

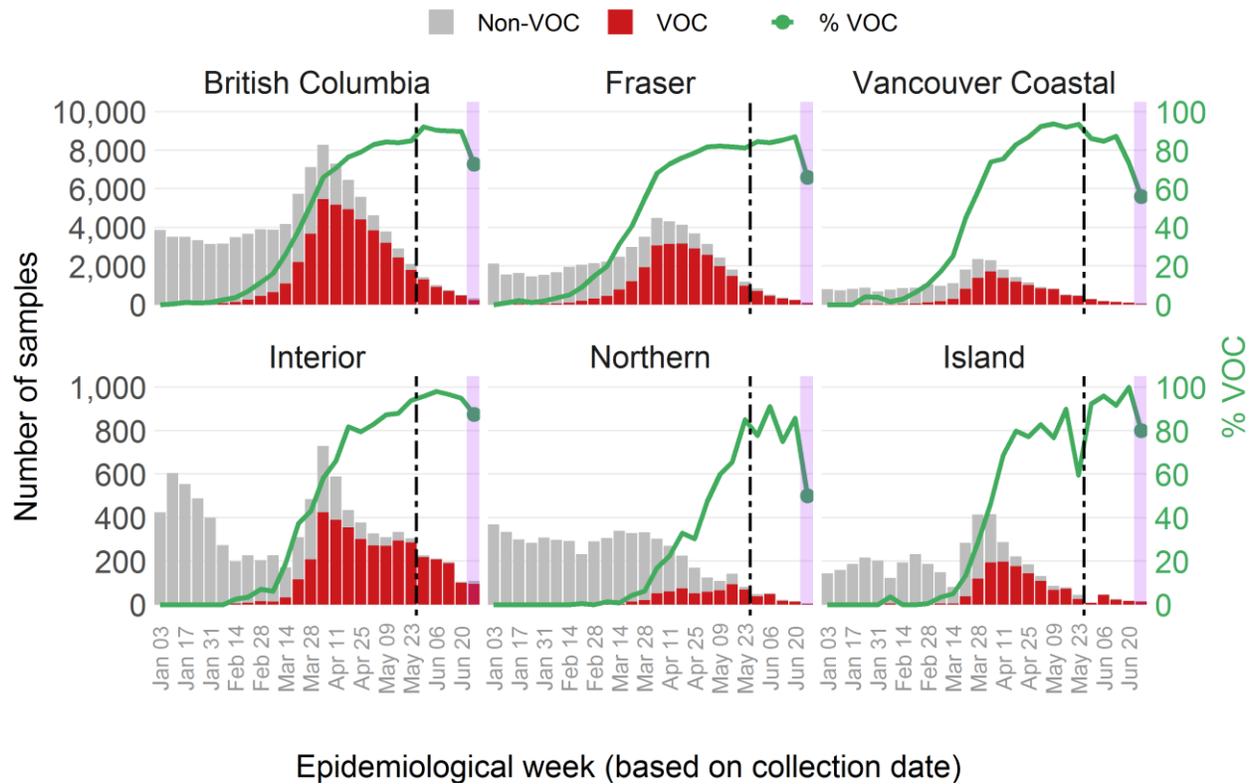
Weekly update on Variants of Concern (VOC)

Jul 9, 2021

B.C. has transitioned to whole genome sequencing on all positive samples to provide gold standard analysis to detect VOC and to support outbreak responses.

Of all positive samples tested in epi week 26 (Jun 27 - Jul 3) in BC, ~ 73% were confirmed VOCs (Figure 1). VOC prevalence was similar across Health Authorities, except in Northern Health, where it was lower, at 50%. Data from epi week 26 reflects partial data due to a lag in receipt of positive samples from front line laboratories; estimates are expected to change as more specimens are received and sequenced.

Figure 1. Prevalence of presumptive VOC, by epi week in BC and Health Authorities, Jun 27 - Jul 03



Data from the PLOVER system at the BCCDC Public Health Lab.

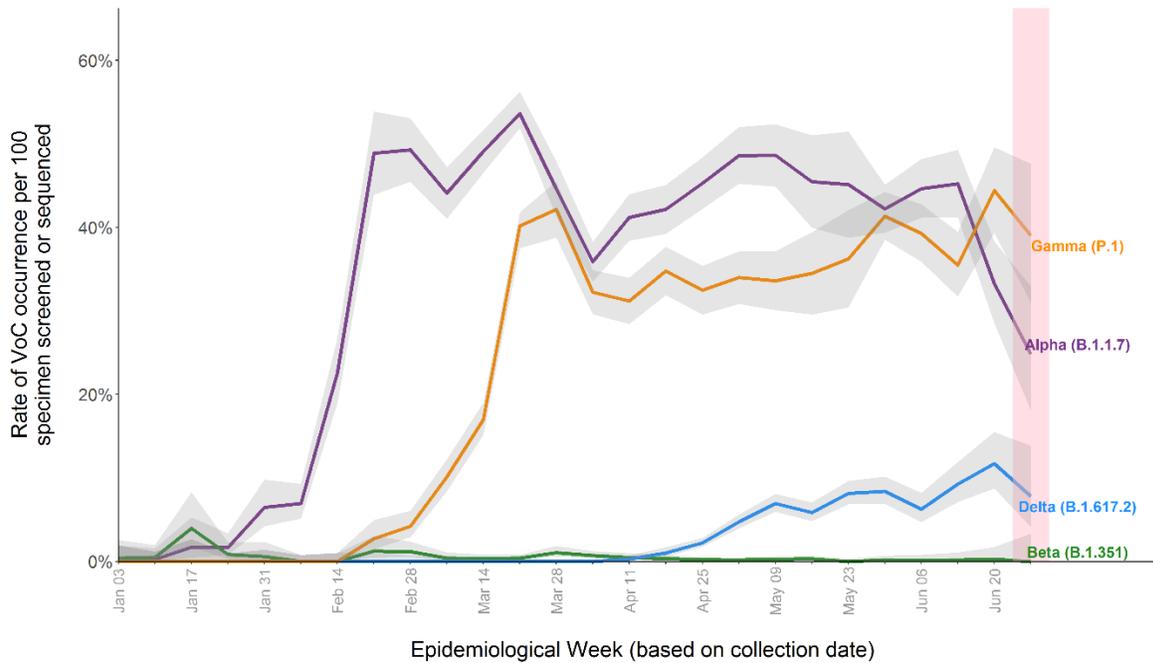
Purple shaded box reflects partial data due to the results being available 4-7 days after the sample is received by the BCCDC Public Health Lab, and estimates for the latest epi week may change as more sequencing results come back.

Dotted line shows the week of transition to full WGS

The main circulating variants are Alpha (B.1.1.7) and Gamma (P.1), respectively accounting for about 25 % and 40% of positive specimens sequenced.

Please note that the estimate of distribution of VOC lineages (Figure 2) in BC for latest epi week 26 (Jun 27 - Jul 3) may change as more sequencing results are analyzed.

Figure 2. Estimated Sample prevalence[^] of VOCs by lineage by epi week of collection date, Jan 3 - Jul 3 2021.



[^] Sample prevalence is calculated as the rate of occurrence of a given VOC lineage per 100 positive lab samples. It was estimated from the proportion of presumptive VOC from screening and the proportion of confirmed VOC via sequencing (excluding outbreaks and targeted surveillance) until May 30th, 2021 when BC transitioned to WGS on all positive cases. From week 13 (March 28, 2021), based on current prevalence, VOC screening results with both E484K and N501Y mutations are assumed to be P.1, given a very low prevalence of B.1.351 in BC. As of week 22 (May 30, 2021), prevalence of VOC is estimated from sequencing results only.

Pink shaded box reflects partial data due to a lag in receipt of positive samples from front line laboratories; estimates are expected to change as more specimens are received and sequenced.

Table 1. Sequencing-based VOC prevalence and approximate distribution by VOC lineage in BC and Health Authorities, latest available estimates on epi week 26 (Jun 27 - Jul 03).

Region	Total positive tests	Sample prevalence VOCs*			Relative Proportion of VOC***		
		%B.1.1.7 (Alpha)	%B.1.617 (Delta)	%P.1 (Gamma)	%B.1.1.7	%B.1.617	%P.1
BC	362	25	8	39	35	11	55
FHA	250	27	2	40	39	3	58
IHA	105	38	13	38	43	14	43
NHA	15	50	0	0	100	0	0
VCH**	112	0	24	40	0	38	63
VIHA	17	40	0	40	50	0	50

* Sample prevalence is calculated as the rate of occurrence of a given VOC lineage per 100 positive lab samples. It is estimated from the proportion of confirmed VOC via sequencing. Note, before epi week 22, sample prevalence was previously calculated using both screening and sequencing data.

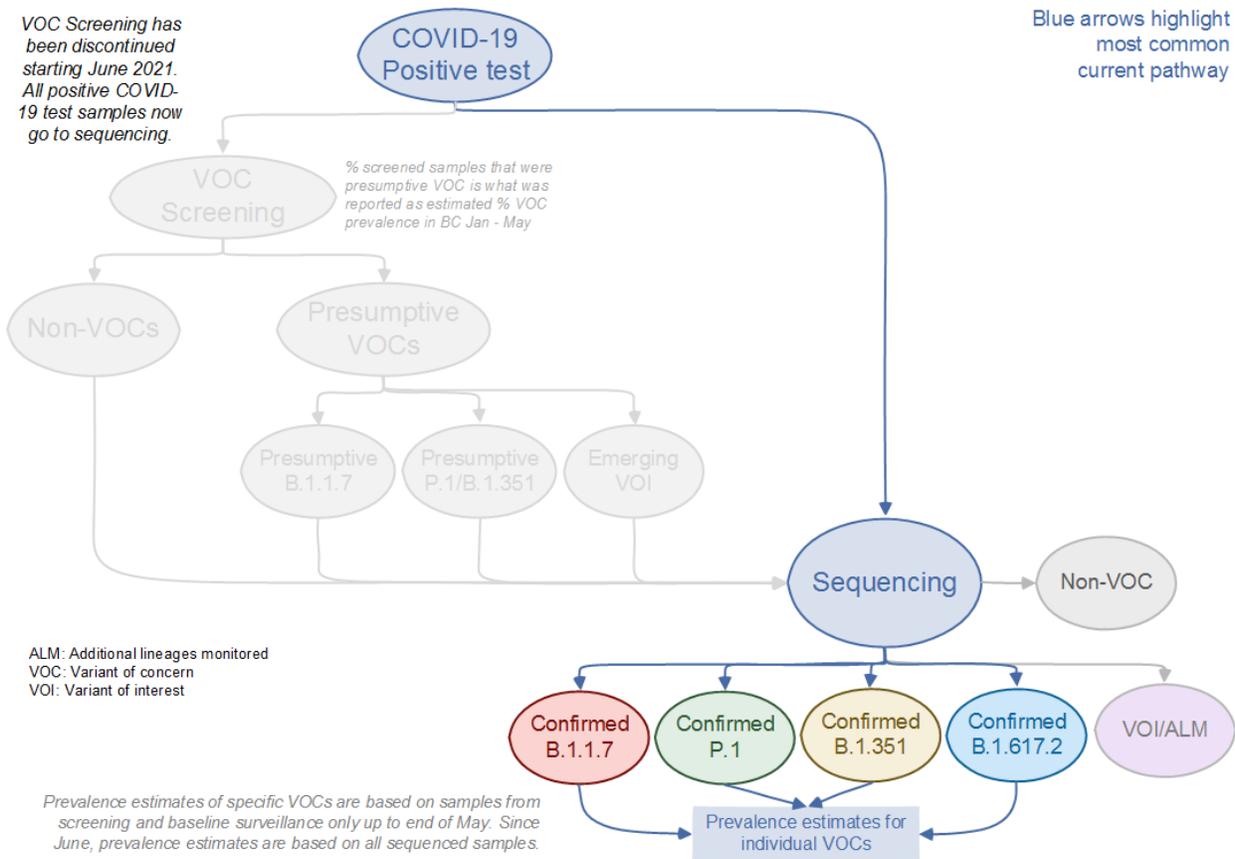
**Note: Due to a lag in receipt of positive samples from front line labs the reported estimates for VoC by Health Authorities are expected to change as more specimens are received and sequenced.

***Relative Proportion from the total VOC identified through sequencing. The proportion for B.1.351 not shown in this table due to small numbers. Note, before epi week 22, relative proportions were previously calculated using both screening and sequencing data. The proportion for B.1.351 not shown in this table due to small numbers.

Variants of Interests (VOI)

As illustrated in Figure 3 below, BCCDC Public Health Lab is continuously monitoring for both VOCs and VOIs. There are numerous VOIs, and they may not necessarily become VOCs. Once a VOI becomes a VOC, it will be added to our VOC reporting.

Figure 3. Overview of the screening and sequencing process applied to positive COVID-19 tests in BC, Jun 2021.



Please note the turnaround time sequencing which takes approximately 4-7 days, but it could also take longer if there are lab backlogs or if there are delays in receiving current positive samples from front line laboratories.

Whole genome sequencing (WGS)

Whole genome sequencing (Illumina only) was performed on 42,701 specimens up to epi week 26 (Jun 27 - Jul 3) in BC, of which 27,370 came back as variants under closer observation. Table 2 below presents the number of variant samples sequenced; it does not represent the number of variant COVID cases. As illustrated in Figure 3 above, BC has transitioned to whole genome sequencing on all positive samples.

Table 2: Frequencies of SARS-CoV-2 monitored genetic lineages confirmed by WGS

Identified Lineage* (Pangolin version 2.4.2/ PangoLEARN2021-05-19)	Nomenclature	Category**	First Detected/Alternate Name	TOTAL
B.1.1.7	Alpha	VOC	UK	14063
B.1.351	Beta	VOC	South Africa	154
P.1	Gamma	VOC	Brazil/Japan	10695
B.1.617.2	Delta	VOC	India	1090
B.1.617.1	Kappa	VOI	India; double mutant	286
B.1.617.3		VOI	India	4
A.23.1		VOI	TBC	23
B.1.427	Epsilon	VOI	California, USA	4
B.1.429	Epsilon	VOI	California, USA	694
B.1.1.318		VOI	Switzerland	19
B.1.616		VOI	France	0
C.37#	Lambda	VOI	Chile	1
P.2	Theta	VOI	Brazil	181
P.3	Iota	VOI	Philippines	1
B.1.526	Zeta	VOI	New York, USA	12
B.1.525	Eta	VOI	Nigeria	94
B.1.526.1		ALM	New York, USA	8
B.1.618		ALM	India; triple mutant	28
P.1.1##		ALM	Brazil	4
AY.1###		ALM	India; Delta+	0
B.1.621		ALM	Colombia	9
TOTAL				27370

** Lineage assignments are based on the use of Pangolin, an epidemiological lineage assignment tool (github.com/cov-lineages/pangolin); these may change with time as new SARS-CoV-2 genomic data becomes available.*

*** Variant category includes: Variant of Concern (VoC), Variant of Interest (VoI) and Additional Lineages Monitored (ALM).*

Note that a new lineage, C.37 (Lambda) has been designated (VoI) as Variant of Interest and added to the list of variants that are closely monitored.

Note that P.1 has been further divided into 2 lineages (P.1 and P.1.1).

Note that AY.1 is a new sub-lineage of B.1.617.2 (Delta) with the addition of a mutation also found in B.1.351 (Beta).