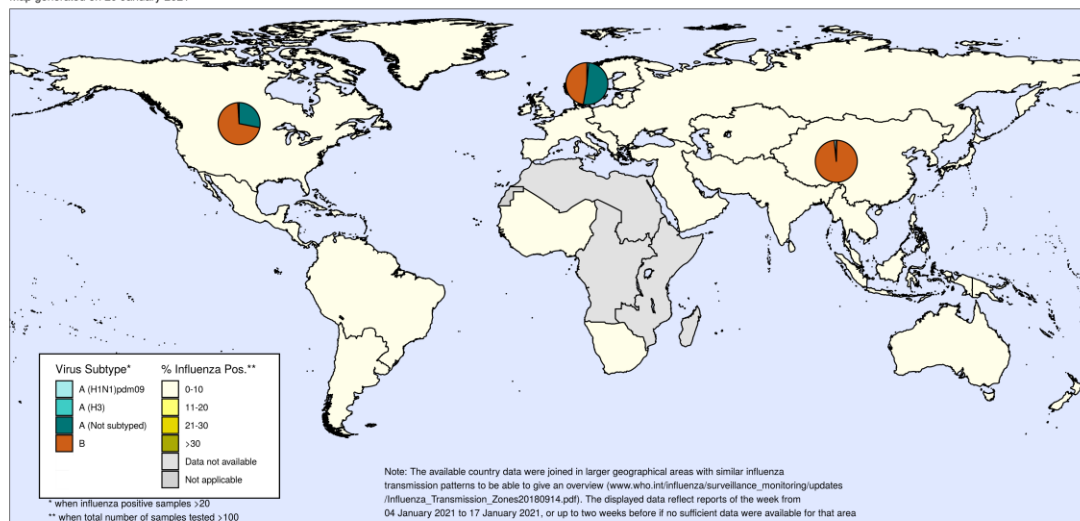


Influenza Update N° 386

01 February 2021, based on data up to 17 January 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 29 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 baseline, 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, low influenza detections were reported in Haiti. Severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) activity increased in Costa Rica.
- In tropical South America, there were no influenza detections reported in this period.
- In tropical Africa, influenza activity continued to be reported in Western Africa.
- In Southern Asia, sporadic influenza detections were reported across reporting countries.
- In South East Asia, influenza detections were reported in some countries in this reporting period.
- 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 82 countries, areas or territories reported data to FluNet for the time period from 04 January 2021 to 17 January 2021 (data as of 2021-01-29 04:07:09 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 233931 specimens during that time period. A total of 566 specimens were positive for influenza viruses, of which 117 (20.7%) were typed as influenza A and 449 (79.3%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 6 (18.8%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 26 (81.3%) were influenza A(H3N2). Of the characterized B viruses, 1 (0.4%) belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 253 (99.6%) 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:

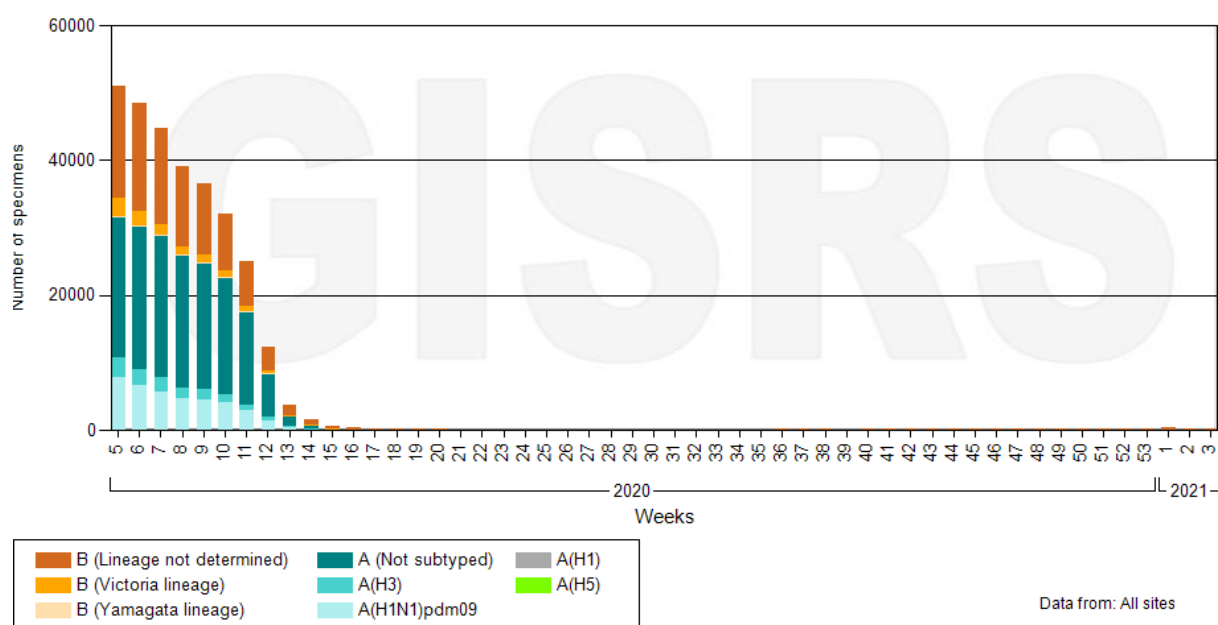
- WHO Region of the Americas (AMRO): www.paho.org/influenzareports
- WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO): <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/influenza/situation-update.html>
- WHO European Region (EURO): www.flunewseurope.org/
- WHO Western Pacific Region (WPRO): <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/surveillance/seasonal-influenza>
- 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 below baseline 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 was at very low level with sporadic detections of influenza A and B viruses reported in some countries. Respiratory illness indicators slightly increased in some reporting countries, likely related to SARS-CoV-2 circulation. Decreased 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, likely related to increased SARS-CoV-2 circulation.
- In Central Asia, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries.
- In Northern Africa, there were no influenza updates for this reporting period.
- In Western Asia, influenza and ILI activity remained low. Sporadic detections of influenza B virus in Oman and Saudi Arabia and influenza A(H3N2) in Armenia and United Arab Emirates were reported during this period.
- In East Asia, influenza illness indicators and influenza activity remained low or below baseline in reporting countries. ILI activity was at or below usual levels in China for this time of the year, with slightly increased but low levels of influenza B-Victoria virus detections reported from Southern China.

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



Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 29/01/2021

Countries in the tropical zone

Tropical countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America

- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, decreased influenza B-Victoria lineage detections were reported in Haiti in recent weeks. SARI cases increased to high levels in Costa Rica. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) detections were reported in Guatemala in recent weeks.
- In the tropical countries of South America, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries. RSV detections continued to be reported from Colombia in recent weeks. SARI activity, likely related to SARS-CoV-2 circulation, decreased to low levels in Ecuador.

Tropical Africa

- In Western Africa, continued although decreased influenza activity was reported with detections of influenza A(H3N2) in Côte d'Ivoire and influenza B-Victoria lineage in Guinea and Sierra Leone.
- In Middle Africa, there were no influenza updates for this reporting period.
- In Eastern Africa, no influenza detections were reported for this period.

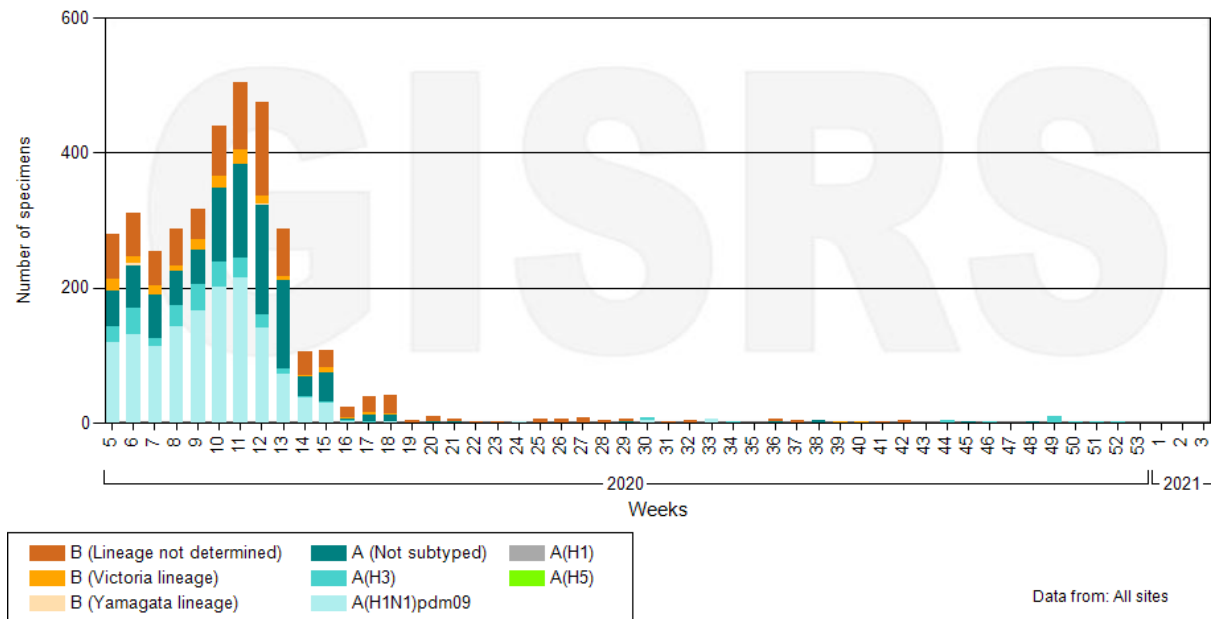
Tropical Asia

- In Southern Asia, sporadic detections of influenza A(H3N2) viruses were reported in Bangladesh and India and influenza B viruses in Iran (Islamic Republic of). ILI and SARI rates remained elevated in Afghanistan and Bangladesh.
- In South East Asia, detections of influenza A(H3N2) continued to be reported in Lao People's Democratic Republic this period. ILI and SARI rates remained stable in Lao PDR.

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, influenza remained at inter-seasonal level. RSV activity plateaued and appeared to decline in parts of Australia.
- In South Africa, no influenza detections but some RSV and a sharp increase in SARS-CoV-2 detections were reported among samples from ILI and pneumonia surveillance.
- In temperate South America, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries. SARI activity slightly increased in Chile and decreased to high levels compared to the extraordinary levels reported in previous weeks in Paraguay.

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 29/01/2021

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/

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