



October 24, 2025

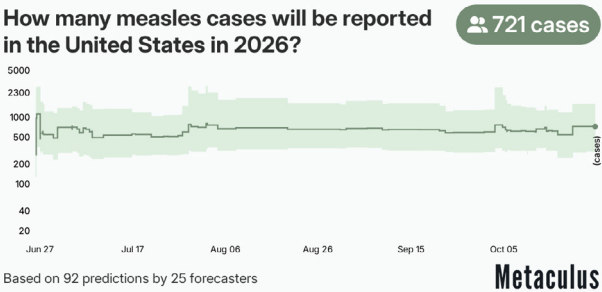
Key Takeaways

- Metaculus forecasters predict 721 cases of measles in 2026 (50% prediction interval [306, 1,572]). Forecasts have remained stable since July.
- Forecasters expect a combined peak this season of 17.4 hospitalizations per 100,000 [14.7, 20.9] from influenza, COVID-19, and RSV, with the peak most likely occurring approximately January 12 [December 31, February 9].
- COVID-19 vaccination coverage is projected to decline relative to the previous year, while influenza vaccination rates are expected to remain largely stable and RSV vaccinations to increase.

A Closer Look

Measles

While forecasters predict that the number of cases in 2025 will reach 1,874, with a 37% probability it will exceed 2,000, for 2026 they expect the total cases to stay significantly lower at 721 (50% prediction interval [306, 1,572], with an 8% probability of more than 2,000 cases). Years with high numbers of cases have been followed by years with significantly fewer cases, suggesting that cases will somewhat regress to the mean. However, the ongoing trend of increasing cases and more frequent large outbreaks due to decreasing vaccination rates drives the forecasts higher. The wide prediction intervals reflect substantial uncertainty, with forecasters assigning a probability of 8% to more than 5,000 cases.



Avian Influenza

The number of H5N1 cases has remained constant since February 2025. Forecasters expect low incidence in 2026, estimating a 63% probability that H5 cases will account for fewer than 0.1% of all influenza cases reported by the CDC.

Peak Hospitalization and Timing Forecasts

Forecasters estimate that the magnitude of the peaks for influenza, COVID-19, RSV, as well as their combined total will be lower than the 2024–25 season. COVID-19 and RSV peaks have declined over the last three seasons, and forecasters expect this trend to persist. RSV incidence is predicted to nearer to pre-pandemic levels, aided by broader uptake of RSV vaccines. Consistent with the August CDC outlook, forecasters assign a probability of 61% that influenza will be of moderate severity in the 2025–26 season and a 24% probability that it will reach high or very high. They expect a modest reduction of 11% to the combined hospitalization peak relative to the previous season. Detailed peak forecasts and 50% prediction intervals can be found below.

	Peak Magnitude	Peak Date (median)
Combined	17.4 [14.7, 20.9]	January 12 [December 31, February 9]
Influenza	9.8 [8.4, 11.2]	January 10 [December 27, February 8]
COVID-19	4.1 [2.8, 5.9]	January 2 [December 26, January 12]
RSV	3.5 [2.9, 4.0]	January 5 [December 27, January 18]

Magnitudes represent hospitalizations per 100,000. Forecasters assign a 50/50 chance the peak will occur before or after the median date.

Forecasters estimate that all diseases will peak in early January, with the single most likely week for all disease peaks being that of January 4. However, for influenza, there remains a 30% probability that the peak will occur during February or March.



Latest flu peak timing forecast. Dashed lines correspond to the 25%, 50% (median), and 75% quartiles.

Vaccination Coverage Forecasts Remain Steady

Forecasters anticipate decreases in the vaccination rates for COVID-19, due to reduced promotional efforts, changes in CDC recommendations, and overall vaccine skepticism. Additional factors include its decreasing severity, potential gaps in insurance coverage for new boosters, and limited vaccine availability for young children at some pharmacies. Among older adults, coverage is projected to remain relatively stable or even increase, as vaccine hesitancy is more prevalent among younger populations. Coverage for influenza is expected to remain largely stable.

For RSV, forecasters expect stable vaccination rates in eligible pregnant women, but a significant increase for infants based on the easier uptake of clesrovimab and a tripling of hospitals participating in the Vaccines For Children program over the past two years. The rate reported for adults aged 75 and older is cumulative with the previous year, but forecasters expect a smaller year-over-year increase, as many individuals who intended to receive the vaccine have already done so.

Influenza		COVID-19		RSV	
Group	Coverage	Group	Coverage	Group	Coverage
Children 6m to 17y	47.1% [43.9%, 49.8%]	Children 6m to 17y	11.8% [10.1%, 13.8%]	Pregnant women age 18-49	40.1% [33.5%, 48.9%]
Adults age 18+	46.6% [44.2%, 49.0%]	Adults age 18+	21.4% [19.4%, 23.3%]	Infants age <8m	49.6% [42.3%, 57.2%]
Adults age 65+	72.3% [69.9%, 74.8%]	Adults age 65+	43.0% [39.4%, 47.0%]	Adults age 75+	57.3% [52.2%, 64.3%]

This table displays the median and 50% prediction interval for vaccine coverage by age group for flu, COVID-19, and RSV.

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.