



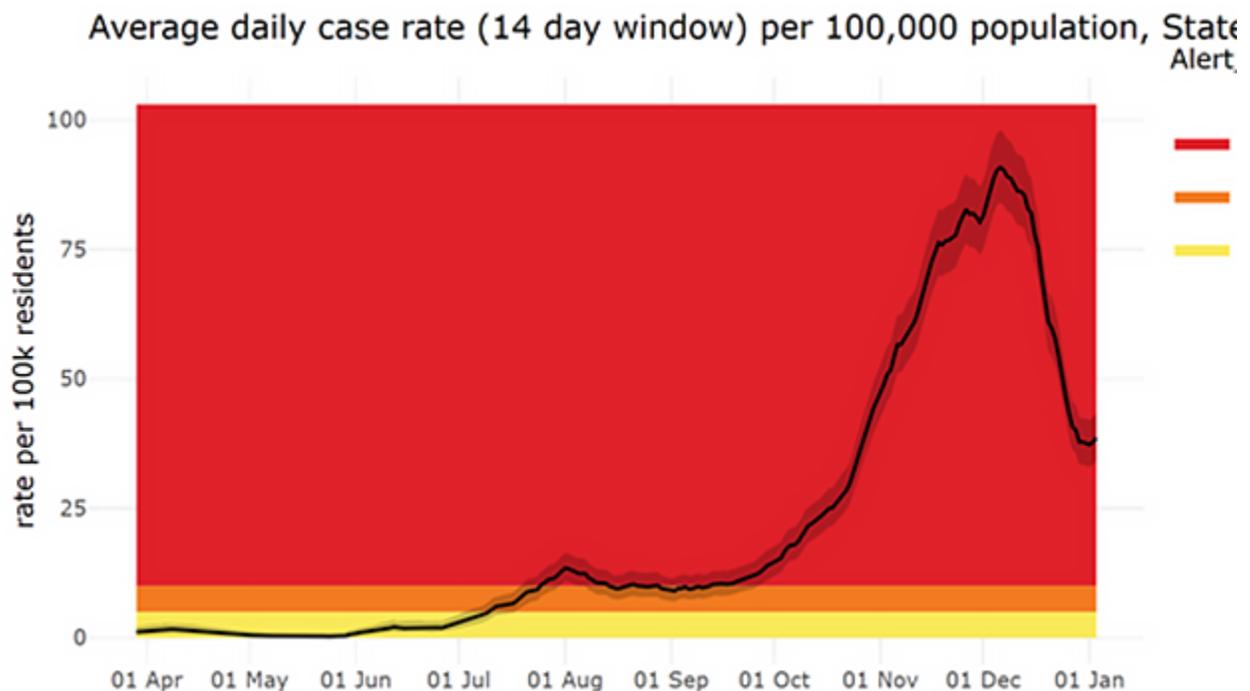
## Alaska Department of Health & Social Services Weekly Case Update December 27, 2020 – January 2, 2021

### Brief status report

- The daily growth rate of viral transmission in Alaska reversed from 0.26% to -4.2% over the past three weeks, indicating a general downward trajectory during that time period. However, in the last week the trajectory has flattened out and test positivity rose slightly, raising concern for an uptick in transmission.
- Every Alaskan who chooses to wear a mask, stay 6 feet from others, and avoid indoor gatherings contributes to the response effort.
- The statewide effort to provide every Alaskan with the option of receiving a vaccine as soon as supply allows is ongoing. Two vaccines for COVID-19 have received FDA emergency use authorization and are currently being distributed in Alaska.
- Currently eligible groups for vaccination include those in Phase 1a: healthcare workers and residents in nursing homes. [Groups in Phase 1b](#), including Alaskans age 65 and older, are not yet eligible to register for the vaccine. The first tier in Phase 1b, which is Alaskans aged 65 years and older, may register for vaccination starting January 6 at noon and vaccinations for that tier will begin January 11. Other groups in Phase 1b may not register at this time but may register as soon as vaccination opens for their phase and tier. All registration for vaccines should go through the registration system on [covidvax.alaska.gov](https://covidvax.alaska.gov), which also has an [eligibility tool](#) for any Alaskan unsure of when they can receive the vaccine. All updates on phases and tiers will be posted on that website; Alaskans are encouraged to check it frequently.
- Two [new variants](#) of the virus causing COVID-19 have been reported – one in the United Kingdom (UK) and one in South Africa. CDC is monitoring the new variants. The UK variant appears to spread faster but does not appear to cause more severe disease. As of 1/4/2021, several cases of the UK variant have been confirmed in the United States. None have yet been found in Alaska.
- CDC [guidelines recommend](#) regular testing for critical infrastructure workers and other groups at higher risk for COVID-19, even if they are asymptomatic. While testing should continue to be prioritized for people with symptoms and those with known exposures to COVID-19, expanding screening testing to many groups, including restaurant and

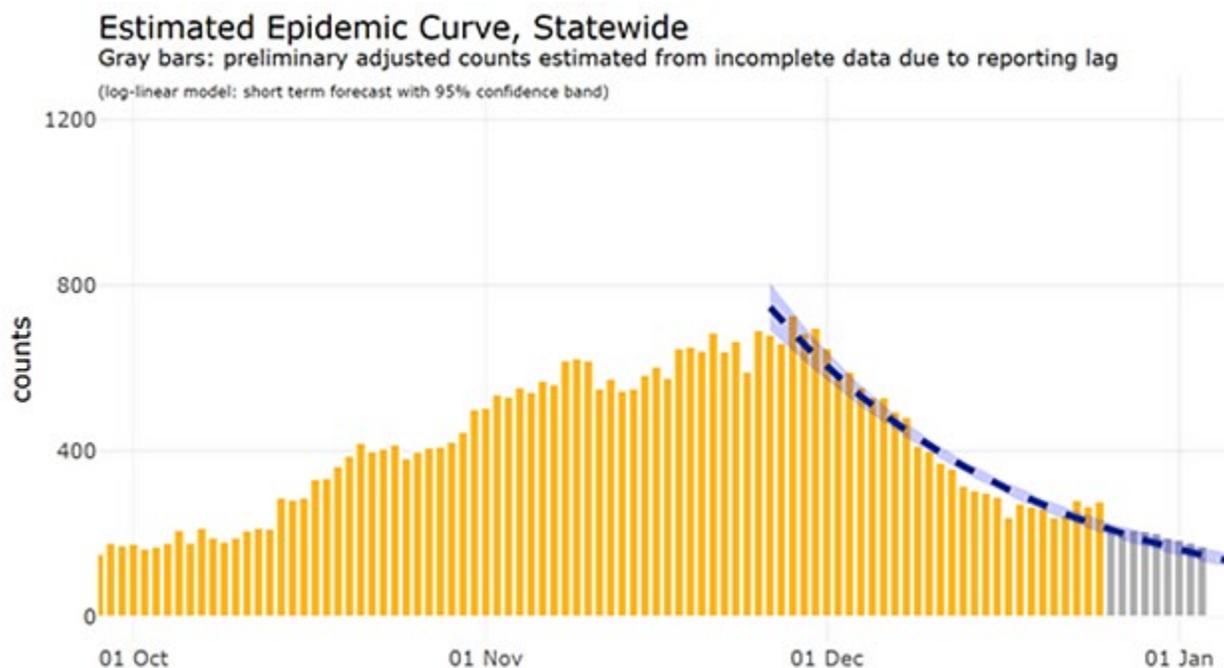
grocery store workers, school staff, people who recently attended large gatherings, first responders, and healthcare workers is recommended. While these recommendations are not requirements for testing, DHSS is available to consult on the logistics of expanding testing.

- Alaskans should get tested immediately at the first sign of any symptoms. Tests work best when obtained promptly after symptoms start. Testing early helps people know if they are positive quickly and helps prompt them to take immediate precautions to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus to others.
- Most Alaskans get COVID-19 from a friend, family member, or coworker. Many Alaskans who are diagnosed with COVID-19 report that they went to social gatherings, community events, church services, and other social venues while they were contagious but before they knew they had the virus. Alaskans should avoid indoor gatherings with non-household members, avoid crowds, wear masks when around non-household members, and stay 6 feet from anyone not in their household.
- As cases, hospitalizations, and deaths continue to increase across the United States, the safest way to connect with others is electronically. Gatherings with family and friends who do not live with you can increase the chances of getting or spreading COVID-19 or the flu.
- [Specific requirements](#) for testing and strict social distancing apply to anyone returning to Alaska or traveling between the road/ferry system and smaller communities within Alaska.



## Case trends and predictions

- 2,055 new cases were reported in Alaskans last week. This is a 10% increase from the week before and reflects continued high-level community transmission throughout much of Alaska.
- Case rates remained similar to the previous week in many regions of Alaska. The Yukon-Kuskokwim (YK) Region saw a substantial increase from a 14-day average daily case rate of 73 to 144. Acceleration in the YK Region is high, with a seven-day average daily case rate of 229. Moderate decreases in case rates were seen in the Northwest, Kenai and Southwest Regions. All regions of Alaska other than the Northern and Southern Southeast Regions continue to have high community transmission and are at a high alert level.
- The estimated daily growth rate as of January 4, 2021 is -4.2% and new cases are expected to halve every 16 days based on current modeling.



## Vaccines status update

- The State of Alaska is working with federal, local, Tribal, and military partners to ensure that the distribution of vaccine goes as quickly and smoothly as possible.
- A limited amount of vaccine is currently available with more expected to be delivered in the coming months. As of January 4, more than 18,000 COVID-19 vaccines had been administered in Alaska. A tracker is [available online](#) as is a [vaccine dashboard](#) for up-to-date data.

- There are no plans to mandate a vaccine at the state level.
- The national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is responsible for providing national recommendations for vaccine administration and allocation.

## New cases, hospitalizations, and deaths

- During the week of December 27, 2020 through January 2, 2021, 2,055 new Alaska cases were reported, a 10% increase from last week, for a total of 46,812 cumulative cases in Alaskans.
- Cumulative hospitalizations increased to 1,013 with 12 reported as occurring this week. Hospitalization reports often lag and only 974 hospitalizations were reported at this time last week, so there are 39 hospitalizations newly reported this week including ones that began during previous weeks.
- Deaths among Alaska residents increased by 18 (217 total). All but two deaths occurred prior to this past week. It is common to take more than a week for a death to be reported, and more deaths that occurred during Dec 27–Jan 2 may be reported in future.
- There were 48 new nonresident cases identified this week, for a total of 1,551 cases.

## Regional case trends

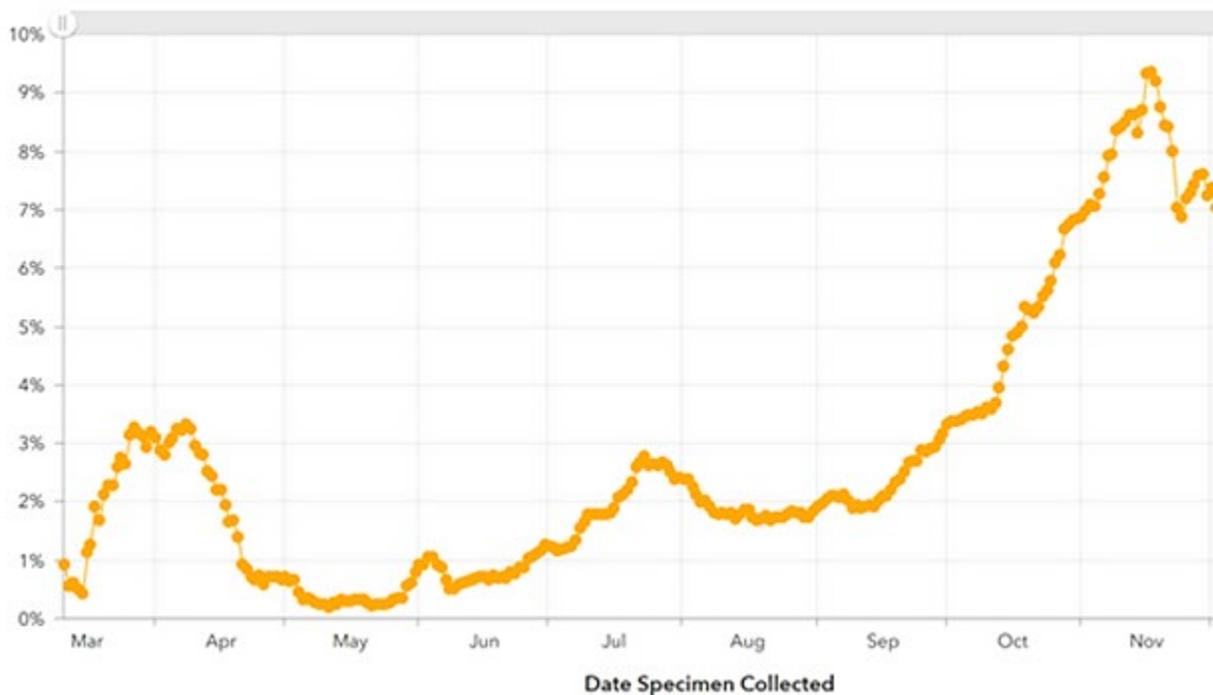
Behavioral Health Region	Case rates Nov 15– Nov 28	Case rates Nov 22– Dec 5	Case rates Nov 29– Dec 12*	Case rates Dec 5– Dec 19	Case rates Dec 13– Dec 26
Anchorage Municipality	105.3	89.2	87.7	73.3	46.4
Fairbanks North Star Borough	42.9	41.0	65.5	61.8	33.8
Interior Region except Fairbanks	61.5	48.7	46.9	35.0	23.2
Juneau City and Borough	22.6	23.5	23.7	17.0	14.7
Kenai Peninsula Borough	100.6	105.7	75.5	60.7	40.0
Matanuska-Susitna Region	68.3	154.4	113.9	62.0	48.2
Northern Southeast Region	23.8	27.2	19.2	15.0	12.6

Northwest Region	50.5	65.6	68.2	58.9	36.5	25.3
Southern Southeast Region	7.5	14.7	14.0	9.0	5.0	6.1
Southwest Region	40.5	72.9	117.2	89.0	50.9	42.5
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region	188.4	172.9	164.8	158.0	73.3	144.2
Statewide	79.9	89.7	85.8	65.2	41.1	38.6

*\*Note: case rates for Nov 29–Dec 12 reflect 2-week case rates through Dec 14*

### Statewide Percentage of Daily Tests with Positive Results

(Seven day rolling average)

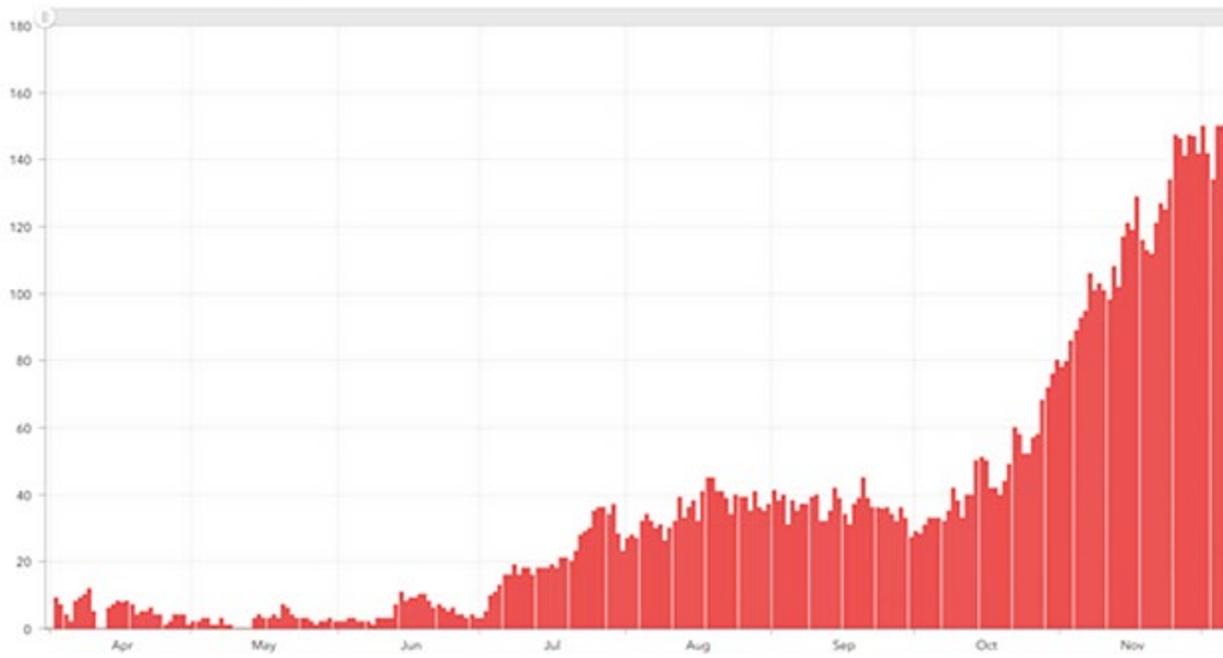


### Health care capacity

- On January 4, 75 Alaskans with confirmed COVID-19 were hospitalized, a 7% increase from this time last week; 9 were reported to have required a mechanical ventilator.

- Hospital staffing can change quickly, particularly if a community has many health workers impacted by COVID-19.

Total Confirmed COVID Beds Occupied



### Additional informational resources:

- The State of Alaska [COVID-19 vaccine status update](#) page.
- The State of Alaska [COVID-19 information page](#) provides more information about the virus and how individuals and businesses can protect themselves and others from transmission.
- For the most up-to-date case information, see the [Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub dashboard](#) (note: some data may change as more information comes to light through contact tracing and other public health work).
- For DHSS media inquiries, please contact [clinton.bennett@alaska.gov](mailto:clinton.bennett@alaska.gov).