



Executive summary

15 March 2023

Three of four metrics used to monitor COVID-19 trends continued to remain relatively stable in recent weeks. Reported case rates for the week ending 12 March 2023 remained similar to the previous week. The viral RNA in wastewater and mortality remained stable for the week ending 05 March. However, hospital admissions continued to gradually increase in the week ending 05 March.

In the fortnight to 24 February 2023, CH.1.1 (a descendant of the BA.2.75 variant) was the most common variant, accounted for 33% of sequenced community cases, a decrease compared to the previous reporting period (fortnight to 10 February 2023). The next most common variants were XBB, XBF and other BA.2.75 lineages. Proportions of XBB and BA.2.75 have increased to 25% and 13%, respectively. The proportion of XBF has decreased to 14%.



Key insights

National Trends

Cases	The 7-day rolling average of reported case rates was 31.4 per 100,000 population for the week ending 12 March 2023. This is similar to the previous week (31.2 per 100,000 as of 05 March 2023). The proportion of infections reported as cases is unknown and may vary by factors such as age and ethnicity.
Wastewater	The viral RNA in wastewater for the week ending 05 March 2023 was similar to the previous week. Please visit the ESR website for further information on wastewater trends. ¹
Hospitalisations	In the week ending 05 March 2023, the 7-day rolling average of hospital admissions was 0.7 per 100,000 population; slightly increased compared to the previous week (0.6 per 100,000 as of 26 February 2023).
Mortality	As of 05 March 2023, there were 150 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in 2023. There were 2,356 deaths during 2022 and 49 ² deaths prior to 2022. The mortality rate, as of the week ending 05 March remained stable compared to the previous week (26 February 2023).
Variants of Concern	Please refer to the latest Genomics Insights Report. ³

Māori

Cases	The 7-day rolling average of reported case rates was 26.4 per 100,000 population for the week ending 05 March 2023. This is similar to the previous week, which was 26.3 per 100,000.
Hospitalisations	The 7-day rolling average for the week ending 05 March 2023 was 0.8 per 100,000 population, an increase from the previous week (0.4 per 100,000).
Mortality	As of 05 March 2023, there were 14 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in 2023. There were 194 deaths during 2022 and 15 deaths prior to 2022.

Pacific peoples

Cases	The 7-day rolling average of reported case rates was 18.5 per 100,000 population for the week ending 12 March 2023. The rate slightly increased from the previous week, which was 17.8 per 100,000.
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¹ <https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-expertise/covid-19-response/covid19-insights/wastewater-surveillance-dashboard/>

² In a previously published version of this report, the number was stated as 59. This was an error. There were 59 deaths with COVID-19 prior to 2022 but only 49 have been attributed to COVID-19.

³ <https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-expertise/covid-19-response/covid19-insights/genomics-insights/>



Hospitalisations

The 7-day rolling average for the week ending 05 March 2023 was 0.6 per 100,000 population, no change from the previous week (0.6 per 100,000).

Mortality

As of 05 March 2023, there were 2 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in 2023. There were 130 deaths during 2022 and 4 deaths prior to 2022.