



This Situation Report is jointly issued by PNG National Department of Health (NDOH) and World Health Organization (WHO) once weekly. This Report is not comprehensive and covers information received as of reporting date.

Situation Summary and Highlights

- ❑ As of 18th July 2021 (12:00 pm), there were a total of 17,519 COVID-19 cases including 191 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea (PNG). From the period of 12th – 18th July, there were 158 newly reported cases and 12 deaths from Western Highlands and Madang.
- ❑ About 68,830 people has been vaccinated in PNG as of 18th July 2021. This includes 8,327 health workers, 47,721 essential workers and 12,782 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- ❑ Almost 6500 people had received their 2nd dose of the COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine as of 18th June 2021.
- ❑ PNG recorded its first imported case of COVID-19 with Delta Variant of concern. Investigation of other suspected cases and contact tracing for this case is being conducted in country.
- ❑ The Government continues to maintain strict border control measures.

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

	New Cases (12 July to 18 July 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	0	436
Central	2	273
East New Britain	10	1205
East Sepik	3	257
Eastern Highlands	1	753
Enga	6	292
Gulf	2	133
Hela	2	187
Jiwaka	2	161
Madang	2	437
Manus	20	510
Milne Bay	1	239
Morobe	6	1211
National Capital District	19	5224
New Ireland	31	577
Northern (Oro)	0	196
Simbu	0	253
Southern Highlands	0	214
West New Britain	0	1025
West Sepik	45	452
Western	0	2393
Western Highlands	6	1052
TOTAL	158	17519

¹ As of 18/07/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ As of 18th July, a total of, 158 new confirmed cases and 12 COVID-19 deaths reported while the cumulative cases are 17,519 and 191 deaths with case fatality rate of 1%.
- ❑ Of the 158 cases reported, about 19% were detected within this week, 15% were from 8 to 14 days ago and about 66% were from over 2 weeks to more than a month ago while the reported deaths accounted for 17% which had occurred more than a month ago.
- ❑ Go.Data rollout training for Western Highlands Province ended with an on-site practicum conducted in Mt Hagen Pathology Lab. This is the third province to have Go.Data installed for COVID-19 Surveillance real-time data captured at the point of testing after the NCD and Central province.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	190 738 559	4 098 247
Western Pacific	3 963 312	60 268

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 18/07/2021, 22:45 CEST

Laboratory:

- There has been discussion on a much needed 'green house' which will be used to enclose the air lab testing space from the isolated patients at Taurama Aquatic Centre (TAC).
- All provinces were advised to send positive samples that meet the whole genomic sequencing criteria immediately to CPHL after a variant of concern, the Delta variant, was identified from a suspicious positive sample. The sample was immediately sent offshore, and sequenced at Doherty Institute laboratory in Melbourne.

COVID-19 Hotline:

- Since the start of pandemic until 18th July, the hotline had received a total of 265,813 calls. Of these, 6,296 (2.4%) were health-related calls. A total of 2625 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- For the reporting period of 11th July – 18th July, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 2848 calls. Of these, 27 (about 0.95%) were health-related calls. 15 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- The hotline is receiving a new wave of curious callers seeking information regarding Delta Variant.
- The hotline continues receiving a number of calls from people seeking information around vaccination, quarantine, clearance certificates and travel restrictions.

Emergency Medical Team (EMT):

- Team Sana, the National EMT, all prepared and set to accompany the clinical management and IPC team to New Ireland Province to strengthen COVID-19 pathways and IPC practices in health facilities within the province and also assist in vaccination awareness activities.

Clinical Management:

- Three urban hospitals in NCD were visited by a joint clinical management-IPC team as part of the scheduled urban health facility mapping to strengthen COVID-19 clinical pathways and IPC measures. The team visited Port Moresby General Hospital, Pacific International Hospital, Taurama Military Hospital and Holiday Inn Hotel.
- A joint effort to strengthen COVID-19 clinical pathways, IPC practices, vaccine awareness and Niupela Pasin activities in provinces has been trained with the National EMT, critical care biomedical technicians, RCCE and Niupela Pasin teams.

Infection Prevention Control (IPC)

- The team visited health facilities to support the implementation of effective and appropriate IPC interventions that will reduce the transmission of COVID-19. The team worked closely with Taurama Hospital, Port Moresby General Hospital, Pacific International Hospital and Tokarara Clinic to ensure the facilities were supported in their current efforts to ensure effective IPC practices.

Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):

- A Joint Media Conference was held on 15th July with NDOH, NCD Health and WHO to announce the details of the first Delta variant detected in country and update on the response, actions taken and current COVID-19 situation in the country.
- Initiated development of communication materials for Delta variant including Q&A points to support the Call Centre Hotline.
- Completed filming of new Vaccine Champions Dr Lucy John, Executive Director of NDoH and Prof. Evelyn Lavu, with Central Public Health Laboratory at Port Moresby General Hospital together with two youth champions.

- ❑ The RCCE team focused on supporting Clinical Management and IPC teams visit to New Ireland Province with integrated advocacy and demand creation efforts. During this same visit, RCCE planned for an official launch of the National EMT through documenting efforts of the EMT in province.
- ❑ A visit to West Sepik provided key insights into vaccine barriers specific to the province as RCCE continued community engagement and social mobilisation in provinces.
- ❑ Vaccine site communications materials all completed and set for rollout.

Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ During the reporting week, about 1.8 tonnes of COVID-19 supplies including mostly PPE and Lab items were dispatched to WHP, EHP and Simbu.
- ❑ Donations received were GeneXpert Cartridges (20000 tests) from DFAT, three ventilators and a thermometer from WHO.
- ❑ mSupply Assessment in progress in eight (8) priority provinces (NCD, Western Province-Kiunga & Daru, WHP, WSP, ENB & WNB) for PPE and other COVID-19 supply integration.

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- ❑ As of 18th July, there were 457 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 42 were in home quarantine, 385 in hotels, 100 in company sites and 20 in apartments.
- ❑ There were seven confirmed positive cases detected at the sea port and quarantined while one was confirmed with the Delta mutation. Two of the seven reported cases were Symptomatic and both Tested Positive and are now hospitalised in PMGH. Both have moderate symptoms. Samples sent to Australia for Genome Sequencing and results pending.

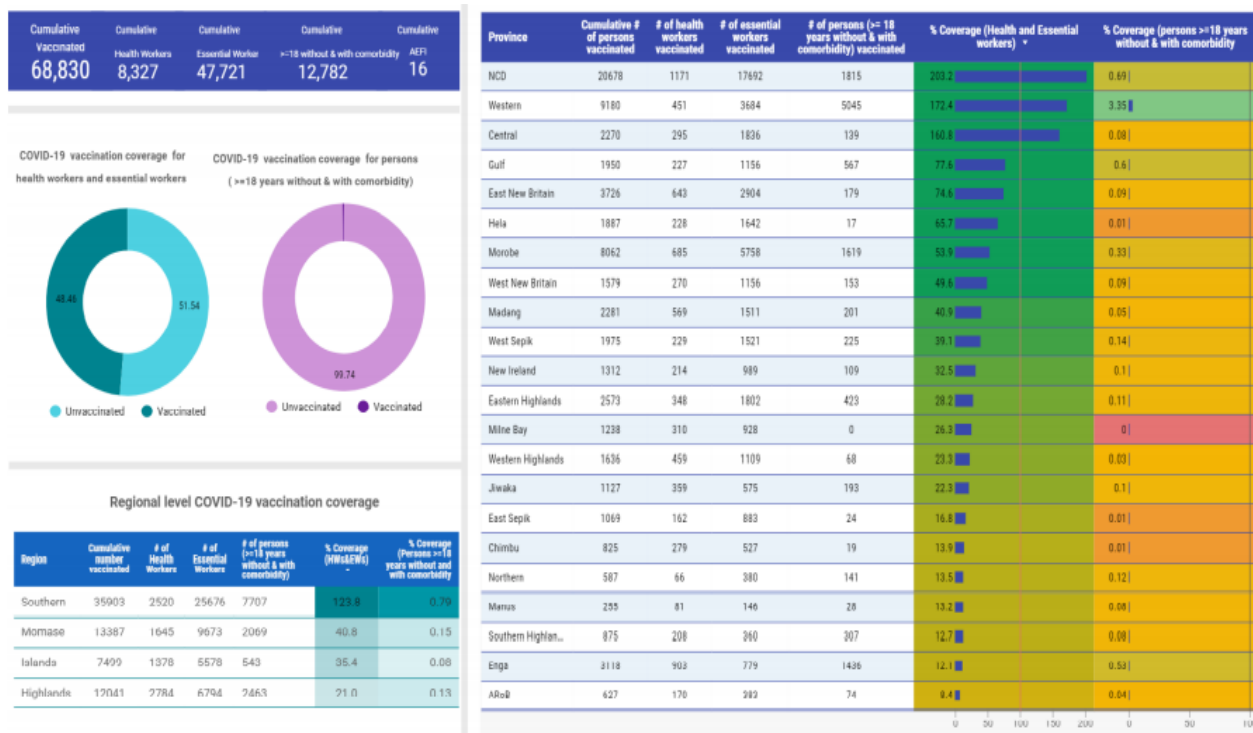
Table 3. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

Total Number of Travelers Screened before SOE (until 22 March 2020)	29,387	
Total Number of Travelers Screened during SOE (23 March – 16 June 2020)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June 2020 – 10 July 2021)	Air	23,753
	Sea	671
	Land	6

National Vaccination Rollout

- ❑ As of 15th July 2021, a total of 68,830 people has been vaccinated in PNG. This includes 8,327 health workers and 47,721 essential workers and 12,782 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- ❑ 52.77% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country.
- ❑ National Capital District has been the most successful in reaching their frontline workers while Western Province has been successful in reaching the general population above 18 years.
- ❑ Over 6000 people are fully vaccinated having received their 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- ❑ There are 163 sites offering vaccination across PNG.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province (18th July, 2021)



National and Provincial Public Health Response

- The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- Full details of all measures can be found at www.covid19.info.gov.pg

Transmission Assessment

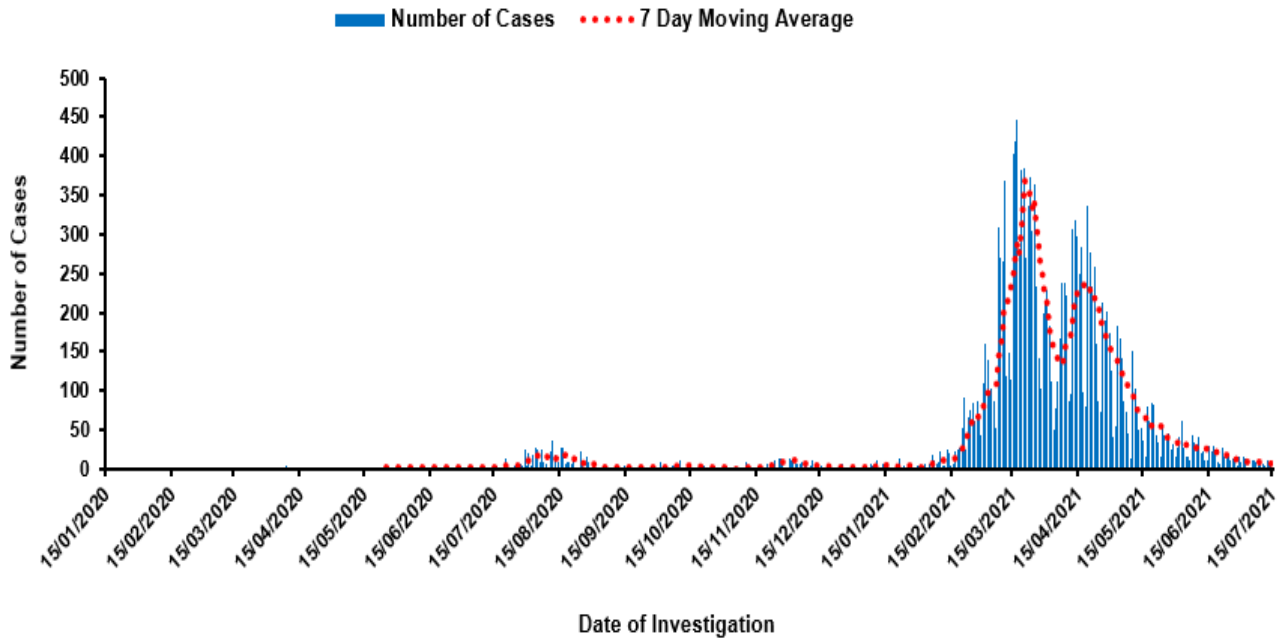
Currently COVID-19 cases are being reported from across PNG, with cases reported from 16 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. Northern (Oro), Milne Bay, AROB, Simbu, Southern Highlands, West New Britain and Western provinces did not report any cases in the past seven days.

The epidemic curve, shows a marked decline in the trend and is consistent with the observed declining trends of ILI/SARI and respiratory illnesses reported through the National Department of Health's e-NHIS data base and a declining testing positivity. The current weekly test positivity is around 2%. The total number of testing reported weekly is twice as high as the reported number of weekly ILI/SARI and suspected COVID-19 reported through the ODK database. While the weekly number of testing could be higher than the number of respiratory illnesses reported, in the context of delayed or under reporting, overall low testing and limited contact tracing, positivity as well as the observed declining trend can be interpreted with caution. In addition, with now the first reported case of an imported delta variant of concern and high vaccine hesitancy rates, surges in new cases in the coming days or weeks cannot be underestimated. Delta variant is known to have 50% more transmissibility, higher rates of hospitalization and severity with ultimate lead to higher mortality.

While there continue to be low rates of testing and limited contact tracing, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. With a low level of confidence based on the available data, all provinces in PNG would appear to have localised community transmission (stage 2). Challenges around obtaining swabbing, testing and reporting data are still observed and strategies are currently being explored to improve and strengthen current response.

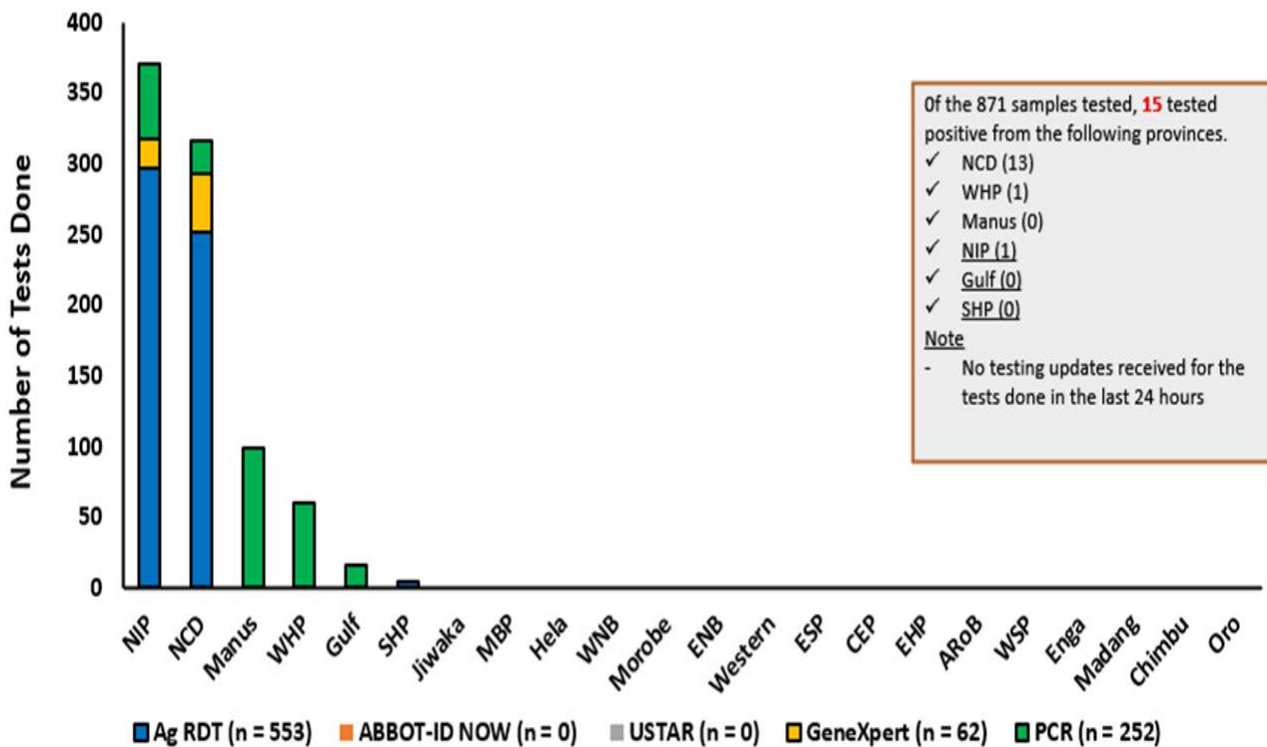
Epidemiology

Figure 3. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15th March 2020 to 18th July 2021



Please note: The true extent of the decreasing trend must be interpreted with caution as there are delays in receiving and reporting results from provinces.

Figure 4: Tests done in the last 7 days, 12th July to 18th July 2021 (n=871)



ANNEX A – Photos

Photo 1: The CM/IPC team visiting the lab at Taurama Military Hospital to review IPC procedures



Photo 2: NCDPHA RRT responding to PUIs at a sea port in Port Moresby

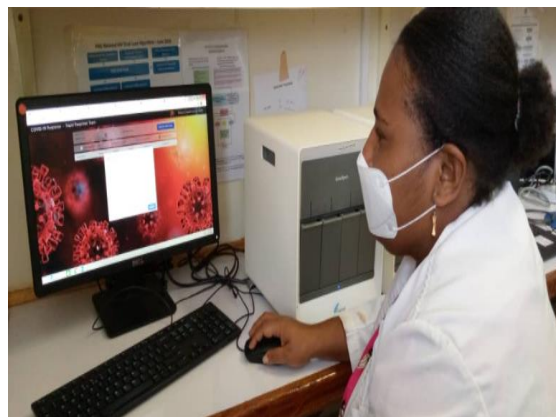


Photo 3: GoData Rollout training at Mt Hagen Pathology Lab, Western Highlands Province

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