

Unprecedented Times Within Unprecedented Times: COVID-19 Cases on the Rise

Originally written for Oklahoma State University on December 11, 2020

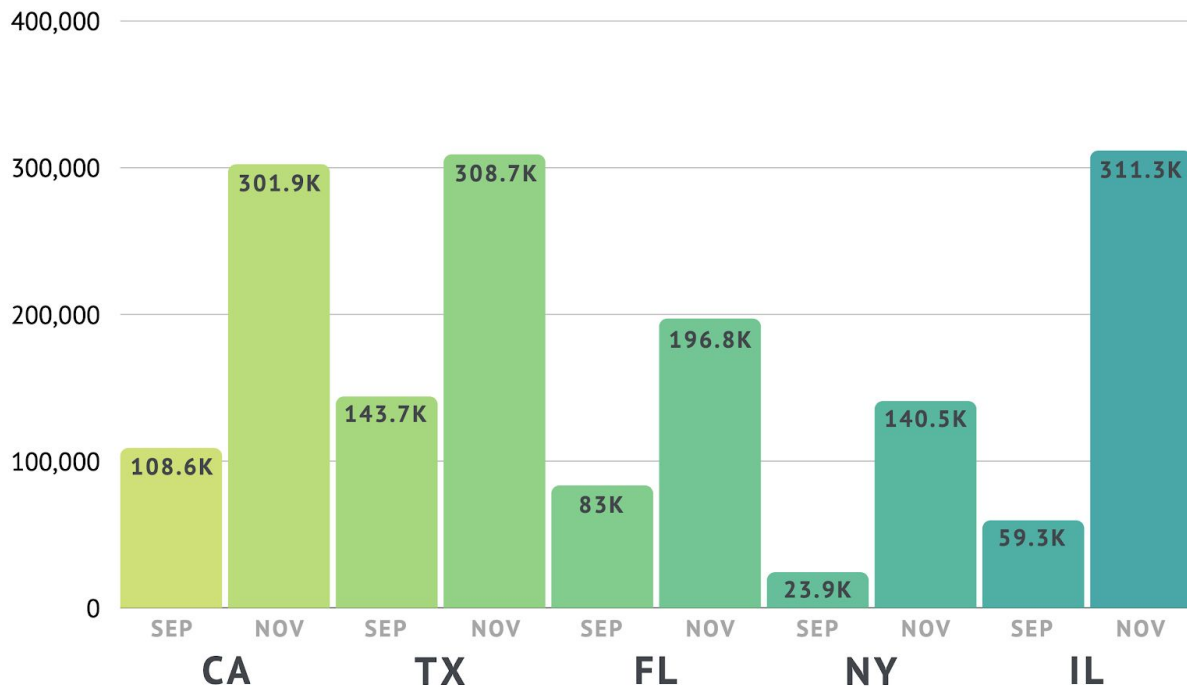
The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought irreparable damage across the United States in 2020, and recent spikes suggest the damage isn't done. New numbers show drastic changes in the last three months. The nation is now entering unprecedented times within unprecedented times.

As far back as September, Dr. Anthony Fauci warned the American public about the possibility of a dangerous season approaching. Fauci, one of the nation's top disease experts and a member of the White House's coronavirus task force, spoke to doctors from Harvard Medical School on an online panel on September 14th.

"We need to hunker down and get through this fall and winter because it's not going to be easy," Fauci said. "As we get into the fall and do more indoor things, we're likely to see upticks in COVID-19."

He was right. All 48 mainland states saw more reported COVID-19 cases in November than in September, with many states' numbers skyrocketing to horrifying heights. Each of the country's five most populous states saw disastrous increases in cases.

MONTHLY COVID-19 CASES



In a year commonly referred to as “unprecedented,” these rises in COVID-19 cases are *truly* unprecedented. Since the beginning of the pandemic, hardly any states have seen such dramatic changes in a short three-month span.

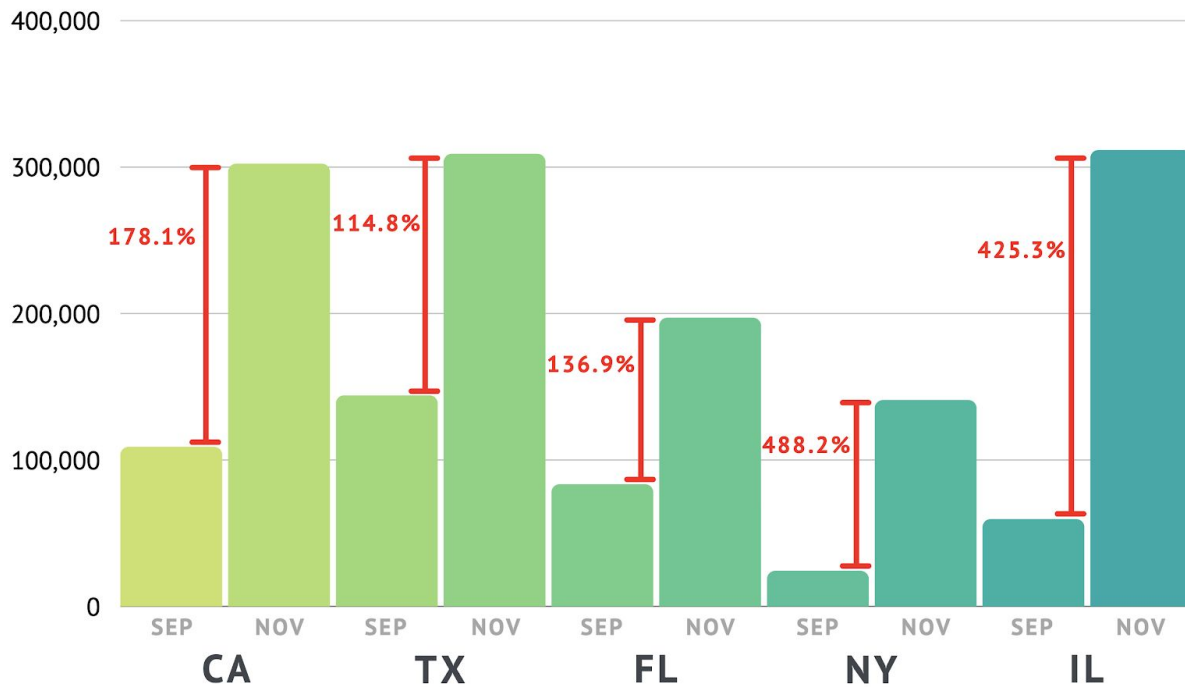
If Halloween weren’t already, Thanksgiving is proving to have been a nationwide super-spreader event. With the holiday season looming ahead, things may not be all that jolly this season. Dr. Colin J. Carlson of Georgetown University predicts a not-so-merry Christmas.

“If people go home for the holidays, they’ll take COVID with them,” Dr. Carlson said. “As people move their socializing indoors—especially if indoor dining or bars stay open—we expect to see massive spikes in cases.”

As a vaccine isn’t expected to see widespread distribution in the United States until late 2021, this struggle is far from over. In fact, it may just be turning a corner into a dangerous home stretch. Using

the numbers from above, we find the percentage increases from September to November in our five most populous states to be striking.

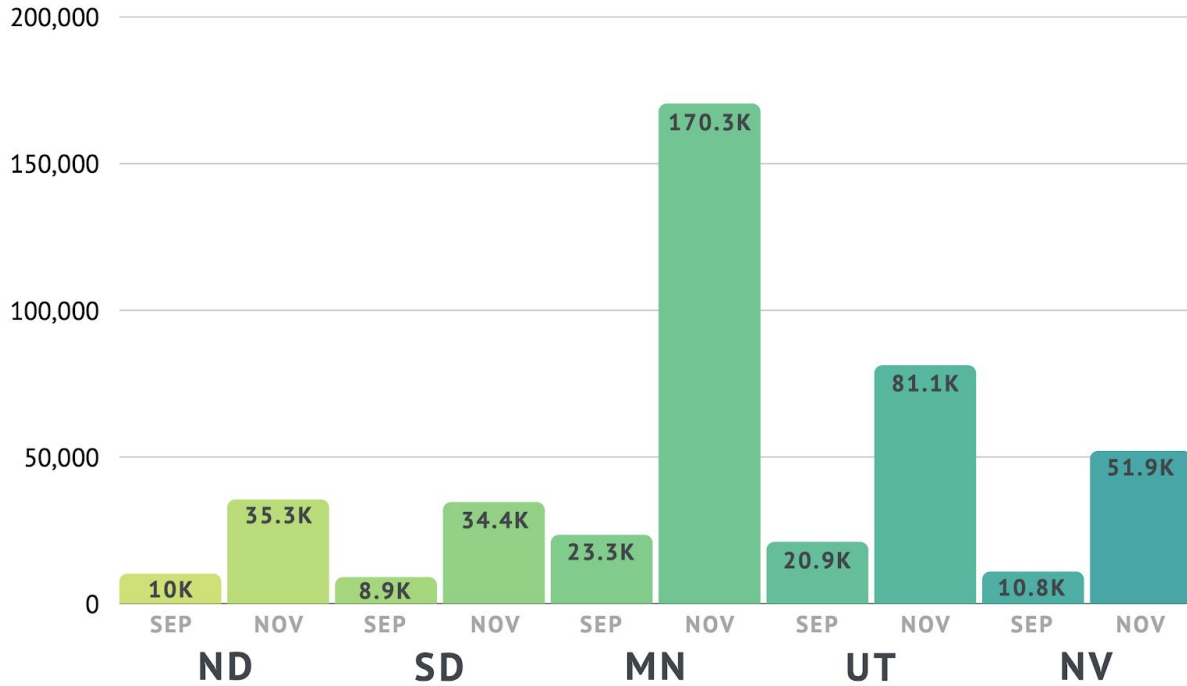
MONTHLY COVID-19 CASE PERCENTAGE INCREASE



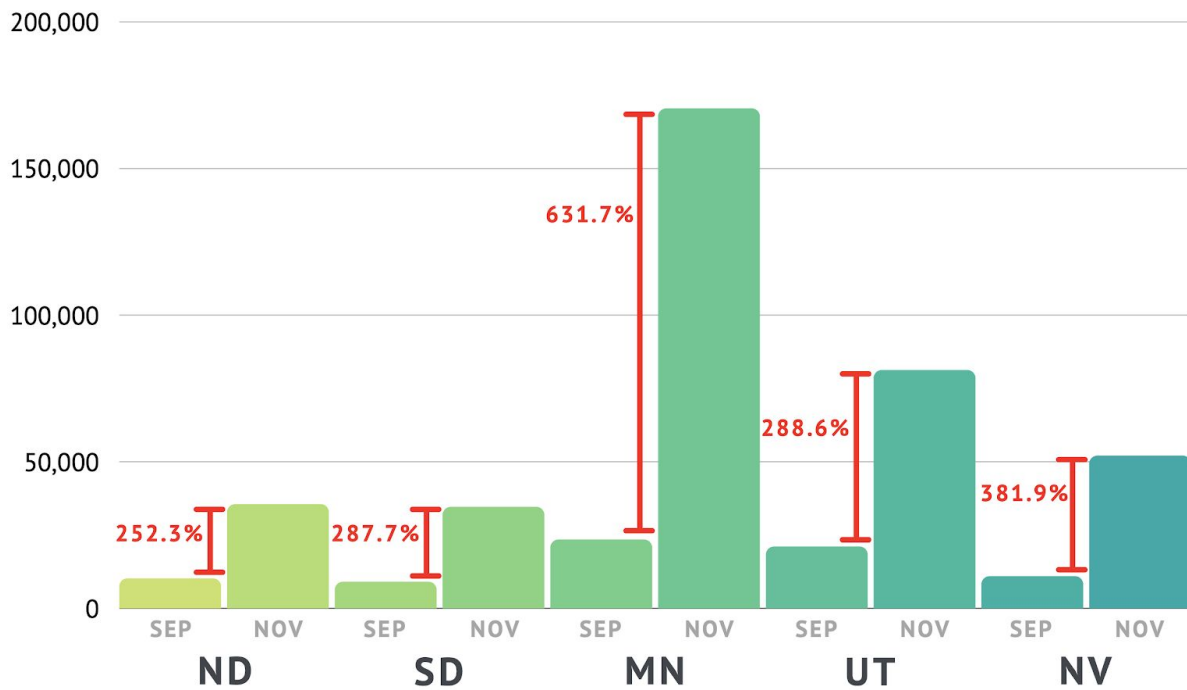
With a disease such as COVID-19 that spreads at an exponential rate, seeing percentages at such high amounts spells a scary future. If it only took three months for New York to see a 488.2% increase in monthly cases, imagine what another six months could mean with an exponentially-spreading pandemic.

Populated states aren't the only ones seeing exponential case growth. In fact, rural states are comprising the currently hardest-hit states. States such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Utah and Nevada are all in the top-ten in average daily cases per 100,000 people in the last seven days. When we plug those states into our graphs, the numbers are just as scary as the populated states.

MONTHLY COVID-19 CASES



MONTHLY COVID-19 CASE PERCENTAGE INCREASE

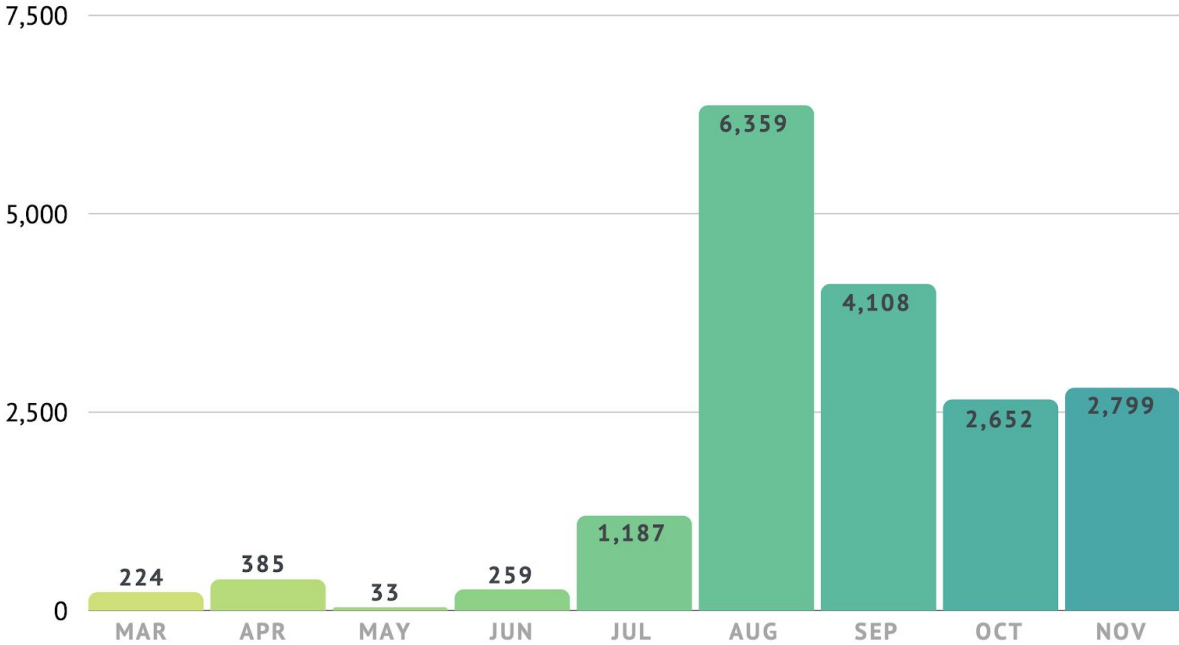


The only state that saw a decrease in COVID-19 cases from September to November was Hawaii. Thanks to the general public’s unwillingness to travel during the pandemic coupled with the state’s travel guidelines, they’ve been able to effectively flatten the curve.

Recently, the state of Hawaii enacted a policy requiring a negative COVID-19 test for all travelers entering the state. If travelers cannot provide a negative test, they must quarantine at their destination for two weeks or the length of their stay, whichever is shorter. Governor David Y. Ige emphasized the health of Hawaiians above all else.

“We’re taking this added safety precaution now in response to the dramatically increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the continental United States and around the world,” Governor Ige said. “The health of our residents and visitors is our primary concern, especially as more people travel to Hawaii to celebrate the holidays.”

MONTHLY COVID-19 CASES: HAWAII



Hawaii is still an outlier, though. The continental United States is home to over 380 million Americans, and none of their states are showing to have bright days ahead of them when it comes to

the pandemic. Nevertheless, there are still measures each American can take as we enter this grueling winter.

There are still a few proven defenses against the coronavirus. They've been echoed for months now, but only because they're the only proven safety mechanisms until a vaccine is ready for widespread use.

Wear a mask at all times. Socially distance. Avoid large gatherings. Stay home when you can. In a pandemic world, these guidelines can save lives and avoid new cases. Considering the frightening recent case trends and the potentially-fatal holiday season we're entering, it's imperative that the American public follows these guidelines. These are truly unprecedented times within unprecedented times.