

Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report

Whatcom County Health Department

Updated 01/13/22 for the period of 01/02/22 – 01/08/22

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

- Whatcom County continues to experience the highest COVID-19 case counts and case rates since the beginning of the pandemic.
- The average daily case count is 453 cases per day, a 129% increase from 198 cases per day for the previous reporting week.
- Among the age group 5 – 17 years, the relative case rates in the all sub-county regions except for Nooksack Valley have reached pandemic-high levels.
- The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate per 100,000 Whatcom County residents based on specimen collection date reached a pandemic high mark of 23.3 on Jan 5th.
- The portion of 5 – 11 year olds in Whatcom County that initiated vaccination reached 5,589 children (31%).

For the period of 01/02 – 01/08

7-Day Case Rate / 100,000	7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000
1,391	21.5

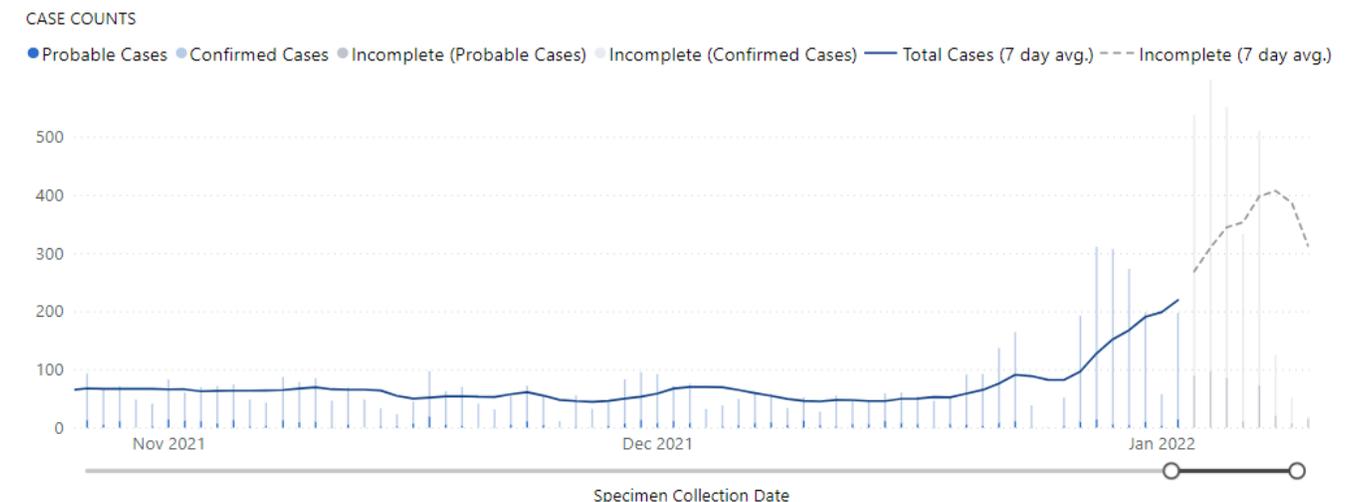
Overview of COVID-19 Cases

Whatcom County continues to experience the highest levels of confirmed and probable cases since the beginning of the pandemic. This trend in COVID-19 cases continues across the region during the most recent reporting week ending 01/08. While testing centers returned to more normal schedules during the past week, the testing capacity of these centers (including the Bellingham Airport, pharmacies, and clinics) is experiencing overwhelming demand. More residents are turning to testing

at home, and most of these results are currently going unreported. Due to these factors, many infections will go unreported, and despite extremely high case counts in the county already, actual levels are suspected to be much higher.

Whatcom County saw a total of 3,169 confirmed and probable cases from specimens collected during the reporting week 01/02 – 01/08, including the five highest daily case counts reported for the second week in a row. The 7-day case rate in Whatcom County for this reporting week is 1,391 cases per 100,000 residents, more than double the case rate from the previous week. According to data published on the Washington State DOH Dashboard updated through 01/12, the 7-day case rate for Whatcom County is slightly below the estimated overall rate for WA State (1,424 per 100,000) for this reporting period ending 01/08.

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



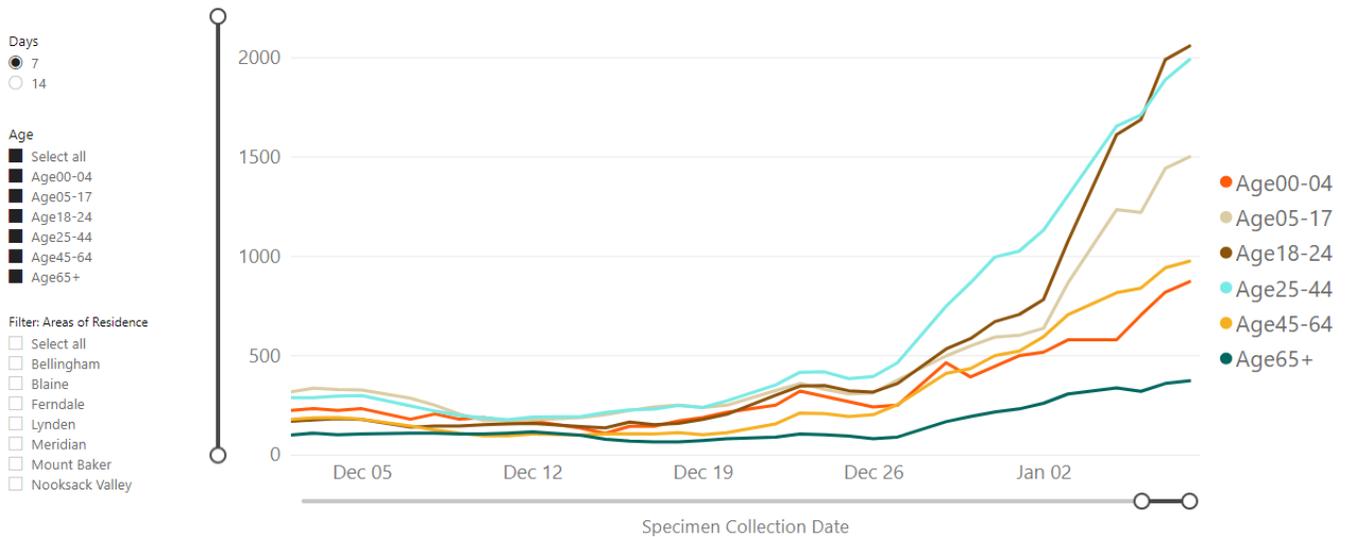
COVID-19 Cases in Age Groups & Sub-County Areas

The 7-day case rates for all age groups in the county are experiencing rapid increases. The case rates range from 371 per 100,000 for 65 years and older up to 2,056 per 100,000 for 18 – 24 year olds. Younger age groups are consistently experiencing higher case rates relative to the previous reporting week. All age groups between 5 and 44 years are experiencing case rates above the county average (1,371 per 100,000). In contrast, the case rate for older adults 65+ years continues to be one of the lowest rates in the county. The percentage of cases accounted for by school-age children (5 – 17 years) is 17% of all confirmed cases in Whatcom County.

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

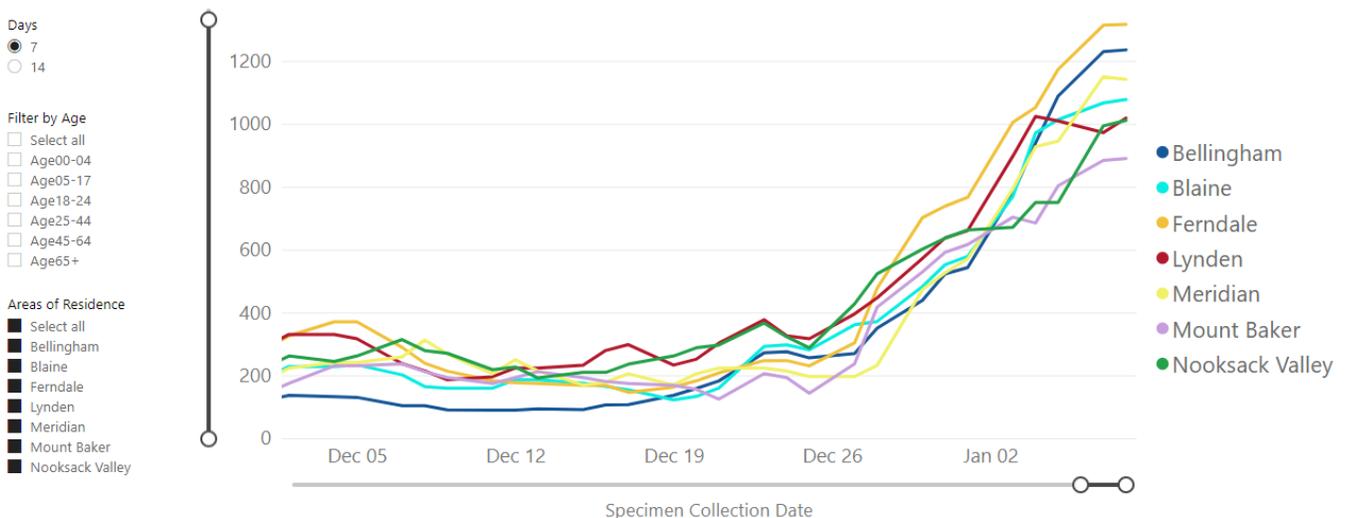
COVID-19 Cases in Areas

Among the sub-county areas in Whatcom County, the 7-day case rates range from 890 per 100,000 in the Mount Baker area to 1,316 per 100,000 in the Ferndale area (Figure 3). Relative case rates continue to climb during the most recent reporting week, and have reached the highest levels recorded during the pandemic. Among the age group 5 – 17 years, the relative case rates in all sub-county regions except for Nooksack Valley have reached pandemic-high levels. The Nooksack Valley region is experiencing an upward trend, but the relative case rate for 5 – 17 year olds has not surpassed the highest mark 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.

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). According to the January 12 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 12/08 to 01/04 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 01/02– 01/08

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Cases	3,169	1,227	1,942

As of the most recent DOH Report on [SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing and Variants in Washington State](#), the Omicron variant has become the dominant variant circulating throughout the State. Among sequenced specimens from 12/22 – 12/28 across the state, the Omicron variant accounted for 90% of specimens, and the delta variant accounted for 10% of specimens. According to this report, 31 Omicron variants have been reported in Whatcom County. Further details about the selection of specimens for sequencing among cases can be found in the linked report.

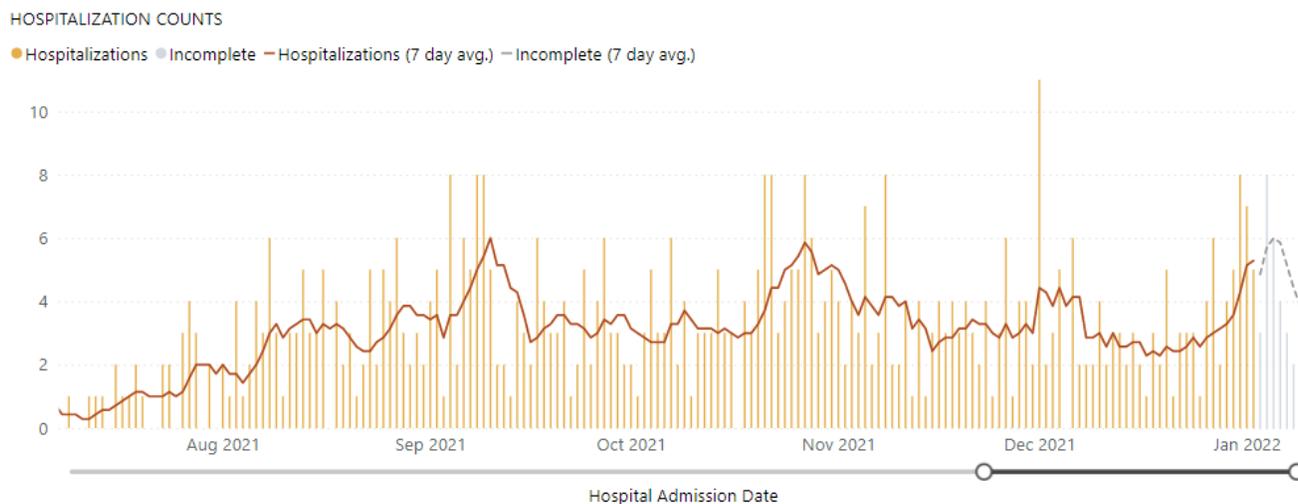
COVID-19 Hospitalizations

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.

COVID-19 hospitalization data available on the DOH Dashboard is shown in Figure 5 on the following page. 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).

COVID-19 hospitalizations for the period 01/02 – 01/08 more than doubled among Whatcom County residents (45) compared to the previous week (17). The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate per 100,000 Whatcom County residents based on specimen collection date reached a pandemic high mark of 23.3 on January 5. 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). Among the reported COVID-19 hospitalizations, older residents 65 years and above accounted for more than one-third during the current reporting period. According to the DOH Dashboard with data updated through 01/12, the estimated COVID-19 hospitalization rate by admission date for Whatcom County is slightly below the rate of WA State.

Figure 4: COVID-19 hospitalization counts for Whatcom County residents with confirmed data through 01/02 (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.

According to the January 12 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 12/01 to 12/28 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 8 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the fully vaccinated population. The difference in rates is 11 times higher for unvaccinated 35 – 64 year olds. For the oldest cohort 65 years and above, the rate of COVID-19 hospitalization is 11 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the vaccinated population.

Table 2: COVID-19 hospitalizations in Whatcom County by vaccination status from 01/02 – 01/08

	Week Total	Vaccinated	Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated
COVID-19 Hospitalizations	45	16	29

COVID-19 Deaths

Whatcom County saw six deaths due to COVID-19 during the period 01/02 – 01/08 (Table 3):

- Unvaccinated Female, 30-39 years
- 2 unvaccinated Males, 70-79 years
- Vaccinated Female, 70-79 years
- Vaccinated Male, 60-69 years
- Vaccinated Male, 70-79 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 01/02 – 01/08	6	3	3

These numbers are preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this reporting week. As of January 8, the cumulative count for COVID-19 deaths for vaccinated Whatcom County residents is 39, and the overall count for COVID-19 deaths is 214.

According to the January 12 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 11/17 to 12/14 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 01/08. 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	69.7	64.0
Population 5+	75.5	68.4
Population 12+	80.7	73.9

As of January 8, the number of pediatric vaccinations received in Whatcom County is 5,589, accounting for 31% of the eligible population in the 5 – 11 year-old age group. The total number of booster doses administered to Whatcom residents is 63,667. Of those, 25,153 have been for residents 65+.