February 27, 2026

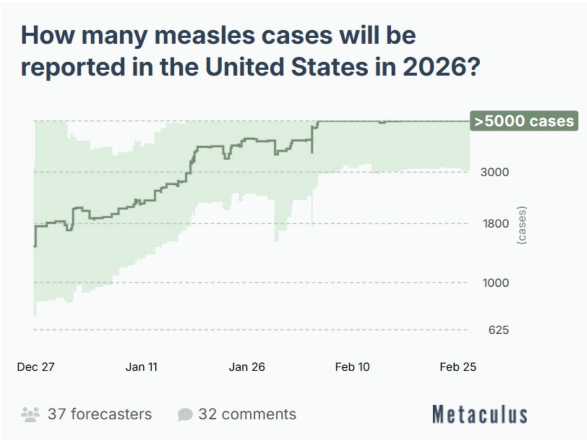
# Key Takeaways

- **Metaculus forecasters have further raised their 2026 measles case estimates to more than 5,000 (50% prediction interval [3,151, >5,000]) as cases show no sign of slowing down.**
- **With the seasonal peaks for COVID-19 and influenza having concluded, forecasters expect RSV to reach its peak in late February.**
- **Vaccination coverage estimates have increased for the flu across all categories.**

# A Closer Look

## Measles

The 1,136 confirmed measles cases in 2026 exceeded forecasters' expectations, leading to a substantial upward revision of their estimates. Forecasters anticipate additional outbreaks, potentially with higher weekly case counts, before transmission declines during the summer. The median forecast has increased to more than 5,000 cases (50% prediction interval [3,066, >5,000]).



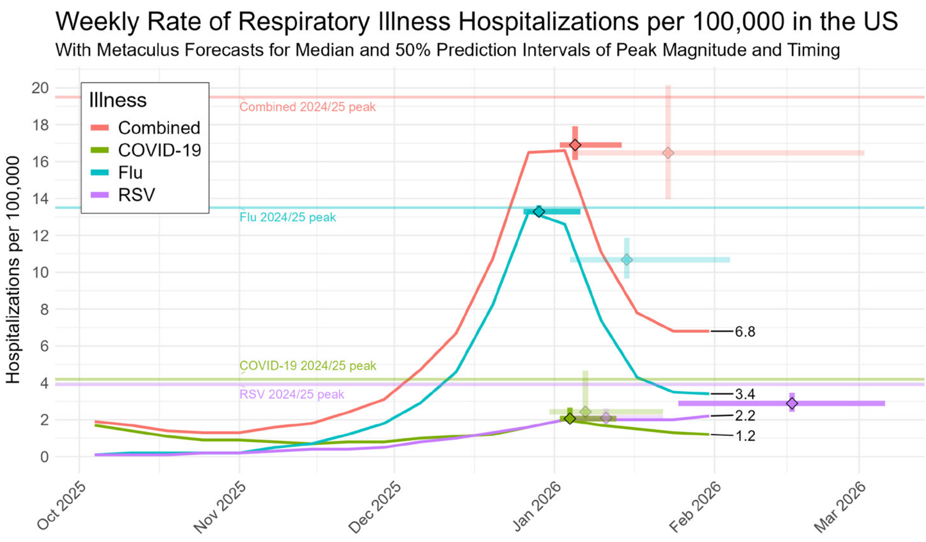

## Influenza

Forecaster estimates for the share of influenza A among tested samples have remained steady (89.7% [84.4%, 94.0%]), reflecting the predominance of influenza A cases in the current wave and the absence of indications for a second influenza B wave. Forecasts for the share of influenza A cases that will be H3N2 have remained largely stable at (86.5% [82.0%, 89.7%]). The expected share of H5 cases remains very low, at <0.1% of influenza A cases.

Given the rapid decline in cases, forecasters view a second influenza wave as very unlikely and have lowered their estimated probability of an influenza season of High or Very High severity from 44% to 17%.

## Peak Hospitalization and Timing Forecasts

Forecasters estimate that influenza, COVID-19, and overall hospitalizations reached their peak in January, while RSV hospitalizations may still increase slightly. The delayed rise of RSV has led to small upward revisions to its projected peak hospitalization rate since last month, both overall and for people aged 65 years or older (5.1 [4.8, 5.5]). In contrast, forecasts for ages 0-4 years have decreased to 16.7 [14.2, 20.3] based on the available data.




*Weekly hospitalization rates per 100,000 according to RESP-NET along with Metaculus forecasts for the peak hospitalization rate in the 2025-26 season and the associated timing. Diamonds reflect median forecasts for the magnitude and timing of the peak, vertical bars show 50% prediction intervals for the magnitude, and horizontal bars show 50% prediction intervals for the timing of the peak. Forecasts from last month (January 8) are shown with transparency. Horizontal lines indicate the peak from the 2024-25 season. COVID-19 magnitude forecasts have used the Pros-only aggregate due to erroneous community forecasts.*

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## Vaccinations

As additional data have become available, forecasters have revised and narrowed their estimates to align with the current trends. Vaccination coverage forecasts for COVID-19 have been revised slightly downward across age groups, as cases are at a record low this season. Similarly, influenza estimates have been adjusted upwards, especially in older populations, along with higher influenza hospitalization rates. RSV coverage estimates have increased substantially in infants, where current data diverge from the projections of forecasters based on limited datapoints from last year and earlier this season. Conversely, estimates for ages 75 and above have significantly decreased as it becomes clear that this season's figures are not cumulative.

| Influenza | | COVID-19 | | RSV | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | Coverage | Group | Coverage | Group | Coverage |
| Children 6m to 17y | **49.6% ↔** [47.6%, 52.8%] *49.1%* *[47.3%, 51.1%]* | Children 6m to 17y | **9.3% ↓** [8.5%, 10.4%] *10.5%* *[9.5%, 12.1%]* | Pregnant women age 18–49 | **40.0% ↔** [37.2%, 46.4%] *39.1%* *[36.8%, 41.6%]* |
| Adults age 18+ | **49.6% ↑** [47.9%, 51.9%] *48.1%* *[46.5%, 49.8%]* | Adults age 18+ | **19.3% ↔** [18.2%, 20.7%] *20.1%* *[18.7%, 21.6%]* | Infants age <8m | **53.4% ↑** [48.5%, 57.7%] *48.5%* *[43.7%, 52.9%]* |
| Adults age 65+ | **73.5% ↑** [71.7%, 76.8%] *71.8%* *[70.1%, 73.8%]* | Adults age 65+ | **37.9% ↓** [36.2%, 40.1%] *39.0%* *[36.6%, 41.6%]* | Adults age 75+ | **46.4% ↓** [43.3%, 51.6%] *52.2%* *[47.7%, 57.8%]* |

*This table displays the median and 50% prediction interval for vaccine coverage by age group for flu, COVID-19, and RSV, with values in italic representing the forecast from last month.*

# Methodology

Metaculus develops forecasting programs to improve decision-making and public coordination on topics of global importance and operates one of the world's largest forecasting platforms. The Respiratory Outlook 2025/26 initiative is designed to harness the effectiveness of crowd forecasting for real-time decision-making, aiding public health officials in responding to ongoing epidemiological changes and better anticipating future conditions. Five Metaculus Pro Forecasters, among the most accurate forecasters on Metaculus, are contributing to the Respiratory Outlook 2025/26 initiative.