



## **COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiology Brief: Week ending 21 May 2022 (Week 20 of 2022)**

### **Summary**

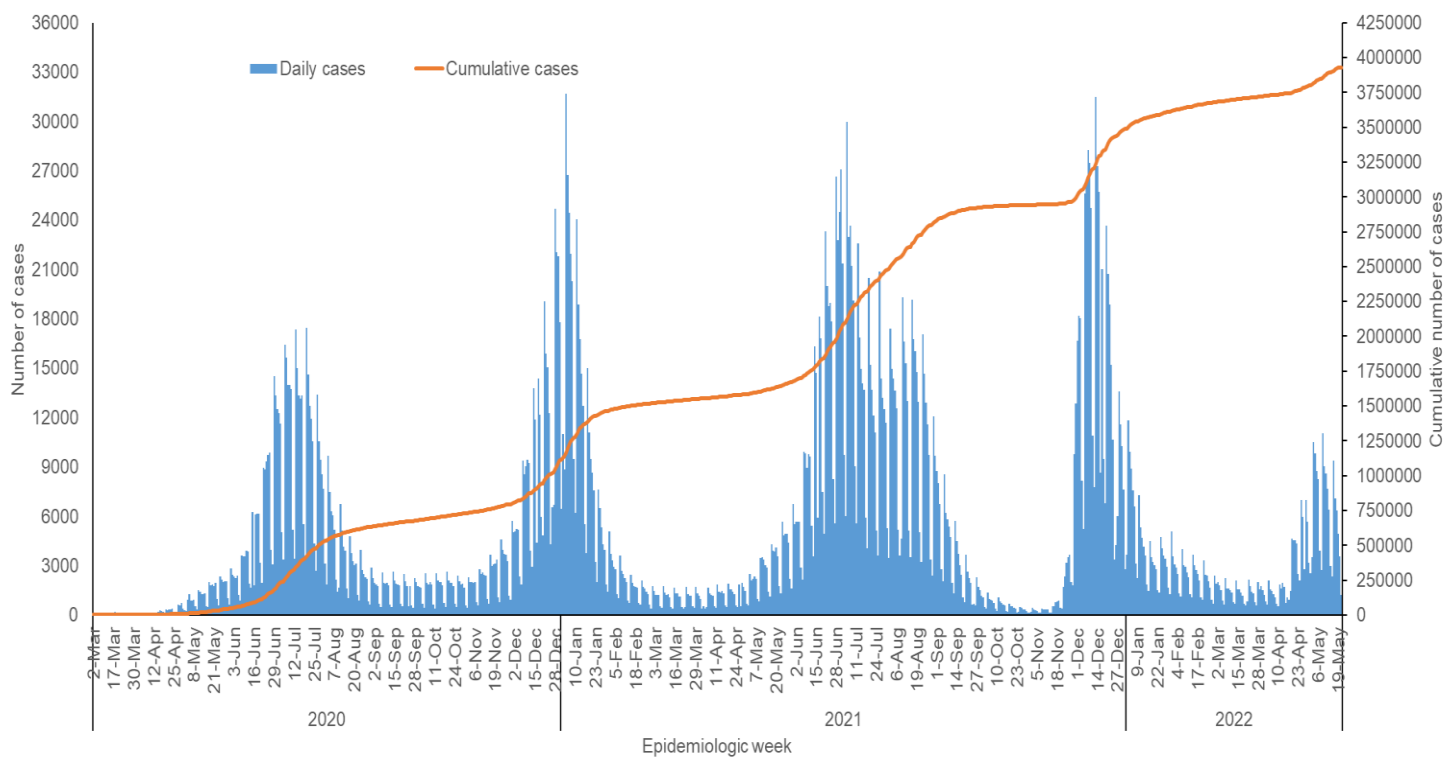
#### Overview of report

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 21 May 2022 (week 20 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 21 May 2022, a total of 3 929 872 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases had been detected in South Africa. Of these, 38 079 were cases reported since the last report (week 19 of 2022). There was a 27.9% decrease in the number of new cases detected in week 20 of 2022 (34 925) compared to the number of new cases detected in week 19 of 2022 (48 433).
- In the past week, the Gauteng Province reported the highest number of cases detected (12 730/34 925, 36.4%), followed by the Western Cape Province (7 539/34 925, 21.6%), and Kwa-Zulu Natal Province (5 511/45 665, 15.8%), with other provinces reporting <9% each.
- In the past week, eight of nine provinces reported a decrease in weekly incidence risk, compared to the previous week. The decrease ranged from 2.8 cases per 100 000 persons (36.6% decrease) in Limpopo Province to 42.1 cases per 100 000 persons (27.9% decrease) in Gauteng Province. Northern Cape Province reported an increase in weekly incidence risk, 11.8 cases per 100 000 persons (13.2% increase).
- In the past week, Western Cape Province reported the highest weekly incidence risk (106.0 cases per 100 000 persons), followed by Northern Cape Province (101.1 cases per 100 000 persons) and Gauteng Province (80.5 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 20 of 2022 was reported in the ≥80-year age group (154.4 cases per 100 000 persons), and the lowest weekly incidence risk was in the 0-4-year age group (16.7 cases per 100 000 persons).

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

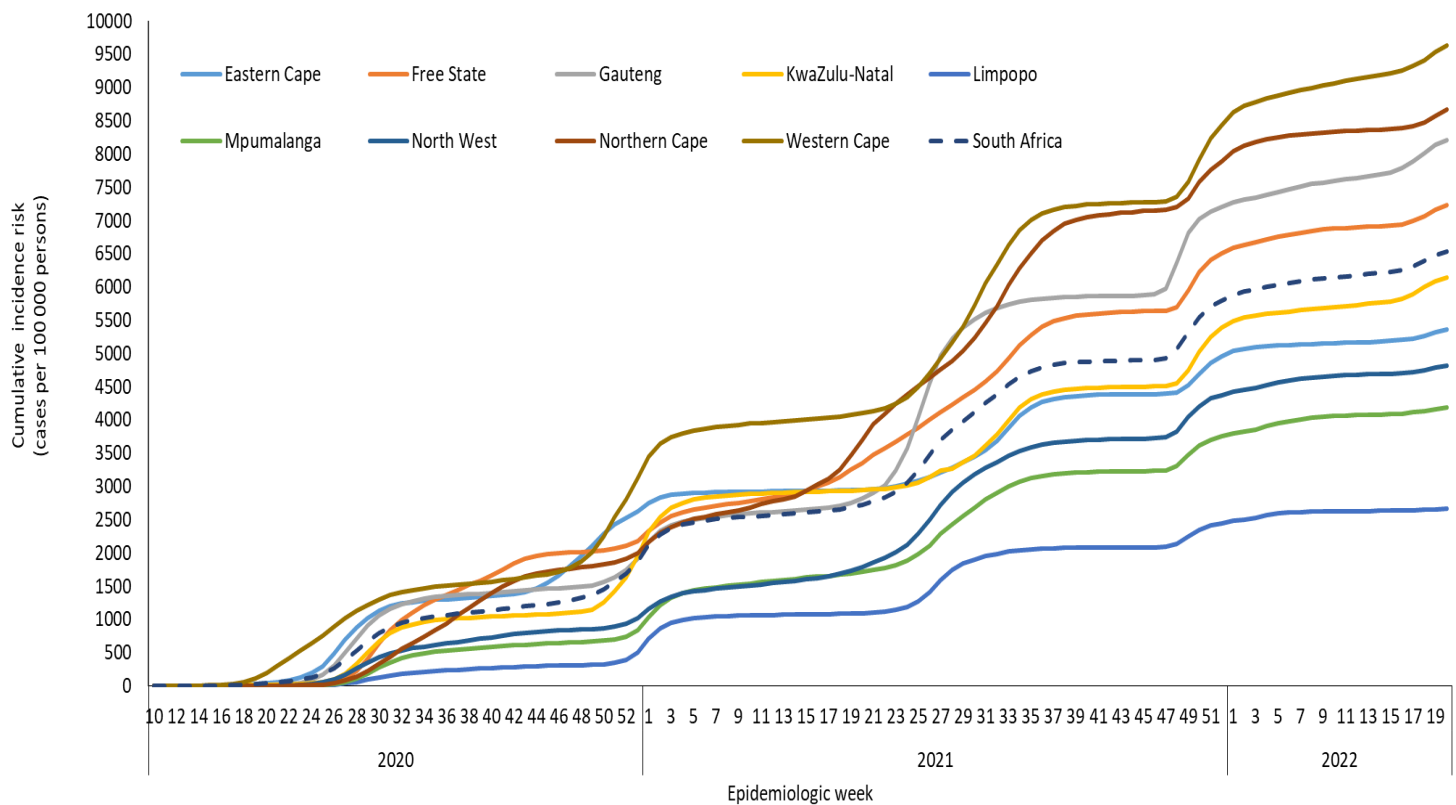


**Figure 1.** Number and cumulative number of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by date of specimen collection, South Africa, 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n= 3 929 872)

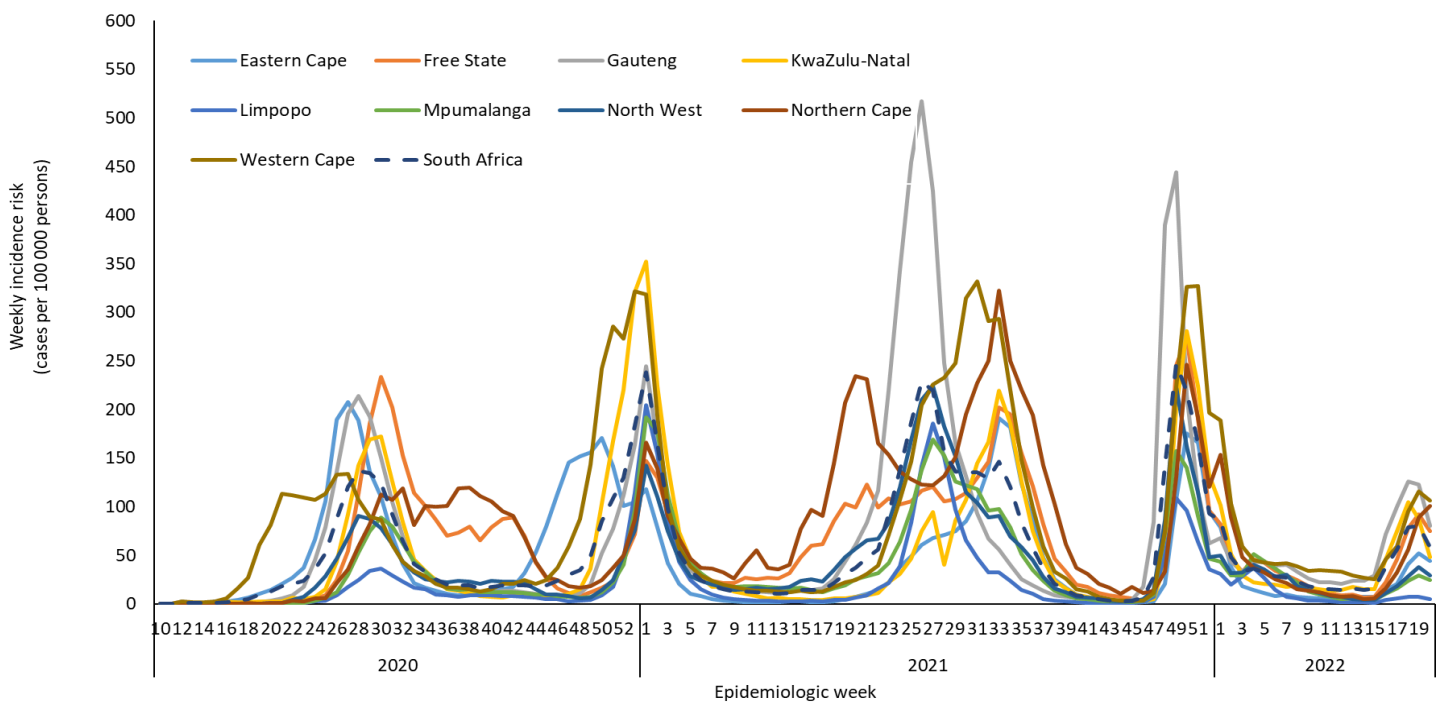
**Table 1.** Number and cumulative/weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and testing per 100 000 persons by province, South Africa, 3 March 2020 – 21 May (n = 3 929 872)

Province	Cumulative cases (n) (percentage, n/total cases in South Africa)	New cases <sup>1</sup> detected in week 20 of 2022 (15-21 May), n (percentage <sup>2</sup> , n/total)	Population in mid-2021 <sup>3</sup> , n	Cumulative incidence risk (cases per 100 000 persons)	Incidence risk of new cases detected in week 20 of 2021 (cases/100 000 persons)	Tests <sup>4</sup> per 100 000 persons, 15-21 May 2022
Eastern Cape	357 888 (9.1)	2 971 (8.5)	6 676 590	5 360.3	44.5	171.3
Free State	212 141 (5.4)	2 204 (6.3)	2 932 441	7 234.3	75.2	328.9
Gauteng	1 99 015 (33.1)	12 730 (36.4)	15 810 388	8 216.2	80.5	427.7
KwaZulu-Natal	706 787 (18.0)	5 511 (15.8)	11 513 575	6 138.7	47.9	270.0
Limpopo	157 928 (4.0)	282 (0.8)	5 926 724	2 664.7	4.8	40.2
Mpumalanga	198 869 (5.1)	1 177 (3.4)	4 743 584	4 192.4	24.8	152.3
North West	198 704 (5.1)	1 194 (3.4)	4 122 854	4 819.6	29.0	165.2
Northern Cape	112 947 (2.9)	1 317 (3.8)	1 303 047	8 667.9	101.1	309.6
Western Cape	685 593 (17.4)	7 539 (21.6)	7 113 776	9 637.5	106.0	327.5
Unknown						
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 929 872</b>	<b>34 925</b>	<b>60 142 978</b>	<b>6 534.2</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>273.4</b>

<sup>1</sup>New cases refer to cases whose samples were collected or received in the current reporting week <sup>2</sup>Percentage=n/total number of new cases (specimen collected or received in current reporting week) <sup>3</sup>2021 Mid-year population Statistics South Africa <sup>4</sup>Data on number of tests conducted sourced from COVID-19 weekly testing report of the same reporting week

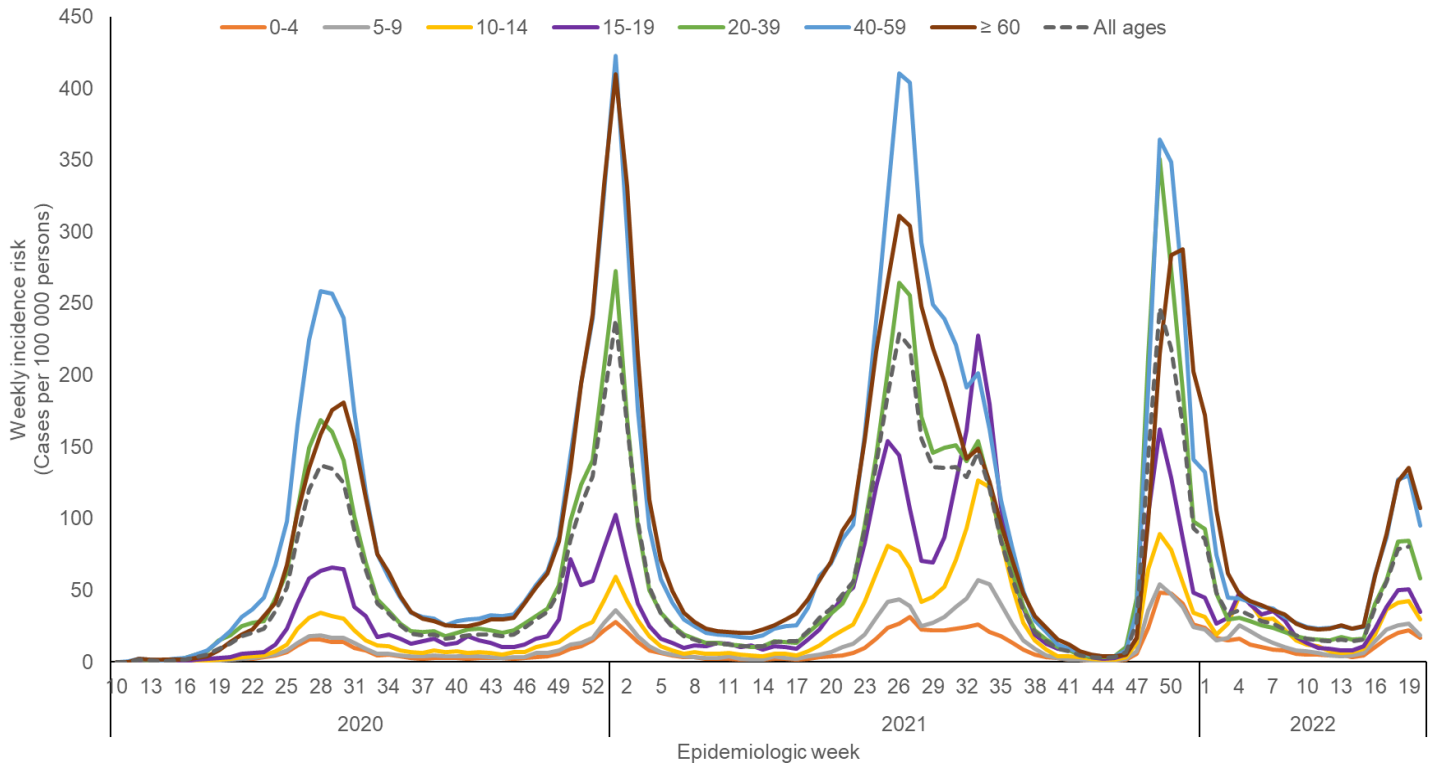


**Figure 2:** Cumulative incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by province and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 3 929 872)

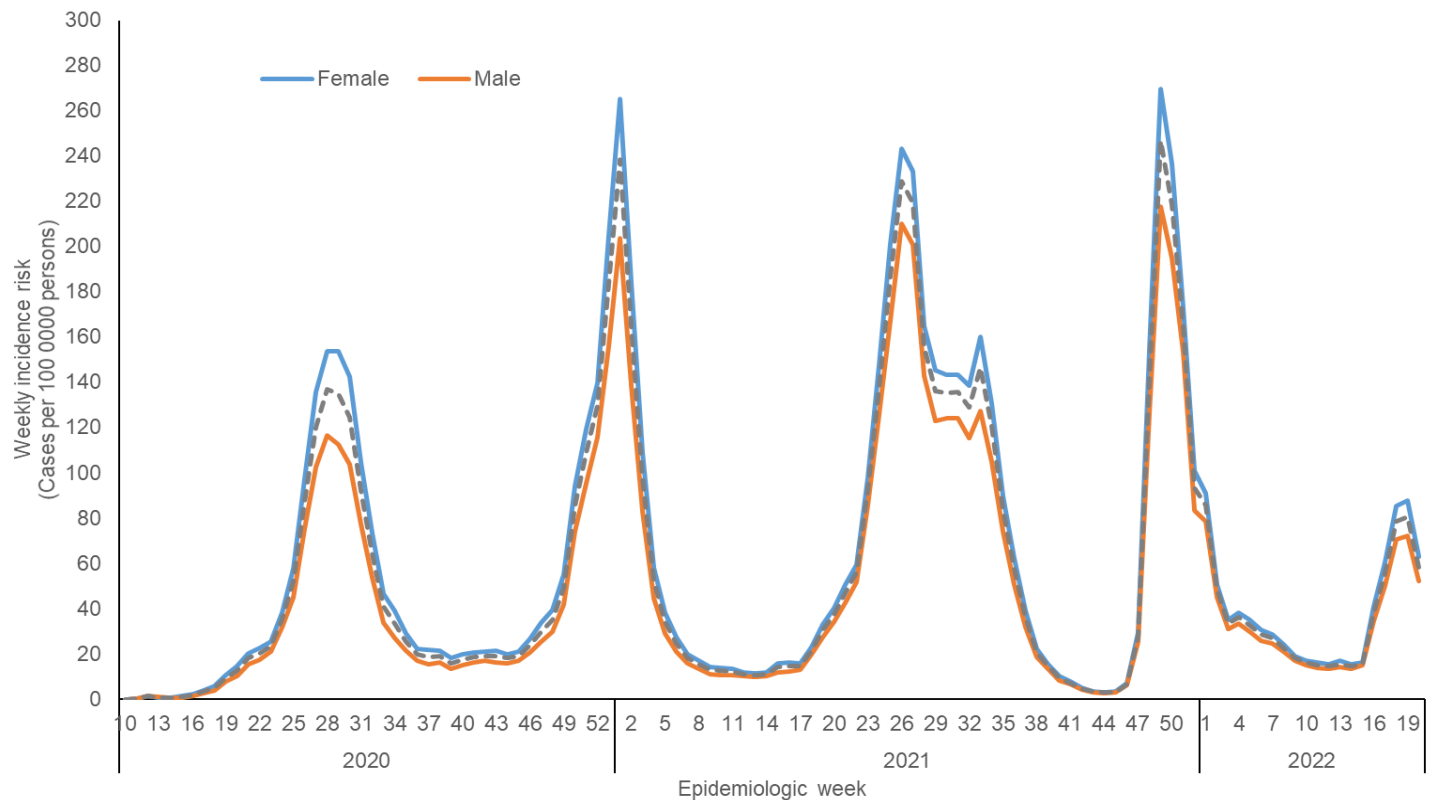


**Figure 3:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by province and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 3 929 872)

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 – 21 May 2022 (n = 3 893 666, 36 206 missing age)



**Figure 5.** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by sex and epidemiologic week South Africa 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 3 851 380, sex missing for 40 413)

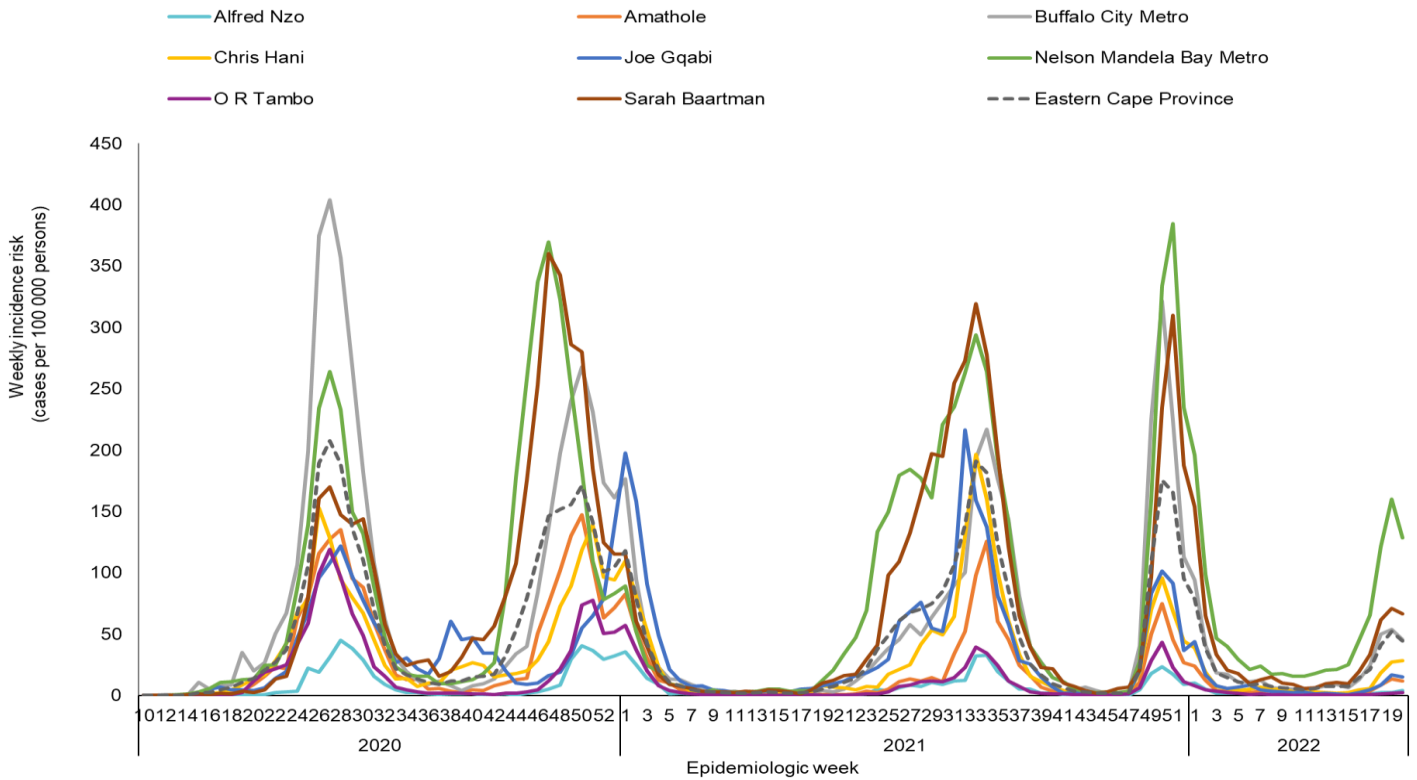
**Table 2.** Number of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and cumulative/weekly incidence risk by age group South Africa 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 n = 3 893 666, 36 206 missing age)

Age group (years)	Cumulative cases (n) (percentage n/total cases in South Africa)	New cases <sup>1</sup> detected in week 20 of 2022 (15-21 May) n (percentage <sup>2</sup> n/total)	Population in mid-2021 <sup>3</sup> n	Cumulative incidence risk (cases per 100 000 persons)	Incidence risk of new cases detected in week 20 of 2022 (cases/100 000 persons)
0-4	63 062 (1.6)	953 (2.7)	5 708 956	1 104.6	16.7
5-9	85 686 (2.2)	1 040 (3.0)	5 663 296	1 513.0	18.4
10-14	153 240 (3.9)	1 695 (4.9)	5 671 023	2 702.2	29.9
15-19	217 648 (5.6)	1 707 (4.9)	4 909 941	4 432.8	34.8
20-24	257 320 (6.6)	1 817 (5.2)	4 739 305	5 429.5	38.3
25-29	377 780 (9.7)	2 961 (8.5)	5 324 134	7 095.6	55.6
30-34	436 280 (11.2)	3 609 (10.4)	5 630 643	7 748.3	64.1
35-39	442 161 (11.4)	3 631 (10.4)	4 985 251	8 869.4	72.8
40-44	374 978 (9.7)	3 221 (9.3)	3 881 731	9 660.1	83.0
45-49	356 902 (9.2)	3 051 (8.8)	3 254 138	10 967.6	93.8
50-54	320 711 (8.2)	2 818 (8.1)	2 625 390	12 215.7	107.3
55-59	265 889 (6.8)	2 344 (6.7)	2 243 823	11 849.8	104.5
60-64	186 891 (4.8)	1 811 (5.2)	1 815 810	10 292.4	99.7
65-69	128 725 (3.3)	1 342 (3.9)	1 422 604	9 048.5	94.3
70-74	94 127 (2.4)	1 040 (3.0)	1 024 345	9 189.0	101.5
75-79	61 288 (1.6)	788 (2.3)	647 265	9 468.8	121.7
≥80	70 978 (1.8)	919 (2.6)	595 323	11 922.6	154.4
Unknown	36 206 (0.0)	178 (0.0)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 929 872 (100.0)</b>	<b>34 925 (100.0)</b>	<b>60 142 978</b>	<b>6 534.2</b>	<b>58.1</b>

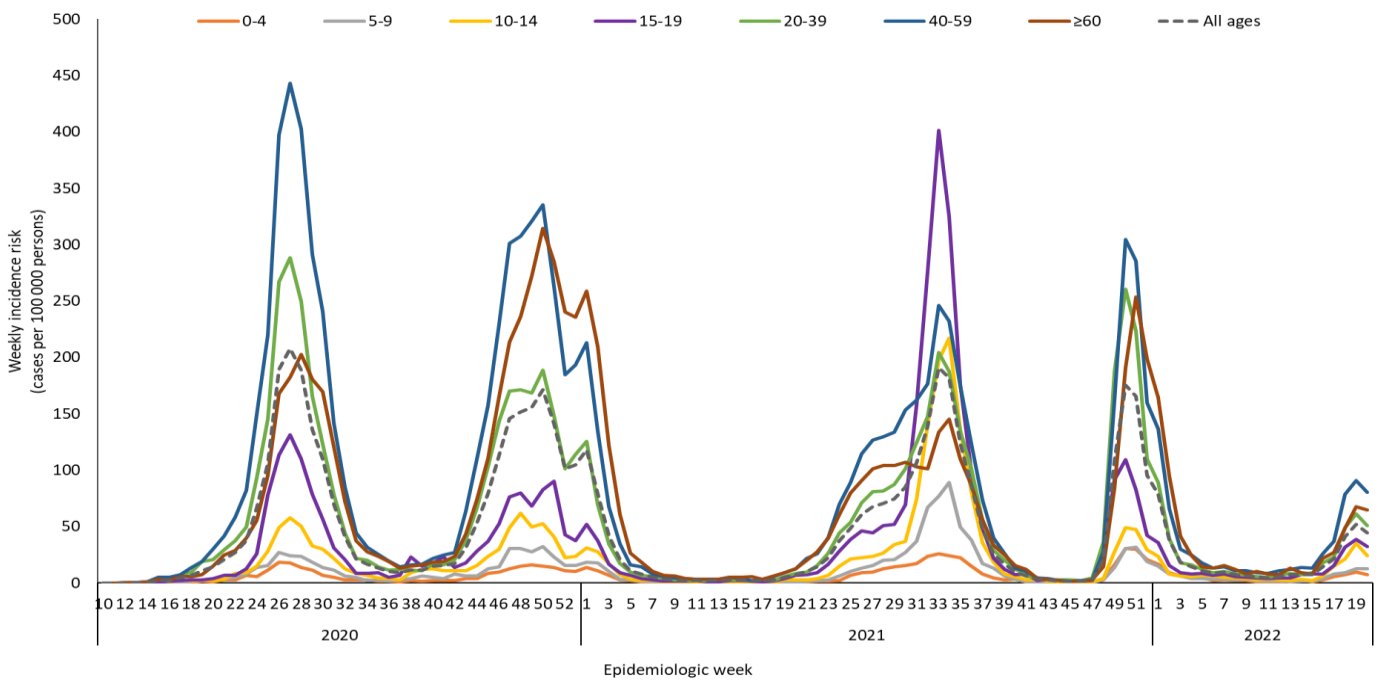
<sup>1</sup>New cases refer to cases whose samples were collected or received in the current reporting week <sup>2</sup>Percentage=n/total number of new cases (specimen collected or received in current reporting week) <sup>3</sup>2021 Mid-year population Statistics South Africa

Provincial trends of COVID-19 cases

Eastern Cape Province

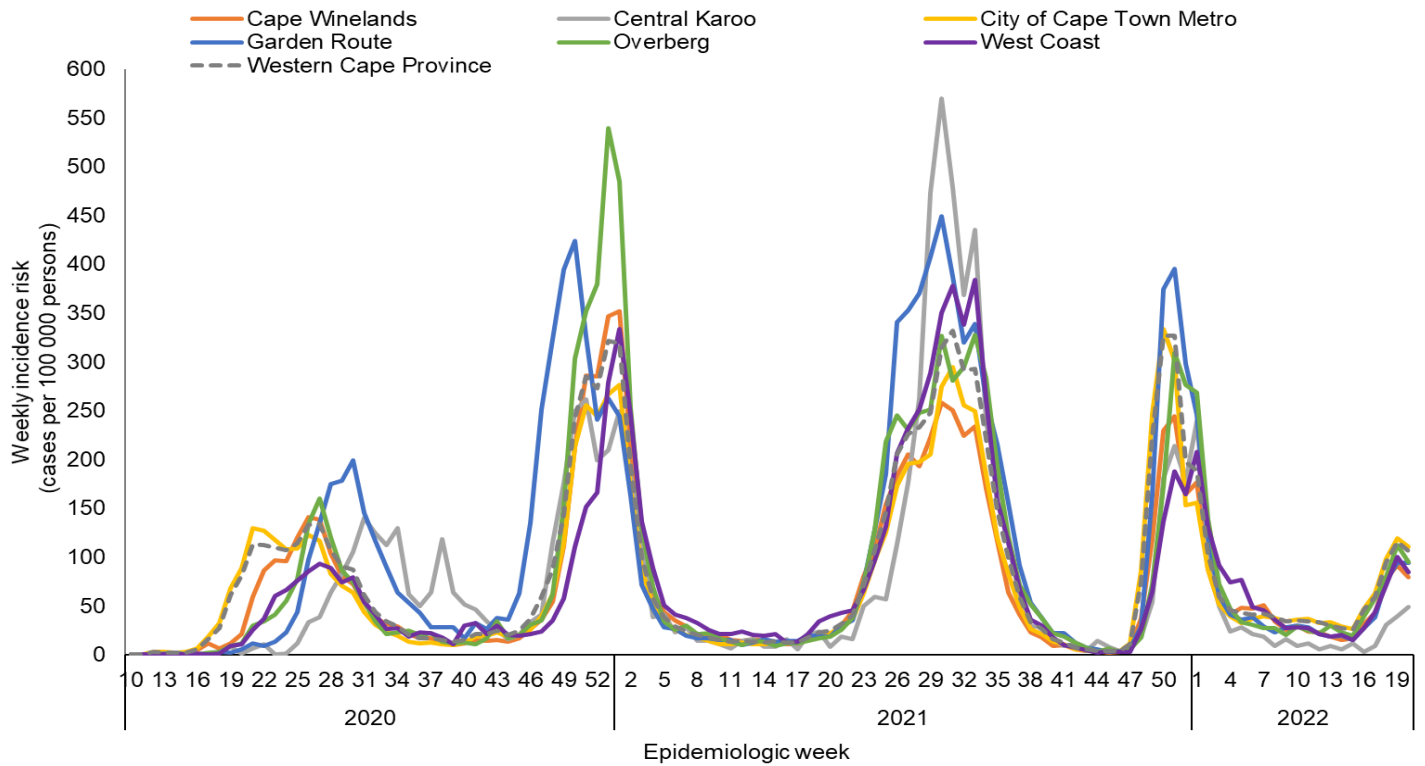


**Figure 6:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Eastern Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 301 482, 56 406 missing district)

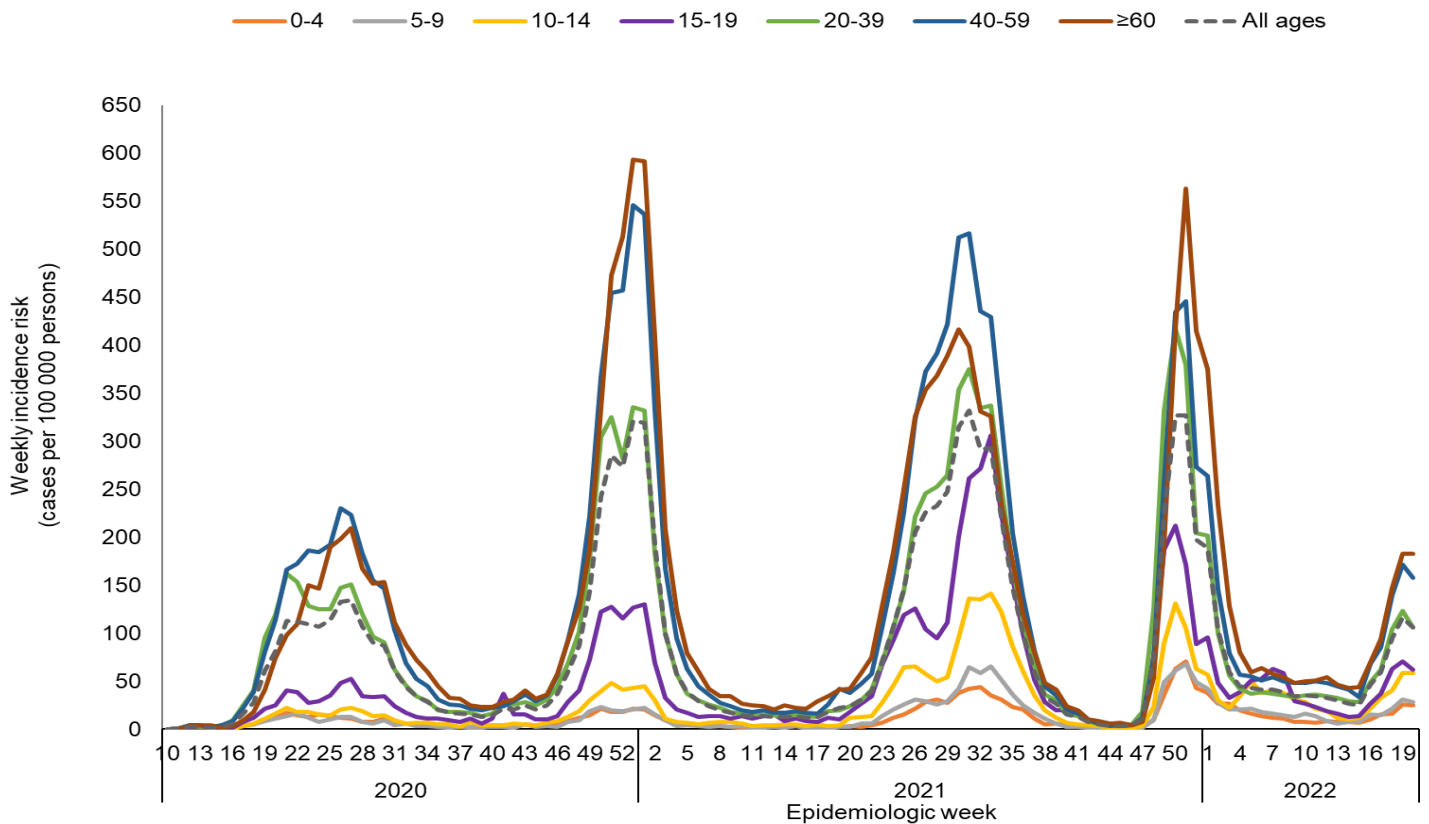


**Figure 7:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Eastern Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 354 186, 3 702 missing age)

## Western Cape Province



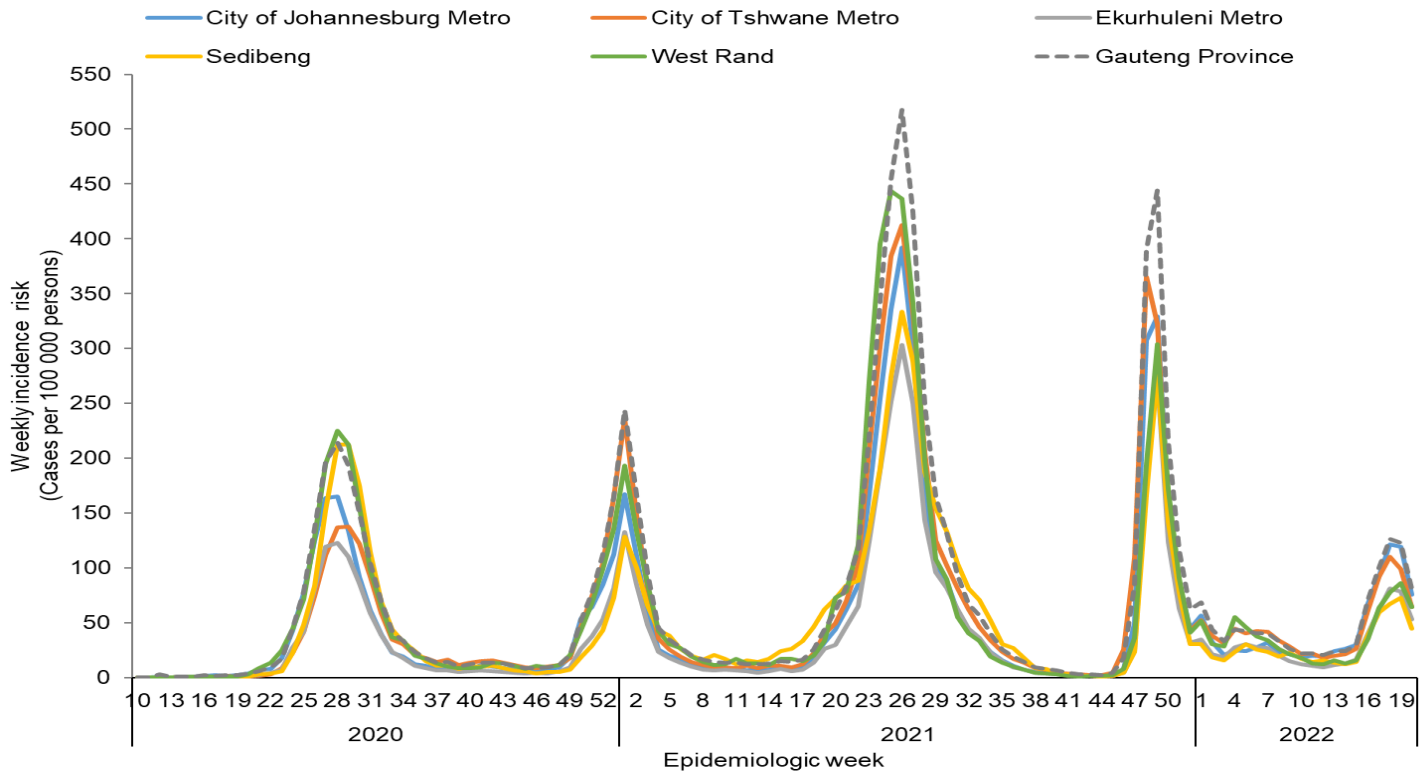
**Figure 8:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Western Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 631 051, 54 542 missing district)



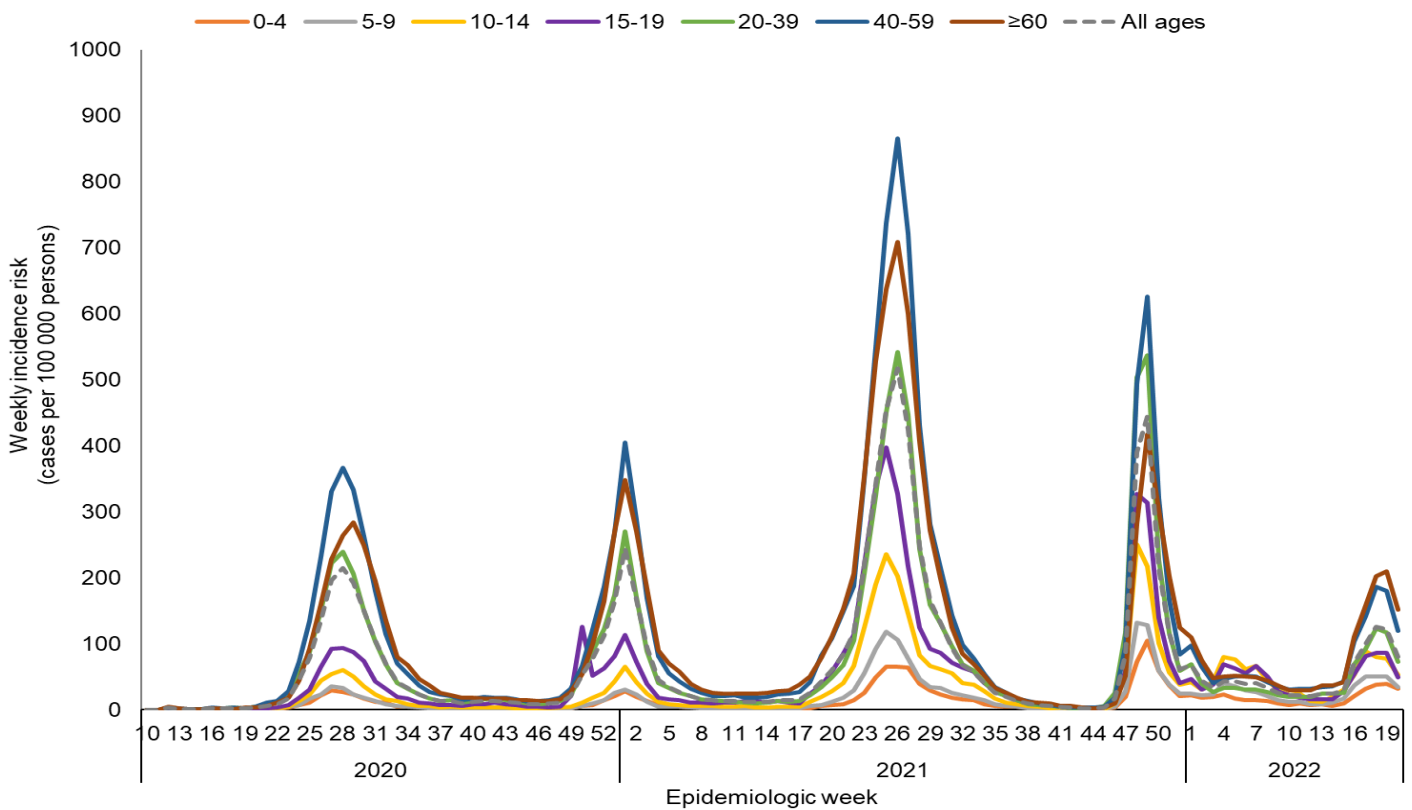
**Figure 9:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Western Cape Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 683 801, 1 792 missing age)



## Gauteng Province

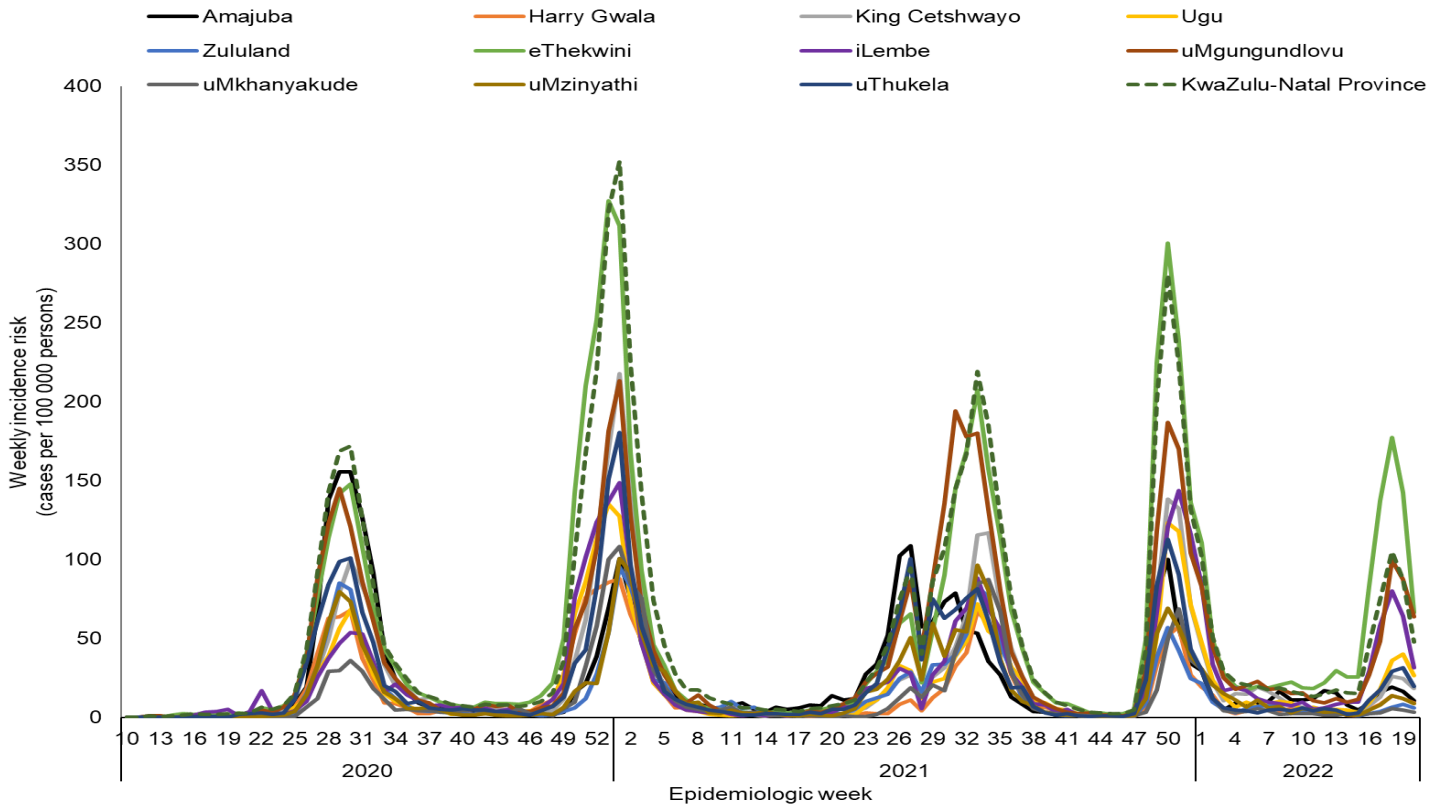


**Figure 10:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Gauteng Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 931 064, 367 951 missing district)

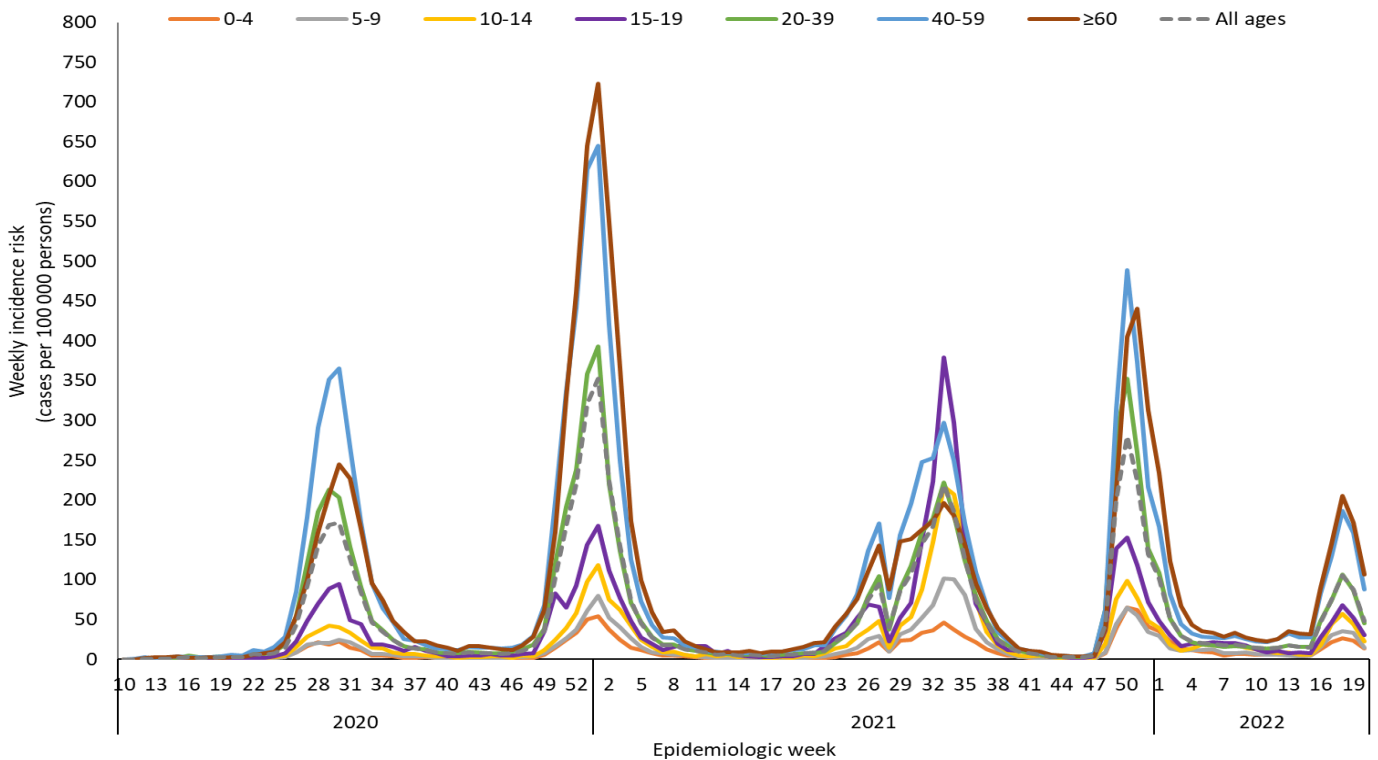


**Figure 11:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Gauteng Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 1 286 145, 12 870 missing age)

## KwaZulu-Natal Province

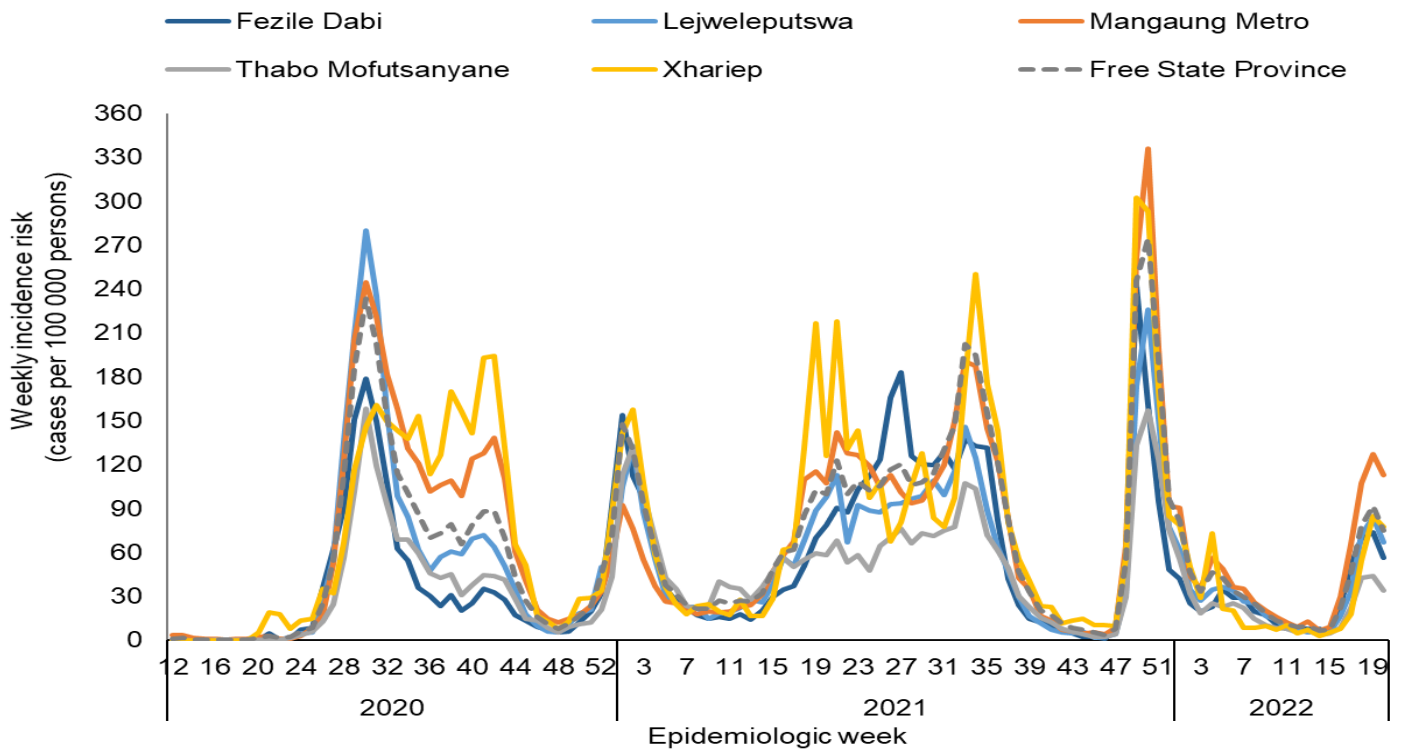


**Figure 12:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week KwaZulu-Natal Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 443 619, 263 168 missing district)

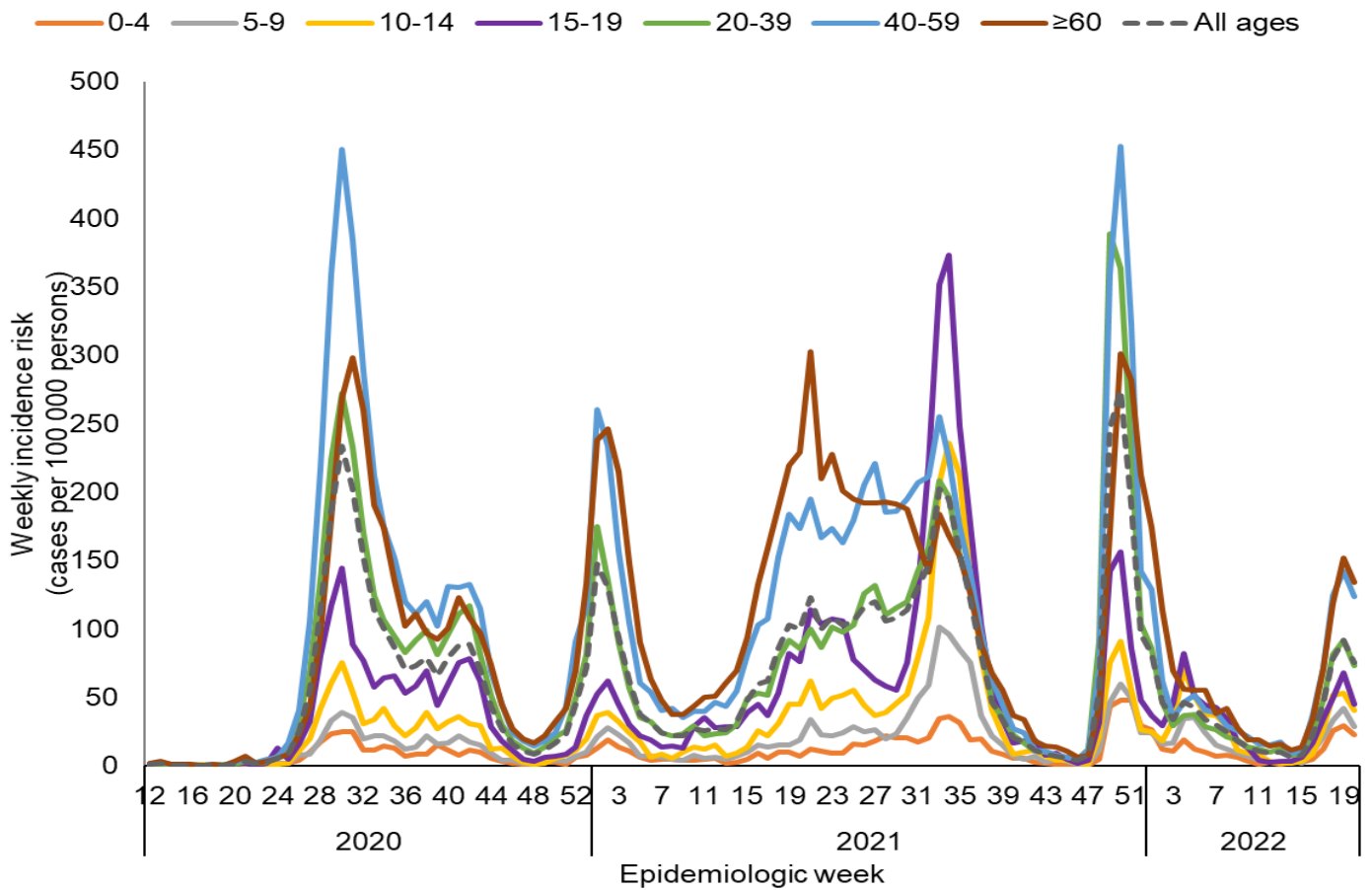


**Figure 13:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week KwaZulu-Natal Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 697 911, 8 876 missing age)

## Free State Province

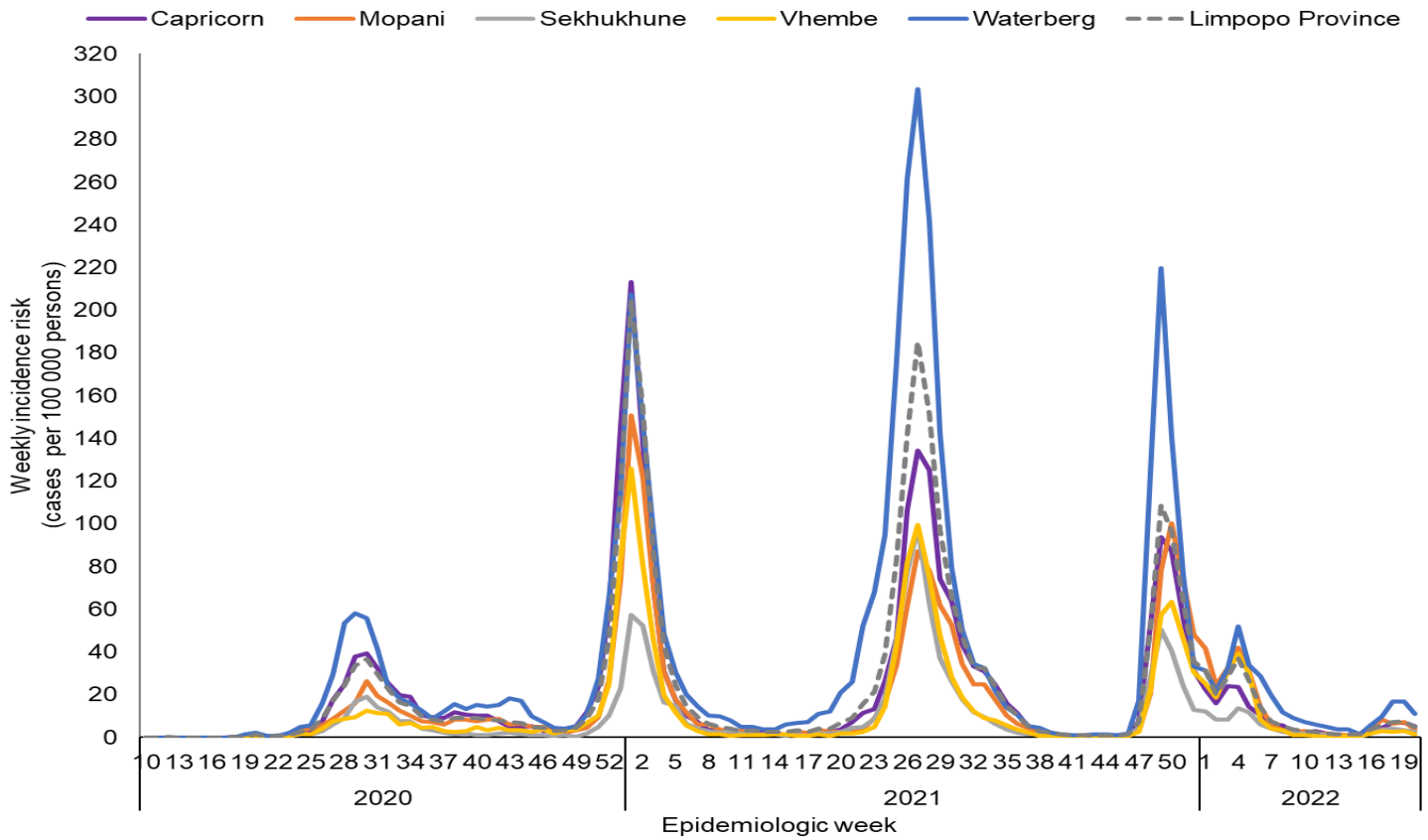


**Figure 14:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Free State Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 181 682, 30 459 missing district)

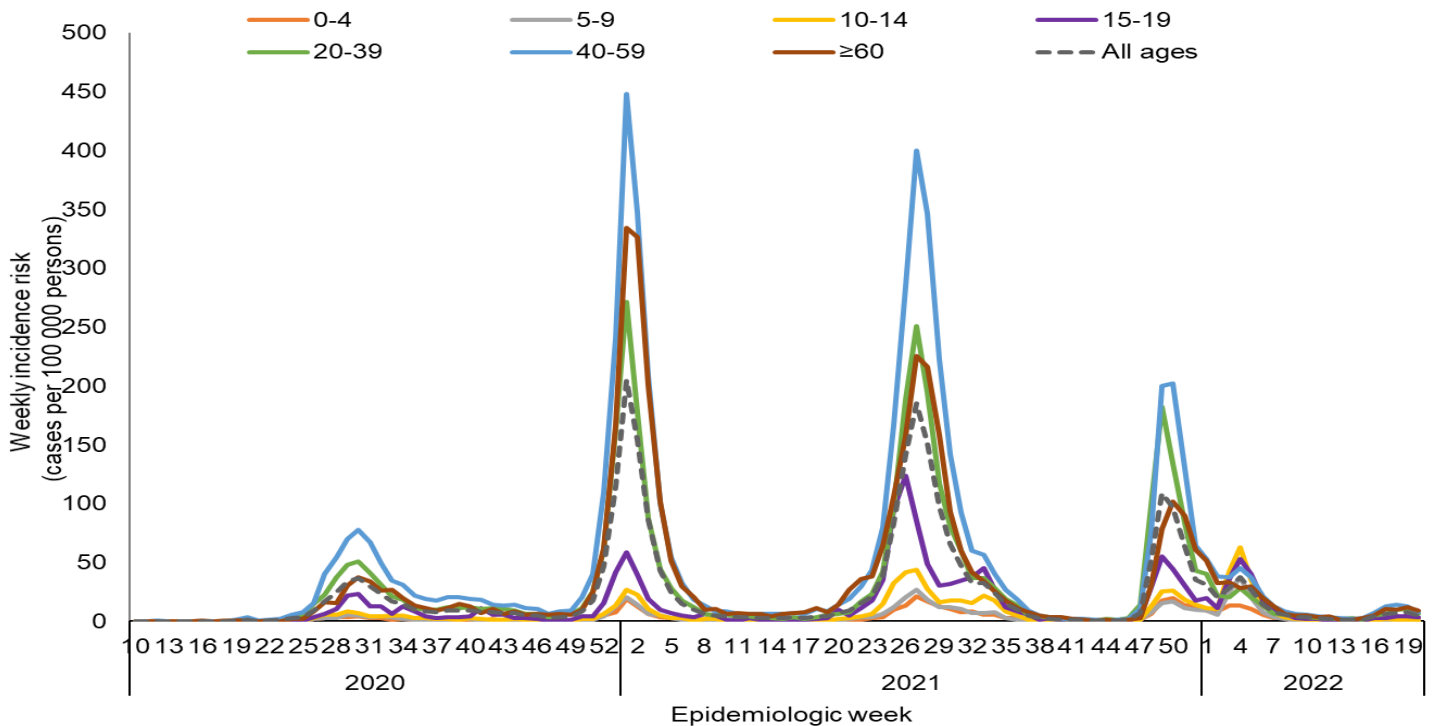


**Figure 15:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Free State Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 211 292, 849 missing age)

## Limpopo Province

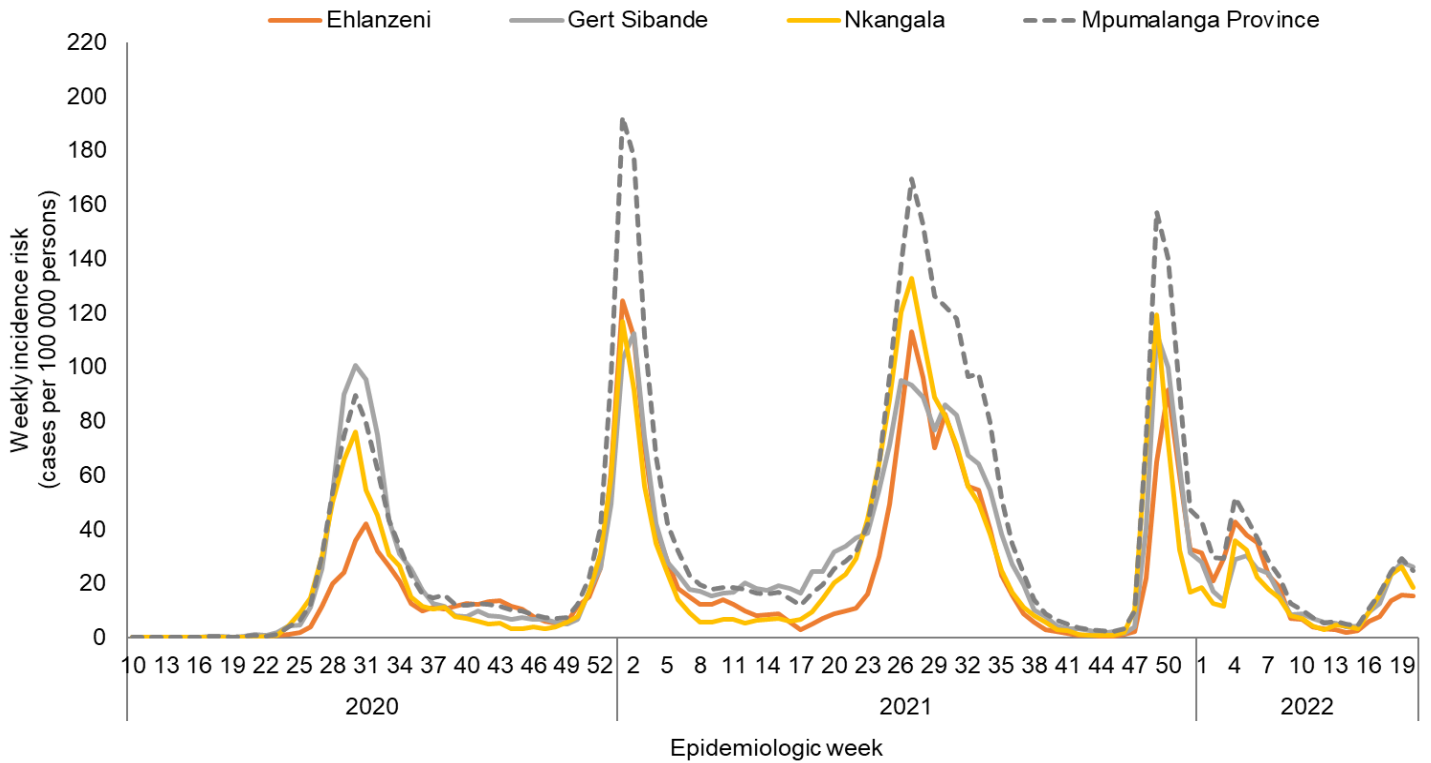


**Figure 16:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Limpopo Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 117 693, 40 235 missing district)

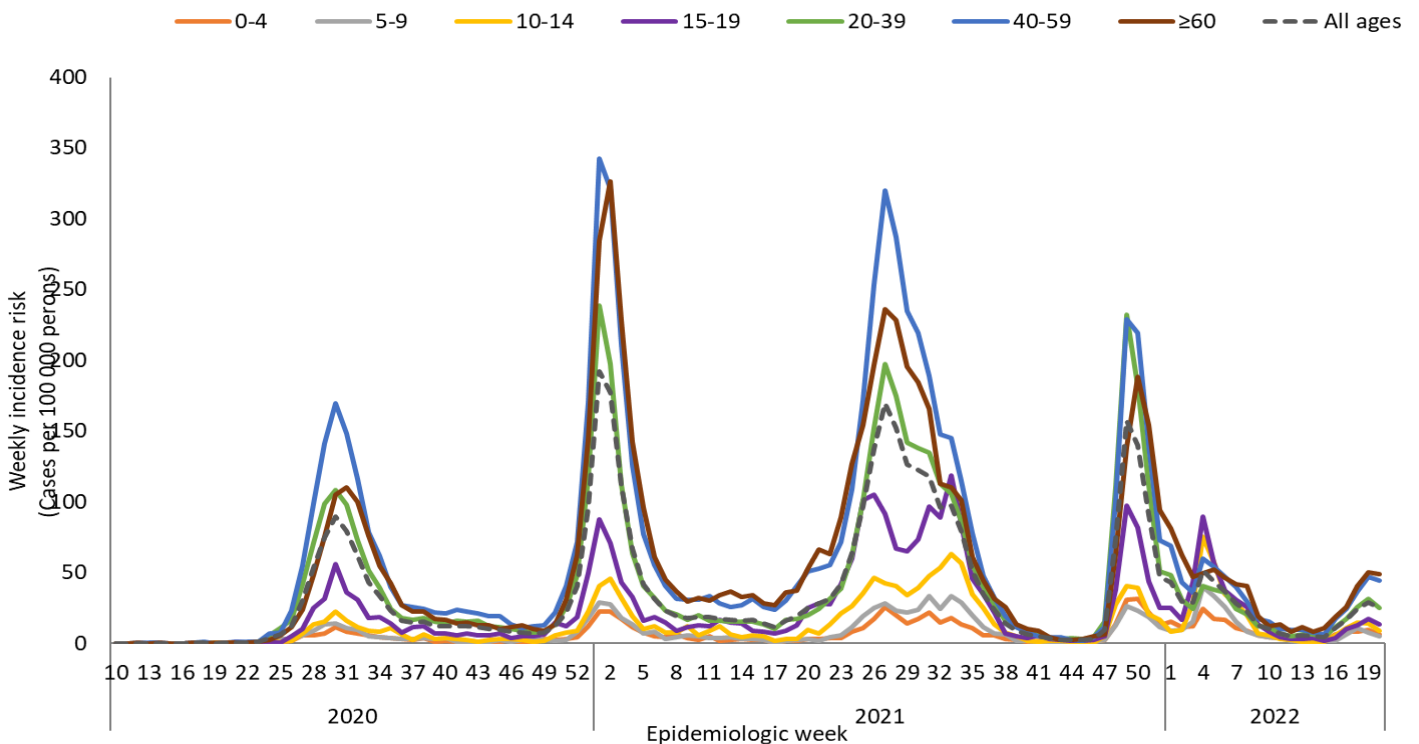


**Figure 17:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week Limpopo Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 157 214, 714 missing age)

## Mpumalanga Province

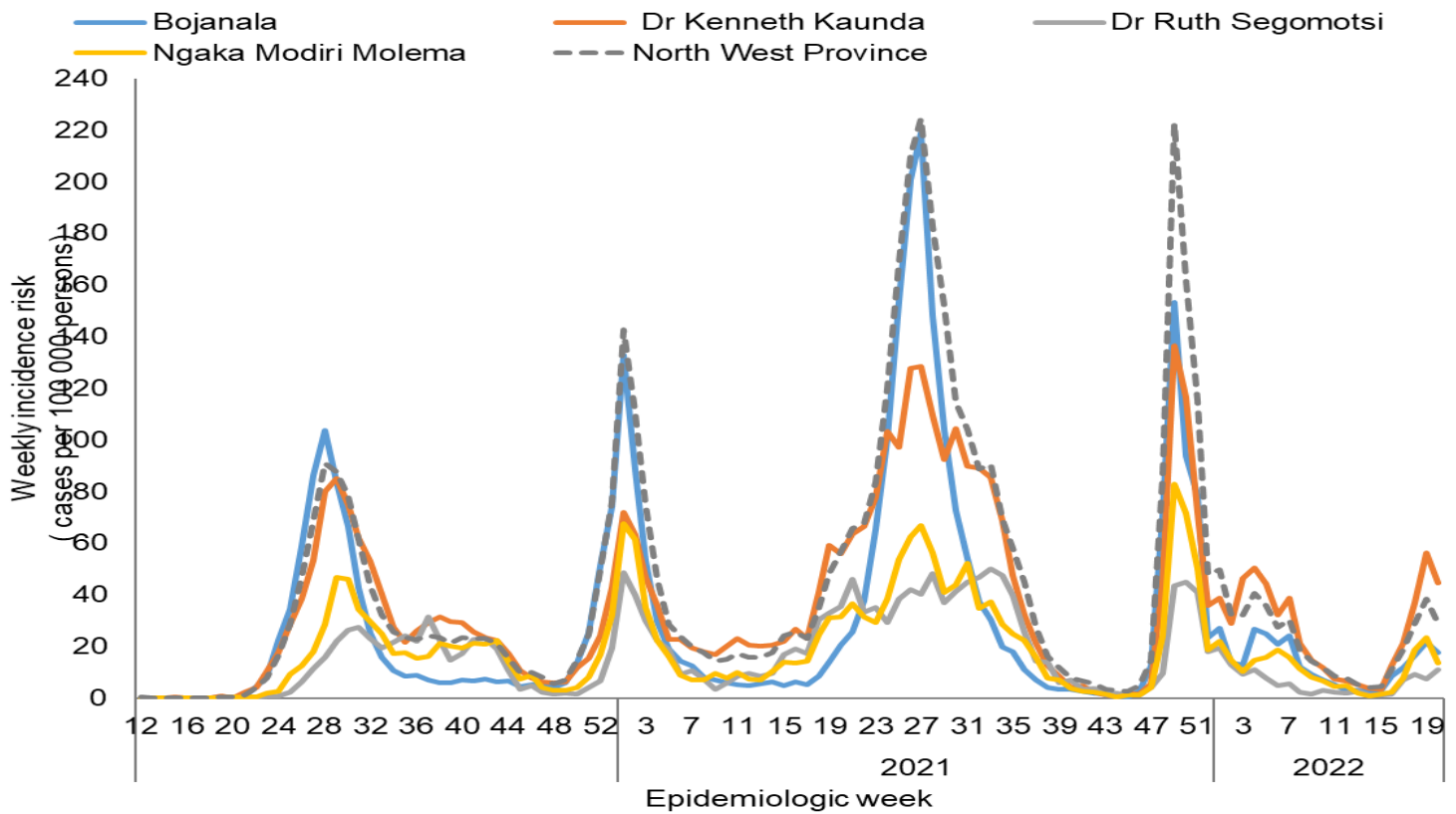


**Figure 18:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week Mpumalanga Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 130 523, 68 346 missing district)

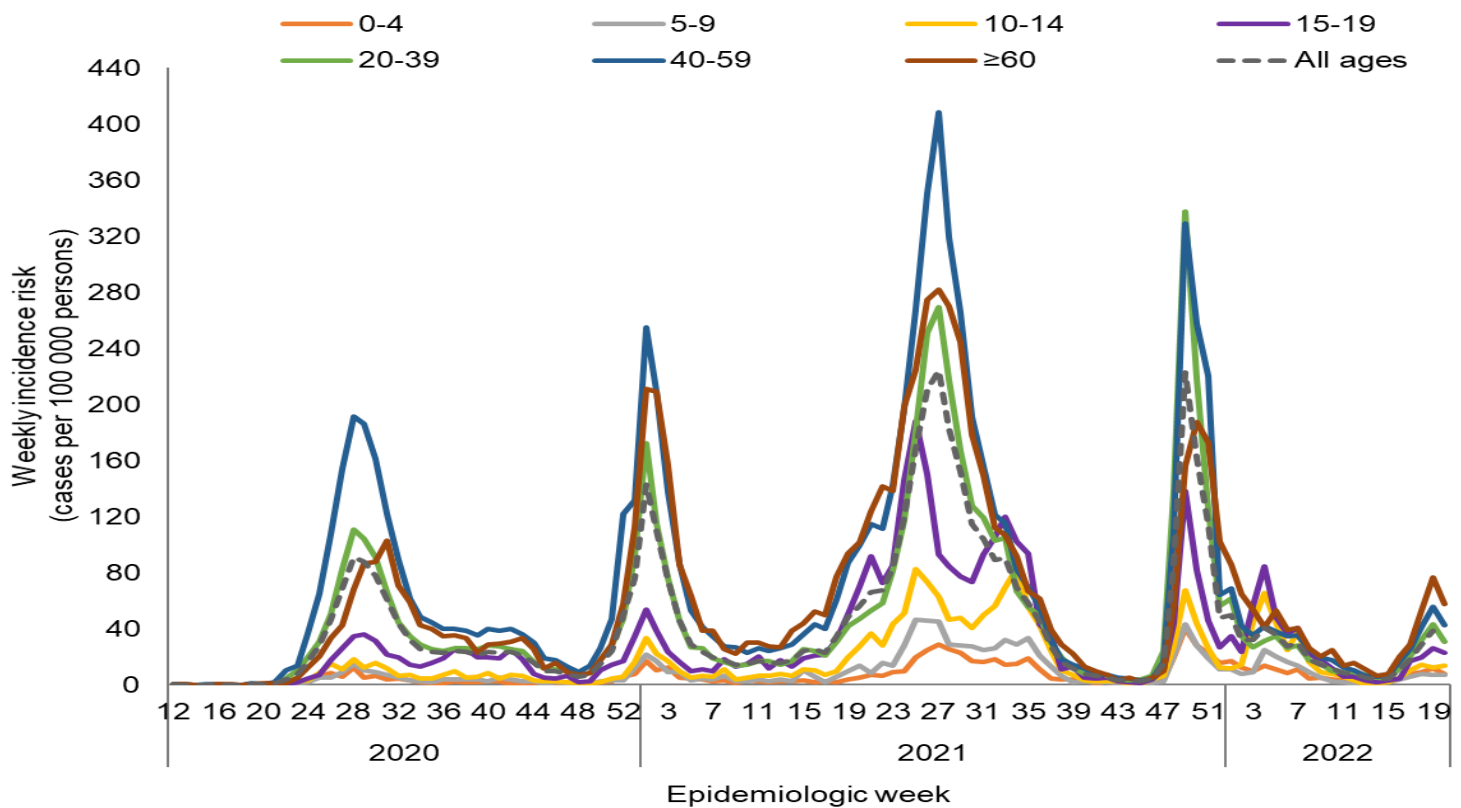


**Figure 19:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group and epidemiologic week Mpumalanga Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 194 724, 4 145 missing age)

## North West Province



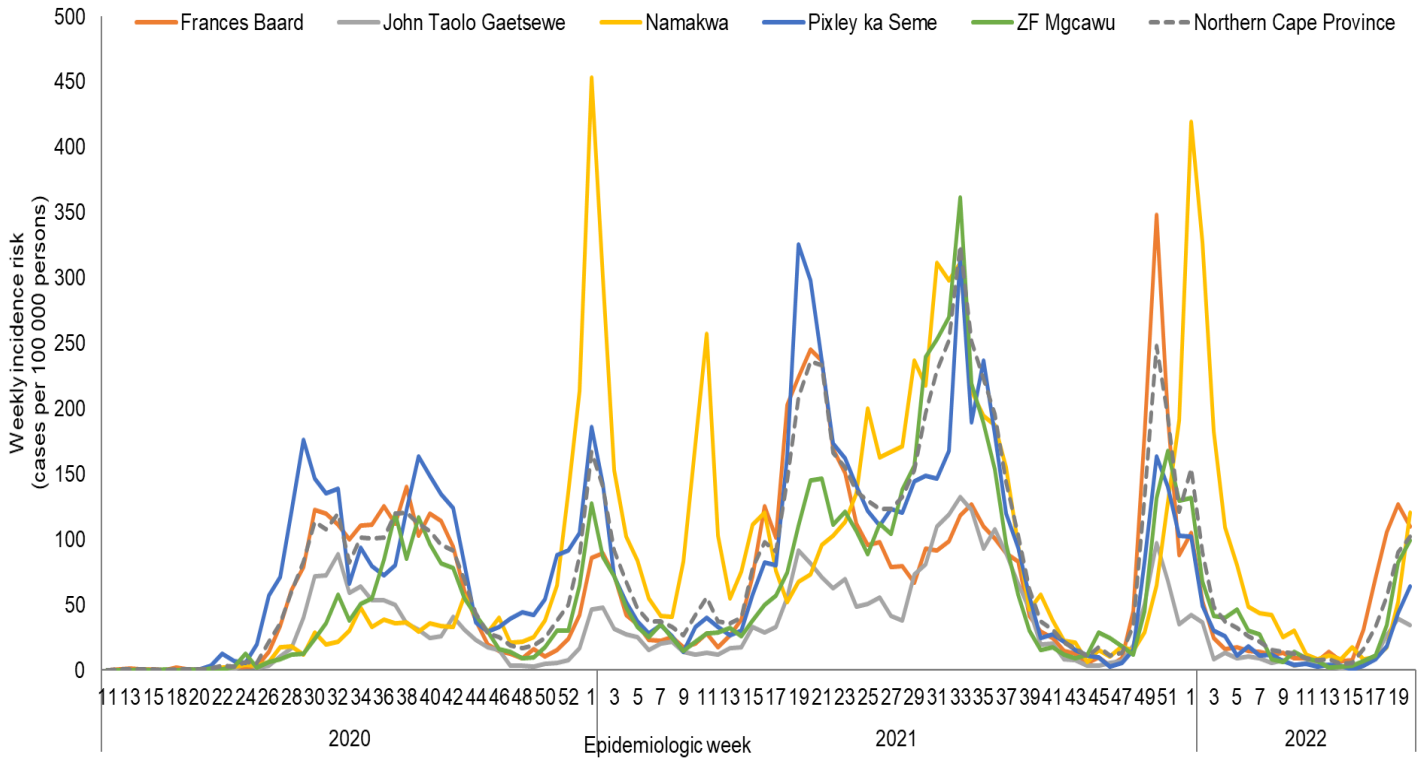
**Figure 20:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by district and epidemiologic week North West Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 123 886, 74 818 missing district)



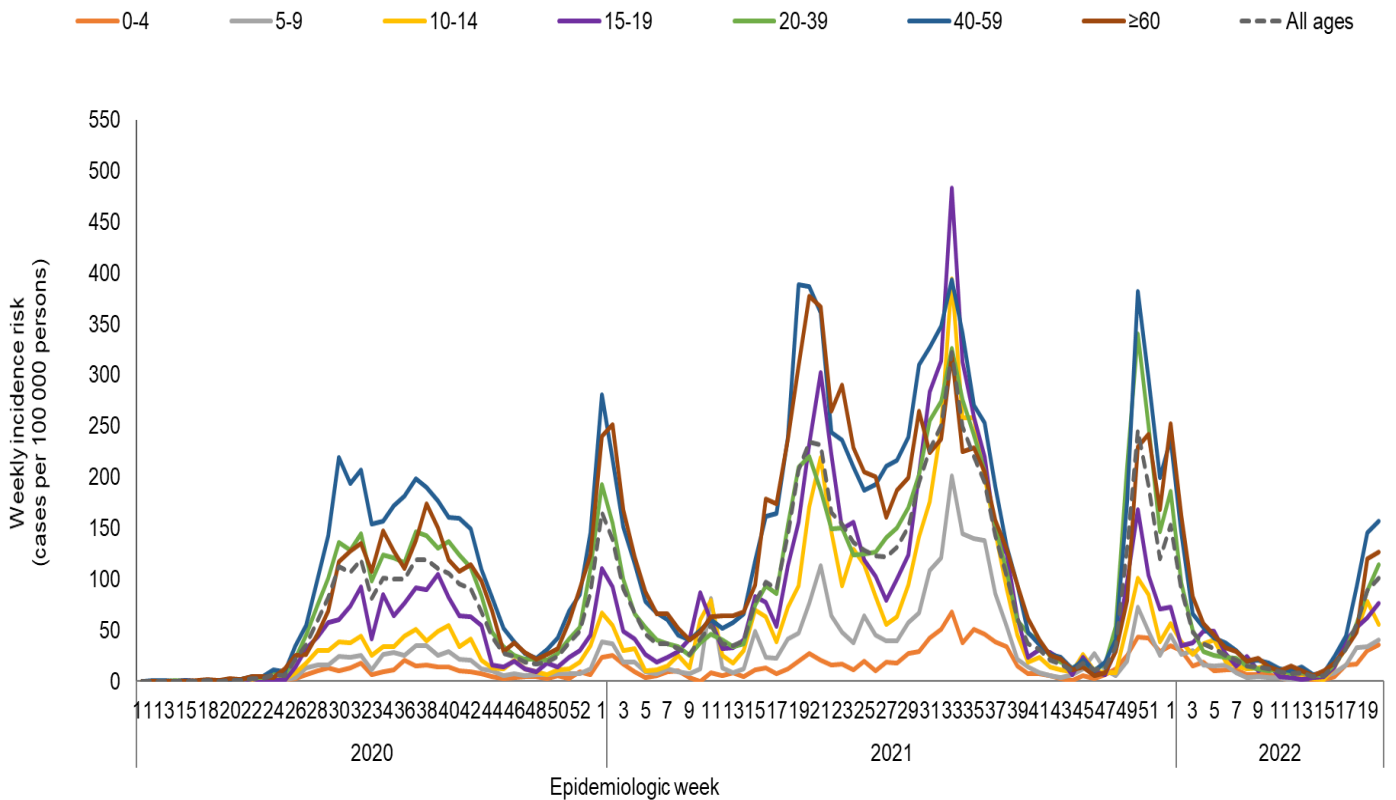
**Figure 21:** Weekly incidence risk of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 by age group in years and epidemiologic week North West Province 3 March 2020 – 21 May 2022 (n = 196 176, 2 528 missing age)



## 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 – 21 May 2022 (n = 86 868, 26 079 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 – 21 May 2022 (n = 112 217, 730 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.