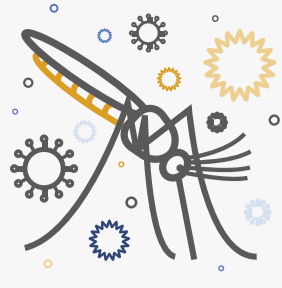


# Malaria Situation in Latin America during the COVID-19 pandemic



**Malaria** is an acute life-threatening febrile illness caused by the *Plasmodium* parasite.



*P. vivax* is the predominant parasite in the Americas, representing 72,3% of estimated malaria cases. After a sustained downward trend in malaria cases from 2005 to 2014, the Americas are experiencing a surge in the total number of cases due to an increase in Venezuela and other endemic countries such as Colombia, Guyana, Nicaragua and Panama.

In the Americas, **139 million people live in areas at risk of malaria**. In 2019, the region reported **723,025 cases** and **197 deaths**, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).



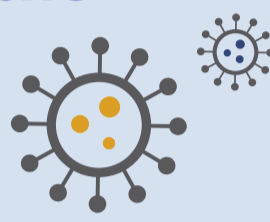
Region of the Americas  
**72,3%**  
*P. vivax*  
malaria cases

**139 million** people live in areas at risk

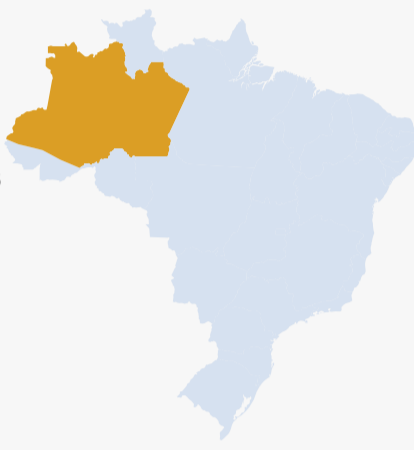
## Malaria-endemic areas have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic



Source: PAHO



The state of **Amazonas**, with **43%** of Brazil's malaria cases has one of the highest **COVID-19** incidence and mortality rates in the country



The department of **Loreto in Peru** with **over 80%** of all national malaria cases has been widely affected by **the virus**



**Colombia** has reported an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Leticia, capital of the **Amazon** department bordering Brazil that harbors between 5% and 10% of all malaria national cases



## Some of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on malaria

**Reduction in the number of patients who seek care for suspected malaria**

due to preventive measures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as instructions to stay at home when symptoms are mild (fever) as well as lockdown and travel restrictions.

**Reduction of malaria healthcare workers**

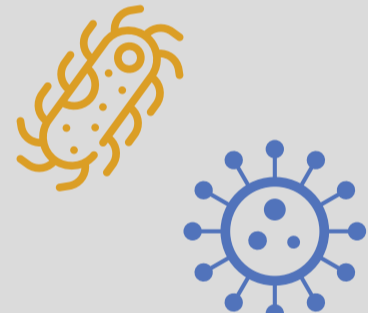
due to the **overburden** from COVID-19 related activities.

**Interruption of the activities carried out by community health**

workers and volunteers due to **mobility restrictions**.

**Reduction in case detection activities**

due to **limitations in the implementation of personal protection measures**.



## Facts and Figures

Source: WHO World Malaria Report, 2020

**889,000** estimated malaria cases in Latin America in 2019

**Venezuela (55%)** together account for almost **90%** of all reported cases in the region  
**Brazil (22%)**  
and **Colombia (11%)**

## Specialists' perceptions



"Travel restrictions, curfew, and lockdown might be impacting the implementation of malaria related activities such as indoor residual spraying, active case finding, treatment and surveillance actions. In addition, many people with malaria symptoms may have stopped attending health services, either due to fear of contagion with COVID-19 or because of social isolation measures. Also, according to our experience, when patients decide to look for treatment, since fever is one of the main malaria symptoms as well as it is for COVID-19, it is important that health care professionals consider malaria as a possible diagnosis for febrile patients in malaria endemic areas."

**Dr. Dhelio Pereira, Researcher, CEMETRON, Brazil**

"Today, one of our main challenges is delivering malaria-related health care in remote malaria-endemic areas where COVID-19 cases are on the rise. National and local governments facing very few resources had to make a tough choice during this pandemic resulting in many health posts and hospitals in remote areas being closed for all clinical activities, except for COVID-19. As one of the consequences related to this difficult choice, there is the risk of malaria resurgence and excess morbidity and mortality as an effect of COVID-19. In order to try to avoid this, public health officials should keep the engagement in malaria prevention, treatment and surveillance actions as much as possible, considering the difficult current context."

**Dr. Alejandro Llanos-Cuentas, Professor, UPCH, Peru**



"Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of patients that came to the hospital and are diagnosed with *vivax* malaria has increased in the past months. Since we always have been a reference hospital for malaria patients and the malaria prevention activities were probably impacted by the pandemic, the hospital has been facing a double burden due to an increase in patients suffering not only of COVID-19, but also of malaria."

**Dr. Mariana Vasconcelos, Head of ICU - CEMETRON, Brazil**

