



## **Epidemiological report of SARS-CoV-2 on the Dutch Caribbean CAS- and BES-islands:**

**February 2023 (week 5-9)**

Produced by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands - RIVM  
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### **Summary of SARS-CoV-2 epidemiological surveillance on the CAS-BES islands**

Last month, the number of SARS-CoV-2 positive test results in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands fell sharply compared to the previous month (from 216 to 89 cases). The number of COVID-19 related hospital admissions declined further. In February, 16 patients were admitted due to/with COVID-19, compared to 27 patients in January. The COVID-19 related mortality remained low (<5 in both January and February). Carnival activities on various islands did not lead to a visible increase in the number of SARS-CoV-2 cases.

In February, Curaçao reported 8 new cases, <5 hospitalizations and no COVID-19 related deaths. The number of SARS-CoV-2 positive test results was considerably lower than in January (45). The number of COVID-19 related hospital admissions (<5) decreased compared to January, when 6 admissions were reported. No COVID-19 related deaths were reported in February (vs. <5 in January). In calendar week 8 (February 20-26), <5 per 100,000 inhabitants (number of inhabitants approx. 162,000) received a positive SARS-CoV-2 test result and the test positivity rate was <5%. There is much less testing on the island than in the autumn of 2022.

Aruba reported 61 positive test results, 13 admissions and <5 COVID-19-related deaths in February; nearly half of the number of cases in January (117). COVID-19 related hospital admissions remained the same compared to January (13); mortality increased slightly compared to a month earlier (0). In calendar week 8 (February 20-26), 8 per 100,000 inhabitants (number of inhabitants approx. 120,000) received a positive SARS-CoV-2 test result and the test positivity rate was 8.0%.

Sint Maarten reported <5 positive test results, <5 COVID-19-related hospitalizations (non-ICU) and no COVID-19-related deaths in February. The number of positive test results decreased compared to January (14). There was also a lot less testing on this island: 75 tests were conducted in February, in January there were 180. In week 7 (15-21 February), <5 per 100,000 inhabitants (number of inhabitants approx. 62,000) tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 test result and the test positivity rate was 7.7%.

In February, 15 SARS-CoV-2 infections were reported on Bonaire. On this island, too, that is considerably less than the number of reports in January (38). The number of COVID-19 related hospitalizations and deaths has been low for some time; no new admissions or deaths were reported in February. In calendar week 8 (February 20-26), 18 per 100,000 inhabitants (number of inhabitants approx. 23,000) received a positive SARS-CoV-2 test result and the test positivity rate was 22%.

No positive test results were reported on Sint Eustatius in January and February 2023. <5 positive test results were reported on Saba last month, in January there were also <5. No COVID-19 related hospitalizations or deaths were reported on either island in 2023.

### **Variants**

On Curaçao, Omicron XBB variants are dominant (100% at week 7, n=3). On Sint Maarten the BQ.1 variants (100% week 5, n=1) and XBB variants (100% week 6, n=1) are circulating. There are no genomic surveillance results from February 2023 available for the other islands. On Aruba, the XBB variants (56%, n=14) and BQ.1 variants (44%, n=11) were circulating in week 3. The BQ.1 variants circulate on Bonaire (100% in week 3, n=1). There are no surveillance results available for Saba and Sint Eustatius for 2023.

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## Information on COVID-19 surveillance on the CAS and BES islands

The Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands entails the countries Curaçao, Aruba, and Dutch St Maarten (CAS-islands), as well as the overseas municipalities Bonaire, St Eustatius, and Saba (BES-islands). Surveillance data of SARS-CoV-2 cases is collected on each island in collaboration with local medical professionals, laboratories, and public health departments. These surveillance data are shared by the CAS- and BES-islands through daily updates and stored in the SARS-CoV-2 IHR Daily Overview Dutch Caribbean; an overview of the spread of SARS-CoV-2 on the CAS- and BES-islands. This report has been generated using surveillance data registered at the RIVM between March 22nd 2020 and 28 February 2023. Sometimes surveillance data is reported to the RIVM one or multiple days later than documented on the islands. The data presented in this report are based on the date of registration at the RIVM. Because islands retrospectively correct surveillance data, the crude estimates in this report may differ slightly from the data shared by each island. The data reported here may lag behind in case more recent data has not yet been reported to the RIVM by respective islands. It is not known from all positive cases if they were admitted to the hospital or have passed away. This is due to the mainland Netherlands, the CAS-, and the BES-islands not being obligated to report on hospital admissions and deaths from persons with a positive test result for SARS-CoV-2. The actual numbers are therefore (probably) higher than the reported numbers.

## Changed reporting of COVID-19 surveillance data throughout the pandemic

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the testing policies on the islands have undergone various changes. Not all persons with SARS-CoV-2 are getting tested. The number of SARS-CoV-2 infections is likely to be higher than what is reported here.

As of March 8, 2022, SARS-CoV-2 positive test results are no longer be reported by the islands on a daily basis. It is possible that SARS-CoV-2 positive test results of more than one day are reported by an island within one reporting date. Data presented in this report may therefore be underreported if the update falls within an incomplete calendar week. Missing data does not mean that there are no positive SARS-CoV-2 test results, but that those data are reported by the island cumulatively at a later time, for example in the form of weekly data.

Until May 31, 2022, the local GGD on Curacao did contact tracing. Until June 4, 2022, Curacao offered free large-scale SARS-CoV-2 tests. From June 5 2022, onwards this policy changed and tests for SARS-CoV-2 are no longer free. People who want to be tested (or are recommended to be tested by their general practitioner) can be reimbursed by their health care provider from June 5 2022, onwards. Due to this policy change the number of people that will be tested at local labs will drop. Surveillance data dating from June 5, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. The percentage of positive tests from June 5, 2022, onwards cannot be compared to before in a straight-forward matter, mostly due to a change in group-composition of the people that are tested. The group-composition of future tests will be mostly travelers, (insured) people with symptoms and clinical test results.

Until March 26 2022, the local GGDs on St. Maarten did contact tracing. Until April 26 2022, St. Maarten offered free large-scale SARS-CoV-2 tests. From April 27 2022 onwards this policy changed and tests for SARS-CoV-2 are no longer free. People who want to be tested (or are recommended to be tested by their general practitioner) can be reimbursed by their health care provider from 27 April 2022 onwards. Due to this policy change the number of people that will be tested at local labs will drop. Surveillance data dating from April 27 2022 onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. The percentage of positive tests from April 27 2022 cannot be compared to before in a straight-forward matter, mostly due to a change in group-composition of the people that are tested. The group-composition of future tests will be mostly travelers, (insured) people with symptoms and clerical test results.

Since autumn 2022, Saba and Sint Eustatius have sporadically detected new SARS-CoV-2 infections. On Bonaire, Curacao, and Sint Maarten, the number of detected SARS-CoV-2 infections has also been declining. Due to the low number of SARS-CoV-2 positive test results, there is insufficient data to continue producing the graphs of the epidemiological trend on these islands. As of January 2023, the epicurves for Saba and Sint Eustatius have (temporarily) been removed from this report. As of February 2023, the epicurves for Bonaire, Curacao, and Sint Maarten has been (temporarily) removed from this report. On all islands, the circulation of SARS-CoV-2 continues to be closely monitored through surveillance by the public health departments.

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## **Information on COVID-19 vaccination monitoring on the CAS and BES islands**

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign on the CAS-BES islands started in February 2021. Each island has their own vaccination campaign. The actual implementation of these vaccination campaigns depends on, among other things, the approval, operation, delivery and distribution of the vaccines, and on people's willingness to vaccinate.

In week 39-40 (2022), the fall campaign of COVID-19 vaccination started for the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. Persons aged 60 years and older, in medical risk groups, and healthcare workers with patient or client contact were the first to be invited. People are eligible for the repeat vaccination from 3 months after their last corona vaccination or 3 months after a SARS-CoV-2 infection.

In this report we report the estimated total number of vaccinated persons and the vaccination coverage on the CAS-BES islands. The current report is based on data on vaccinations administered up to and including 28 February 2023 using monitoring data received by the RIVM from the CAS-BES islands.

### **Disclaimer**

Though this monthly report has been produced with the utmost care, it could possibly contain errors. Feedback on this overview is welcome.

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# 1 Overview of reported SARS-CoV-2 infections on the CAS-BES islands

Table 1: Number of laboratory confirmed cases with a positive SARS-CoV-2 test result, number of hospital admissions and number of deceased cases, cumulative and for the previous week, on the CAS-BES islands, as reported to RIVM<sup>1,2</sup>

Island	Last updated on	Total cumulative			Past 4 weeks <sup>5</sup>		
		Number of cases	Hospital admissions	Deceased	Number of cases	Hospital admissions	Deceased
Aruba	2023-02-28	44066	1696	286	61	13	<5
Curaçao <sup>3</sup>	2023-02-28	45787	1156	301	8	<5	0
Saba	2023-02-28	742	7	<5	<5	0	0
Sint Eustatius	2023-02-28	1214	22	6	0	0	0
Sint Maarten <sup>4</sup>	2023-02-28	11023	419	90	<5	<5	0
Bonaire	2023-02-28	9852	152	33	15	0	0

<sup>1</sup> Actual number of hospitalised COVID-19 patients or (probable) COVID-19 deaths may be higher than the number of admitted or deceased patients reported in the surveillance. This is because there is no reporting obligation for hospital admissions in the European Netherlands as well as on the CAS-BES islands

<sup>2</sup> Due to privacy reasons, numbers smaller than 5 will not be specified in this table.

<sup>3</sup> Surveillance data reported by Curaçao as of June 5, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. See page 2 for more information.

<sup>4</sup> Surveillance data reported by Sint Maarten as of April 27, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. See page 2 for more information.

<sup>5</sup> These have been reported to the RIVM between 21 January 2023 and 28 February 2023 .

Table 2: Number of laboratory confirmed cases with a positive test result for SARS-CoV-2 over the past 2 weeks, as reported to the RIVM by the CAS-BES islands<sup>1</sup>

Island	Period	Number of tests	Number of laboratory confirmed positive test results	Positivity rate %
Aruba	20 until 26 February 2023	125	10	8
Aruba	27 February until 5 March 2023	166	16	9.8
Bonaire	20 until 26 February 2023	21	<5	57
Bonaire	27 February until 5 March 2023	21	<5	43
Curaçao <sup>2</sup>	20 until 26 February 2023	135	<5	<5
Curaçao	27 February until 5 March 2023	77	0	-
Saba	20 until 26 February 2023	0	0	-
Saba	27 February until 5 March 2023	0	0	-
Sint Eustatius	17 until 23 February 2023	0	0	-
Sint Eustatius	24 February until 2 March 2023	0	0	-
Sint Maarten <sup>3</sup>	15 until 21 February 2023	26	<5	7.7
Sint Maarten	22 until 28 February 2023	0	0	-

<sup>1</sup> A '-' sign indicates there is insufficient data available at the RIVM to present in this table.<sup>2</sup> Surveillance data reported by Curaçao as of June 5, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. See page 2 for more information.<sup>3</sup> Surveillance data reported by Sint Maarten as of April 27, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. See page 2 for more information.

Table 3: SARS-CoV-2 incidence rate per 100,000 residents on the CAS-BES islands, as reported to RIVM<sup>1</sup>

Island	Period	Number of positive cases	Incidence per 100.000 inhabitants
Aruba	20 until 26 February 2023	10	8
Aruba	27 February until 5 March 2023	0	0
Bonaire	20 until 26 February 2023	<5	17
Bonaire	27 February until 5 March 2023	<5	13
Curaçao <sup>2</sup>	20 until 26 February 2023	<5	<5
Curaçao	27 February until 5 March 2023	0	0
Saba	20 until 26 February 2023	0	0
Saba	27 February until 5 March 2023	0	0
Sint Eustatius	17 until 23 February 2023	0	0
Sint Eustatius	24 February until 2 March 2023	0	0
Sint Maarten <sup>3</sup>	15 until 21 February 2023	<5	<5
Sint Maarten	22 until 28 February 2023	0	0

<sup>1</sup> The calculated incidence rates include the estimated number of undocumented migrants on each island, see Table 5.

<sup>2</sup> Surveillance data reported by Curaçao as of June 5, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. See page 2 for more information.

<sup>3</sup> Surveillance data reported by Sint Maarten as of April 27, 2022, onwards will have to be interpreted differently than before. See page 2 for more information.

Table 4: Number of residents and acreage of the CAS- and BES-islands 2022<sup>1</sup>

Island	Capital city	Residents	Acreage	Political status
Aruba	Oranjestad	120.605	180 km <sup>2</sup>	Country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands
Bonaire	Kralendijk	22.575	288 km <sup>2</sup>	Dutch municipality
Curaçao	Willemstad	161.671	444 km <sup>2</sup>	Country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands
Saba	The Bottom	1.983	13 km <sup>2</sup>	Dutch municipality
Sint Maarten	Philipsburg	62.350	34 km <sup>2</sup>	Country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands
Sint Eustatius	Oranjestad	3.142	21 km <sup>2</sup>	Dutch municipality

<sup>1</sup> For St. Eustatius, these numbers refer to the 2021 population sizes. This island does not have updated population data yet. Each island counts a substantial population of undocumented migrants. On Aruba, Curaçao, and Dutch Sint Maarten the population size was estimated to be between 8,000 and 20,000 migrants in 2021. On Bonaire the population size was estimated around 1,400 migrants. These data are relevant to include as these populations are difficult to reach for local public health services and often have less access to curative care. The reported incidence rates for the CAS-islands include the estimated population of undocumented migrants. The reported incidence rates for the BES-islands exclude the estimated population of undocumented migrants.

## 2 SARS-CoV-2 progression over time

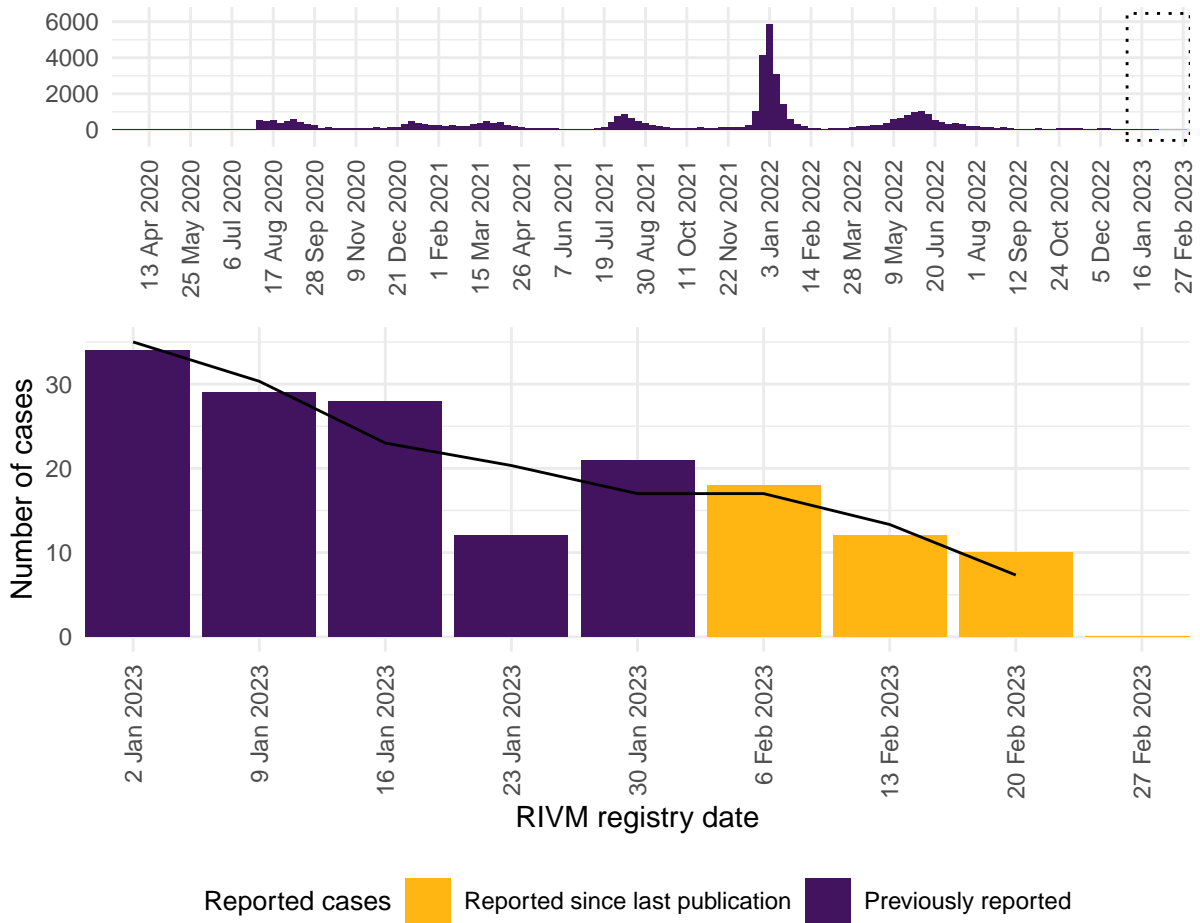


Figure 1: Number of weekly reported positive SARS-CoV-2 test results on Aruba, presented by reporting date<sup>1-3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> These data show the weekly number of new SARS-CoV-2 infections by reporting date of each island. The black line in the epicurve represents the 3-week average in the number of newly detected SARS-CoV-2 infections.

<sup>2</sup> Due to underlying differences between the islands in the number of reported infections differ on the Y axes of these figures.

<sup>3</sup> The reported data has been presented by the date of reporting by each island. These numbers can lag behind when the most recent data has not yet been registered at the RIVM.



### 3 SARS-CoV-2 three week average incidence rate, progression over time

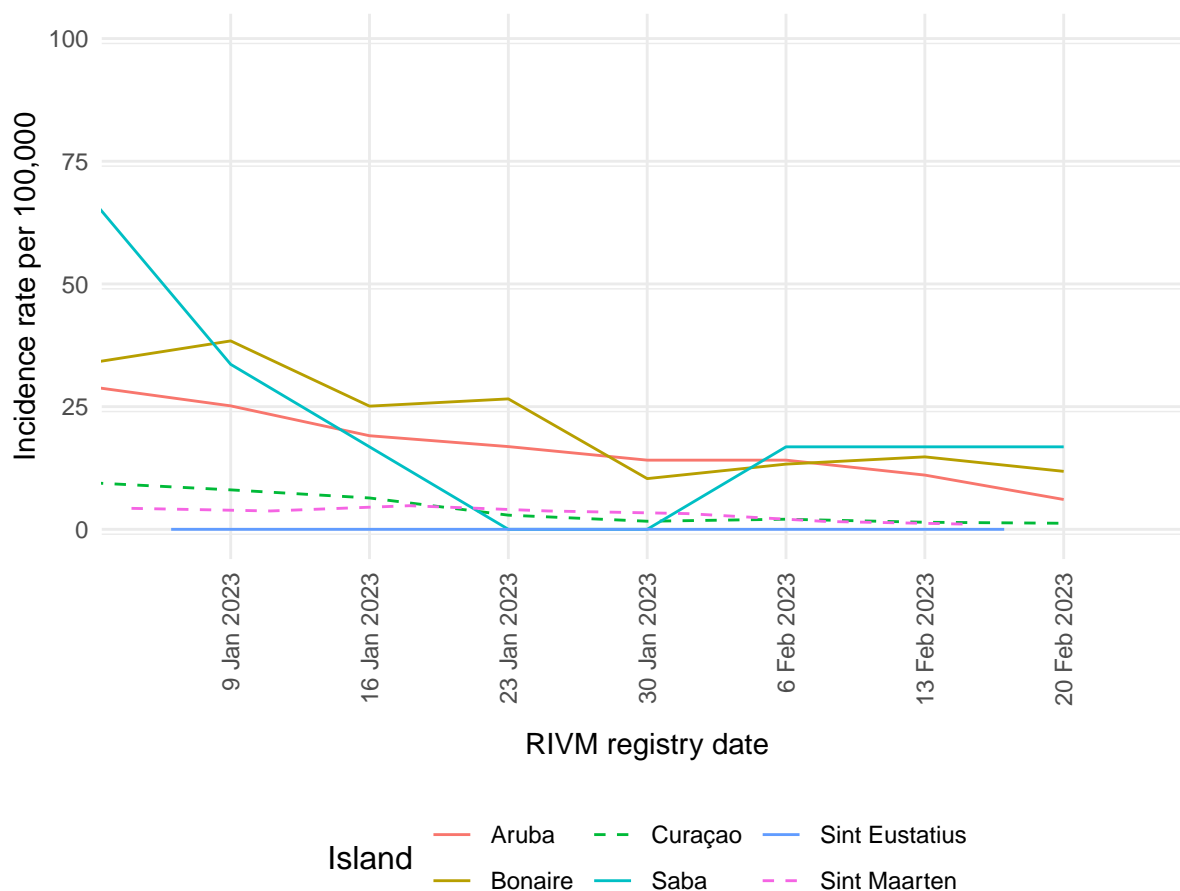


Figure 2: Three week<sup>1</sup> average number of reported cases per 100,000 residents by each islands' reporting date, on Curaçao<sup>2</sup>, Aruba, Dutch Sint Maarten<sup>3</sup>, Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Bonaire.

<sup>1</sup> This figure displays the 3-week average incidence rate per island per 100,000 residents, including the population of undocumented migrants on each island. Each line on the vertical axis indicates a weekly average of the incidence rate (defined as the number of new cases per 100,000 persons per week, over the total population) over a period of three weeks.

<sup>2</sup> The incidence on Curaçao as shown in Figure 7 from June 5, 2022, onwards cannot be compared to the trend prior to June 5, 2022, due to a change in group-composition of the people that are tested. The group-composition of future tests will be mostly travelers, (insured) people with symptoms and clinical test results. For this reason the incidence as of June 5, 2022, continues in a dotted line in the graph above. See page 2 for more information.

<sup>3</sup> The incidence on Dutch Sint Maarten as shown in Figure 7 from April 27, 2022 onwards cannot be compared to the trend prior to April 27, 2022, due to a change in group-composition of the people that are tested. The group-composition of future tests will be mostly travelers, (insured) people with symptoms and clinical test results. For this reason the incidence as of April 27, 2022 continues in a dotted line in the graph above. See page 2 for more information.

## 4 Number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered on the CAS-BES islands

Table 5: Number of persons per island with a completed primary series, primary series + 1, primary series + 2, primary series +3, until 27 February 2023<sup>1-3</sup>

BES-/CAS-eilanden	Date update	Number primary series	Number primary series + 1	Number primary series + 2	Number primary series + 3
Aruba	2023-01-02	84105	35659	5441	1128
Bonaire	2023-02-20	16189	8125	1231	65
Curaçao	2023-02-27	100913	43150	6116	1641
Saba	2023-02-27	1667	1170	362	93
Sint Eustatius	2023-02-27	1609	767	69	6
Sint Maarten	2023-02-20	26773	9146	915	207

<sup>1</sup> The vaccination coverage data presented here is reported by the islands to the RIVM on a weekly basis. These data may lag behind from the vaccination coverage data presented by the island officials.

<sup>2</sup> These data refer to the numbers of vaccinated persons on the Dutch side of Sint Maarten. Vaccination coverage on the French side of St Martin is reported by Santé Publique France on a weekly basis.

<sup>3</sup> The number of fully vaccinated persons is defined as the number of completed vaccinations. This also includes persons who only require one dose of vaccine to be considered as fully vaccinated, due to having a history of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Both Aruba and Curaçao are reporting these data separately from the number of persons who have received two doses of vaccine. Dutch Sint Maarten and the BES islands are currently not reporting these data. The number of completed vaccinations on those islands may therefore be an underestimation.

Table 6: Number of persons per island who received a repeat vaccination in the autumn campaign, until 27 February 2023<sup>1-3</sup>

BES-/CAS-eilanden	Date update	Number repeat vaccinations (60-)	Number repeat vaccinations (60+)
Aruba	2023-01-02	979	2392
Bonaire	2023-02-20	1018	1049
Curaçao	2023-02-27	802	3071
Saba	2022-11-28	117	84
Sint Eustatius	2023-02-27	13	17
Sint Maarten	2023-02-20	348	427

<sup>1</sup> The vaccination coverage data presented here is reported by the islands to the RIVM on a weekly basis. These data may lag behind from the vaccination coverage data presented by the island officials.

<sup>2</sup> These data refer to the numbers of vaccinated persons on the Dutch side of Sint Maarten. Vaccination coverage on the French side of St Martin is reported by Santé Publique France on a weekly basis.

<sup>3</sup> The repeat vaccination is available to everyone aged 12 years and older who has completed the basic series of COVID-19 vaccinations. People can get the repeat vaccination starting from 3 months after their last COVID-19 vaccination or 3 months after a SARS-CoV-2 infection.

## 5 Vaccination coverage on the CAS-BES islands

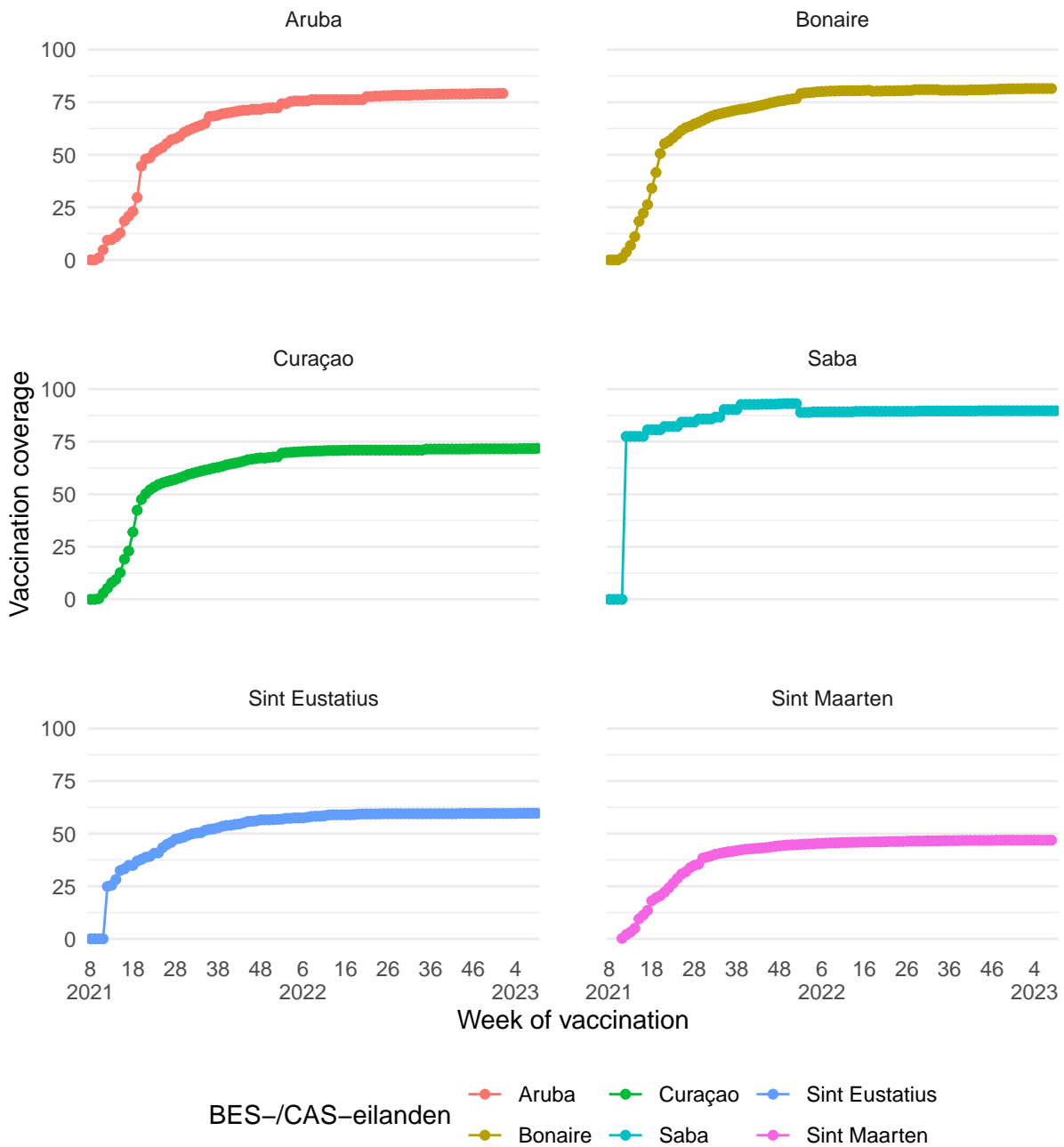


Figure 3: COVID-19 vaccination coverage for the primary series on the CAS-BES islands, until 27 February 2023<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The vaccination coverage data presented here is reported by the islands to the RIVM on a weekly basis. These data may lag behind from the vaccination coverage data presented by the island officials.

<sup>2</sup> These data refer to the numbers of vaccinated persons on Dutch Sint Maarten. Vaccination coverage on French St Martin is reported by Santé Publique France on a weekly basis.

<sup>3</sup> The number of fully vaccinated persons is defined as the number of completed vaccinations. This also includes persons who only require one dose of vaccine to be considered as fully vaccinated, due to having a history of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Both Aruba and Curaçao are reporting these data separately from the number of persons who have received two doses of vaccine. Dutch Sint Maarten and the BES islands are currently not reporting these data. The number of completed vaccinations on those islands may therefore be an underestimation.