

A lab confirmation of the
Omicron Variant
in Northwest Syria (NWS)

February 22,

Summary:

Recently, the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN) has noticed a worrying surge in the incidence rate of COVID-19 disease in Northwest Syria. The incidence rate for the epidemiological week (Epi week 06-2022) has increased three times compared to the prior week. We have observed a steady increase in the daily positivity rate, reaching 30% in the Epi week 7/2022.

In collaboration and support from the World Health Organization (Gaziantep office) and the Turkish Ministry of Health, EWARN established the genomic surveillance for the SARSOCOV-2. The sequencing process is ongoing weekly by sending samples from northwest Syria to the reference lab in Ankara.

On 17 February 2022, EWARN received genomic lab confirmation of the Omicron variant. The results of whole genomic sequencing showed that the “Omicron” strain was confirmed in 12 samples out of 18 samples (66%). The samples were collected in northwest Syria from 15 January to 2 February 2022.

The results have been uploaded to the GISAID platform. There are 38 sequences from Syria reported and published in the GISAID.

One result is still pending approval to be published at the report time. All the sequences were from Northwest Syria and uploaded by the EWARN team.

The epidemiological future of the “Omicron” cases:

The geographical distribution of the 12 cases was as in the table:

Governorate	District	No. of cases
Aleppo	Al-Bab	8
Aleppo	A'zaz	2
Aleppo	Jarablus	1
Idleb	Idleb	1
	Total	12

Four out of the eight cases in the Al-Bab district were related to one cluster investigated in the middle of January 2022. The other four Al-Bab cases were sporadic and unrelated to the cluster.

The clinical manifestation of nine cases was asymptomatic and mild for three cases (headache and sore throat).

The outcome of 10 cases was recovery, with 2 cases being still alive under the follow-up. There were no reports for cases that needed hospitalization, and no reported deaths among the cases.

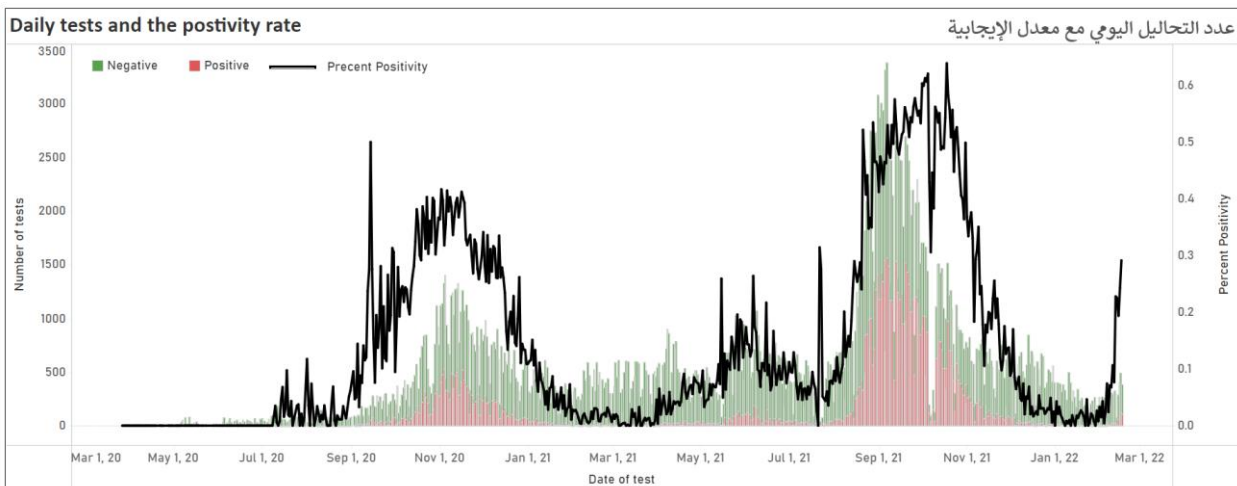
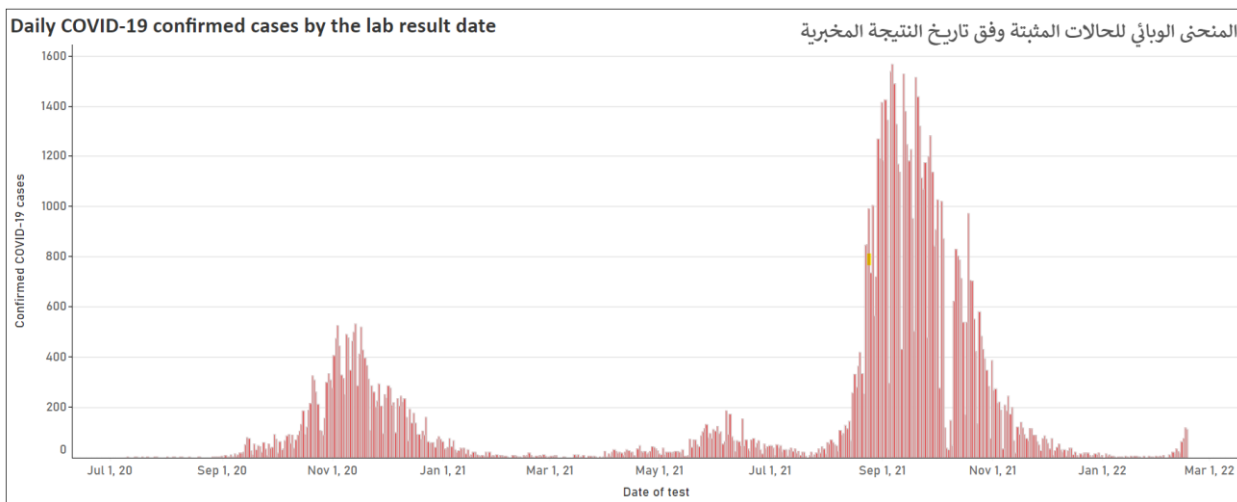
Three cases got vaccinated with one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine; the rest 9 cases were unvaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine.

Nine cases were males, three females. The age range was from 23 to 45 years.

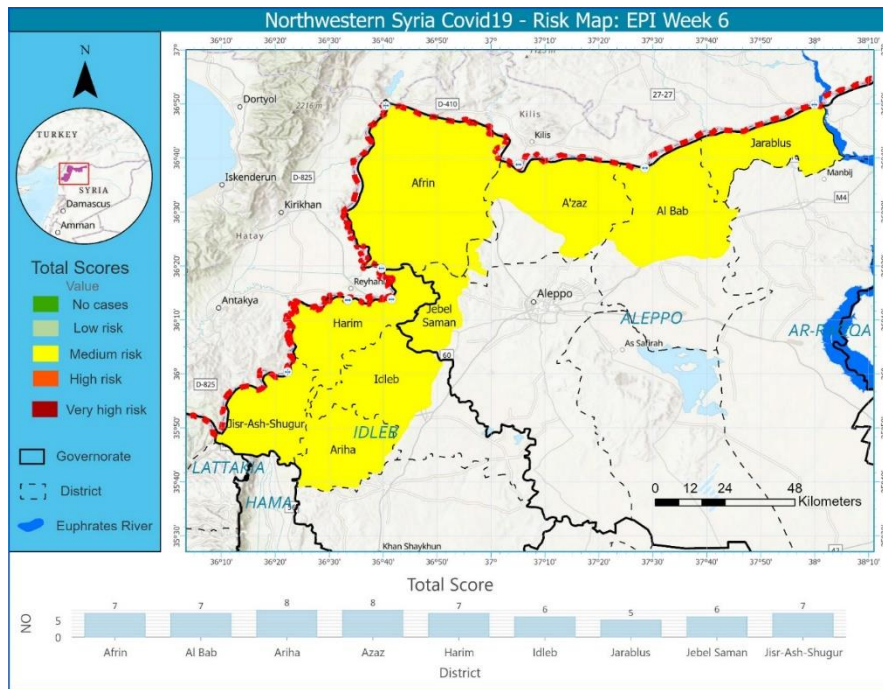
Two cases were from the health care workers (a nurse and a midwife).

The current epidemiological situation of the COVID-19 outbreak:

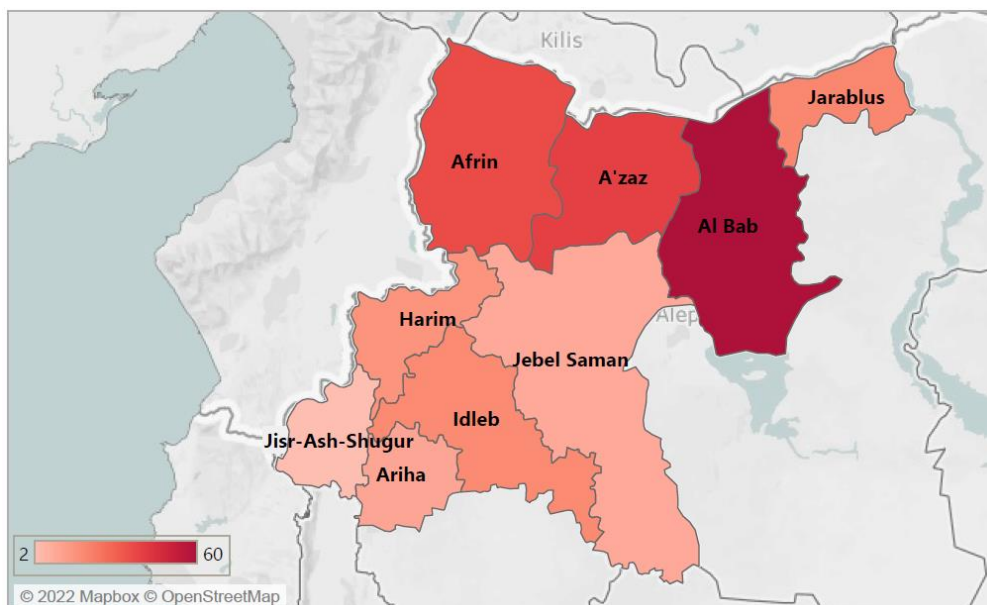
The indicators of the COVID-19 surveillance demonstrate that the scenario of virus transmission is community transmission level 2. The daily new cases rate is 26 per million. As of 16 February 2022, there are 93,592 confirmed COVID-19 cases in NWS; the number of COVID-19 deaths is 2,380; the number of recoveries is 91,533; the number of PCR tests is 344,820, with a daily positivity rate of 28%. The figures below show the epi curve for the daily new cases and the positivity rate in NWS up to 16 February:



The COVID-19 risk map up to the epi week 6/2022 shows that all the districts in NWS are in the medium-risk level of COVID-19 transmission.



The confirmed cases in 2022 are 635; 81% of them were detected in the last two weeks. The map below demonstrates the distribution of the confirmed cases in the previous four weeks, noticing that Al-Bab districts recorded the highest number of the cases in this period.



Recommendations:

All those mentioned above may indicate that we are heading directly to a new wave of the COVID-19 outbreak in NWS, which may increase the burden on the health system in NWS.

We in EWARN are stressing the importance of raising the preparedness level by following personal and public health protection measures, receiving COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible from the eligible groups, activating the triage systems in health facilities, and activating other preventive measures that may mitigate the impact of the pandemic .

Related Links:

[Daily report's link/ EWARN](#)

[Weekly report's link/ EWARN](#)

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