



## Lay summary

In late 2021, the Omicron COVID-19 variant quickly replaced Delta as the dominant COVID-19 variant globally. The more contagious Omicron variant led to increases in COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations. However, it was unclear if this variant led to more severe disease. This study aimed to understand and compare the severity of Omicron infections compared to Delta. Our team analyzed data from the British Columbia COVID-19 Cohort (BCC19C). Specifically, we looked at data of British Columbian residents that were infected with Delta or Omicron strains in December 2021, when both variants were detected in the population. We found that individuals infected with Omicron were 50% less likely to be hospitalised and 73% less likely to be admitted to ICU than those infected with Delta. We also found that those admitted to hospital with Omicron spent 5 days less in hospital on average than those admitted with Delta. It is also notable that when infected with either Omicron or Delta, those who were unvaccinated were 3 to 5 times more likely to be hospitalized or admitted to the ICU compared to those who were fully vaccinated. This study supports the idea that Omicron may cause less severe COVID-19 disease compared to Delta. It also highlights the importance of vaccination and booster dose programs.

## What is the reference for this study?

Harrigan, S. P., Wilton, J., Chong, M., Abdia, Y., Garcia, H. V., Rose, C., Taylor, M., Mishra, S., Sander, B., Hoang, L., Tyson, J., Krajden, M., Prystajek, N., Janjua, N. Z., & Sbihi, H. (2022). Clinical severity of Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variant relative to Delta in British Columbia, Canada: A retrospective analysis of whole genome sequenced cases. *Clinical infectious diseases: an official publication of the Infectious Diseases Society of America*, ciac705. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciac705>

