



## COVID-19 Data Dashboard Explainer

Last updated 6/7/20

### What's In the New Dashboard?

Much of the information we will be sharing will be the same, with one key difference--the data source. We switched from using our internal Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) database to the Washington Disease Reporting System for our publicly reported data. Through regular reconciliation, these databases host the same information about Whatcom County confirmed cases and other COVID-19 related data.

While that doesn't change the information much, you should know that there may be some subtle differences from our previous numbers:

- **The total number of deaths** - Whatcom County had been reporting fewer deaths than Washington State Department of Health (DOH) because we have different definitions of what a COVID-19 death is. We've defined a COVID-19 death as someone who died with COVID-19 as their primary cause of death, meaning they died because of COVID-19. DOH includes people who tested positive for COVID-19 and died, but may not have died of COVID-19. That's why the dashboard may show a higher number of deaths than we previously reported. DOH is currently updating their definition, and in the coming days, the total number of deaths reported on the dashboard may decrease.
- **The total number of cases** - Think of this like taking a snapshot of the same scene at a different time. We've been taking a snapshot of our current case count at a slightly different point in time to report this number to you, and now we'll be taking the snapshot a new time. Either way, we'll be reporting to you a daily count of the total number of confirmed cases, as of the moment the snapshot was taken.

The new Whatcom County COVID-19 dashboard shares data visualization in the following ways:

- A "current status" tab shows:
  - The total number of confirmed cases.
  - The total number people who have ever been hospitalized.
  - The total number of deaths of people who have had lab-confirmed COVID-19.
  - The percent of deaths (deaths/confirmed cases).
  - Total number of tests performed.
  - The percent of tests that have been positive, sometimes called positivity rate. There are many negative test results that have not been entered into the state's electronic reporting system by local labs, and that causes us to show a higher positivity rate than our true positivity rate. Local labs are now able to report electronically, and these records are being entered in the coming days. We expect our positivity rate to decrease as these negative results are added to the database.
- An "epidemiologic curves" tab shows:
  - The number of confirmed cases over time by date of when symptoms first occurred. This means that if a confirmed case is reported to us on a Monday, but symptoms started the previous week, the case will be reported in the previous week on the epi

curve. Because they measure different things, the daily numbers in the epi curve and cumulative case count graphs will not match.

- The number of hospitalizations over time by admission date.
- The number of deaths over time by date of symptoms onset.
- For each of these graphs, hover over the day to see the number of new cases, deaths, or hospital admissions that were reported that day.
- A “demographics” tab shows percentages of:
  - Confirmed cases by sex at birth and age category.
  - Hospitalizations by sex at birth and age category.
  - Deaths by sex at birth and age category.
- A “testing” tab shows the total number of tests performed each day and whether they are positive or negative. This chart also shows the overall and daily positivity rates.

## Data Updates

The data dashboard will be updated daily, between approximately 2:00-4:00 p.m. During this time, it will be unavailable for about one hour while updates are integrated.

Data for the most recent days are considered preliminary and not yet complete. Cases, deaths, negative test results, and hospitalizations from the past 4-7 days may not have yet been reported and must be verified before we can say that those results are accurate.

Even then, some of our data may change as we learn more, review records, and investigate cases. That’s a normal part of our process - making sure our data is accurate - and now you get to see it happen in real-time!

## Some Data Will Still Be Shared Differently

Some of the data we’ve been providing will continue to be shared as images on our website and won’t be included in the dashboard ... yet.

- **Percentage of cases by race and ethnicity** - We’ll continue to update this chart each Monday with new data.
- **The rate of cases by geographic regions** - Our map of cases by school district will also be updated each Monday. We break down the location of confirmed cases by school district because many people tend to identify their community in connection to schools and school districts. We don’t use some other boundaries like zip codes because zip codes cut through cities and towns, so they don’t align well with the way many of us identify where we live.

We will no longer be updating the Average Confirmed Cases in Whatcom County, Per Day chart. This information is now available on the [Washington State COVID-19 Risk Assessment Dashboard](#). From the “phases and risk assessment” tab, select Whatcom County to view the Whatcom County key metrics. The “rate per 100K of newly diagnosed cases during the prior two week” value show the same information previously provided in this chart. The only difference is this dashboard shows the rate per 100,000 people in our county. Our chart showed the average value without calculating the rate per 100,000 people.

## What isn't being shared?

There are some data that we are not able to share on the dashboard. This includes:

- **Number of recoveries** - Recoveries are difficult to track. There was no definition of “recovered” from COVID-19 for quite a while, and so we were unable to determine how many people may have been considered recovered from the disease. Also, people who have tested positive for COVID-19 are not required to report to the health department or to their healthcare provider when they have recovered. It's likely that many people are recovering without even realizing that they've even been infected. Some people who become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 show little or no symptoms and therefore are not tested in the first place. Since we can't know how many people have been infected, we can't know how many have recovered, and any data we give on recovery rates would be inaccurate and misleading.
- **Number of active cases** - Similar to recovery data, active case numbers are difficult to track so we are unable to report this.
- **Detailed outbreak or cluster information** - We don't currently share specifics about disease clusters or industry and employer specific data. We need to ensure that industries, employers, employees, and groups are willing to cooperate with us during disease investigations, and releasing this information can hinder the trust and cooperation needed for our investigations to be effective. We also do not release any details that might make it possible to specifically identify anyone's medical condition.