Virological Surveillance Summary

The total number of specimens and number of positive specimens reported to FluNet by Western Pacific Region countries and areas between week 23 of 2020 and week 21 of 2021 are presented in table 1 below. Influenza A and B are co-circulating, however, the majority of cases reported from week 52, 2020 to week 21, 2021 have been Influenza B (Figure 1). Caution should be taken when interpreting these data as there are reporting delays.

Table 1: Cumulative data reported to FluNet from Western Pacific Region, week 23, 2020 to week 21, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country (most recent week of report)</th>
<th>Total number of specimens processed</th>
<th>Total number of influenza positive specimens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia (21)</td>
<td>103730</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia (14)</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (20)</td>
<td>605991</td>
<td>4156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji (4)</td>
<td>308</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao People’s Democratic Republic (21)</td>
<td>3821</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (21)</td>
<td>2802</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia (20)</td>
<td>1268</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia (53*)</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand (37*)</td>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines (16)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (20)</td>
<td>2771</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam (20)</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data available for 2020

Figure 1: Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype, Western Pacific Region, week 24, 2020 to week 20, 2021 (Source: WHO FLUNET)
Influenza surveillance summary

Influenza surveillance in the WHO Western Pacific Region is based on outpatient and inpatient indicator based surveillance (IBS) systems, as well as event-based surveillance. Case definitions, population groups included and data formats differ among countries. This influenza surveillance summary includes countries and areas where routine IBS is conducted and information is available.

The WHO surveillance case definition for influenza-like illness (ILI) is an acute respiratory infection with a measured fever of ≥38°C and cough, with symptom onset within the last 10 days. For SARI, it is an acute respiratory infection (ARI) with a history of fever or measured fever of ≥38°C and cough, with symptom onset within 10 days that requires hospitalization. Sentinel site data should be interpreted with caution since the number of sites reporting may vary between weeks.

Countries in the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere

In countries within the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere, ILI and influenza activity continues to be lower than in previous seasons.

Outpatient ILI Surveillance

**China (North)**

During week 20 of 2021, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Northern China was 2.7%, slightly higher than the previous week (2.4%). This was also higher during the same period in 2018, 2019, and 2020 (2.3%, 2.5% and 1.9%, respectively) [Figure 2].

![Figure 2: Percentage of visits for ILI at sentinel hospitals in Northern China, 2018-2021](Source: China National Influenza Center)
**Mongolia**
During week 19 of 2021, ILI activity in Mongolia continues to decrease and remains lower than 20 cases per 10,000 population and below the lower tolerance limit (Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Proportion of outpatient ILI visits per 10,000 people in Mongolia, 2019-2021](Source: Mongolia National Influenza Center)

**Republic of Korea**
In week 21 of 2021, the overall weekly ILI rate was 1.7 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits, which was lower than the previous week (2.3 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits). The ILI consultation rate has remained below the national epidemic threshold (5.8 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits) since week 10 of 2020 (Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Weekly ILI incidence rate per 1,000 outpatient consultations, Republic of Korea, 2017-2021](Source: Korean Centres for Disease Control and Prevention)
Sentinel influenza surveillance

Japan
In week 19 of 2021, the number of cases reported weekly by sentinel hospital sites remained very low in Japan. The number of cases this year is not in line with usual trends in which seasonal peaks are seen between weeks 1-9, the trend in 2021 has been consistently low with no peak (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of influenza cases reported weekly per reporting sentinel hospital site, Japan 2011-2021
(Source: Japan National Institute of Infectious Diseases)
Countries/areas in the tropical zone

ILI and influenza activity continued to be lower than previous seasons in most of the countries and areas in the tropical zone.

**Hong Kong SAR (China) – ILI and hospital Surveillance**

In week 21 of 2021, the average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel general outpatient clinics was 0.7 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was higher than 0.6 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations recorded in the previous week and is slightly lower to the rate of consultation during the same period in 2020 (Figure 6). The average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel private medical practitioners was 10.8 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was lower than 20.3 recorded in the previous week (Figure 7).

**Figure 6: ILI consultation rates at sentinel general outpatient clinics, Hong Kong SAR 2019-2021**
(Source: Hong Kong Centre for Health Protection)

**Figure 7: ILI consultation rates at sentinel private doctors, Hong Kong SAR 2017-2021**
(Source: Hong Kong Centre for Health Protection)

**China (South) - ILI Surveillance**

During Week 20 of 2021, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Southern China was 2.7%, higher than the previous week (2.4%), higher than the same week of 2018, 2019, and 2020 (2.3%, 2.5% and 1.9%, respectively) (4.2%) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Percentage of visits due to ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Southern China, 2018-2021**
(Source: China National Influenza Center)
Singapore – Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) Surveillance
In Week 20 of 2021, the average daily number of patients seeking treatment in polyclinics for ARI was 1,669 over 5.5 working days, higher than the previous season in 2020 (Figure 9). Of 346 samples tested for influenza in the past 4 weeks, the positivity rate in the community was 0%; there were no positive results in April 2021.

![Figure 9: Average daily polyclinic attendances for ARI in Singapore, 2020-2021](Source: Singapore Ministry of Health)

Lao PDR
From 8 to 14 May 2021, the proportion of ILI cases presenting to sentinel sites is less than the previous week. Over the past two months, ILI presentations have fluctuated compared to the 3-year average (Figure 10).

![Figure 10: Weekly proportion of ILI presentations at sentinel sites for 2021 compared to previous 3-year average (2018 to 2020)](Source: Lao National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology)

Cambodia (no update)
In week 18 of 2021, the number of ILI cases reported weekly by seven sentinel outpatient sites remained low in Cambodia. The number of cases has remained relatively stable after a second peak in positivity rate seen in week 40, 2020 (65.2%). In week 18, 2021, there were no positive specimens and the positivity rate remains very low since week 45, 2020 (Figure 11).
Figure 11: Number of ILI cases from 7 sentinel sites and influenza positivity rate by week, 2020-2021, Cambodia

(Source: Cambodia Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report #45, World Health Organization)
Countries in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere

In the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity is reported during the influenza season usually starting in May in Australia and New Zealand.

**Australia – Laboratory-confirmed influenza and ILI**

From 10 May to 23 May 2021, there were 43 laboratory-confirmed influenza notification to the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS). In the year to date, there have been 249 notifications of laboratory-confirmed influenza to the NNDSS. Number of confirmed cases reported are lower than the five-year average but showing a weekly trend similar to that seen in past years (Figure 12).

![Graph showing ILI presentations to sentinel general practitioners by month and week from 2016-2021 in Australia](source: National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, Australian Department of Health)

**New Zealand – Influenza like Illness**

Public Health Units routinely investigate respiratory outbreaks, including laboratory testing of a sample of cases. In the week ending 21 May 2021, there were no outbreaks of influenza-like illness, acute respiratory infections or COVID-19 reported. (Source)
Pacific Island Countries and Areas (PICs) - ILI Surveillance

In the Pacific Island Countries and Areas, in week 20 of 2021, ILI cases overall remained low. However, there is an increasing ILI trend in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Cases in Samoa appear to be decreasing but numbers remain high (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Reported cases of influenza-like illness in Pacific Island Countries, 17-23 May 2021
(Source: Pacific Syndromic Surveillance System Weekly Bulletin)
* Caution should be taken in interpreting these data as there may be changes in number of sentinel sites reporting to the Pacific Syndromic Surveillance System.
Global influenza situation updates:

Virological update

Global update

Others:

- Recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2021 southern hemisphere influenza season [Link]
- Recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2020-2021 northern hemisphere influenza season [Link]
- WHO Consultation and Information Meeting on the Composition of Influenza Virus Vaccines for Use in the 2021 Southern Hemisphere Influenza Season [Link]
- Antigenic and genetic characteristics of zoonotic influenza viruses and candidate vaccine viruses developed for potential use in human vaccines [Link]
- 4th WHO Informal Consultation on Improving Influenza Vaccine Virus Selection [Link]

WHO's YouTube Channel: film exploring a number of key aspects of the constant evolution of influenza viruses and associated impacts on public health. [Arabic], [Chinese], [English], [French], [Russian], [Spanish]