

Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report

Whatcom County Health Department

Updated 10/14/21 for the period of 10/3/21 - 10/9/21

Overview

This report is currently published weekly to provide a narrative of current COVID-19 trends, data not available elsewhere online, and a more in-depth analysis of COVID-19-related topics of interest. This report references data obtained from the [Washington State Department of Health's COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#), [DOH Sequencing and Variants Report](#), [DOH Breakthrough Surveillance Report](#), as well as the [WCHD's Data Dashboard](#) and other COVID-related data. Note that information on these topics is rapidly evolving, and the data are always changing. This report uses the most up-to-date data available, and measures may change over time.

Key findings

- The case rate among school-age children started to decline again, but this rate (257 per 100,000) still remains higher than that of other age groups.
- Cases among 18 – 24 year-olds declined during this reporting week nearly as rapidly as they increased at the end of September.
- Hospitalizations among Whatcom County residents continue to be high with a 7-day rate of 10.5 per 100,000.

For the period of 10/3-10/9

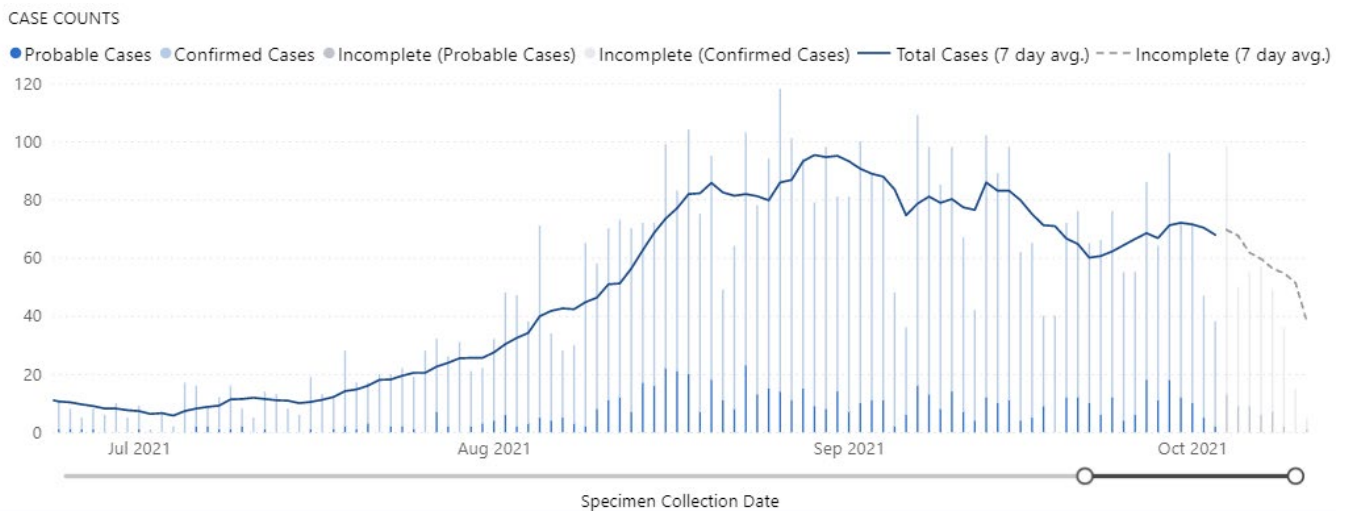
7-Day Case Rate / 100,000	7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000
178	10.5

Overview of COVID-19 Cases

Whatcom County saw a total of 407 confirmed and probable cases from specimens collected during the current reporting week 10/3 – 10/9. The 7-day case rate in Whatcom County for this reporting week is approximately 178 cases per 100,000 residents. The daily case count continued to decline gradually during this reporting week after briefly rising at the end of September. The slower overall decline in cases observed in Whatcom County since the end of August is in contrast to the steep increase in case counts observed throughout the summer months (Figure 1). Cases among school-age children continue to make up about a quarter of all confirmed cases in Whatcom County. According to data published on the Washington State DOH Dashboard through 10/11, Whatcom

County continues to have one of the lowest 14-day case rates in the state (330 per 100,000), with a ranking of 8th out of 39 counties.

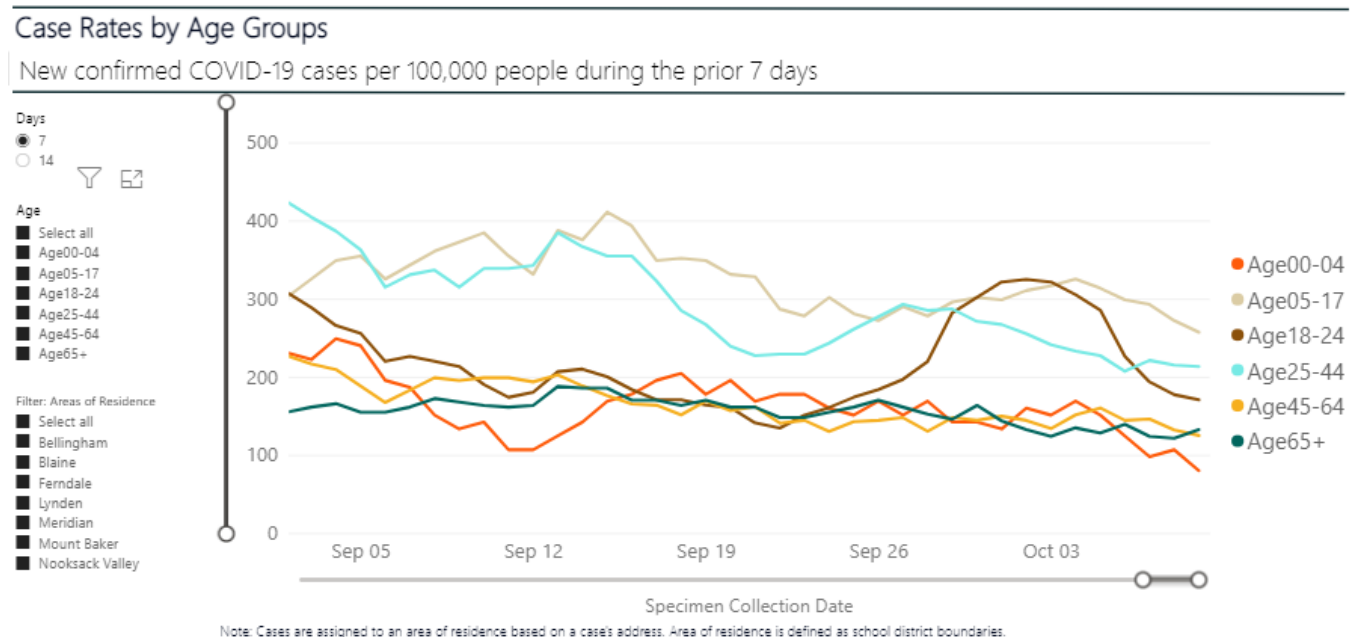
Figure 1: Daily COVID-19 case counts and 7-day average for Whatcom County (Source: DOH)



COVID-19 Cases in Age Groups & Sub-County Areas

The case rate among school-age children started to decline again, but this rate (257 per 100,000) still remains higher than that of other age groups (Figure 2). Cases among 18 – 24 year-olds declined during this reporting week nearly as rapidly as they increased at the end of September. The case rates per 100,000 for older adults 25 – 44 years declined further this reporting week, but appear to level off near the end of the week. The case rates for older adults above 44 years and children under 4 years continue to trend downward slowly.

Figure 2: 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 by age groups in Whatcom County



Note: Cases are assigned to an area of residence based on a case's address. Area of residence is defined as school district boundaries.

New functionality on the Whatcom County Data Dashboard allows users to examine age groups across different areas in the county. The two figures below show case rates for age groups between 0 and 44 years in separate examples for Bellingham (Figure 3) and Lynden (Figure 4). It is important to pay attention to the values on the Y-axis as these change to accommodate the data that is displayed on the graph. The case rate for 5 – 17 year olds in Bellingham started to increase prior to the beginning of school (September 1). In Lynden this trend among 5 – 17 years olds increased to higher levels but not until after school began. In contrast, the dramatic increase in the case rate for 18 – 24 year olds that is observed in Bellingham does not appear among the same age group in the Lynden area. Area of residence in these data visuals refers to the place of residence for confirmed cases. This does not necessarily mean that exposure or transmission took place at that location.

Figure 3: 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 for selected age groups (0 – 44 years) for cases with Bellingham residence

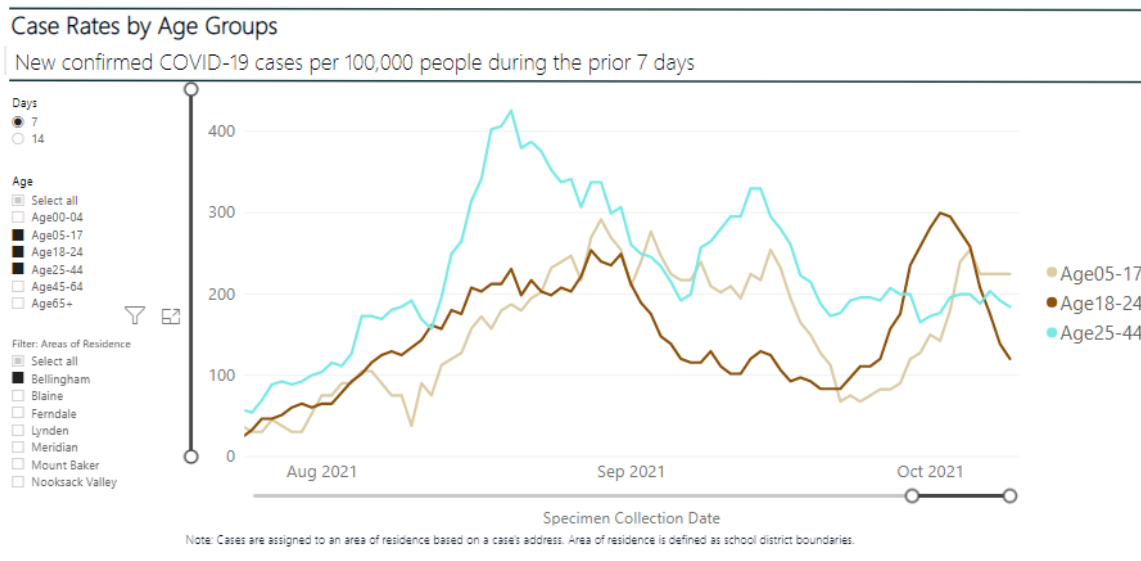
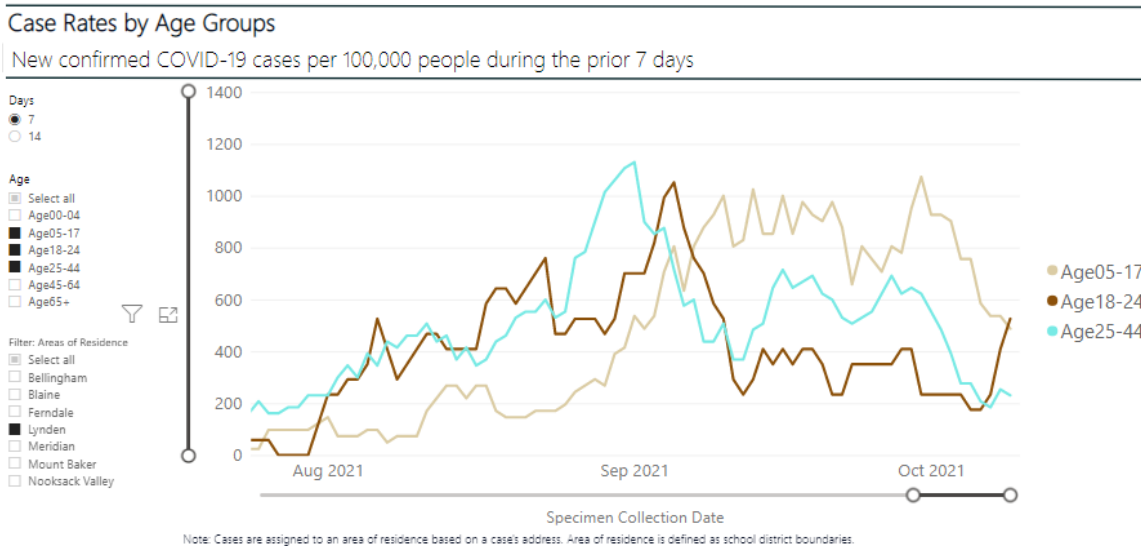


Figure 4: 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 for selected age groups (0 – 44 years) for cases with Lynden residence

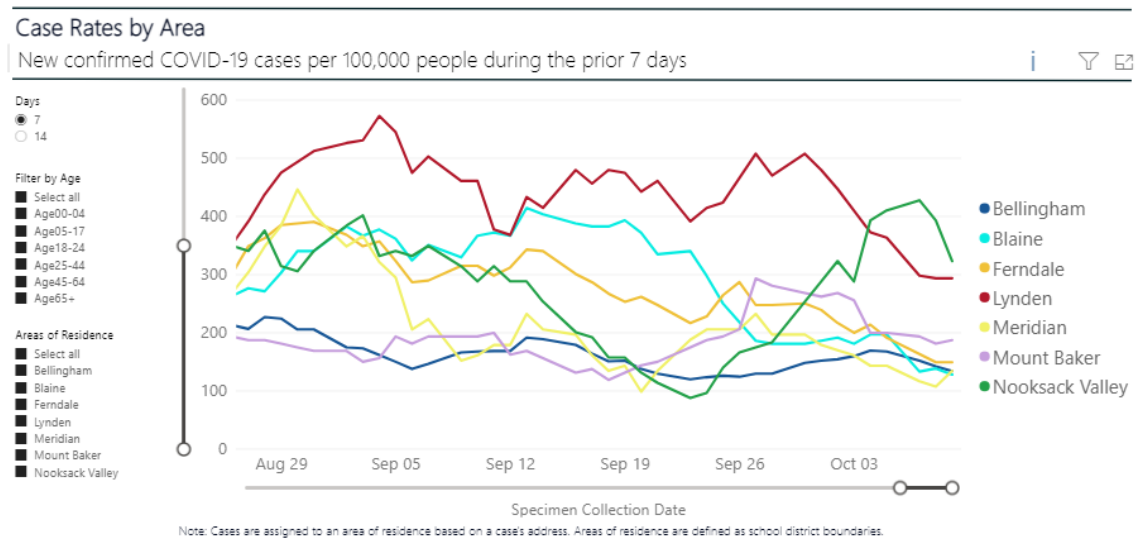


COVID-19 Cases in Areas

By looking at the case rates across areas, it is clear that every area saw another decline in 7-day case rates per 100,000 residents. The greatest proportional decreases in case rates were observed in the Lynden and Ferndale areas (Figure 5). Confirmed cases in the Nooksack Valley appear to crest during the previous reporting week before falling to a rate of 322 per 100,000 as of 10/9.

By using the “Case Rates by Area” page on the Data Dashboard, users can select different areas across the county and then add or remove age groups from the selection.

Figure 5. 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 by sub-county area in Whatcom County



The example below shows the same age groups (5 – 17, 18 – 24, and 25 – 44) as above; however, these groups are now combined into one line per area (Figure 6). The user can view the combined case rate for ages 5 – 44 and make comparisons across three areas (Bellingham, Blaine, Lynden).

Figure 6. 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 in selected areas for 5 - 44 year olds.

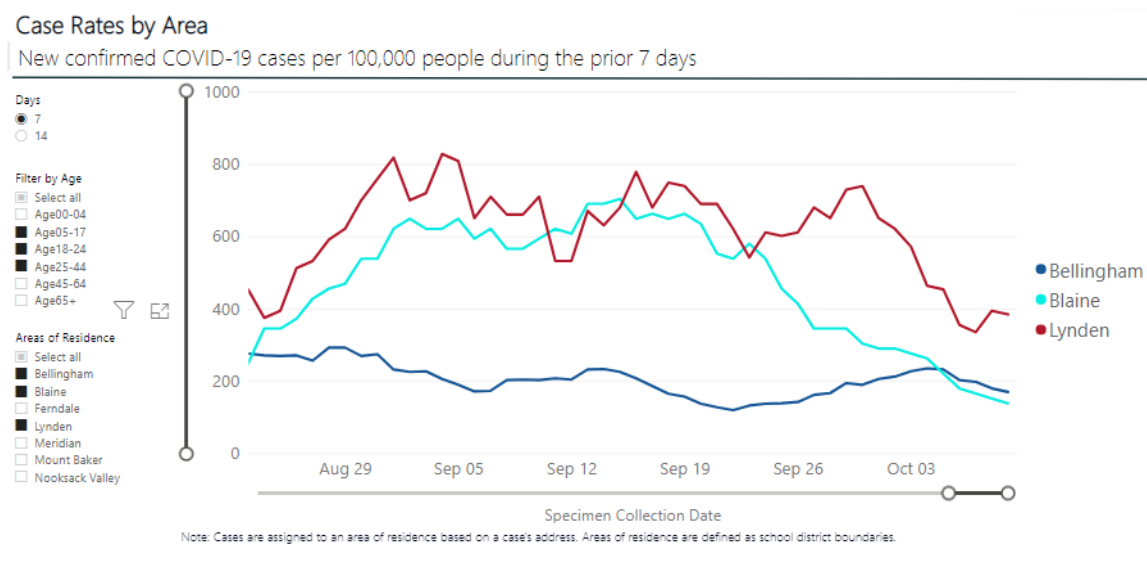
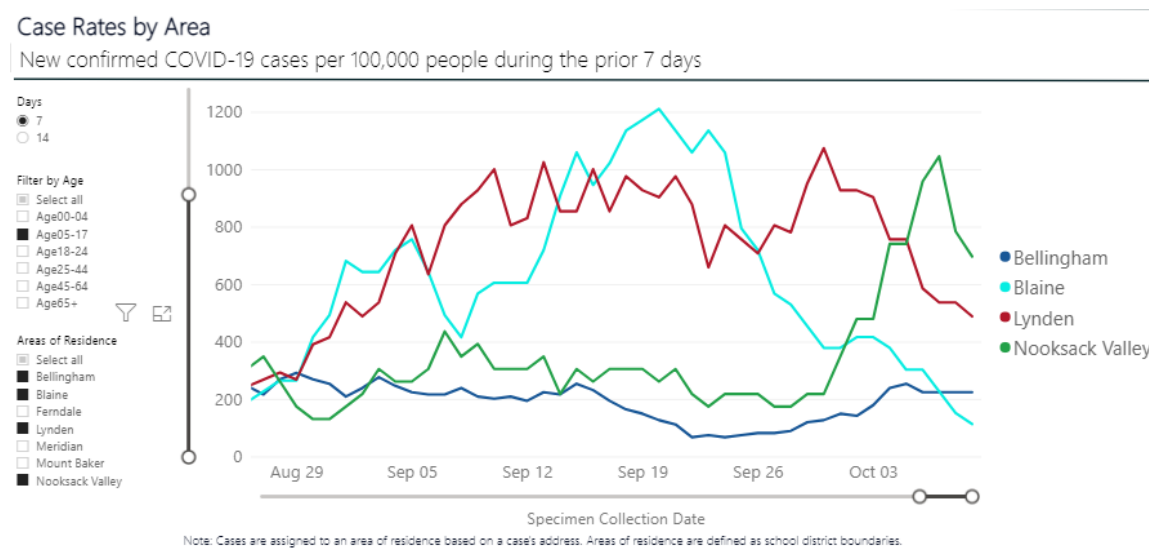


Figure 7 shows a single age group (5 – 17 years) compared across four areas. This shows the higher than normal case rates among school-age children that were observed in Lynden and Blaine throughout September, followed by the increase among school-age children in the Nooksack Valley area at the beginning of October.

Figure 7. 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 in selected areas for 5 - 17 year olds



Across the county, confirmed cases continue to be much more common among unvaccinated residents (Table 1). The 7-day weekly case rate among unvaccinated residents in Whatcom County is roughly four times higher than the equivalent rate among fully vaccinated residents.

Table 1: Confirmed cases by vaccination status in Whatcom County for 10/3 – 10/9

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Cases	407	123	284

COVID-19 Hospitalizations

The 7-day rate for COVID-19 hospitalizations describes the number of Whatcom County residents who have tested positive (PCR test) for COVID-19 and have been hospitalized due to their COVID-19 illness. It does not include people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are hospitalized for other reasons (ex: heart attack, injuries). This rate is useful for understanding disease severity over time.

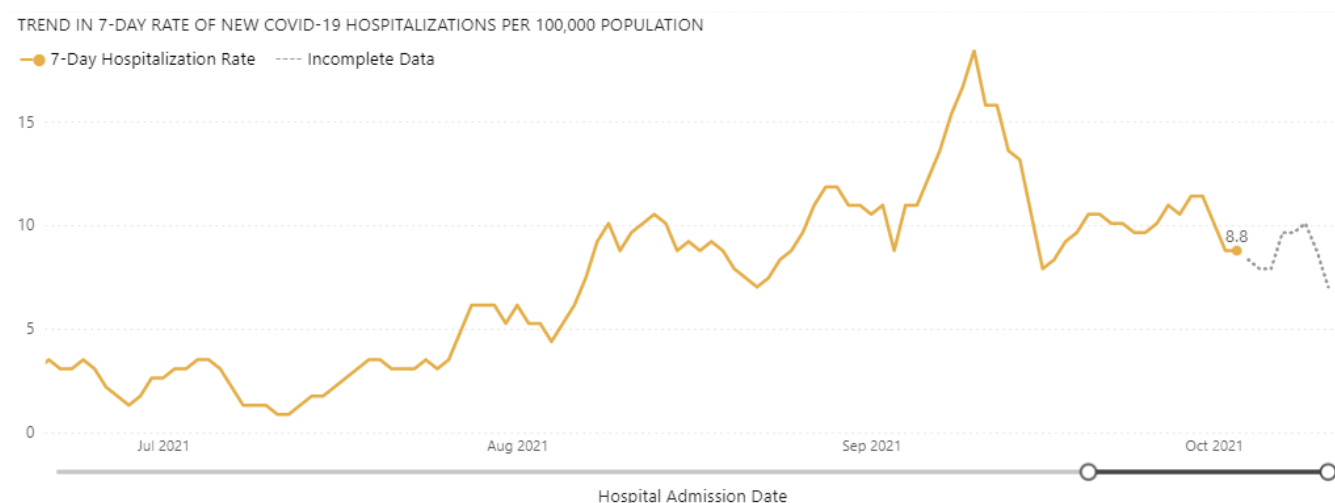
Whatcom County reported a 7-day hospitalization rate of approximately 10.5 per 100,000 residents as of 10/9. The gradual decrease in the number of Whatcom County residents requiring hospitalization reflects the slow decrease in total cases. A total of 26 Whatcom residents were

hospitalized due to COVID-19 illness during the seven days ending on 10/9. Consistent with the breakdown of confirmed cases in the county, more unvaccinated residents continue to need hospitalization for COVID-19 symptoms than vaccinated residents (Table 2). According to the DOH Dashboard, as of 10/9, the estimated COVID-19 hospitalization rate for Whatcom County is still below the state average and is among the lowest fifteen county rates (out of 39 counties). COVID-19 hospitalization data available on the DOH Dashboard is shown in Figure 4. Caution should be taken when interpreting hospitalization rates within the most recent eight days because of the incompleteness of the data.

Table 2: COVID-19 hospitalizations in Whatcom County by vaccination status from 10/3 – 10/9

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Hospitalizations	26	6	20

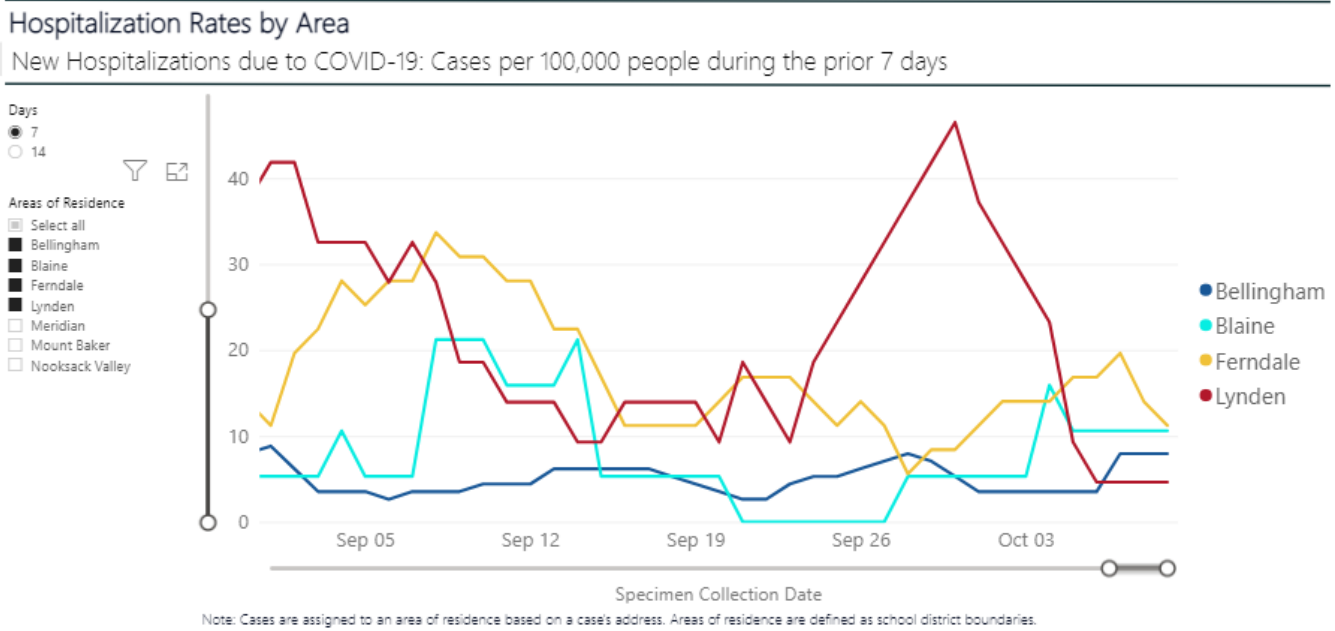
Figure 8: 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate for Whatcom County residents (Source: DOH)



Note: PeaceHealth reports the number of COVID-19 positive patients, a measure of the number of people who are hospitalized for any reason/diagnosis and who have also tested positive for COVID-19. Their care requires COVID-19 protocols to prevent infection of others in the hospital, regardless of the severity of their illness. This number is helpful in understanding changes in our hospital's COVID unit capacity, as caring for COVID-positive patients is resource-intensive.

A breakdown of the 7-day rate per 100,000 residents requiring hospitalization due to COVID-19 by area in Whatcom County is shown below (Figure 9); this data is also available on the Whatcom County Data Dashboard. The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rates in Blaine, Ferndale, and Lynden have varied to a greater extent than that of Bellingham through the month of September and into October. This type of display allows the user to compare the rate of hospitalization due to COVID-19 among residents relative to the local populations for each area.

Figure 9: 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate by area for Whatcom County



COVID-19 Deaths

Whatcom County had three deaths due to COVID-19 during the week ending on 10/9 (Table 3):

- one unvaccinated female, 50-59
- one unvaccinated female, 80-89
- one unvaccinated male, 60-69

This number is preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this reporting week.

Table 3: COVID-19 deaths among Whatcom County residents by vaccination status for 10/3 – 10/9

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Deaths	3	0	3

According to the Sept 15 [report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status from the Department of Health, unvaccinated individuals 65 and older are more than 8 times likely to die of COVID-19 than vaccinated individuals 65 and older.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

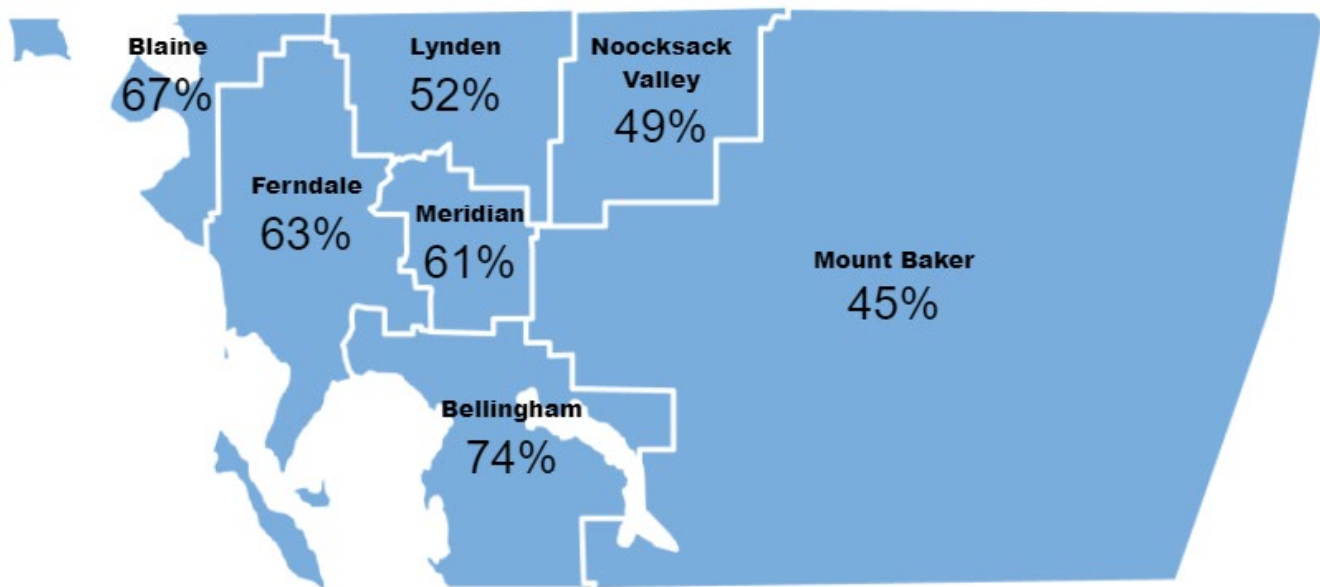
As of 10/11, 61% of Whatcom County residents are fully vaccinated, and 66% have initiated vaccination. Of the 12 and older eligible population, 70% are fully vaccinated, and 76% have initiated (Source: DOH Dashboard).

Of the eligible population, there are still 48,000 Whatcom County residents who have not initiated vaccination.

Vaccination in Sub-County Areas

As of 10/11, vaccination rates continue to be the lowest in the Nooksack (49%) and Mt. Baker (45%) sub-county areas and among our Hispanic population (41%).

Figure 10. Percent of population who have initiated COVID-19 vaccination by sub-county area for Whatcom County



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HEALTH
Department



For more information about this report, contact Health_Data@co.whatcom.wa.us.