Cowlitz County COVID-19 data

Updated 1/12/22

1/12 UPDATES –

- Our case counts have probably become less accurate over time. We suspect that most people testing positive with an at-home COVID-19 test will not be reported, and testing availability through local pharmacies, clinics, and other testing sites is not enough to meet current demand. Because of these two factors, **our true case counts are probably higher, and possibly much higher, than what we provide in today's report**.

- 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. 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 107 new confirmed and probable cases per day from specimens collected the first week of January. Note that this time frame is recent and data are incomplete. Final counts will be higher, and true case counts are likely much higher because of testing limitations described above. Cowlitz cases began to rise gradually mid-December, and the increase accelerated rapidly the first week of January. Statewide case counts appear to be following a similar trend, though the statewide spike began earlier than Cowlitz'. Cowlitz County's new per capita case rate is currently about half the state rate.

Case counts are spiking among both males and females, among all age groups, and in all regions. The spike is most pronounced in children aged 0-11. This may be due at least in part to school testing protocols.

Cowlitz County saw an average of 2-3 residents admitted to a hospital for COVID-19 each day In December. New COVID-19 hospitalizations among Cowlitz County residents have been fairly steady since mid-October. Statewide hospitalizations have more than tripled since mid-December. We anticipate an increase in Cowlitz hospitalizations to follow our increase in cases, including an increase among higher-risk older age groups. Cowlitz County's new per capita hospitalization rate is currently on par with the state average.

Hospital admission time trends have been fairly steady among males and females, all age groups, and regions. Current hospitalization admission rates are similar between males and females and across regions, and increase with age.

Cowlitz County saw an average of one person dying every other day from COVID-19 in November and December. Note that December figures are considered incomplete due to reporting lags. We anticipate an increase in Cowlitz deaths to follow our increase in cases, including an increase among higher-risk older age groups. Our new per capita COVID-19 death rate is currently about double the state rate. 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.
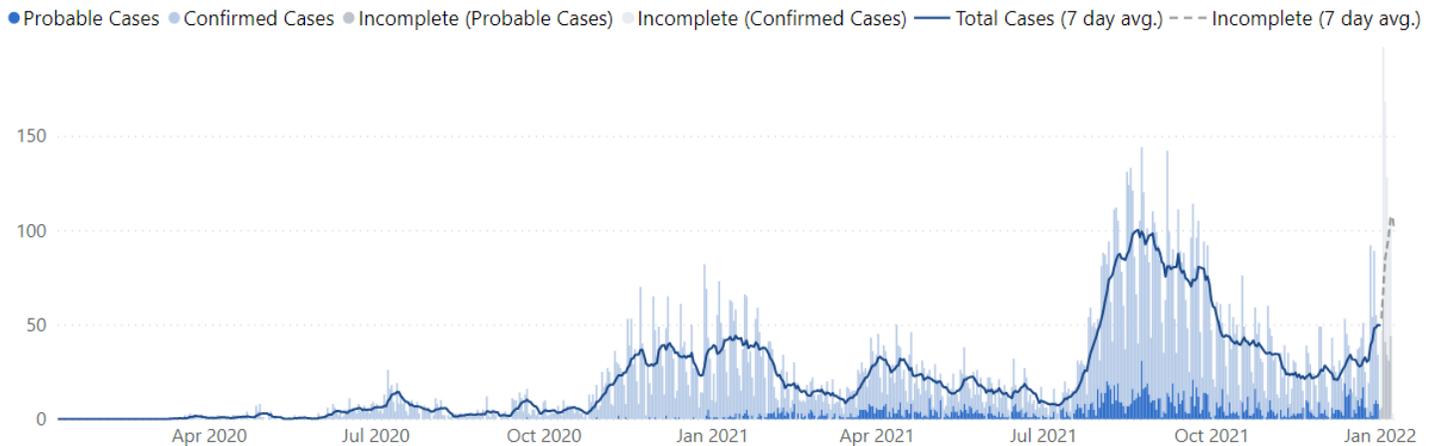
For school operations (based on K-12 guidance from the state DOH and CDC)

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 677 cases/100,000 population. Note that this rate is from a recent time frame and data are incomplete; final counts will be higher. 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 992 cases/100,000 population. Note this figure is from an incomplete time frame and will increase.

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 esimated 940 identified active COVID-19 cases in Cowlitz County. This represents 0.85% (or one out of every 118) resdients. 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, and cases identified with at-home tests will probably not be reported, the true number of active cases is probably higher, and possibly much higher, than this figure.

Variants

➢ **The new Omicron variant has been identified in Cowlitz County residents.**

   o **The latest statewide variant report has more information and can be found here. The true number of residents infected with the Omicron variant is much higher than what is provided in this report.** Details are provided below.

➢ 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.
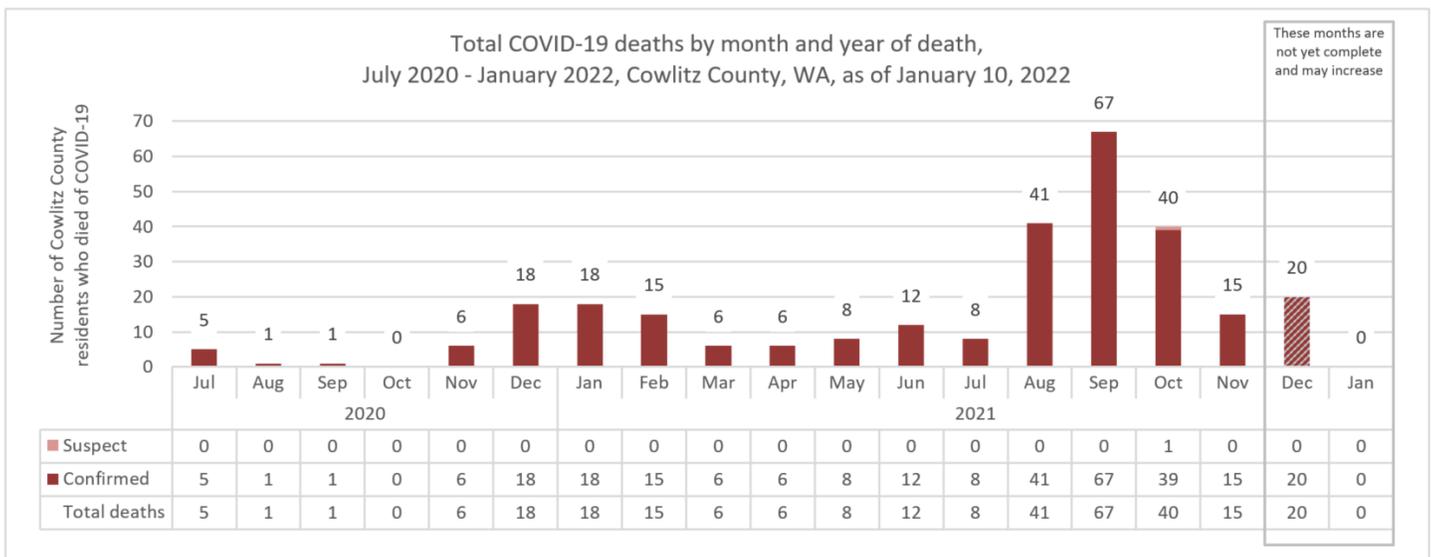
Deaths

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:
- **287** total deaths
  - **286** were confirmed
  - **1** are considered suspect

Total COVID-19 deaths by month and year of death, July 2020 - January 2022, Cowlitz County, WA, as of January 10, 2022

These months are not yet complete and may increase

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
			2020										2021						
Suspect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Confirmed	5	1	1	0	6	18	18	15	6	6	8	12	8	41	67	39	15	20	0
Total deaths	5	1	1	0	6	18	18	15	6	6	8	12	8	41	67	40	15	20	0

Additional information on COVID-19 deaths

Note: these data are from the 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.