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 3 2020 and week 3 of 2021 are presented in the table below. Influenza A and B are co-circulating in the region, at a very low level compared to the same time of the previous year (Figure 1). Caution should be taken when interpreting these data as reporting to FluNet in 2020 was interrupted in some countries/areas.

Table 1: Cumulative data reported to FluNet from Western Pacific Region, week 3 2020 to week 3 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 (3)</td>
<td>125,765</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia (53*)</td>
<td>1,091</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (2)</td>
<td>558,287</td>
<td>17,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji (29*)</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao People's Democratic Republic (52*)</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (52*)</td>
<td>2,737</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia (1)</td>
<td>5,143</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia (53*)</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>11</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 (51*)</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea (6*)</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (3)</td>
<td>3,198</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam (50*)</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data available for 2020

Figure 1: Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype, Western Pacific Region, week 5 2020 to week 3 2021 (Source: WHO FLUNET)
Influenza surveillance summary

Influenza surveillance in the WHO Western Pacific Region is based on outpatient and inpatient sentinel 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 continue to decrease, lower than in previous seasons.

Outpatient ILI Surveillance

China (North)

During Week 2 of 2021, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Northern China was 2.7%, higher than last week (2.5%), lower than the same week of 2018 to 2020 (5.5%, 5.4% and 5.2%) (Figure 2).

Mongolia

During Week 2 of 2021, ILI activity in Mongolia has remained low and below the lower tolerance limit (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Percentage of visits for ILI at sentinel hospitals in Northern China, 2017-2021 (Source: China National Influenza Center)

Figure 3: Proportion of outpatient ILI visits per 10,000 people in Mongolia, 2018-2021 (Source: Mongolia National Influenza Center)
Republic of Korea

In Week 3 of 2021, the overall weekly ILI rate was 2.6 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits, lower than the previous week with 2.4 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits. The trend this season has not shown the expected increase and has remained below the national epidemic threshold (5.8 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits) (Figure 4).

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

Sentinel influenza surveillance

Japan

In Week 1 of 2021, the number of cases reported weekly by sentinel hospital sites remained low in Japan. The number of cases this year is lower than the previous years. (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: Number of influenza cases reported weekly per reporting sentinel hospital site, Japan 2010-2021](source: Japan National Institute of Infectious Diseases)
Countries/areas in the tropical zone

ILI and influenza activity continued to decrease in most of the countries and areas.

Surveillance

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

In Week 3 of 2021, the average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel general outpatient clinics was 0.4 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was lower than 0.5 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations recorded in the previous week and lower than the previous two years (Figure 6). The average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel private medical practitioners was 19.0 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was lower than 19.8 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 2 of 2020, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Southern China was 3.5%, higher than the previous week (3.4%), and lower than the same week of 2018 to 2020 (6.0 %, 5.6 % and 6.0%) (Figure 8).

**Singapore – Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) Surveillance (No update)**

In Week 53 of 2020, the average daily number of patients seeking treatment in polyclinics for ARI was 849 over 4 working days, which is significantly lower than the same time period in 2019 (Figure 9).

![Figure 8: Percentage of visits due to ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Southern China, 2017-2021](Source: China National Influenza Center)

![Figure 9: Average daily polyclinic attendances for ARI in Singapore, 2019-2020](Source: Singapore Ministry of Health)
Lao PDR

In Week 1 of 2021, the number of ILI cases presenting to sentinel sites was higher compared to the previous week but lower than the same week of the previous year (Figure 10).

![Figure 10: Weekly number of ILI presentations at sentinel sites, 2016-2021, Lao PDR](Source: Lao National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology)

Cambodia

In week 3, 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 and low since week 11, 2020, with a second peak between weeks 39-40, 2020 (Figure 11). The positivity rate peaked in week 40, 2020 (65.2%) and has remained at 0% for the last twelve weeks. In week 3, 2021, there were no positive specimens (Figure 12).

![Figure 11: Number of ILI cases at seven sentinel sites and influenza positivity rate by week, 2020-2021, Cambodia](Source: Communicable Disease Control Department, Cambodia Ministry of Health)

![Figure 12: Number of influenza positive samples by subtype, 2020, 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 May in Australia and New Zealand.

Australia – Laboratory-confirmed influenza and ILI

In 2020, the average ILI consultation rate at sentinel general practitioners for the seasonal period was 1.6 per 1000 consultations, four times lower than the five year average for the same period (8.1 per 1000 Consultations) (Figure 13).

![ILI presentations to sentinel general practitioners, by week, 2020, 2015-2020 Australia](Source: National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, Australian Department of Health)

New Zealand – Influenza like Illness (No update)

General Practice-based ILI surveillance methods have changed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 response, limiting interpretability for influenza ILI surveillance. Collection of specimens commenced on 2nd June 2020 and stopped on 27 September 2020. In this period, there were 230 specimens collected from patients presenting to general practices with ILI symptoms, 0 (0%) of which were influenza positive. For the same period in the previous year, 1,617 specimens were tested, 919 (56.8%) of which were influenza positive. (Source)
In the Pacific Island Countries and Areas, in week 2 of 2021, there was an increase in ILI cases observed in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Palau, and Tokelau (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Reported cases of influenza-like illness in Pacific Island Countries
(Source: PacNet 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 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]