

6/23 UPDATES –

- Our internal data reporting standards suppress reporting indicators that are missing data for more than 30% of records. This is the reason we have not reported on the race/ethnicity of our COVID-19 cases since last fall – we have been missing race/ethnicity data for more than 30% of our cases for most weeks since then. Our race/ethnicity data for cases were complete enough to analyze for a couple of weeks in mid-May. During this time, case counts were high enough to assess rates for White and Hispanic residents. Both of these groups had case incidence rates similar to the county average.
- We reported vaccine coverage by racial/ethnic group in our previous report but did not include data on multi-racial residents. As of that report, only 37 Cowlitz County residents who had initiated or completed the vaccine series identified at multi-racial; this represents an “initiated” coverage rate of just 1%. Note that this figure is drastically lower than other racial/ethnic groups, and may be the result of data quality issues as opposed to a truly lower coverage rate.

This report is published every other Wednesday to provide a narrative of current COVID-19 trends, data not available elsewhere online, and a more in-depth analysis in our “Spotlight” section on a COVID-19-related topic of interest. This report references data obtained from the Washington State Department of Health’s COVID-19 [Data Dashboard](#) and [Risk Assessment Dashboard](#), as well as more detailed in-house analysis of case, hospitalization, death, and other COVID-related data.

Data on case incidence, hospitalizations, percent positivity, and ICU occupancy are no longer provided in table format in this report, but can still be found on the state DOH’s [Data Dashboard](#) and [Risk Assessment Dashboard](#).

Do you have a question or comment about this report, or a suggestion for what to include in a future Spotlight section? Please email us at Askcowlitzhealth@co.cowlitz.wa.us.

Current COVID-19 trends in Cowlitz County

Cases appear to have leveled off

We saw an average of 12 new confirmed and probable cases per day from specimens collected June 7-13. Weekly case counts decreased from early April through early May and now appear to have leveled off. Adults aged 65 and older continue to have the lowest per capita new case rate of any age group. Cowlitz County’s new per capita case rate is currently trending above the state average.

Hospitalization data are not available this week.

Because counts are so small, trends in new COVID-19 deaths among Cowlitz residents have been challenging to assess. Overall, new deaths appear to have decreased since the end of January and are currently on par with or hovering just above the state per capita average.

The per capita molecular testing rate in Cowlitz County has steadily decreased since the beginning of April and is currently just over half the state per capita rate.

For school operations (based on CDC guidance)

We are currently at a “Substantial” level of COVID-19 community transmission, with a **one-week** case rate of 70 cases/100,000 population and a percent positivity of 8.8%.

Note that the CDC’s case rate is a one week case rate, which differs from the two-week case rate used in Washington State. Cowlitz County’s most recent two-week case incidence rate is 174 cases/100,000 population.

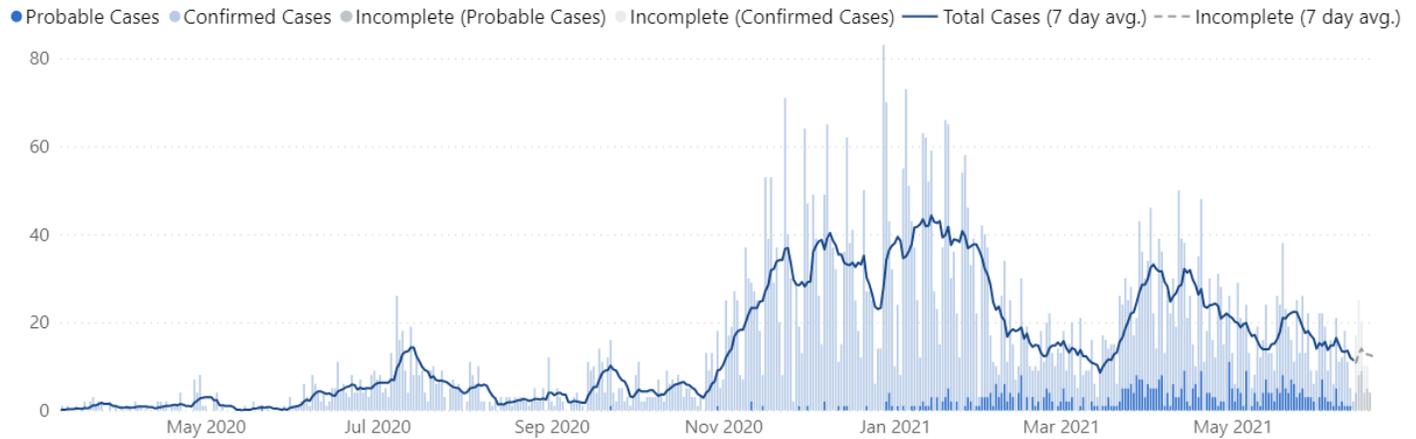
Roadmap to Recovery

Cowlitz County is currently in Phase 3 and will reopen along with the rest of the state on June 30 unless statewide ICU capacity exceeds 90%. Statewide ICU occupancy is currently at 80%, and has been hovering between 80% and 84% since mid-April.

Cowlitz County COVID-19 Epidemiologic Curve

This epidemiologic curve was screenshot from the Washington State Department of Health (state DOH) [Data Dashboard](#). The most current version of this curve can be found on the “Epidemiologic Curves” tab under “Cases” and “Cowlitz County”.

CASE COUNTS



Active cases

COVID-19 cases are considered “active”, or contagious, for 10 days after their symptom onset, or, for asymptomatic cases, 10 days after their test date. There are currently 117 identified active COVID-19 cases in Cowlitz County.

Deaths

The number of deaths reported by the state DOH includes both confirmed and suspect deaths. Confirmed COVID-19 deaths are those with a positive COVID-19 test (molecular or antigen) and have COVID-19 listed on the death certificate. Suspected COVID-19 deaths are those that occur within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 test but do not have COVID-19 listed on the death certificate. Suspect deaths are removed from the state’s count if COVID-19 is later ruled out as the official cause of death following a clinical review. A clinical review may instead reclassify a suspect death into a confirmed death. As a result, the number of suspect deaths in the most recent month or two may decrease if they are ruled out or reclassified to “confirmed”. All confirmed and suspect COVID-19 deaths undergo a clinical review in Cowlitz County.

	2020											2021						Total
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		
Suspect deaths	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Confirmed deaths	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	6	18	17	15	6	6	7	7	89	
Total deaths	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	6	18	17	16	6	6	7	7	90	

Additional information on COVID-19 deaths

- Over 95% of confirmed deaths had underlying conditions.
- 36% of confirmed deaths were associated with a long-term care facility.

Variants & breakthrough cases

Note that information on these topics is rapidly evolving and the data are very dynamic. This report includes the most up-to-date data available, and may change as time goes on.

Variants

- Genetic sequencing of COVID-19 viruses allows public health to identify which variants of COVID-19 are circulating.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [SARS-CoV-2 Classifications and Definitions website](#) provides information on variants being tracked in the US.
- 1.8% of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Cowlitz County (107 cases total) have been genetically sequenced.

Note that genetic sequencing can only be performed on COVID-19 cases confirmed with a molecular test. In addition, most confirmed cases are not sequenced.

- Cowlitz County Health and Human Services has identified 46 cases with a variant of concern.
 - B.1.1.7 – 10 cases
 - B.1.427 – 9 cases
 - B.1.429 – 11 cases
 - P.1 – 16 cases

Because only a small proportion of COVID-19 specimens are sequenced, the cases listed in this report do not capture all COVID-19 cases in Cowlitz County with each specific variant of concern.

- Among those 46 cases:
 - 4 have been hospitalized for COVID-19
 - 4 have died from COVID-19
- Ages of Cowlitz County cases with a variant of concern range from below 18 through their 90's; the average age is 49.
- The latest statewide variant report can be found [here](#).

Breakthrough cases

- A "breakthrough case" is someone who becomes infected with COVID-19 after they are fully vaccinated. A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving their final dose of the vaccine series. The first Cowlitz County residents to receive the COVID-19 vaccine became fully vaccinated in mid-January.
- Breakthrough cases are currently identified when vaccine status is collected during the case investigation and the state DOH confirms that a case meets the state definition. Our nurses have not been able to successfully collect vaccine information from all cases. Because of this, additional Cowlitz County breakthrough cases likely exist that we have not identified.
- Cowlitz County Health and Human Services has identified 68 cases that meet the state definition of a confirmed vaccine breakthrough case.

The state DOH is working on a system to actively identify breakthrough cases by comparing COVID-19 vaccine data with case data. Once this system is implemented, additional breakthrough cases will likely be identified.

- Among those 68 cases:
 - 43 (63%) had COVID-19 symptoms
 - 6 have been hospitalized for COVID-19
 - 3 have died from COVID-19
- Ages of COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough cases range from 20's to 90's; the average age of breakthrough cases is 61.
- These 68 breakthrough cases identified to date represent 2% of cases since mid-January.
- The latest statewide breakthrough report can be found [here](#).

Given the small number of variant and breakthrough cases, Cowlitz County HHS is not releasing any additional information about these cases to protect privacy.

Spotlight: Test and case rates by age in Cowlitz County

Background

Our [May 25 Cowlitz County COVID-19 data report](#) found that youth aged 0-19 experienced the largest proportional increase in cases from mid-March to mid-April. Community members have asked about the drivers of this trend, including whether or not school-based COVID-19 testing explains part or all of the increase. This report includes an initial analysis of this issue.

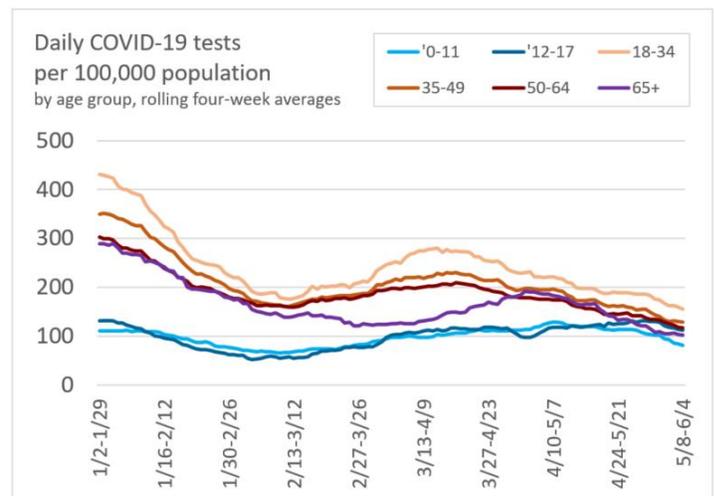
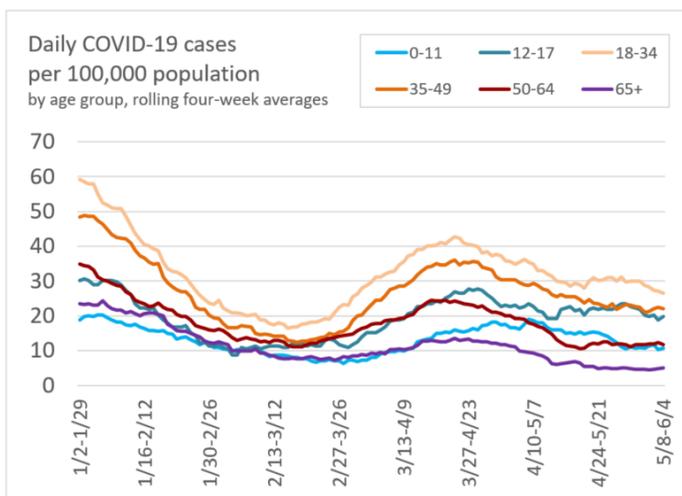
Key findings

School-based testing was implemented in several Cowlitz County districts this spring. This testing spans grades K-12 and includes both molecular and antigen tests.

It is challenging to definitively assess how testing levels have impacted case rates among youth for several reasons:

- State DOH tests data include only molecular tests. Antigen test data are not systematically collected.
- Case data include both confirmed cases (those identified with a positive molecular test) and probable cases (those identified with an antigen test with no follow-up molecular test).
- The proportion of cases identified with only an antigen test have become more common since the beginning of the year, particularly among youth.
- School-based testing was implemented around the same time that case rates increased among both youth and adults.

The graphs below illustrate case and testing rates by age group since the beginning of the year. However, because of the challenges noted, we cannot make solid conclusions about the relationship between testing and cases solely based on these data. Additional analysis is needed to more thoroughly understand this issue.



Technical notes

Since the 5/25 report, we've updated our COVID age groups to align across COVID-19 case, vaccine, and test data. Children are now represented in two age groups: 0-11 and 12-17.

Data in this Spotlight report were obtained from the Washington State Department of Health and analyzed by Cowlitz County Health & Human Services.