New PolicyLab Study Confirms Social Distancing as Most Effective Intervention Against COVID-19

Date:

Thursday, July 23, 2020

A new PolicyLab study published today in *JAMA Network Open* found that social distancing remains the most effective intervention to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The study—led by PolicyLab Director David Rubin, MD, MSCE, and PolicyLab researchers Gregory Tasian, MD, MSc, MSCE, and Jing Huang, PhD—showed spring-like temperatures contributed to some reduction in the spread of the virus, but without strong social distancing practices, the beneficial impact of temperature was not fully realized.

To conduct the study, the researchers monitored social distancing during the initial period of the pandemic using county-level cellphone data that tracks changes in travel to non-essential businesses. Additionally, the experts used wet-bulb temperatures, which capture the combined effect of temperature and humidity, to study the effects of weather on COVID-19 transmission and found that temperatures between 60-65°F had the greatest benefit on reducing the spread of the virus. The results emphasize why enforceable mitigation policies, such as commitment to social distancing and universal masking requirements, were critical to containing viral transmission over the summer season.

In turn, the data and methodology from this study has informed the development of the team's COVID-Lab: Mapping COVID-19 in Your Community, which tracks and projects COVID-19 transmission at the county level. Be sure to read the study here, visit the COVID-Lab model here and read more about this unique project here.

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