

Weekly COVID-19 Epidemiological Update – Region of the Americas

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Executive Summary

Globally, COVID-19 cases decreased for the fourth consecutive week with 10.7 million new cases reported in epidemiological week (EW) 8 (20 – 26 February 2022) – a 16.5% decrease compared to the previous week (**Figure 1**). The decrease in cases was observed across most WHO regions except for the Western Pacific Region (31.7% increase).

Deaths also declined globally for the second consecutive week with 59,668 new deaths reported in EW 8 – a 10.7% decline compared to EW 7 (13 – 19 February 2022) (**Figure 1**). Except for the EMRO (3.7 % increase) and WPRO (22.2% increase) regions, weekly deaths declined in the rest of the four WHO regions.

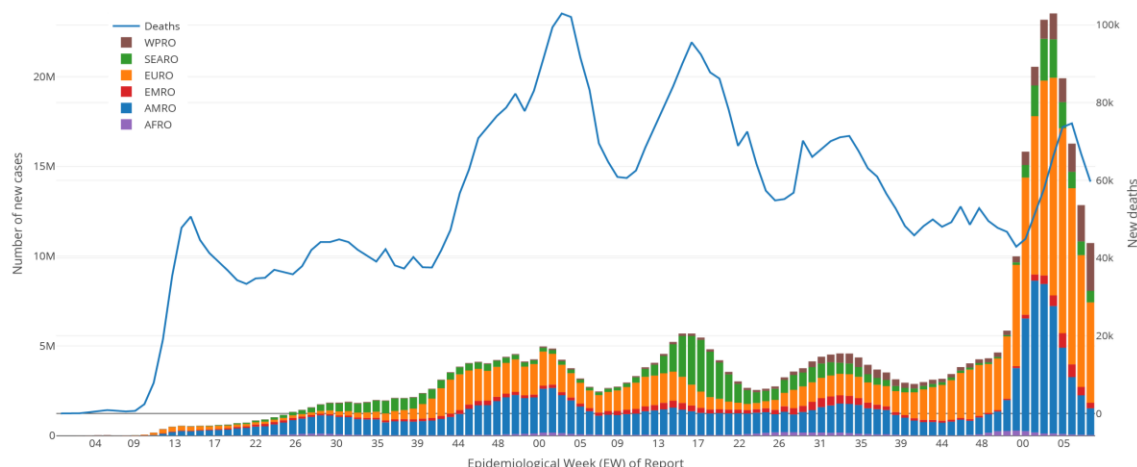
In the Region of the Americas, the **incidence** of COVID-19 continues to decline for a sixth consecutive week in 2022, with nearly 1.5 million new cases reported in EW 8 – a decline of 32% compared to the previous week. The decreasing trend was observed across all four sub-regions.

Weekly deaths also declined in the region for a third consecutive week with approximately 24,650 new deaths reported during EW 8 – a 10% decline compared to EW 7. Deaths increased in Central America by nearly 16% during EW 8 but declined in all other subregions (range – 2.3% to – 25.5%).

Overall declining trends in **hospitalizations and/or ICU admissions** also continued in EW 8 with only three countries/territories (Anguilla, Curacao, and Chile) reporting an increase in hospitalizations and two reporting an increase in ICU admissions (Chile and Saint Lucia).

The SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern (VOC) Omicron has now been detected in 49 countries and territories of the region of date. The latest two countries to identify the VOC were Guyana and the Bahamas.

Figure 1: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW) of report and WHO region. As of EW 8 2022.

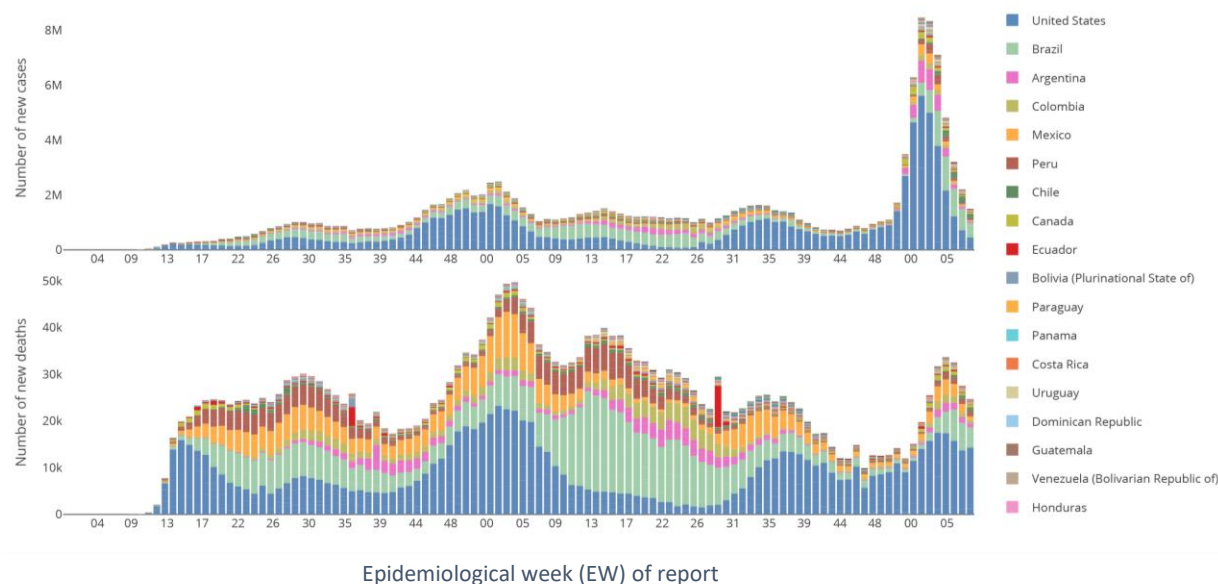


Source: Data from [WHO COVID-19 dashboard](https://www.who.int/dashboards/covid19)

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 – An overview

Figure 2: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW) of report and country/territory. Region of the Americas. As of EW 8 2022.



Source: Data published by Ministries of Health

Weekly COVID-19 cases declined for sixth consecutive week in 2022 with nearly 1.5 million new cases reported in EW 8 – a 32% decrease compared to the previous week (**Figure 2**). The decreasing trend was observed across all four sub-regions with similar percentages in the overall weekly decline (**Table 1**). A summary of the changes in weekly incidence rate per 100,000 population at the sub-national level is presented in the map available in Annex 1.

Table 1: Weekly change (%) in cases and deaths between EW 7 and EW 8 by subregion. Region of the Americas

Subregion	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Cases EW 7	Deaths EW 7	Cases EW 8	Deaths EW 8	% Change Cases	% Change Deaths
North America	86,989,342	1,295,532	810,511	16,026	531,549	15,655	-34.40%	-2.30%
Central America	2,960,505	48,677	74,779	416	49,495	482	-33.80%	15.90%
South America	53,970,123	1,253,839	1,282,230	10,772	884,547	8,281	-31.00%	-23.10%
Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands	3,182,471	32,020	32,626	310	23,457	232	-28.10%	-25.20%

Source: Data published by Ministries of Health

Similarly, **weekly deaths** also declined in the region for a third consecutive week with approximately 24,650 new deaths reported during EW 8 – a 10% decline compared to EW 7 (**Figure 2**). Deaths increased in Central America by nearly 16% during EW 8 but declined in all other subregions (range – 2.3% to – 25.5%) **Table 1**. However, despite a declining trend in the aggregate deaths for the other subregions – many countries and territories continue to report elevated levels of weekly deaths relative to the end of 2021, prior to the Omicron surge.

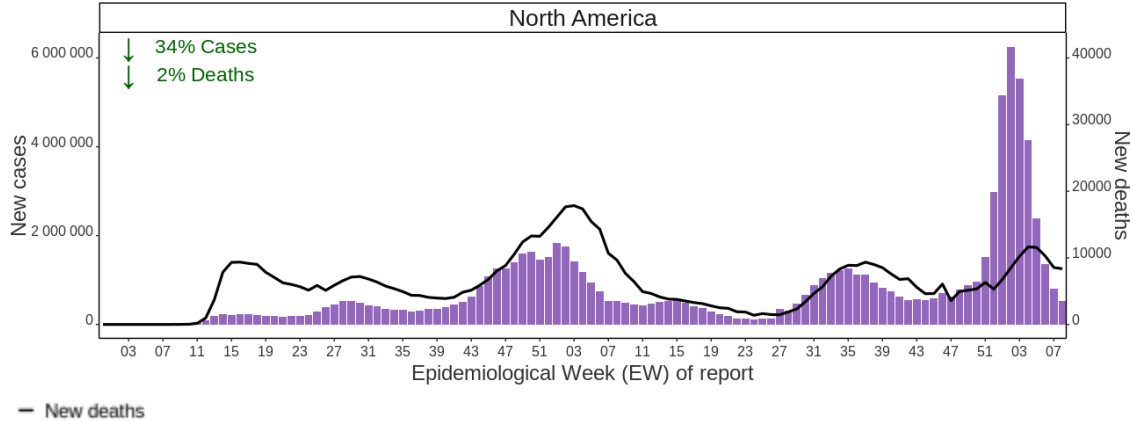
Out of 35 countries and territories with available data for **hospitalizations**, only three reported an increase – Anguilla (3 admissions, 200% increase), Curacao (10 admissions, 25% increase), and Chile (5,389 admissions, 7% increase). Of the 29 countries and territories with available data for **ICU admissions**, two reported an increase compared to last week – Saint Lucia (4 admissions, 300% increase) and Chile (1,106 admissions, 11% increase).

A summary of the COVID-19 trends for EW 8 by subregion is presented below.

North America

While the overall trend for COVID-19 cases have been on the decline in all three countries for the past several weeks reaching low pre-omicron levels (**Figure 3**), COVID-19 deaths remained elevated in Canada (551 deaths, no % change) and the United States (14, 290 deaths, 4% increase) as of EW 8, despite their respective weekly trends being on the decline.

Figure 3: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **North America.** Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 8 2022.

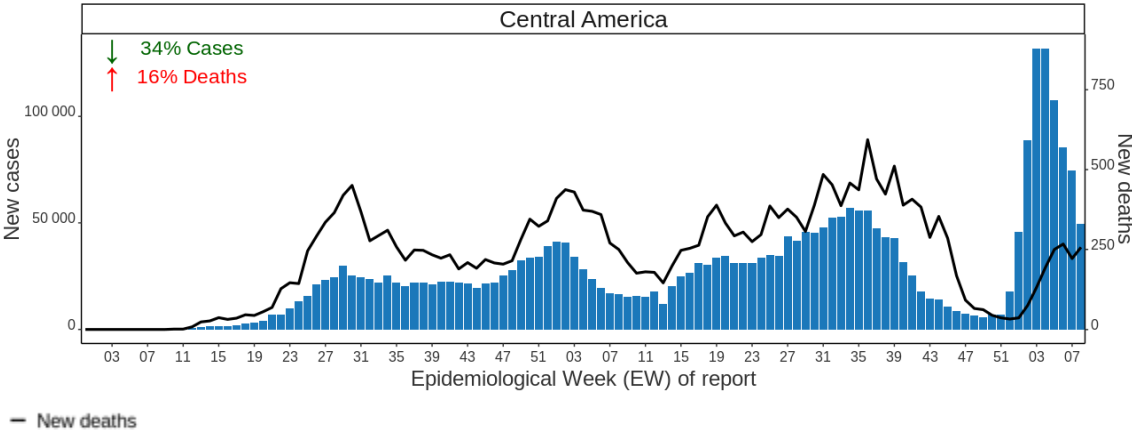


Similarly, while COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions have been trending downwards in both Canada and the United States for the past four to five weeks, the admission levels in Canada are still elevated in the context of the entire pandemic with over 6000 hospitalizations including approximately 770 ICU admissions reported in EW 8. In the United States, both hospitalizations and ICU admissions appear to have decreased to pre-omicron levels.

Central America

In Central America, the overall COVID-19 incidence is on a downward trend as of EW 8 (**Figure 4**) even though weekly cases remain elevated in some of the countries/territories of this subregion (e.g., Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala). Weekly deaths increased in Central America by nearly 16% this week compared to the previous week (Figure 4), driven primarily by the increases in Honduras (79 new deaths, 139% increase) and Guatemala (195 new deaths, 47% increase).

Figure 4: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **Central America.** Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 8 2022.



Despite a declining trend compared to the previous weeks, the absolute number of weekly deaths remained elevated in most other countries and territories in Central America relative to the end of 2021 (EW 52), prior to the Omicron surge. For example, both Costa Rica and Panama have been observing a consistent decline in deaths for the past two to three weeks. However, weekly deaths were 13 times higher in Costa Rica and 3 times higher in Panama during EW 8 compared to EW 52, 2021 when both countries had some of the lowest weekly deaths reported in the entire pandemic. **Table 2**

Table 2: Changes in COVID-19 severity indicators (deaths, hospitalizations, & ICU Admissions). EW 7 vs. EW 8 2022 & EW 52, 2021 vs. EW 8, 2022. **Central America**, Region of the Americas.

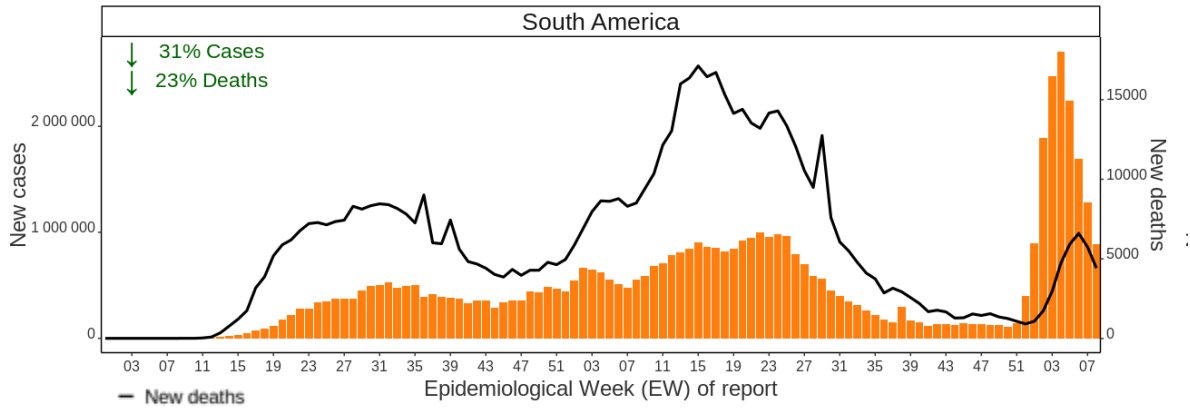
Country	% change Hospit (EW 7 vs. EW 8)	% change ICU (EW 7 vs. EW 8)	% change deaths (EW 7 vs. EW 8)	Deaths EW 52, 2021	Deaths EW 8, 2022	% change deaths (EW 52, 2021 vs. EW 8, 2022)
Belize	-35.0%	-66.7%	-10.0%	10	9	-10.0%
Costa Rica	-3.5%	-6.9%	-13.9%	8	105	1212.5%
El Salvador	NA	NA	-30.2%	6	30	400.0%
Guatemala	NA	NA	46.6%	12	195	1525.0%
Honduras	-13.9%	0.0%	139.4%	5	79	1480.0%
Nicaragua	NA	NA	0.0%	1	1	0.0%
Panama	-34.4%	-7.6%	-14.9%	19	63	231.6%

The same trend has been observed for hospitalizations and/or ICU admissions in both countries – a declining trend for the past few weeks but elevated levels of admissions in the context of the entire pandemic.

South America

In South America, all other nine countries besides **Chile**, reported a decrease in cases, deaths (**Figure 5**), and hospitalizations and/or ICU admissions during EW 8 compared to EW 7. However, the trends for some of these countries should be interpreted with caution due to delays in reporting and other influencing factors.

Figure 5: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **South America**. Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 8 2022.



While cases also continue to decline in Chile (17% decrease), severity indicators like deaths (19.4% increase), hospitalizations (7.1% increase), and ICU admissions (11.3% increase) continue accelerating as of EW 8.

In all the other countries of the subregion, severity indicators like deaths and hospitalizations/ICU admissions have been declining consistently for the past 3 – 4 weeks. However, weekly deaths are still relatively elevated (range: 131% - 1,087%) compared to the low numbers reported at the end of 2021 – pre-Omicron – in a vast majority of these countries and territories. (See **Table 3**)

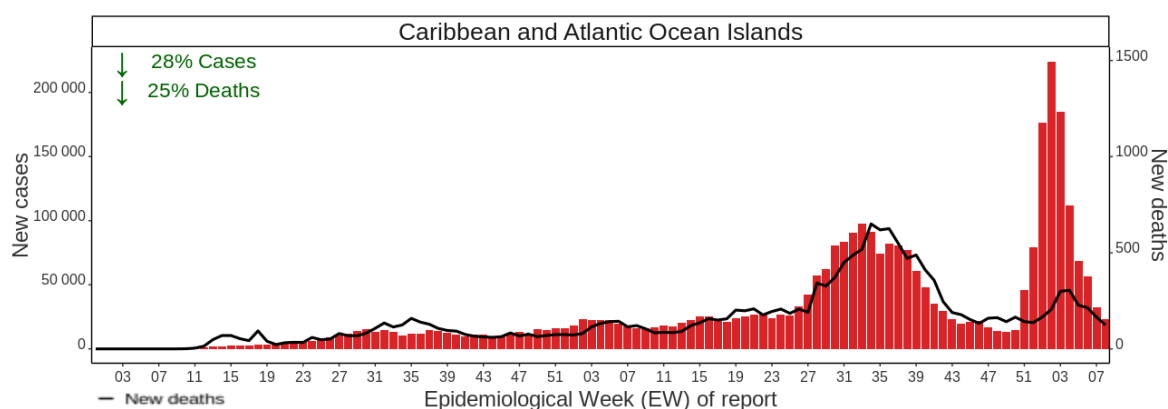
Table 3: Changes in COVID-19 severity indicators (deaths, hospitalizations, & ICU Admissions). EW 7 vs. EW 8 2022 & EW 52, 2021 vs. EW 8, 2022. **South America**, Region of the Americas.

Country	% change Hospit (EW 7 vs. EW 8)	% change ICU (EW 7 vs. EW 8)	% change deaths (EW 7 vs. EW 8)	Deaths EW 52, 2021	Deaths EW 8, 2022	% change deaths (EW 52,2021 vs. EW 8, 2022)
Argentina	NA	-22.1%	-28.0%	173	863	398.8%
Bolivia	NA	NA	-61.4%	150	34	-77.3%
Brazil			-25.8%	664	4,361	556.8%
Chile	7.1%	11.3%	19.4%	256	874	241.4%
Colombia	-29.9%	-30.7%	-42.8%	127	632	397.6%
Ecuador			-41.6%	34	80	135.3%
Paraguay	-21.5%	-15.4%	-38.6%	33	186	463.6%
Peru	-29.2%	-12.0%	-2.3%	236	1,119	374.2%
Uruguay		-14.0%	-24.0%	8	95	1087.5%
Venezuela	-17.7%	0.0%	-40.3%	16	37	131.3%

Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands

In the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands subregion, weekly cases and deaths decreased by 28% and 25% respectively compared to the previous week (**Figure 6**). The only two countries to report an increase in cases during EW 8 were Dominica (17.3% increase) and Bermuda (2.5% increase) – though the trends for Dominica should be interpreted with caution due to delays in reporting and other influencing factors.

Figure 6: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands**. Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 8 2022.



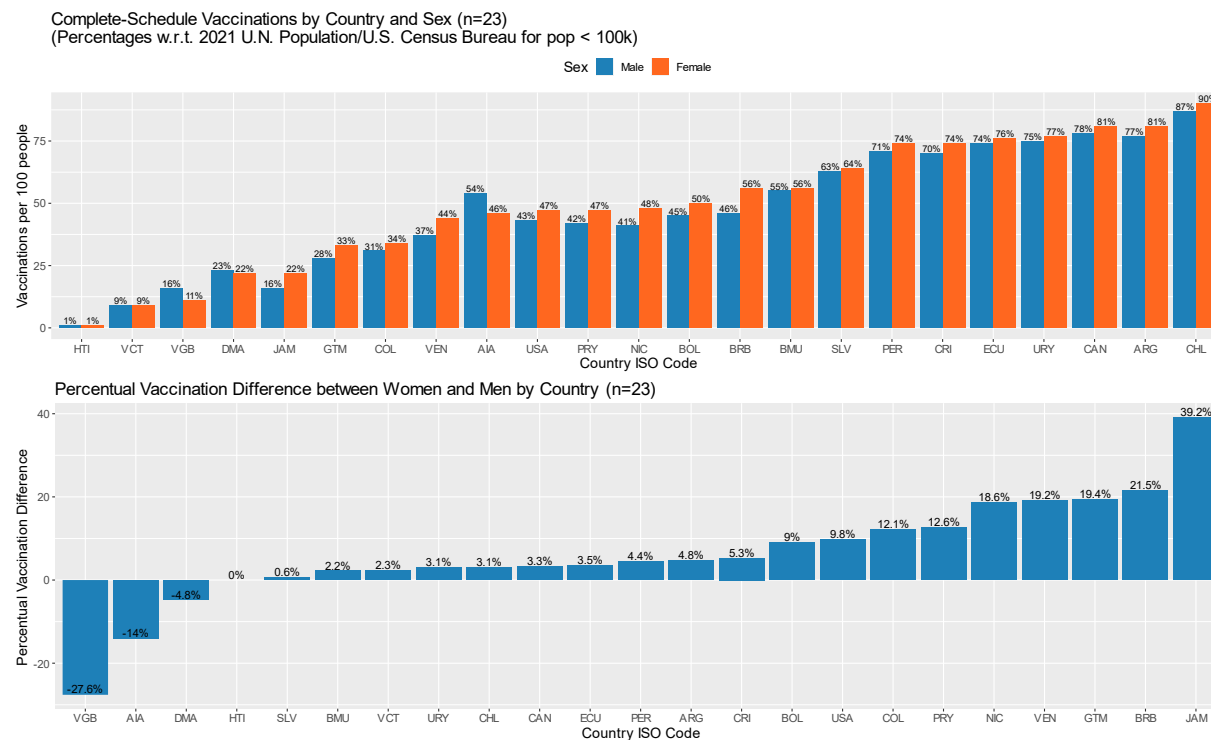
Out of 33 countries and territories with reported COVID-19 deaths, six observed a relative increase during EW 8 compared to the previous week – Aruba, French Guiana, Grenada, Jamaica, Martinique, and Saint Kitts and Nevis (range: 21% - 725%). While the overall trends in weekly deaths have declined to one of the lowest levels since the onset of the pandemic in some of the larger countries/territories in the subregion (e.g., Cuba, Dominica Republic, and Puerto Rico), weekly deaths remain elevated on other islands like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in the context of the entire pandemic.

Besides Chile in South America, the other three countries/territories reporting increases in hospitalizations/ICU admissions during EW 8 were in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Island subregion (Anguilla, Curacao, and Saint Lucia). However, the overall trends in all three countries and territories are on the decline since their peaks in early 2022. Similar to deaths, the levels of hospitalizations/ICU admissions in some of the more populated countries/territories like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago remain elevated in the context of the entire pandemic despite the trends declining for the past several weeks.

Immunization

From the 23 countries and territories of the Region that report data stratified by sex, 19 countries/territories have vaccinated a greater proportion of women than men (as noted by the positive percentual difference). In comparison, three have vaccinated a greater proportion of men. Haiti is the only country that does not show a difference in vaccination by sex.

Figure 7: COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the Region of the Americas by country/territory and sex. As of EW 8, 2022



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

*Based on UN population projections for 2021 and US Census Bureau projections for countries with less than 100,000 inhabitants. For more information, please visit https://ais.paho.org/imm/IM_DosisAdmin-Vacunacion.asp.

It is important to note that countries do not necessarily update the information presented here synchronously. Additionally, coverage percentages are based on UN Population Estimates for 2021 except for countries/territories with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. For those countries, the reference population is taken from the US. Census Bureau estimates database.

Genomic Surveillance

Through PAHO's Genomic Surveillance Regional Network and the work from the Member States, more than 285,331 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 1 March 2022.

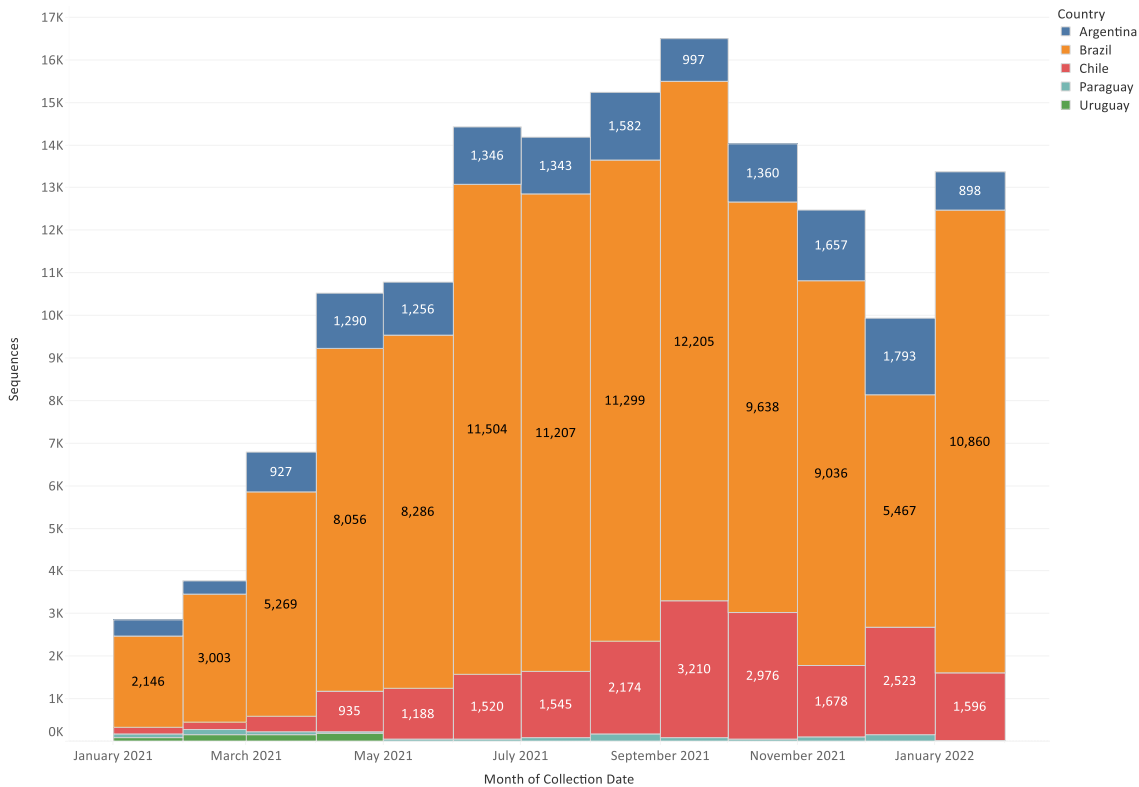
After the introduction of the Omicron VOC in the Americas by the end of December 2021, it has rapidly increased in prevalence and has been officially reported by 48 Countries or Territories. Omicron is now predominant in all PAHO countries with the BA.1 and BA.1.1 sub lineages identified in more than 98% of the characterized samples.

Spotlight: Sequencing and genomic surveillance in the Southern Cone

During the last year (January 2021 to January 2022), 144,885 whole genome sequences from the South Cone Countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay) have been generated as part of the genomic surveillance systems. The five designated VOCs (Alpha-last detected 7 December 2021; Beta-last detected 12 August 2021; Gamma-last detected 30 December 2021; Delta-last detected 27 January 2022; and Omicron) have been detected in addition to VOIs Lambda (last detected 17 December 2021) and Mu (last detected 19 December 2021) along with other lineages/variants.

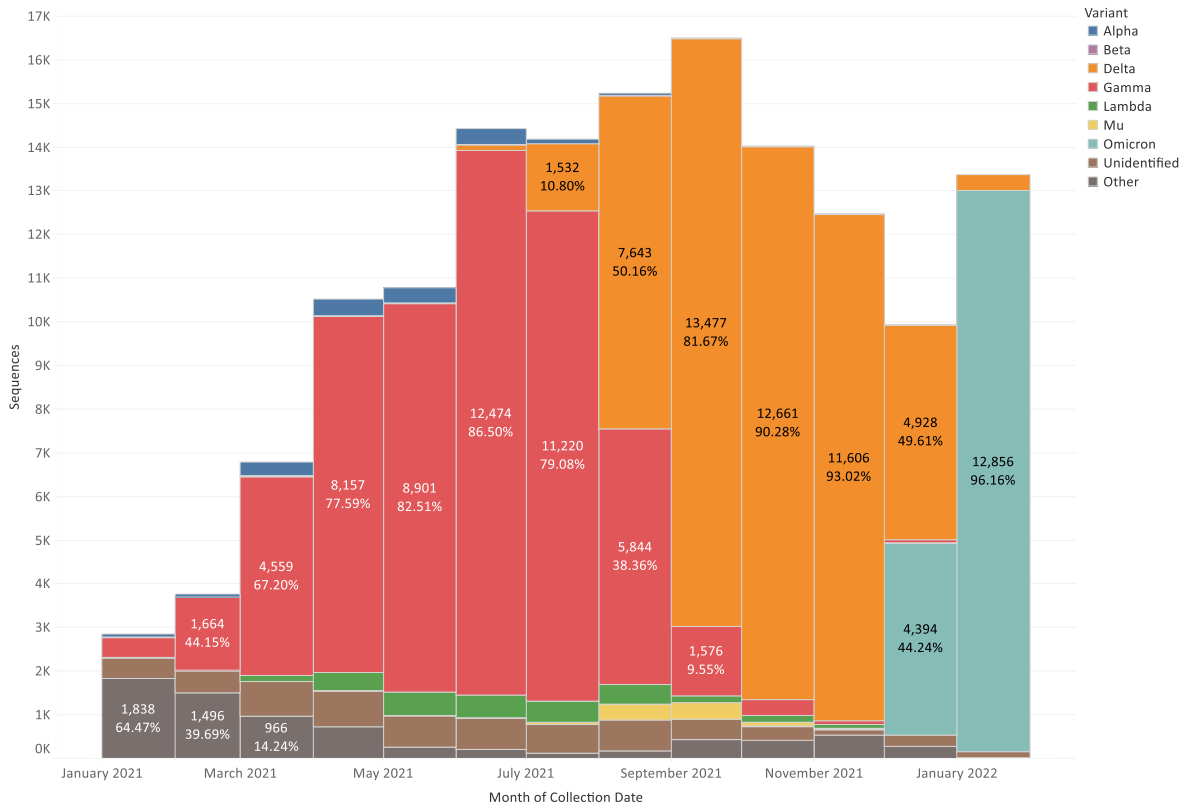
From the Southern Cone Countries, Delta VOC was first detected in April 2021 by Paraguay, and rapidly expanded to become predominant by mid-July in all the Southern Cone Countries. VOC Omicron was first detected in the subregion on 26 October 2021 in Chile. After replacing Delta, Omicron has been predominant in all the subregion and has been detected in more than 4,841 samples (98%) sequenced and reported to GISAID during the last 6 weeks. So far, BA.1 (76%) and BA.1.1 (24%) sub-lineages are predominant with only 25 BA.2 samples reported (Argentina, Brazil, Chile) and still no BA.3 detected.

Figure 7: Number of sequences generated monthly by countries in the Southern Cone.



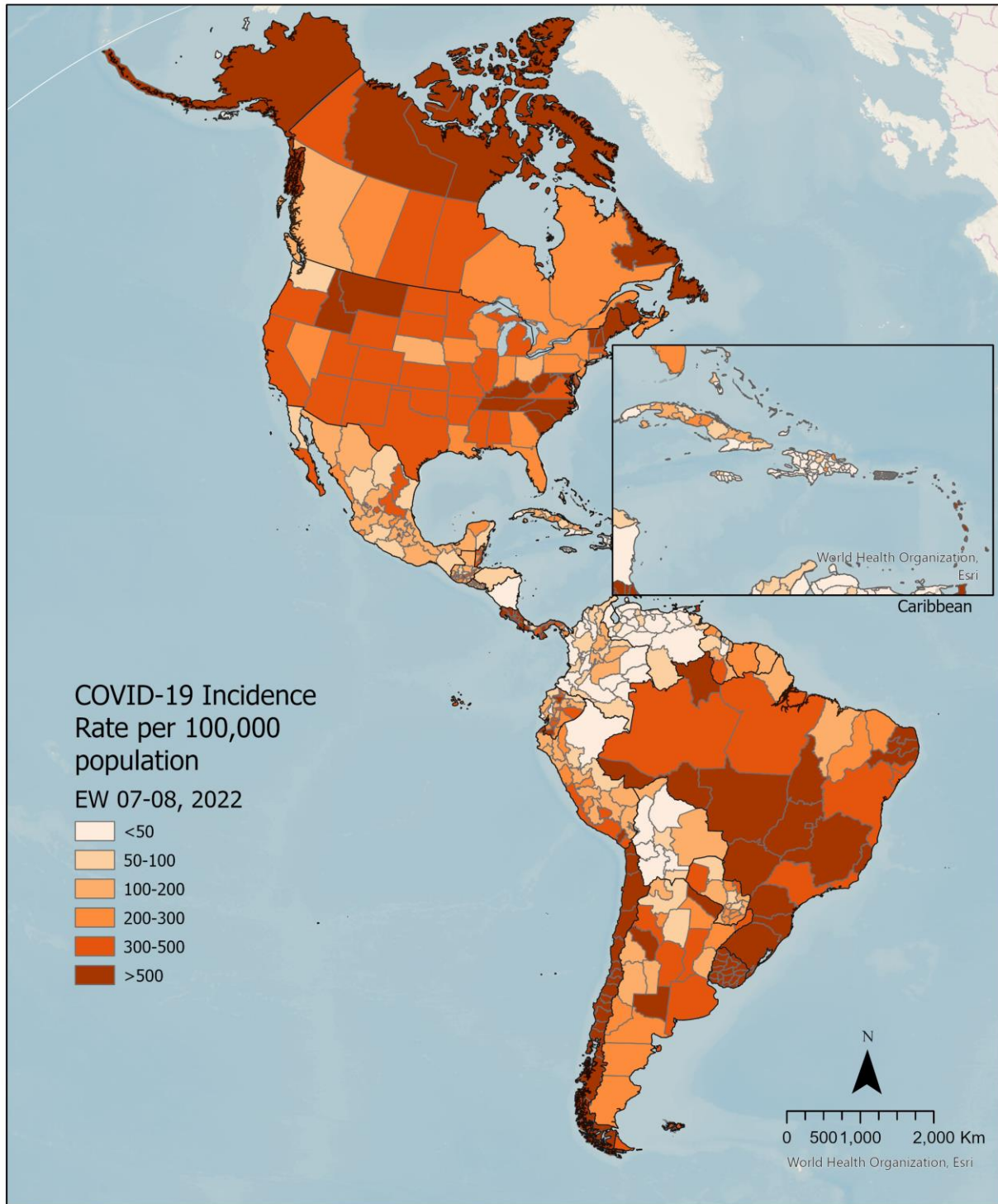
Source: GISAID

Figure 8: SARS-CoV-2 variants detected and reported in the Southern Cone (January 2021 – February 2022)



Annex 1

Map 1: COVID-19 incidence per 100,000 population in the Region of the Americas reported in EW 07 and EW 08 (2022).



Map 1 represents the incidence rate of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the Region of the Americas reported in EW 07 and 08, 2022.

Overall, COVID-19 incidence in all sub-regions followed the declining trend of the past few weeks, with the largest declines observed in North America and in the Caribbean compared to the previous two weeks. The highest rates in the region in the last two weeks were seen in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Guadeloupe, Curacao, Barbados, Dominica, Martinique and Trinidad and Tobago.

In **North America**, most states in the United States of America reported over 300 cases per 100,000 population and a handful (mostly northeast and southern states) reported over 500 cases per 100,000 people. This represents a decrease compared to the previous two weeks. In Canada, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick reported the highest incidence rates in the country (over 500 cases per 100,000 people). In Mexico, the D.F. reported over 500 cases per 100,000 people, the remaining states reported mostly between 50 and 200 cases.

In **South America**, while incidence was highest in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, few territories in Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru reported over 500 cases per 100,000. For all countries, a decline in incidence was observed compared to the previous two weeks.

In **Central America**, Costa Rica reported the highest incidence with >500 cases per 100,000 population in all its territories. Few territories of Panama, Guatemala and Belize also reported over 500 cases per 100,000.

In **the Caribbean**, while some islands mentioned above reported over 500 cases per 100,000 people, most territories in Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the Bahamas reported below 200 cases per 100,000 people. In the Guianese shield, Region 9 in Guyana reported the highest incidence again (between 300-500 cases per 100,000), and remaining territories including Suriname and French Guiana reported below 300 cases per 100,000.

Annex 2

SARS-CoV-2 variants identified in the Region of the Americas as of 1 March 2022

subregion	Country	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta	Omicron
North America	Canada	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	United States of America	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South America	Argentina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	✓		✓	✓	
	Brazil	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Chile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Colombia	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Ecuador	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Paraguay	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Peru	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Uruguay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	✓		✓	✓	✓
Central America	Belize	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Costa Rica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	El Salvador	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Guatemala	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Honduras	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Nicaragua	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Panama	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands	Anguilla	✓			✓	✓
	Antigua and Barbuda	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Aruba	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Bahamas	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Barbados	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Bermuda	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Bonaire	✓		✓	✓	✓
	British Virgin Islands	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Cayman Islands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cuba	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Curaçao	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Dominica	✓			✓	
	Dominican Republic	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	✓	✓			
	French Guiana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Grenada	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Guadeloupe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Guyana	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Haiti	✓		✓	✓	
	Jamaica	✓			✓	✓
	Martinique	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Montserrat	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Puerto Rico	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Saba				✓	
	Saint Barthélemy	✓			✓	✓
	Saint Kitts and Nevis				✓	✓
	Saint Lucia	✓			✓	✓
	Saint Martin	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Saint Pierre and Miquelon				✓	✓
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines			✓	✓	✓
Sint Maarten	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Suriname	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Trinidad and Tobago	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Turks and Caicos Islands	✓		✓	✓		
United States Virgin Islands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

✓ Sequence is not available at GISAID

✓ Official source available