World Health Organization

European Region

European Respiratory Virus Surveillance Summary (ERVISS)

WHO European Region Summary, Week 42/2023 (ending 22nd October 2023)

Overall statement

- Rates of influenza-like illness and/or acute respiratory infection are elevated above baseline levels in 5 of 50 countries or areas of the WHO European Region reporting data in week 42.
- Compared to week 40, influenza activity remains at low levels, RSV activity continues to increase and SARS-CoV-2 activity remains elevated.
- SARI hospital admissions are at a similar low level to last year, with SARS-CoV-2 explaining the majority of cases. Influenza and RSV detections in secondary care remain at low levels.

Respiratory virus activity

- Rates of influenza-like illness are elevated above baseline in 5 countries (Azerbaijan, Denmark, Greece, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia) and rates of acute respiratory infection are elevated in 2 countries (Lithuania and Russian Federation).
- Across the Region, the percentage of all sentinel primary care specimens from patients presenting with ILI or ARI symptoms that tested positive for (Figure 1):
    - influenza remained below the 10% epidemic threshold and stable at 2% compared to the prior week.
    - SARS-CoV-2 remained stable and elevated at 12%, compared to the prior week.
    - RSV remained stable at around 4% compared to the prior week.
- Of 36 reporting countries or areas, 7 reported low and 2 medium (Israel and Slovakia) influenza intensity (Map 1). Of 36 reporting countries or areas, 15 reported sporadic and 3 (Slovakia, Spain and United Kingdom (Scotland)) reported local spread of influenza activity within the country (Map 2).
- Confirmed influenza virus infection detections reported from sentinel primary care for the past week (n=48) were mainly influenza type A viruses (94%; Table 1), a mix of A(H3) (n=22) and A(H1~~N1~~)pdm09 (n=10). These proportions were similar among non-sentinel sources.

- In ~~five~~ 5 countries an increasing trend of RSV positivity from primary care sentinel source specimens was observed this week, with the Netherlands reaching 11% and France 7%.
- From primary care sentinel sources, an increasing trend in SARS-CoV-2 detections was observed in 7 reporting countries (Belarus, Denmark, Portugal, Slovakia, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom (Scotland)).

Severity

- Based on sentinel secondary care data, SARI rates remained at similar levels to those observed in the same period last year. Of the 21 countries reporting age-based data, two countries (Malta and Türkiye) observed a noticeable increase in the 65 and above age group.
- In the past week, 10 countries reported at least 10 weekly sentinel SARI tests for influenza, RSV or SARS-CoV-2. Similar to the situation in sentinel primary care surveillance, pooled test positivity was highest for SARS-CoV-2 at 18% (median of country values 9%; range: 0%-27%) with increasing trends reported in 4 countries. There was a total of 15 detections of RSV reported and 5 detections reported for seasonal influenza among a total of 988 tests.
- Among the SARI specimens, there were only 4 detected influenza viruses, of which 1 was subtype A(H1)pdm09, 1 was A(H3) and 2 were type A (subtype unknown).
- Of 31 countries reporting data on non-sentinel COVID-19 hospital admissions or ICU indicators in the last year, 8 reported an overall increasing trend in at least one of these indicators compared with the previous week. Although levels remain relatively low, increases in death rates for up to six weeks were reported in those aged 65 years and above by 2 of the 10 countries reporting age-specific death data.
- There was evidence of recent increases in hospital admissions for RSV, mainly among those aged 0-4 years, in ~~two~~ 2 (Ireland and Malta) of the ~~five~~ 5 countries reporting data.
- Across the Region, the percentage of all specimens from patients presenting to sentinel SARI sites that tested positive for (Figure 2):
    - an influenza virus remained stable at 1% compared to the prior week
    - SARS-CoV-2 increased to 18% from 17% in the prior week
    - RSV remained stable at around 2% compared to the prior week
- No countries or areas with more than ~~ten~~ 10 specimens tested from sentinel SARI sources reported influenza virus positivity above 10% positivity.

- EuroMOMO pooled estimates of excess mortality from 25 European countries or sub-national regions are within expected levels. However, some countries in southern Europe have reported elevated mortality over the recent weeks, which have coincided with observed heatwaves.

Virus characterization

Influenza

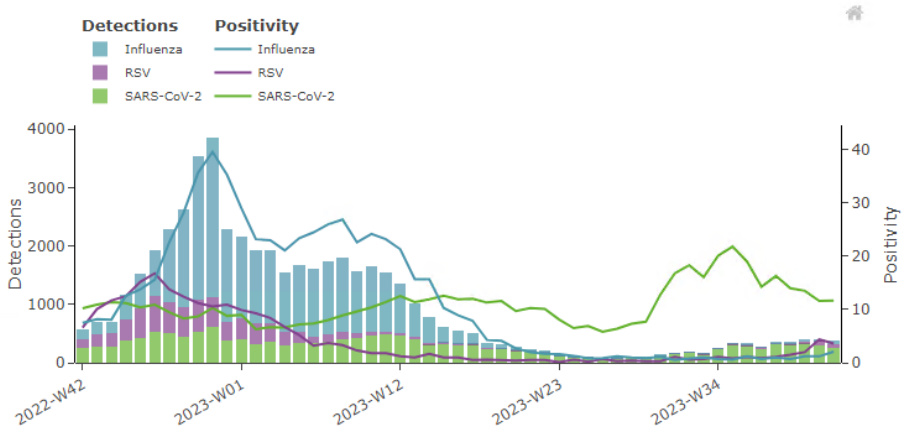
- No viruses were reported to have been genetically characterized so far for the 2023-2024 season.

SARS-CoV-2

- Between weeks 40/2023 and 41/2023, 21 countries and areas reported sufficiently complete information to permit calculation of the relative frequency of specific variants. Among these countries and areas, the median (range) proportion of all nationally sequenced virus isolates detected, that were a current or former variant of concern or variant of interest, was:
    - XBB.1.5+F456L: 63% (32-78% from 21 countries or areas). The XBB.1.5-like+F456L umbrella category includes the EG.5 and EG.5.1 sub-lineages.
    - XBB.1.5: 26% (11-68% from 21 countries or areas)
    - BA.2.75: 2% (0-8% from 21 countries)
    - BA.2: 3% (0-10% from 21 countries or areas). This is likely due to BA.2.86 viruses being classified as BA.2

See maps 3 & 4.

Figure 1. Primary care sentinel detections and test positivity by pathogen



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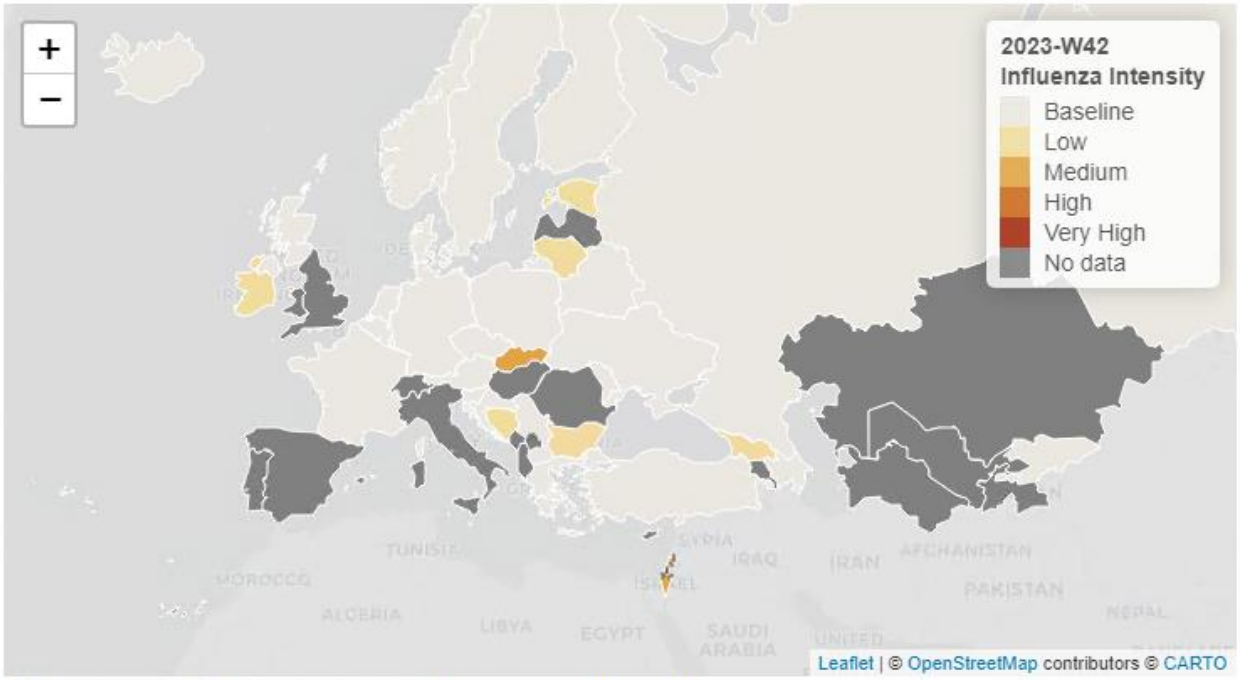
Map 1. Influenza intensity map, Week 42/2023



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Map 2. Influenza geographic spread, Week 42/2023

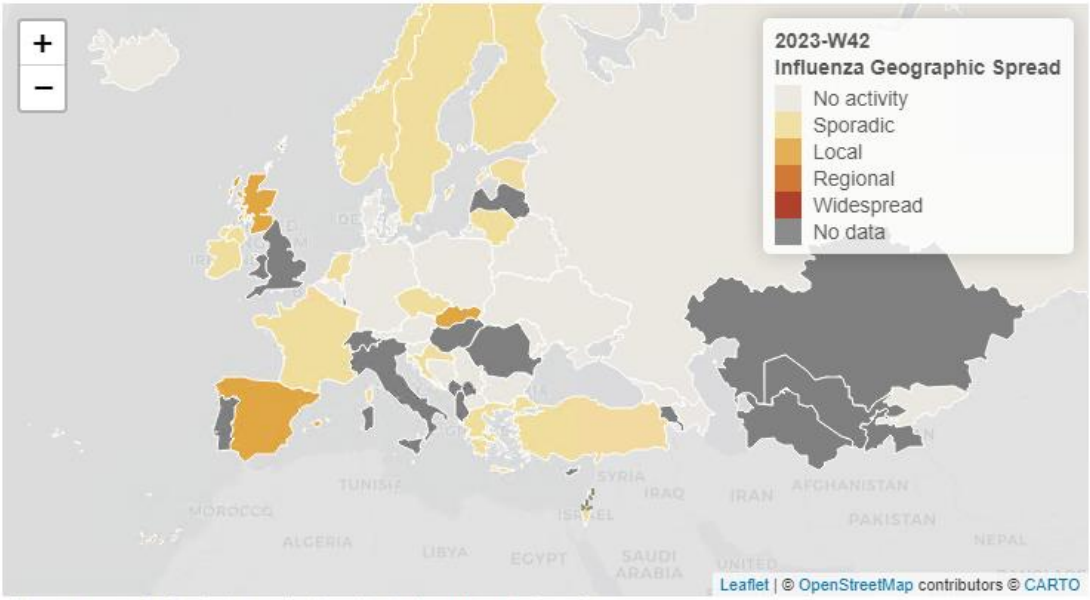

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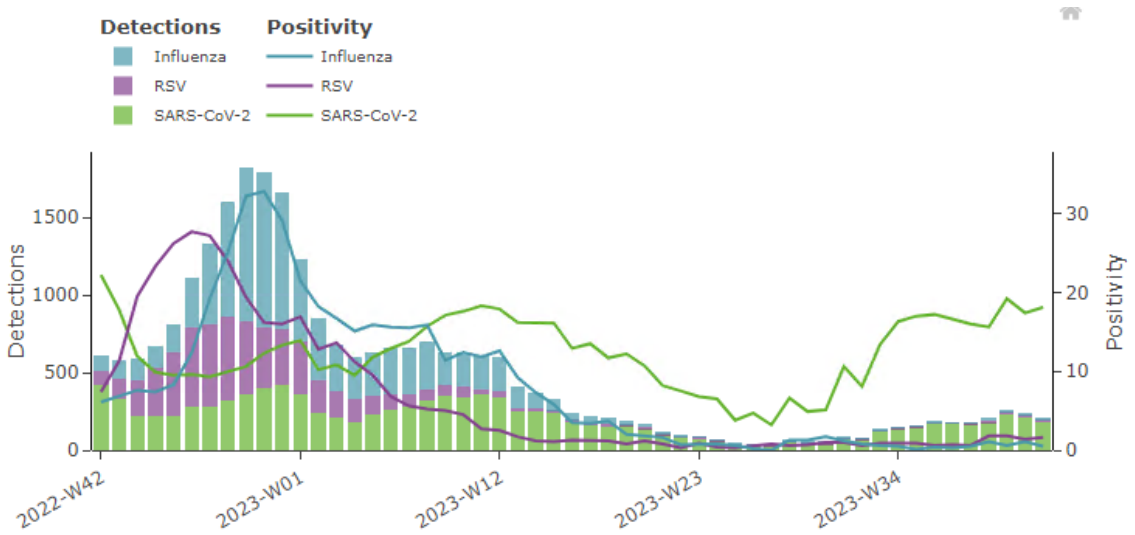
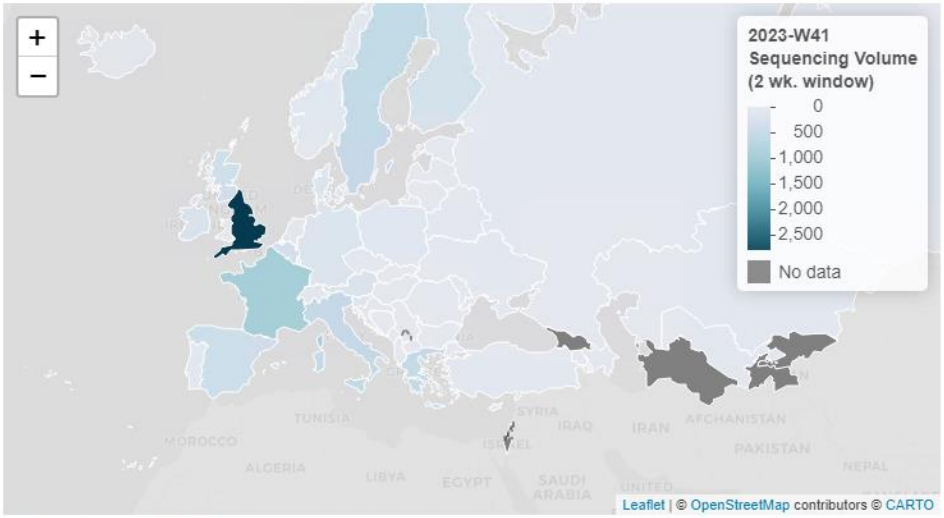
Table 1. influenza virus, RSV and SARS-CoV-2 from primary care sentinel source specimens for week 42/2023 and cumulatively since week 40/2023

Pathogen	Reporting week (42/2023)		Current season (from week 40/2023)	
	Detections	Positivity %	Detections	Positivity %
Influenza	48	2%	108	1%
Influenza A	45	94%	101	94%
A(H1)pdm09	10	31%	38	47%
A(H3)	22	69%	43	53%
A not subtyped	13		20	
Influenza B	3	6%	7	6%
B/Victoria lineage	0	-	0	-
B unknown lineage	3	-	7	-
RSV	69	4%	196	3%
SARS-CoV-2	254	12%	874	12%
For influenza type percentage calculations, the denominator is total detections; for subtype and lineage, it is total influenza A subtyped and total influenza B lineage determined, respectively; for total detections, it is total tested				

Figure 2. SARI sentinel detections and test positivity by pathogen



Map 3. Volume of SARS-CoV-2 sequencing or genotyping, weeks 40/2023 to 41/2023



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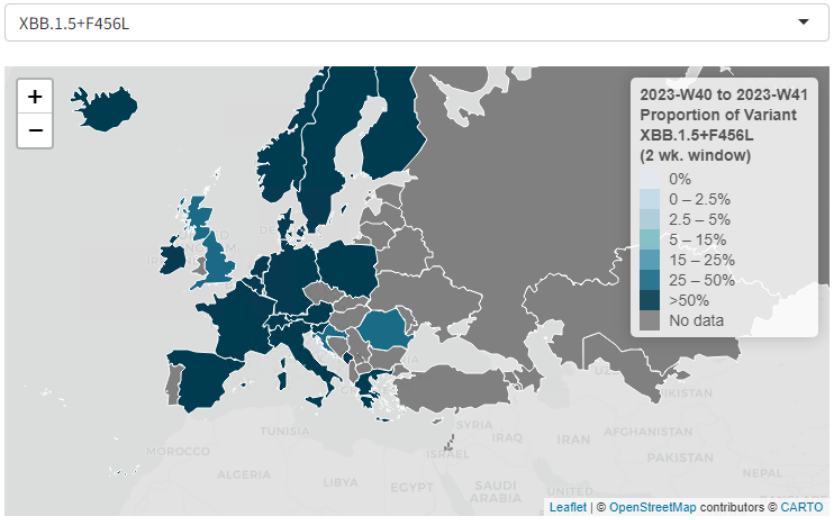
Map 4. SARS-CoV-2 Variant proportion, weeks 40/2023 to 41/2023

A.



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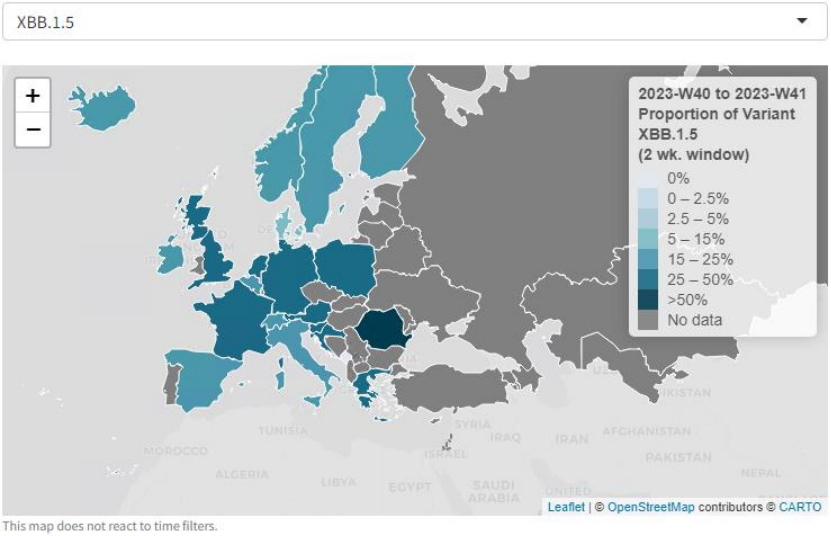
B.



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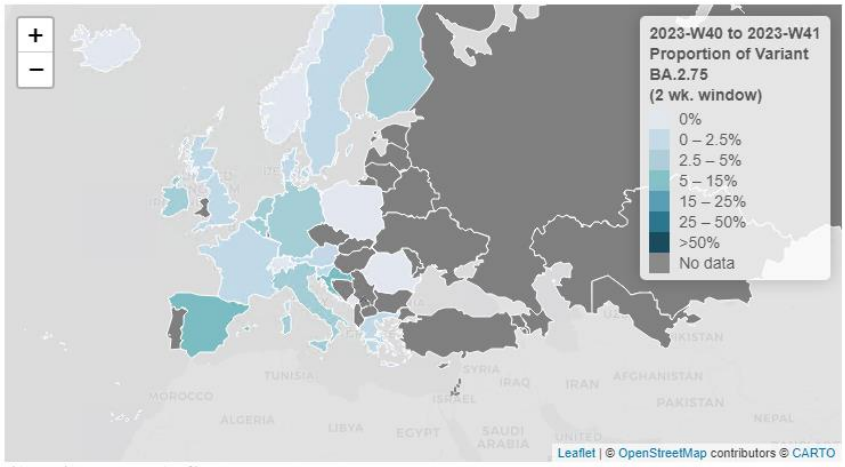
C.

BA.2.75



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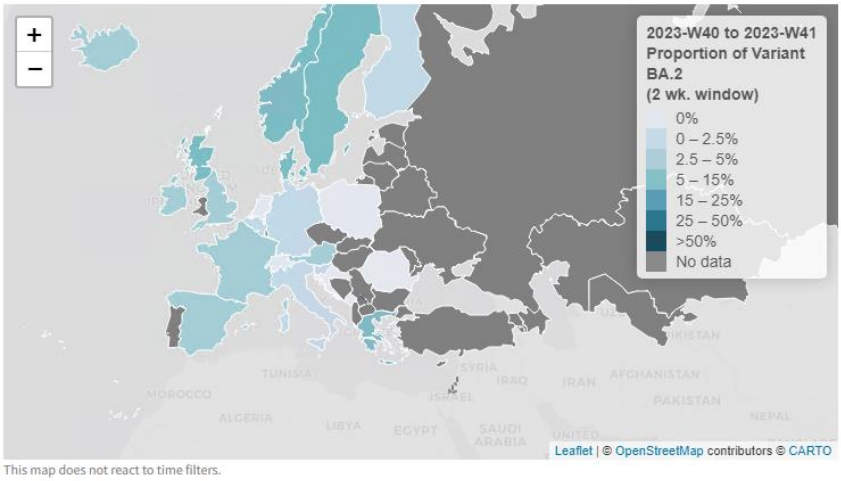
D.

BA.2



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