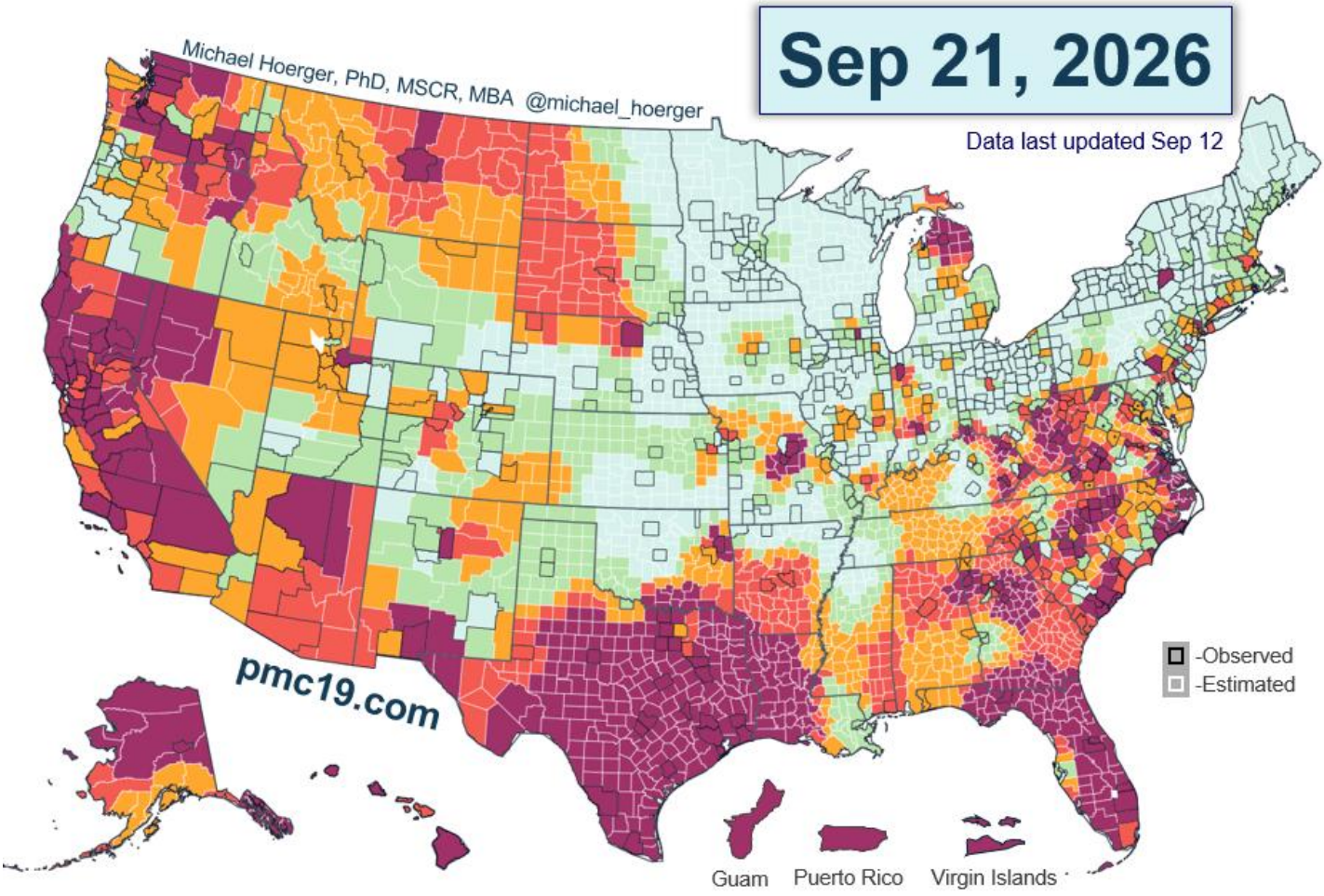
PMC U.S. COVID-19 Report for September 21, 2026. pmc19.com

Michael Hoerger, PhD, MSCR, MBA, Pandemic Mitigation Collaborative (PMC)



Cite as: Hoerger, M. (2026, September 21). *PMC U.S. COVID-19 Report for September 21, 2026*. Pandemic Mitigation Collaborative. http://www.pmc19.com

Announcements

Recent Press Coverage

- Forbes: https://www.forbes.com/sites/judystone/2026/08/27/covid-19-cases-surge-heres-whats-different-this-summer-that-will-help/
- The Sick Times: https://thesicktimes.org/2026/08/18/national-covid-19-trends-august-18/
- TODAY: https://www.today.com/health/coronavirus/summer-covid-surge-symptoms-guidelines-2026-covid-vaccine-test-rcna592549
- New York Post: https://nypost.com/2026/08/19/health/cases-of-a-very-contagious-winter-disease-spiking-this-summer/
- People: https://people.com/cases-of-covid-growing-with-a-pretty-steady-increase-nationwide-12063766

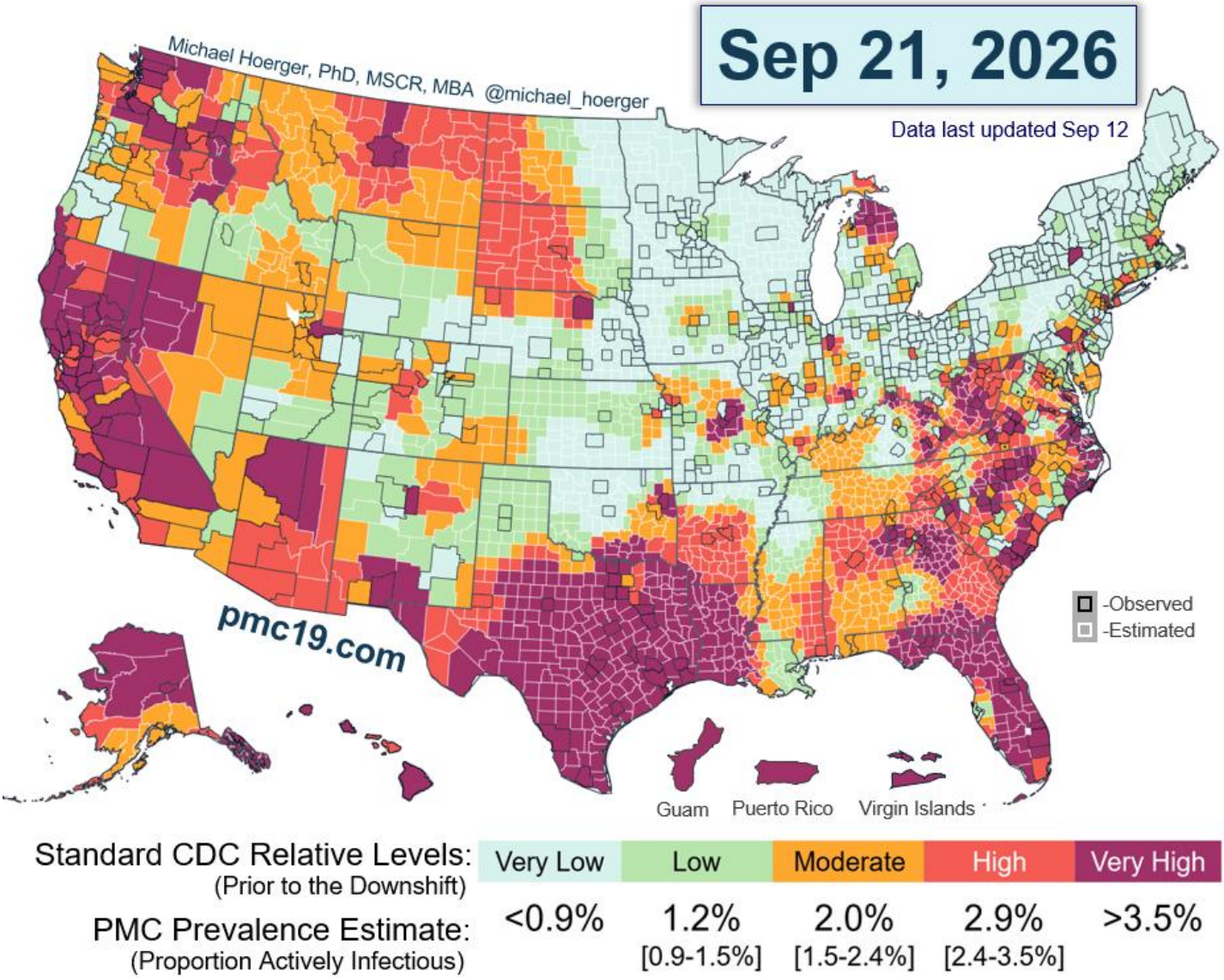
Dashboard Update

- The interactive version of the map now has a URL shortcut (https://pmc19.com/map).

Data Quality

- The CDC (80% model weight) reported this week. Biobot (20% model weight) also reported. Both sources had major upward corrections to last week's data, which adds uncertainty around forecasting.
- As noted previously, on August 14, the CDC abruptly changed their coding system for how they link numeric levels to category labels, without flagging or explaining the change, generally downplaying transmission (pmc19.com/bluewashing.mp4). At the extreme end of the Very High category, levels are still described as "Very High." However, much of Very High has moved to "High." High has moved to "Moderate." Moderate has moved to "Low." Low has moved to "Very Low." Very Low remains "Very Low." The changes are most readily observable in the middle categories, so it will slow the process of alerting the public when levels are rising. Disturbingly, the change has been applied retroactively to descriptions of historical data too, so it is rewriting the past. PMC disagrees with the change, the timing of the change as levels are rising, the lack of transparency, and the lack of a firm rationale for the change. We will continue to lead with the prior system, noted as "Standard," and offer contrasts with the "Revised" system to shine light on its potential damage to public health. The interactive map now allows users to toggle between systems. In October, we expect to launch a new category system but felt it would be imprudent to do so when levels are rising. It will also have a toggle switch so users can focus on the map system they prefer.

COVID-19 Heat Map, Based on CDC Wastewater Data & Standard Levels



Standard CDC Relative Levels: (Prior to the Downshift)	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
PMC Prevalence Estimate: (Proportion Actively Infectious)	<0.9%	1.2% [0.9-1.5%]	2.0% [1.5-2.4%]	2.9% [2.4-3.5%]	>3.5%

The US has at least 40 states and territories with COVID outbreaks. These include Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and West

Virginia. Levels on the Big Island of Hawai'i are particularly high. Note also, the NYC area is seeing outbreaks.

There are likely outbreaks in additional states. The summary statistic of 40 only includes counties with observed data, rather than estimated data. For example, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, and Tennessee likely have outbreaks, but monitoring is poor.

COVID-19 State Prevalence Estimates

pmc19.com

Sep 21, 2026

State	Standard CDC Level	Revised # CDC Level (Downshifted)	PMC Estimate, % Actively Infectious	Chances anyone is infectious in a room of 10 to 100 people			
				10	25	50	100
Alabama	Moderate	Moderate	1 in 44 (2.3%)	21%	44%	69%	90%
Alaska	Moderate	Low	1 in 60 (1.7%)	15%	34%	57%	81%
Arizona	Moderate	Moderate	1 in 43 (2.3%)	21%	44%	69%	90%
Arkansas	Moderate*	Low*	1 in 54 (1.9%)	17%	38%	61%	85%
California	Very High	High	1 in 25 (4.0%)	34%	64%	87%	98%
Colorado	Low	Low	1 in 82 (1.2%)	11%	26%	46%	70%
Connecticut	Low	Low	1 in 75 (1.3%)	13%	29%	49%	74%
Delaware	Moderate	Low	1 in 46 (2.2%)	20%	42%	66%	89%
District of Columbia	Low	Low	1 in 74 (1.4%)	13%	29%	50%	74%
Florida	Very High	High	1 in 25 (4.0%)	33%	64%	87%	98%
Georgia	Low	Low	1 in 78 (1.3%)	12%	28%	48%	73%
Guam	Very High	High	1 in 23 (4.3%)	36%	67%	89%	99%
Hawaii	High	Moderate	1 in 30 (3.3%)	29%	57%	81%	97%
Idaho	Moderate	Low	1 in 64 (1.6%)	15%	33%	55%	79%
Illinois	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 134 (0.7%)	7%	17%	31%	53%
Indiana	Low	Very Low	1 in 98 (1.0%)	10%	23%	40%	64%
Iowa	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 111 (0.9%)	9%	20%	36%	59%
Kansas	Low	Very Low	1 in 108 (0.9%)	9%	21%	37%	60%
Kentucky	Moderate	Moderate	1 in 44 (2.3%)	20%	43%	68%	90%
Louisiana	Low	Very Low	1 in 99 (1.0%)	10%	23%	40%	64%
Maine	Low	Very Low	1 in 102 (1.0%)	9%	22%	39%	63%
Maryland	Low	Low	1 in 73 (1.4%)	13%	29%	50%	75%
Massachusetts	Moderate	Moderate	1 in 44 (2.2%)	20%	43%	68%	90%
Michigan	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 157 (0.6%)	6%	15%	27%	47%
Minnesota	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 222 (0.5%)	4%	11%	20%	36%
Mississippi	High*	Moderate*	1 in 33 (3.1%)	27%	54%	79%	95%

* Limited data reporting

Data last updated Sep 12

On August 14, 2026, the CDC revised categorical descriptors downward without notice or rationale for both past and present data. Very High levels were often revised downward to "High," High levels to "Moderate" or "Low," typically one category downward. More at pmc19.com/bluewashing.mp4

COVID-19 State Prevalence Estimates

pmc19.com

Sep 21, 2026

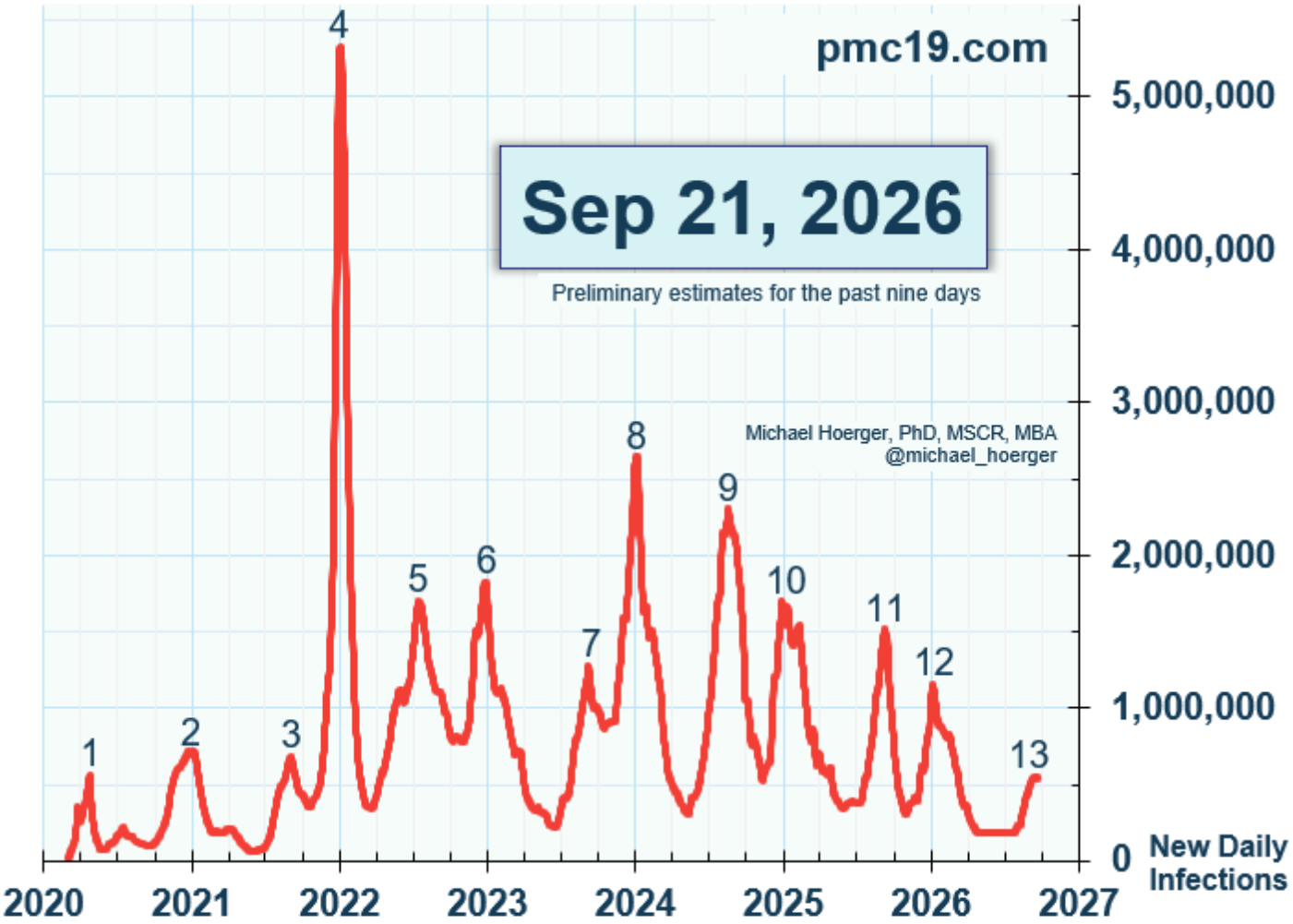
State	Standard CDC Level	Revised # CDC Level (Downshifted)	PMC Estimate, % Actively Infectious	Chances anyone is infectious in a room of 10 to 100 people			
				10	25	50	100
Missouri	Low	Very Low	1 in 101 (1.0%)	9%	22%	39%	63%
Montana	Very High*	High*	1 in 19 (5.2%)	41%	73%	93%	>99%
Nebraska	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 252 (0.4%)	4%	9%	18%	33%
Nevada	High	Moderate	1 in 37 (2.7%)	24%	50%	75%	94%
New Hampshire	Low*	Very Low*	1 in 95 (1.1%)	10%	23%	41%	65%
New Jersey	Low	Very Low	1 in 96 (1.0%)	10%	23%	41%	65%
New Mexico	Moderate	Low	1 in 46 (2.2%)	20%	42%	67%	89%
New York	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 222 (0.5%)	4%	11%	20%	36%
North Carolina	High	Moderate	1 in 38 (2.6%)	23%	48%	73%	93%
North Dakota	Moderate*	Moderate*	1 in 46 (2.2%)	20%	43%	67%	89%
Ohio	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 222 (0.5%)	4%	11%	20%	36%
Oklahoma	Very Low*	Very Low*	1 in 202 (0.5%)	5%	12%	22%	39%
Oregon	Moderate*	Low*	1 in 47 (2.1%)	19%	41%	66%	88%
Pennsylvania	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 114 (0.9%)	8%	20%	36%	59%
Puerto Rico	Very High*	High*	1 in 23 (4.4%)	36%	67%	89%	99%
Rhode Island	Low	Very Low	1 in 100 (1.0%)	10%	22%	39%	63%
South Carolina	High	Moderate	1 in 38 (2.6%)	23%	48%	73%	93%
South Dakota	Low	Very Low	1 in 102 (1.0%)	9%	22%	39%	63%
Tennessee	Low	Low	1 in 68 (1.5%)	14%	31%	52%	77%
Texas	Very High	Very High	1 in 15 (6.7%)	50%	82%	97%	>99%
U.S. Virgin Islands	Very High	Very High	1 in 16 (6.2%)	47%	80%	96%	>99%
Utah	Moderate	Low	1 in 48 (2.1%)	19%	41%	65%	88%
Vermont	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 222 (0.5%)	4%	11%	20%	36%
Virginia	Low*	Low*	1 in 79 (1.3%)	12%	27%	47%	72%
Washington	Very High	High	1 in 26 (3.8%)	32%	62%	86%	98%
West Virginia	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 739 (0.1%)	1%	3%	7%	13%
Wisconsin	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 195 (0.5%)	5%	12%	23%	40%
Wyoming	Very Low	Very Low	1 in 115 (0.9%)	8%	20%	35%	58%

* Limited reporting; ND averages MN, MT, SD; PR from non-CDC PR dashboard

Data last updated Sep 12

On August 14, 2026, the CDC revised categorical descriptors downward without notice or rationale for both past and present data. Very High levels were often revised downward to "High," High levels to "Moderate" or "Low," typically one category downward. More at pmc19.com/bluewashing.mp4

SARS-CoV-2 New Daily Infections, Wastewater-Derived Estimates (U.S.)



PMC identifies **12** SARS-CoV-2 waves and estimates averages of **5.4** infections per person and **14.5** months between infections.

National COVID-19 Estimates (U.S.)

Sep 21, 2026 pmc19.com

Infections

Proportion Actively Infectious	1 in 91 (1.1%)
New Daily Infections	542,000
Infections the Past Week	3,810,000
Infections in 2026	111,000,000
Cumulative Infections per Person	5.41

Long COVID

Long COVID Cases Resulting from New Daily Infections	27,000 to 108,000
Long COVID Cases Resulting from New Weekly Infections	191,000 to 760,000

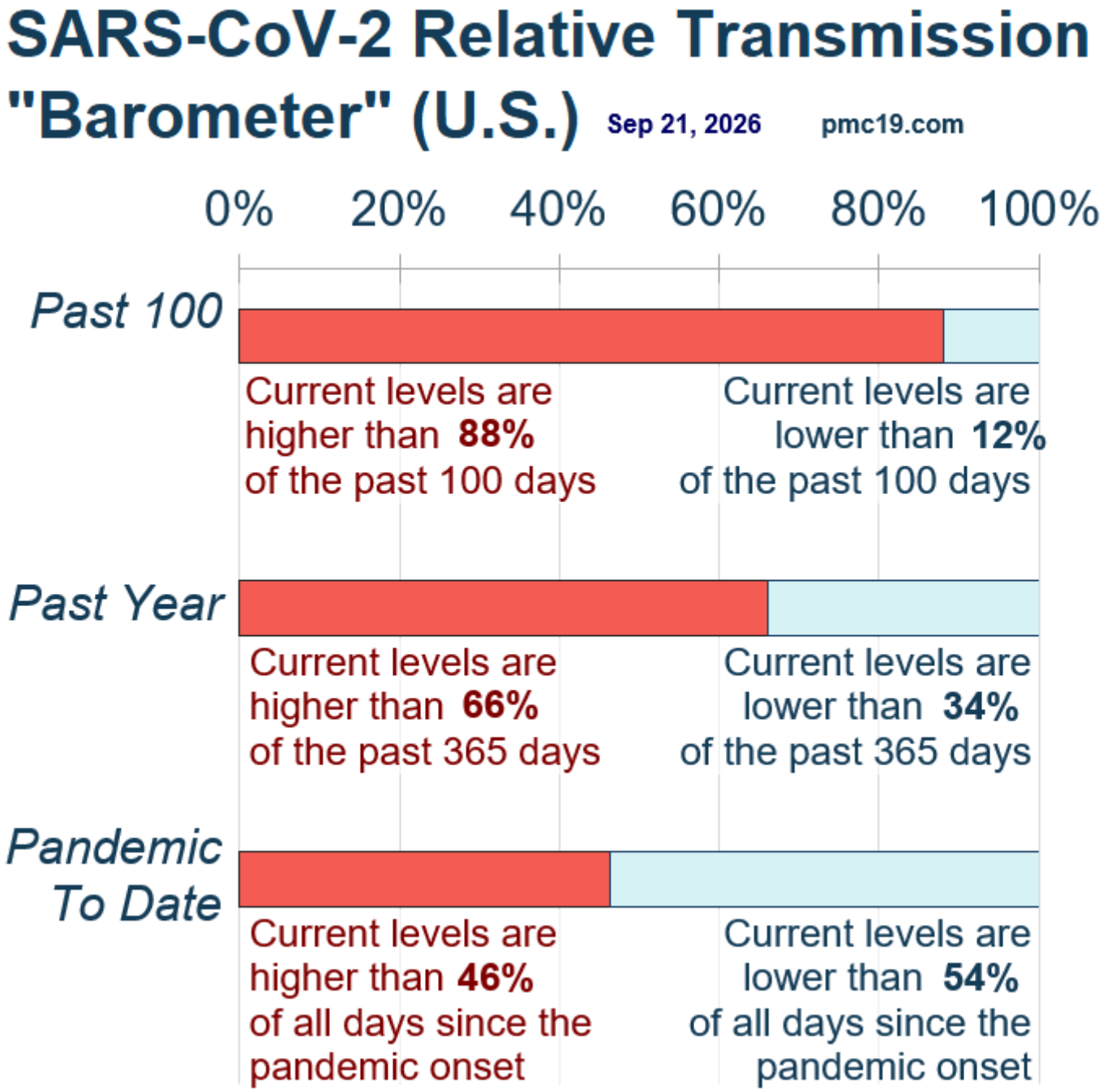
Excess Deaths

Excess Deaths Resulting from New Daily Infections	130 to 240
Excess Deaths Resulting from New Weekly Infections	900 to 1,700

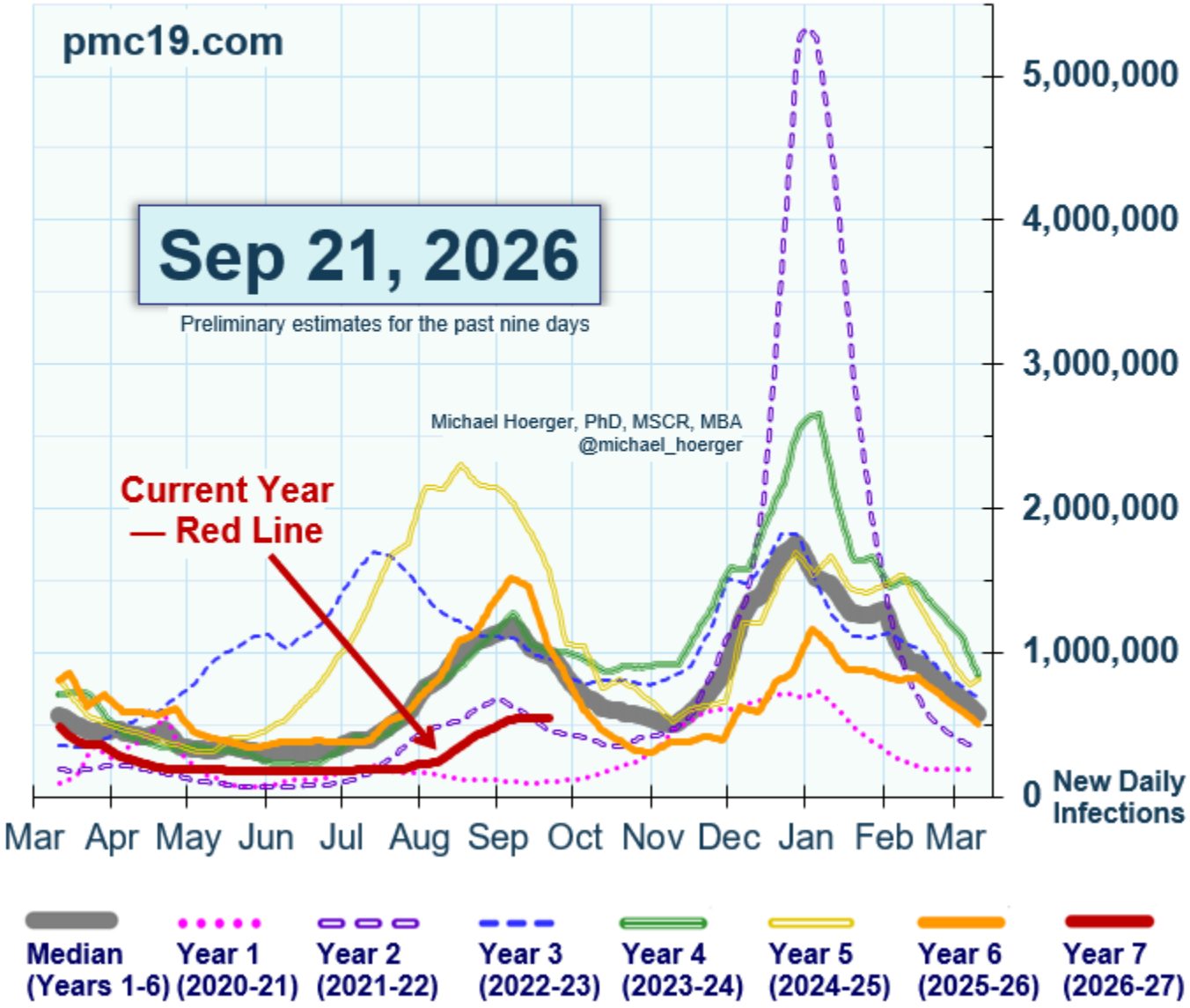
National COVID-19 Risk Table (U.S.)

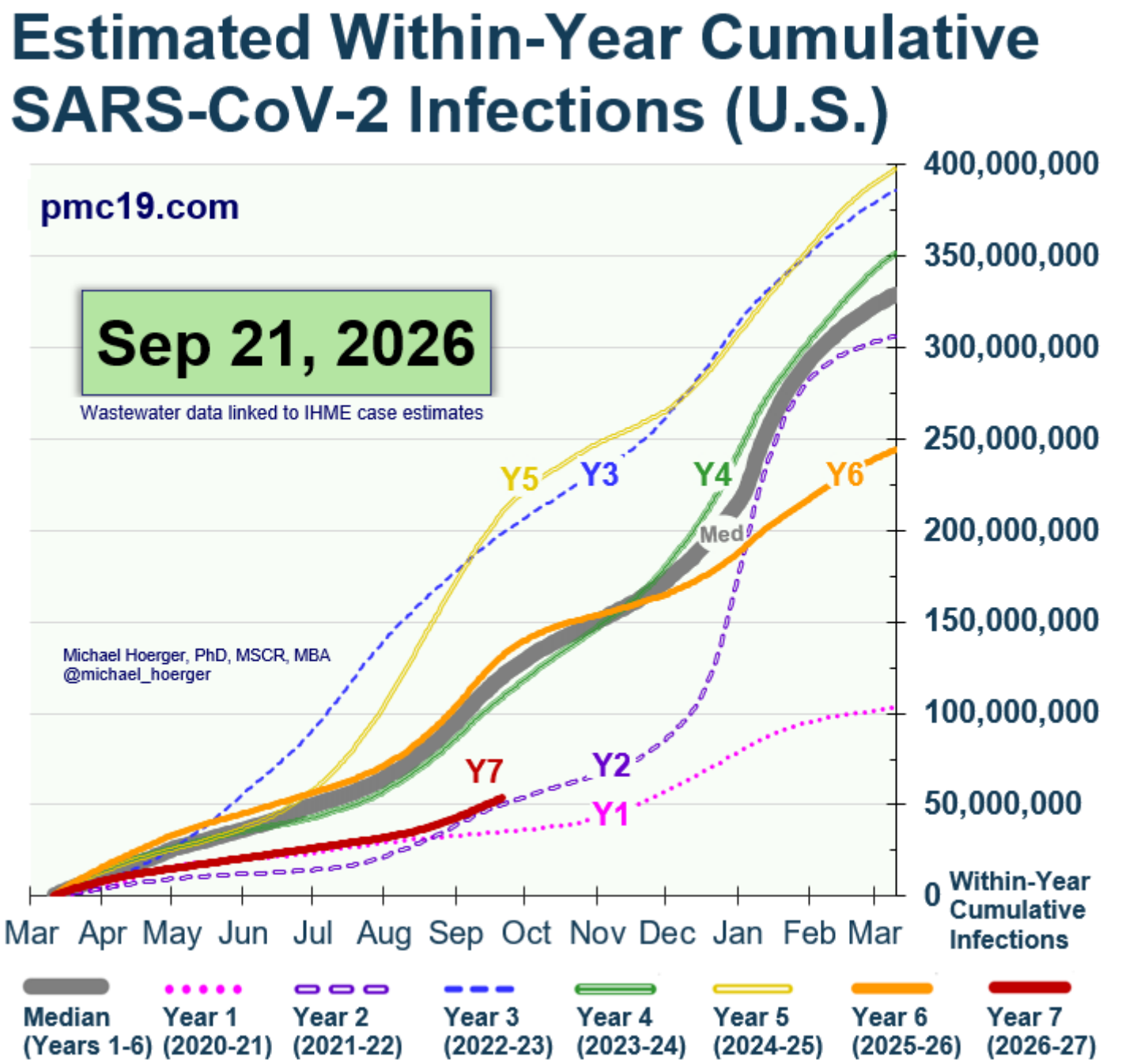
Sep 21, 2026 pmc19.com

Number of People	Chances Anyone is Infectious
1	1.1%
2	2.2%
3	3.3%
4	4.3%
5	5.4%
10	10.5%
15	15.3%
20	19.9%
25	24.2%
30	28.3%
50	42.6%
75	56.5%
100	67.0%
200	89.1%
300	96.4%


SARS-CoV-2 Relative Transmission "Barometer" (U.S.)
Sep 21, 2026
pmc19.com
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Past 100
Current levels are higher than 88% of the past 100 days
Current levels are lower than 12% of the past 100 days
Past Year
Current levels are higher than 66% of the past 365 days
Current levels are lower than 34% of the past 365 days
Pandemic To Date
Current levels are higher than 46% of all days since the pandemic onset
Current levels are lower than 54% of all days since the pandemic onset

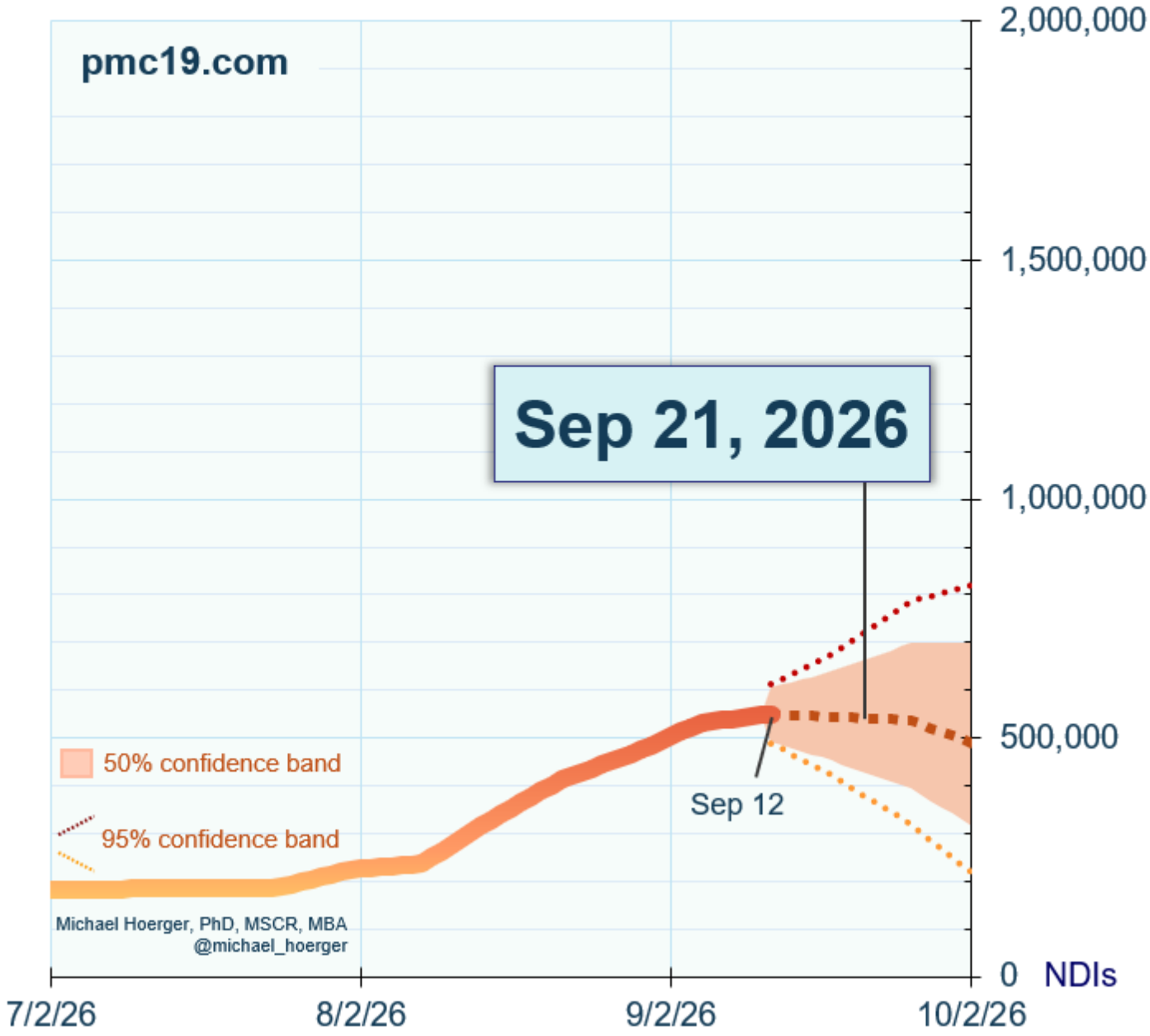
SARS-CoV-2 Year-Over-Year Estimates of Transmission (U.S.)





This is a special table we share periodically. Transmission has been atypically lower since November. Year 7 was closely tracking Year 1 until the summer wave and now resembles Year 2. An optimistic scenario would be finishing Year 7 close to 150 million infections. The most pessimistic scenario would be that there is very little short-term population immunity against infection currently due to limited boosting and fewer infections; a saltation variant could accelerate transmission as in Year 2, or with a slightly lower ceiling.

SARS-CoV-2 Transmission Forecast, Wastewater-Derived Estimates (U.S.)



The national transmission peak likely falls between September 3-25. The real-time data have had major retroactive corrections. Our model continues to show a peak around September 9-12, but that may shift as delayed sites report. A simple indicator of the peak is that as of September 12, half of states had increasing levels, half decreasing, as expected when broaching the summit.

A separate document called a Technical Appendix appears on the dashboard page and has more methodologic info. Search for key answers there first, and then send a public comment tagging Dr. H. on Twitter if further help is needed.