

VWA 2024

Vaccination Week in the Americas

FACT SHEET

Vaccination Week in the Americas
20 to 27 April 2024

“Engage now to protect your future #GetVax”

For 21 years, the countries and territories of the Americas have protected individuals, families, and communities through the Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA).

Since 2003:



VWA has helped countries vaccinate 1.15 billion people in more than 40 countries.



This initiative supported the control of many vaccine-preventable diseases, as well as the elimination of 6 vaccine-preventable diseases: polio, measles, rubella, congenital rubella syndrome, neonatal tetanus and smallpox¹.

VWA 2024 GOALS²

- For this year’s campaign, 44 countries and territories are planning to reach more than 83.5 million people with almost 156 million doses of the vaccines that make up national immunization programs.
- Eighteen (18) countries and territories again will prioritize vaccination against COVID-19, aiming to reach around 70 million individuals, including older adults, health workers and those with chronic illnesses.
- As one of the cornerstones of VWA, vaccination against Influenza will continue to be one of the top priorities for participating countries and territories. Operations will target 78 million people with this vaccine, including children younger than 5 years, pregnant women, older adults, health workers and those with chronic diseases.
- This year marks the 30th anniversary of our Region receiving the polio-free certification. This achievement requires countries to invest and reach as many children as possible to maintain this status. Twenty-eight (28) countries and territories will aim to vaccinate almost 3,5 million children with the bOPV and IPV vaccines.
- Countries will administer almost half-a-million doses of vaccines against measles and rubella. These efforts bring our region closer to obtaining, once again, elimination status for measles.
- Twenty-nine countries (29) will be prioritizing the vaccination of over 900,000 girls and boys aged 9 years or older against the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Vaccination against HPV is a key intervention to address several types of cancer, including cervical cancer, one of the leading causes of death among women in the Region.

¹ <https://www.paho.org/en/news/26-9-2023-paho-gives-new-impetus-initiative-eliminate-more-30-communicable-diseases-following>

² Based on information provided to PAHO by 36 countries and territories out of the 44 that will be participating this year in the VWA initiative.

SITUATION IN THE AMERICAS³

- Historically, the Region of the Americas always reported high vaccination coverage levels. However, rates have decreased considerably over the past decade. Today, the region of the Americas has the second lowest levels of vaccine coverage. This can be attributed to several issues including a decline in investment in the program.
- In 2022, thanks to increased efforts of the countries, vaccination coverages rates for most antigens have started to recover.

Trend of DTP1 and DTP3 Vaccination Coverage in the Americas 2010-2022.

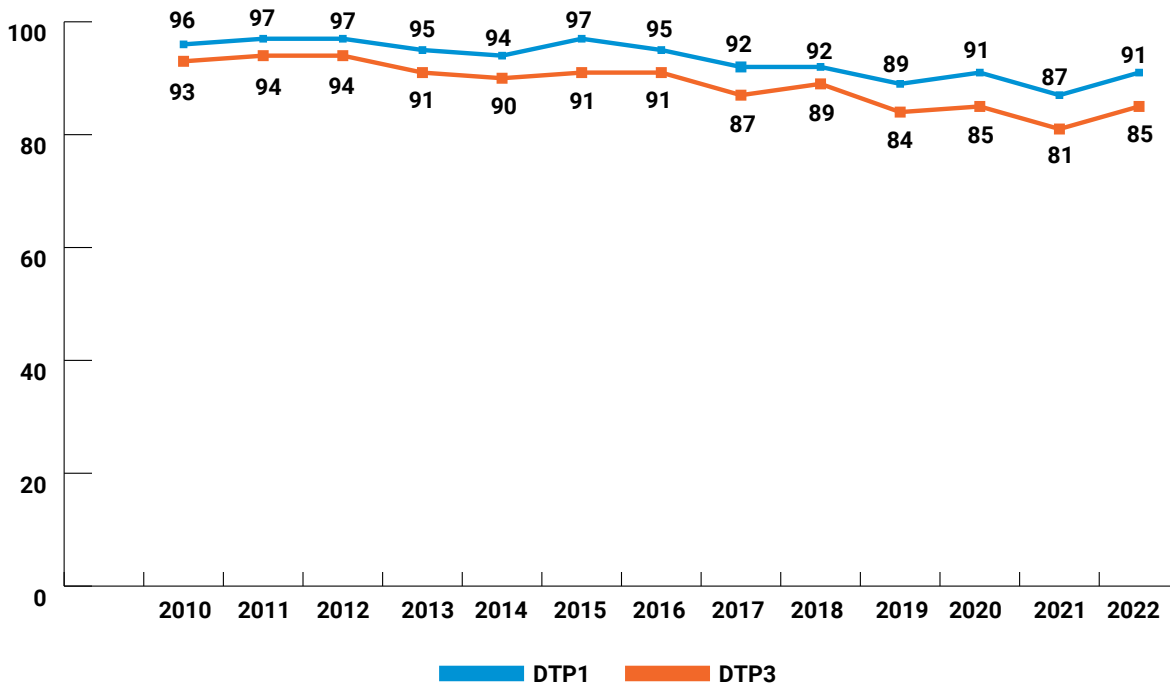


Figure 1: Trend of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis dose #1 and dose #2 Vaccination Coverage in the Americas, 2010-2022.

- Countries worked hard to bring the regional coverage of the DTP1⁴ vaccine up to 91% from 87%. While a positive achievement, 1.2 million children younger than 1 year remained unvaccinated. In 2021, this number was 1.9 million.
- The regional immunization program has now reached pre-pandemic performance levels (2019). Unfortunately, rates have not yet reached the recommended target of 95%. Additionally, 15 out of 100 children do not receive their third dose of vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough⁵.

³ Data presented here were extracted from national reports shared through the PAHO-WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form (eJRF). The data represent aggregated information up to 2022.

⁴ The first dose of the vaccine against Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis is considered a tracker indicator for the performance of national immunization programs, as well as a measure of regional vaccination coverage.

⁵ The third dose of the vaccine against Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis is considered a tracker indicator for desertion rate, meaning it shows the number/percentage of children who do not come back to complete their schedules.

Number of ZERO-DOSE (DTP1) and UNDERVACCINATED (DTP3) children, Region of the Americas, 2017-2023.

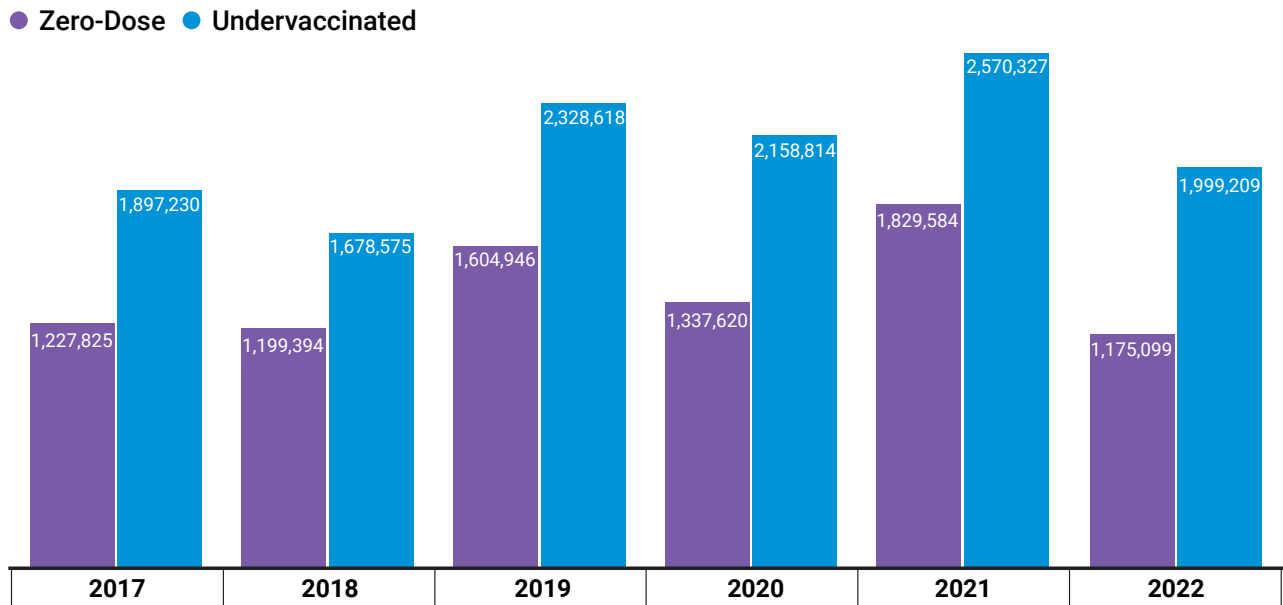


Figure 2. Number of children younger than 1 year who did not receive the first dose of the vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP1) (i.e., zero-dose) and number of children younger than 1 year who did not receive the third dose of the DTP vaccine (DTP3) (i.e., under-vaccinated), Region of the Americas, 2017-2022.

Measles

Trend of MMR-1 and MMR-2 Vaccination Coverage in the Americas 2010-2022.

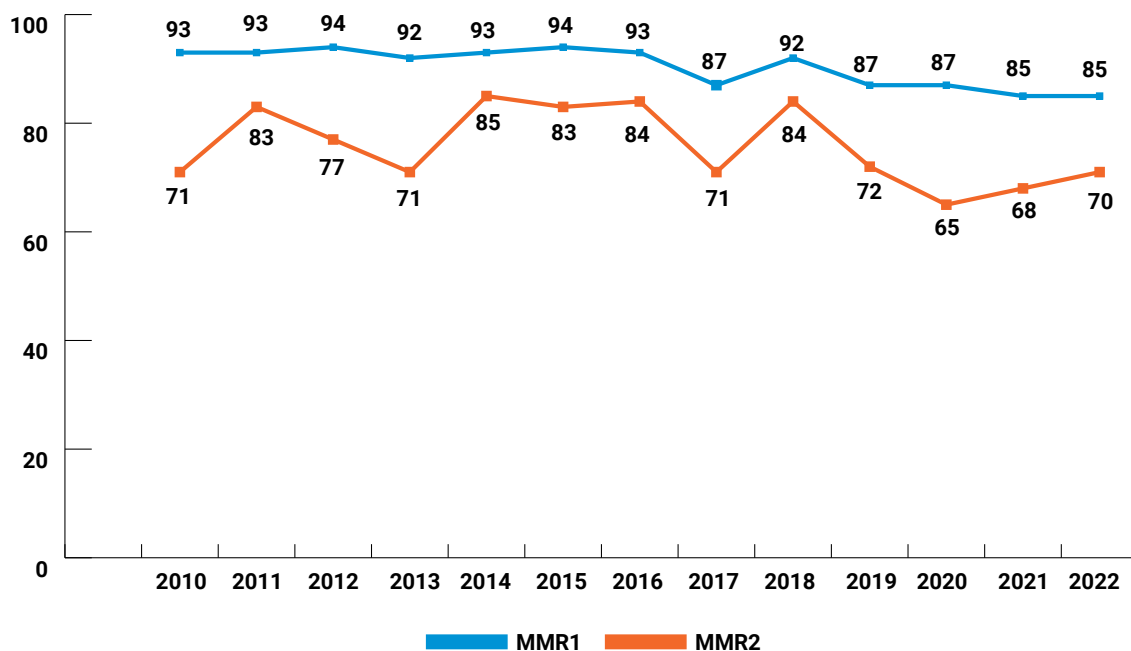


Figure 3: Trend of Measles, Mumps and Rubella dose #1 and dose #2 Vaccination Coverage in the Americas, 2010-2022.

- After the Region obtained its measles-free status, a few countries experienced outbreaks and re-established transmission. Due to this, the Region lost its measles-free status.
- Since then, thanks to the sustained efforts of countries and territories, the Region of the Americas is advancing towards achieving its measles-free target .
- Despite this progress, the Americas have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels of vaccination coverage, and the first-dose measles vaccine continues to be the only antigen with declining coverage.
- In 2022, 1.6 million children aged 12 months did not receive at least one dose of the MMR vaccine, leaving them vulnerable to one of the world’s most contagious diseases.

COVID-19

- As of January 2024⁶, the countries and territories of the Americas administered more than 2.18 billion doses of vaccine against COVID-19. Overall, 71.1% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean have been fully vaccinated against this disease.
- PAHO estimates that 196 million people have never received a single vaccine dose against COVID-19.
- SAGE and PAHO continues to call on all countries to promote vaccination among all eligible persons. This means reaching those eligible with at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- For persons at higher risk of infection or disease – older adults, pregnant women, immunocompromised persons, persons with comorbidities and health workers – SAGE and PAHO recommend they receive at least one booster dose within the next 12 months.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

- Each year, infections due to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) cause over 59,000 cases of cervical cancer and around 31,000 deaths in the Region of the Americas. Cervical cancer is the leading cause of death among women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Vaccination is one of the best ways to prevent this cancer, alongside screening and treatment.
- In 2022, among the countries that introduced the HPV vaccine, only 68% of girls had received at least one dose⁷.
- In 2023, PAHO’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on vaccine-preventable diseases for the Americas recommended that countries ensure all girls between the ages of 9 and 14 years receive one dose of HPV vaccination⁸.

⁶ WHO policy has changed and will no longer require countries to report weekly COVID vaccine data. Moving forward, these data will be reported through the eJRF once per year, as for all other antigens. Please visit [PAHO’s COVID-19 vaccination dashboard](#) for up-to-date information.

⁷ For more information, [please visit this dashboard](#).

⁸ PAHO Technical Advisory Group recommends countries of the Americas to use single-dose HPV vaccine schedule: <https://www.paho.org/en/news/5-9-2023-paho-technical-advisory-group-recommends-countries-americas-use-single-dose-hpv>

KEY CHALLENGES

There continues to be challenges related to the recovery of immunization programs:

- **Governments:** The political commitment to COVID-19 vaccination is not easily translating to the routine immunization program.
- **Resources:** Limited financial resources in the national budget are much depleted from the pandemic response efforts, with negative impacts on the performance of essential services, the quality of outreach and prevention interventions, and health workers' workload.
- **Vaccine acceptance:** Hesitancy and refusal towards COVID-19 vaccines is entrenched and may spill to other vaccines in the routine immunization program.

PAHO SUPPORT

Since 1977, the Regional Immunization Program, supports countries and territories by:

- Generating strategic and operational guidelines adapted to the regional context.
- Providing technical and financial support to national immunization programs.
- Employing state-of-the-art strategies and tools to find and reach unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children and adults.
- Applying new performance monitoring tools to identify gaps and improve performance.

Additionally, since 1979, the Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines (RFV):

- Provides access to safe and quality vaccines at affordable prices for countries and territories throughout our Region. This has greatly contributed to the sustainability of national immunization programs, since 95% of vaccines are purchased with national funds.
- In 2023, 180 million people around our Region received at least one dose procured through the Revolving Fund.
- The RFV helps countries and territories generate savings of up to 50% in the cost of vaccines, injectable materials, and cold chain equipment through the 76 products offered.



PAHO will continue to support national immunization programs in the following priority action areas:

1. Close the most urgent immunity gaps due to low coverage rates by implementing multi-antigen and/or follow-up vaccination campaigns and strengthening the operations of the national EPI.
2. Maintain the regional elimination targets for polio, measles, rubella, CRS, tetanus and Hepatitis B.
3. Engage heads of government and Ministries of Finance and regional and global organizations to obtain unequivocal commitments to strengthen the regional immunization program.

PAHO'S ELIMINATION INITIATIVE

Since 2019, PAHO has been working with the countries and territories of the Americas to eliminate – or maintain elimination of – more than 30 communicable diseases and related conditions by 2030. Of these, 11 are vaccine-preventable diseases: Measles, Rubella, Congenital Rubella Syndrome, Poliomyelitis, Mother-to-child transmission of Hepatitis B, Yellow fever, Bacterial Meningitis, Cervical cancer, Cholera, Tuberculosis and Neonatal tetanus.

ABOUT THE VWA

Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA) began in 2003 as part of the response to an endemic outbreak of measles in the Americas that took place in the border area between Colombia and Venezuela in 2002. To prevent future outbreaks of this kind, the ministers of health of the Andean countries proposed a coordinated international initiative.

Over the past 21 years, VWA has given governments an opportunity to reach millions of people in a concerted effort with live-saving vaccines. The efforts of our region inspired the world, and many other regions followed suit, leading to the creation of World Immunization Week in 2012. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) at the global level. PAHO will celebrate this milestone in 2027.

During VWA, every year more than 40 countries and territories in the Americas come together in April to vaccinate their populations, making a special effort to reach people who may not have regular access to health services, including indigenous peoples, migrants, border populations and people living on the urban fringe. Multiple events and extended service hours allow more people to receive missing vaccines at more convenient times and locations.

Resources:

- www.paho.org/vwa
- www.paho.org/immunization
- www.paho.org/en/revolving-fund
- www.paho.org/en/technical-advisory-group-vaccine-preventable-diseases
- www.paho.org/en/elimination-initiative

Innovations in Immunization

Use this QR code to open a map of immunization innovations that countries in the Region have implemented in the last few years.



PAHO