

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: June 25, 2021

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

Alberta continues to see a decline in COVID-19 cases across the province as more individuals become vaccinated. The province entered Stage 2 of the [Alberta's Open for Summer Plan](#) on June 10, and with 70.7 per cent of eligible individuals having been vaccinated with at least one dose as of June 22, Alberta will move to Stage 3 on July 1 and fully reopen, removing all mandatory restrictions. While the Stage 3 reopening is a very good sign for Alberta, community outbreaks and localized clusters of COVID-19 continue to occur and spread, predominantly in unimmunized individuals. ISC-AB's MOHs recommend that First Nations in Alberta consider a more cautious approach to reopening compared to the rest of Alberta. ISC-AB is available to support Nations on reopening. Vaccines continue to be the best path forward towards protecting our health and the health of our communities. ISC-AB is available to support Nations to address the current plateau in vaccine uptake in their communities.

Status Update

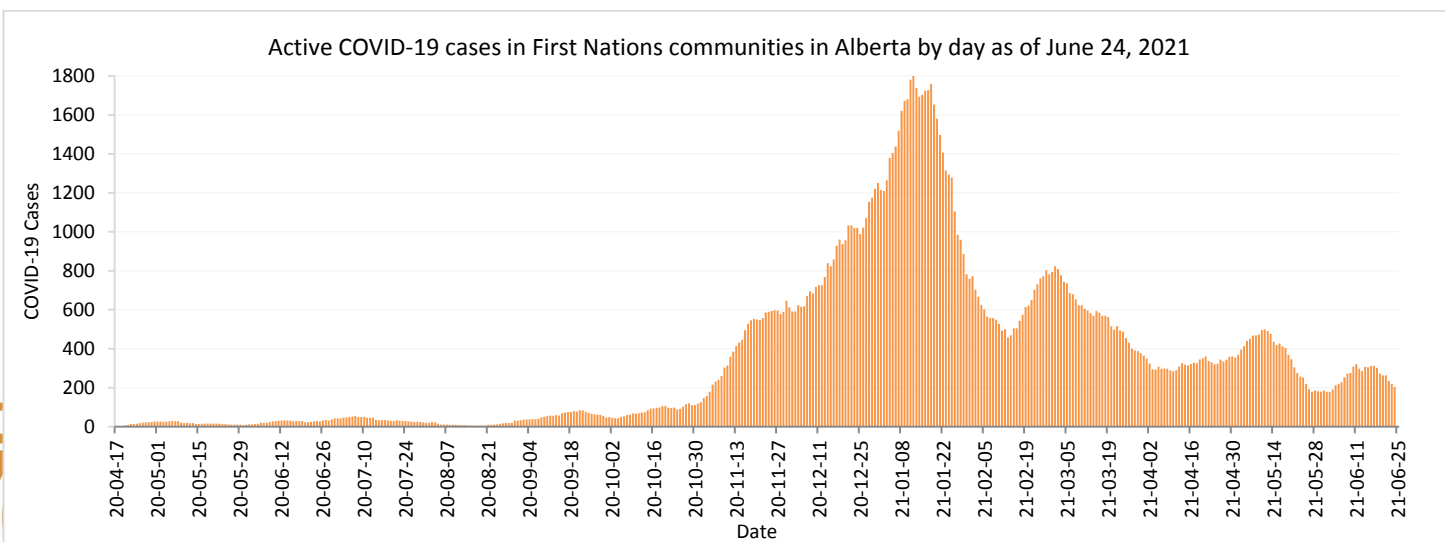
Number of Cases Reported* as of June 25, 2021:

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

Alberta: There are **1,580 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	8,893	8,602	204	87	18	22
Living on and off reserve in Alberta	17,686	17,253	272	161	31	NA



COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta				
Treaty Area	Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered Cases	Deaths
Treaty 6	4,153	35	4,084	34
Treaty 7	2,339	88	2,219	32
Treaty 8	2,401	81	2,299	21
TOTAL	8,893	204	8,602	87

Variants of Concern (VOCS) in First Nations Living on Reserve in Alberta:

As of June 24th, **1,011** VOCs have been detected in **38** First Nations communities in Alberta.

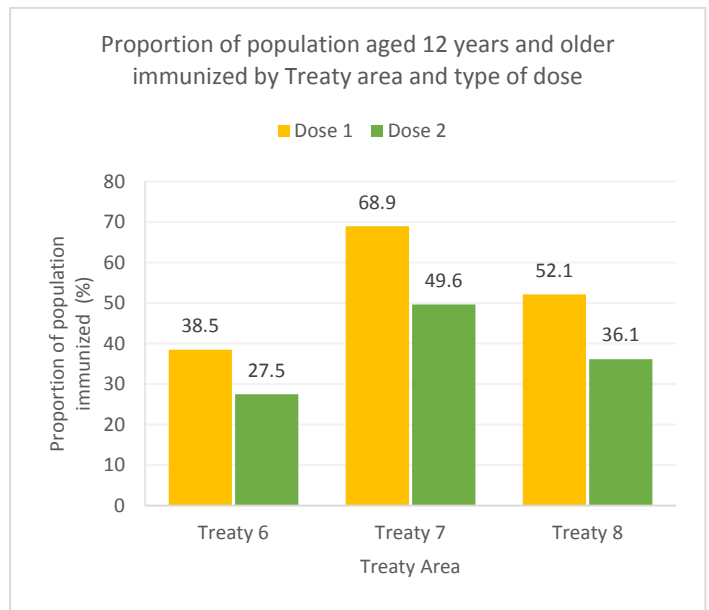
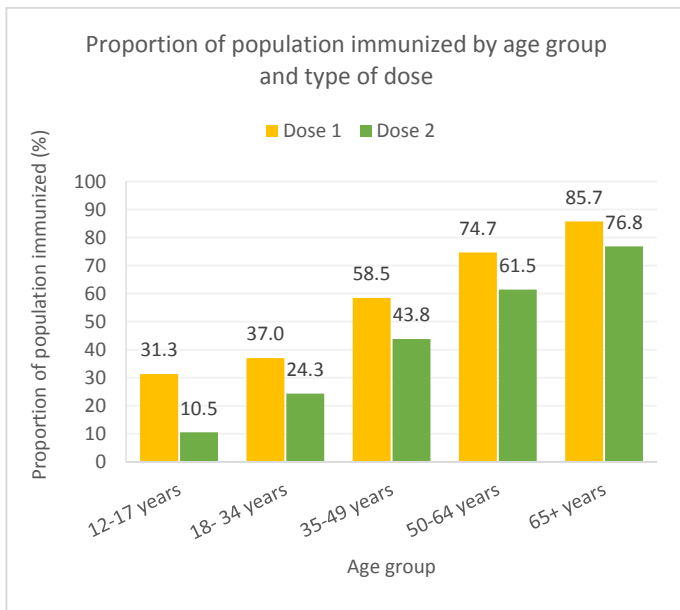
VOC Type	Total Cases	Recovered Case	Active Cases	Deaths	Communities with Active Cases
B.1.1.7 (Alpha)	982	832	143	7	14
B.1.351 (Beta)	-	-	-	-	-
P.1 (Gamma)	27	25	2	0	2
B.1.617.2 (Delta)	2	2	0	0	0
Total (VOC)	1,011	859	145	7	16

COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations Communities in Alberta as of June 24, 2021

- **56,187** doses have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta
- **32,883** First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- **23,304** First Nations people living on reserve are fully immunized (2 doses)

Approximately **51.2%** of the total population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose and approximately **36.4%** have been fully immunized (2 doses).



8 Communities
Have vaccinated over 70% of eligible members with the first dose

16 Communities
Have vaccinated 50 - 70% of eligible members with the first dose

22 Communities
Have vaccinated less than 50% of eligible members with the first dose

COVID-19 Vaccine New Developments

1. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has recently updated its recommendation on the [interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines](#) for second doses. NACI recommends that vaccine types should remain consistent when possible but that mRNA vaccines could be interchanged when there isn't readily available access to a vaccine (i.e. in times of short supply). NACI also recommends preferential use of mRNA vaccines as second doses for those individuals who received AstraZeneca (has not been administered on reserve but may have been accessed by some through AHS clinics).
2. NACI has updated the guidelines on the storage of the Moderna vaccine. The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine can be stored between +2°C to below +25°C but must be discarded after 24 hours from the time of first puncture. Full recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines can be found [here](#).
3. The transportation of thawing/thawed COVID-19 vaccine has been updated to provide clearer direction on how often vaccine can be moved. See [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling Policy for COVID-19 Vaccine](#) for more information.
4. Rare cases of myocarditis and pericarditis (heart muscle and heart tissue inflammation) related to the Pfizer vaccine have been reported, predominantly in men under 30 years following their second dose. Health Canada and international regulatory bodies continue to look into this issue.
5. Spacing between the administration of COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines has been changed from 28 days to 14 days, except in the case where the vaccine is required for post-exposure prophylaxis.
6. All individuals aged 12 and over are eligible to receive their first and second vaccine doses now, providing the minimum interval between doses is met. Information on vaccinating those aged 12-17 is the same as vaccinating any other age group, with the exception being a written or verbal parental consent is needed. Please contact your local Health Centre for further information on how to receive a vaccine in your community. First Nations individuals living off-reserve can [book online](#), or at a [participating pharmacy](#) or call 811.
7. The Government of Canada is extending the temporary travel restrictions on discretionary (non-essential) international travel and travel with the US until July 21, 2021, 11:59 p.m. EDT. However, beginning July 5th, fully vaccinated travellers who are [permitted](#) to enter Canada will not be subject to the federal requirement to quarantine or take a COVID-19 test on day-8. Individuals are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after receiving a second dose of vaccine. In addition, fully vaccinated travellers arriving by air will not be required to stay at a government-authorized hotel. For these new measures to apply to them, fully vaccinated travellers must be asymptomatic and still meet all other mandatory requirements, including pre- and on-arrival testing. For travellers who are not fully vaccinated, there are no changes to Canada's current border measures. More information on Canada's border measures for travellers entering Canada can be found [here](#).

Reminders

1. The Government of Alberta has updated the [isolation and quarantine requirements](#) for individuals who have been vaccinated.
2. Minor and temporary adverse events, such as headache, fever, fatigue, or pain at the injection site, are common after all vaccinations. All individuals are encouraged to seek medical attention if they experience any new or worsening symptoms and to [report any adverse events](#) after immunization.

Alberta's Relaunch - Update

- **[New]** Alberta will move to Stage 3 of [Alberta's Open for Summer Plan](#) on July 1 and fully reopen, removing all remaining mandatory restrictions including the ban on indoor social gatherings. Isolation requirements for confirmed cases of COVID-19, quarantine for close contacts that are not fully immunized, and protective measures in continuing care settings may remain. The general indoor provincial mask mandate will be lifted, but masking may still be required in limited and specific settings. All current restrictions remain in effect until July 1.
- **[New]** Through the Provincial government, any Albertan 18 and older who has received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine can enter a province-wide lottery to win \$1 million and other prizes. Registration for the first \$1-million prize closed on June 24, however there will be further \$1 million prize draws in August and September. See the [Open for Summer Lottery](#) for more information and to register online.

COVID-19 Variants of Concern

- **[New]** As of June 20, 2021, there are outbreaks of the Delta variant (B.1.617.2) in three units at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary. The province continues to monitor cases of Delta variant as there are concerns that the Delta variant could become the dominant strain in Alberta.

What the Government of Canada and ISC/FNIHB-AB Are Doing

- **[New]** The Government of Canada announced \$117 million to renew the [Indigenous Community Business Funds](#) (ICBF). The ICBF provides non-repayable financial contributions to Indigenous microbusinesses and community- or collectively- owned businesses that do not qualify for other existing business supports. Stream 1 of the funding will be transferred directly to communities and collectives to immediately support their COVID-19 economic priorities, no applications are required. Stream 2 of the funding will be proposal based. [Applications](#) must be submitted by the community or collectives on behalf of the business and funding will be transferred directly to communities and collectives.
- **[New]** The Government of Canada announced the [Own-Source Revenue in Indigenous Communities Initiative](#) (OSRICI) to support communities that have experienced a reduction in own-source revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recipients can use this funding to provide core community programs and important services that would have been funded by own-source revenue. Funding under this initiative is not meant to overlap with other COVID-19 measures including the Indigenous Community Business Fund, Support Fund or other health, economic and social supports. All applications must be submitted to Indigenous Services Canada by August 31, 2021. More information on eligibility and application requirements can be found [here](#).
- **Reminder:** [Infrastructure Canada](#) is accepting applications for retrofits and new building projects for community buildings. [Applications](#) for projects under \$3 million are being accepted on an ongoing basis and applications for projects that are between \$3 million and \$25 million are being accepted until July 6.
- **Reminder:** Nations that require additional surge supports for COVID-19 response or vaccine clinics including contact tracing, testing, and vaccine administration support should submit a [request form](#) to ISC-AB at: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

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.

Additional Information and Resources

- **[New]** As vaccinations continue and restrictions are lifted, ISC-AB will scale back on the bi-weekly delivery of the bulletin. Beginning in July, ISC-AB Office of the Senior MOH is amending the frequency of the bulletin to monthly. As a result, you will receive the next bulletin on **Thursday July 22nd**.
- **[New]** Effective July 30th, 2021, Dr. Wadieh Yacoub will be retiring from the Federal Public Service. Dr. Chris Sarin will take over the role of Alberta Region Senior Medical Officer of Health with support from Dr. Parminder Thiara. We sincerely thank Dr. Yacoub for his tireless work on supporting positive health outcomes for all First Nations in Alberta and he will be sorely missed in our office and we are certain among your Nations' staff as well.
- **[New]** The ISC-AB COVID-19 Update telehealth sessions will pause for the summer and resume in the fall.

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**

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

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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUp06_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.

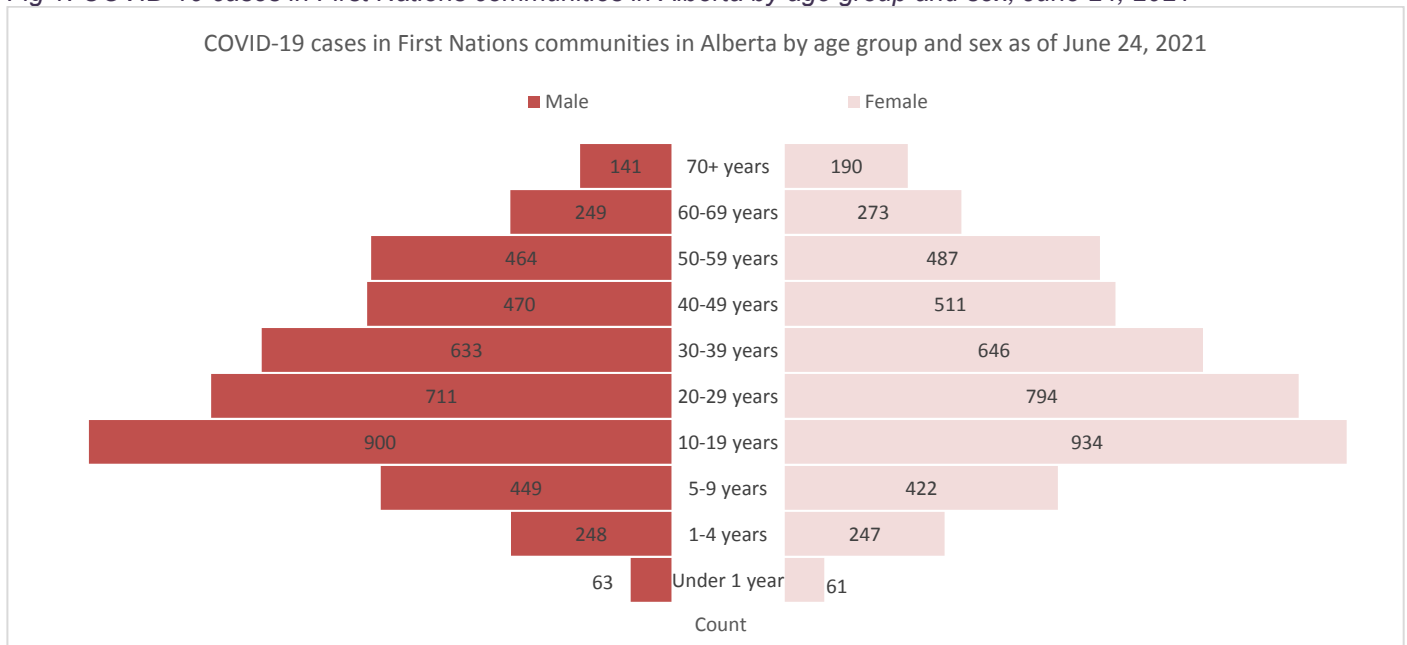
- The Mental Health Help Line [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642) is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you.
- Hope for Wellness Help Line [1-855-242-3310](tel:1-855-242-3310), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Kids and teens can call the Kids Help Phone: [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868).
- 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.



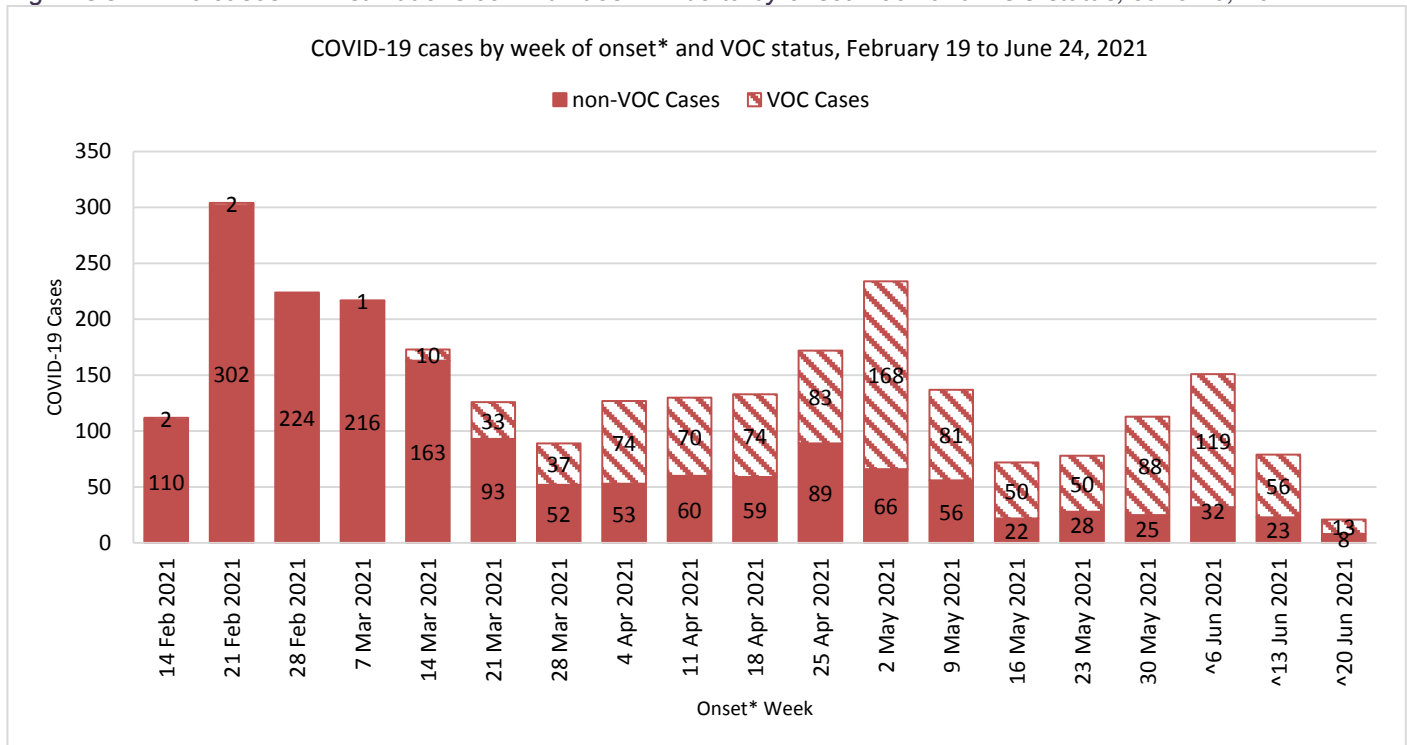
APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, June 24, 2021



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.9% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 50.6% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 51.3% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.2% among all Albertans.

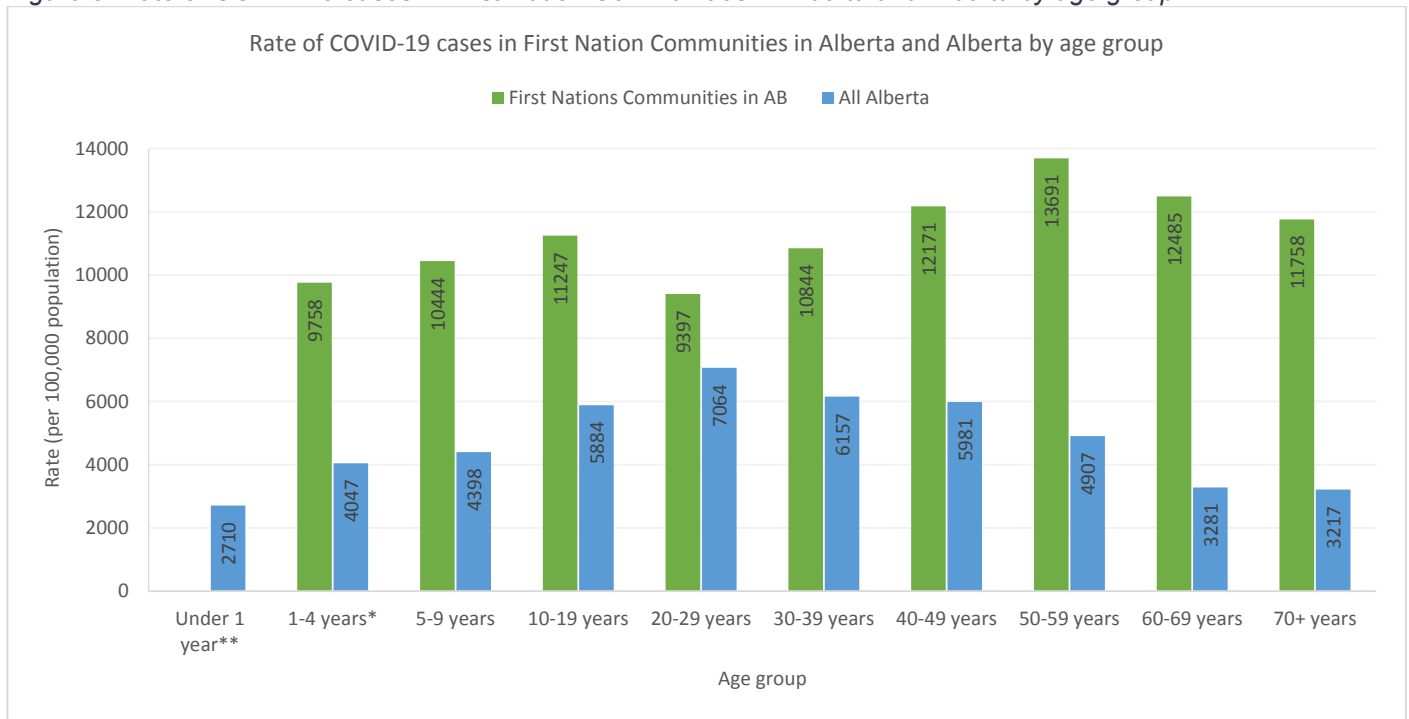
Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week and VOC status, June 10, 2021



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.

One thousand and eleven (1,011) VOCs have been detected. Currently there are 145 active VOCs in 16 First Nations Communities making up 71.1% of all active COVID-19 cases in communities.

Figure 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group

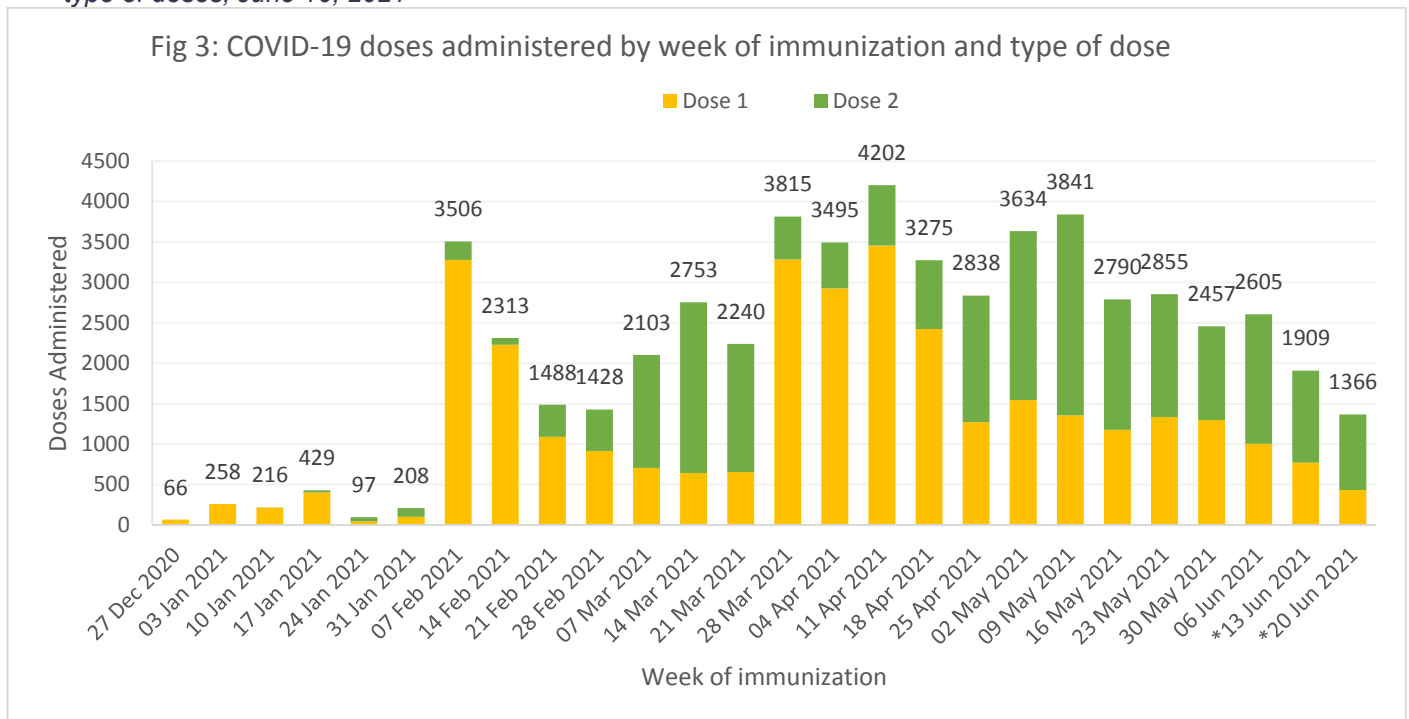


Note: **Due to late reporting and registration of birth, the rate in this age group is not calculated for First Nations communities.

*Due to late reporting and registration of birth, this rate may be overestimating

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 in First Nations communities in Alberta by week of immunization and type of doses, June 10, 2021



*May be incomplete due to late reporting and data entry

A total of 56,187 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 32,883 people in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 23,304 are fully immunized with two doses.