



Executive summary

22 March 2023

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

In the fortnight to 10 March 2023, XBB and CH.1.1 (a descendant of the BA.2.75 variant) were the most common variants, both accounting for 36% of sequenced community cases. XBB has been growing because of a specific variant of XBB called XBB.1.5, which is responsible for 22% of all cases. The next most common variants, BA.2.75 and XBF, are still present.



Key insights

National Trends

Cases	The 7-day rolling average of reported case rates was 30.4 per 100,000 population for the week ending 19 March 2023. This is similar to the previous week (31.4 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 12 March 2023 was increased compared to the previous week. Please visit the ESR website for further information on wastewater trends. ¹
Hospitalisations	In the week ending 12 March 2023, the 7-day rolling average of hospital admissions was 0.8 per 100,000 population; slightly increased compared to the previous week (0.7 per 100,000 as of 05 March 2023).
Mortality	As of 12 March 2023, there were 168 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in 2023. There were 2,359 deaths during 2022 and 49 ² deaths prior to 2022. The mortality rate, as of the week ending 12 March remained stable compared to the previous week (05 March 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 23.5 per 100,000 population for the week ending 19 March 2023. The rate slightly decreased from the previous week, which was 26.4 per 100,000.
Hospitalisations	The 7-day rolling average for the week ending 12 March 2023 was 0.6 per 100,000 population, a decrease from the previous week (0.8 per 100,000).
Mortality	As of 12 March 2023, there were 18 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 17.1 per 100,000 population for the week ending 19 March 2023. The rate slightly decreased from the previous week, which was 18.5 per 100,000.
--------------	---

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 12 March 2023 was 0.6 per 100,000 population, a negligible change from the previous week (0.6 per 100,000).

Mortality

As of 12 March 2023, there were 2 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in 2023. There were 130 deaths during 2022 and 4 deaths prior to 2022.