Lockdown rollback checklist: Do countries meet WHO recommendations for rolling back lockdown?

Research note

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As countries begin to roll back 'lockdown' measures, how and when do we know it is safe to do so?

The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) provides a cross-national overview of which countries meet four of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) six recommendations for relaxing physical distancing measures.

While the OxCGRT data cannot fully say how ready countries are to leave lockdown, it does provide for a rough comparison across nations. Even this 'high level' view reveals that few countries are close to meeting the WHO criteria for rolling back lockdown measures.

At the time of writing, only a handful of countries are doing well at the four 'checklist' criteria OxCGRT is able to track.

World Health Organization criteria

The WHO has recently outlined six categories of measures governments need to have in place before rolling back 'lockdown' measures. In brief, these are as follows (quoted in part; for full descriptions see here):

1. COVID-19 transmission is controlled to a level of sporadic cases and clusters of cases, all from known contacts or importations; at a minimum, new cases would be reduced to a level that the health system can manage based on health care capacity.

2. Sufficient public health workforce and health system capacities are in place to enable the major shift from detecting and treating mainly serious cases to detecting and isolating all cases, irrespective of severity and whether there is local transmission or an importation.

3. Outbreak risks in high-vulnerability settings are minimised, which requires all major drivers or amplifiers of COVID-19 transmission to have been identified, with appropriate measures in place to maximise physical distancing and minimise the risk of new outbreaks.

4. Preventive measures are established in workplaces.

5. Manage the risk of exporting and importing cases from communities with high risks of transmission.

6. Communities are fully engaged and understand that the transition away from large-scale movement restrictions and public health and social measures – from detecting and treating serious cases to detecting and isolating all cases – is a 'new normal' in which prevention measures would be maintained, and that all people have key roles in preventing a resurgence in case numbers.

What does the Oxford data measure?

OxCGRT currently provides information relevant to recommendations 2, 4, and 6. We combine this with epidemiological data from the European Centre for Disease Control on cases and deaths, provided by Our World in Data, which address recommendation 1, and data from Apple and Google on travel and mobility, which further address recommendation 6. OxCGRT also tracks emergency investments in the healthcare system since 1 January 2020, which can provide useful contextual information. See our working paper for a complete description of the data.

From this information, we construct a "Lockdown rollback table," defined below, which roughly describes how close countries are to achieving four of the six current WHO recommendations.

Because the data only measure four of six recommended actions, we should be cautious about inferring what countries are ready to rollback lockdown from this measure. Indeed, the data provides a better indication of what countries are *not* ready.

Moreover, we stress that the WHO recommendations are more specific and extensive than cross-national measures like OxCGRT can readily provide. The checklist below should therefore be seen as a starting point for assessing a country's preparedness for leaving lockdown. In particular, we note that the OxCGRT data measure countries' stated policies, not how well they implement them.

We will continue to develop our assessment of the WHO checklist as new indicators become available.

WHO recommendation	OxCGRT indicators	Rollback readiness
Transmission controlled	Daily cases and deaths (from European CDC via Our World in Data)	New daily cases <50 and daily growth rate lower than a week ago
Test / trace / isolate	S12 (testing policy) S13 (contact tracing policy)	S12 + S13 gives a value between 0 and 5(does not measure isolation)
High vulnerability settings	*Not currently measured*	*Not currently measured*
Preventative measures established in workplaces	*Not currently measured*	*Not currently measured*
Manage risk of exporting and importing cases	S7 (international travel restrictions)	S7 gives a value between 0 and 3 (does not measure risk of exporting cases)
Communities fully engaged	S5 (public information campaigns) Travel and mobility data from Apple and Google	Must have a nationwide public info campaign (S5 = 1G); reduction from baseline mobility levels
	S10 (investments in health system since 1 January 2020)	*Not included, but useful contextually*

Assessing countries on the Lockdown Rollback Checklist
As of 22 April 2020, we estimate that no countries fully meet all 4 of the WHO recommendations we are able to estimate with the OxCGRT data, and less than a dozen are coming close. We conclude that further steps are likely needed to ensure a safe re-opening of society in the next weeks.

Table 1: Lockdown Rollback Checklist 20 April 2020

(NB: Not every country is updated every day, so data for any particular country may be several days out of date)

Less ready to exit lockdown · · · More ready to exit lockdown

	Cases controlled	Test, trace, isolate	Vulnerable settings (no data)	Preventative measures in workplaces (no data)	Manage imported cases	Community understanding		Overall (based on 4/6)
Vietnam								
Trinidad and Tobago								
Costa Rica								
South Korea								
Belize								
Hong Kong								
New Zealand								
Slovenia								
Jordan								
Barbados								
Mauritius								
Iceland								
Croatia								
Guam								
Lebanon								
Uganda								
Rwanda								
Zimbabwe								
Myanmar								
Albania								
India								
Burkina Faso								
Laos								
Aruba								
Thailand								
United Arab Emirates								
Cameroon								
Italy								
Portugal								
Philippines								
Greenland								
Ecuador								
South Africa								
Colombia								
Romania								
Chile								
Oman								
Sri Lanka								
Kyrgyz Republic								
Singapore								

Table 1: Lockdown Rollback Checklist 20 April 2020

Country							
Austria							
Turkey							
Ghana							
Niger							
Australia							
Bosnia and Herzegovina							
Canada							
Malawi							
South Sudan							
Panama							
Macao							
Peru							
Iraq							
United States							
Guyana							
Bermuda							
China							
Kuwait							
Serbia							
Dominican Republic							
Gabon							
Mozambique							
Israel							
Saudi Arabia							
Paraguay							
Guatemala							
Hungary							
Andorra							
Egypt							
Indonesia							
Pakistan							
Slovak Republic							
Namibia							
Greece							
Spain							
Morocco							
Argentina							
Gambia							
Syria							
Czech Republic							
Bahrain							
Uruguay							
Honduras							
Russia							
Japan							
El Salvador							
Malaysia							
Kazakhstan							
Botswana							
Qatar							
Belgium							

| Nigeria |
| Mexico |
| Ukraine |
| Taiwan |
| Papua New Guinea |
| Bangladesh |
| Tunisia |
| Mongolia |
| Djibouti |
| Netherlands |
| Switzerland |
| Burundi |
| Kosovo |
| Chad |
| Bolivia |
| France |
| Nicaragua |
| Cyprus |
| Estonia |
| Angola |
| Denmark |
| Bulgaria |
| Norway |
| Sweden |
| Brazil |
| Poland |
| Finland |
| Jamaica |
| Libya |
| Venezuela |
| Puerto Rico |
| Mali |
| Moldova |
| Kenya |
| Azerbaijan |
| Seychelles |
| Sierra Leone |
| Zambia |
| Germany |
| Brunei |
| San Marino |
| Cuba |
| Uzbekistan |
| Madagascar |
| Eswatini |
| Tanzania |
| Luxembourg |
| Dominica |
| Sudan |
| Democratic Republic of Congo |

Ireland							
Afghanistan							
Lesotho							
Algeria							
United Kingdom							
Palestine							
Mauritania							
Iran							