

# 30th PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE

## 74th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

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### HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS 2022

#### Introduction

1. One of the core mandates of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is to collect and disseminate information on health conditions and trends in the countries and territories in the Region of the Americas. Health in the Americas is PAHO's flagship publication in response to this mandate.
2. In accordance with Resolution CD7.R23 of the Seventh Directing Council, each country and territory was asked to complete a four-year report on health conditions, with a focus on health statistics, for the Fourteenth Pan American Sanitary Conference held in Santiago, Chile, in October 1954. Publication of this report, currently known as Health in the Americas, has continued on a periodic basis since that time.
3. The publication examines the health conditions, trends, and challenges in the Americas. The series began as a compilation of data and evolved to become a key reference document for use both within the various countries and at the regional level to acquire knowledge about topics of public health concern, challenges, and guidance to address them.
4. In recognition of the need to tackle important public health issues on a timelier basis, in 2017 the decision was made to convert Health in the Americas into a platform format to provide an in-depth focus on specific topics of regional importance. This platform both upholds the mandate and represents a transformation of the flagship report to the digital age, aligned with increasing access to data science, analytics, and health information resources.

#### Background

5. The 2022 edition of Health in the Americas: The Impact of COVID-19 represents the second edition under its new format. The platform<sup>1</sup> provides access to all information published in Health in the Americas, beginning with the first such report in 2021 on Potentially Avoidable Premature Mortality, and includes interactive ways to view data and

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<sup>1</sup> The Health in the Americas platform is available from: <https://hia.paho.org>.

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compare information in different sub-regions and countries. Like the previous edition, the Health in the Americas 2022 is based on the most recent data gathered at the regional level and from the countries and territories in the Region.

6. As of 31 August 2022, there have been 175.8 million COVID-19 cases in the Americas since the beginning of the pandemic, and 2.8 million deaths. At different times, the Region has been the epicenter of the pandemic. The Region, and the world, has learned greatly since December 2019. Health systems in the Region have shown significant resilience, although at times they have been overwhelmed by the demand for care.

7. Health in the Americas 2022 illustrates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region, its effects on societies, and the challenges it poses going forward for health systems. The objectives of the report are to:

- a) Analyze the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region with respect to the population's health, including universal access to health, with a focus on inequities.
- b) Identify the lessons learned that were generated from the response to the pandemic, including the innovations that were developed.
- c) Provide a prospective view to recover and maintain the gains in public health and return to the path towards universal health.

### **Health in the Americas 2022**

8. Health in the Americas 2022 provides an assessment of the health situation at the regional and country levels in a highly dynamic epidemiological transition for the Region. The report highlights the issues with the greatest impact on health outcomes, and presents lessons learned and guidance for protecting and improving population health. It addresses the interconnection between the COVID-19 pandemic and the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health and their impact on health inequalities, going beyond highlighting these concerns.

9. The report focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic and its implication for health and health systems in the Region, underscoring the following key messages:

- a) The pandemic and the measures taken in response to it have directly and indirectly affected the health of the population in the Region, causing setbacks in the achievements made previously and compromising the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- b) The pandemic has exacerbated social inequalities by disproportionately concentrating its negative effects on the most socially disadvantaged populations. An approach based on the social and environmental determinants of health is urgently needed, with explicit resources and interventions to effectively advance health equity.

- c) The pandemic has made even more evident the importance of addressing the mental health crisis through psychosocial support and a psychosocial and community approach.
- d) The pandemic has made clear the challenges facing health systems to ensure universal access to health and universal health coverage.
- e) Pre-existing public health capacities and established epidemiological surveillance systems have contributed to countries' response, showing the importance of having strengthened public health capacities for responding to health emergencies.
- f) Monitoring and evaluation are key to informing the response and contributing to better outcomes. For this, it is essential to strengthen health information systems to have robust data and evidence in real time. The pandemic has generated a renewed awareness and appreciation among decision makers for the importance of data, information, and the impact new technologies have on guiding public health actions. It is a public health priority to accelerate the digital transformation of the health sector.
- g) Health systems—and emergency preparedness—must adapt to demographic and epidemiological changes, considering their long-term care structures. It is necessary to invest in resilient health systems, including the training and retention of human resources, with the capacity to face current and emerging health challenges, as well as to respond to health emergencies in a timely manner.
- h) The pandemic is not a short-term event, and there will be similar future events. It is essential to prepare for health emergencies recognizing the complexity and uncertainty in these events ensuring mechanisms are in place to implement and review plans when an event arises.
- i) Preparedness planning is multifaceted and should consider strengthening epidemiological surveillance systems including surveillance at the human-animal interface, the diagnostic capacity of clinical and national reference laboratories, the capacity to develop technologies for response—diagnostics, treatments, vaccines, etc.—and research and development to avoid shortages in essential health supplies.

### **Health in the Americas Platform**

10. The Health in the Americas 2022 platform includes open datasets, dashboards, data visualizations, narratives, maps, among other tools and resources. Its information architecture is prepared to allow different possible analysis and an ongoing updating process.

11. The 2022 edition also updates country and territory health profiles on the Health in the Americas platform, which are in a standardized format that includes data for more than 80 health indicators and graphics based on PAHO, World Health Organization, and United Nations interagency data previously validated by countries, that have been standardized for comparability and updated in an efficient manner. The areas covered in the profiles are:

- a) *Social and environmental determinants of health.* Population and demographic profile, life expectancy, human development index, GDP, and out-of-pocket health spending.
- b) *Digital coverage.* Percent of population connected to the internet.
- c) *Health situation.* Maternal and child health, communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, and risk factors.
- d) *Mortality indicators.* Age-adjusted mortality, potentially avoidable premature mortality, and mortality due to cancer.
- e) *Status of the COVID-19 pandemic.* Cases and deaths.
- f) *Country perspectives.* Policies and interventions to achieve universal health; main health challenges for the country and response by the health system; impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; actions taken and planned to strengthen response capacity; and, national health strategies, actions, and plans to address health inequalities.
- g) Additional data and other data sources provided by countries.

**Action by the Pan American Sanitary Conference**

12. The Conference is requested to take note of this report and provide any comments it deems pertinent.

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