

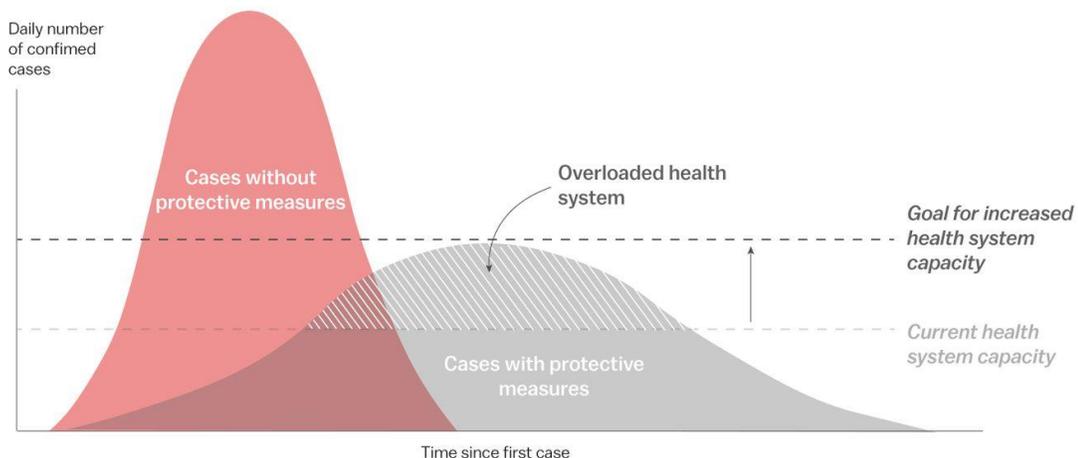
August 4, 2020

Despite the Uptick, Michigan Drops ...

On August 3, the Detroit News ran a headline that said “[Despite uptick](#), Michigan drops out of top 15 states for COVID-19 cases.” This very short article (by Craig Mauger) noted that recently, according to the [Johns Hopkins](#) database, Virginia, Ohio, Alabama and South Carolina had surpassed Michigan for total cases, according to the university's tracking. Due in large part to the severity of early cases, Michigan still ranked ninth in total deaths with 6,212 deaths.

As this is published, with bated breath, clenched teeth, and fervent hopes [that the legislature doesn't do something stupid] your blogger (YB) will note that the restrictive measures put in place by Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan's governor, (also known as “that woman from Michigan”) seem to have flattened the curve. The semi-ugly graphic below, which for many reflects their forced recognition of a normal distribution (although it is not clear that it really is normal), shows that measures can work (the grey curve) ... and they have.

Raising the line while flattening the curve



Source: Adapted from CDC and Kumar Rajaram, UCLA

Vox

It is not clear why Michigan was smacked so hard at the beginning. Detroit Metropolitan Airport is a major port in the US – China air travel industry (YB has flown nonstop to China himself from Detroit), and the initial surge was probably travel and traveler-induced. No one saw it coming, and Michigan (particularly southeastern Michigan) was one of the epicenters along with New York and New Jersey (many feel that the surge in those places related to travel from Europe).

YB and his partner were in Florida when the pandemic struck, and we seriously considered staying there all summer. Place doesn't seem to matter right now, and Florida (at least into early June) seemed to be OK. However, it

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was getting really hot there, and we missed Detroit, so in early June we did a three day drive up I-75.

We're glad we did because we all know what has happened since. Policy has failed in Florida. Florida now has (as of August 3) nearly half a million cases (over five times as many as Michigan), and over 7,000 deaths. Ray Charles (of blessed memory) could have seen this coming. People were flocking to restaurants, and to the beaches. Shoppers at Publix (a grocery chain) masked, but shoppers at other stores often did not. The gyms and the pools reopened. To date Governor Ron DeSantis has refused to issue a mask mandate. Well into the end of July, Governor DeSantis was insisting that all of the schools reopen for "in-person" classes, although he seems to have backed off from that stance as we have moved into August.

In Michigan, we are lucky (thus far) that the adults in the room have made the right decisions, and have been (largely) followed. Even the Republicans (who control the legislature) and some of the more reactionary news media have backed off. Michigan's university presidents have been extraordinarily cautious about reopening, and Michigan State President Samuel Stanley sent the following letter to students this week:

"If you can live safely and study successfully at home, we encourage you to consider that option for the fall semester ...
Living away from campus may be the best choice for you and your family, particularly if you have family members at higher health risk."

(source: <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2020/08/03/msu-president-students-should-consider-studying-home-fall/5577478002/>).

Flattening the curve is not rocket science, but it requires patience and self-control ... and (thus far), it works.

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