

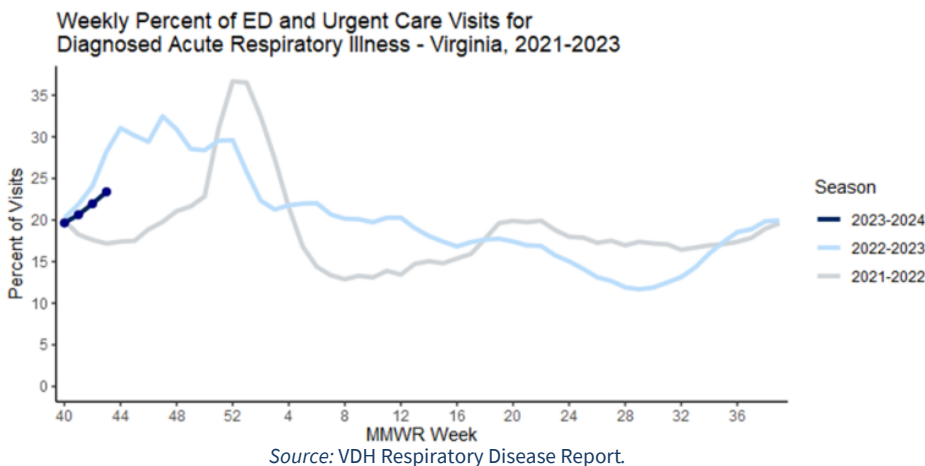
November 3, 2023

## Key Takeaways

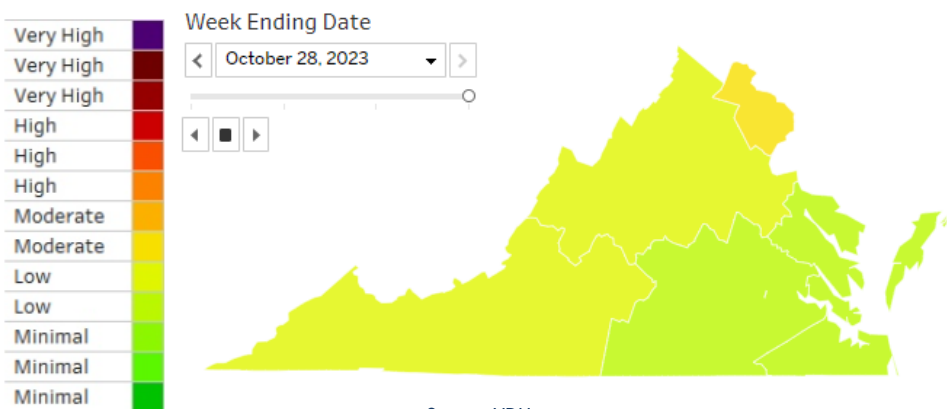
- COVID-19 surveillance and forecasts suggest a plateau in activity and hospital admissions. Hospital admissions and occupancy are at ‘low’ levels.
- Influenza activity has increased, and is now at ‘low’ activity levels statewide. Activity is at ‘moderate’ levels in Northern Virginia, while Virginia’s other four regions are at ‘low’ levels.
- The CDC suggests that the RSV season has begun, while access to new treatments remains limited.
- The FBI issued new warnings about an increased terror threats related to the Israel - Palestine conflict, while reports of bias incidents continue.
- Labor actions health worker shortages continue to affect the health sector.

## Key Figures

**Seasonal Comparison of Respiratory Disease Activity**



**Regional Flu Activity Levels**



## COVID-19

Low

Characterization of COVID-19 hospital admissions and hospital occupancy in Virginia.

## Influenza

Low

Statewide influenza activity levels in Virginia, as of Oct. 28.

1 of 5

Virginia regions with Moderate influenza activity levels, as of October 28.

## Health Workforce

75,000

The number of workers that participated in the Kaiser Permanente Strike, making it the largest health care strike in US history.

31%

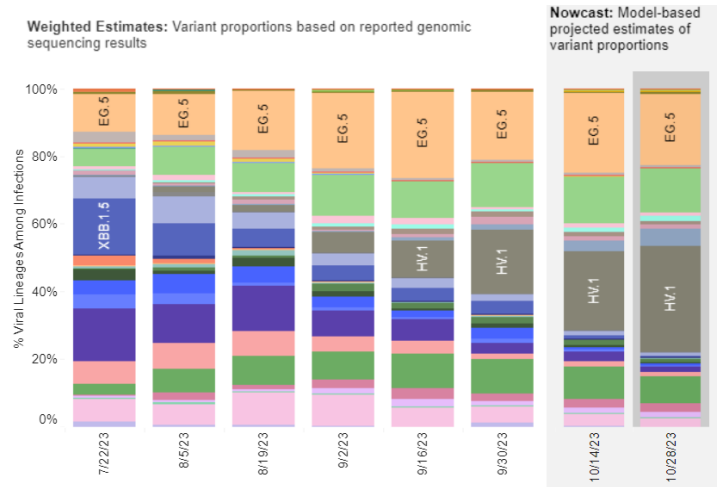
The share of Virginia Long-term Care Facilities reporting ‘crisis’ or ‘disconcerting’ staffing situations, down from 54% in 2022.

## Spotlight: Health Workforce

## Respiratory Illness

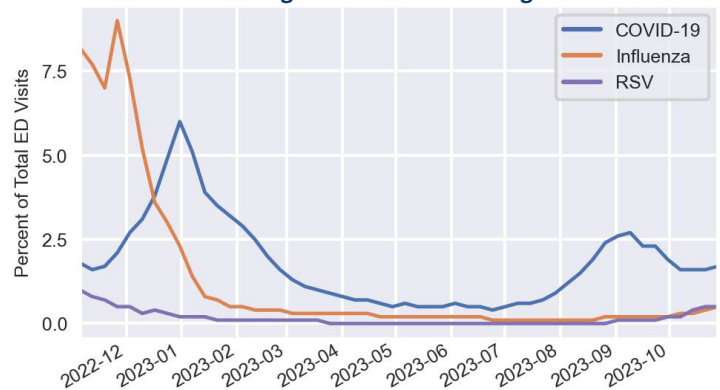
- **COVID-19 metrics suggest plateau.** The percentage of emergency department (ED) visits resulting in a COVID-19 diagnosis increased slightly this week. Hospitalizations are up, by less than 2%. CDC models suggest that hospitalization rates will remain flat through the end of November.
- **HV.1 replaces EG.5 as the most prevalent variant.** Data suggests HV.1 now accounts for over 30% of new cases in HHS Region 3 (including Virginia). The HK.3 variant is also growing quickly. The new JN.1 variant has been detected in the US, but is still very rare.
- **2023-24 COVID-19 vaccines expected to protect against HV.1.** Though HV.1 is not a direct descendant of XBB.1.5 -- from which the vaccine is derived -- it is still a “good match” and expected to offer protection.
- **The CDC suggests the 2023-24 RSV season has begun,** citing sustained activity increases in the Southern US, and elevated activity in the Northwest and Mid-Atlantic. Meanwhile, access to new RSV treatments for children continues to be limited.
- **Misinformation continues to impact vaccine acceptance.** A recent survey found that vaccine confidence has decreased among U.S. adults since April 2021. Findings highlighted the increasing prevalence of misconceptions about vaccine safety and effectiveness.

**Variant Prevalence in HHS Region 3 (including Virginia)**



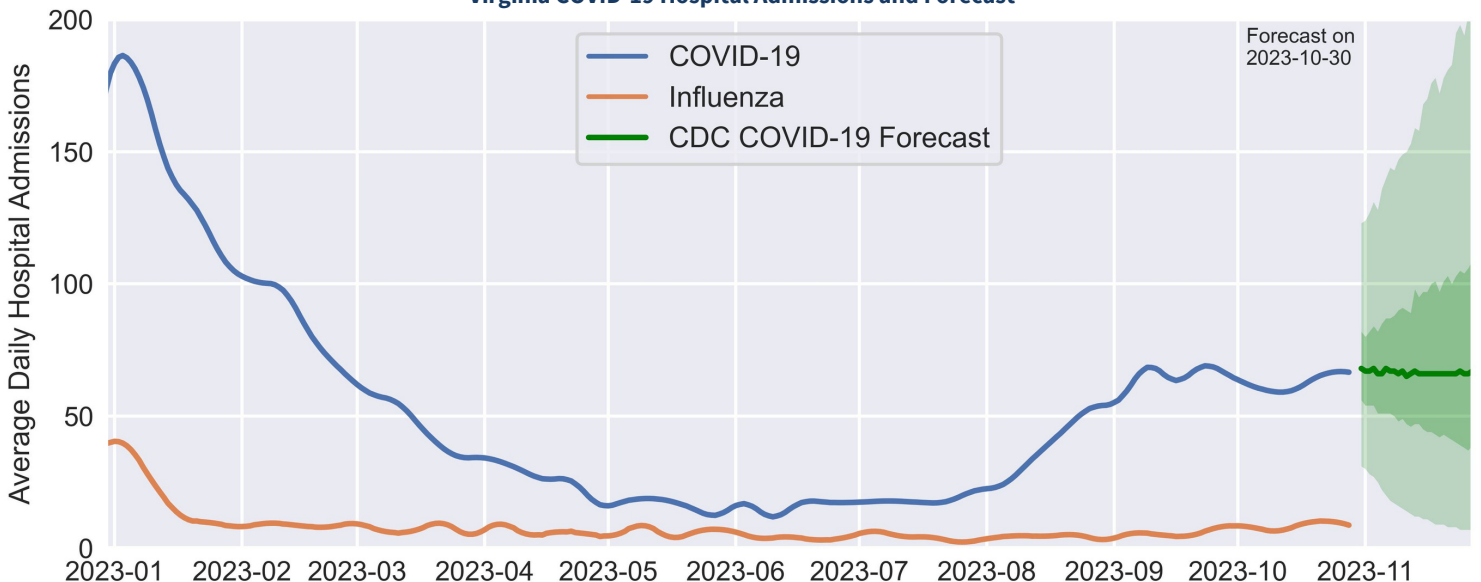
Data Source: [CDC](#).

**Percent of Virginia ED Visits with Diagnosis**



Data Source: [CDC](#).

**Virginia COVID-19 Hospital Admissions and Forecast**



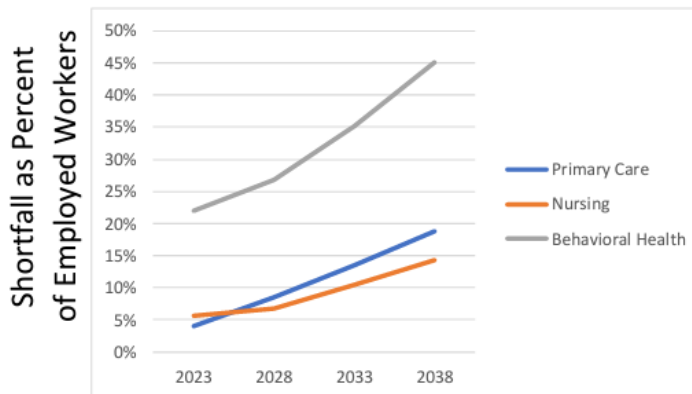
Historical data source: [HealthData.gov](#), forecast data source: [CDC CFA](#).

## Spotlight

- **Some pharmacy workers at CVS and Walgreens staged a loosely-organized, 3-day walkout.** The workers are not unionized, but organized the walkout on social media. While details are sparse, organizers claim as many as 5,000 workers participated, and up to 25 pharmacies closed in 15 states.
- **44% of Virginia’s long-term care facilities put a hold on admissions at least once since June 1 due to staffing shortages,** according to a recent survey. 16% reported turning away more patients from hospitals compared to pre-pandemic times.
- **Health worker strikes appear to be on the increase,** following a general trend of increased labor action. Becker’s Hospital Review, a trade publication, has reported on 22 strikes in 2023. By comparison, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported just 96 work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers in the health sector from 1993 to 2021.

## Health Workforce

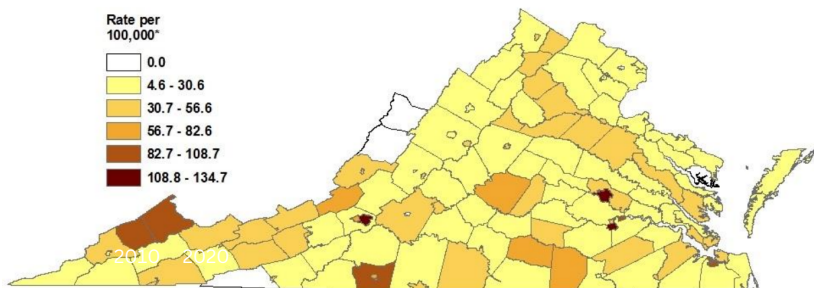
**Baseline Health Workforce Projections - Virginia**



According to a recent study by Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority, health workforce shortages are likely to grow in all but the most optimistic scenarios, with the largest shortages in the behavioral health workforce. Insufficient staffing has been cited by health workers as a cause for labor actions, including strikes, and is also cited as a top reason some workers leave direct patient care positions. Image Source: VHWA

## Other News

**Rate of All Fatal Drug Overdoses, All Substances, by Locality of Overdose, 2022**



Source: Virginia Department of Health, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Fatal drug overdoses have increased annually according to the most recent VDH Fatal Drug Overdose Quarterly Report. The rate of fatal drug overdoses are particularly high in some regions of Southwest Virginia and Central Virginia.

Source: VDH

- **Opioid overdose outbreak at Sterling high school.** Nine students were reported to have overdosed in the last three weeks, prompting an investigation by the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office.

- **FBI warns of increased terror threat, citing homegrown violent extremists as the biggest concern.** The Middle East conflict has given rise to an increase in hate crimes and bias incidents against targeted communities nationally.
- **30 wildfires have burned over 1,800 acres in Virginia** since Oct 15, including some large fires affecting several counties in western Virginia. Currently the Salem region is at High Fire Danger, and the Abingdon region is at Moderate Fire Danger. The Charlottesville and Farmville regions are expected to enter Moderate Fire Danger today.
- **Mpox cases rapidly increase in the San Francisco Bay area.** 20 cases were reported in October 2023. Public health officials encourage at-risk groups to complete the vaccination series as a preventative measure.