

Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report

Whatcom County Health Department

Updated 1/20/22 for the period of 1/09/22 – 1/15/22

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 saw its highest daily case count yet again on 01/10 with 711 cases.
- For the week ending 01/15, the average daily case count is 497 cases per day.
- New COVID-19 hospitalizations among Whatcom residents climbed to a pandemic-high of 63 during the most recent reporting week.
- The 7-day rate for COVID-19 hospitalizations among Whatcom County residents is increasing and reached a rate of 20.6 per 100k with data confirmed through 1/07.
- The portion of 5 – 11 year olds in Whatcom County that initiated vaccination reached 5,976 children (34%).

For the period of 1/09 – 1/15

| 7-Day Case Rate / 100,000 | 7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000* |
|------------------------------|--|
| 3,476 | 20.6 |

*Hospitalization data is confirmed through 1/07

Overview of COVID-19 Cases

Confirmed and probable cases detected in Whatcom County remain at very high levels. Another high mark was set on Monday (1/10), with 711 cases in one day. Testing locations throughout the county are experiencing greater demand, and resources are at capacity. Testing appointments are now scheduled several days out, even for those with symptoms. At-home testing continues to be a common alternative, but it is assumed that these results are not reported. As a result of these factors, the actual case levels are likely higher than reported here. In addition, testing labs and reporting

processes are overwhelmed with the high number of cases, causing some delays in data reporting. Current trends should be interpreted with caution as these are subject to change.

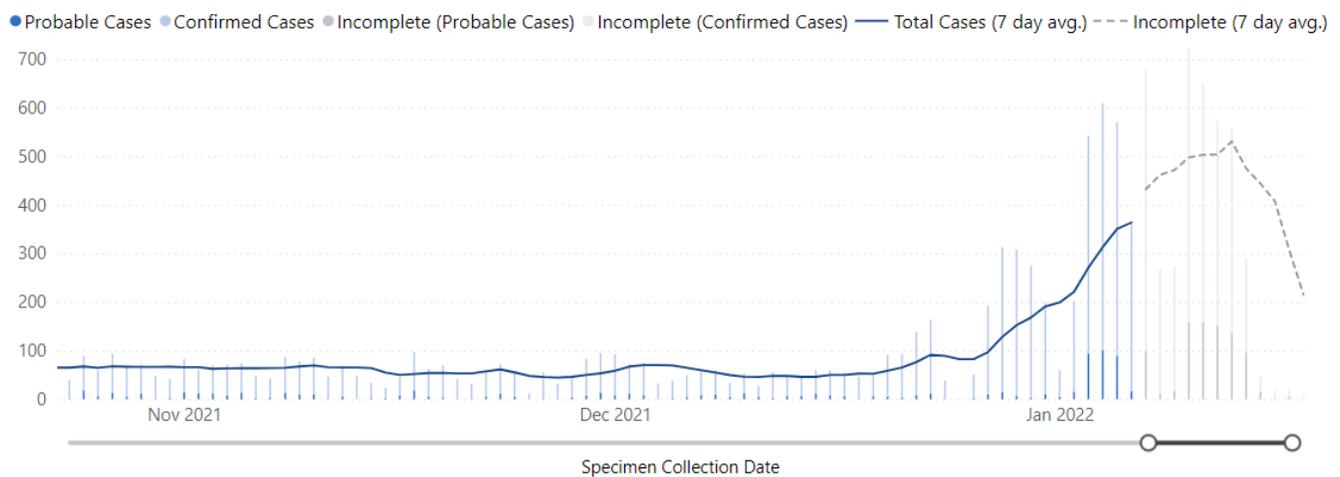
Whatcom County saw a total of 3,476 confirmed and probable cases from specimens collected during the reporting week 1/09 – 1/15. The 7-day case rate in Whatcom County for this reporting week is 1,525 cases per 100,000 resident. The case rate for Whatcom County is consistent with other counties in the region. Despite these high rates, some potential signs of slowing are observed across the region. According to data published on the Washington State DOH Dashboard updated through 1/18, the estimated 7-day case rate for Whatcom County is very similar to the overall rate for WA State for this reporting period ending 1/15.

The percent-positivity from the community testing site in Bellingham reflects the positive test results as a percentage of all tests ordered at this site. Generally, about 40% of tests completed in Whatcom County are conducted at this site. On January 11, the percent-positivity at this site peaked at 21%. While it is too soon to draw conclusions from current case rates due to reporting delays, test-positivity data from this site is complete and provides a tentative indication of a peak in the current surge.

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

The 7-day case rates for all age groups remain at the highest levels recorded during the pandemic.

CASE COUNTS

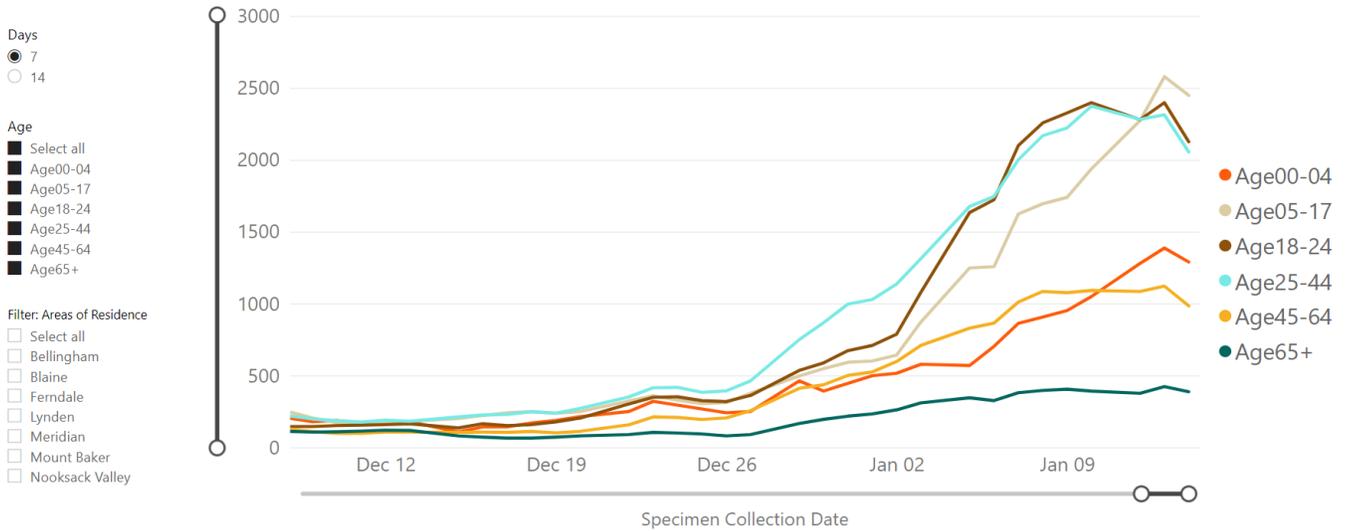


Some indications of cresting case rates are observed; however, it is too early to determine whether this observation reflects the real situation or a delay in tests reported. The case rates range from 387 per 100,000 for 65 years and older up to 2,448 per 100,000 for 5 – 17 year olds. Younger age groups are consistently experiencing higher relative case rates similar to the previous reporting week. All age groups between 5 and 44 years are experiencing case rates above the county average (1,525 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 25% 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.

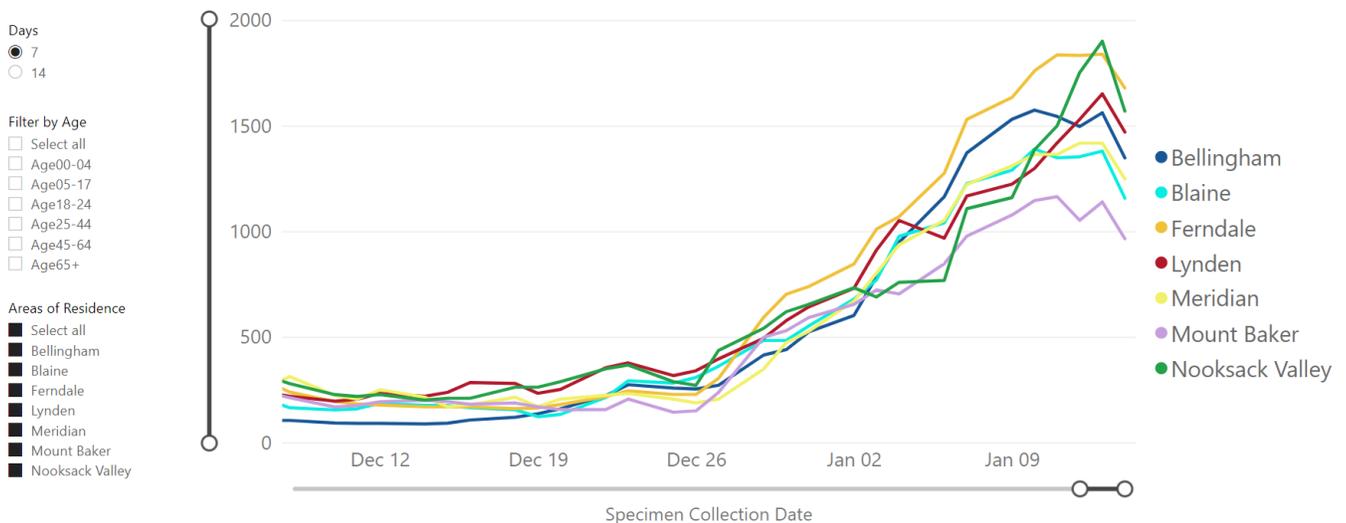
COVID-19 Cases in Areas

Among the sub-county areas in Whatcom County, the 7-day case rates range from 965 per 100,000 in the Mount Baker area to 1,678 per 100,000 in the Ferndale area (Figure 3). Relative case rates continue to reflect the highest levels reported during the pandemic in all areas, but the same cresting patterns are observed in area case rates. Whether or not this reflects the actual situation will be determined over the coming days as data become more complete.

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 19 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 12/15 to 1/11 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 01/09– 01/15

| | Week Total | Vaccinated | Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated |
|----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| COVID-19 Cases | 3,476 | 1,047 | 2,429 |

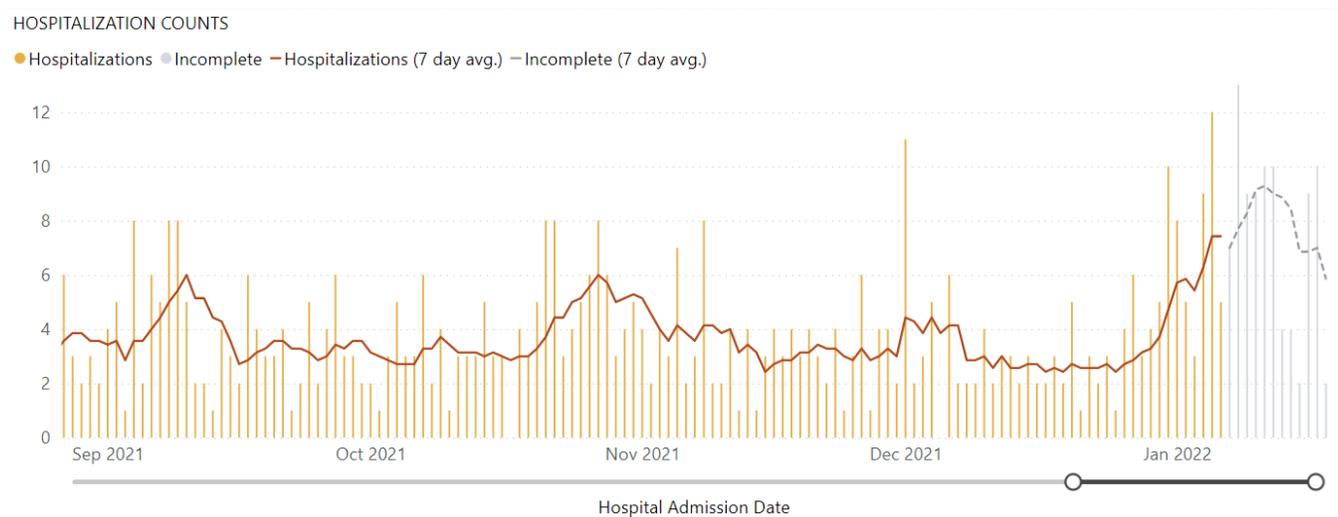
As of the most recent DOH Report on [SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing and Variants in Washington State](#), the Omicron variant has become and continues to be the dominant variant circulating throughout the State. According to this report, 279 Omicron specimens have been sequenced in Whatcom County. Further details 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. 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).

Figure 4: COVID-19 hospitalization counts for Whatcom County residents with confirmed data through 1/02 (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.

COVID-19 hospitalizations for the period 1/09 – 1/15 continued to climb among Whatcom County residents, reaching another pandemic-high mark for one week (63). The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate per 100,000 Whatcom County residents based on data confirmed through 1/07 is 20.6, and this rate is likely to increase over the coming week. 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 40% during the current reporting period. According to the DOH Dashboard with data updated through 1/12, the estimated COVID-19 hospitalization rate by admission date for Whatcom County is slightly above the rate of WA State.

Table 2: COVID-19 hospitalizations in Whatcom County by age and vaccination status from 1/09 – 1/15

| | Week Total | Vaccinated | Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| COVID-19 Hospitalizations | 63 | 12 | 51 |

According to the January 19 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 12/08 to 1/04 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 5 times higher in the unvaccinated population than in the fully vaccinated population. The difference in rates is 8 times higher for unvaccinated 35 – 64 year olds. For the oldest cohort 65 years and above, the rate of COVID-19 hospitalization is 7 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 1/09 – 1/15 (Table 3):

- Unvaccinated Female, 80-89 years
- Unvaccinated Male, 60-69 years
- Unvaccinated Male, 80-89 years
- Unvaccinated Male, 100-109 years
- Vaccinated Female, 60-69 years
- Vaccinated Female, 70-79 years
- Vaccinated Male, 80-89 years

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

| | Total | Vaccinated | Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated |
|-----------------|-------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| COVID-19 Deaths | 7 | 3 | 4 |

These numbers are preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this reporting week. As of January 15, the cumulative count for COVID-19 deaths for vaccinated Whatcom County residents is 43, and the overall count for COVID-19 deaths is 221.

According to the January 19 [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status, data collected from 11/24 to 12/21 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 1/15. Of the eligible population (5+ years), there are 50,000 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 | 70.2 | 64.4 |
| Population 5+ | 76.1 | 69.0 |
| Population 12+ | 80.5 | 73.8 |

As of January 15, the number of pediatric vaccinations received in Whatcom County is 5,976, accounting for 34% of the eligible population in the 5 – 11 year-old age group. The total number of booster doses administered to Whatcom residents is 70,738. Of those, 25,201 have been to residents 65+.



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