

# COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 Schools

Washington State Department of Health

June 30, 2022

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## Executive Summary

- This report describes COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools that have been reported to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) during the 2021/2022 school year.
- A total of 1799 COVID-19 outbreaks occurred in K-12 schools between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.
- 11823 COVID-19 cases were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools. Eighty-nine percent of COVID-19 cases associated with outbreaks were among those aged 19 and under.
- This report includes outbreaks that were reported to DOH in May 2022. Some LHJs had a backlog of outbreaks to report, as surges in cases and outbreaks strained LHH resources for outbreak reporting.
- There may be underreporting of outbreaks as a result of ongoing limitations of capacity to investigate and report COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools.

## Methods

This report was created using information from COVID-19 test results and COVID-19 outbreaks reported by local health jurisdictions to DOH. The investigation of COVID-19 cases to confirm that an event meets Washington State's cluster or outbreak definition is time intensive. Therefore, the number of cases and outbreaks reported by a local health jurisdiction may change over time as outbreak details become available.

## Definition of a COVID-19 Outbreak in Washington State K-12 Schools

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has updated our school outbreak definition for the 2021/2022 school year. During the 2020/2021 school year, the case count threshold to meet outbreak definition was two epidemiologically linked cases. For the 2021/2022 school year, the threshold has been raised to 3 cases or 10% of a specified core group, as defined below. This change was made to bring DOH in alignment with national standards based on the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) definition (<https://preparedness.cste.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CSTE-Standardized-COVID-19-K-12-School-Surveillance-Guidance-for-Classification-of-Clusters-and-Outbreaks.pdf>)

### K-12 school outbreak definition:

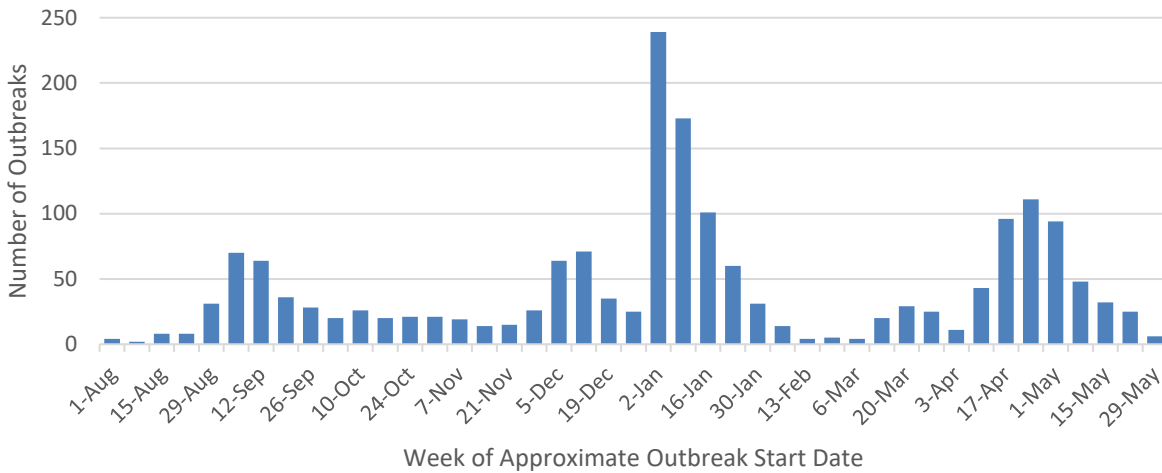
- Multiple probable or confirmed COVID-19 cases comprising at least **10% of students, teachers or staff within a specified core group\***
- OR
- At least **3 cases within a specified core group\*** meeting criteria for a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case
- AND
- Cases have symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other, AND
  - Cases were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting (i.e., household) outside of the school setting, AND
  - Cases were epidemiologically linked in the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity

\*A "core group" includes but is not limited to extracurricular activity†, cohort group, classroom, before/after school care, etc.)

† A school sanctioned extracurricular activity is defined as a voluntary activity sponsored by the school or local education agency (LEA) or an organization sanctioned by the LEA. Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to, preparation for and involvement in public performances, contests, athletic competitions, demonstrations, displays, and club activities.

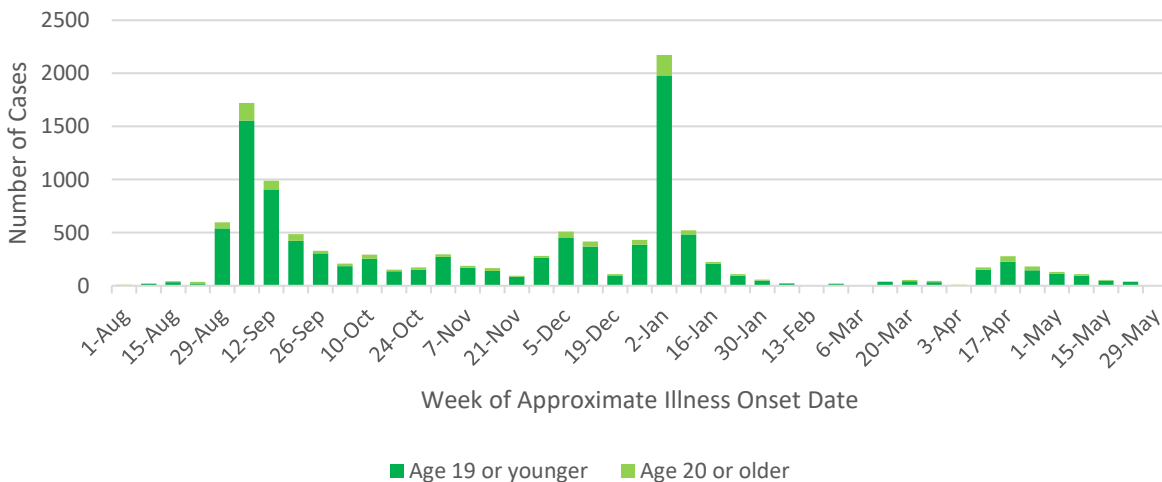
### COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the weekly count of the 1799 COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools by week of approximate outbreak start date. Of the 1799 outbreaks reported, 205 outbreaks started between May 1, 2022 and May 31, 2022. Reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks and associated cases for the most recent months is ongoing, so the number of outbreaks and associated cases may change.



### Cases associated with COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the week of approximate illness onset of the 11,823 COVID-19 cases that were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools. The approximate illness onset date is defined as the date when a case’s COVID-19 symptoms began. If the case was asymptomatic, or the symptom start date is unknown, the illness onset date is when the case was tested for COVID-19. Cases from a specific outbreak can be spread out over time, so the cases reported in a given week may not all be associated with the outbreaks reported in the same week. Reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks and associated cases is ongoing, so the number of outbreaks and associated cases may change.



## COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, by county, between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.

Local health jurisdictions reported 1799 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools across 28 counties. Two hundred and five outbreaks occurred in May 2022. The number of outbreaks by county ranged from 1 to 669. A total of 11823 COVID-19 cases were associated with these outbreaks. Not all outbreaks have case level information available due to resource limitations at the school or local health jurisdiction level. The median number of cases per outbreak was five. Reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks and associated cases is still occurring, so the number of outbreaks and associated cases may change

County	Number of Outbreaks	% of Schools with Outbreaks	Number of Associated Cases	Median Cases Per Outbreak
Benton	27	22	135	4
Chelan	2	4	33	17
Clallam*	1	3	NA	--
Clark	48	16	112	4
Cowlitz	40	36	130	3
Douglas*	2	5	NA	--
Ferry*	1	8	NA	--
Franklin	5	7	25	4
Garfield*	1	50	NA	--
Grant	33	27	131	4
Grays Harbor	14	17	84	5
Island	9	13	27	3
Jefferson	5	29	29	5
King	669	40	762	5
Kitsap	84	38	544	4
Klickitat*	2	4	NA	--
Lewis*	2	4	NA	--
Pend Oreille*	3	17	NA	--
Pierce	162	30	587	3
San Juan	16	26	84	4
Skagit	23	29	137	5
Skamania*	1	10	NA	--
Snohomish	306	69	7966	14
Spokane	38	15	183	5
Stevens	17	23	130	7
Thurston	196	62	483	3
Walla Walla*	2	5	NA	--
Whatcom	69	35	146	5
Yakima	21	10	45	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1799</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11823</b>	<b>5</b>

\*To protect privacy, counts of less than 10 are not reported. Some additional values that could allow someone to calculate those small numbers are also not reported.

## Characteristics of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.

Among the 1799 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools, 182 (10%) were in private schools, and 1598 (90%) were in public schools. Sixty percent of outbreaks involved elementary schools, and 47% were suspected to have transmission in classroom settings. The 523 outbreaks with an undetermined suspected transmission location could have been in classroom, sports, lunchroom, or other locations, though the data are incomplete.

	N	%
<b>Public/Private</b>		
Public	1598	90
Private	182	10
<b>Grade Level Served*</b>		
Elementary	1082	60
Middle	397	22
High	484	27
<b>Suspected Transmission Location</b>		
Classroom	851	47
Office	5	<1
Cafeteria/meal space	3	<1
Sports	318	18
Performing arts	36	2
Transportation/bus	60	3
Undetermined	523	29

\*Grade level served is not a mutually exclusive category. Percent reflects the percentage of total schools serving each grade level.

## Proportion of K-12 schools with COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State, between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.

There were 1799 COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022. The Washington State Office of the Superintendent (OSPI) education directory lists 2,552 public K-12 schools on their [website](#). Among these 2,552 public K-12 schools, 778 (30%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year. The Washington State Board of Education [licenses](#) 505 private K-12 schools, and among them, 123 (24%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year.

	Total K-12 schools with outbreaks (N)	Total Schools (N)	%
Public	778	2552	30
Private	123	505	24
Total	901	3057	30

**Characteristics of cases associated with COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, between August 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022.**

Among the 11823 COVID-19 cases that were linked to outbreaks in K-12 schools, the median age was 13 years. Forty-five percent of COVID-19 cases were Non-Hispanic White, and 51% were male.

	N	%
<b>Median Age</b>	13	--
<b>Age Group</b>		
0-3	27	<1
4-10	4257	36
11-13	2168	18
14-19	4114	35
20-29	180	2
30-39	312	3
40-49	373	3
50-59	268	2
60+	123	1
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	1156	10
Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Native	97	1
Non-Hispanic Asian	822	7
Non-Hispanic Black	422	4
Non-Hispanic Multiracial	321	3
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	118	1
Non-Hispanic White	5338	45
Non-Hispanic Other Race	77	1
Unknown	3472	29
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	5632	49
Male	5788	51
Other	19	<1
<b>Hospitalization overnight</b>	35	<1
<b>Deaths*</b>	<10	--

\*To protect privacy, counts of less than 10 are not reported. Some additional values that could allow someone to calculate those small numbers are also not reported.