

Lab turnaround time for case-defining positive tests in Cowlitz County

8/24/2020

Background

It is important to identify people who are positive for COVID-19 in a timely manner in order to slow disease transmission. One way we measure this is the lab turnaround time, defined as the number of days between specimen collection and when the local health jurisdiction is notified of the test result.

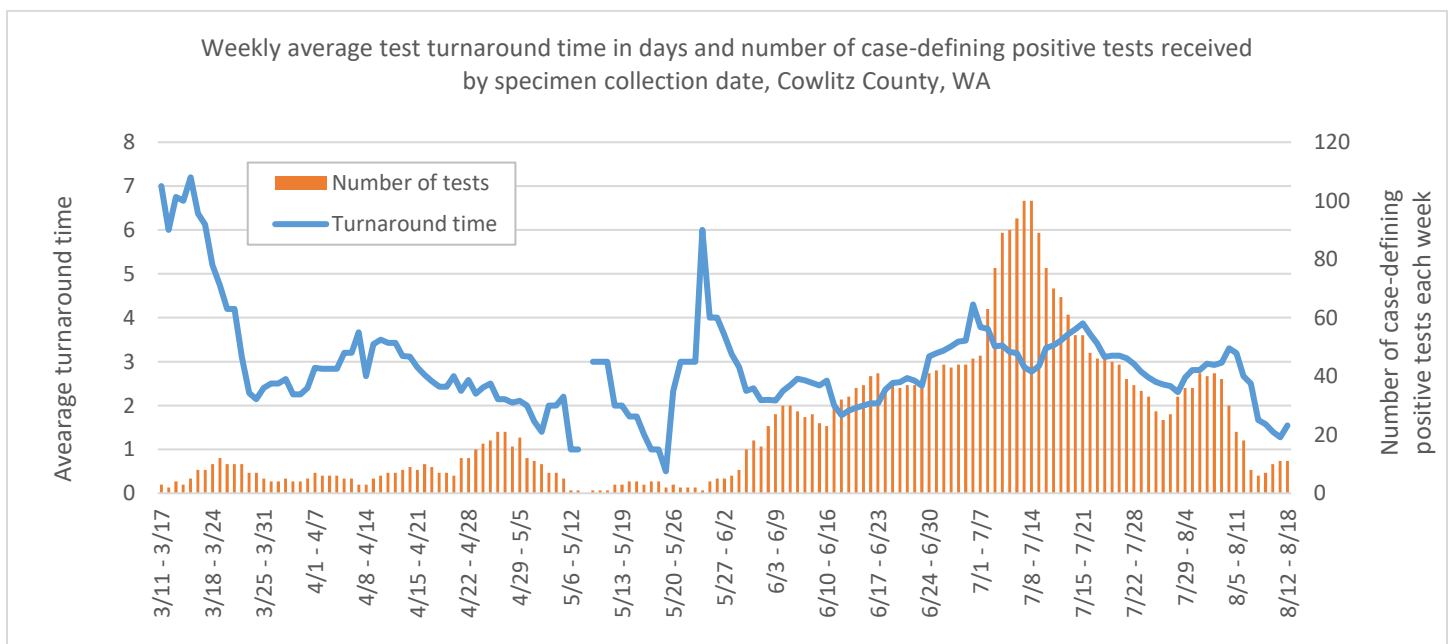
Indicator details & limitations

Ideally, we would look at the lab turnaround time for all tests done for Cowlitz County residents. However, because of technical issues and ongoing changes in how COVID-19 indicators are calculated in Washington State, data on all COVID tests are not currently available. We are, however, able to look at lab turnaround times for our cases, and, more specifically, for the positive test that defines someone as a COVID-19 case. This is typically the first PCR or antigen test that is positive.

This graph includes the lab turnaround time for all case-defining positive tests in Cowlitz County. It does not include subsequent positive tests for an established case, or any tests with a negative result. Note that these may or may not be representative of all tests. Additional analysis will be done on all tests once data are available.

Data & interpretation

The number of case-defining positive tests spiked in early-mid July, and, other than a bump in early August, has decreased steadily since then. The lab turnaround time has fluctuated between 2 and 4 days since the end of May, and is currently relatively low, at an average of 1.5 days between specimen collection and health department notification for the week of 8/12 to 8/18.



Note: The break in the line graph is due to a week with no case-defining positive test results.

Please contact Askcowlitzhealth@co.cowlitz.wa.us with any questions or comments.