



At the end of January 2020, a total of 2519 laboratory-confirmed cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), including 866 associated deaths (case-fatality rate: 34.3%) were reported globally. The majority of these cases were reported from Saudi Arabia (2121 cases), including 788 related deaths with a case-fatality rate of 37.1%.

Since the last update was published (December MERS situation update), a total of 17 new laboratory-confirmed cases of MERS were reported globally. Two of the cases were reported from the United Arab Emirates, both males, with a history of exposure to camels and their products. The other 15 cases were reported from Saudi Arabia with five associated deaths. The deaths occurred among patients aged 45-85 years with comorbidities. They have no clear history of exposure to any of the known risk factors. A hospital outbreak was reported in Saudi Arabia with a cluster of six cases. Three of the cases were health care workers, two were patients (one of whom died) and one was a visitor. The source of infection of the first case reported in the cluster is currently unknown and under investigation. Investigation of household and hospital contacts revealed no further secondary cases.

The demographic and epidemiological characteristics of reported cases, when compared with the same corresponding periods in 2014–2020, do not show any significant difference or change. The number of cases reported in this period was less than all other corresponding periods. The age group 50–59 years continues to be at the highest risk for acquiring infection as primary cases. The age group 30–39 years is most at risk for secondary infections. The number of deaths is higher in the age group 50–59 years for primary cases and 70–79 years for secondary cases.

[Read the latest MERS update for January 2020](#)

to the monthly newsletter from the Infectious Hazard Preparedness unit of the Health Emergencies Programme for the latest data and analysis on epidemic and pandemic-prone diseases as well as news on outbreak preparedness and response within the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

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