

COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update

Edition 72, published 28 December 2021

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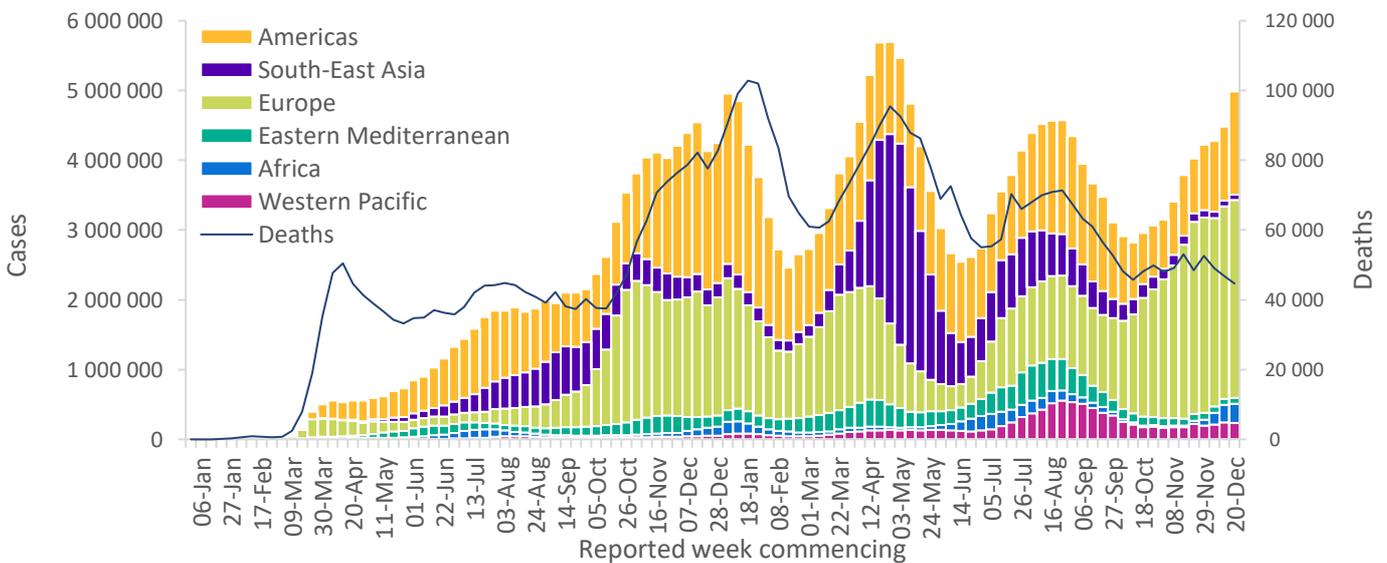
Global overview

Data as of 26 December 2021

During the week 20-26 December, following a gradual increase since October, the global number of new cases increased by 11% as compared to the previous week (Table 1); while the number of new deaths remained similar to the number reported during the previous week. This corresponds to just under 5 million new cases and over 44 000 new deaths. As of 26 December, over 278 million cases and just under 5.4 million deaths have been reported globally (Figure 1).

The Region of the Americas reported the largest increase in new cases in the last week (39%), followed by the African Region, which reported an increase of 7%. The South-East Asia Region continued to report a decrease in new cases as compared to the previous week (12%) while in the European, Eastern Mediterranean, and Western Pacific Regions, the number of new cases was similar to those reported during the previous week. The African Region reported the highest increase in the number of new deaths (72%), followed by the South-East Asia Region (9%) and the Region of the Americas (7%). The European and Eastern Mediterranean Region reported decreases of 12% and 7% respectively, in the incidence of deaths, while in the Western Pacific Region, the incidence was similar to the previous weeks.

Figure 1. COVID-19 cases reported weekly by WHO Region, and global deaths, as of 26 December 2021**



**See [Annex 1: Data, table, and figure notes](#)

The European Region continued to report the highest incidence of weekly cases (304.6 new cases per 100 000 population), followed by the Region of the Americas (144.4 new cases per 100 000 population). Both regions also reported the highest weekly incidence in deaths of 2.6 and 1.2 per 100 000 population, respectively, while all other regions reported <1 new death per 100 000.

The highest numbers of new cases were reported from the United States of America (1 185 653 new cases; 34% increase), the United Kingdom (611 864 new cases; 20% increase), France (504 642 new cases; 41% increase); Italy (257 579 new cases; 62% increase) and Germany (197 845 new cases; 30% decrease).

Please note, the next issue of the Weekly Epidemiological Update (to be published on 6 January) will be condensed versions covering only the global and regional epidemiology of COVID-19.

Table 1. Newly reported and cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths, by WHO Region, as of 26 December 2021**

WHO Region	New cases in last 7 days (%)	Change in new cases in last 7 days *	Cumulative cases (%)	New deaths in last 7 days (%)	Change in new deaths in last 7 days *	Cumulative deaths (%)
Europe	2 842 375 (57%)	3%	97 359 631 (35%)	23 900 (53%)	-12%	1 650 729 (31%)
Americas	1 476 724 (30%)	39%	101 243 155 (36%)	12 782 (29%)	7%	2 399 735 (44%)
Africa	274 342 (6%)	7%	7 055 628 (3%)	952 (2%)	72%	155 292 (3%)
Western Pacific	238 654 (5%)	0%	11 062 163 (4%)	3 063 (7%)	-3%	153 746 (3%)
Eastern Mediterranean	76 875 (2%)	-3%	17 093 469 (6%)	1 275 (3%)	-7%	314 949 (6%)
South-East Asia	76 123 (2%)	-12%	44 899 674 (16%)	2 708 (6%)	9%	719 486 (13%)
Global	4 985 093 (100%)	11%	278 714 484 (100%)	44 680 (100%)	-4%	5 393 950 (100%)

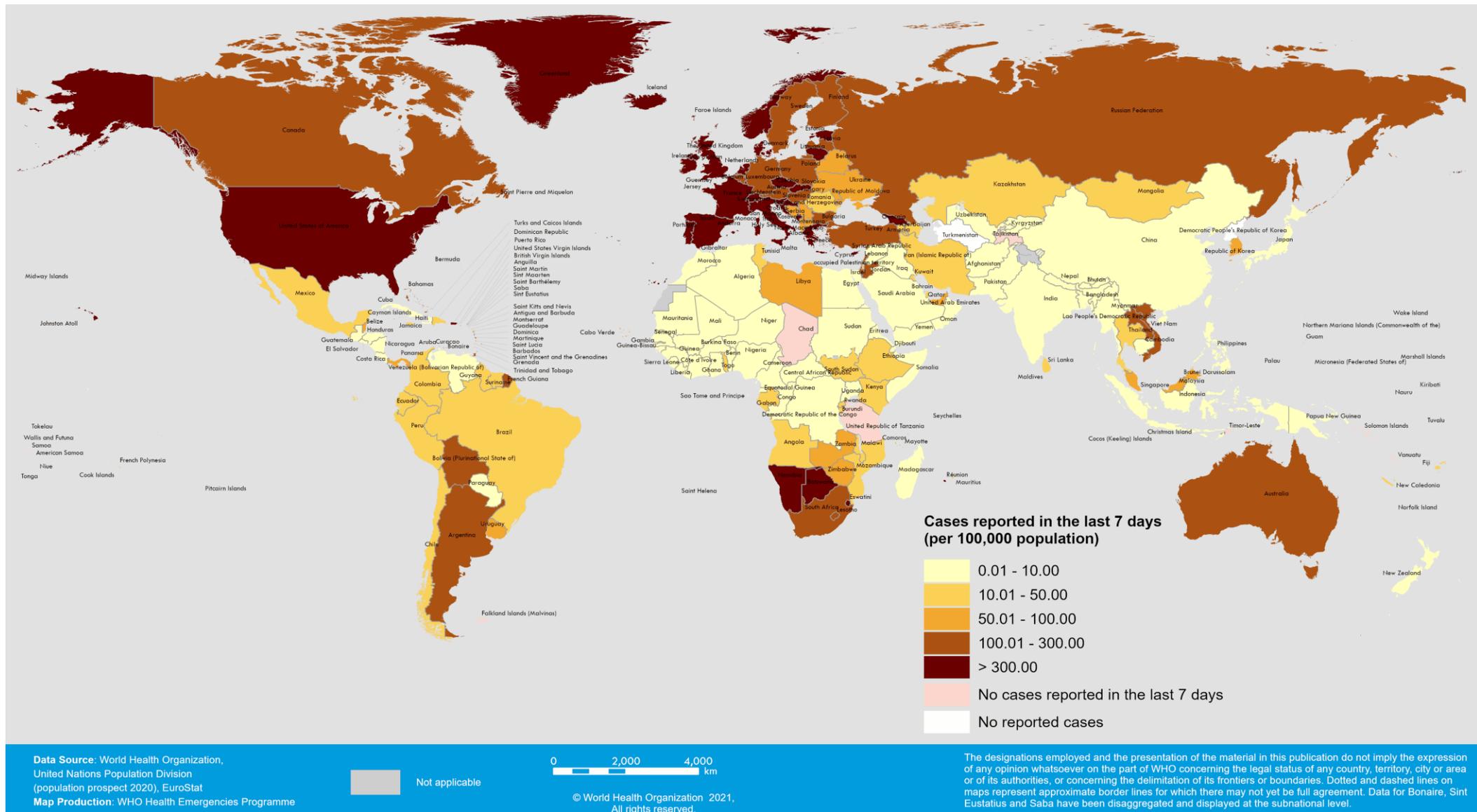
*Percent change in the number of newly confirmed cases/deaths in the past seven days, compared to seven days prior

**See [Annex 1: Data, table, and figure notes](#)

For the latest data and other updates on COVID-19, please see:

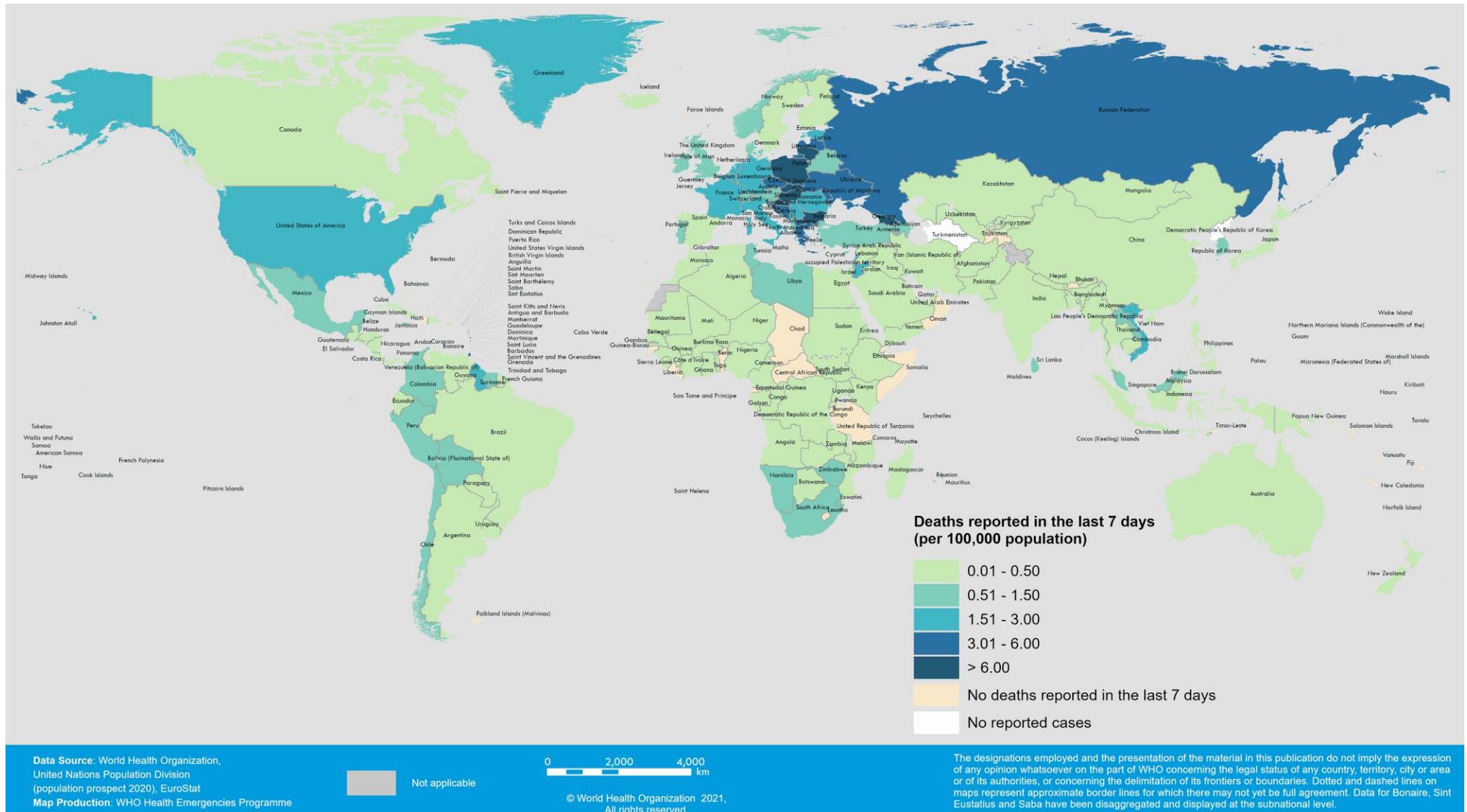
- [WHO COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Weekly Operational Update and previous editions of the Weekly Epidemiological Update](#)

Figure 2. COVID-19 cases per 100 000 population reported by countries, territories and areas, 20 - 26 December 2021**



**See Annex 1: Data, table, and figure notes

Figure 3. COVID-19 deaths per 100 000 population reported by countries, territories and areas, 20 - 26 December 2021**



**See Annex 1: Data, table, and figure notes

Brief Update on SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant

The overall risk related to the new variant of concern Omicron remains very high. Consistent evidence shows that the Omicron variant has a growth advantage over the Delta variant with a doubling time of 2-3 days and rapid increases in the incidence of cases is seen in a number of countries, including those where the variant has become the dominant SARS-CoV-2 variant, such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. However, a decline in the incidence of cases has now been observed in South Africa. The rapid growth rate is likely to be a combination of both immune evasion and intrinsic increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant. Early data from the United Kingdom, South Africa and Denmark suggests there is a reduced risk of hospitalization for the Omicron compared to the Delta variant, however, further data are needed to understand the clinical markers of severity including the use of oxygen, mechanical ventilation and death, and how severity may be impacted by vaccination and/or prior SARS-CoV-2 infection. It is also expected that corticosteroids and interleukin 6 receptor blockers will remain effective in the management of patients with severe disease, however, preliminary data suggest that monoclonal antibodies may be less able to neutralize the Omicron variant. Reassuringly, preliminary data suggests testing using either PCR or antigen-based rapid diagnostic tests (Ag-RDT) assays does not appear to be impacted by the Omicron variant. More information on this variant can be found in the updated [Technical Brief and Priority Actions for Member States](#) that was published on 23 December 2021 by WHO.

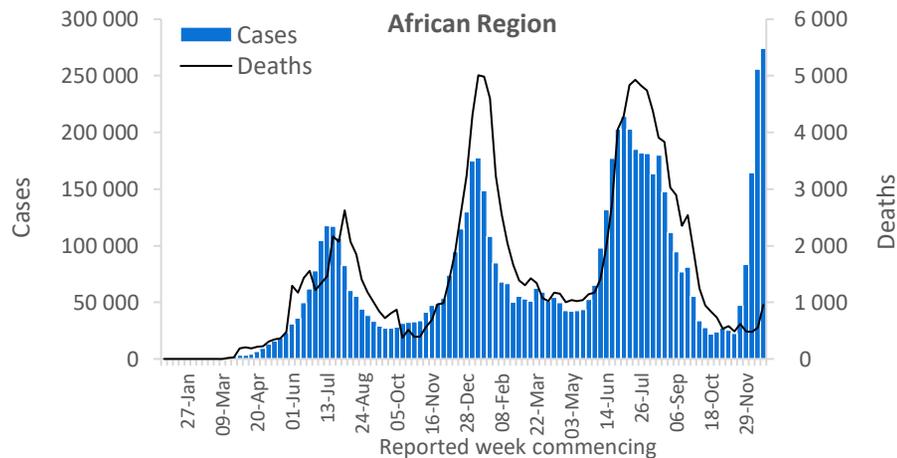
Additional resources

- [Tracking SARS-CoV-2 Variants](#)
- [COVID-19 new variants: Knowledge gaps and research](#)
- [Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2: a guide to implementation for maximum impact on public health](#)
- [Considerations for implementing and adjusting PHSM in the context of COVID-19](#)

African Region

The African Region reported over 274 000 new cases, however, the weekly increase in incidence was smaller (7%) as compared to the incidence of the previous week (53%). Increases in case incidence of over 50% were observed in nearly two-thirds (32/49; 65%) of countries in the Region. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from South Africa (115 328 new cases; 194.5 new cases per 100 000 population; a 29% decrease), Ethiopia (19 940 new cases; 17.3 new cases per 100 000 population; a 610% increase) and Kenya (19 023 new cases; 35.4 new cases per 100 000; a 207% increase).

The Region reported over 900 new weekly deaths, a 72% increase as compared to the number reported during the previous week. The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from South Africa (428 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000 population; an 87% increase), Zimbabwe (103 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 119% increase) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (79 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; an 888% increase).

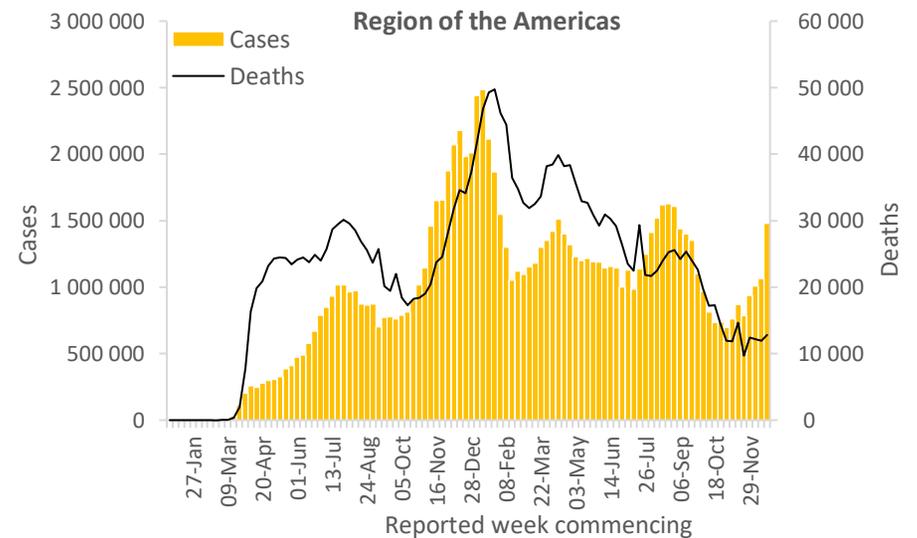


Updates from the [African Region](#)

Region of the Americas

The Region of the Americas reported over 1.4 million new cases and over 12 000 new deaths, increases of 39% and 7% respectively, as compared to the previous week. Half of the countries (28/56) reported increases of over 10%, with the highest increases reported from Saint Kitts and Nevis (38 vs 3 new cases, an 1167% increase albeit small numbers); the United States Virgin Islands (367 vs 42 new cases, a 774% increase) and Puerto Rico (32 162 vs 3736 new cases, a 761% increase). However, the highest numbers of new cases continued to be reported from the United States of America (1 185 653 new cases; 358.2 new cases per 100 000; a 34% increase), Canada (78 847 new cases; 208.9 new cases per 100 000; a 101% increase), and Argentina (65 966 new cases; 146.0 new cases per 100 000; a 106% increase).

The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from the United States of America (9355 new deaths; 2.8 new deaths per 100 000; a 7% increase), Brazil (997 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 42% increase), and Mexico (797 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 41% increase).

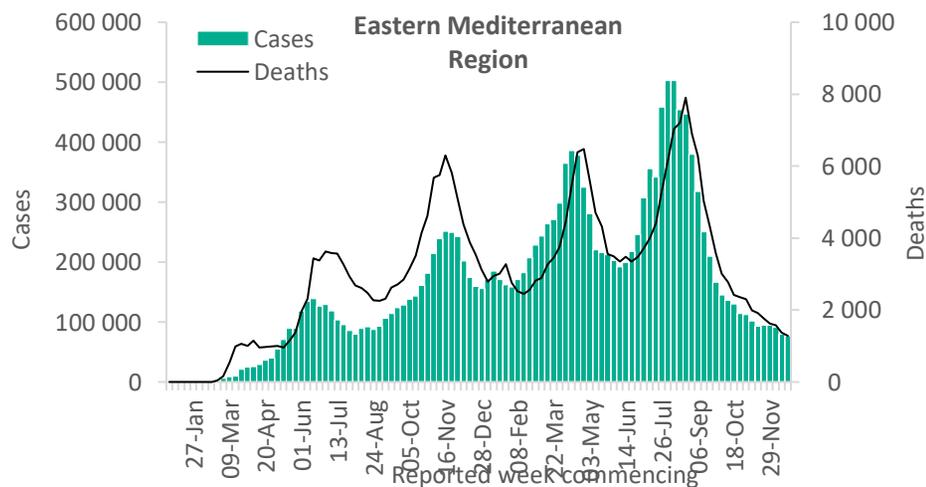


Updates from the [Region of the Americas](#)

Eastern Mediterranean Region

The weekly incidence of cases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region remained similar to the incidence reported during the previous week, with over 76 000 new cases reported. Half of the countries (11/22) reported increases in cases of over 10%, with the highest increases reported from the United Arab Emirates (5678 vs 1133 new cases, a 401% increase); Somalia (363 vs 95 new cases, a 282% increase) and Saudi Arabia (1668 vs 549 new cases, 204% increase). The highest numbers of new cases continued to be reported from Jordan (17 952 new cases; 267.9 new cases per 100 000; a 34% decrease), the Islamic Republic of Iran (13 894 new cases; 16.5 new cases per 100 000; a 16% decrease), and Lebanon (11 795 new cases; 172.8 new cases per 100 000; an 8% increase).

The weekly incidence of deaths in the Region decreased by 7%, while the highest numbers of new deaths continued to be reported from the Islamic Republic of Iran (315 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 15% decrease), Egypt (256 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 15% decrease), and Jordan (253 new deaths; 2.5 new deaths per 100 000; similar to the previous week).

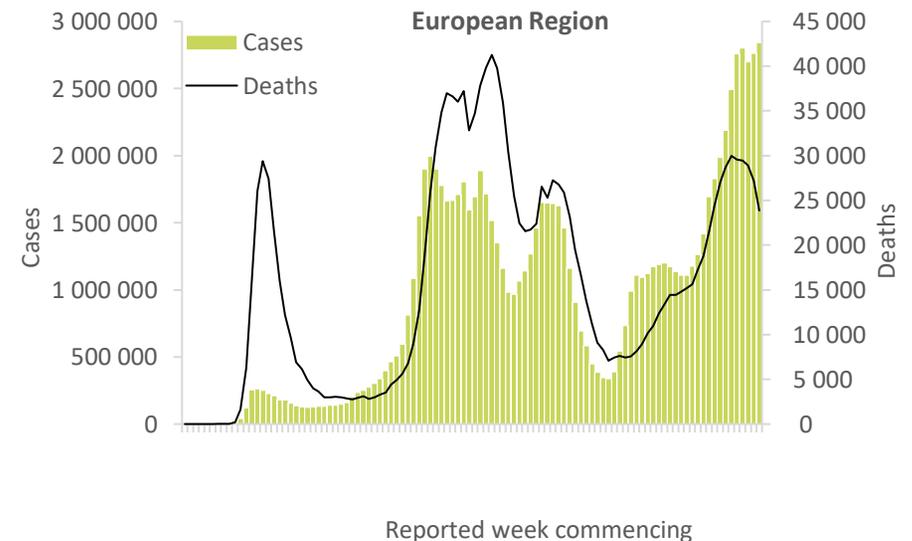


Updates from the [Eastern Mediterranean Region](#)

European Region

The European Region reported over 2.8 million new cases, similar to the number reported during the previous week. However, the weekly incidence of deaths decreased by 12%, with over 24 000 new deaths reported. Despite the stable trend, one third of countries (20/61) reported a weekly increase in cases of over 10%, with the highest increases reported from Malta (4107 vs 1103 new cases, an 272% increase), Israel (9076 vs 4886 new cases, an 86% increase) and Portugal (55 217 vs 30427 new cases, an 81% increase). The highest numbers of new cases were reported from the United Kingdom (611 864 new cases; 901.3 new cases per 100 000; a 20% increase), France (504 642 new cases; 775.9 new cases per 100 000; a 41% increase) and Italy (257 579 new cases; 431.9 new cases per 100 000; a 62% increase).

The highest numbers of new deaths continued to be reported from the Russian Federation (7015 new deaths; 4.8 new deaths per 100 000; a 9% decrease), Poland (2842 new deaths; 7.5 new deaths per 100 000; a 5% decrease), and Germany (2131 new deaths; 2.6 new deaths per 100 000; an 18% decrease).

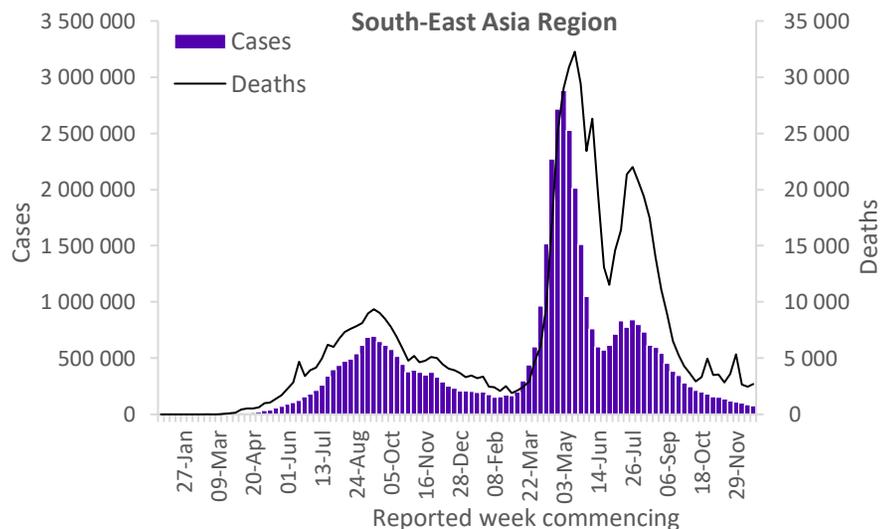


Updates from the [European Region](#)

South-East Asia Region

The declining trend in the number of weekly cases reported has continued in the South-East Asia Region, with over 76 000 new cases reported, a 12% decrease as compared to the number reported during the previous week. However, the number of new weekly deaths increased by 9%, with 2700 new deaths reported. Only two countries in the Region reported an increase in weekly cases: Bangladesh (2170 vs 310 new cases, a 23% increase) and the Maldives (907 vs 838 new cases, an 8% increase). However, the highest numbers of new cases continued to be reported from India (46 527 new cases; 3.4 new cases per 100 000; a 7% decrease), Thailand (18 442 new cases; 26.4 new cases per 100 000; a 19% decrease), and Sri Lanka (3964 new cases; 18.5 new cases per 100 000; a 42% decrease).

The highest numbers of new deaths also continued to be reported from India (2260 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 14% increase), Thailand (203 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; similar to the previous week), and Sri Lanka (132 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; similar to the previous week).

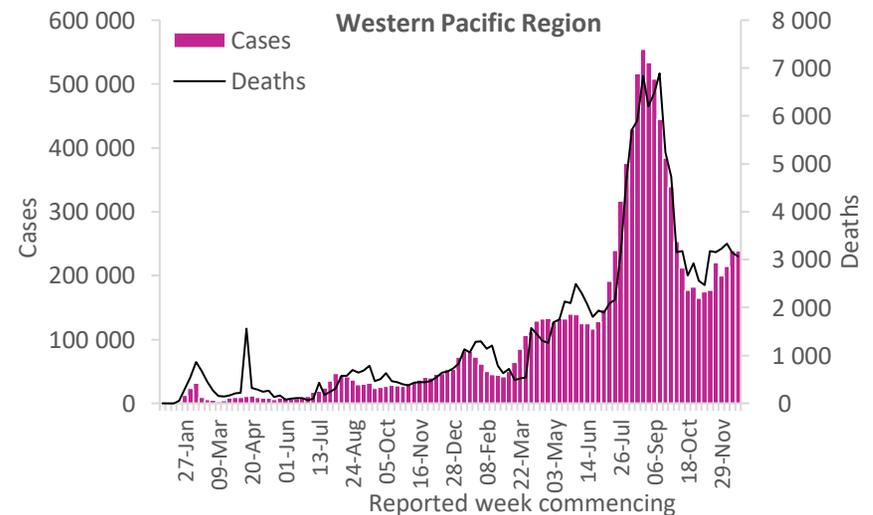


Updates from the [South-East Asia Region](#)

Western Pacific Region

The incidence of cases and deaths reported in the Western Pacific Region was similar to those reported during the previous week, with over 238 000 new cases and over 3000 new deaths reported. However, seven of the 27 countries in the region, reported an increase in case incidence of over 10%, with the highest increases reported from French Polynesia (40 vs 8 new cases, a 400% increase), Fiji (192 vs 39 new cases, a 392% increase) and Australia. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from Viet Nam (112 087 new cases; 115.2 new cases per 100 000; a 11% decrease), Australia (45 560 new cases; 178.7 new cases per 100 000, a 135% increase), and the Republic of Korea (42 367 new cases; 82.6 new cases per 100 000; an 11% decrease).

The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Viet Nam (1656 new deaths; 1.7 new deaths per 100 000; similar to the previous week), the Republic of Korea (523 new deaths; 1.0 new death per 100 000; a 12% increase), and the Philippines (512 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; a 12% decrease).



Updates from the [Western Pacific Region](#)

Technical guidance and other resources

- [WHO technical guidance](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [WHO Weekly Operational Updates on COVID-19](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 case definitions](#)
- [COVID-19 Supply Chain Inter-Agency Coordination Cell Weekly Situational Update](#)
- [Research and Development](#)
- [Open WHO courses on COVID-19](#) in official UN languages and in [additional national languages](#)
- [WHO Academy COVID-19 mobile learning app](#)
- [The Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#) (SPRP) outlining the support the international community can provide to all countries to prepare and respond to the virus
- [EPI-WIN: tailored information for individuals, organizations, and communities](#)
- Recommendations and advice for the public:
 - [Protect yourself](#)
 - [Questions and answers](#)
 - [Travel advice](#)

Annex 1. Data, table, and figure notes

Data presented are based on official laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths reported to WHO by country/territories/areas, largely based upon WHO [case definitions](#) and [surveillance guidance](#). While steps are taken to ensure accuracy and reliability, all data are subject to continuous verification and change, and caution must be taken when interpreting these data as several factors influence the counts presented, with variable underestimation of true case and death incidences, and variable delays to reflecting these data at the global level. Case detection, inclusion criteria, testing strategies, reporting practices, and data cut-off and lag times differ between countries/territories/areas. A small number of countries/territories/areas report combined probable and laboratory-confirmed cases. Differences are to be expected between information products published by WHO, national public health authorities, and other sources.

Due to public health authorities conducting data reconciliation exercises that remove large numbers of cases or deaths from their total counts, negative numbers may be displayed in the new cases/deaths columns as appropriate. When additional details become available that allow the subtractions to be suitably apportioned to previous days, graphics will be updated accordingly. A record of historic data adjustment made is available upon request by emailing epi-data-support@who.int. Please specify the countries of interest, time period, and purpose of the request/intended usage. Prior situation reports will not be edited; see covid19.who.int for the most up-to-date data. COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths reported in the last seven days by countries, territories, and areas, and WHO Region (reported in previous issues) are now available at: <https://covid19.who.int/table>.

‘Countries’ may refer to countries, territories, areas or other jurisdictions of similar status. The designations employed, and the presentation of these materials do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WHO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Countries, territories, and areas are arranged under the administering WHO region. The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers’ products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by WHO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions except, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

^[1] All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). In the map, the number of cases of Serbia and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244, 1999) have been aggregated for visualization purposes.