

## FACT SHEET

Vaccination Week in the Americas // 22 to 29 April 2023

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Over the last 20 years, Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA) has been the most important initiative for immunization programs of the Region to bring vaccine doses to all people in a concerted manner.

### SINCE 2003:



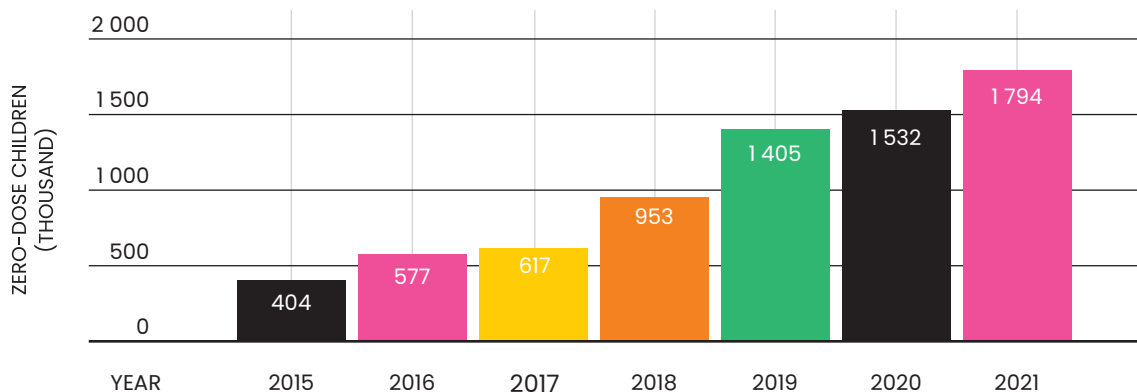
VWA has helped countries reach nearly **1.1 billion people** in more than **40 countries**.



This initiative has supported the control of many vaccine-preventable diseases and, **the elimination of 6 vaccine-preventable diseases: polio, measles, congenital rubella syndrome, neonatal tetanus, hepatitis B and smallpox.**

## SITUATION IN THE AMERICAS <sup>1</sup>

FIGURE 1. NUMBER OF CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 1 YEAR IN THE AMERICAS WHO NEVER RECEIVED A SINGLE DOSE OF VACCINE, BY YEAR (2015-2021).



Source: PAHO/WHO and UNICEF Joint Immunization Reporting Form 2022 (JRF) (Data 2021).

\*Administrative population reported by countries was adjusted by exponential weighted moving average algorithm.

<sup>1</sup> Data presented here uses Country reports through the PAHO-WHO/UNICEF Join Reporting Form (JRF). The data is until 2021.

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## NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMS

- In 2021, **more than 2.7 million children under 1 year in the Americas did not receive all their vaccine doses**. This means that almost **1 in every 5 children are not fully protected** against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough.
- The Region of the Americas has traditionally had high vaccination coverage levels. In 2010, it was the second region with highest reported coverage, after WHO EURO.
- However, this has decreased considerably in the past decade. Today, **the region of the Americas is the second in the world with the worst vaccine coverage**, followed by WHO AFRO.
- **Two countries** – Brazil and Mexico – **account for more than 50% of children who have never received a vaccine**. Campaigns and other activities to reach these children are ongoing, with PAHO support, to bring up vaccination rates.
- **The risk of outbreaks** due to vaccine-preventable diseases is **currently at its highest point in the last 30 years**.

## COVID-19 VACCINATION OPERATIONS

- The countries and territories of the Americas **applied 2.12 billion COVID-19 vaccine** doses since December 2020. In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 70% of the population has received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- Among the elderly ( $\geq 60$  years), vaccination coverage rate increased from 71.4% to 78% between January and December 2022. Among pregnant women, the coverage rate increased from 13.9 per 100 live births to 23.0 per 100 live births during the same period. Finally, the number of health workers with at least two COVID-19 vaccine doses rose from 18 million to 24 million in 2022.
- However, coverage rates have reached a plateau. There are **still more than 202 million people who have not yet received a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine**.
- As of March 2023, there are **10 countries and territories** (most of which in the Caribbean) that report a **COVID-19 vaccination coverage rate below 40%**.

## IMPACT OF VACCINES

- **National immunization programs** in Latin America and the Caribbean **prevent approximately 174,000 deaths in children under age five every year** ([Llau et al., 2021](#)).
- Globally, it is estimated that **COVID-19 vaccines prevented 14.4 million deaths in 185 countries and territories** between Dec 8, 2020, and Dec 8, 2021. In the Americas, the estimated total number of deaths averted through COVID-19 vaccination is 4.4 million ([Watson et al., 2022](#)).
- Despite the incremental costs, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru had a total estimated net **cost saving** to the health system **of US\$16.29 billion thanks to COVID-19 vaccination campaigns** ([Augustovski et al., 2023](#)).

## KEY CHALLENGES

- The political commitment shown during the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines is not easily translating into action for routine immunization programs. Strong **commitment from Member States** to ensure the smooth integration of COVID-19 vaccination into national immunization programs **should be a priority**.
- **Fewer financial resources are available** at the national and subnational levels for immunization campaigns after the shock of the pandemic.
- Limited resources are available to provide essential services, outreach, and prevention interventions to all who need it. In many countries vaccination sites operate on a limited schedule and with few staff.
- **Health workers are few and overburdened**, especially after the trials of the pandemic.
- **Hesitancy and refusal towards COVID-19 vaccines** is entrenched and **may have started to affect confidence in other vaccines** of the program.
- While regional coverage is good (over 70%), there are still many countries with low COVID-19 vaccine rates, especially in the Caribbean.

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## PAHO'S RESPONSE

- Continued call for countries to place **immunization programs at the highest level of the political agenda** to boost coverage rates and prevent new outbreaks.
- Redouble efforts to work with the highest political and technical authorities in Member States and with partners to **reinvigorate immunization programs and implement innovative approaches** to better tackle the challenges brought forth by the pandemic.
- **Tailor technical cooperation to countries' needs.** For example: geo-referencing data for evidence-based efforts to increase coverage rates, using diagnostics tools to quickly identify operational gaps, rapid introduction of new vaccines in emergency situations, and social and behavioral data use to address vaccine hesitancy.
- Provide **access to safe and quality vaccines**, essential medicines and strategic health supplies **at affordable prices through PAHO's Regional Revolving Funds.** Through these mechanisms, participating countries and territories improve their purchasing power by approximately 75% for vaccines and ensure the sustainability of their essential health programs.

## VWA GOALS FOR THIS YEAR

-  For this year's campaign, **45 countries and territories have set to reach more than 92 million people with over 144 million doses of different vaccines.**
-  **Twenty-four countries are planning on reaching more than 55 million people with COVID-19 vaccines**, both primary and booster doses.
-  **Vaccination against Influenza** has always been a cornerstone of VWA. This year, participating countries and territories are set to reach over **84 million people such as pregnant women, older adults and health workers** with these vaccines.
-  Efforts to keep our region polio-free include the **vaccination of almost a million children with polio vaccines.**
-  Countries will administer over **800,000 doses of vaccines against measles and rubella.** These efforts will support the regional goal to obtain once again elimination status.
-  Other goals include vaccinating more than **3 million people, including pregnant women and children, against diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough.**



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## 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 20 years, VWA has given governments a yearly 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.

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](http://www.paho.org/vwa)
- [www.paho.org/immunization](http://www.paho.org/immunization)
- [www.paho.org/en/covid-19-vaccines](http://www.paho.org/en/covid-19-vaccines)
- [www.paho.org/en/topics/immunization/immunization-toolkit-0](http://www.paho.org/en/topics/immunization/immunization-toolkit-0)



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