

Influenza Update N° 403

27 September 2021, based on data up to 12 September 2021

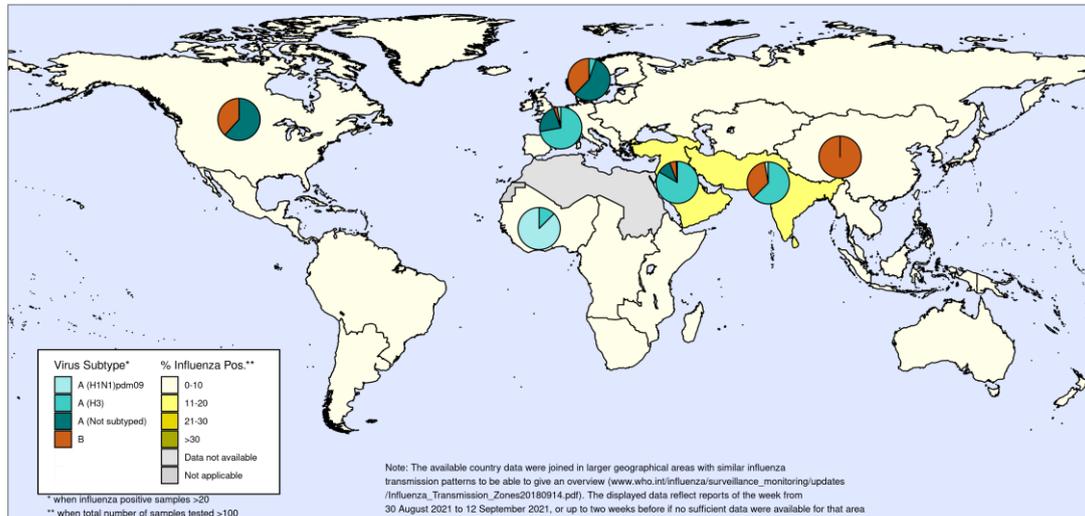
In this update, information on SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel and non-sentinel surveillance performed by GISRS and GISRS-associated influenza surveillance systems and reported to FluNet is included in addition to the routine influenza surveillance information.

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 zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, sporadic influenza B virus detections were reported in some countries.
- In tropical South America, one influenza A detection was reported in Peru in this period.
- In tropical Africa, a few influenza detections of predominately influenza A were reported in some countries in Western, Middle and Eastern Africa.
- In Southern Asia, influenza detections of predominately influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B continued to be reported across reporting countries.
- In South East Asia, sporadic influenza A(H3N2) detections were reported in the Philippines.
- Worldwide, influenza A and B viruses were detected in similar proportions.
- National Influenza Centres (NICs) and other national influenza laboratories from 88 countries, areas or territories reported data to FluNet for the time period from 30 August 2021 to 12 September 2021 (data as of 2021-09-24 07:02:37 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 275 940 specimens during that time period. 1884 were positive for influenza viruses, of which 808 (42.9%) were typed as influenza A and 1076 (57.1%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 54 (7.3%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 686 (92.7%) were influenza A(H3N2). Of the characterized B viruses, 973 (99.8%) belonged to the B-Victoria lineage and 2 (0.2%) to the B-Yamagata lineage.

Percentage of respiratory specimens that tested positive for influenza by influenza transmission zone¹. Map generated on 24 September 2021.

Percentage of respiratory specimens that tested positive for influenza
By influenza transmission zone
Map generated on 24 September 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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- 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 (see the guidance here: <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1316069/retrieve>).
- At the global level, SARS-CoV-2 percent positivity from sentinel surveillance appeared to decrease though remained at elevated levels. Activity showed a slight decline in the WHO American, European, South-East Asia and in the WHO African Regions. Activity was low from sentinel surveillance in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean and Western Pacific Regions this reporting period.
- NICs and other national influenza laboratories from 39 countries, areas or territories from six WHO regions (African Region: 1; Region of the Americas: 13; Eastern Mediterranean Region: 2; European Region: 14; South-East Asia Region: 4; Western Pacific Region: 5) reported to FluNet from sentinel surveillance sites for time period from 30 Aug 2021 to 12 Sep 2021 (data as of 2021-09-24 07:02:37 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 85 300 sentinel specimens during that time period and 31 092 (36.5%) were positive for SARS-CoV-2. Additionally, approximately 2 million non-sentinel or undefined reporting source samples

¹ 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://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/influenza/influenza-updates/2020/influenza_transmission_zones20180914.pdf?sfvrsn=dba8eca5_3

were tested in the same period and 211 892 were positive for SARS-CoV-2. Further details are included at the end of this update.

- The WHO Consultation and Information Meeting on the Composition of Influenza Virus Vaccines for Use in the 2022 Southern Hemisphere Influenza Season was held on 13-24 September 2021 in the format of an e-Consultation. It was recommended that trivalent egg-based vaccines contain the following: an A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus; an A/Darwin/9/2021 (H3N2)-like virus; and a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus. It was also recommended that quadrivalent vaccines containing two influenza B viruses contain the above three viruses and a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus. For more information: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/recommended-composition-of-influenza-virus-vaccines-for-use-in-the-2021-southern-hemisphere-influenza-season>.

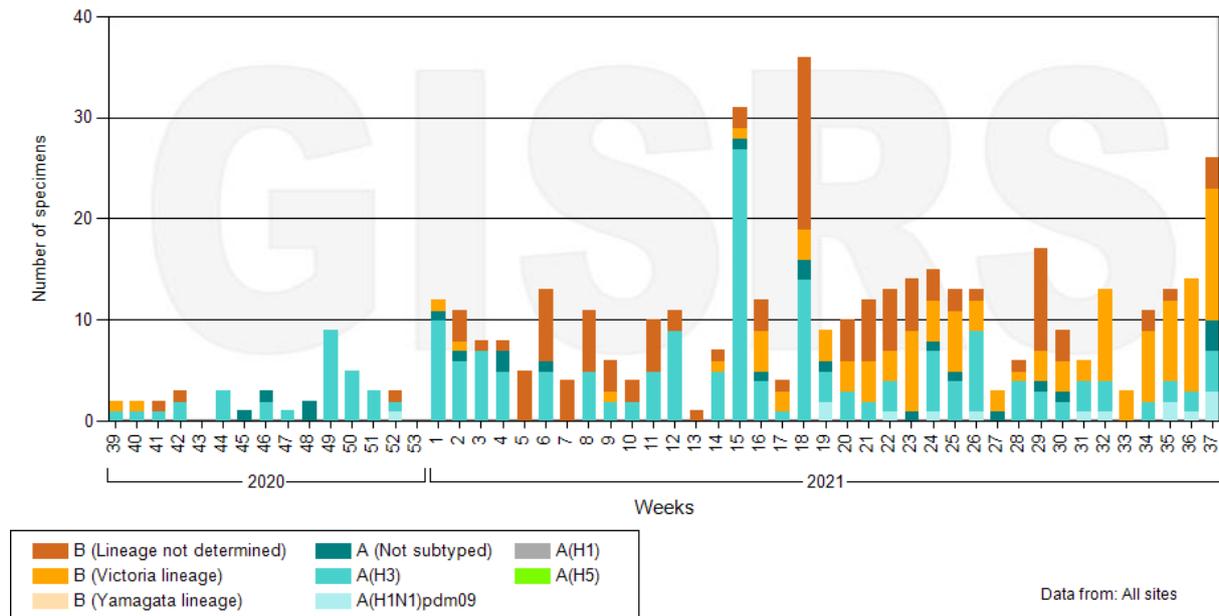
For more detailed information, see the Influenza reports from WHO Regional Offices:

- WHO Region of the Americas: www.paho.org/influenzareports
- WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/influenza/situation-update.html>
- WHO European Region: www.flunewseurope.org/
- WHO Western Pacific Region: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/surveillance/seasonal-influenza>

Countries in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere

- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In Oceania, influenza is being detected at very low levels, even below the already low detection in 2020, despite ongoing testing. Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity remains below seasonal levels. In some areas of Australia other respiratory virus (ORVs) activity returned to usual level for this time of year.
- In South Africa, detections of predominately influenza B/Victoria lineage viruses continued to be reported; a few influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) viruses were also detected. Overall activity remained at inter-seasonal levels. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is also being detected below seasonal levels. COVID-19 detections decreased in both influenza like illness (ILI) and pneumonia surveillance systems.
- In temperate South America, no detections of influenza virus were reported. RSV activity remained elevated in Argentina and increased in Chile. Severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) hospitalization rates were at moderate levels in Uruguay.

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 24/09/2021

Countries in the tropical zone

Tropical countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America

- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, sporadic influenza B virus detections were reported in Haiti, Mexico and Nicaragua. RSV detections increased in El Salvador during this period. The number of SARI cases decreased, though remained at extraordinary level in Mexico. In Jamaica, pneumonia cases were at extraordinary levels likely associate with increased SARS-CoV-2 activity. ILI cases in the ≥ 5 years of age remained elevated in Saint Lucia.
- In the tropical countries of South America, one influenza A virus detection was reported in Peru. RSV activity continued to be reported in Peru.

Tropical Africa

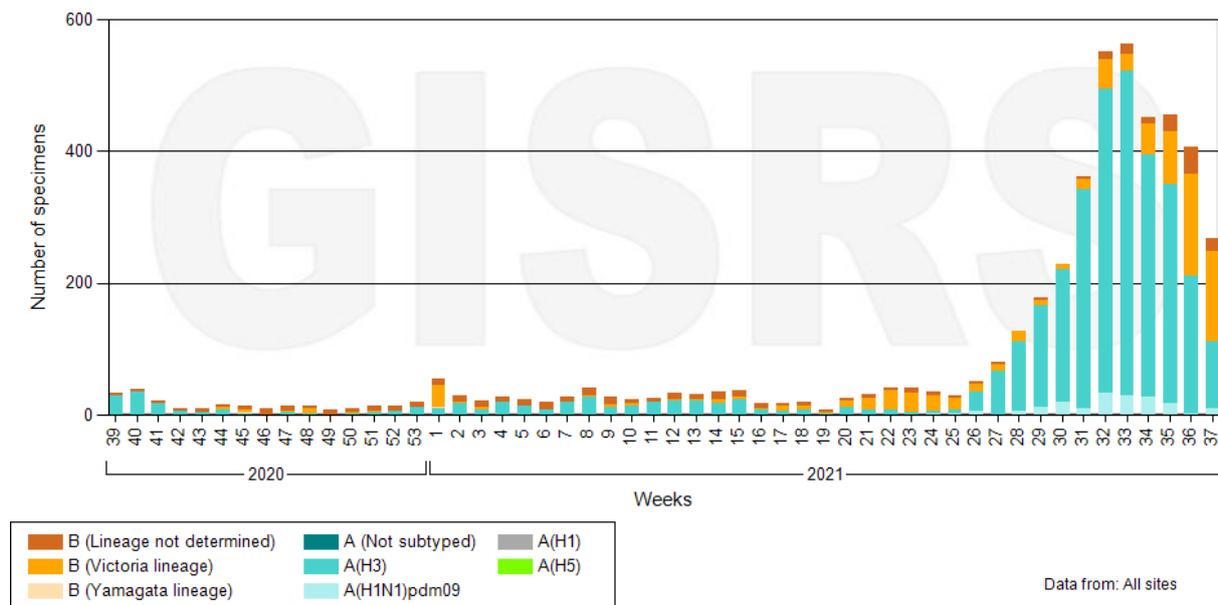
- In Western Africa, a few influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus detections were reported in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali. Ghana also reported influenza A(H3N2) detections. Senegal reported detections of influenza A viruses. SARI activity was high in Togo but no influenza detections were reported.
- In Middle Africa, Cameroon reported a few influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and one influenza B/Victoria lineage detection.

- In Eastern Africa, influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 detections were reported in Tanzania. Influenza A(H3N2) viruses were reported in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. Influenza B viruses (Victoria lineage for those where lineage was determined) were reported in Kenya and Mozambique. ILI rates remained elevated in Zambia.

Tropical Asia

- In Southern Asia, influenza detections of predominantly A(H3N2) and influenza B/Victoria lineage viruses continued to be reported in India and Nepal, though showing a decreasing trend. In addition, a few influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 detections were reported in India. Sporadic detections of influenza A(H3N2) viruses were reported in Pakistan.
- In South East Asia, a few influenza A(H3N2) virus detections were reported in the Philippines in recent weeks. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, ILI and SARI levels remained below the average of the previous three years.

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in Southern Asia



Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

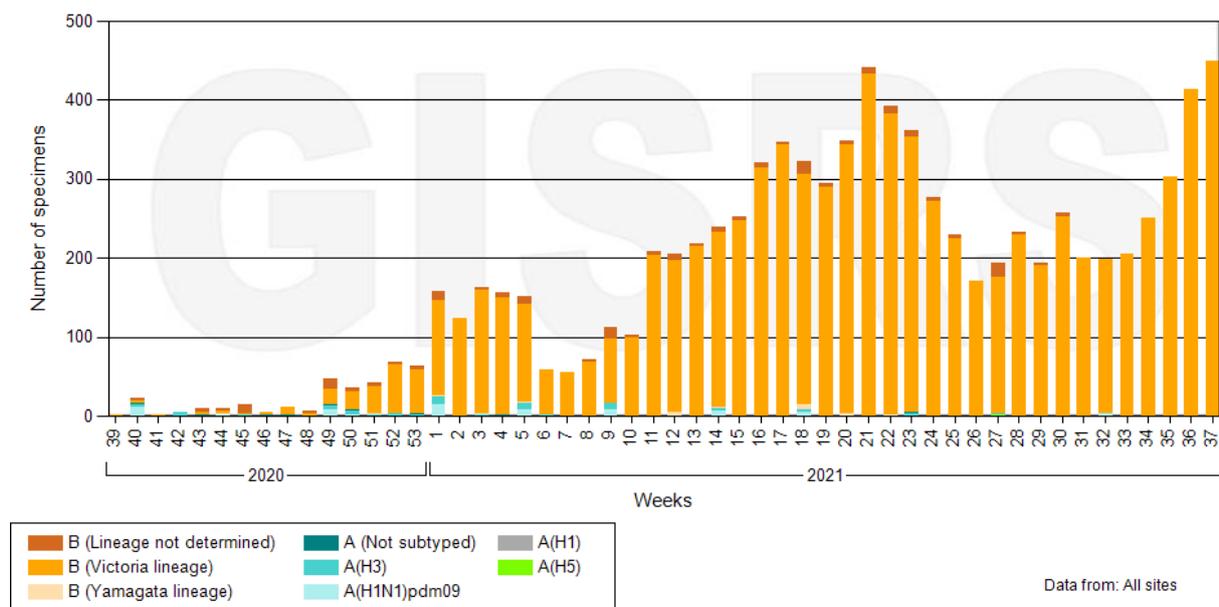
Countries in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere

- In the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity remained below baseline overall.
- In the countries of North America, influenza activity indicators and detections were at low levels with sporadic detections of influenza A and B viruses. In the United States of America (USA), ILI activity remained stable and above levels seen in previous years at this time of year. The percentage of deaths attributed to pneumonia, influenza or COVID-19 increased and remained above the epidemic threshold for pneumonia and influenza mortality established from historical data. RSV detections increased in some parts of Canada and the USA.
- In Europe, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels. Detections of influenza A (predominated A(H3N2) for those specimens that were subtyped) and B viruses were

reported in Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK). Detections of ORVs were reported in some countries performing surveillance for ORVs; RSV activity was higher than in previous years for this time of year in Germany and England (UK). Pooled mortality estimates from the EuroMOMO network were slightly elevated in this reported period.

- In Central Asia, no reports were received for this reporting period.
- For Northern Africa, no reports were received for this reporting period.
- In Western Asia, Lebanon, Oman and Qatar reported influenza A(H3N2) virus detections. no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries during this period.
- In East Asia, influenza illness indicators and influenza activity remained low. Influenza B/Victoria lineage viruses were detected in China at higher levels than the previous reporting period but lower compared to previous years. The vast majority of detections were from Southern provinces. The proportion of hospitalizations due to pneumonia continued to increase in Mongolia.

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in Eastern Asia



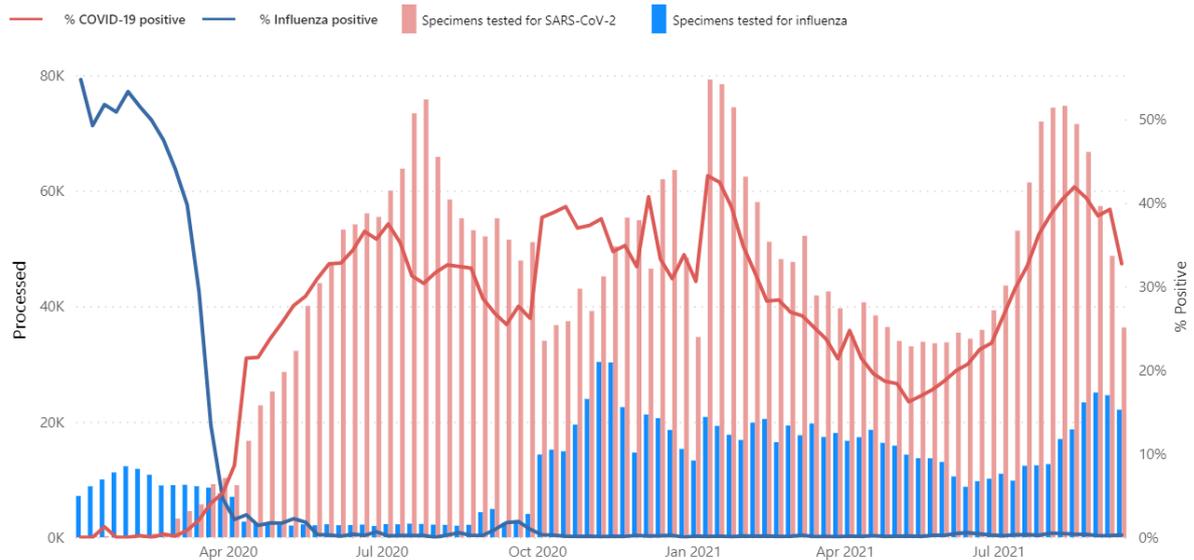
Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)

Data generated on 24/09/2021

SARS-CoV-2 sentinel surveillance data reported to FluNet

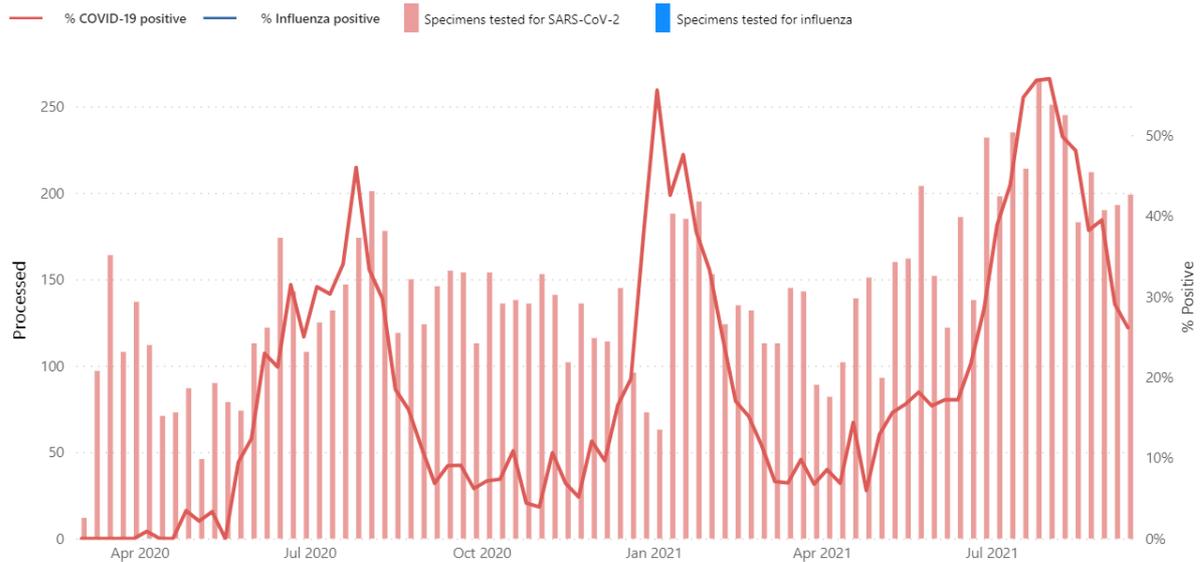
- SARS-CoV-2 data are included from those countries reporting testing one or more sentinel specimens for SARS-CoV-2 per week. Influenza data are included from those countries reporting testing one or more sentinel specimens for influenza per week regardless of their reporting of SARS-CoV-2 testing data. Currently, there are a limited number of countries reporting such data to FluNet in a timely and consistent way. The charts below show the data globally and by WHO region from the data reported to date to WHO from a limited number of countries and thus the trends in percent positivity do not reflect the situation as a whole in the region.

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet globally



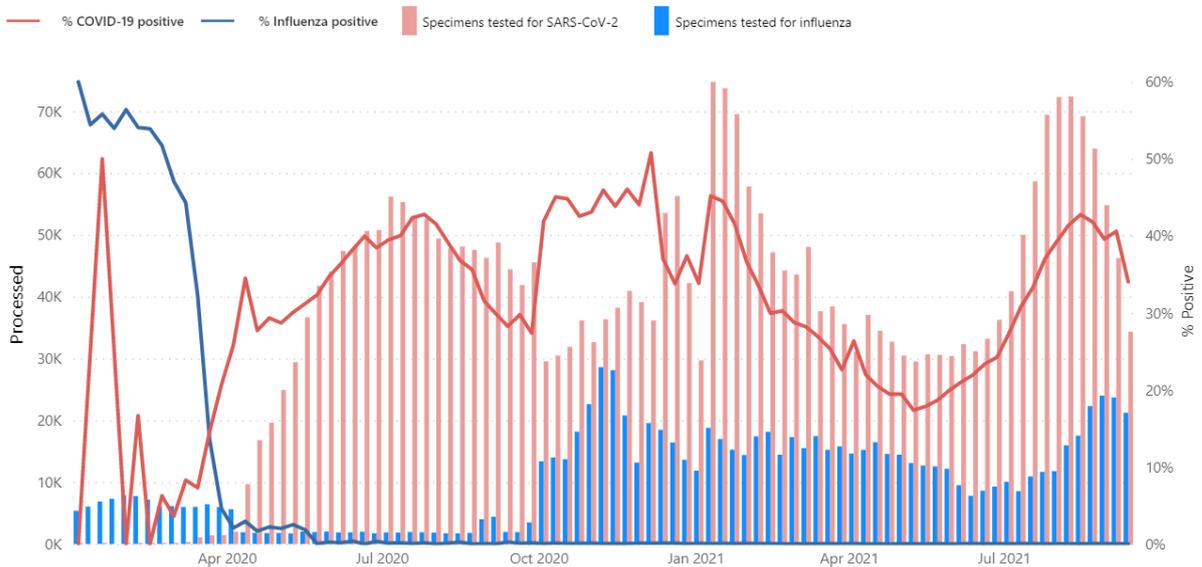
Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO African Region



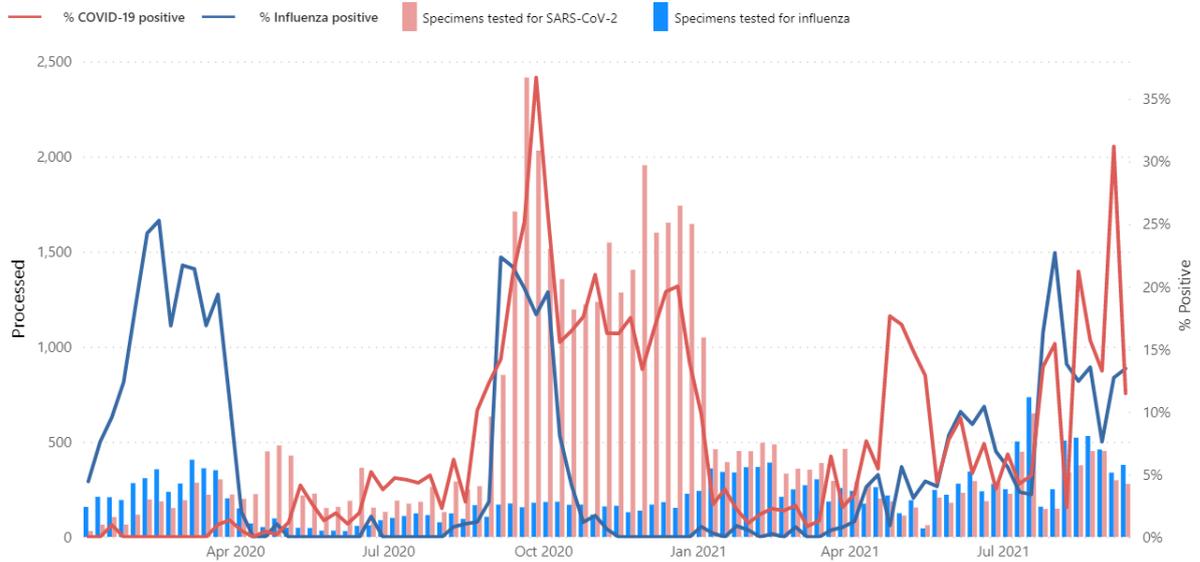
Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO Region of the Americas



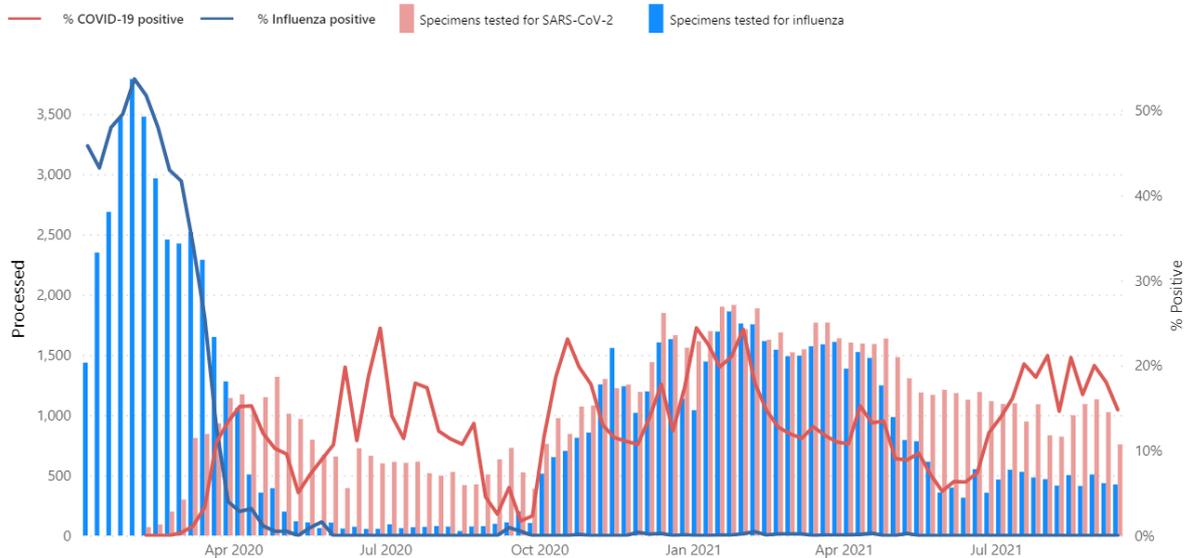
Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO South-East Asia Region



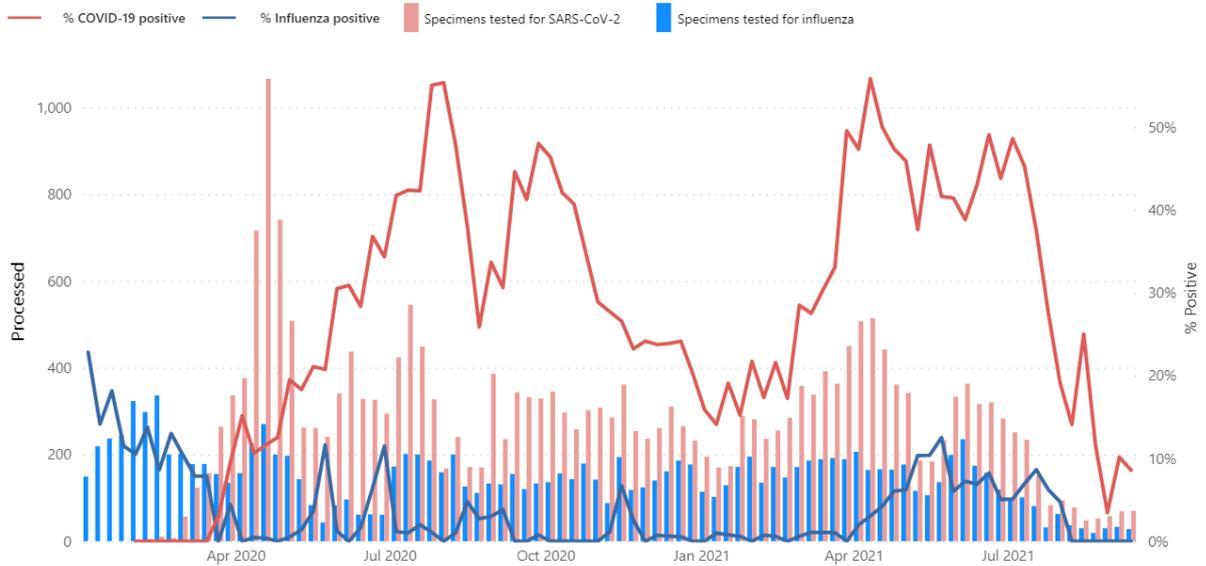
Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO European Region



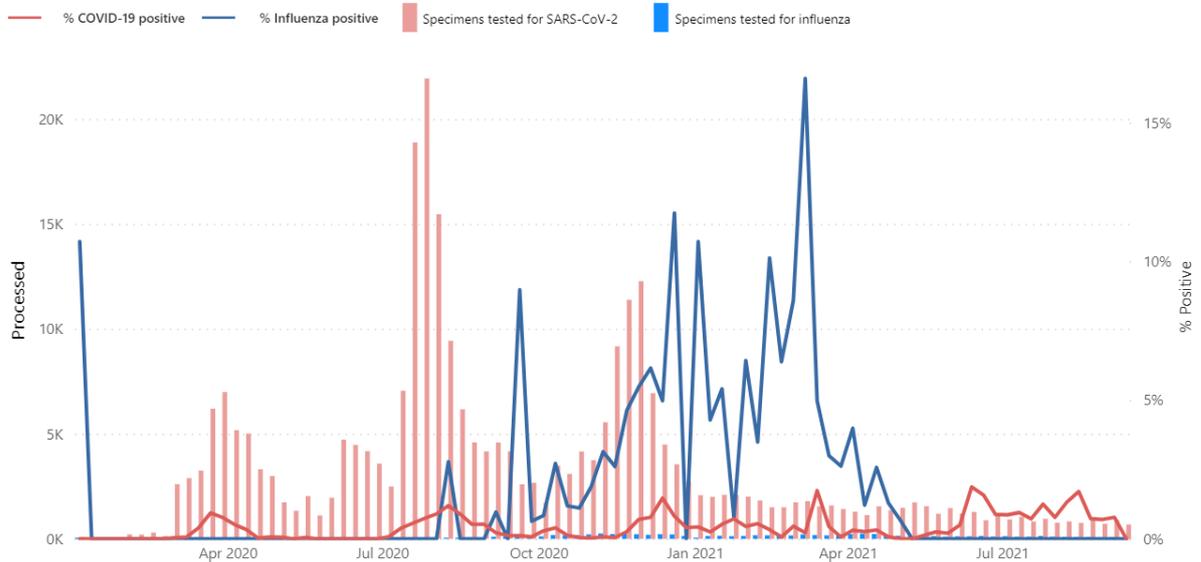
Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region



Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO Western Pacific Region



Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/toolkits/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 24/09/2021

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. During the COVID-19 pandemic, FluNet has also been receiving updates on testing of samples obtained from routine influenza surveillance systems for SARS-CoV-2. Completeness can vary among updates due to availability and quality of data available at the time when the update is developed.

Seasonal influenza reviews: [Review of global influenza circulation, late 2019 to 2020, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on influenza circulation](#)

Epidemiological Influenza updates: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/surveillance-and-monitoring/influenza-updates>

Virological surveillance updates: <https://www.who.int/tools/flunet/flunet-summary>

Influenza surveillance outputs: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/surveillance-and-monitoring/influenza-surveillance-outputs>

Influenza – COVID-19 Interface, including surveillance outputs: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/influenza-covid19>

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