

Overall strategy

On 5 May 2023, the WHO Director-General declared that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a Public Health of international Concern (PHEIC) and that it is no longer a global health emergency. Despite the termination of the (PHEIC), COVID-19 remains a global health threat.

This means that it is time for those Member States who have not already done so, to shift from emergency mode to the sustained management of COVID-19 taking a risk-based approach using the following recommended tools: COVID-19 vaccination, calibrated public health and social measures, strengthened health system capacity, early detection and targeted response and international border measures.

Regional overview

As of 22 May 2023, 203 669 467 cases with 411 963 deaths (proportion of fatal cases (PFC) 0.2%) have been reported. The overall trend has been decreasing over the past two weeks after several weeks of increasing cases (Figures 1 and 2). This trend, however, should be interpreted with caution due to decreased testing and sequencing, alongside a lack of reporting and delays in many countries.

In the previous 14 days, a total of 411 963 new cases with 521 new deaths (Table 1) were reported in 21 countries and areas: Australia 35 525, Brunei Darussalam 4 214, Cambodia 5, China 9 387, Cook Islands 39, French Polynesia 24, Guam 187, Japan 10 143, the Republic of Korea 262 173, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) 111, Malaysia 15 012, Mongolia 390, New Zealand 23 330, Northern Mariana Islands 24, Papua New Guinea 12, the Philippines 24 840, Singapore 24 296, Viet Nam 26 855 and Wallis and Futuna 81.

As of 16 May 2023, XBB.1.16 variant was the dominant variant, accounting for 19.3% of sequences in region. XBB.1.5 became a variant under interest on 16 April and continues to increase in proportion among sequenced cases. This is the first time in several months that BA.5 did not account for the highest proportion of cases in the region.

Biweekly country situation updates

- Mongolia has reported a rise in cases and hospitalizations over the past four weeks. Within the first week of May, the country reported 390 cases, ten times as many as the weekly reported cases two weeks prior. Hospitalizations also continue to rise, however, no reports of hospital strains have been observed. Additionally, no deaths have been reported since December 2022.
- Some increasing trends in cases have been observed in some Pacific Island Countries, including Tokelau, which reported three new cases in the past week, all traced back to a ship. These cases are isolated and the government implemented some public health and social measures in response. Guam, Niue and are also reporting small rises in cases, however, case counts remain low. Since the start of the pandemic, no deaths have been reported in Pitcairn Islands or Tokelau, and Guam has not reported any deaths since January 2023.

- Following several weeks of increasing case trends, Viet Nam has reported a declining number of cases over the past three weeks. The 14-day daily case average was 1 918 during the first two weeks of May, a 13% decrease compared to the final two weeks in April. Hospitalizations also peaked in late April, with 2 596 hospitalizations reported on 28 April. An overall decreasing trend has been observed through May and as of 22 May, 493 hospitalized cases were reported. Death continue to remain low; Viet Nam has reported 7 within the past two weeks.

SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Interest and Variants Under Monitoring in the Region

A total of 7 044 sequences from 9 countries and areas were uploaded to GISAID from 16 April to 6 May 2023.

For weeks 12 and 13 (16 April to 6 May 2023) the distribution of Variants of Interest (VOI) and Variants Under Monitoring (VUM) among the 8 countries and areas was 19.3% for XBB.1.5, 17.0% for XBB.1.16, 15.2% for XBB.1.9.1, 15.0% for BA.5, 6.2% for XBB, 5.6% for XBB.2.3, 4.5% for BA.2.75 and 3.3% for BQ.1.

Deployments COVID-19 response

564	534	18	1	16
total deployments	deployments completed	actively supporting country offices	actively supporting the Regional Office	currently supporting remotely

Supplies and logistics for health care workers shipped to 42 destinations in the Western Pacific Region (as of 27 March 2023)



37 764 374
surgical masks



6 492 719
particulate
respirators



2 069 199
medical gowns



369 336
goggles



1 408 324
face shields



9 104 960
pairs of gloves



38 189
alcohol-based
hand rub (100mL)



782 344
laboratory tests



1 998 669
point of care tests



3 730 390
swab kits



706
ICU ventilators



3 198
oxygen
concentrators



30 155
pulse oximeters



333 490
rapid antigen tests



Figure 1. Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19 cases in countries and areas with the highest number of cases, as of 22 May 2023 10:00 (GMT+8)

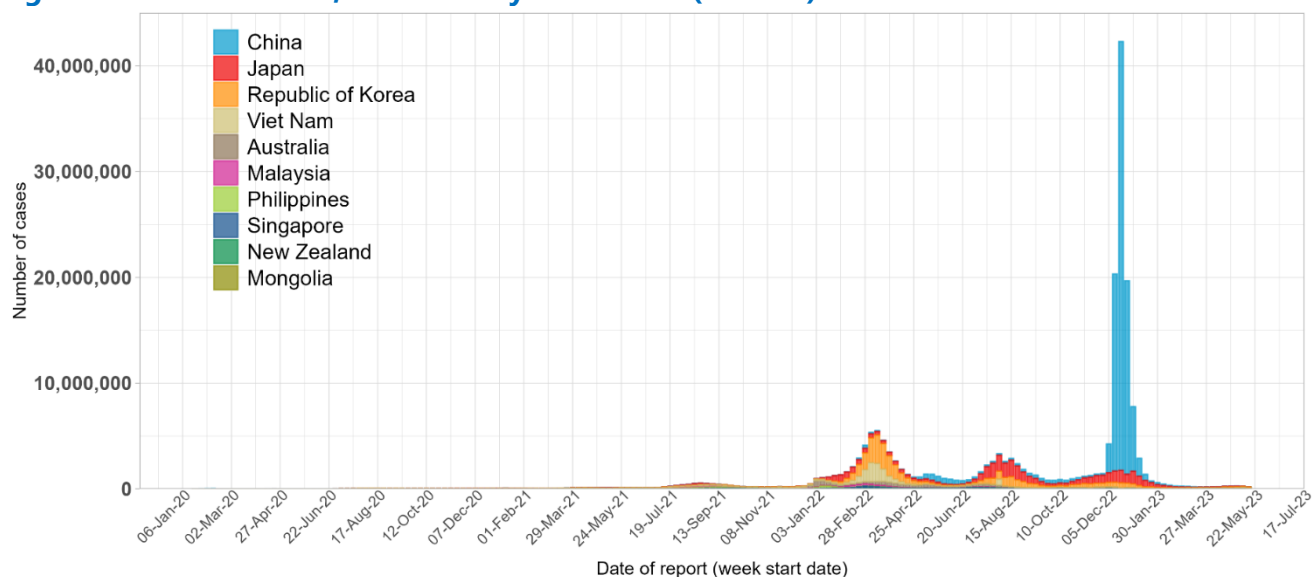
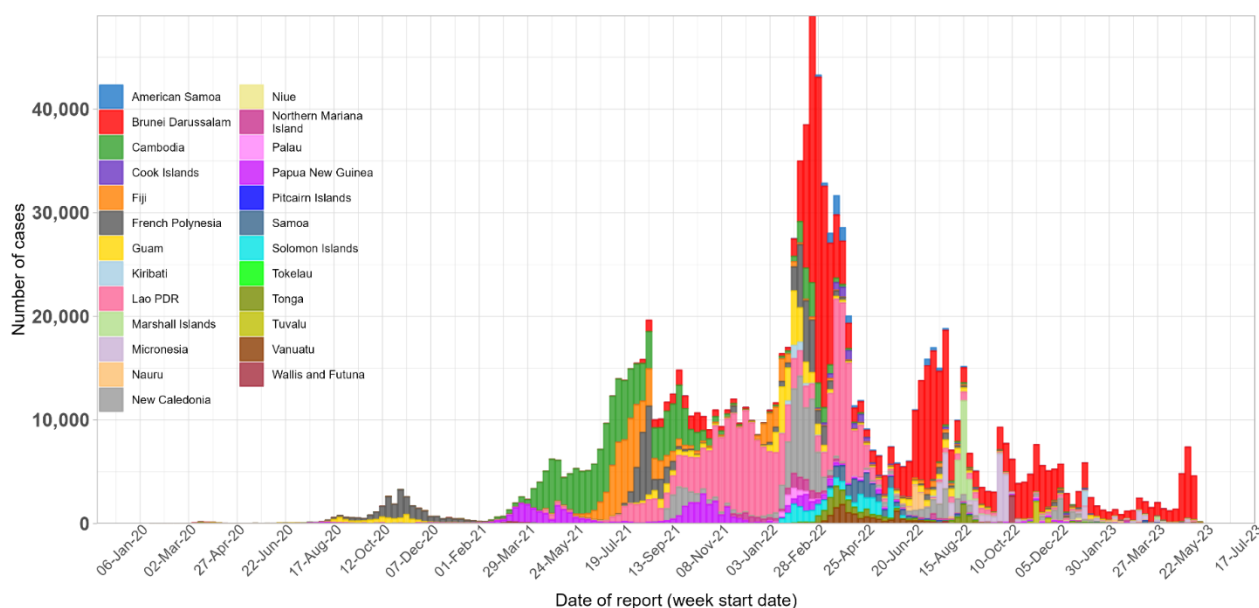


Figure 2. Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19 cases in countries or areas with the lowest number of cases, as of 22 May 2023 10:00 (GMT+8)



Period of Report: As of 22 May 2023, 10:00 (GMT+8)

Table 1. Countries or areas with reported laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths, covering the period from 8 May to 21 May 2023, as of 22 May 2023 (GMT+8)

Country or area	New cases (cumulative)	New deaths (cumulative)	Change (14-day average of cases)
American Samoa	0 (8 331)	0 (34)	-0.14
Australia	35 525 ¹ (11 339 196)	34 ¹ (20 393)	-1 835.43
Brunei Darussalam	4 214 (303 719)	31(161)	-517.14
Cambodia	5 (138)	0 (3 056)	-0.07
China	9 387 ¹ (99 261 812)	129 ¹ (121 144)	159.07
Cook Islands	39 (7 106)	0 (2)	2.21
Fiji	0 (68 921)	0 (883)	-0.21
French Polynesia	24 (78 569)	0 (649)	-5.21
Guam	187 (51 427)	0 (413)	4.07
Japan	10 143 ² (33 803 572)	40 ² (74 694)	-9 670.50
Kiribati	2 ¹ (5 027)	0 ¹ (24)	0.14
Korea, Republic of	262 173(31 548 083)	153 (34 687)	4 274.93
Lao PDR	111 (218 196)	0 (641)	6.79
Malaysia	15 012 (5 094 448)	42 (37 070)	175.21
Marshall Islands	0 (16 081)	0 (17)	0
Micronesia (Federated States of)	0 (26 453)	1 (65)	-26.64
Mongolia	390 (1 008 655)	0 (2 136)	8.86
Nauru	0 ¹ (5 393)	0 ¹ (1)	0
New Caledonia	0 ¹ (80 058)	0 ¹ (314)	-0.07
New Zealand	23 330 (2 295 559)	101 (2 893)	181.5
Niue	55 ¹ (802)	0 ¹ (0)	3.93
Northern Mariana Islands	24 ¹ (13 896)	0 ¹ (41)	-0.64
Palau	0 ¹ (6 000)	0 ¹ (9)	-0.07
Papua New Guinea	13 ¹ (46 864)	0 ¹ (670)	-0.14
The Philippines	24 840 (4 127 628)	13 (66 466)	786.93
Pitcairn Islands	0 ¹ (4)	0 ¹ (0)	0
Samoa	0 ¹ (16 763)	0 ¹ (31)	-1.86
Singapore	24 296 (2 438 690)	0 (1 722)	-1 553.21
Solomon Islands	0 ¹ (24 575)	0 ¹ (153)	0
Tokelau	0 ¹ (5)	0 ¹ (0)	0
Tonga	0 (16 817)	0 (12)	-0.21
Tuvalu	0 ¹ (2 779)	0 ¹ (0)	0
Vanuatu	0 (12 016)	0 (14)	0
Viet Nam	26 855 (11 602 738)	7 (43 203)	-303.57
Wallis and Futuna	0 ¹ (3 427)	0 ¹ (7)	0
Total	436 705 (203 669 467)	521 (411 963)	-8 305.57

Note: Data continues to be collected and may change according to Member States' reports.

¹ Countries reported no or partial data for the 14-day period ² Japan no longer reports case numbers as of 8 May 2023.

Table 2. Countries or areas in the Western Pacific Region that have reported currently circulating Variants of Concern, as of 22 May 2023 10:00 (GMT+8)

Country or area	Omicron Sub-lineage ³								BQ.1*
	BA.5*	BA.2.75*	XBB [^]	XBB.1.5	XBB.1.16	XBB.1.9.1	XBB.1.9.2	CH.1.1	
American Samoa	X							X	
Australia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Brunei Darussalam	X	X	X		X				X
Cambodia	X	X	X			X			X
China	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guam	X							X	X
Japan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kiribati	X								
Lao PDR	X								
Malaysia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Marshall Islands		X							X
Micronesia (Federated States of)	X	X		X					X
Mongolia	X			X	X	X	X		X
New Zealand	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Mariana Islands	X	X		X					X
Palau	X								X
Papua New Guinea	X	X	X						X
The Philippines	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Republic of Korea	X	X	X						X
Samoa	X								
Singapore	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Solomon Islands	X								
Tonga	X								
Vanuatu	X								
Viet Nam	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	

*Includes sub-variants. ^Includes sub-variants, except for XBB.1.5. XBB.1.5 is a Variant of Interest and is reported separately. Note: GISAID submission data is subject to change.

Key information and announcements

Information and Planning

The Regional Office continues to monitor COVID-19 incidence in countries and areas across the Region. Updated information is available on the [dashboard for the Western Pacific Region](#).

Partner Coordination

The Global Outbreak and Response Network (GOARN) Strategy Implementation Workshop and the 33rd GOARN Steering Committee meeting was held from 8 May to 12 May 2023 in Amman, Jordan. The primary aim of the GOARN Strategy Implementation Workshop was to prioritize activities according to four strategic themes. Participants developed collaborative plans to support the global and regional outbreak preparedness, readiness and response activities.

The 33rd GOARN Steering Committee reflected on the challenges and opportunities for GOARN in a 2023 context, clarified GOARN governance structure and membership, and applied discussions from the strategy workshop to decision making and execution by GOARN partners. For the first time, the first day of the Steering Committee was open for observation by attendees of the Strategy Implementation Workshop.

The Western Pacific was represented by nine partners from five Member States: Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, and Fiji.

Strategic Communication

The Regional Office continues to support COVID-19 strategic communications in countries and areas across the Region, including developing health messages and campaigns, monitoring and responding to mis- and disinformation through social listening, gathering behavioural insights and media relations.

Messages for the public

- On social media, posted about the end of the COVID-19 PHIEC, the Pandemic Accord, donor and partnerships in PICS. WHO also shared messages for World Immunization Week highlighting the collective action needed to protect people from COVID-19 and vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Facebook
 - [Driven by the heightened demand during the pandemic, Pacific nations have been working with WHO and partners to strengthen their laboratory services to detect #COVID19 and other diseases](#). Check out our latest photo story to see how: <https://bit.ly/3Mxz5ZU>
 - [The Ministry Of Health & Medical Services - Solomon Islands sb inaugurated its very first oxygen plant in the country yesterday, with support from WHO and the European Union in the Pacific](#). The new oxygen plant was delivered and installed at the National Referral Hospital, helping boost access to life-saving medical oxygen in



the Solomon Islands. Oxygen is an essential medicine that, when used properly, is critical to treating #COVID19 and other respiratory illnesses.

- ["The Pandemic Accord and the amendments to the International Health Regulations are a commitment to future generations that we will not go back to the old cycle of panic and neglect but move forward with shared commitment to meet shared threats with a shared response."](#) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization

- Twitter

- [Globally, millions of children have missed out on life-saving vaccines due to #COVID19.](#)
- [The Pandemic Accord and the amendments to the International Health Regulations are a commitment to future generations that we will not go back to the old cycle of panic and neglect but move forward with shared commitment to meet shared threats with a shared response.](#)
- [The new oxygen plant was delivered and installed at the National Referral Hospital, helping boost access to life-saving medical oxygen in the Solomon Islands.](#) Oxygen is an essential medicine that, when used properly, is critical to treating #COVID19 & other respiratory illnesses.