

## INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026

(Second week, up to 11 January 2026)

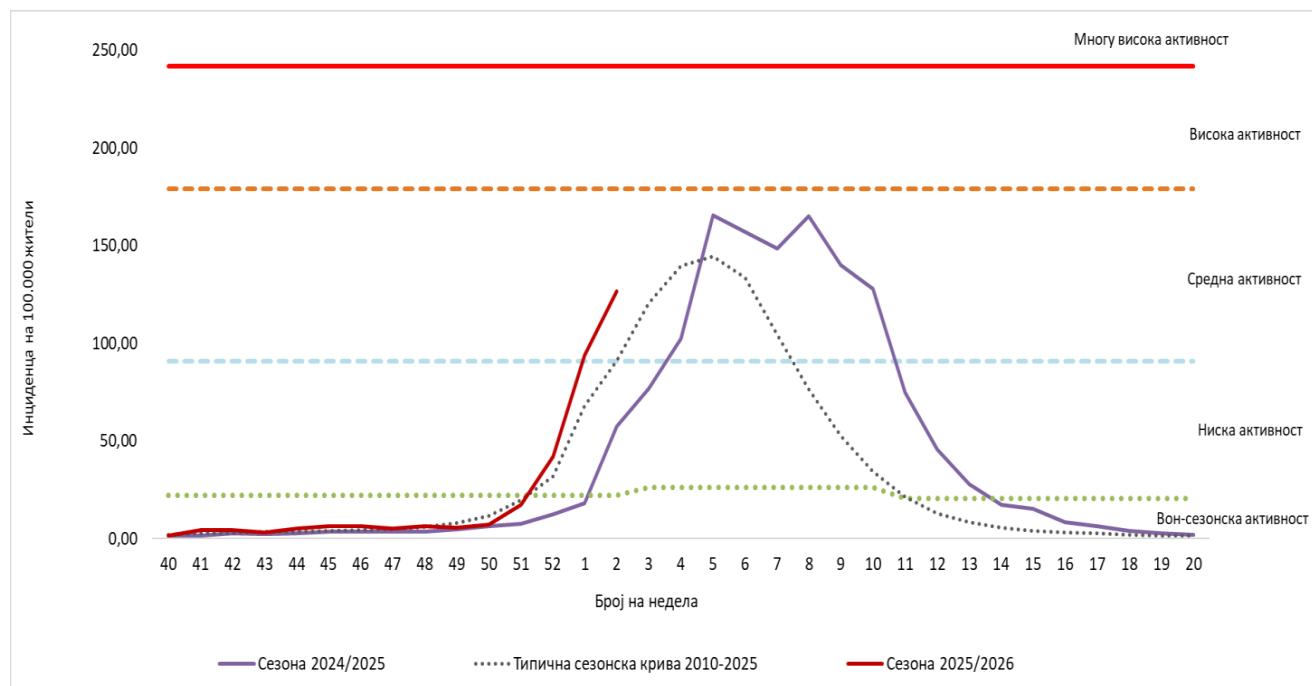
### Weekly data

During the second week of 2026 (05–11 January 2026), a total of 2,321 cases of influenza and influenza-like illness were reported in North Macedonia (incidence rate: 126.4 per 100,000 population), representing a 34.6% increase compared to the previous week ( $n = 1,725$ ).

Compared to the second week of the previous season ( $n = 1,053$ ), the number of reported cases is 2.2 times higher, and compared to the second week of the typical epidemic curve (modeled from the last 15 seasons) ( $n = 1,669$ ), an increase of 39.1% is observed (Figure 1).

During the second week, the reported incidence exceeded the weekly threshold for medium activity ( $I = 90.84$  per 100,000) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Intensity levels and weekly distribution of influenza and influenza-like illness cases according to the expected epidemic curve 2010–2025, season 2024/2025, and season 2025/2026.



By age group: 1,378 persons were aged 15–64 years, 369 persons were aged 65 years and over, 316 children were aged 5–14 years, 259 children were aged 0–4 years.

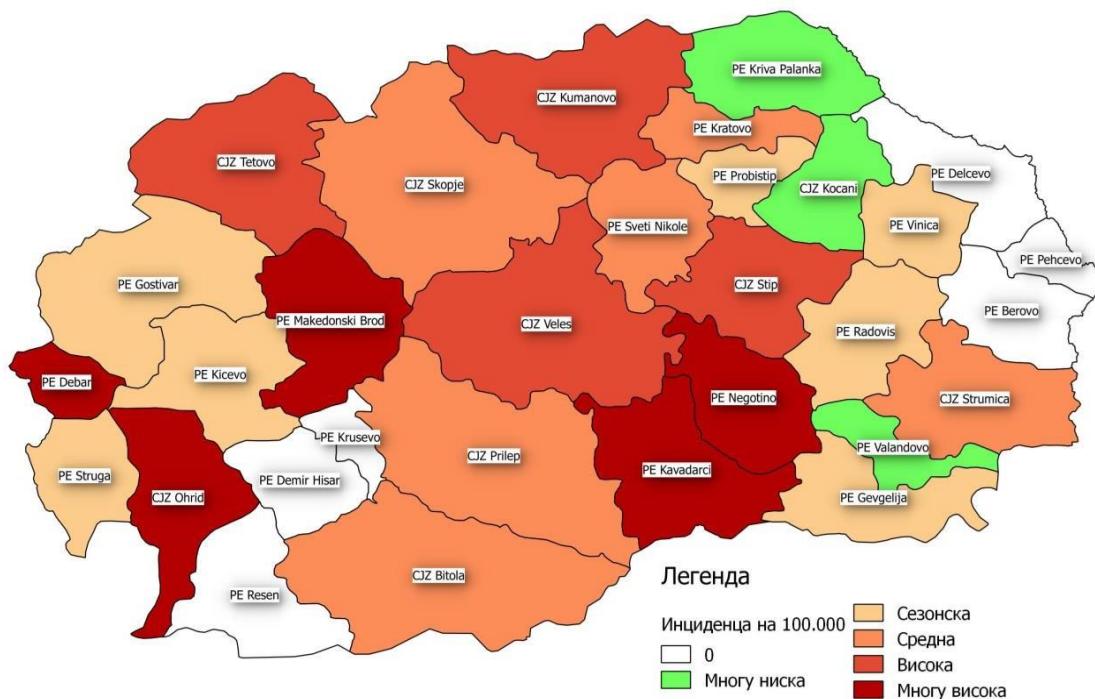
The highest incidence rate (268.3 per 100,000) was recorded among children aged 0–4 years.

Cases were reported from 25 Public Health Centers / Regional Units:

Skopje – 556, Tetovo – 308, Kumanovo – 266, Ohrid – 202, Prilep – 127, Veles – 111, Kavadarci – 109, Shtip – 95, Strumica and Bitola – 87 each, Debar – 78, Gostivar – 71, Negotino – 54, Makedonski Brod – 42. In Kichevo, Gevgelija, Sveti Nikole, Kochani, Vinica, Kriva Palanka, Kratovo, Struga, Valandovo, Probištip and Radovish, the number of cases was below 30.

Very high influenza activity was recorded in five Public Health Centers (Debar, Ohrid, Makedonski Brod, Kavadarci and Negotino), high activity in four (Veles, Tetovo, Kumanovo and Shtip), medium activity in six, seasonal activity in seven, while very low activity was recorded in three units (Map 1).

Map 1. Influenza activity level according to incidence per 100,000 population, second week of 2026.



During the second week of 2026, one influenza-associated death was reported. The case involved a 75-year-old female from Skopje, hospitalized at the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions. The patient had comorbidities and had not been vaccinated against seasonal influenza. Laboratory testing confirmed Influenza A.

#### Virological surveillance

During the second reporting week of 2026, 99 samples from routine and SARI surveillance were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health and were tested in parallel for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

Out of all tested samples, 26 influenza-positive cases were detected: 15 Influenza A(H3), 6 Influenza A(H1)pdm09, 5 Influenza A (non-subtyped). Additionally 7 RSV cases were detected (1 RSV-A and 6 RSV-B), 1 SARS-CoV-2 positive case was detected.

#### EPIDEMOIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative data

In the 2025/2026 season, a total of 6,147 cases of influenza/influenza-like illness were reported (incidence rate: 334.7 per 100,000 population).

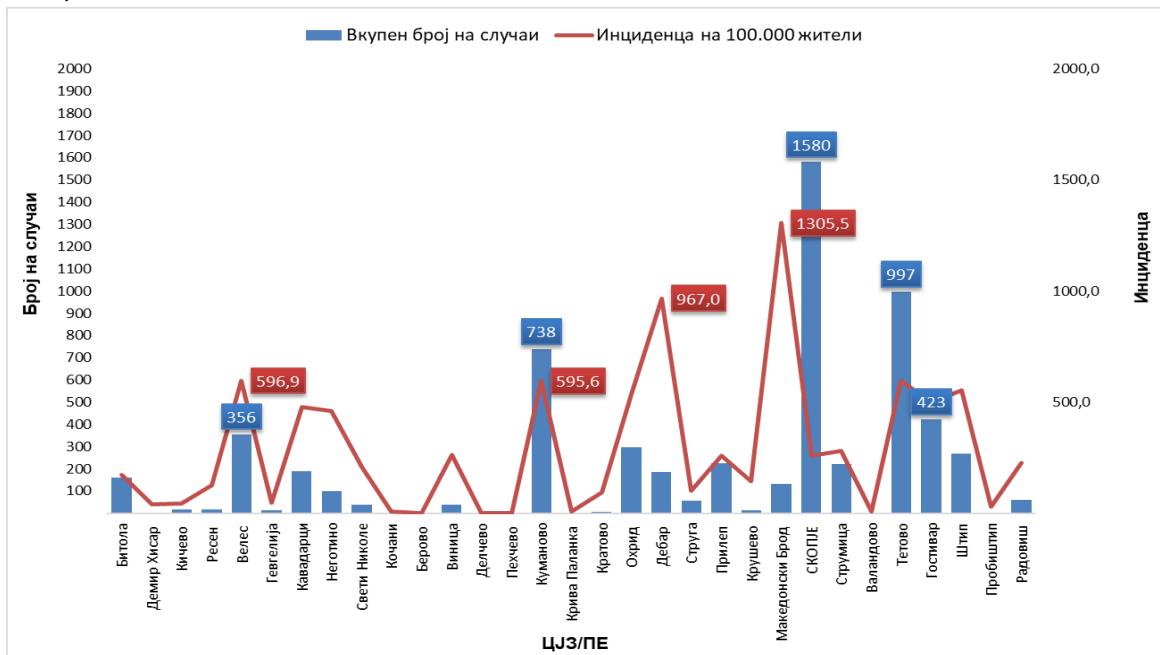
Compared to the same period of the previous season ( $n = 2,408$ ), the number of reported cases is 2.6 times higher, and compared to the model based on the last 15 seasons ( $n = 4,841$ ), an increase of 27.0% is recorded.

Cumulatively, cases were reported from 28 Public Health Centers / Units.

The highest number of cases was registered in Skopje (n = 1,580), while the highest cumulative incidence (1,305.5 per 100,000) was recorded in Makedonski Brod (n = 132) (Table 1, Annex).

By age group, the largest proportion of cases was reported in the 15–64 years group (3,538 cases; 57.6%), while the highest incidence rates were recorded among children aged 0–4 years (654.8/100,000) and 5–14 years (580.5/100,000) (Figure 2; Table 1, Annex).

Graph 2. Distribution of seasonal influenza cases by PHI/RU and incidence per 100,000 population, 2025/2026 season.



Monthly distribution of cases (Table 1, Annex)

October – 338 cases (5.5%)

November – 438 cases (7.1%)

December – 1,324 cases (21.5%)

January – 4,047 cases (65.9%)

During the influenza season, one influenza-associated death has been registered.

#### VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative data

From the beginning of the 2025/2026 season through week 2/2026, 515 samples were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health of North Macedonia from routine and sentinel SARI surveillance. All samples were tested for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

Detected influenza-positive cases:

Influenza A – 65

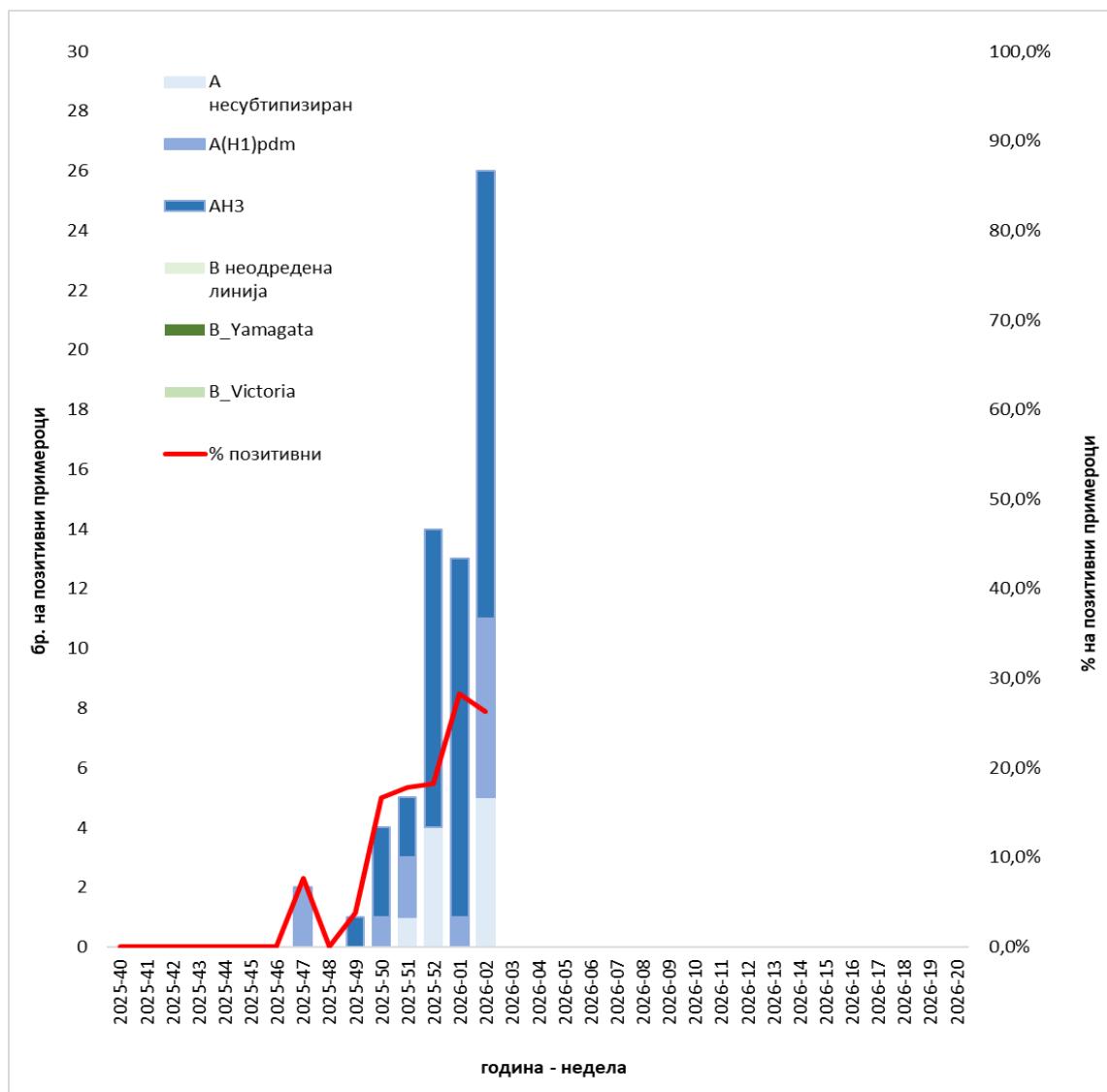
- A(H1)pdm09 – 12 (18.5%)

- A(H3) – 43 (66.2%)
- A (non-subtyped) – 10 (15.3%)

#### Influenza B – 0

Additionally, 6 SARS-CoV-2 positive cases, 21 RSV-positive cases (1 non-subtyped RSV, 5 RSV-A, 15 RSV-B)

Figure 2. Weekly distribution of the number and percentage of influenza-positive samples, routine and sentinel surveillance, Republic of North Macedonia, 2025/2026.



#### EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

During the second week of 2026, the number of cases and the incidence of influenza-like illness continued to increase on a weekly basis. The reported incidence remains above the weekly threshold for medium activity. Virological surveillance results indicate regional geographic circulation of the influenza virus. The positivity rate has exceeded 10% for five consecutive weeks.

Based on these data, influenza activity in North Macedonia is high, with an expectation of further increase in activity in the coming period.

## GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Source: <https://sezonskigrip.mk/>

General preventive measures against influenza apply to all acute respiratory infections and are particularly useful when applied throughout the winter season:

- Avoid gatherings and crowded indoor spaces, especially close contact with people who are ill.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use hand disinfectants.
- Ensure adequate heating and frequent ventilation of indoor spaces.
- Wear warm, layered clothing; take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (tea, soups), freshly squeezed fruit juices, and water with lemon.
- Consume fresh foods rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruits and vegetables; vitamin C-rich foods are particularly recommended.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: adequate sleep and rest, healthy diet, physical and mental activity, and stress reduction.

A strong immune system helps prevent illness or cope more easily with influenza; however, even healthy individuals may become ill.

### What to do if you become ill with influenza

- Stay at home; do not go to work, school, or crowded places.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids; eat light food.
- Avoid close contact with household members; do not receive visitors.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing; dispose of tissues properly.
- Wear a protective mask when in contact with others.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Use alcohol-based hand wipes or disinfectants.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Ventilate rooms frequently.
- Keep your surroundings clean and disinfect surfaces.
- If you are over 65 years of age, have chronic diseases, or symptoms worsen or persist for several days, seek medical attention.

## INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Vaccination against seasonal influenza is the most effective preventive measure. The Institute of Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, particularly for risk groups (according to WHO): persons over 65 years of age, children aged 6–59 months, individuals over 6 months with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and healthcare workers.

For the 2025/2026 season, the Ministry of Health provided 80,000 free quadrivalent vaccine doses for priority population groups. Vaccination began on 16 October 2025 and is carried out at Public Health Centers and Health Centers. Healthcare workers in Skopje are vaccinated at the Institute of Public Health.

According to the National e-Health Administration, 77,193 individuals from risk groups have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

An additional 2,400 commercial vaccine doses were procured; 1,824 individuals have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

As of the second week, a total of 79,017 individuals in North Macedonia have been vaccinated with free or commercial vaccines.

#### EUROPEAN REGION

Source: <https://erviss.org/>

According to the ERVISS report for week 1 of 2026:

Influenza-like illness and/or acute respiratory infection rates are above baseline levels in 18 of 29 countries in the WHO European Region.

Influenza activity shows signs of stabilization but remains high and widespread.

Persons aged 65 years and over account for the majority of influenza-related hospitalizations.

Influenza A(H3) remains the dominant circulating virus, with A(H1) also circulating.

SARS-CoV-2 activity indicators are at baseline levels.

RSV positivity has increased in primary healthcare but remains stable in sentinel hospitals; children under 5 years account for most cases.

Note: All data are provisional. Interpretation of trends, especially for the most recent weeks, should take into account possible delays or underreporting by individual countries.

Note: Delays in data collection and reporting due to the holiday period may have affected the data presented in this weekly report and should be interpreted with caution.

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