

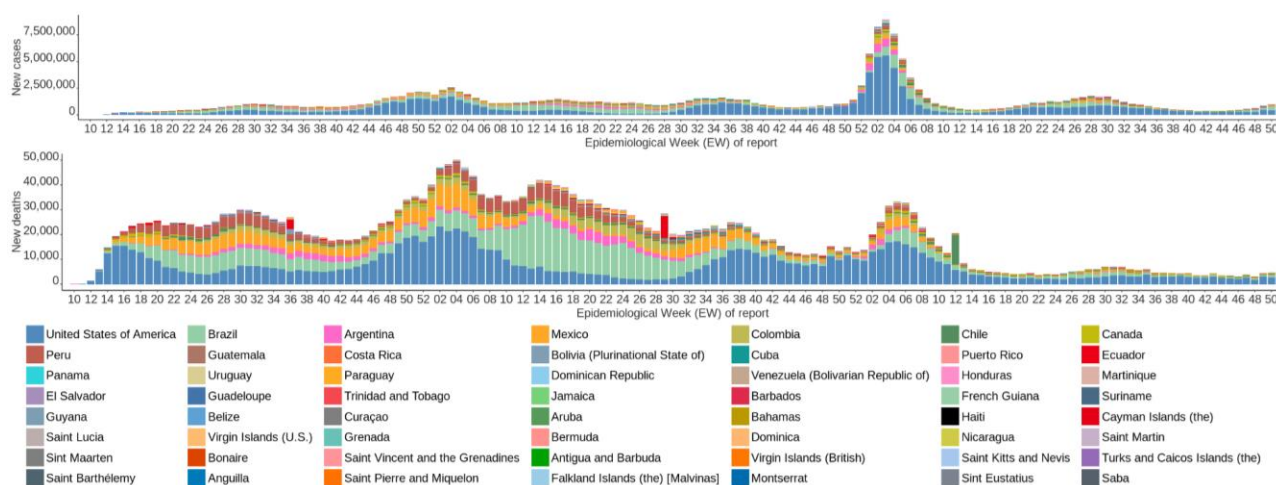
In recent weeks, there has been an increase in new outpatient COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in 12 countries/territories in the Region of the Americas, which, along with the increase in hospitalizations due to influenza, RSV, and other respiratory viruses, could impact the demand for health services. PAHO/WHO urges Member States to update the prevention, preparedness and response plans of the healthcare system across all levels in order to respond to a possible increase in outpatient cases, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and/or deaths, as well as to establish strategies for increasing the proportion of the vaccinated, mainly among vulnerable and high-risk populations.

Summary of the epidemiological situation

Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020 and up to December 20, 2022, a cumulative total of approximately 650 million COVID-19 cases including about 6.6 million deaths were reported globally. Approximately 3,821,620 new COVID-19 cases and 10,737 new COVID-19 deaths were reported in epidemiological week (EW) 50 (December 11, 2022-December 17, 2022).

In the Region of the Americas, cases increased for the sixth consecutive week. During EW 50, 1,022,218 new COVID-19 cases were reported in the region of the Americas - a relative increase of 17.9% compared to previous week (**Figure 1**). For the same period, 4,637 COVID-19 deaths were reported in the region of the Americas - a relative increase of 2.5% compared to previous week (**Figure 1**). At the subregional level, COVID-19 cases and deaths increased in two subregions – the South American subregion (49.6% and 55.0%, respectively) and the Central American subregion (10.4% and 57.7%, respectively).

Figure 1: COVID-19 cases and deaths by epidemiological week (EW) of report and country/territory. Region of the Americas. EW 3, 2020 - 51, 2022.

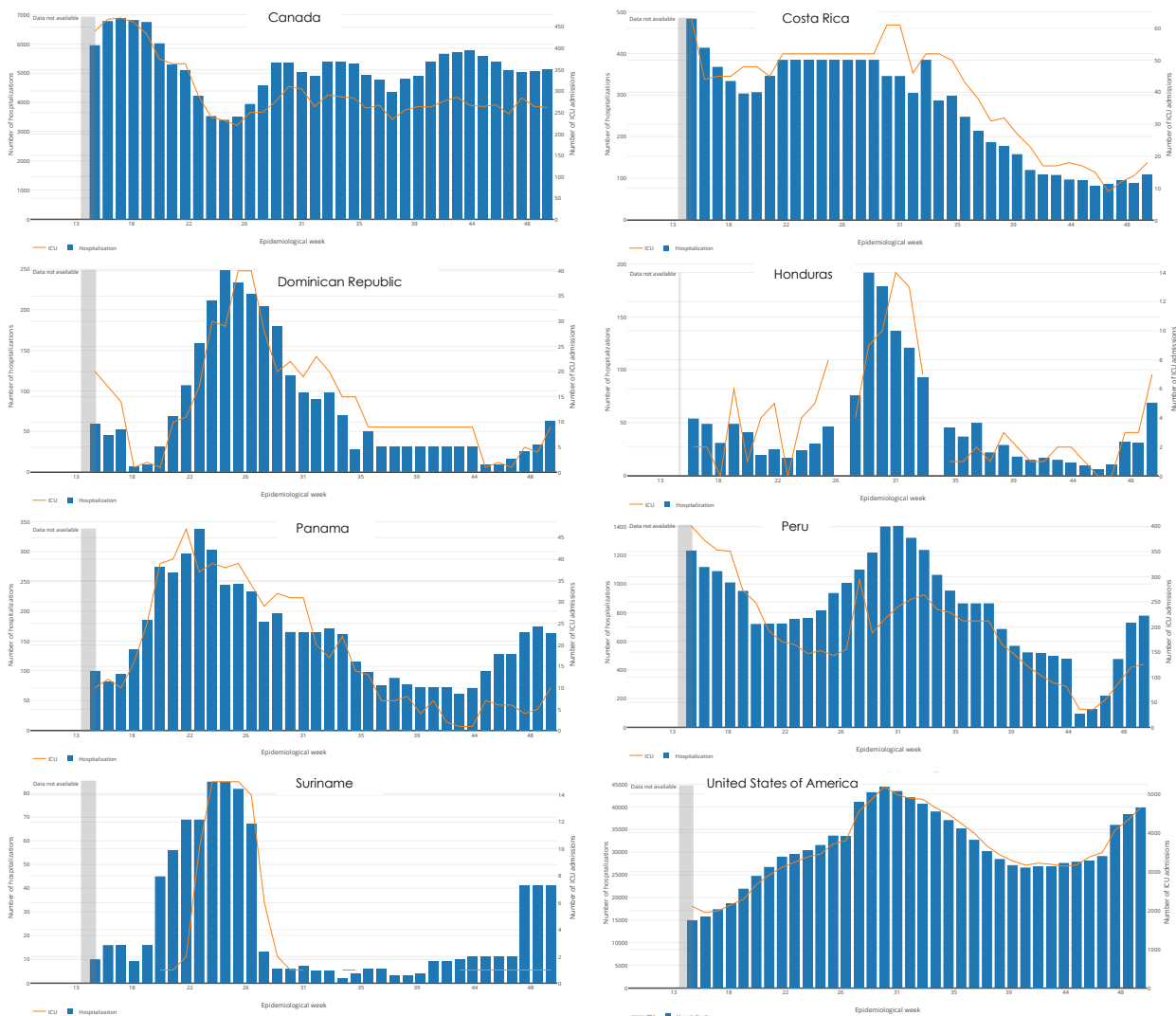


Source: WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) data reproduced by PAHO/WHO. Available at: <https://covid19.who.int/info/>

Suggested citation: Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization. Increase of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. 29 December 2022, Washington, D.C.: PAHO/WHO; 2022

Among 22 countries/territories in the region with available data¹, COVID-19 hospitalizations increased in 12 countries and territories² during EW 50 compared to the previous week. Among 16 countries and territories with available data, COVID-19 ICU admissions increased in 7 countries and territories³ (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: COVID-19 hospitalization and ICU admission by epidemiological week of report in selected countries of the Region of the Americas. EW 14, 2020 - 50, 2022.



Source: PAHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) data. Available at: <https://shiny.pahobra.org/wdc/>

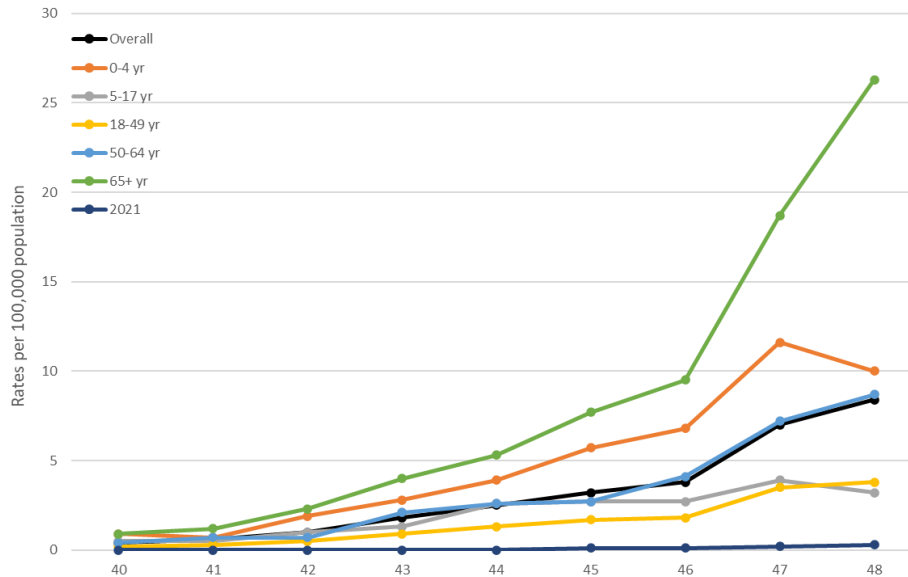
During EW 50 of 2022, the United States of America reported an increase in weekly hospitalizations (n=39,888, 4.1% increase) and ICU admissions (n=4,648, 7.5% increase) for the fifth consecutive week (**Figure 2**). Additionally, the 2022–23 influenza season shows an early rise in influenza-associated hospitalizations in the USA mainly in adults of 65 years and more (**Figure 3**).

¹ Information available on the websites of the countries/territories in the Region of the Americas.

² Countries/territories that reported an increase in hospitalizations: Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cuba, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Sint Maarten, Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, United States of America, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

³ Countries/territories that reported an increase in ICU admission: Argentina, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Peru, and United States of America.

Figure 3: Laboratory-confirmed Influenza-related hospitalizations by epidemiological week and age groups in the United States. EW 40 - 48, 2022.

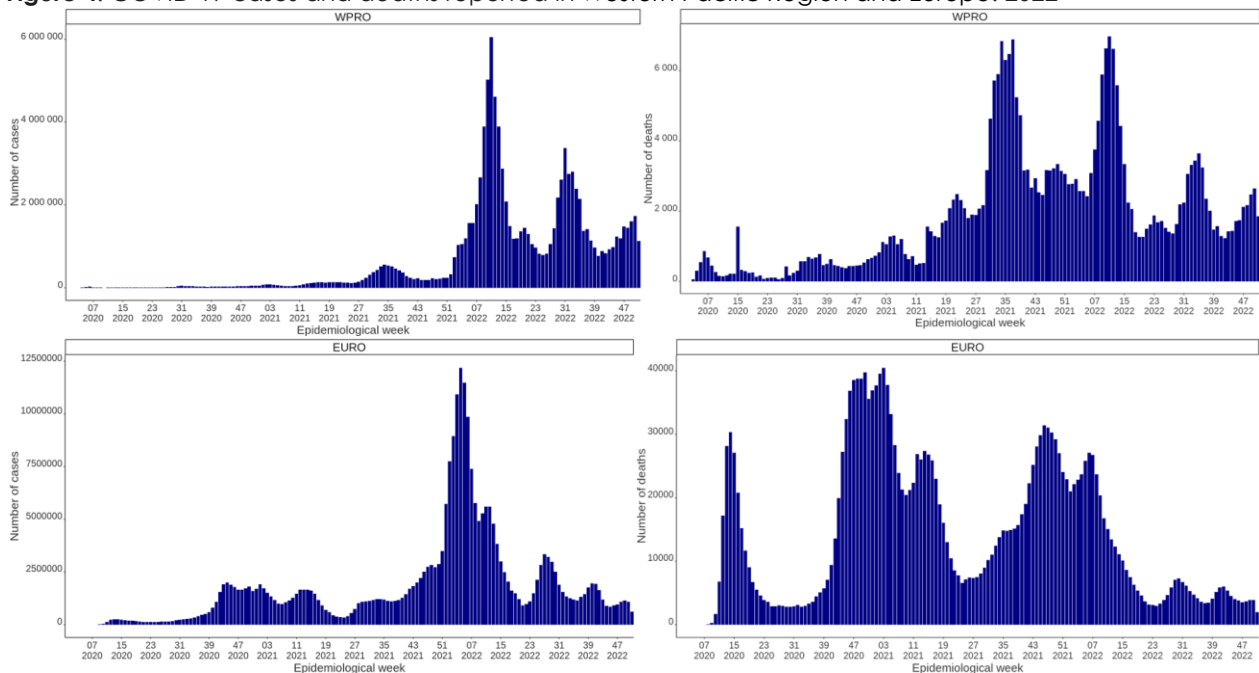


Source: CDC FluSurv-NET Interactive. Available at: <https://gis.cdc.gov/GRASP/Fluview/FluHospRates.html>

Influenza, RSV and SARS-CoV-2 viruses individually contribute to pediatric morbidity. The prevalence and severity of coinfection with influenza and SARS-CoV-2 are less well understood since circulation of influenza and other respiratory viruses increased recently in 2022.

Furthermore, an increase in cases and deaths is being reported in the Western Pacific Region and Europe since October and November 2022 respectively (**Figure 4**). The epidemiological situation observed in these two Regions along with the increase in hospitalization reported in North America could increase the demand for medicines and supplies and stress the COVID-19 response in the coming months.

Figure 4: COVID-19 cases and deaths reported in Western Pacific Region and Europe, 2022



Source: WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) data reproduced by PAHO/WHO. Available at: <https://covid19.who.int/info/>

Guidance for national authorities

The countries and territories in the Region of the Americas, with the support of the Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization (PAHO / WHO), are making efforts to increase the proportion of the population immunized; however, there is still a latent risk of recurrent outbreaks, including subsequent hospitalizations and deaths, occurring in different areas within the same country, simultaneously or at different times. This could again lead to an increase in hospitalizations and deaths, mainly in those areas with a high proportion of the population not immunized or partially immunized.

PAHO/WHO calls for continued efforts to guarantee the population's access to vaccines for COVID-19 and influenza, to diagnostic tests that guide clinical management, as well as to ensure the proper management of patients at all levels of the healthcare system, especially among vulnerable and high-risk populations.

Given the recorded new increase in cases and deaths from COVID-19 in some countries and territories of the Americas, PAHO/WHO urges Member States to strengthen surveillance of SARS-CoV-2, seasonal influenza, zoonotic influenza and other respiratory viruses, in order to detect clinical, epidemiological, and/or virological changes, as well as changes in the trends of outpatient cases, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and/or deaths, mainly in areas with a higher proportion of the unvaccinated or partially vaccinated population and among populations with a higher risk⁴ of developing severe forms of COVID-19 and influenza.


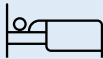





PAHO/WHO urges Member States to consider that the simultaneous circulation of other viruses, such as respiratory viruses in the pediatric and elderly population, is another variable that increases the demand for health services and intensive care by vulnerable and high-risk groups.

PAHO/WHO urges Member States to carry out risk communication campaigns for COVID-19 and influenza aimed at the general population, health workers, and especially vulnerable and high-risk populations.

Additional PAHO/WHO recommendations can be found in the COVID-19 Epidemiological Alerts and Updates, which are available at: <https://bit.ly/3MP3qB6>.

⁴ Patients with comorbidities, immunocompromised, over 60 years of age, pregnant women, displaced populations, populations living in overcrowded conditions, populations with difficulties in accessing health services, among others.

The following are guidance, scientific reports, and other resources published by PAHO/WHO and WHO.

<p>Surveillance, rapid response teams, and case investigation</p> 	<p>Clinical management</p> 
<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/30zjmCj</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/36Dji3B</p>	<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3li6wQB</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3sadTxQ</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> 	<p>Infection prevention and control</p> 
<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3d3TJ1g</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3oD2Gen</p>	<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3d2ckuV</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3nwyOaN</p>
<p>Critical preparedness and response</p> 	<p>Travel, Points of entry, and border health</p> 
<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3ljWHBT</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/36Dji3B</p>	<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3ivDivW</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/36Dji3B</p>
<p>Schools, workplaces, & other institutions</p> 	<p>Other resources</p>
<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/3d66iJO</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/36Dji3B</p>	<p>WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/33zXgRQ</p> <p>PAHO/WHO resources available at: https://bit.ly/36Dji3B</p>

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