

COVID-19 Laboratory tests and number confirmed positive in Canada, March to September 2020

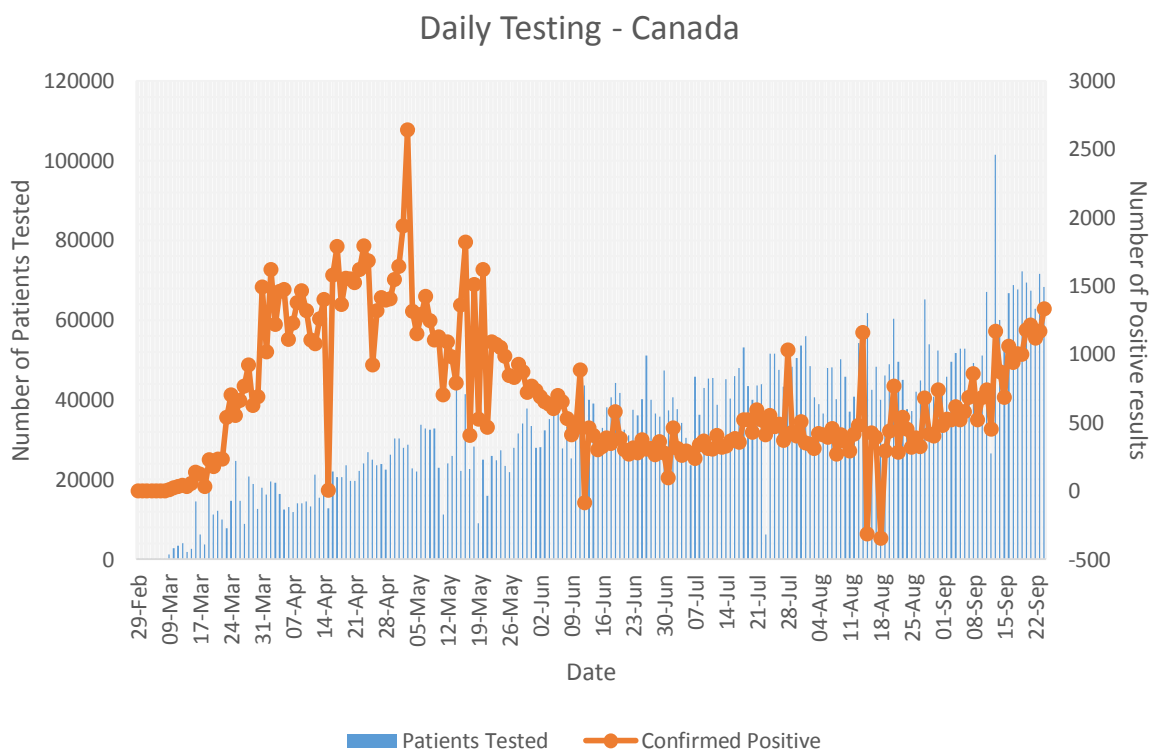
Data up to September 19, 2020

The Public Health Agency of Canada has been collating COVID-19 laboratory test data during the COVID-19 pandemic. In January and the first several weeks of February, National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) was confirming presumptive positive cases for all provinces. Provinces started to confirm their on laboratory diagnostics for the virus that causes COVID-19 on the dates shown below:

- British Columbia – February 24
- Ontario - February 25
- Quebec - March 4
- Alberta - March 8
- Saskatchewan – March 20
- Nova Scotia – March 20
- New Brunswick – March 20
- Newfoundland – March 20
- Manitoba – March 26
- Prince Edward Island – June 18

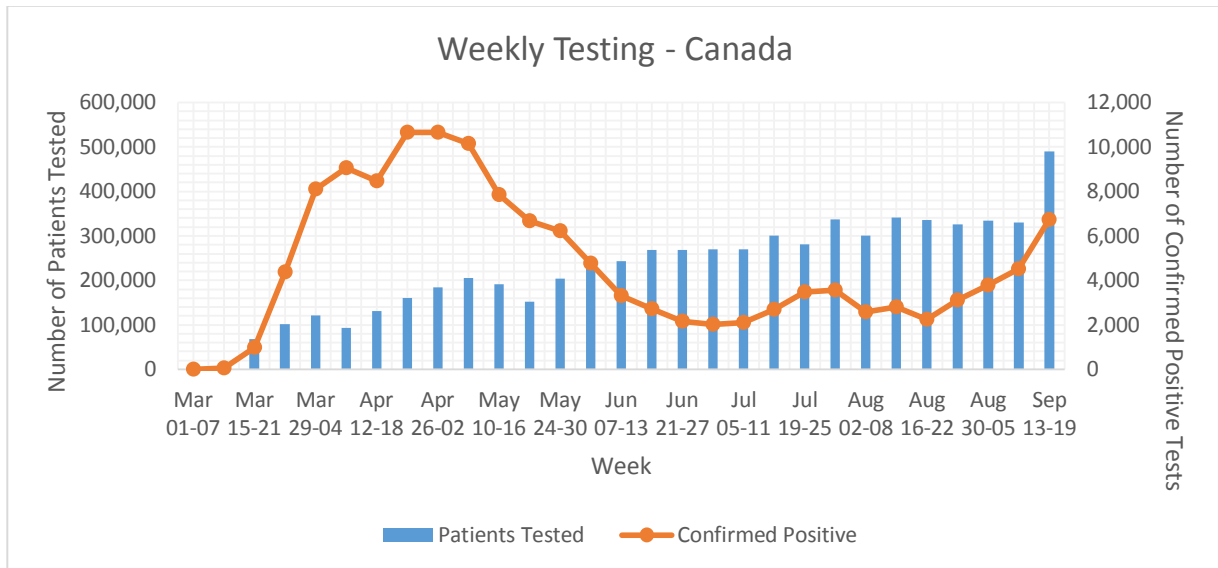
The NML continues to provide all provinces and territories with laboratory reference services. These testing services provide a variety of support to provincial and territorial laboratories across Canada including confirmatory testing, quality assurance, and in-depth analysis of difficult to diagnose specimens.

Figure 1. Patients tested and confirmed positives by day in Canada, week of March 1-7 to week of September 13-19, 2020



Due to reporting differences over time and by provinces and territories e.g. no weekend reports, the daily numbers fluctuate significantly. Therefore weekly would be more appropriate representation of the situation. See below.

Figure 2. Patients tested and confirmed positives by week in Canada, week of March 1-7 to week of September 13-19, 2020



COVID-19 Percent Positivity in Canada, March to September 2020

Data up to September 19, 2020

The Public Health Agency of Canada has been tracking percent positivity as a key indicator during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Percent positivity allows us to determine the proportion of positive COVID-19 cases among those who are tested. Note that this metric may be influenced by factors such as changes in patterns of testing, availability of testing, recommendations regarding who should be tested, and is subject to jurisdictional variations.
- A higher percent positive suggests higher transmission and that there are likely more people with coronavirus in the community who haven't been tested yet.
- The percent positive is a critical measure because it gives us an indication how widespread infection is in the area where the testing is occurring—and whether levels of testing are keeping up with levels of disease transmission.
- The [Detailed weekly epidemiological report](#) provides the percent positivity for the report week and a comparison to the previous week. This report also details laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 detection metrics, including weekly percent positivity by province.
- The cumulative percent positivity is available on the [Health Infobase](#).
- A summary of the weekly percent positivity of COVID-19 lab tests in Canada over time is shown in Figure 1. This analysis, conducted September 25, 2020, provides the percent positivity from mid-March 2020 as this is the point at which a full dataset was available.

Figure 3. Weekly percent positivity of COVID-19 lab tests in Canada, week of March 15-21 to week of September 13-19, 2020

