Influenza Update N° 395

07 June 2021, based on data up to 23 May 2021

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

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 detections of influenza B-Victoria lineage slightly increased, especially in China.

▪ In the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal level.

▪ In the Caribbean and Central American countries, there were no influenza detections reported.
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- In tropical South America, no influenza detections were reported.
- In tropical Africa, few influenza detections were reported in some countries in Western and Middle Africa.
- In Southern Asia, few influenza detections continued to be reported in India.
- In South East Asia, no influenza detections were reported.
- 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 89 countries, areas or territories reported data to FluNet for the time period from 10 May 2021 to 23 May 2021 (data as of 2021-06-04 06:47:25 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 284780 specimens during that time period. A total of 764 specimens were positive for influenza viruses, of which 69 (9%) were typed as influenza A and 695 (91%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 11 (55%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 9 (45%) were influenza A(H3N2). The lineage for 646 influenza B viruses was determined: 4 (0.6%) belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 642 (99.4%) to the B-Victoria lineage.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO encourages countries, especially those that have received the multiplex influenza and SARS-CoV-2 reagent kits from GISRS, 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](http://www.paho.org/influenzareports)
- WHO European Region (EURO):[www.flunewseurope.org/](http://www.flunewseurope.org/)
- WHO Western Pacific Region (WPRO): [https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/surveillance/seasonal-influenza](https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/surveillance/seasonal-influenza)
- EuroMOMO Bulletin: [https://www.euromomo.eu](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, ILI activity in 0-4-year-olds...
olds, and 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 very low level with sporadic detections of influenza A and B viruses reported in some countries. Detections of other respiratory viruses (ORVs) continued to be reported in some countries performing surveillance for ORVs. Pooled mortality estimates from the EuroMOMO network showed were at expected levels.
- In Central Asia, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries.
- In Northern Africa, increased detections of influenza A(H3N2) and B were reported in Egypt in recent weeks.
- In Western Asia, influenza and ILI activity remained low overall. Qatar reported continued detections of influenza B viruses.
- In East Asia, influenza illness indicators and influenza activity remained low. Increased detections of influenza B-Victoria lineage virus were reported from northern and southern China though these detections are remaining low compared to previous years.

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

Data source: FluNet [www.who.int/toolkits/flunet](http://www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) Data generated on 04/06/2021
Countries in the tropical zone

Tropical countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America

- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, no influenza was reported across reporting countries. The number of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases remained at moderate level in Costa Rica.
- In the tropical countries of South America, no influenza detections were reported for this period. Detections of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) were reported in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru. SARI consultation rate was reported at moderate levels in Bolivia and Ecuador.

Tropical Africa

- In Western Africa, few detections of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) were reported in Côte d’Ivoire and influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 in Ghana.
- In Middle Africa, few detections of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) were reported in Cameroon in recent weeks.
- In Eastern Africa, no detections of influenza viruses were reported across reporting countries.

Tropical Asia

- In Southern Asia, detections of predominately influenza A(H3N2) viruses continued to be reported in India.
- In South East Asia, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries.

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 rates and other influenza activity indicators remained very low, despite continued testing. Influenza detections remained very sporadic, while in some part of Australia other respiratory viral diseases are detected at usual levels for this time of the year and parainfluenza is reported to be higher than historical levels.
- In South Africa, few detections of influenza B-Victoria lineage were reported in this period. RSV detections continued and SARS-CoV-2 detections increased again in pneumonia surveillance.
- In temperate South America, no influenza but RSV detections were reported across reporting countries. SARI cases decreased to low levels in Chile and were at extraordinary levels 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 04/06/2021

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: https://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/en/
Virological surveillance updates: https://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/updates/summaryreport/en/
Virological surveillance updates archives: https://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/updates/en/

Contact: fluupdate@who.int