



COVID-19 Situation Update for Watauga County January 15, 2021

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.

"Right now we are receiving limited supplies of vaccine so we are following the priority groups outlined from the state and scheduling appointments based on those who have completed our COVID-19 vaccine interest form. We are prioritizing vaccine deployment and will continue to do everything we can to ensure vaccine gets out to the community as quickly and efficiently as possible," stated Jennifer Greene, Health Director, AppHealthCare.



Vaccinating Makes Everyone Safer - COVID-19 Vaccine Update

What phase are we in for Watauga County?

On January 14, NC DHHS announced changes to the priority groups for vaccine distribution. We will be following these groups for our counties. Right now Group 1 and Group 2 are eligible for vaccine which includes health care workers with in-person patient contact, long-term care staff and residents—people in skilled nursing facilities, adult care homes, continuing care retirement communities and anyone 65 years or older, regardless of health status or living situation.



How many doses of vaccine do we have?

For Watauga County, we have received 1,600 doses of Moderna and 975 doses of Pfizer vaccine to date. We have administered 1,400 vaccines as of January 15, 2021 at noon. At this time, we have been notified by NC DHHS we will not be receiving a shipment of first dose vaccine next week. We are anticipating receiving 975 doses of Pfizer and 600 doses of Moderna for individuals' second dose.

Mass Vaccination Event by Appointment Only - Saturday, January 16th by Appointment Only

AppHealthCare, Appalachian Regional Healthcare System and other local partners are hosting a mass vaccination event on Saturday, January 16th at the Watauga High School primarily for those who are 75 years or older. However, with the changes to vaccine groups from NC DHHS yesterday, we have opened up the event for those who are 65 years or older. We first went through our interest form list of those who identified themselves as 75 years or older and then for any open slots, we have opened those up to individuals who have identified themselves as 65 years or older. We are using the information people have already provided in the COVID-19 interest form to schedule appointments for Saturday's event. This event is by appointment only since we have limited vaccine quantities. We are reaching out directly to individuals to confirm appointments.

Interested in Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine?

We have launched a COVID-19 vaccine interest form for anyone interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Anyone can fill out the form regardless of which phase they will fit into. You can find the form on our website [here](#).

Want to Volunteer for a COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic?

If you are interested in volunteering your time to help with COVID-19 vaccine clinics in Alleghany, Ashe or Watauga County, please complete [this form](#).



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 our website [here](#) or NC DHHS's website [here](#).

Key Points

Case Updates

For the week of January 3-9 (graphs below), there was an increase in both new cases and the number of individuals in quarantine.

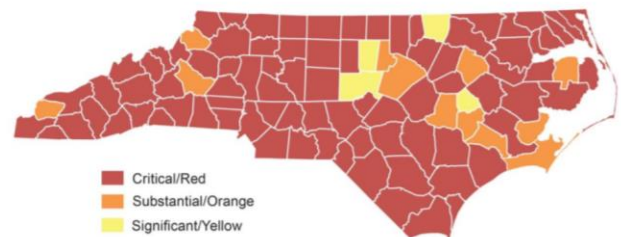
Hospitalizations Remain Concerning

The number of hospitalizations remains a concern and we are continuing to watch this closely. 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 an average of 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 is **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 December 20 through January 2, 2021



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.

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 by Appointment. We are offering testing on Mondays and Thursdays of each week. Please do

A blue rectangular graphic with the text "COVID-19" in large white letters and "TESTING" in large white letters below it. A small white icon of a test tube is positioned between the two words.

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](#).

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, January 14, 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	0	7 staff 2 residents	12/23/2020

			1 death	
Long Term Care Facility	Foley Center	3 staff 7 residents	19 staff 26 residents	01/14/2021
Childcare Facility	Greenway Baptist Child Development Center	1 child 6 staff	1 child 7 staff	1/13/2021

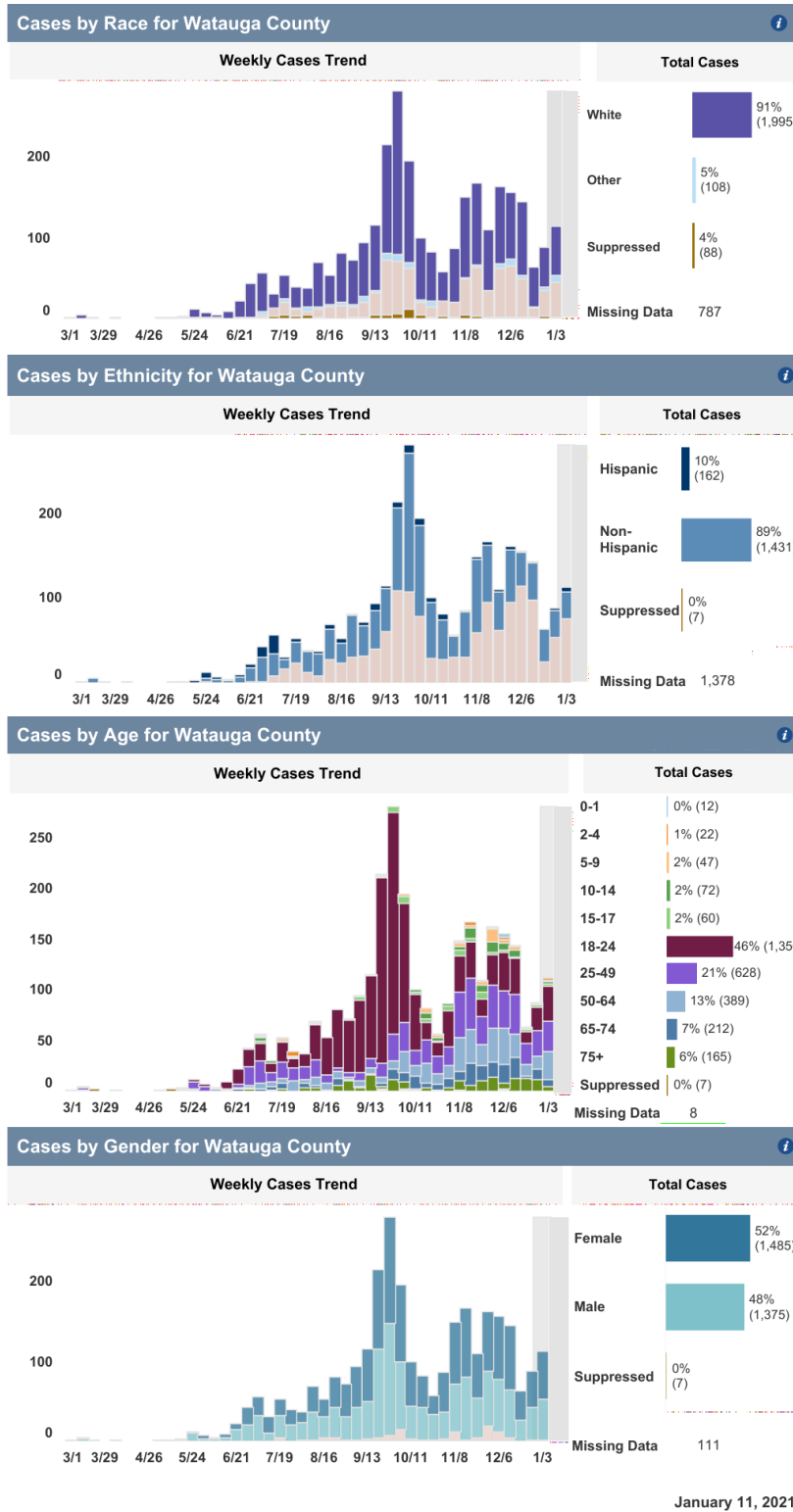
Mitigation and Response Efforts

- 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 January 11th

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

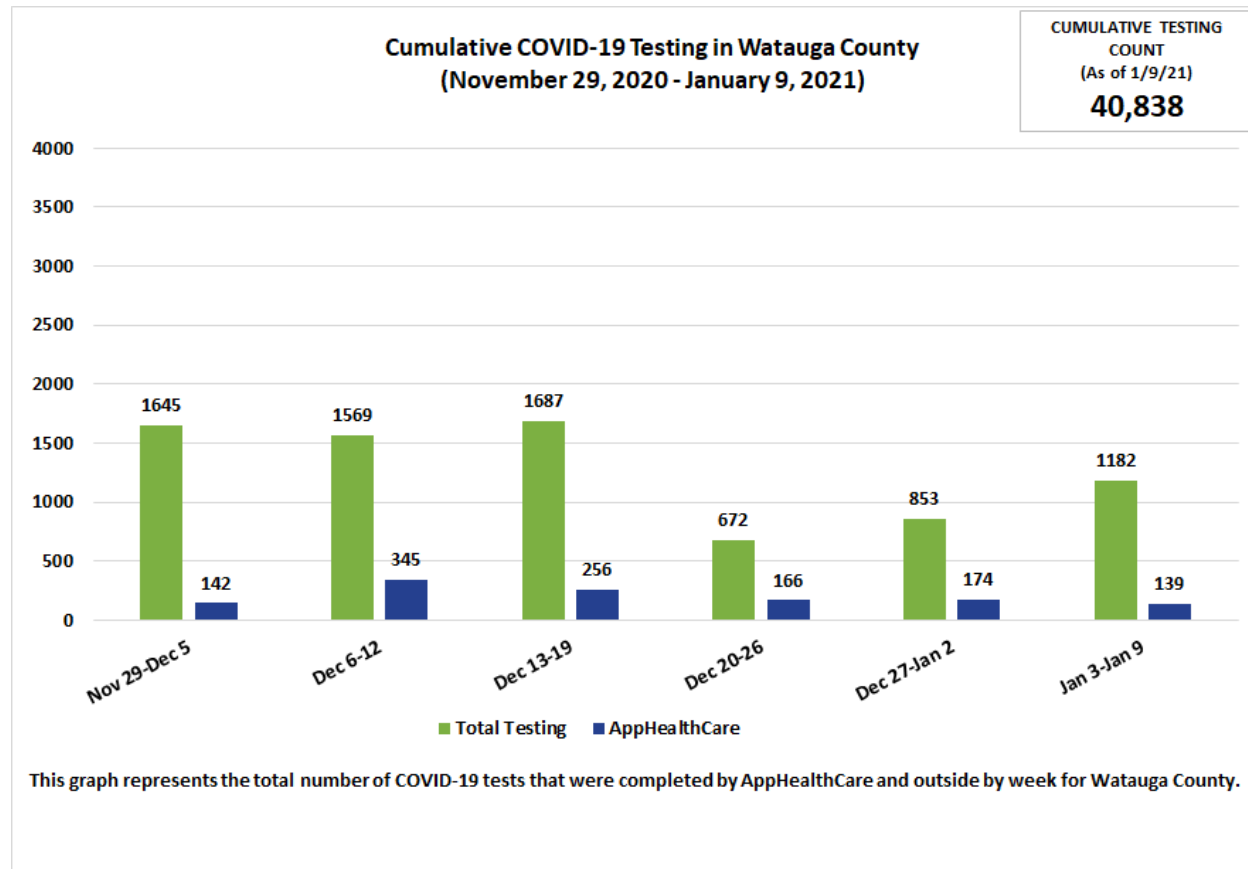


Data for Watauga County

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.

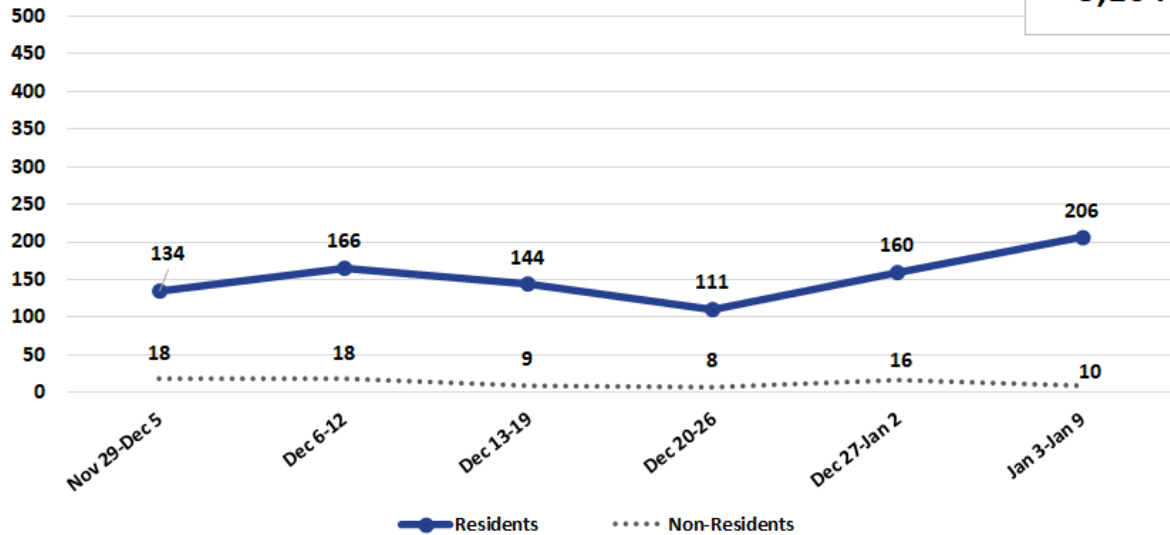
Important Disclaimer About Data

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.**



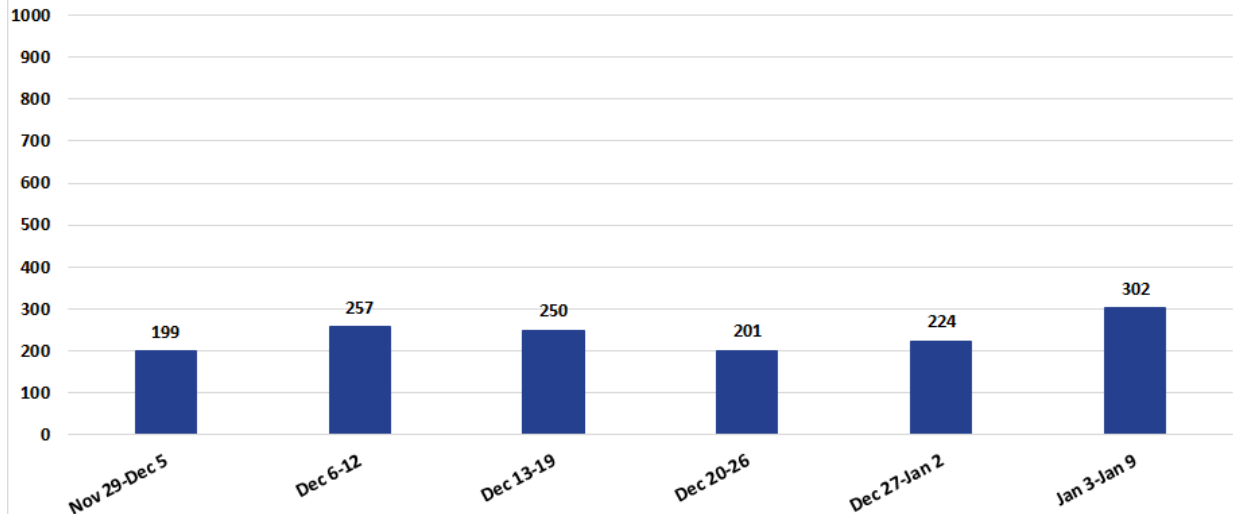
**Cumulative Case Count by Week in Watauga County
(November 29, 2020 - January 9, 2021)**

CUMULATIVE CASE
COUNT
(As of 1/9/21)
3,164



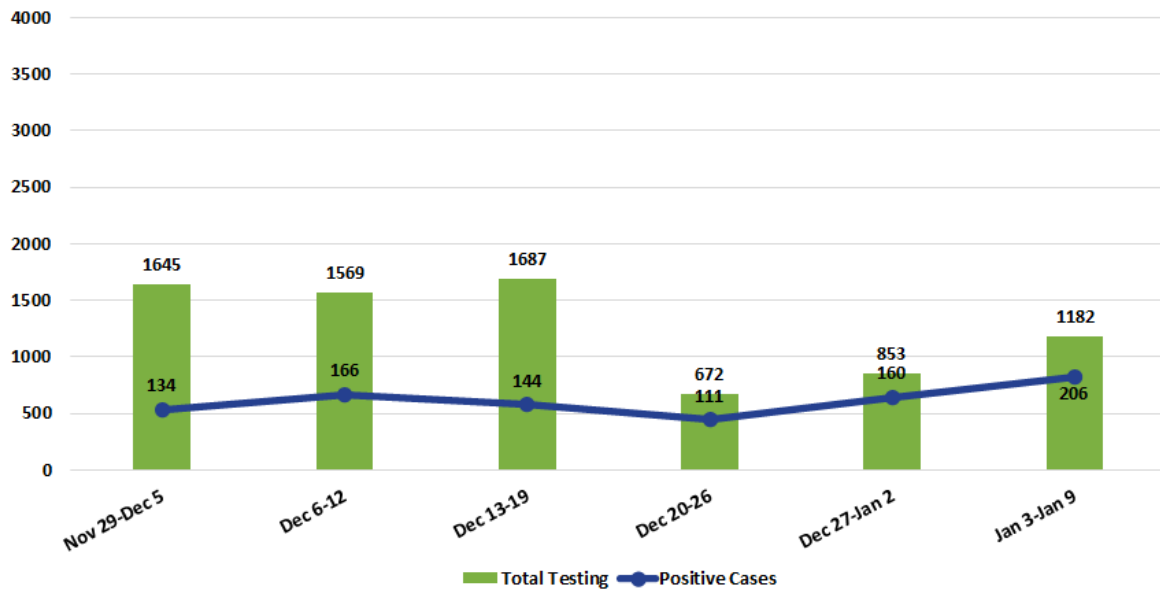
The solid navy blue line in this graph represents the number of positive COVID-19 cases among Watauga County residents by week. This graph also shows the number of non-residents that have tested positive for COVID-19 but reside outside Watauga County.

**Number of Active Positive Cases by Week in Watauga County
(November 29, 2020 - January 9, 2021)**



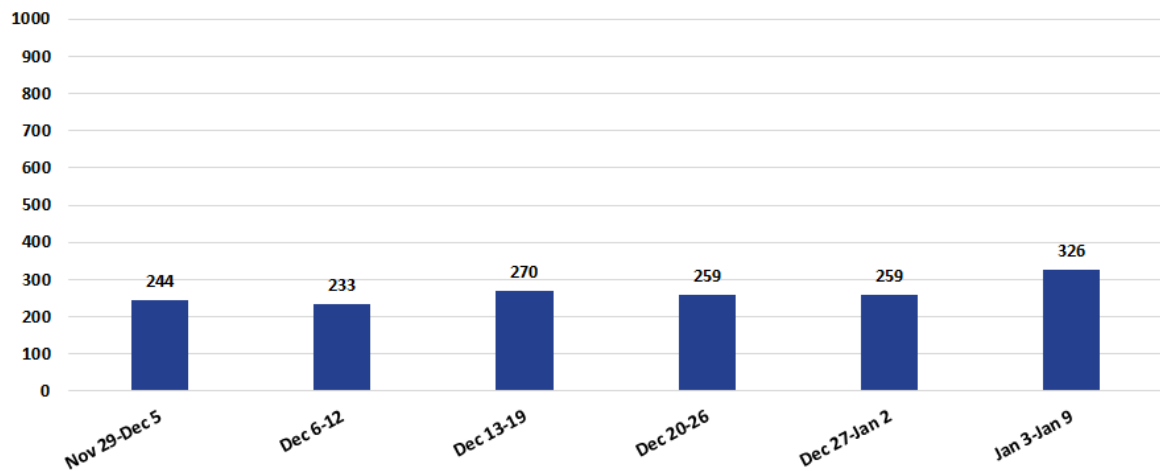
This graph represents the number of active COVID-19 positive cases by week in Watauga County. A positive COVID-19 case is considered active for a total of ten days after the initial positive test result.

**Total Weekly Tests Reported vs. Weekly Positive Case Count in Watauga County
(November 29, 2020 - January 9, 2021)**



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 29, 2020 - January 9, 2021)**



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 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

