

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: March 24, 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 BA.2 variant (a sub-variant of Omicron) has become the dominant strain among positive COVID-19 tests in Alberta, and is expected to increase in transmission in the coming weeks. This sub-variant is highly transmissible, however there are no indicators that it leads to more severe illness or outcomes.

PCR testing continues to be available for those with clinical risk factors for severe disease or those who live and work in high risk settings, including First Nations communities. However, PCR tests likely capture only a fraction of all cases as take-home rapid antigen test results are not reported. Although the province is no longer reporting active case counts on a daily basis, an upward trend in the amount of COVID-19 virus in wastewater has been detected in communities across Alberta after several weeks of decline. The [wastewater data](#) is being used as an early indicator for a spike in COVID-19 cases in select Alberta communities. Individuals at risk of severe disease are advised to revisit their precautionary measures and get their booster dose as soon as they qualify.

The province remains in [Step 2](#) of the three phase approach to easing public health restrictions in Alberta. Nearly all pandemic public health measures have been lifted in the province as of March 1; however masking is still required in high-risk settings. These settings include Alberta Health Services (AHS)-operated and contracted acute care facilities, all continuing care settings, and on municipal and intra-provincial public transit for Albertans aged 13 and older. Masking requirements continue to be recommended in all health centres located in First Nation communities.

We encourage you to remain careful and take actions to limit the spread of COVID-19 in your communities. Vaccination offers the most robust protection against serious illness due to COVID-19. All First Nations aged 12 years old and older in Alberta are urged to get their booster 5 months after their second dose.

### Number of Cases Reported\* as of March 22, 2022:

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

**Alberta:** There are currently **956** COVID-19 hospitalized cases in Alberta as of end of day March 21, 2022.

**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	Deaths	Currently Hospitalized
Living on Reserve in Alberta	19,345	170	26
Living on and off reserve in Alberta	37,655	321	80

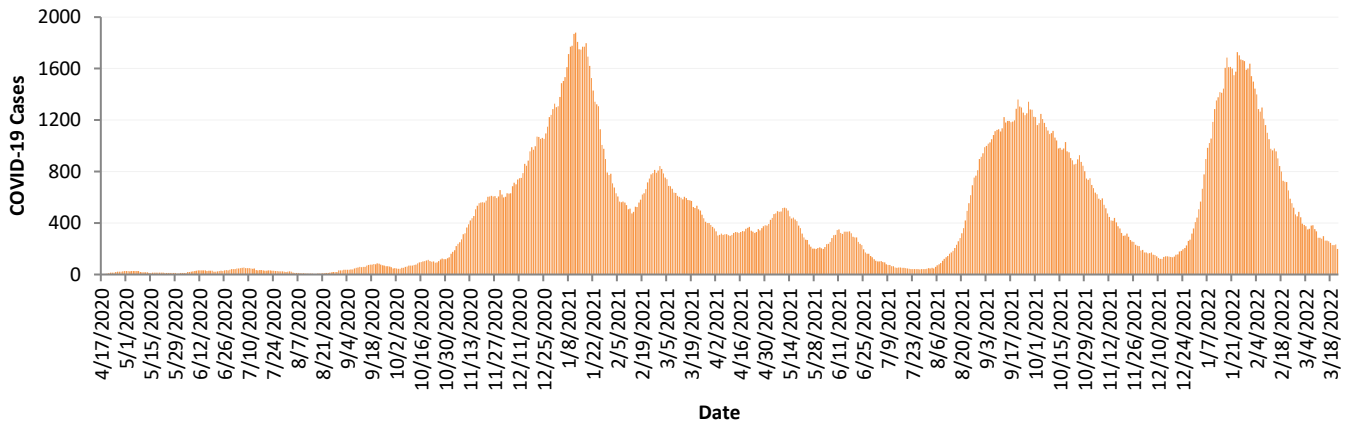


Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Active confirmed COVID-19 cases by date, March 22, 2022



COVID-19 in First Nations living on reserve in Alberta

Treaty Area	Total Cases	Active Cases	Recovered Cases	Deaths
Treaty 6	8,818	68	8,683	67
Treaty 7	5,275	87	5,124	64
Treaty 8	5,252	44	5,169	39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19,345</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>18,976</b>	<b>170</b>

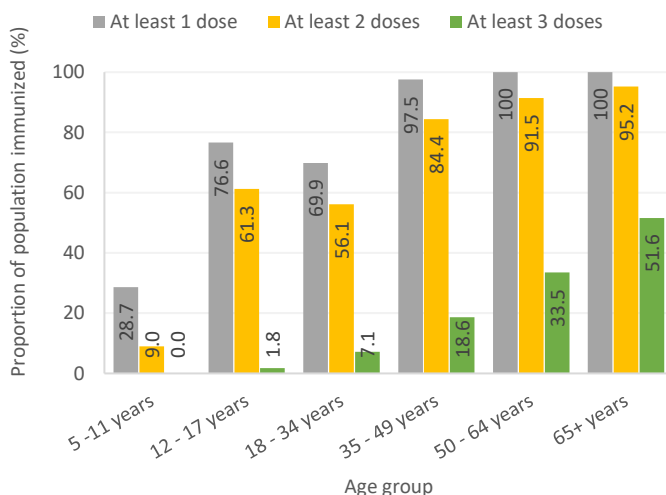
## COVID-19 Vaccine

### COVID-19 Vaccine in First Nations people living on reserve in Alberta as of March 22, 2022.

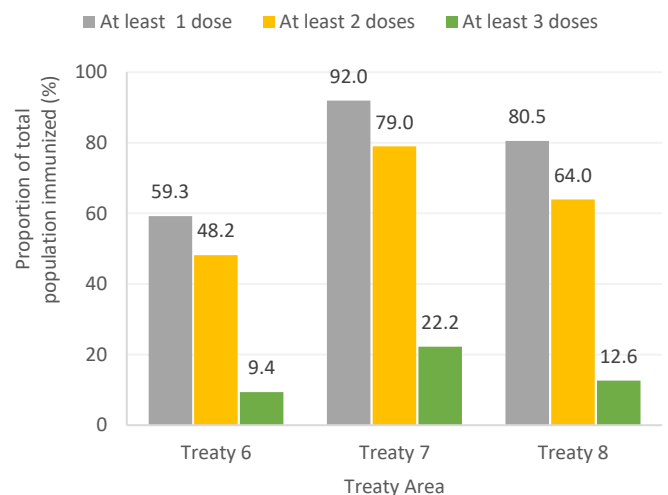
- 120,535 doses have been administered to First Nations living on-reserve in Alberta.
- 59,949 First Nations people living on reserve have received at least one dose
- 49,366 First Nations people living on reserve have received at least two doses
- 11,220 First Nations people living on reserve have received three doses

Approximately 88.8% of the population aged 12 years and older living on reserve have received at least one dose (74.9% of the total population), 75.7% have received at least two doses (61.7% of the total population), and 17.6% have received three doses (14.0% 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

- **Reminder:** All youth aged 12 – 17 in Alberta are eligible to book a booster dose. Booster doses are available for all First Nations aged 12 years old and older in Alberta regardless of where they live.
- Children 5 to 11 years of age with certain [immunocompromising conditions](#) are also eligible for an additional dose.
- A fact sheet on vaccinations for children aged 5 – 11 is available at [covid-19-get-facts-vaccinating-children-eng.pdf \(canada.ca\)](#)
- **Reminder:** COVID-19 vaccines, as well as influenza and pneumonia vaccines for adults, youth and children are always available in health centres on reserve. They are also available at the Genesis Centre and the Village Square Leisure centre in Calgary. These vaccine clinics are open to all families and are a partnership between the Government of Alberta, Alberta Health Services, the City of Calgary, Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary, Siksika Health Services, OKAKI Health Intelligence and the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

## COVID-19 Treatment in Alberta

- Alberta Health Services (AHS) updated the [eligibility for early COVID treatment](#) for those at risk of severe outcomes. AHS is offering Paxlovid or Sotrovimab to individuals tested positive for COVID-19 with mild to moderate symptoms:
  - aged 55 or older, who are not fully vaccinated (received no or only a single dose of vaccine).
  - aged 18 or older, who are not fully vaccinated and living with a health condition (e.g. diabetes).
  - aged 18 or older, who have a significant immunocompromising condition (e.g. received a transplant or being on active cancer treatment), even if they have received all doses of vaccine.

## COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

- **[New]** Emerging evidence on Omicron variants indicates that swabbing both an individual's mouth and nose is a more effective for detecting COVID-19 when using a rapid antigen test. See the new [guidance for at-home rapid test sample collection](#) for the recommended swabbing process and what to do depending on the results. Watch this [instructional video](#) on how to swab both an individual's mouth and nose at home.
- **Reminder:** 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. 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](#). First Nations communities requiring at-home test kits should email [rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca).
- **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

- 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.

## Mental Health and Wellness

- **[New]** A mental wellness town hall, with a focus on nutrition and mental health and featuring Elder Tom Snow and Dr. Bonnie Kaplan, was held on March 23, 2022 as part of the Windspeaker town hall series. This can be accessed through their Facebook page.

- **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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUp06\\_wGmSxUc](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>

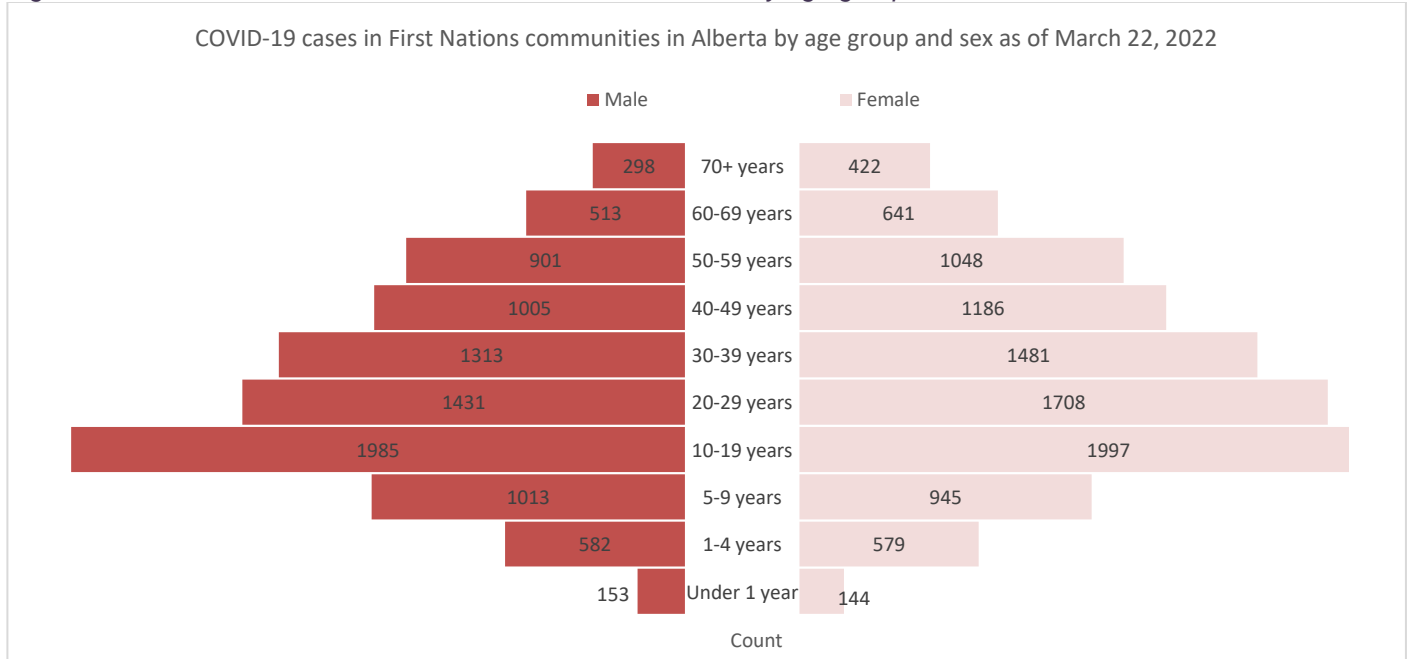
### **Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.**

- 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.**

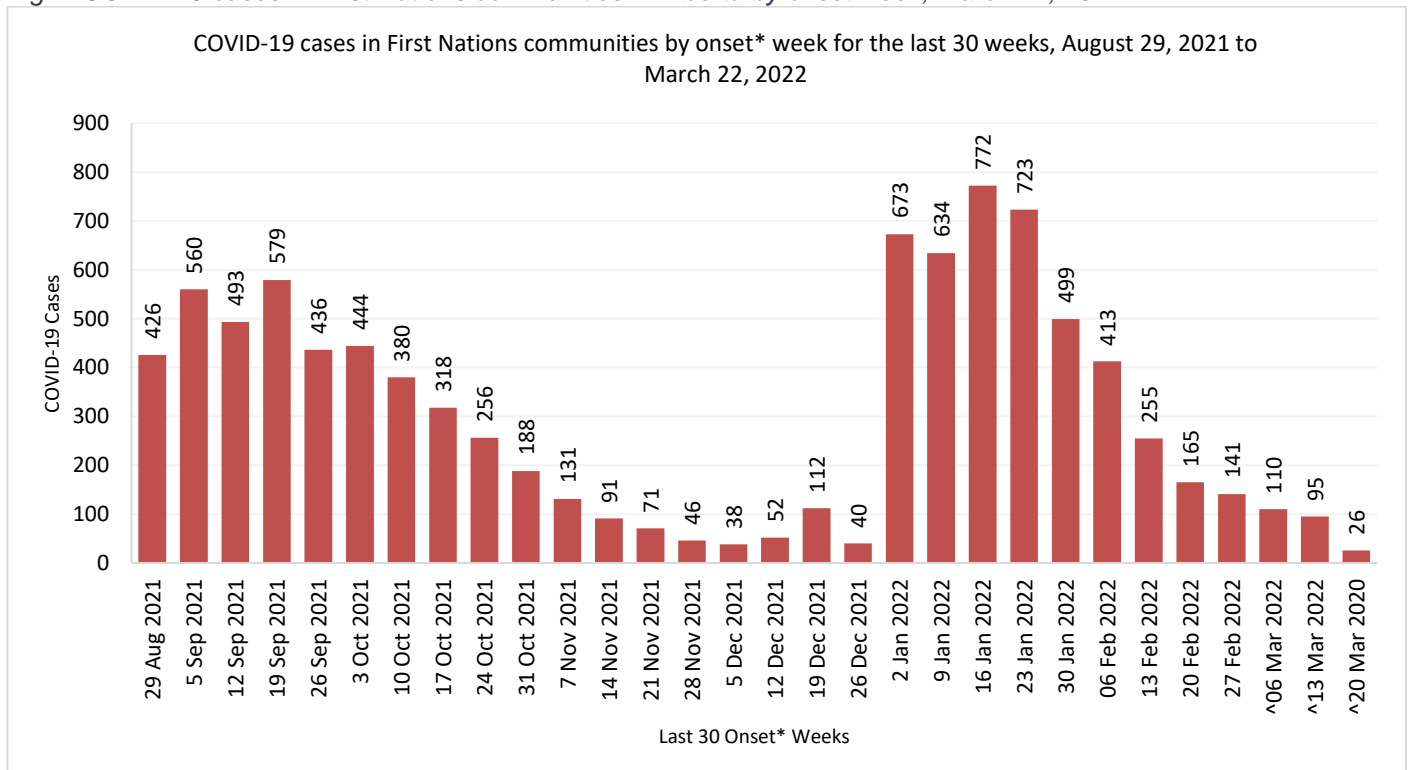
## APPENDIX A: Additional COVID-19 Data in First Nations On-Reserve in Alberta

Fig 1. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by age group and sex, March 22, 2022



Individuals between the ages of 10 and 39 years accounted for 51.3% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 49.9% of all cases in Alberta. Females accounted for 52.5% of all cases in First Nations communities in Alberta and 51.6% among all Albertans.

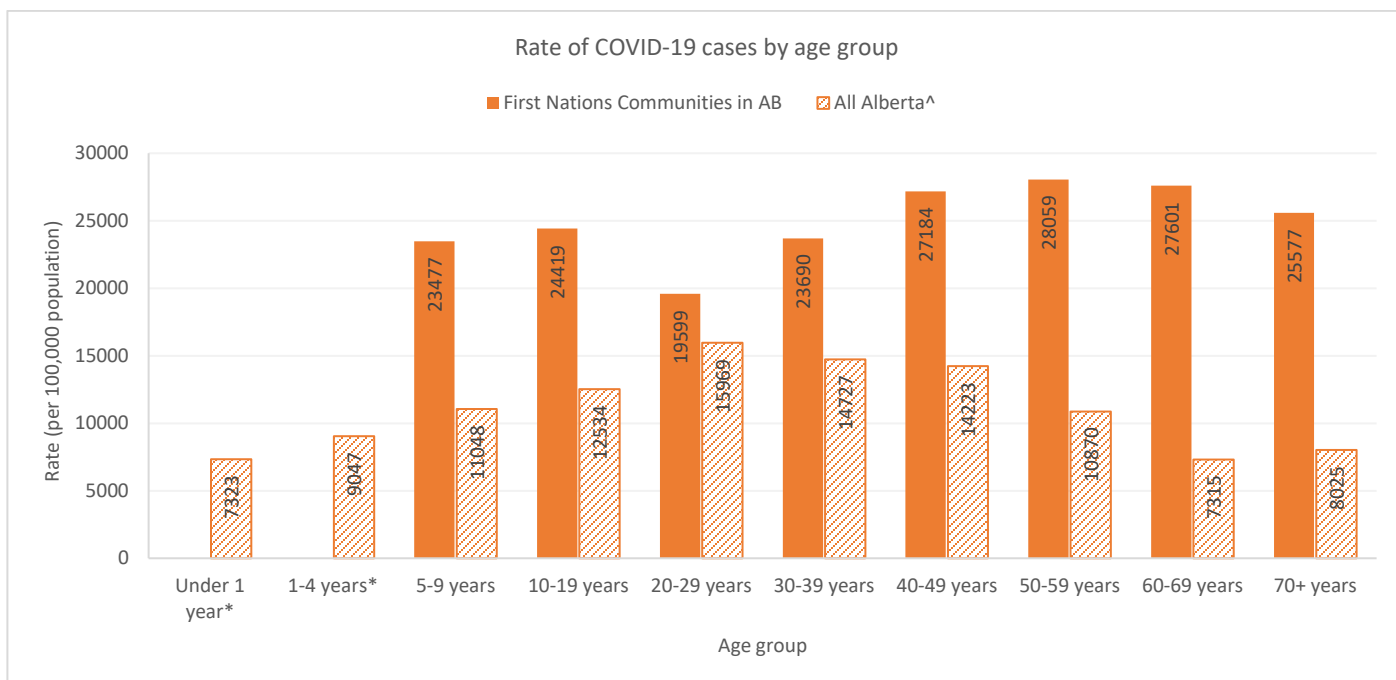
Fig 2. COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities in Alberta by onset week, March 22, 2022



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 decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases are seen in the last eight weeks in First Nation communities in Alberta.

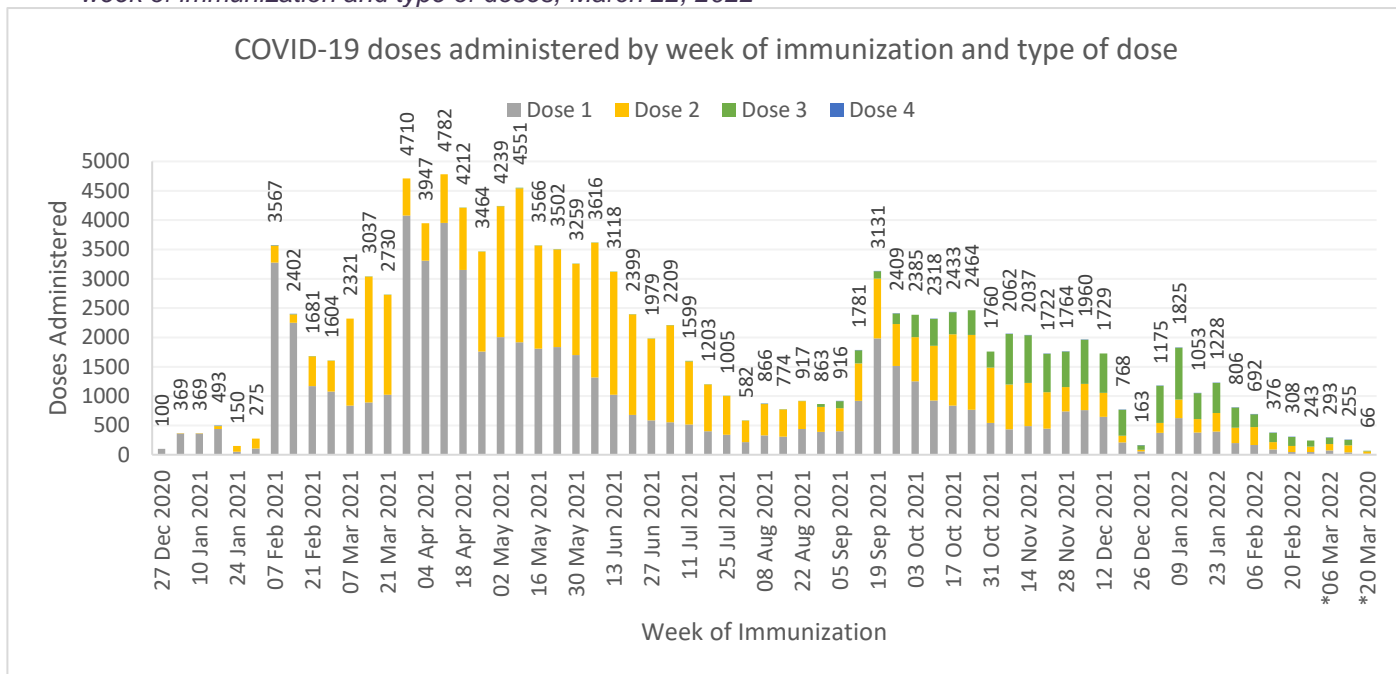
Fig 3: Rate of COVID-19 cases in First Nation Communities in Alberta and Alberta by age group, March 22, 2022



Note: \*Due to late reporting and registration of birth, the rate in this age group is not calculated for First Nations communities.^All Alberta data is up-to-date as of end of day March 17, 2022

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, March 22, 2022



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

A total of 120,535 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to 59,949 people living in First Nations communities in Alberta, of whom 49,366 have received at least two doses, 11,220 have received at least three doses, and 47 have received 4 doses.