

Weekly COVID-19 Epidemiological Update – Region of the Americas

Issue 8, published 29 March 2022

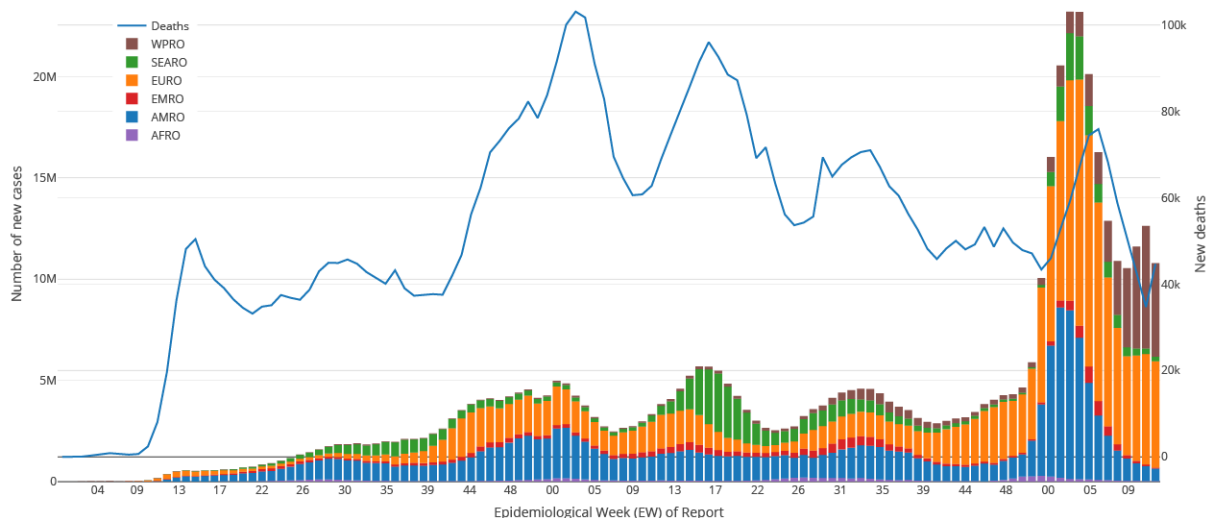
Contents:

- Executive summary including global overview
- Regional and subregional trends
- Immunization
- Genomic Surveillance

Executive Summary

- **Globally**, approximately 10.9 million new **COVID-19 cases** were reported in epidemiological week (EW) 12 (20 – 26 March 2022) – a 13.4% decrease compared to the previous week (**Figure 1**). The decrease in cases was observed across all six WHO regions. Global deaths on the other hand, increased by 29% - partly due to the 116% increase in weekly deaths observed in the SEARO region and partly due to a data artifact from the addition of back-logged deaths in the AMRO region (Chile) during EW 12.¹
- **In the Region of the Americas**, COVID-19 cases have been declining consistently for the past 10 weeks with 619,321 new cases reported in EW 12 – a decline of 15.6% compared to the previous week. The decreasing trend was observed across all four sub-regions.
- **Weekly deaths** in the region increased by 96% in EW 12 compared to the previous week – primarily due to the data artifact from the addition of more than 11,000 back-logged COVID-19 deaths in Chile¹.
- COVID-19 **hospitalizations** increased in six countries/territories during EW 12 compared to the previous week – all in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean subregion (range: 10% - 50%). ICU admissions increased in three countries and territories – Saint Lucia (100%), Honduras (58%), and Cuba (28.5%) – compared to EW 11.
- The **SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern (VOC)** Omicron has now been detected in 53 countries and territories of the region of date. The latest two countries to identify the VOC were Haiti and Saba.

Figure 1: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW) of report and WHO region. As of EW 12 2022.

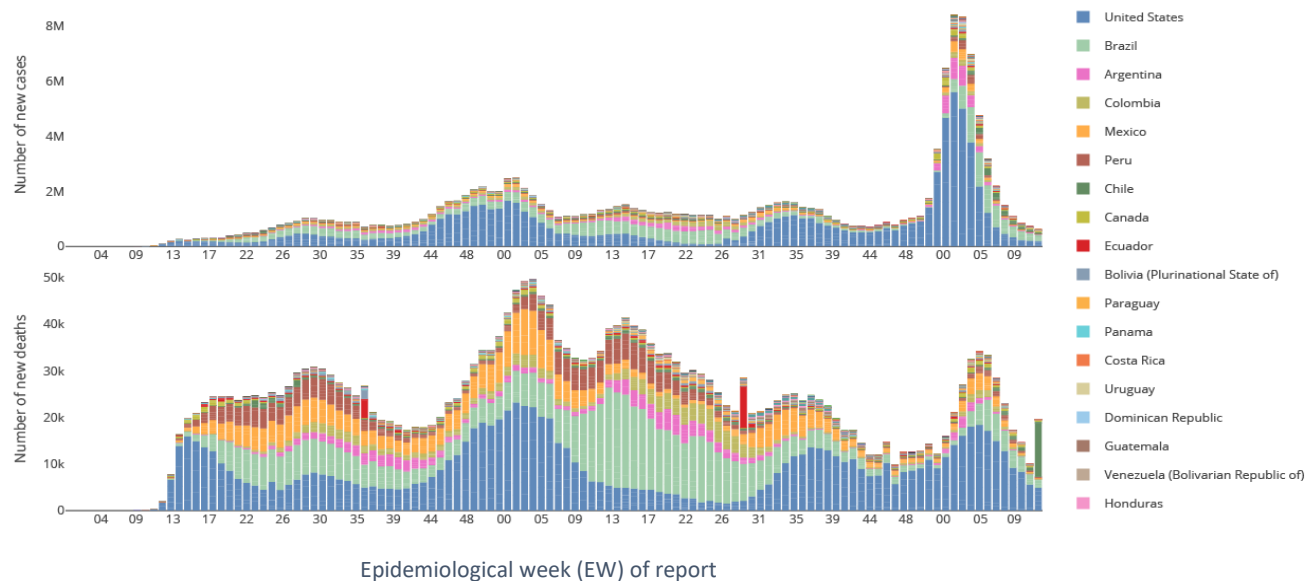


Source: Data from [WHO COVID-19 dashboard](#)

¹ Chile Ministry of Health. *Changes in the report of COVID-19 deaths*. 21 March 2022. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3DkLVW5>

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 12, 2022.



Source: Data published by Ministries of Health

Weekly COVID-19 cases declined for the 10th consecutive week in 2022 with more than 620,000 new cases reported in EW 12 – a 15.5% decrease compared to the previous week (**Figure 2**). The decreasing trend was observed across all four sub-regions with the largest relative decreases observed in the subregions of Central America (28% decrease) and South America (23% decrease) (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Weekly change (%) in cases and deaths between EW 11 and EW 12, 2022 by subregion. Region of the Americas

Subregion	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Cases EW 11	Deaths EW 11	Cases EW 12	Deaths EW 12	% Variation Cases	% Variation Deaths
North America	88,318,954	1,332,562	257,306	6,155	248,412	5,299	-3.50%	-13.90%
Central America	3,075,837	49,590	26,042	196	18,842	139	-27.60%	-29.10%
South America	55,753,171	1,283,376	427,427	3,588	329,649	14,168	-22.90%	294.90%
Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands	3,274,745	32,399	23,404	98	22,418	67	-4.20%	-31.60%

Source: Data published by Ministries of Health

In EW 12, the **weekly COVID-19 deaths** increased by 96% compared to the previous week – primarily due to the data artifact from the addition of more than 11,000 back-logged COVID-19 deaths in Chile¹. Only three countries/territories experienced an increase in weekly deaths during EW 12 – Barbados (33%), Puerto Rico (25%), and Guatemala (1.5%).

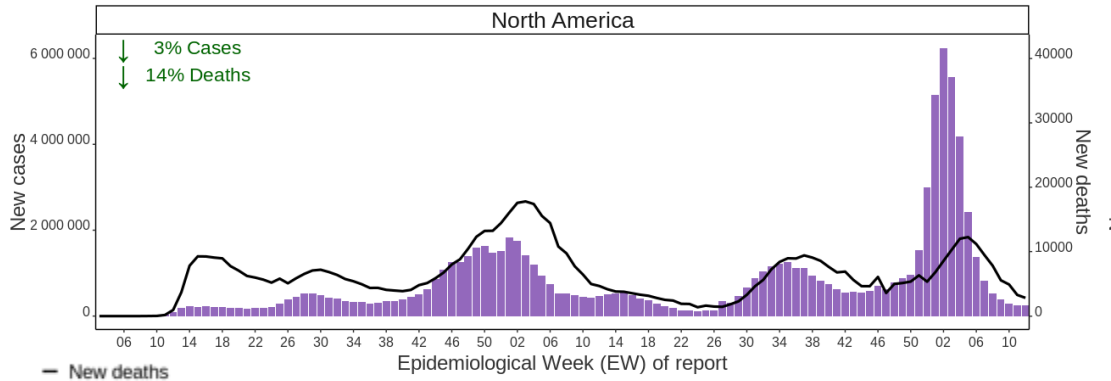
Out of 35 countries and territories with available data for **hospitalizations**, six reported an increase during EW 12, and all were in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean subregion – Grenada (50%), Cuba (26%), Martinique (24%), Puerto Rico (13.7%), Barbados (13%), and Bermuda (10%). Of the 29 countries and territories with available data for **ICU admissions**, three reported an increase compared to last week – Saint Lucia (2 admissions, 100% increase), Honduras (19 admissions, 58% increase), and Cuba (27 admissions, 29% increase).

A summary of the COVID-19 trends for EW 12 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 two months (**Figure 3**), Canada experienced a slight increase during EW 12 with over 42,000 new cases reported – a 13% relative increase compared to the previous week. In the United States, the Omicron Variant of Concern (VOC) now accounts for 100% of the weekly variants identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)). Of note, the proportion of the [sub-variant BA.2](#) has steadily increased from 2.2% at the end of February to nearly 55% as of 26 March 2022.

Figure 3: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **North America.** Region of the Americas. EW 6, 2020 – EW 12 2022.

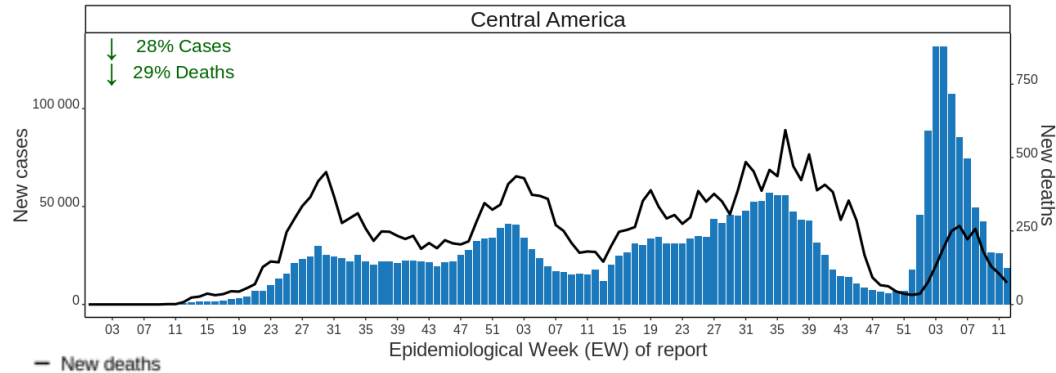


COVID-19 deaths continued to decline in all three countries during EW 12 with largest decrease observed in Mexico (51.5% decrease), followed by Canada (13.3% decrease), and the United States (12.2% decrease). While COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions have also been trending downwards in Canada and the United States, the admission levels in Canada are still moderately elevated in the context of the entire pandemic with approximately 3,830 hospitalizations including 431 ICU admissions reported in EW 12. In the United States, hospitalizations and ICU admissions decreased by 91.5% and 85% respectively compared to their peaks in EW 3, 2022.

Central America

In Central America, the overall COVID-19 incidence for the subregion is on a downward trend as of EW 12 (**Figure 4**) even though weekly cases increased by nearly 48% in Honduras and 14% in Panama compared to the previous week – cases declined in the remaining countries and territories. Weekly deaths also decreased in the subregion by nearly 29% (Figure 4) with six out of the seven countries and territories reporting a decrease during EW 12 (range: 39% decrease – 100% decrease). In Guatemala, weekly deaths increased slightly during EW 12 with 68 new deaths reported – a 1.5% increase compared to the previous week.

Figure 4: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **Central America.** Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 12, 2022

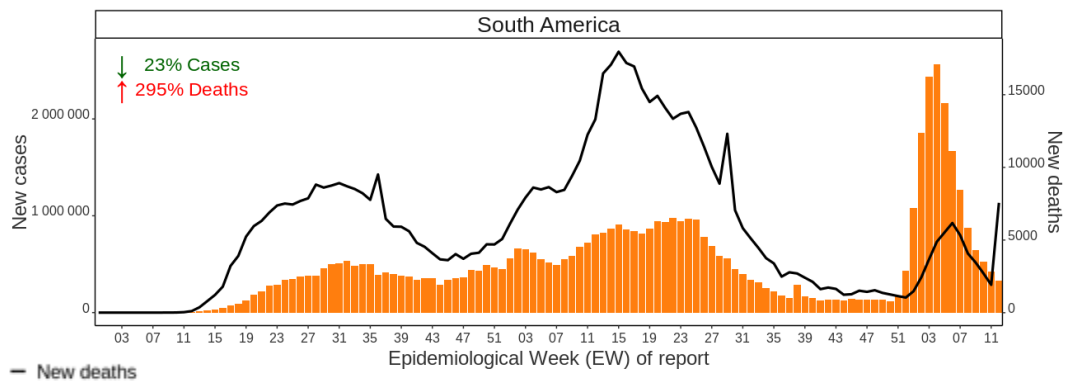


While weekly COVID-19 hospitalizations decreased in all four countries and territories with available data (range: 2% decrease – 50% decrease), ICU admissions increased in Honduras by more than 58% during EW 12 (19 new admissions) compared to the previous week. ICU admissions declined in the remaining three countries and territories during EW 12 – Costa Rica (14% decrease), Panama (25% decrease), and Belize (100% decrease).

South America

In South America, weekly COVID-19 cases declined in all 10 countries during EW 12 (range: 12.5% decrease – 56.5% decrease), leading to an overall decline of 23% for the subregion (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **South America.** Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 12, 2022

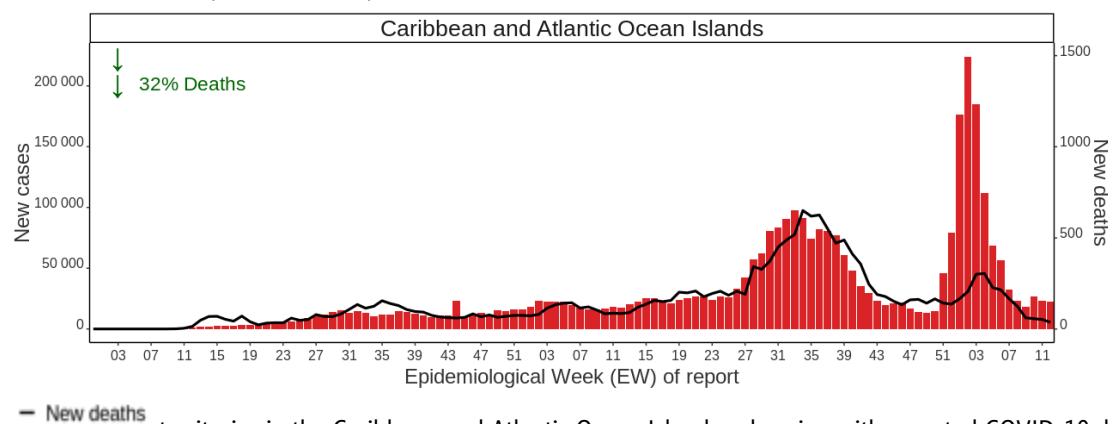


The 295% increase in subregional deaths during EW 12 for South America is due to a data artifact from Chile, where more than 11,000 new deaths were added to their database on 20 March 2022 as part of the reclassification of their COVID-19 deaths. In the remaining nine South American countries, COVID-19 deaths declined during EW 12 compared to EW 11 (range: 9% decrease – 66% decrease). COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions also continue to decline in all countries of the subregion with available data. The declining trends range from 8% to 26% decreases in hospitalizations (n=6 countries) and from 4% to 53% decreases in ICU admissions (n=8 countries).

Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands

In the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands subregion, overall weekly cases and deaths decreased by 4.2% and 31.6% respectively compared to the previous week (**Figure 6**). At the national level, cases increased in 14 out of the 34 countries and territories in the subregion (range: 2.6% increase - 200% increase) while it declined in the remaining 20 (range: 2.8% decrease – 100% decrease).

Figure 6: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW). **Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands.** Region of the Americas. EW 5, 2020 – EW 12, 2022



Out of 33 territories in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands subregion with reported COVID-19 deaths, four

observed a relative increase during EW 12 compared to the previous week – Sint Maarten (1 death, 100% increase), Dominica (1 death, 100% increase), Barbados (4 deaths, 33% increase), and Puerto Rico (5 deaths, 25% increase). Weekly deaths either remained the same (Cuba and Grenada 0% change) or declined in the remaining countries and territories of the subregion (range: 11% decrease – 100% decrease).

Table 2: COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions in EW 11 vs. EW 12, 2022. Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands. Region of the Americas

Country	Hospit. EW 11	ICU EW 11	Hospit. EW 12	ICU EW 12	% Variation Hospit.	% Variation ICU
Grenada	2	1	3	0	50.00%	-100.00%
Cuba	3,000	21	3,780	27	26.00%	28.60%
Martinique	86	12	107	11	24.40%	-8.30%
Puerto Rico	51	10	58	8	13.70%	-20.00%
Barbados	38	NA	43	NA	13.20%	
Bermuda	10	NA	11	NA	10.00%	
Saint Lucia	0	1	0	2		100.00%

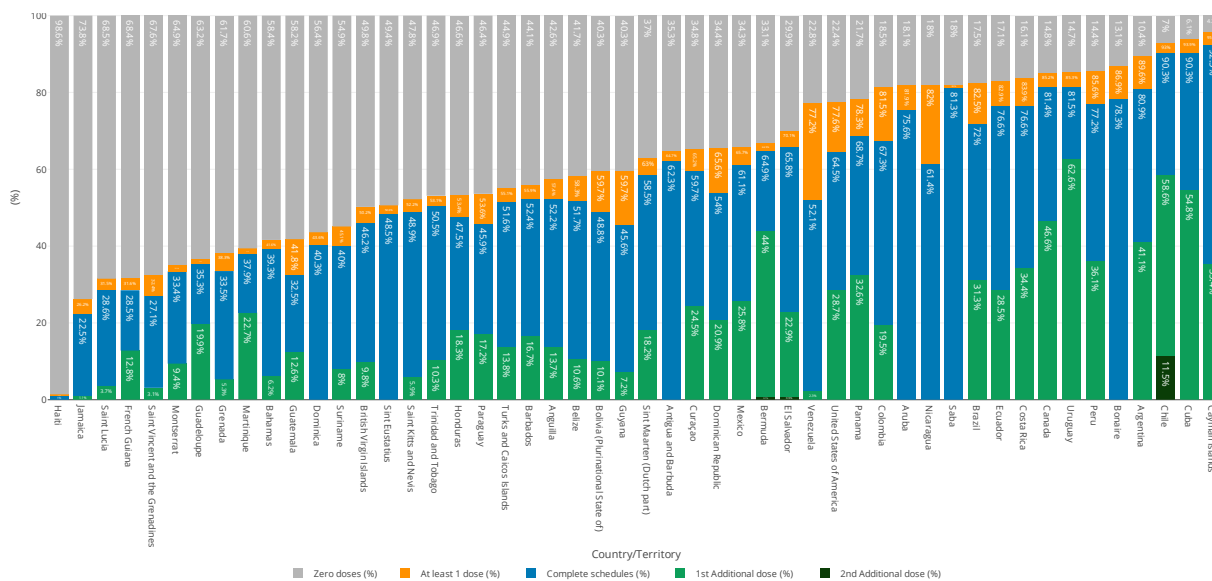
Source: Data published by Ministries of Health and analyzed by PAHO/WHO

During EW 12, all six countries and territories reporting an increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations and two out of three countries and territories reporting an increase in ICU admissions were located in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands subregion (Table 2).

Immization

The latest data on COVID-19 vaccination progress shows that 50 of the 51 countries/territories of the Americas started administering additional doses (except for Haiti). Of these, 43 report data at varying frequencies and dates (42 of these are shown in Figure 7). These additional doses – which may include third doses administered to immunocompromised individuals or people with specific pathologies, as well as booster doses applied to the general population – are included within the "1st Additional Dose" category. Furthermore, three countries started reporting data on the application of fourth doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, which is marked as "2nd Additional Dose".

Figure 7: COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the Region of the Americas by country/territory and sex. As of EW 12, 2022



Source: Data published by members 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.

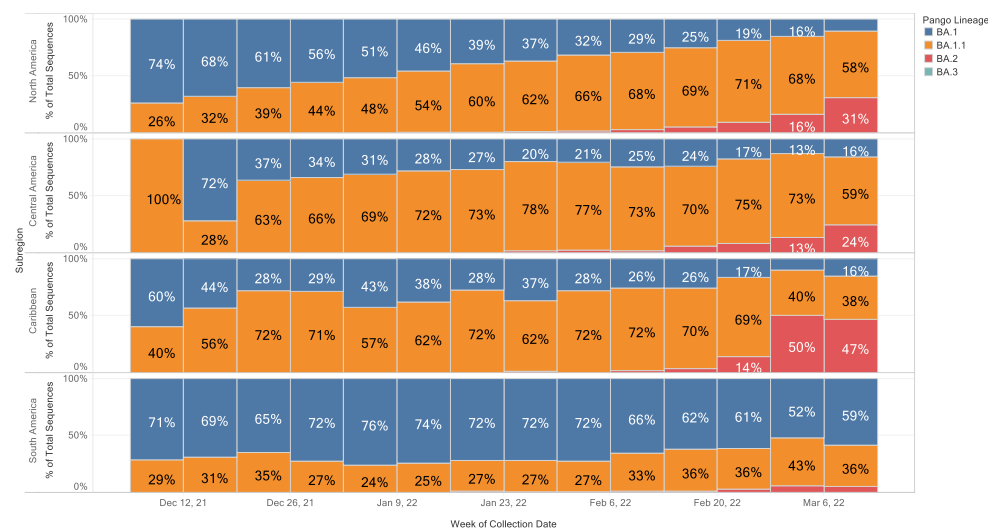
It is important to note that additional countries/territories may be applying a fourth dose of the vaccine at this time as well. However, these countries do not report disaggregated data for third and fourth dose. Therefore, both doses are both included under the "1st Additional Doses" category.

Genomic Surveillance

Through PAHO's Genomic Surveillance Regional Network and the work from the Member States, more than 307,407 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 29 March 2022.

After the introduction of the Omicron Variant of Concern (VOC) in the Americas at the end of December 2021, it has rapidly increased in prevalence and has been officially reported by 52 Countries and Territories to date. The VOC is now the predominant strain in the region and makes up almost 100% of the samples currently sequenced.

Figure 8: Circulation of Omicron Variant of Concern (VOC) sub-lineages by subregion. Region of the Americas. December 2021 to March 2022.



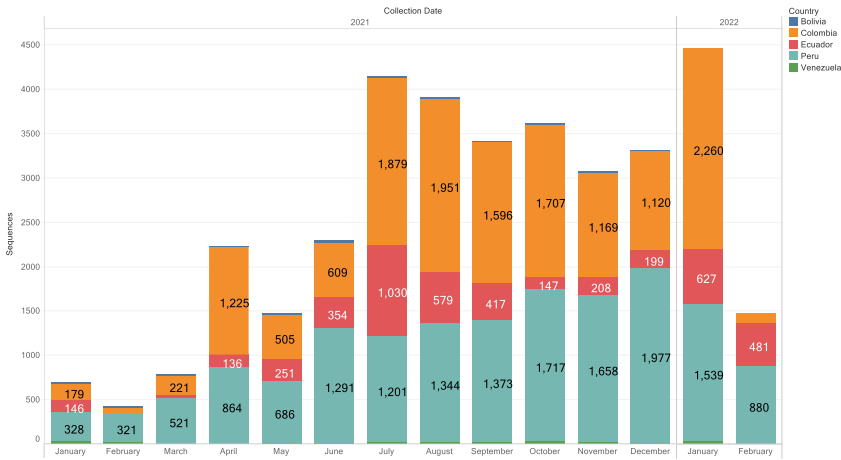
Four different sub lineages of Omicron classified as BA.1, BA.1.1, BA.2 and BA.3, have been reported globally. In the Region of the Americas, sub lineages BA.1 and BA.1.1 are predominant and have been identified in more than 94% of the characterized samples (**Figure 8**). Although BA.2 still represents less than 6% of the Omicron samples in Latin America (21% in North America), the number of identified samples has slightly increased particularly in USA, Brazil, Costa Rica and Curaçao. It is important to remember that there are not significant changes in public health impact regarding the Omicron sub lineages and all non-pharmacological measures, including vaccination and appropriate use of masks, remain extremely useful.

Spotlight: Sequencing and genomic surveillance in the Andean subregion

During the last year (January 2021 to March 2022), 35,387 whole genome sequences from the Andean countries have been generated as part of the genomic surveillance systems (**Figure 9**). Four VOCs (Alpha-last detected 3 October 2021; Gamma-last detected 23 December 2021; Delta-last detected 4 February 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 (**Figure 10**). The Beta variant was not detected in any of the Andean countries.

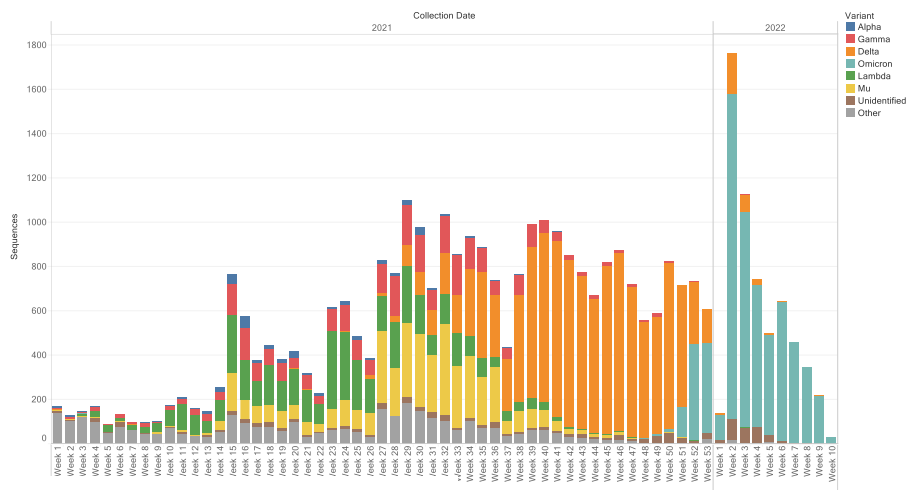
Among the Andean Countries, Delta VOC was first detected by Peru in May 2021, and rapidly expanded to become predominant by mid-July in all the subregion. VOC Omicron was first detected in the subregion on 22 November 2021 by Colombia. After replacing Delta, Omicron has been predominant in all the subregion and has been detected in more than 601 samples (99%) sequenced during the last 6 weeks. So far, BA.1 (61%) and BA.1.1 (39%) sub lineages are circulating with BA.2 identified in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru while still no detections of BA.3 in the subregion. **Figure 11**

Figure 9: Number of sequences generated monthly by countries in the Andean subregion. Region of the Americas. January 2021 – February 2022.



Source: Data from GISAID

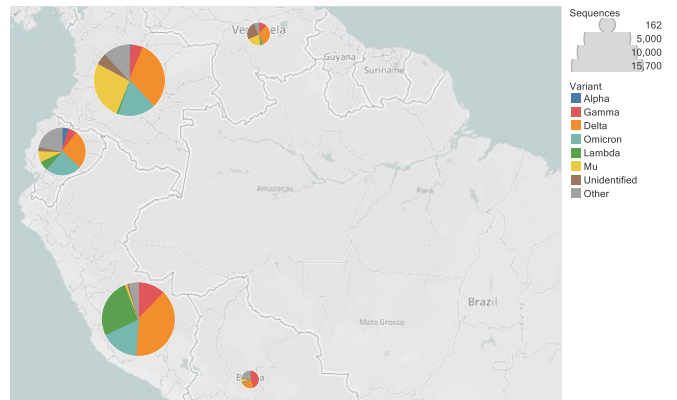
Figure 10: SARS-CoV-2 variants detected and reported by countries in the Andean subregion. Region of the Americas. July 2021 to February 2022.



Source: Data from GISAID

Figure 11: SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern (VOC) and variants of interest (VOI) detected and reported by countries in the Andean subregion. Region of the Americas. July 2021 to February 2022.

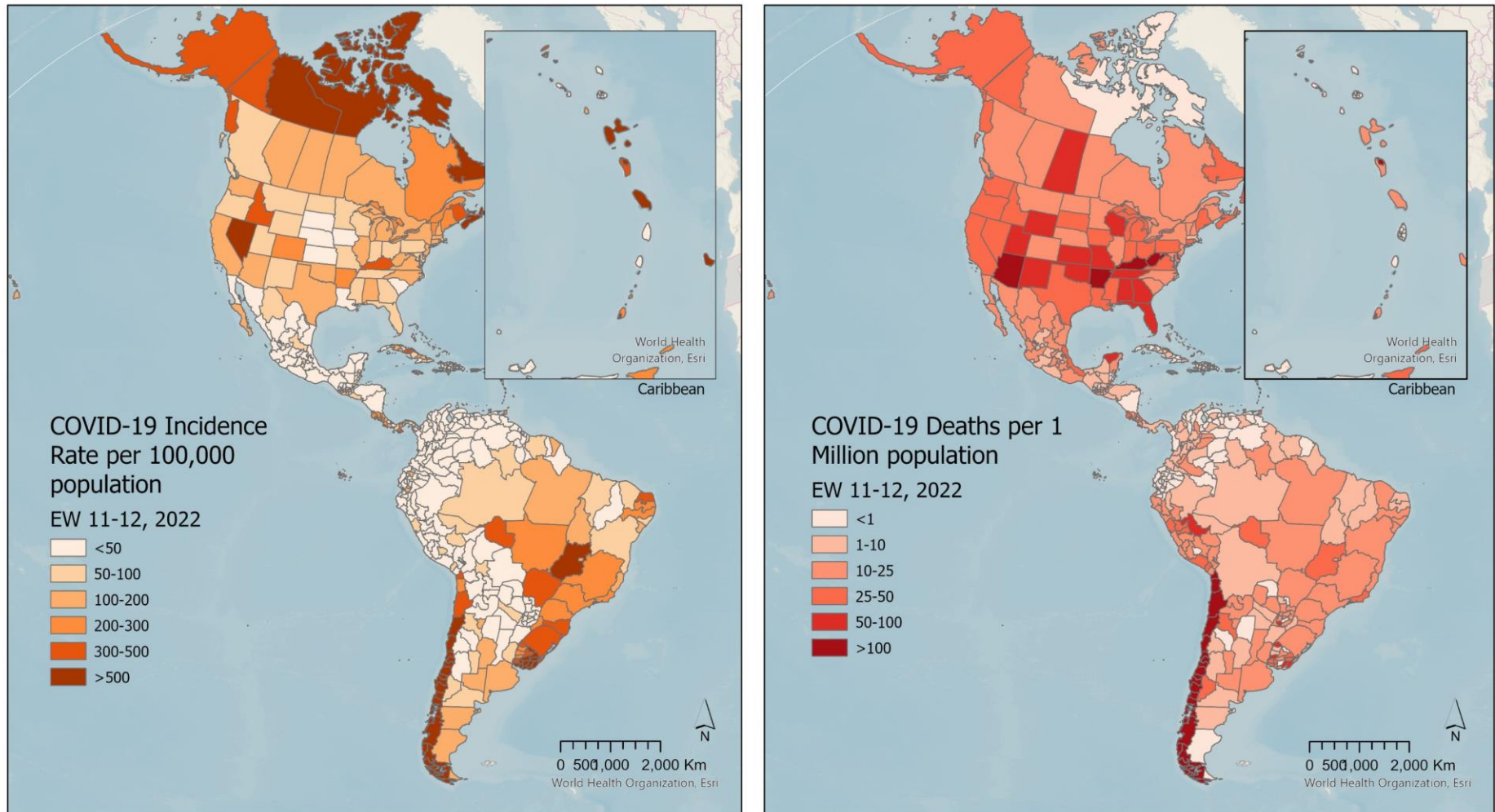
Country	Alpha	Gamma	Delta	Omicron	Lambda	Mu
Bolivia		+	+	+	+	+
Colombia	+	+	+	+	+	+
Ecuador	+	+	+	+	+	+
Peru	+	+	+	+	+	+
Venezuela	+	+	+	+	+	+



Source: Data from GISAID

Annex 1

Map 1: COVID-19 incidence per 100,000 population (left) and mortality per 1 million population (right) during EW 11 and EW 12, 2022. Region of the Americas.



Map 1 represents the COVID-19 incidence rate per 100,000 population (left) and mortality rate per 1 million population(right) in the Region of the Americas reported during EW 11 and EW 12, 2022.

Overall, the highest COVID-19 incidence per 100,000 population during EW11 and EW 12 was observed in Canada, Chile, some parts of Brazil, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Dominica, and Barbados. The highest mortality rate per 1 million population for the same period was reported from the United States of America. **Map1**

In **North America**, Nunavut, Newfoundland, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories in Canada had the highest incidence rates per 100,000 population during EW 11 and EW 12. While the United States observed one of the highest mortality rates per 1 million population, the rates are declining in most states compared to the previous two weeks.

In **Central America**, there is a continued decline in the bi-weekly incidence and mortality rates throughout the subregion, while in **South America**, Chile continues to report high incidence rates per 100,000 population in most parts of the country. Some parts of Brazil (Goiás and surrounding Federal states), and Uruguay observed some of the highest incidence rates in the sub-region.

In the **Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean** islands, Guadeloupe, Dominica, and Barbados observed high incidence rates during EW 11 and EW 12, while mortality rates continue to remain relatively low in most countries and territories of the subregion.

Annex 2

SARS-CoV-2 variants identified in the Region of the Americas as of 29 March 2022

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

■ Official source available
■ sequences not available in GISAID