WHO South-East Asia Region
Epidemiological Bulletin

WHO Health Emergencies Programme
WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia
18th edition, 27 December 2023. Reporting period: 11 – 24 December 2023

HEALTH EMERGENCIES programme

World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR South-East Asia

This epidemiological bulletin aims to provide the situation of key infectious diseases in the WHO South-East Asia region to inform risk assessments and responses. The bulletin uses information from publicly available sources and will be published every two weeks. For feedback or suggestions, please write to seoutbreak@who.int.

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Key events and updates

WHO Initial Risk Evaluation for JN.1[1]

- Due to its rapidly increasing spread, WHO is classifying JN.1 as a separate variant of interest (VOI) from the parent lineage BA.2.86.
- It was previously classified as VOI as part of BA.2.86 sub-lineages. In comparison with the parent lineage BA.2.86, JN.1 has the additional L455S mutation in the spike protein.
- The earliest sample of JN.1 was collected on 25 August 2023. In recent weeks, JN.1 continues to be reported in multiple countries (as of 16 December, 7344 sequences were submitted to GISAID from 41 countries (with France, the United States of America and Singapore reporting the largest proportions), and its prevalence has been increasing globally and now represents the vast majority of BA.2.86 descendent lineages reported to GISAID.
- Considering the available, yet limited evidence, the **additional public health risk posed by JN.1 is currently evaluated as low** at the global level.
  - It is anticipated that JN.1 may cause an increase in SARS-CoV-2 cases amid a surge of infections of other viral and bacterial infections, especially in countries entering the winter season.
  - Current population immunity is expected to remain cross-reactive to JN.1 against symptomatic and severe disease. Therefore, it is unlikely to increase the burden on national public health systems compared to other Omicron sub-lineages.
- Please see Initial Risk Evaluation of JN.1 released on 19 December 2023 for further information.

[1] https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/18122023_jn.1_ire_clean.pdf?sfvrsn=6103754a_3

COVID-19

Status as of 24 December 2023

- In the WHO South-East Asia Region, from 11 to 24 December 2023, 11 443 new COVID-19 cases and 74 deaths have been reported, a 235.4% and 311.1% increase compared to the previous 14 days, respectively.
  - Between 11 and 24 December 2023, India (5 565 new cases, +331.1%), Indonesia (4 674, +426.9%), and Myanmar (36 new cases, +260.0%) reported an increase in the number of new cases, compared to previous 14 days.
  - In the same period, Bangladesh reported 74 new cases which is similar to the number reported during the previous 14 days.
  - Data were not available from Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Timor-Leste for this period.
- General bed occupancy rates remain low in Delhi, India (0.10% as of 24 December 2023)[2] and Indonesia (1.70% as of 24 December 2023); however, a small rise has been reported in the latter from 0.62% as of 1 December.[3]
- The Region has recorded a cumulative total of 61 226 840 COVID-19 cases, including 808 166 deaths.
- Please refer to the WHO SEARO COVID-19 dashboard for further information of COVID-19 in WHO South-East Asia Region.
- Globally, 772 838 745 COVID-19 cases, including 6 988 679 deaths have been cumulatively reported, as of 17 December 2023 [4].

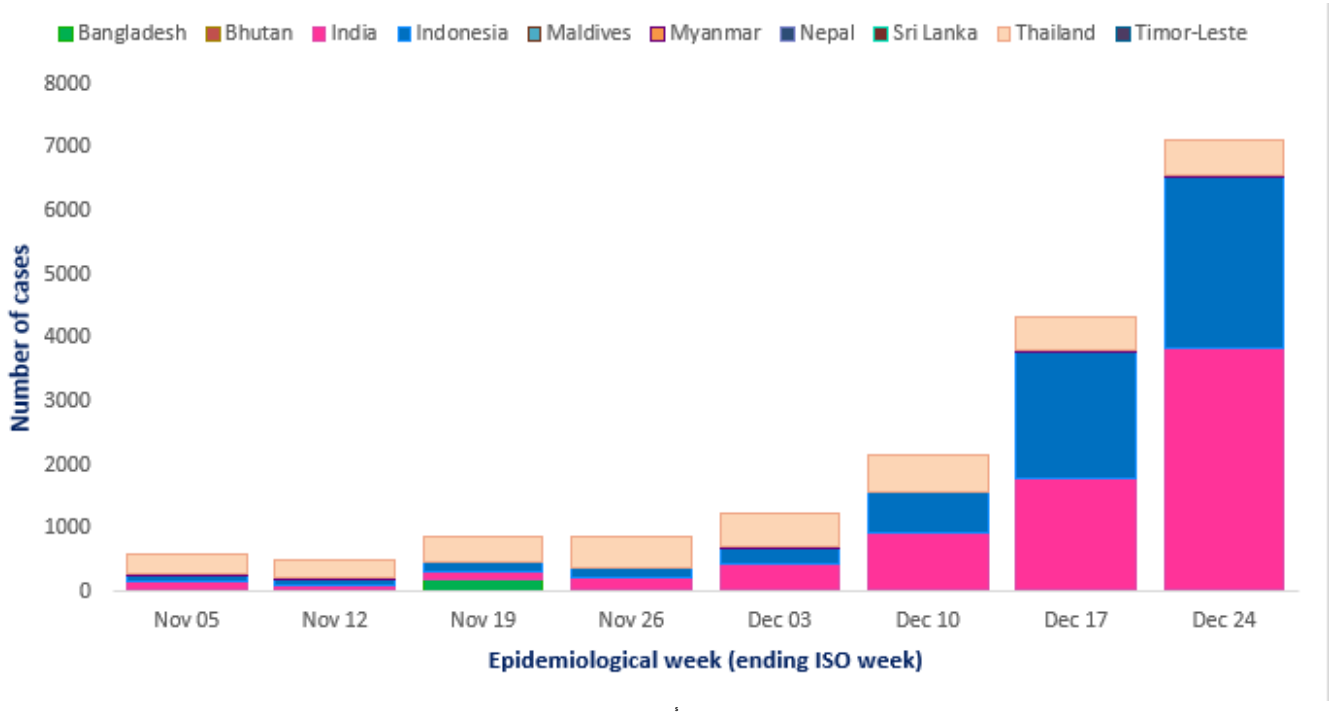
Table 1. COVID-19 cases, deaths, and the weekly change in countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region in the week from 11 to 24 December 2023

Country		Cumulative cases	New cases (last 14 days)	% change in new cases	New cases per 1M pop	Cumulative deaths	New deaths (last 14 days)	% change in new deaths	New deaths per 1M pop
India		45,008,620	5,565	331.1	4.0	533,333	27	237.5	0.0
Indonesia		6,819,830	4,674	426.9	17.1	161,954	31	1450.0	0.1
Thailand		4,761,781	1,069	-5.1	14.9	34,514	14	75.0	0.2
Bangaldesh		2,046,207	74	1.4	0.4	29,477	0	0.0	0.0
Sri Lanka		672,679	25	0.0	1.1	16,888	2	0.0	0.1
Myanmar		641,422	36	260.0	0.7	19,494	0	0.0	0.0
Bhutan		62,697	NA	NA	NA	21	NA	NA	NA
Maldives		186,694	NA	NA	NA	316	NA	NA	NA
Nepal		1,003,450	NA	NA	NA	12,031	NA	NA	NA
Timor - Teste		23,460	NA	NA	NA	138	NA	NA	NA
SEAR Total		61,226,840	11,443	235.4	NA	808,166	74	311.1	NA

Percent change in the number of newly confirmed cases/deaths in past 14 days, compared to the previous 14 days.
NA = data not available.
DPR Korea has not reported confirmed COVID-19 cases.
Thailand data were for the period from 10 to 23 December 2023 in comparison to the preceding 14 days.
As for cumulative numbers, Maldives data are as of 5 August, Timor-Leste data as of 11 August, Bhutan data as of 8 October and Nepal data as of 20 October 2023.

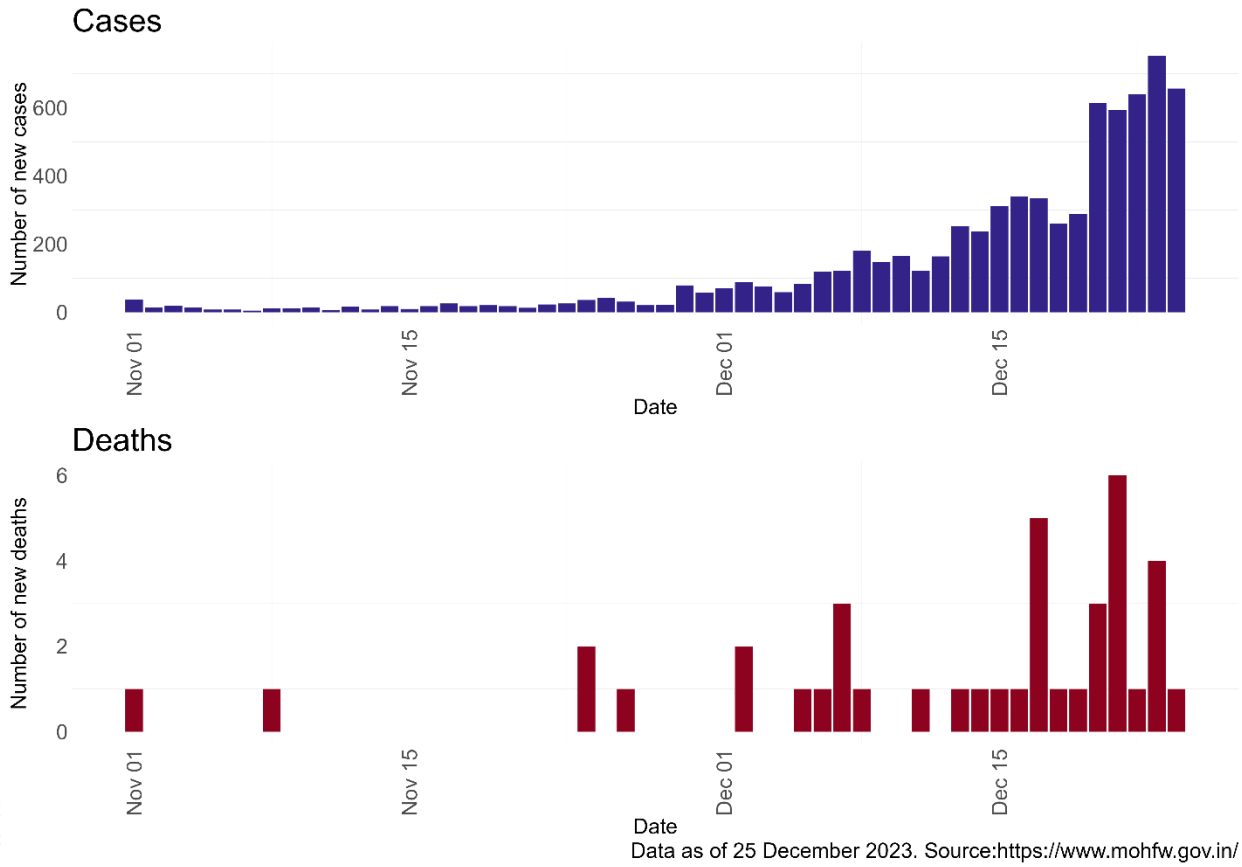
[2] https://coronabeds.jantasamvad.org/
[3] https://vaksin.kemkes.go.id/#/scprovinsi
[4] Data as 17 December 2023 link: https://covid19.who.int/

Figure 1. Weekly number of new COVID-19 cases reported during the previous eight weeks (30 October to 24 December 2023) in the WHO South-East Asia Region *



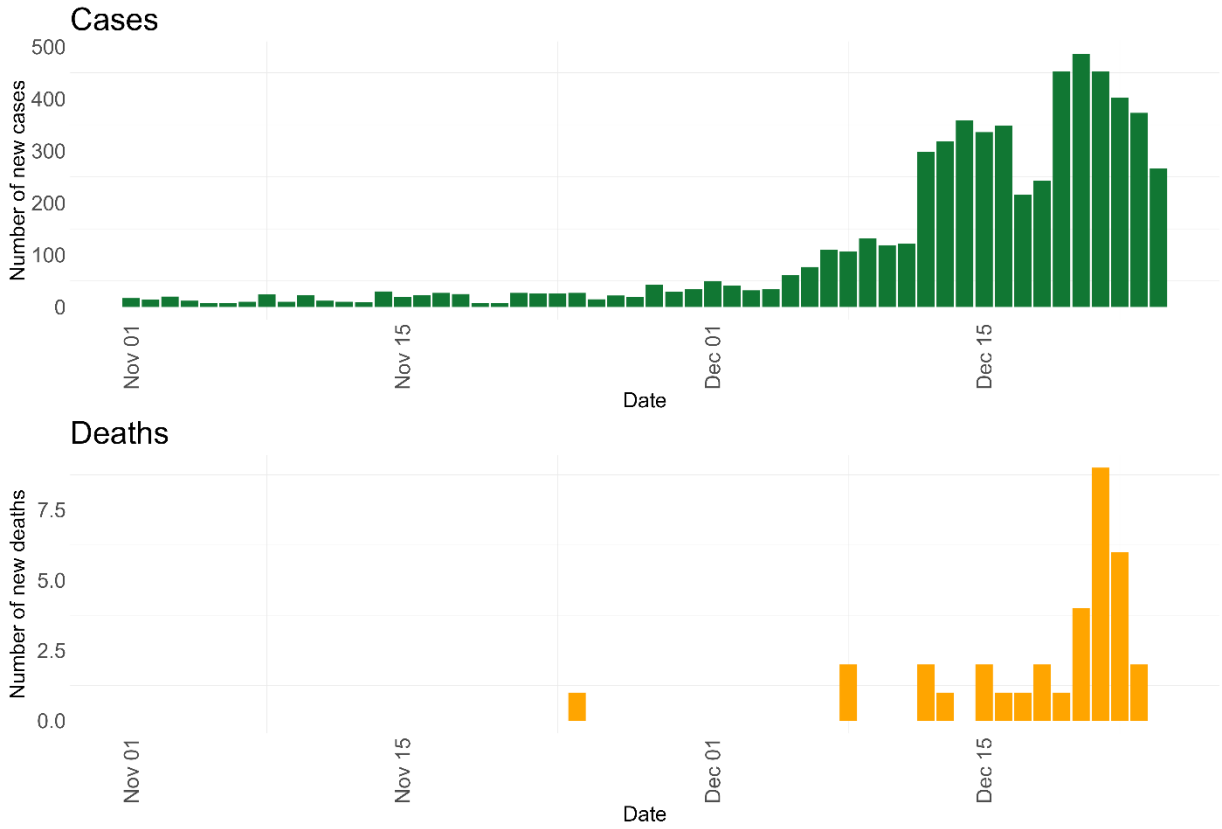
** Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal and Timor-Leste data are not available.*

Figure 2. Number of new daily COVID-19 cases and deaths in India from 1 November to 24 December 2023



Data as of 25 December 2023. Source:https://www.mohfw.gov.in/

Figure 3. Number of new daily COVID-19 cases and deaths in Indonesia from 1 November to 24 December 2023



Data as of 25 Dec 2023. Source:https://infeksiemerging.kemkes.go.id/dashboard/covid-19

Circulation of SARS-CoV-2 variants globally [5]

Currently, WHO is closely tracking five variants of interest (VOI) and five variants under monitoring (VUMs) and their descendent lineages (* includes their descendant lineages).

- The VOIs are XBB.1.5, XBB.1.16, EG.5, BA.2.86 and JN.1.
- The VUMs are DV.7, XBB, XBB.1.9.1, XBB.1.9.2 and XBB.2.3.
- Globally, EG.5* remains the most frequently reported VOI (now reported by 93 countries); however, it has shown declining trends over the past few weeks, accounting for 36.3% of sequences in week 48 (27 November to 3 December 2023) compared to 53.7% in week 44 (30 October to 5 November 2023).
- JN.1* accounted for 27.1% of sequences in week 48 compared to 3.3% in week 44. This is a notable increase when comparing to its parent lineage BA.2.86, which accounted for 5.9% of sequences in week 48 compared to 4.4% in week 44.
- Among the other VOIs, XBB.1.16* and XBB.1.5* both declined in prevalence and all VUMs declined in prevalence.

For information on the global circulation of SARS-CoV-2 variants please refer to the WHO Tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants webpage.

[5] https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update---22-december-2023

SARS-CoV-2 variants in the South-East Asia Region

- As of 23 December 2023, the sequence data submitted to GISAID by countries in the South-East Asia region in the last 60 days by date of collection are shown in the Table 2. Only a small number of sequences has been submitted from the Region and therefore the data should be interpreted with caution.
  - In **India**, 15 sequences were submitted, with sub-lineages categorized as 'other' accounting for the highest percentage (73.3%, n=11), of which 15 were BA.2 and its sub-lineages and two were unassigned. However, as per the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium, as of 26 December 2023, a total of 55 sequences of JN.1* have been reported in India, of which 29 were from the state of Goa, eight from Karnataka, five from Kerala, seven from Maharashtra, four from Tamil Nadu and two from Telangana.[6]
  - In **Indonesia**, 35 sequences were submitted with EG.5 and its sub-lineages accounting for the highest percentage (25.7%, n=9 of which seven sequences were HK.3* - the sub-lineage of EG.5). A total of eight sequences of JN.1* were submitted accounting for 22.9% of all sequences.
  - **Sri Lanka** submitted one sequence which was unassigned.
  - In **Thailand**, 123 sequences were submitted with EG.5 and its sub-lineages accounting for the highest percentage (46.3%, n=57) of which 31 sequences were HK.3*. A total of two sequences of JN.1* were submitted.
  - Other countries have not submitted sequences recently to GISAID.

Table 2. Percentage and number of variants of interest (VOIs) and variants under monitoring (VUMs) submitted to GISAID within the past 30 and 31-60 days as of 23 December 2023 (by date of sample collection)

Lineage	India (n=15)		Indonesia (n=35)		Sri Lanka (n=1)		Thailand (n=123)	
	<31 days (n=0)	31-60 days (n=15)	<31 days (n=11)	31-60 days (n=24)	<31 days (n=0)	31-60 days (n=1)	<31 days (n=0)	31-60 days (n=123)
Variants of interest								
XBB.1.5*		1 (6.7%)		1 (4.2%)				7 (5.7%)
XBB.1.16*			3 (27.3%)	4 (16.7%)				16 (13.0%)
EG.5* **HK.3*** **HV.1***		1 (6.7%)	1 (9.1%) 1 (9.1%)	8 (33.3%) 6 (25%)				57 (46.3%) 31 (25.2%) 2 (1.6%)
BA.2.86*			1 (9.1%)					
JN.1*			5 (45.5%)	3 (12.5%)				2 (1.6%)
Variants under monitoring								
DV.7*								2 (1.6%)
XBB*		1 (6.7%)	1 (9.1%)	5 (20.8%)				3 (2.4%)
XBB.1.9.1*				1 (4.2%)				10 (8.1%)
XBB.1.9.2*								5 (4.1%)
XBB.2.3*		1 (6.7%)		2 (8.3%)				13 (10.6%)
Other		11 (73.3%)				1 (100%)		

*indicates the sub-lineage of each variant.
XBB* excludes XBB.1.16*, XBB.1.5*, XBB.1.9.1, XBB.1.9.2 and XBB.2.3*
XBB.1.9.2* excludes the sub-lineage EG.5*
EG.5* is inclusive of HK.3* and HV.1*; however, the denominator for the percentage of HK.3* and HV.1* is the total number of all variants.

Sources: GISAID (https://gisaid.org/), as of 23 December 2023.

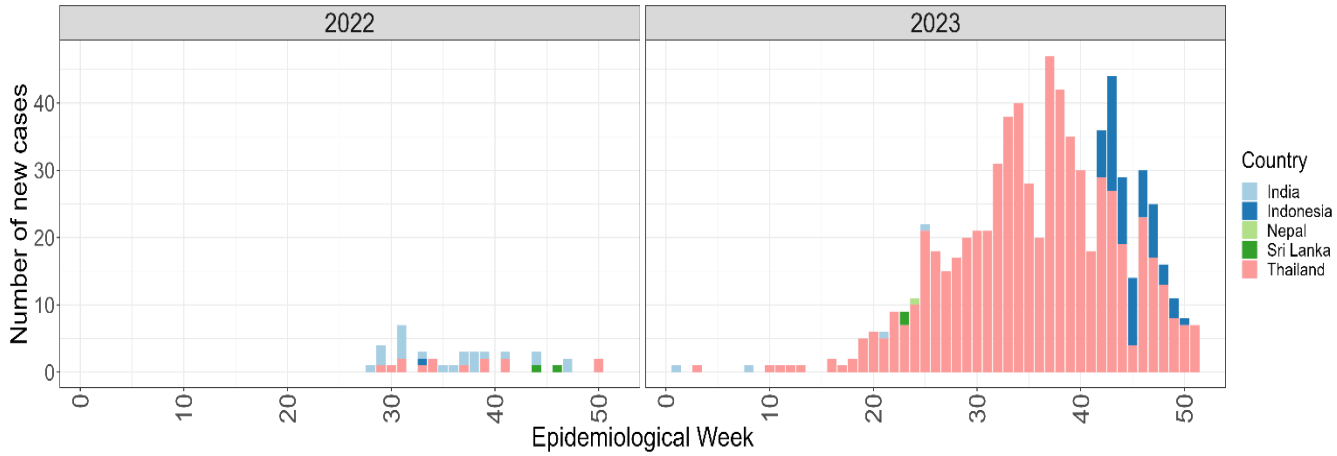
[6] https://inda.rcb.ac.in/insacog/lineagWiseGraph?lineage=JN.1

mpox

Status as of 24 December 2023

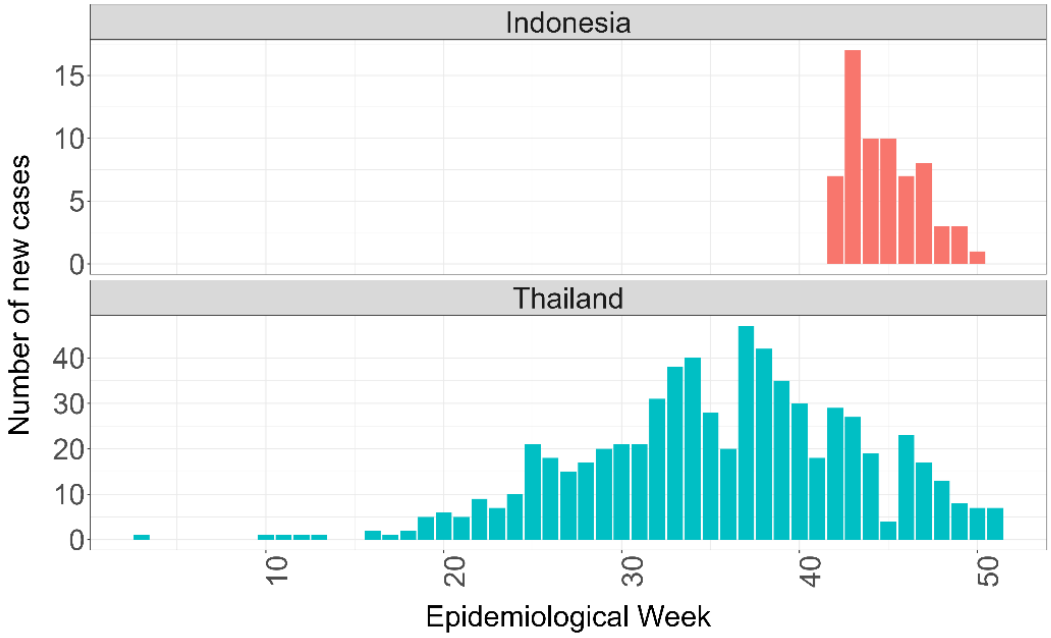
- In epidemiological weeks 50 and 51 (11 to 24 December 2023), 14 new mpox cases were reported from Thailand and one from Indonesia.
- In the WHO South-East Asia Region, a total of 781 laboratory-confirmed mpox cases (including two deaths) have been reported since 14 July 2022 (Figure 4).
- Figure 5 shows the weekly number of cases reported in Indonesia and Thailand in 2023. Table 3 summarizes the basic epidemiological profile of the mpox cases in the Region.
- For more information on the global situation of mpox outbreak, please visit the global dashboard.

Figure 4. Number of mpox cases reported in WHO South-East Asia Region by date of notification* (14 July 2022 – 24 December 2023)



* Cases are plotted as per the week of notification (based on the date on which the case was notified to the public health authority). Where the date of notification is missing for 66 cases in Indonesia, this was replaced with the date of diagnosis.

Figure 5. Number of mpox cases reported in Indonesia (n=66) and Thailand (n=668) in 2023 by date of notification*



* Cases are plotted as per the week of notification (based on the date on which the case is notified to the public health authority). Where the date of notification is missing for 66 cases in Indonesia, this was replaced with the date of diagnosis.

Table 3. Profile of the 781 confirmed mpox cases reported in WHO South-East Asia Region for which case-based information is available since July 2022 and since July 2023 (as of 24 December 2023)*

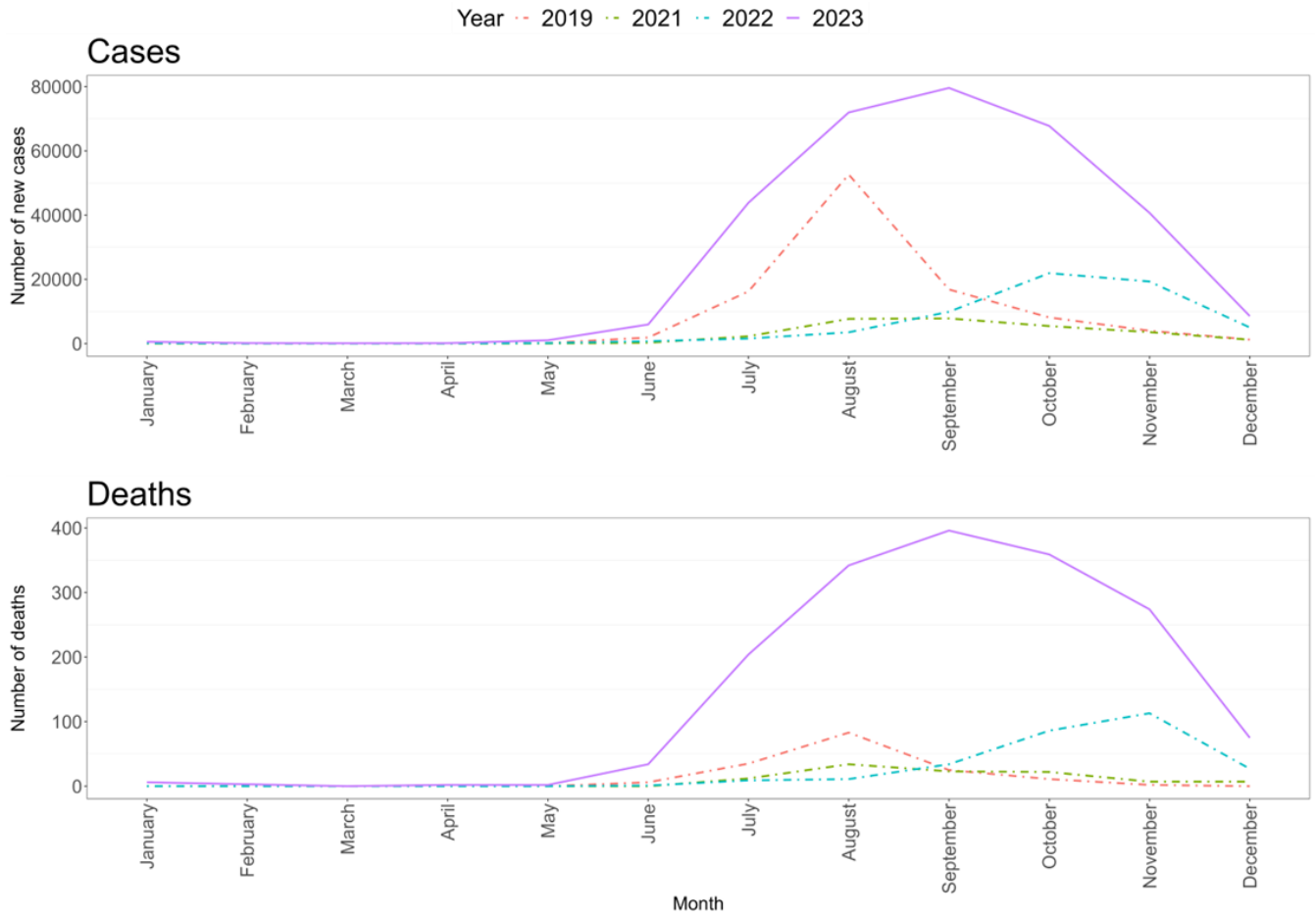
	July 2022 onwards (n=781)	July 2023 onwards (n=648)
Country		
India	27 (3.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Indonesia	67 (8.6%)	66 (10.2%)
Nepal	1 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Sri Lanka	4 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Thailand	682 (87.3%)	582 (89.8%)
Gender		
Female	32 (4.1%)	10 (1.5%)
Male	748 (95.8%)	638 (98.5%)
Transgender	1 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Age group (years)		
Less than 18	4 (0.5%)	3 (0.5%)
18-29	263 (33.7%)	224 (34.6%)
30-39	336 (43.0%)	279 (43.1%)
40-49	148 (19.0%)	122 (18.8%)
50+	30 (3.8%)	20 (3.1%)
Sexual orientation		
Bisexual	13 (1.7%)	12 (1.9%)
Heterosexual	57 (7.3%)	33 (5.1%)
Men who have sex with men (MSM)	631 (80.8%)	545 (84.1%)
Other	22 (2.8%)	20 (3.1%)
Unknown	58 (7.4%)	38 (5.9%)
Recent overseas travel		
Yes	43 (5.5%)	12 (1.9%)
No	730 (93.5%)	634 (97.8%)
Unknown	8 (1.0%)	2 (0.3%)

Dengue

Bangladesh [7] [8]

- A total of 1 224 new dengue cases were reported in Bangladesh during week 51 (18 to 24 December 2023), a 38.9% decrease compared to week 50 (11 to 17 December 2023) (n=2 004). The number of new deaths also decreased by 28.5% from 21 in week 50 to 15 in week 51.
- Between 1 and 24 December 2023 a total of 8 569 cases including 75 deaths have been reported. This compares to 5 024 cases including 27 deaths during the entirety of December 2022 (Figure 6).
- A total of 320 460 dengue cases including 1 697 deaths have been cumulatively reported between 1 January and 24 December 2023 with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 0.53%.

Figure 6. Number of new cases of, and deaths from dengue by month in Bangladesh from January 2019 to 24 December 2023



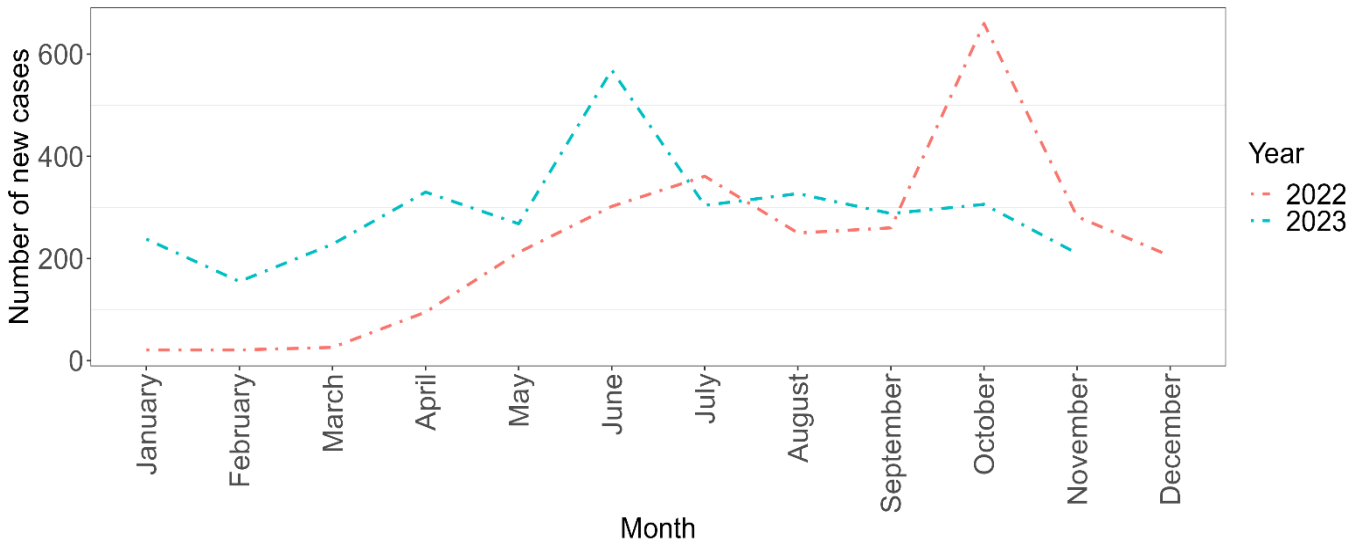
Source: Health Emergency Operation Center and Control Room, DGHS Reported Monthly Dengue cases & Dengue Deaths in Bangladesh. https://old.dghs.gov.bd/index.php/bd/home/5200-daily-dengue-status-report

[7] https://old.dghs.gov.bd/index.php/bd/home/5200-daily-dengue-status-report
[8] https://old.dghs.gov.bd/images/docs/vpr/20231224_dengue_all.pdf

Maldives

- Between January and November 2023, a total of 3 223 cases of dengue have been reported in Maldives compared to 2 490 cases reported during the same period in 2022.
- A total of 210 new cases of dengue were reported in November 2023, a 31.4% decrease compared to October 2023 (n=306). This compares to 282 cases reported during November 2022 (Figure 7).

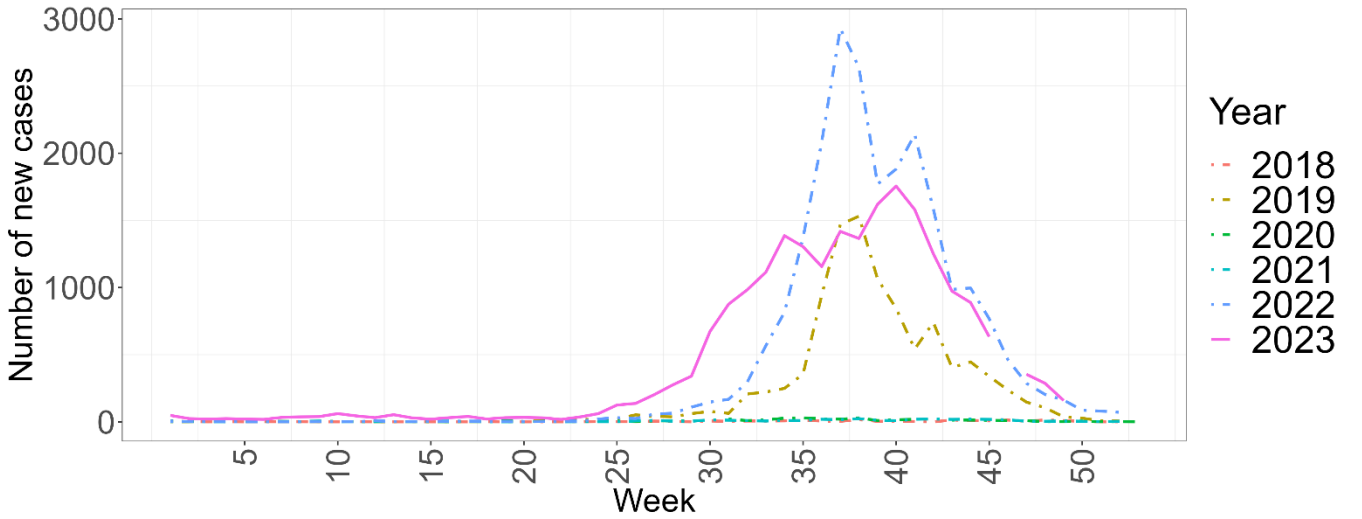
Figure 7. Number of new cases of dengue by month in Maldives from January 2022 to November 2023



Nepal [9] [10]

- A total of 159 cases of dengue were reported in Nepal during week 49 (4 to 10 December 2023) via the Early Warning and Reporting System (EWARS), an 44.6% decrease compared to week 48 (27 November to 3 December, n= 287) (Figure 8).
- Between 1 January and 15 December 2023, 51 243 dengue cases, including 20 confirmed deaths (CFR=0.04%), have been reported from 77 districts in Nepal.
    - The highest cumulative number of cases has been reported from Sunsari district, Koshi province (16 174 cases, 31.6%) followed by Tanahu district, Gandaki province (7 193, 14.0%).

Figure 8. Number of new cases of dengue by week reported by the Early Warning and Reporting System (EWARS) in Nepal from January 2018 to 10 December 2023



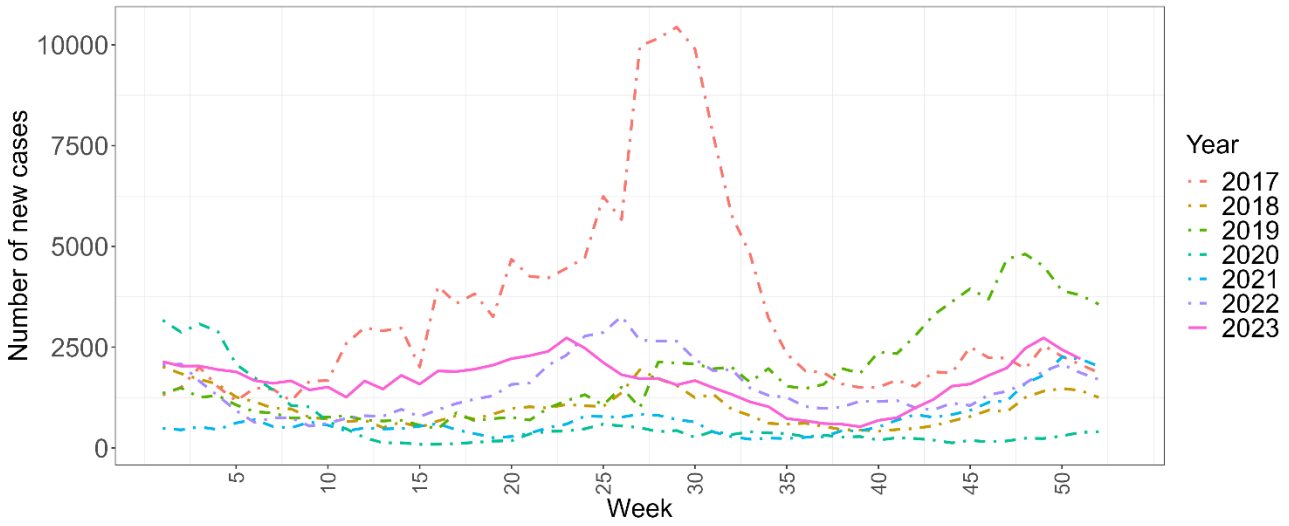
Source: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Health and Population, Department of Health Services, Epidemiology and Disease Control Division. EWARS Weekly Bulletin. https://edcd.gov.np/resources/newsletter

[9] Government of Nepal, Ministry of Health and Population, Department of Health Services, Epidemiology and Disease Control Division. EWARS Weekly Bulletin. https://edcd.gov.np/resources/newsletter
[10] https://edcd.gov.np/news/20231215-dengue-situation-update

Sri Lanka [11]

- A total of 2 212 dengue cases were reported in Sri Lanka in week 51 (18 to 24 December), a 9.3% decrease compared to 2 438 cases reported in week 50 (11 to 17 December 2023). This is the second highest number of cases reported during week 51 since 2017, following 3 790 cases reported in 2019 (Figure 9).
- As of 24 December (end of week 51), a total of 84 727 cases of dengue have been reported in Sri Lanka in 2023. This compares to 75 219 cases reported between weeks one and 51 in 2022.

Figure 9. Number of new cases of dengue by week in Sri Lanka from January 2018 to 24 December2023



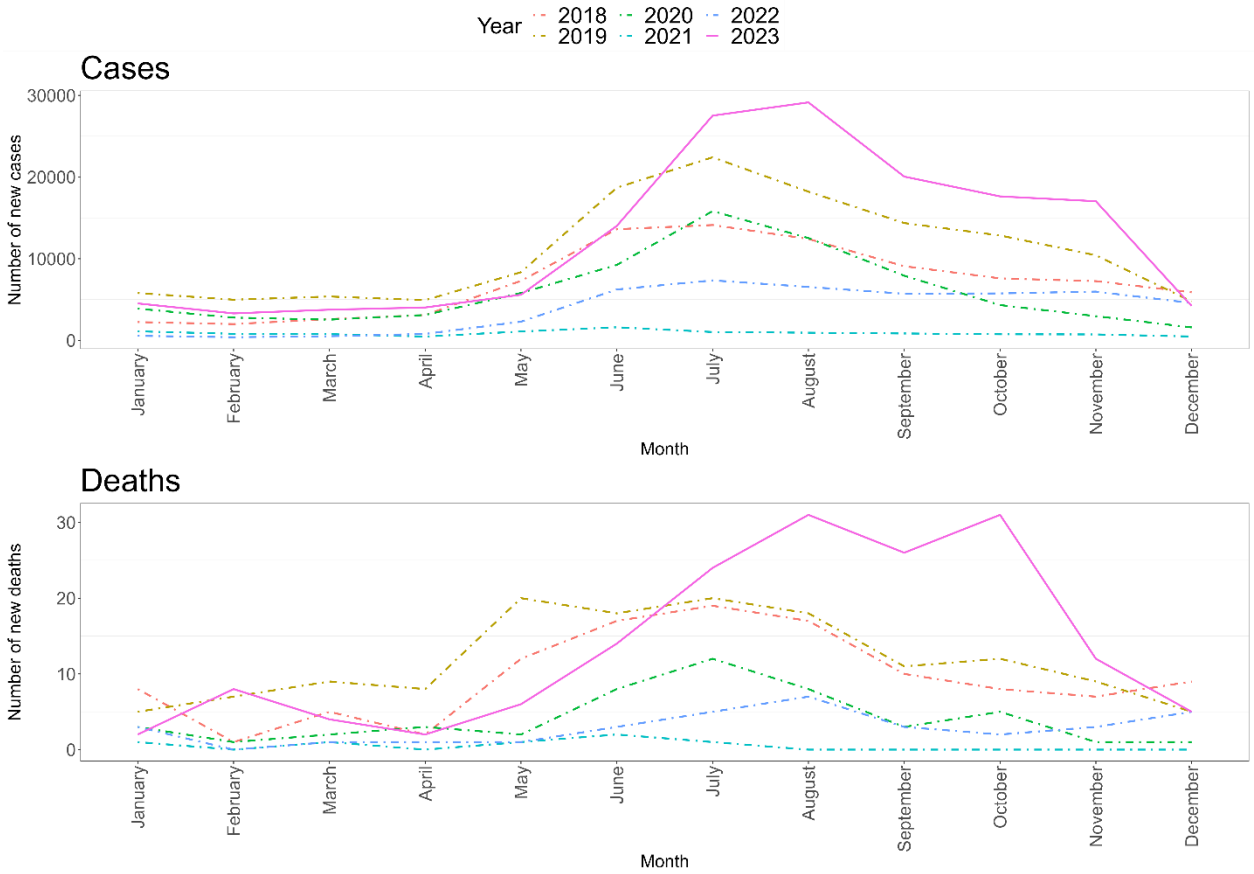
Sources: Epidemiology Unit and National Dengue Control Unit, Ministry of Health.
https://www.epid.gov.lk/epid/public/index.php/weekly-epidemiological-report/weekly-epidemiological-report (2017 to 2020)
https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/95b978f1-5c1a-44fb-a436-e19819e939c0/page/XRtTB (2021 to 2023)

[11] https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/95b978f1-5c1a-44fb-a436-e19819e939c0/page/XRtTB

Thailand [12] [13] [14] [15]

- As of 20 December, a total of 150 808 dengue cases (inclusive of dengue (n=113 763, 75.4%), dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) (n=35 824, 23.8%) and dengue shock syndrome (DSS) (n=1 221, 0.8%)) and 165 dengue deaths (inclusive of dengue (n=15, 9.1%), DHF (n=46, 27.9%) and DSS (n=104, 63.0%)) (CFR=0.1%) were reported in Thailand in 2023.
- In 2023, the number of cumulative cases and deaths between January and November (n=142 603 and n=154, respectively) is higher than that reported for the same period in previous years (2018 to 2022).
- Between 1 and 24 December 2023, a total of 4 213 cases including five deaths have been reported (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Number of new dengue cases and deaths by month in Thailand from January 2018 to November 2023



Sources: Bureau of Epidemiology, DDC, MPH. http://doe.moph.go.th/surdata/disease.php?ds=66; http://doe.moph.go.th/surdata/disease.php?ds=26 and http://doe.moph.go.th/surdata/disease.php?ds=27

[12] Bureau of Epidemiology, DDC, MPH. http://doe.moph.go.th/surdata/disease.php?ds=66
[13] Bureau of Epidemiology, DDC, MPH. http://doe.moph.go.th/surdata/disease.php?ds=26
[14] Bureau of Epidemiology, DDC, MPH. http://doe.moph.go.th/surdata/disease.php?ds=27
[15] https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/dfa7d4e2-b7f5-48ed-b40a-54f1cd4cbdfb/page/p_ortuohurpc

Influenza

Status as of 17 December 2023

- Since late June 2023, in the WHO South-East Asia Region, an increase in transmission of seasonal influenza has been observed, according to the data submitted to Global Influenza Surveillance and Response (GISRS) FluMart. The weekly proportion of specimens positive for influenza has been between 12% and 33% in the period from 3 July to 17 December 2023. On the week starting on 11 December, the test positivity was 17.3%. During this period, the most frequently reported strains were influenza B Victoria, followed by A/H1N1pdm09 and A/H3 (Figure 11).
- In Thailand, the percentage of specimens positive for influenza increased from 13% in the week starting on 31 July to 38% in the week starting on 25 September. Since then, the test positivity for influenza has fluctuated between 26% and 36%. The test positivity remained high at 36% in the week starting on 11 December. In the past month, the large majority of reported strains has been the subtype B Victoria and influenza A/H3 (Figure 12).
- Data sources and information on influenza, including updates of integrated surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 using influenza sentinel surveillance systems, are available at WHO SEARO Influenza dashboard.

Figure 11. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in WHO South-East Asia Region (as of 17 December 2023)

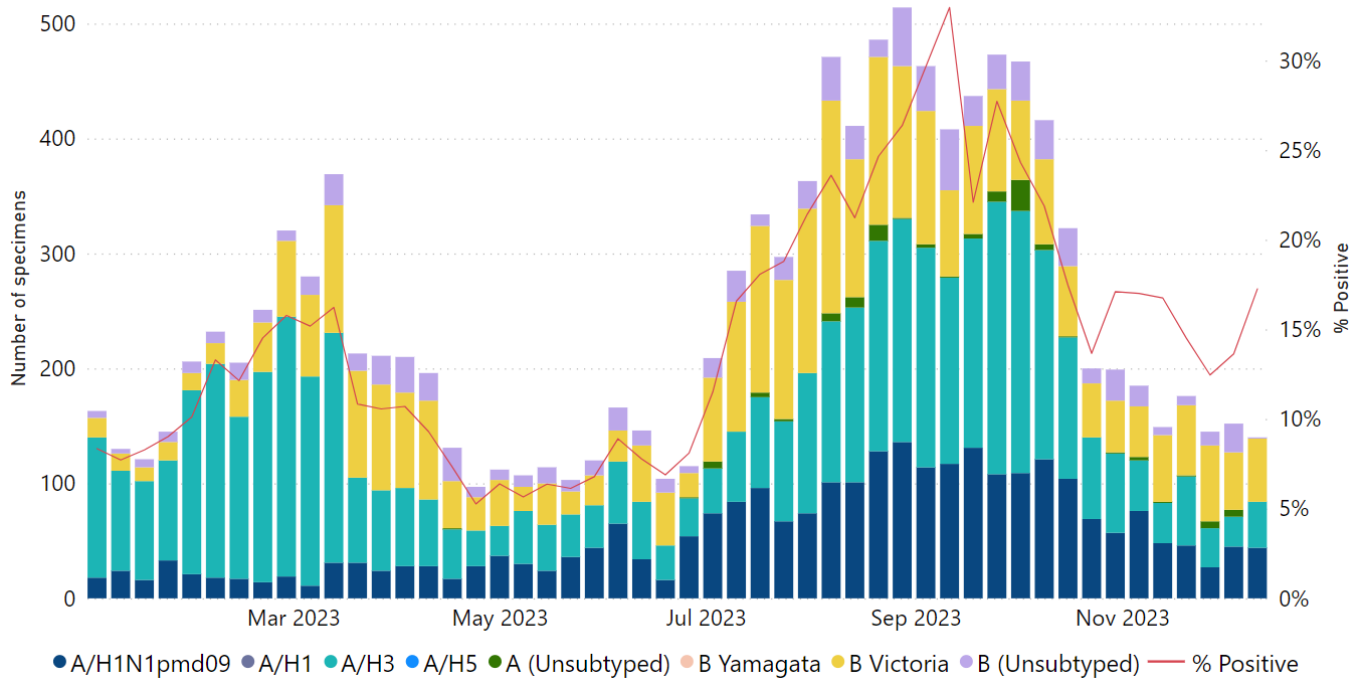


Figure 12. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in Thailand 2023 (as of 17 December 2023)