



| COVID-19 POLICY BRIEF SERIES

Vaccination Rates Among Washington State's Latinos¹ are Improving, but Challenges Remain

October 27, 2021

BACKGROUND

Washington State's Latinx communities have been and continue to be disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of September 20, 2021, the age-adjusted COVID-19 case rate among Latinx community members in WA was 9,450 per 100,000, as compared with a case rate of 3,562 per 100,000 among Whites. Similarly, the age-adjusted COVID-19 mortality rate among Latinos was 231 per 100,000, as compared with a mortality rate of 69 per 100,000 for Whites.²

In response to the rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant (B.1.617.2) in our region, now accounting for most new cases, and the related surge in COVID-19 cases straining our state's healthcare system, the state department of health, local health jurisdictions, healthcare providers, community-based organizations and others have redoubled their efforts to vaccinate Latinx community members and others. And yet, despite the overwhelming sci-

entific evidence supporting the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, progress in vaccinating eligible Latinx individuals has been slower than hoped and uneven across the state.

With the CDC's recent recommendations for vaccine boosters among adults vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine³ and the expected approval of vaccine boosters for adults vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccines, as well as approval of vaccines for children 5-11 years of age⁴, this is an important time to reexamine vaccination rates among Latinos in our state. In this brief, we report current vaccination rates of fully vaccinated Latinos at the state and county levels and note progress made in vaccinating Latinx community members since [our last report in July 2021](#). The purpose of this brief is to provide policy makers and other stakeholders with current vaccination rates for Latinos in Washington to help inform the allocation of the state's vaccination resources going forward.

Latino Center for Health – University of Washington

The Latino Center for Health is a state-funded interdisciplinary research center at the University of Washington. Housed administratively at the School of Social Work, the center conducts community-engaged research through capacity building and authentic partnerships with community stakeholders to promote the health and well-being of Latino communities in Washington state (<https://latinocenterforhealth.org/>).

1 Although "Latino" is in the official name of LCH and is considered the most familiar term, we recognize that it is limited. We acknowledge that "Latino" is a male-gendered identifier and people in our community choose other forms of identity, including "Latina" and gender-neutral "Latinx" and "Latine." Our community is not a monolith, and we work to support all chosen identities.

2 Source: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/data-tables/COVID-19MorbidityMortalityRaceEthnicityLanguageWASState.pdf> accessed 9/29/2021.

3 Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0924-booster-recommendations.html>

4 Source: <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/exclusive-us-decision-pfizer-covid-19-shot-kids-age-5-11-could-come-october-2021-09-10/>



FINDINGS

Overall, the rate of fully vaccinated individuals among Latinos twelve years of age and older in Washington State was 54.6% as of September 29, 2021, up from 40.5% in July (2021), representing a 33.4% increase in the number of vaccinated Latinos (Table 1).

Although this increase in the number of fully vaccinated Latinos is significant, progress in vaccinating Latinos in our state is still critically needed since approximately 341,808 of the estimated 752,802 Latinos twelve years of age and older in our state remain partially vaccinated or unvaccinated. Approval of COVID-19 vaccines for 5–11 year-olds will result in 156,577 additional Latinx children in the state becoming eligible to be vaccinated (Table 2).

Figure 1 is a map of the full vaccination rates among Latinos for Washington State by county. Rates of full vaccination varied by county from a low of 19.1% to 76.3%, with a median full vaccination rate of 43.0%. The counties with the highest full vaccination rates were San Juan (76%), Okanogan (76%), Douglas (63.7%), King (62.9%) and Chelan (59.3%) counties (see Table 1). The counties with the lowest full vaccination rates were Ferry (12.9%), Stevens (19.1%), Asotin (19.1%), Pend Oreille (21.7%), and Pacific (24.1%). Full vaccination rates for the top 5 counties in terms of eligible Latinx individuals were King (62.3% vaccinated), Yakima (53.3%), Pierce (44.4%), Snohomish (54.9%) and Franklin (39%). Vaccination rates for the top five counties in terms of share of the population that is Latinx were Adams (41.1% vaccinated), Franklin (39%), Yakima (53.3%), Grant (50.9%), and Douglas (63.7%). In general, counties in the eastern part of the state had the lowest full vaccination rates of Latinos.

SUMMARY

Although Washington State has made significant progress towards vaccinating Latinos against COVID-19, some urban and rural Latinx communities are lagging behind the state as a whole, and remain at significant risk of COVID-19 infections. In fact, data from the state COVID-19 dashboard show higher infection, hospitalization and death rates among Latinos compared with Whites.¹ The CDC's recent recommendations for booster vaccinations and the anticipated expansion of eligibility to include 5-11 year-olds will add to the number of Latinos needing vaccination in our state.

Recent reports on new COVID-19 cases suggest we may have passed the peak of the surge in infections. However, concerns remain that with the return to in-person work and school, we may see additional surges in infections driven in large part by unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals. According to the CDC, the best means of preventing the spread of COVID-19 remains fully vaccinating eligible individuals in addition to the use of face-coverings, social distancing, avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated spaces, and frequent hand-washing.

We urge our state's elected leadership to continue their support of community-based organizations and trusted community leaders who are working to increase access and overcome hesitancy to COVID-19 vaccines among Latinos in Washington through the use of culturally and linguistically tailored efforts. Other recommendations for increasing vaccine uptake among Latinos can be found in our recent policy briefs [on vaccine hesitancy](#) and [COVID-19 information sources](#).

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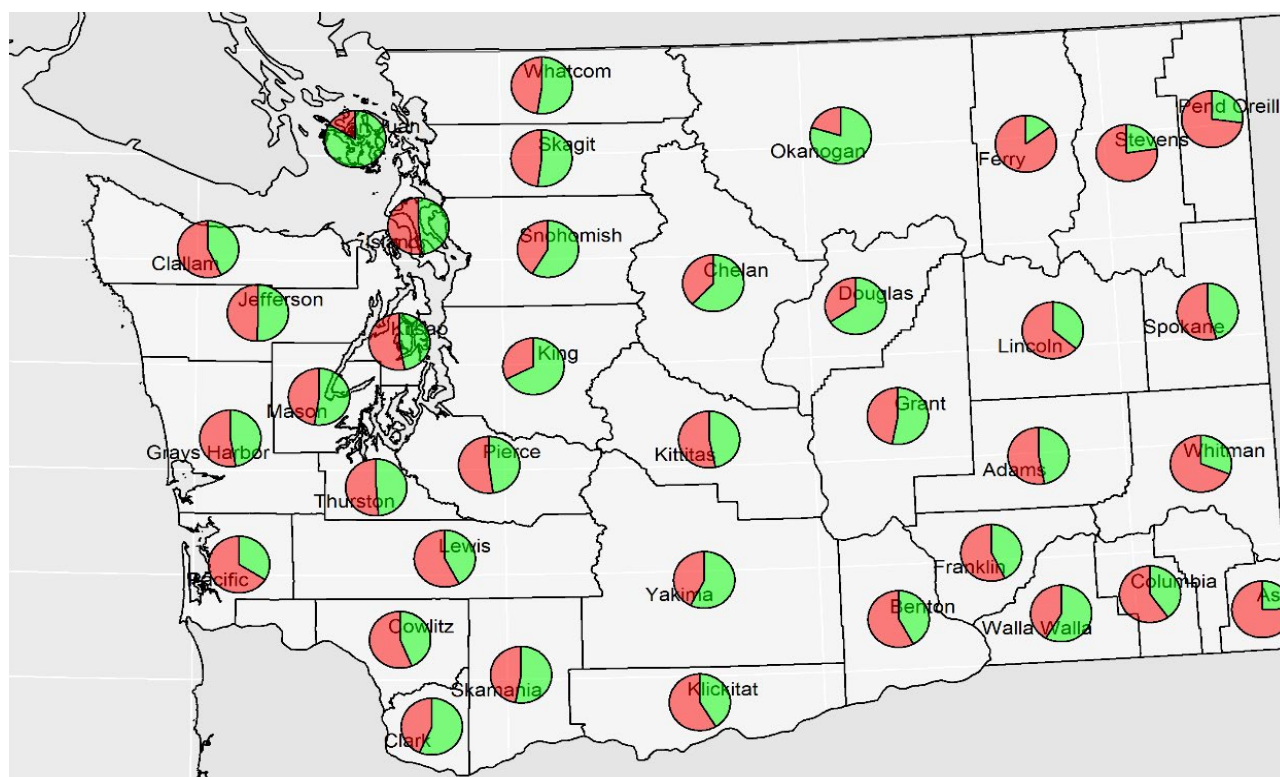
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For questions about this brief, contact Amber Tafoya, LCH Communications Specialist, altafoya@uw.edu



Figure 1. Washington State Map of Adjusted Rates of Fully Vaccinated Latinos, by County.



DATA SOURCES

Data for this Policy Brief were drawn from the Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting and Research Division (OFM)⁵ and the Washington State Department of Health COVID-19 Data Dashboard vaccination counts.¹ Latino population counts for the state and counties, based in the OFM's Small Area Demographic Estimates

(SADE) model, were accessed on 9/18/2021.⁴ Counts of fully vaccinated individuals of known Latino ethnicity were on the Washington State Department of Health COVID-19 Data Dashboard.¹ These vaccination counts were current as of 9/29/2021.

METHODS

We estimated the full vaccination rates based on (1) counts of fully vaccinated self-identified Latinx individuals taken from the WA DOH COVID-19 dashboard and (2) the OFM's Latinx population estimates of the number of Latinos twelve years of age and older. Rates were computed for the state and each county. To compare changes in vaccination rates, we recomputed rates for July 2021 using comparable counts of vaccinated Latinx individuals and OFM population counts. Those fully vaccinated refers to individuals who have received a complete multidose schedule of either the Pfizer or the Moderna vaccines, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

LIMITATIONS

The vaccine rates reported in this brief are solely based on counts of vaccinated individuals with known Latino ethnicity. Some vaccinated Latinos may not have been asked to provide their ethnicity or declined to provide it when asked, resulting in underreporting of the true rates of vaccinations. Further, our counts of vaccinated Latinx individuals are based on publicly available data through the WA DOH COVID-19 dashboard, and does not include counts of individuals, Latinx or otherwise, vaccinated by the Department of Defense or the Veterans Administration. At the state level, individuals vaccinated by the DoD and VA account for just 3% of all fully vaccinated individuals in the state (151,325 of 4,662,963)⁶.

5 Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting and Research Division <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-estimates/estimates-april-1-population-age-sex-race-and-hispanic-origin>

6 Accessed on 10.14.2021: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/DataDashboard>



Table 1. Rates of Fully Vaccinated Latinos by County in Washington State.

	Number Vaccinated (06/2021)	% Vaccinated (06/2021)	Number Vaccinated (09/2021)	% Vaccinated (09/2021)	% Increase in Number Vaccinated
State	304,810	40.5%	410,994	54.6%	34.8%
Adams	2,528	25.2%	4,124	41.1%	63.1%
Asotin	87	13.6%	137	21.4%	57.5%
Benton	8,524	25.0%	13,090	38.4%	53.6%
Chelan	7,730	43.2%	10,621	59.3%	37.4%
Clallam	941	26.0%	1,266	34.9%	34.5%
Clark	12,114	34.2%	19,052	53.8%	57.3%
Columbia	56	27.2%	80	38.9%	42.9%
Cowlitz	2,004	27.2%	3,048	41.4%	52.1%
Douglas	5,286	49.1%	6,865	63.7%	29.9%
Ferry			33	12.9%	
Franklin	10,000	25.2%	15,497	39.0%	55.0%
Garfield					
Grant	10,683	33.6%	16,181	50.9%	51.5%
Grays Harbor	1,603	27.9%	2,436	42.3%	52.0%
Island	1,291	30.2%	1,866	43.7%	44.5%
Jefferson	332	36.3%	414	45.3%	24.7%
King	83,136	45.9%	113,795	62.9%	36.9%
Kitsap	4,662	30.0%	6,501	41.9%	39.4%
Kittitas	840	25.9%	1,105	34.1%	31.5%
Klickitat	564	26.3%	721	33.6%	27.8%
Lewis	1,363	22.6%	2,243	37.1%	64.6%
Lincoln	62	22.8%	90	33.1%	45.2%
Mason	1,427	29.1%	2,252	45.9%	57.8%
Okanogan	3,567	55.0%	4,930	76.1%	38.2%
Pacific	279	17.1%	394	24.1%	41.2%
Pend Oreille	57	14.5%	85	21.7%	49.1%
Pierce	20,931	29.2%	31,751	44.4%	51.7%
San Juan	559	59.2%	720	76.3%	28.8%
Skagit	6,554	34.4%	9,228	48.4%	40.8%
Skamania	223	40.3%	267	48.3%	19.7%
Snohomish	23,926	36.3%	36,120	54.9%	51.0%
Spokane	6,306	28.0%	9,074	40.3%	43.9%
Stevens	150	12.4%	231	19.1%	54.0%
Thurston	5,872	30.6%	8,716	45.4%	48.4%
Wahkiakum					
Walla Walla	4,402	40.5%	5,886	54.2%	33.7%
Whatcom	5,499	33.2%	7,943	47.9%	44.4%
Whitman	510	19.1%	695	26.0%	36.3%
Yakima	36,746	37.8%	51,887	53.3%	41.2%

Note: Vaccination data for Wahkiakum and Garfield counties were not available; and data for Ferry county were only available for September, 2021. Adjusted estimates include vaccinated individuals without race/ethnicity data, adjusted for proportion of the county population that is Latinx, including children under 12 who are currently ineligible for vaccination.

**Table 2.** Latinx Population Counts for Washington State and Counties.

	Latinx Population	Latinx Population	Latinx Population
WA State	1,022,677	752,802	156,577
Adams	14,147	10,031	2,453
Asotin	938	639	177
Benton	47,451	34,081	7,649
Chelan	24,549	17,911	3,942
Clallam	5,000	3,626	809
Clark	48,292	35,417	7,654
Columbia	286	206	42
Cowlitz	10,793	7,363	1,952
Douglas	14,794	10,776	2,444
Ferry	325	256	43
Franklin	54,092	39,697	8,821
Garfield	74	51	19
Grant	43,852	31,792	7,153
Grays Harbor	8,133	5,755	1,348
Island	6,121	4,274	906
Jefferson	1,163	914	153
King	233,923	180,943	29,987
Kitsap	21,068	15,533	2,981
Kittitas	4,409	3,240	662
Klickitat	2,906	2,144	464
Lewis	8,832	6,040	1,559
Lincoln	343	272	35
Mason	6,870	4,907	1,070
Okanogan	9,280	6,481	1,626
Pacific	2,268	1,636	355
Pend Oreille	524	393	72
Pierce	100,817	71,587	16,376
San Juan	1,214	944	146
Skagit	26,479	19,069	4,339
Skamania	770	553	145
Snohomish	90,576	65,836	14,332
Spokane	30,454	22,502	4,567
Stevens	1,631	1,211	246
Thurston	26,012	19,217	3,939
Wahkiakum	179	124	39
Walla Walla	14,642	10,863	2,232
Whatcom	22,176	16,578	3,305
Whitman	3,174	2,669	276
Yakima	134,120	97,273	22,257

Note: Population counts for is this table were accessed from the OFM website at:

<https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-estimates/estimates-april-1-population-age-sex-race-and-hispanic-origin>