

COVID-19 Tracking at UAlberta Throughout Winter 2022

July 12, 2022

Prepared for UASU Executive Committee



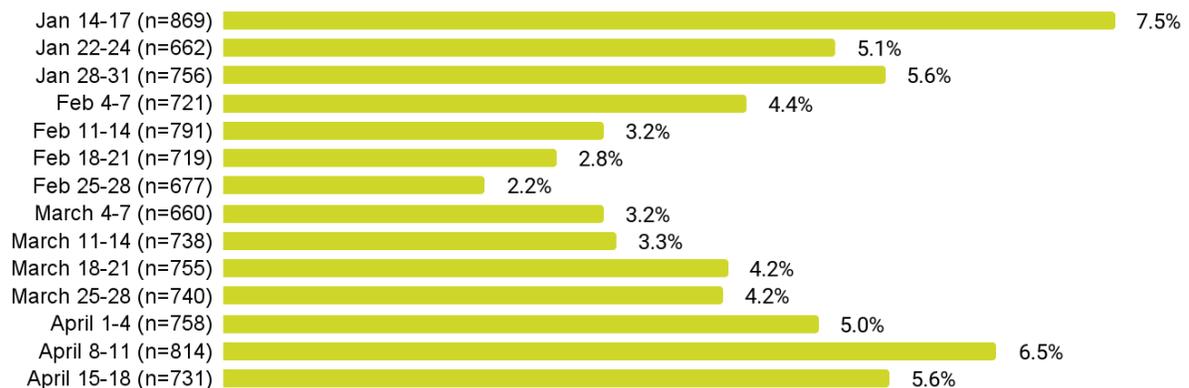
Overview

Throughout the Winter 2022 semester, the UASU conducted a weekly two-question student survey that measured whether students had tested for, and tested positive for, COVID-19. To eliminate self-selection bias, each of the 14 incidences of this survey was appended to an unrelated general-interest survey. Though the survey ran weekly, the question specified student experiences in the previous TWO weeks. Each survey had between 650 and 900 respondents, representing around 1/3 of the users of the Perks platform over each survey's time period. While Perks users do tend to be somewhat more engaged than the average student, we consider these results broadly representative of the student body.

Developing trends and preliminary versions of the following data were shared with University governance and the Board of Governors throughout the semester, in connection with student safety issues and priorities.

Students Contracting COVID-19

UASU data: UAlberta undergraduates who tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous two weeks

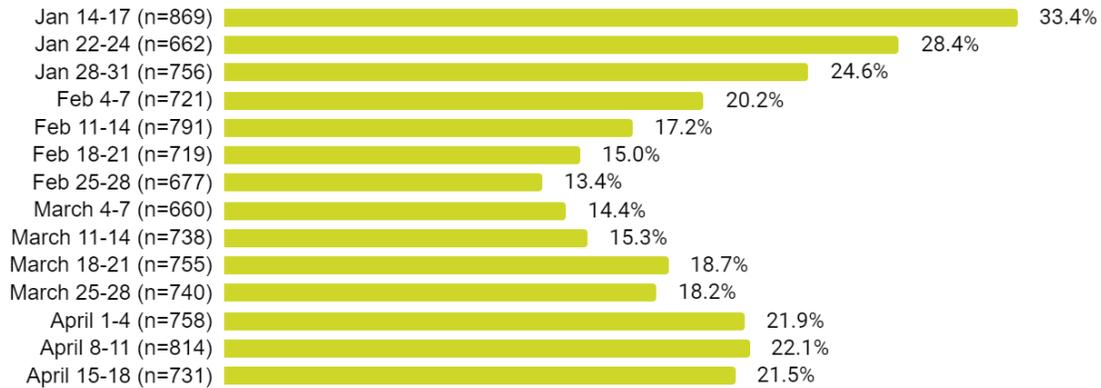


This pattern parallels Edmonton's wastewater tracking data from the [Centre for Health Informatics](#) (CIHR): a spike in the first two weeks of January (the height of Omicron), a low point at the end of February/start of March, and the beginnings of another spike in the first two weeks of April.

In any given two-week period during Winter 2021 (both with and without removing alternating/overlapping time periods), around 4.5% of UAlberta students tested positive for COVID-19.

Students Taking COVID-19 Tests

UASU data: UAlberta undergraduates who took a COVID-19 test in the previous two weeks

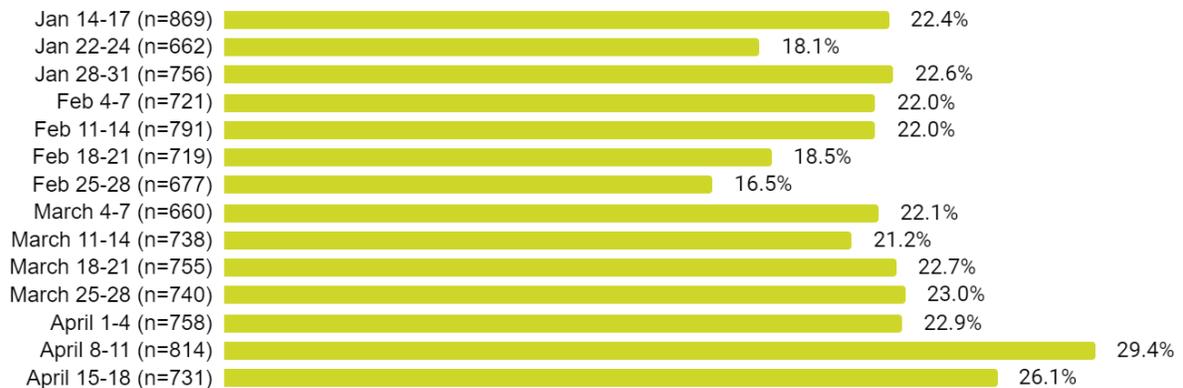


The previous question's results are tightly linked to the rate at which students took COVID-19 tests. Again, these patterns align with Edmonton's wastewater data: students were more likely to take tests during peaks in COVID-19 infection. At the height of Omicron, fully $\frac{1}{3}$ of students had taken a test in the preceding two weeks.

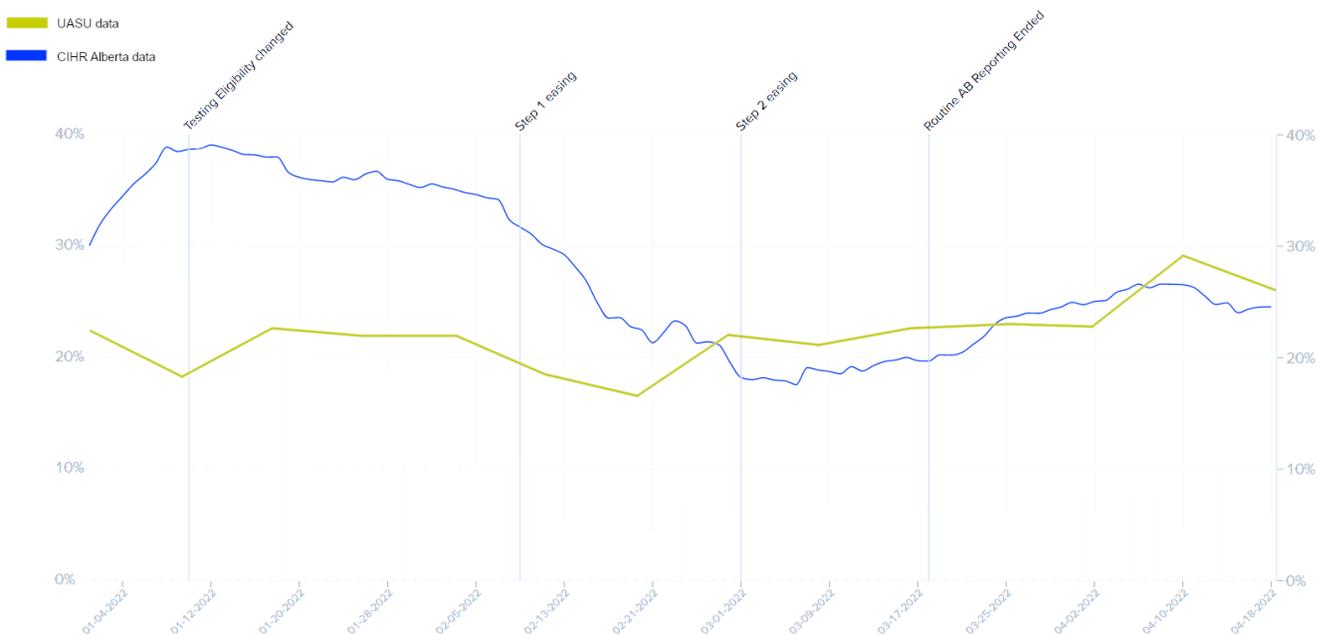
Test Positivity Rate

Comparing the 'took a test' data with the 'tested positive' data, we were able to explore test positivity, a key metric for assessing whether students had adequate testing access. Testing access speaks to health care access, campus access (at some points), and whether public health data is sufficiently capturing the extent of pandemic waves. Persistently, we found that students reported test positivity rates around 22%.

UASU data: UAlberta undergraduates' COVID-19 test positivity rates in the previous two weeks



This data compares straightforwardly to the CIHR's test positivity data for Alberta in the same period, January 1–April 18. Weekly average positivity rate data is not available for Edmonton specifically.



The major difference between UASU test positivity data and these Alberta-wide trends is that UASU students had much lower (or less high) test positivity during Omicron. This suggests that students may have had somewhat better (or less insufficient) testing access than many other Albertans throughout January. Before and during Omicron, the UASU made testing access a priority request to both the University and the provincial government. Student advocacy may well have been a contributing factor in the level of testing access that students received during Omicron.