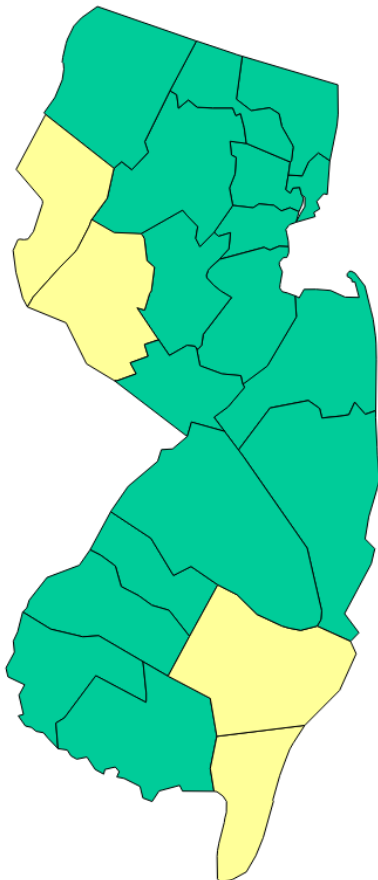


Week ending September 28, 2023

## Highlights

- [CDC COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels](#) for the week ending September 28, 2023, are medium in 4 counties (Atlantic, Cape May, Hunterdon, and Warren) and low in all other counties.
- The percentage of deaths due to COVID-19 in the past week is a timely measure of mortality trends. For the week ending September 28, 2023, 3.4% of deaths were due to COVID-19 ([CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)).
- In the past week, 1.8% of emergency department visits were diagnosed as COVID-19. This has increased since the previous week ([CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)).
- In the four weeks leading up to September 9, 2023, EG.5 accounted for 21.9% of sequenced variants. FL.1.5.1 and XBB.1.5 accounted for 18.6% and 7.5% of sequenced variants, respectively.
- For the week ending September 17, 2023, ten COVID-19 outbreaks were reported into the SIC module by K-12 schools.

## 1. Hospitalizations



[CDC COVID-19 hospital admission levels](#) are the primary surveillance indicator to help guide individual and community decisions related to risk and preventative measures.

The number of new COVID-19 hospital admissions for every 100,000 persons in the past week is used to classify county risk levels as low, medium, or high as follows:

New COVID-19 Hospital Admissions per 100,000 population	
Low	<10
Medium	10.0 – 19.9
High	≥ 20.0

In addition to new hospital admissions, the percentage of inpatient beds and ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients are important metrics for monitoring COVID-19 activity. Table 1 includes current values for these metrics and a comparison from the previous week.

Many individuals have immunity against COVID-19 due to vaccination and/or prior infection. Immunity, in addition to treatments, have greatly reduced the risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. In the meantime, immunocompromised individuals and persons with certain underlying health conditions continue to be at higher risk for severe illness. The following table includes recommendations for protecting yourself, your family, and communities. Additional information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>.

COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level	Protect yourself and your family	Protect your communities, schools, and workplaces
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay <a href="#">up to date</a> with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters.</li> <li>Stay home if you are sick.</li> <li>Avoid contact with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19.</li> <li>Follow <a href="#">isolation &amp; post-exposure recommendations</a>.</li> <li>Get tested if exposed to someone with COVID-19, if you develop COVID-19 <a href="#">symptoms</a>, and before/after travel.</li> <li>Keep at-home <a href="#">tests</a> on hand.</li> <li>Look for ways to <a href="#">improve airflow when home</a> or indoors.</li> <li><a href="#">Wash your hands</a> frequently.</li> <li><a href="#">Clean and disinfect</a> your home.</li> <li>If you are at high risk for severe disease, have a plan for rapid testing and talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote equitable access to COVID-19 <a href="#">vaccines</a>, <a href="#">testing</a>, <a href="#">treatment</a>, <a href="#">masks</a>, outreach, and support services, particularly for those at high risk of severe illness and vulnerable populations. Contact your <a href="#">local health department</a> (LHD) for information.</li> <li>Ensure <a href="#">isolation &amp; post-exposure recommendations</a> are followed.</li> <li>Maintain good indoor <a href="#">ventilation</a> and airflow.</li> <li>Teach and reinforce importance of proper <a href="#">hand hygiene</a> and respiratory etiquette.</li> <li>Ensure routine <a href="#">cleaning and disinfecting</a> of buildings and facilities.</li> <li>Maintain screening testing infrastructure in high-risk settings to allow for easier scale up when COVID-19 hospital admission levels are medium or high.</li> </ul>
Medium	<p><b>Follow recommendations for 'Low' above and:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, wear a high-quality <a href="#">mask</a> or respirator (e.g., N95) when indoors in public.</li> <li>If you spend time with someone at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, consider self-testing before you see them and wearing a high-quality mask when indoors with them.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow recommendations for 'Low' above and:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-risk <a href="#">congregate settings</a> should consider their facility-specific risks to guide decisions about when to apply specific COVID-19 prevention actions.</li> </ul>
High	<p><b>Follow recommendations for 'Low' and 'Medium' above and:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear a high-quality <a href="#">mask</a> or respirator.</li> <li>If you are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, avoid non-essential indoor activities in public where you could be exposed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow recommendations for 'Low' and 'Medium' above and:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement enhanced prevention measures in high-risk congregate settings, such as in <a href="#">homeless service sites and correctional facilities</a>. Enhanced strategies include requiring universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status, increasing/improving ventilation, adding enhanced cleaning &amp; disinfection, increasing physical distance between individuals in congregate areas, and holding group activities outdoors.</li> <li>High-risk congregate settings should consult with their <a href="#">LHD</a> about implementing facility-wide routine screening testing.</li> <li>Healthcare facilities should institute facility-wide masking when masks are recommended in the community.</li> <li>School and childcare settings may consider implementing screening testing for high-risk activities or at key times in the year. Screening testing can also be implemented by schools serving students with moderate or severe immunocompromise or complex medical conditions.</li> </ul>

**Table 1. COVID-19 hospital admission levels and percentage of inpatient and ICU beds occupied for current week ending September 28, 2023.**

County	New Hospital Admissions per 100,000				Percentage of Inpatient Beds Occupied by COVID-19 patients		Percentage of ICU Beds Occupied by COVID-19 patients	
	Current Value	Current Level	Previous Week Level	Change since previous week	Current Value	Change since Previous Week	Current Value	Change since Previous Week
Atlantic	10.1	Medium	Medium	(-)	2.6	(-)	1	(↓)
Bergen	5	Low	Low	(-)	2.5	(-)	1.9	(-)
Burlington	6.7	Low	Low	(-)	1.7	(-)	1.2	(-)
Camden	6.7	Low	Low	(-)	1.7	(-)	1.2	(-)
Cape May	10.1	Medium	Medium	(-)	2.6	(-)	1	(-)
Cumberland	5.4	Low	Low	(-)	3.1	(↑)	0.6	(-)
Essex	5.3	Low	Low	(-)	1.9	(-)	1.2	(-)
Gloucester	6.7	Low	Low	(-)	1.7	(-)	1.2	(-)
Hudson	5	Low	Low	(-)	2.5	(-)	1.9	(-)
Hunterdon	10	Medium	Low	(↑)	1.8	(-)	0	(-)
Mercer	4.9	Low	Low	(-)	2.1	(↑)	0.2	(-)
Middlesex	5.3	Low	Low	(-)	1.9	(-)	1.2	(-)
Monmouth	6.2	Low	Low	(-)	3	(↑)	1.8	(-)
Morris	6.2	Low	Low	(-)	2	(↑)	1.2	(-)
Ocean	6.2	Low	Low	(-)	3	(↑)	1.8	(-)
Passaic	5	Low	Low	(-)	2.5	(-)	1.9	(-)
Salem	6.7	Low	Low	(-)	1.7	(-)	1.2	(-)
Somerset	5.3	Low	Low	(-)	1.9	(-)	1.2	(-)
Sussex	6.2	Low	Low	(-)	2	(↑)	1.2	(-)
Union	5.3	Low	Low	(-)	1.9	(-)	1.2	(-)
Warren	10	Medium	Low	(↑)	1.8	(-)	0	(-)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID Data Tracker. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2023, September 28. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker>

## 2. Healthcare Infection Prevention & Control

[CDC healthcare guidance](#) no longer uses COVID-19 Transmission Levels to guide facility COVID-19 infection prevention and control interventions. Healthcare facilities each have unique strengths and challenges which often require facility-specific infection prevention and control practices. Healthcare facilities should consider several factors when determining when and how to implement COVID-19 infection prevention and control practices (e.g., patients/residents with highest risk of severe outcomes, input from stakeholders, outbreak status). In addition, state and national data on COVID-19 and trends of other respiratory viruses can help inform facility-specific practices:

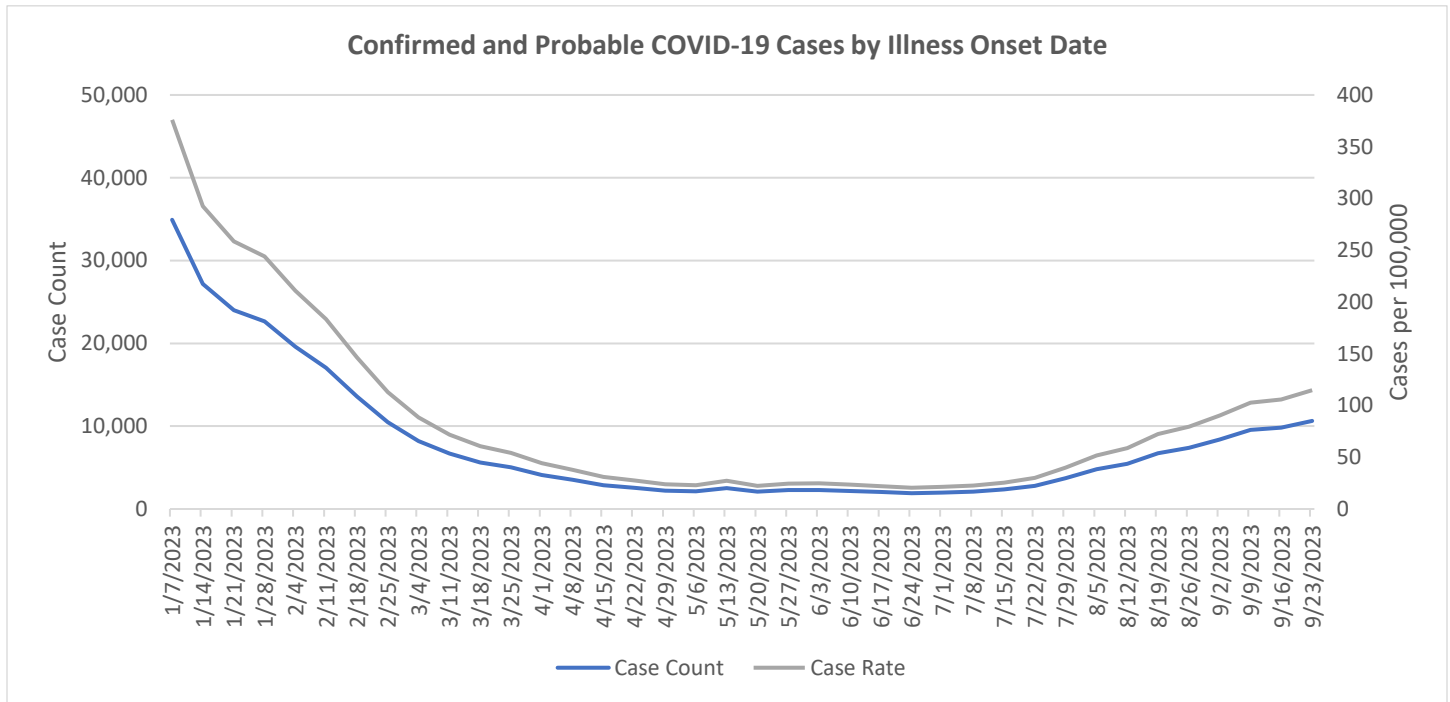
- [NJDOH Influenza and Respiratory Illness Surveillance Reports](#)
- [National Emergency Department Visits for COVID-19, Influenza, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus](#)

Source control remains an important intervention during periods of higher respiratory virus transmission. **Healthcare facilities should institute facility-wide masking when masks are recommended in the community (e.g., when COVID-19 hospital admission levels are high).**

New admission testing in nursing homes has been updated to align with other healthcare settings and is at the discretion of the nursing home. Refer to CDC [Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2](#).

### 3. Cases

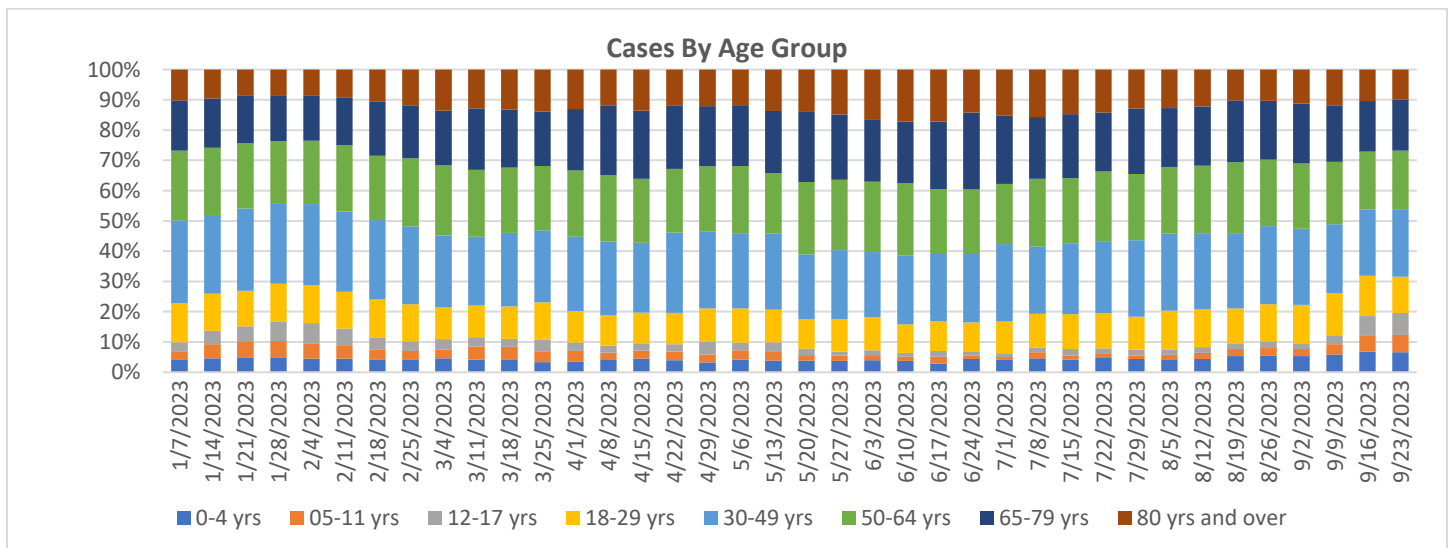
NJDOH uses [CSTE Case Definition criteria](#) to define COVID-19 cases for public health surveillance. Confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by illness onset date are plotted below. When the illness onset date is unknown, the date of earliest positive specimen collection or the date of NJDOH notification is used, whichever is earlier. The statewide COVID-19 case rate has been below 200 cases per 100,000 residents since mid-January 2023.



Source: NJDOH Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS)

### 4. Cases by Age

The percentage of confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by age group as reported to the NJDOH Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System are plotted below.



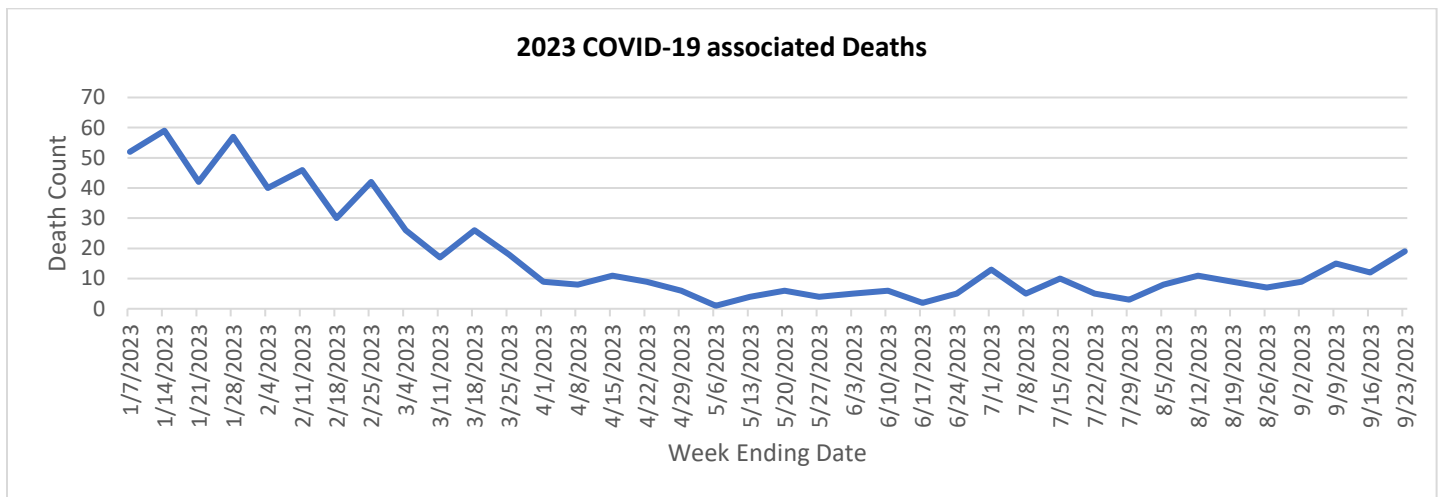
Source: NJDOH Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS)

## 5. Deaths

The percentage of deaths due to COVID-19 in the past week is a timely disease severity indicator. The percentage of deaths due to COVID-19 in the past week as indicated by National Vital Statistics Surveillance (NVSS) data included on the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#). COVID-19-associated deaths by age group and date of death are shown below. COVID-19 associated deaths are classified according to [CSTE Revised COVID-19-associated Death Classification Guidance for Public Health Surveillance Programs](#). For information on historical COVID-19 death data, see the Mortality dashboard on the [NJ COVID-19 Information Hub](#).

**2023 COVID-19-associated Deaths by Age group**

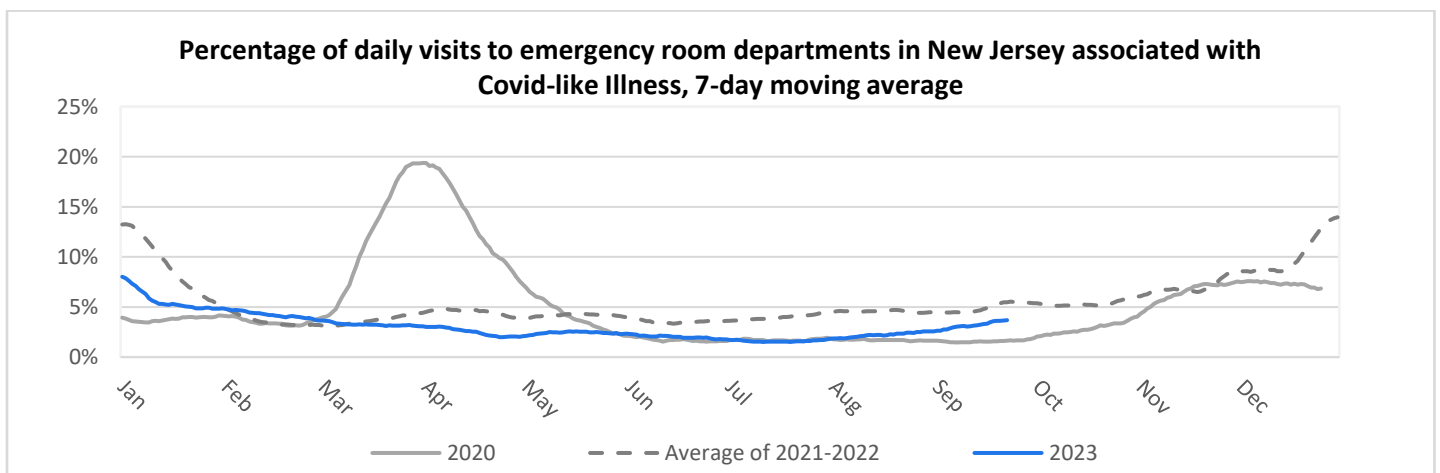
Total	0-4 yrs	5-17 yrs	18-29 yrs	30-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65-79 yrs	80+
657	0	2	2	13	43	188	409



Source: NJDOH Communicable Disease Service, NJ Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS)

## 6. Syndromic Surveillance

NJDOH uses syndromic surveillance data to monitor trends associated with visits to emergency departments for COVID-like illness (CLI). CLI is defined as fever and cough or dyspnea (shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, etc.) or the presence of coronavirus diagnosis codes. The diagnosis of another respiratory pathogen (such as influenza, parainfluenza, and RSV) is excluded. Percent daily visits associated with CLI from emergency department data is collected via EpiCenter (i.e. NJDOH syndromic surveillance). CLI is monitored as a 7-day weekly average.



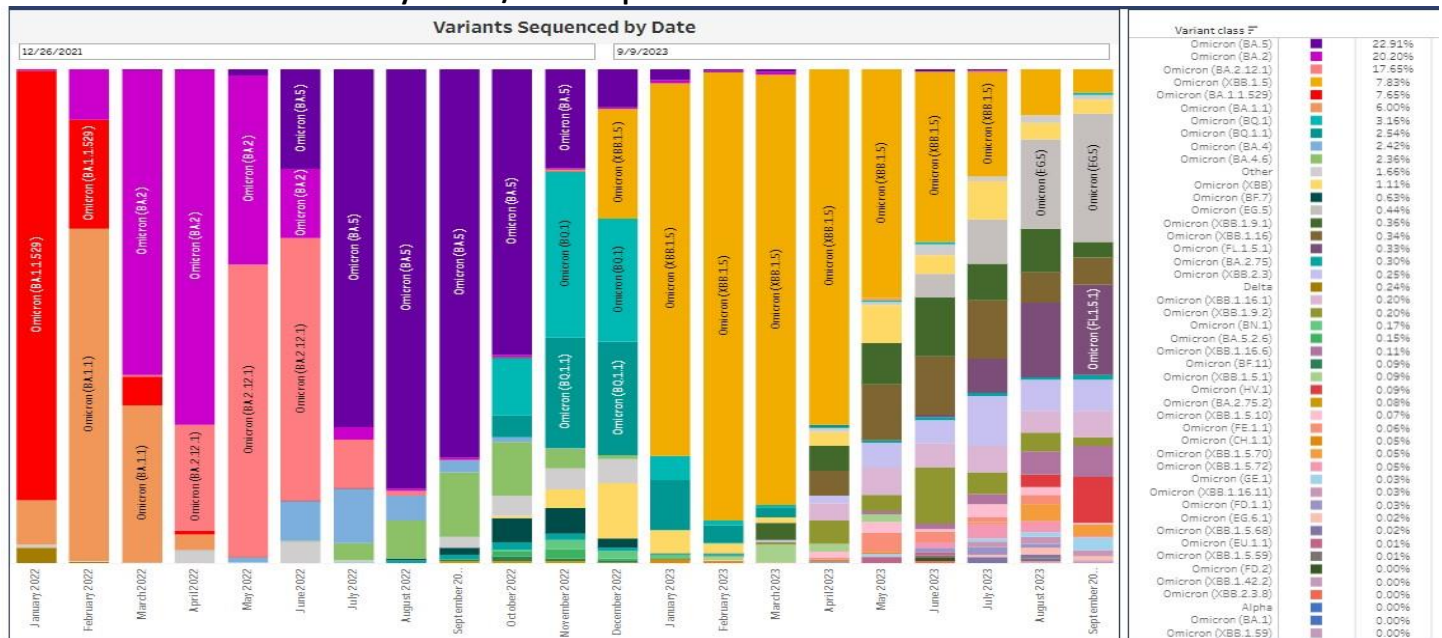
Source: EpiCenter, NJDOH syndromic surveillance data

## 7. Variant Surveillance

The table below shows the proportion of variants sequenced in the last 4 weeks as of the week ending September 9, 2023. The chart depicts a cumulative summary of COVID-19 variant surveillance by week of specimen collection. Data includes sequencing results reported by Commercial Labs (LabCorp, Aegis Sciences Corporation, Helix, Infinity Biologix, and Quest Diagnostics) and the NJDOH State Public Health Lab that have been submitted for surveillance purposes. Percentages represent the proportion of specimens sequenced with the specified variant lineage. For additional information on variant classification, see [CDC SARS-CoV-2 Variant Classifications and Definitions](#).

Variant of Concern Lineage (WHO Classification)	Proportion of Variants Sequenced in the last 4 weeks, as of week ending September 9, 2023
EG.5 (Omicron)	21.9%
FL.1.5.1 (Omicron)	18.6%
XBB.1.5 (Omicron)	7.5%
XBB.2.3 (Omicron)	6.6%
XBB.1.16 (Omicron)	6.1%
HV.1 (Omicron)	6.0%
XBB.1.16.6 (Omicron)	5.7%
XBB.1.9.1 (Omicron)	5.5%
XBB.1.16.1 (Omicron)	3.7%
XBB.1.5.70 (Omicron)	3.1%
XBB (Omicron)	2.9%
XBB.1.9.2 (Omicron)	2.2%
GE.1 (Omicron)	1.8%
XBB.1.5.72 (Omicron)	1.8%
XBB.1.16.11 (Omicron)	1.2%
Other (Omicron)	1.2%
EG.6.1	1.1%

### COVID-19 Variant Surveillance by Month/Year of Specimen Collection

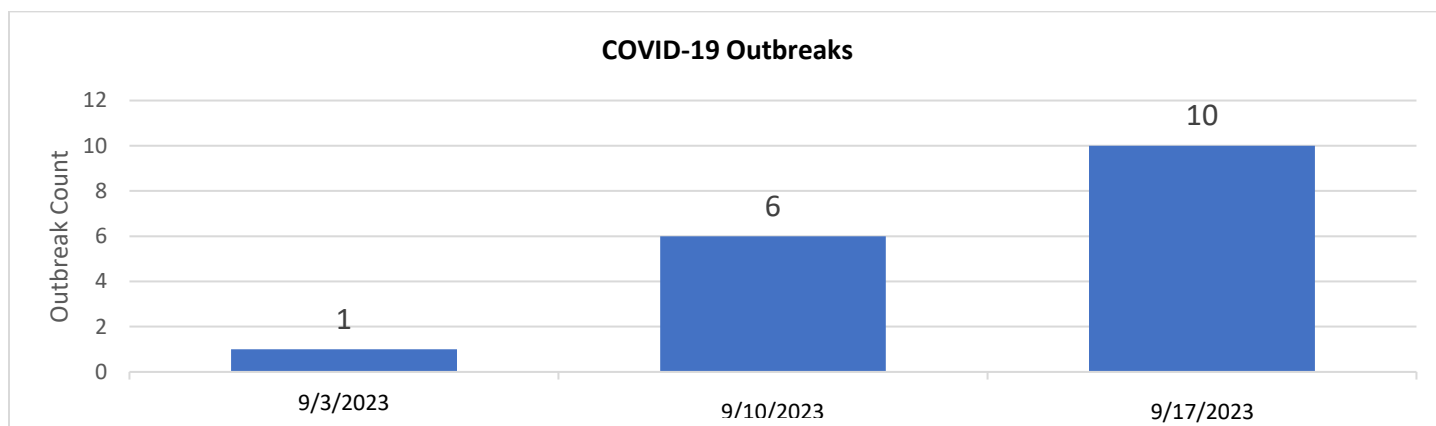


**Notes:**

- Omicron B.1.1.529 includes BA.1, BA.3 and all sublineages (except BA.1.1 and its sublineages).
- Omicron BA.2 includes all sublineages except BA.2.12.1, BA.2.75, BA.2.75.2, XBB and their sublineages.
- Omicron BA.2.75 includes all BA.2.75.2, CH.1.1, BN.1 and their sublineages.
- Omicron BA.4 includes all sublineages except BA.4.6.
- Omicron BA.5 includes all sublineages, including (BE.x and BF.x), except BF.7, BF.11, BA.5.2.6, BQ.1, BQ.1.1 and their sublineages.
- Omicron XBB includes all XBB sublineages except XBB.1.16, XBB.1.5, XBB1.5.1, FD.2 and all their sublineages.
- Delta includes B.1.617.2 and all AY variants. Other represents additional and unassigned lineages not classified as variants of concern or variants of interest.

## 8. K-12 Schools

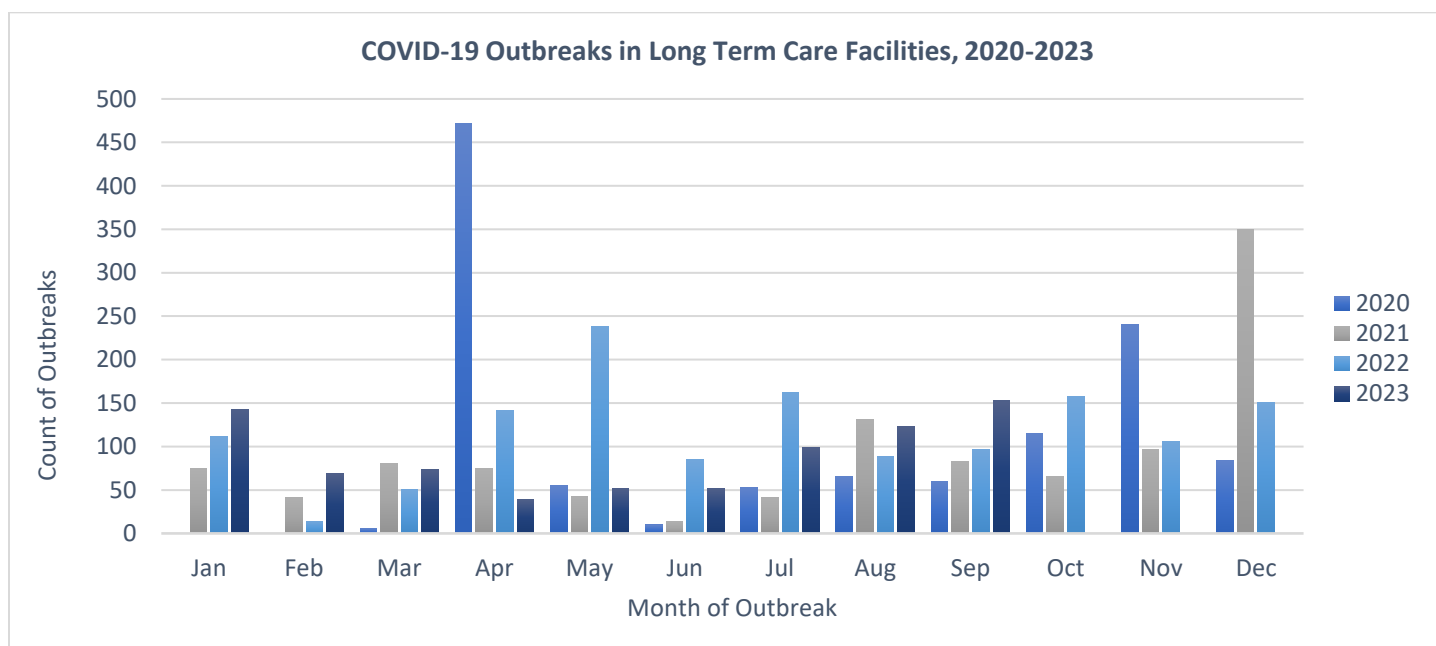
As of the week ending September 17, 2023, 1,711 schools have reported their outbreak data into the Surveillance for Infectious Conditions (SIC) module. The overall outbreak rate this week, calculated as the number of outbreaks/clusters reported by schools divided by the total number of schools reporting multiplied by 100, increased from 0.38% to 0.64%. Ten COVID-19 outbreaks were reported by ten schools- four of which were in Bergen County, two of which were in Mercer County, and one each in Essex, Sussex, Monmouth and Morris counties. For the week of September 11-September 15, a total of fourteen (14) schools implemented a universal mask policy due to high COVID-19 disease levels; these schools were predominantly in Bergen and Passaic counties. Additional information is available on the [K-12 Schools Dashboard](#).



Source: NJDOH CDRSS, Surveillance for Infectious Conditions (SIC) module

## 9. Outbreaks in Long Term Care

COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care facilities by month of outbreak as reported to NJDOH in the Communicable Disease Surveillance and Reporting System (CDRSS) are plotted below.



Source: NJDOH Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS)

This report will be updated weekly, on Fridays, and posted at: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/index.shtml>.

For additional information visit:

[NJDOH Communicable Disease Service: COVID-19](#)

[NJ COVID-19 Information Hub](#)