



COVID-19 Situation Update for Watauga County

August 28, 2020

This document is intended to provide a regular update on the local response to COVID-19 in our communities and timely, trended data related to COVID-19. This report will be published on Fridays.

Situation Update

Watauga County continues to see an increase in new cases. Even though we are not seeing a large spike in cases, the number of newly identified and active cases remains higher than what we want to see. Our case trends have continued to increase with the largest percentage of cases in the 18-24 old age group. Of the newly identified cases for this week, we are continuing to see the same trend with cases exposed due to close contact with others through living or working closely with others or attending social gatherings.

“We all have the power to slow the spread of COVID-19 and this can be done by practicing the 3Ws, avoiding large gatherings and maintaining good hygiene practices. Wear a cloth face covering anytime you will be around others who are not in your household or living space, wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitizer and wait at least 6 feet from others. This virus is highly contagious and sometimes people can spread the virus without realizing it because they have mild or no symptoms at all. These actions help protect everyone in our community and helps make sure we have the healthcare system capacity that we all depend on,” stated Jennifer Greene, Health Director, AppHealthCare.

Key Points

- We continue case investigation and contact tracing efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you receive a call from a member of our case investigation or contact tracing team, we urge you to cooperate and provide information that will help us conduct response efforts.
- Our case trends have continued to increase with the largest percentage of cases in the 18-24 old age group.
- We are continuing to work closely with our University partners and provide public health guidance and recommendations to ensure our response efforts are coordinated. Every Monday through Friday, we meet with App State to review confirmed cases and outline a plan of action to care for those students who need to be in isolation or quarantine. There are protocols in place to continue surveillance of cases to identify response testing needed. Collaboration continues on the weekends between App State and the AppHealthCare case investigation team. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that highlights guidance, regular updates and data for the Appalachian community.

- We are continuing to work with [Watauga County Schools](#) as they started a new school year this week. We are continuing to provide public health information to inform their decisions about school operations.
- We are continuing to work to increase testing opportunities for the community. Planning for proactive testing for staff in locations that have opted-in to that service continues. Also, we are conducting response based testing when data gathered in the case investigation of a positive case informs the need to conduct broader testing. These response based testing events are intended to focus on areas where there is potential for further spread, a cluster of cases, or an outbreak.
- PPE (personal protective equipment) levels remain stable in most areas.
- Turnaround times for testing have improved with most tests resulting around 2-4 days. NC DHHS now provides data on testing turnaround times. This data is updated daily and can be found [here](#).
- We have posted additional positions to assist with COVID-19 response efforts to respond to the increased demand due to increased cases. More information about those positions can be found [here](#).
- Outreach continues to be an important part of our collective community strategy to address COVID-19. Regular meetings take place with community partners to discuss the current situation in the county, strategize areas for growth and improvement and provide a time for questions and answers.

Outbreaks & Clusters

Data is provided for outbreaks and clusters that are active and ongoing. The number of cases are current at the release of this report. As we conduct outbreak investigations, the numbers included in this report are subject to change.

An outbreak is defined as two or more laboratory confirmed cases. A cluster is defined as a minimum of five cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14-day period and plausible epidemiologic linkage between cases. An outbreak or cluster is considered over if 28 days have passed after the latest date of symptom onset in a symptomatic person or first date of specimen collection from the most recent asymptomatic person, whichever is later.

Additional information on the [definitions of outbreaks and clusters](#) is provided by the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services.

Facility or Setting Type	Facility or Setting Name	Cumulative Cases	Last Positive Result	Total Cases
Nursing Home	Glenbridge Health & Rehab	1 staff, 9 residents	8/28/2020	10
Child Care	Appalachian State University Child	4 staff, 6 children	8/5/2020	10

	Development Center			
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Last week App State announced a cluster of cases associated with the football team. By proactively testing these athletes, App State Athletics has been able to identify opportunities for isolating positive cases and quarantining others who have been exposed. The last positive case result was 8/20/2020. Routine testing continues through App State Athletics to continue identifying early any positive cases. In addition, App State Student Health Services provides testing for students each weekday. The university is offering free COVID-19 tests for App State students, faculty and staff at a “pop-up” testing event on Saturday, Aug. 29, from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. in the Rivers Street Parking Deck. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that has guidance, regular updates and data for the Appalachian community.

Mitigation and Response Efforts

- Ongoing testing continues to monitor the health of residents in skilled nursing facilities
- Educational outreach on COVID-19 prevention with these facilities
- Positive cases are separated from others to allow for safe isolation
- Ongoing daily health monitoring is occurring at the facilities
- Monitoring of positive cases continues with public health staff
- App State and AppHealthCare review cases daily to ensure that staff and students get the support they need to safely isolate or quarantine and to support contact tracing efforts by public health staff
- Ongoing messaging continues from App State to campus about prevention measures and enforcement

Demographic Data from NC DHHS as of August 28th

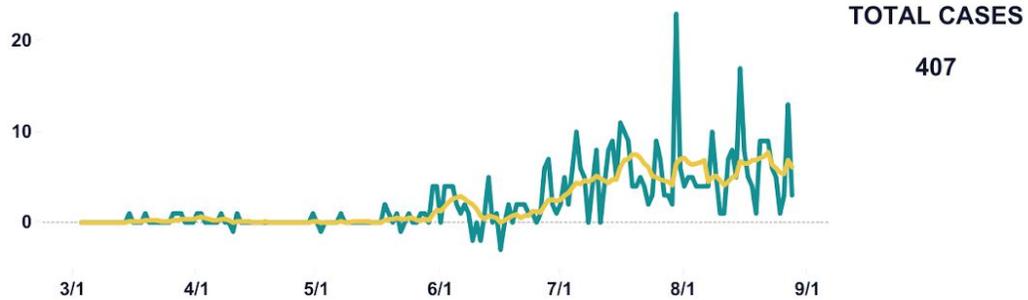
NC DHHS updates this data daily and can be found on [NC DHHS's website](#).

Daily Lab-Confirmed Cases i

Top Graph - Select By:

- CASES by Date Reported
- CASES by Date of Specimen Collection
- DEATHS by Date of Death

Is Watauga County seeing a downward trajectory over 14 days, or sustained leveling in new cases?



Demographic Data

Select county:
Watauga County

Watauga County Cases

407

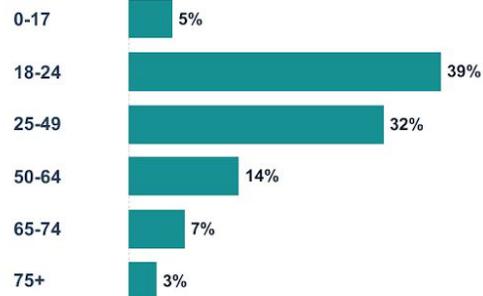
Select demographic metric:

- CASES
- DEATHS

For demographic groups where the county has fewer than five cases and the county has a population of fewer than 500 for that demographic, then that data is suppressed for privacy and the graph for that demographic won't appear. For example, if a county has fewer than five cases in people 18-24 years old and the county population has less than 500 people who are 18-24 years old based on census data, then the age graph will not appear for that county. Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

By Race

By Age



By Ethnicity



By Gender



Missing Demographic Data

Race	87
Ethnicity	144
Gender	9

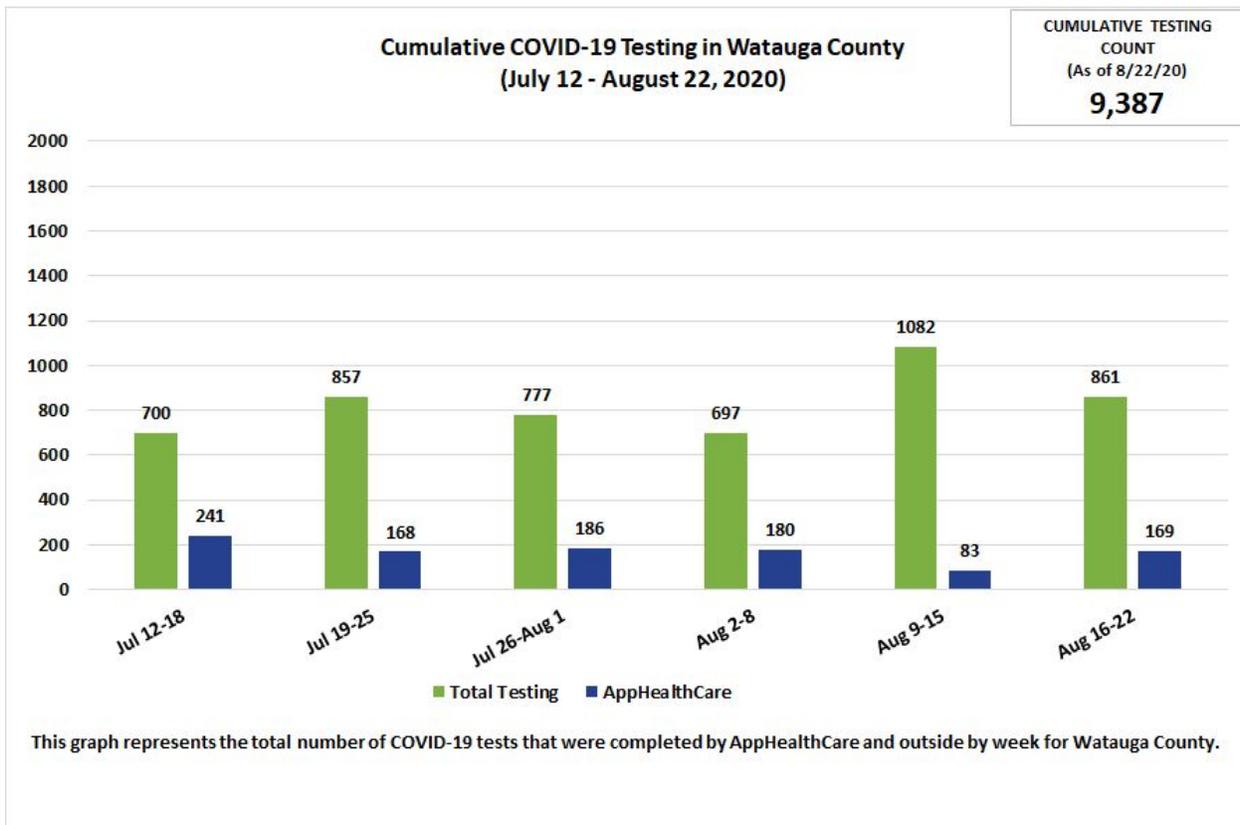
August 28, 2020

Data for Watauga County

An important note about data context: The graphs below show the available data. Please carefully read the descriptions below the graph to understand the data limitations. The most current data is available on the [AppHealthCare dashboard](#), as the data below is past data trended.

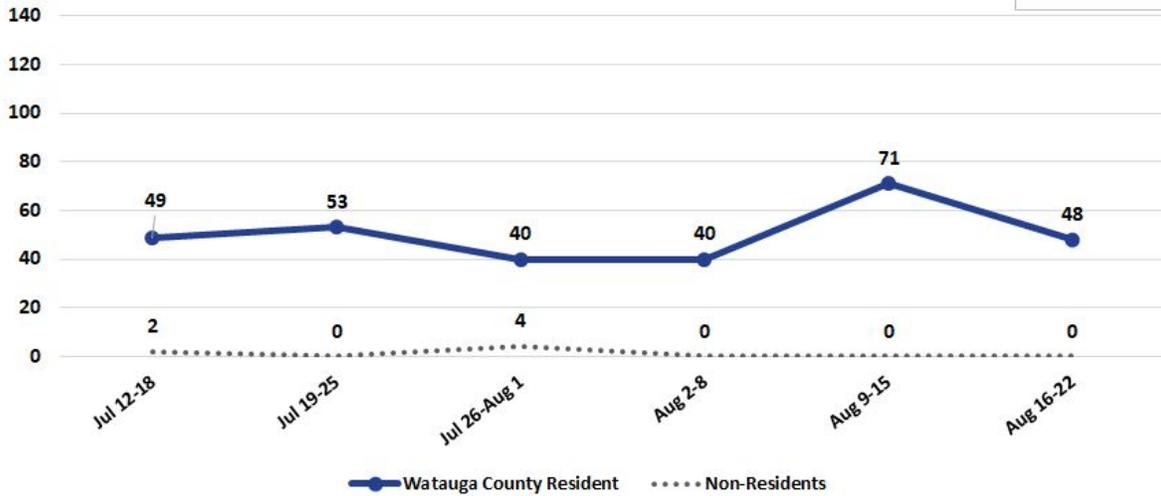
Important Disclaimer About Data

It is imperative that this report and the data contained within is understood in the appropriate context. Please, if you use this report, please be certain that the information included within is shared within the appropriate context. Doing otherwise may be damaging to the public health response efforts. There are multiple factors involved in addressing this virus, including compliance with public health control measures implemented by the local health director and referenced in NC GS 130A. These measures are imperative for limiting the spread of COVID-19. **AppHealthCare strongly advises that when data is shared for the purposes of educating the public or informing policy decisions, it should come directly from NC DHHS or AppHealthCare as it is presented with appropriate context from those directly involved in public health response.**



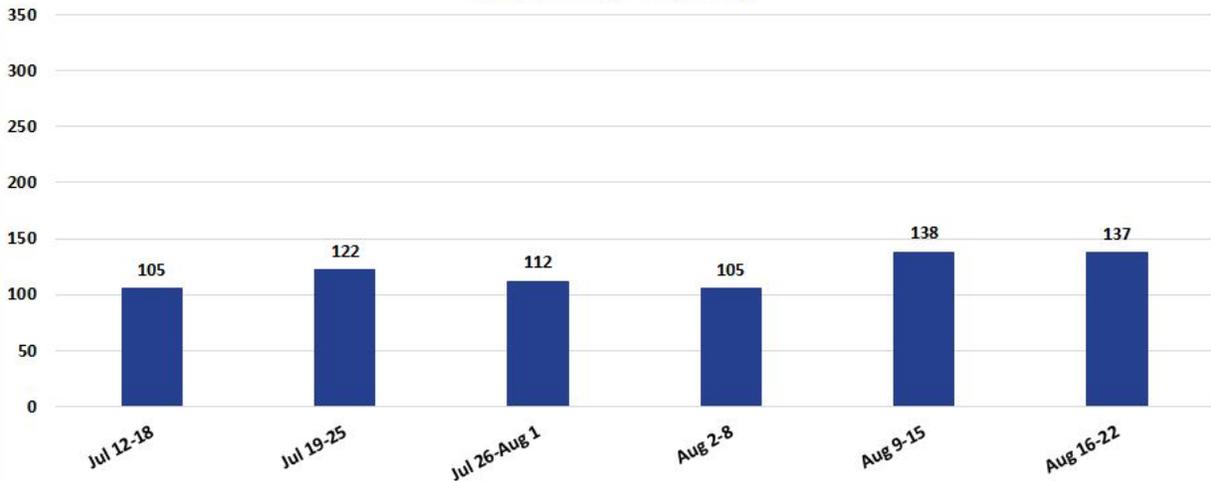
Cumulative Case Count by Week in Watauga County (July 12 - August 22, 2020)

CUMULATIVE CASE
COUNT
(As of 8/22/20)
431



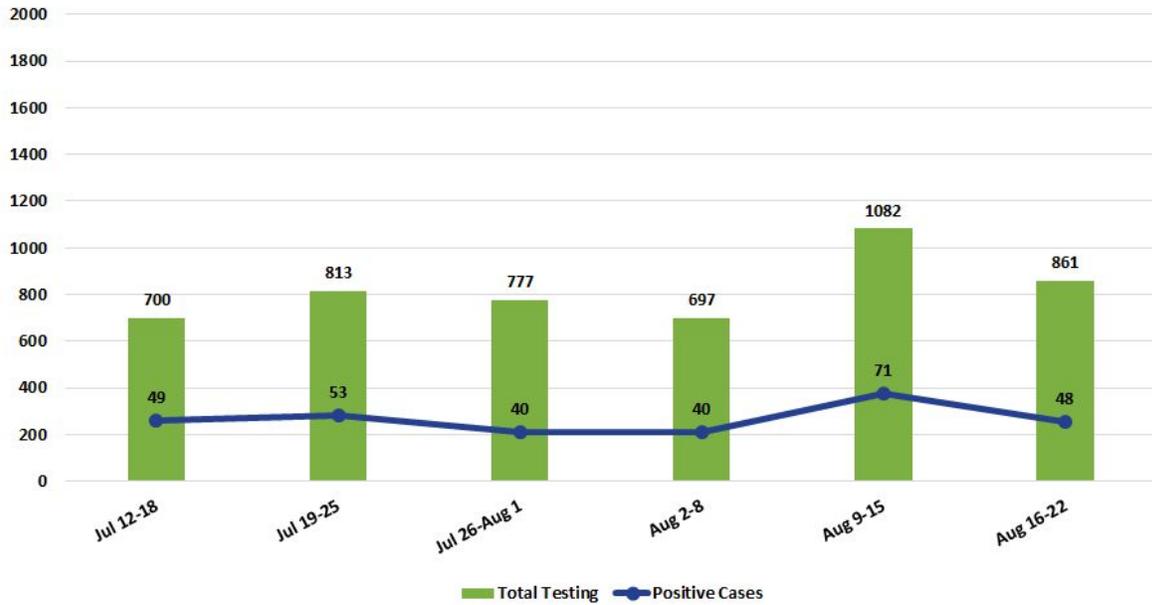
The solid navy blue line in this graph represents the number of positive COVID-19 cases among Watauga County residents by week. This graph also shows the number of non-residents that have tested positive for COVID-19 but reside outside Watauga County.

Number of Active Positive Cases by Week in Watauga County (July 12 - August 22, 2020)



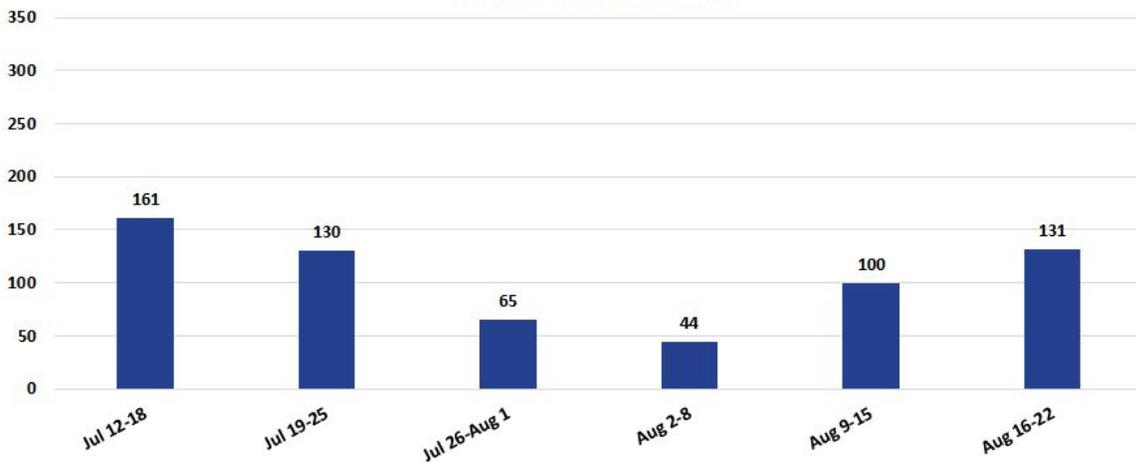
This graph represents the number of active COVID-19 positive cases by week in Watauga County. A positive COVID-19 case is considered active for a total of ten days after the initial positive test result.

**Total Weekly Tests Reported vs. Weekly Positive Case Count in Watauga County
(July 12 - August 22, 2020)**



This graph represents the number of COVID-19 positive cases by week compared to the total number of reported tests that were completed by AppHealthCare and outside agencies each week.

**Number of People Being Actively Monitored by Week in Watauga County
(July 12 - August 22, 2020)**



This graph represents the total number of Watauga County residents that AppHealthCare staff have monitored due to being exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Individuals are notified and asked to quarantine and monitor for symptoms for fourteen days.

Additional data can be found on [AppHealthCare's data dashboard](#). This data is updated each day by 8pm. You may notice a difference between our case count and the [NC DHHS state database](#). Sometimes we get notification of positive results before they show up on the state dashboard. Also, individuals can sometimes get "assigned" to our counties that actually do not reside in our counties. When that happens, we work with the state to get that data reassigned to the person's place of residence.

Additional Data and Information from NC Department of Health & Human Services

- **Zip Code Data** - NC DHHS publishes data for confirmed cases by zip code for the state. The map and data can be found [here](#).
- **Outbreak Data & Information** - This data is broken down by type of congregate setting like a nursing home, residential care facility, correctional facility, or a congregate working setting. The map by county and report can be found [here](#).
- **Hospitalizations** - More detailed data around hospitalizations, ventilators and bed capacity is now available by regions and can be found [here](#). Our district counties are in the Triad Healthcare Preparedness Coalition.

Key Messages

- **Show Your Love!** This multi-county communication campaign focuses on showing your love to yourself, others around you and the community. Posters and social media graphics for the 3Ws are now available on our website in both English and Spanish. Download them [here](#).
- Practice the 3Ws if you have to leave your house - **Wear** a cloth face covering, **Wash** your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer and **Wait** 6 feet from others.
- Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, handles, light switches, countertops, etc.
- If you are sick, please stay home except to receive medical care.
- If you are at higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19, we encourage you to stay at home to the greatest extent possible to decrease your chance of infection.



Testing

If you meet any of the criteria listed below, we encourage you to be tested for COVID-19. You can call your healthcare provider or AppHealthCare. You should be tested if:

- You believe you have symptoms of COVID-19,
- You have no symptoms and you are at higher risk for severe illness (you are 65 or older, you have an underlying health condition or chronic condition), or have been in close contact with someone who is known to have a positive result,
- You are someone working in a frontline role or essential business where social distancing is hard to maintain,
- You are a first responder, law enforcement officer, fire department staff member, or healthcare staff member,

- You live in or work in a facility where social distancing is hard to maintain, like congregate living, healthcare facilities or home care.
- You are part of a historically marginalized population who may be at higher risk for exposure.
- You have attended protests, rallies, or other mass gatherings where you could have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or could have exposed others because it may have been difficult to practice social distancing.

What should you do while waiting for test results? What if the test is negative or positive?

Answers for those questions, including prevention measures and home care if someone is sick are included in NC DHHS guidance [here](#).

NC DHHS has tools for the public including a website to [Check Symptoms](#) and [Find My Testing Place](#). AppHealthCare does not require someone to have symptoms to be tested.

Alleghany (336) 372-5641 | Ashe (336) 246-9449 | Watauga (828) 264-4995

AppHealthCare COVID-19 Hotline (828) 795-1970

General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com

Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com

www.AppHealthCare.com and follow us on Facebook & Twitter

