Flunomics

Snapshot: Italy

Assessing the impact of previous influenza seasons on Italy's people, health system and economy

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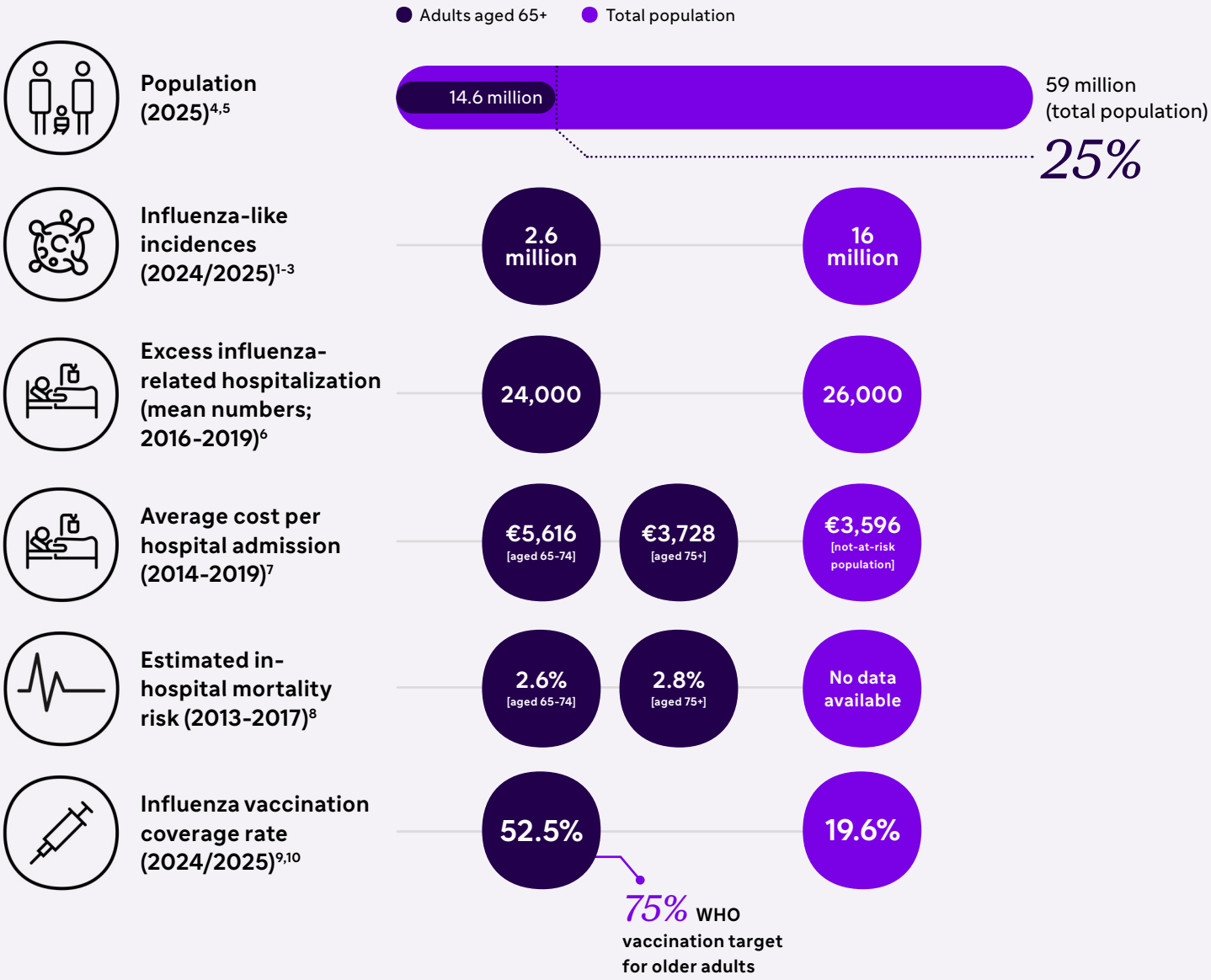
MAT-GLB-2506501-v2.0-10/2025

Italy

Italy recorded its *highest-ever number of influenza-like incidence (ILI) cases in 2024/2025*,[1-3] yet persistent gaps in hospital and mortality data make it difficult to fully assess the impact – especially among older adults, who remain under-protected despite long-standing policy commitments.

Estimated influenza burden



Data and *Limitations*

Italy recorded *an estimated 16 million ILI cases during the 2024/2025 season — the highest incidence since national surveillance began*.[1-3] However, official data for age-specific hospitalizations and ICU admissions have not been published.

Adults over the age of 65 were the largest contributor to excess influenza-related hospitalizations. Over the course of three influenza season between 2016 to 2019, the 3-season mean number of excess influenza-related hospitalizations was approximately 24,000 for adults over the age of 65.[6] In comparison, the mean number of excess hospitalizations was 26,000 for the total population over the same period.[6]

Though it can be seen that older adults are more greatly impacted by the burden of influenza, the inconsistency in data collection reflects *persistent gaps in influenza surveillance*, making it difficult to fully quantify the impact of influenza — especially on older populations — or track year-on-year shifts in disease severity.

The Economic *Impact*

The most recent cost data comes from a 2024 study analysing influenza seasons between 2014/2015 and 2018/2019, which estimated an average hospitalization cost of €3,596 for people not considered to be at-risk.[7] The same study estimated that total direct costs (mostly hospitalization-related) amounted to approximately €9.7 million, with around 95% of this borne by hospital care.[7] Notably, individuals aged 65 and older and those with comorbidities accounted for nearly half of these hospitalization costs with adults aged 65-74 averaging €5,616 per hospitalization, and those aged 75+ averaging €3,728 per hospitalization.[7]

Policy *Landscape*

Italy maintains a longstanding national recommendation for annual influenza vaccination and offers the vaccine free of charge to adults aged 60 and over.[11] Despite this, *vaccination coverage in this group was only 52.5% during the 2024/2025 influenza season, well below the WHO's 75% target*.[9,10]

For the 2024/2025 campaign, authorities authorized eight influenza vaccines, including formulations specifically indicated for older adults.[12] However, authorization does not guarantee that all vaccines were marketed or available across the country. *Systemic barriers persist* — from regional tenders to uneven distribution logistics and inhomogeneous access to vaccination among Regions, and a declining number of general practitioners, which continues to impact timely and equitable vaccine delivery.[13,14]

The 2024/2025 season reinforced a recurring challenge: strong policy intent has not yet translated into consistent, real-world protection for high-risk groups. As Italy's population ages, improving both access and uptake among older adults will be critical to reducing the growing annual burden of influenza.

Systemic barriers impact vaccination rates - despite free access for people aged 65 and over, eight vaccines being available and influenza vaccination being ingrained in national policy, barriers remain

- *Ministry of Health guideline delays*
- *Regional tender delays*
- *Uneven distribution*
- *Fewer GPs*
- *Logistical inconsistencies*

Vaccination coverage in adults 65+ was 52.5%

The WHO vaccination coverage rate goal is 75% in this age group

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