



This Situation Report is jointly issued by PNG National Department of Health (NDOH) and World Health Organization (WHO) once weekly. This Report is not comprehensive and covers information received as of reporting date.

Situation Summary and Highlights

- ❑ As of 05th September, a total of 24 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases and 2 deaths were reported. The cumulative number increased to 18,265 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 194 deaths.
- ❑ From the period of 30th August – 05th September, there were 255 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases reported including 2 deaths.
- ❑ Based on the available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. Western Province, West Sepik Provinces and NCD would appear to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while all other provinces in PNG would appear to have localised community transmission (stage 2).
- ❑ As of 6th September 2021, over 114,419 people has been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. This includes 10,085 health workers, 61,810 essential workers, 42,524 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities and 16 Adverse Effects Following Immunisation (AEFI).
- ❑ The Police Commissioner / Controller's gave an update on the law and order & PNG COVID-19 response noting that Papua New Guinea has done exceptionally well in its COVID-19 response to date.

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases and deaths in PNG¹

	New Cases (30 August to 05 September 2021)	New Deaths	Cumulative Total
AROB	4		450
Central	2		281
East New Britain	0		1220
East Sepik	0		268
Eastern Highlands	1		754
Enga	1		294
Gulf	0		133
Hela	0		189
Jiwaka	1		165
Madang	3		512
Manus	1		523
Milne Bay	0		257
Morobe	0		1291
National Capital District	40		5358
New Ireland	1		584
Northern (Oro)	1		197
Simbu	1		277
Southern Highlands	0		217
West New Britain	0		1026
West Sepik	12		556
Western	186	2	2630
Western Highlands	1		1083
TOTAL	255	2	18265

¹ As of 05/09/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ As of 05th September, a total of 24 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases and 2 deaths were reported. The cumulative number of confirmed COVID cases shot to 18,265 and 194 deaths.
- ❑ More than 98% of the reported cases have recovered, 0.5% (cases) remain active cases (diagnosed in the last 21 days) and 1% have died. Over 85% of all reported deaths have had underlying comorbidities.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	221 076 440	4 574 443
Western Pacific	6 914 769	94 375

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 06/09/2021, 22:45 CEST

- Among all reported cases, 54% reported being symptomatic and the proportion of cases with history of previous infection is close to 1%. The median interval between the first infection and the second infection was about 7 months.
- In the last seven 7 days, a total of 255 cases including 2 deaths were reported (a 300% increase in the number of cases compared to last week's total). However, almost 75% of the cases were from more than 1 week ago and 15% of the total cases were reported to have been actually diagnosed (tested) in the last 7 days, giving a national average diagnosis of 9 COVID-19 cases per day with a range of 0 - 21 cases being diagnosed every day.
- Delays in testing and reporting remains a big challenge.
- Of the 255 cases reported this week, Western Province accounted for the highest number of reported cases (184 cases or 72%), followed by NCD (16%), WSP (5%) and other provinces reported less than 5 cases as shown on Table 1.
- Western: Among all cases reported, 81% of the cases were reported from the North-fly district, Middle fly accounted for 18% and South fly district accounted for only 2% of the cases in the last 7 days.
- NCD: Among NCD cases, Moresby Northeast accounted for 55% of the cases, followed by Moresby Northwest (12.5%) and Moresby South (12.5%). 20% of the cases had no record of their district of residence.
- West Sepik: 100% of the reported WSP cases are from the Vanimo Green River district.
- Cases are only reported upon receipt of CIFs and death certificate. Therefore, the figures may not be reflective of the current situation in the provinces.
- The epidemic curve has been showing a declining trend after the first surge in March until in August, it appears to show a small peak with slightly flattening testing positivity. In the context of delayed or under reporting, overall low testing and limited contact tracing activities, the declining trend and positivity should be interpreted with caution.
- Based on the available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. Western Province, West Sepik Provinces and NCD would appear to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while all other provinces in PNG would appear to have localised community transmission (stage 2).
- Contact Tracing:

West Sepik 92 contacts	19 Positives	6 - Fully Vaccinated 6 - 1 st Dose Vaccinated 7 - Not Vaccinated	All asymptomatic cases
	73 Negative	22 - Fully Vaccinated 11 - 1 st Dose Vaccinated 40 - Not Vaccinated	
Western 28 contacts	5 Positives 22 Negatives	4 - 1 st Dose Vaccinated	All asymptomatic cases
NCD 62 contacts	8 Negative 54 all under monitoring	7 - Fully Vaccinated	All asymptomatic cases 1 child not eligible for vaccine
Madang 3 contacts	3 Negative	3 - Fully Vaccinated	All asymptomatic cases

Laboratory

- All testing commodities have been distributed to the provinces, and provinces have been encouraged to utilise these commodities according to specific criteria for the different tests to ensure testing is carried out at every opportunity.
- Communication is ongoing with Laboratory Managers in all provinces to provide weekly report on the number of tests done and more importantly the number of samples that are sent for genomic sequencing. Provinces are only reporting when there are low to nil

commodities onsite. Meanwhile, efforts are also concentrated on CPHL for the results of Whole Genomic Sequencing to be urgently sent back to the provinces.

COVID-19 Hotline:

- As of 05th September, hotline has received a cumulative total of 281,091 calls. Of these, 6,539 (2.3%) were health-related calls. A total of 2757 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- For the reporting period of 30th August – 05th September, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 1073 calls. Of these, 11 (about 0.99%) were health-related calls. 6 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- Received a couple of callers mainly from the rural areas seeking information on the signs and symptoms of covid-19 and prevention messages.
- Some callers called in seeking information around Delta Variant while others wanted updates on the Delta Variant cases in PNG.
- Travel Measures and requirements on how to enter the country are been asked and callers also following-up calls on Travel approvals.

Clinical Management (CM):

- The team conducted scoping assessment on swabbing facilities in NCD. The team consisting of NDOH and WHO consultants visited Gordons, Tokarara, 6mile, 9 miles and Lawes Road clinics. Pre-triage, swabbing, PPEs and waste segregation were some of the areas assessed.
- Four Quarantine Facilities in NCD were inspected by the team to ensure all IPC procedures were in place and protocols followed. A report will be furnished with all the findings and shared.
- The team did follow ups on Morobe trip recommendations for Angau Memorial Hospital for PSA Oxygen Plants (for ARoB/Morobe, Port Moresby, East New Britain and Western Highlands) and incinerators (procured through World Bank funding).

Risk Communication & Community Engagement

- Johnson & Johnson vaccine information poster (facts about) has been developed and pending approvals for dissemination supported by WHO.
- WHO Risk Communication team planned to provide support to the NDOH Health Promotions team who will be travelling out to the 6 high risk provinces next week.
- Social media insights. The joint NCC/WHO RCCE team continued to monitor and counter misinformation through NDOH and WHO Socials media platforms. Interested partners have come on board to support the 'social listening' and to fight the spread of misinformation.
- Social listening reporting tool has been developed for all to contribute to. Based on these findings, there will be fortnightly social wraps to emailed out as a guide on what NCC approved materials to use to counter specific misinformation.
- Youth specific campaign planning is back on track. Reaching out to potential ambassadors to drive this campaign. Still in talks to set up an event and use the ambassadors in a social media campaign, ideally during the Vision City Vaccine Champion Event.
- To get a better understanding of the views of youths in our communities, the youth campaign has been tailored to address their issues around the vaccine. The team are in the process of setting up a focus group meeting. This will involve youths from different backgrounds representing their communities to gauge their thoughts on the vaccine.

- ❑ Preparations continued for Phase II of the vaccine roll out to the first 6 priority provinces. Teams to be mobilised to the 6 priority provinces of Western, West Sepik, East Sepik, Madang, Manus and ARoB for a comprehensive 10-day program focused on training, planning and execution of critical advocacy and demand creation activities in each province.

Niupela Pasin (NP):

- ❑ Niupela Pasin team this week assessed 4 indoor events and 2 outdoor events. 15 approvals were granted for various events in meetings around the country on commitment to strictly observe NP while 2 requests were declined in NCD and New Ireland. Events ranged from meetings workshops and private functions across the country with strict observations of Niupela Pasin which mandatory mask wearing, temperature checks, hand sanitizing and observing social distancing.
- ❑ 7 organisations submitted COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures was shared with NCC while two pre assessed are yet to submit before the event.
- ❑ Mass gatherings such as cultural/provincial shows are discouraged at this time in light of delta variant spread confirmed in one province and highly suspicious in other provinces which have already detected delta variant in the province. People are strongly encouraged to adhere to Niupela Pasin measures as target vaccination groups are still below mark.

FACTS ABOUT Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine

- The COVID-19 vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson (J&J) is **single-dose**.
- J&J will be made available first to identified **border and high-risk provinces** with high case rates and detected Delta variant cases.
- All vaccines approved for use in PNG, including J&J, are **safe and effective against COVID-19 and its variants**, preventing serious illness and death.
- To **protect yourself and your loved ones** from COVID-19, get vaccinated, wear a mask, wash your hands, avoid crowded or confined spaces, and keep 1.5m distance from others.
- Older people and those with underlying conditions** should be among the first to get the COVID-19 vaccine because they are at higher risk of severe illness or worse if infected.

The best vaccine is the one available to you now.

For more information, call the COVID-19 Hotline FREE: **1-800-200** or visit your nearest health facility to find out where you can get vaccinated.

World Health Organization | unicef | Niupela Pasin

Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ Supplied 2.8 tonnes of COVID-19 supplies of PPEs dispatched to 7 consignees from ARoB, East Sepik, New Ireland, West Sepik and Western Highlands. Two non-health entity supplied with lab consumables this week was PNG Defence Force and NCC Response Team to Western Province.
- ❑ Continued support by UNOPS on the distribution of N95 Masks and gowns (procured by UNOPS on behalf of GoPNG) throughout the country.
- ❑ Continued casual staff, supported by WHO, to assist with warehousing tasks.
- ❑ Storage area previously allocated by the Defence Force for the storage of COVID-19 supplies at the Murray Barracks warehouse has been reduced to approximately 160m³ of space.
- ❑ Partial delivery of World Vision donation paused due to unavailability of space at the Murray Barracks warehouse. Space is dependent on dispatch.

- ❑ Outstanding receipt of ADB, DFAT, Global Fund and WHO donations due to space issues at MBW. Donors incurring storage and container demurrage fees while a more suitable avenue for storage is being worked on.
- ❑ Continued mass dissemination of PPE and printed Lab requisition forms to provinces continued this week.
- ❑ mSupply integration: The Logistic team are currently in Morobe province to integrated COVID-19 PPE details into the Provincial Medical Store (PMS).

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- ❑ As of 4th September, there were 362 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 43 were in home quarantine, 247 in hotels, 40 in company sites and 25 in organizational apartments.
- ❑ There were no reported COVID-19 cases of international travellers during the reporting period. Investigation and contact tracing are being carried out on these passengers and moved into isolation.

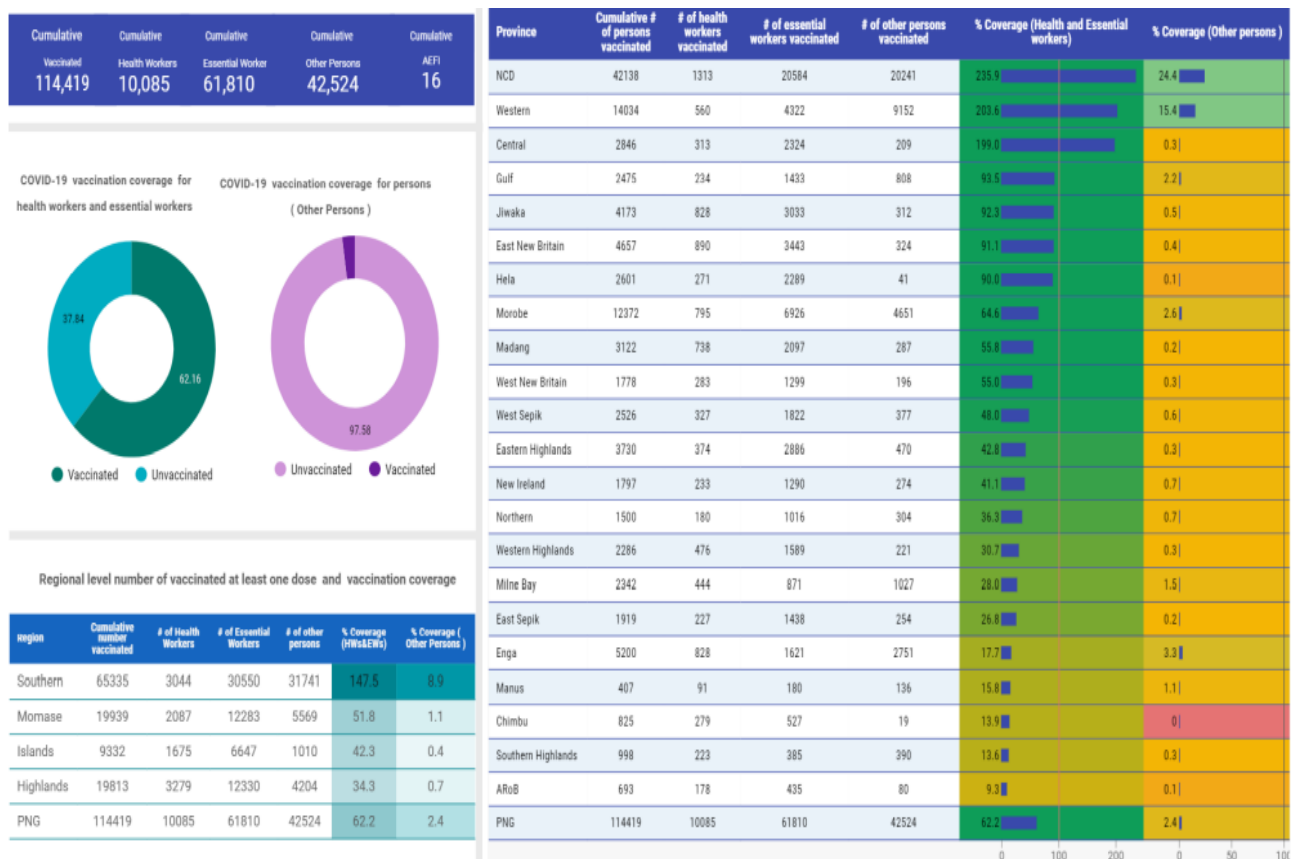
Table 3. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

Total Number of Travelers Screened before SOE (Until 22 March 2020)	29,387	
Total Number of Travelers Screened during SOE (23 March 2020 – 16 June 2020)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June 2020 – 04 September 2021)	Air	26,779
	Sea	1,309
	Land	6

National Vaccination Rollout

- ❑ As of 6th September 2021, over 114,419 people has been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. This includes 10,085 health workers, 61,810 essential workers, 42,524 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities and 16 Adverse Effects Following Immunisation (AEFI). Of these 16 AEFI cases, all were classified as non-serious and each has made a full recovery.
- ❑ Over 62.16% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country.
- ❑ Almost 40,291 people are fully vaccinated having received their 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- ❑ There are 190 sites offering vaccination across PNG.
- ❑ NCD has been administering Johnson & Johnson vaccine since 30th August. Prior to roll out of J&J in the 1st tranche 6 provinces (AROB, Manus, WSP, ESP, Madang and Western) will start once the provinces have undergone training to administer vaccination, and implement an intensive advocacy program prior to roll out of the J&J vaccine.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province 6th September, 2021



National and Provincial Health Response

- ❑ The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- ❑ Police Commissioner / Controller’s gave an update on law and order & PNG COVID-19 response. On a global scale Papua New Guinea has done exceptionally well in its COVID-19 response to date.
- ❑ In November this year we intend to hold a national summit on the PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response which will see participation from key partners involved in our response. The intention of the summit is to bring everyone together to look at the PNG response to date and if we could have done it better. This summit will not only determine the shape, size and form of the PNG response to COVID-19 in 2022 and beyond, but we expect that gaining from the lessons learnt we can establish set protocols to deal with any and all future pandemics.
- ❑ Full details of all measures can be found at www.covid19.info.gov.pg
- ❑ Western province – 119 samples positive by Ag RDT in Kiunga reported as of 2nd September, Western Province PHA was in Kiunga to support at start of surge in the North Fly district and especially when delta variant cases are being confirmed in the district. About 30 volunteers were employed in Kiunga to support the surge and response. Ongoing once a week multi agency meeting happening every Tuesdays, and WPHA and partners meeting weekly on Thursdays on zoom with participation from PHA, district health, YWAM, PATH, OTML, QHS, this is chaired by CEO WPHA, Dr Wuatai.

- ❑ WSP updates- reports a challenge in testing for COVID-19 hence a declining number of swabbing and testing, as well as contact tracing, however there has been a peak in number of cases reported as of late, showing a steady increase since July/August and a recent marked increase in last 2 weeks. A 10-15% COVID-19 infection rate among health care workers, means a shortage of manpower in Vanimo hospital and the PHA has requested for immediate assistance from the national EMT. The NCC has acknowledge call of distress from province and a team from the national EMT will be deployed in the coming week to assist the province for at least 14 days.

Partners Health Response

- ❑ The Health Cluster Partners meeting was held on Tuesday 31st of August with over 25 Health and Non-Health partners in attendance.
- ❑ Members were briefed on the most current surveillance and vaccine rollout reports. The lack of testing and reporting from provinces limits the national team's ability to plan and make evidence-based decisions. Vaccine uptake continues to remain low across the country; this includes health care workers.
- ❑ YWAM reported it has seen some positive COVID-19 cases amongst those who have been fully vaccinated in Middle-Fly district in Western Province. *The Information and Planning team would like to apologise to our partner YWAM on misinformation reported in last SITREP 88 regarding MV YWAM's travel history to Western Province.
- ❑ Child Fund continues to support the Central Provincial Health Authority, particularly in Kairuku and Rigo districts, with the rollout of second dose of AstraZeneca vaccines. They are also supporting Kwikila Health Centre to set up a GeneXpert machine and continued community outreaches, which included awareness of vaccines in districts and COVID-19 messaging.
- ❑ Contact has been made with Western Province PHA and West Sepik PHA in order to begin partner coordination for the advocacy and roll out of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in the coming weeks.
- ❑ Education cluster and GBV sub-cluster coordinators shared updates.
- ❑ The next Health Cluster Meeting will be held on the 14th September. Please contact osheaj@who.int if you wish to join the Health Cluster and report activities.

Transmission Assessment

Currently COVID-19 cases are being reported from across PNG, with cases reported from 14 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days (a 50% increase than last week's proportion of reporting provinces). ENB, ESP, Gulf, Hela, Milne Bay, Morobe, SHP & WNB didn't report in the last 7 days.

Boarder provinces and provinces with international ports continue to report cases. In the last 7 days, Western Province accounted for the highest number of reported cases, followed by NCD and WSP. Given the occurrence the emergence of delta variant in these provinces, the risk for widespread community transmission in the country as a whole cannot be under estimated. The current weekly test positivity has increased from 2% to 6%, suggesting increasing community transmission in the reporting provinces and the need for more testing. There are likely more people with coronavirus in the community who haven't been tested yet in those provinces.

While the epidemic curve continues to show a declining trend with a mild peak in August, in the context of delayed or under reporting, overall low testing and limited contact tracing activities, the declining trend and positivity should be interpreted with caution.

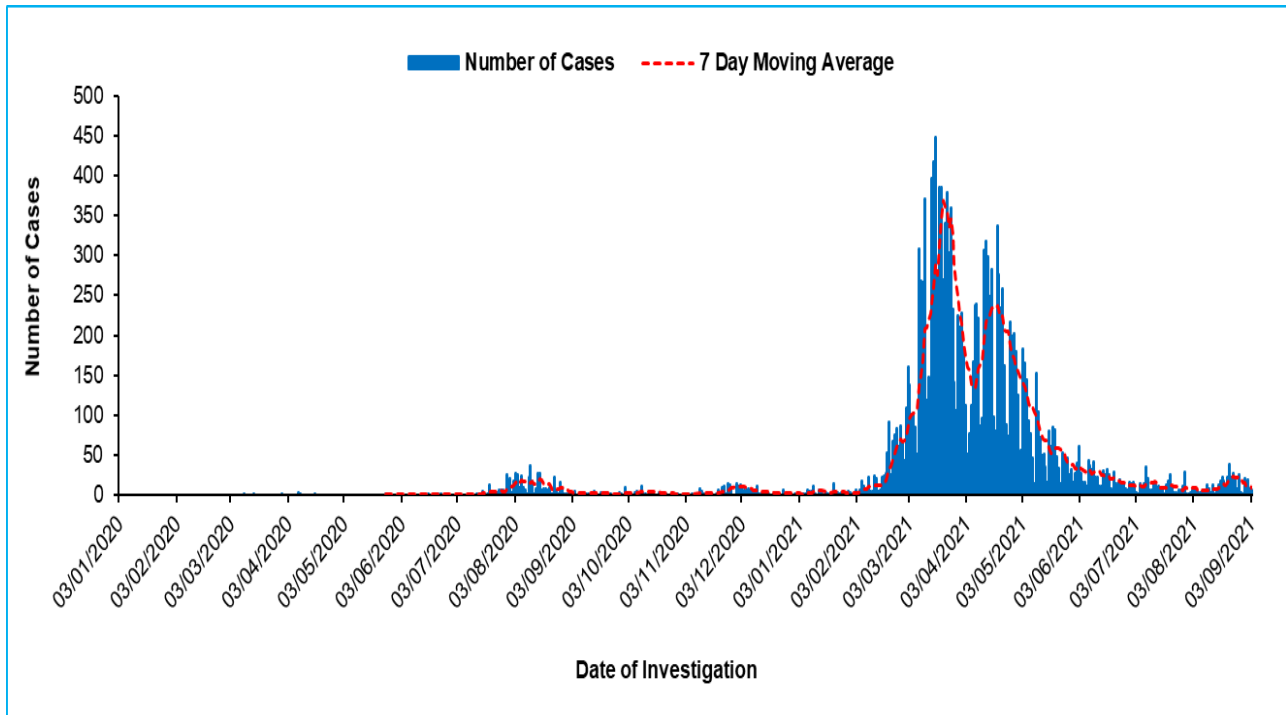
With low level of confidence, based on the available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. Western, WSP and NCD provinces would appear to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while all other provinces in PNG would appear to have localised community transmission (stage 2).

Challenges around obtaining swabbing, testing, reporting data and contact tracing are still observed. Strategies are currently being explored to improve and strengthen current responses including ramping up active surveillance and enhance testing in order to establish the extent of Delta transmission in the country. Increasing vaccination coverage to high risk/ vulnerable population with priorities on frontline health workers, persons over the ages of 45yrs and persons with underlying medical conditions, including, re-enforcing maintenance of the new normal practices even after vaccination, are also part of the national strategies to the current responses.

More information on the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office COVID-19 transmission stages can be found here: bit.ly/WPRODashboard

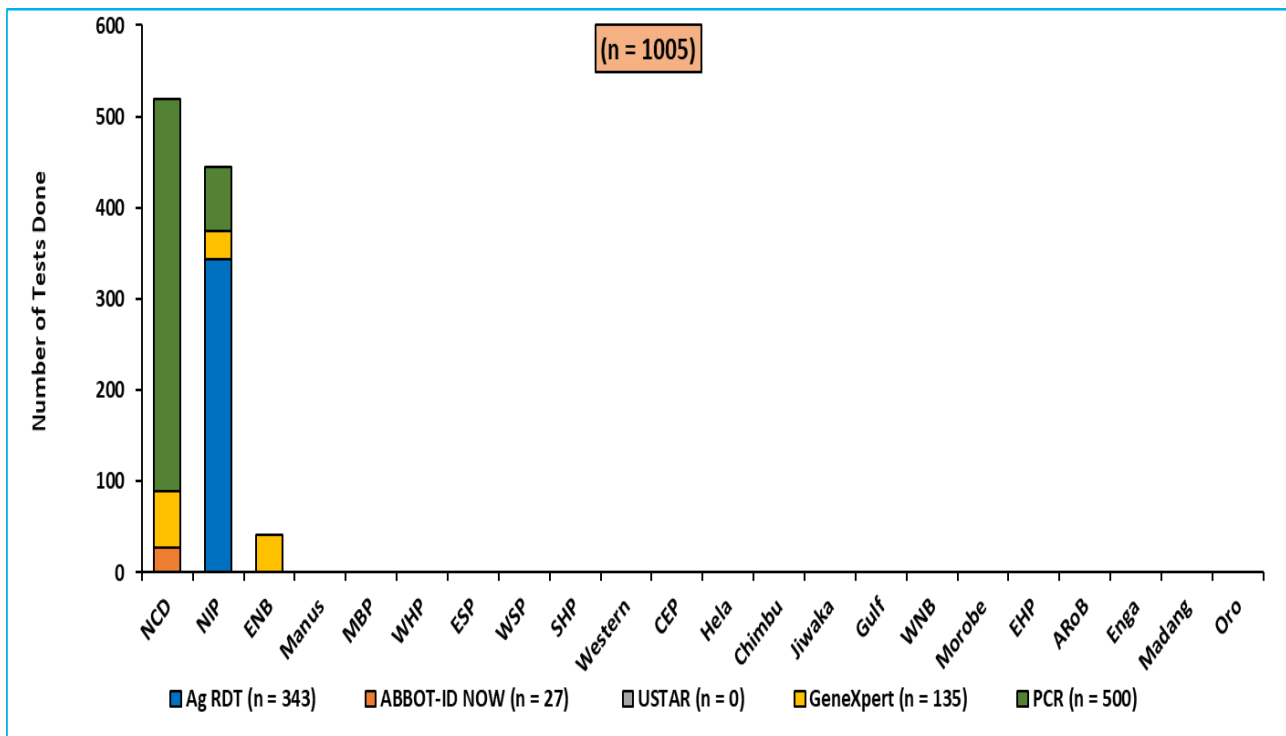
Epidemiology

Figure 2. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as at 03rd September, 2021



Please note: The true extent of the decreasing trend must be interpreted with caution as there are delays in receiving and reporting results from provinces.

Figure 3: Tests done in the last 7 days, 30th August to 05th September 2021



ANNEX A – Photos

Photo 1: Clinical team from NDOH and WHO during site inspection visit to Airways Hotel quarantine facilities in NCD.



Photo 2: Isolation centre within the Dogura Quarantine Facilities in NCD



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