The coronavirus disease COVID-19 continues to spread at the regional and global levels. As of 9 January 2021, the global cumulative incidence reached 87 595 381 reported cases and 1 906 679 associated deaths with a case fatality ratio (CFR) of 2.2%. Meanwhile, the 22 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) have reported a total of 5 154 585 cases, which represent about 5.9% of the global count, with 124 968 associated deaths (CFR 2.4%). 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 (1 280 438 cases; 24.8% of the Region's total), followed by Iraq (602 331; 11.7%) and Pakistan (502 416; 9.8%). Islamic Republic of Iran also reported the highest number of total associated deaths (56 100; CFR 4.4%) followed by Iraq (12 881; CFR 2.1%) and Pakistan (10 644; CFR 2.1%). The highest CFRs were reported by Yemen (29%) followed by Sudan (6.3%), while the lowest CFRs were reported by Qatar (0.2%) followed by United Arab Emirates (0.3%) and Bahrain (0.4%).

During epidemiological week 1, the Region reported an increase of 10.8% in cases when compared to the previous week (172 026 cases compared to 155 300 cases). On the other hand, an 8.5% decrease was observed for associated deaths (2787 deaths compared to 3046 deaths).

Lebanon, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates reported a relative increase in COVID-19 activity in week 1. The cumulative number of cases increased from 186 408 to 215 553 in Lebanon (15.6% weekly increase), from 143 544 to 159 276 in Tunisia (11% weekly increase), and from 211 641 to 227 702 in United Arab Emirates (8% weekly increase). Occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia and Lebanon had the largest relative increase in deaths.

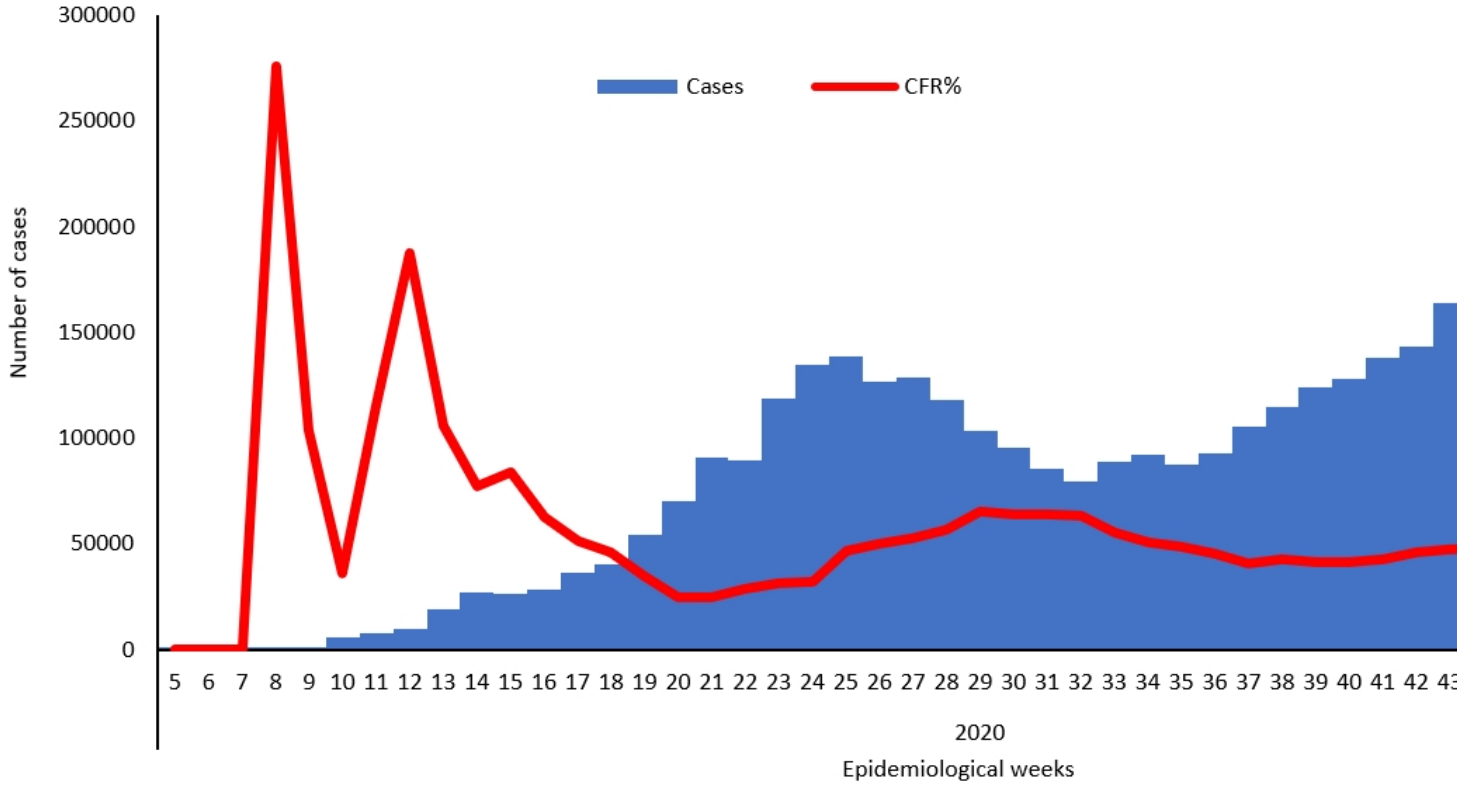
In terms of testing, a total of 73 551 470 laboratory PCR tests were conducted since the start of the outbreak across the Region including 2 922 066 tests in week 1, which shows a 6% increase compared to the previous week (2 745 111). The highest number of PCR tests were reported from United Arab Emirates (22.2 million), followed by Saudi Arabia (11.3 million) and Islamic Republic of Iran (8.1 million). The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain are performing the highest rates of testing per capita (2249/1000 and 1448/1000, respectively). The average positivity rate for the Region is 7.1%. WHO recommends a positivity rate of around 3–12% as a general benchmark indicating adequate testing, which was achieved in most countries of the Region.

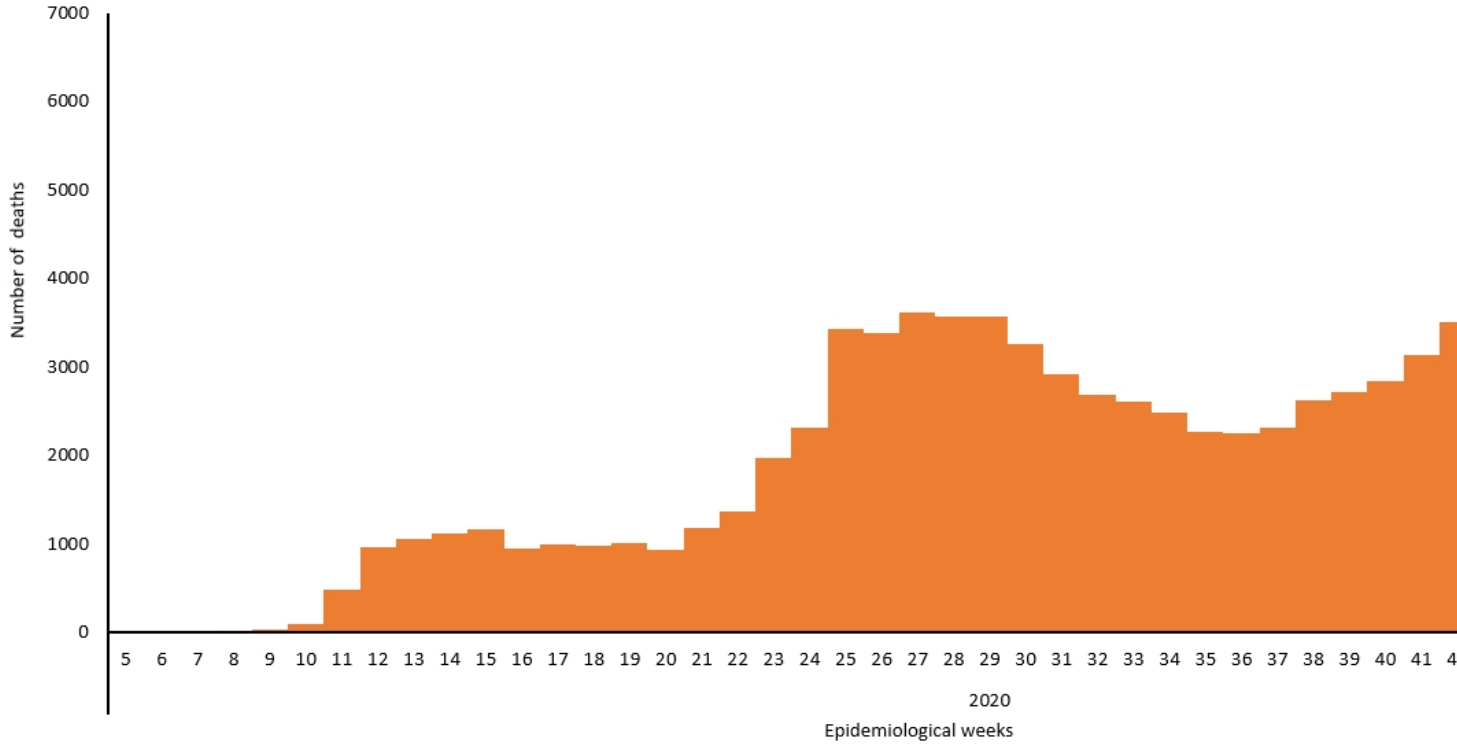
Supporting countries in the Region

The regional incident management support team 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 (IPC), risk communication and community engagement, points of entry according to the International Health Regulations (2005), research, health systems, and essential health services among others. Activities this week included:

training 100 UNWRA health care workers on basic IPC measures; and

releasing “Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2: a guide to implementation for maximum impact on public health” and interim guidance on “SARS-CoV-2 genomic sequencing for public health goals”.





To access data from the Region, please visit the COVID-19 dashboard [illegible] WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region [illegible]