



COVID-19 Situation Update for Watauga County December 18, 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.

Due to the Christmas Holiday next week, we will not publish a weekly update on December 25th. The next situation update will be published Thursday, December 31st.

“We are working closely with state and local partners as we prepare for vaccine distribution locally. We are expecting to receive our first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine early next week and will prioritize those agencies and individuals who qualify in Phase 1a due to their higher risk of COVID-19 exposure. This ensures those who are at most risk get the vaccine first. Supplies will be limited at first but will increase in the coming months,” stated Jennifer Greene, Health Director, AppHealthCare.



Key Points

Vaccinating Makes Everyone Safer - COVID-19 Vaccine Update

This week we were notified our first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine should arrive early next week. We are expecting to receive 600 Moderna doses for Watauga, 300 for Ashe and 100 for Alleghany. Our local hospitals are also expecting vaccine shipment next week as well.

COVID-19 Vaccinations: Those most at risk get it first.



Those who are at most risk will receive the vaccine first and it will be offered in phases. The first phase (Phase 1a) will include healthcare workers who are at high risk of COVID-19 exposure and long term care facility staff and residents which includes skilled nursing facilities, and adult, family and group homes. We are currently in the process of contacting and communicating with Phase 1a agencies and individuals to gather basic information that will be used to coordinate and ensure we have a comprehensive list of those who qualify for the vaccine in this current phase.

Appalachian Regional Healthcare System (ARHS) reported this week that they will receive 800 doses of Moderna vaccine for frontline healthcare workers. Read more from ARHS [here](#).

The vaccine will be offered free of charge to everyone whether or not you have health insurance. To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit NC DHHS's website [here](#).

Cases Remain Steady

For the week of December 6-12 (graphs below), there was an increase in active cases and a slight decrease in those who are in quarantine. Cases have continued to remain steady for the most part but when looking at the cumulative case trend, the past couple of weeks have seen an increased trend.

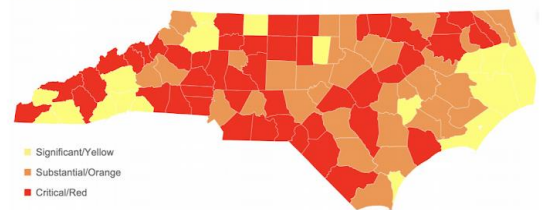
Hospitalizations Remain Concerning

This trend continues to be a concern. Appalachian Regional Healthcare System is in phase three of a four-phase COVID-19 surge plan. Phase three means there is an advanced patient surge with 25 positive COVID-19 patients hospitalized. We want to monitor this data point very closely because it is important we have hospital capacity for those who may need hospital care for things like a heart attack, stroke, car accident, etc.

NC DHHS County Alert System Notes Substantial Community Spread for Watauga County

In the latest update, Watauga County has moved from yellow and is now **ORANGE** which notes substantial community spread. This system outlines actions we can take to lessen the impact and spread in our community. You can read more about the [County Alert System on NC DHHS's website](#).

NC Counties by Tier: Data from November 21 through December 4, 2020



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. You may receive a call from (844) 628-7223 or (828) 264-4995. It may also show up as “NC Outreach” or “Contact Tracing.” Your cell phone carrier may flag the call as spam. It is so important to answer the call of a contact tracer. It is a key tool in slowing the spread of this virus.

Updated Quarantine Guidance

Quarantine times for close contacts to a positive case can now be shortened to 7 or 10 days if certain areas are met (based on CDC guidance). It is important to note, quarantine times may be longer depending on individual situations and public health risk.

The CDC has recently updated its guidance to allow for shortened quarantine if certain areas are met. AppHealthCare is following the updated recommendations.

In addition to 14-day quarantine, the updated recommendations include*:

- A 7-day quarantine with no symptoms and a negative test no earlier than day 5 of quarantine
- A 10-day quarantine with no symptoms.

*Quarantine times may be longer depending on individual situations and as determined by public health.

If you are a close contact, we will reach out to you and provide guidance based on your specific situation. Call (828) 795-1970 for more information.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) levels remain stable in most areas.

Testing

If you have COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, we recommend you be tested. You can [check your symptoms](#) and determine if testing is needed. To find a testing site near you, visit [NC DHHS's Find My Testing Place](#).

Turnaround Times for Testing remains between 2 and 4 days. NC DHHS provides data on testing turnaround times. This data is updated daily and can be found [here](#).

Free COVID-19 Testing at AppHealthCare. Due to the Christmas Holiday next week and prioritizing vaccine distribution, we will only be offering testing on Monday, December 21st with appointments beginning at 9:30am. Please do not just show up for testing. We request that you schedule an appointment through our [website](#) or by calling our COVID-19 Call Center at (828) 795-1970.



Testing is also offered by appointment at [Appalachian Regional Healthcare System](#), [High Country Community Health Watauga Medical](#), [CVS Pharmacy in Boone](#), [Boone Drug](#) and other local healthcare providers may offer testing as well.

Guidance Documents to Prevent & Slow the Spread

Tips for Holiday & Private Social Gatherings

As we continue through the Holiday season, we encourage everyone to be mindful of the fact that this virus is still with us and there are actions we can all take to avoid and lessen our exposure and a potential spike that could overwhelm our healthcare system. If you will be hosting or attending an event, NC DHHS has compiled some [tips for gathering safely](#) and some [guidance for private social gatherings](#).

Celebrate the Holidays Safely

Take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**PRACTICE
THE 3 WS**



WEAR a mask
over your nose
and mouth



WAIT
6 feet
apart



WASH
your
hands

Avoid holiday travel and limit physical contact with people who do not live with you.

If you choose to travel or gather with people who live outside of your household, follow these recommendations.



Get tested for COVID-19 three to four days before traveling or attending gatherings.



Do not host or attend a gathering if you've been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms.

1/2



Guests who are high risk for complications from COVID-19 should attend events virtually.



Live together? Sit together. If not, stay 6 feet apart.



Keep the guest list small.



Use single-serve options or have one person serve food so that multiple people are not handling items.



Host your gathering outdoors. If that's not possible, make sure the room is well-ventilated by opening windows and doors.



Clean and disinfect commonly-touched surfaces such as door handles and sink faucets.

2/2

Active Outbreaks and Clusters

Data is provided for outbreaks and clusters that are active and ongoing. The number of cases for outbreaks and clusters are current as of each Thursday at 9:00am. The case counts vary day by day as new cases are identified and as cases are moved in and out of isolation. This data may not match other reported data since this is a point in time. As we conduct outbreak and case investigations, the data included in this report are subject to change. For a current case count, visit the [AppHealthCare data dashboard](#), which is updated daily by noon.

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.

NC DHHS also provides regularly updated information on [outbreaks and clusters](#).

Active Outbreaks & Clusters				
<i>Data is current as of Thursday, December 17, 9:00am</i>				
Facility or Setting Type	Facility or Setting Name	Active Cases	Cumulative Cases	Last Positive Result
Long Term Care Facility	Glenbridge Health & Rehab	5 staff 1 resident	6 staff 1 resident	12/14/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Mountaineer Hall	0	10	11/23/2020
Residential Complex	Cottages of Boone	0	66	12/10/2020
Residential Complex	University Highlands	0	36	11/23/2020

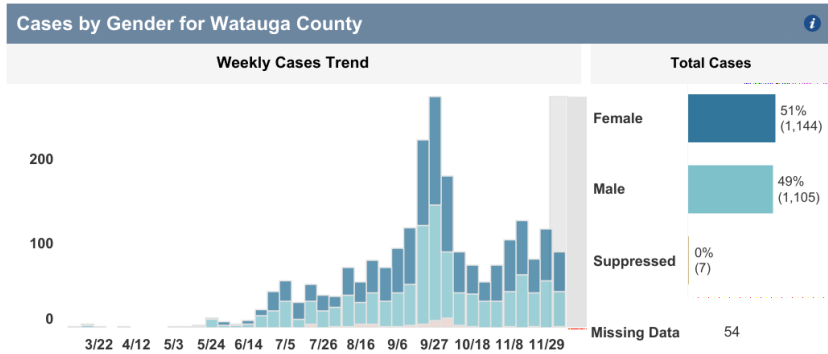
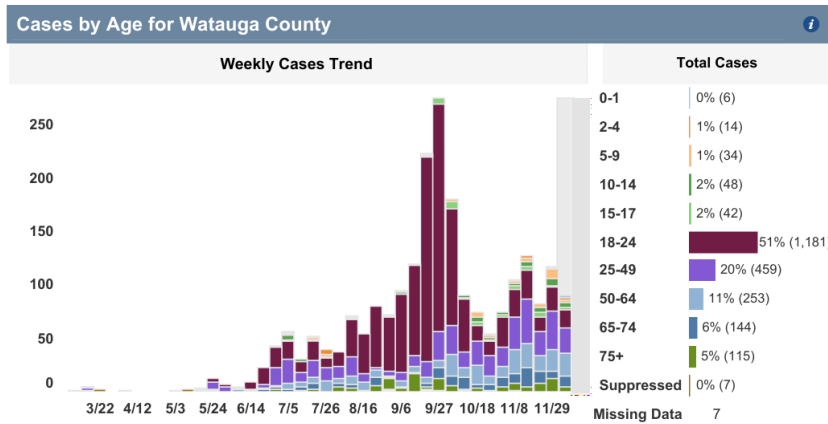
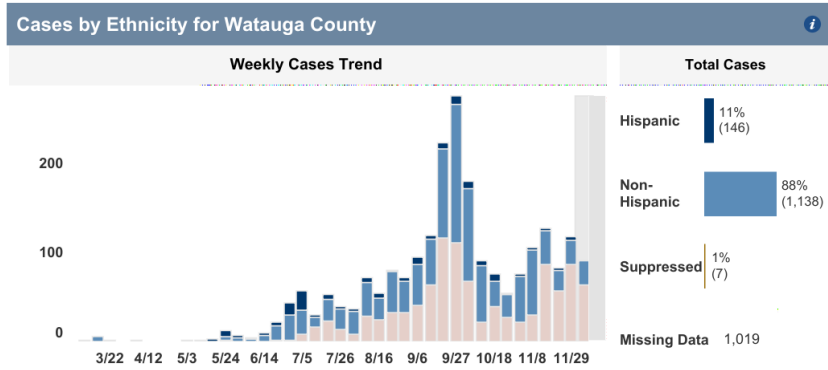
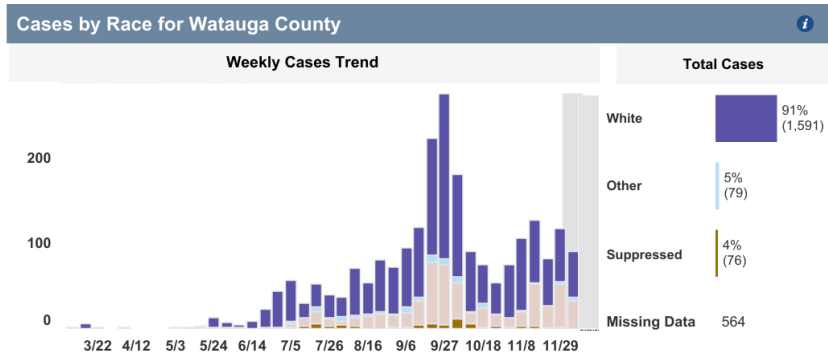
Mitigation and Response Efforts

- 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

App State Student Health Service also continues providing testing for students each weekday. Surveillance testing- including mandatory entry testing for residence hall students, student athletes and other students as determined necessary- will resume prior to the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester. The university is providing five washable, re-usable face coverings for all students, faculty and staff prior to the start of the Spring 2021 semester. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that has guidance, testing schedule information, regular updates and data for the Appalachian community. The university's holiday and winter break departure and return plan [may be found here](#).

Demographic Data from NC DHHS as of December 14th

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



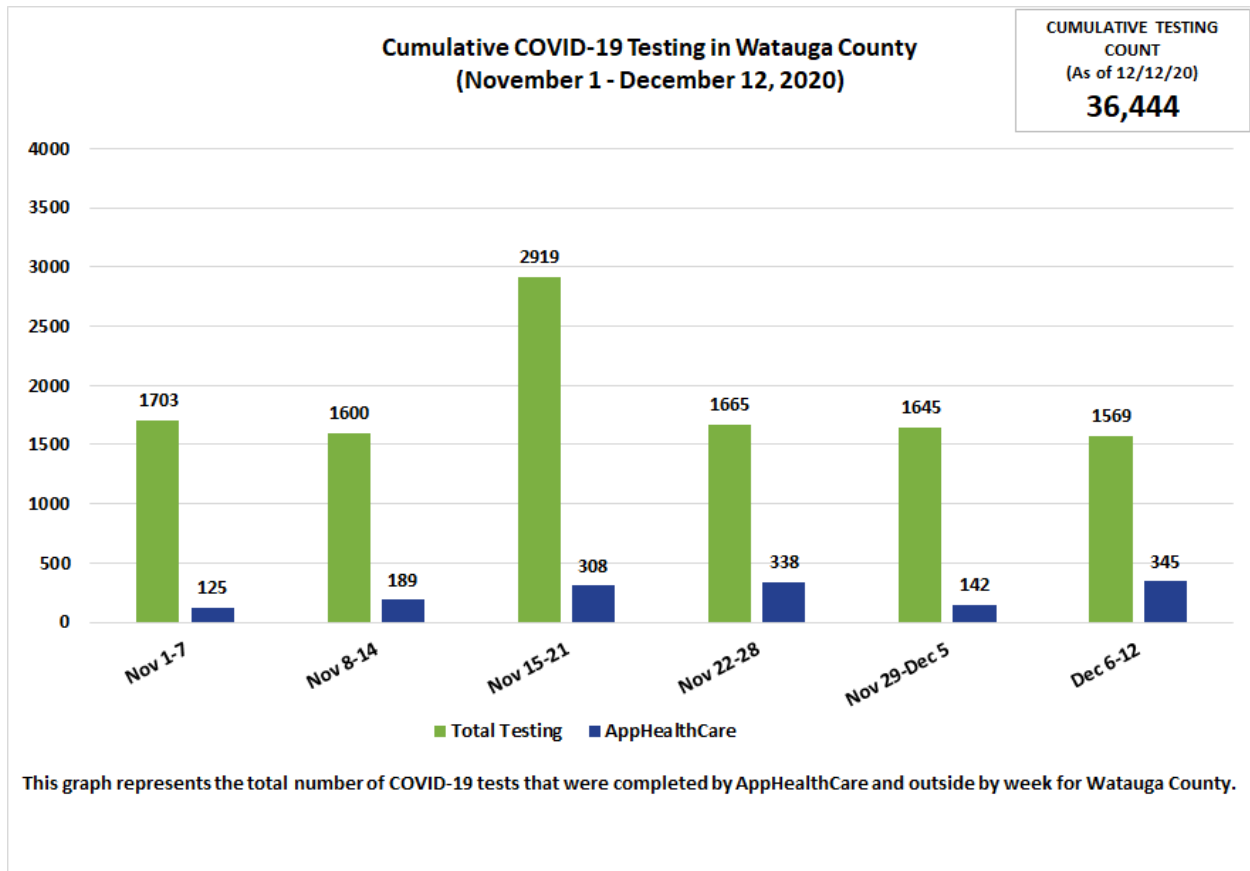
December 14, 2020

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.

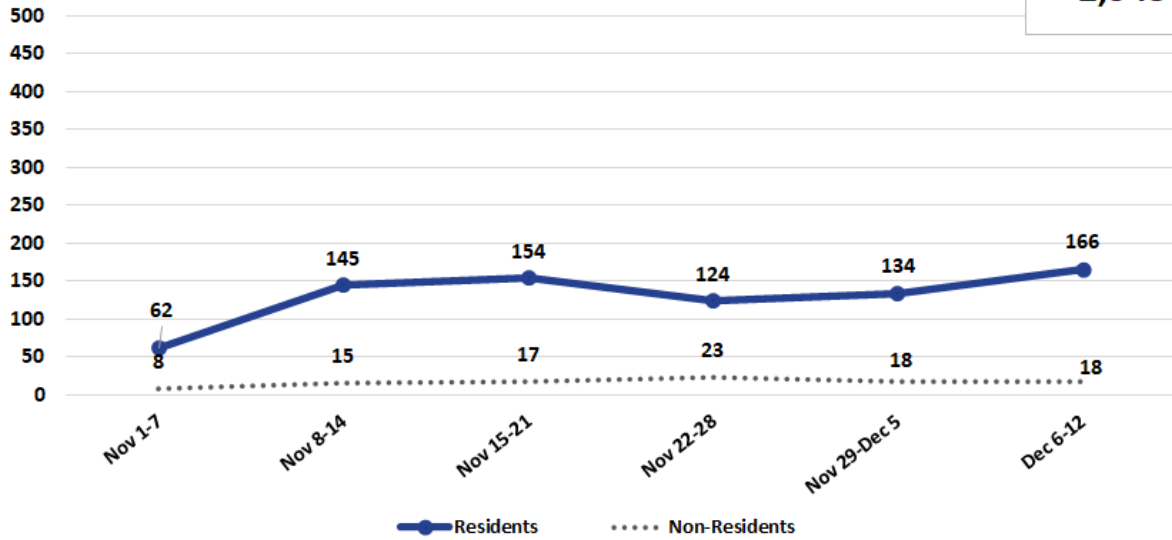
Important Disclaimer About Data

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.**



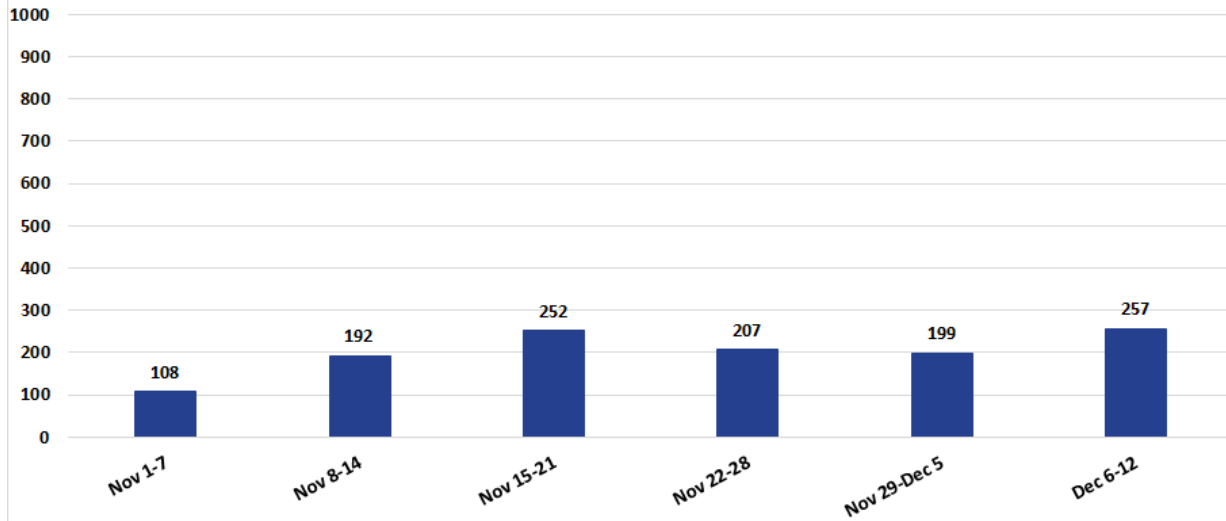
Cumulative Case Count by Week in Watauga County (November 1 - December 12, 2020)

CUMULATIVE CASE
COUNT
(As of 12/12/20)
2,543



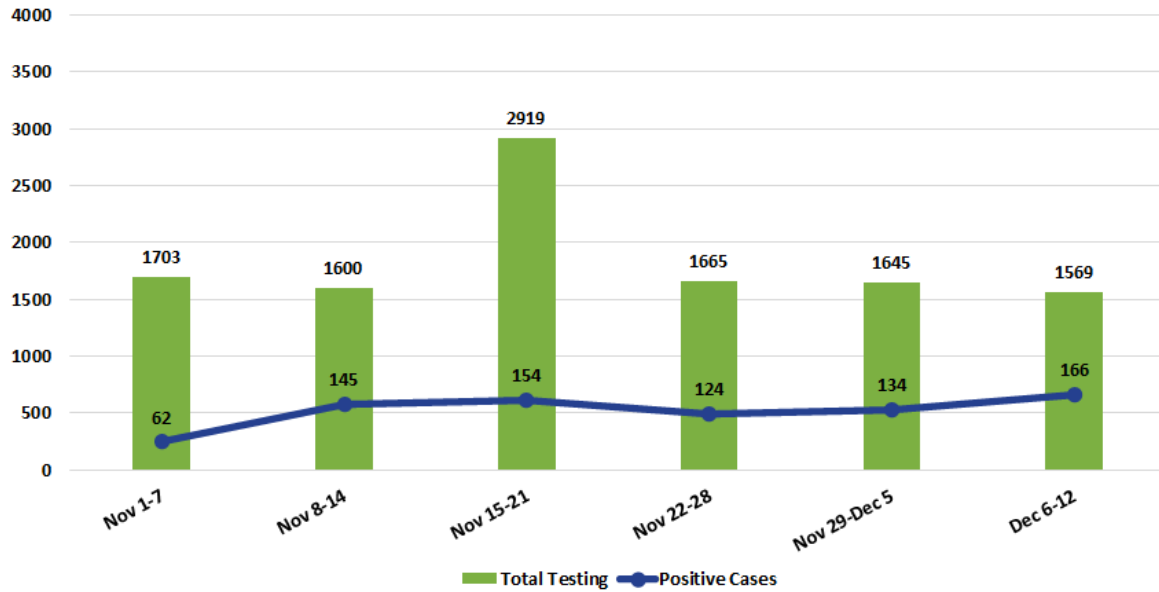
The solid navy blue line in this graph represents the number of positive COVID-19 cases among Watauga County residents by week. This graph also shows the number of non-residents that have tested positive for COVID-19 but reside outside Watauga County.

Number of Active Positive Cases by Week in Watauga County (November 1 - December 12, 2020)



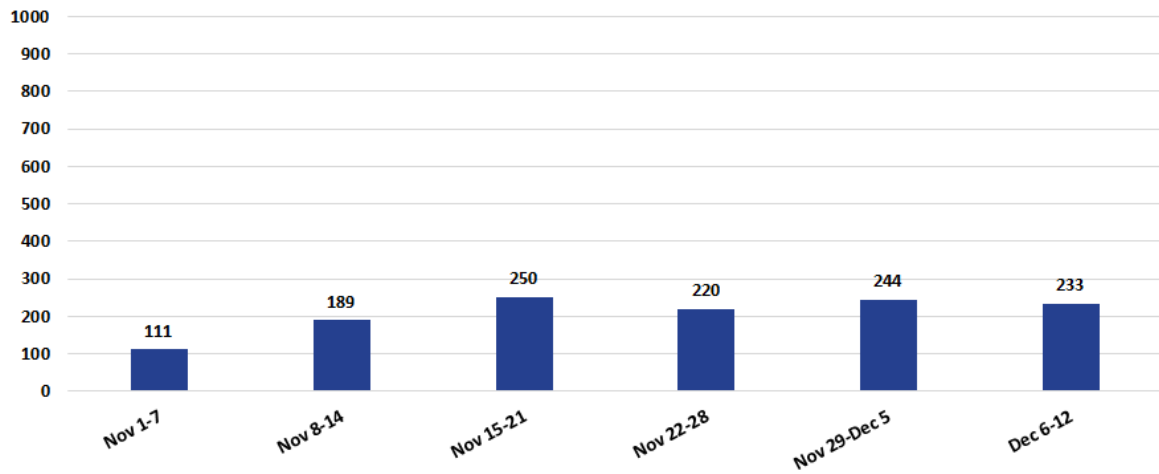
This graph represents the number of active COVID-19 positive cases by week in Watauga County. A positive COVID-19 case is considered active for a total of ten days after the initial positive test result.

**Total Weekly Tests Reported vs. Weekly Positive Case Count in Watauga County
(November 1 - December 12, 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
(November 1 - December 12, 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.

App State cumulative testing as of week ending December 14, 2020. These totals include tests performed at Student Health Service and from pop-up test events contracted with Mako Medical.

On-Campus Tests Positive Tests % Positive Cases
30,456 **875** **2.9%**

Date (Week ending)	On-Campus Tests	Positive Tests	% Positive Cases
Dec 14, 2020	1,028	27	2.6%
Dec 7, 2020	1,074	18	1.7%
Nov 30, 2020	1,483	8	0.5%
Nov 23, 2020	3,717	41	1.1%
Nov 16, 2020	1,869	42	2.2%
Nov 9, 2020	1,734	31	1.8%

Additional data can be found on [AppHealthCare's data dashboard](#). This data is updated each day around noon.

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

AppHealthCare COVID-19 Call Center (828) 795-1970

General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com

Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com

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

