

Workforce Challenges for US Nursing Homes: Implications for Access and Quality

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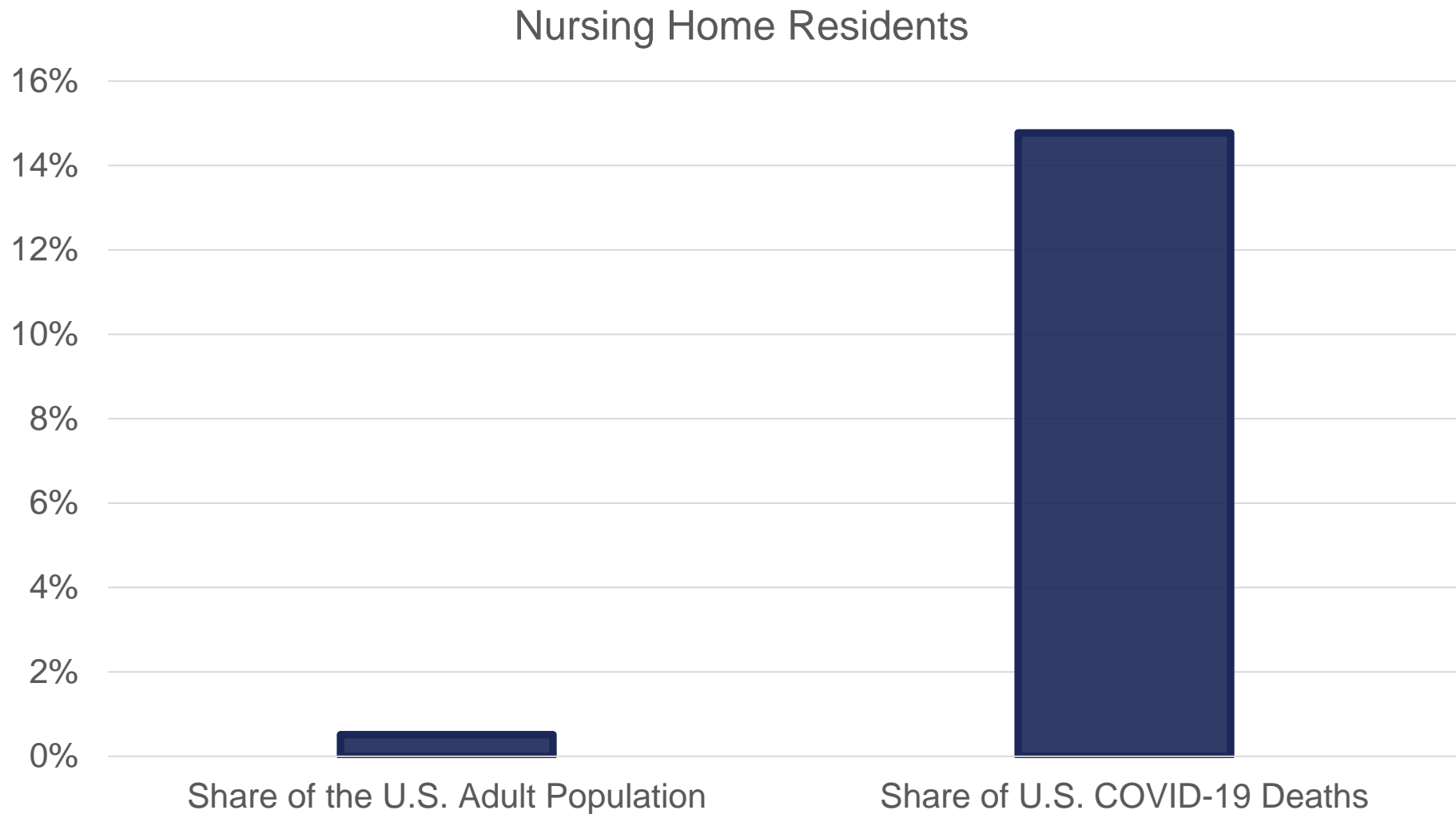


Overview

- Provide a summary of current challenges facing the US nursing home workforce
- Share recent evidence on the role of the nursing home staffing in determining
 - Quality of care provided
 - Access to care
- Discuss potential strategies to bolster the nursing home workforce

BACKGROUND

Nursing home residents were devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic



Opinion | Nursing home workers now have the most dangerous jobs in America. They deserve better.

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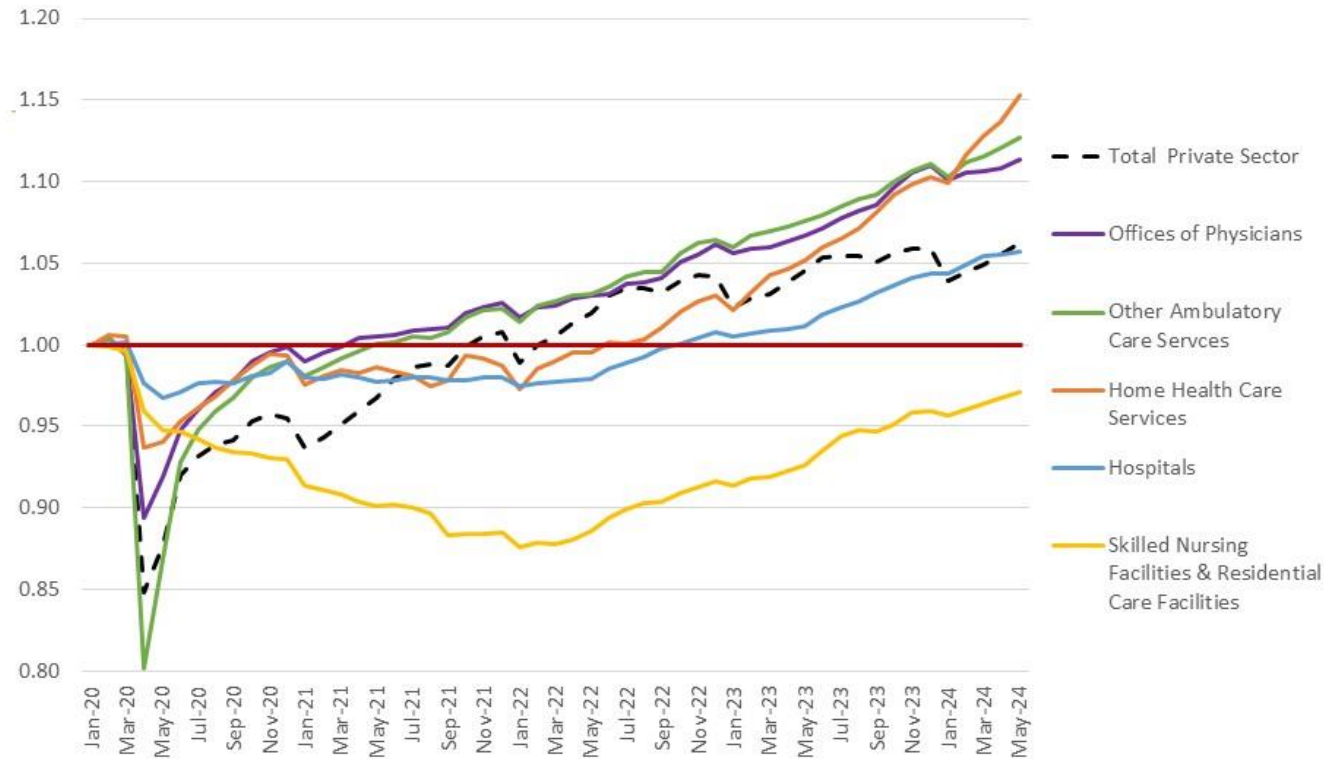


A health worker arrives to take a nose swab sample as part of testing for the covid-19 at a nursing and rehabilitation facility in Seattle on April 17. (Ted S. Warren/AP)

By Brian E. McGarry, Lori Porter and David C. Grabowski
July 28, 2020 at 7:00 a.m. EDT

Nursing home labor supply still hasn't recovered to pre-pandemic levels

Relative Number of Employees by Healthcare Sector, Jan 2020 to May 2024 (Red line represents Jan 2020=1.00)

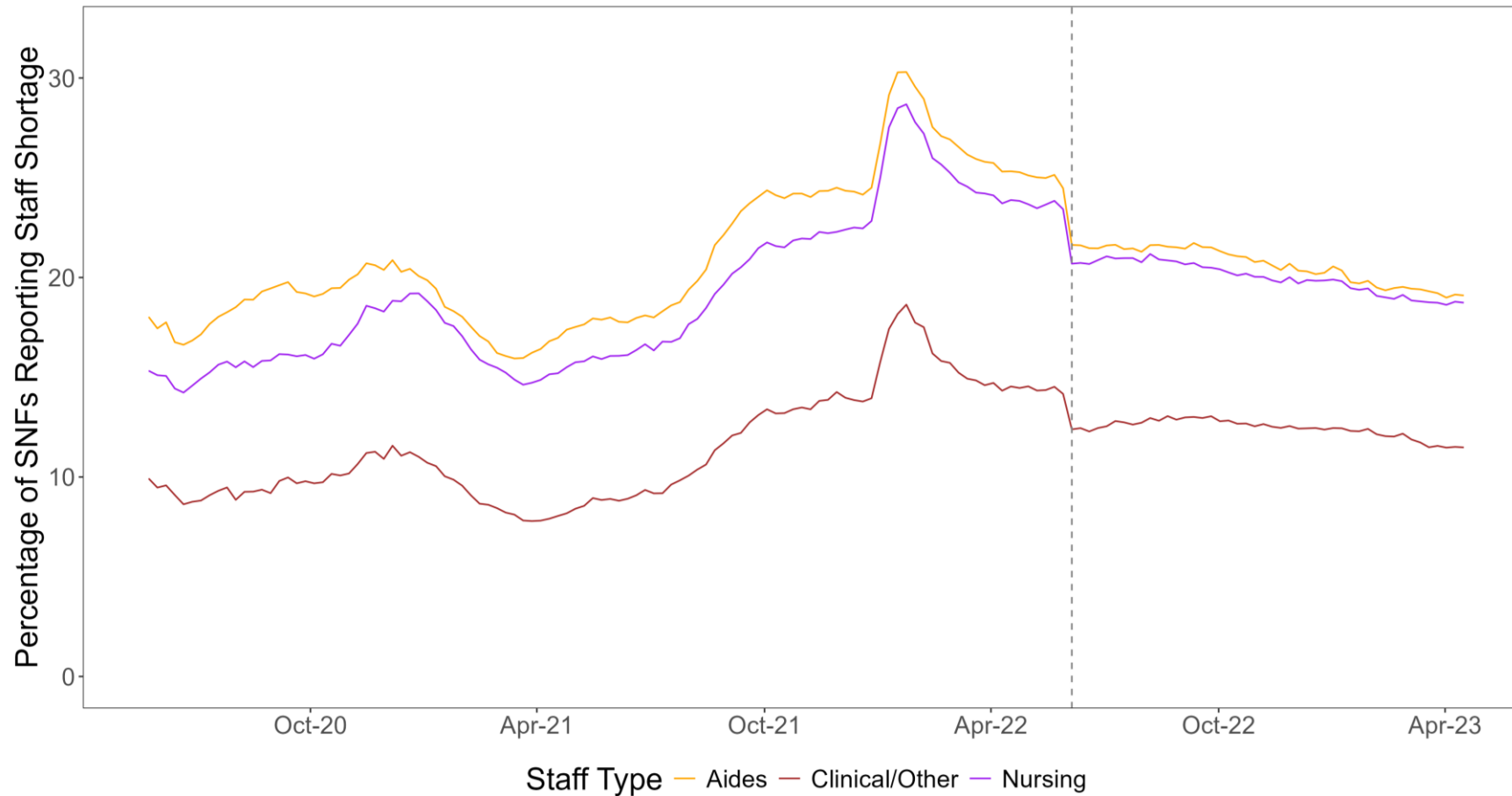


Source: Author calculation of Table B-1 Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t17.htm>

B. Frogner, 2024

>20% of nursing homes reporting a staff shortage by Q2 2023

B. Staffing Shortage

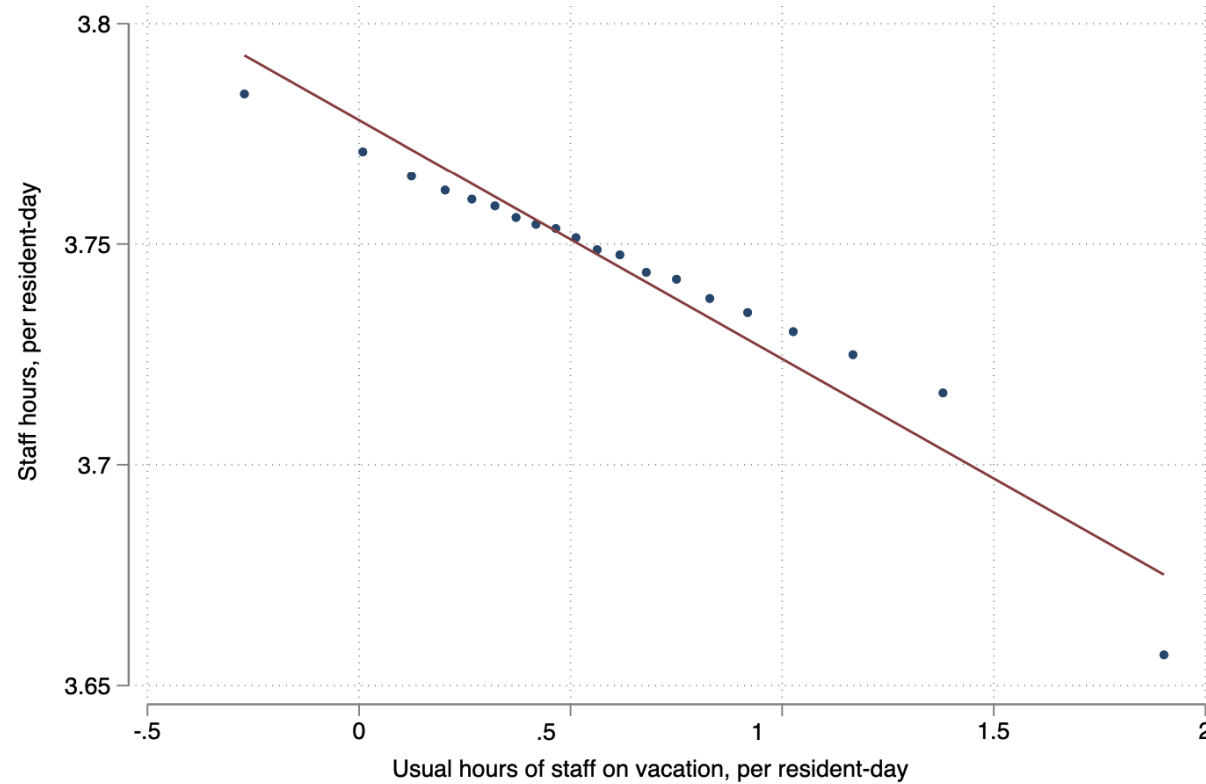


STAFFING AND CARE QUALITY

Effect of Staffing Levels on the Quality of Care

- Joint with Ashvin Gandhi, David Grabowski, and Ljubica Ristovska
- Study effect of changes in nurse and nursing assistant on nursing home patient health outcomes
- Instrument for staffing levels with worker vacations (absences of at least 7 consecutive days)
- PRELIMINARY – do not cite

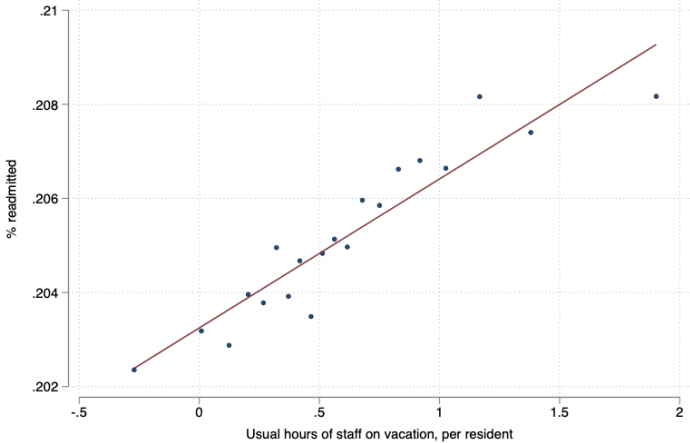
First stage: as nurse vacation hours increase, staffing levels decrease



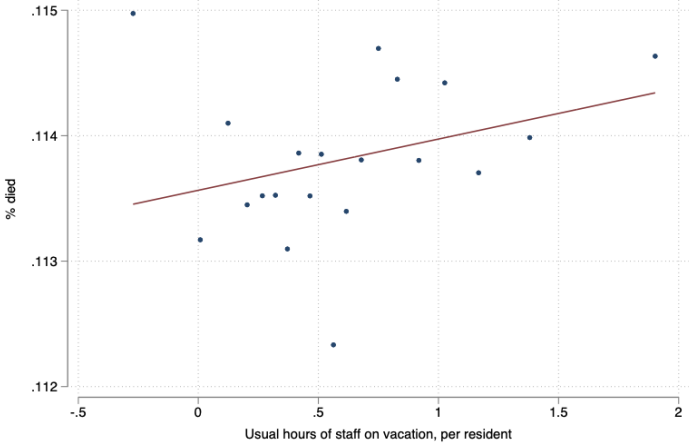
Includes controls for facility by quarter fixed effects. Unit of observation: facility-week. Includes dates in 2017-2019. Sample facility-quarters only. Staff on vacation have zero hours for at least 7 days and up to 30 days. Usual hours are measured during the week prior to the vacation start. All measures were winsorized at the 99th percentile.

Reduced form: as nurse vacation hours increase, outcomes worsen

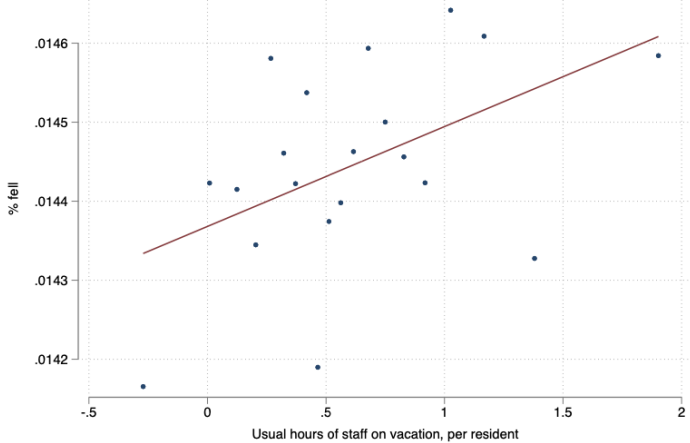
(a) Readmission



(b) Mortality



(c) Falls



Includes controls for facility by quarter fixed effects. Unit of observation: facility-week. Includes dates in 2017-2019. Sample facility-quarters only. Staff on vacation have zero hours for at least 7 days and up to 30 days. Usual hours are measured during the week prior to the vacation start. All measures were winsorized at the 99th percentile.

Effect of Staff Turnover on Quality of Care

Research

JAMA Internal Medicine | [Original Investigation](#)

Health Care Staff Turnover and Quality of Care at Nursing Homes

Karen Shen, PhD; Brian E. McGarry, PT, PhD; Ashvin D. Gandhi, PhD

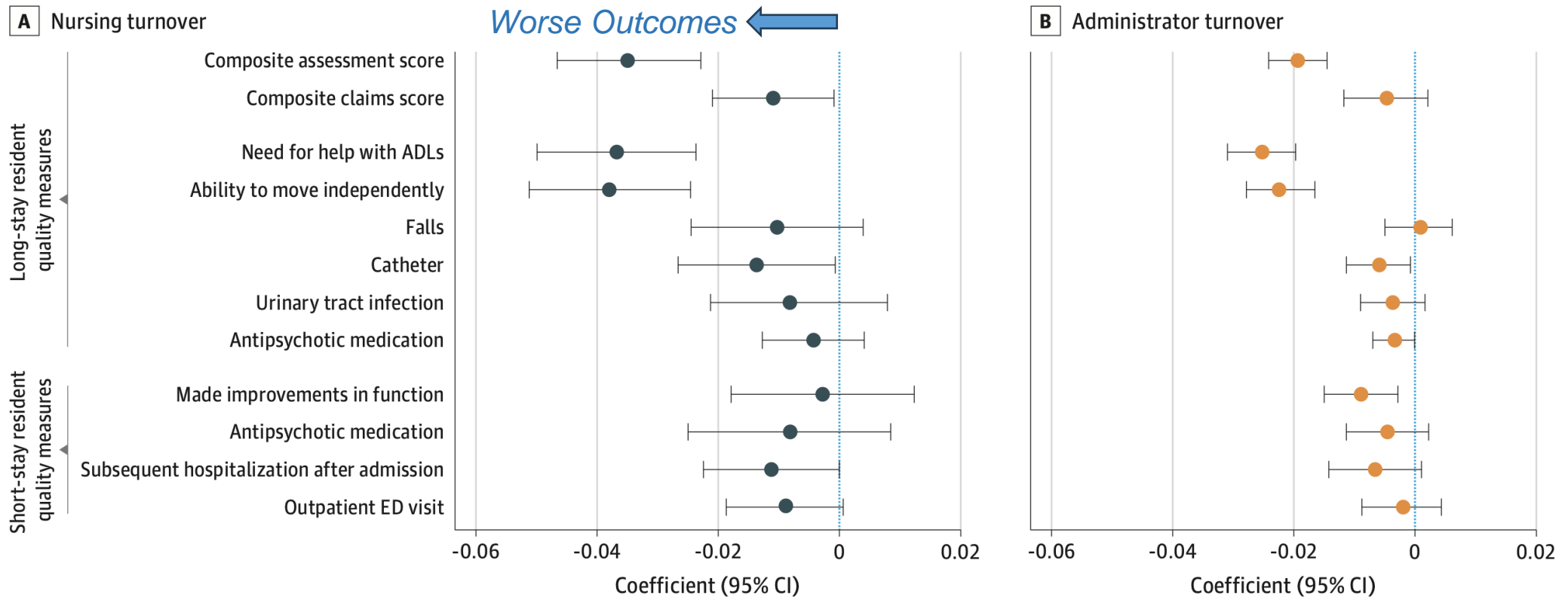
[+ Supplemental content](#)

IMPORTANCE Turnover in health care staff may disrupt patient care and create operational and organizational challenges, and nursing home staff turnover rates are particularly high.

- Use within-facility variation in turnover to study how quality outcomes differ in the same nursing home at times of high vs. low turnover
- On average, 15-18% of weekly staff hours come from a new employees
 - High rate of turnover!

Higher staff (and administrator) turnover leads to worse quality outcomes, especially for long-term care residents

Figure 3. Heterogeneity of Association of Turnover and Quality Measure Outcomes by Individual Quality Measures



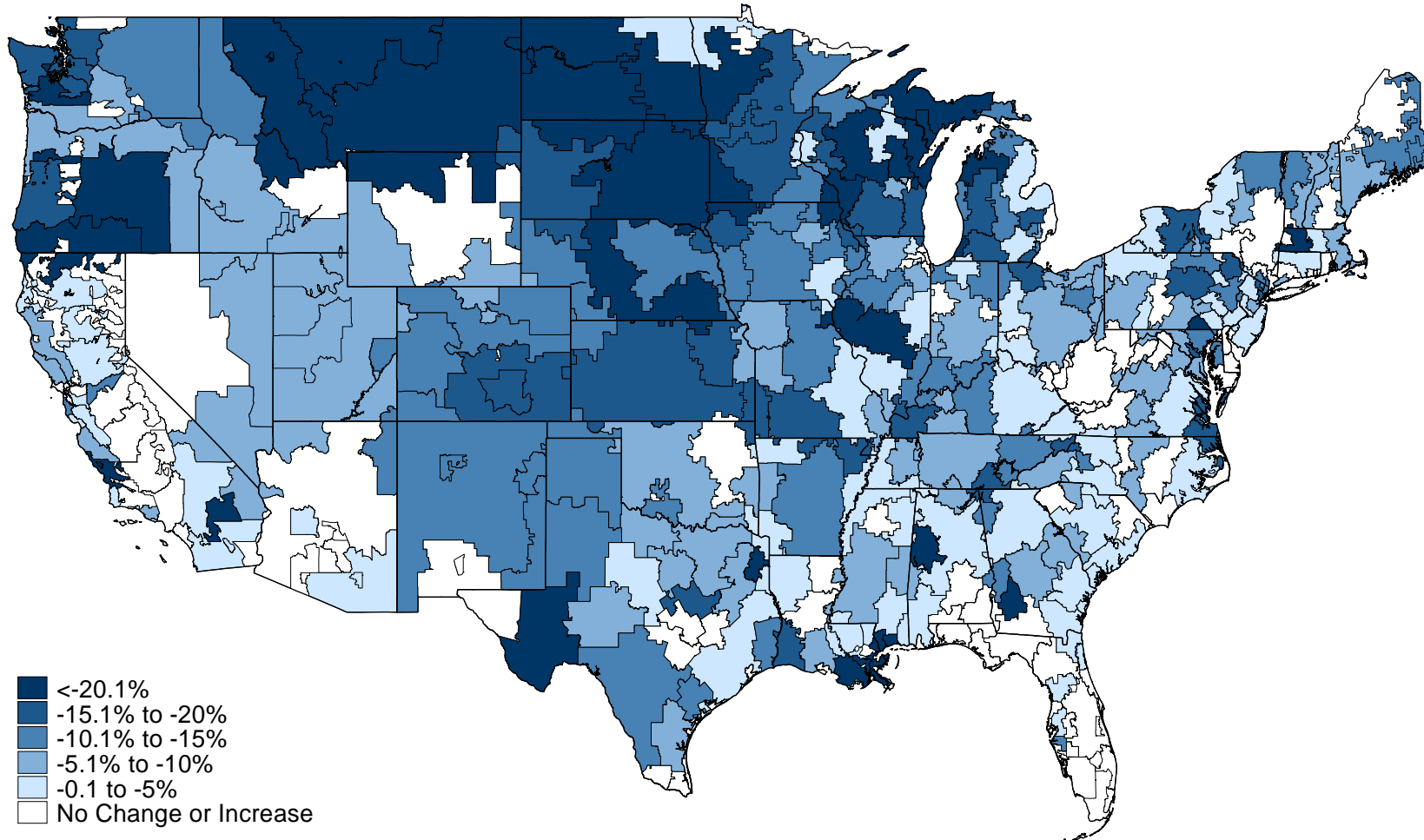
STAFFING AND CARE ACCESS

Workforce shortages and US nursing home capacity

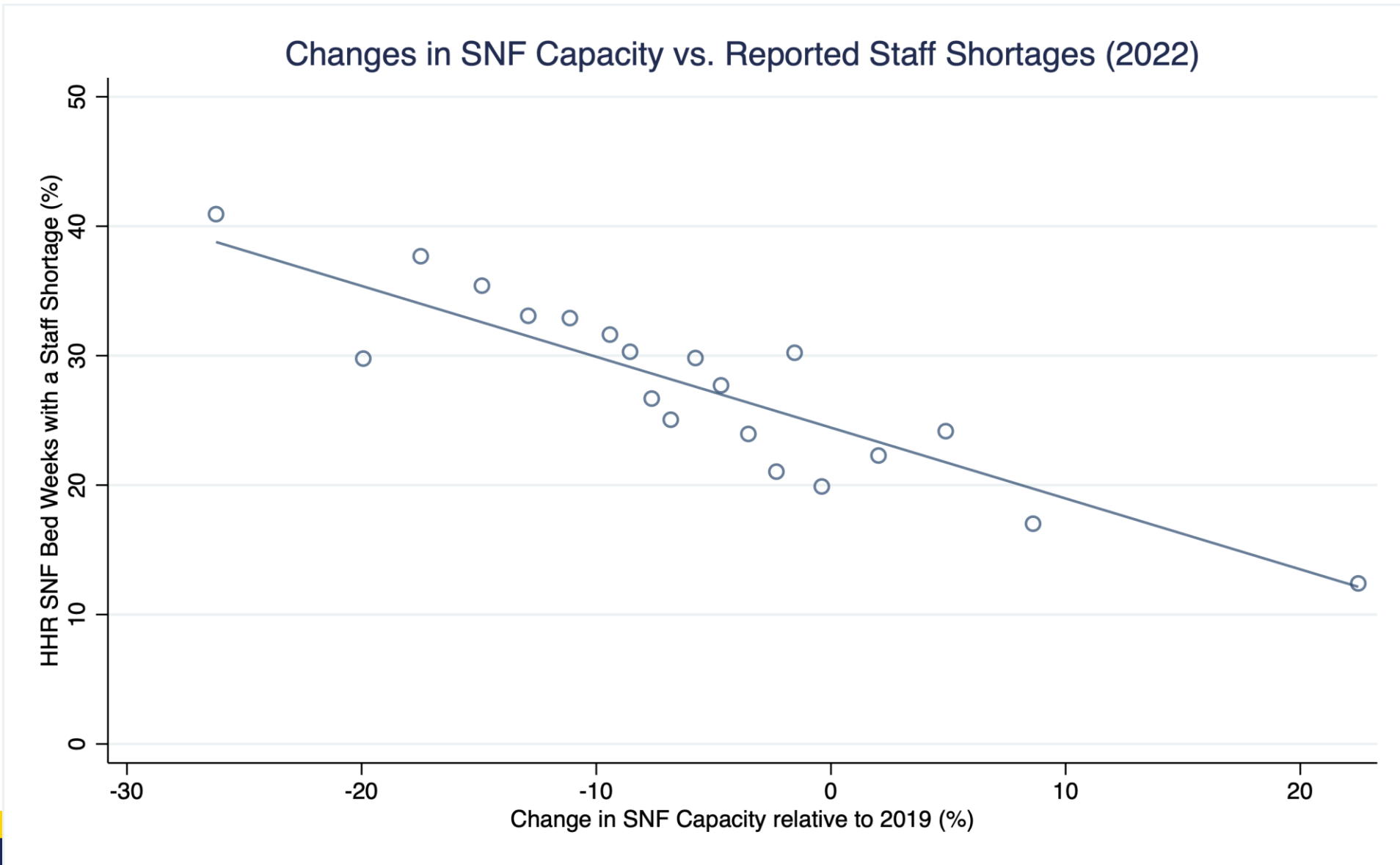
- Ongoing work with Michael Barnett, Ashvin Gandhi, Andrew Wilcock, and David Grabowski
- Estimate nursing home “functional capacity” (beds in operation) using recent maximum census
- Examine changes in functional capacity in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic

US has lost 7-10% of its nursing home capacity since 2019

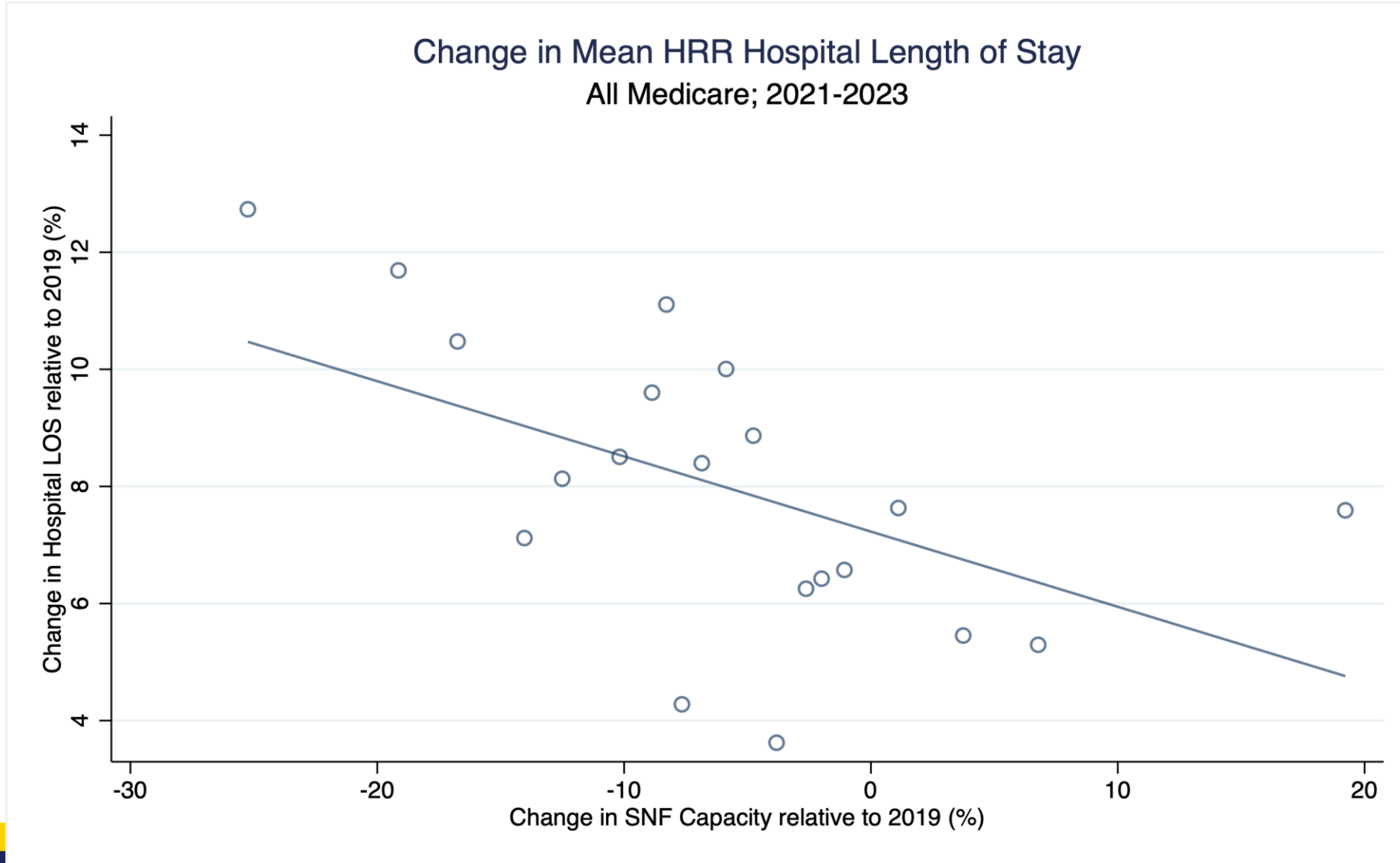
C. Geographic Variation in SNF Bed Availability (2023 vs. 2019)



Capacity declines appear to be related to staffing shortages



Capacity declines may be contributing to longer hospital stays (patients waiting for a bed)



DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

- Nursing home staffing are critical determinants of the availability *and* the quality of long-term nursing home care
- Persistent workforce shortages
- Approaching a state of crisis?
 - Aging of US population
 - Oldest Baby Boomers will turn 80 in 2026

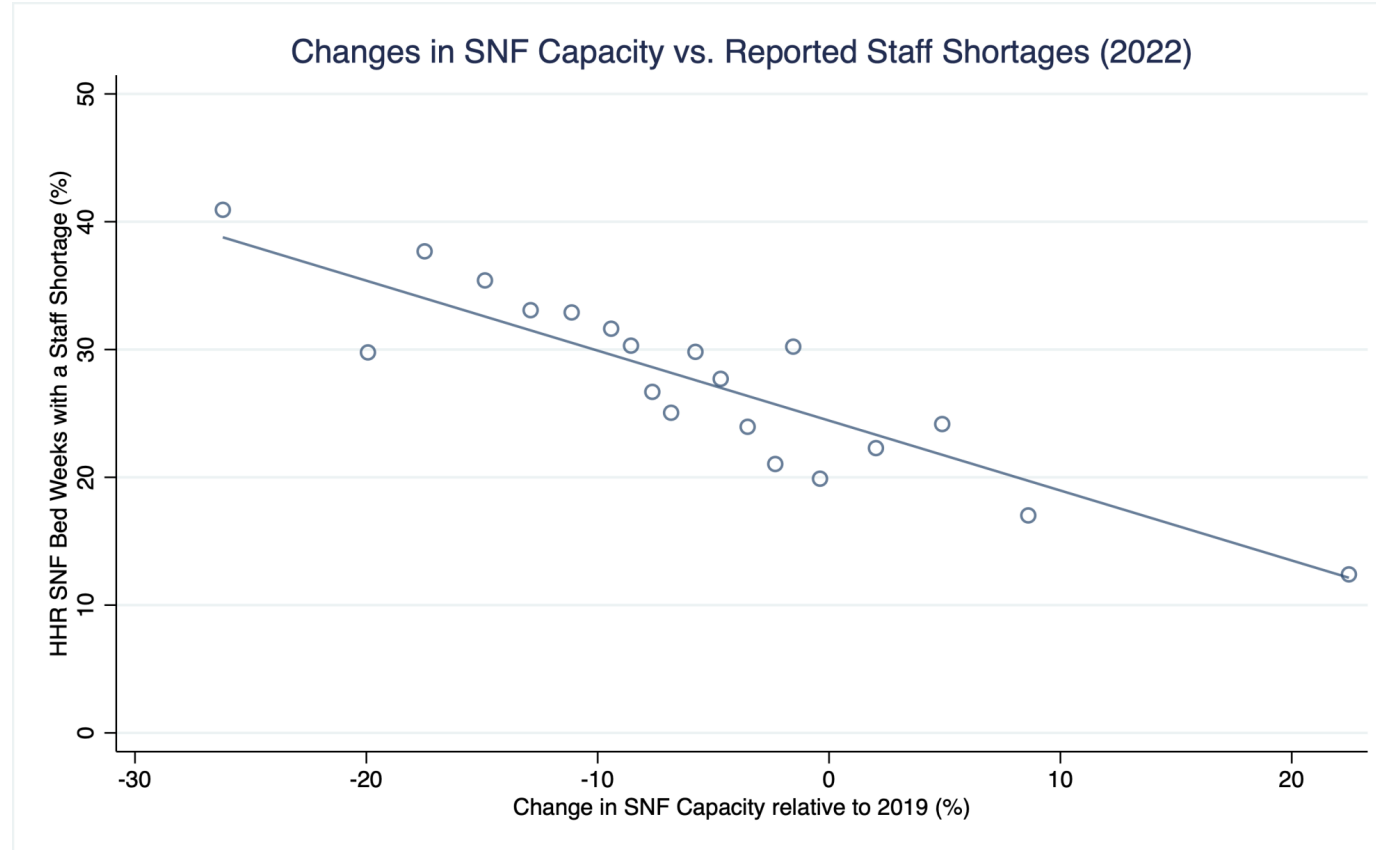
Crisis Averted?

- Federal minimum nursing home staffing standards
 - Biden administration finalized in April 2024
 - Begin taking effect in May 2026
 - Some \$ for education and training of new care workers
 - *Clear increase in demand for care staffing, but will supply respond?*
- Greater oversight to ensure funds are spent on staffing
 - Reduce practice of tunneling (Gandhi and Olenski 2024)
- Immigration Policy as Long-Term Care Policy
 - Increases in immigration increase full-time nursing home staffing and improve care quality (Grabowski, Gruber, McGarry 2023)



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Questions



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