

Weekly COVID-19 Epidemiological Update – Region of the Americas

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Executive Summary

Globally, COVID-19 cases decreased for the third consecutive week with 12.8 million new cases reported in epidemiological week (EW) 7 (13 – 19 February 2022) – a 21.3% decrease compared to the previous week (**Figure 1**). The decrease in cases was observed across most WHO regions except for the Western Pacific Region (28.8% increase).

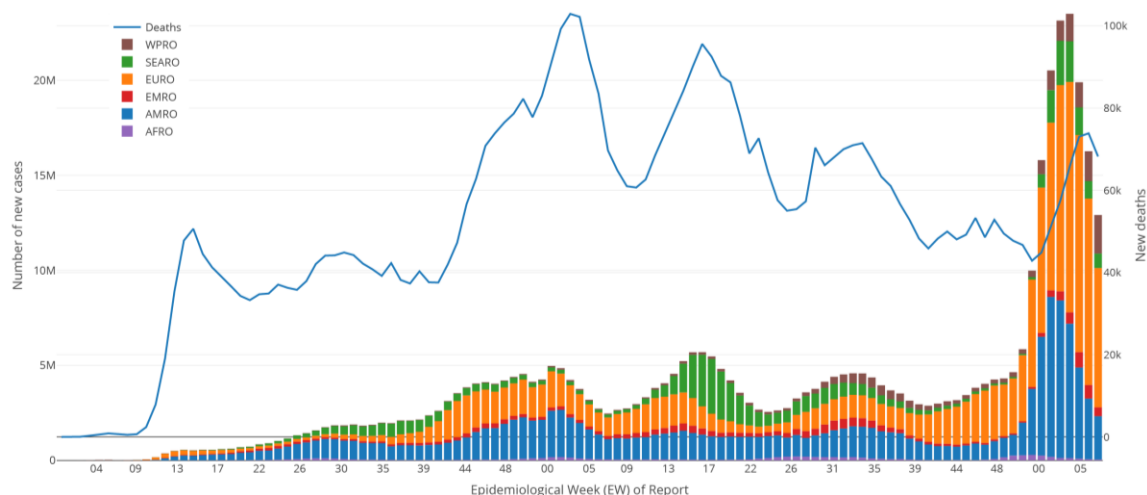
Deaths also declined globally for the first time in weeks since the acceleration in EW 52 of 2021 (**Figure 1**). About 67,645 new deaths were reported in EW 7 representing a decline of 8.3% compared to the previous week. Except for the African (19.6% increase) and WPRO (21.4% increase) regions, weekly deaths declined in the rest of the four WHO regions.

In the Region of the Americas, the overall epidemiological situation during EW 7 (13 – 19 February 2022) was characterized by a continued decline in cases and deaths across all four subregions. A total of 2.2 million new cases including approximately 29,000 deaths were reported in the Region during EW 7, representing a decline of 28.7% and 8.9% respectively compared to the previous week.

Among countries/territories with available data, overall weekly number of COVID-19 hospitalizations and/or ICU admissions also appear to be abating except for a few countries like Chile and Costa Rica where both trends continue to accelerate. ICU admissions in particular continue to increase in some countries of the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean islands (Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Grenada), Central America (Honduras), and South America (Uruguay).

No new countries/territories identified a variant of concern (VOC) during EW 7. The SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern (VOC) Omicron has been detected in 47 countries and territories of the region of date.

Figure 1: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW) of report and WHO region. As of EW 7 2022.

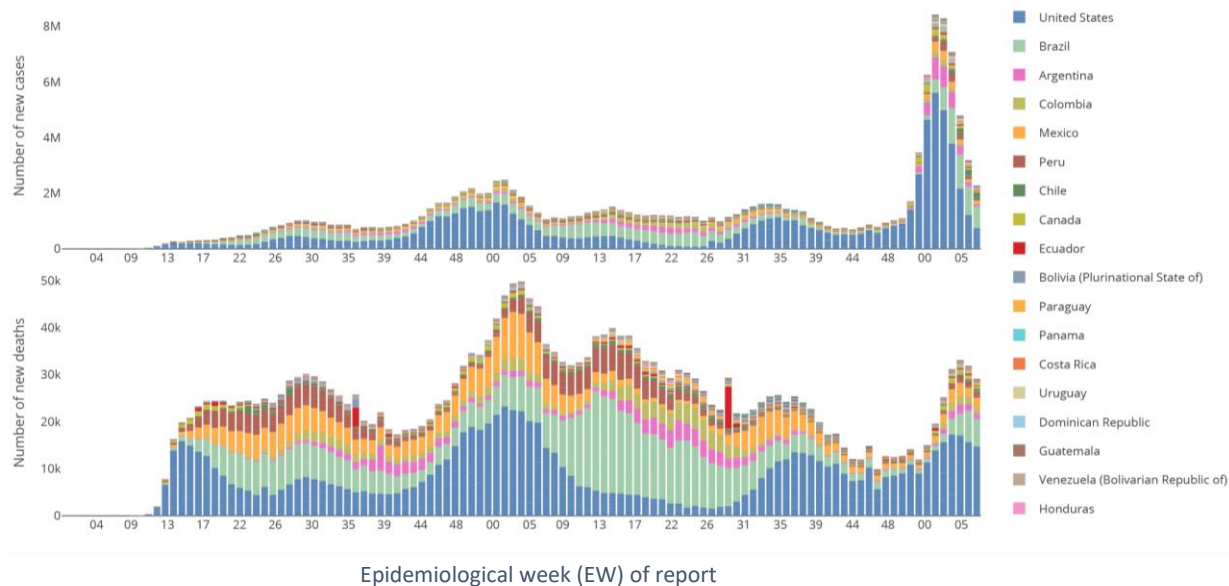


Source: Data from [WHO COVID-19 dashboard](https://www.who.int/dashboards/covid19)

More information available at: <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/coronavirus-infections/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pandemic> and <https://shiny.pahobra.org/wdc/>

Region of the Americas

Figure 2: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW) of report and country/territory. Region of the Americas. As of EW 7 2022.



Source: Data published by Ministries of Health

Incidence

Weekly COVID-19 cases declined for a fifth consecutive week in the region of the Americas with approximately 2.2 million new cases reported during EW 7 – a 28.7% decline compared to EW 6, and close to the previous peak of 2.4 million cases during EW 2 of 2021 (**Figure 2**). The trend was observed across all four subregions with the largest decline in cases reported in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands (44% decrease), followed by North America (34% decrease), South America (25% decrease), and Central America (11% decrease). **Table 1**

The decline in cases was also evident at the national level with majority of the countries and territories (46/54) reporting at least a 23% decline in cases during EW 7 compared to the previous week (range: 23% - 221% decrease). Only three countries/territories reported an increase in weekly cases – Mexico (70% increase), Nicaragua (31% increase), and Saint Lucia (28% increase). El Salvador also reported an additional 12,677 cases during EW 7 compared to 0 cases in EW 6, however, the trends should be interpreted with caution due to known delays in reporting from the country.

Furthermore, while incidence continues to decline in majority of the countries and territories in the region, the daily test positivity (%) remains elevated in some countries/territories like Suriname (36% on 17 February) Barbados (20% on 19 February), Saint Lucia (40% on 18 February), and Martinique (15% on 19 February).

Lastly, Brazil (773K), United States (746K), and Chile (236K) contributed the highest proportions of weekly cases during EW 7 in the region of the Americas, with Brazil displacing the United States as the country with the highest weekly burden of cases. Cases have been decreasing steadily in the United States for the past five weeks and is now lower than the peaks in the previous waves in 2021. On the other hand, weekly cases are at or near the highest levels since the onset of the pandemic in Brazil and Chile, though the growth appears to have slowed down in Brazil as of EW 7.

Table 1: Weekly change (%) in cases and deaths between EW 6 and EW 7 by subregion. Region of the Americas

Subregion	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Cases EW 6	Deaths EW 6	Cases EW 7	Deaths EW 7	% Change Cases	% Change Deaths
North America	86,364,445	1,278,382	1,351,197	19,188	883,001	17,496	-34.70%	-8.80%
Central America	2,914,738	48,225	85,344	501	74,779	416	-12.40%	-17.00%
South America	53,037,258	1,244,942	1,696,888	12,375	1,275,583	10,734	-24.80%	-13.30%
Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands	3,157,272	31,766	56,104	401	31,851	299	-43.20%	-25.40%

Source: Data published by Ministries of Health

Severity

A total of 29,071 new COVID-19 deaths were reported in the region of the Americas during EW 7, representing a decline of 8.7% compared to the previous week. This was the first substantive decline in weekly deaths (>5%) in the region since the acceleration which began in EW 1 of 2022 (**Figure 2**).

The declining trend was consistent across all four subregions with the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands reporting the largest decline in weekly deaths (25.4% decrease), followed by the Central American (17% decrease), and South American (13.3% decrease) subregions (**Table 1**). The North American subregion reported an overall decline of 8.8% with Mexico reporting a small increase of 7.8% in weekly deaths – deaths continued to decline in Canada and the United States of America.

Unlike the trends in cases, the United States continues to report the largest proportion of weekly deaths (14,723), followed by Brazil (5,877) and Mexico (2,221). In both Brazil and Mexico, the weekly deaths in 2022 are much lower than the peaks observed in the previous two waves of the pandemic. In the United States, weekly deaths have been declining for the three weeks, but the rates are still elevated in the context of the entire pandemic and higher than the second peak in deaths reported during the delta wave of 2021 (13,503 deaths in EW 37). Furthermore, while weekly cases in the country declined by more than 86% during EW 7 compared to the peak in EW 2 of 2022, weekly deaths only declined by approximately 15% in EW 7 compared to the peak in EW 4 of 2022.

Relative to the previous week, 13 countries and territories out of 53 with reported COVID-19 deaths in the region (compared to 23 countries and territories in EW 6) observed an increase in weekly deaths during EW 7 (range: 1.6% - 400%). Majority of the countries and territories reporting an increase in weekly deaths were in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands subregion, followed by those in South America (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Weekly change (%) in COVID—19 deaths by country/territory among those with a weekly increase (EW 6 – EW 7) and corresponding vaccination coverage (per 100 persons) as of EW 7. Region of the Americas.

Country/Territory	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Deaths - EW 6	Deaths - EW 7	% change in Deaths	Complete Schedule per 100 people [1]
Belize	56,079	641	2	10	400.00%	50.8
Barbados	53,253	308	5	16	220.00%	51.7
French Guiana	77,454	387	1	3	200.00%	28.1
Dominica	10,752	57	2	4	100.00%	39.6
Honduras	408,456	10,704	57	96	68.40%	45.3
Guyana	62,638	1,210	11	18	63.60%	44.0
Curaçao	38,608	260	7	11	57.10%	59.5
Saint Lucia	22,468	356	6	9	50.00%	
Chile	2,851,382	41,347	534	732	37.10%	89.1
Guadeloupe	122,211	909	16	20	25.00%	37.3
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	510,553	5,602	55	62	12.70%	49.8
Mexico	5,407,711	315,525	2,060	2,221	7.80%	60.3
Uruguay	812,367	6,865	123	125	1.60%	77.6

Sources:

Hospitalization data published by Ministries of Health and analyzed by PAHO/WHO Vaccination data collected by PAHO/WHO Immunization Unit

[1] Number of people who received the last recommended dose of any vaccine or completed their schedule. This includes the second dose if the schedule is a two-dose schedule and the single dose in a single dose schedule

Over all trends for **COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions** have declined in most countries and territories of the region as of EW 7. Among the 38 countries and territories with available data for COVID-19 hospitalizations, three countries/territories reported an increase during EW 7 compared to the previous week (vs. 12 countries/territories in EW 5 and 8 in EW 6) and none observed an increase greater than 50% (range: 4.9% - 13.3%). **Table 3**

Table 3: Weekly change (%) in COVID-19 hospitalizations and/or ICU admissions by country/territory among those with a weekly increase (EW 6 – EW 7) and corresponding vaccination coverage (per 100 persons) as of EW 7. Region of the Americas.

Country	Hospit. - EW 6	ICU - EW 6	Hospit. - EW 7	ICU - EW 7	% Variation of Hospit.	% Variation of ICU	Complete Schedule per 100 people [1]
Chile	4,443	790	5,034	994	13.30%	25.80%	89.1
Martinique	233	42	253	36	8.60%	-14.30%	37.5
Costa Rica	970	143	1,018	145	4.90%	1.40%	72.9
Grenada	8	2	6	3	-25.00%	50.00%	33.0
Jamaica	407	13	328	16	-19.40%	23.10%	21.6
Honduras	412	27	366	30	-11.20%	11.10%	45.3
Guadeloupe	176	23	168	25	-4.50%	8.70%	37.3
Uruguay	NA	166	NA	178		7.20%	77.6
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	7,333	278	5,564	284	-24.10%	2.20%	49.8

Sources: Hospitalization data published by Ministries of Health and analyzed by PAHO/WHO Vaccination data collected by PAHO/WHO Immunization Unit

[1] Number of people who received the last recommended dose of any vaccine or completed their schedule. This includes the second dose if the schedule is a two-dose schedule and the single dose in a single dose schedule

Among the three countries/territories with an increase in hospitalizations during EW 7, Costa Rica and Chile also reported an increase in COVID-19 ICU admissions for the same period (**Table 3**). On the other hand, Martinique reported a 14% decline in ICU admissions during EW 7, while reporting an 8.6% increase in hospitalizations for the same week.

Despite having achieved one of the highest rates of COVID-19 vaccination with a completed schedule [1] among its eligible population (89.1 per 100 people), weekly indicators for severity continue to accelerate in **Chile** with a 37% increase in deaths, 13% increase in hospitalizations and 26% increase in ICU admissions reported for EW 7 compared to EW 6. While the weekly deaths reported during EW 7 (n=732) are elevated and now at levels observed during the peak period in 2021 (EW 13 – EW 26 2021), weekly hospitalizations are nearly 41% less than the peak during EW 16, 2021 and ICU admissions are down 70% for the same period.

In **Costa Rica**, while hospitalizations continue to accelerate with 1,018 admissions reported during EW 7 – approximately 69% of the peak hospitalizations during EW 21, 2021. On the other hand, ICU admissions are plateauing in Costa Rica with only 1.4% increase observed during EW 7 compared to EW 6, 2022 and at least 73% lower than the peak number of ICU admissions reported during EW 21, 2021.

Among the 34 countries and territories with available data for ICU admissions, eight reported a relative increase compared to the previous week (range: 1.4% - 50%) – primarily in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands (Grenada 50%, Jamaica 23%, and Guadeloupe 9%). Besides Honduras in Central America (11% increase) and Uruguay in South America (7% increase), the rest of countries and territories did not report a significant increase relative to the previous week.

Immunization

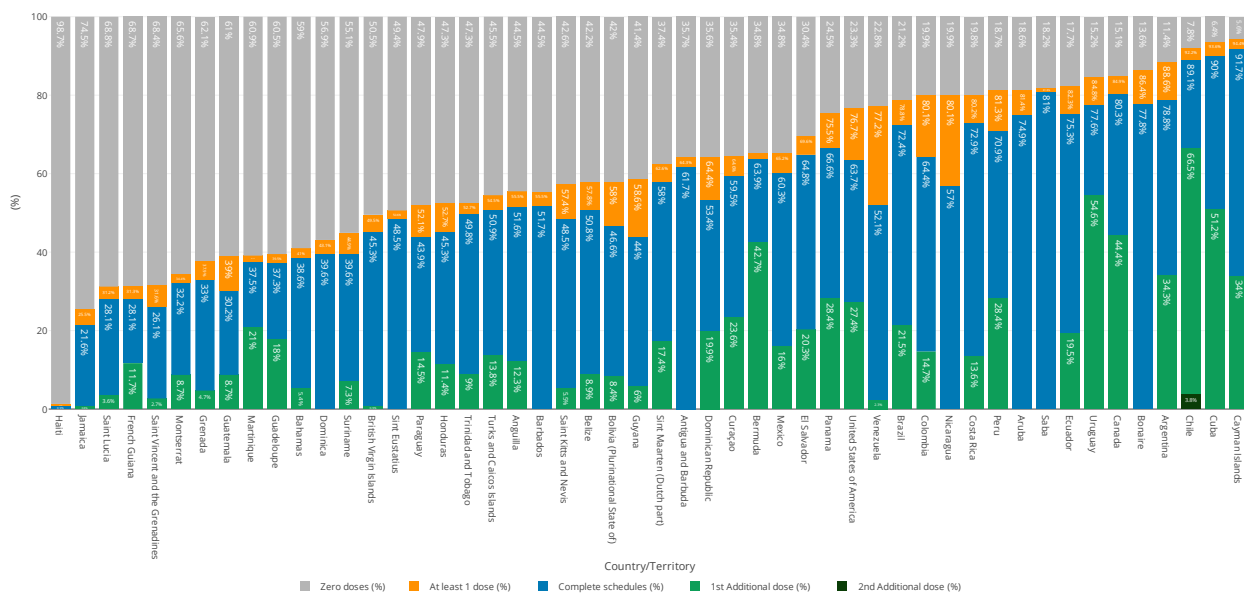
The rate of COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the Americas continues to increase. About 25.1% of the Region's population* has not yet received a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine, while five countries/territories report fewer than 15% of persons with zero COVID-19 doses administered. **Figure 3** below shows that most countries have low dropout rates between people vaccinated with at least one dose and complete schedules; other countries such as Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Colombia reported more significant gaps.

Throughout the Region, 49 countries/territories have begun administering additional doses, with only Haiti and Saint Eustatius not reporting information on whether additional doses are being applied. Of the 49 countries/territories administering, 41 are reporting corresponding data at different frequencies.

At this time, five countries/territories Canada, Chile, Uruguay, The United States, and the Dominican Republic, recommend a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. People eligible for the fourth dose are among others:

- Elderlies.
- Residents of long-term care homes.
- Persons with immunocompromising conditions.
- People who take immunosuppressive medications or therapies.

Figure 3: COVID-19 vaccination coverage by dose and country/territory. Region of the Americas. As of 18 February 2022



Source: Data published by member states and analyzed by PAHO/WHO

*Based on UN population projections for 2021 and US Census Bureau projections for countries with less than 100,000 inhabitants.

Genomic Surveillance

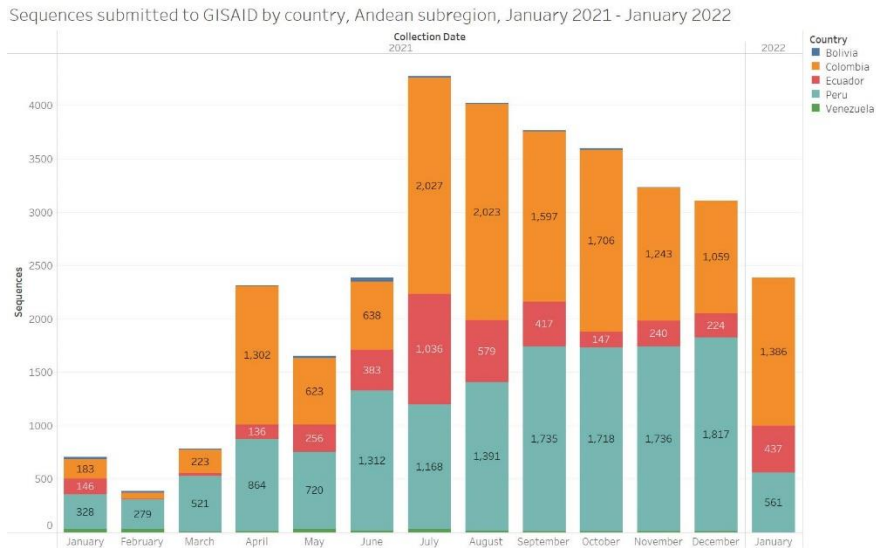
Through PAHO's Genomic Surveillance Regional Network and the work from the Member States, more than 278,601 full genome sequences of SARS-CoV-2 from Latin America and the Caribbean have been uploaded to the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) platform up to 21 February 2022.

After the introduction of the Omicron VOC in the Americas by the end of December 2021, it has rapidly increased in prevalence and has been officially reported by 47 Countries or Territories. Omicron is now predominant in all PAHO countries with the BA.1 and BA.1.1 sub lineages identified in more than 98% of the characterized samples.

Spotlight: Sequencing and genomic surveillance in the Andean subregion

During the last year (January 2021 to February 2022), 32,853 whole genome sequences from the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) have been generated as part of the genomic surveillance systems (**Figure 4**). Four VOCs (Alpha-last detected 3 October 2021; Gamma-last detected 23 December 2021; Delta-last detected 24 January 2022; and Omicron) have been detected in addition to VOIs Lambda (last detected 12 January 2022) and Mu (last detected 11 January 2022) along with other lineages/variants. The Beta VOC was not detected in any of the Andean countries.

Figure 4: Proportion of sequences generated monthly by countries in the Andean subregion. As of 22 February.



Source: GISAID

From the Andean Countries, Delta VOC was first detected by Peru in May 2021, and rapidly expanded to become predominant by mid-July in all the subregion. VOC Omicron was first detected in the subregion by 28 November also in Peru. After replacing Delta, Omicron has been predominant in all the subregion and has been detected in more than 587 samples (92%) sequenced and reported to GISAID (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) during the last 6 weeks. So far, BA.1 (65%) and BA.1.1 (35%) sub lineages are predominant with only 4 BA.2 samples reported by Peru, and still no BA.3 detected.

Figure 5: SARS-CoV-2 variants detected and reported in Central American Subregion (July 2021, February 2022)

Distribution of SARS-CoV-2 variants, Andean subregion, January 2021 - January 2022

