

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 3rd October, PNG has officially reported 21,032 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 234 COVID-19 deaths. The estimated case-fatality rate remains at 1.1%.
- ❑ From the period of 27th September – 03rd October, there were 1508 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases reported with 8 new deaths.
- ❑ The number of COVID-19 tests conducted this week was 1,848 tests. The testing positivity rate is elevated in several provinces where testing data is available; 16% in EHP, 15% in NCD and 7% in SHP.
- ❑ As of 03rd October 2021, over 139,930 people have been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. Over 65,834 people are fully vaccinated, having received their 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine. This is 3.5% of the 20% target population for 2021 target for COVID-19 vaccination.
- ❑ Police Commissioner and Controller of the PNG National Pandemic Response David Manning has imposed a one month ban on gatherings of 20-plus persons beginning September 30.

**Table 1. Reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹
(27 Sept – 03 Oct 2021)**

Province	New Cases	Deaths	Cumulative Delta Cases	Cumulative Total
AROB	0			452
Central	16		2	317
ENB	11			1239
ES	14			274
EH	212	2	1	1066
Enga	185	1		535
Gulf	1			134
Hela	43			253
Jiwaka	36	1		216
Madang	10			547
Manus	1		1	526
Milne Bay	2			271
Morobe	85		2	1499
NCD	269	2	21	5815
NI	3			589
Northern	0			197
Simbu	1			280
SH	45		1	279
WNB	3			1044
WS	31			658
Western	387	2	46	3511
WH	153			1330
TOTAL	1508	8	74	21032

¹ As of 03/10/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Pillar Updates & Priorities

*Surveillance:

- ❑ Police Commissioner and Controller of the PNG National Pandemic Response David Manning has imposed a one month ban on gatherings of 20-plus persons beginning September 30.
- ❑ As of 3rd October, PNG has officially reported 21,032 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 234 COVID-19 deaths. The estimated case-fatality rate remains at 1.1%.
- ❑ The number of tests conducted is week was 1,848 tests. The testing positivity rate is elevated in the provinces where testing data is available; 16% in EHP, 15% in NCD and 7% in SHP.
- ❑ Delays in case reporting remain a challenge with 39% of notifications reported last week to the National Command Centre received at least 7 days after case diagnosis.
- ❑ A total of 1516 cases including 8 deaths were reported from 20 provinces in the last seven days. There has been an almost three-fold increase in the number of COVID-19 cases reported this week compared to last week.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	235 175 106	4 806 841
Western Pacific	8 680 923	118 505

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 05/10/2021, 22:45 CEST

- ❑ Almost 90% of these cases reported were diagnosed in the last 7-14 days, suggestive of active ongoing community transmission in provinces reporting cases. The epidemic curve shows notable surge since the beginning of September.
- ❑ Of the reported cases this week, Western Province at 26% accounted for the highest number of cases and deaths followed by NCD (18%), EHP (14%), Enga (12%), WHP (10%), Morobe (6%), SHP (3%), Hela (3%) and others as shown on Table 1 above. West Sepik province in the border accounted for 2% of these reported cases.
- ❑ All deaths were reported among unvaccinated persons and were reported from five (5) provinces namely Western, NCD, EHP, Enga and Jiwaka.
- ❑ Over 60% of these deaths reported having underlying comorbidities. Pulmonary diseases, Diabetes mellitus type II, cardiac diseases including hypertension and stroke, and severe malaria appeared to be the leading comorbidities among the reported COVID-19 deaths.
- ❑ In the last 7 days, vaccine break-through infections (post vaccination) accounted for 4.6% (69/1516) of the cases reported in the last 7 days which is within the reported vaccine efficacy of these vaccines.
- ❑ 76% of the vaccinated cases reported been fully vaccinated while 24% reported have had received one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine.
- ❑ With current low compliance to “Niupla Pasin” observed throughout the country, the risk of transmission by both vaccinated and unvaccinated cases remains a concern
- ❑ Re-infections accounted for only 2% of all the cases reported in the last 7 days. Almost 90% of the re-infected cases were asymptomatic.
- ❑ This week the team finalised the list of essential surveillance indicators to be implemented this coming week. Also finalised was a risk assessment flow chart which will be used to categorise provinces as high, medium or low risk in terms of transmission assessment (widespread community transmission, localised transmission or introduced cases), strained health systems and increasing COVID-19 deaths. It is hoped the risk determination will help guide decision-making on the level of public health measures to implement in each province.

* Cases are only reported upon receipt of CIFs and death certificates hence the figures reported may not be reflective on the current situation in the provinces.

Laboratory:

- ❑ Team working around the clock to get Minderoo Air Lab Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed next week together with technical report and end user agreement. The air lab has the capacity of testing 3,000 tests per day with the possibility of genomic sequencing positive samples.
- ❑ Communication with the provinces has indicated that GeneXpert commodities are currently sufficient with an average of 1000 -2000 availability in the provinces, on the other hand, Ag-RDT is fast diminishing due to increased testing at the districts and all point of care sites. This is good to see. Low testing commodities will be replenished.
- ❑ Results for the 115 samples shipped to Melbourne Doherty University for genome sequencing in past four weeks have been received and shared with provinces. Preliminary data showed more than 50% of samples returned as positive for the Delta Variant of Concern. The cases were from Western (46), NCD (21), Morobe and Central (2) while Eastern Highlands, Manus and Southern Highlands has 1 confirmed case each.
- ❑ Whole Genomic Sequencing: Positive samples from the provinces are sent to CPHL who coordinates all samples for sequencing to Doherty Institute in Melbourne who is supporting the country for sequencing and funded by DFAT.

COVID-19 Hotline:

- As of 03rd October, hotline has received a cumulative total of 290,148 calls. Of these, 6,672 (2.3%) were health-related calls. A total of 2,860 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- For the reporting period of 27th September – 03rd October, the COVID-19 National Hotline received an increase of 3,174 calls. Of these, 78 (about 2.46%) were health-related calls and 51/26 were referred to the respective Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- Callers wanting to know if the rumours about a potential upcoming nationwide lockdown.
- Most of these callers claimed that there has been no proper community-based awareness going into their respective areas since the beginning of the COVID response.
- What is the allowable number of persons for large gatherings?
- Continue to receive callers requesting information on the different types of vaccines currently used in PNG and the risks and benefits associated with each vaccine.

Clinical Management (CM):

- Two working documents on oxygen surge capacity were presented to the Secretary of Health – NDoH this week. Oxygen Policy and Strategy in terms of production, distribution and usage, together with recommendations made by the Surge Oxygen committee to make part payment for outstanding debt with BOC and to beef up oxygen volume for each PHAs through their respective Area Medical Stores.
- Working progress still for clinical dashboard finalization. Clinical data sourcing from PHAs continues to remain a challenge despite directive from the Deputy Controller. With the help of a 'on-loan' Lab data entry assistants, funded by Trackpro, all PHAs were contacted via email and followed through with phone calls, at 24-, 48- and 72-hours period. All initially acknowledged receipt email affirmed compliance. Yet to receive data from PHAs.
- Local Emergency Medical Team, have worked around the clock in building a team for Goroka to assist in the surge in Eastern Highlands.
- National EMT - Western Province, fully deployed, strengthened Clinical Management and Infection Prevention Controls and had walked through case management.
- International EMT UK-Med are ready for deployment into country by next week. Progress is delayed as data is needed from PHAs to support deployment to provinces that most need the teams.
- The national EMT members will need to be fully vaccinated to travel and work in the surge provinces. If you are interested, please send in Expression of Interests using the link here; <https://forms.gle/A5uyLGo5oQnbx3Lg6>.

Risk Communication & Community Engagement:

- Support and capacity building continues for national and provincial health promotion staff. NGI Health Promotion Officer Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop successfully completed (when?? Dates).
- RCCE surge plan critical priorities identified with recommendations made as part of overall IMT current surge plan. The RCCE cluster supported communication for each phase of the high-risk provinces' Containment Strategy and the surge overall.
- With support from partners, RCCE team scaled up on mass media communications with a focus on increasing perceived risk and highlighting the benefits of vaccination to drive vaccine demand.
- RCCE is working with the NCC surveillance team to identify key data points to develop messaging for the mass media communications and other social media content.

- ❑ The team provided technical advice on Ministerial Task Force strategic priorities on scale up of social mobilisation and demand creation communications to increase vaccine uptake.
- ❑ Tranche one of the TOT for Phase II of vaccine roll out has been completed for the first 6 priority provinces for J&J vaccine distribution.
- ❑ Positive results continue to be reported following these missions, with large numbers of community members attending mobile vaccination clinics in the days following community engagement activities.
- ❑ For example, in West Sepik province, an integrated RCCE Demand Creation and Vaccine Team vaccinated 211 community members following earlier information and advocacy sessions given to the communities.
- ❑ RCCE aims to build a sense of social norms around vaccination by increasing the visibility of vaccine campaign.
- ❑ Mass production and distribution of merchandise has been developed with design and plans for distribution developed with support from WHO and UNICEF.

Niupela Pasin:

- ❑ Controller of the PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response David Manning has directed that events/gathering, inclusive of social (clubbing/bar activities, dances, dinners, parties, sporting competitions, etc.) and religious activities (church, fellowships, etc.) will not be approved.
- ❑ All prior approvals granted for gatherings/events that will occur between 20 September, 2021 to 20 October 2021 are now revoked. Those that have been granted prior approvals must liaise with the *Niupela Pasin* team at the NCC.
- ❑ Mr. Manning also issued another directive outlining the process for those requesting approval for hosting of gatherings/events of more than 20 persons:
 - a) All organizations, whether private or public, shall request to host an event of more than 20 persons by writing in, copying the Deputy Controller and attention to the *Niupela Pasin* team;
 - b) Request letters must indicate the following information; Type of event, date, time and venue of event, Number of participants who will attend the event, Focal

HAVE YOU BEEN TO WESTERN PROVINCE, WEST SEPIK PROVINCE OR EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE RECENTLY?*

*between August and September 2021

GET TESTED IF YOU'RE EXPERIENCING THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

Dry cough, Fever, Headache, General body aches, Shortness of breath, Sore throat, Loss of smell or taste

COVID-19 Hotline **1-800-200**

Niupela Pasin, World Health Organization Representative Office for Papua New Guinea

COVID-19 ALERT

FACT: COVID-19 is making **thousands** of Papua New Guineans very sick and killing many of our people

FACT: Official numbers over the past **7 days**:

18 people have died from COVID-19, **None** of them were fully vaccinated.

* as of 29 Sep 2021

FACT: The real number of deaths is **much higher** around our country

FACT: **Vaccines save lives. Get vaccinated before it's too late.**

Find out where you can get your vaccine by calling **1-800-200**

Maura Elaripa
Vice President, ISAT HOPE Vaccine Champion

person contact information for communication purposes, and Floor plans for the event.

c) Venue facilities (hotels, clubs, government buildings, etc.) shall not host events unless approval from the National Control Centre is presented by the event requester/organizer;

d) All organizations, whether private or public, must liaise with the *Niupela Pasin* Team to ensure due process of pre-event set up assessment and event assessment is adhered to.

- Private organizations and businesses shall liaise with the *Niupela Pasin* team in formulating their respective standard operating procedures.
- The number of event requests reduce as the new measures and directives went out. *Niupela Pasin* team this week assessed only two indoor events for less than 20 participants, suggested delay to four non critical requests, approved eight minor events, mainly funeral services and rejected one request as deem a super spreader event. All events requests were from NCD only.
- Invitation letters were sent out to members of the Pandemic Group mainly PNGDF, RPNGC, NCDC, NCDPHA, Motu-Koita Assembly and Central Province PHA for joint efforts in policing the *Niupela Pasin* strategy in NCD and Central.
- Met with NCDC city authorities, law enforcement authorities and other relevant stakeholders on enforcement of *Niupela Pasin* in NCD and Motu-Koitabu areas.
- Monitoring of shutting down of Clubs and related activities has begun with NP team visited nine major night clubs in NCD on Friday night to ensure compliance to measure on mass gathering.
- All other clubs closed with no clubbing activities and patrons limited to only 20 or less.

Logistics and Supplies:

- Mass distributions of PPEs were done this week in response to the surge around the country. Three tonnes of COVID-19 supplies of mostly PPEs and Laboratory items was dispatched to 11 consignees: National Capital District, Eastern Highlands, Western Highlands, Milne Bay and Morobe. Other facilities/organizations supplied were National Department of Health, Anglicare - NCD, Gerehu General Hospital, Health Minister's Office, Port Moresby General Hospital and Rita Flynn Isolation Facility.
- Completion of nationwide N95 masks and gown distribution with support of UNOPS.
- Continued mass distribution of PPEs to provinces by the team.
- Extension of casual support by WHO to continue to assist warehouse tasks.
- Received donation of 300, 000 surgical face masks from BOC.
- Continued receipt of partial donations (bleach & surgical masks) from World Vision (Global Fund).
- A new dedicate warehouse located outside Port Moresby along Napa Napa road is now available for the storage and warehouse operation for COVID-19 commodities supported by DFAT.
- Partial delivery of 40 000 respirator masks from DFAT due to ongoing unavailability of space at the Murray Barracks warehouse.

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- As of 03rd October, there were 632 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 103 were in home quarantine, 436 in hotels, 77 in company sites and 16 in organizational apartments.

- There were no reported COVID-19 cases of international travellers during the reporting period.

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 2020 – 16 June 2020)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June 2020 – 2 October 2021)	Air	28,721
	Sea	1,309
	Land	6

National Vaccination Rollout

- As of 03rd October 2021, over 139,930 people have been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. Over 65,834 people are fully vaccinated having received their 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine. This is 3.5% of the 20% target population for 2021 target for COVID-19 vaccination.
- A joint team from NDOH and WHO has been on Manus last week to conduct ‘trainings for Trainers’ (TOT) to better equip the Provincial Health Authority to roll out the J&J as well as the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccines. The training targeted overall planning, logistics and vaccine management, cold chain and vaccine handling, injection safety, AEFI surveillance and management, overview of the J&J vaccine, vaccine demand generation, advocacy and social mobilization.
- Johnson and Johnson vaccine are now available throughout PNG in every province of the country. Over 4,000 people have received the J & J vaccine.

Table 4. PNG COVID-19 Vaccination cumulative number and coverage of persons vaccinated by category as of 03rd October, 2021

Category	At least one dose received	Fully vaccinated
Health Worker	10865	4420
45 years and above	44359	22916
Persons with comorbidity	3287	1034
Cumulative	139930	65834

Figure 1. PNG COVID 19 Vaccination, total dose administered as of 03rd October, 2021

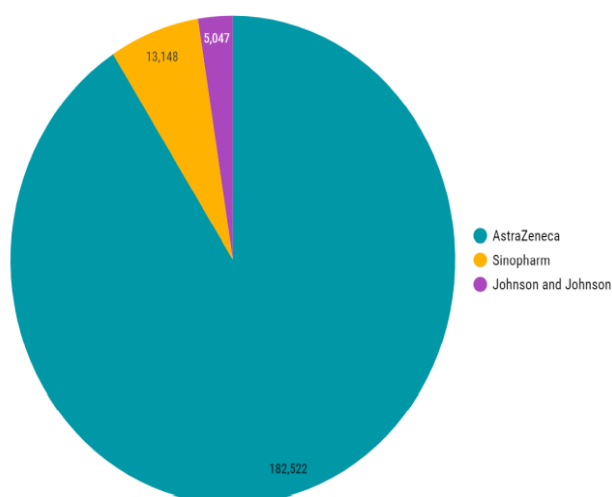


Table 5. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province as of 3rd October, 2021

Province	Target for 2021	Cumulative-at least one dose received (#)	At least one dose received coverage (%)	Fully vaccinated(#)	Fully vaccinated coverage (%)
NCD	92312	51167	55.0	32,836	36.0
Western	61786	15817	26.0	5,580	9.0
Morobe	189992	15243	8.0	6,050	3.0
East New Britain	77059	5542	7.0	1,399	2.0
Heia	62028	4404	7.0	1,645	3.0
Enga	98321	6826	7.0	2,196	2.0
Gulf	39065	2475	6.0	377	1.0
Jiwaka	70874	4322	6.0	416	1.0
Central	65203	3508	5.0	1,584	2.0
West Sepik	64889	3405	5.0	1,979	3.0
New Ireland	43771	2228	5.0	572	1.0
Manus	13650	670	5.0	197	1.0
Milne Bay	71136	2830	4.0	636	1.0
Northern	48628	1755	4.0	604	1.0
Madang	148653	4338	3.0	2,954	2.0
Western Highlands	90838	2654	3.0	1,123	1.0
West New Britain	71832	2060	3.0	932	1.0
East Sepik	132662	3751	3.0	2,670	2.0
Eastern Highlands	146980	3977	3.0	699	0.0
Chimbu	76963	1033	1.0	473	1.0
ARoB	68891	761	1.0	280	0.0
Southern Highlands	133846	1164	1.0	632	0.0
Total	1869379	139930	7.5	65,834	3.5

National and Provincial Health Response

- The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- Commissioner of Police and Controller of the PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response David Manning this week has issued a directive banning gatherings of more than 20 persons effective from September 30 for one month ending October 30, 2021.
- The two directives on *Niupela Pasin* are;
 - ban on any gatherings of more than 20 persons effective from September 20, for one month, ending October 20, 2021
 - The second directive outlined the process for those requesting approval for hosting of gatherings/events of more than 20 persons.
- As per the new directive, all organizations, whether private or public, shall formulate standard operating procedures for COVID-19 safety within their organizations and submit to the *Niupela Pasin* team at the National Control Centre.
- Private organizations and businesses shall liaise with the *Niupela Pasin* team in formulating their respective standard operating procedures.
- Mr. Manning has also directed that the wearing of masks is mandatory and effective immediately in public places as of September 30, 2021.
- Full details of all measures can be found at www.covid19.info.gov.pg
- The Manus Provincial Health Authority CEO, Mr. Francis Possy has urged health workers on the island to vaccinate themselves so they are protected in their line of duty.
- Over 2 weeks a joint team from NDOH and WHO has been on Manus to conduct ‘trainings for Trainers’ (TOT) to better equip the Provincial Health Authority to roll out the J&J as well as the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccines. The TOT will enable participants to

cascade the training to health workers at the health centre level who eventually will administer the vaccines as well as advocate for it to the members of the community.

Partners Health Response

- ❑ The Health Cluster meeting was held on Tuesday 28th of September with over 40 Health and Non-Health partners in attendance. This continued trend of more engagement within the cluster. Thank you to AHP and Education Cluster for their presentations and insight.
- ❑ Members were briefed on the most current surveillance and vaccine rollout reports. The lack of testing and reporting from provinces limits the national team's ability to plan and make evidence-based decisions. Vaccine uptake continues to remain low across the country; this includes health care workers.
- ❑ Thank you to the NCDPHA and WNBPHA for expressing interest in holding fortnightly partner coordination meetings in light of the recent surge.
- ❑ The next Health Cluster Meeting will be held on the 12th October. Please contact osheaj@who.int if you wish to join the Health Cluster and report activities.

Transmission Assessment

Currently COVID-19 cases are being reported from across PNG, with cases reported from 20 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. Western Province accounted for the highest number of reported cases, followed by NCD, EHP, Enga, WHP, Morobe, SHP, Hela among others.

Bougainville (AROB) and Northern (Oro) provinces didn't report in the last 7 days.

Almost 90% of these cases reported were diagnosed in the last 7-14 days, suggesting active (ongoing) community transmission in provinces reporting cases. The epidemic curve shows notable surge (low peak) with increasing test positivity in the months of August and September for several provinces. There has been an almost three-fold increase in the number of COVID-19 cases reported in the last seven 7 days, compared to last week.

Factors considered in the transmission stage assessment include the number of newly diagnosed cases and case trend, deaths, testing rates, hospital capacity, contact tracing effectiveness and recent trends in ILI and SARI presentations.

Based on these data and considering a context of delayed and under reporting, overall low testing and limited contact tracing activities, it appears that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG.

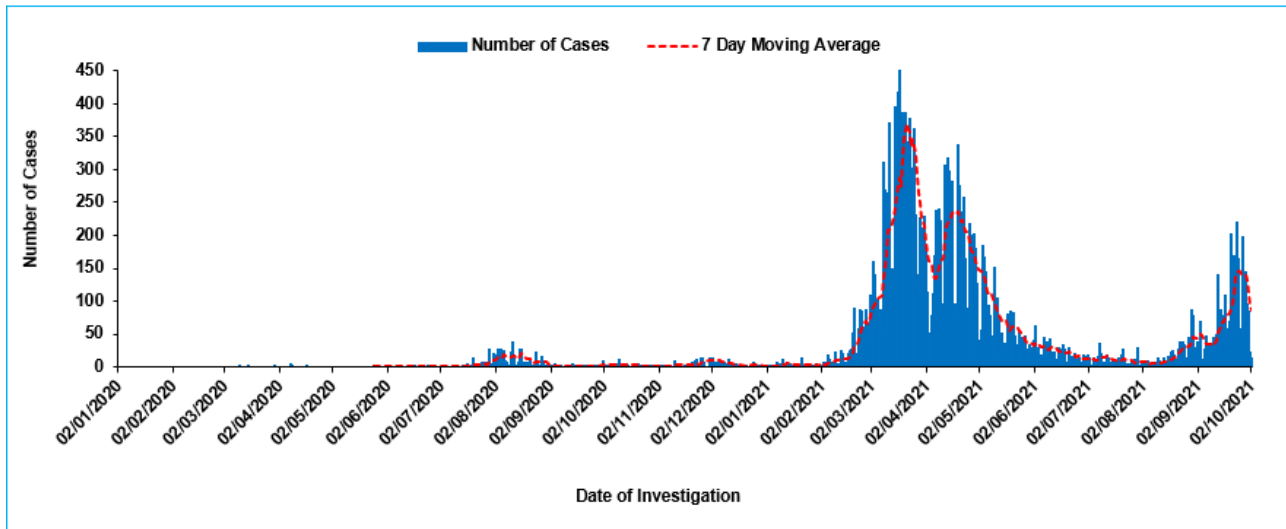
Based on the available data, the following provinces are considered to be in stage 3 (widespread community transmission): all four Momase region provinces, six of seven Highlands provinces (Enga, EHP, WHP, Hela, and Southern Highlands), NCD, Central and Western provinces. In stage 2 (localised community transmission) are ENB, Simbu, Jiwaka and Manus while the remaining provinces are rated stage 1 (sporadic cases).

Challenges around obtaining swabbing, testing, reporting data and contact tracing are still observed. Strategies are currently being explored to improve and strengthen current responses including ramping up active surveillance and enhancing testing in order to establish the extent of Delta transmission in the country. Increasing vaccination coverage to high risk/ vulnerable population with priorities on frontline health workers, persons over the ages of 45yrs and persons with underlying medical conditions, including, re-enforcing maintenance of the new normal practices even after vaccination, are also part of the national strategies to the current responses.

More information on the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office COVID-19 transmission stages can be found here: bit.ly/WPRODashboard

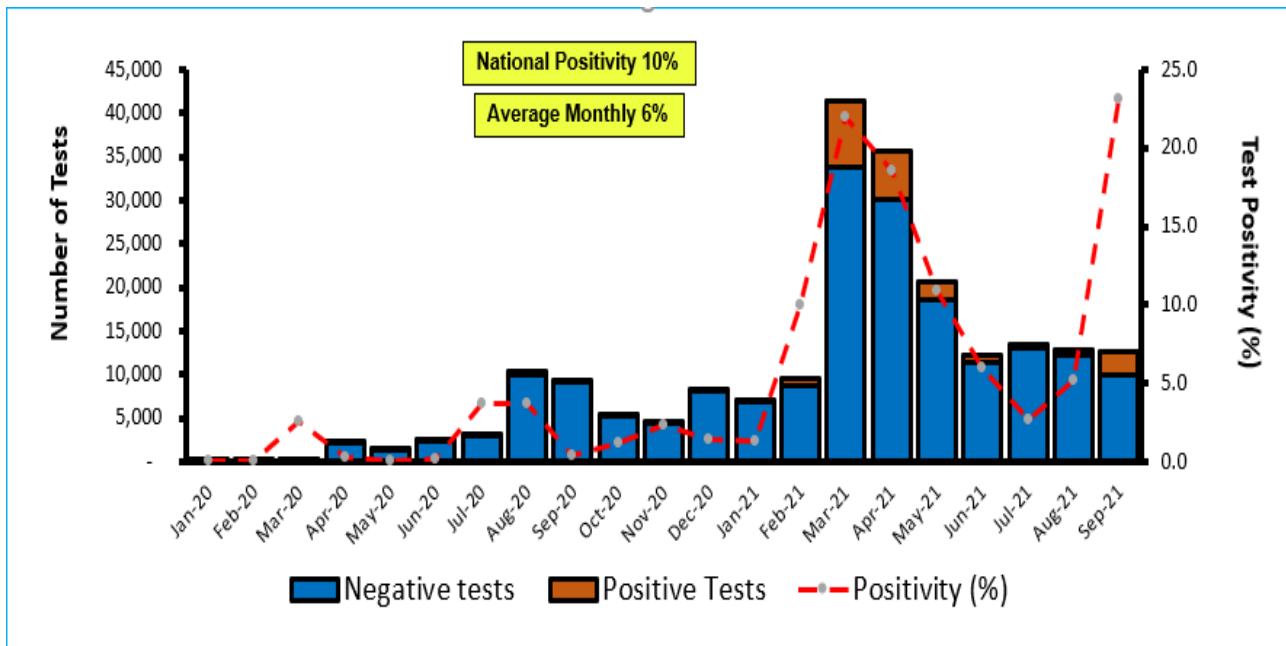
Epidemiology

Figure 2. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as at 03rd October, 2021



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

Figure 3: Tests done in the last 7 days, 27th September to 03rd October 2021



ANNEX – Photos

Photo 1: Invitation by community leaders to return and set up vaccination mobile clinic in Waromo Village on the west coast of West Sepik province.



Photo 2: Vaccine mobile clinic in West Sepik Province by joint Risk Communication and Communication Engagement team.



Photo 3: AES warehouse available for storage and operations at Napa Napa in outside Port Moresby.



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