

COVID-19 Pandemic In the Arab World Country Experience, Jordan

Najwa Khuri-Bulos MD, FIDSA

Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics and Infectious Disease
University of Jordan, Adjunct professor Vanderbilt University
Consultant National Center for Security and Crisis Management

There is more to Jordan than Petra



Outline

- The emergence of COVID 19 pandemic
- COVID19 in Jordan, country response
- Progress of the COVID 19 pandemic in Jordan and globally
- Planning for the future

Covid -19 characteristics that allowed it to become a pandemic

- This is a new corona virus, Novel Corona
- It is easily transmissible between individuals
- It Travels by droplet, but also survives on surfaces. Airborn
- Human host transmits and is also the “victim” of the virus, some of these individuals may be symptom free but disseminate the infection to others
- Spread between individuals is magnified with super spreading events such as weddings, prayers in mosques and churches and big parties of more than 20 people. Human activity is at the core of this viral spread
- Time for the virus to become a pandemic was less than two months
- It is this that made WHO declare COVID 19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern PHEIC, Jordan was notified by WHO about this decision and this set into motion many recommendations and decrees

Jordan response to the outbreak

- Task force was headed by the Minister of Health, who communicated on a daily basis and was transparent in all activities done
- The Whole Jordan government was represented in the task force to include education, agriculture, ministry of interior, ministry of exterior and prime minister office as well as the Royal court were fully informed of the effort
- The Ministry engaged all other sectors through the high level committee for pandemic control. The members included academics, NGOs, WHO, CDC and other parties at the discretion of the Minister who was also the chairman of the committee
- Implementation was helped by the security forces represented by the leader of the National Center for Security and Crisis Management.
- Infectious Disease consultant was designated as a science advisor to the head of the national center for security and crisis management and helped shape the country policy
(Professor Khuri-Bulos)
- Country plan was discussed and approved by the ministry, center was instrumental in coordinating all activities related to COVID 19 plan for Jordan

Government actions

- **Feb 15:** Travel ban instituted from China, South Korea and Iran starting
- **Feb 20 :** order to increase number of factories that manufacture masks to fill country needs
- **Feb 23rd :** PCR testing instituted at all points of entry into the country
- **March 11th:** the crises “cell” was formed.
- **March 15th:** the government announces total shut down for two weeks,
- In addition All schools and universities and educational institutions were shut down to prevent crowding

Government Actions

- Regular media coverage by the Minister of State for Media Affairs and Government Spokesperson, Minister of Health and the director of the Crisis Cell from JAF in addition to the competent minister when he is needed, in coordination with Media Response Unit at the NCSCM.
- Weekly press conference to answer any questions about this pandemic.
- March 15th , His Majesty King Abdullah II chaired a meeting of the National Policy Council at the NCSCM to discuss the implications of COVID1 and to determine the extent of the Kingdom's preparations to confront this epidemic
- March 17th Defense Law issued in 1992 was activated,(lock down) for about 3 months and some more.

Government actions..cont

- Ministry of health to provide information, an awareness campaign
- Jordan Emergency Cash Transfer/supplementary support, social support , support day laborers in times of crisis with cash support.
- Financial aid for the elderly.
- Expedite the repatriation of migrant and expat workers
- Establish a platform for On line education and deliver educational material and classes on a TV channel to help those who do not have online access.

Government mitigation measures

- The Ministry of Digital Economy, assisted by The National Center for Security and Crises Management established digital platforms so as to help support citizens during the shut down and continue with providing essential services..
- The aim was to minimize disruption in lives during quarantine and assure social support for the most vulnerable.
- corona.moh.gov.jo + hot line
- <https://reg.takmeely.jo>
- <https://service1.ssc.gov.jo/sscaid>
- <https://www.stayhome.jo>
- <https://darsak.gov.jo> (3) + two TV Channels
- www.stayhome.jo for permits
- <https://emed.hakeem.jo/index.php/en>

Implementation of recommendations

Several committees were formulated consisting of three teams each

- The National Economy Protection (Protection Team), which includes two committees, the Committee for Sustainability of Production, Labor and Supply Chains, and the Macro and Microeconomic Committee.(3 committees)
- Protecting public services and vital facilities team includes the Health Care and Protection Committee, the Main Services Committee and the Social Protection Committee(3 committees)
- The technical and logistical support team includes 3 committees, Field and Border Crossing Organization Committee, the Media and Education Coordination Committee and the Legal Committee

Government committees

. Work Continuity Committee:

Balance business needs, setting expectations, tracking considering the defense low, ensure the appropriate safety measures are considered and carried out

. Back to Work Committee:

- Preparing the general atmosphere in the facility to work by making sure of safety measures such as wearing a mask, sterilization and spacing.
- It is concerned with determining number of employees, where it started at 30% until it reached 100% and now 50%

Economic support

Three (funds) were established in order to support the economic downturn and help maintain basic functions

- Himatt Wattan (Nation's Mission) : to help the needy, day laborers and those unable to return to the country
- Helping expatriates get back
- Support the efforts of the Ministry of Health

Role of the National Center for Security and Crisis Management and Jordan Government

- While established in 2006, The National Center for Security and Crises Management was activated at the National Level (Strategical Level), beginning of March in order to coordinate all government actions against COVID -19. This center is led by His Royal Highness Prince ALI Al Hussain .
- NCSCM is considered a National Command and Control Center, Since Pandemic response was considered part of National Defense, the National Contingency Plan for Pandemics Prevention was activated.
- The center served as the coordinating center for all stakeholders including the “cell” which included all government branches.
- NCSCM performed also an early assessment of the consequences resulting from the crisis, and was responsible for all the data collection and analysis of all statistics. Dashboards and Diagrams were reviewed on a daily basis and guided response.

Strategies to Control the Pandemic

Interventions

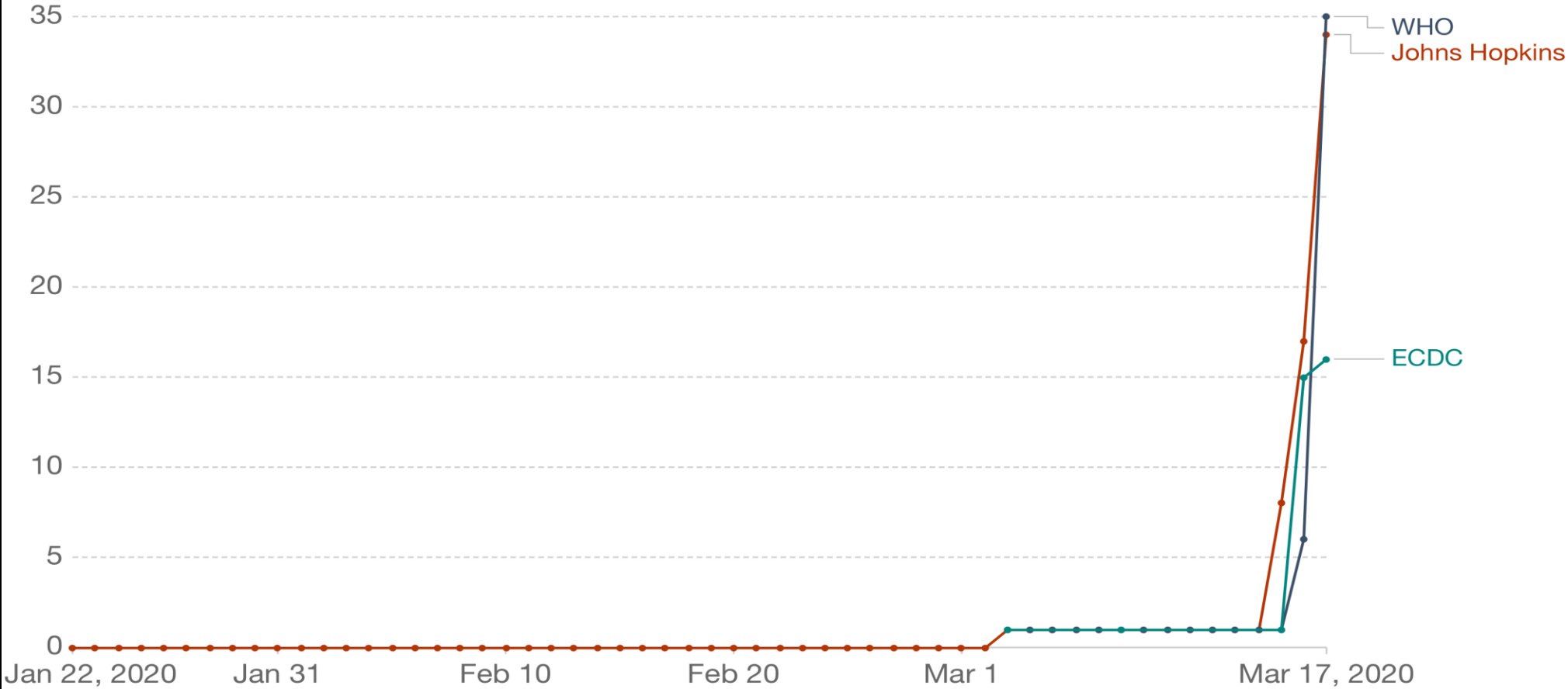
1. Lockdown/Shelter-in-Place
2. Societal Measures:
 - i. Quarantine/Isolation
 - ii. Social Distancing
 - iii. Masking
 - iv. Hand Hygiene
3. The TTT Program
 - i. Testing
 - I. Tracking (surveillance)
 - II. Tracing
4. Therapeutics (drugs – IV, oral, inhalants and Plasma phosphoresis)
5. Vaccines

Total confirmed COVID-19 cases, by source, Jordan



Confirmed COVID-19 cases are compared for the three main data sources:

- Johns Hopkins University;
- World Health Organization (WHO) Situation Reports;
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

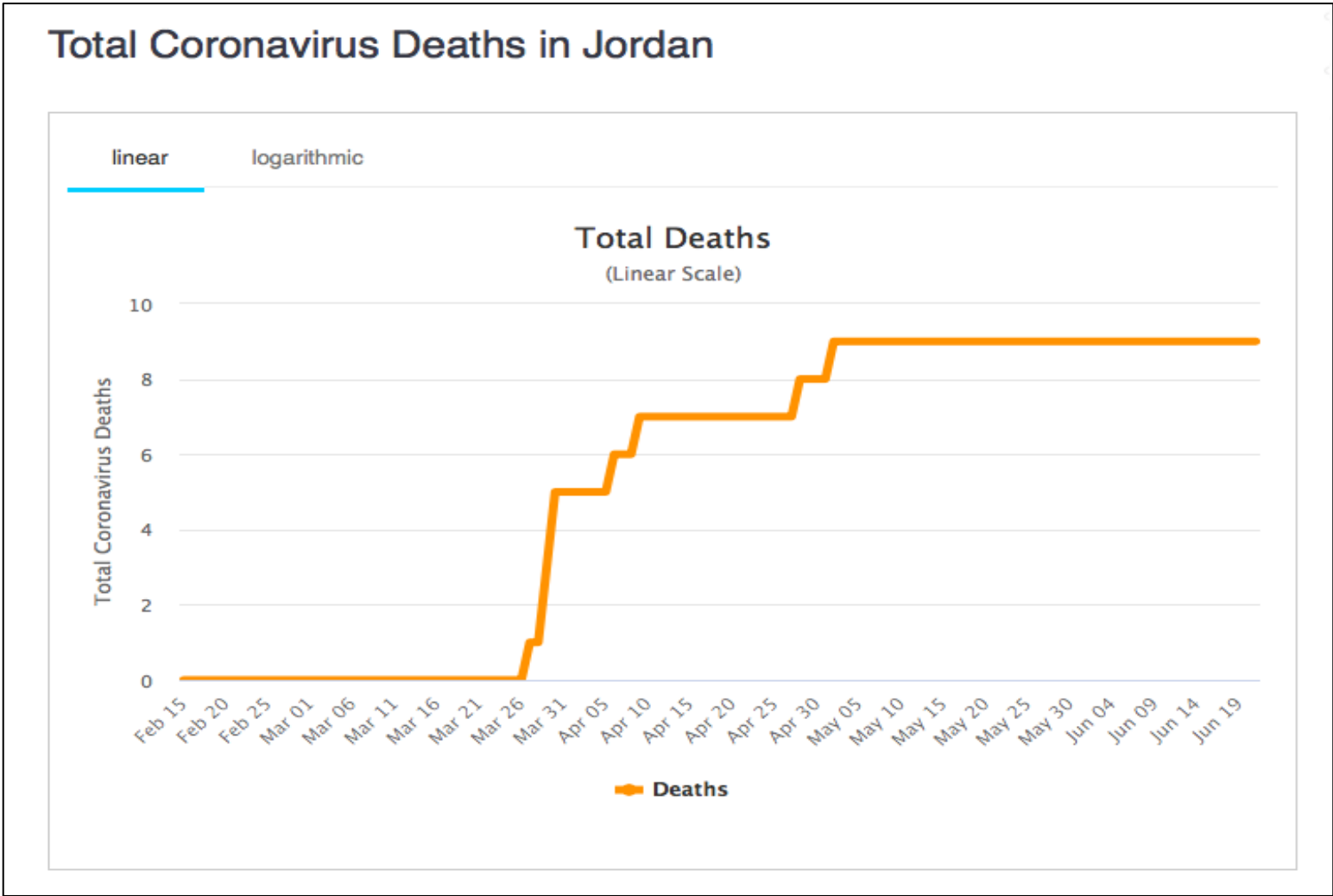


Source: Johns Hopkins (2020); WHO COVID-2019 Situation Reports; ECDC (2020)

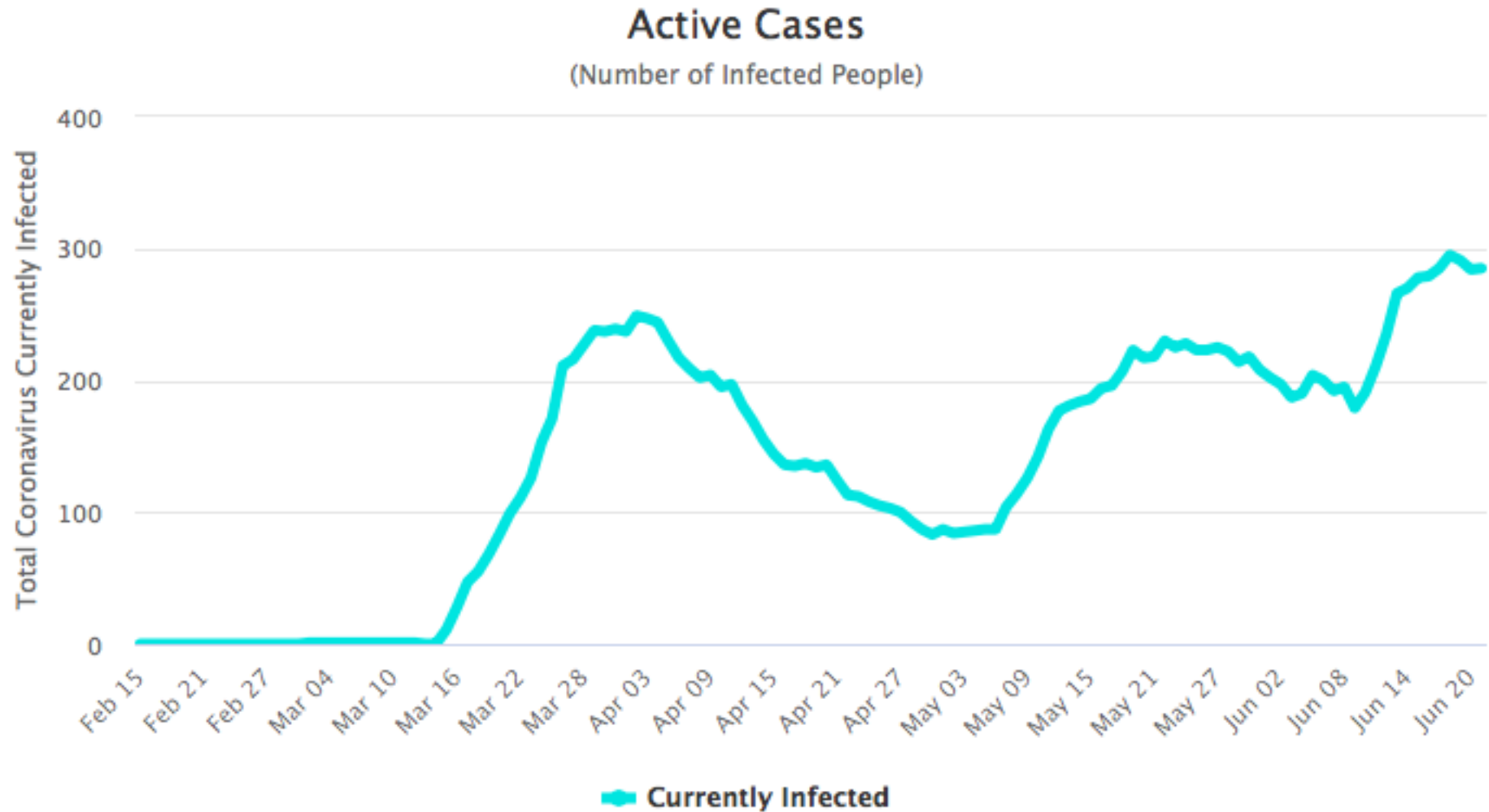
OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Note: The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of total cases. The main reason for this is limited testing.

Jordan Mortality due to COVID 19, March-June



Active Cases in Jordan

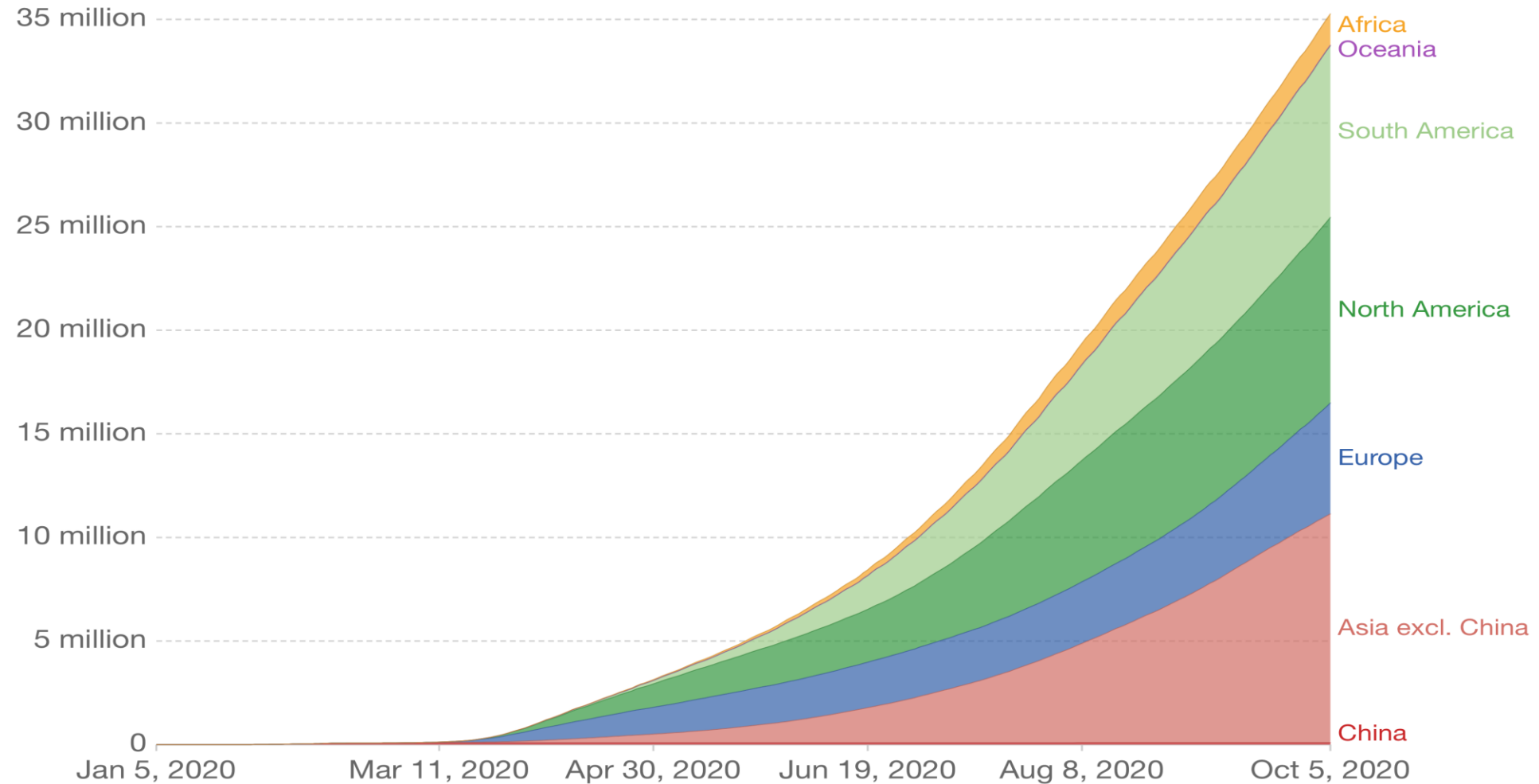


Covid 19 spread

Total confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of total cases. The main reason for this is limited testing.

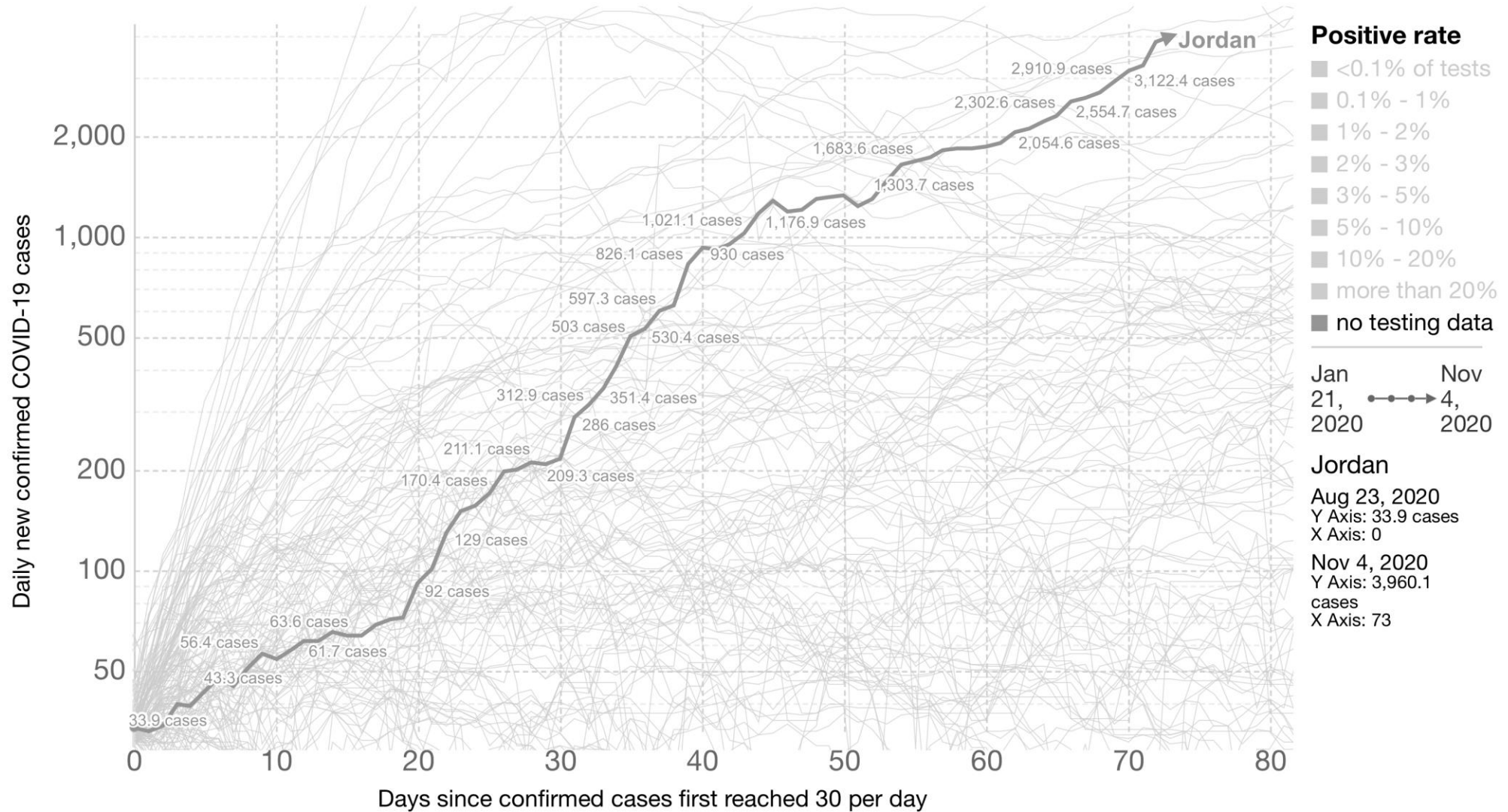
Our World
in Data



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 6 October, 10:06 (London time)OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

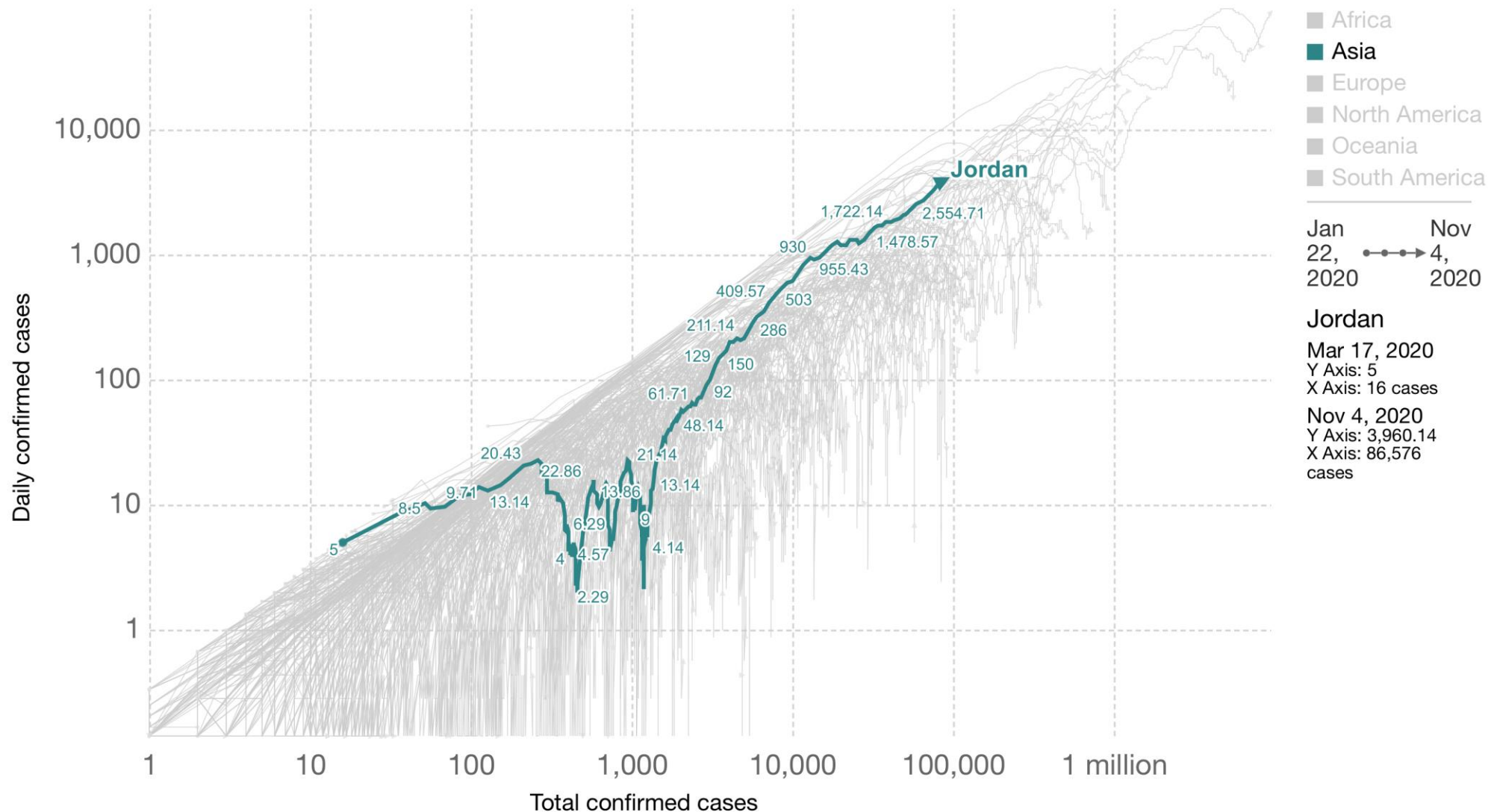
Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



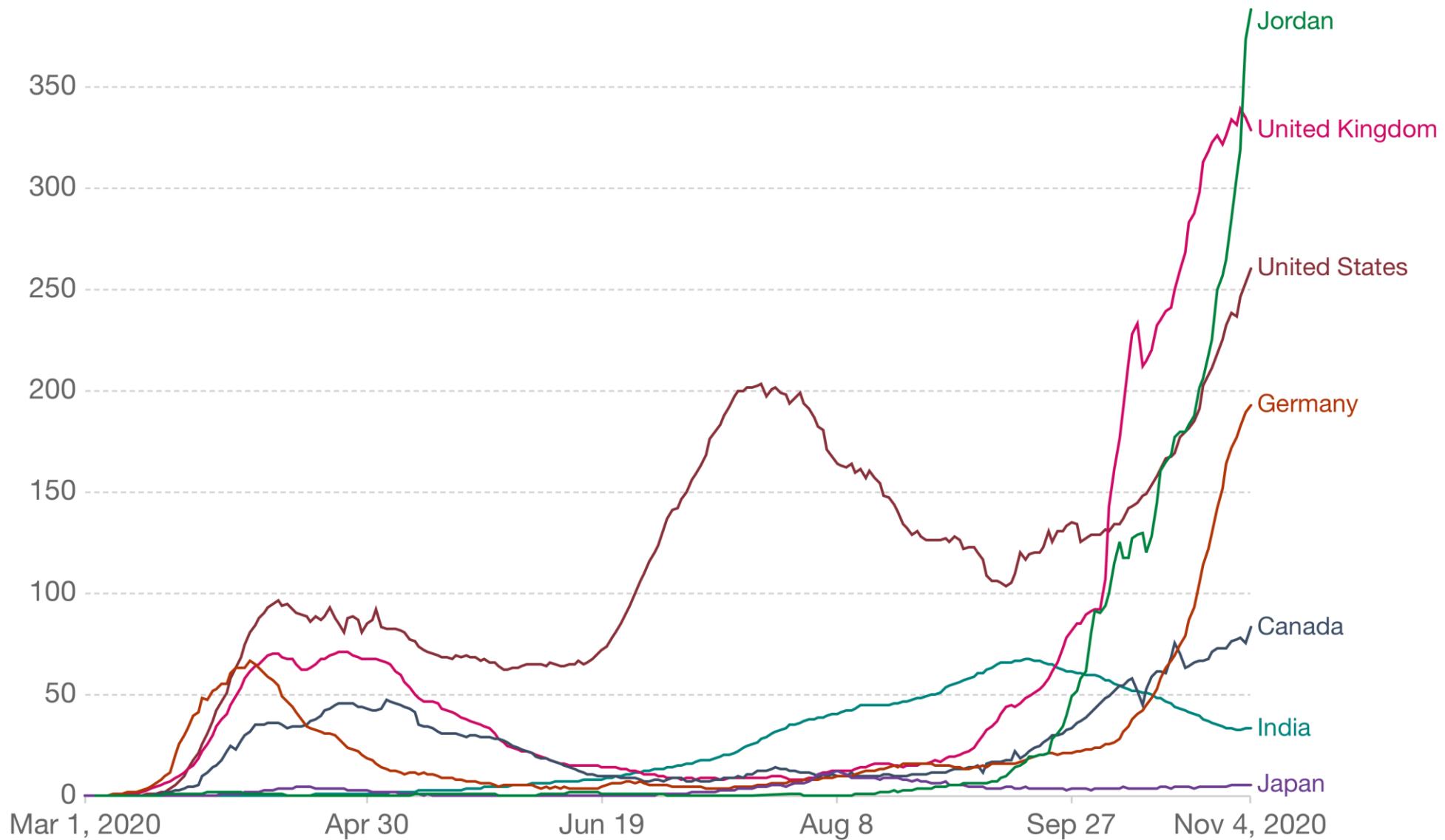
Daily vs. Total confirmed COVID-19 cases

Shown is the 7-day rolling average of confirmed COVID-19 cases. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of total cases. The main reason for this is limited testing.



Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

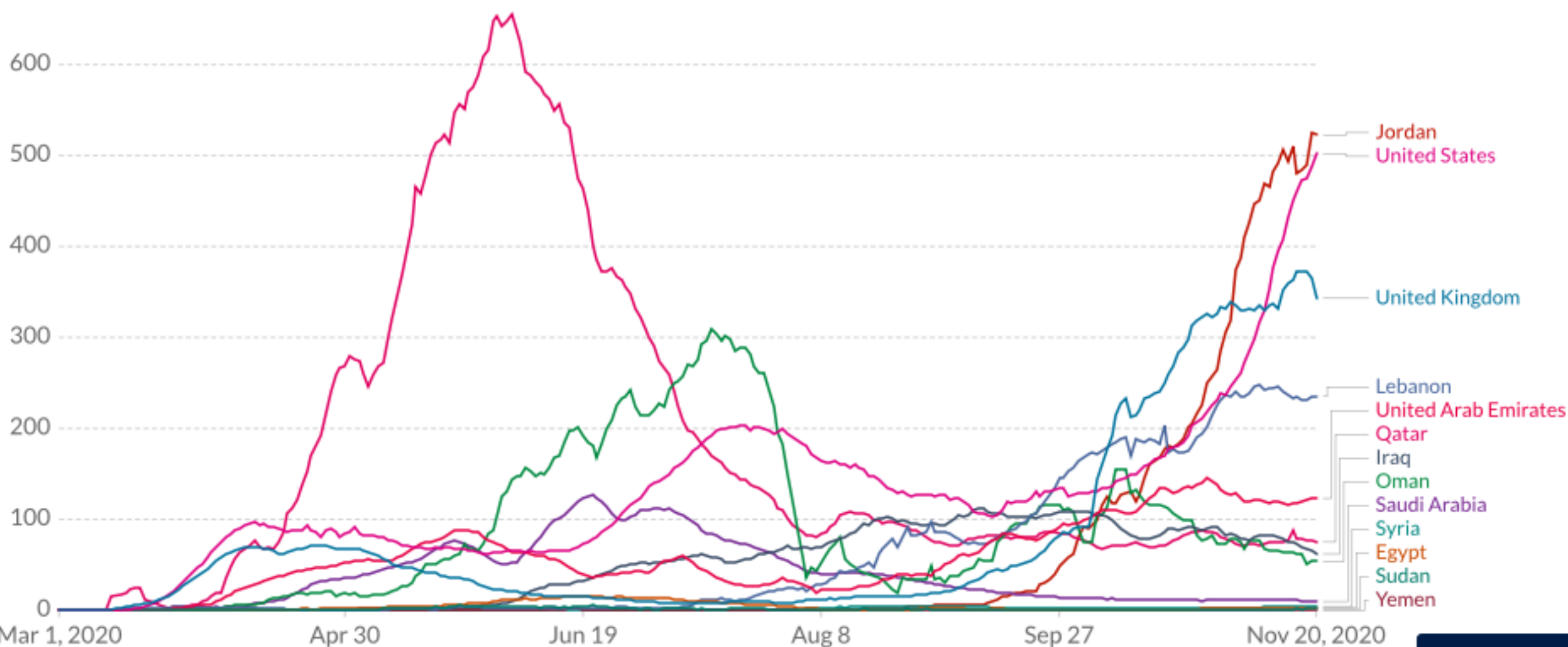


Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

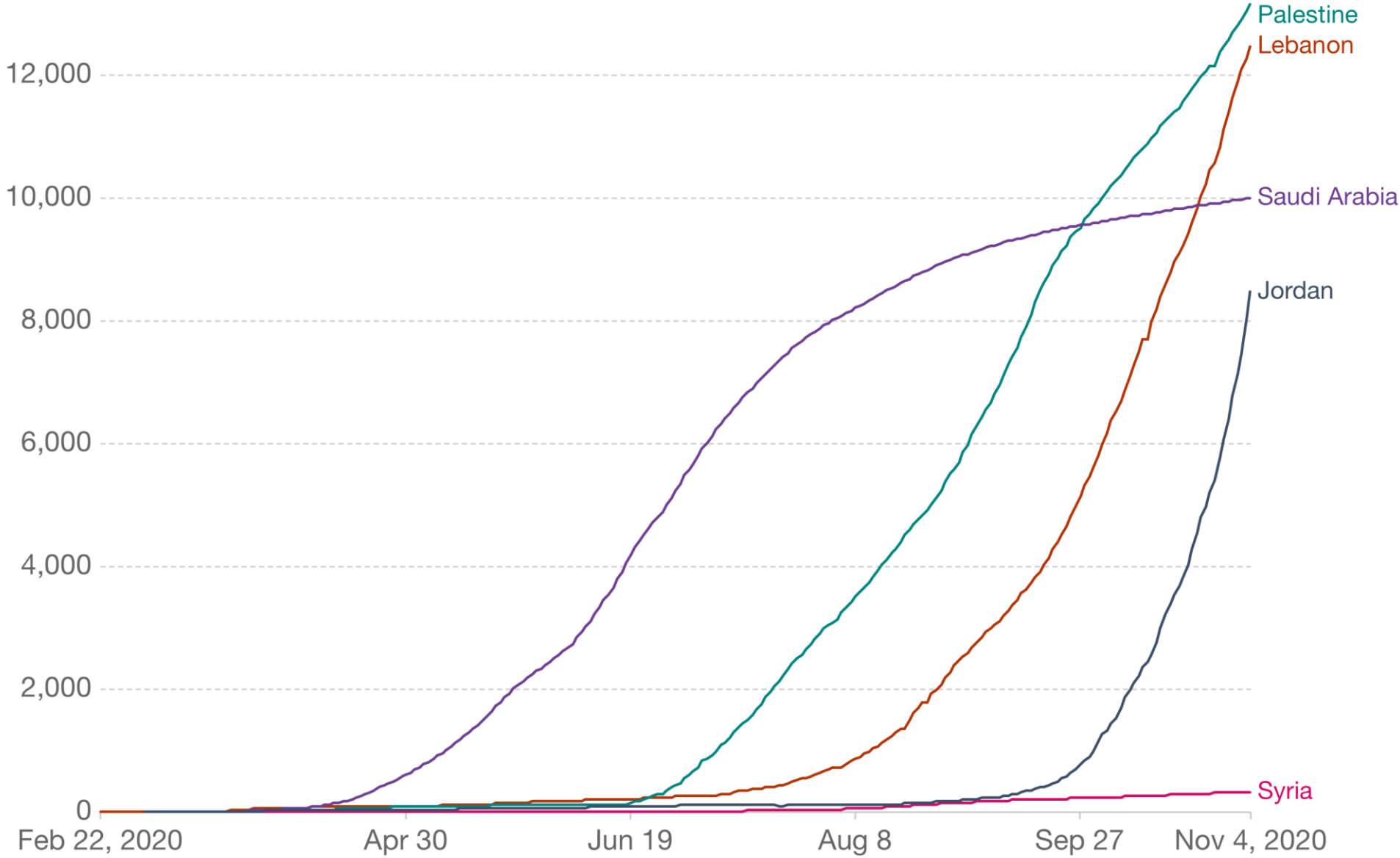
LINEAR

LOG



Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people

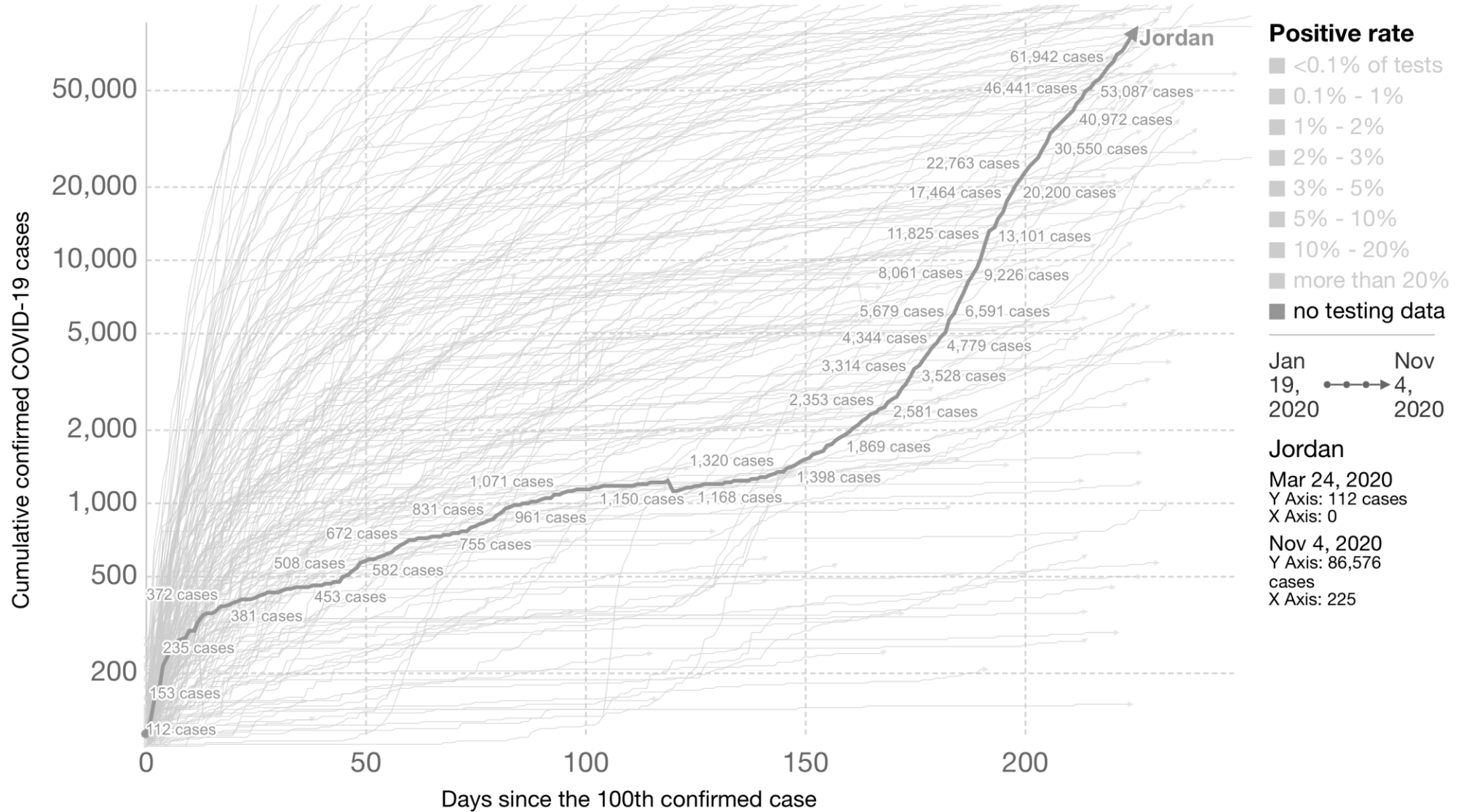
The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 4 November, 11:36 (London time)

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



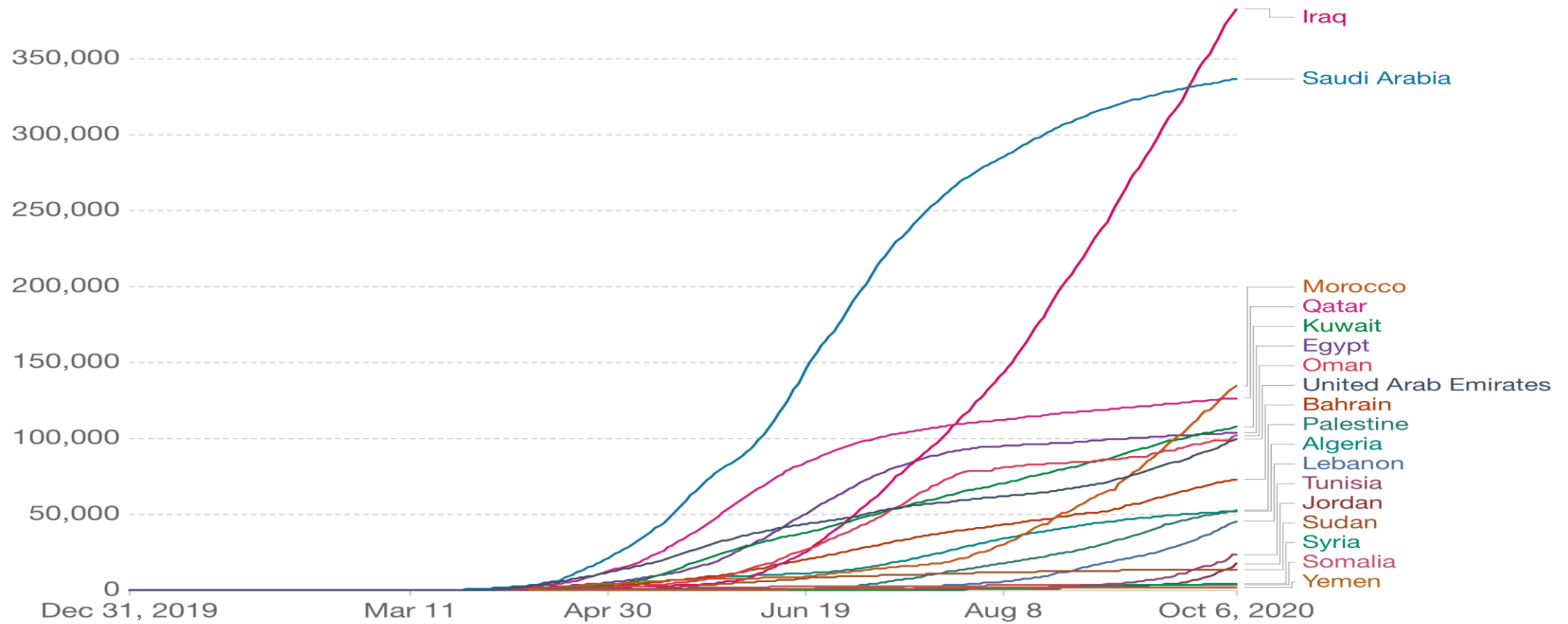
Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 4 November, 11:36 (London time), Official data collated by Our World in Data
 CC BY

Cumulative cases of Covid 19 in Arab Countries, March-October

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

Our World
in Data



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 6 October, 10:06 (London time)

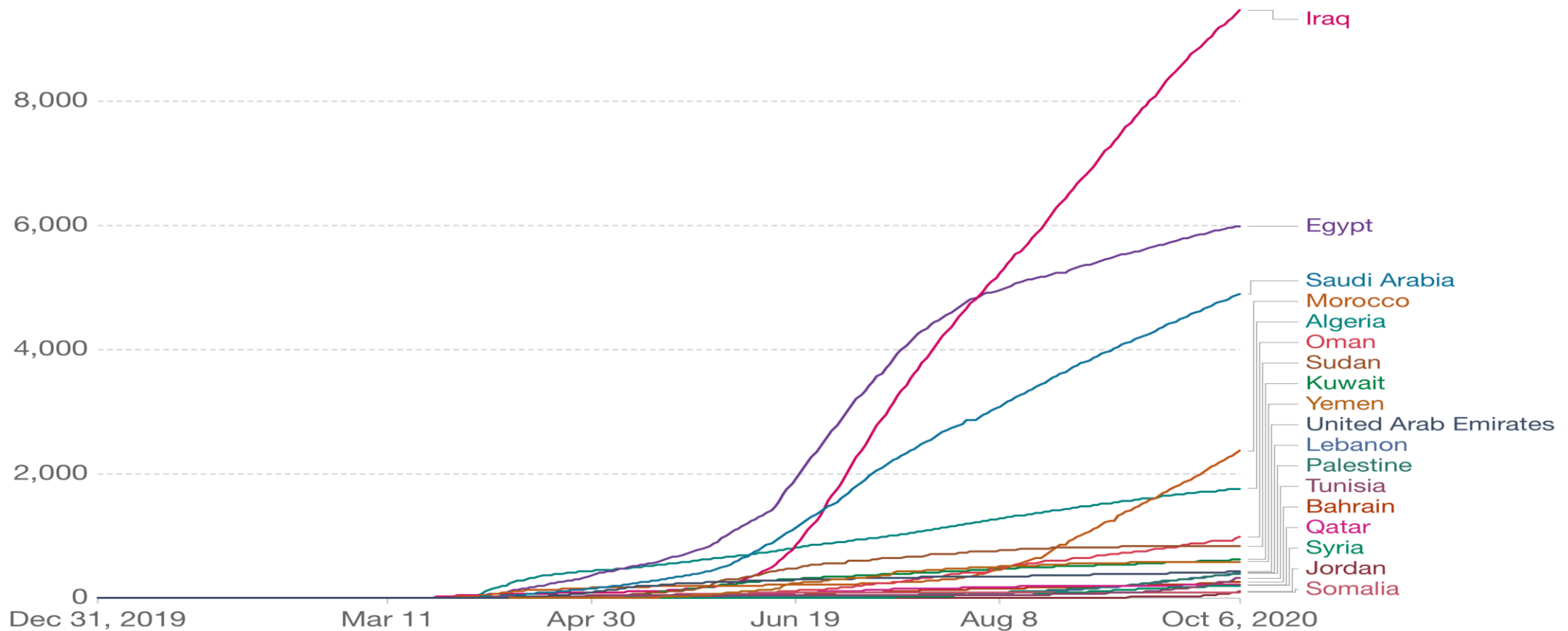
CC BY

Cumulative *deaths* in Arab Countries Covid-19 March-October 2020

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 deaths

Limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death means that the number of confirmed deaths may not be an accurate count of the true number of deaths from COVID-19.

Our World
in Data



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 6 October, 10:06 (London time)

CC BY

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

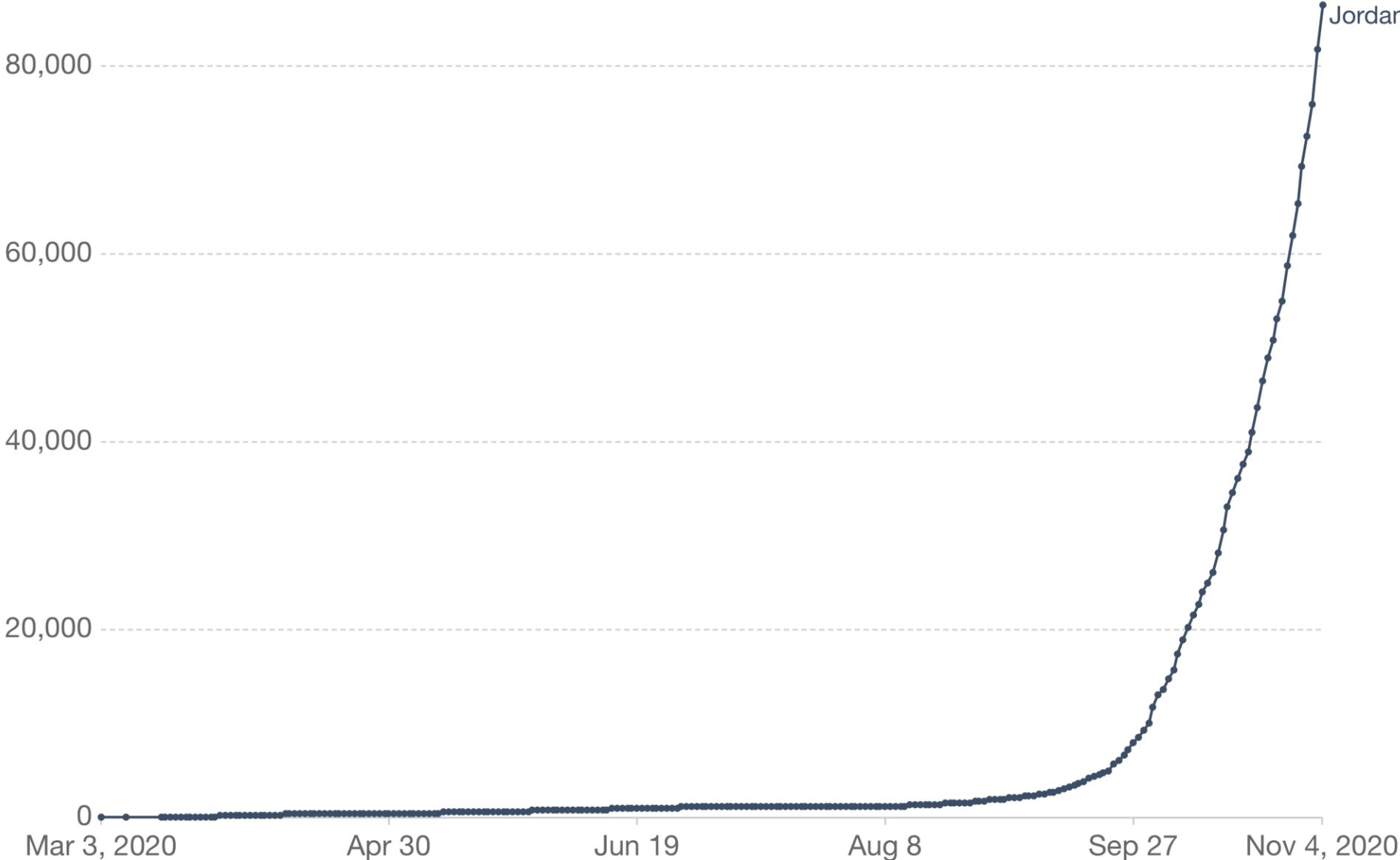
The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 4 November, 11:36 (London time)

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 4 November, 11:36 (London time)

COVID 19 November 17, 2020

- The control measures which had to be scaled down and this may have contributed to the increase in cases
- Evaluation of this now shows that Jordan has had a major upturn of cases
- Like what is going on in many parts of the world, this now will need new emphasis on patients rather than the virus and assure the continued support for patients, their families and their contacts
- In the long run while we take care of patients we should also try to obtain vaccines like many other countries have been doing
- Jordan signed on to the COVAX initiative but in the meantime all efforts should be directed at assuring that the public is better aware of social distancing and masking till such time as the vaccine is obtained