



Session #1

Public Health Update:

The Impact of Syphilis

December 13, 2022

13:30 - 15:00



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Outline

1. MOH Update: Respiratory viruses in Alberta

- *Dr. Chris Sarin*

2. Provincial Sexually Transmitted Infection Services Structure

- *Dr. Petra Smyczek, Provincial Medical Director of STI Services, Alberta Health Services*

- *Jennifer Gratrix, Manager of STI Centralized Services, Alberta Health Services*

3. MOH Update: The Impact of Syphilis in Alberta First Nations

- *Dr. Chris Sarin*

4. Best Practices to Reduce Syphilis

- *Christina Smith*

- *Dr. Lauren Bilinsky*

5. Questions

MOH Update: Respiratory Viruses in Alberta

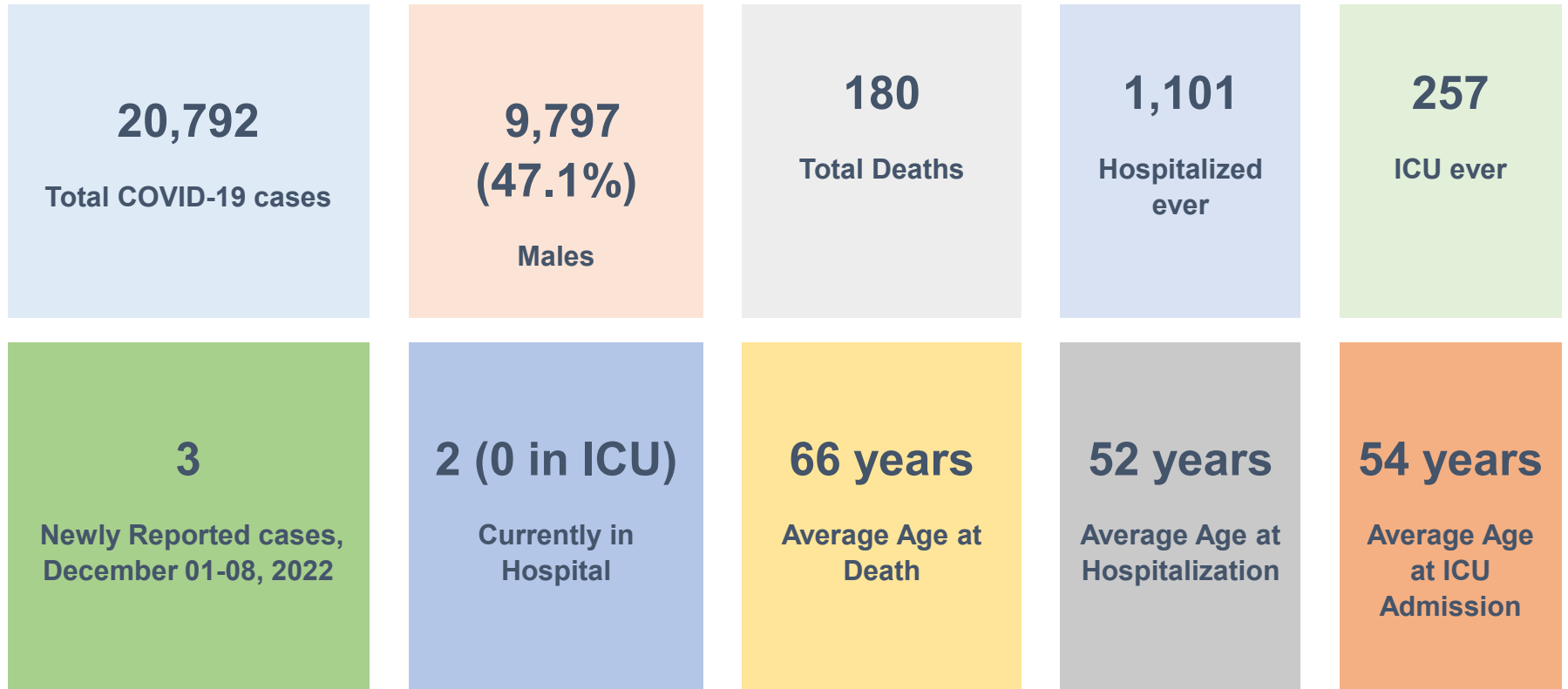
Dr. Chris Sarin

Senior Medical Officer of Health



Overview of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities on Reserve in Alberta

Source: FNIHB COVID-19 ER System via Synergy in Action (December 9, 2022)

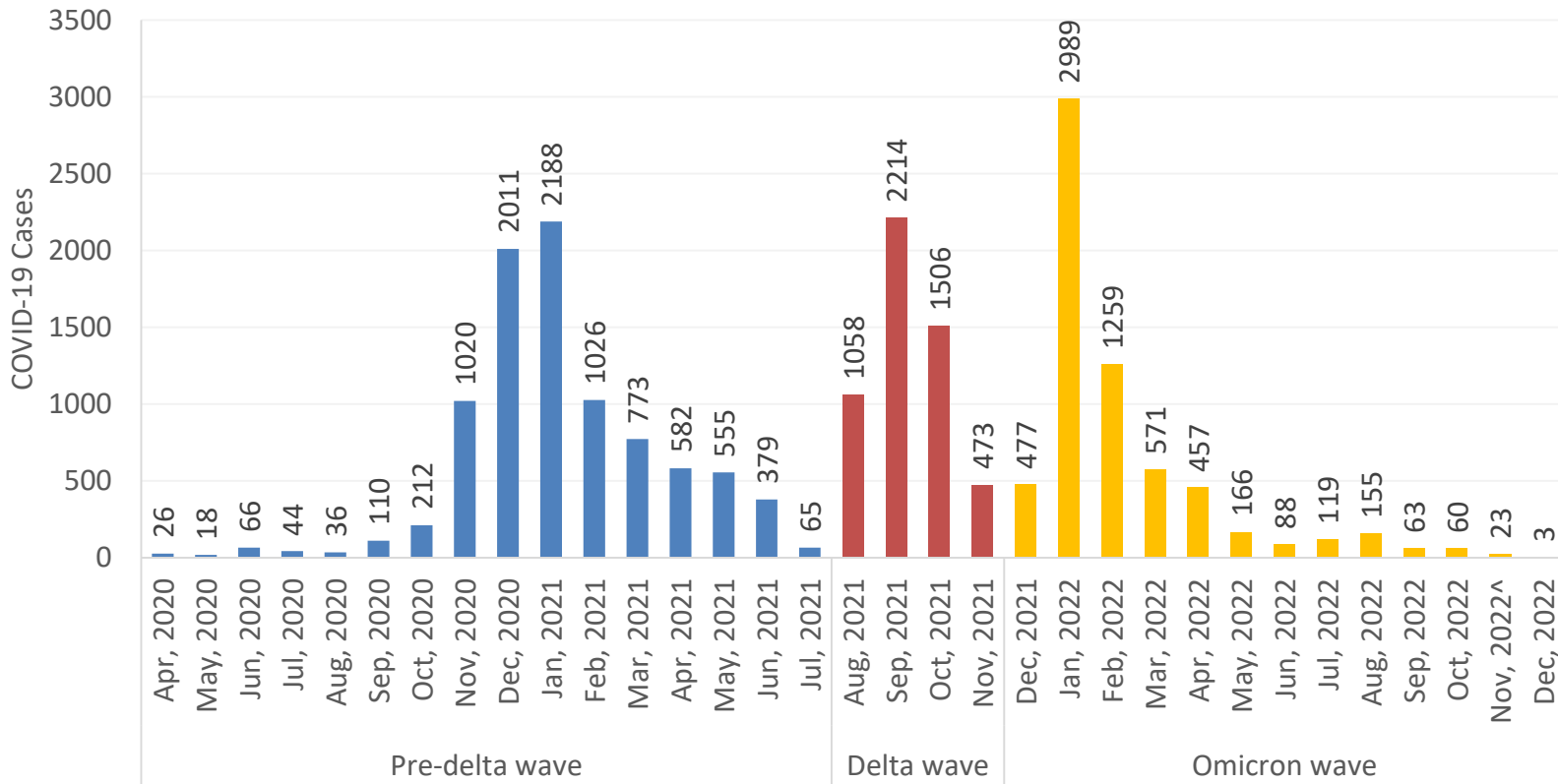


These do not include cases confirmed with only rapid antigen test in communities

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities on Reserve by Month and Wave

Source: FNIHB COVID-19 ER System via Synergy in Action (December 9, 2022)

COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities in Alberta by Wave and Specimen Collection Month



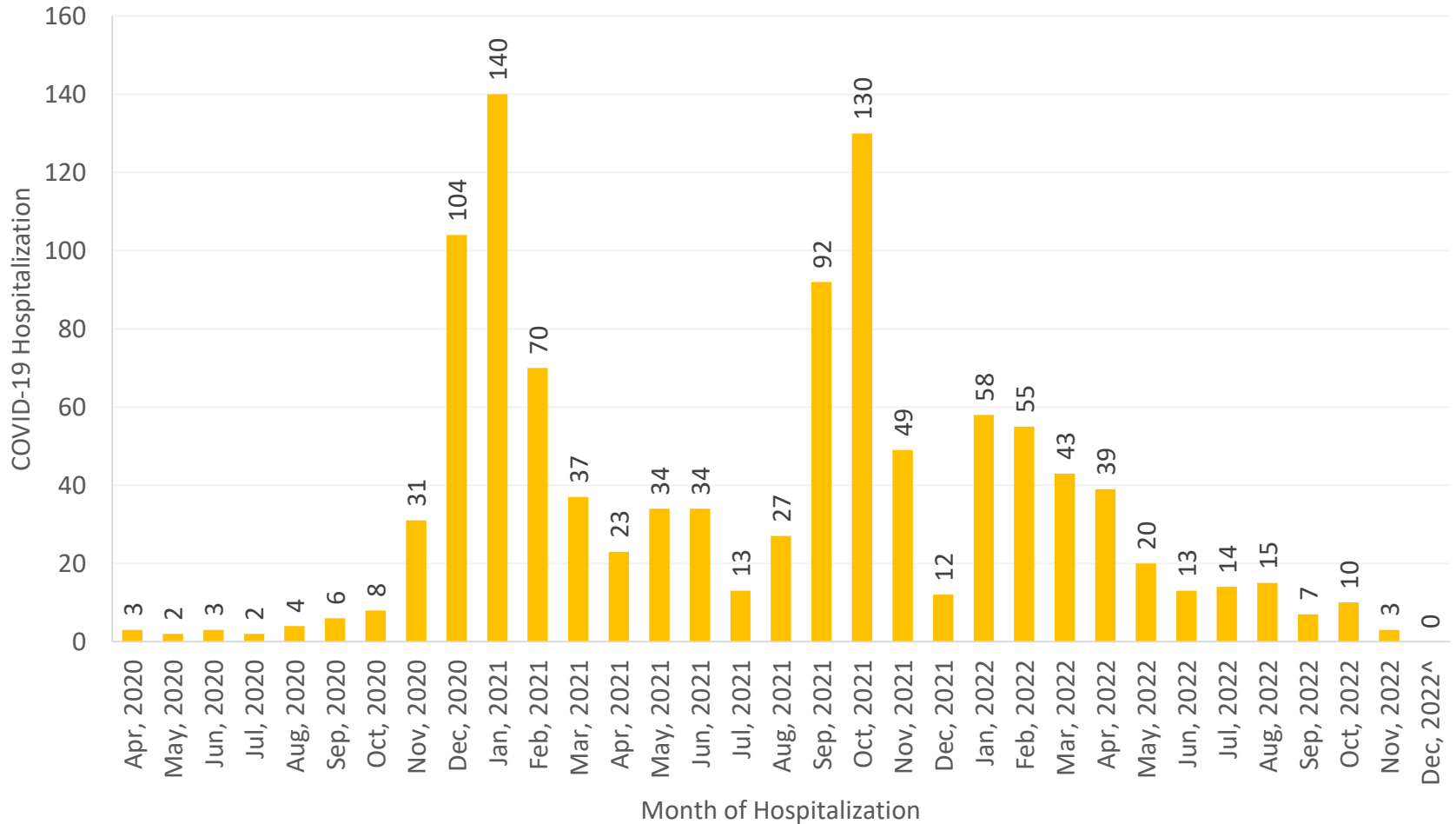
COVID-19 Wave and Specimen Collection Month

[^]Data may be incomplete

These do not include cases confirmed with only rapid antigen test in communities

Confirmed COVID-19 Hospitalizations in First Nations Communities on Reserve by Month of Hospitalization

Source: FNIHB COVID-19 ER System via Synergy in Action (December 9, 2022)



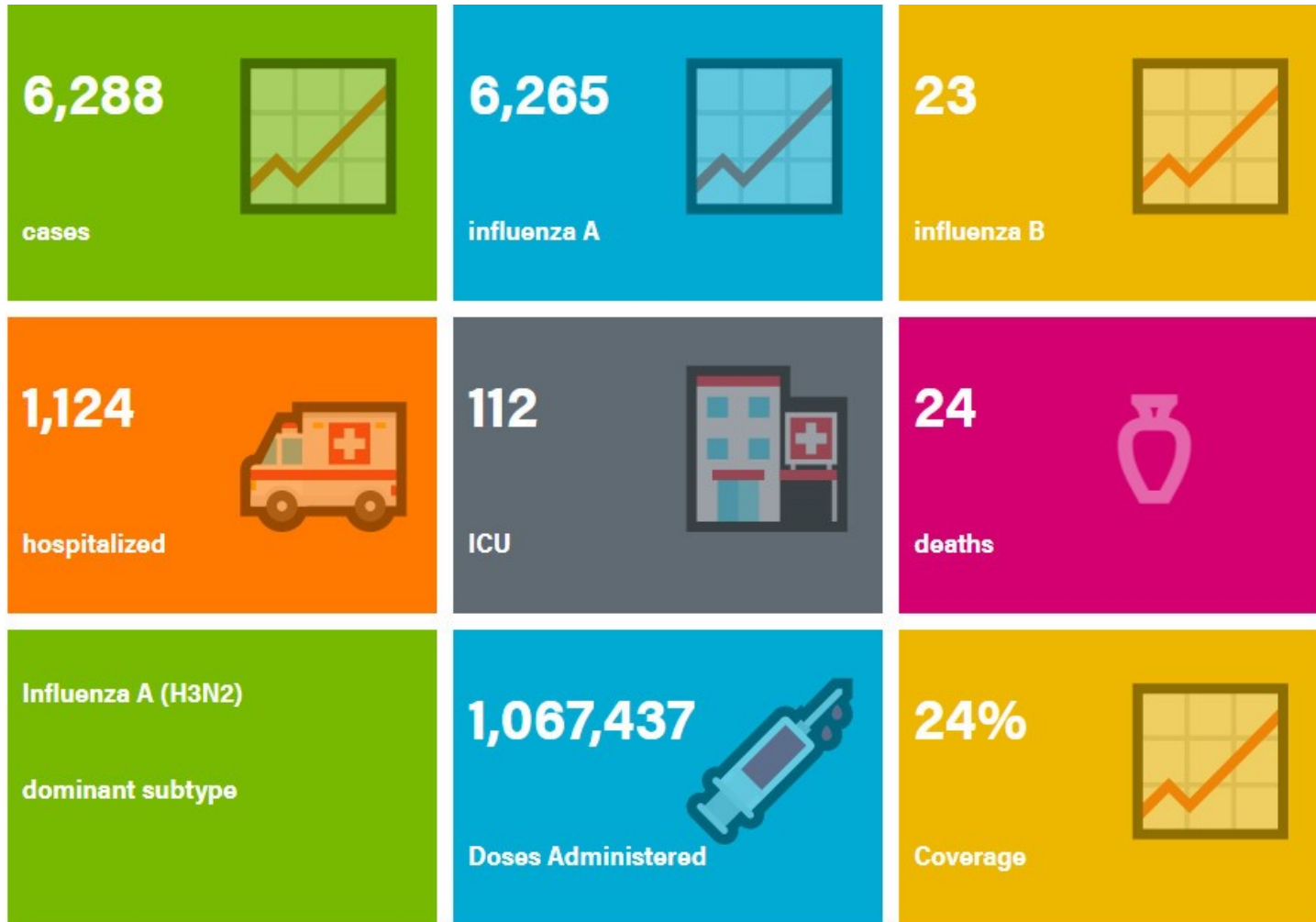
[^]Data may be incomplete

Increasing Impact of Respiratory Viruses

- Since November 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has reported rapidly rising levels of influenza activity.
- Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services is also reporting a severe surge in respiratory viruses in the province, especially impacting children and youth.
- PHAC has reported that 46% of new influenza cases reported nationally between November 20 – 26, 2022 were in individuals aged 0-19 years old.
- Nationally, PHAC is reporting the highest cumulative hospitalization rates are among children under 5 years of age (41/100,000).
- Primary respiratory viruses of concern in Alberta:
 - Seasonal influenza
 - COVID-19
 - Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

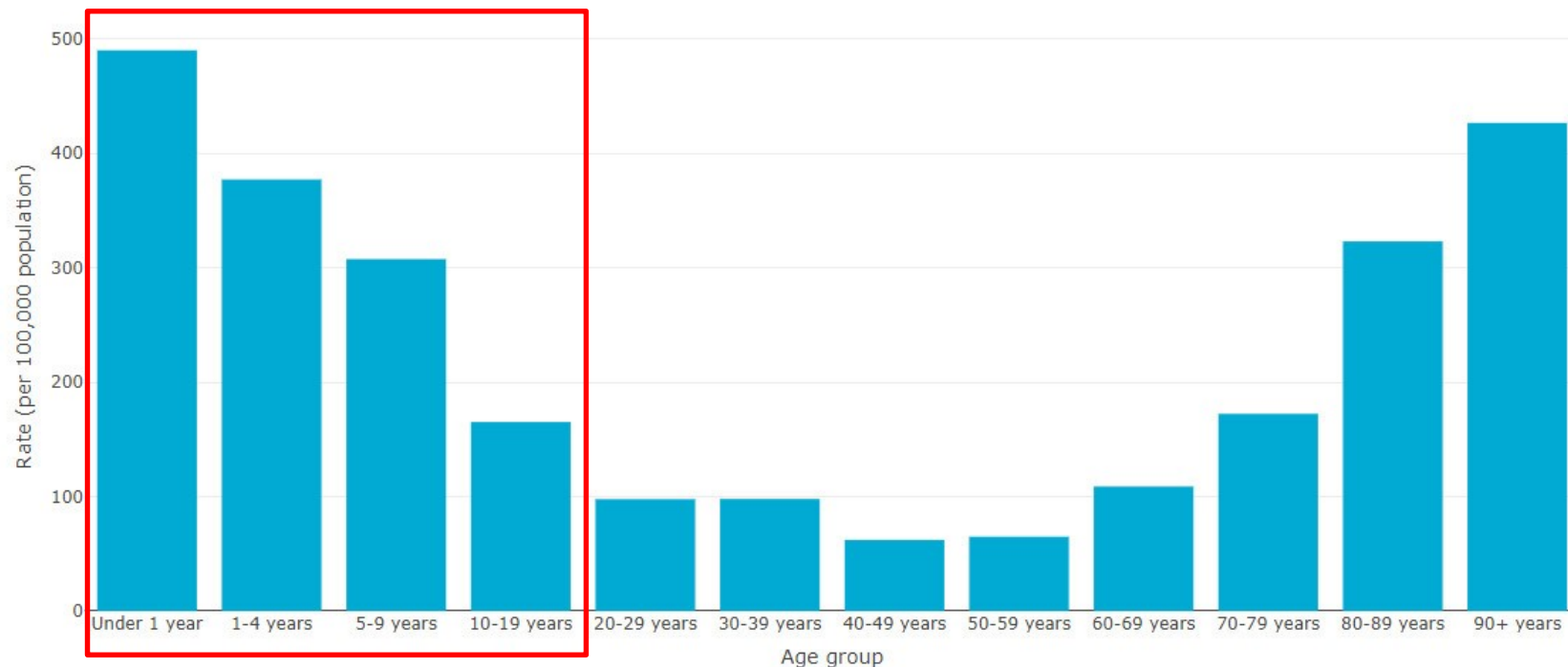
Influenza in Alberta as of December 3, 2022

Source: Alberta Health: Alberta Influenza statistics (December 12, 2022)



Case rates (per 100,000 population) of laboratory-confirmed influenza by age group as of December 3, 2022

Source: Alberta Health Influenza Statistics (December 12, 2022)



- As of December 3, 2022, a total of 2,779 cases of influenza have been confirmed in individuals under the age of 19 years old (representative of approximately 44% of total confirmed cases in Alberta).
- As of December 3, 2022, a total of 338 individuals under the age of 19 years old have been hospitalized due to confirmed cases of influenza (representative of approximately 30% of hospitalizations due to influenza in Alberta).

Influenza in Alberta First Nations

- As of December 6, 2022, 17 hospitalizations and 1 death due to influenza have been reported among First Nations people living on-reserve in Alberta.
- As of December 6, 2022, a total of 6,123 influenza vaccines have been administered on-reserve in Alberta.
- The influenza vaccine is available at all Alberta First Nation health centres and can safely be administered to children 6 months and older.
- For parents/guardians wishing to book an appointment at an off-reserve site, appointments for children under five years of age and their families are available at Alberta Health Services clinics and can be booked by calling 811 or online at: <https://bookvaccine.alberta.ca/s/booking>.

Preventing the Spread of Respiratory Viruses

Immunization

- Vaccines are safe, effective and offer the best defense from serious illness.
- Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines can be safely administered to individuals ages 6 months and older, at the same time.
- Most individuals do not have any side effects from vaccines and severe side effects are rare.

Basic Infection, Prevention and Control Practices

- Stay home when sick;
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette (e.g. covering coughs and sneezes);
- Wash hands and sanitize; and,
- Mask up in crowded indoor spaces.

Maintain High-Quality Cleaning Practices in Public Spaces

- Regularly sanitize all high-traffic areas;
- Ensure public surfaces are wiped down between users; and,
- Limit the sharing of items and equipment.

Provincial Sexually Transmitted Infection Services Structure

Dr. Petra Smyczek

Provincial Medical Director of STI Services, Alberta Health Services

Jennifer Gratrix

Manager of STI Centralized Services, Alberta Health Services



MOH Update: The Impact of Syphilis in Alberta First Nations

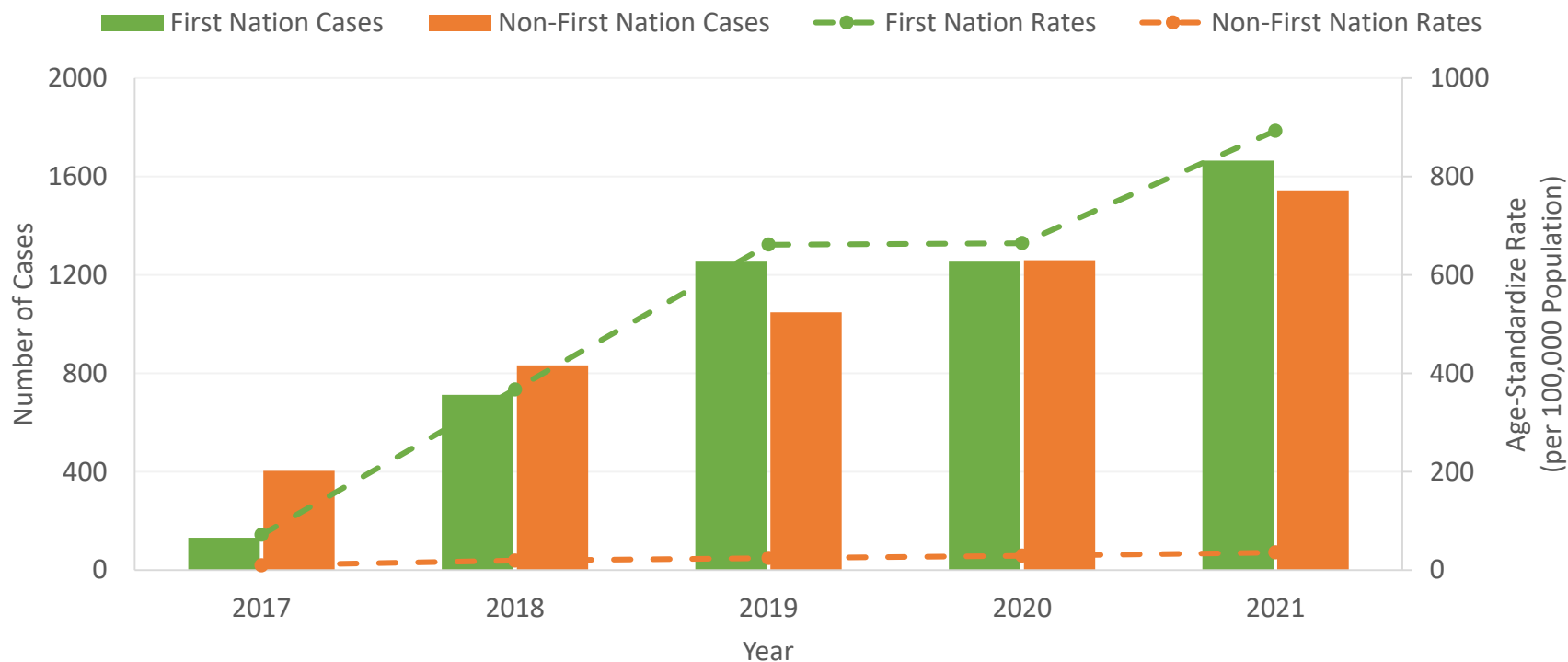
Dr. Lauren Bilinsky

Deputy Medical Officer of Health



Number and Age-Standardized Rates of Reported Infectious Syphilis, First Nation and Non-First Nation People, Alberta, 2017 - 2021

Source: Data prepared for FNIHB-AB by Alberta Health

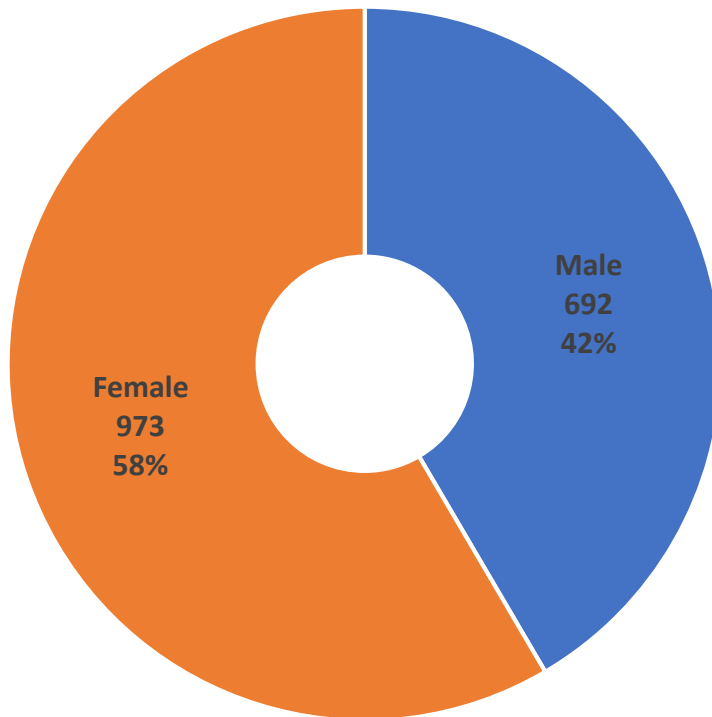


- In 2021, there were approximately 3,209 infectious syphilis cases reported in Alberta (1,665 among First Nations people and 1,544 among non-First Nations people).
- In 2021, the age-standardized infectious syphilis rate among First Nations people (893 per 100,000 population) was approximately 25 times higher than the rate among non-First Nations people (36 per 100,000 population).

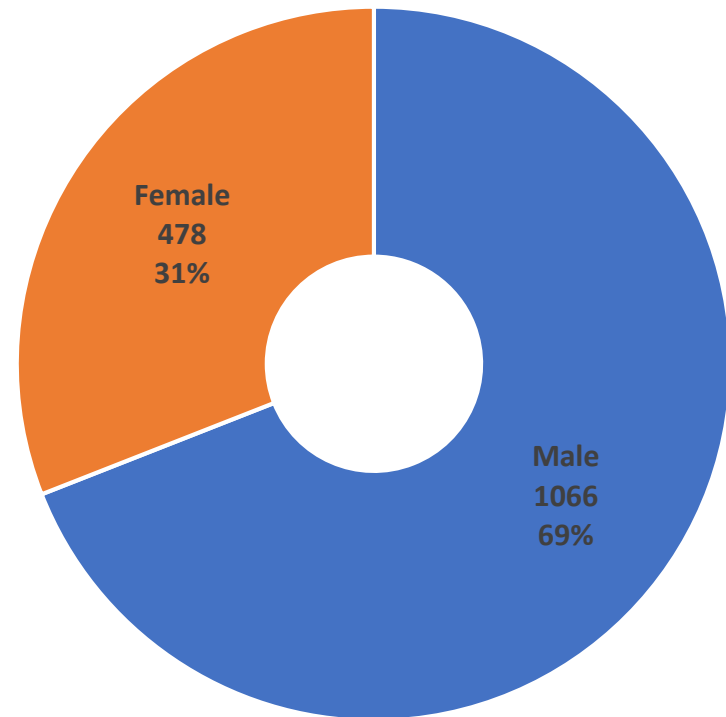
Infectious Syphilis Cases by First Nation Status and Sex, 2021

Source: Data prepared for FNIHB-AB by Alberta Health

First Nation People

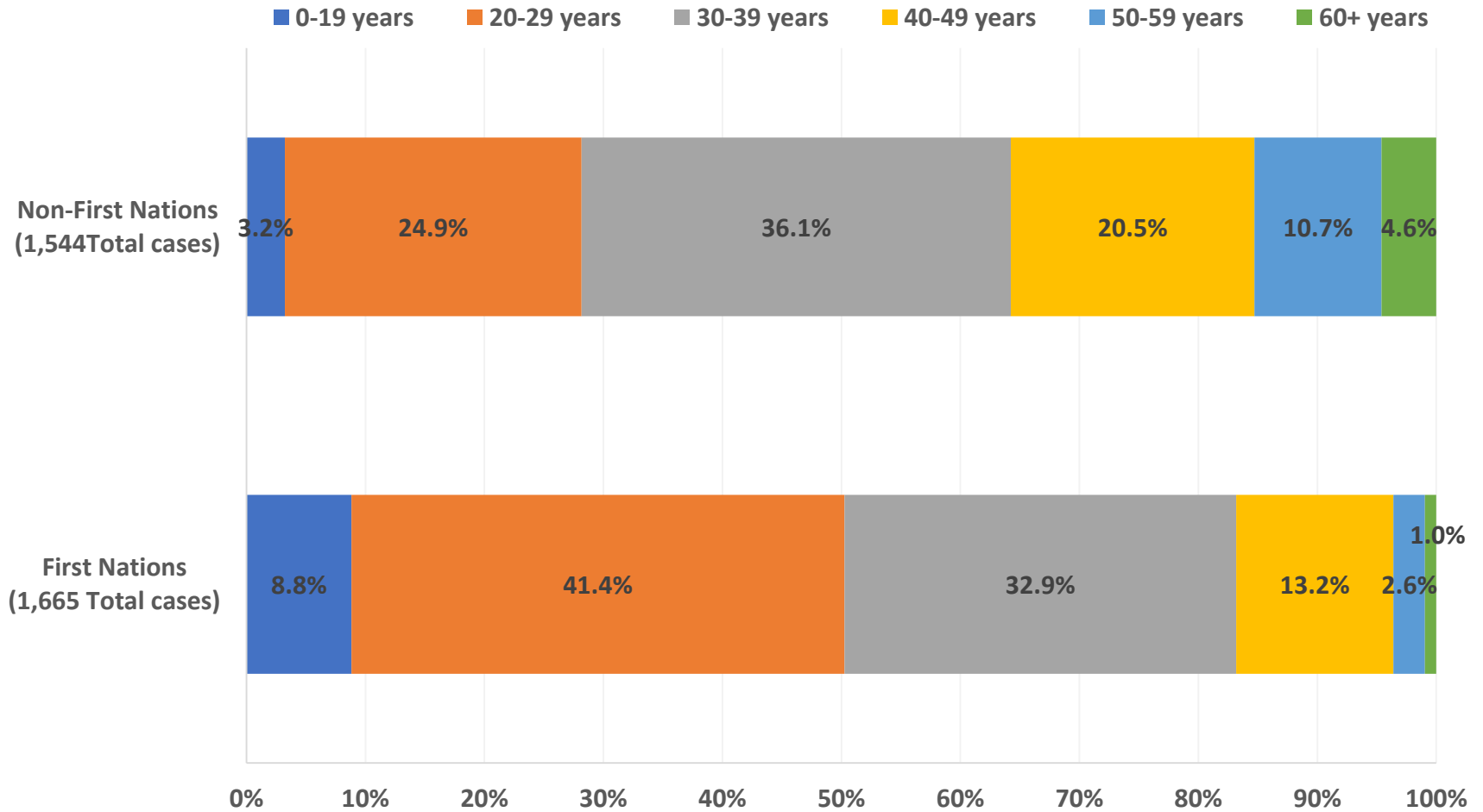


Non-First Nation People



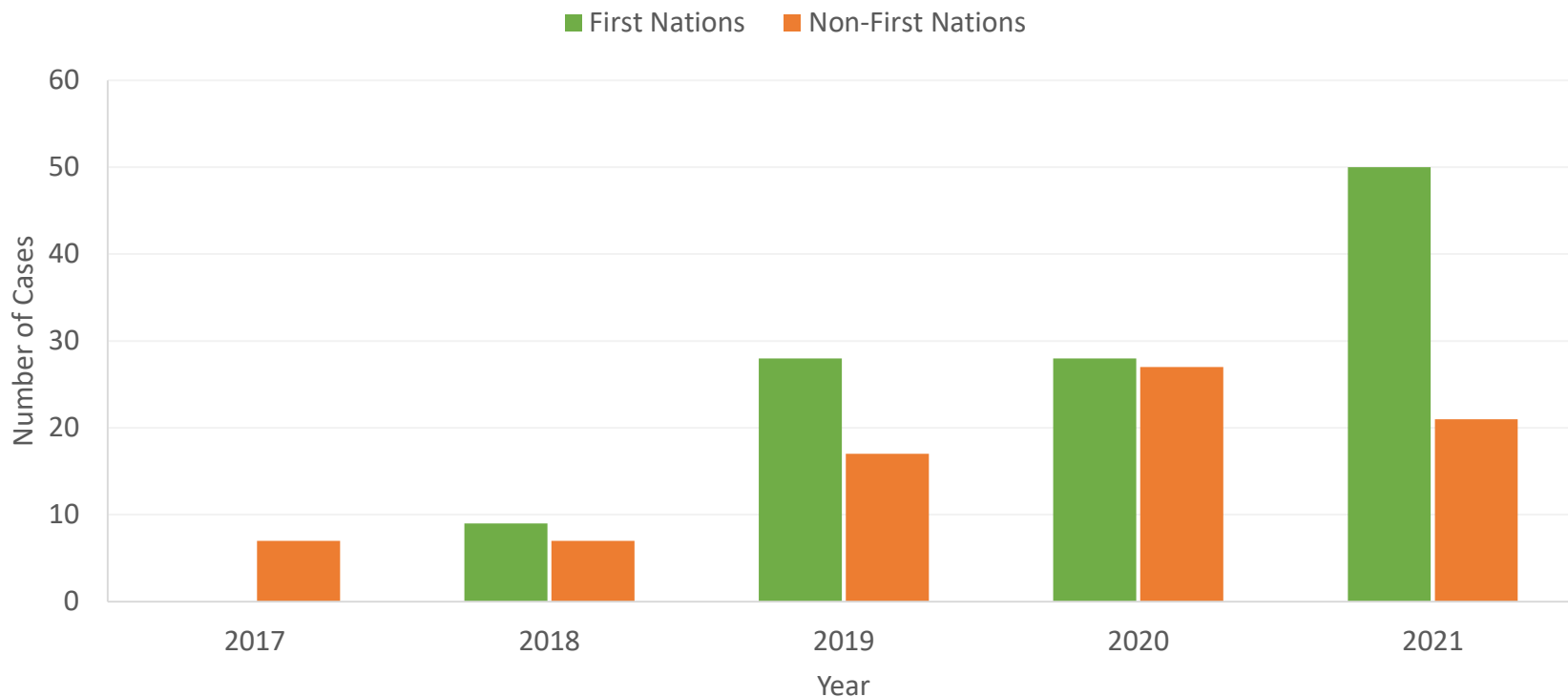
Infectious Syphilis Cases by First Nation Status and Age, 2021

Source: Data prepared for FNIHB-AB by Alberta Health



Number of Reported Congenital Syphilis, First Nation and Non-First Nations People, Alberta, 2017 - 2021

Source: Data prepared for FNIHB-AB by Alberta Health



- In 2021, 50 congenital syphilis cases were reported among First Nation people living in Alberta and 21 cases were reported among non-First Nation people in Alberta

Syphilis Response

Dr. Lauren Bilinsky

Deputy Medical Officer of Health, ISC-AB

Christina Smith, RN

Communicable Disease Control Nurse Manager, ISC-AB



Prioritizing Syphilis Response Efforts

- Alberta's First Nations leadership has prioritized syphilis response for First Nation communities.
- ISC-AB is utilizing a multipronged approach which includes:
 - Exploring innovative practices to improve access to testing, treatment, and follow up in community.
 - Collaborating with Indigenous and provincial partners to leverage expertise and ensure access to high-quality care.

(Con't)



AB Region Syphilis Response Model,
HCOM Health Protection Subcommittee 2022

Prioritizing Syphilis Response Efforts (con't)

- Working with provincial partners to improve access to data to support community-driven response efforts;
- Developed a province-wide communication campaign to:
 - increase awareness of syphilis,
 - encourage testing,
 - provide specific messaging to higher-risk populations such as pregnant individuals and their partners.



AB Region Syphilis Response Model,
HCOM Health Protection Subcommittee 2022

Innovative Practices: Rapid Point of Care Testing

- Health Canada has granted ISC-AB special access to syphilis and HIV rapid point of care tests (POCT) for First Nations.
- Real-time results generated by rapid point of care testing could provide First Nations Health Centers with the tools to support timely test and treat practices and decrease community-spread.
- POCT enables community health staff to better meet the needs of community members by:
 - providing results within minutes.
 - providing treatment that day, if clinically indicated.
 - consolidating test and treat services to a single visit to the health center.
- POCT is especially impactful when
 - Accessibility and transportation have been barriers to services
 - working with transient individuals.

Enhancing Test & Treat Practices

- The ISC-AB Communicable Disease Control team has worked with partners to create an STBBI Test and Treat Program for community health nurses which includes policy, learning modules and resources. Both in-person or online syphilis and STBBI training is available to community health nurses working in Alberta First Nations.
- The STBBI Test and Treat Program
 - Expands testing options for community members beyond primary care clinics to also include First Nation's health centers.
 - Allows patients to access timely treatment
- ISC-AB Communicable Disease Control team continues to work closely with First Nation Health Centers across the province to ensure community health staff are trained in providing best practices related to syphilis care and sexual health.

FNIHB Syphilis Resources

- **FNIHB Test and Treat Policy**
 - Available on OneHealth
- **FNIHB Test and Treat Training Modules**
 - Available on the Nursing E-Learning Portal
- **Syphilis Treatment Order – Non-pregnant Individual**
- **Syphilis Treatment Order – Pregnant Individual**
 - Available on OneHealth

(con't)

FNIHB Syphilis Resources

- **Syphilis Prenatal PowerPoint**
 - Available on OneHealth
- **Intro to Sexually Transmitted Infections for Grades 9 – 12**
 - Will be placed on OneHealth.
- **Checklist to Initiate a Test and Treat Program**
 - A checklist that reviews what should be in place for testing and treating of STBBIs. A STBBI team member can meet with health centre staff to review.
 - Will be placed on OneHealth.

FNIHB Syphilis Resources

Primary STBBI Program Contact:

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Additional nurses to contact:

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Questions?

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Acknowledgements

Dr. Petra Smyczek, Provincial Medical Director of STI Services, Alberta Health Services

Jennifer Gratrix, Manager of STI Centralized Services, Alberta Health Services

Dr. Chris Sarin, Senior Medical Officer of Health – FNIHB

Dr. Lauren Bilinsky, Deputy Medical Officer of Health – FNIHB

Christina Smith, Registered Nurse - FNIHB

Ibrahim Agyemang, Senior Epidemiologist – FNIHB

TSAG Telehealth Team (Michelle Hoeber, Brooke Hames and team)

FNIHB Technical Team