

Response to COVID-19: March 2022 Update

Presentation to the Board of Health

March 21, 2022





Status of the COVID-19 Epidemic in Toronto

Monitoring dashboard –Mar 17*, 2022

Virus Spread and Containment

New COVID-19 cases, 7 day moving average¹

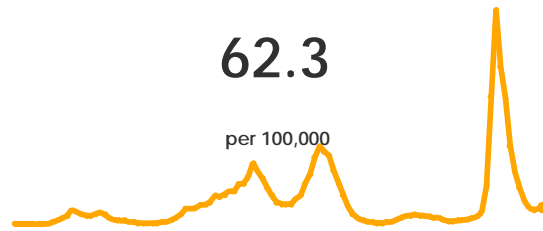
245



New COVID-19 cases, weekly incidence rate¹

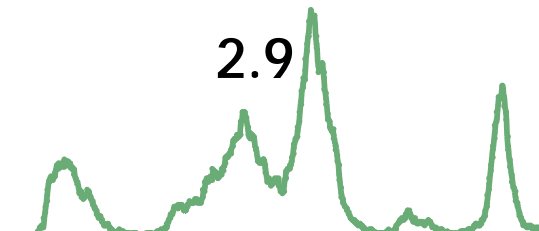
62.3

per 100,000



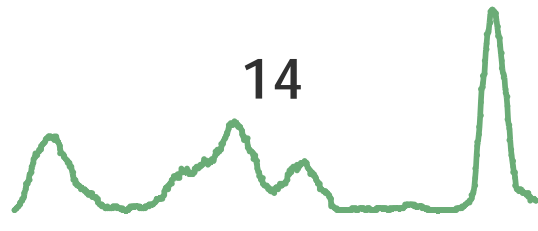
New Hospitalizations, 7 day moving average¹

2.9



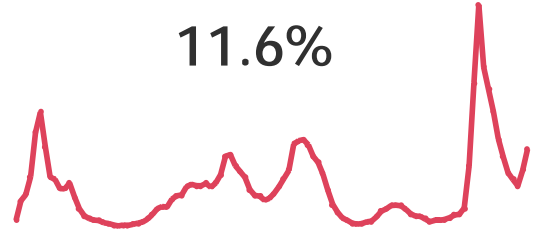
Active daily COVID-19 outbreaks in institutions¹

14



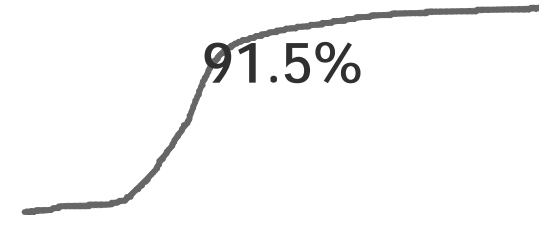
COVID-19 Laboratory Tests Percent Positivity, previous week average³

11.6%



Vaccination coverage 12+ (at least one dose)⁵

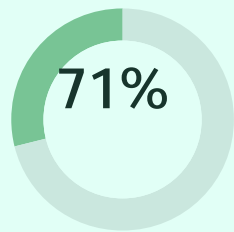
91.5%



Health System Capacity

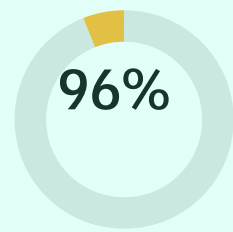
ICU bed occupancy rate⁴

71%



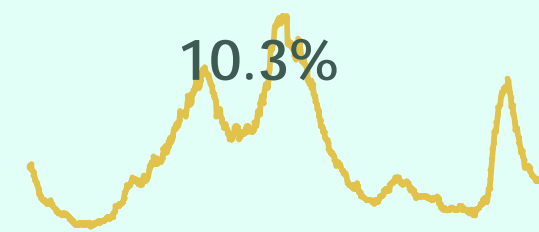
Acute bed occupancy rate⁴

96%



COVID-19 related critical illness (ICU) occupancy rate⁴

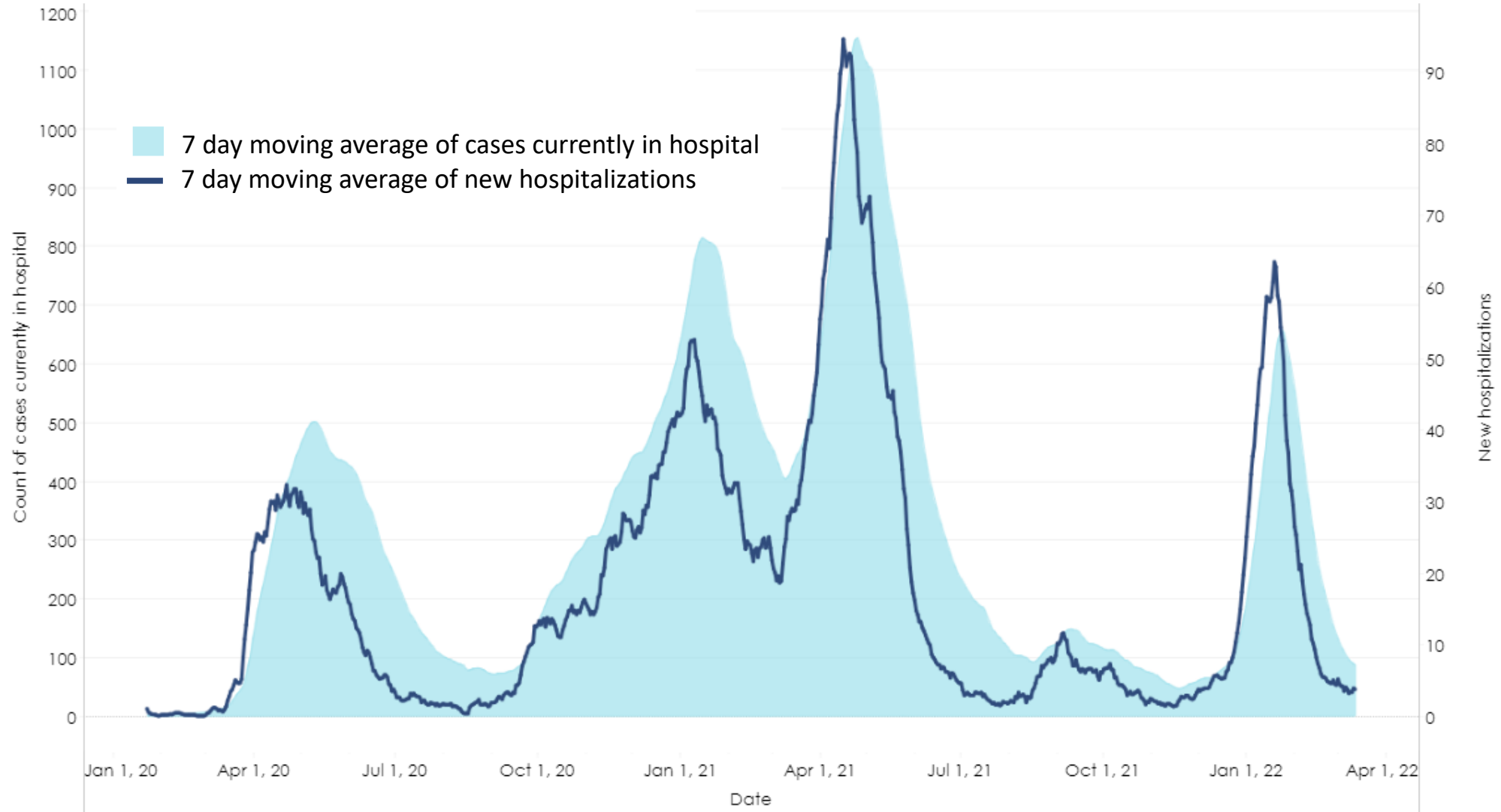
10.3%



Due to changes in eligibility for testing driven by increasing COVID-19 cases related to the Omicron variant, case counts are an underestimate of the true number of individuals with COVID-19 in Toronto. Changes in trends should be interpreted with caution.

* **Notes:** 1) Data as of: March 16, 2022 2) N/A 3) Data as of: Week ending March 12, 2022 4) Data as of March 14, 2022 5) Data as of: Mar 14 2022 6) Data for September, 2021

Steep decline in cases currently in hospital and of new hospitalizations

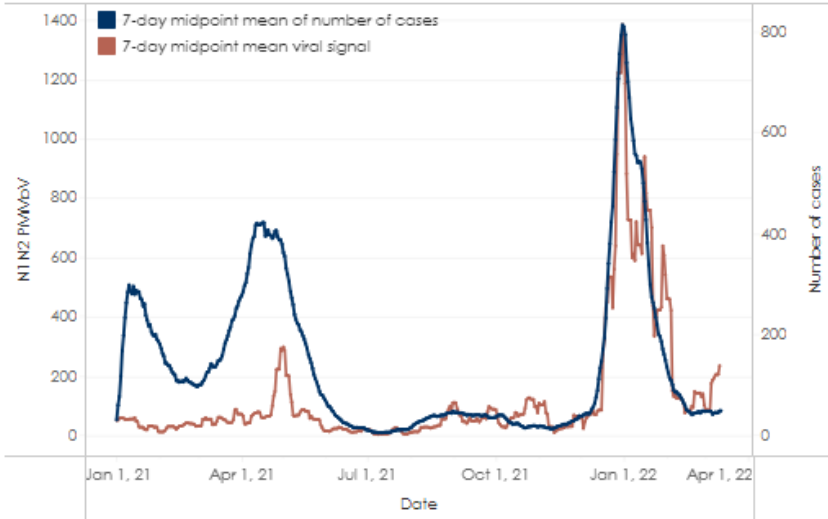


Data as of March 16, 2022

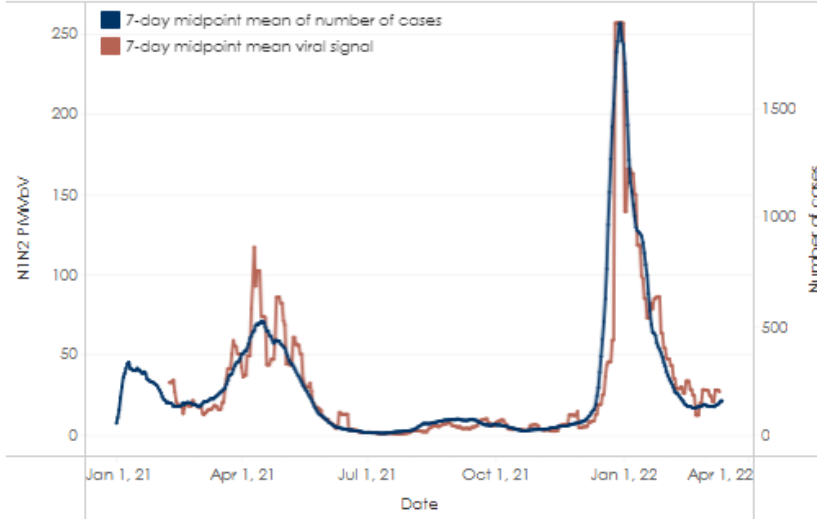
Data Source: The Public Health Case and Contact Management Solution (CCM), Ontario Ministry of Health

COVID-19 Toronto Wastewater trends are stable

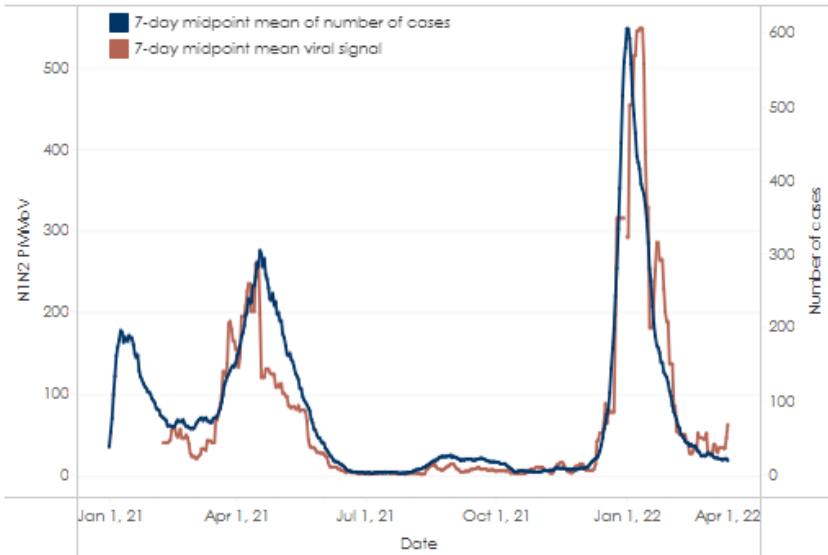
Humber



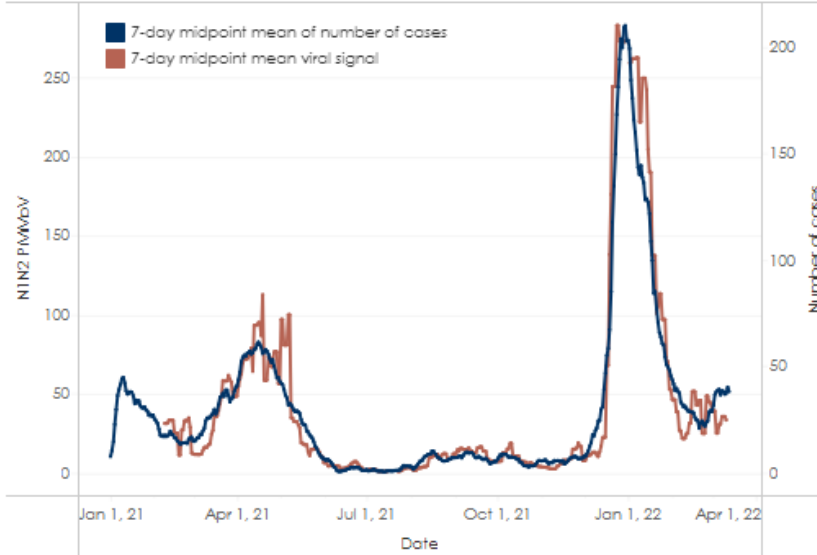
Ashbridges Bay



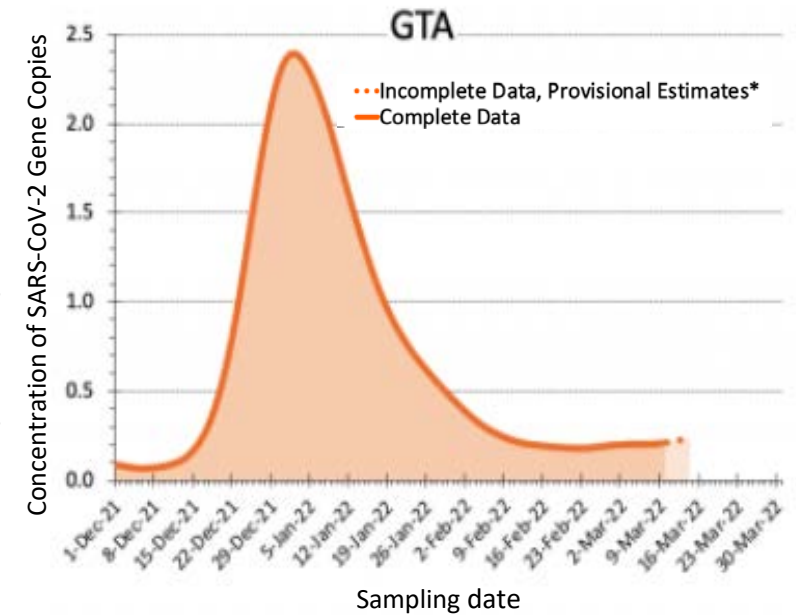
Highland Creek



North Toronto

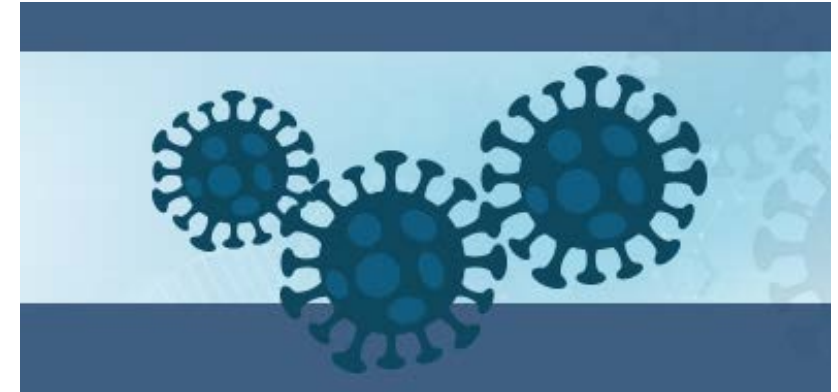


COVID-19 Wastewater Signals



*The dotted orange line and the lighter shaded area represent incomplete data (less than 90% of data available on a given date). The dashed red line thus represents the currently available best estimates using the statistical approaches above to account for not yet available data, but are provisional. As such they may be under- or over-estimates and may change when more data become available.

- Multiple indicators show that the Omicron wave has subsided since peaking in January.
- Increased COVID-19 activity is expected in the coming weeks due to the lifting of restrictions.
- The proportion of COVID-19 cases caused by the more transmissible Omicron sub-variant, BA.2., is growing. There is no evidence of increased severity with BA.2 compared to the original Omicron variant, BA.1.





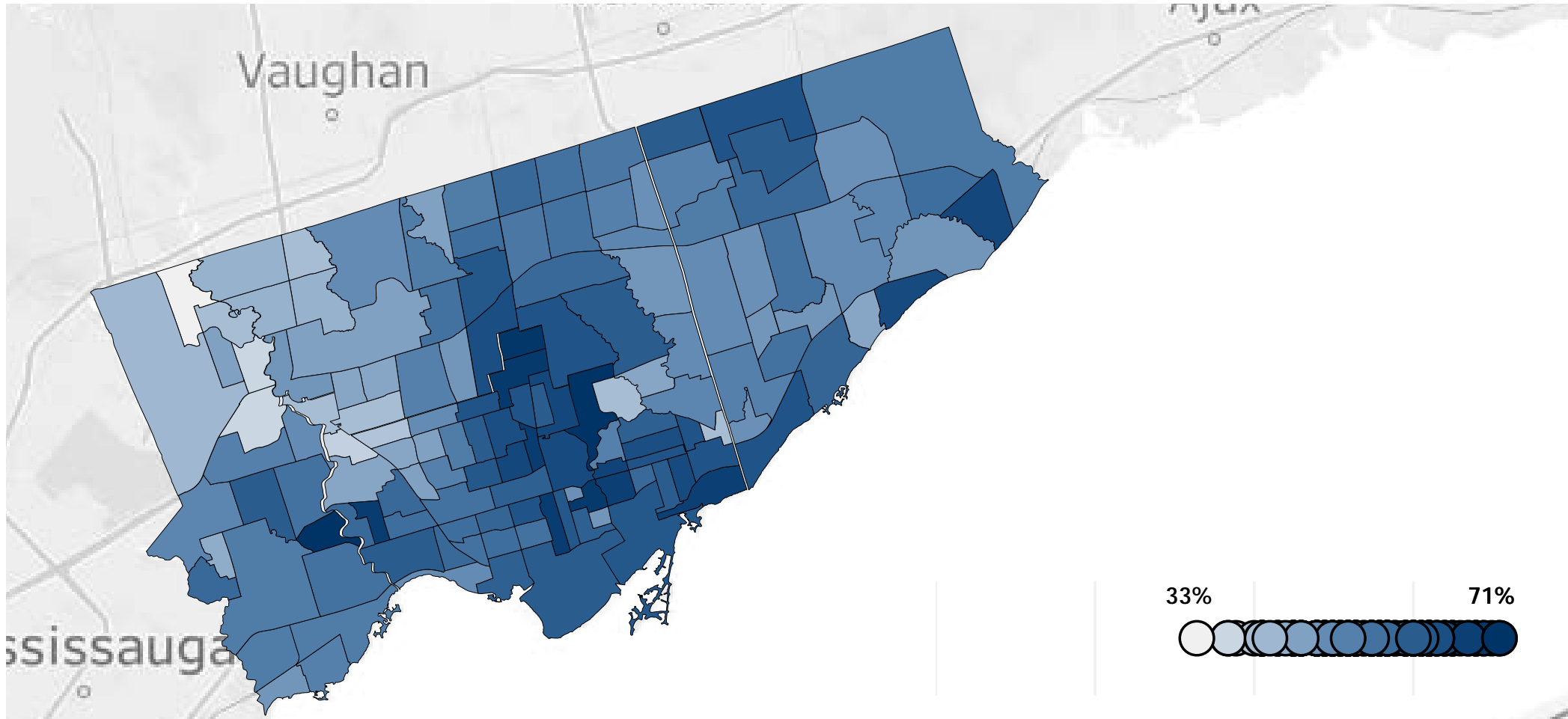
Update on COVID-19 Vaccination

COVID-19 vaccine coverage continues to increase

- Share of Toronto residents aged 12+ vaccinated:
 - Dose 1: 91%
 - Dose 2: 89%
- Additionally, nearly 65% of eligible Toronto residents aged 18 and above have three doses.
 - Over 83% of eligible individuals aged 70+ have received a third dose
- Vaccination rates among Toronto residents aged 5-11 continue to increase:
 - 57% have one dose
 - 39% have two doses

Third dose coverage by neighbourhood

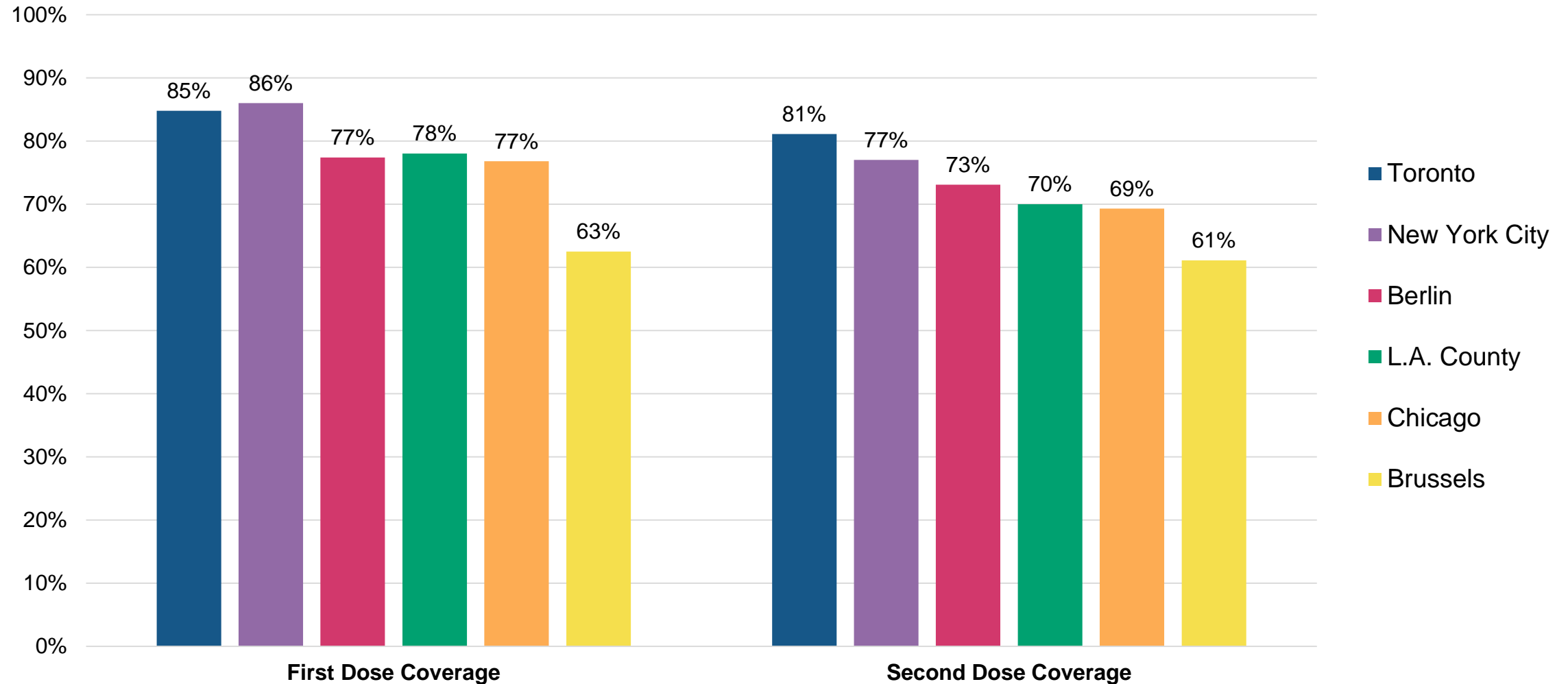
Third dose vaccination coverage, Toronto residents aged 18+



Data as of March 17, 2022

- Team Toronto is focusing its efforts on increasing vaccine uptake in 30 neighbourhoods that continue to experience barriers to vaccination.
- This has included mobile and pop-up clinics, hundreds of school clinics, and special event vaccination clinics, and ongoing work by the City's Vaccine Engagement Teams to promote vaccination with the help of trusted community ambassadors.
- The VaxTO campaign further supports these efforts by calling individuals who are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Current efforts focus on encouraging older individuals to access third doses.

Toronto is a leader in vaccine coverage among major cities



COVID-19 vaccine approvals

- Health Canada recently approved new COVID-19 vaccines manufactured by Novavax and Medicago.
- These vaccines work differently from the mRNA vaccines and offer new options for individuals to protect themselves and others from COVID-19.
- TPH and Team Toronto vaccination partners will make the vaccine available to Torontonians once supplies are received.
- Health Canada has also authorized use of the Moderna vaccine in children aged 6-11.

Strengthening and innovating approaches to COVID-19 vaccination

- **Preparing for the long-term:** Toronto Public Health is working to expand vaccination capacity and prepare for long-term COVID-19 vaccine administration.
- **Innovating new approaches:** Two pilot projects are underway to support primary care settings and pharmacies in administering the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Global vaccine equity:** The Medical Officer of Health joined public health leaders from around the world in issuing a Global Vaccine Equity Call for Action, requesting that governments and decision makers take urgent action to expand access to the COVID-19 vaccine in low-income countries.



Supporting Schools and Students

- Toronto Public Health is working with Toronto school board and schools to review lessons learned over the course of the pandemic and optimize approaches for future school years.
- Ongoing support from other orders of government is needed to help keep schools as safe as possible on a long-term basis.
- **Recommendation 5:** The Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health to work with the Province of Ontario and school boards to achieve the shared goal of create a healthy learning environment for children and report back to the Board of Health in the first quarter of 2023 with an update on actions taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 during the 2022-2023 school year.
- **Recommendation 6:** The Board of Health request the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada to continue to review best practices for COVID-19 infection prevention and control in schools, including facility upgrades, and to provide guidance and support to school boards to implement these measures, as required.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mental health and wellbeing of children and youth.
- Toronto Public Health is working with education sector partners to develop appropriate strategies to address this important public health issue and support positive mental health outcomes for children and youth.
- Further information will be provided to the Board of Health in the coming months as additional evidence becomes available and potential interventions are scoped.



COVID-19 Policy Updates

Removal of provincial restrictions

- On March 1, the Province of Ontario removed numerous COVID-19 restrictions, including the vaccine certificate program, physical distancing, and all indoor and outdoor capacity limits.
- Today, March 21, the Province removed masking requirements for most indoor settings.
- Masking continues to be required in certain settings, including public transit, hospitals, shelters and long-term care homes until at least April 27.

Removal of local public health measures

- On March 1, five class orders and letters of instruction were revoked.
- Today, the City's masking bylaw expired in line with changes to provincial masking requirements.
- Special requirements for apartment buildings (e.g. enhanced cleaning, signage) are set to expire in early April.
- If circumstances change, TPH will consult with Province through an established process to consider appropriate local public health protective measures.

TPH is continuing to provide COVID-19 guidance and support to Torontonians

- TPH continues to recommend that individuals follow public health measures to protect themselves and others from COVID-19.
- Guidance and resources will remain available on the City's website and will be kept up-to-date.
- The COVID-19 hotline will continue to operate and provide support to Torontonians seeking information and advice about COVID-19.
- The Toronto Voluntary Isolation Centre will continue to operate until March 2023, thanks to continued funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada.



Looking Back and Looking to the Future

- Over two years have passed since the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020.
- We are transitioning to a new stage in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has implications for:
 - **indicators and reporting:** due to testing limitations, other data and indicators are required to understand the state of COVID-19 activity
 - **assessing risk:** as broad public health measures are removed, Torontonians need to be supported in assessing risk based on situational context and personal circumstances

- Many important public health functions have been paused due to the demands of COVID-19 response. This has exacerbated certain existing public health issues.
- Over the course of the pandemic, other health issues have emerged.
- The pandemic has also demonstrated the need for a renewed approach to addressing health inequities.
- While some functions have continued through the pandemic, there is an opportunity to enhance others. TPH is currently developing and implementing an approach to resuming public health functions and addressing new public health challenges.

- Our successes in responding to the pandemic and in mounting a strong vaccination campaign are due in large part to the incredible efforts of TPH staff.
- Addressing fatigue and supporting staff well-being is a key priority for TPH at this time, and will be considered when developing TPH's strategic goals for the months to come.