

Why the US won't spot the next big COVID wave until it's too late

Lines on charts can tell you something about the state of the Covid pandemic in the United States.

Deaths: declining, even with the looming milestone of the millionth US death.

Hospitalizations: at historically low levels, but ticking back up.

Cases: rising, particularly in the Northeast, reliably a harbinger for the rest of the country.

What you can't do with those lines is use them to map your way forward—because at this point, we've reached the choose-your-own-adventure stage of the pandemic.

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All the indicators suggest the US is likely poised for a new surge of Covid; in some parts of the country, that surge may already be arriving.

But in our zeal to declare the pandemic over, we may have maneuvered ourselves into a position where it is now harder to detect a coming wave.

"More and more, the relaxation of public health requirements, mandates, has placed responsibility on the individual and the employer," says Saskia Popescu, an infectious-disease epidemiologist and an assistant professor at George Mason University. "But I've noticed that when we relax these mandates, we're doing that at times that are really inopportune, when case numbers are already increasing."

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)