

## Some troubling signs in our state

COVID TRACKER: 14-day average shows the number of new cases is rising again

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To be honest, back in March, I thought COVID-19 would be calming down by now.

I knew the disease wouldn't be gone – that will take effective vaccines – but I figured warm weather and months of experience would reduce its impact on our lives.

Instead, the coronavirus is surging in much of the country and the world and there are even some worrisome signs in New Hampshire, which so far has been spared the worst. In fact, the *Monitor*'s weekly tracking of four

measures of the disease deteriorated this week, the first time that has happened since we started the project.

Before we get to that, let's look at the longer-term picture. We've gone through four full months of the COVID-19 era, during which the situation in New Hampshire got much

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## After long, steady drop, 14-day average of new cases on rise in N.H.

TRACKER FROM A1

worse but is now better.

As regular readers know, every day I calculate the average of daily confirmed cases and new hospitalizations over the previous two weeks, as well as the total (rather than average) COVID-related deaths over the previous two weeks. Here's how those figures have looked on the first day of each month:

Date	Average cases	Average hospitalizations	Deaths over two weeks
April 1	27	3.9	4
May 1	75	5.7	

long-term care facilities, but it may also reflect how the serious effects of COVID-19 don't show up until a few weeks after the number of cases starts to rise.

In short, we need to be careful. It's easy for us to pat ourselves on the back for how well we've done so far but we can't let our guard down. Even though we thought back in March that we would be able to

Here's our weekly measure of four goals to show the extent of the virus in New Hampshire: **Goal 1:** Conducting at least 150 PCR tests, which spot current COVID-19 cases, per 100,000 people per day.

As I noted above, the two-week average of new cases has not only stopped declining but has been rising slowly.

**Goal 3:** Fewer than four new cases per 100,000 people each day, or 54 new cases a day, which would show that the disease is below dangerous levels.

Have we met this goal? Yes.

**Goal 4:** A positive rate of PCR tests below 5%, indicating that the virus is not spreading rapidly in the general population.

Have we met this goal? Yes.

43 June 1 75 6.3 63 July 1 33 2.4 42  
Aug. 1 35 1.6 18

All those numbers were going up, up, up through May but then they peaked and began a long, slow decline. Hooray for us!

However, look at the most recent tally for new cases. The two-week average bottomed out in mid-July at 25 but since then has slowly edged back up, erasing all of July's gains.

The increase is not huge and could reflect other factors such as changes in testing patterns, but any rise is worrisome because COVID-19 can quickly get out of control.

The good news is that hospitalizations and deaths have not increased so far. This may reflect lessons we've learned about treatment and the need to concentrate on

New Hampshire has 1.35 million people, so that works out to 2,000 tests per day.

Have we met this goal? Yes.

More than 2,000 test results were reported every day but one in the past week and the average rose to 2,600 a day.

As I've noted in the past, the actual number of people tested is much less because of multiple tests to individuals working in health care or high-risk situations, but it still meets the mark.

**Goal 2:** A two-week drop in cases as measured by the 14-day running average, which would indicate that the virus is not spreading.

Have we met this goal? No.

The positive rate has been around 3% as measured by the Department of Health and Human Services for more than two months.

I update three charts each weekday on the virus in New Hampshire: New cases, new hospitalizations and total deaths.

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