

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.

As of 31 July 2023, the Western Pacific Region has moved from a biweekly COVID-19 situation report to a monthly situation report. All COVID-19 situation reports are published the first week of the month until otherwise noted.

Regional overview

As of 30 October 2023, 207 418 150 cases with 417 776 deaths (proportion of fatal cases (PFC) 0.2%) have been reported. There has been a fluctuating trend in overall cases over the past several weeks. This is partially due to changes in testing strategies and reporting frequency in many countries.

In the previous 28 days, a total of 73 622 new cases with 351 new deaths (Table 1) were reported in 18 countries and areas: Australia 16 308, Brunei Darussalam 910, Cambodia 2, China 4 867, Cook Islands 10, French Polynesia 17, Guam 43, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) 21, Malaysia 1 985, Marshall Islands 2, Mongolia 54, New Zealand 13 109, Northern Mariana Islands 14, Palau 5, the Philippines 4 798, Singapore 31 051, Tonga 33, and Viet Nam 293.

As of 27 October 2023, EG.5 was the dominant variant, accounting for 29.0% of sequences in region.

Monthly country situation updates, as of 2 November 2023

- In Australia, there has been an increasing trend in cases through the month of October. The country reported a 31% increase in number of cases from the first week of October compared to the third week of October. Between 16-22 October, Australia reported 6 144 cases. This is the highest number of weekly cases since mid-July. As cases increased over the past weeks, ICU trends have remained relatively stable; 30 cases were admitted to the ICU in the first week of October compared to 25 in the third week. There has also been a stable, low trend of weekly deaths reported in October, averaging 32 per week.
- There has been a recent increase in the number of reported cases in Brunei Darussalam, however overall case counts continue to remain low. Between 25 September to 1 October, 165 cases were reported compared to 368 cases between 23 to 29 October. During this time, hospitalizations have fluctuated weekly but also remain low. A total of 35 cases have been hospitalized over the four-week period, averaging approximately 9 new hospitalizations per week. No deaths have been reported within Brunei Darussalam since July.

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

A total of 17 775 sequences from 14 countries and areas were uploaded to GISAID from 2 to 28 October 2023.

The EG.5 variant became a Variant of Interest on 9 August 2023, when WHO published its first risk evaluation on the variant. An updated risk evaluation was published on 21 September 2023 that can be found [here](#). EG.5 has shown an increasing trend in sequenced cases within the region over the past several months.

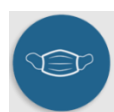
Globally, the proportion of unassigned variants has increased over the past several weeks; in week 39, 5% of variants were unassigned. This increased to 35% in week 41. This trend has also been observed in the Western Pacific Region and 15.7% of all sequenced cases were unassigned between 2 to 28 October.

Between 2 to 28 October 2023, the distribution of Variants of Interest (VOI) and Variants Under Monitoring (VUM) among the 14 countries and areas was: 29.0% for EG.5, 15.7% unassigned, 14.8% HK.3, 10.7% for XBB.1.16, 5.9% for XBB.1.9.1, 5.9% for XBB, 5.0% for XBB.2.3, 4.8% for XBB.1.5, 3.2% for XBB.1.9.2, and less than 2% for all other variants.

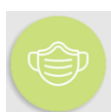
Deployments COVID-19 response

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

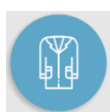
Supplies and logistics for health care workers shipped to 42 destinations in the Western Pacific Region (as of 27 March 2023)



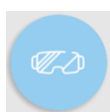
37 764 374
surgical masks



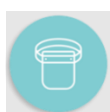
6 492 719
particulate
respirators



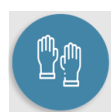
2 069 199
medical gowns



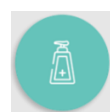
369 336
goggles



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

Period of Report: As of 2 October 2023, 10:00 (GMT+8)

Figure 1. Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19 cases in countries and areas with the highest number of cases, as of 30 October 2023 10:00 (GMT+8)

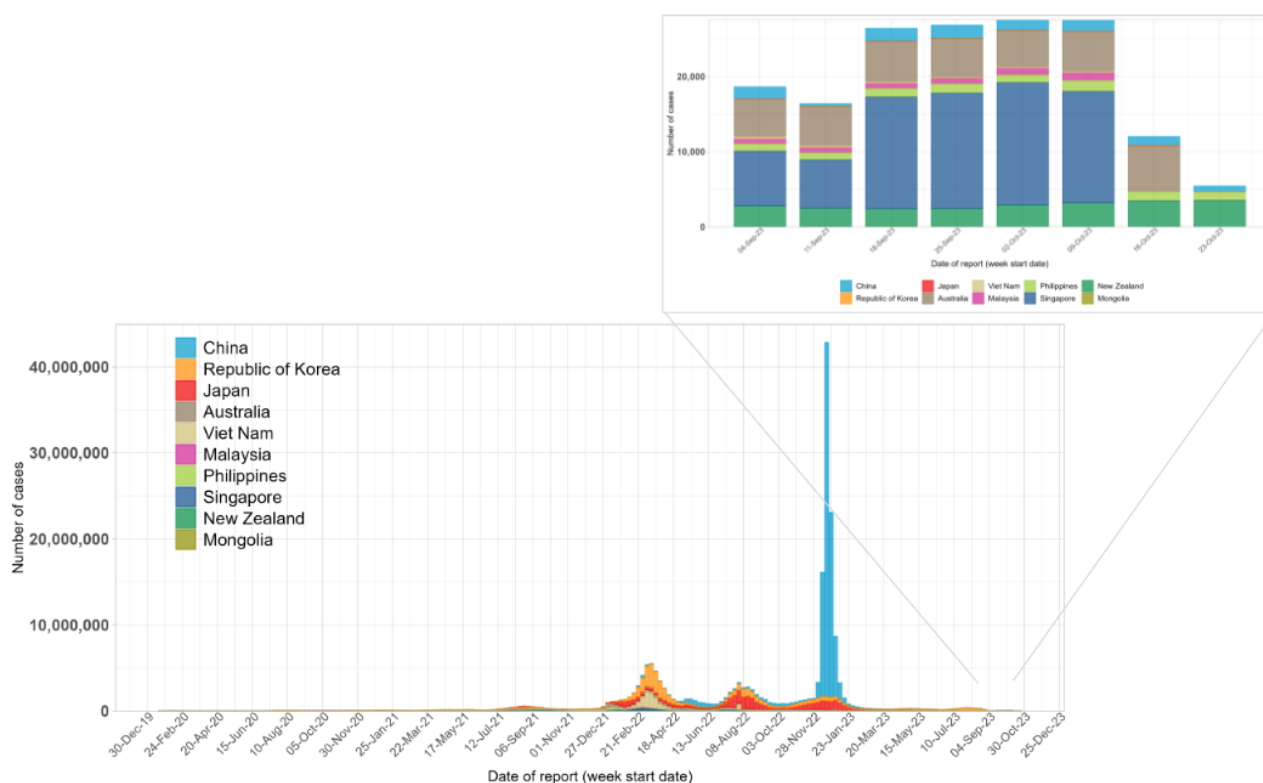


Figure 2. Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19 cases in countries or areas with the lowest number of cases, as of 30 October 2023 10:00 (GMT+8)

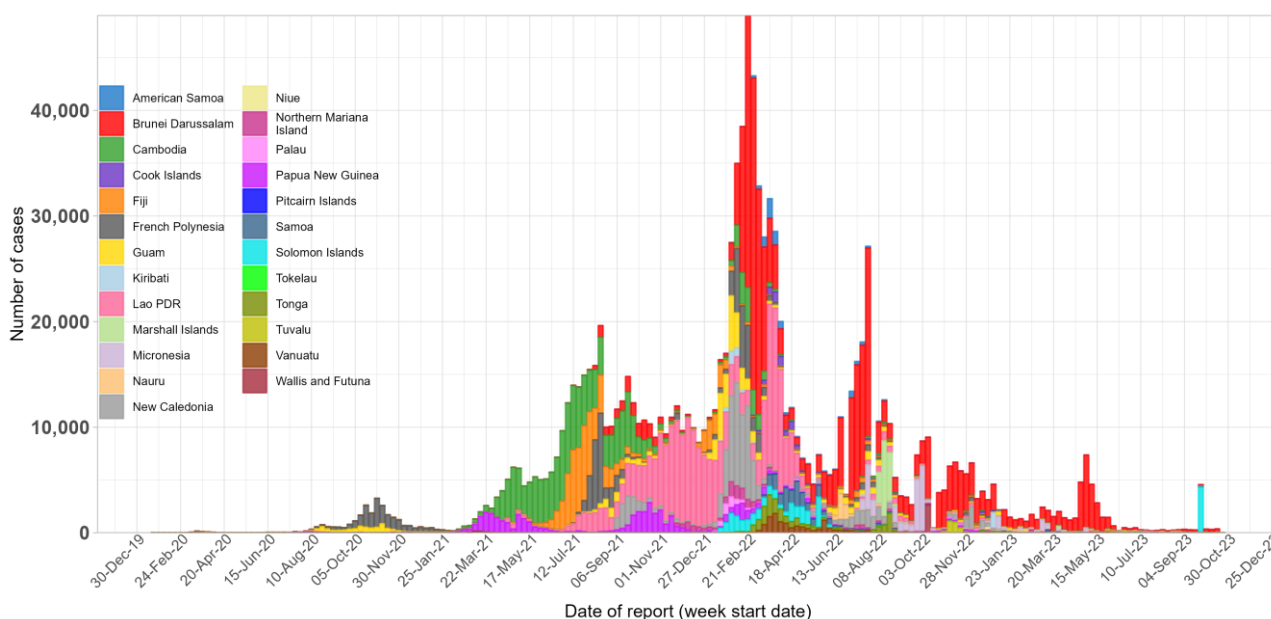


Table 1. Countries or areas with reported laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths, covering the period from 2 to 29 October 2023, as of 30 October 2023 (GMT+8)

Country or area	New cases (cumulative)	New deaths (cumulative)	Change (28-day average of cases)
American Samoa	0 (8 359)	0 (34)	-70.29
Australia	16 308 ¹ (11 629 977)	140 ¹ (23 342)	-360.21
Brunei Darussalam	910 ¹ (312 524)	0 ¹ (163)	-6.50
Cambodia	2 (138 943)	0 (3 056)	0.04
China	4 867 ¹ (99 318 598)	64 ¹ (121 778)	-70.29
Cook Islands	10 ¹ (7 168)	0 ¹ (2)	0.14
Fiji	0 ¹ (69 047)	0 ¹ (885)	0
French Polynesia	17 ¹ (78 649)	0 ¹ (649)	0.29
Guam	43 (52 060)	1 (417)	-2.04
Japan	0 ¹ (33 803 572)	0 ¹ (74 694)	0
Kiribati	0 (5 085)	0 (24)	0
Korea, Republic of	0 ² (34 571 873)	0 ² (35 934)	0
Lao PDR	21 (218 891)	0 (671)	-1.0
Malaysia	1 985 ¹ (5 131 899)	8 (37 202)	-76.07
Marshall Islands	2 ¹ (16 138)	0 ¹ (17)	-0.54
Micronesia (Federated States of)	0 ¹ (26 547)	0 ¹ (65)	-0.61
Mongolia	54 ¹ (1 011 224)	0 ¹ (2 284)	-5.04
Nauru	0 ¹ (5 393)	0 ¹ (1)	0
New Caledonia	0 ¹ (80 064)	0 ¹ (314)	0
New Zealand	13 109 (2 400 967)	98 (3 445)	109.71
Niue	0 ¹ (887)	0 ¹ (0)	-0.68
Northern Mariana Islands	14 ¹ (14 313)	0 ¹ (41)	-3.11
Palau	5 ¹ (6 246)	0 ¹ (9)	-0.32
Papua New Guinea	0 ¹ (46 864)	0 ¹ (670)	0
The Philippines	4 798 (4 119 478)	40 (66 736)	16.46
Pitcairn Islands	0 ¹ (4)	0 ¹ (0)	0
Samoa	0 ¹ (16 778)	0 ¹ (31)	0
Singapore	31 051 ¹ (2 641 196)	0 ¹ (1 872)	-609.71
Solomon Islands	0 ¹ (25 954)	0 ¹ (199)	-155.11
Tokelau	0 ¹ (80)	0 ¹ (0)	0
Tonga	33 (16 860)	0 (12)	0.96
Tuvalu	0 ¹ (2 943)	0 ¹ (1)	0
Vanuatu	0 (12 019)	0 (14)	0
Viet Nam	293 (11 624 000)	0 (43 206)	-17.50
Wallis and Futuna	0 ¹ (3 550)	0 ¹ (8)	0
Total	73 522 (207 418 150)	351 (417 776)	-1 181.75

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

¹ Countries reported no or partial data for the 28-day period ² The Republic of Korea stopped publishing daily cases after downgrading the COVID-19 classification.

Period of Report: As of 2 October 2023, 10:00 (GMT+8)

Table 2. Countries or areas in the Western Pacific Region that have reported currently circulating Variants of Concern, as of 27 October 2023 10:00 (GMT+8)

Country or area	Omicron sublineage										
	BA.2.86	BA.5*	HK.3	XBB^	XBB.1.5	XBB.1.16	XBB.1.9.1	XBB.1.9.2	EG.5	CH.1.1	BQ.1*
American Samoa		X							X	X	
Australia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Brunei Darussalam		X		X		X					X
Cambodia		X		X	X	X	X	X			X
China	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guam		X								X	X
Japan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kiribati		X									
Lao PDR		X									
Malaysia		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Marshall Islands						X					X
Micronesia (Federated States of)		X			X						X
Mongolia		X		X	X	X	X	X			X
New Zealand		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Mariana Islands		X			X						X
Palau		X									X
Papua New Guinea		X									X
The Philippines		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Republic of Korea	X	X	X	X							X
Samoa		X									
Singapore		X	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	X	

*Includes sub-variants. ^Includes sub-variants not specified on the table. 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 actively supports country offices in testing messages to ensure data-driven and audience-focused risk communication and has completed the administration process for continuing to engage a vendor to provide technical support for message testing on COVID-19 and other emergency topics.

Messages for the public

On WPRO social media, published posts on COVID-19 protective measures in schools, country response, and health security and COVID-19 lessons as part of the 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific (RCM74).

Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram posts:

- To reduce the spread of #COVID19 in schools, ensure good ventilation by opening windows and doors when possible and safe, or providing adequate mechanical ventilation. Wear masks if unsure about ventilation and encourage outdoor activities when feasible. [Facebook/ X](#)
- As #Cambodia navigated challenges of the #COVID19 pandemic, the country has emerged stronger, with enhanced health security and emergency preparedness and readiness systems. Supported by partnerships between the WHO and European Union in the country , Cambodia combated the pandemic and laid the foundations for a safer and healthier future. [Facebook/ X/ YouTube](#)
- Lao PDR videos on country COVID-19 response published on WPRO [YouTube](#).
- **RCM74: COVID-19 and health security:**
 - "During the pandemic, all countries built new capacities to prevent and control epidemics and pandemics. I urge all Member States to sustain those gains and not slip back into the cycle of panic and neglect. The investments you have made must not go to waste. And nor must the painful lessons we have learned." - WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. [Facebook/ X](#)
 - The Western Pacific's COVID-19 response was a testament to strong health security systems. Our strategic investments in health security systems showed during the #COVID19 pandemic response. Now, the Asia Pacific Health Security Action Framework is our roadmap to building robust health systems that can handle even the most complex health emergencies. [Facebook/ X/ YouTube](#)
 - "During COVID-19, information was rapidly changing in real-time. To ensure that our information was up to date, we worked closely with researchers in other countries." Watch the story of Dr Naranzul Tsendenbal, head of the virology laboratory at Mongolia's National Centre for Communicable Diseases. [Facebook/ X/ YouTube](#)
 - What is health security and why is it important? Dr Babatunde Olowokure, WHO Regional Emergency Director for the Western Pacific, explains. Today at #RCM74, health leaders in the Region endorsed the Asia Pacific Health Security Action Framework to support countries to be ready for and respond to health emergencies like #COVID19. [Facebook/ X/ Instagram](#)