

Respiratory Virus Surveillance in the WHO African Region



Epidemiological Week 5,
January 29 to February 11, 2024



African Region

Influenza

During Epidemiological week (Epiweek) 5, 20 countries in the WHO African region (WHO AFR) contributed virological data for analysis - Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia (Figure 1). During Epiweek 5, 1,492 specimens were collected, and 1,466 were tested for influenza.

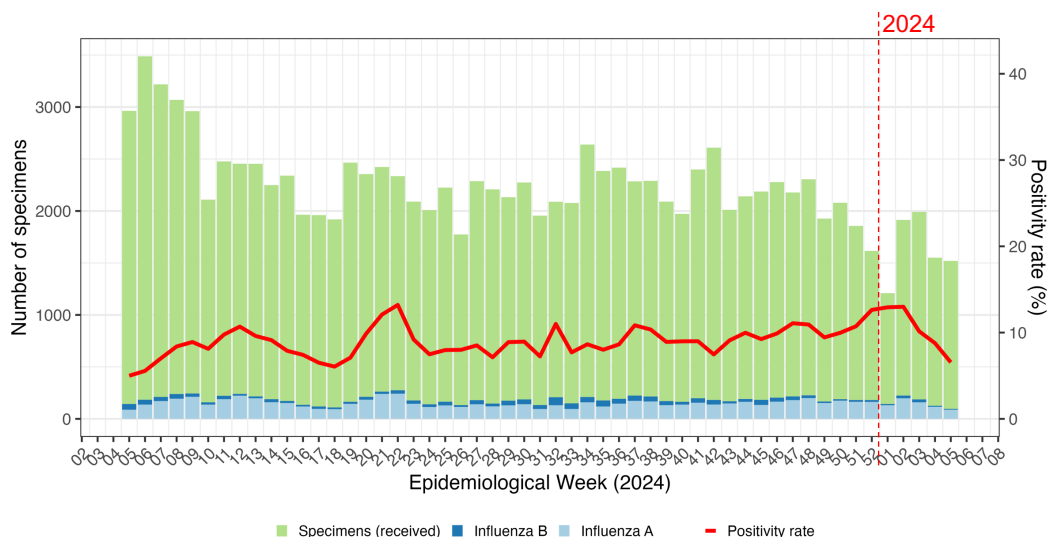


Figure 1. Epicurve of influenza cases in WHO AFR countries, areas and territories by influenza type.

Week 5 Data for Sentinel Surveillance		
	Influenza	SARS CoV-2
Specimens tested	1,466	1,434
Specimens positive	96	83
Regional percent positivity	6.5%	5.8%
Cumulative Sentinel Surveillance Data for 2024		
	Influenza	SARS CoV-2
Specimens tested	7576	7026
Specimens positive	776	403
Percent positivity	10.2%	5.7%

In Epiweek 5, 96 specimens tested positive for influenza virus (positivity of 6.5%), of which 88 specimens were Influenza A, and 8 specimens were Influenza B. The following influenza viruses were identified: Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 (n = 34), Influenza A (H3) (n = 52), Influenza A (subtyping not performed) (n=2), and Influenza B (Victoria) (n = 8) (Figure 1).

1. https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/influenza_transmission_zones



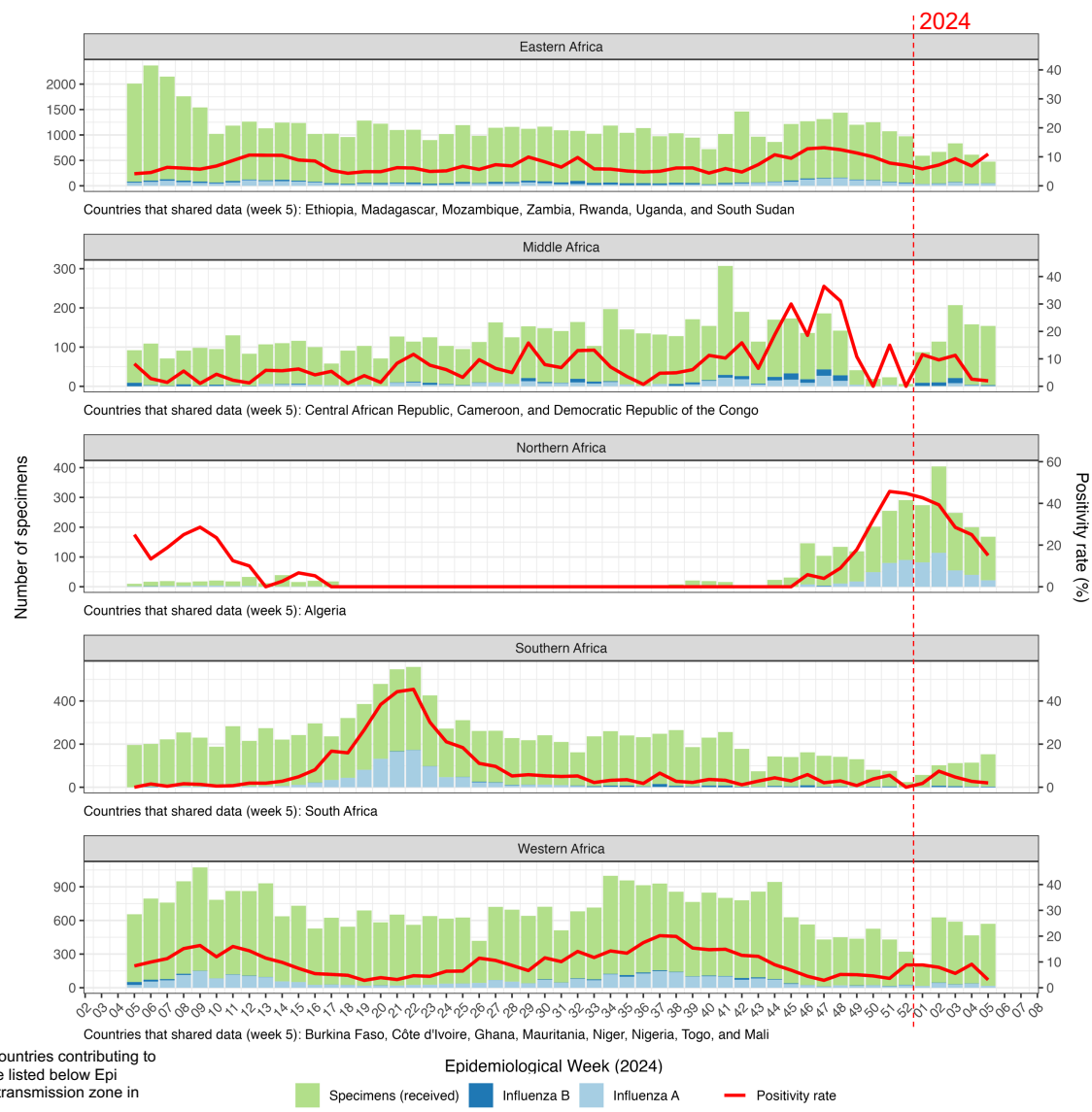


Figure 2. Epicurve of influenza cases in WHO AFR transmission zones

- In the **Eastern Transmission Zone**, 492 specimens were collected and 466 tested for influenza by 7 laboratories#. Fifty-one (51) specimens tested positive for influenza virus, with a positivity rate of 10.9% (Figure 2). Influenza types and subtypes identified in the zone included: A(H1N1)pdm09 (n = 6), A(H3) (n = 40), A(subtyping not performed) (n=2) and B(Victoria) (n = 3). In this transmission zone all 7 countries collected >20 specimens and 3/7 countries had positivity rates >10% ($\pm 1\%$) that had increased compared to week 4: Mozambique, 18.5%; Rwanda 35.3%; and Zambia 13.6%. Influenza A/H3 continues to predominate in these countries.
- In the **Middle Transmission Zone**, 151 specimens were collected and tested for influenza by 3 laboratories#. Three (3) specimens tested positive for influenza virus, giving a sub-regional positivity rate of 2% (Figure 2). Once again all positive specimens originated from Cameroon where the positivity rate has decreased (2%) compared to week 4. Influenza types and subtypes identified in Cameroon included: A(H1N1)pdm09 (n = 1), and B(Victoria) (n = 2).
- In the **Northern Transmission Zone**, 146 specimens were collected and tested for influenza by the laboratory in Algeria. Twenty-two (22) specimens tested positive for influenza virus, with a positivity rate of 15%, a decrease from week 4 (25%). (Figure 2). Influenza types and subtypes identified included: A(H1N1)pdm09 (n = 21) and A(H3) (n = 1).
- In the **Southern Transmission Zone**, 150 specimens were collected tested for influenza by the laboratory in South Africa. Three (3) specimens tested positive for influenza virus, with a positivity rate of 2% (Figure 2). Influenza B Victoria (n=3) was the only influenza type identified in South Africa this week.
- In the **Western Transmission Zone**, 553 specimens were collected tested from 8 laboratories#. Seventeen (17) specimens tested positive for influenza virus, with a sub-regional positivity rate of 3.1% (Figure 2). Influenza types and subtypes identified included: A(H1N1)pdm09 (n = 6) and A(H3) (n = 11).



SARS CoV-2

In Epiweek 5, 83 specimens tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 (positivity of 5.8%), of the 1,434 specimens processed by 17 laboratories regionally. (Figure 3).

Cumulatively, from weeks 1 to 5, the WHO AFR influenza laboratory network has tested 7,026 sentinel surveillance specimens for SARS-CoV-2, of which 403 were positive for SARS-CoV-2 (cumulative regional positivity rate 5.7%) (Figure 3).

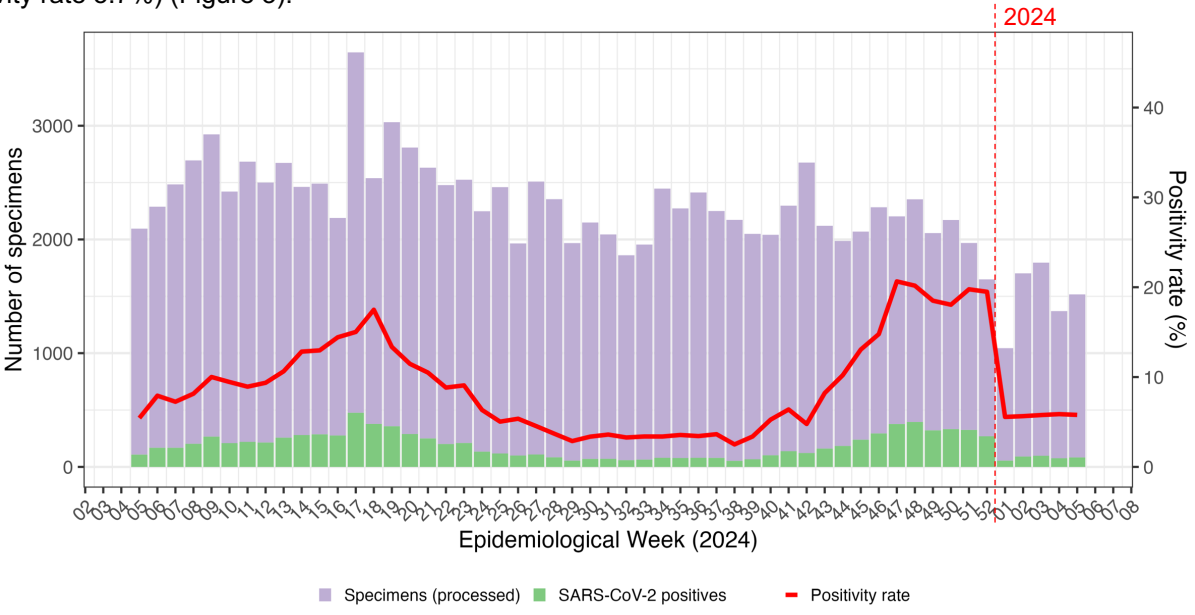


Figure 3. Epicurve of SARS CoV-2 cases from sentinel surveillance in WHO AFR region.

Summary Data for SARS CoV-2 – Week 5			
Transmission Zone	Specimens Tested	SARS CoV-2 positive	Transmission Zone % positivity
Eastern [^]	571	33	5.8%
Middle [^]	14	2	14.3%
Northern	146	23	15.7%
Southern	150	3	2%
Western [^]	553	22	4%
Cumulative Sentinel Surveillance Data for SARS CoV-2, 2024			
Transmission Zone	Specimens Tested	SARS CoV-2 positive	
Eastern [^]	3,026	158	
Middle [^]	198	2	
Northern	981	120	
Southern	516	13	
Western [^]	2,305	110	

[^]More than one country contributes to the weekly and cumulative data. Countries contributing are listed under the epi curves for each transmission zone.



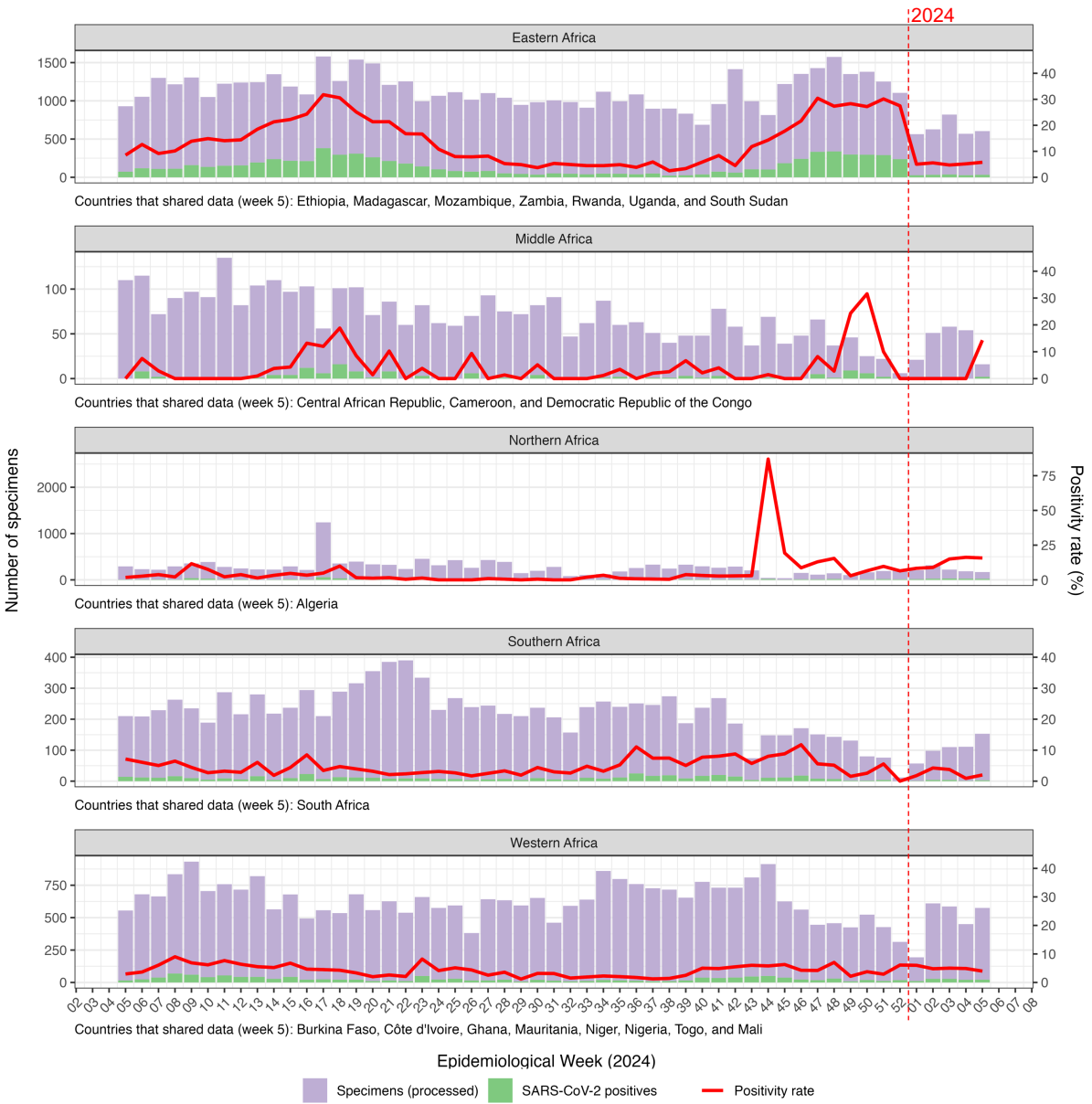


Figure 4. Epicurves of SARS CoV-2 cases from sentinel surveillance specimens in WHO AFR transmission zones

- An average of 84 specimens were tested for SARS CoV-2 by each laboratory (Range 7 - 216). Seven countries tested over 100 specimens.
- Positivity rates for SARS CoV-2 exceeded 5% ($\pm 1\%$) in the following countries that tested >20 specimens: Ethiopia (13.5%), Algeria (15.8%), Burkina Faso (6.5%). The high positivity in SARS CoV-2 was concurrent with an elevated positivity rate for influenza in Algeria.
- Eight countries (>20 specimens tested) : Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan and Uganda had positivity rates between 0 and 5% ($\pm 1\%$). Six countries tested less than 20 specimens.