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 36 of 2020 are presented in the table below. Influenza A and B are cocirculating in the region, at a very low level compared to previous year (Figure 1). It should be noted that several countries and areas have not reported in 2020.

Table 1: Cumulative data reported to FluNet from Western Pacific Region, week 1 2020 to week 36 2020

<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 (36)</td>
<td>96294</td>
<td>946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia (28)</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (35)</td>
<td>365001</td>
<td>30980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji (29)</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (33)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao People's Democratic Republic (35)</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (17)</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia (34)</td>
<td>4811</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia (6)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand (33)</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines (4)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea (6)</td>
<td>1409</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (35)</td>
<td>2313</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam (28)</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype, Western Pacific Region, week 37 2019 to week 36 2020 (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 35 2020, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Northern China was 1.8%, higher than last week (1.7%), and lower than the same week in 2017-2019 (2.4%, 2.0%, and 2.0%). (Figure 2).

Mongolia

During week 35 2020, ILI activity in Mongolia has remained low, between the lower and upper tolerance limits (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, 2018-2020

(Source: Mongolia National Influenza Center)
**Republic of Korea**

In week 35 of 2020, the overall weekly ILI rate was 2.0 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits, lower than the previous week with 2.1 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits and below the national epidemic threshold (5.9 ILI cases per 1,000 outpatient visits) (Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Weekly ILI incidence rate per 1,000 outpatient consultations, Republic of Korea, 2015-2020](Source: Korean Centre for Disease Control and Prevention)

**Sentinel influenza surveillance**

**Japan**

In week 34 of 2020, the number of cases reported weekly by sentinel hospital sites remained low in Japan. The peak this year is lower than the previous years, but the general trend was similar to that seen in previous seasons (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: Number of influenza cases reported weekly per reporting sentinel hospital site, Japan 2010-2020](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 35 of 2020, the average consultation rate for ILI among sentinel general outpatient clinics was 0.6 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was higher than 0.4 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 22.7 ILI cases per 1,000 consultations, which was higher than 17.0 recorded in the previous week (Figure 7).

China (South) - ILI Surveillance

During week 35, 2020, the percentage of visits for ILI at national sentinel hospitals in Southern China was 2.7%, higher than the previous week (2.6%), lower than the same week of 2017 and 2019 (3.3% and 2.8%), but higher than the same week of 2018 (2.6%). ILI activity this season remains lower than previous seasons (Figure 8).

Singapore – Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) Surveillance

In week 35 of 2020, the average daily number of patients seeking treatment in polyclinics for ARI was 730 over 5.5 working days, which is significantly lower than the same time period in 2019 (Figure 9).
**Lao PDR**

In week 35 of 2020, the number of ILI cases presenting to sentinel sites was higher compared to previous week, but lower to the same week of the previous year. *(Figure 10).*

![Figure 10: Weekly number of ILI presentations at sentinel sites, 2016-2020, Lao PDR](#)

*(Source: Lao National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology)*

**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 1 January to 23 August 2020, there have been 21,079 notifications of laboratory-confirmed influenza to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System. Number of cases was lower than the five-year average and have not showed an upward seasonal trend as seen in past years *(Figure 11).*

![Figure 11: Australian notifications of laboratory confirmed influenza](#)

*(Source: National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, Australian Department of Health)*
New Zealand – Influenza like Illness
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. As of 28 August 2020, there have been 194 specimens collected from patients presenting to general practices with ILI symptoms, 0 (0%) of which were influenza positive. For the same period last year, 1,517 specimens were tested of which 886 (59.6%) were influenza positive. (Source)

Pacific Island Countries and Areas (PICs) - ILI Surveillance
In the Pacific Island Countries and Areas, in week 35 of 2020, increase in Republic of Marshall Islands and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. A total of 1,110 ILI cases were reported in Samoa in week 34, which is lower than previous week (1,267 cases) (Figure 12).

![Figure 12: 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 2020 southern hemisphere influenza season [Link]
- Recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2020-2021 northern 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]