



Key Takeaways from this Report

- Cases associated with clusters in **educational** settings have been stable since mid-October
- Clusters in **workplace** and **community settings** continue to be reported but reports remain low

Introduction

North Carolina's key metrics show increasing levels of COVID-19 spread and clusters continue to be reported in many settings. Identifying and responding to COVID-19 clusters helps Local Health Departments (LHDs) and the state implement prevention and control measures, identify risk factors, and understand settings where transmission of COVID-19 is most likely to occur.

This report includes clusters identified by LHDs but underrepresents the full scope of clusters and associated cases occurring across the state. In part, this is due to the fact that many COVID-19 cases are never diagnosed or cannot be linked to a specific setting or specific cluster. Additionally, **while congregate living settings, schools, and childcare facilities are required to report clusters or outbreaks to their LHDs, other settings are not required to report in the same manner.** Thus, the cluster data provided in this report is limited to clusters that have been voluntarily reported to LHDs or identified through case investigation and contact tracing efforts.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) defines clusters of COVID-19 in non-congregate living settings as:

- A minimum of 5 cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14-day period AND
- Plausible epidemiologic linkage between cases*

**Cases should be present in the same general setting during the same time period (e.g., same shift, same classroom, same physical area) and there should not be a more likely source of exposure for identified cases (e.g., household or close contact to a confirmed case in another setting).*

Cases and deaths included in this report represent only those linked to clusters meeting the above definition. Clusters are included if they were reported to public health on or after May 22, 2020, the date the cluster definition was published; the exception is clusters in meat and poultry processing facilities, which were tracked beginning in April 2020.

A cluster is considered over if there is not evidence of continued transmission within the setting. This is measured as 28 days after the latest date of onset in a symptomatic person or the latest date of specimen collection in an asymptomatic person, whichever is later. If additional cases are subsequently reported and a new cluster exists, it will be reported as a second, new cluster in that setting.

Clusters are often identified through the case investigation process, during which LHDs contact people newly diagnosed with COVID-19 to determine where they had been for the previous 14 days. This helps identify links to other cases with shared exposures. Confirmed or suspected clusters can also be reported directly to LHDs by individuals or businesses, although such reporting of clusters or outbreaks is only required by congregate living settings, child care programs and K-12 schools. Lists of [ongoing outbreaks in congregate living settings](#) and [ongoing clusters in child care and school settings](#) can be found in separate reports. Cluster data from the most recent weeks are preliminary and subject to change as case investigations proceed, as it can take time for LHDs to link cases to a specific cluster.

Spread of COVID-19 is most likely to occur in indoor settings with large numbers of people, particularly those where mask use and social distancing are not being observed.

This report includes 1) total cumulative reported clusters, cases, and deaths by type of cluster since May 22, 2020 (except for meat and poultry processing facilities, which were tracked beginning in April 2020 and 2) graphs per type of cluster showing trends over time. This report will be updated every other Monday.

Cumulative Reported Clusters, Cases, and Deaths by Type of Cluster

Cluster Category	Setting Type	Number of Total Reported Clusters	Total Cluster-associated Cases	Total Cluster-associated Deaths
Workplace	Agriculture*	10	126	0
	Construction/Contractor	20	147	0
	Food Processing	12	451	2
	Government Services ¹	132	1,145	8
	Manufacturing	132	2,057	9
	Meat and Poultry Processing	47	5,556	27
	Other Workplace	111	1,206	6
Shopping and Services	Retail	29	316	0
	Personal Care Services ²	5	43	5
Food and Drinks	Bar/Brewery	3	17	0
	Restaurant	59	501	3
Child Care, Schools, and Higher Education	Child Care	273	2,208	3
	Camp	40	643	2
	K-12 School	671	7,040	1
	College or University	387	5,161	1
Health Care³	Health Care Setting	101	1,047	10
Community Living and Events	Religious Gathering	211	2,923	44
	Social Gathering ⁴	63	604	5
	Independent Living Facility	60	832	48
	Apartments**	6	100	1
	Community Event ⁵	8	136	0
	Other Community Setting	81	832	10
Total		2,461	33,091	185

*Clusters in agricultural settings represent cases that did not occur among migrant farmworkers. Cases among migrant farmworkers are captured as outbreaks rather than clusters because they occurred in congregate living settings. See [COVID-19 Ongoing Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings report](#) for information about outbreaks.

**Clusters that occur in apartments among college or university students are included in the College or University setting type

1 - Government Services includes first response, fire, law enforcement, courts, and government offices

2 - Personal Care Services includes salons, barbers, and spas

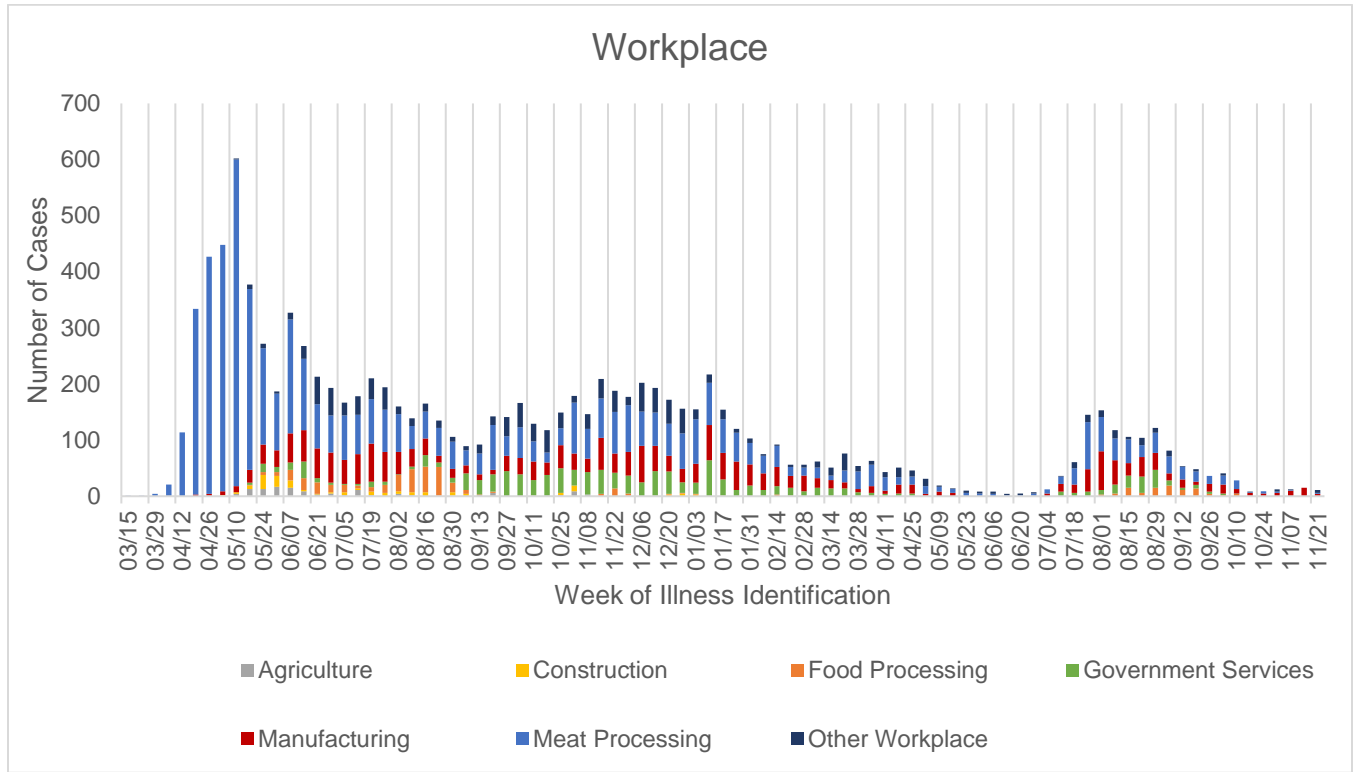
3 - Health Care includes hospitals, hospice facilities, and other non-hospital clinical settings. Cases among congregate living facilities are captured as outbreaks rather than clusters because they occurred in congregate living settings. See [COVID-19 Ongoing Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings report](#) for information about outbreaks.

4 - Social Gathering includes parties, family gatherings, weddings, funerals

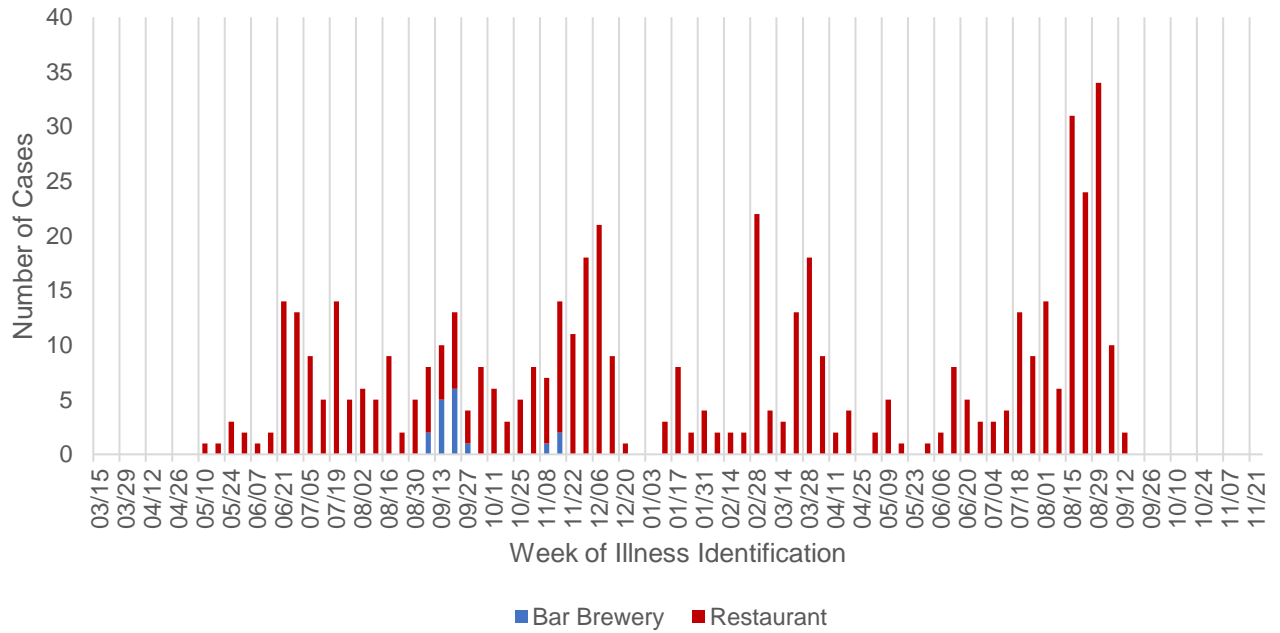
5 - Community Event includes concerts, festivals, rallies, and sporting events

Cluster-associated Cases Over Time by Type of Setting

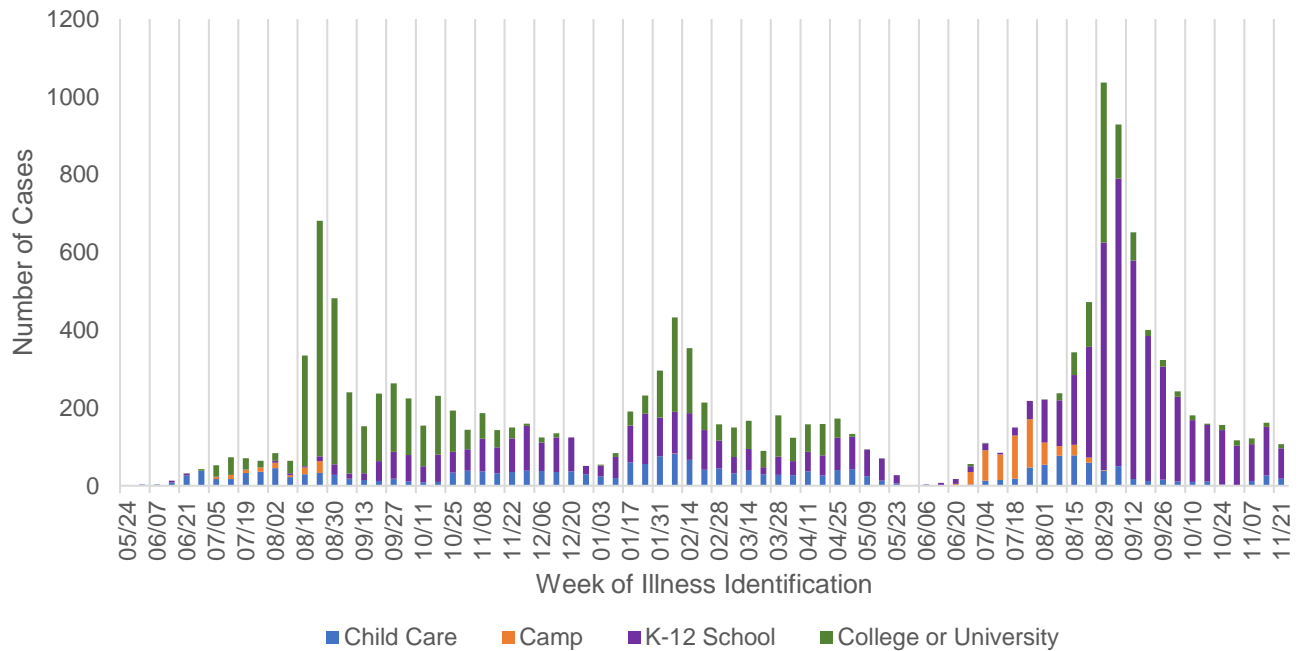
Please note that the range of number on the y axis varies significantly by graph.



Food & Drinks



Child Care, Schools, & Higher Education



Community Living & Events

