

Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report

Whatcom County Health Department

Updated 4/15/22 for the period of 3/1/22 – 3/31/22

Executive Summary

This report is currently published monthly 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.

Whatcom County experienced a decline in confirmed and probable COVID-19 case counts during 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 fell to 1.3 per 100K by the end of the month. A significant drop in COVID-19 hospitalizations occurred among individuals 65 and older during the month of March.

The mask mandate across Washington State was lifted starting on March 12th. WA DOH provided new guidance for schools, child care, day camps, and other youth activities.

Beginning March 30, the WA DOH announced that those 50 years and older as well as certain immunocompromised individuals may begin to receive a second COVID-19 booster dose four months after receiving their first booster dose.

Information for COVID-19 vaccinations by race and ethnicity is now available on the DOH dashboard.

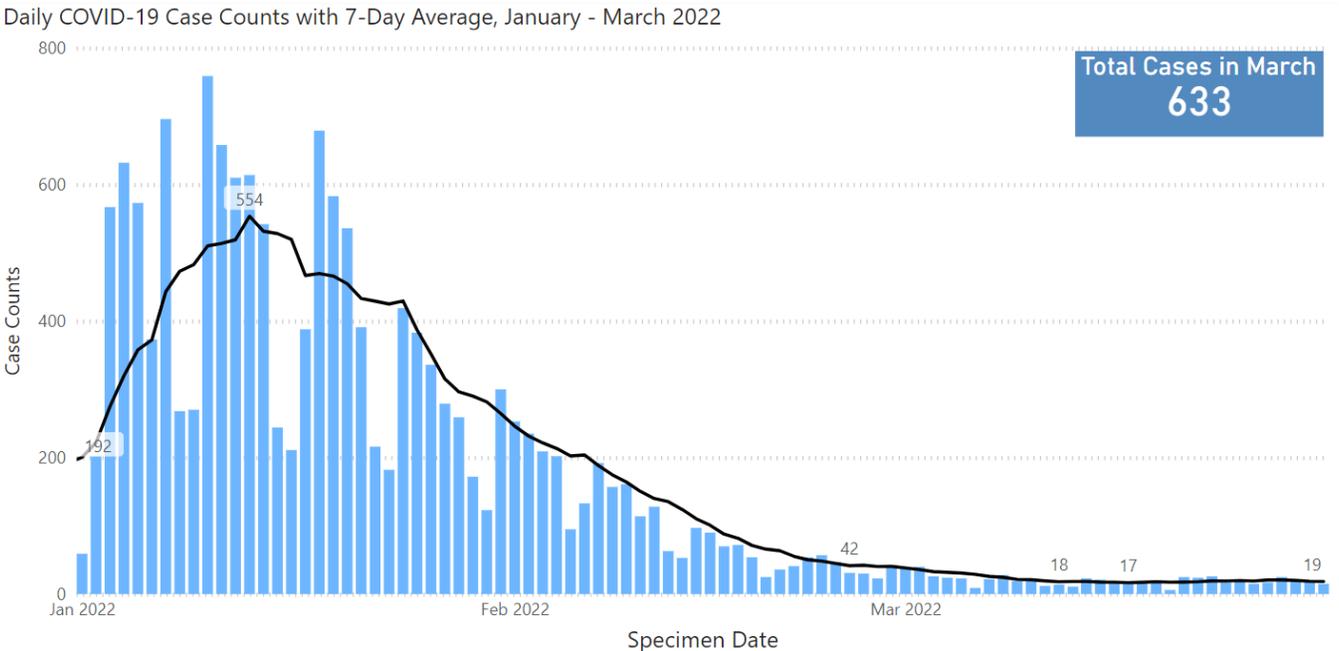
March 2022 COVID-19 Numbers			
Case Count	Average 7-Day Case Rate / 100,000	Hospitalization Count	Average 7-Day Hospitalization Rate / 100,000
633	62.7	37	3.7

Overview of COVID-19 Cases

In Whatcom County, the total number of confirmed and probable cases leveled off over the month of March. The total number of new confirmed and probable cases for March was 633 with an average daily case count of 20 cases. COVID-19 testing patterns have changed during the recent months and 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. Starting on March 12th, the mask mandate was lifted in Washington State. WA DOH accompanied this policy change with new guidance for schools, child care, day camps, and other youth activities.

Figure 1 shows the confirmed and probable case counts for Whatcom County from January through March, 2022. The black line indicates the 7-day average for daily cases. The last time confirmed and

Figure 1. COVID-19 Daily Case Counts and 7-Day Average for Whatcom County.



probable case counts were measured at this level was in mid-July toward the beginning of the Delta variant surge.

During the month of March, COVID-19 cases declined at a slower rate than previous months. The 7-day average daily case count was recorded at 41 at the beginning of the month, then fell to the lowest point in the middle of the month at 17 (Figure 2). No significant change in the average daily case count was observed in the second half of the month.

Figure 2. Daily COVID-19 Case Counts and 7-Day average for Whatcom County during March, 2022.

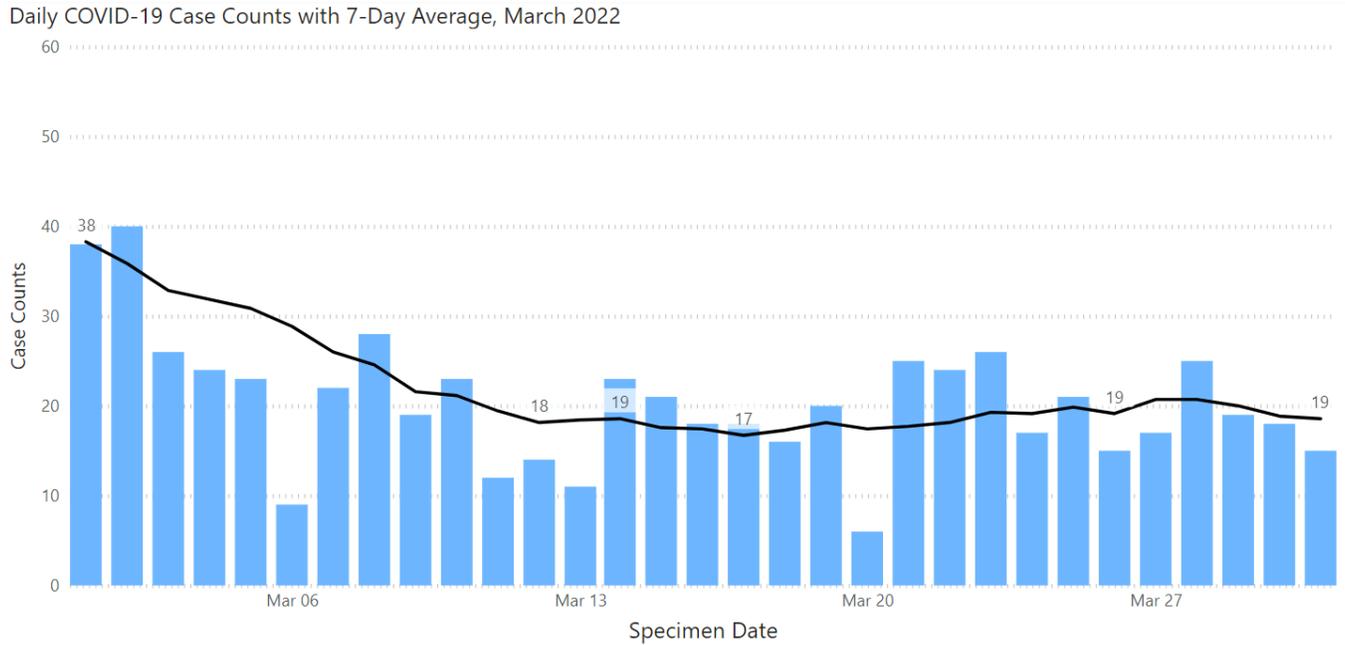
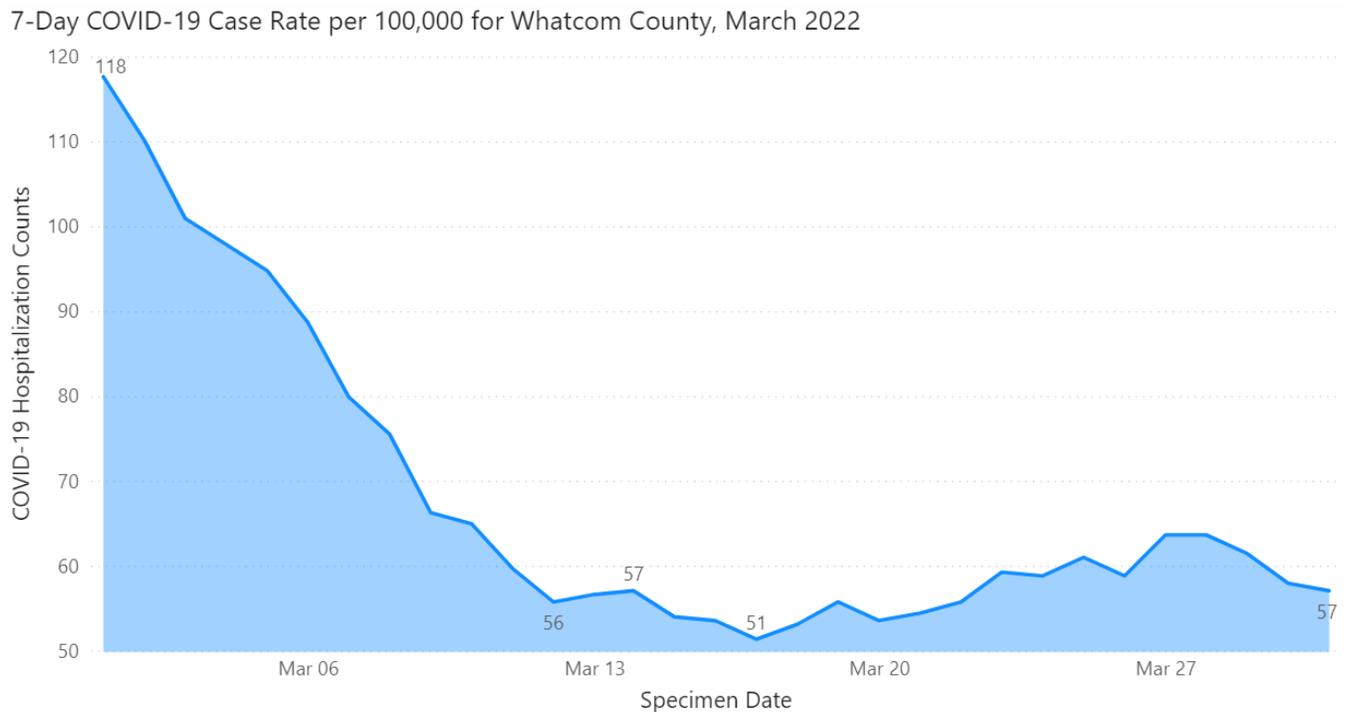


Figure 3. 7-Day COVID-19 Case Rate per 100,000 for Whatcom County.



The COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 in Whatcom County was measured at 118 on March 1 and declined by 52% to 57 at the end of the month (Figure 3). The 7-day average rate for the overall month of March was 62.7 per 100,000. Compared to the previous month (February) when the 7-day average rate was 394.6 per 100,000, this represents a decrease of 84%.

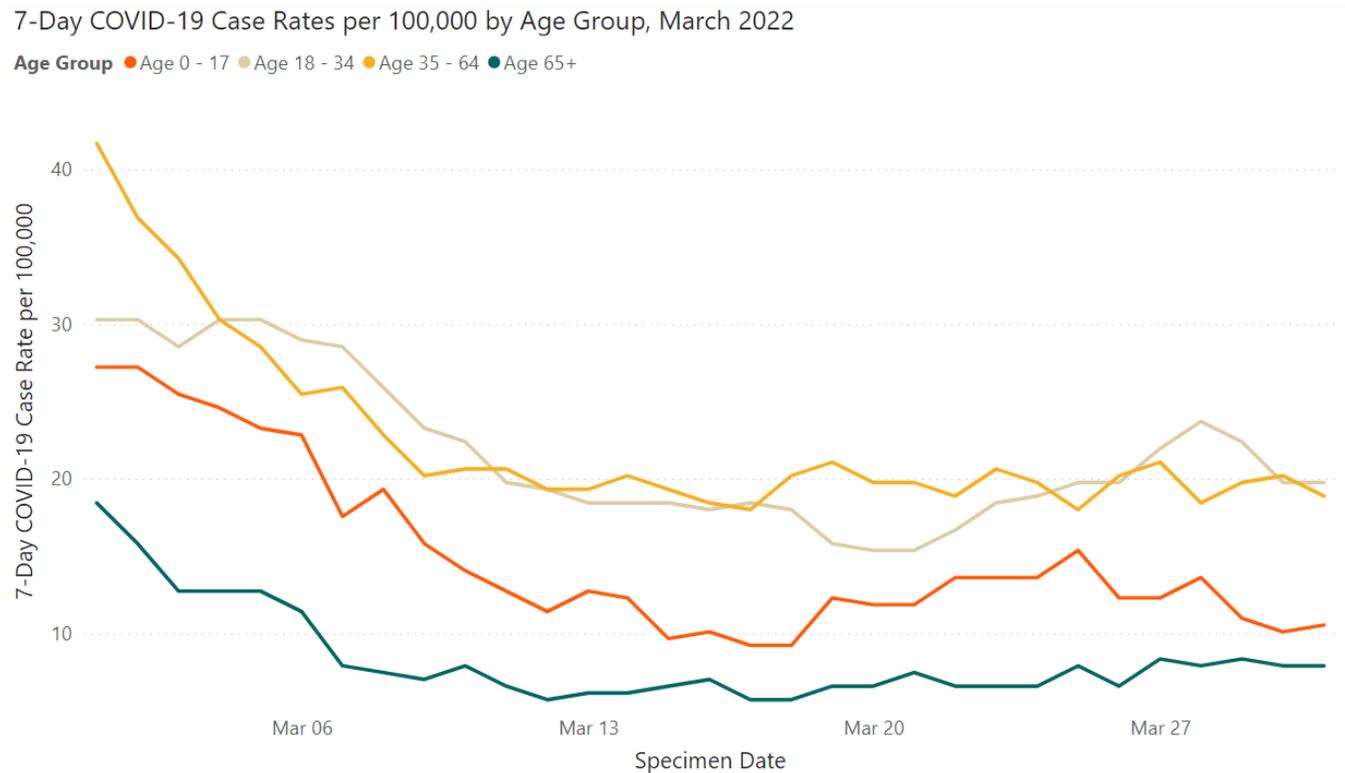
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a county level measure of COVID-19 data standardized across the country. The COVID-19 community levels presented on this page are determined by the number of new cases per 100,000 in the previous seven days, and by two COVID-19 hospitalization indicators that measure new admissions and the percent of inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. This CDC resource can be accessed [here](#).

During the month of March, the dominant variant lineage detected in sequenced COVID-19 specimens in Washington State shifted to the BA.2 variant. This new variant has been detected among Whatcom County residents. More information can be found in the WA DOH [Sequencing and Variants Report](#). Specimens from only about 10% of collected specimens are sent for genomic sequencing. A specimen may be selected for sequencing if it comes from a unique case, such as a younger otherwise healthy person who is hospitalized for COVID-19. The state DOH is also sequencing a random sample of specimens across the state to estimate the overall prevalence of variants.

COVID-19 Cases in Age Groups

The relative case rates per 100,000 for all of the age groups experienced an overall decrease during the month of March consistent with the county average. Children 0 – 17 years experienced the largest decrease in case rate of 61% from 27.2 down to 10.5 at the month's end (Figure 4).

Figure 4. 7-day COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 by age groups in Whatcom County.



The new WCHD [dashboard](#) displays the information related to cases, hospitalizations, and deaths by vaccination status. Case rates for COVID-19 cases that are unvaccinated, fully vaccinated, and fully vaccinated + additional dose per 100,000 residents are displayed for ages 5 and older. This cut off is made due to the fact that children under 5 years old are not eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination at this time. The relative case rates for all three vaccination status experienced a decline during March. Unvaccinated individuals experienced the greatest decline in case rate during the month decreasing by 61% from 236 per 100,000 down to 91. The lowest average case rate per 100,000 over the month was lowest among cases with vaccination + additional dose at 51, followed by cases fully vaccinated at 64, and finally unvaccinated cases at 105.

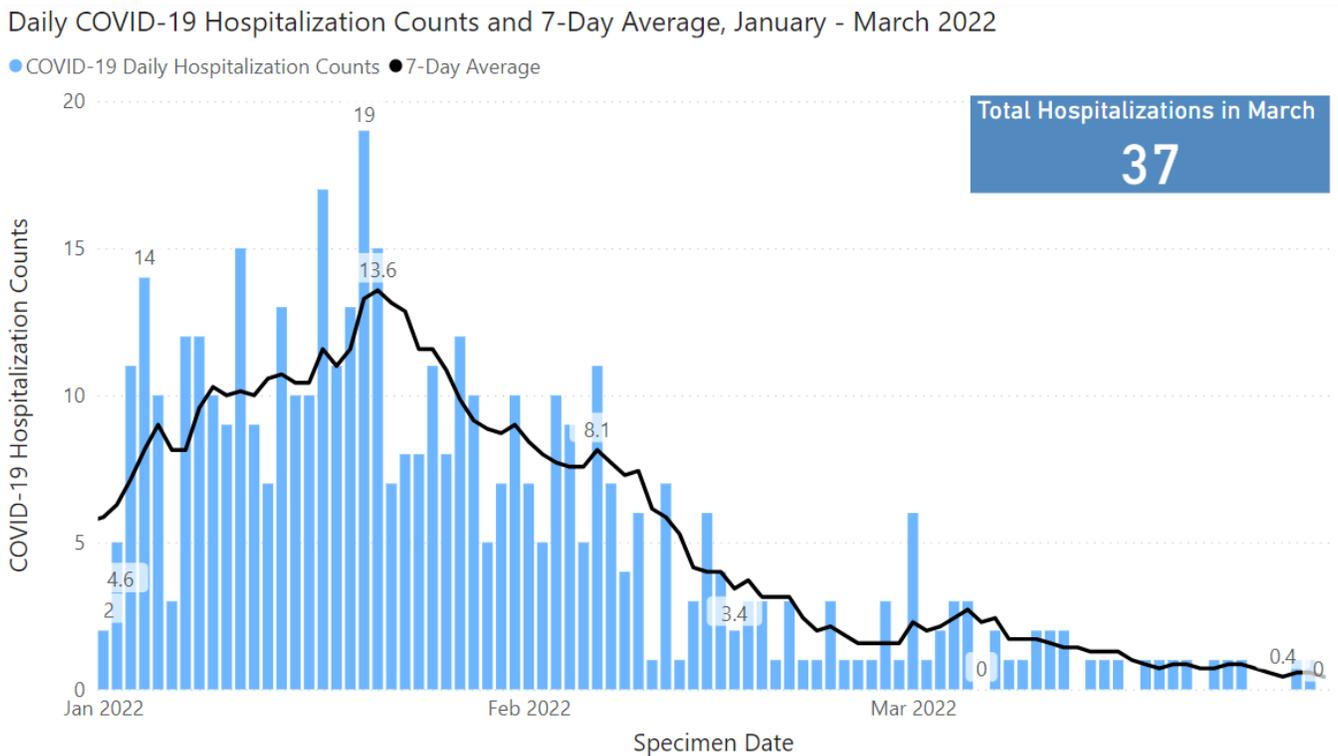
An analysis of cases by vaccination status at the state level is available in the [DOH Cases, Hospitalization and Deaths by Vaccination Status report](#).

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 hospitalizations recorded by specimen date among Whatcom County residents since January 1 are shown in Figure 5. COVID-19 hospitalizations peaked during the Omicron-dominant phase in January and have since steadily declined. The total number of COVID-19 hospitalizations was 37 during the month of March.

Figure 5: COVID-19 hospitalization counts and 7-Day Average for Whatcom County residents.



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.

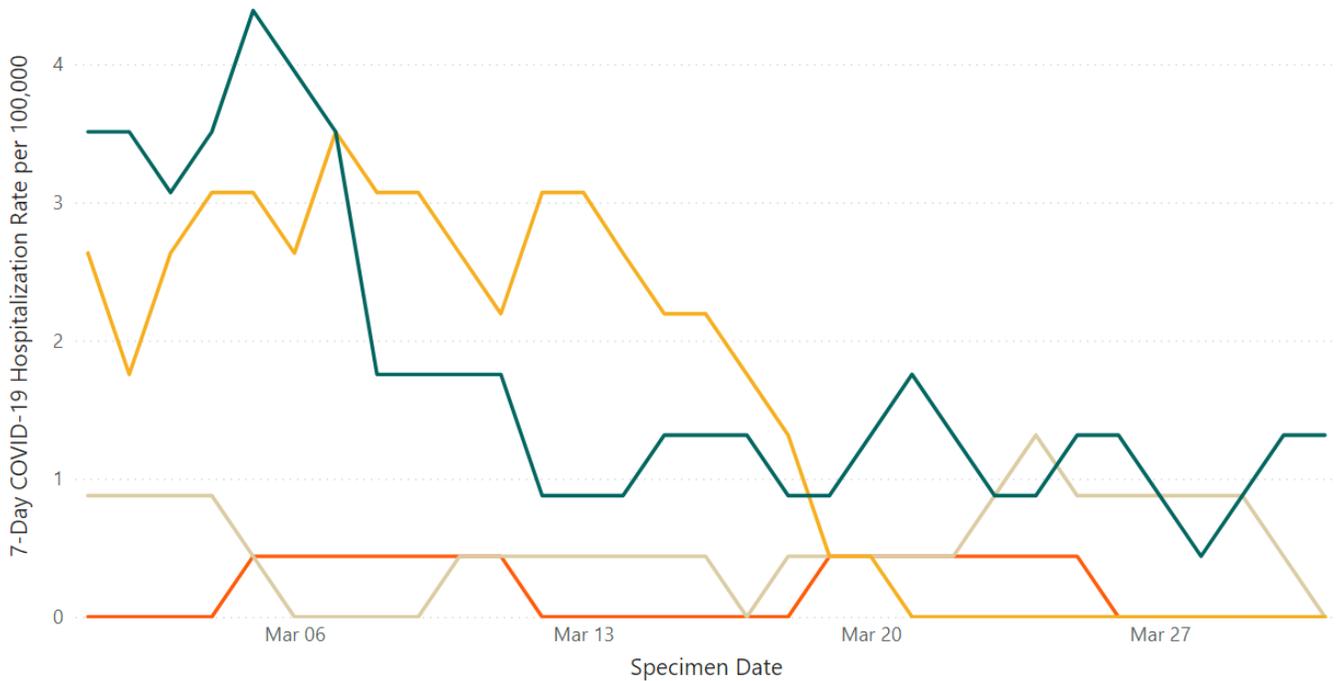
The 7-day COVID-19 hospitalization rate per 100,000 Whatcom County residents was measured at 7.0 at the beginning of March and declined by 81% to 1.3 by the end of the month. A 7-day hospitalization rate of 1.0 in Whatcom County translates to roughly 2 hospitalizations per week. The hospitalization rates are further described by age group in Figure 6. The relative rate for individuals 65 years and older,

which has been the highest rate throughout the recent weeks, saw an overall decline from 3.5 down to 1.3 hospitalizations per 100,000 population. The relative rate among 35 – 64 year olds also declined significantly from 2.6 to 0 by the end of March. The number of hospitalizations among individuals under 35 years was less than 10 for the month.

Figure 6. COVID-19 Hospitalization Rates per 100,000 for Whatcom County Residents by Age Group.

7-Day COVID-19 Hospitalization Rates per 100,000 by Age Group, March 2022

Age Group ● Age 0 - 17 ● Age 18 - 34 ● Age 35 - 64 ● Age 65+



The COVID-19 hospitalization rates by vaccination status for Whatcom County residents can be seen on the WCHD [dashboard](#). The rates for unvaccinated, fully vaccinated, and fully vaccinated + additional dose are shown on the dashboard for ages 5-49 years and for ages 50 and older. Age is an important factor to consider when looking at the relationship between COVID-19 vaccination status and hospitalization. However, the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations among Whatcom County residents does not support dividing rates into smaller age groups than those displayed. During the month of March hospitalization rates decreased overall. At the same time, individuals 50 and older with an additional COVID-19 vaccination dose experienced a significantly lower rate of hospitalization than did either unvaccinated or fully vaccinated individuals. This difference in these rates is less pronounced when looking at younger individuals 5-49 years.

For an analysis of hospitalizations by vaccination status across the Washington State population, the [DOH Report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths is available.

COVID-19 Deaths

The number of deaths due to COVID-19 among Whatcom County residents has significantly declined in recent weeks. In January, there were 49 Covid-19 deaths recorded by specimen collection date. In February this number fell to 15. Whatcom county recorded just 2 COVID-19 deaths during the month of March at the time this report was published. These two individuals included one male and one female both over the age of 80 years.

The total number of deaths due to COVID-19 among Whatcom County residents reached 292 as of March. These numbers are preliminary; WCHD may not yet have been notified of other deaths for this period.

Deaths among Whatcom County residents by vaccination status is also available on the WCHD [dashboard](#). The rates displayed include deaths only among individuals 50 years and older due to the relatively small number of deaths in other age groups and the instability in rates when assessing by vaccination status.

An analysis of deaths for the Washington State population by vaccination status is available in the state's [DOH report](#) on COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by Vaccination Status.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Beginning March 30, the WA DOH announced that those 50 years and older as well as certain immunocompromised individuals may begin to receive a second COVID-19 booster dose four months after receiving their first booster dose.

The percent coverage for COVID-19 vaccinations among the Whatcom County population is displayed in Table 4 as of the end of March. Of the eligible population (5+ years), there are 46k Whatcom County residents who have not initiated vaccination. The number of 5 – 11 year olds who received an initial COVID-19 vaccination dose in March was 200 and the total at the end of the month was 7,197 (40%). For additional COVID-19 vaccination doses, there were 2,986 provided to Whatcom County residents during March to bring that total to 86,233 doses.

Table 14: 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.



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