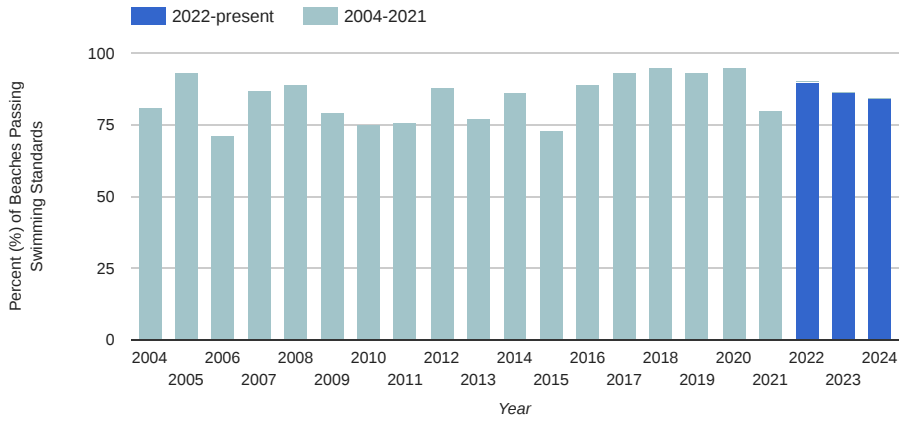
PUGET SOUND
VITAL SIGNS

INDICATOR
CONDITION OF SWIMMING BEACHES

The "condition of swimming beaches" indicator reflects marine water quality conditions in areas heavily used for recreation. This indicator tracks the percent of swimming beaches that pass swimming standards with no more than one exceedance event of the swimming standard during the summer. Swimming beaches not meeting water quality standards indicate increased risk of people getting sick through gastrointestinal illnesses, respiratory illnesses, and skin infections.

Condition of swimming beaches

By: Core Puget Sound Beaches



The percent of Puget Sound core beaches that have no more than one exceedance of the swimming standard during the summer. Core beaches are a prioritized subset of all monitored beaches sampled every year. The method for calculating an exceedance of the swimming standard changed in 2022. Beginning in 2022, an exceedance is now recorded over a 7-day period and is called an *exceedance event*. Results from the new method are marked differently from earlier years.

Indicator Progress

NO TREND

Target Status

BELOW TARGET

Target

Beginning in 2022, 95% of core beaches meet safe swimming standards annually.

Target fact sheet

Memo to Science Panel with rationale

Data Source

Washington State Department of Ecology BEACH Program and BEACH Annual Report

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Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- 84% of Puget Sound core beaches monitored during the 2024 season met the recreational water quality standard. This is a 2% decrease from 2023. Core beaches are a subset of all monitored beaches that are sampled yearly or almost every year since 2004 and are considered as the highest-use and highest-risk marine beaches in Washington.
- Six core beaches had two or more exceedance events of the swimming standard in 2024. Those beaches are Indianola Dock, Pomeroy Park (Kitsap County), Jack Hyde Park, Titlow Park (Pierce County), Larrabee State Park, Wildcat Cove (Whatcom County), and Twanoh State Park (Mason County). Additionally, there were four non-core beaches that failed during the 2024 sampling season: Belfair State Park (Mason County), Boulevard Park near Taylor Dock, Little Squalicum Park (Whatcom County) and Hollywood Beach (Clallam County).
- Since 2004, soon after the BEACH program started, many local bacteria problems have been identified and corrected through local pollution identification work. There are still year-to-year fluctuations in marine water quality at swimming beaches due to different factors, but many beaches are experiencing water quality improvements and the work to identify problems continues.

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

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