

Briefing note: COVID-19 Situation Report for January 2022

1. Epidemiological Situation

Sri Lanka had a cumulative caseload of 587,245 and 14,979 deaths at the beginning of 2022. The Omicron variant was first reported in the country in late December 2021. It has quickly become the dominant variant in circulation. The advent of the Omicron variant has led to a gradual increase in cases, with 24533 cases being reported within the month of January 2022 which is a 14% increase compared to the previous month of December 2021. In contrast, the deaths declined in the month of January with only 462 being reported compared to 633 in December 2021.

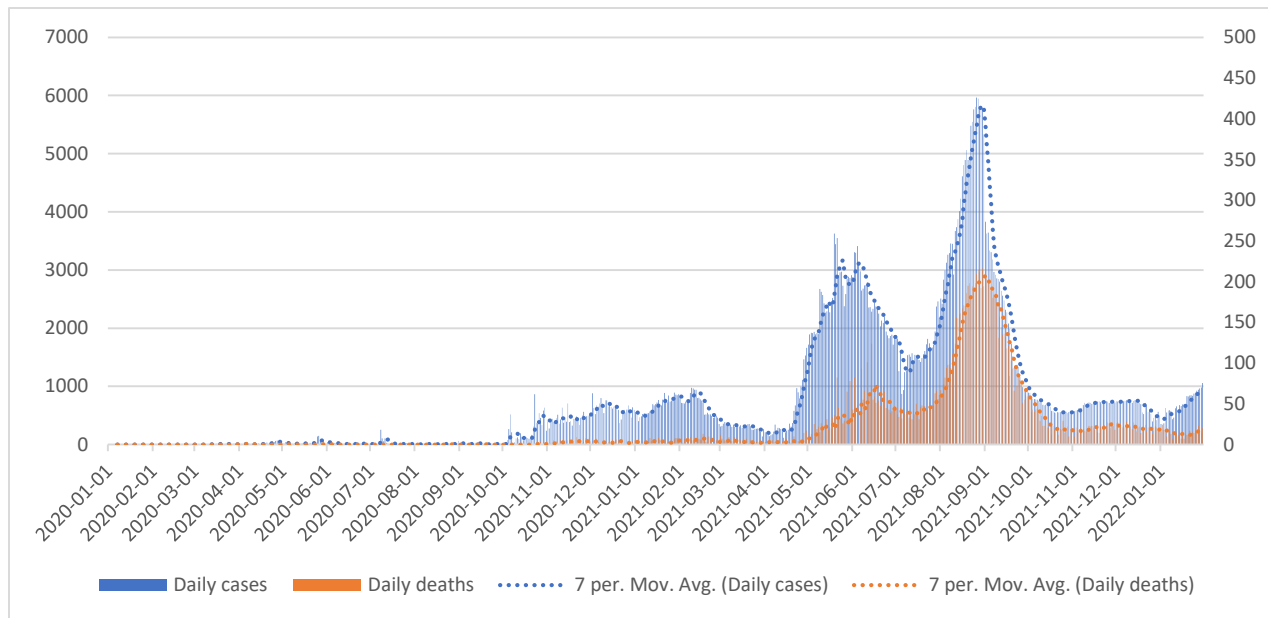


Fig 1. COVID-19 Epi curve for Sri Lanka (Source: Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of health)¹

2. Variant assessment

The first case of Omicron, reported on 3 December 2021, was a Sri Lankan who returned from Nigeria. By the end of 2021, the Omicron variant accounted for about a quarter of the samples sequenced with the remaining being the Delta variant. By the end of January 2022, Omicron variant has replaced the Delta variant to become the predominant variant in circulation with 81.6% of samples sequenced during the last week of December being Omicron with the rest being Delta².

The timeline of emergence of different Variants of Concern (VoC) is given in figure 2. ²

¹ Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health

² Allergy Immunology and Cell Biology Unit, Department of Immunology and Molecular Medicine of University of Sri Jayewardenepura

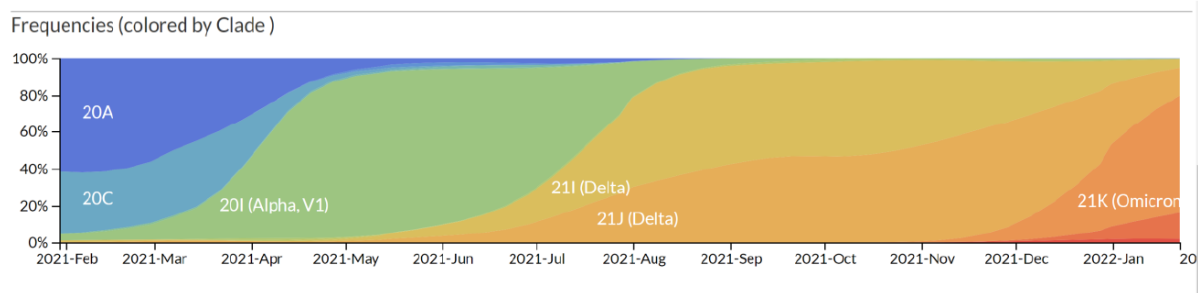


Fig 2. Timeline of the emergence and displacement of different variants in Sri Lanka

3. Testing for COVID-19

According to the latest testing strategy, all with symptoms are tested for COVID 19 with a rapid antigen test followed with an RT-PCR if tested negative. COVID-19 positivity rates among symptomatic patients presenting to government sector hospitals is shown in figure 3.

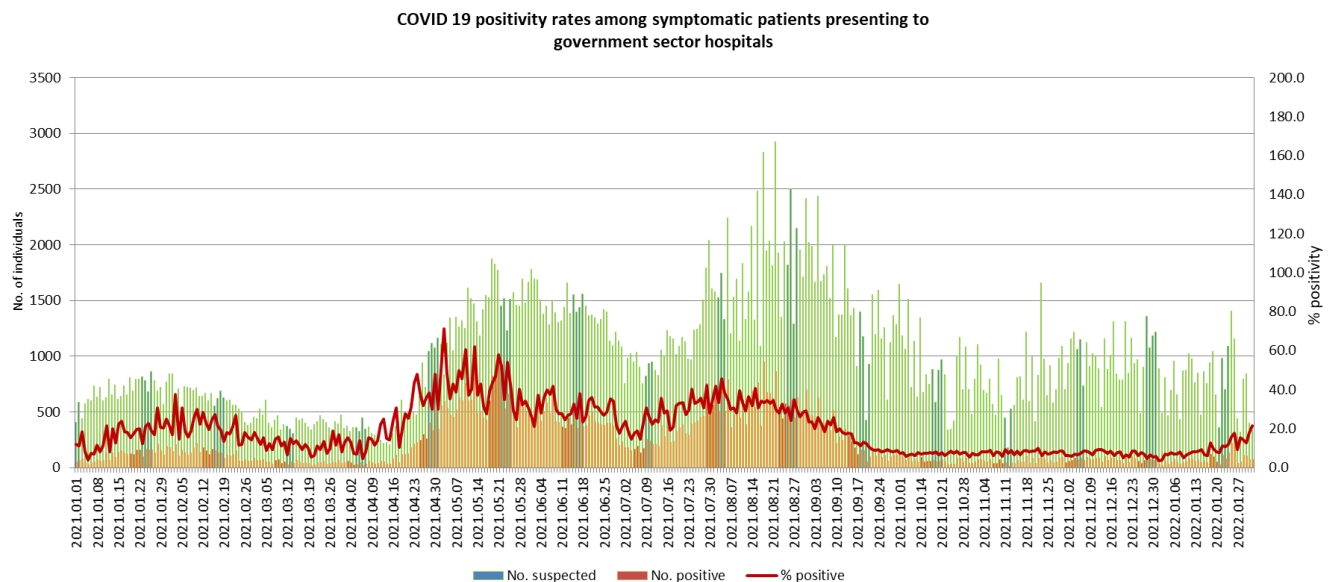


Fig 3. COVID-19 positivity rates among symptomatic patients presenting to government sector hospitals³

Around 50,000 PCR tests were performed per week in December 2021. There was a slight increase in the number of PCRs conducted in January 2022 with a total of 215,142 tests being performed. Figure 4 illustrates the trend in the number of PCR tests performed and the positivity rate until the end of January 2022.

³ Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health

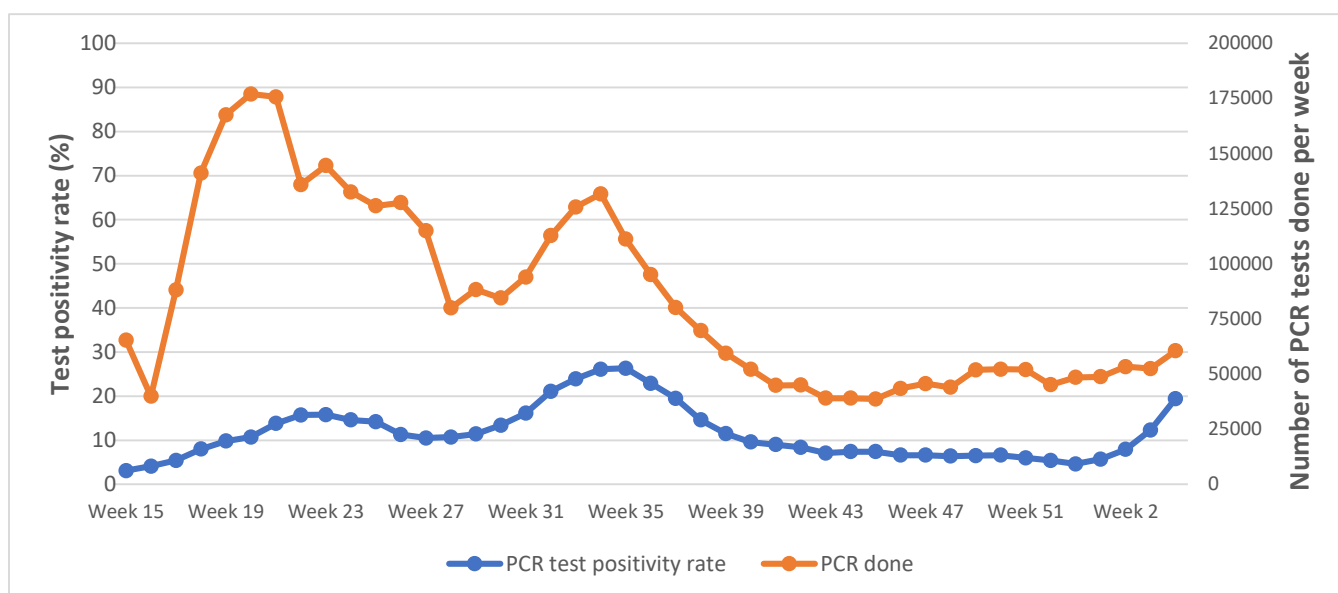


Fig 4. Number of PCR tests conducted weekly and the test positivity rate⁴

4. National Vaccination program against COVID 19

At the start of 2022, all individuals aged 16 years and above were eligible for vaccination with 16-19 year old individuals being offered a single dose. The booster dose vaccination campaign for adults aged 20 years and above had been rolled out since November 2021. In 2022, more target groups were included for vaccination. A single dose of the Pfizer vaccine was offered to children aged 12 – 16 years from 5th January 2022. Further, a second dose of the Pfizer vaccine was offered to those aged 16-19 years since 20th January 2022. Table 1 outlines the coverage of COVID 19 vaccination as of 31st January 2022.

Table 1: Details of vaccine administration as of 31 January 2022⁵

	Number of 1 st doses administered	Number of 2 nd doses administered	Number of 3 rd doses administered
AstraZeneca	1,479,631	1,418,593	
Sinopharm	11992023	11044102	
Sputnik V	159,110	155,812	
Pfizer	2,240,669	524,447	5,261,005
Moderna	804,801	787,361	
Total	16,676,234	13,930,315	5,261,005
Eligible population	Above 12 years (17,655,390)	Above 16 years (16,033,871)	Above 20 years (14,612,364)
Vaccination coverage as a percentage of the eligible population	94.5%	86.9%	36.0%
Vaccination coverage as a percentage of the total population (21,919,416)	76.1%	63.6%	24.0%

⁴ National COVID-19 Surveillance System of Sri Lanka

⁵ Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health