



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
HEALTH BOARD

The Role of Primary Care in Communication – Estonia's Experience

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How is immunisation in Estonia organised?



- * Family physicians (GPs) have had a central role in vaccination in Estonia since late 90s
 - * For example, children were mainly vaccinated by paediatricians before
- * Many reforms in the field of immunisation in Estonia in early 21st century
- * Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control Act
 - * § 8(5) Requirements for Organising Immunisation



How is immunisation in Estonia organised?



- * Health care workers administering vaccines are required to undergo a 16 h course and have an additional 8 h training every 5 years
- * The base course consists of 4 mandatory modules:
 - * General principles of immunisation
 - * Administering vaccines, possible side effects, consultation
 - * Treating side effects and anaphylaxis
 - * Vaccinating against COVID-19
- * Additional modules chosen depending on the needs of the health care worker
 - * For example: separate module on vaccination against tuberculosis and separate module on travel vaccinations



Family Physicians in Estonia



- * In 2021 there were around **940 family physicians** in Estonia and **each physician was responsible for 1417 patients** on average (as of 07.07.2022)
 - * They are supported by 1525 family nurses
- * Main challenges: rural areas, aging population, vaccine hesitancy
- * Family physicians usually have the trust of their patients – focus group interviews show that **personal approach and consultation is very important for people**
- * Estonia is a country with high childhood vaccination coverage although a decline has been seen for the last 10 years



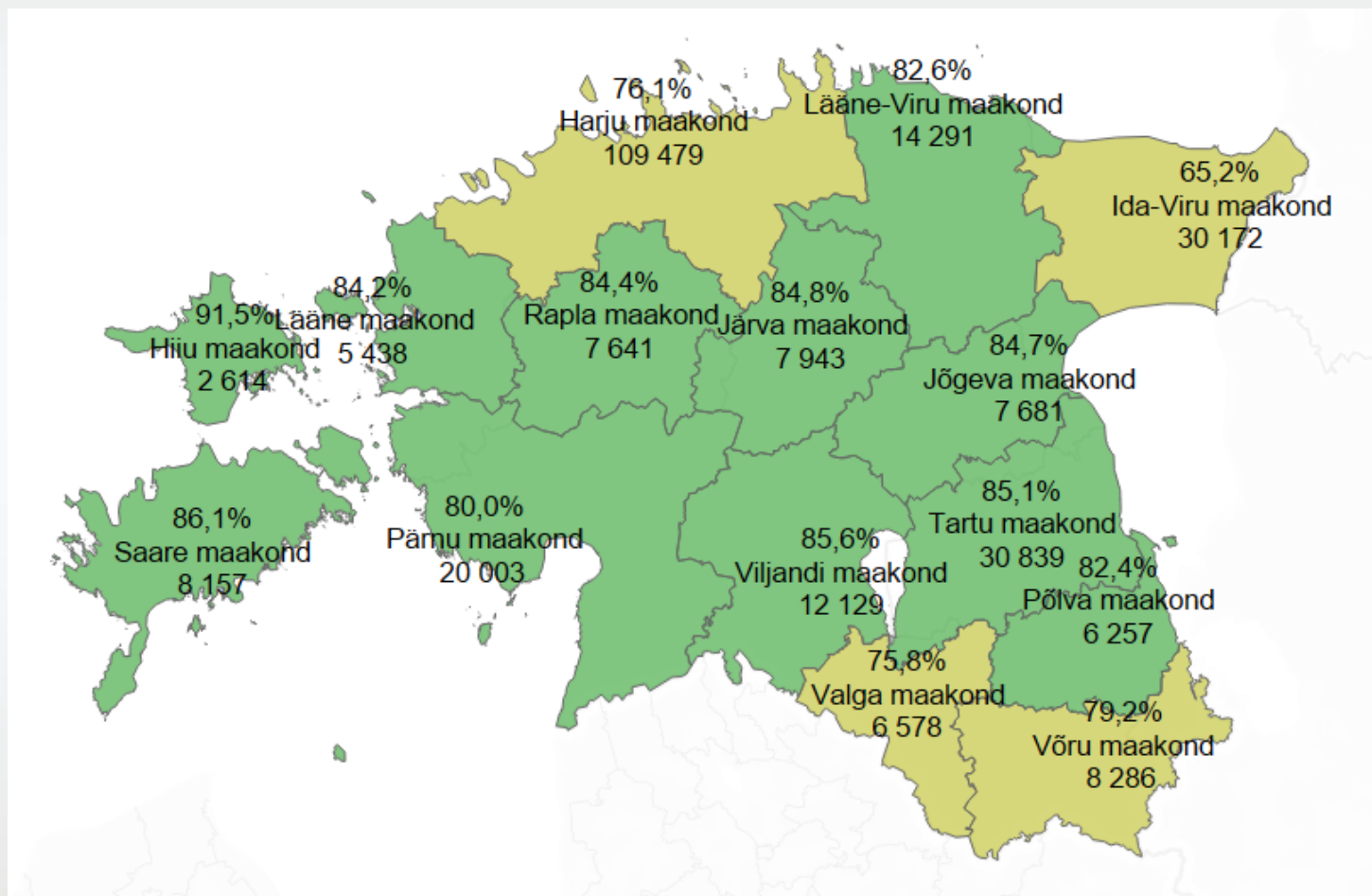
Family Physicians and COVID-19



- * Plan for vaccinating against COVID-19 presented in January 2021
- * Family physicians had a central role in reaching risk groups and the elderly
- * Risk groups were invited and contacted personally by GPs
 - * This was supported by a communication campaign targeted to the general population and reminders from health information system



Coverage of first vaccination series against COVID-19 among people over the age 60



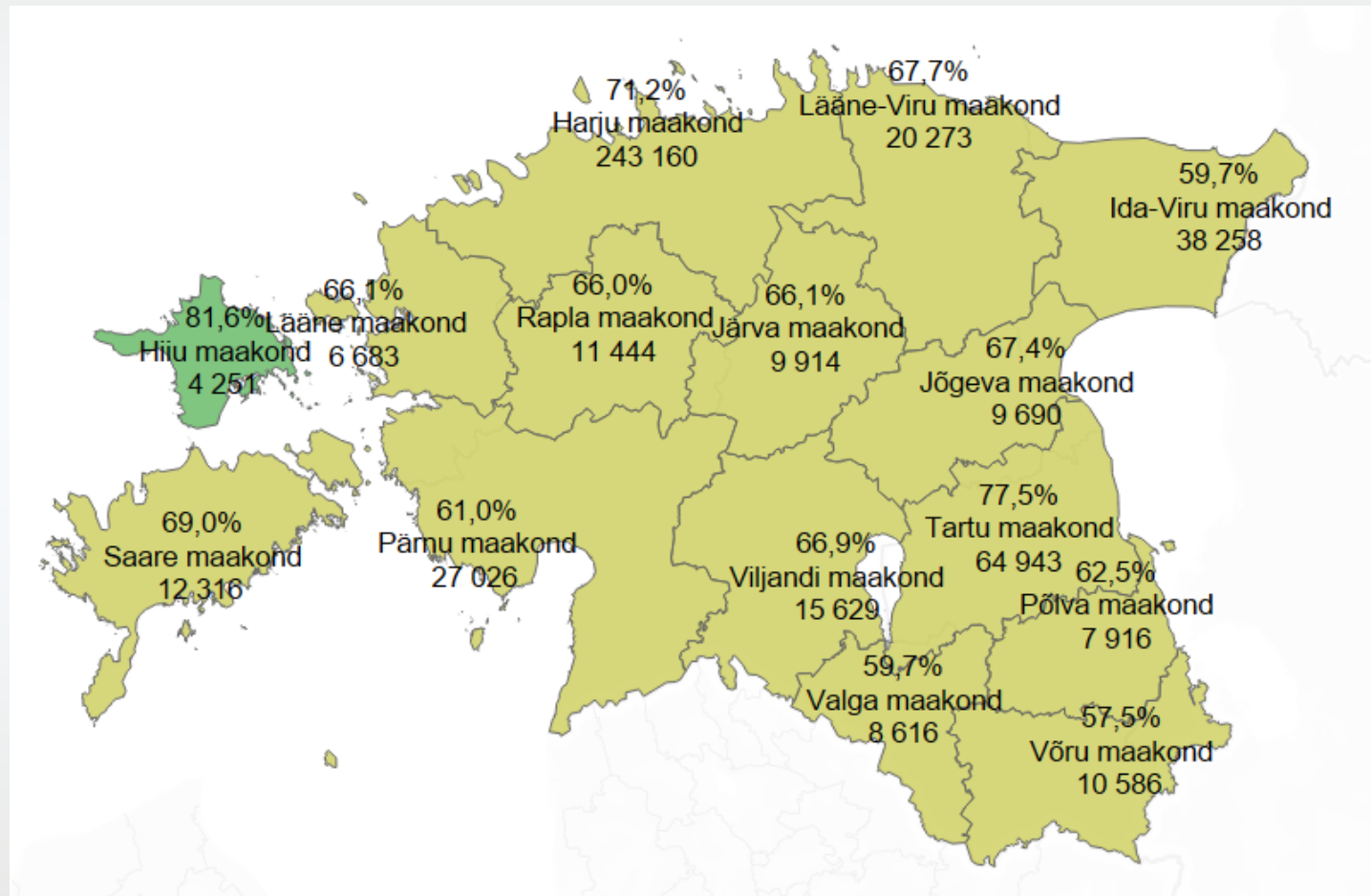
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Coverage of first vaccination series against COVID-19 among people aged 18-59



In conclusion



- *Family physicians were crucial in reaching risk groups as part of vaccination against COVID-19 campaign
- *Family physicians are in general trusted by their patients – training of new generation important
- *Additional support and materials are also needed as well as motivation by the state





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