

COVID-19 Update

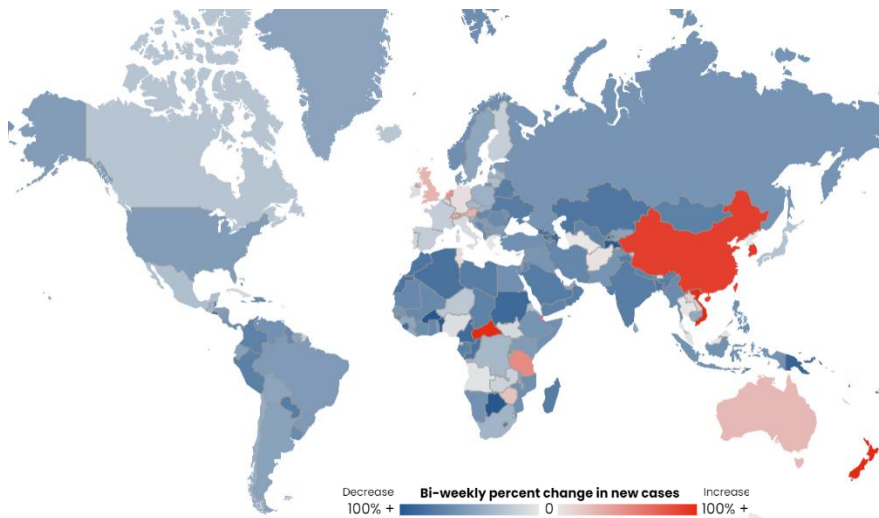


March 2022

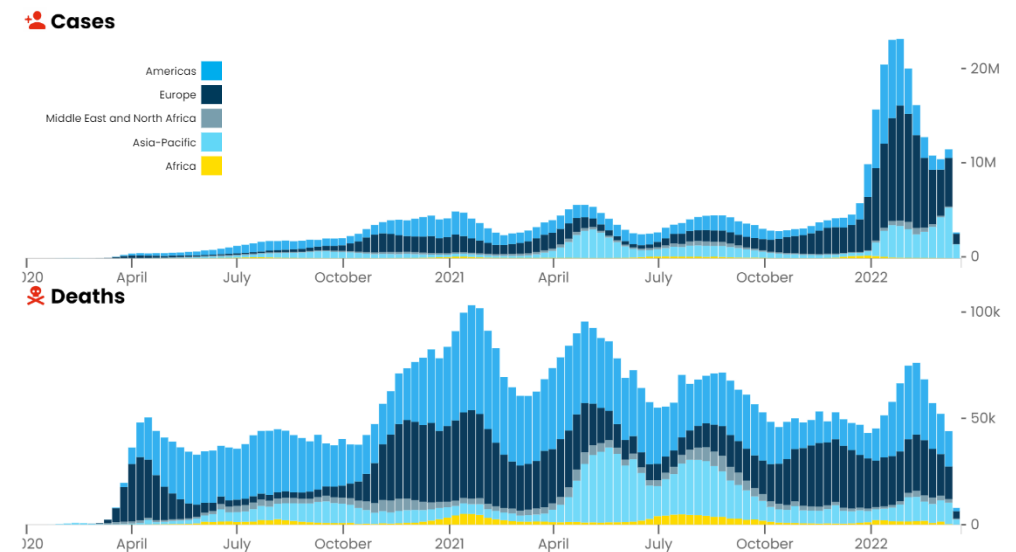
Bi-weekly COVID-19 updates from IFRC focusing on the epidemiological trends and updated evidence are shared through the [Health Help Desk](#). Additional external resources for deeper weekly or monthly subject-area analysis have also been added to the public access page on the Health Help Desk. Internal reports from the IFRC are available on [IFRC Go page for the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (including operational updates, immunization updates and updated figures by IFRC region).

Situation update

Bi-weekly percent change in new case



Weekly trends in new COVID-19 cases, deaths and vaccines by IFRC Region



After consistent global decreasing trends since the end of January, weekly case incidence of COVID-19 increased by 8% last week compared to the previous week of reporting. In particular, the regions of Africa, Asia Pacific (primarily driven by trends in the Pacific) and Europe all reported increasing trends in COVID-19 cases. Global incidence of COVID-19 deaths did continue to decrease, with countries in the Pacific of Asia Pacific region reported increasing trends in COVID-19 deaths. The Asia Pacific Region represents the largest proportion of COVID-19 cases currently with 47% of all cases reported from the region, while the European region continues to report around 44% of all officially reported

- March 11th marked 2 years since the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic
- **Globally there have been over 458 million cumulative cases and 6 million cumulative deaths of COVID-19 reported worldwide.**
- An estimated 63.8% of the global population has received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, with an estimated 56.5% fully vaccinated.

Regional Trends

Africa Region

- **For the first time since January the Africa region reported increasing trends** in COVID-19 reported cases (increases of 8% compared to the previous week). 22% of countries in the region reported large increasing trends (over 20%)
 - Weekly incidence of reported COVID-19 deaths continued to decline (by 41%) compared to the previous week.
 - Countries reporting the most worrisome trends include **Mauritius** and **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, both reporting increasing trends of over 40% and overall large numbers of COVID-19 cases.

Americas Region

- Since mid-January the Americas region has continued to report decreasing trends in new reported COVID-19 cases (decreasing by 20% compared to the previous week), while also reporting a 15% decrease in new COVID-19 deaths compared to the previous week.
 - However, while the region as a whole continued to report decreasing trends, **16% of countries in the region reported increases of 20% or more in the incidence of weekly COVID-19 cases compared to the previous week. Many of the countries reporting the largest increases are small island nations and territories in the Caribbean**

Middle East and North Africa Region

- After peaking in early February, the MENA region has continued to report declining COVID-19 cases (declining by 24% compared to the previous week), while reporting a larger decrease in new COVID-19 reported deaths (a decrease of 49% compared to the previous week).
 - **Iran continues to report the highest number of new cases and deaths in the region, while Tunisia reported the greatest increase in new COVID-19 cases (an increase in over 155% compared to the previous week)**
 - Notably, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia all reported case fatality rates greater than 2% in the past seven days, with Yemen reporting a cumulative case fatality ratio greater than 18% for COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Europe and Central Asia

- After reporting decreasing trends since the end of January, the European region reported increasing trends in COVID-19 cases (by 2% compared to the previous week) reporting just under 5 million new COVID-19 cases.
 - At least 20% of countries in the region reported large increasing trends of 20% or more compared to the previous week, including the Netherlands which reported a 42% increase in new COVID-19 cases. Some of these countries such as the Netherlands and the UK are also reporting increasing trends in hospitalization
 - The recent uptick in new COVID-19 cases is likely a combination of relaxing of restrictions and changing behaviors as well as waning vaccination protection. Additionally, many experts warn that the conflict in Ukraine causing 3 million people to flee may also influence increasing trends in COVID-19 in the region, and the increased prevalence of the subvariant of Omicron "BA.2" may also imply more rapid transmission.
- The number of new COVID-19 deaths continued to decline throughout the region with a 23% decrease reported last week compared to the previous week. The largest number of new COVID-19 deaths reported continue to be reported from Russia and Germany.

Asia Pacific Region

- While Southeast Asia continued to report declining trends in COVID-19 cases (driven by declining trends in Indonesia and India), the Pacific part of the region continues to report large increasing trends, with many countries reporting their highest number of COVID-19 deaths since the beginning of the pandemic.

Overall, the region reported a 22.1% increase in new COVID-19 cases compared to the previous week

- The WHO Western Pacific region reported a 29% increase in new COVID-19 cases compared to the previous week, and reported an increasing trend in COVID-19 deaths (by 12% compared to the previous week)
- Several small island countries including Vanuatu and Tonga reported significant increases of more than 120% compared to previous weeks.
- The greatest number of new COVID-19 cases were reported from the Republic of Korea, Japan and Viet Nam, while the Republic of Korea, Japan and China reported the greatest number of new COVID-19 deaths in the region.

Risk Assessment & What to watch

Overall Morality & impact on health

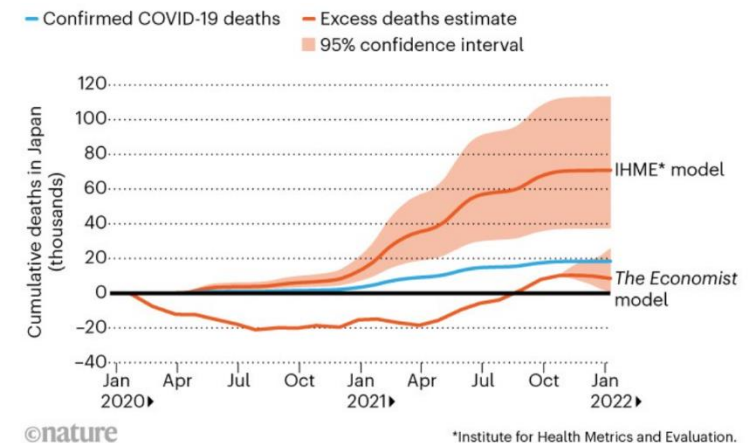
In the past week, the world passed 6 million deaths officially reported with many experts looking at excess mortality estimating that the true number of COVID-19 deaths is likely 2-4 times 6 million ([Nature](#)). Such a large number of casualties is a reminder that the pandemic is far from over even as cases are trending down in many regions. The impact of so many deaths will also influence the lives and livelihoods of the families of the deceased for years to come.

More than 5.2 million children are estimated to have lost a parent or caregiver during the first 19 months of the pandemic, with researchers estimating that the number of children experiencing orphanhood or caregiver deaths increased by 90% from April 30th to October 31st, 2021 ([Lancet Child and Adolescent Health](#)). Overall, the recent study estimated that 5.2 million children lost a parent or caregiver during the 20 month time period, both of which have been associated with longer-term implications for child health including greater risk of poverty, sexual abuse, mental health challenges and severe stress- all of which will have an impact on the generation as they grow-up.

Long covid, or the persistence of COVID-19 symptoms long after the acute phase of disease is over is estimated to impact 10-30% of those who were infected, with some researchers estimating the impact may be far greater among specific populations. An article in the [Atlantic](#) phrased the pervasive issue well by stating how even as many country policies move on from immediate response to COVID-19 worldwide, it will continue to “linger in the bodies of millions of people worldwide” noting that “hospitalizations and ICU admissions are not the only COVID outcomes that can buckle a health system.”

Prevalence of COVID-19 in large animal populations

The persistence of



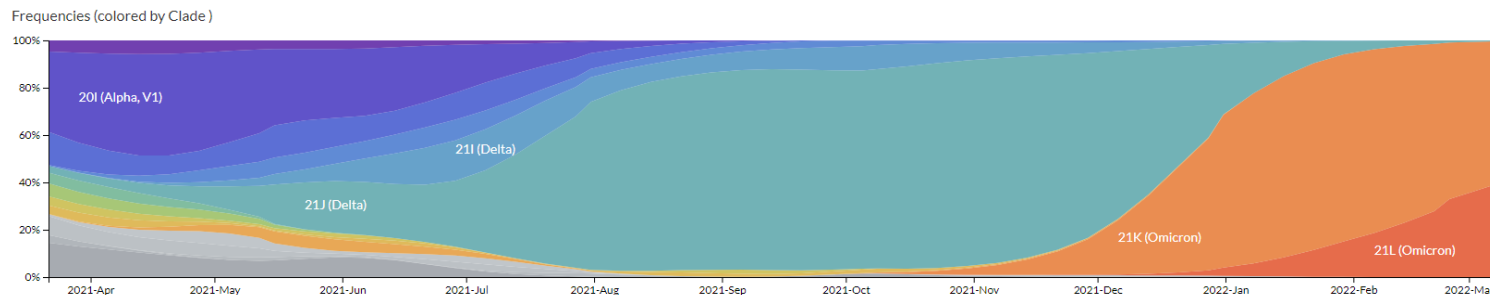
Emerging Evidence Review

Secondary Impacts

- More than 5.2 million children are estimated to have lost a parent or caregiver during the first 19 months of the pandemic, with researchers estimating that the number of children experiencing orphanhood or caregiver deaths increased by 90% from April 30th to October 31st, 2021 ([Lancet Child and Adolescent Health](#)). Overall, the recent study estimated that 5.2 million children lost a parent or caregiver during the 20 month time period, both of which have been associated with longer-term implications for child health including greater risk of poverty, sexual abuse, mental health challenges and severe stress- all of which will have an impact on the generation as they grow-up.
- Inequalities along gender lines increased throughout the pandemic, with research published in the [Lancet](#) estimating that women were more likely to report job losses or forgoing work to take care of others from March 2020 to September 2021. Also concerning, was excluding situations where there were school closures, women and girls were 1.21 times more likely to drop out of school compared to men and boys. As with other research findings, women were also more likely to report gender-based violence compared to men.

Variants of Concern or of Interest & Implications

- In a recent analysis still undergoing peer review, several scientists have found [evidence for recombination of Delta and Omicron](#) popularly dubbed “Deltamicron” due to the combination of genetic attributes from both Omicron and Delta SARS-CoV-2 variants. The recombination of different variants may not be unexpected given [other reports](#) (also still under peer review) of [co-infections](#) among non-immunocompromised individuals who didn't share an epidemiological link. Previous studies published in [Cell](#) have also demonstrated other examples of recombination of SARS-CoV-2 variants. At this time researchers are not sounding the alarm, but are continuing to investigate and follow the evidence.



Omicron
= (an estimated) over 94%
of global variants

Summary impacts of Variants of Concern designated by WHO (referenced from [WHO Situation Report #78](#))

Name/ Label	Alpha	Beta	Gama	Delta	Omicron <i>Dominant variant worldwide</i>
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Transmissibility	Increased transmissibility	Increased transmissibility	Increased transmissibility	Increased transmissibility	Increased transmissibility
Disease Severity	Possible increased risk of hospitalization, possible increased risk of severity and mortality	Possible increased risk of hospitalization, possible increased risk of in-hospital mortality	Possible increased risk of hospitalization and/or risk of severe disease	Possible increased risk of hospitalization	Reduced risk of hospitalization and severe disease
Risk of reinfection	Neutralizing activity retained, risk of reinfection remains similar	Reduction in neutralizing activity reported; T cell response elicited by D614G virus remains effective	Moderate reduction in neutralizing activity reported	Reduction in neutralizing activity reported	increased risk of reinfection
Impact on Diagnostics	Limited impact – S gene target failure (SGTF), no impact on overall result from multiple target RT-PCR; No impact on Ag RDTs observed	No impact observed	No impact reported	No impact reported	PCR continues to detect Omicron. Impact on Ag-RDTs is still under investigation and are mixed
Impact of vaccine efficacy (for those with WHO EUL)¹	Protection retained against all outcomes	Protection maintained against severe disease, limited evidence for reduced efficacy against symptomatic disease (limited evidence)	Unclear, limited evidence at this time	Protection retained against severe disease, limited evidence for possible reduced infection against symptomatic disease and infection	Reduced protection against infection and symptomatic disease; possible reduced protection against severe disease

- While there are some documented cases of infection of BA.2 following BA.1. initial data from population-level studies suggest that infection with BA.1 provides substantial protection against reinfection with BA.2, at least for the limited period for which data are available ([WHO](#), [WHO statement on Omicron sublineage BA.2](#))

References

Internal

¹ Resources and detailed list of vaccine efficacy studies can be found here: [VIEW-hub \(IVAC\)](#)

[IFRC Go COVID-19 response](#)

- Dashboards and operational reports
- Monthly vaccine updates and highlights

[IFRC Health Help Desk](#)

- Webinars
- Operational Guidance related to the health response to COVID-19

External

[ALNAP COVID-19 Response Portal](#)

[British Medical Journal Coronavirus Hub](#)

[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)- COVID-19 Reports](#)

[Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security](#)

- Particularly the [COVID-19 Updates](#) (weekly)

Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs [COVID-19 Behavior Dashboards](#)

[Journal for American Medical Association COVID-19 focus](#) (JAMA)

[Nature SARS-COV-2 Review](#)

[New England Journal of Medicine COVID-19 page](#) (NEJM)

[Nextstrain](#) (genomic data tracking for mRNA viruses)

[Our World in Data](#)

[Prevent Epidemics In-Depth Science Reviews](#)

[UNDP Vaccine Affordability](#)

[WHO COVID-19 Dashboards](#)

[WHO Epidemiological Situation Reports](#)