



## Countries of the Americas must redouble efforts to meet 70% vaccination target for COVID-19

*Now that the region has "enough vaccines to protect everyone, including the most vulnerable," it is time to turn "vaccines into immunity", PAHO Director says.*



**Washington D.C., 15 June 2022 (PAHO)** – As COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the Americas for the eighth week running, PAHO Director, Carissa F. Etienne, has called on countries to increase efforts towards achieving the World Health Organization (WHO) target of 70% vaccination coverage by mid-2022.

Last week, countries of the region reported more than 1.2 million new cases of COVID-19, an 11% hike from the previous week.

“Thanks to the commitment of donors and national governments, we now have the supplies and financial and technical support to help countries reach the 70% target,” the Director said during a media briefing today.

“Our priority now should be turning vaccines into immunity, ensuring that the doses we have are making it into people’s arms and saving lives.”

But while 16 countries and territories of the region have already vaccinated 70% of eligible populations, and Colombia, Bermuda and El Salvador are close behind at 65%, 11 others have yet to reach even 40% coverage.

Since the start of COVAX in 2021, PAHO’s Revolving Fund has delivered over 142 million vaccines to countries in the Americas, and thanks to the commitment of donors and governments, the region now has the necessary financial and technical support to help all countries reach the 70% target, Dr. Etienne said.

It is therefore “crucial that countries redouble their efforts to protect those most at risk,” she added, including the elderly and immunocompromised, health professionals and pregnant women.

To achieve this, they must tailor efforts to address the concerns that still surround vaccines and collaborate with communities to develop outreach strategies in areas where coverage is poor.

As some countries begin to scale back local vaccination centers such as those in grocery stores, schools and local marketplaces, Dr. Etienne urged governments to continue to use resources wisely and try to reach people where they are.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is not a short-term problem,” the PAHO Director said. And with PAHO’s latest Essential Health Services survey revealing that routine immunizations were heavily disrupted by the pandemic, it is vital that countries integrate COVID vaccination into their national immunization programs “so that we have robust services in place to deliver routine vaccines, expand COVID coverage and better prepare for future emergencies.”

Dr. Etienne also highlighted that the recent cases of monkey pox and acute hepatitis further underscore the need to build more resilient health systems that can respond quickly to new and emerging risks. To ensure this, PAHO is working to support and train healthcare providers to help reduce the shortfall of 600,000 public health workers in the region.

“Now is the time for countries to take everything we have learned from the response to the pandemic, and commit to investing in stronger, more resilient health systems,” she said.

Turning to the COVID-19 situation in the region, in North America over the past week, cases increased by 71% in Mexico, and the United States reported a 2% increase in hospitalizations and 4.2% rise in ICU admissions.

South America reported a 20% hike in cases, while in the Caribbean, the number of new infections increased by 3.7%.

Central America was the only sub-region to report a downward trend, with a 32% reduction in COVID-19 cases and a 36% fall in deaths.

## **Links**

[Conferencia de prensa de la OPS sobre COVID-19 / PAHO's Press Briefing on COVID-19 - AUDIO ORIGINAL](#)

[PAHO Press Briefing on COVID19 - AUDIO ENGLISH](#)

[Coletiva de Imprensa OPAS - COVID-19 - AUDIO PORTUGUÊS](#)

[Conférence de Presse COVID-19 – AUDIO FRANÇAIS](#)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.