

Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report

Whatcom County Health Department

Updated 4/01/22 for the period of 3/13/22 – 3/26/22

Overview

This report is currently published bi-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.

COVID-19 testing patterns are changing as many individuals are choosing over-the-counter (OTC) tests across the county. The results from these OTC tests remain largely unreported, and therefore estimates of confirmed case counts and rates may not portray the complete picture of COVID-19 activity in the county. As a result of these factors, WCHD will be introducing changes to the reporting interval and measures in upcoming reports. This report will be published on a bi-weekly schedule through March and then move to a monthly schedule in April assuming declining trends continue.

Key Findings

- COVID-19 confirmed and probable case counts in Whatcom County are leveling off during the second half of March.
- The 7-day average daily case count decreased to 18 cases per day. The last time confirmed and probable case counts were measured at this level was in mid-July 2021 toward the beginning of the Delta variant surge.
- The 7-day rate for COVID-19 hospitalizations by specimen date among Whatcom County residents was confirmed at 2.2 per 100k for the week ending 3/26.
- COVID-19 hospitalizations remain highest among individuals 65 and older.
- Vaccine and booster dose information is now available by age group on the state's DOH dashboard.

For the period of 3/20 – 3/26	7-Day Case Rate / 100,000
	55.9

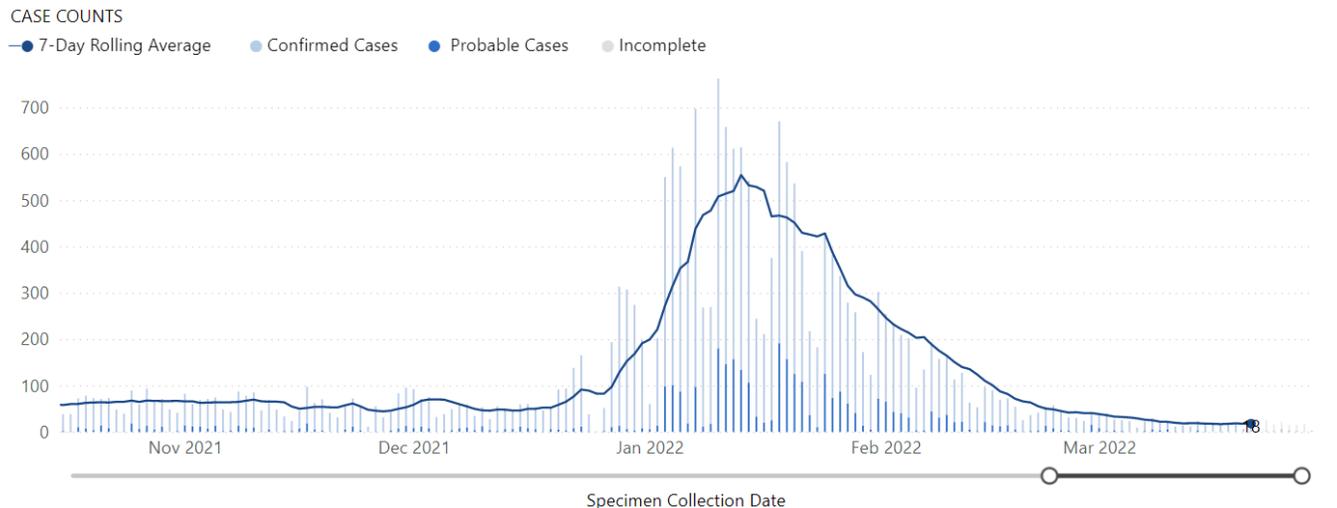
For the period of 3/13 – 3/19*	7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000
	2.2

*To align with changes on the DOH Dashboard, the COVID-19 hospitalization rate is delayed to allow for completeness of the data.

Overview of COVID-19 Cases

In Whatcom County, the total number of confirmed and probable cases has begun to level off over the month of March. The total number of new confirmed and probable cases for the week ending 3/26 was 127 with a 7-day average case count of 18. The number of new cases remained constant for the past three weeks ending on 3/26. The lifting of the mask mandate in WA State that occurred on March 11th is one factor that may affect infection rates in the county. However, findings from this analysis are still estimates of the actual COVID-19 activity in the county due to the continued promotion and use of OTC tests that are not included here. Figure 1 shows the confirmed and probable case counts for Whatcom County through 3/21 according to the state’s DOH Dashboard. The last time confirmed and probable case counts were measured at this level was in mid-July toward the beginning of the Delta variant surge. Calculated rates and averages based on incomplete data no longer appear on this dashboard in order to focus on the most complete COVID-19 information.

Figure 1. COVID-19 Daily Case Counts and 7-Day Average for Whatcom County Confirmed through 3/21. Source: DOH



WCHD is preparing a new dashboard to display the most accurate information related to cases, hospitalizations, and deaths by vaccination status. In the meantime, an analysis of COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status is available in the corresponding [DOH report](#).

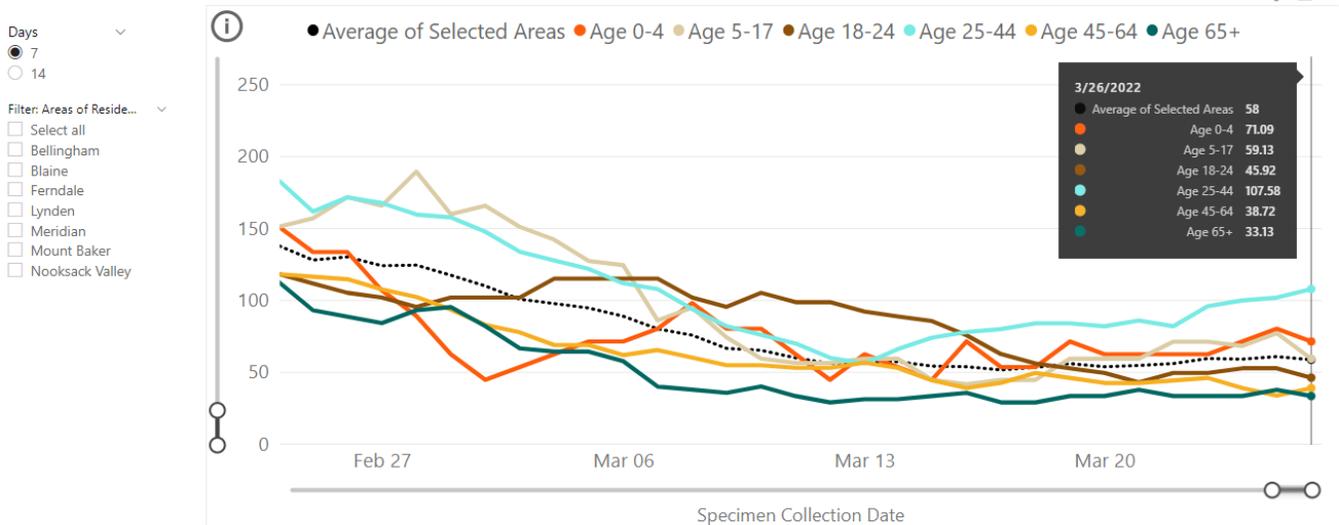
COVID-19 Cases in Age Groups & Sub-County Areas

The COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 across several age groups in Whatcom County have started to level off. The case rates are now measuring between 33 per 100,000 for those 65 years and older and 108 per 100,000 for 25 – 44 year-olds. New cases among 25 – 44 year olds increased by 78% over the two weeks ending 3/26. Case rates are still measuring at a level last seen in mid-July (2021) at the beginning of the Delta variant surge.

Figure 2. 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

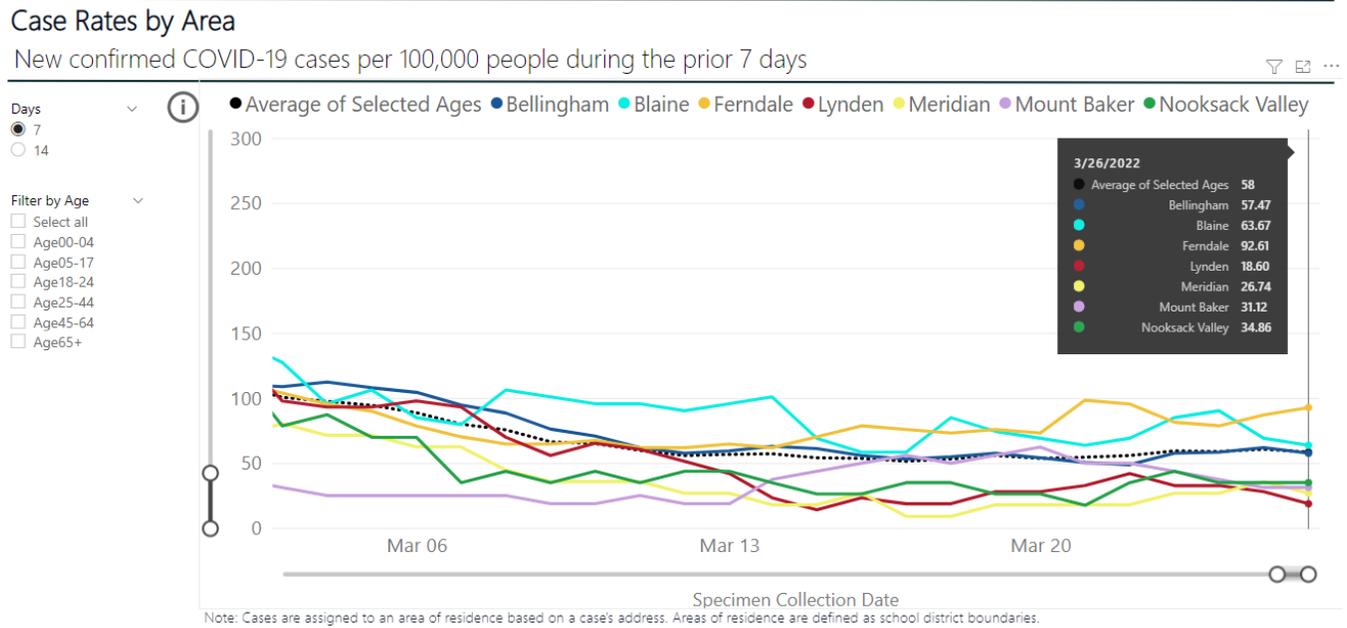


Note: Cases are assigned to an area of residence based on a case's address. Area of residence is defined as school district boundaries.

COVID-19 Cases in Areas

The leveling pattern is also observed among the COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 across all sub-county areas. At the end of the most recent reporting week, the case rates range from 18 per 100,000 in the Lynden area up to 93 per 100,000 in the Ferndale area. Some of the sub-county area relative case rates have already reached pre-Delta levels measured at the beginning of July 2021.

Figure 3. 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 by sub-county area in Whatcom County

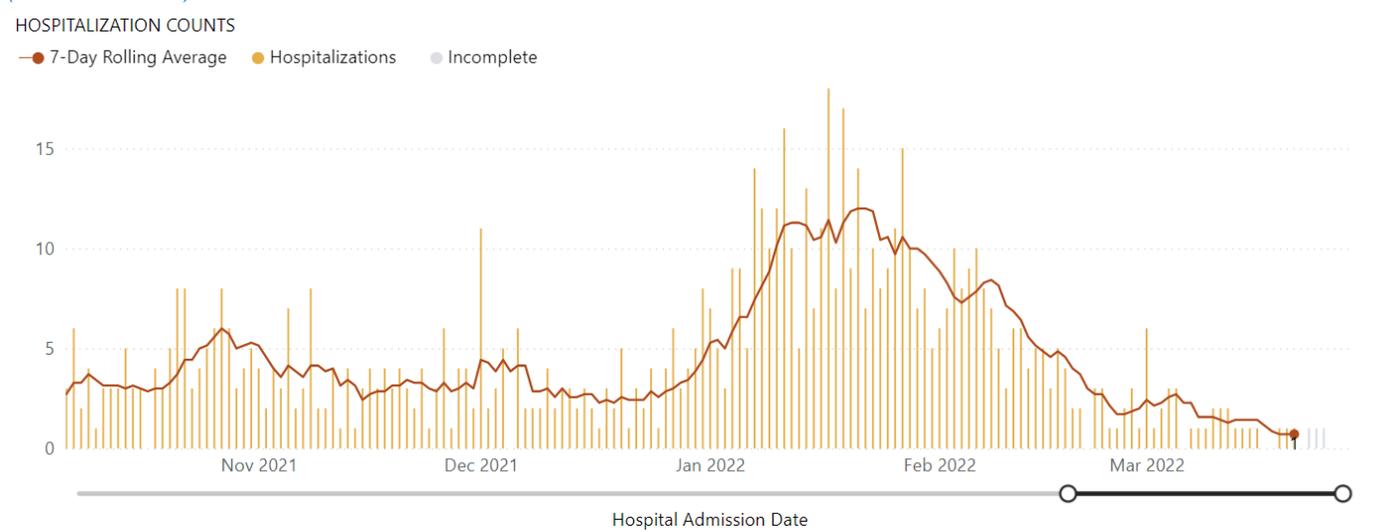


COVID-19 Hospitalizations

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 4. Caution should be taken when interpreting hospitalization rates within the most recent eight days because of the incompleteness of the data (noted with grey bars). As noted above, calculated rates and averages are no longer included on DOH graphs for incomplete data.

Figure 4: COVID-19 hospitalization counts for Whatcom County residents with confirmed data through 3/21. (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.

The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate per 100,000 Whatcom County residents was confirmed at 2.2 as of 3/21. Based on the population in Whatcom County, this rate translates into 7 new hospitalizations per 7-day period, or 1 per day. For the two weeks ending 3/26, 50% of the hospitalizations were among individuals 65 years and older. COVID-19 hospitalizations have steadily declined among Whatcom County residents and are now at a level last seen in July 2021 before the Delta variant surge; however, those 65 years and above consistently make up the greatest proportion of those hospitalized. For an analysis of hospitalizations by vaccination status, the [DOH Report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths is available.

COVID-19 Deaths

WCHD is working on other measures to report deaths that better represent the distribution of these events across the population and consider the additional vaccinations that are now common. Further details will be available as they are confirmed in the coming weeks. An analysis of deaths by vaccination status is available in the state's [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status.

Whatcom County saw two deaths due to COVID-19 during the period 3/13 – 3/26:

- Female, 70-79 years
- Female, 80-89 years

The total number of deaths due to COVID-19 among Whatcom County residents reached 290 as of 3/26. These numbers are preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this reporting week.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

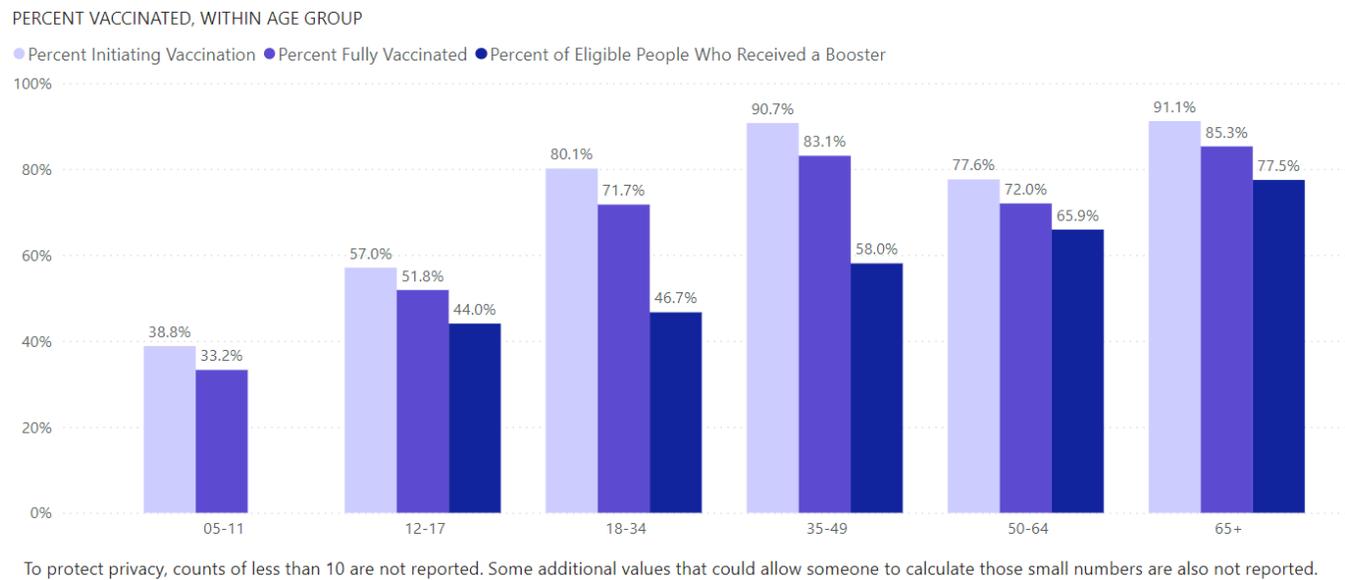
The percent coverage for COVID-19 vaccinations among the population is displayed in Table 4 as of March 28. Of the eligible population (5+ years), there are 46k Whatcom County residents who have not initiated vaccination.

Table 1: Percent of population who are initiating vaccination and fully vaccinated in Whatcom County.

	Initiating (%)	Fully Vaccinated (%)
Total Population	74.8	68.4
Population 5+	78.6	71.9

The state’s DOH Dashboard provides information on the proportion of people in Washington that has received COVID-19 vaccinations including booster doses by age group and county. In Whatcom County, beginning with individuals 12 years and above, the percent of individuals receiving a booster dose increases with age.

Figure 5. Percent of Whatcom County residents with COVID-19 Vaccinations by Age Group. Source: DOH.



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