

We've successfully flattened the curve. Now get ready for an 'agonizing' COVID-19 plateau

As the summer gets into full swing and much of the country lifts its restrictions on distancing... it's important to keep in mind that we may not see an immediate and dreaded second wave, as many onlookers fear, at least not everywhere in the U.S. Rather, we could be staring at an agonizing plateau for the foreseeable future.

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There are several reasons that might explain why [mass gatherings such as protests] haven't yet led to an explosive outbreak—reasons that similarly lower the odds of an imminent second wave happening all across the country. For one, research is [starting](#) to suggest that most infected people don't spread the virus to others at all. Instead, so-called super-spreading events might account for the bulk of cases in an outbreak or cluster, where only one person or a few people transmit the virus to many others.

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It's absolutely plausible that these or any future outbreaks later on in the year could worsen to the point where much of the U.S. ends up where New York was in April... But it's also possible that we'll continue to see an ebb and flow of hotspots in some parts of the country and never a full-on second wave—a [patchwork pandemic](#), as the Atlantic's Ed Yong has coined it.

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