

## 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 8 May 2023, 203 172 588 cases with 411 146 deaths (proportion of fatal cases (PFC) 0.2%) have been reported. The overall trend has been increasing for the past four weeks following a decline in the region since mid-January 2023 (Figures 1 and 2).

In the previous 14 days, a total of 489 601 new cases with 633 new deaths (Table 1) were reported in 24 countries and areas: Australia 28 371, Brunei Darussalam 4 543, Cambodia 4, China 7 160, Cook Islands 8, Fiji 3, French Polynesia 70, Guam 130, Japan 145 530, the Republic of Korea 202 324, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) 16, Malaysia 12 559, Federated States of Micronesia 373, Mongolia 39, New Caledonia 1, New Zealand 20 789, Northern Mariana Islands 10, Palau 1, Papua New Guinea 11, the Philippines 13 823, Samoa 26, Singapore 22 651, Tonga 2, and Viet Nam 31 105.

As of 29 April 2023, BA.5 variant was the dominant variant, accounting for 23.8% of sequences. This variant continues to decline in the proportion of sequenced cases in the region as multiple XBB variants increase (including XBB.1.5 and XBB.1.16).

## Biweekly country situation updates

- The Philippines continues to report an increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations. Between 24 April and 7 April, 13 823 cases were reported in the Philippines a 160% increase from the previous 14 day period. A rise in hospitalisations has also been observed over the past four weeks. Nationally, COVID-19 bed occupancy is at 20% and 27% within the National Capital Region, which accounts for the largest proportion of cases. Reported deaths have remained low during this time period.
- Increasing trends in the number of cases and hospitalisations continue in Malaysia. In the first week of May, 7 596 cases were reported, including 18 deaths. 2 363 new hospitalizations were reported over this week and as of 9 April, hospital utilization rate was 75%. Between 16 and 29 April, over 53% of sequenced cases were identified as an XBB lineage, including XBB.1.5, XBB.1.16, XBB.1.9.1 and XBB.1.9.2.
- The number of cases continues to rise in Brunei Darussalam. As of 9 May, the country reported 11 454 cases over the previous two weeks, a 395% increase compared to the previous two-week period. The number of new cases admitted to the ICU has also increased but remains low; in the same two-week period, 12 ICU cases were reported. This is up from 2 cases being admitted between 3 April to 16 April 2023.



- Viet Nam has reported an increasing trend in cases for the past five weeks. Within the past two weeks, the country has reported 31 105 cases. This is an 83% increase in cases compared to the two weeks prior, in which 17 032 cases were reported. Nine deaths have been reported in the past 14 days. Hospitalizations continue to rise, however, no health care strain has been observed. In response, vaccination and risk communication campaigns have been rolled out at the national and subnational levels. New public health and social measures have also been implemented in some areas, including mask wearing in some settings.

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

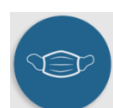
A total of 8 074 sequences from 9 countries and areas were uploaded to GISAID from 16 to 29 April to 2023.

For weeks 16 and 17 (16 to 29 April 2023) the distribution of Variants of Interest (VOI) and Variants Under Monitoring (VUM) among the 9 countries and areas was 23.8% for BA.5, 16.9% for XBB.1.5, 11.3% for XBB.1.9.1, 10.2% for XBB, 9.0% for XBB.1.16, 5.5% for BA.2.75, 5.0% for BQ.1 and 4.2% for XBB.1.9.2.

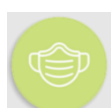
### Deployments COVID-19 response

|                      |                          |                                        |                                            |                                  |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 564                  | 534                      | 18                                     | 1                                          | 16                               |
| total<br>deployments | deployments<br>completed | actively supporting<br>country offices | actively supporting<br>the Regional Office | currently supporting<br>remotely |

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



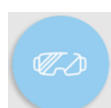
37 764 374  
surgical masks



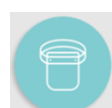
6 492 719  
particulate  
respirators



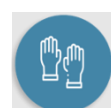
2 069 199  
medical gowns



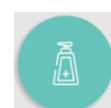
369 336  
goggles



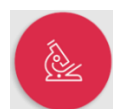
1 408 324  
face shields



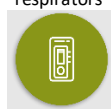
9 104 960  
pairs of gloves



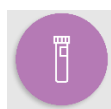
38 189  
alcohol-based  
hand rub (100mL)



782 344  
laboratory tests



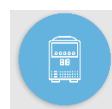
1 998 669  
point of care tests



3 730 390  
swab kits



706  
ICU ventilators



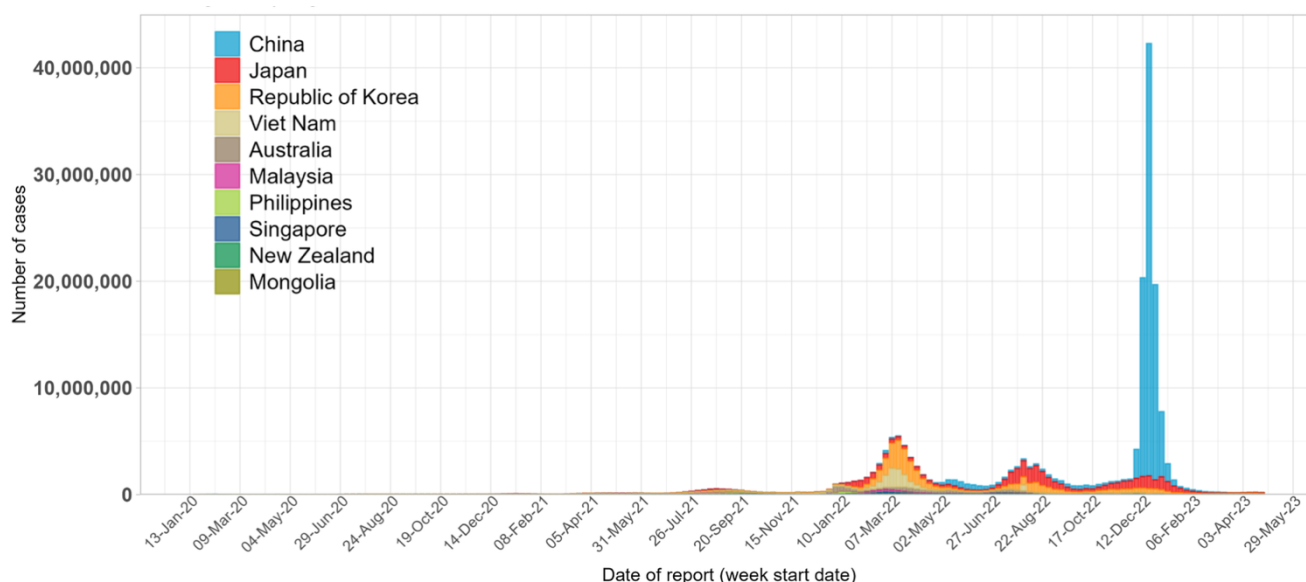
3 198  
oxygen  
concentrators

30 155  
pulse oximeters

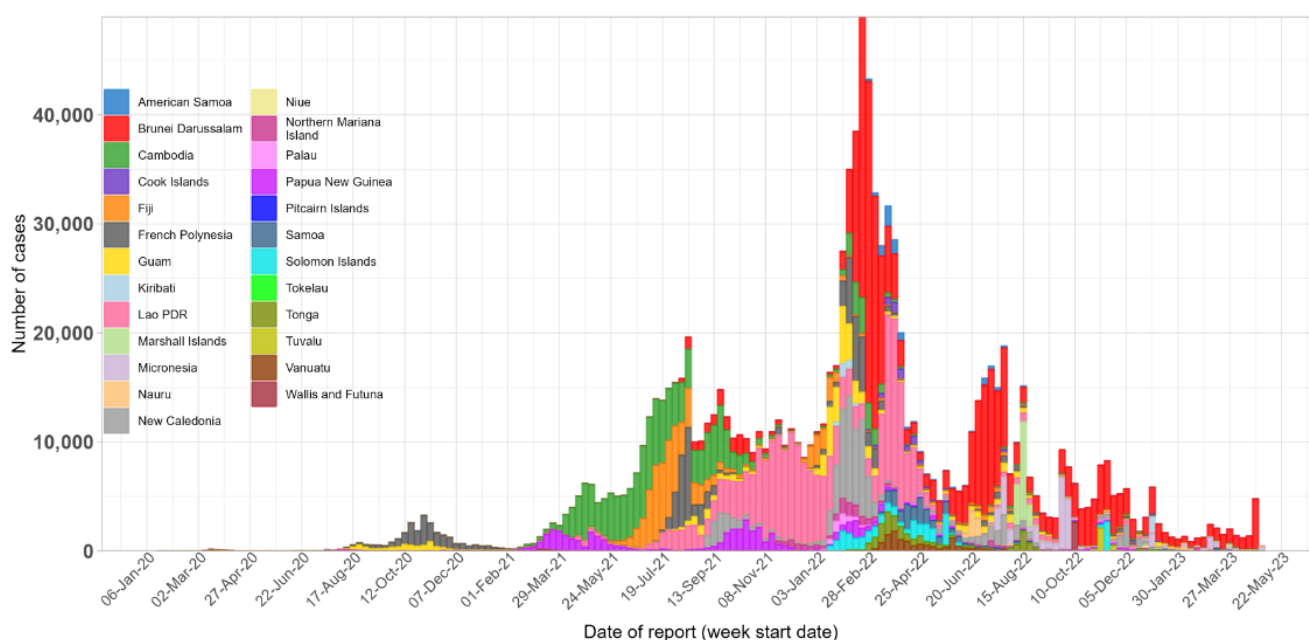
333 490  
rapid antigen tests



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



Period of Report: As of 5 May 2023, 10:00 (GMT+8)

**Table 1. Member States with lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths, 24 April 2023 to 7 May 2023, as of 8 April 2023 (GMT+8)**

| Country or area                  | New cases (cumulative)           | New deaths (cumulative)   | Change<br>(14-day average of cases) |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| American Samoa                   | 0 (8 331)                        | 0 (34)                    | 0                                   |
| Australia                        | 28 371 <sup>1</sup> (11 270 821) | 42 <sup>1</sup> (20 393)  | -2 196.14                           |
| Brunei Darussalam                | 4 593 (292 644)                  | 3 (158)                   | 163                                 |
| Cambodia                         | 4 (138 735)                      | 0 (3 056)                 | -0.07                               |
| China                            | 7 160 <sup>2</sup> (99 252 425)  | 92 <sup>2</sup> (121 015) | 213.14                              |
| Cook Islands                     | 8 <sup>1</sup> (7 067)           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (2)        | -0.07                               |
| Fiji                             | 3 <sup>1</sup> (68 921)          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (883)      | 0.14                                |
| French Polynesia                 | 70 <sup>1</sup> (78 518)         | 0 <sup>1</sup> (649)      | 0                                   |
| Guam                             | 130 (51 240)                     | 0 (413)                   | 3.21                                |
| Japan                            | 145 530 (33 793 429)             | 278 (74 654)              | 1 539.86                            |
| Kiribati                         | 0 <sup>1</sup> (5 014)           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (18)       | -0.79                               |
| Korea, Republic of               | 202 324 (31 285 910)             | 107 (34 534)              | 2 628.43                            |
| Lao PDR                          | 16 (218 082)                     | 0 (641)                   | -1.14                               |
| Malaysia                         | 12 559 (5 079 436)               | 17 (37 028)               | 185.21                              |
| Marshall Islands                 | 0 <sup>1</sup> (16 081)          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (17)       | 0                                   |
| Micronesia (Federated States of) | 373 (26 453)                     | 0 (64)                    | 24.43                               |
| Mongolia                         | 39 (1 008 038)                   | 0 (2 136)                 | -1.21                               |
| Nauru                            | 0 <sup>1</sup> (5 393)           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (1)        | 0                                   |
| New Caledonia                    | 1 (80 058)                       | 0 (314)                   | -0.29                               |
| New Zealand                      | 20 789 (2 272 229)               | 76 (2 792)                | -214.93                             |
| Niue                             | 0 <sup>1</sup> (747)             | 0 <sup>1</sup> (0)        | 0                                   |
| Northern Mariana Islands         | 10 (13 849)                      | 0 <sup>1</sup> (41)       | -2.14                               |
| Palau                            | 1 <sup>1</sup> (6 000)           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (9)        | -0.07                               |
| Papua New Guinea                 | 11 (46 849)                      | 0 (670)                   | 0.71                                |
| The Philippines                  | 13 823 (4 102 788)               | 9 (66 453)                | 608.64                              |
| Pitcairn Islands                 | 0 <sup>1</sup> (4)               | 0 <sup>1</sup> (0)        | 0                                   |
| Samoa                            | 26 <sup>1</sup> (16 763)         | 0 <sup>1</sup> (31)       | 1.86                                |
| Singapore                        | 22 651 (2 391 248)               | 0 (1 722)                 | -2 231.36                           |
| Solomon Islands                  | 0 <sup>1</sup> (24 575)          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (153)      | 0                                   |
| Tokelau                          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (5)               | 0 <sup>1</sup> (0)        | 0                                   |
| Tonga                            | 2 <sup>1</sup> (16 816)          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (12)       | 0.14                                |
| Tuvalu                           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (2 779)           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (0)        | 0                                   |
| Vanuatu                          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (12 016)          | 0 <sup>1</sup> (14)       | -0.14                               |
| Viet Nam                         | 31 105 (11 575 883)              | 9 (43 196)                | 1 005.21                            |
| Wallis and Futuna                | 0 <sup>1</sup> (3 427)           | 0 <sup>1</sup> (7)        | 0                                   |
| Total                            | 489 601 (203 172 588)            | 633 (411 146)             | 1 725.79                            |

<sup>1</sup> Data was not reported for the complete 14-day period.

<sup>2</sup> Data was only reported from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong SAR, China and Macao SAR, China



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

| Country or area                  | Omicron Sub-lineage <sup>3</sup> |          |                  |         |          |           |           |        |       |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|------------------|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|--------|-------|
|                                  | BA.5*                            | BA.2.75* | XBB <sup>^</sup> | XBB.1.5 | XBB.1.16 | XBB.1.9.1 | XBB.1.9.2 | CH.1.1 | BQ.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     |
| China                            | X                                | X        | X                | X       | X        | X         | X         | X      | X     |
| Guam                             | X                                |          |                  |         |          |           |           | X      | X     |
| Japan                            | 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     |
| 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](#).

### Strategic Communication

The Regional Office supported the Philippines Country Office on the Crisis Communication and Infodemic Management Workshop for the Department of Health.

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, published posts about public health and safety measures and post-COVID condition as well as tie-in messages with World Days.
- Facebook
  - [#LiveLifeSafely](#). Here are ways employers and staff can help keep everyone safe from #COVID19 in the workplace.
  - [Children 🧒🧒🧒 under 5 are at greater risk of severe disease or complications following infection with influenza](#). During the #COVID19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to protect children from #flu.
  - Get your vaccine or booster dose — especially if you are at high risk of severe disease and death from #COVID19 — to protect yourself and your loved ones.
- Twitter
  - [Keep learnings from the #COVID19 pandemic in mind](#): protect yourself and others from infection by cleaning your hands.
  - [Cases of #COVID19 are on the rise in the Region](#). Make safe choices and assess your risk to help prevent infection.
  - [You can prevent post #COVID19 condition by taking measures to prevent the infection](#).