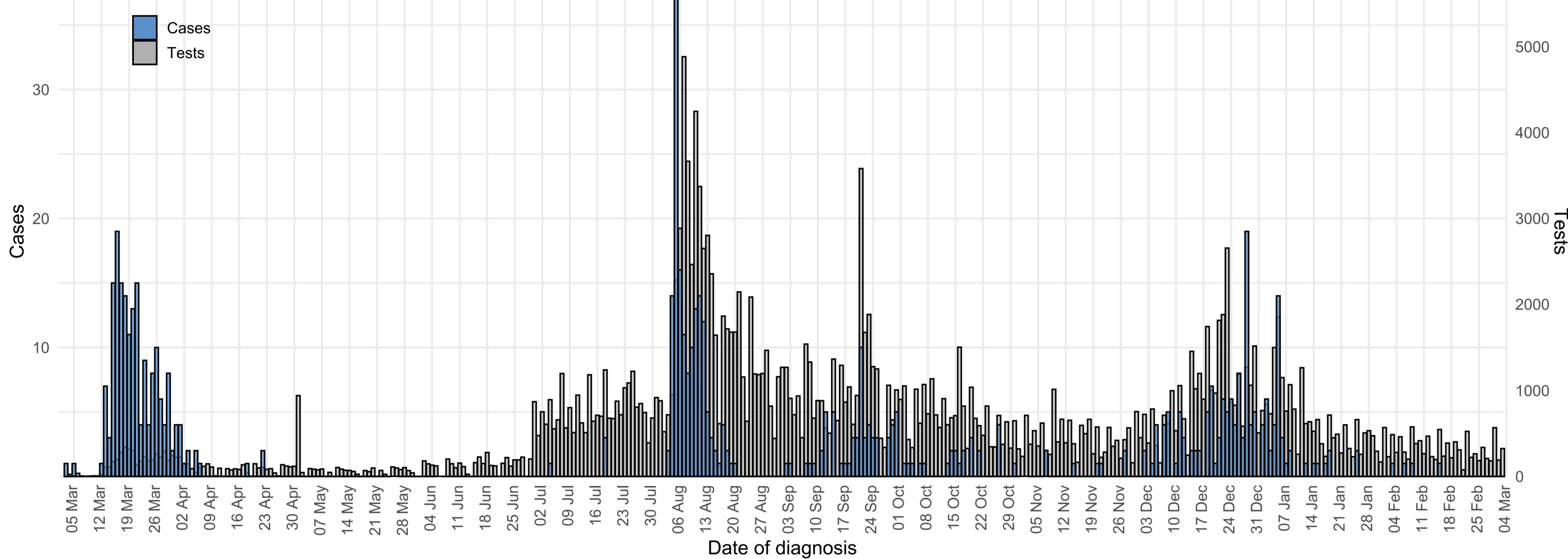


Repeated Elimination of COVID-19 The Pandemic Response in the Faroe Islands

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COVID-19 cases and tests in the Faroe Islands from March 3rd 2020 to March 4th 2021



All COVID-19 cases (blue) and RT-PCR tests (grey) in the Faroe Islands, from March 3rd 2020, to March 4th 2021.

During this period, 660 COVID-19 cases were confirmed in the Faroe Islands; however, 63 of these were amongst foreign ship workers (not shown) that did not interact with the population. During this period, there were 23 hospital admissions for COVID-19 and one registered death within 30 days of a COVID-19 diagnosis.

There were performed 233,608 RT-PCR tests, which corresponds to 445,579 tests per 100,000. This was amongst the highest per capita in the world. The number of tests surged in response to the different waves of cases, especially during August, when on one day 4,882 tests were performed

Cases were seen in four separate waves, which are further categorized in the figures below. Cases are categorized as imported; local – quarantined; local - not quarantined. This provides an overview of the effect of measures taken and especially contact tracing.

Introduction:

The Faroe Islands was one of the first countries in the western hemisphere to eliminate the first wave of COVID-19 in April 2020 after initial high rates relative to the population size. However, as travelling has not been restricted, reintroduction of the disease has been inevitable. After the initial wave, the Faroes have experienced three subsequent waves of infection; all were eliminated after massive testing and intensive contact tracing, which has led to life being relatively unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Faroe Islands, compared to other countries.

The fourth wave was anticipated due to travelling in connection with the Christmas holiday period, and handling of this wave included a mixture of testing and restrictions on gatherings and nightlife activities.

Conclusion:

The success of the Faroese strategy can be attributed to several factors. Being an island nation and a small population has in some regards been advantageous, but building an efficient test apparatus even before the pandemic took off has been instrumental. However, without a high adherence by the public to the authorities' guidelines, and effective test and trace systems, as well as short term lock-down restrictions when infection rates were high, elimination would not have been reached. The effective strategy in the Faroe Islands, limiting the number of cases as much as possible, has avoided many harmful effects on both public health and the economy. Because of this, the Faroese strategy can be described as a success until now.

Measures taken:

Different measures were taken during the course of the pandemic. Early on, when the three first cases were discovered, societal lock-down was implemented and only essential travel was allowed. This was combined with recommended quarantine of 14 days for incoming travellers. After the first wave was eliminated, the goal was to minimize local transmission and keep the number of infections to a minimum.

Through all of the waves, a high focus has been on testing and contact tracing. This was combined with recommended quarantine for travellers.

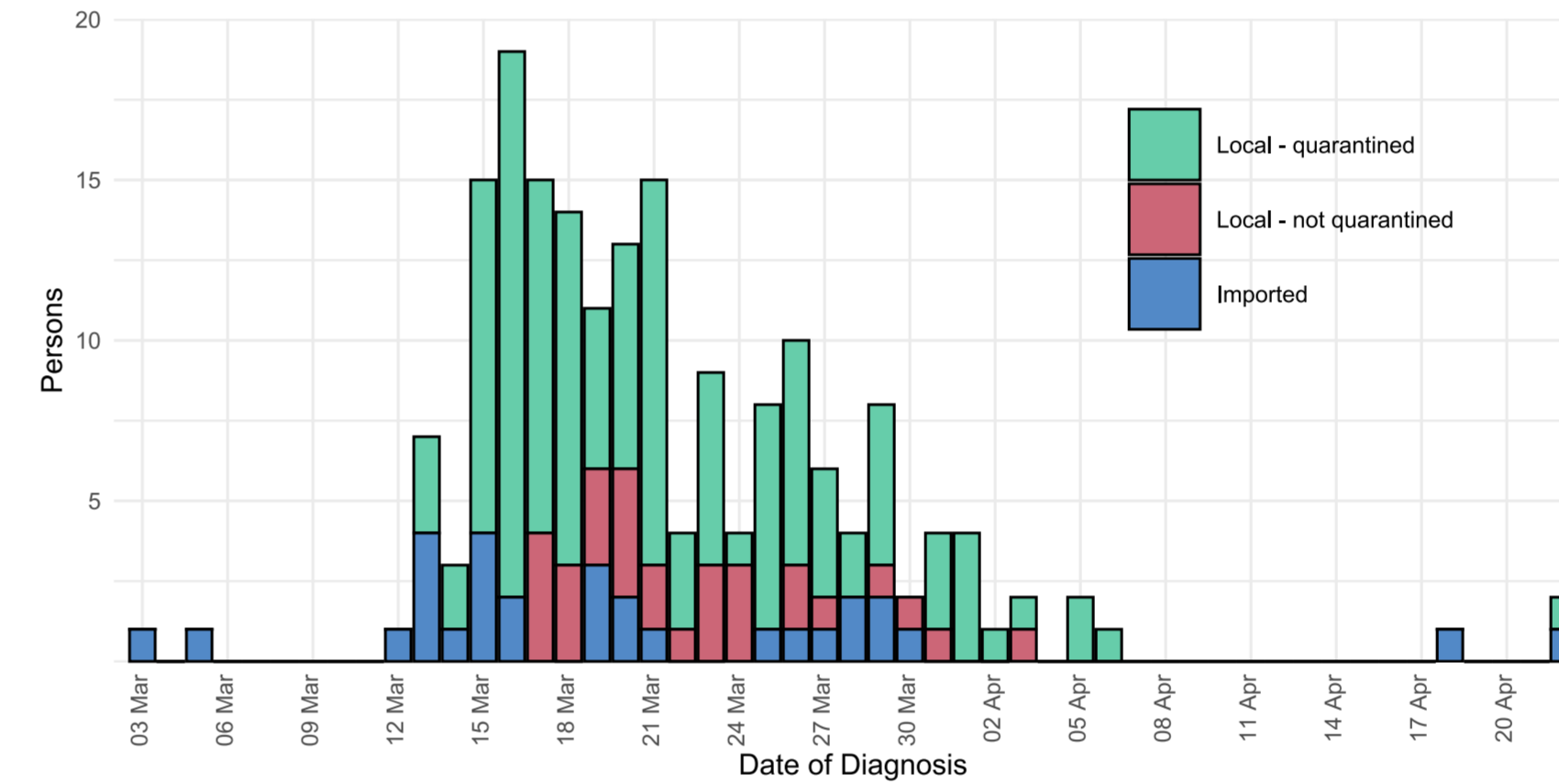
Restrictions had been lifted before the second wave and the recommendation for quarantine for travellers was replaced by a single test at the border. As a response to the sudden surge of cases, an appeal for the public to be tested was made by the government, and the requirement of referral for testing was lifted making it freely available to anyone.

After the second wave, a further test was recommended for travellers on day six after entry.

Key strategies

- Effective contact tracing
- Freely available testing and fast results
- High adherence to guidelines
- Short and effective lockdown
- Tests for all travellers at the border and a second test some days later
- Aiming for elimination

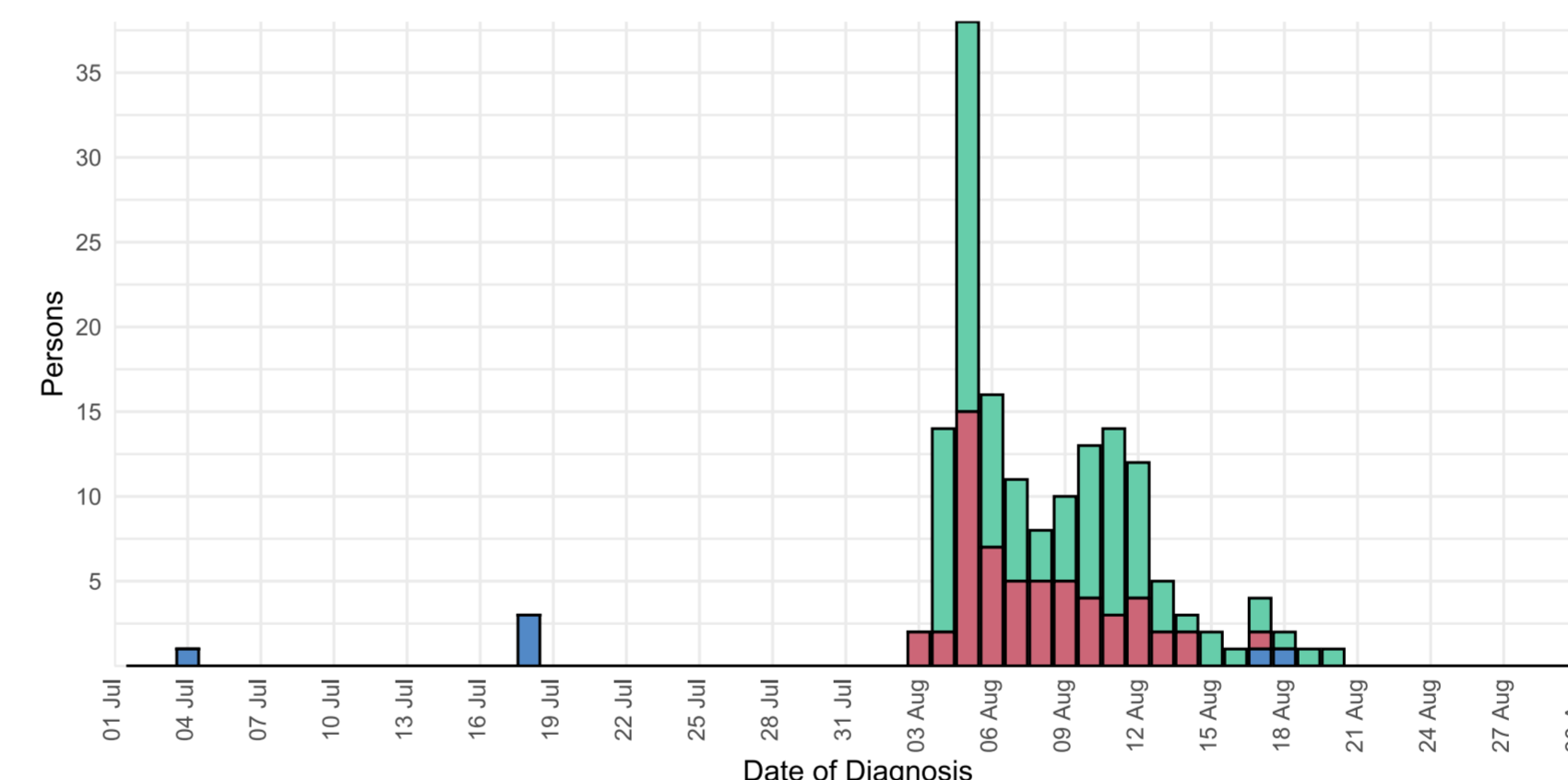
First wave



187 cases - March 3rd to April 22nd.

Imported cases set off the first wave, and subsequent cases were for the most part among local within quarantine. However, some cases persisted out of quarantine, indicating that societal lock-down was probably necessary to reach elimination of the first wave.

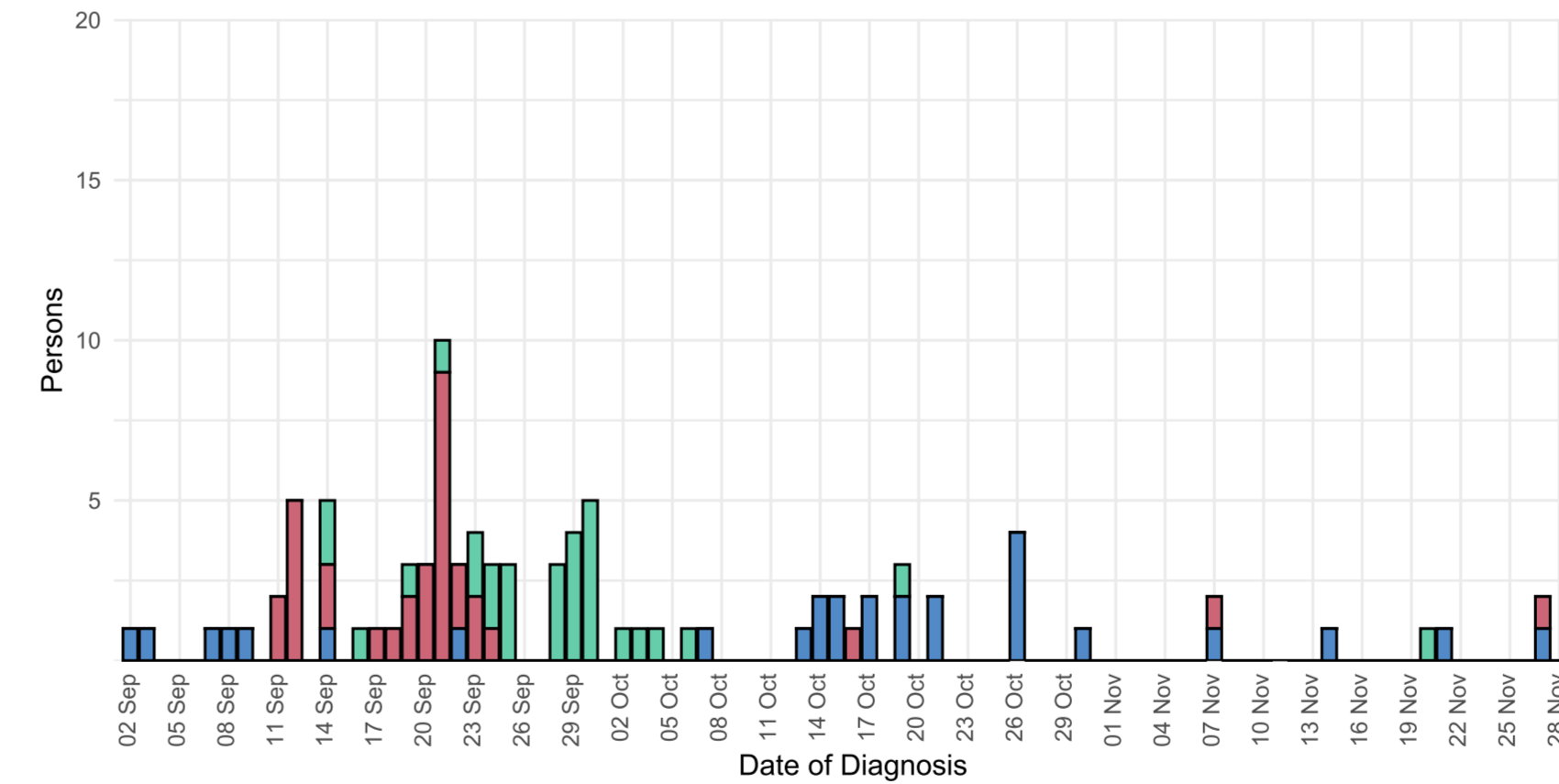
Second wave



157 cases - August 3rd to August 20th.

The second wave was set off from cases without travel history, as the initial imported cases had been missed. This, in combination with large social gatherings during the national holiday a few days before, led to a sudden spike. In response, testing was ramped up and quickly ended the second wave.

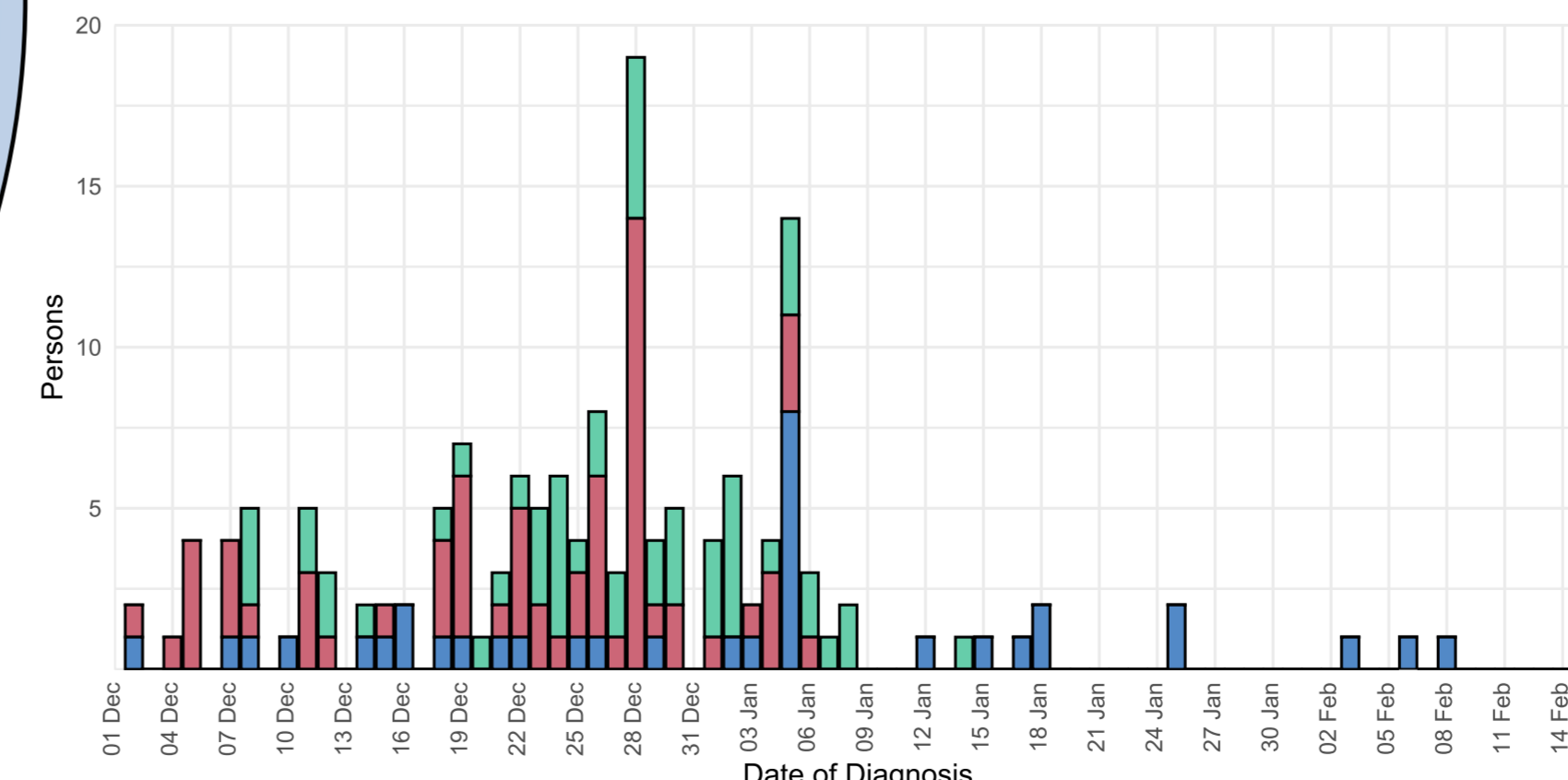
Third wave



92 cases - September 1st to October 7th.

A third wave was seen during September. At this point, a test on day six after entry was recommended, which meant imported cases were found. The surge was initiated by a few imported cases, followed by some local cases outside of quarantine. After these initial cases, new cases were found within quarantine, and the wave ended.

Fourth wave



155 cases - December 2nd to January 15th.

A fourth wave was seen during the holiday period. Some cases persisted outside of quarantine throughout. However, a moderate amount of testing, and some restrictions led to an eventual end of the fourth wave.



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Link to article 1



Link to article 2



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