Is it truthful?

From my perspective, this figure is not so truthful. Here are my reasons:

1, There are no numbers on the x-axis and y-axis, so we are not sure what is the difference between the peak of cases before and after social distancing. Similarly, we are not sure to what extent that social distancing will delay the peak. Without this two significant information, the arguments of this figure may be weakened. Actually, I don’t believe the change of case numbers would be so clean without any noise;

2, This picture is misleading, because the shapes of “without measures” and “with measures” remind people of normal distribution. However, they are not normal distribution of any kind—they are the relationship between time and new cases. In that sense, it provides some skeptical information even if the author did not mean to;

3, The blue area and the yellow area are very close in size. I am not sure this is supported by any empirical data. In fact, I don’t believe they should be—social distance should decrease the total number of infected cases. This pattern often appears in normal distribution. As I mention in 2, they are not normal distribution in any kind, so this may also add to people’s misunderstandings;

4, It gives people the impression that “with measures” and “without measures” are two different things without any relationship—however, in reality, they are not. Two peaks cannot co-exist. For any analytical unit, usually only one peak exists, either “with measures” or “without measures”. For the districts where measures are taken some time after the first case is identified, “with measures” and “without measures” should be aligned and continuous.

For the four reasons mentioned above, I think the figure is not so truthful. The advice for improvements is as follows:

1, add y-axis and x-axis. Draw the picture based on these coordinates.

2, Don’t use abstract shapes; use the empirical datasets of United States (or other spatial units) and show all the fluctuations. For future dates without empirical datasets, predictions by medical models can be used.

Is it functional?

It is an attracting figure that conveys two information: 1, social distancing delays the peak of new cases; 2, social distancing decreases the height of the peak. It does convey this two information quite efficiently. However, as to other aspects, it does not do so well. It is too abstract without much useful information.

Is it beautiful?

Yes—I think it is good. The colors are beautiful, with two different periods with contrasting colors. However, its simplicity limits its truthfulness and functionality.

How to improve? I think there are several things we can do. Firstly, add a grid in the background—to make it more accurate while more stylish. Secondly, some irrelevant details can be deleted, like the red square on the left top and number 2 on the right top. These details will make the figure messy and too complex.

Is it insightful?

Yes-I think it conveys the basic arguments very well, and this argument is quite solid. However, it may need further improvements to contain more information since the current version is too simple.

Is it enlightening?

I don’t think that the current picture is very enlightening. Most people can easily know that social distancing will decrease the number of cases and delay the peak—after all, this measure is for controlling the disease. If it does not, why do we do it? I think more detailed information will be more interesting: for example: how much social distancing will decrease the number of new cases? How long will it delay the peak? Does this measure effect all the states? Is this effect size different for different states? If these questions can be answered, it would be far more interesting and enlightening than the current version because the current figure contains too little valid info.