

## INFLUENZA SITUATION – SEASON 2025/2026

(Third week, up to 18 January 2026)

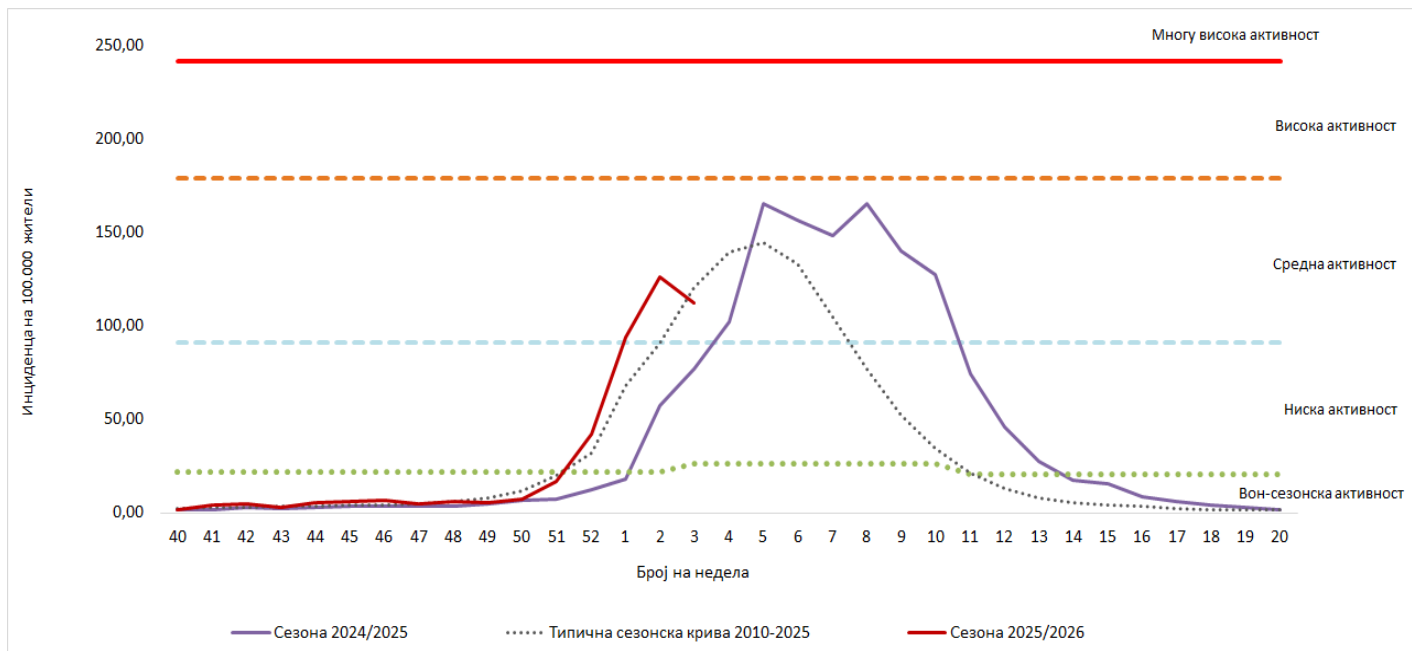
### Weekly data

During the third week of 2026 (12–18 January 2026), a total of 2,062 cases of influenza and influenza-like illness were reported in North Macedonia (incidence rate: 112.3 per 100,000 population), representing an 11.2% decrease compared to the previous week ( $n = 2,322$ ).

Compared to the third week of the previous season ( $n = 1,412$ ), the number of reported cases has increased by 46.0%, while compared to the third week of the typical epidemic curve (modeled from the last 15 seasons) ( $n = 2,215$ ), it has decreased by 6.9% (Figure 1).

During the third 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.**



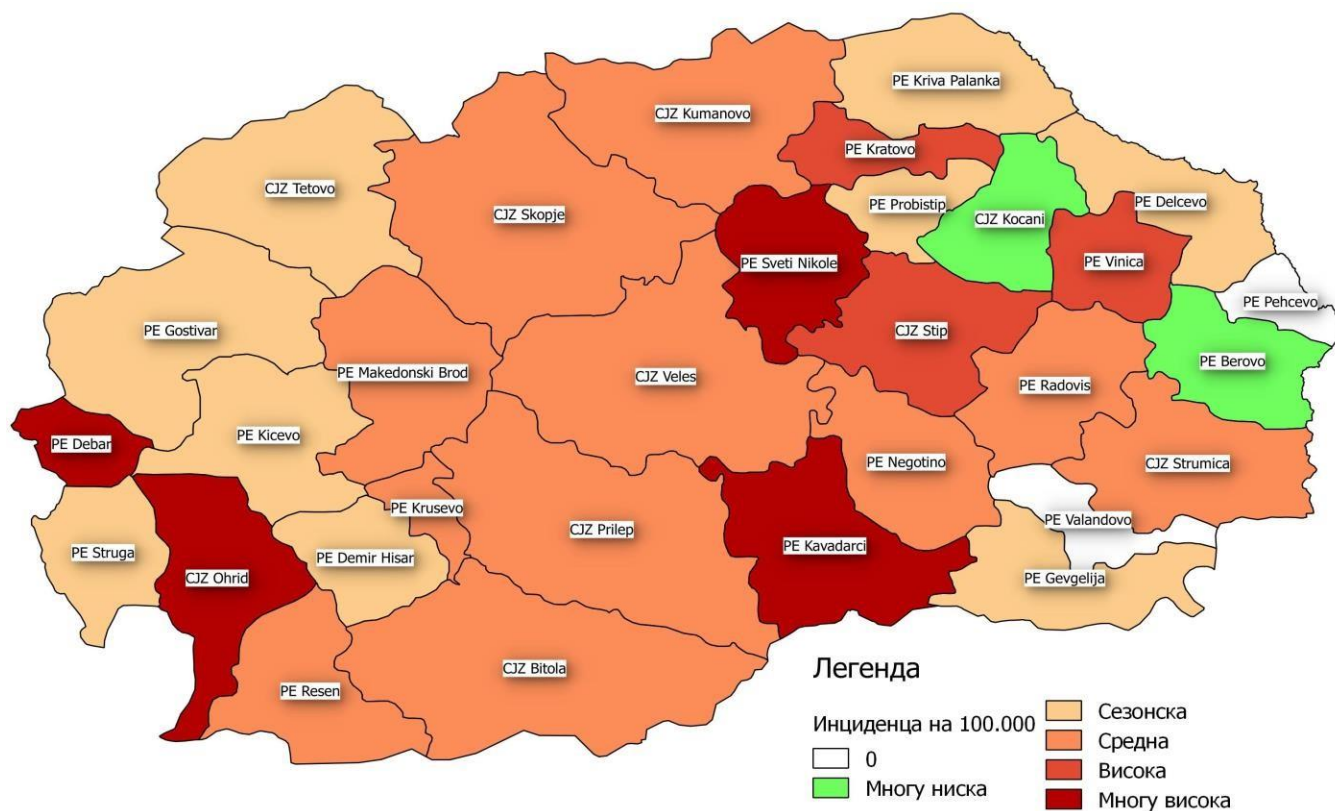
Age distribution of the reported cases: 1,274 were aged 15–64 years, 279 were children aged 0–4 years, 266 were persons aged 65 years and over, 243 were children aged 5–14 years. The highest incidence rate (289.1 per 100,000) was recorded among children aged 0–4 years.

Cases were reported from 29 Public Health Centers / Regional Units:

Skopje – 556, Tetovo – 146, Ohrid – 142, Bitola – 139, Kumanovo – 137, Prilep – 115, Shtip – 110, Kavadarci – 102, Veles – 96, Strumica – 85, Debar – 75, Sveti Nikole – 59, Gostivar – 52, Radovish – 33,

Negotino – 30. In Gevgelija, Vinica, Struga, Resen, Kichevo, Krushevo, Kratovo, Makedonski Brod, Probishtip, Delchevo, Kriva Palanka, Kochani, Demir Hisar and Berovo, the number of cases was below 30. Very high activity was recorded in four Public Health Centers (Debar, Ohrid, Sveti Nikole, Kavadarci), high activity in three (Kratovo, Shtip, Vinica), medium activity in eleven, seasonal activity in nine, while very low activity was observed in two units (Map 1).

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



During the third week of 2026, two influenza-associated deaths were reported: a 75-year-old female from Skopje and a 69-year-old male from Kavadarci

Both patients were hospitalized at the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions in Skopje. Comorbidities were present, and neither of them had been vaccinated against seasonal influenza. Laboratory testing confirmed Influenza A in both cases.

#### VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE

During the third reporting week of 2026, 81 samples from routine and SARI surveillance were received at the virology laboratory of the Institute of Public Health for testing for Influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and/or RSV.

Out of all tested samples, 19 influenza-positive cases were detected: 9 Influenza A(H3), 8 Influenza A(H1)pdm09, 2 Influenza A (non-subtyped)

Additionally 5 RSV cases were detected (1 RSV-A, 3 RSV-B, 1 non-subtyped RSV).

No SARS-CoV-2 positive cases were detected during the previous week.

#### EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative data

In the 2025/2026 season, a total of 8,209 cases of influenza/influenza-like illness were reported (incidence rate: 446.9 per 100,000).

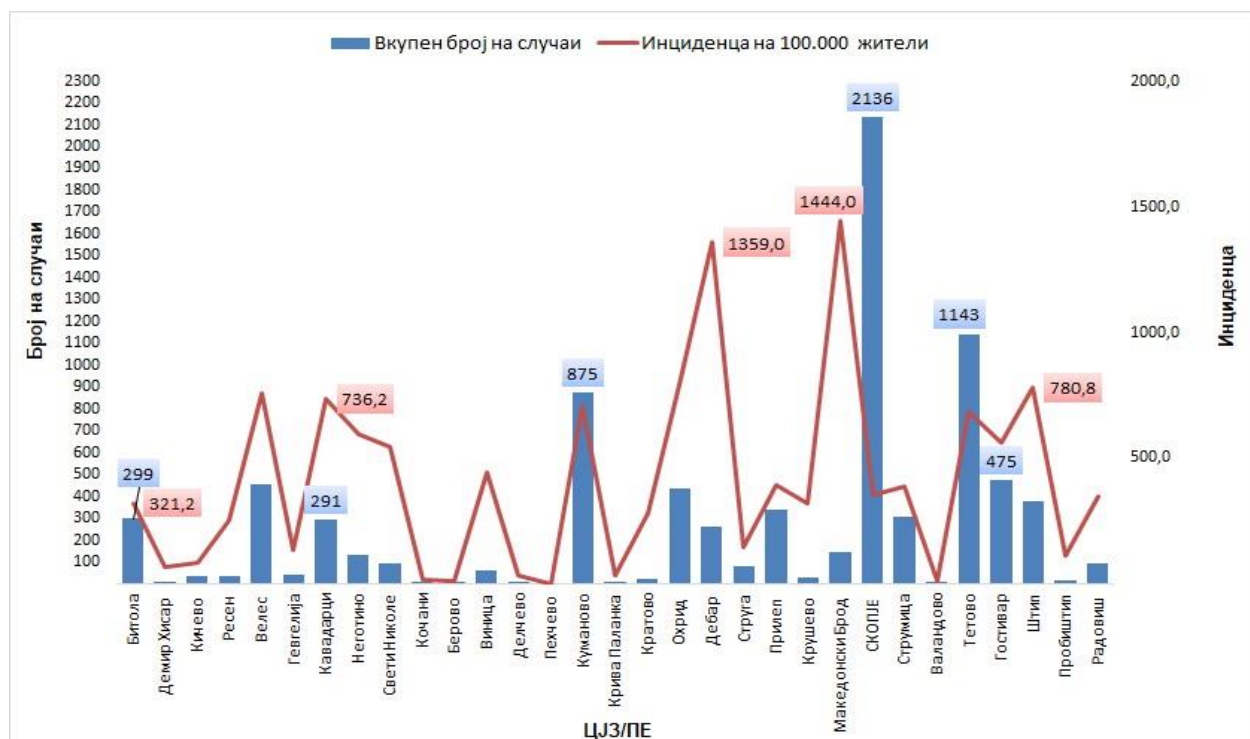
Compared to the same period of the previous season ( $n = 3,820$ ), the number of reported cases is 2.1 times higher, and compared to the model based on the last 15 seasons ( $n = 7,057$ ), an increase of 16.3% was noted.

Cumulatively, cases were reported from 30 Public Health Centers / Regional Units.

The highest number of cases was registered in Skopje ( $n = 2,136$ ), while the highest cumulative incidence (1,444.0 per 100,000) was recorded in Makedonski Brod ( $n = 146$ ) (Table 1, Annex).

By age group, the highest number of cases occurred in the 15–64 years group (4,812 cases; 58.6%), while the highest incidence rates were recorded among children aged 0–4 years (943.8/100,000) and 5–14 years (693.6/100,000) (Figure 2; Table 1, Annex).

**Figure 2. Distribution of seasonal influenza cases by Public Health Center and incidence per 100,000 population, season 2025/2026.**



Monthly distribution of cases (Table 1, Annex)

October – 338 cases (4.1%)

November – 438 cases (5.3%)

December – 1,324 cases (16.1%)

January – 6,109 cases (74.5%)

During the influenza season, three influenza-associated deaths have been registered.

#### VIROLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE – Cumulative data

From the beginning of the 2025/2026 season up to week 3/2026, 596 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:

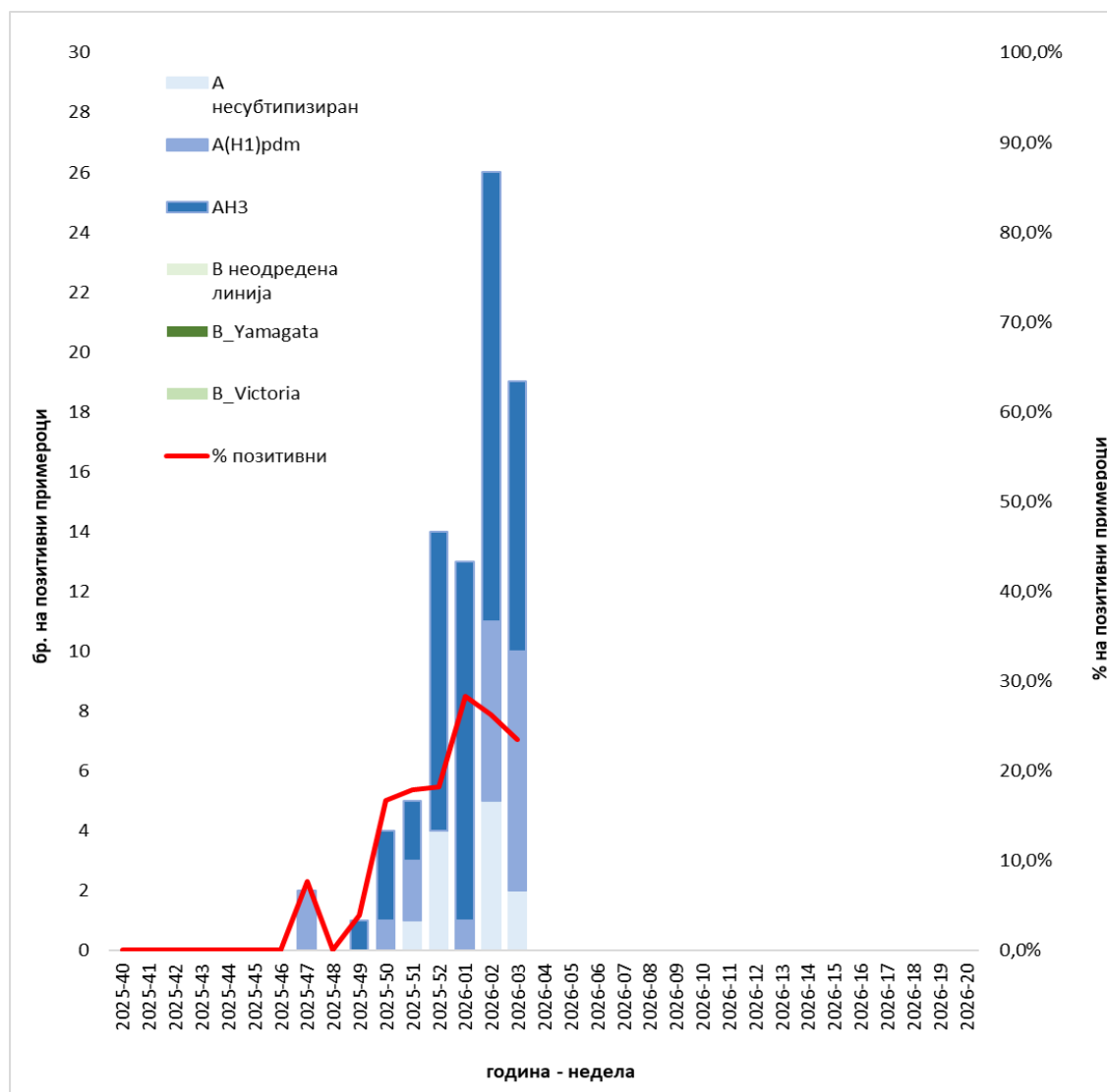
Influenza A – 84

- A(H1)pdm09 – 20 (23.8%)
- A(H3) – 52 (61.9%)
- A (non-subtyped) – 12 (14.3%)

Influenza B – 0

Additionally, 6 SARS-CoV-2 positive cases, 26 RSV cases (2 non-subtyped RSV, 6 RSV-A, 18 RSV-B), 5 other respiratory viruses detected among tested samples

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



## EPIDEMIOLOGICAL COMMENT

During the third week of 2026, a slight decrease in the number of influenza-like illness cases and incidence is noted on a weekly basis. The reported incidence remains above the weekly threshold for medium activity. Virological surveillance results indicate regional geographic activity of the influenza virus. The positivity rate has exceeded 10% for six consecutive weeks.

Based on these data, influenza activity in North Macedonia is high.

## GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

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

General preventive measures against influenza apply to all acute respiratory infections are particularly beneficial if followed throughout the winter season:

- Avoid gatherings and staying in crowded indoor spaces, especially close contact with people who are ill (coughing, sneezing, fever).
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use hand disinfectants.
- Heat indoor spaces adequately and ventilate frequently.
- Wear warm, layered clothing; take warm baths.
- Drink warm beverages (tea, soups), freshly squeezed fruit juices, water with lemon.
- Consume fresh foods rich in vitamins and minerals, especially fruits and vegetables. Foods rich in vitamin C (lemons, oranges, citrus fruits) are particularly recommended. If fresh food is not always available, multivitamin supplements may be used.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: good sleep and rest, healthy diet, physical and mental activity, stress reduction.

A strong immune system helps you stay healthy or cope more easily with influenza, but even healthy individuals can become ill.

#### **What to do if you get 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 nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing; dispose of tissues properly.
- Wear a protective mask when in contact with household members.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Use alcohol-based wipes or hand 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 care.

#### **INFLUENZA VACCINATION**

Vaccination against seasonal influenza is the most effective protection. The Institute of Public Health recommends vaccination for the entire population, especially risk groups (according to WHO): people aged over 65, 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 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 data from the National e-Health Administration, 77,245 persons from risk groups have been vaccinated with free vaccines.

An additional 2,400 commercial vaccine doses were procured for the general population. 1,833 persons have been vaccinated with commercial vaccines.

As of week three, a total of 79,078 people in North Macedonia have been vaccinated.

#### EUROPEAN REGION

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

According to the ERVISS report published for the second week of 2026 on influenza virus activity across the WHO European Region

- Influenza-like illness and acute respiratory infection rates are above baseline levels in 26 of 33 countries in the WHO European Region.
- Influenza activity has reached a peak in nearly all countries and remains high.
- People aged 65 years and over account for most 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 is increasing in primary healthcare, while remaining stable in sentinel hospitals; children under 5 years account for most cases.

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