



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 10th October, PNG has officially reported 23,149 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 234 COVID-19 deaths.
- ❑ From the period of 4 – 10 October, there were 2117 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases reported with 18 new deaths.
- ❑ As of 10th October 2021, over 152,547 people have been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. Over 76,372 people are fully vaccinated. This is 4.1% fully vaccinated of the 20% target population for 2021 target for COVID-19 vaccination.
- ❑ An integrated approach of community-based advocacy and social mobilization with mobile vaccine units has been scaled up by trained health promotion teams following TOT trainings by the RCCE team has seen increase in the numbers of vaccinations in West Sepik and West New Britain Province.
- ❑ NCC Niupela Pasin team was supported with five officers from FHi360 to coordinate and monitor Niupla Pasin Interventions nation-wide.

**Table 1. Reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹
(04 – 10 Oct 2021)**

Province	New Cases	Deaths	Cumulative Delta Cases	Cumulative Total
AROB	0			452
Central	45		3	362
ENB	96			1335
ES	68			342
EH	280	1	1	1346
Enga	160			694
Gulf	2			136
Hela	34		1	287
Jiwaka	18	1		234
Madang	107		2	654
Manus	2		1	528
Milne Bay	31			302
Morobe	175		2	1674
NCD	454	7	43	6270
NI	7		1	596
Northern	0			197
Simbu	30		1	310
SH	91	1		370
WNB	36			1080
WS	37	4	56	695
Western	22	3	31	3533
WH	422	1		1752
TOTAL	2117	18	142	23149

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

Pillar Updates & Priorities

*Surveillance:

- ❑ In the last seven days, a total of 2,117 cases including 18 deaths were reported from 20 provinces; a two-fold increase in the number of reported deaths and a 40% increase on infections compared to last week. The cumulative number of cases now stand at 23,149 with 247 deaths.
- ❑ Of the 2,135 cases reported this week, NCD (22%) accounted for the highest number of cases, followed by WHP (20%), EHP (13%), Morobe (8%), Enga (7%), Madang (5%), ENBP (4%), SHP (4%) and ESP (3%) and others as shown on the table above.
- ❑ Almost 90% of the cases reported were diagnosed in the last 7-14 days indicative active (ongoing) community transmission in provinces reporting cases. The epidemic curve shows notable upward trend in cases. Testing increased from July to September. Test positivity was 25% in September and has been increasing in the last 7 days for several provinces reflecting the widespread community transmission in the provinces reporting test positivity.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	239 007 759	4 871 841
Western Pacific	8 977 649	122 618

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 15/10/2021, 22:45 CEST

- ❑ Over 90% of the cases were reported to have either died and/or tested in the last 21 days. COVID-19 deaths were reported this week were from seven provinces. Close to 80% of reported deaths had underlying comorbidities and all deaths are unvaccinated persons.
- ❑ In the last seven days, vaccine break-through infections (post vaccination) were reported to occur in 5% (106/2117) of fully vaccinated cases in the fully vaccinated reported in the last seven days (SITREP 93) and within the reported vaccine efficacy of these vaccines.
- ❑ Re-infections accounted for only 1% of all the cases reported in the last seven days. The cumulative reinfected cases stand at 241. Among all cases with past history of COVID-19 infection, the median interval between the first and the second infection was observed to be around six months, with most cases (23%) reporting reinfection after seven months and five months (22%). Almost 90% of the re-infected cases were stated asymptomatic on their Case Investigation Forms (CIFs).
- ❑ This week the team began collecting data from the provinces on the essential indicators that will underpin our surge metrics and provincial risk assessment. Members of the surveillance team joined the clinical team on duty travel through the Highlands on Monday this week. They visited Eastern Highlands and Simbu provinces and met with a range of people engaged in the response including surveillance officers, clinical and laboratory staff across PHA, hospital and health centre levels. Questionnaires were administered on capacity and processes, challenges and positive experiences.

* 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:

- ❑ The compulsory technical inspection was carried out on Minderoo Air Lab by the National Department of Health's Health Facilities Branch on 4 October, a technical report is pending.
- ❑ Provinces have indicated there are currently sufficient GeneXpert cartridges and other lab commodities with an average of 1000 -2000 cartridges per province as most district health facilities are using the Ag RDT tests. The provinces have been advised to follow the national testing algorithm for a quality outcome in addition to testing using 5 AgRDTs. Provinces have been encouraged to maintain stock inventory, report testing data and complete the lab requisition form whilst using buffer stocks.
- ❑ 278 Samples have been sent to Doherty Institute Lab in Melbourne on the 5 October for whole genome sequencing (WGS). Samples sent were from Morobe, EHP, NCD, ENB, Hela, WHP, Western, Enga, Madang, ESP and Jiwaka. Provinces are encouraged to follow the protocol of sampling criteria for WGS.
- ❑ Mapping for all used GeneXpert cartridges have indicated that nearly all provinces have functioning incinerators for their safe disposal.

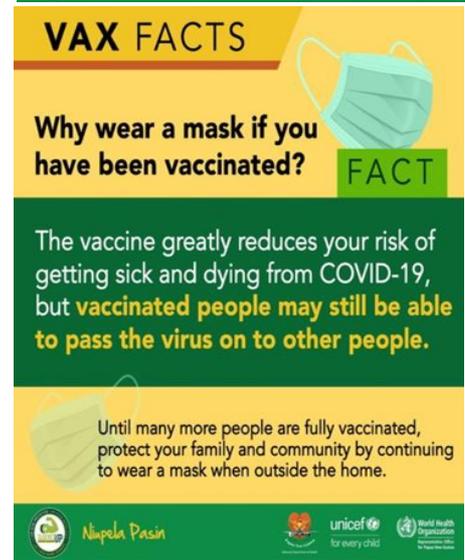
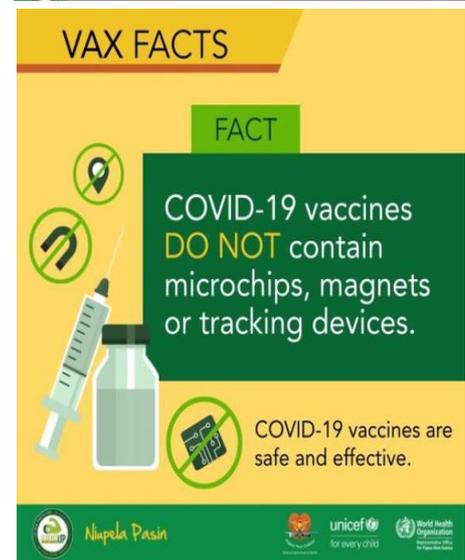
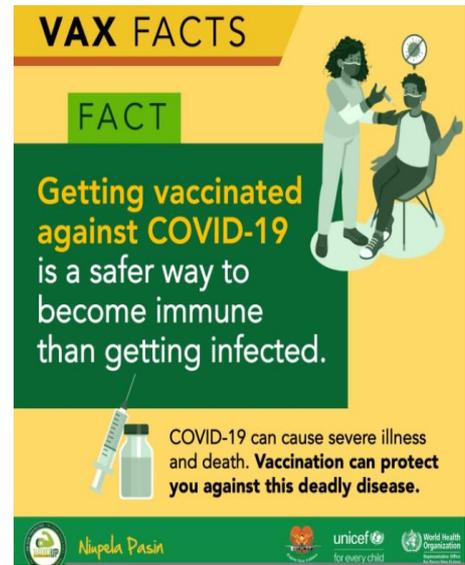
COVID-19 Hotline:

- ❑ As of 11 October, the COVID-19 Hotline has received a cumulative total of 295,763 calls. Of these, 6,828 were health-related calls. A total of 2,968 calls to date have been referred to responsible Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- ❑ For the reporting period of 04 -11 October, the COVID-19 National Hotline received an increase of 4,940 calls. Of these, 132 (about 2.67%) were health-related calls and 41 were referred to the respective Rapid Response Team/PHA.

- ❑ Frequently asked questions include difference between COVID-19, cold and flu and pneumonia in order to self-identify and seek medical attention immediately.
- ❑ Information is also being sought on the different types of vaccines currently used in PNG and the risks and benefits associated with each vaccine and current vaccination sites/locations around the country.

Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE):

- ❑ Capacity building and support continued for the national and provincial health promotion officers at the National Training of Trainer (TOT) workshop for New Guinea Islands Region officers completed this week in Rabaul, East New Britain Province in which 15 participants have been trained. Momase and Highlands regions will be trained next week.
- ❑ Commencement of tranche two and three TOT for Phase II of Johnston & Johnston vaccine roll out this week with completion of Western, West New Britain and Southern Highlands provinces.
- ❑ Vaccination uptake was reported following these community engagement activities, with large numbers of health care workers and community members attending mobile vaccination clinics. An integrated approach of community-based advocacy and social mobilization with mobile vaccine units has been scaled up by trained health promotion teams following TOT trainings resulting in an increase in vaccinations. Up to 250 vaccinations were reported per day using this model by teams in West New Britain Province.
- ❑ Joint RCCE and Partner Coordination teams from NDoH and WHO staff were deployed to Kimbe to support West New Britain PHA coordinate with NGO and private sector partners in the province for a planned province-led mass vaccination campaign from Friday 15 October.
- ❑ RCCE team worked with the partner coordination cluster and other development partners including FHi360, DFAT and ADI to coordinate promotion and demand creation efforts for the campaign that includes SMS blasts, In-App Ad campaigns, IEC material distribution and mobile vaccine units. A national TOT was delivered by the team for 60 participants who reported increased confidence to be advocates for vaccination as lead-up preparations for the campaign.
- ❑ Implementation of surge plan mass media continued as a joint RCCE, national media and WHO team travelled to Goroka, Eastern Highlands to film the EMT response to the surge in cases. Contents from this trip has resulted in securing front page national papers daily.



- ❑ A weekly 'COVID-19 Alert' focused on increasing community perception of the risk from COVID-19 has been pushed out via mass media with a full-page press ad this week with supporting social tiles.
- ❑ Team worked with the Surveillance Cluster to develop a COVID-19 dashboard with key indicators for use by the National Control Centre and included utilising emerging vaccine data to strengthen messages on vaccination in preventing of serious illness and death.
- ❑ The RCCE cluster lead, together with WHO and other partners, provided technical advice on Ministerial Task Force strategic priorities for social mobilisation and demand creation communications to increase vaccine uptake.
- ❑ Mass production and distribution of merchandise, with design and distribution plans compiled with support from WHO and UNICEF. The new contents developed such as Flash cards for community process awareness and Vaccine FAQs are currently in clearance process including 'vax facts' social media tiles, responding to the key rumours and concerns detected through social listening. This is aimed to build a sense of social norms around vaccination by increasing the visibility of vaccine campaign.

Niupela Pasin:

- ❑ FHi360 has supported Niupela Pasin team with five officers to monitor NPIs around the country. Orientation on each of the main focus areas of Niupela Pasin - Awareness, Compliance, Standard Operating Procedures and Provincial Support has been given to each of the teams.
- ❑ Niupela Pasin team carried out a joint inspection of gaming sites in NCD. Findings were that a lot of sites were non-compliant and or complacent of the measures and the SOP written by the Gaming Board and NCC.
- ❑ Eight approvals were given on a case-by-case basis for Pool Finals & Awards Night, School Graduation, Farewell Function, Burial & Funeral, Camping, Boxing Competition and Policy Launch. The Policy Launch was the only event NP team assessed, shared the Niupela Pasin document and Temperature SOP with the event organizers and ensured NP protocols were followed.

Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ Approximately three tonnes of COVID-19 supply mostly PPE and Laboratory items were dispatched to National Capital District, Eastern Highlands, Western Highlands and Morobe. Other facilities/organizations supplied were National Department of Health (TB Program), National Control Centre, Laloki Psychiatric Hospital and Port Moresby General Hospital.
- ❑ Completion of nationwide N95 masks and gown distribution with support of UNOPS.
- ❑ Preparation of the new AES warehouse to receive outstanding donations from ADB, DFAT, Global Fund and WHO.
- ❑ mSupply integration of COVID-19 commodities completed for three provinces in phase one; West New Britain, East New Britain and Morobe.

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- ❑ As of 9 October, there were 805 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 180 were in home quarantine, 491 in hotels, 100 in company sites and 34 in organizational apartments.

- There were five COVID-19 cases of international travellers whose tested positive upon arrival during the reporting period. Investigation and contact tracing are being carried out on these passengers and moved into isolation.

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	29,265
	Sea	1,309
	Land	6

National Vaccination Rollout

- As of 10 October 2021, over 152,547 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID vaccine in PNG. Over 76,372 people are fully vaccinated. This is 4.1% of the 20% target population for 2021 phase I target for COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Johnson and Johnson vaccine is now available in every province. 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 10 October, 2021

Category	At least one dose received	Fully vaccinated
Health Worker	11421	4924
45 years and above	48888	26926
Persons with comorbidity	3598	1247
Cumulative	152547	76372

Table 5. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province as of 10 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	54453	59.0	35,755	39.0
Western	61786	16190	26.0	5,853	9.0
Morobe	189992	15775	8.0	6,337	3.0
Enga	98321	7491	8.0	2,578	3.0
East New Britain	77059	5542	7.0	1,399	2.0
Hela	62028	4404	7.0	1,645	3.0
Gulf	39065	2659	7.0	617	2.0
Jiwaka	70874	4322	6.0	624	1.0
West Sepik	64889	3475	5.0	2,049	3.0
New Ireland	43771	2362	5.0	415	1.0
Central	65203	3530	5.0	1,622	2.0
Manus	13650	670	5.0	197	1.0
East Sepik	132662	6285	5.0	5,316	4.0
Eastern Highlands	146980	6413	4.0	2,588	2.0
Milne Bay	71136	2830	4.0	636	1.0
Western Highlands	90838	3422	4.0	1,287	1.0
Northern	48628	1790	4.0	645	1.0
Madang	148653	5206	4.0	3,742	3.0
West New Britain	71832	2060	3.0	932	1.0
Chimbu	76963	1295	2.0	733	1.0
ARoB	68891	959	1.0	514	1.0
Southern Highlands	133846	1414	1.0	888	1.0
Total	1869379	152547	8.2	76,372	4.1

National and Provincial Health Update

- ❑ The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- ❑ Full details of all containment measures can be found at www.covid19.info.gov.pg
- ❑ The Modilion General Hospital staff and families in Madang turned up in number to be vaccinated so they are protected in their line of duty and also from home.
- ❑ Eastern Highlands is operating with a well-established and functional surveillance system and Simbu is operating a safe and efficient triage and isolation system at the provincial hospital entrance.
- ❑ West New Britain to launch an extensive vaccination drive in the province in the coming days. The WNB Provincial Health Authority, together with the Provincial Government, business stakeholders, partners and leaders in the province have all come together to support the drive.
- ❑ As part of these preparations for the vaccine drive, The National Department of Health (NDOH) and World Health Organisation (WHO) currently in the province from 5 October to train health workers on vaccine management, as the J&J vaccine will also be made available in WNB alongside the AstraZeneca vaccine.
- ❑ Over 60 health care workers (HCW) from Kandrian and Talasea districts attended the training and were equipped with the correct knowledge and tools to support the provincial vaccination program. Furthermore, 13 HCWs were vaccinated after one advocacy session, with some choosing to be a local vaccine champion by planning on being vaccinated during advocacy sessions in their own communities.
- ❑ The training also covers vaccine advocacy, where they are able to go back to the community to address vaccine hesitancy issues among their colleagues and with the general public who may still have doubts.

Partners Health Response

- ❑ WHO has developed a partner mapping tool that is currently in trial phase. Health Cluster members will be approached to populate this tool in the coming weeks.
- ❑ A successful call with partners was conducted on 8 October to support WNB on a province wide vaccination campaign saw over six partners and stakeholders participated in the meeting including WNBPHA management, ADI, DFAT, USAID, FHi360 and WHO.
- ❑ Papua New Guinea Council of Churches support the call for COVID-19 Vaccinations. Acting Arch Bishop Nathan Ingen of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea calling on you to encourage and educate each other on the good of the vaccines, to help and protect each other, get vaccinated and follow the Niupela Pasin
- ❑ 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.

NCD accounted for the highest number of cases, followed by WHP, EHP, Morobe, Enga, Madang, ENBP, SHP and ESP among others. Bougainville (AROB) and Northern (Oro) provinces didn't report in the last seven 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 two-fold increase in the number of COVID-19 cases reported in the last seven days, compared to last week.

Factors considered in the transmission stage assessment include the number of newly diagnosed 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

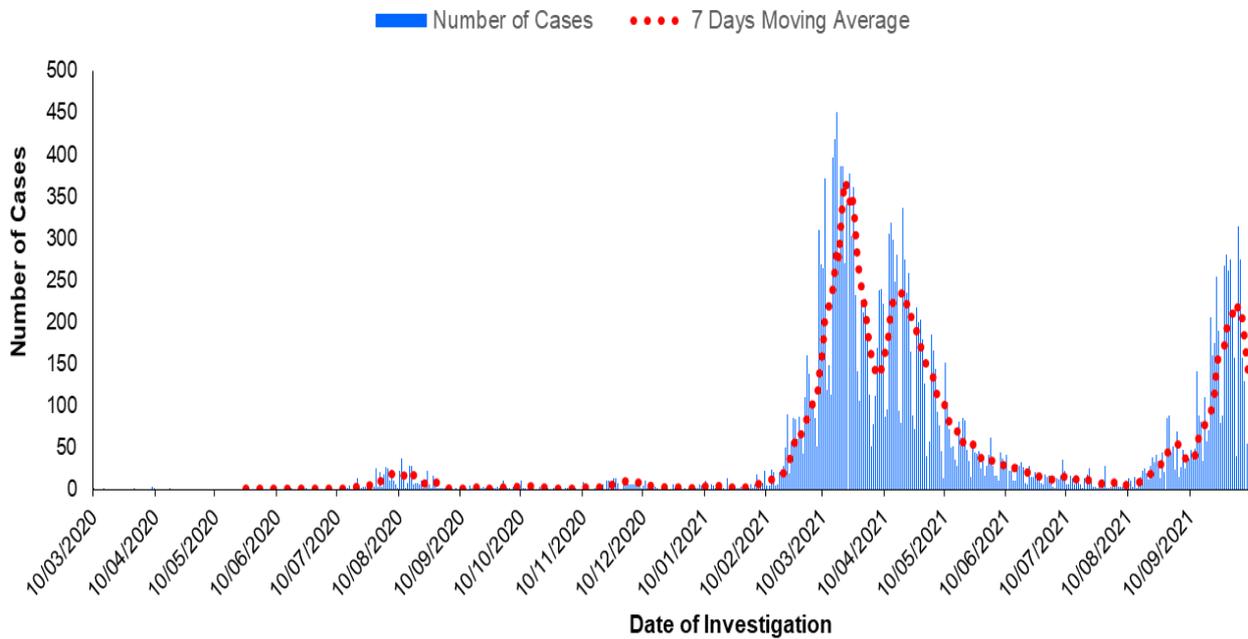
Based on the available regional data of each province, the following provinces are considered to be in stage 3 (widespread community transmission): all four Momase region provinces (ESP, WSP, Madang & Morobe), all seven Highlands provinces (Hela, WHP, EHP, SHP, Enga, Simbu and Jiwaka provinces), NCD, Central and Western provinces. In stage two (localised community transmission) are ENB, Milne Bay, New Ireland, Gulf and WNB Provinces while the remaining provinces are rated stage one (sporadic cases). AROB and Northern Oro Province have not been reporting so cannot be classified.

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

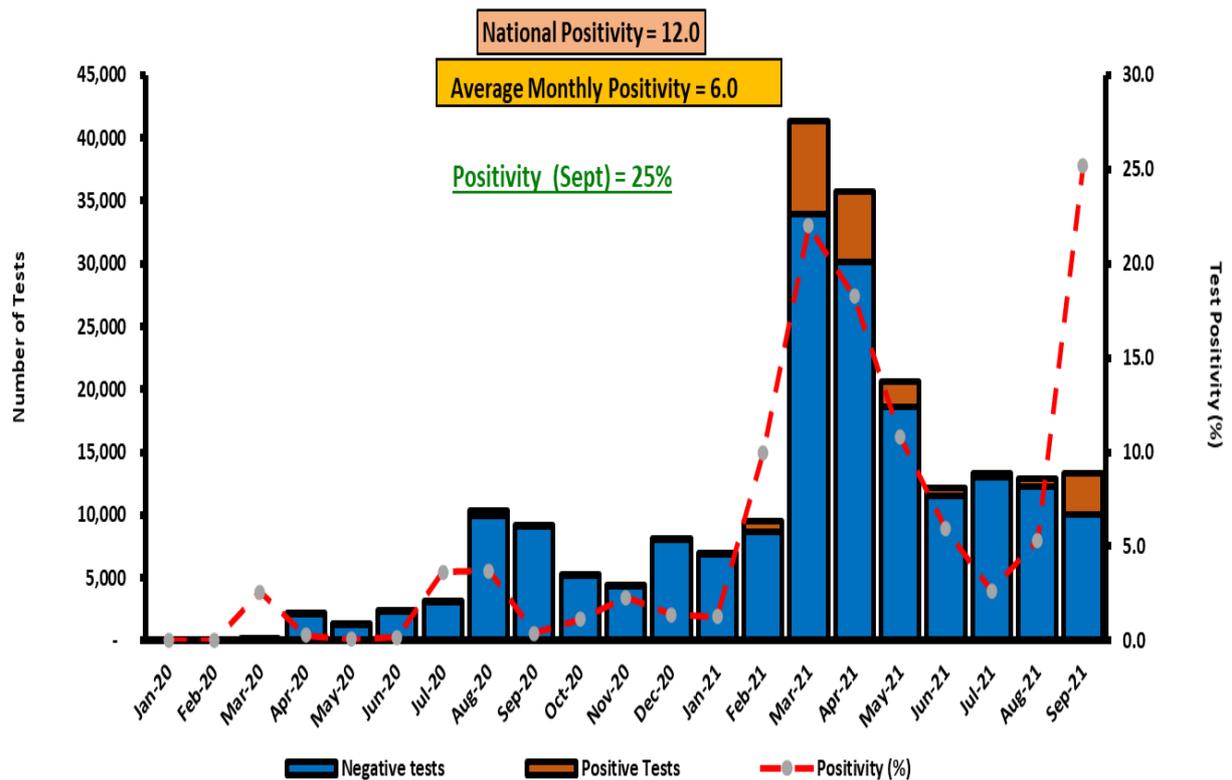
Epidemiology

Figure 2. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as at 10 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: Positivity and testing trend from 22 Jan 2020 to 10 October, 2021



ANNEX – Photos

Photo 1: Assessment visit to Sir Joseph Nombri Hospital in Kundiawa Simbu Province by joint NCC and WHO



Photo 2: Modilon Health Care Workers and their family members waiting patiently to be vaccinated in Madang.



Photo 3: Advocacy Session with PNG Ports Kimbe staff in West New Britain.



For more information about this Situation Report, please contact:

Dr Daoni Esorom
Deputy Pandemic Controller
National Department of Health
Email: daoniesorom@gmail.com
Mobile: +675-7231 3983

Mr Jack O'Shea
Deputy Incident Manager
Health Cluster Coordinator, WHO
Email: osheaj@who.int