



COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiology Brief: Week ending 14 May 2022 (Week 19 of 2022)

Summary

Overview of report

Disease surveillance is a core function of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), a division of the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS). This report summarises data from a national laboratory-based surveillance system that is used to monitor the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, in South Africa. This report is based on data collected up to 14 May 2022 (week 19 of 2022). Note: Trends in numbers of new cases by province and age group may be affected by changes in testing practice and delays in testing of specimens and numbers are updated weekly as new data become available. The methods and data sources can be found at the end of the report.

Highlights

- As of 14 May 2022, a total of 3 891 793 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases had been detected in South Africa. Of these, 50 405 were cases reported since the last report (week 18 of 2022). There was a 3.1% decrease in the number of new cases detected in week 19 of 2022 (45 665) compared to the number of new cases detected in week 18 of 2022 (47 126).
- In the past week, the Gauteng Province reported the highest number of cases detected (18 368/45 665, 40.2%), followed by the KwaZulu-Natal Province (9 584/45 665, 21.0%), and Western Cape Province (7 909/45 665, 17.3%), with other provinces reporting <7% each.
- In the past week, three of nine provinces reported a decrease in weekly incidence risk, compared to the previous week. The decrease ranged from 0.1 cases per 100 000 persons (0.9% decrease) in Limpopo Province to 21.5 cases per 100 000 persons (20.5% decrease) in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. Of the six provinces that reported an increase in weekly incidence risk, the increase ranged from 3.8 cases per 100 000 persons (15.8% increase) in the Mpumalanga Province to 24.0 cases per 100 000 persons (43.1% increase) in Northern Cape Province.
- In the past week, Gauteng Province reported the highest weekly incidence risk (116.2 cases per 100 000 persons), followed by Western Cape Province (111.2 cases per 100 000 persons), Free State Province (84.8 cases per 100 000 persons) and Kwa-Zulu Natal Province (83.2 cases per 100 000 persons). The other provinces reported weekly incidence below 80 cases per 100 000 persons.
- The highest weekly incidence risk among cases detected in week 19 of 2022 was reported in the ≥80-year age group (174.2 cases per 100 000 persons), and the lowest weekly incidence risk was in the 0-4-year age group (20.2 cases per 100 000 persons).

National and provincial trends of COVID-19 cases in South Africa

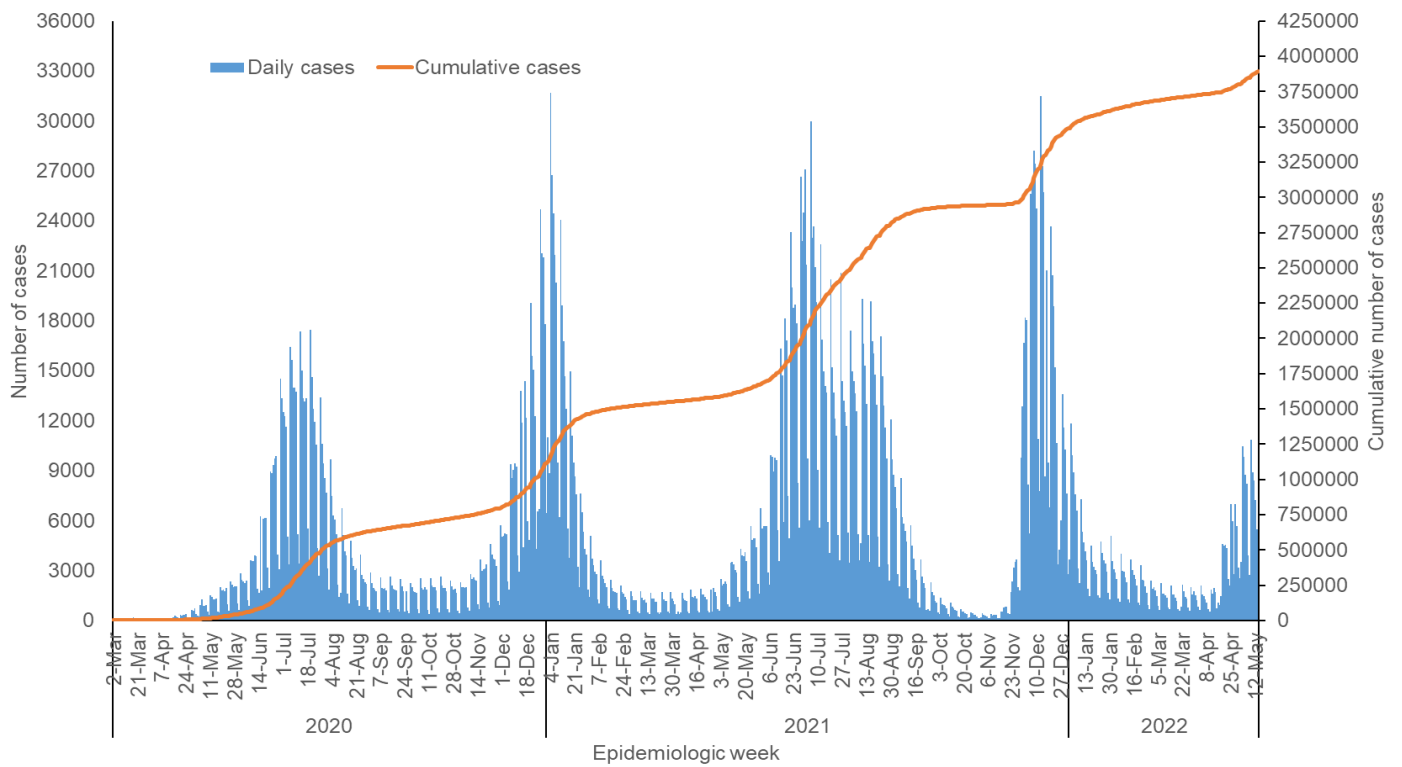


Figure 1. Number and cumulative number of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by date of specimen collection, South Africa, 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n= 3 891 793)

Table 1. Number and cumulative/weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and testing per 100 000 persons by province, South Africa, 3 March 2020 – 14 May (n = 3 891 793)

Province	Cumulative cases (n) (percentage, n/total cases in South Africa)	New cases ¹ detected in week 19 of 2022 (08-14 May), n (percentage ² , n/total)	Population in mid-2021 ³ , n	Cumulative incidence risk (cases per 100 000 persons)	Incidence risk of new cases detected in week 19 of 2021 (cases/100 000 persons)	Tests ⁴ per 100 000 persons, 08-14 May 2022
Eastern Cape	354 511 (9.1)	3 081 (6.7)	6 676 590	5 309.0	46.1	169.1
Free State	209 727 (5.4)	2 488 (5.4)	2 932 441	7 152.0	84.8	326.3
Gauteng	1 285 081 (33.0)	18 368 (40.2)	15 810 388	8 128.1	116.2	477.5
KwaZulu-Natal	700 729 (18.0)	9 584 (21.0)	11 513 575	6 086.1	83.2	324.3
Limpopo	157 561 (4.0)	419 (0.9)	5 926 724	2 658.5	7.1	44.7
Mpumalanga	197 633 (5.1)	1 326 (2.9)	4 743 584	4 166.3	28.0	145.7
North West	197 379 (5.1)	1 451 (3.2)	4 122 854	4 787.4	35.2	166.1
Northern Cape	111 496 (2.9)	1 039 (2.3)	1 303 047	8 556.6	79.7	274.7
Western Cape	677 676 (17.4)	7 909 (17.3)	7 113 776	9 526.2	111.2	324.3
Unknown						
Total	3 891 793	45 665	60 142 978	6 470.9	75.9	295.6

¹New cases refer to cases whose samples were collected or received in the current reporting week ²Percentage=n/total number of new cases (specimen collected or received in current reporting week) ³2021 Mid-year population Statistics South Africa ⁴Data on number of tests conducted sourced from COVID-19 weekly testing report of the same reporting week

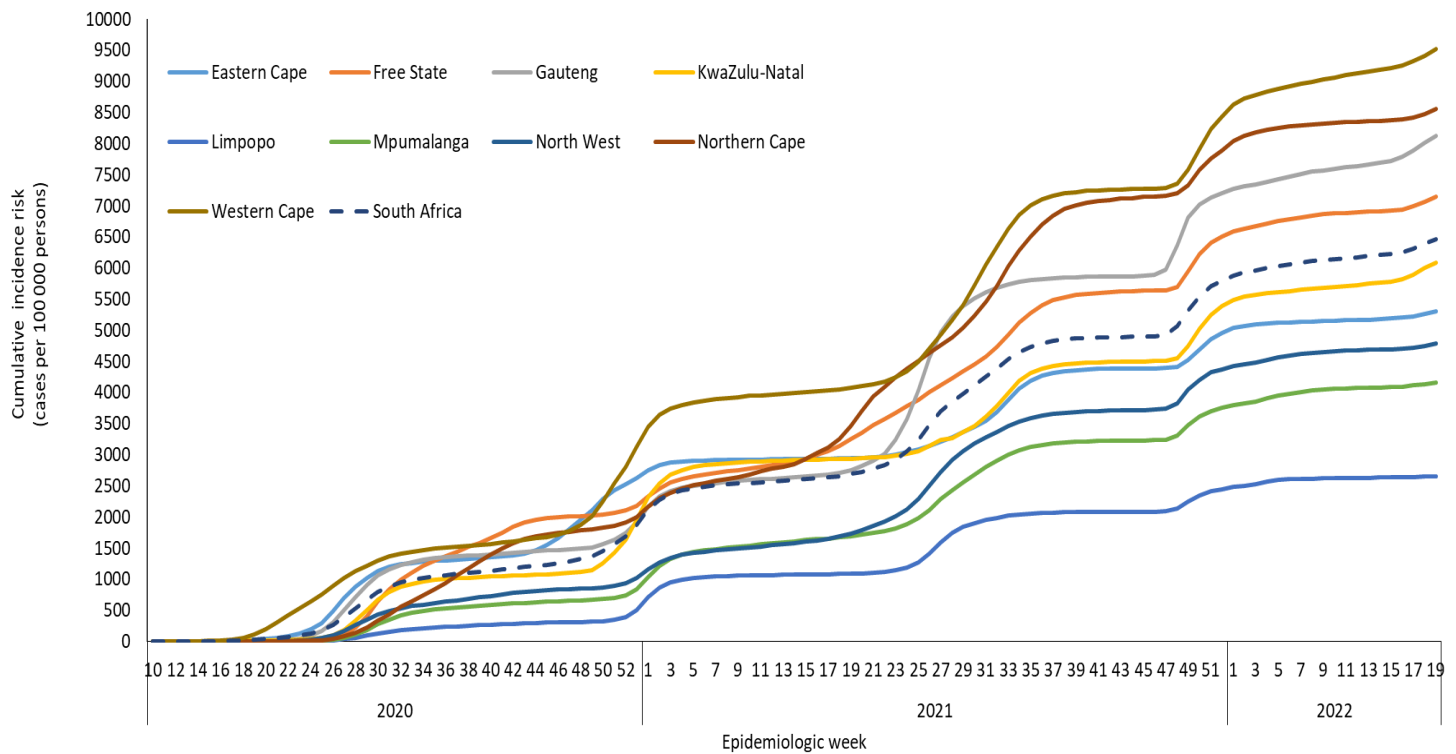


Figure 2: Cumulative incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by province and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 3 891 793)

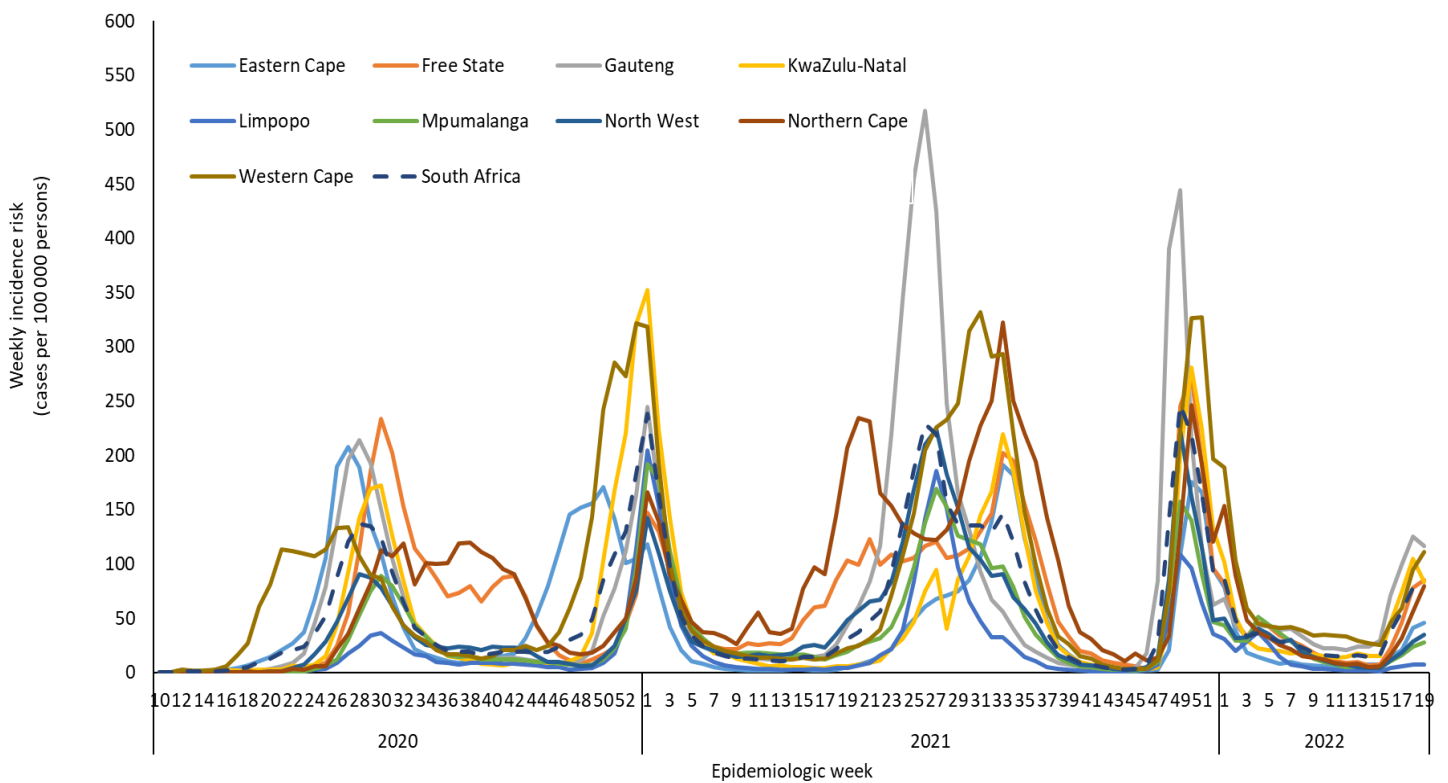


Figure 3: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by province and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 3 891 793)

Characteristics of COVID-19 cases in South Africa by age and sex

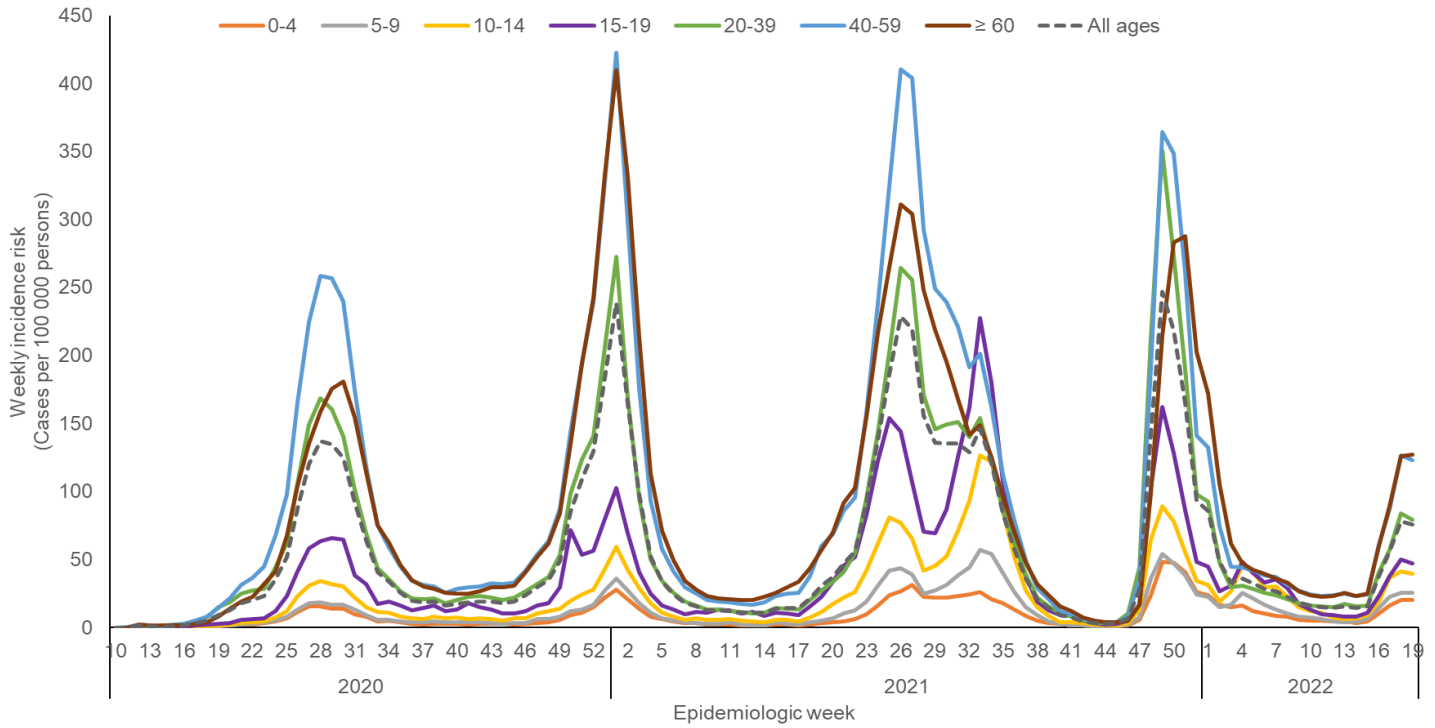


Figure 4: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 3 855 784, 36 009 missing age)

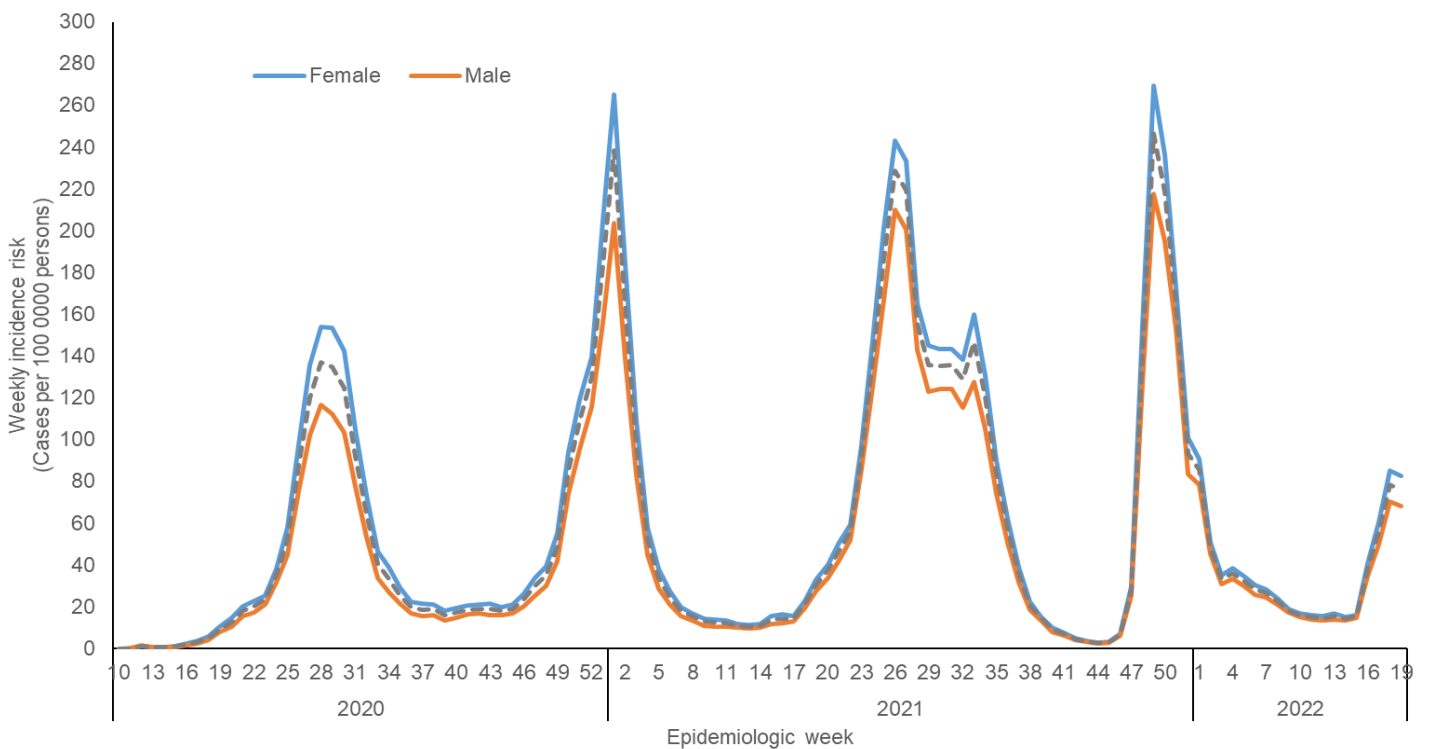


Figure 5. Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by sex and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 3 851 380, sex missing for 40 413)

Table 2. Number of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and cumulative/weekly incidence risk by age group South Africa 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 n = 3 855 784, 36 009 missing age)

Age group (years)	Cumulative cases (n) (percentage n/total cases in South Africa)	New cases ¹ detected in week 19 of 2022 (08-14 May) n (percentage ² n/total)	Population in mid-2021 ³ n	Cumulative incidence risk (cases per 100 000 persons)	Incidence risk of new cases detected in week 19 of 2022 (cases/100 000 persons)
0-4	62 007 (1.6)	1 156 (2.5)	5 708 956	1 086.1	20.2
5-9	84 550 (2.2)	1 448 (3.2)	5 663 296	1 492.9	25.6
10-14	151 373 (3.9)	2 246 (4.9)	5 671 023	2 669.2	39.6
15-19	215 755 (5.6)	2 322 (5.1)	4 909 941	4 394.2	47.3
20-24	255 275 (6.6)	2 601 (5.7)	4 739 305	5 386.3	54.9
25-29	374 538 (9.7)	4 035 (8.9)	5 324 134	7 034.7	75.8
30-34	432 307 (11.2)	4 914 (10.8)	5 630 643	7 677.8	87.3
35-39	438 246 (11.4)	4 906 (10.8)	4 985 251	8 790.9	98.4
40-44	371 512 (9.6)	4 168 (9.2)	3 881 731	9 570.8	107.4
45-49	353 579 (9.2)	3 883 (8.6)	3 254 138	10 865.5	119.3
50-54	317 653 (8.2)	3 755 (8.3)	2 625 390	12 099.3	143.0
55-59	263 358 (6.8)	2 963 (6.5)	2 243 823	11 737.0	132.1
60-64	184 926 (4.8)	2 268 (5.0)	1 815 810	10 184.2	124.9
65-69	127 281 (3.3)	1 610 (3.5)	1 422 604	8 947.0	113.2
70-74	93 002 (2.4)	1 221 (2.7)	1 024 345	9 079.2	119.2
75-79	60 441 (1.6)	877 (1.9)	647 265	9 337.9	135.5
≥80	69 981 (1.8)	1 037 (2.3)	595 323	11 755.1	174.2
Unknown	36 009 (0.0)	255 (0.0)			
Total	3 891 793 (100.0)	45 665 (100.0)	60 142 978	6 470.9	75.9

¹New cases refer to cases whose samples were collected or received in the current reporting week ²Percentage=n/total number of new cases (specimen collected or received in current reporting week) ³2021 Mid-year population Statistics South Africa

Provincial trends of COVID-19 cases

Eastern Cape Province

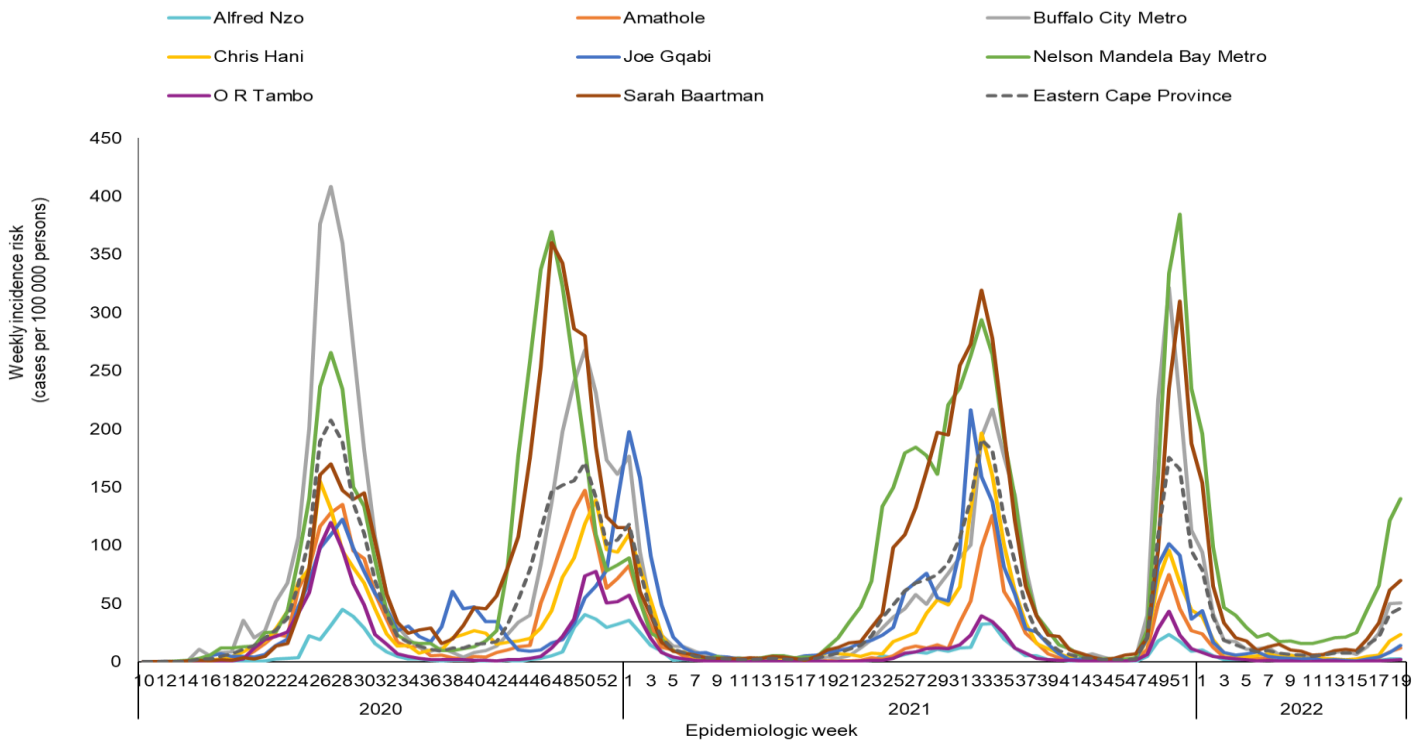


Figure 6: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Eastern Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 298 822, 55 689 missing district)

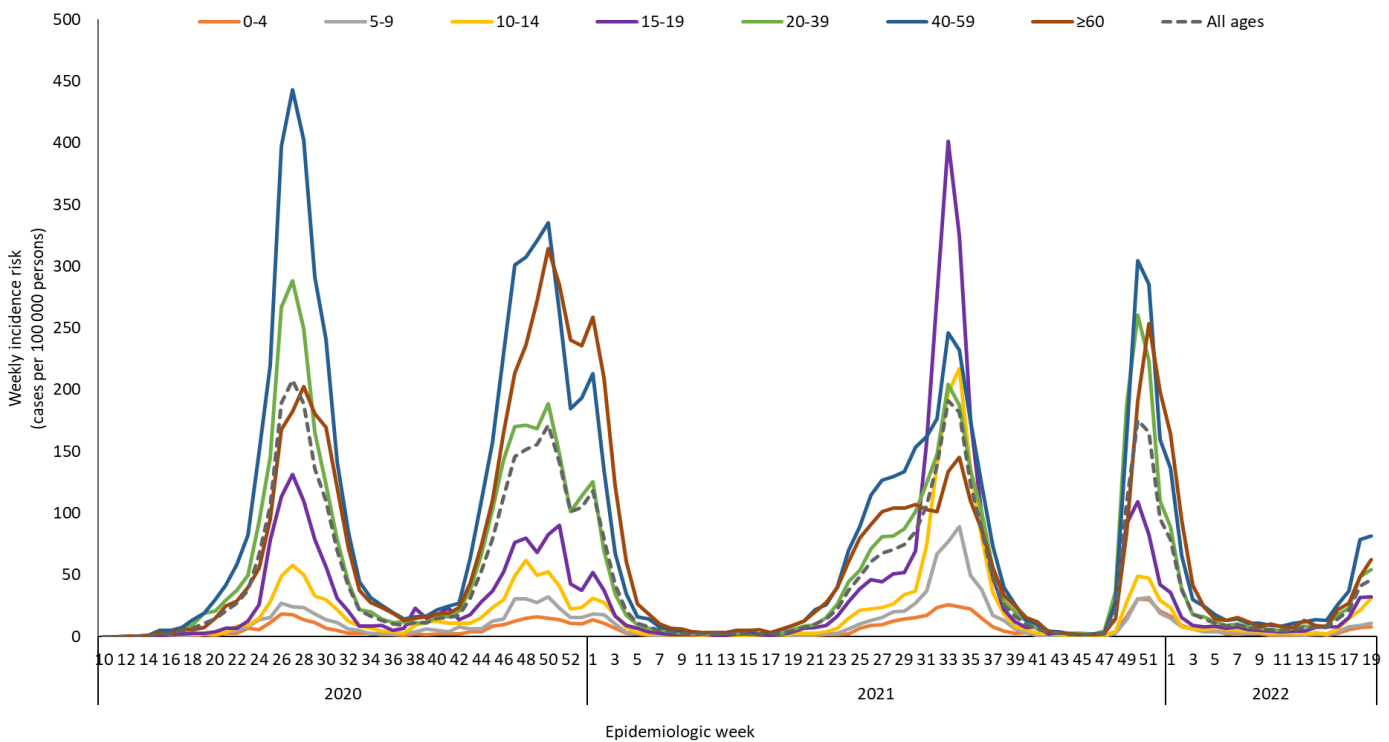


Figure 7: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Eastern Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 350 820, 3 691 missing age)

Western Cape Province

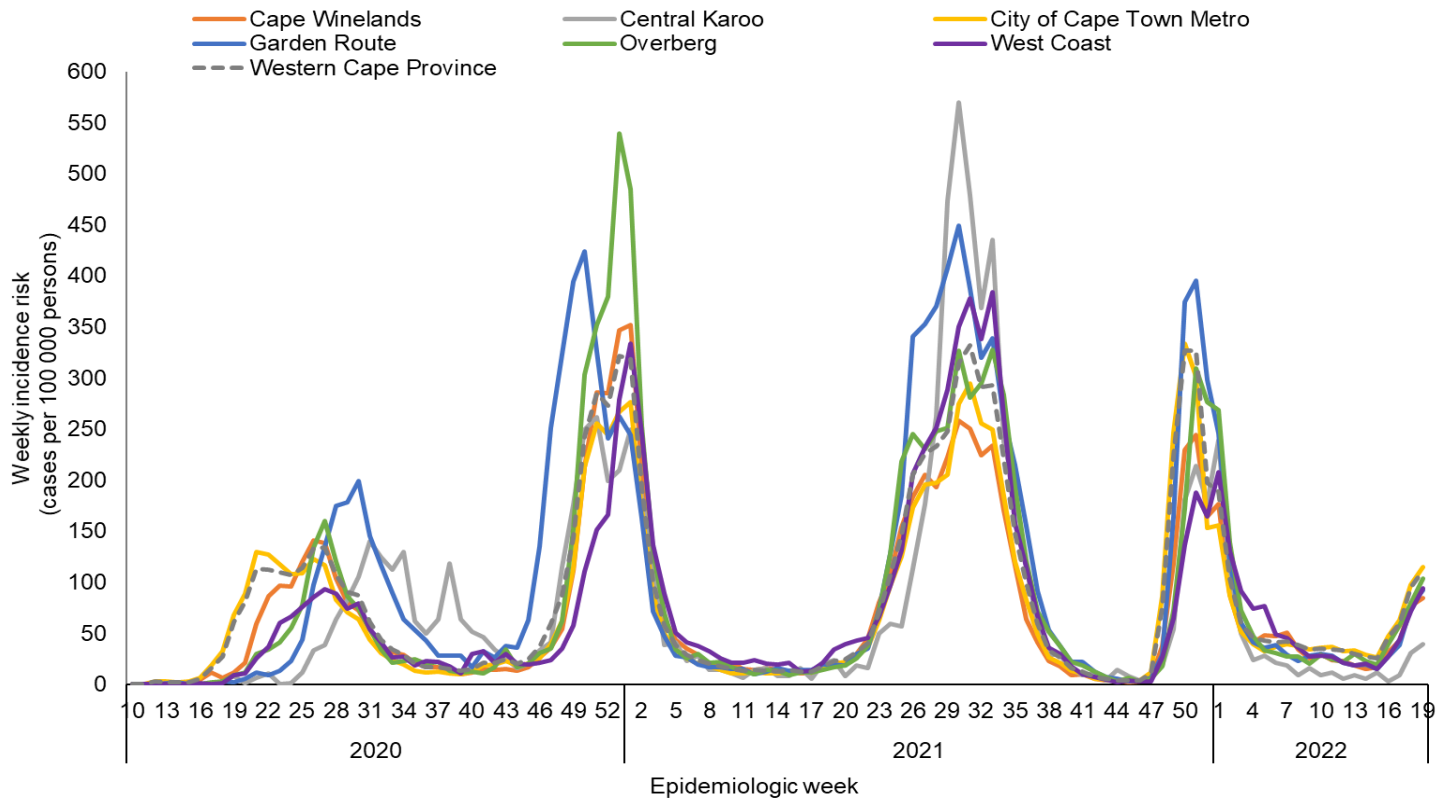


Figure 8: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Western Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 623 462, 54 214 missing district)

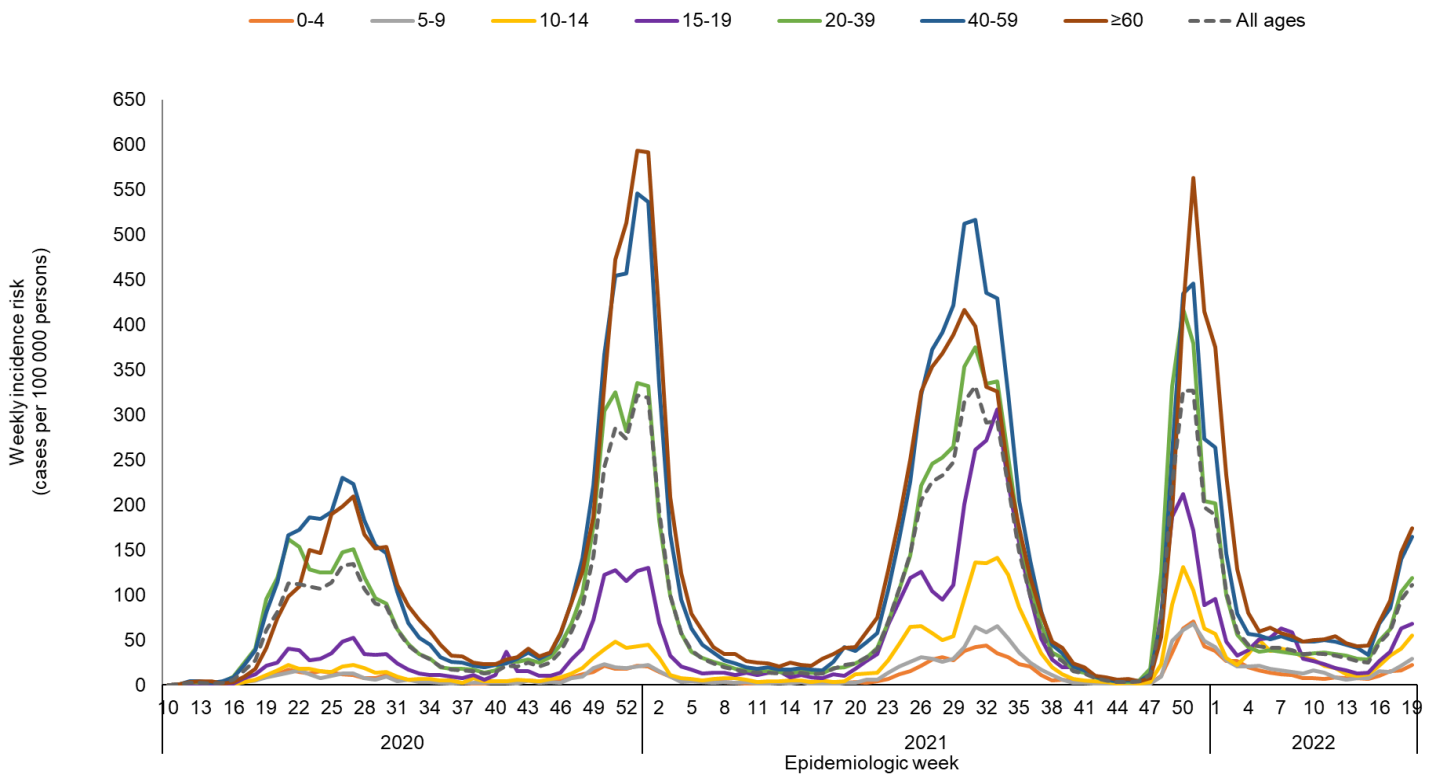


Figure 9: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Western Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 675 889, 1 787 missing age)

Gauteng Province

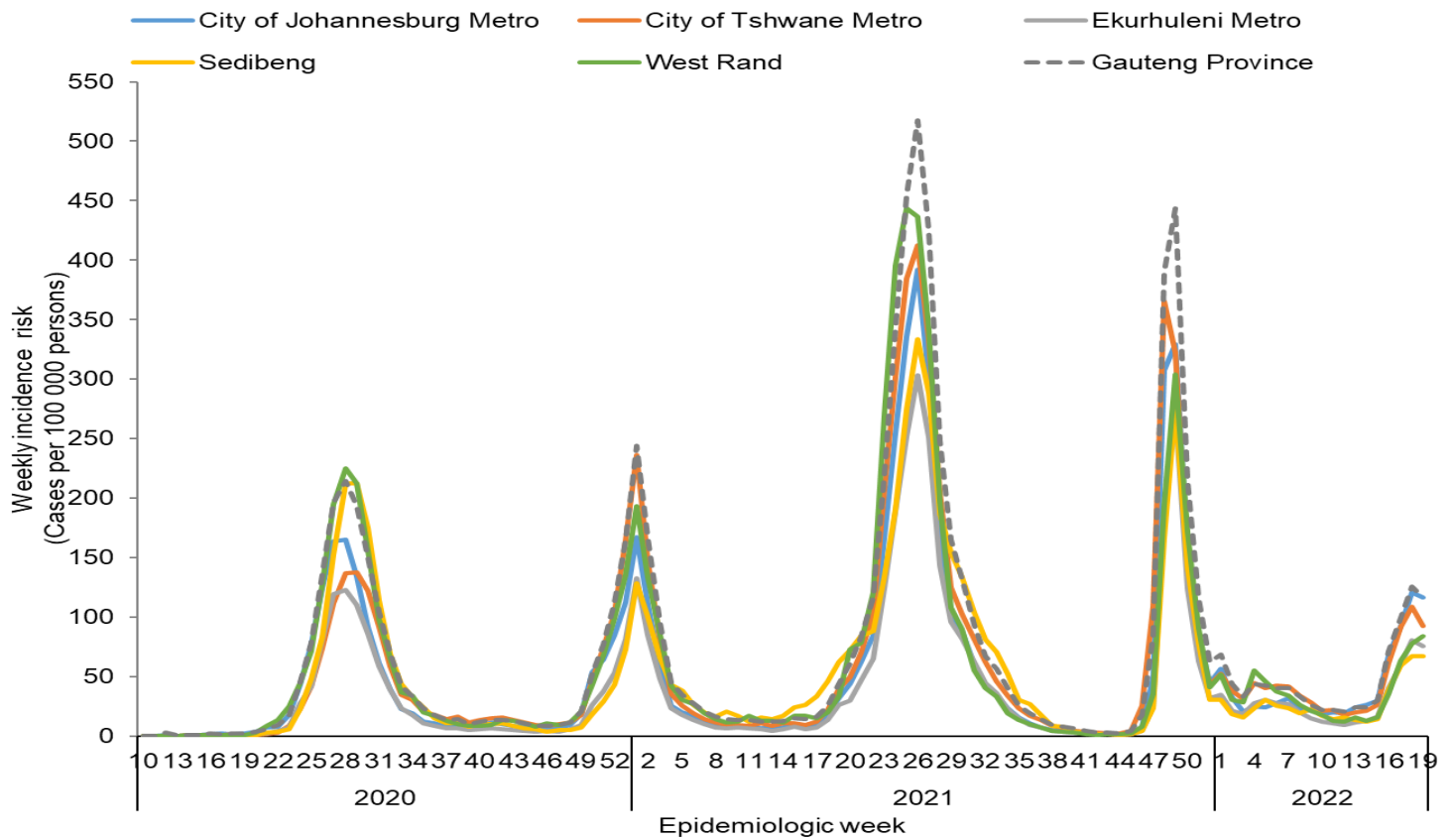


Figure 10: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Gauteng Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 920 069, 365 012 missing district)

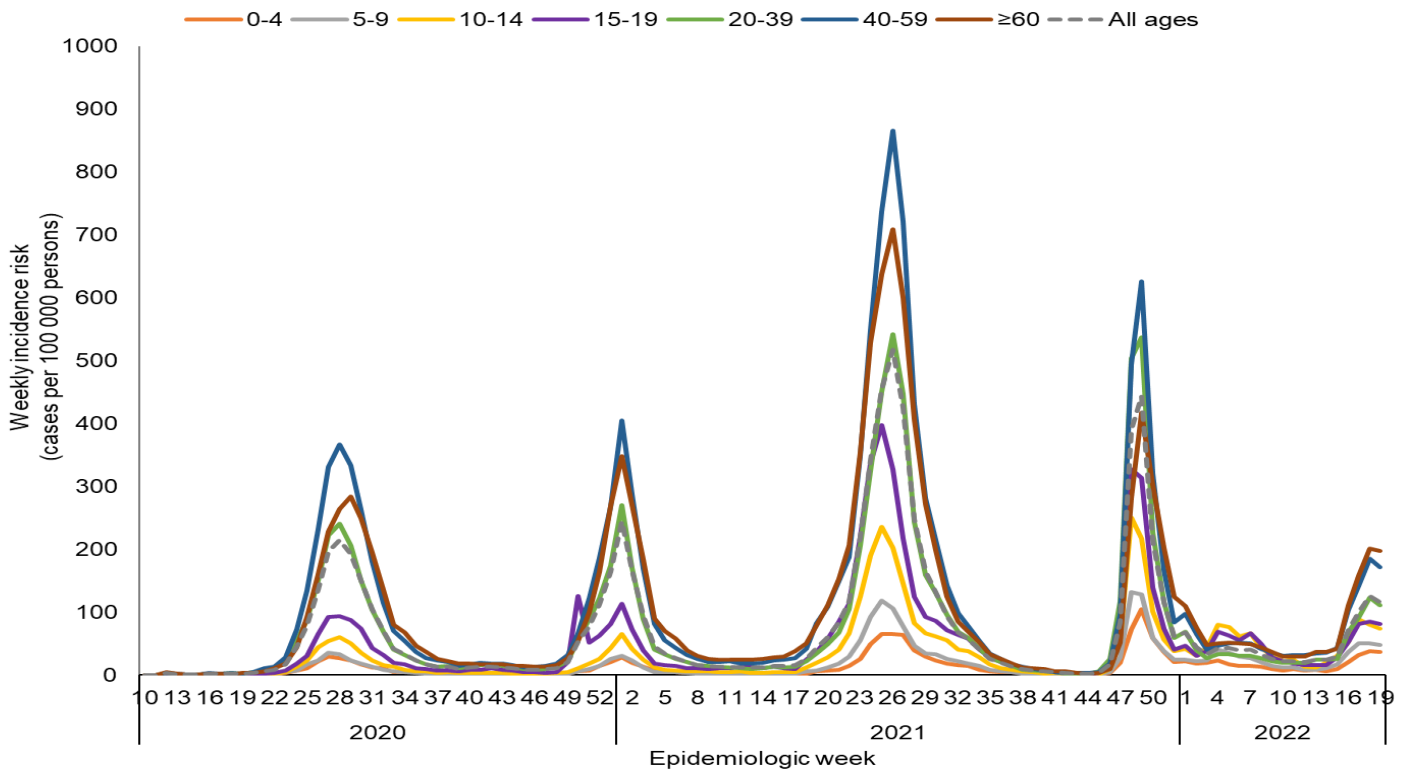


Figure 11: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Gauteng Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 1 272 304, 12 777 missing age)

KwaZulu-Natal Province

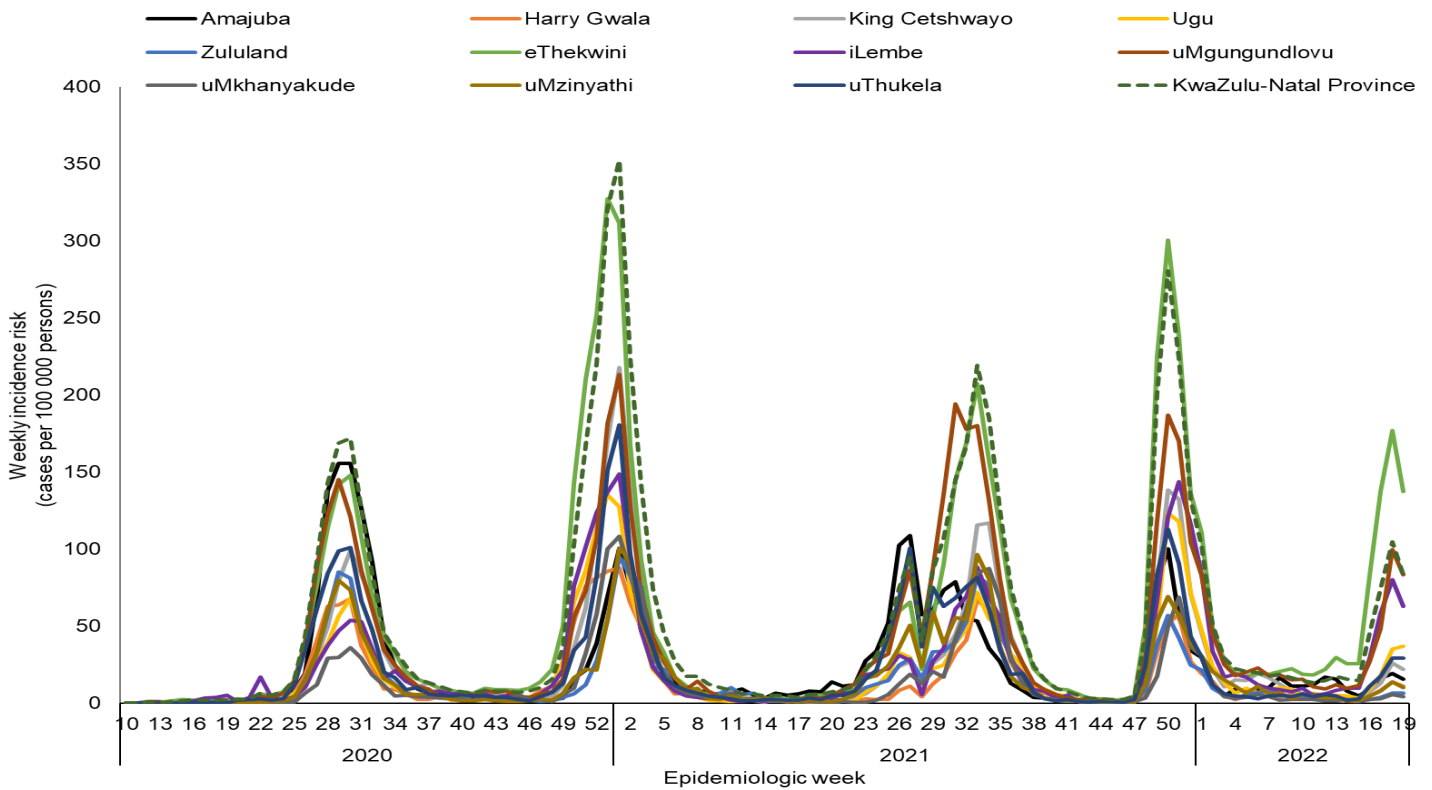


Figure 12: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week KwaZulu-Natal Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 438 824, 261 905 missing district)

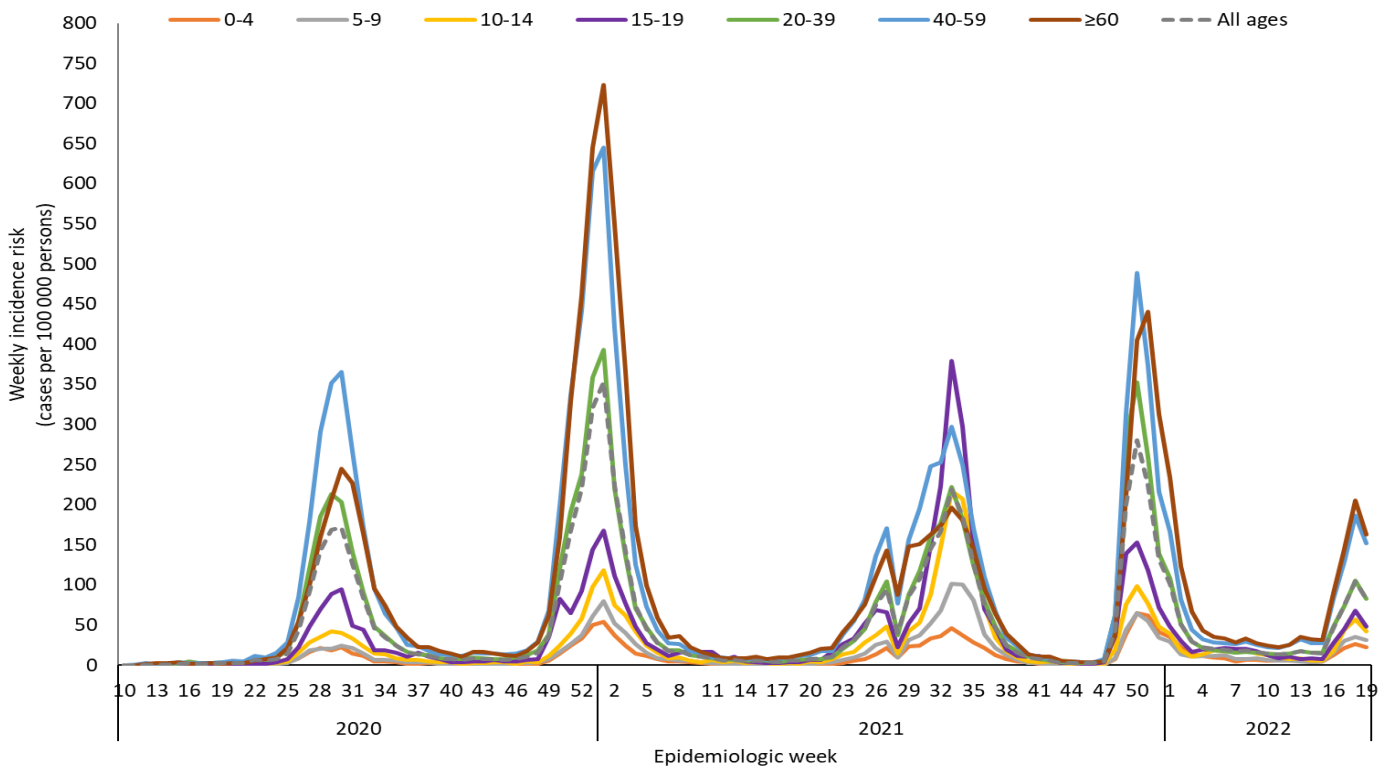


Figure 13: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week KwaZulu-Natal Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 691 897, 8 832 missing age)

Free State Province

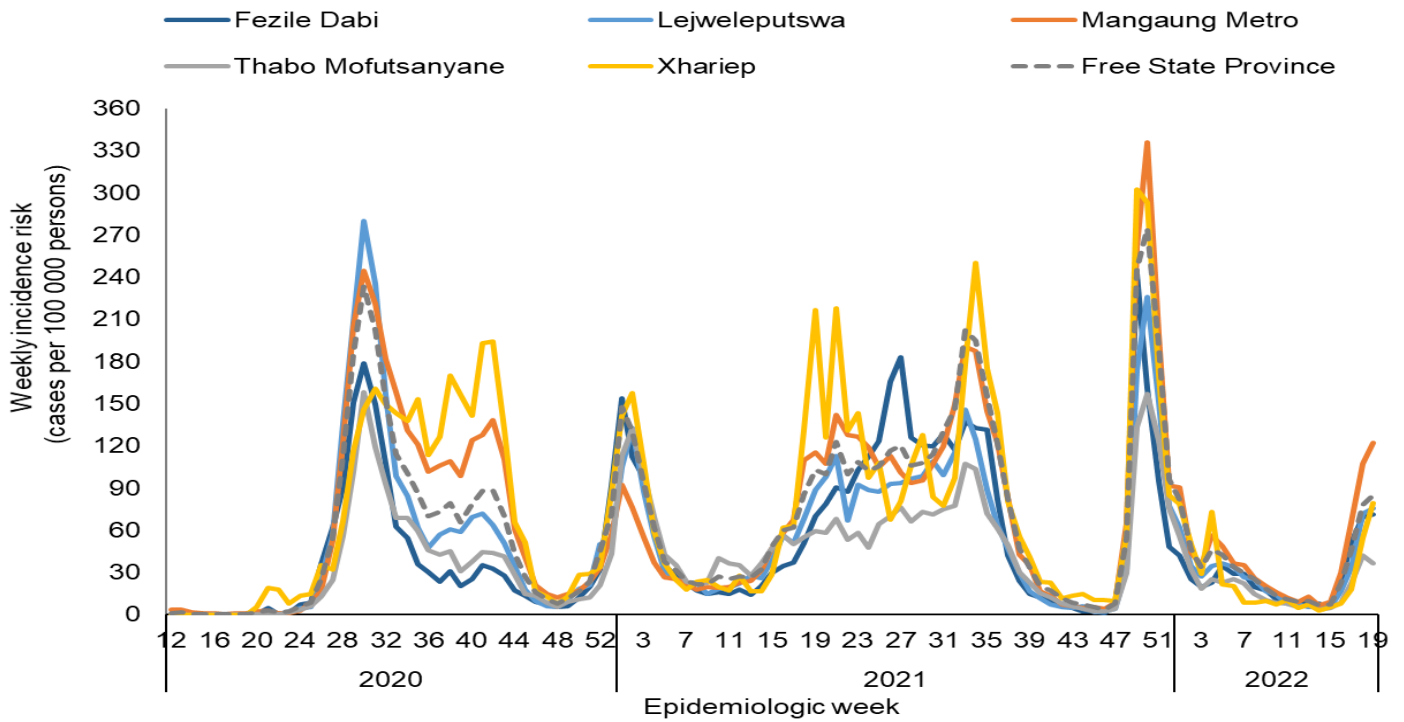


Figure 14: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Free State Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 179 430, 30 297 missing district)

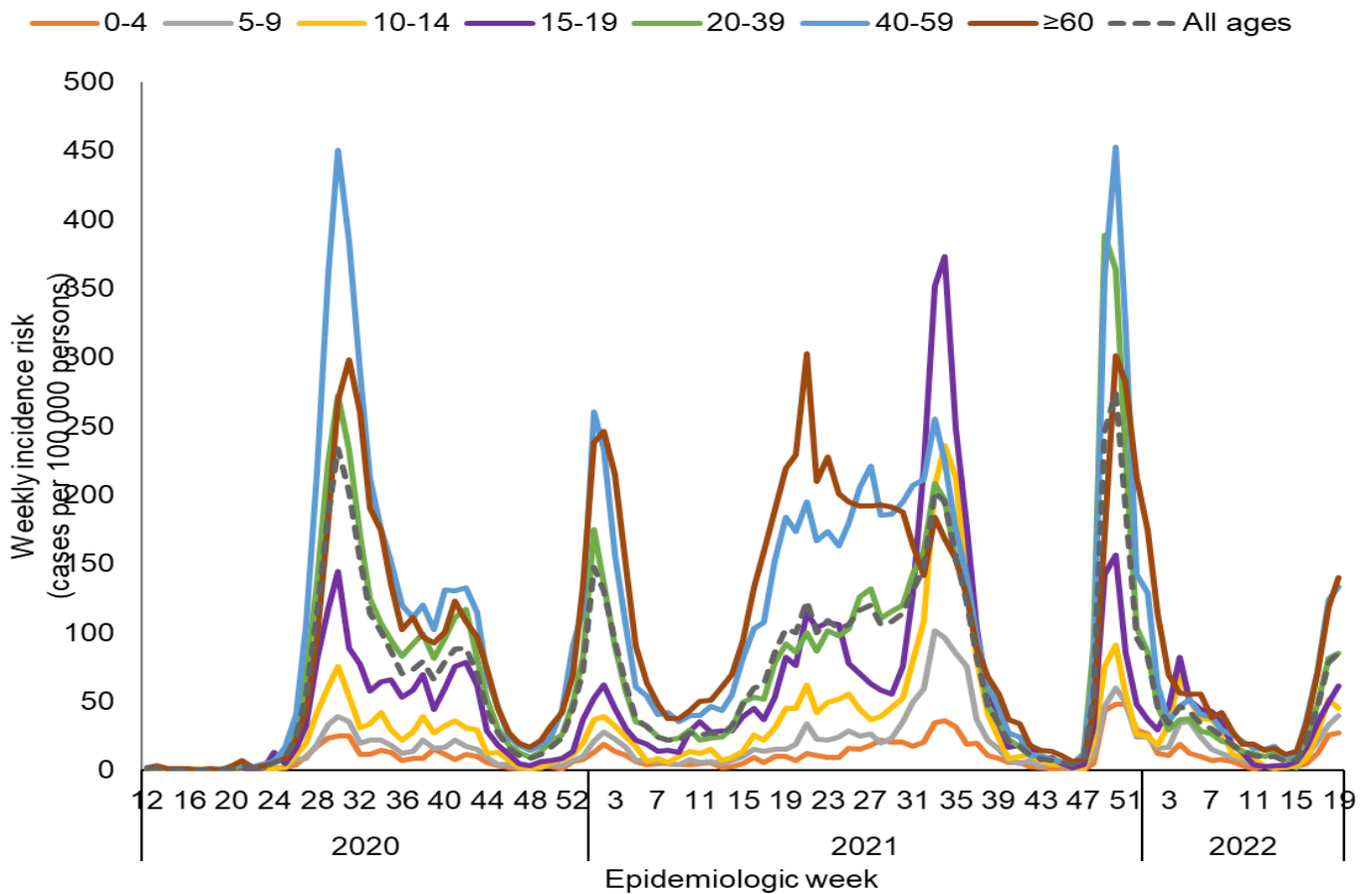


Figure 15: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Free State Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 208 891, 836 missing age)

Limpopo Province

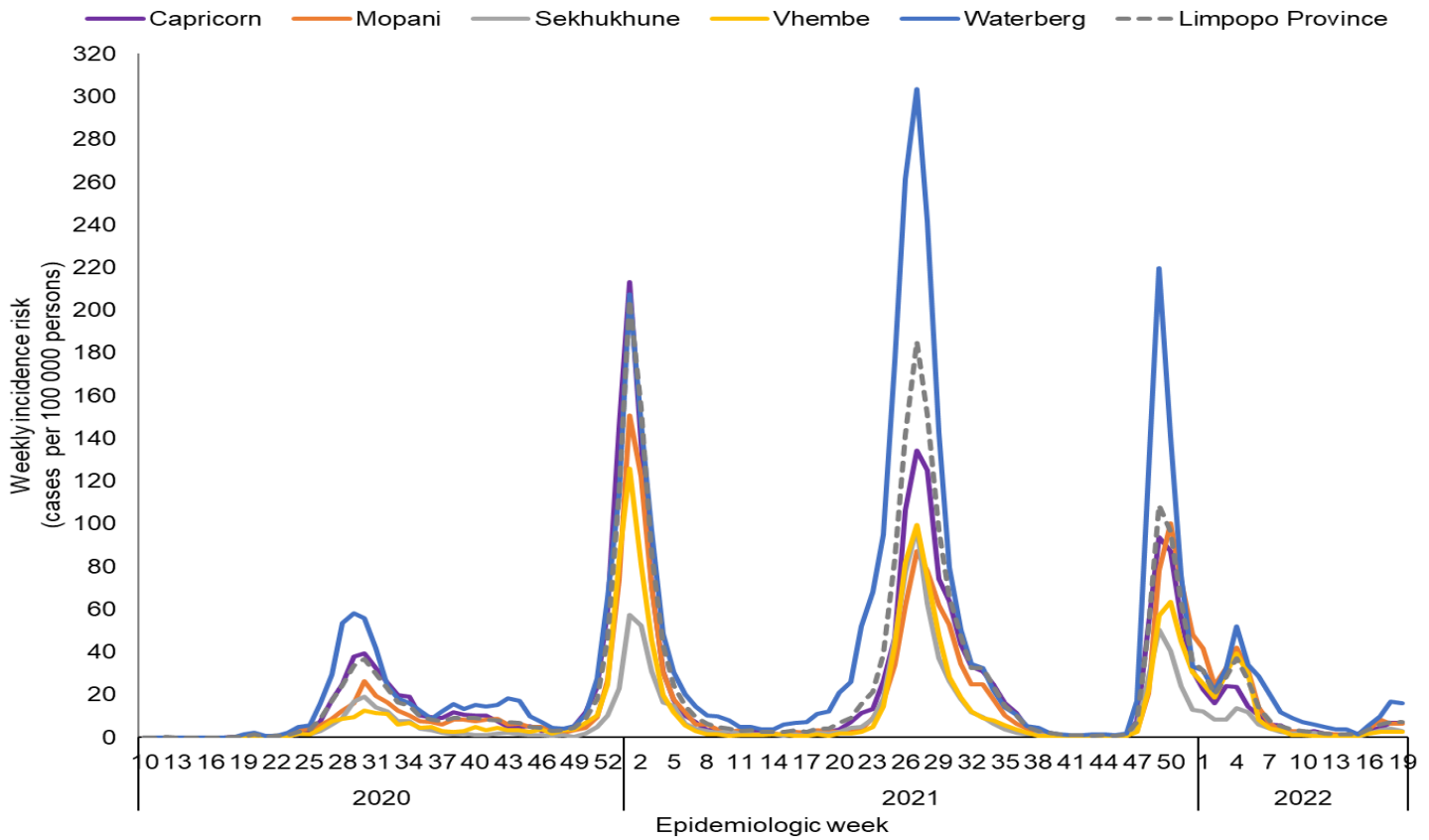


Figure 16: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Limpopo Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 117 355, 40 206 missing district)

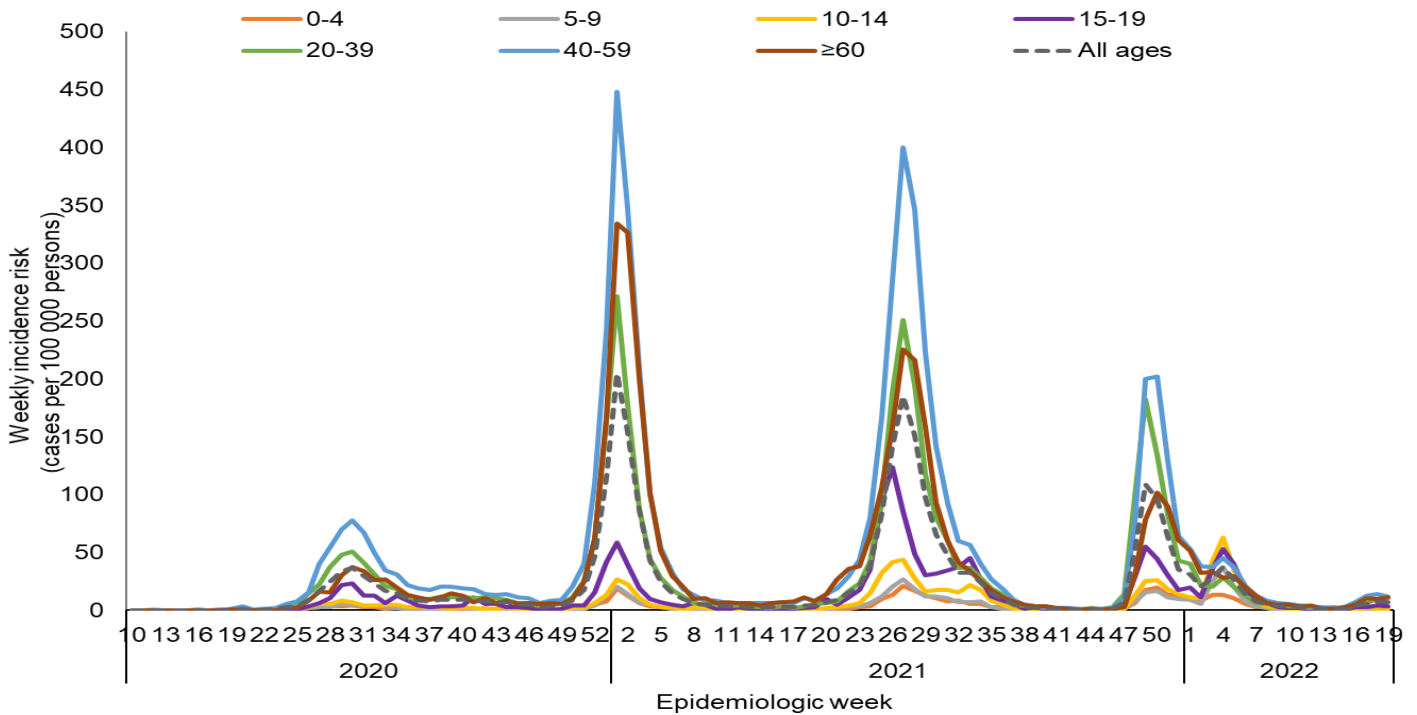


Figure 17: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Limpopo Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 156 847, 714 missing age)

Mpumalanga Province

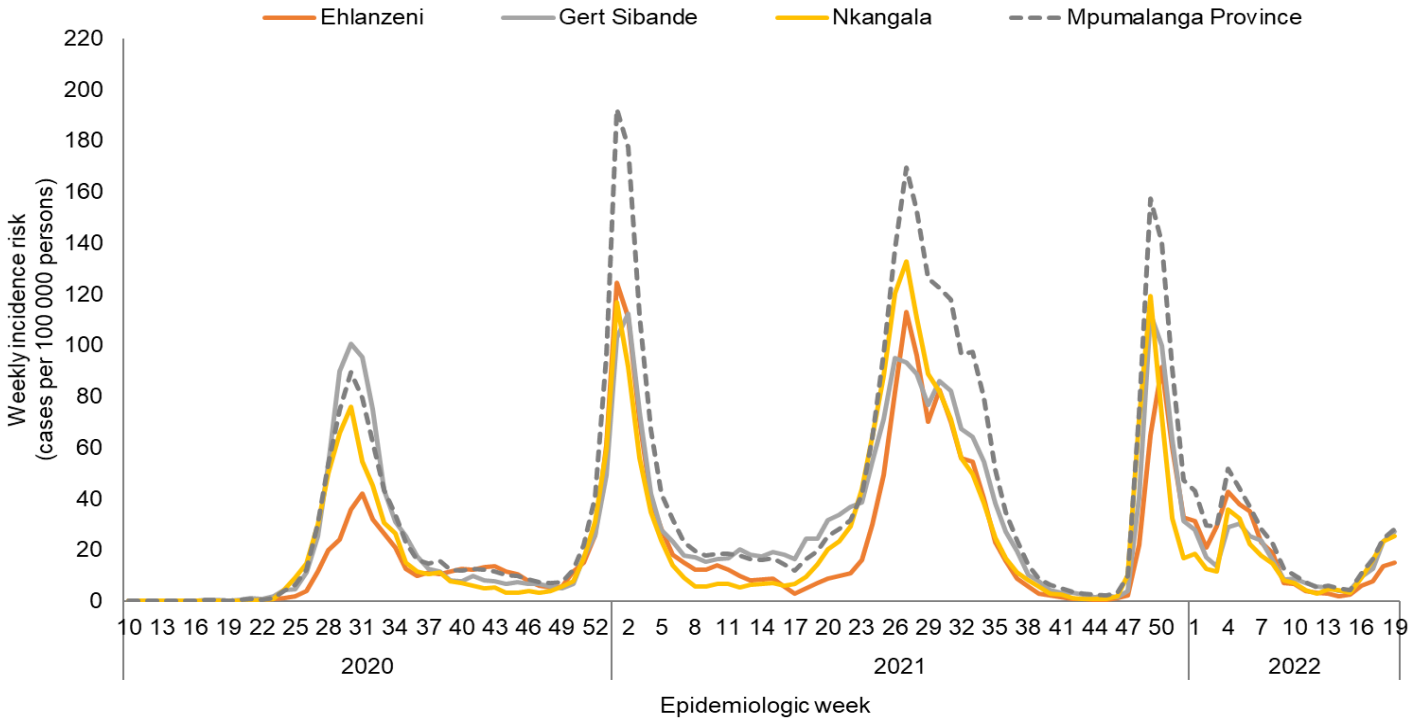


Figure 18: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Mpumalanga Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 129 570, 68 063 missing district)

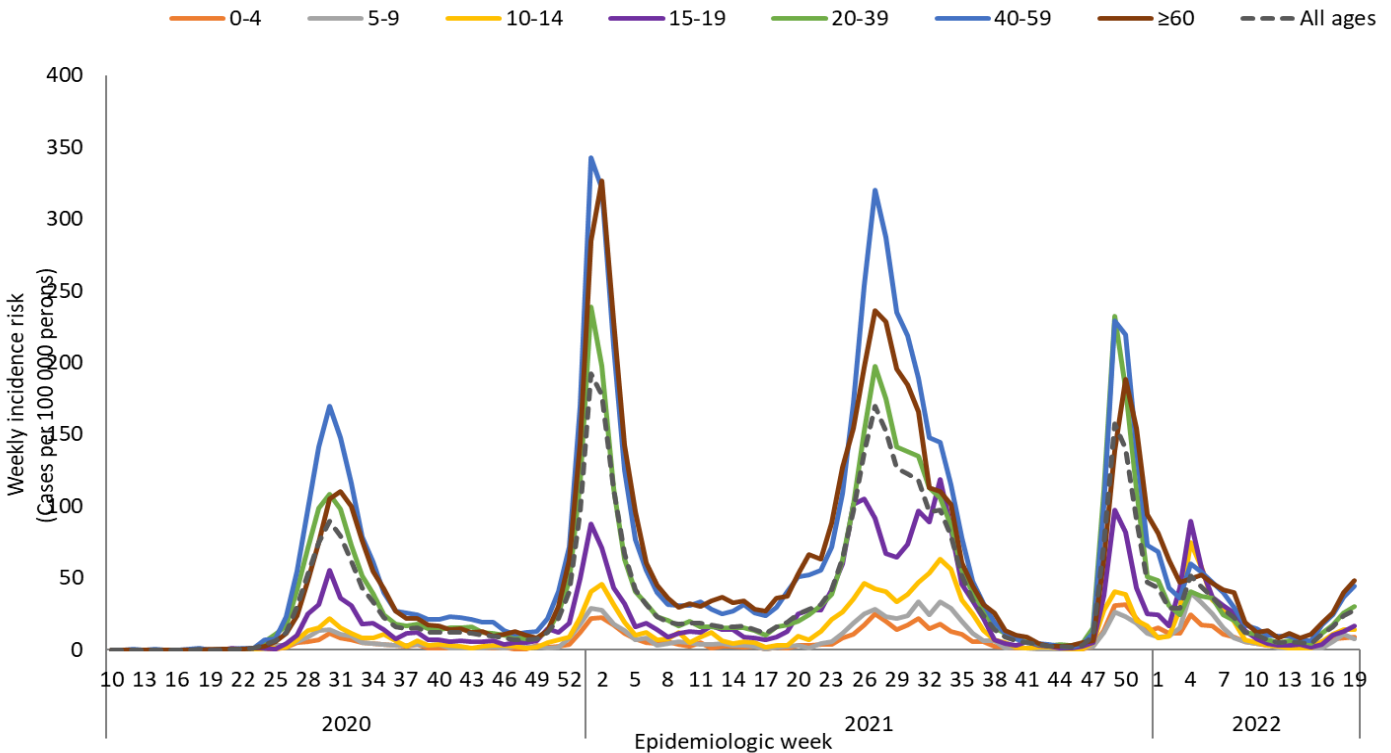


Figure 19: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group and epidemiologic week Mpumalanga Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 193 508, 4 125 missing age)

North West Province

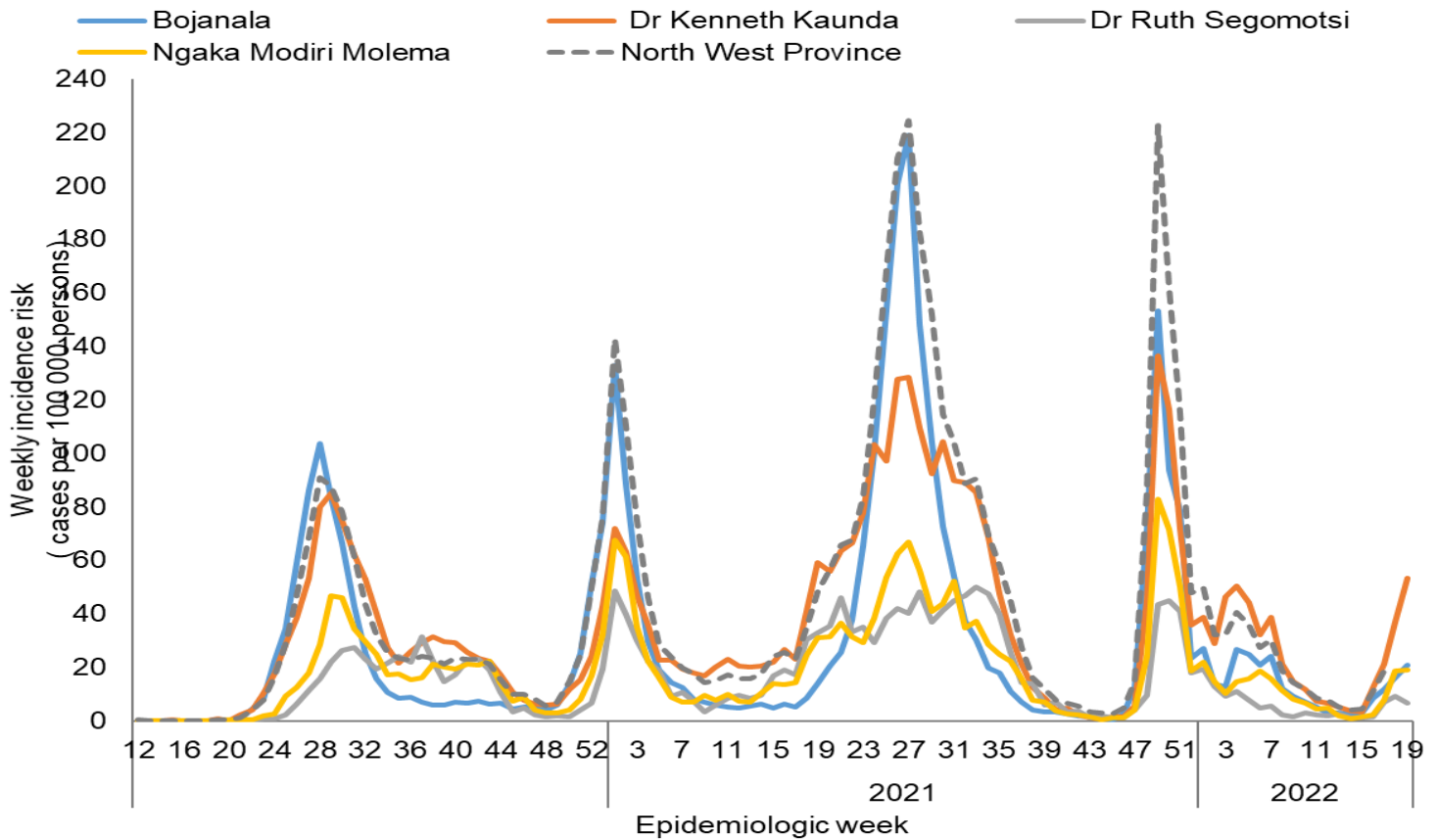


Figure 20: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week North West Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 122 925, 74 454 missing district)

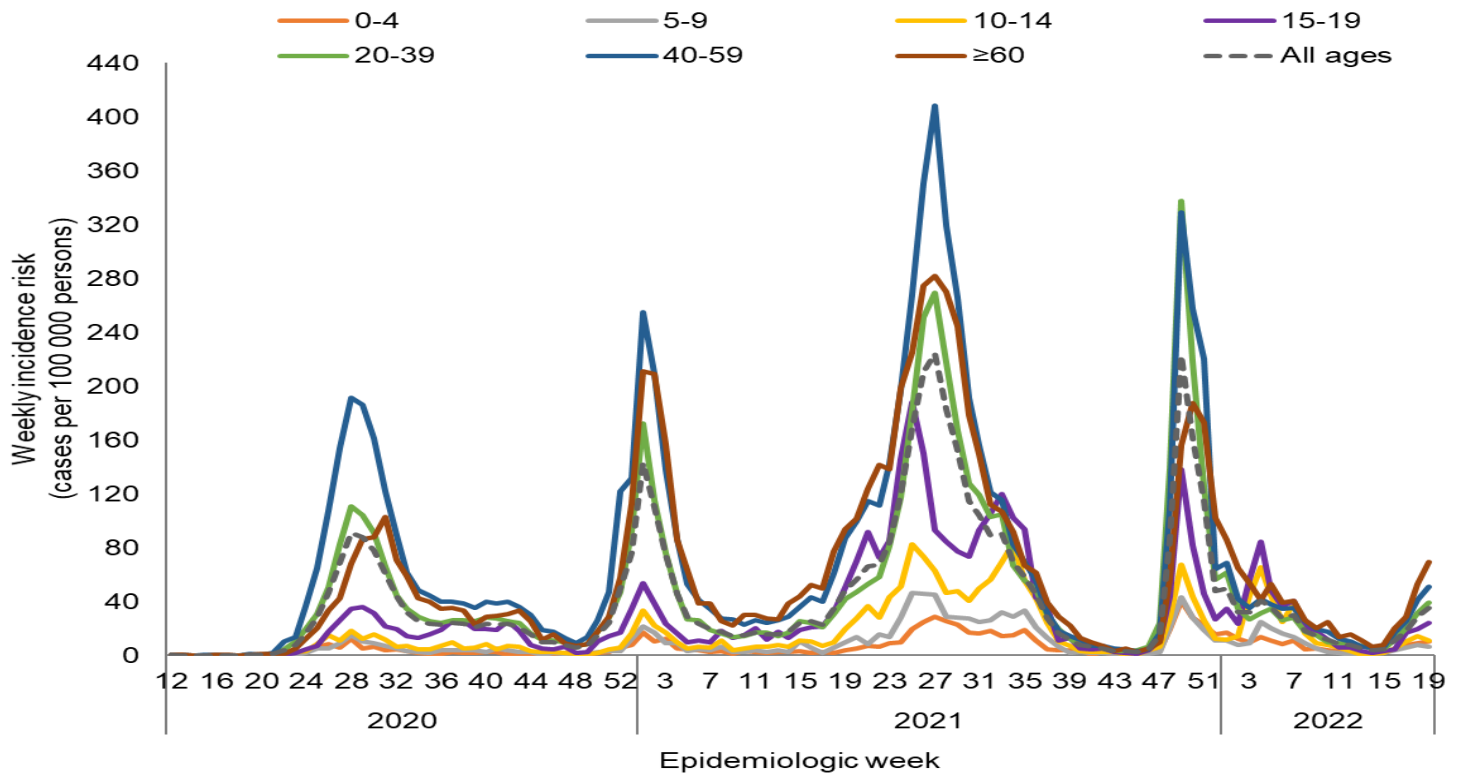


Figure 21: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week North West Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 194 856, 2 523 missing age)

Northern Cape Province

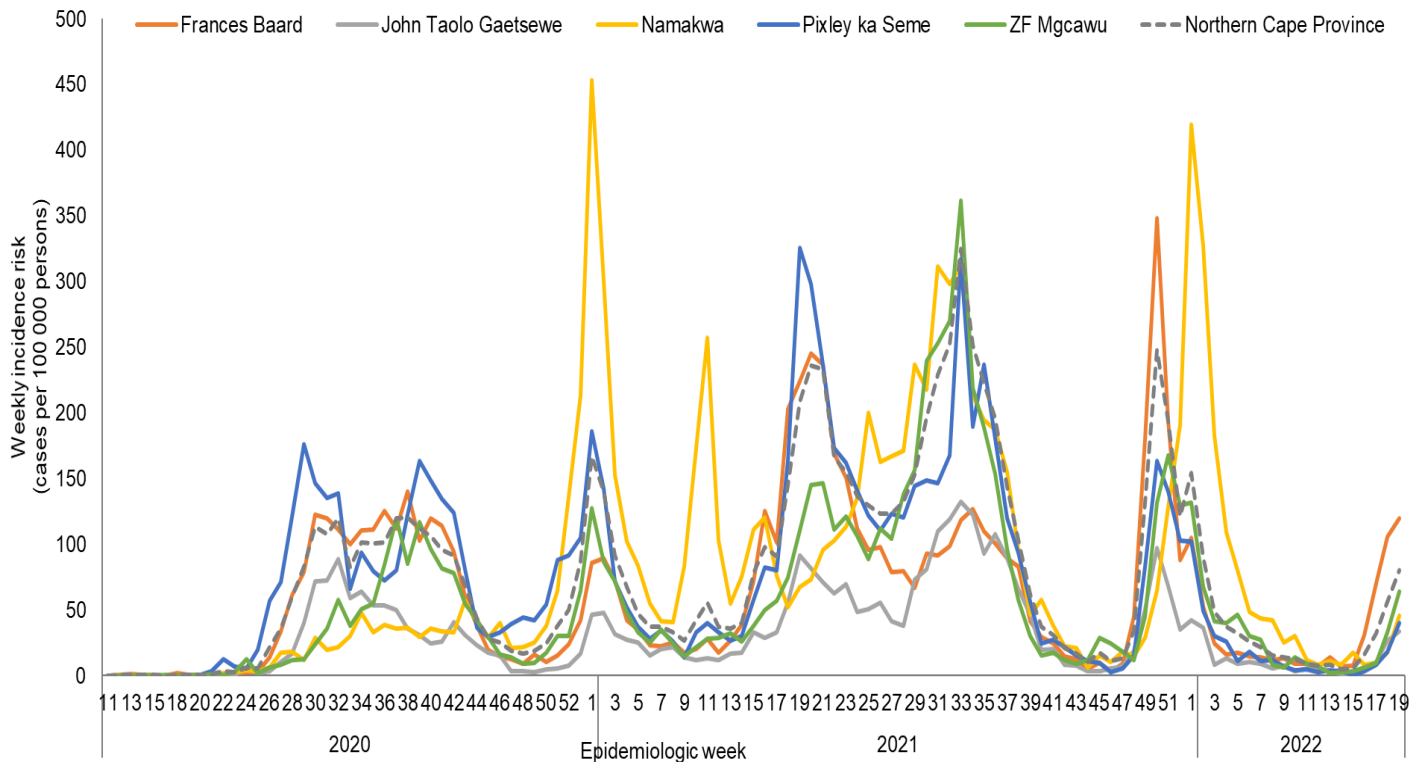


Figure 22: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Northern Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 85 648, 25 848 missing district)

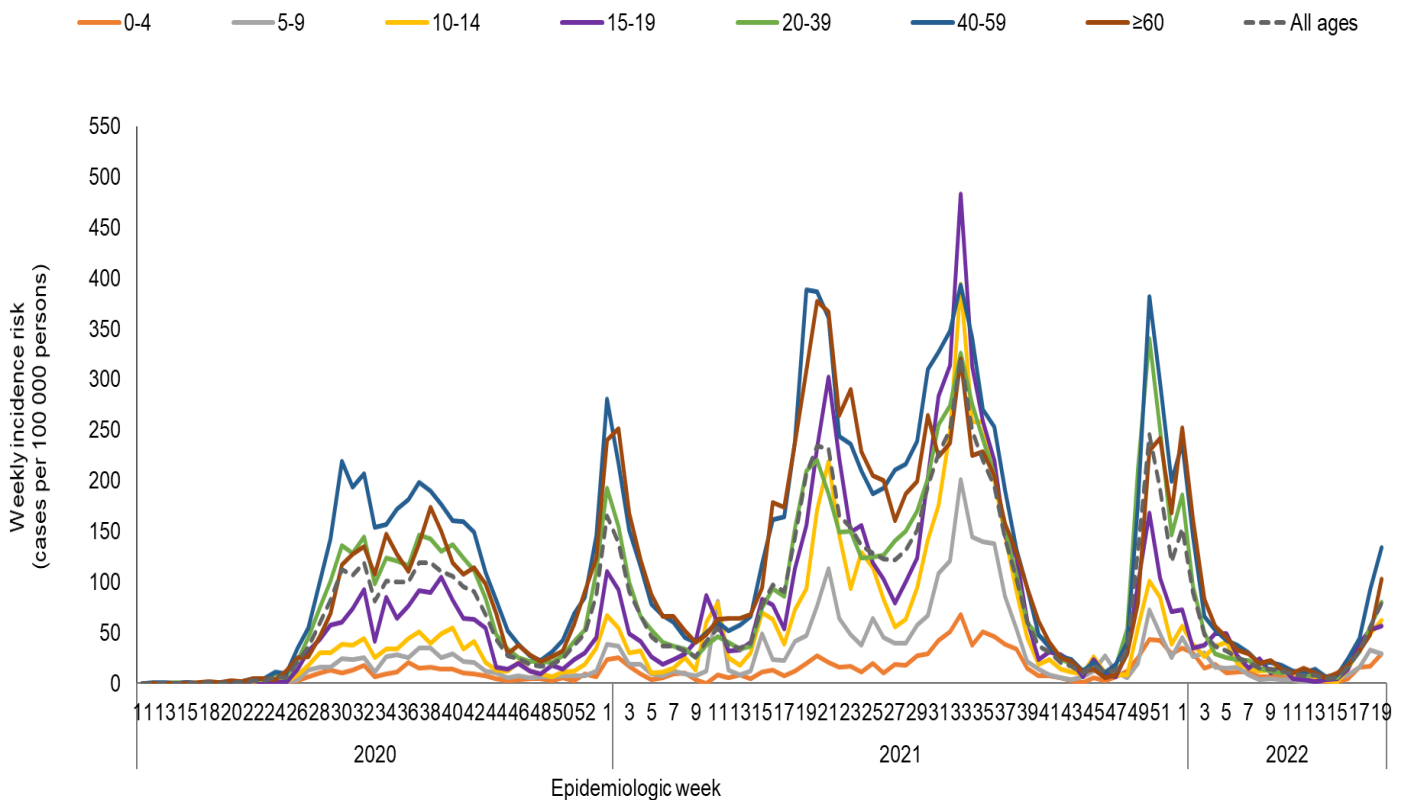


Figure 23: Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Northern Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 14 May 2022 (n = 110 772, 724 missing age)

Methods

Testing for SARS-CoV-2 began on 28 January 2020 at the NICD and after the first case was confirmed in early March 2020, testing was expanded to a larger network of private and NHLS laboratories. Respiratory specimens were submitted from persons under investigation (PUI). Initially, tested individuals were those who had travelled to countries with COVID-19 transmission but the PUI definition was changed over time. Community symptom screening and referral for PCR testing was implemented in April 2020 but the strategy was changed to a more targeted approach in May 2020. Community screening was largely discontinued and testing efforts then focussed on areas identified as hot spots and on investigating clusters. Contacts of cases were traced and tested if symptomatic. In some provinces and certain circumstances (e.g. closed settings, workplaces), asymptomatic contacts were tested. In recent weeks, testing has been prioritised for healthcare workers and hospitalised patients. Laboratories used any one of several in-house and commercial PCR assays to test for the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 using rapid antigen-based tests was implemented during November 2020. We excluded specimens collected outside South Africa. Date of specimen receipt in the laboratory was used when date of specimen collection was missing. A case of COVID-19 was defined as any person, resident in South Africa, with a single positive SARS-CoV-2 PCR or antigen test. For reports published from week 2 of 2022 onwards, we used 2021 mid-year population estimates to calculate incidence risk (cumulative and weekly incidence). For historical reports published from week 41 of 2020 to week 1 of 2022, 2020 mid-year population estimates were used, and reports published from epidemiologic week 10 (during the start of COVID-19 epidemic in South Africa) to week 40 of 2020, 2019 mid-year population estimates were used. Data on number of tests conducted in the past week as reported in the simultaneously-published COVID-19 weekly testing report was used to calculate tests conducted per 100 000 persons. Data on province and district allocation was based on geocoding algorithm using in order of priority (i) completeness of patient data, (ii) submitting doctor's address, (iii) registering doctor's address and as final option, (iv) the guarantor's address data. The geocoding algorithm used the most complete data for assigning data on province and district where adequate information was provided on the lab request form at the time of sample collection. Data on district allocation may lag resulting in number of cases in recent weeks missing district allocation. Prevalence and incidence risk by districts should be interpreted with caution.

Until the week 29 of 2020 report, new cases were defined as all cases reported since the last report, irrespective of when the sample was collected. Subsequent to the week 29 of 2020 report, new cases are now defined as cases detected in the past epidemiologic week based on date of sample collection or sample receipt. It is therefore possible for numbers reported as new cases for the current reporting week not to tally with total additional cases reported since the last report. This will be the case when there was a delay in reporting of cases.

Limitations

This report is based on laboratory-based surveillance of laboratory-confirmed cases. The number of reported cases is heavily dependent on testing practices. Although trends over time and comparisons by geographic area are presented in this report, changes in testing practices over time or differences by region may partially explain the results. Differences in health-seeking behaviour by age group and sex could also contribute to the observed differences in case numbers between groups. Delays in reporting may result in incomplete data for recent weeks, leading to an apparent reduction in number of cases. Changes in testing strategy during the different times of the epidemic may also affect the number of cases reported, leading to a decrease in number of positive cases if testing is only conducted for severe cases or certain risk groups.