

The coronavirus disease COVID-19 continues to spread at the regional and global levels. As of 31 December 2022, the global cumulative incidence reached 655 539 421 reported cases and 6 683 993 associated deaths at a case-fatality ratio (CFR) of 1.02%. Meanwhile, the 22 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) have reported a total of 23 222 958 cases, representing about 3.54% of the global count, with 349 090 associated deaths (CFR 1.5%). Most countries in the Region are in the community transmission phase.

Since the beginning of the outbreak, the country that has reported the highest number of total cases in the Region is Islamic Republic of Iran (7 561 140 cases; 32.56% of the Region's total), followed by Iraq (2 465 545; 10.62%) and Jordan (1 746 997; 7.52%). Islamic Republic of Iran also reported the highest number of total COVID-19 associated deaths (144 685; CFR 1.91%), followed by Pakistan (30 635; CFR 1.94%) and Tunisia (29 284; CFR 2.55%). The highest CFRs were reported by Yemen (18.07%), followed by Sudan (7.84%) and Syria (5.51%), while the lowest CFRs were reported by Qatar (0.14%), United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (0.22% for both).

During epidemiological week 52, the Region reported a decrease in cases by 14% when compared to the previous week (4108 cases compared to 4778 cases). A decrease by 21% was also observed for the associated deaths (30 deaths in the current week compared to 38 deaths in the previous week).

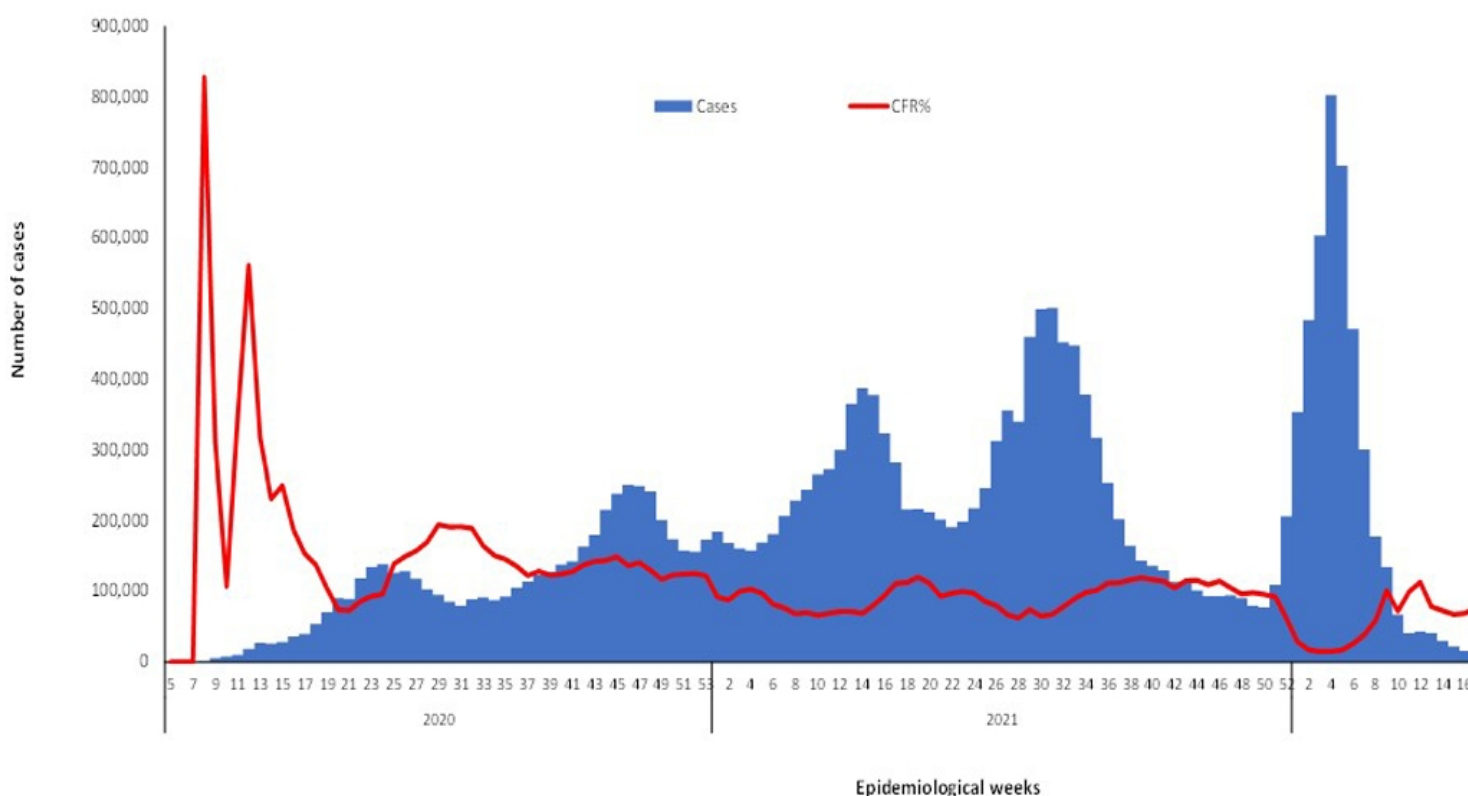
The weekly number of cases have decreased in all countries of the Region except in Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon as compared to the previous week. This week the number of COVID-19 associated deaths also decreased in all countries of the Region except in Afghanistan and Lebanon as compared to the previous week.*

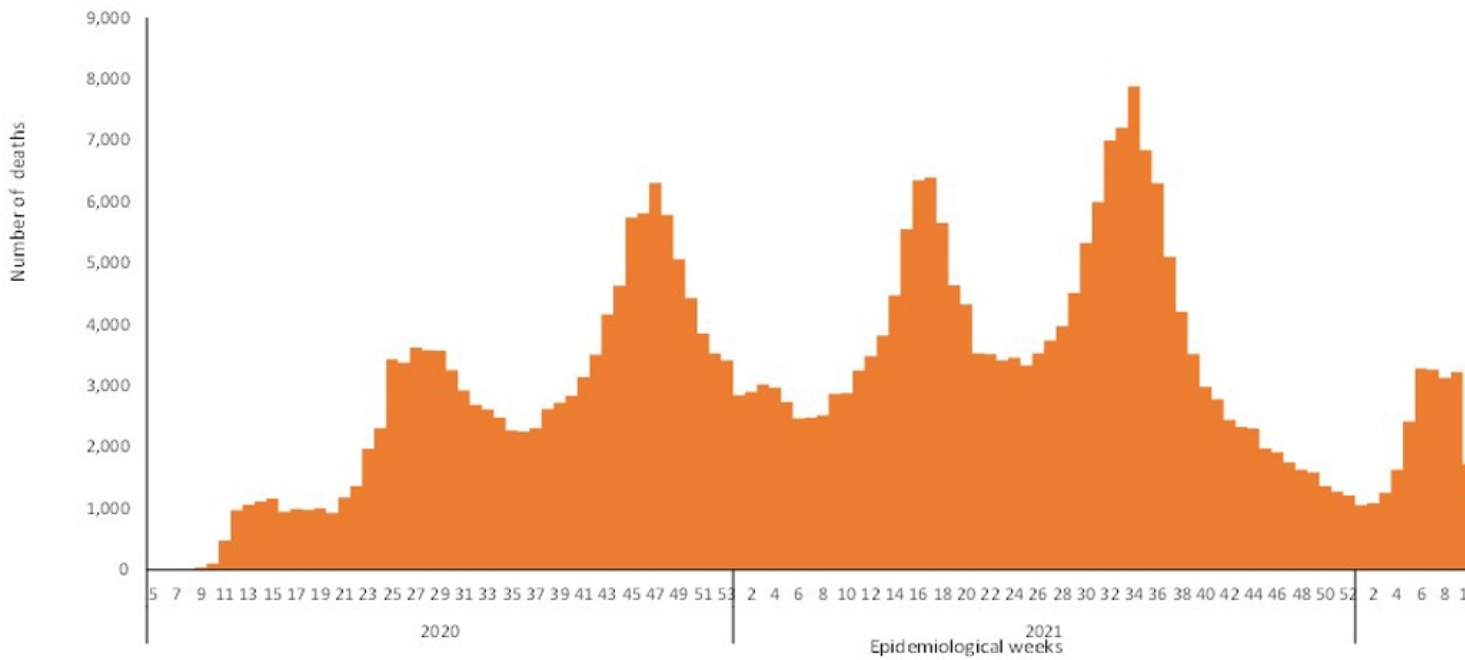
In terms of laboratory testing, a total of 442 397 639 tests were conducted since the start of the outbreak across the Region including 270 531 tests in week 52, which shows only a one per cent decrease as compared to the previous week when 274 560 tests were conducted. The highest number of PCR tests were reported from United Arab Emirates (197 950 426), followed by Islamic Republic of Iran (54 772 229) and Saudi Arabia (44 940 564). The average positivity rate for the Region is 5.25%. WHO recommends a positivity rate of around 3% to 12% as a general benchmark indicating adequate testing, which was achieved in most countries of the Region.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 vaccination continues across the Region. The total number of doses administered so far in the 22 countries is 844 957 683. Pakistan has administered the highest number of doses (317 080 887), followed by Islamic Republic of Iran (154 773 070) and Egypt (100 993 230). On the other hand, Bahrain (3 476 633), Yemen (1 238 962) and Djibouti (338 051) administrated the lowest number of COVID-19 doses in the Region.**

Supporting countries in the Region

Through the regional incident management support team, WHO/EMRO continues to coordinate the response and provide technical support to countries and partners in the Region in the areas of coordination and partnership, surveillance, laboratory capacity, clinical management, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement, points of entry in accordance to the International Health Regulations (2005), research, health systems strengthening, and immunization, essential health services among others.





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