Influenza Update N° 357

20 December 2019, based on data up to 8 December 2019

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: www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/EN_GIP_Influenza_transmission_zones.pdf

Summary

- In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, respiratory illness indicators and influenza activity continued to increase in most countries.
- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, influenza activity was low overall, except for Cuba where increased detections of influenza B/Victoria lineage viruses were reported. In tropical South American countries, influenza activity remained low.
- In tropical Africa, influenza activity remained elevated in some countries of Middle and Western Africa.
- In Southern Asia, influenza activity was low across reporting countries, but was reported at high levels in the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent weeks.
- In South East Asia, influenza activity continued to be reported in Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the Philippines.
- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- Worldwide, seasonal influenza A(H3N2) viruses accounted for the majority of detections.
National Influenza Centres (NICs) and other national influenza laboratories from 112 countries, areas or territories reported data to FluNet for the time period from 25 November 2019 to 08 December 2019 (data as of 2019-12-19 11:04:16 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 86,210 specimens during that time period. 9,438 were positive for influenza viruses, of which 7,067 (74.9%) were typed as influenza A and 2,371 (25.1%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 1,216 (30.2%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 2,809 (69.8%) were influenza A(H3N2). Of the characterized B viruses, 25 (5.2%) belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 458 (94.8%) to the B-Victoria lineage.

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): [www.wpro.who.int/emerging_diseases/Influenza/en/](http://www.wpro.who.int/emerging_diseases/Influenza/en/)

Countries in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere

- In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, respiratory illness indicators and influenza activity continued to increase overall.

- In the countries of North America, ILI and influenza activity continued to increase. All seasonal influenza subtypes co-circulated in Canada and the United States of America (USA), though the proportion of influenza B viruses was higher than in previous years for this period of the influenza season. Influenza B viruses accounted for almost half of the detections in Canada and were the predominant influenza type detected in the USA, followed by influenza A(H1N1)pdm09.

- In Europe, influenza activity continued to increase across the region, although most countries are still reporting influenza activity rates at baseline or at low levels. Influenza A viruses were predominant in most countries. Of subtyped influenza A viruses 62% were A(H3N2) and 38% were A(H1N1)pdm09. However, influenza B viruses predominated in the east of the region and Portugal. Of the B viruses for which lineage was known, all belonged to the Victoria lineage.

- In Central Asia, influenza activity increased with influenza B viruses most frequently detected.

- In Northern Africa, activity remained at inter-seasonal levels. Morocco and Tunisia reported influenza B virus detections in recent weeks.

- In Western Asia, influenza activity remained elevated overall. Influenza activity continued to increase in Bahrain, Iraq, Israel and Jordan with detections of predominately influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and a small proportion of B viruses. In Oman and Qatar, influenza activity appeared to decrease with detections of predominantly influenza A(H3N2) and B viruses. Kuwait reported influenza detections at lower levels compared to previous weeks. Increased SARI levels continued to be reported in Saudi Arabia with detections of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and B viruses.
In East Asia, ILI and influenza activity increased in most countries, but remained low overall. ILI and influenza activity started to increase in China, with influenza A(H3N2) most frequently detected. In the Republic of Korea, ILI activity crossed the seasonal threshold in recent weeks and influenza activity of predominately influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 continued to increase. In Japan the number of influenza cases per sentinel site started to increase, slightly earlier than previous seasons.

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

![Graph showing number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in the northern hemisphere.]

_data source_ FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 19/12/2019

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in Northern Europe

![Graph showing number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in Northern Europe.]

_data source_ FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 19/12/2019
Countries in the tropical zone

Tropical countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America

- In the Caribbean, influenza activity was reported in some countries in the sub-region. Influenza activity continued to increase in Cuba with influenza B/Victoria lineage viruses most frequently detected. Influenza activity of predominantly influenza A(H3N2) viruses continued to be reported in Jamaica. In Central American countries, influenza activity continued to decrease in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Honduras reported decreased detections of influenza A(H3N2) and B viruses.

- In the tropical countries of South America, influenza activity was low in general.

Tropical Africa

- In Western Africa, reported influenza activity was generally low. Influenza virus detections of predominantly influenza A(H3N2) and B/Victoria lineage viruses were reported in Ghana, influenza (H3N2) and B viruses were reported in Niger and Togo. Côte d’Ivoire reported predominantly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 followed by B/Victoria virus detections.

- In Middle Africa, Cameroon reported influenza activity with detections of predominantly influenza A(H3N2) viruses during week ending 01 December 2019. SARI activity increased in the Democratic Republic of Congo but only one detection of influenza B/Victoria virus was reported.

- In Eastern Africa, influenza detections were low across most reporting countries. Increased ILI activity was reported in Zambia with no detections of influenza viruses. Predominantly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus detections in Ethiopia and low levels of influenza B detections in Madagascar were reported in the week ending 01 December 2019. Increased ILI activity and influenza B virus detections were reported in the French territory of Mayotte as part of sentinel surveillance.

Tropical Asia

- In Southern Asia, influenza detections were low across reporting countries except for the Islamic Republic of Iran where influenza activity of predominantly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses was reported in recent weeks.

- In South East Asia, influenza activity was reported in some countries. In recent weeks, influenza activity was elevated in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the Philippines, with detections of predominantly influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B/Victoria-lineage in the former and influenza A(H3N2) in the latter.
Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in Central America and Caribbean

Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)  
Data generated on 19/12/2019

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in Western Africa

Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)  
Data generated on 19/12/2019
Countries in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere

- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in southern hemisphere

[Graph showing number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype over weeks from 2017 to 2019]

Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 19/12/2019

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 2018–2019 influenza season in the northern hemisphere, was published in August 2019 and can be found here: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/326242/WER9432-en-fr.pdf

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

Epidemiological Influenza updates archives 2015:
http://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/GIP_surveillance_2015_archives

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

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