

# Oregon 65,000 shots shy of lifting COVID-19 restrictions

By Gary A. Warner  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon needs just over 65,000 more people to get their first COVID-19 vaccination shot for the state to lift most restrictions statewide.

"We are incredibly close to achieving a 70% statewide adult vaccination rate, bringing us closer to returning to a sense of normalcy," Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement Tuesday, June 15.

The Oregon Health Authority said 65,484 more shots were needed, as of mid-day, to pass 70% of eligible adult residents having received one shot.

OHA reported it was averaging 13,484 shots per day, which includes each shot of the two-shot Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, as well as the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The daily totals are down sharply from April, when the state topped 50,000 shots on its biggest vaccination days.

Demand for vaccinations has slowed in the past month, as those eager to be vaccinated against the virus have been served. What's left is residents for whom vaccination is inconvenient or who have doubts about getting the shots.

Oregon Republicans have been critical of Brown's approach throughout most of the pandemic, despite the state's low infection and death rates compared to most of the rest of the nation.

Critics say restrictions have unnecessarily hamstrung the Oregon economy as other states had fewer or sometimes no restrictions. Now Brown is being cast as out of step even with Democratic governors in California and Washington.

House Minority Leader Christine Drazan, R-Canby, released a public letter to Brown on Tuesday calling for her to follow the example of California, where Gov. Gavin Newsom opened the state to most activities on Tuesday.

"Oregon does not need to be the most restrictive state on the West Coast, or one of the last states to reopen nationwide," Drazan wrote.

Citing vaccines, improved medical treatment for infections, and the "natural immunity" of those who contracted COVID-19 and survived, Drazan said there were enough safeguards to lift restrictions immediately.

"If we include Oregonians with natural immunity, then we are well above the 70 percent threshold to reopen the state," Drazan wrote. "Oregonians have been through enough. They do not need to wait another day."

The range of restrictions differs from county to county in Oregon as Brown has taken steps to remove limits in areas that have put at least one shot into the arms of 65% of eligible adult residents.

Eight counties have met the standard and were moved



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Lisa Weichbrodt receives her second dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine during a clinic Friday, March 26, at Baker High School. About 450 people got their second shot during the clinic.

*"We are incredibly close to achieving a 70% statewide adult vaccination rate, bringing us closer to a sense of normalcy."*

— Oregon Gov. Kate Brown

to the least restrictive lower risk level, regardless of infection rates.

Washington, Benton, Hood River, Multnomah, Lincoln, Deschutes, Lane and Clackamas counties are past the 65% mark. Polk County is less than 1 percentage point away from joining the group as soon as OHA confirms it has met the qualifications.

Two counties in the northwest could still see limits lifted before the whole state. Clatsop and Tillamook are over 62% and if they keep up the same rate of vaccination could move to lower level next week.

For many counties the statewide 70% mark is likely their only path out of the restrictions on restaurants, events, shops and socializing that come with high risk levels.

There are currently nine counties at what is now the state's top risk status. Marion, Jefferson and Linn have given at least one shot to more than half their population. Umatilla and Malheur are below 40%. Columbia, Crook, Douglas and Klamath are in between.

While the end of June seems a likely time frame to reach 70% with at least one vaccine shot, the main goal has been to reach President Joe Biden's hope for a normalization of life by the July 4 holiday.

Oregon Health Authority officials and vaccination partners are making a more assertive effort to get into the community and offer shots at workplaces, shops, schools and shopping areas.

## Baker County vaccination rate well below state average

Baker County's vaccination rate — 43.6% of residents 16 or older — ranks 27th out of Oregon's 36 counties.

As of Tuesday, June 15, 5,774 Baker County residents were fully vaccinated, and 413 were partially vaccinated, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Although the county's rate is well below the statewide average of 68%, Baker County has the second-highest vaccination rate among eight counties in Eastern Oregon, trailing only Wallowa County's 55.4% rate. Rates for other counties in the region: Malheur, 35.2%, Umatilla, 39.2%, Harney, 40.4%, Grant, 40.4%, Morrow, 41.4%, Union, 43.5%. In Baker County, vaccination rates among age groups are: 80 and older, 67.2%; 75 to 79, 59.3%; 70 to 74, 67.6%; 65 to 69, 54.8%; 60 to 64, 46.4%; 50 to 59, 38.8%; 40 to 49, 35.9%; 30 to 39, 27.3%; 20 to 29, 25.8%; 16 to 19, 20.5%; 12 to 15, 11%.

— Jayson Jacoby

The state is also trying to appeal to the wallets of those who haven't yet stepped up to get inoculated.

Oregon will hold a drawing on June 28 in which one vaccinated resident will win \$1 million. One resident from each of the 36 counties will receive \$10,000. Vaccines are now available to all those age 12 and older. Though they are not part of the 70% adult goal announced earlier, the state will give out five \$100,000 Oregon College Savings Plan scholarships to vaccinated youth.

OHA officials have said the state is now experiencing two different pandemics, one that can affect the health of vaccinated people only moderately at best. For the unvaccinated, the virus that has killed nearly 600,000 Americans is still spreading to the unprotected.

"If you are not vaccinated, COVID-19 remains just as dangerous as before," Brown said.

Until the 70% mark is hit, Brown will continue to announce revised COVID-19 county risk levels each week. The current list goes into effect June 18 to 24. Baker County remains in the lowest risk level, with the least-stringent restrictions on businesses and events.

## Study: COVID-19 likely arrived in U.S. in late 2019

By Mike Stobbe  
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK — A new analysis of blood samples from 24,000 Americans taken early last year is the latest and largest study to suggest that the new coronavirus popped up in the U.S. in December 2019 — weeks before cases were first recognized by health officials.

The analysis is not definitive, and some experts remain skeptical, but federal health officials are increasingly accepting a timeline in which small numbers of COVID-19 infections may have occurred in the U.S. before the world ever became aware of a dangerous new virus erupting in China.

"The studies are pretty consistent," said Natalie Thornburg of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"There was probably very rare and sporadic cases here earlier than we were aware of. But it was not widespread and didn't become widespread until late February," said Thornburg, principal investigator of the CDC's respiratory virus immunology team.

The pandemic coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China in late 2019. Officially, the first U.S. infection to be identified was a traveler — a Washington state man who returned from Wuhan on Jan. 15 and sought help at a clinic on Jan. 19.

CDC officials initially said the spark that started the U.S. outbreak arrived during a three-week window from mid-January to early February. But research since then — including some done by the CDC — has suggested a small number of infections occurred earlier.

A CDC-led study published in December 2020 that analyzed 7,000 samples from American Red Cross blood donations suggested the virus infected some Americans as early as the middle of December 2019.

The latest study, published Tuesday, June 15 online by the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, is by a team including researchers at the National Institutes of Health. They analyzed blood samples from more than 24,000 people across the country, collected in the first three months of 2020 as part of a long-term study called "All Of Us" that seeks to track 1 million Americans over years to study health.

Like the CDC study, these researchers looked for antibodies in the blood that are taken as evidence of coronavirus infection, and can be detected as early as two weeks after a person is first infected.

The researchers say nine study participants — five from Illinois, and one each from Massachusetts, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin — were infected earlier than any COVID-19 case was ever reported in those states.

## Two charged in vandalism

Baker City Police arrested two girls, ages 11 and 12, on Tuesday, June 14, on criminal mischief charges during an investigation of vandalism at Geiser-Pollman Park.

The girls, whose names were not released due to their ages, will be charged in juvenile court with first-degree criminal mischief, a Class C felony, according to a press release from Sgt. Wayne Chastain of the Baker City Police.

The investigation started June 10 when graffiti was reported at Geiser-Pollman Park. Officers found that someone had used black markers on playground equipment, and spread black paint on sidewalks. The estimated damage and cleanup costs exceed \$1,000, according to the press release.

The video cameras the city installed in the park earlier this spring recorded the vandalism.

On June 14 police were dispatched to another report of graffiti behind the Dollar Tree store at 2300 Resort, just south of Geiser-Pollman Park. During that investigation, police detained three juvenile girls. A city employee who arrived recognized two of the girls from the park video from June 10.

Chastain said the two girls were also suspected of the graffiti at the Dollar Tree, but that store officials didn't press charges in that case.

The girls were released to their parents after being cited.

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## EASTERN OREGON PHOTO CONTEST

### 2021

**Official Rules:**  
Photo Contest open now and closes at 11:59 pm Sunday, June 20, 2021.  
Staff will choose the top 10. The public can vote online for People's Choice from 12:01 am Monday, June 21 through 11:59 pm Thursday, June 30.  
Digital or scanned photos only, uploaded to the online platform. No physical copies.  
Only photographers from Oregon may participate.  
The contest subject matter is wide open but we're looking for images that capture life in Eastern Oregon.

Entrants may crop, tone, adjust saturation and make minor enhancements, but may not add or remove objects within the frame, or doctor images such that the final product doesn't represent what's actually before the camera.  
The winners will appear in the July 8th edition of Go Magazine; the top 25 will appear online.  
Gift cards to a restaurant of your choice will be awarded for first, second and third place.

Submit all photos online at: [bakercityherald.com/photocontest](http://bakercityherald.com/photocontest)