

12/15 UPDATES –

- At-home COVID-19 tests have become more available to the public. The state DOH has provided [guidance](#) for individuals with a positive at-home test result, including how to report results to the state DOH. Because we know that many of these results will not be reported to public health, our case data may become more incomplete over time.
- Information on the Omicron variant in Cowlitz County can be found in the “Variants” section on page 3 of this report.

This report is published every four weeks to provide a narrative of current COVID-19 trends and data not available elsewhere online. This report references data obtained from the Washington State Department of Health’s COVID-19 [Data Dashboard](#) as well as more detailed in-house analysis of case, hospitalization, death, and other COVID-related data. This report is published every 4 weeks. More frequent data updates can be found on our [Facebook page](#) and [COVID-19 Data webpage](#). Updates on vaccine data can be found on our [COVID-19 Vaccine webpage](#).

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

Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths all leveled off or may be increasing again

Cowlitz County saw an average of 26 new confirmed and probable cases per day from specimens collected November 28 – December 4. The decline in weekly new case counts that we’ve seen since late August has leveled off and may be increasing again. Statewide case counts appear to be following a similar trend. Cowlitz County’s new per capita case rate is currently about one-quarter higher than the state rate.

Case counts have leveled off among males and females, and in most age groups; children 0-11 are seeing an increase since late November and are on track to be tied with teens aged 12-17 for the highest current per capita rate of any age group. Kalama appears to have the highest current per-capita rate of any region in the county.

Cowlitz County saw an average of 2 residents admitted to a hospital for COVID-19 each day from November 28 – December 4. New COVID-19 hospitalizations among Cowlitz County residents have been fairly steady since mid-October and may even be increasing again. Cowlitz County’s new per capita hospitalization rate is currently more than double the state average.

New hospital admissions have leveled off or continue to decrease among females but have risen among males; the per capita rate among males is currently twice that among females. New analysis has found that the difference in hospitalization rates since the beginning of the pandemic between males and females is largest among 35-49 year-olds. New hospital admissions are decreasing or have leveled off for all age groups, except for 80+ year-olds who are seeing a recent increase, and in all regions of the county with high enough counts to assess time trends. New per-capita hospital admission rates increase with age. Woodland residents currently have the lowest rates in the county.

Cowlitz County saw an average of one person dying every other day from COVID-19 from October 31 – November 13. New COVID-19 deaths in Cowlitz County have decreased since the end of September and have now leveled off or may be increasing again. Our new per capita COVID-19 death rate is currently similar to the state rate. However, based on current trends, we will likely pull away from the state average again soon. Death counts are too small to assess trends among specific demographic groups in the county.

Testing data are not currently available from the state DOH. Details available in the “NOTE” on our [COVID-19 Data webpage](#).

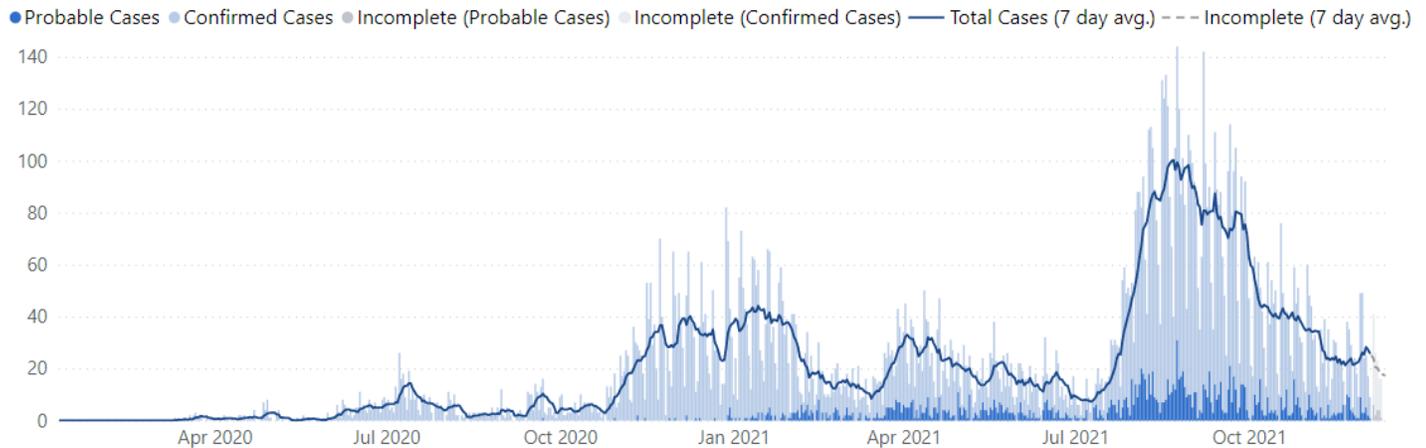
For school operations (based on K-12 guidance from the [state DOH and CDC](#))

Based on the Levels of Community Transmission on the [CDC's COVID-19 Data Tracker Integrated County View](#), we are currently at a "High" level of COVID-19 community transmission, with a **one-week** case rate of 165 cases/100,000 population. Complete percent positivity data are not available.

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 305 cases/100,000 population.

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”.



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 an estimated 222 identified active COVID-19 cases in Cowlitz County. Note that these only include cases that have been identified via a COVID-19 test. Because we know that some people with COVID-19 are not tested, the true number of active cases is probably higher than this figure.

Variants

- **The new Omicron variant has not been identified in any Cowlitz County cases as of this report’s publication.**
 - **The latest statewide variant report is updated more frequently and can be found [here](#).**
- COVID-19 tests at doctors’ offices or drive-thru testing sites detect the COVID-19 virus but do not differentiate between different variants of the virus. That’s why your provider may say they can’t test for variants, and our public health nurses can’t tell you if you’ve tested positive for a specific variant. If you are infected with a specific variant, advice and patient care is the same as anyone who tests positive for COVID-19.
- Determining whether a person is infected with a variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus requires a lab to perform genomic sequencing on a collected specimen. A specimen is the fluid collected from someone’s nose with a test swab. Genomic sequencing looks at the virus genes for mutations specific to the different variants. If a mutation is detected in a specimen, it means that person was infected with the corresponding variant.
- Specimens from only about 10% of cases are sent for genomic sequencing. Specimens may be chosen for sequencing if they are from a unique case, such as a younger otherwise healthy person who is hospitalized for COVID-19. This may help identify new variants that could be more transmissible or cause more severe illness. The state DOH has also begun to sequence a random sample of specimens across the state to estimate the overall prevalence of variants.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [SARS-CoV-2 Classifications and Definitions website](#) provides information on variants being tracked in the US.

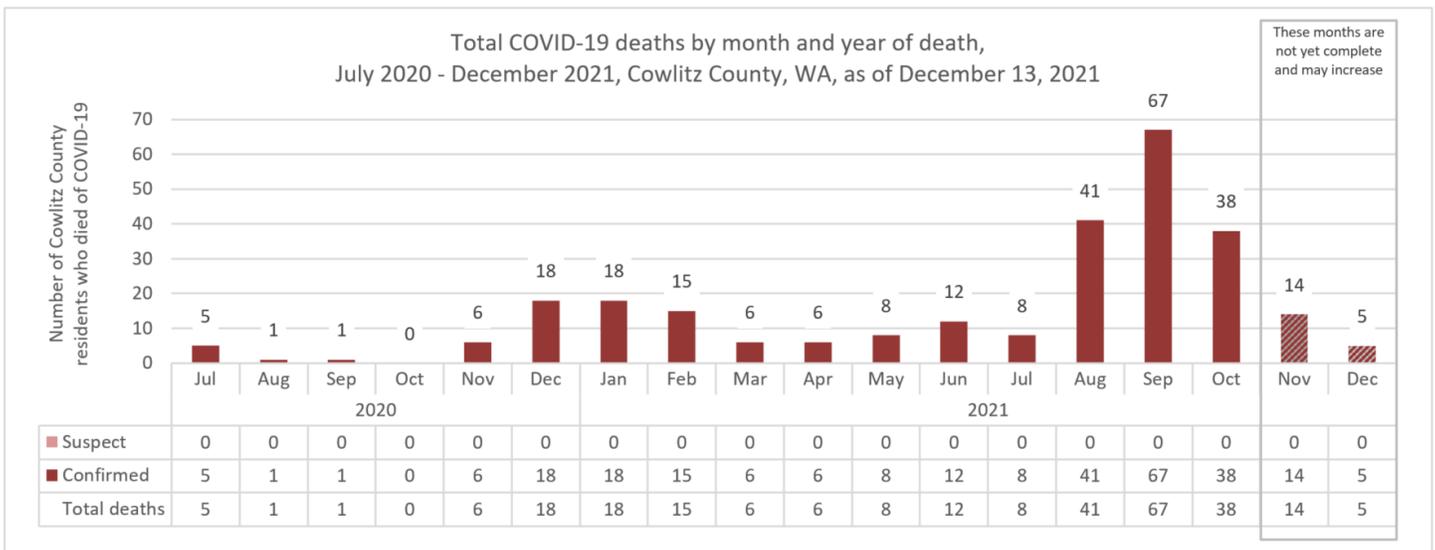
Deaths

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.

Note that the counts on this graph will not match the counts reported on the state DOH’s [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). The Dashboard reports deaths based on the decedent’s test date. Our graph is based on the date of death, which we believe to be more meaningful.

COVID-19 death count to date among Cowlitz County residents:

- **269** total deaths
 - **269** were confirmed
 - **0** are considered suspect



Additional information on COVID-19 deaths

Note: these data are from the previous report on November 3 because updated data are not available for this report.

- Over 95% of total confirmed deaths had underlying conditions.
- About one out of every five total confirmed deaths were associated with a long-term care facility.