

# Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report

Whatcom County Health Department

Updated 01/06/22 for the period of 12/25/21 - 01/01/22

## 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](#), and 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

- COVID-19 case counts and case rates increased to the highest levels recorded since the beginning of the pandemic.
- The average daily case count is 192 cases per day for the week ending 01/01, a 269% increase from 52 cases per day for the week 12/18 before the recent surge.
- Rising trends are seen among the relative case rates of all age groups and all sub-county areas, and case rates are reaching all-time highs.
- Among the age group 5 – 17 years, the case rates in the Bellingham and Ferndale regions have reached pandemic-high levels. Other areas are experiencing rising trends but have not reached rates as high as those recorded during the Delta surge earlier this year.
- The 7-day rate for COVID-19 hospitalizations by specimen date among Whatcom County residents is climbing, but to a lesser extent than case rates.
- The portion of 5 – 11 year olds in Whatcom County that initiated vaccination reached 5,276 children (30%).

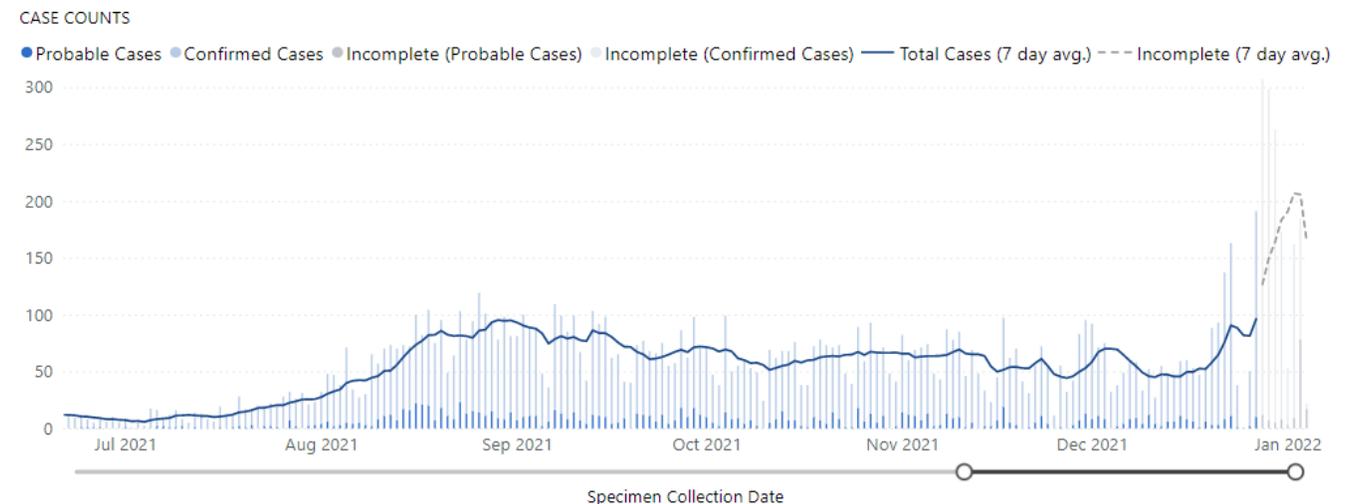
## For the period of 12/25-01/01

7-Day Case Rate / 100,000	7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000
589	13.6

## Overview of COVID-19 Cases

Whatcom County continues to experience a rapid increase in confirmed and probable cases. The increasing trend in COVID-19 cases continues across the region during the most recent reporting week ending 01/01. Due to holiday schedules and winter weather, many testing sites were closed on multiple dates in Whatcom County over the previous two weeks (including the Bellingham Airport site). As testing availability returns, the county is starting to see a more accurate picture of cases. Whatcom County saw a total of 1,384 confirmed and probable cases from specimens collected during the reporting week 12/26 – 01/01, including the five highest daily case counts reported since the beginning of the pandemic. The 7-day case rate in Whatcom County for this reporting week is 589 cases per 100,000 residents. The percentage of cases accounted for by school-age children is 15% of all confirmed cases in Whatcom County. This represents a decrease from levels leading up to the winter holidays. According to data published on the Washington State DOH Dashboard updated through 01/04, the 7-day case rate for Whatcom County is below the estimated state 7-day case rate (618 per 100,000).

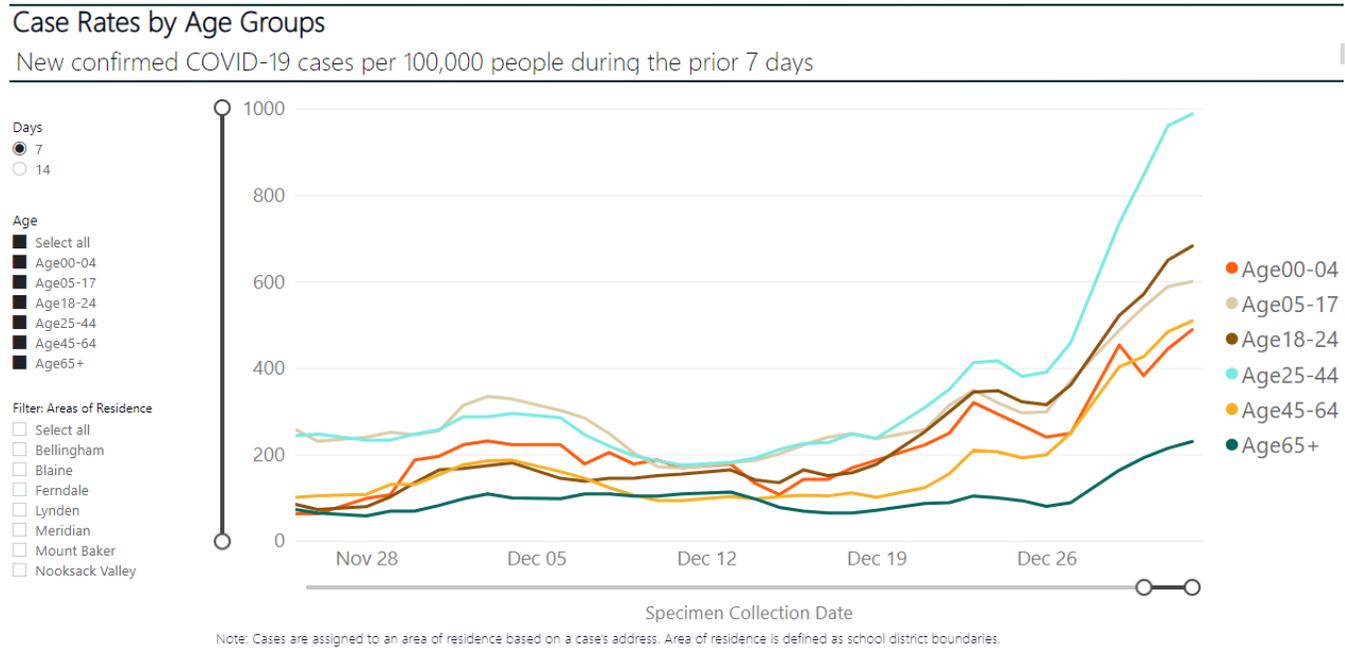
Figure 1: Daily COVID-19 case counts and 7-day average for Whatcom County (Source: DOH)



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

The 7-day case rates for all age groups in the county are experiencing rapid increases. The case rates range from 230 per 100,000 for 65 years and older up to 988 per 100,000 for 25 – 44 year olds. Similar to the previous reporting period, younger age groups are consistently experiencing higher relative case rates similar to the previous reporting period. All age groups between 5 and 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.

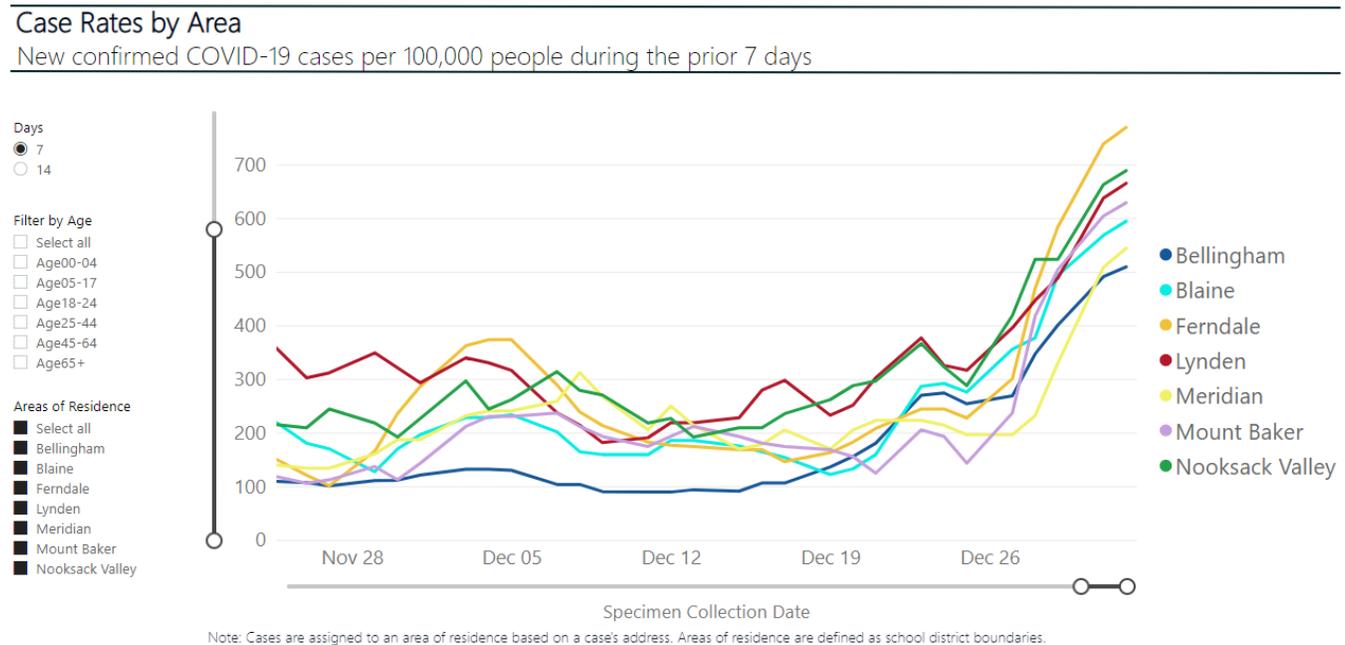
Figure 3: 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 by age groups in Whatcom County



### COVID-19 Cases in Areas

Among the sub-county areas in Whatcom County, the 7-day case rates range from 509 per 100,000 in the Bellingham area to 769 per 100,000 in the Ferndale area (Figure 3). Relative case rates continue to climb during the most recent reporting week, and all areas have reached the highest levels recorded during the pandemic. Among the age group 5 – 17 years, the relative case rates in the Bellingham and Ferndale regions have reached pandemic-high levels. Other areas are experiencing rising trends but have not yet reached rates as high as those recorded during the Delta surge earlier this year.

Figure 2: 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 by sub-county area in Whatcom County.



Across the county, confirmed cases continue to be more common among unvaccinated residents (Table 1). According to the January 5 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 12/01 to 12/28 suggests that unvaccinated individuals are at a higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19.

Table 1: Confirmed cases by vaccination status in Whatcom County for 12/26– 01/01

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Cases	1384	578	806

As of the most recent DOH Report on [SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing and Variants in Washington State](#), the Omicron variant is quickly becoming the dominant variant circulating throughout Washington State. Among sequenced specimens from 12/21 – 12/27 across the state, the omicron variant accounted for 83.5% of specimens, and the delta variant accounted for 16.5% of specimens. According to this report, 28 omicron variants have been reported in Whatcom County. The Omicron variant is expected to be the dominant variant in circulation in Whatcom County soon if it is not already.

## COVID-19 Hospitalizations

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

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.

COVID-19 hospitalizations for the period 12/26 – 01/01 increased slightly to 21 new hospitalizations among Whatcom County residents from 17 the previous week. The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate for Whatcom County residents based on specimen collection date is 13.6, which is starting to reflect the increase in case counts. 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 9 of the total hospitalizations during the current reporting period. According to the DOH Dashboard with data confirmed through 12/27, the estimated COVID-19 hospitalization rate for Whatcom County by admission date is equal to the state average of 9.0 hospitalizations per 100,000 population.

Table 2: COVID-19 hospitalizations in Whatcom County by vaccination status from 12/26 – 01/01

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Hospitalizations	21	6	15

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 January 5 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 11/24 to 12/21 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 10 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the fully vaccinated population. The difference in rates is 14 times higher for unvaccinated 35 – 64 year olds. For the oldest cohort 65 years and above, the rate of COVID-19 hospitalization is 13 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the vaccinated population.

## COVID-19 Deaths

Whatcom County saw seven deaths due to COVID-19 during the period 12/24 – 01/01 since the last report (Table 3):

- One unvaccinated male, 40-49 years
- One unvaccinated male, 50-59 years
- One unvaccinated male, 60-69 years
- Two unvaccinated males, 70-79 years
- One unvaccinated female, 70-79 years
- One vaccinated female, 100-109 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 12/24 – 01/01	7	1	6

These numbers are preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this reporting week. As of Jan 1, the cumulative count for COVID-19 deaths for vaccinated Whatcom County residents is 36, and the overall count for COVID-19 deaths is 205.

According to the January 5 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 11/10 to 12/07 suggests that for individuals 65 and older, unvaccinated individuals are 15 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 01/01. Of the eligible population (5+ years), there are 51,000 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	69.5	63.8
Population 5+	75.1	68.1
Population 12+	80.3	73.6

As of Dec. 25, the number of pediatric vaccinations received in Whatcom County is 5,276, accounting for 30% of the eligible population in the 5 – 11 year-old age group. The total number of booster doses administered to Whatcom residents is 58,953. Of those, 24,508 have been for residents 65+.



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