

What COVID-19 Taught Me About Volunteerism

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Vashon's COVID-19 Success Story

- Lowest COVID-19 case rate among 77 King County zip codes
- Case & hospitalization rates <40% of predicted from demographics
- Widespread acceptance & success of COVID-19 testing strategy
- Nearly unanimous participation in contact tracing
- Rapid and extensive vaccine uptake (partnership with Vashon Pharmacy)



PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Interplay of demographics, geography and COVID-19 pandemic responses in the Puget Sound region: *The Vashon, Washington Medical Reserve Corps experience*

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¶ Complete membership of the Vashon MRC COVID-19 Steering Committee is provided in the acknowledgments
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This Was an All-Volunteer Effort!

Public Health Volunteerism Works in Rural Communities

- Truest expression of altruism that drives people into healthcare work
- Rural communities are used to helping their neighbors
- Small is beautiful!
- Volunteers will do work that you can't pay people to do!

So How Do You Make It Happen?

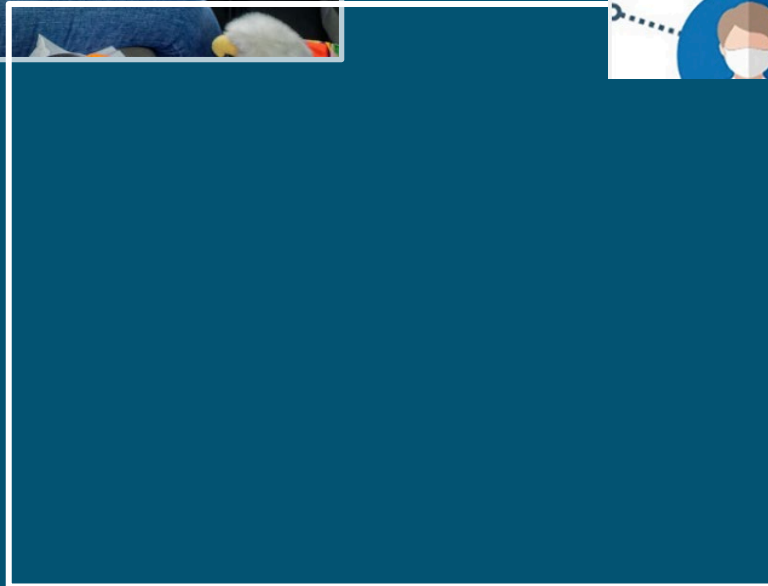
Start Small and Adapt



Testing



Contact Tracing



Advice Line



Vaccination

Communicate Broadly and Often

Become a trusted voice for your community's public health

Weekly newsletter since April '20
4000 recipients, 60% open rate
Printed in local newspaper

COVID helpline 60 hrs/wk during
declared emergency

Public talks, VoV radio interviews,
frequent comment on PH issues



Be Persistent; Be Resilient

- Apr-Sept, 2020: MRC prohibited from contact tracing by KCOEM/PHSKC
- Oct, 2020: PHSKC contact tracing briefly suspended due to overwhelming # of cases. MRC begins independent contact tracing effort.
- 95% success because tracing begins with positive test reporting.
- Nov, 2020: Jan, 2021: PHSKC begins sending non-MRC cases for contact tracing. Delay of 2+ days.

Be Flexible!

Drive-Through



Mass Indoor



Walk-Up



Homebound



Pharmacy



Recognize Your Heroes

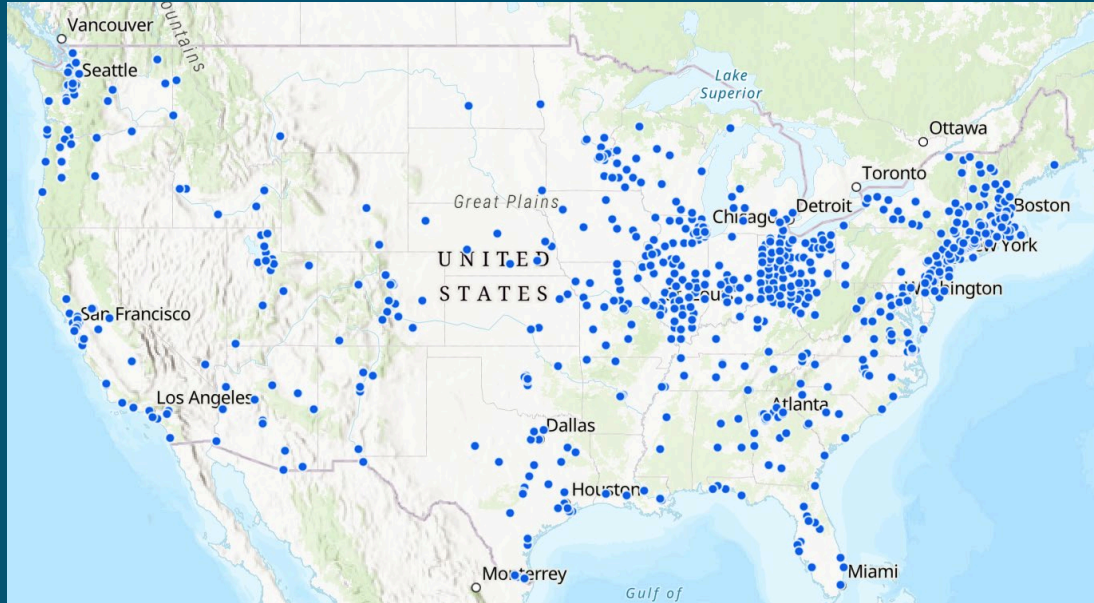


Bring Food, Have a Party



Join an MRC or Start One!

HHS-ASPR Medical Reserve Corps Network



Regional MRC activities:

- Adult & childhood vaccine clinics (many)
- Cardiac screening of high school kids (Vashon MRC)
- Free medical clinics (Seattle PHRC)
- Street medicine (Whatcom Co MRC)
- Homeless footcare clinics (Pierce Co MRC)
- Rural medication delivery (Jefferson Co MRC)
- Community CPR training (Bainbridge Island MRC)
- Severe weather shelters (Kitsap Co MRC)

What does your community need?

Some Final Thoughts

- Starting small, patience, resilience, flexibility, communication & celebration are foundational attributes for organizing volunteer programs
- Here's what you can do:
 - *Volunteer!*
 - *When you retire, keep your license- it's free from WHAA!*
 - *Create local solutions to your community's healthcare problems*
 - *Let your elected representatives hear your concerns*
 - *Help me to get WA legislature to support MRCs*

Questions?



Washington
Healthcare
Access Alliance



J Bristow et al
PLOS One
Aug 16, 2023

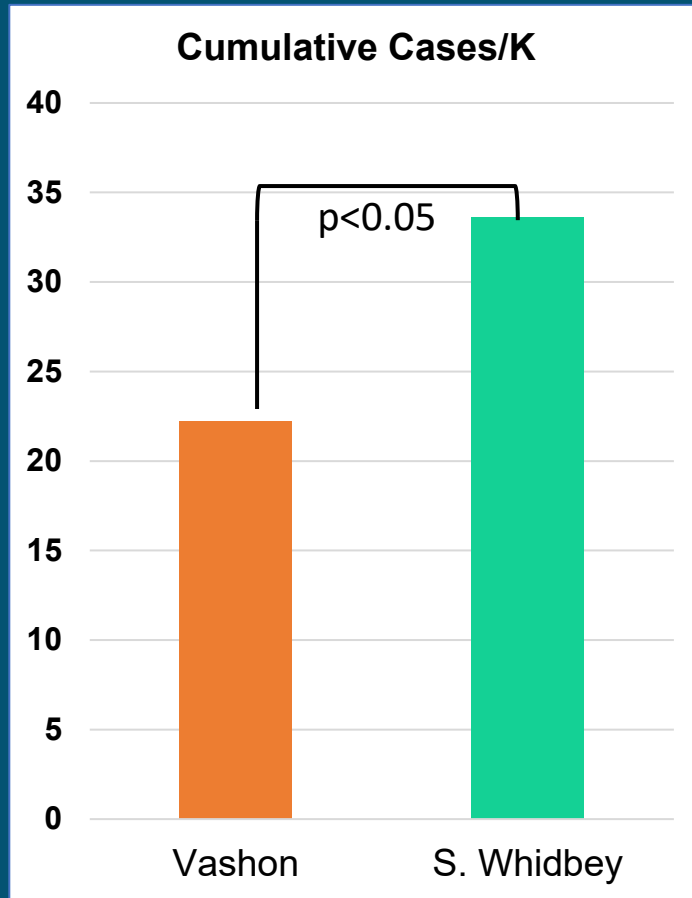


Thank You Vashon Island!

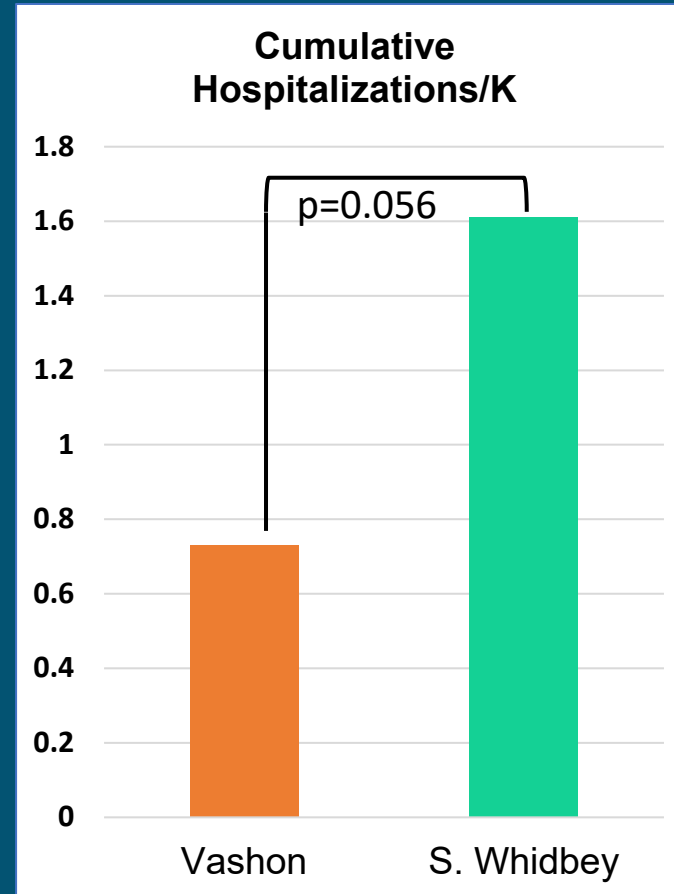
A Word About Liability

- #1 Concern of volunteers and volunteer coordinators
- Volunteers are generally covered by good Samaritan laws
- REWs have coverage for work performed within scope of practice during approved training & activations- includes travel
- Housing organization insurance coverage
- No MRC has ever been sued for their medical activities
- WHAA provides free coverage for licensed healthcare professionals for non-invasive care
- WHAA also will pay licensure fees for retired healthcare professionals

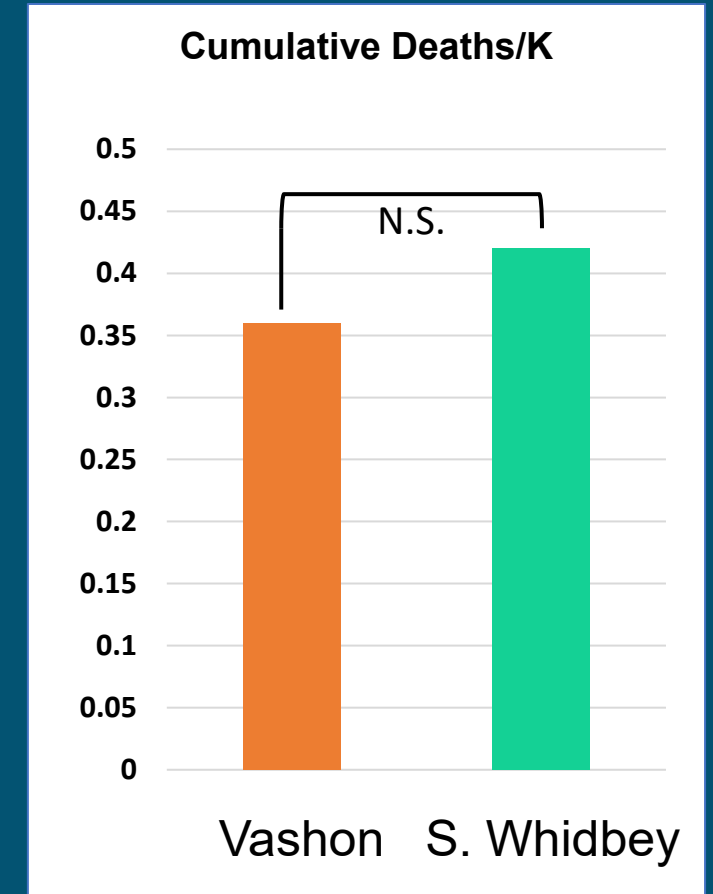
Vashon & S. Whidbey- COVID-19 Rates



35% reduction in cases

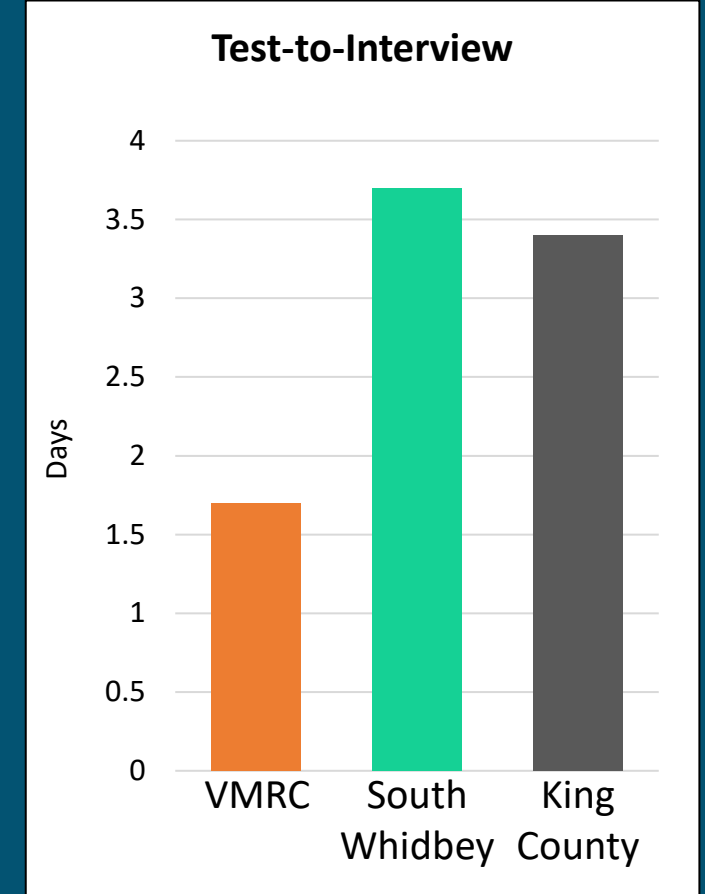
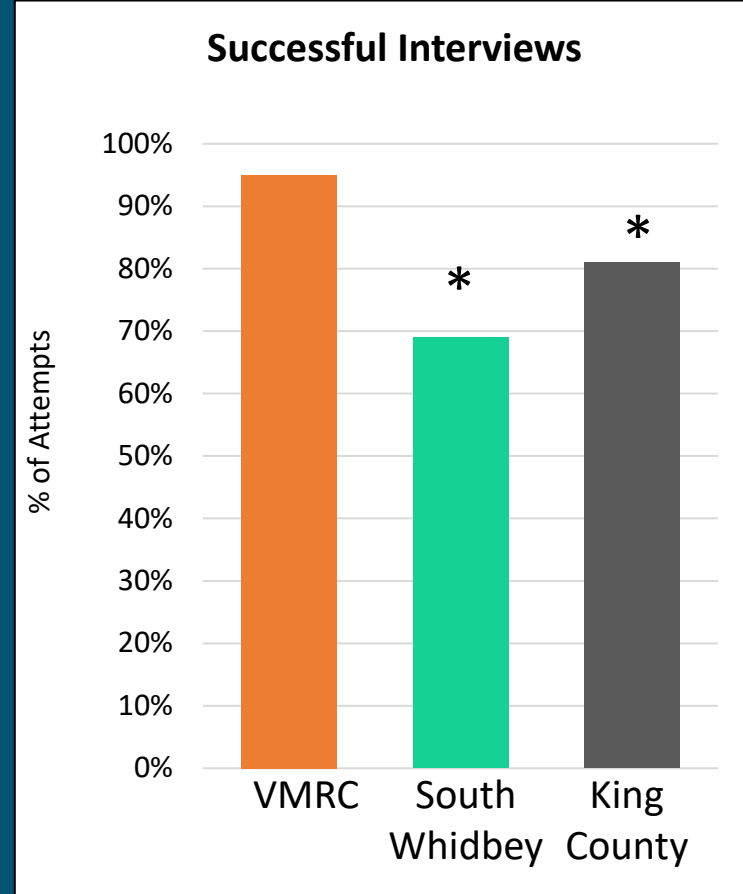
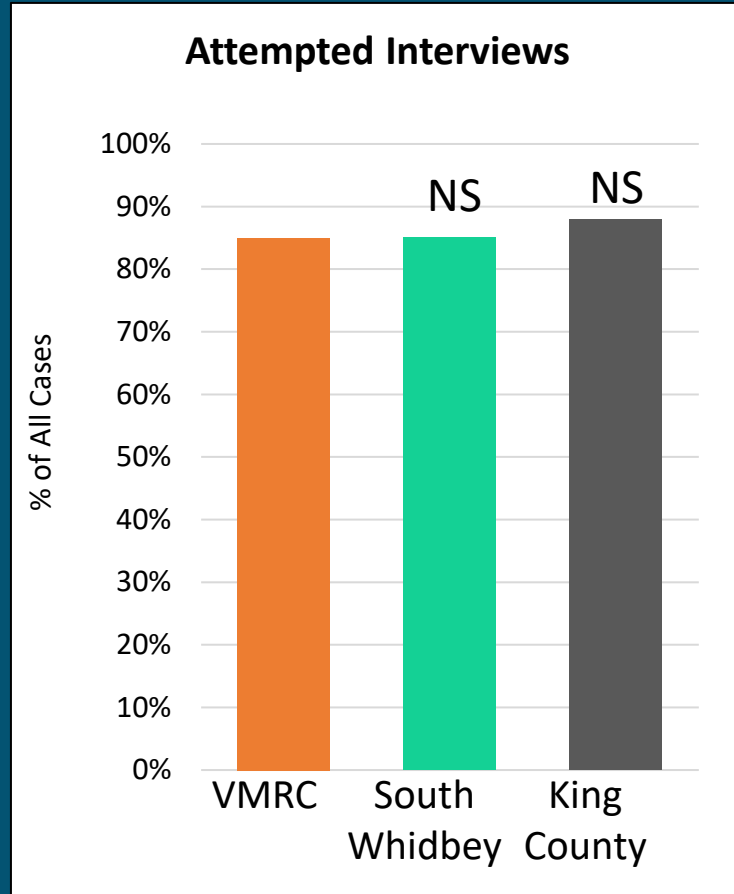


55% reduction in hospitalizat'n



15% reduction in deaths

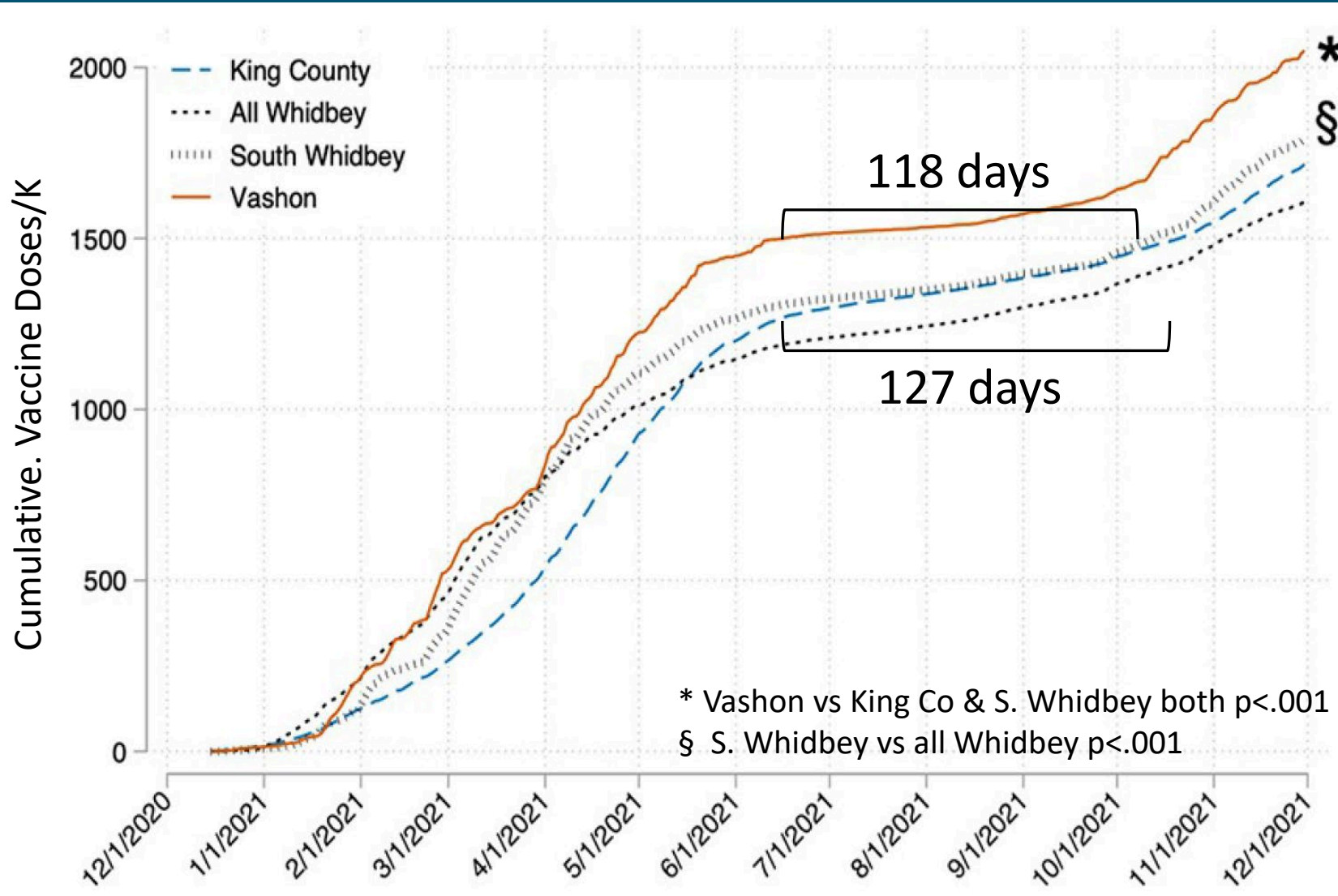
Case Investigation & Contact Tracing



* $p < .001$ vs VMRC

Vashon/MRC: 211 cases
S. Whidbey/WADOH: 494 cases
King Co/PHSKC: 61,269 cases

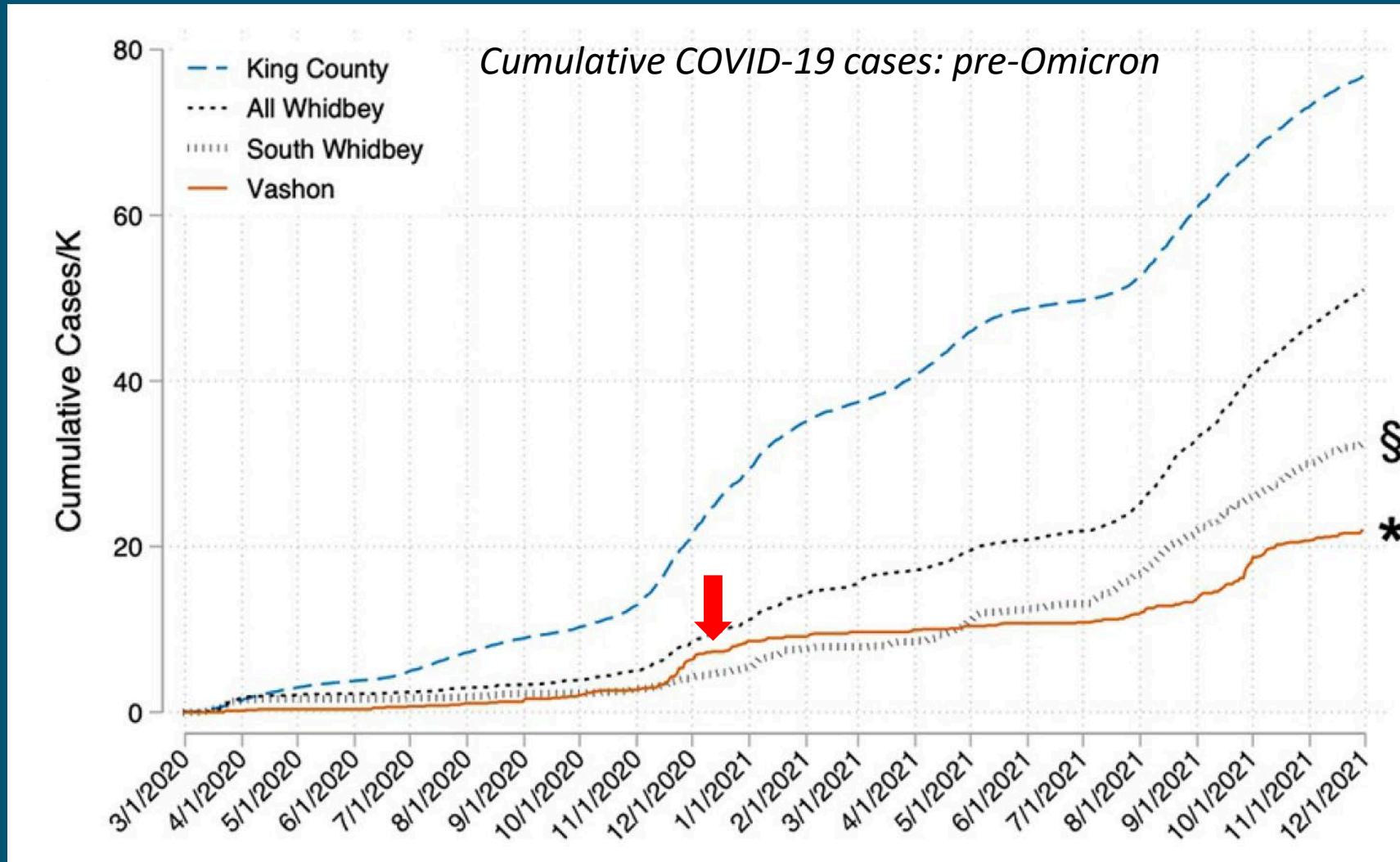
Vaccine Uptake in King & Island Cos.-2021



Pre-Omicron: vaccination prevents 95% of symptomatic COVID-19

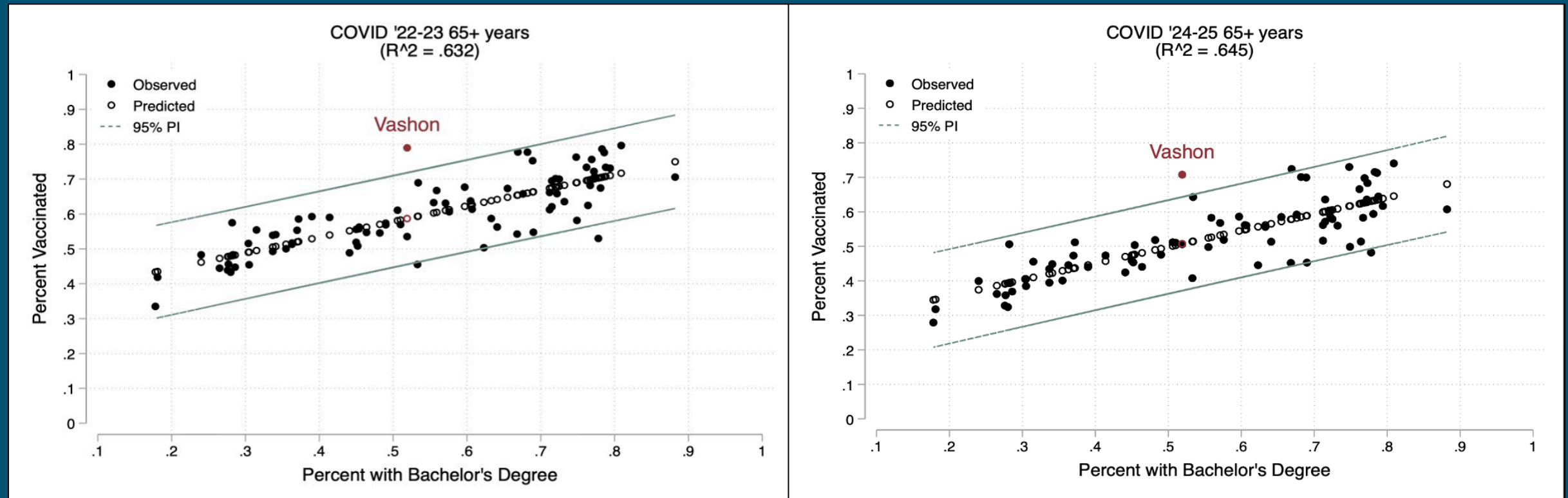
1500 doses/K: surrogate for 75% “fully vaccinated”

Did Immunization Reduce Vashon Cases?



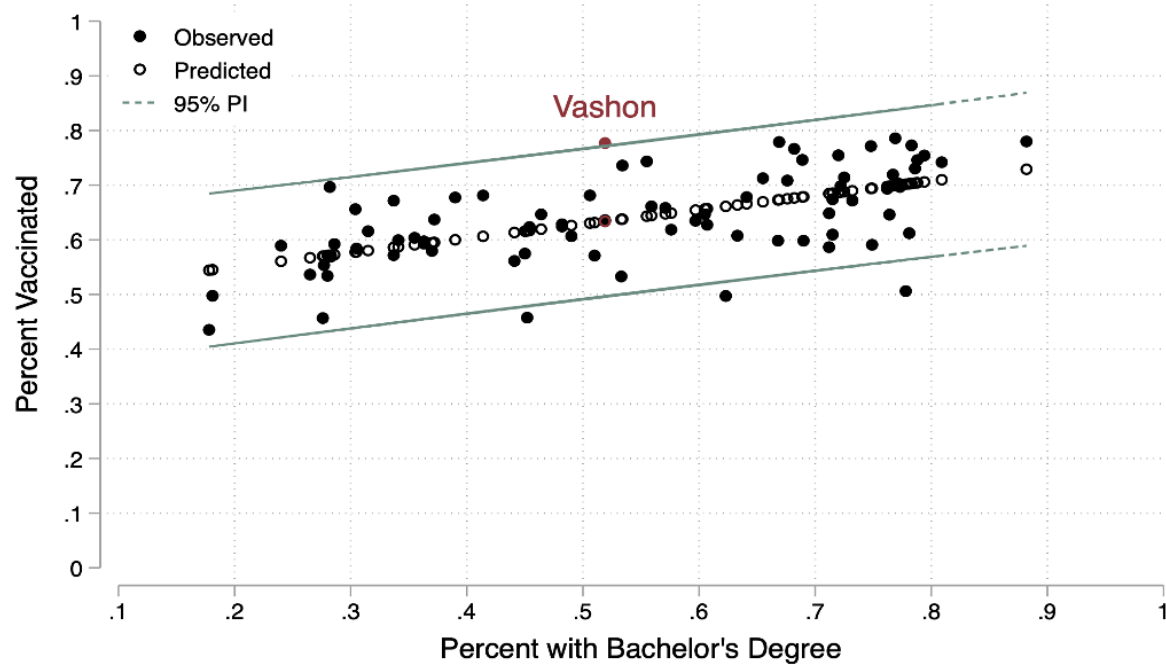
Vashon's Ongoing COVID-19 Vaccine Success

- Vashon Pharmacy, VMRC, VashonBePrepared partnership



Vashon Flu Vaccination '22-'23 vs '24-'25

FLU '22-23 65+ years
($R^2 = .349$)



FLU '24-25 65+ years
($R^2 = .368$)

