

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: January 27, 2022

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

The Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) continues to spread in Alberta. Hospitalizations have reached the highest level since the pandemic started, but ICU admissions are manageable and are not as high as during previous waves. In recent weeks, there has also been an increase in unvaccinated children requiring hospitalization. Positivity rates from PCR tests remain high but do not reflect the true case numbers. [PCR testing eligibility](#) is focused on those who have risk factors for severe outcomes and those who live and work in high-risk settings and remains available on-reserve. For on-reserve PCR testing, we still encourage Nations to focus on testing high risk individuals and in high risk settings, such as congregate care.

Vaccination, in combination with public health and individual protective measures, offers the best and most robust protection against serious illness due to COVID-19. Alberta is behind other provinces in vaccinating children aged 5 – 11. The Omicron wave has confirmed vaccination prevents severe outcomes among this age group. No children with at least one dose of the vaccine have been admitted to hospital. For adults, a booster dose also offers the best protection from infection and severe outcomes. All individuals 18 years old and older in Alberta are urged to get their booster as soon as possible, provided it has been at least 5 months since their second dose.

### Number of Cases Reported\* as of January 26, 2022:

*\*numbers are changing rapidly and may change after this bulletin is released*

**Alberta:** There are **47,743 Active Cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

**First Nations in Alberta:** Aggregate data on COVID-19 First Nations cases in Alberta is available at: <http://www.afnigc.ca/main/index.php?id=home> and <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.

| First Nations                        | Total Cases | Recovered Case | Active Cases | Deaths | Currently Hospitalized | Communities with Active Cases |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|--------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Living on Reserve in Alberta         | 17,043      | 15,569         | 1,320        | 154    | 31                     | 36                            |
| Living on and off reserve in Alberta | 34,071      | 30,971         | 2,812        | 288    | 123                    | NA                            |

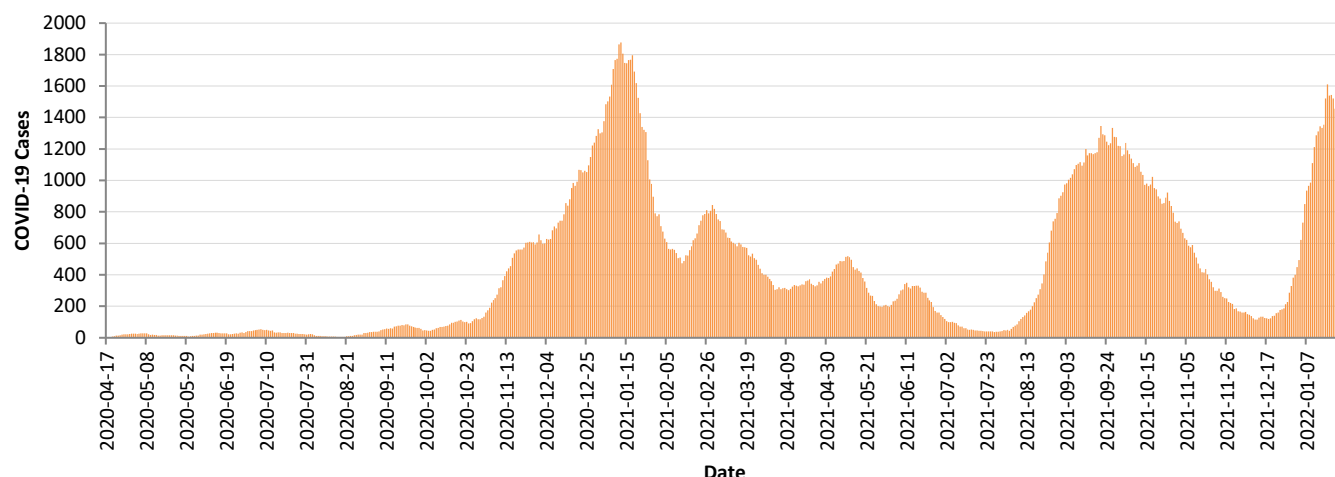


Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Active confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by date, January 26, 2022



COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta

| Treaty Area  | Total Cases   | Active Cases | Recovered Cases | Deaths     |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Treaty 6     | 7,846         | 710          | 7,076           | 60         |
| Treaty 7     | 4,377         | 435          | 3,885           | 57         |
| Treaty 8     | 4,820         | 175          | 4,608           | 37         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>17,043</b> | <b>1,320</b> | <b>15,569</b>   | <b>154</b> |

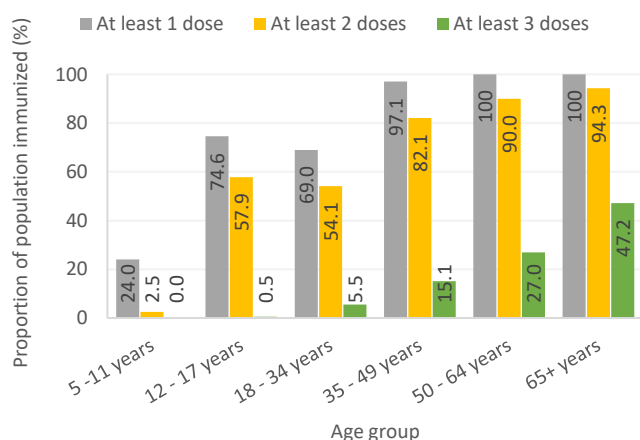
## COVID-19 Vaccine

### COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations people living on reserve in Alberta as of January 26, 2022.

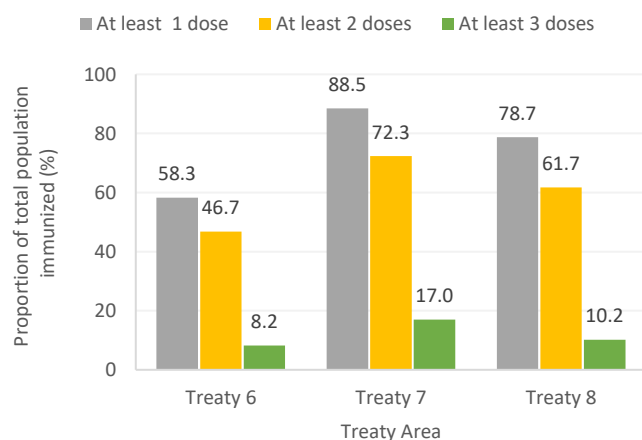
- **114,247** doses have been administered to First Nations living on-reserve in Alberta.
- **58,398** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **46,809** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least two doses
- **9,040** First Nations people living on reserve have received three doses

Approximately 87.2% of the population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose (73.0% of the total population), 72.9% have received at least two doses (58.5% of the total population), and 14.2% have received three doses (11.3% of the total population).

Proportion\* of population immunized by age group and type of dose



Proportion\* of total population immunized by Treaty area and type of dose



\*Percentages are calculated using unadjusted ISC-IRS on-reserve and Crown land population as of December 31, 2020. If the proportion of population immunized in any age group exceeds 100% because of population data limitation, we keep the proportion at 100% by adjusting the population to be equal to the number of first doses administered in that age group

## COVID-19 Vaccine

- **[New]** Fourth doses are now available for eligible immunocompromised individuals aged 18 and older, as long as they have waited 5 months since their third dose. See here for a list of [eligible immunocompromised conditions](#).
- Everyone aged 18 and older can get a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine 5 months after their second dose. Individuals who received 2 doses of AstraZeneca or one dose of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) can get a booster of an mRNA vaccine. Vaccine effectiveness against infection may decline over time, especially with the highly transmissible Omicron variant, but vaccines remain the best way to prevent severe illness and limit spread.
- **Reminder:** Children ages 5-11 are also eligible for vaccination. An 8 week interval between the first and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is recommended. Contact your local health centre for more information or to book an appointment. Further information on pediatric vaccination is available [here](#).

## COVID-19 Treatment

- **[New]** On January 25, 2022 Alberta announced that the newly approved Paxlovid drug, an oral antiviral treatment, will be available in the province on January 31, 2022. This medication consists of two drugs, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir, that patients take twice a day for five days.
- **[New]** Paxlovid is for use in patients who have a confirmed COVID-19 infection, are within five days of experiencing their first symptoms and meet certain medical criteria. Albertans who meet the eligibility criteria can call Health Link at 1-844-343-0971. Eligible conditions include:
  - Individuals who have no contraindications and one of the following immunocompromising conditions, regardless of vaccination status:
    - transplant recipients;
    - oncology patients who have received chemotherapy or other immunosuppressive treatment since December 2020;
    - those with inflammatory conditions, such as:
      - rheumatoid arthritis;
      - lupus;
      - inflammatory bowel disease.
  - Individuals who have no contraindications, are unvaccinated and:
    - Age 65 and older;
    - Age 18 and older with pre-existing health condition including:
      - Diabetes (taking medication for treatment);
      - Obesity (BMI>30);
      - Congestive heart failure;
      - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and moderate to severe asthma.

## Personal Protective Equipment

- **[New]** Alberta Health Services remains the primary source for ordering PPE for staff working in Indigenous health care facilities and isolation centres in First Nations communities. Continue ordering health related PPE by completing and forwarding the AHS PPE order form to [CPSMOperations.EOC@ahs.ca](mailto:CPSMOperations.EOC@ahs.ca). A copy of the AHS order form can be found [here](#). Indigenous communities and organizations can also get non-health related PPE from the following agencies:
  1. Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). AEMA currently has two streams of PPE available:
    - Excess/Expiring PPE Expanded Portal: This is a portal where AEMA offers PPE that has reached 75% of its lifecycle. PPE available from this portal **is free**, to ensure that PPE is not wasted. It can be reached here: <https://xnet.gov.ab.ca/ppe/other-order/>. Currently on this site there is ATSM Level 3 surgical masks as well as KN95 masks.
    - Main PPE Portal: <https://xnet.gov.ab.ca/ppe/>. Items available include hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, thermometers, face shields, gloves (Nitrile), gowns, masks (Procedural, KN95-Non Medical, N95-Non Medical). It is important to note that the costs noted plus shipping is charged at cost.
  2. Public Services and Procurement Canada's Essential Services Contingency Reserve (ESCR)

- Essential Services Contingency Reserve is offering PPE items such as hand sanitizer, gloves (Nitrile), masks (non-medical, KN95 respirators), face shields, safety goggles, disposable coveralls, and disinfection products at **no cost** to Indigenous communities and organizations. For more information on eligibility and application process, visit the [ESCR web page](#).

### **COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests**

- COVID-19 rapid antigen testing kits for at-home use can help identify infections early and help stop the spread of COVID-19. These tests are intended for at-home personal use for screening in symptomatic and asymptomatic people. These rapid tests cannot be used for the Restrictions Exemption Program. Unvaccinated people must pay to obtain proof of a negative test result through a private vendor or pharmacy to gain admission. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about how to perform a rapid test at home. Only certain people need to confirm RAT results with PCR testing. To find out what to do if you get a positive, negative, or invalid rapid antigen test result, refer to [Rapid testing at home | Alberta.ca](#).
- The province has indicated that the expected supply of at-home rapid test kits has been delayed. First Nations communities requiring at-home test kits should continue to email [rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca) and shipments will be processed when additional stock becomes available (anticipated early February).
- **Reminder:** Employers and service providers can apply to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization's COVID-19 screening program. More information on the rapid testing program for employers and service providers can be found [here](#).

### **Steps Individuals Can Take**

- Masks are mandatory in all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship, including eligible businesses that implement the Restriction Exemption Program; for employees in all indoor work settings, except while alone in work station; and for all students in Grades 4 and up, plus staff and teachers in all grades. Masks should fit well and be of high quality. People at risk of severe outcomes should wear medical masks when in settings with people outside of their household.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you can assume you have COVID-19 and likely the Omicron variant. You do not need to be tested to confirm, but you can use an at-home rapid test if you have access to one. Most people recover from COVID-19 without special treatment and can manage mild symptoms at home. Resources are available to help you manage mild symptoms at home and take care of someone who has COVID-19. AHS has developed a [COVID-19 Self-Care Guide](#) if you need further information on how to manage COVID-19 at home. In addition, the Alberta Medical Association has [Patient Resources for COVID-19](#) available on their website that can help determine when you may need to talk to your doctor. It is not always necessary to get in touch with your doctor, as most people with mild symptoms can manage at home with no problems. Please have a look at the resources available to you if you are feeling sick, to know what best to do.

### **Mental Health and Wellness**

- **Reminder:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful for many individuals, families, and communities who have all been affected in several ways. The [Hope for Wellness](#) help line offers immediate, toll-free telephone and online-chat based support and crisis intervention to all Indigenous people across Canada. Help is available in English and French, and upon request in Cree and Ojibway. Call the toll-free Help Line at **1-855-242-3310**, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week.

### **Virtual Care Clinic**

- **Reminder:** The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic (AIVCC) has updated their hours and they are now **open until 8:30pm on Wednesdays**. The AIVCC serves individuals self-identifying as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their families. AIVCC provides same-day care to rural and urban Indigenous people residing in Alberta via secure video or phone service and can be reached at 1-888-342-4822 or [www.aivcc.ca](http://www.aivcc.ca).

### **Additional Information**

If you have general questions about COVID-19 or require current information, please refer to the following

websites which are trusted information sources and are being regularly maintained and updated. **Should you have questions about COVID-19, please do not hesitate to email: [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)**

**OneHealth** - <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>

**InfoPoint (First Nations Health Manager Association)** – This site is designed for First Nation health managers to access credible sources of information related to COVID-19. To access this service, call the toll-free number at **1-855-446-2719**, or email [InfoPoint@fnhma.ca](mailto:InfoPoint@fnhma.ca)

### **Alberta Health**

- Coronavirus info for Albertans: <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

### **Alberta Health Services**

- Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>
- Indigenous Peoples & Communities (COVID-19):  
[https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17101.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUpo6\\_wGmSxUc](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17101.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUpo6_wGmSxUc)

### **Indigenous Services Canada COVID-19 (Updates available in several Indigenous languages)**

- COVID-19 & Indigenous Communities: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298>

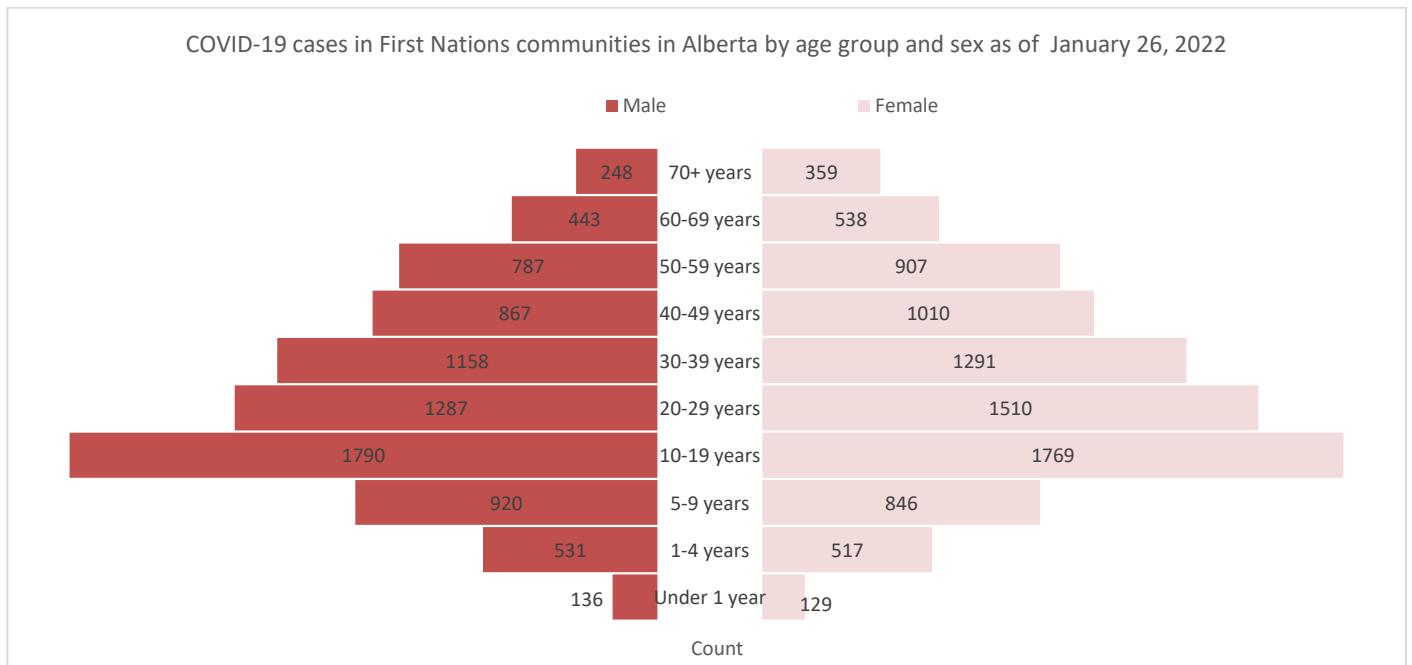
**Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.**

- The Mental Health Help Line [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642) is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you.
- Hope for Wellness Help Line [1-855-242-3310](tel:1-855-242-3310), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Kids and teens can call the Kids Help Phone: [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868).
- Text COVID19HOPE to [393939](tel:393939) to subscribe to a free service supporting mental health and wellness in a time of stress and isolation.
- Family Violence Resources: <https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-prevention-resources.aspx>
- **Text4Hope-Addiction Support** is designed to help Albertans dealing with psychological issues related to addiction. Text “Open2Change” to [393939](tel:393939) to subscribe.

**Anyone with specific questions or concerns about their health is encouraged to call Health Link at 811 for health advice.**

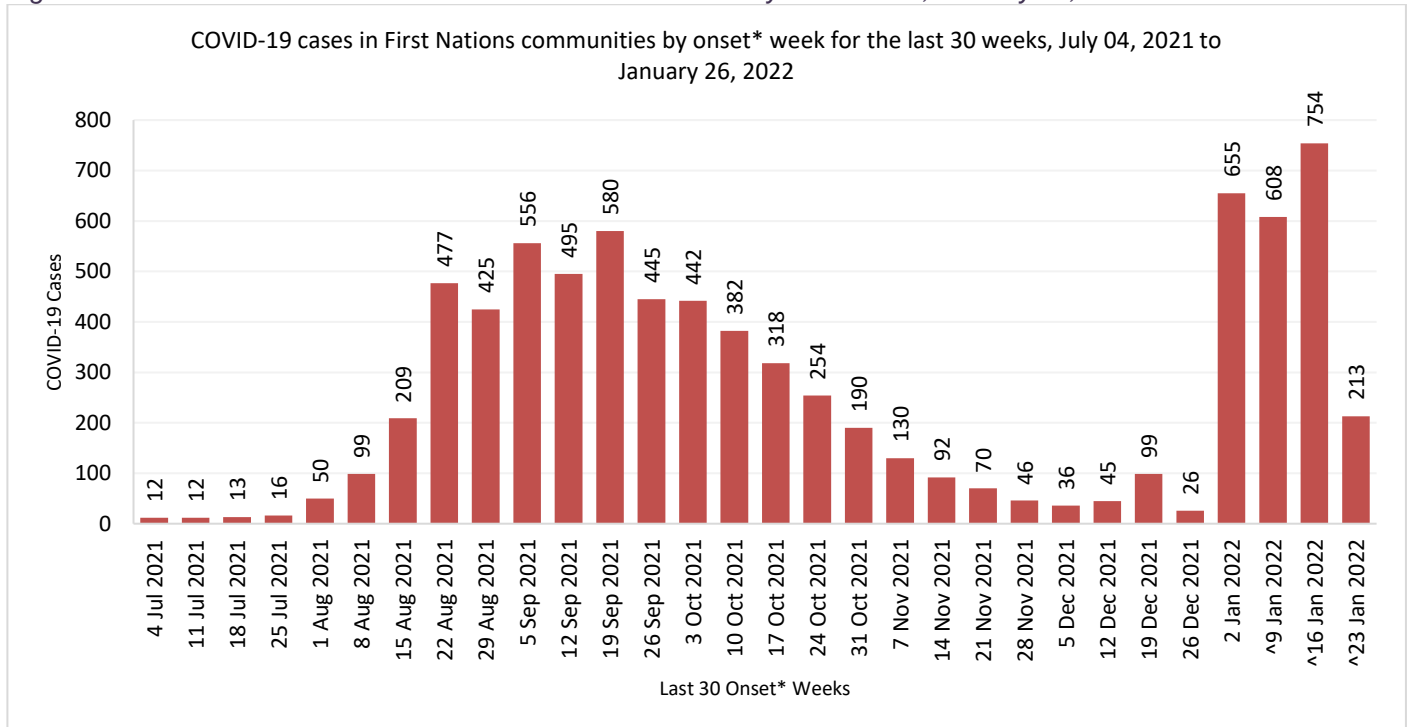
## APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, January 26, 2022



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.7% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.9% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 52.1% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.9% among all Albertans.

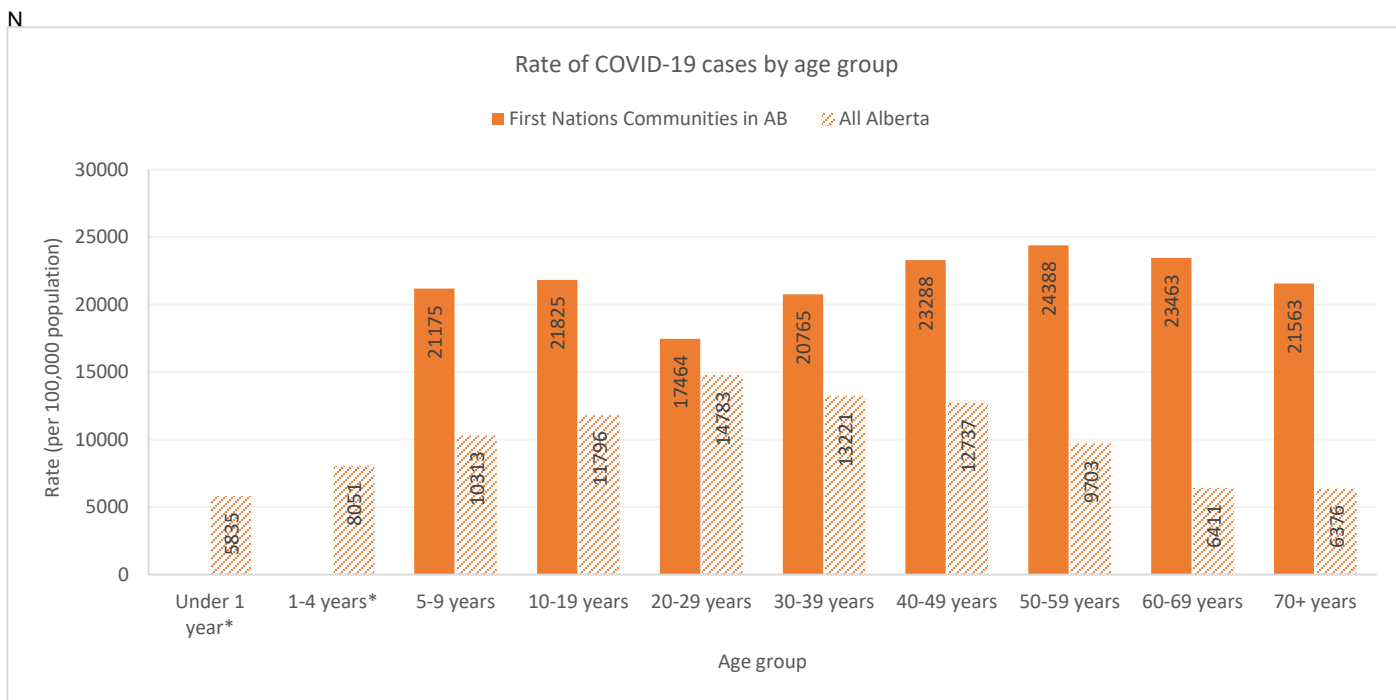
Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week, January 26, 2022



Note: ^Data may be incomplete due to late receipt of lab reports. \*Onset date is the earliest of the "symptoms onset" and "specimen collection" date.

A significant increase in the number of COVID-19 cases are seen in January 2022 compared to December 2021 in First Nation communities in Alberta. The increase is mainly due to the spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant.

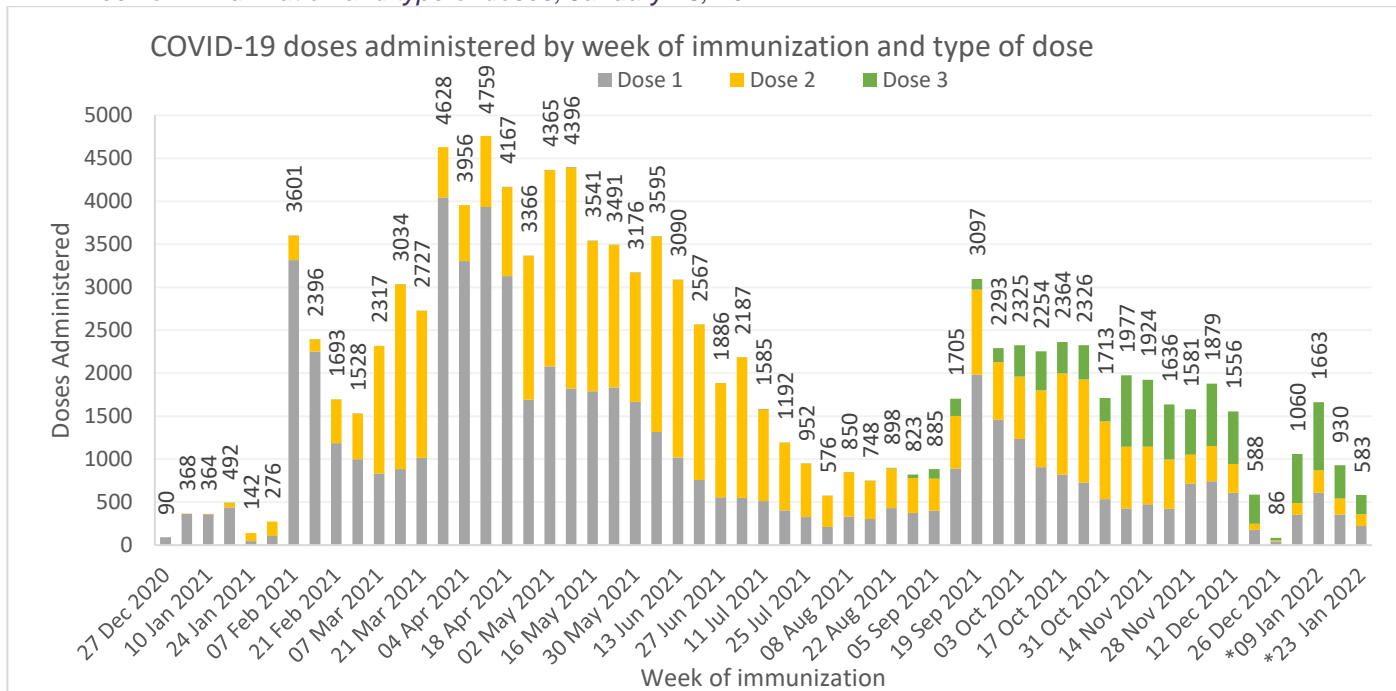
Fig 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group, January 26, 2022



Note: \*\*Due to late reporting and registration of birth, the rate in this age group is not calculated for First Nations communities.

There is a higher burden of COVID-19 cases in First Nations in Alberta compared to the general Alberta population in every age group.

Fig 4: COVID-19 Vaccine doses administered to First Nations people living in First Nation communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, January 26, 2022



\*May be incomplete due to late reporting and data entry

A total of 114,247 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 58,398 people living in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 46,809 have received at least two doses and 9,040 have received three doses.