

COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGICAL UPDATE

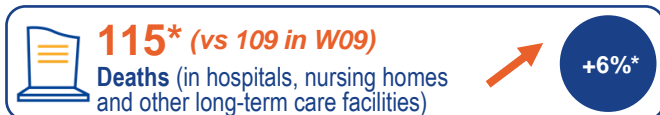
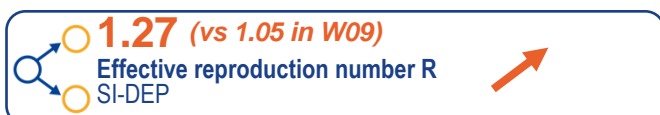
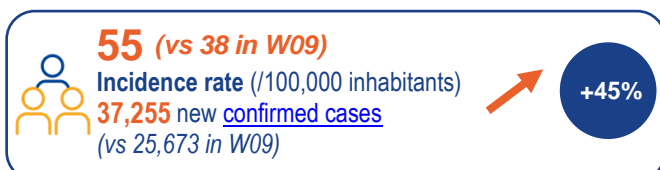
15 March 2023 / N° 158

As part of its surveillance, alert, and prevention missions, Santé publique France analyses and publishes COVID-19 data obtained from its network of partners¹ as well as its own studies and surveys. This report is based on data submitted to Santé publique France up to 15 March 2023.

Key numbers

In week 10 (6-12 March 2023)

Compared to week 9 (27 February–5 March 2023)



On 13 March 2023

Compared to 6 March 2023



Key points

Epidemiological situation

In week 10, incidence and positivity rates increased but remained at low levels. Indicators for emergency department visits and hospital admissions were again on the rise.

- Metropolitan France:
 - Incidence and positivity rates rising in all age groups and in all regions
 - Hospital admission rates increasing moderately in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Centre-Val de Loire and Hauts-de-France
- Overseas France:
 - Incidence and hospital admission rates remain very low

Variants

- The recombinant XBB was in majority with 57% of sequences in the week 8 Flash Survey (vs 45% in week 7), carried by 48% XBB.1.5 (vs 36%)
- BA.5 and its sub-lineages continued to decrease (33% in the week 8 Flash Survey vs 45% in week 7)
- All Omicron sub-lineages currently identified present similar characteristics

Prevention

- Vaccination on 13 March 2023 (Vaccin Covid data):
 - 23.1% of 60-79 year-olds had received a booster dose adapted to the Omicron variant (26.7% among those eligible); in the 80+ age group, 25.8% had received this booster dose (29.4% among those eligible)
 - 25.9% of 60-79 year-olds had received a dose of vaccine in the last 6 months and 11.7% of 80+ year-olds in the last 3 months
- Given the current situation regarding respiratory viruses 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.

*W10: unconsolidated data. Updated values for these indicators will feature in the next Epidemiological Update.

¹Santé 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 10 (6 to 12 March 2023)

SITUATION UPDATE

In week 10, incidence and positivity rates were on the increase but remained at low levels and the screening rate stabilised. This occurred in the context of children returning to school and a change in the screening strategy*. The number of emergency department visits was on the rise, as were consultations in the SOS Médecins primary care network. New hospital admissions also increased in some regions, but to a lesser extent. Given the insufficient level of booster vaccination and the very active circulation of flu viruses, increasing vaccination against COVID-19 and the flu among target groups remains necessary. 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.

An increase in incidence and positivity rates was observed at national level. The incidence rate was rising in all age groups. It remained lowest among those aged under-20, but had increased more markedly in this age group. The positivity rate was also up in all age groups, remaining lowest among 0-9 year-olds. The screening rate stabilised across all age groups but was rising slightly among 0-19 year-olds. Consultations for suspected COVID-19 were increasing in emergency departments and in the primary care network SOS Médecins. In metropolitan France, incidence rates were rising in all regions, with screening stable or slightly up in some regions. Hospital admissions increased in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Centre-Val de Loire and Hauts-de-France, while they were stable or decreasing in the other regions. In overseas France, the incidence rate was decreasing or stable except in French Guiana and Guadeloupe, where levels were still low. The number of new hospital admissions, either falling or stable in the majority regions, remained at a very low level.

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, the recombinant XBB (all sub-lineages included) is now the majority Omicron sub-lineage, with 57% of interpretable sequences in the week 8 Flash Survey from 20 February 2023 (vs 45% in the week 7 Flash Survey). The increase in XBB is driven by its sub-lineage XBB.1.5 which, together with its further sub-lineages, accounted for 48% of all interpretable sequences in the week 8 Flash Survey 2023 (vs 36% in week 7). Meanwhile, BA.5 and its sub-lineages continue to decrease, falling from 45% in the week 7 Flash Survey to 33% in week 8, particularly BQ.1.1 (from 38% in the week 7 Flash Survey to 28% in week 8). Detection of BA.2 sub-lineages remains stable at 9% in the Flash Surveys for weeks 7 and 8, 2023.

Vaccination coverage for booster doses adapted to the Omicron variant remained insufficient. On 13 March 2023, 23.1% of 60-79 year-olds and 25.8% of 80+ year-olds had received such a booster dose (26.7% and 29.4% among those eligible, respectively**). At that date, 25.9% of 60-79 year-olds had received a vaccine dose within the last 6 months***, and 11.7% of 80+ year-olds within the last 3 months***. Vaccination coverage among health professionals for the booster adapted to the Omicron variant is estimated at 13.6% for those working in nursing homes, 14.5% for those working in private practice and 14.9% for those working in health institutions****.

*Due to possible changes in the use of screening, particularly owing to modified conditions of paid sick leave from 1 February 2023 and new screening strategies (including within hospitals) from 27 February 2023, these indicators should be interpreted with caution. **Method described in Epidemiological Update N° 145. ***All COVID-19 vaccines combined. **** Method described in Epidemiological Update N° 147.

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](#)