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 1 and week 43 of 2021 are presented in Table 1 below. Influenza A and B are co-circulating, however, the majority of cases reported from week 45, 2020 to week 43, 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 1, 2021 to week 43, 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 (43)</td>
<td>87 810</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia (40)</td>
<td>4 669</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (42)</td>
<td>504 741</td>
<td>10 612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji (41)</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (41)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao People’s Democratic Republic (43)</td>
<td>2 369</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (42)</td>
<td>2 548</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia (39)</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines (40)</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea (43)</td>
<td>3 410</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (42)</td>
<td>2 172</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam (40)</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype, Western Pacific Region, week 45, 2020 to week 43, 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 $\geq 38^\circ C$ 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 $\geq 38^\circ C$ 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 40 of 2021, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Northern China was 2.3%, higher than the last week (2.0%), the same level as the same period in 2018 (2.3%), lower than the same period in 2019 (2.4%) and higher than the same period in 2020 (2.2%) (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 41 of 2021, there was a decrease in ILI activity in Mongolia from the previous week, with 19 ILI cases per 10,000 population as compared to 21 cases per 10,000 for week 40. This is higher than the lower tolerance limit of 12 ILI cases per 10,000 population, yet lower than the upper tolerance limit of 31 per 10,000 population for this week (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 43 of 2021, the overall weekly ILI rate was 1.6 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits, which was an increase compared to previous week (1.2 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 41 of 2021, the number of cases reported weekly by sentinel hospital sites remained very low in Japan. The number of cases this year has not been 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 some of the countries and areas in the tropical zone.

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

In week 43 of 2021, the average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel general outpatient clinics was 0.4 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was higher than 0.3 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations recorded in the previous week (Figure 6). The average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel private medical practitioners was 13.4 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was lower than 16.8 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 42 of 2021, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Southern China was 3.0%, higher than the previous week (2.8%), higher than the same period in 2018-2019 (2.6% and 2.9%, respectively), and lower than the same period 2020 (3.1%) (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 42 of 2021, the average daily number of patients seeking treatment in polyclinics for ARI was 1,187 over 5.5 working days, higher than the previous season in 2020 (Figure 9). Of 106 samples tested for influenza in the past 4 weeks, the positivity rate in the community was 0.0%. The last specimen to test positive for influenza was collected in July 2021 and tested positive for influenza B (Figure 10).

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

Lao PDR
From 16 to 22 October 2021, the number of ILI cases presenting to sentinel sites was 55, which was 30 cases higher compared to the previous report. Of 11 samples tested for influenza this week, zero (0) cases were positive. Since week 18, the proportion of ILI presentations at sentinel sites have been lower compared to the 3-year average (Figure 11).

![Figure 10: Monthly influenza surveillance for ARI in Singapore, 2020-2021](source: Singapore Ministry of Health)
Cambodia

In week 42 of 2021, the proportion of ILI presentations was 5.7%, which is higher than the previous week (4.7%) and higher than the same period in 2020 (2.3%). (Figure 12). In week 42, 2021, there were no positive specimens for influenza A or B; there has only been one avian influenza A(H9N2) case detected for 2021 in week 8 (Figure 13).

Figure 11: 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)

Figure 12: Number of ILI cases from seven sentinel sites and influenza positivity rate by week, 2020-2021, Cambodia
(Source: Communicable Disease Control Department, Cambodia Ministry of Health)

Figure 13: Number of influenza positive samples by subtype, 2020-2021, Cambodia
(Source: Communicable Disease Control Department, Cambodia Ministry of Health)
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

From 11 October to 24 October 2021, there were 30 laboratory-confirmed influenza notification to the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS). In the year to date, there have been 584 notifications of laboratory-confirmed influenza to the NNDSS. Number of confirmed cases reported have remained low since April 2020 and are lower than the five-year average (Figure 14).

New Zealand – Influenza like Illness (no change)

Overall, based on multiple sources of surveillance information, influenza-like illness (ILI) activity has remained low in the week ending 1 October 2021. Community ILI activity remains very low for this time of year. The rates of Healthstat consultations for ILI are lower than the levels seen at the same time in 2020. The ILI consultation rates in most age groups in the week ending 1 October are below the historical rates (Figure 15). Public Health Units routinely investigate respiratory outbreaks, including laboratory testing of a sample of cases. There are currently five influenza cases detected through the surveillance system in 2021 (source).

Figure 14: Notifications of laboratory-confirmed influenza by month and week from 2016 to 2021 in Australia
(Source: National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, Australian Department of Health)

Figure 15: Weekly rates of general practice ILI consultations per 100,000 people in New Zealand in 2020-2021
(Source: New Zealand Institute of Environmental Science and Research)
**Pacific Island Countries and Areas (PICs) - ILI Surveillance**

In the Pacific Island Countries and Areas, actual increases of ILI cases for week 42 were seen in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Niue, Wallis and Futuna, Vanuatu, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Solomon Islands and Samoa. A reduction of ILI cases was seen in Cook Islands, and Tonga. Fiji, Kiribati and New Caledonia also saw a decrease in the number of ILI cases however this may be due to the decreased in the number of sites reported for week 42 compared to week 41. (Figure 16).
Caution should be taken in interpreting these data as there may be changes in the number of sentinel sites reporting to the Pacific Syndromic Surveillance System.

Figure 16: Reported cases of influenza-like illness in Pacific Island Countries, 2020-2021
(Source: Pacific Syndromic Surveillance System Weekly Bulletin)
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’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]