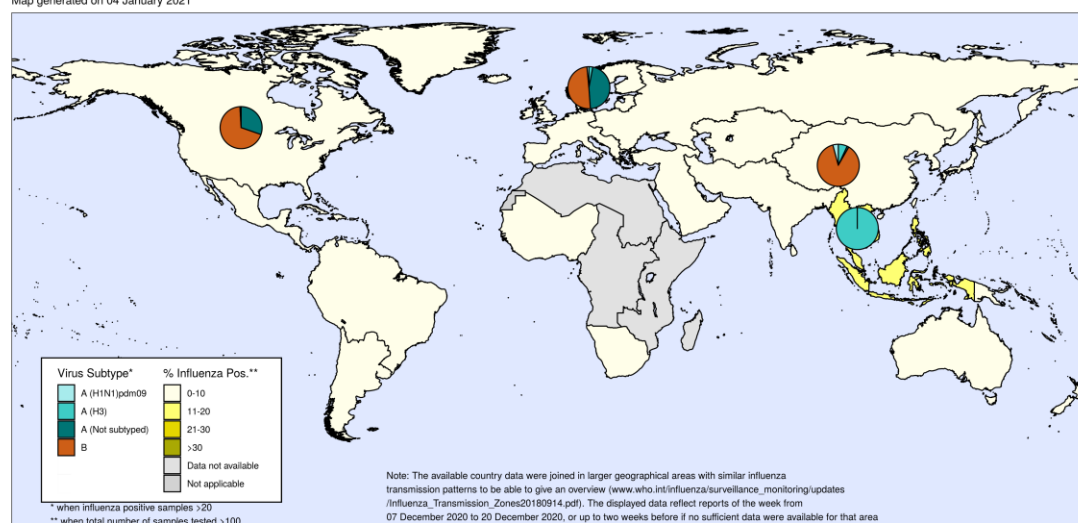


Influenza Update N° 384

04 January 2021, based on data up to 20 December 2020

Information in this report is categorized by influenza transmission zones, which are geographical groups of countries, areas or territories with similar influenza transmission patterns. For more information on influenza transmission zones, see: https://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/Influenza_Transmission_Zones20180914.pdf

Percentage of respiratory specimens that tested positive for influenza
By influenza transmission zone
Map generated on 04 January 2021



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

Data source: Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS), FluNet (www.who.int/flu-net)
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Summary

- The current influenza surveillance data should be interpreted with caution as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has influenced to varying extents health seeking behaviours, staffing/routines in sentinel sites, as well as testing priorities and capacities in Member States. The various hygiene and physical distancing measures implemented by Member States to reduce SARS-CoV-2 virus transmission have likely played a role in reducing influenza virus transmission.
- Globally, despite continued or even increased testing for influenza in some countries, influenza activity remained at lower levels than expected for this time of the year.
- In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity remained below inter-seasonal levels, though sporadic detections of influenza A and B viruses were reported in some countries.
- In the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity was reported at inter-seasonal level.

- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, no influenza detections were reported. Severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) activity, likely due to COVID-19, was elevated in some reporting countries.
- In tropical South America, there were no influenza detections in this reporting period.
- In tropical Africa, influenza activity continued to be reported in Western Africa.
- In Southern Asia, sporadic influenza detections were reported in India.
- In South East Asia, influenza detections of predominately influenza A(H3N2) continued to be reported in Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) and Viet Nam.
- Worldwide, influenza B detections accounted for the majority of the very low numbers of detections reported.
- National Influenza Centres (NICs) and other national influenza laboratories from 75 countries, areas or territories reported data to FluNet for the time period from 07 December 2020 to 20 December 2020 (data as of 2021-01-04 04:42:38 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 188383 specimens during that time period. A total of 379 specimens were positive for influenza viruses, of which 141 (37.2%) were typed as influenza A and 238 (62.8%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 8 (13.6%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 51 (86.4%) were influenza A(H3N2). Of the characterized B viruses, 1 (1.5%) belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 64 (98.5%) to the B-Victoria lineage.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO encourages countries to continue routine influenza surveillance, test samples from influenza surveillance sites for influenza and SARS-CoV-2 viruses where resources are available and report epidemiological and laboratory information in a timely manner to established regional and global platforms. Updated considerations for addressing disruptions in the influenza sentinel surveillance and extending to include COVID-19 wherever possible are available in the interim guidance, [Maintaining surveillance of influenza and monitoring SARS-CoV-2 – adapting Global Influenza surveillance and Response System \(GISRS\) and sentinel systems during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Updated algorithms for testing of both influenza and SARS-CoV-2 for surveillance are also included.

For more detailed information, see the Influenza reports from WHO Regional Offices:

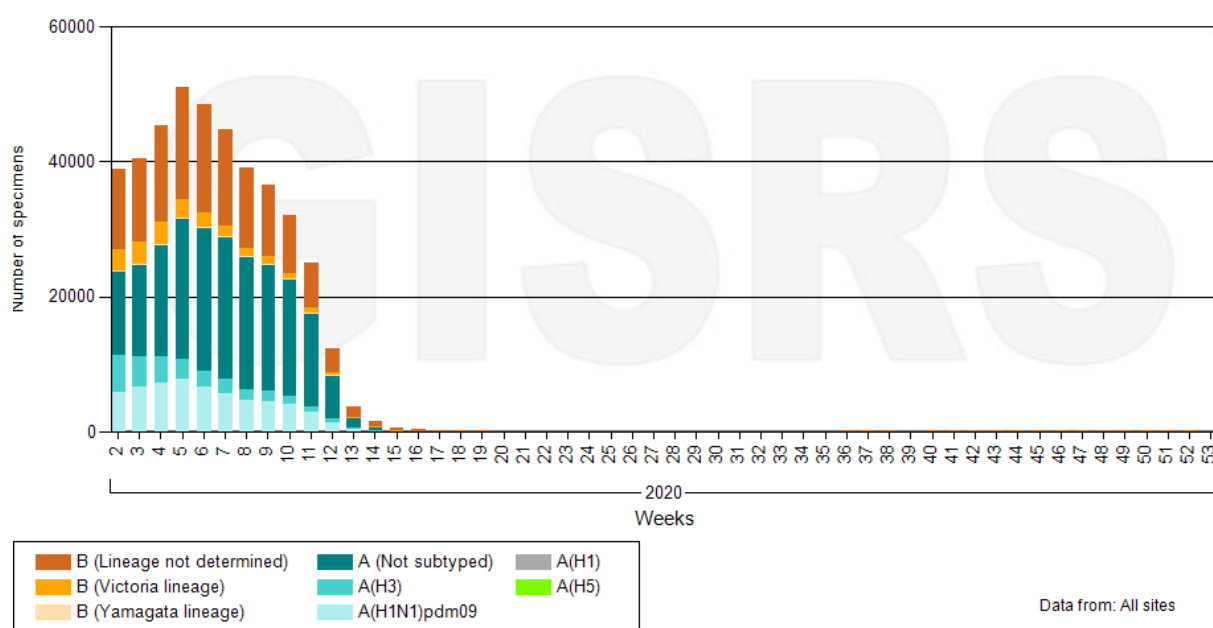
- WHO Region of the Americas (AMRO): www.paho.org/influenzareports
- WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO): <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/influenza/situation-update.html>
- WHO European Region (EURO): www.flunewseurope.org/
- WHO Western Pacific Region (WPRO): <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/surveillance/seasonal-influenza>
- EuroMOMO Bulletin: <https://www.euromomo.eu>

Countries in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere

- In the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal level overall.

- In the countries of North America, influenza activity indicators, including the percent of tests positive for influenza and influenza like illness (ILI) activity, were at very low levels, despite testing at usual or increased levels. In the United States of America, the percentage of deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza or COVID-19 remained above the epidemic threshold for pneumonia and influenza mortality established from historical data.
- In Europe, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels though sporadic detections of influenza A and B viruses were reported across reporting countries. Respiratory illness indicators slightly increased in some reporting countries, likely related to SARS-CoV-2 circulation. Rhinovirus activity was reported in some countries performing surveillance for other respiratory viruses. Pooled mortality estimates from the EuroMOMO network showed an increase in excess mortality in some countries and mainly in persons aged 45 years and older.
- In Central Asia, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries.
- In Northern Africa, there were no influenza reports for this period.
- In Western Asia, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal level and ILI activity remained low overall. In Saudi Arabia, SARI activity decreased but remained elevated and low levels of influenza B detections continued to be reported. Sporadic influenza B detections were also reported in the United Arab Emirates.
- In East Asia, influenza illness indicators and influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels in most reporting countries. ILI activity was at or below usual levels in China for this time of the year, with low levels of influenza B virus detections reported in Southern China.

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in the northern hemisphere



Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flu-net). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 04/01/2021

Countries in the tropical zone

Tropical countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America

- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries. SARI cases were reported at extraordinary levels in Costa Rica and Honduras, likely related to elevated SARS-CoV-2 circulation.
- In the tropical countries of South America, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries. SARI activity, likely related to SARS-CoV-2 circulation, decreased to low levels in Ecuador.

Tropical Africa

- In Western Africa, continued influenza activity was reported with detections of influenza A(H3N2) and B in Burkina Faso and Ghana, influenza B (Victoria lineage) in Guinea and influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 in Togo.
- In Middle Africa, there were no influenza updates for this reporting period.
- In Eastern Africa, no influenza detections were reported for this period.

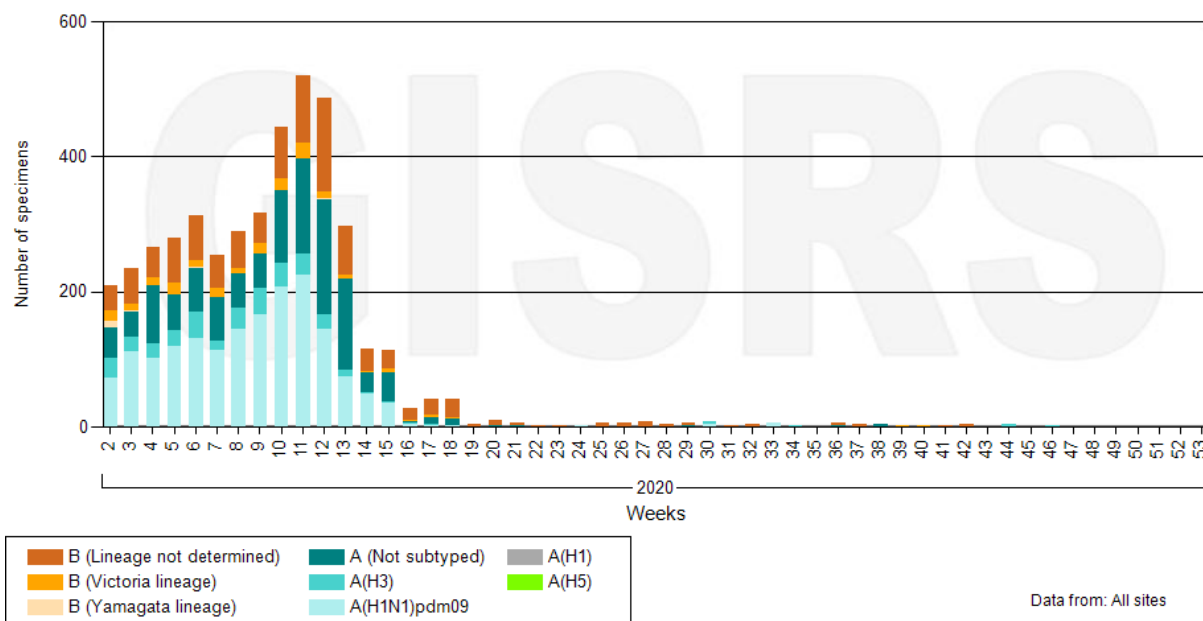
Tropical Asia

- In Southern Asia, sporadic detections of influenza A were reported in India in recent weeks. ILI and SARI rates remained elevated in Afghanistan.
- In South East Asia, influenza activity of predominately influenza A(H3N2) continued to be reported in Lao PDR and Viet Nam.

Countries in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere

- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal level.
- In Oceania, ILI and other influenza activity indicators remained very low, despite continued testing. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) continued to circulate at high level in parts of Australia.
- In South Africa, no influenza viruses were detected in ILI and pneumonia samples from sentinel sites. RSV activity remained below the epidemic threshold level.
- In temperate South America, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries. In Chile, SARI activity remained elevated compared to usual levels for this time of year.

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in southern hemisphere



Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)

Data generated on 04/01/2021

Sources of data

The Global Influenza Programme monitors influenza activity worldwide and publishes an update every two weeks. The updates are based on available epidemiological and virological data sources, including FluNet (reported by the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System), FluID (epidemiological data reported by national focal points) and influenza reports from WHO Regional Offices and Member States. Completeness can vary among updates due to availability and quality of data available at the time when the update is developed.

Seasonal influenza reviews: A review of the 2019 influenza season in the southern hemisphere, was published in January 2020 and can be found here:

<https://extranet.who.int/iris/restricted/bitstream/handle/10665/330368/WER9501-02-eng-fre.pdf>

Epidemiological Influenza updates:

http://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/latest_update_GIP_surveillance

Virological surveillance updates: http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/updates/summaryreport

Virological surveillance updates archives: http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/updates/

Contact : fluupdate@who.int