

# COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGICAL UPDATE

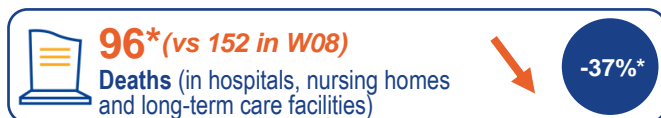
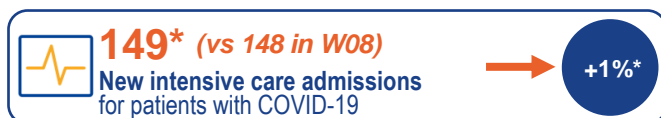
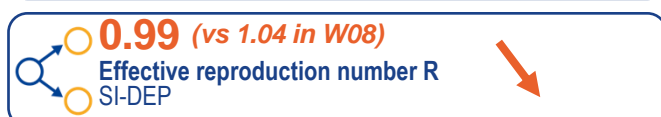
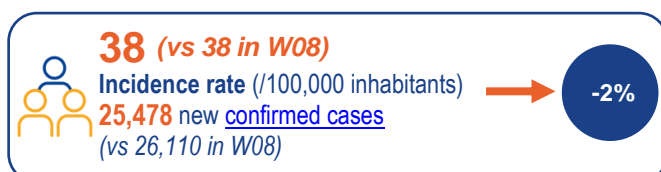
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As part of its surveillance, alert, and prevention missions, Santé publique France analyses and publishes COVID-19 data obtained from its network of partners<sup>1</sup> as well as its own studies and surveys. This report is based on data submitted to Santé publique France up to 8 March 2023.

## Key numbers

In week 9 (27 February-5 March 2023)

Compared to week 8 (20-26 February 2023)



On 27 February 2023\*\*

Compared to 20 February 2023\*\*



## Key points

### Epidemiological situation

In week 9, the incidence rate stabilised and the positivity rate increased slightly again, with both indicators remaining at low levels. Indicators for emergency department visits were increasing, while new hospital admissions were decreasing.

#### • Metropolitan France:

- Incidence and positivity rates stable or slightly up in most age groups and regions
- Hospital admission rate decreasing in most regions

#### • Overseas France:

- Incidence and positivity rates down slightly in Reunion Island
- Hospital admission rate at a low level and decreasing in Reunion Island

### Variants

- BA.5 decreased further (48% of sequences in the Flash Survey for week 7 vs 56% for week 6), as did its sub-lineage BQ.1.1 (40% in the Flash Survey for week 7 vs 43% for week 6)
- Increase of recombinant XBB to 41% (vs 34% in the Flash Survey for week 6), with 32% of XBB.1.5 (vs 26%)
- All Omicron sub-lineages currently identified present similar characteristics

### Prevention

- Given the respiratory viruses currently in circulation, continued compliance with preventive measures remains recommended:
  - up-to-date COVID-19 vaccination, including a booster dose of bivalent vaccine (protecting against the original strain and the Omicron variant) for eligible individuals already vaccinated with a primary series, and flu vaccination;
  - continued application of precautionary measures, particularly in case of a positive test and/or symptoms.

\*W09: unconsolidated data. Updated values for these indicators will feature in the next Epidemiological Update. \*\*Due to a technical incident which occurred prior to processing carried out by Santé publique France, indicators relating to COVID-19 vaccination will not be updated this week.

<sup>1</sup>Santé publique France acknowledges the large public health network that contributes to COVID-19 surveillance: healthcare professionals working in private practice and hospitals, emergency departments, hospital and private biology laboratories, learned societies for infectious diseases, resuscitation and emergency medicine, CNAM, INSERM and INSEE.

## Week 9 (27 February to 5 March 2023)

### SITUATION UPDATE

In week 9, virological indicators were fluctuating at low levels with a slight increase in positivity rate, which occurred in the context of a decreased screening rate\*. The number of emergency department visits was on the rise, while new hospital admissions continued to fall. In view of the insufficient level of booster vaccination and the very active circulation of influenza viruses, it remains necessary to increase vaccination against COVID-19 and the flu among target groups. Compliance with protective precautions and other preventive measures remains recommended in case of symptoms or a positive test, as well as to protect vulnerable people.

A stabilisation of the incidence rate and a slight increase in the positivity rate were observed at national level. The incidence rate was stable in most age groups. A slight increase in this indicator was observed in the under-20 age group, while it decreased among 60-79 year-olds. The positivity rate increased in most age groups, except among 60-79 year-olds, where it decreased slightly. A more marked increase was observed in the under-20 age group, where levels nevertheless remained moderate. The screening rate continued to decline across all age groups, most markedly in the population aged under-20 years. Consultations for suspected COVID-19 were increasing in emergency departments and decreasing in the primary care network SOS Médecins. New hospital admissions were also down.

In metropolitan France, fluctuations in incidence rates gave variable trends between regions due to limited numbers, and the positivity rate remained stable or increased in most regions. New hospital admissions were down in most regions. In overseas France, the incidence rate was decreasing or stable except in Martinique; Reunion Island was still showing the highest levels, which nonetheless remained low. The positivity rate remained at moderate levels; it was slightly increasing in Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guyana, stable in Mayotte and decreasing in Reunion Island. The number of hospital admissions was at a very low level and decreasing or stable depending on the region.

Since the emergence of Omicron in late 2021, significant and rapid genetic diversification has been observed within this variant and its successive sub-lineages. However, all Omicron sub-lineages currently described feature very similar characteristics, hence remaining within this variant. In metropolitan France, BA.5 (all sub-lineages combined) remained the most detected sub-lineage but continued to decrease, with 48% of interpretable sequences in the Flash Survey for week 7 on 13 February 2023 (vs 56% in the Flash Survey for week 6). Among the sub-lineages of BA.5, detection of BQ.1.1 (including all further sub-lineages) was likewise in decline, with 40% of interpretable sequences in the week 7 Flash Survey (vs 43% in the week 6 Flash Survey). Meanwhile, there was an increase in the recombinant XBB from 34% in the Flash Survey week 6 to 41% in the Flash Survey for week 7, in particular of its sub-lineage XBB.1.5 (from 26% in the Flash Survey for week 6 to 32% in the Flash Survey for week 7). More information is available in the [risk assessment of 15 February 2023 on emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants](#).

\*Due to possible changes in the use of screening, particularly owing to the change in derogatory sick-leave compensation from 1 February 2023 and in testing strategy from 27 February 2023, these indicators may be underestimated and should be interpreted with caution.

## Graphs and tables

[InfoCovidFrance](#)

The dashboard gives direct access to the indicators presented as graphs and tables and a complementary weekly report covering:

- **hospital indicators**
- **long-term care facility indicators**
- **virological data at national level**
- **virological data at regional level**
- **data on variants**
- **data on vaccination coverage**

For more information on COVID-19, the surveillance systems in place, and vaccination, consult the websites of [Santé publique France](#) and [Vaccination Info Service](#)  
For more information on the regional data, see the [Regional Epidemiological Updates](#)  
Find all the open access data on [Géodes](#)