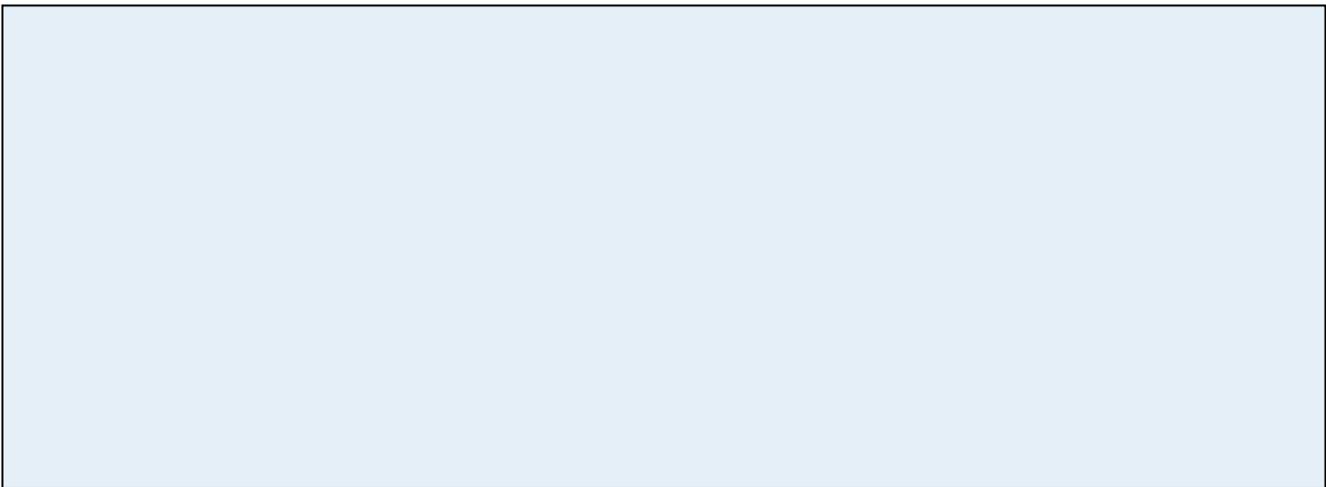


Overview

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.



For the period of 12/19-12/24

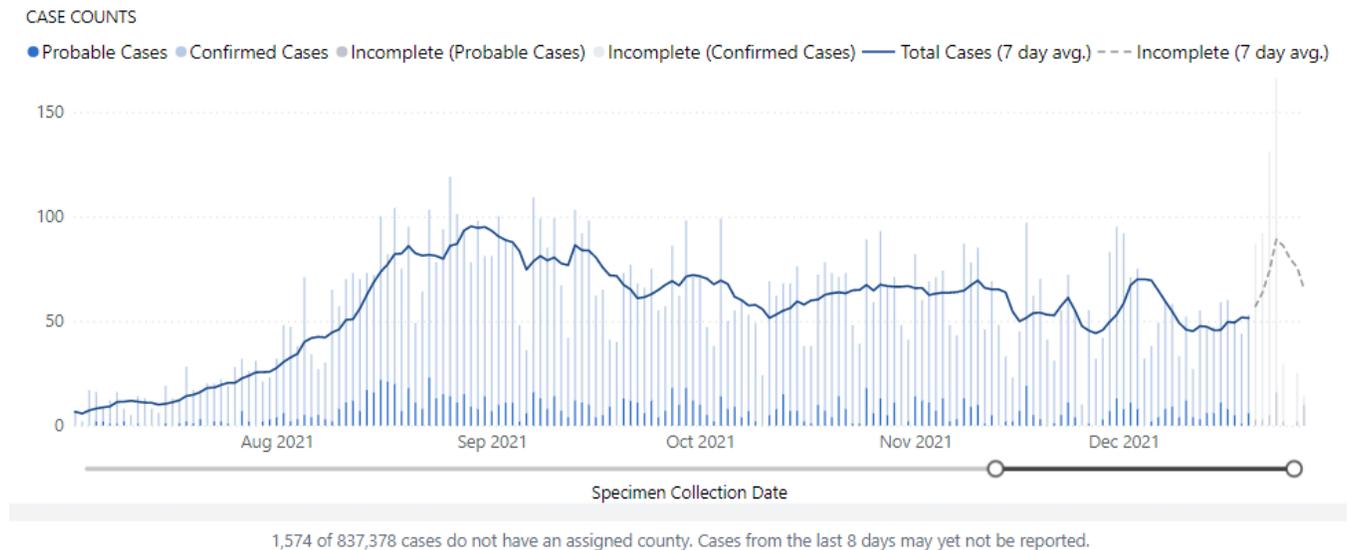
7-Day Case Rate / 100,000	7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000
274	6.6

Overview of COVID-19 Cases

Since the last reporting period ending on December 11th, Whatcom County experienced a marked increase in confirmed and probable cases. The increasing trend in COVID-19 cases can be seen across the region during the most recent reporting week ending 12/23. Due to holiday schedules, many testing sites were closed on December 24th-25th in Whatcom County (including the Bellingham Airport site). The current report includes specimens collected through December 23rd in order to reflect the most accurate data. Whatcom County saw a total of 557 confirmed and probable cases

from specimens collected during the reporting week 12/19 – 12/23, including the highest daily case count reported since the beginning of the pandemic (166 cases on 12/23). The 7-day case rate in Whatcom County for this reporting week is 274 cases per 100,000 residents. The percentage of cases accounted for by school-age children is 18% of all confirmed cases in Whatcom County. According to data published on the Washington State DOH Dashboard confirmed through 12/21, the 7-day case rate for Whatcom County is below the state average (357 per 100,000).

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

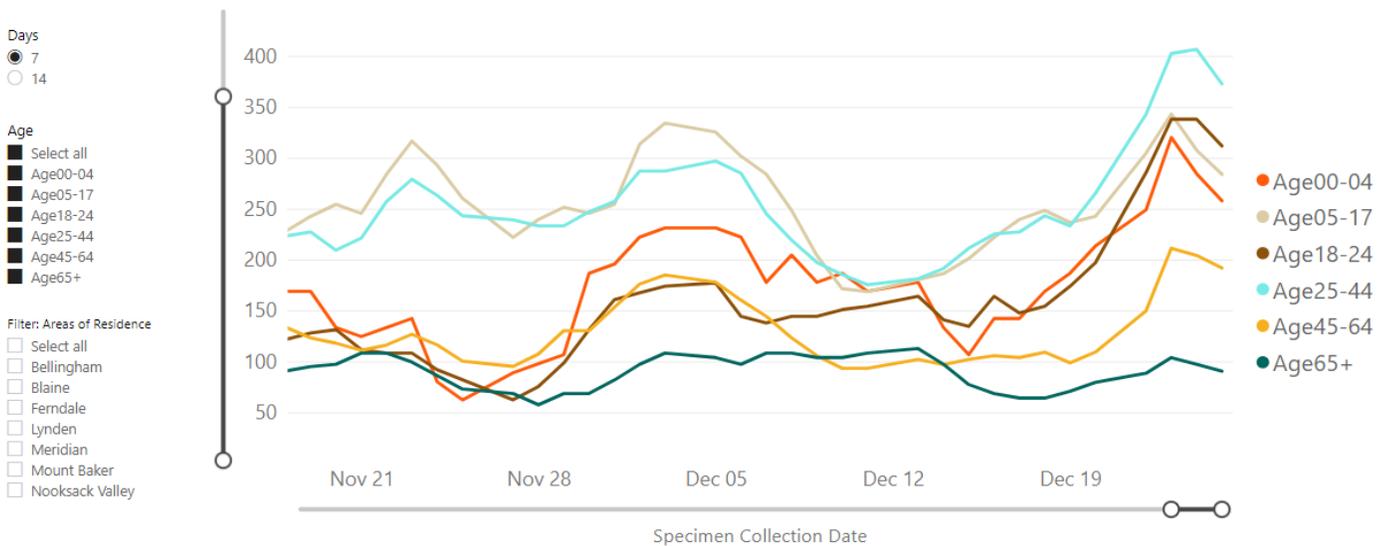


COVID-19 Cases in Age Groups & Sub-County Areas

The 7-day case rates for all age groups in the county increased during the most recent reporting period. The case rates range from 97 per 100,000 for 65 years and older up to 406 per 100,000 for 25 – 44 year olds. Younger age groups are currently experiencing higher relative case rates. All age groups under 44 years are experiencing case rates above the county average. In contrast, the case rate for older adults 65+ years continues to be one of the lowest rates in the county.

Case Rates by Age Groups

New confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people during the prior 7 days



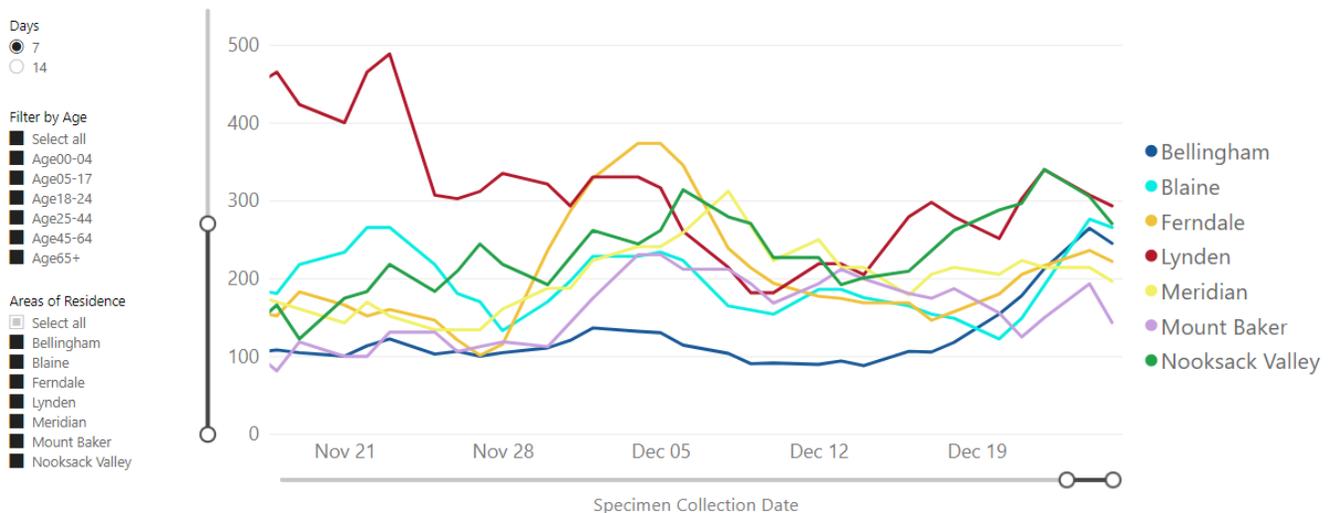
Note: Cases are assigned to an area of residence based on a case's address. Area of residence is defined as school district boundaries.

COVID-19 Cases in Areas

Among the sub-county areas in Whatcom County, the 7-day case rates range from 193 per 100,000 in the Mount Baker area to 407 per 100,000 in the Lynden area (Figure 3). The relative case rates in all areas increased during the most recent reporting period. The relative case rate for the Bellingham region experienced one of the most significant increases in the county, rising to 264 per 100,000. The last time the Bellingham region experienced a relative case rate as high as the current one was in late August.

Case Rates by Area

New confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people during the prior 7 days



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

Across the county, confirmed cases continue to be more common among unvaccinated residents (Table 1). The most recent [DOH Report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status from December 22 provides findings by smaller age groups for the period of 11/17 – 12/14. Case rates per 100,000 among Washington residents 12 – 34 years are four times higher in unvaccinated residents. Case rates per 100,000 among Washington residents 35 – 64 years are five times higher in unvaccinated residents. The case rate per 100,000 among Washington residents over 65 years is seven times higher in unvaccinated residents.

Table 1: Confirmed cases by vaccination status in Whatcom County for 12/19– 12/23

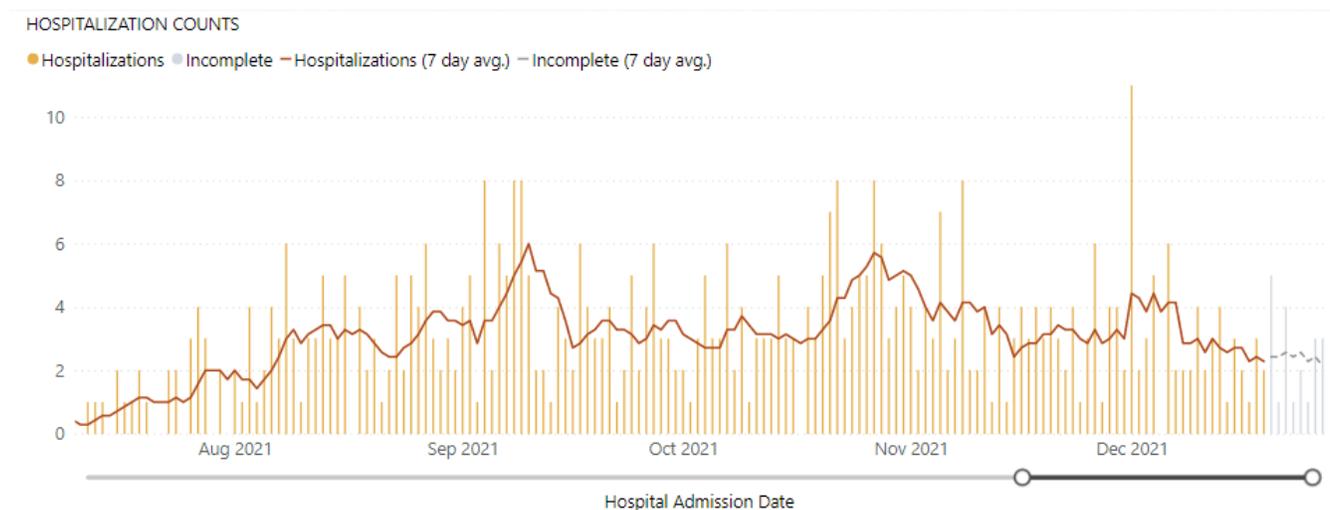
	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Cases	557	17	540

As of the most recent DOH Report on [SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing and Variants in Washington State](#), the Delta variant continues to be the dominant variant circulating throughout Whatcom County. In Washington State among sequenced specimens from 12/05 – 12/18, the delta variant accounted for 84.4% of specimens and the omicron variant accounted for 15.6% of specimens. According to this report, two omicron variants have been reported in Whatcom County. The proportion of omicron variant cases is expected to rise in the coming weeks as more sequencing results become available.

COVID-19 Hospitalizations

A “COVID-19 hospitalization” is a Washington resident identified using case investigation data in the

Figure 4: COVID-19 hospitalization counts for Whatcom County residents with confirmed data through 12/19 (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.

Washington Disease Reporting System (WDRS) or linkage with Rapid Health Information Network (RHINO) records as hospitalized with confirmed or probable COVID-19. The 7-day rate for COVID-19 hospitalizations in this report describes the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations among Whatcom County residents in a seven-day period divided by the county population.

COVID-19 hospitalizations for the period 12/19 – 12/23 remain relatively steady with 17 new hospitalizations among Whatcom County residents. The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate for Whatcom County residents does not reflect the same increase as the 7-day COVID-19 case rate. The current estimate of 7-day hospitalization rate based on specimen collection date is 6.6. 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). Older residents 65 years and above accounted for seven of the total COVID-19 hospitalizations during the current reporting period. According to the DOH Dashboard with data confirmed through 12/19, the estimated COVID-19 hospitalization rate for Whatcom County is above the state average of 6.0 hospitalizations per 100,000 population.

Table 2: COVID-19 hospitalizations in Whatcom County by vaccination status from 12/19 – 12/23

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Hospitalizations	17	0	17

COVID-19 hospitalization data available on the DOH Dashboard is shown in Figure 5. Caution should be taken when interpreting hospitalization rates within the most recent eight days because of the incompleteness of the data (noted with a dashed line).

According to the December 22 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 11/10 to 12/07 suggests vaccinated individuals continue to be at much lower risk for hospitalization due to COVID-19 than the unvaccinated population. Hospitalization rates among the youngest age cohort eligible for vaccination (12 – 34 years) are 19 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the fully vaccinated population. The difference in rates is 18 times higher for unvaccinated 35 – 64 year olds. For the oldest cohort 65 years and above, the rate of COVID-19 hospitalization is 12 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the vaccinated population.

COVID-19 Deaths

Whatcom County saw eight deaths due to COVID-19 during the period 12/12 – 12/23 since the last report (Table 3):

- One unvaccinated female, 60-69 years
- One unvaccinated female, 70-79 years
- One unvaccinated male, 90-99 years
- One unvaccinated male, 60-69 years
- Two unvaccinated males, 40-49 years
- One vaccinated female, 60-69 years
- One vaccinated female, 90-99 years

Table 3. Summary of COVID-19 deaths among Whatcom County residents by vaccination status

COVID-19 Deaths	Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
Week 12/05 – 12/11	8	2	6

These numbers are preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this reporting week. The cumulative count for COVID-19 deaths for vaccinated Whatcom County residents is 34, and the overall count for COVID-19 deaths is 198.

According to the December 22 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 10/27 to 11/23 suggests that for individuals 65 and older, unvaccinated individuals are 13 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than vaccinated individuals.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

The percent coverage for COVID-19 vaccinations among the population is displayed in Table 4 as of 12/25. Of the eligible population (5+ years), there are 53,000 Whatcom County residents who have not initiated vaccination. The eligible population of 5+ years in Whatcom County includes an additional 17,807 individuals compared to the population 12+.

Table 4. Percent of population who are initiating vaccination and fully vaccinated in Whatcom County.

	Initiating (%)	Fully Vaccinated (%)
Total Population	69.3	63.7
Population 5+	74.9	67.8
Population 12+	79.4	73.0

As of Dec. 25, the number of pediatric vaccinations received in Whatcom County is 5,159, accounting for 29% of the eligible population in the 5 – 11 year-old age group. The total number of booster doses administered to Whatcom residents is 56,721.