

Fortaleza, Ceará

Figure CE.1 – Accumulated number of deaths and deaths per capita for Ceará and the seven other states surveyed.

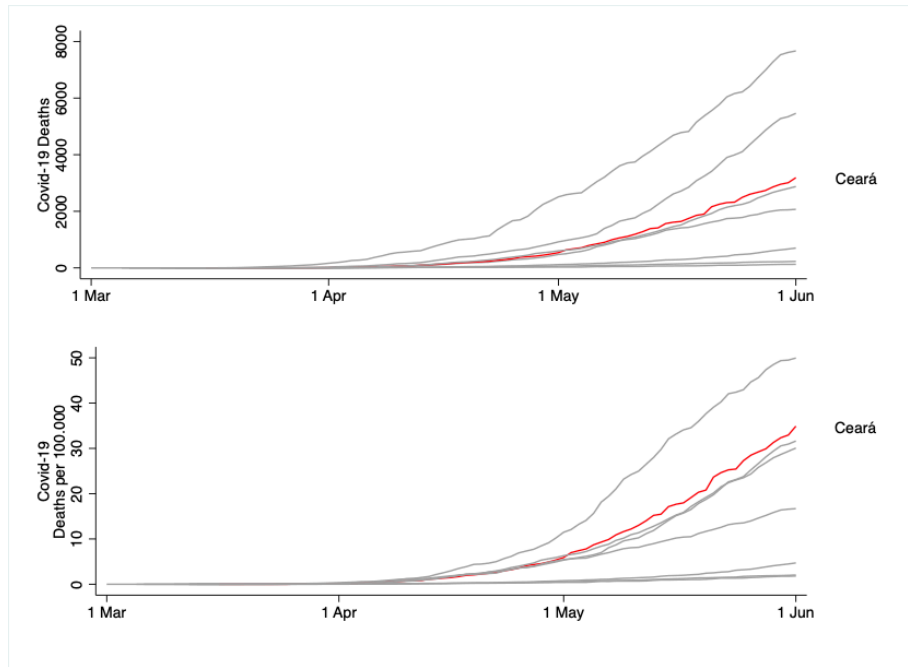
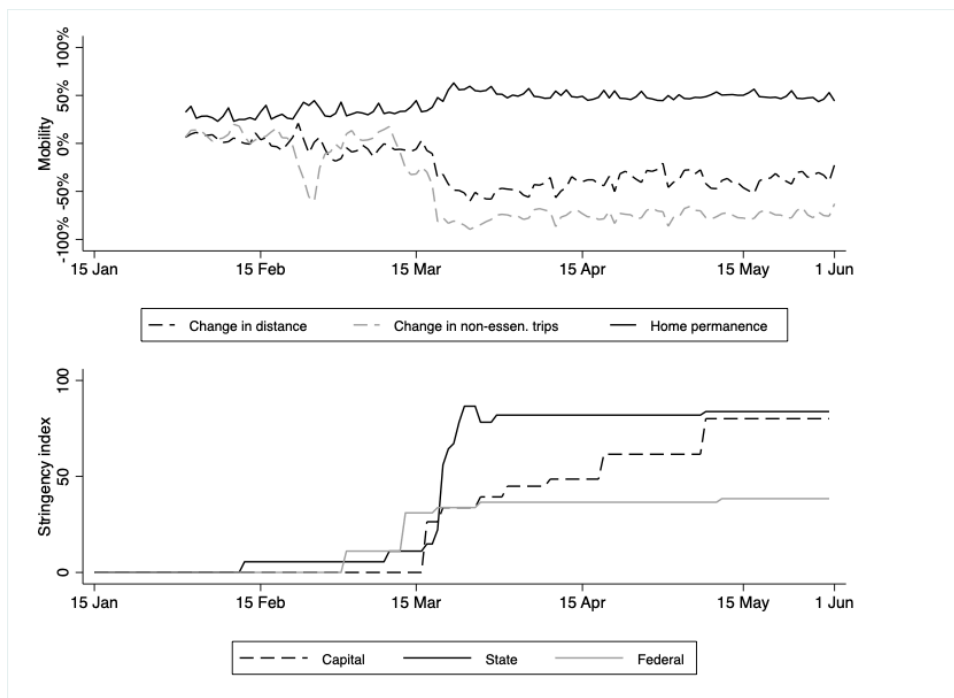


Figure CE.2 – Mobility indicators for Ceará and the OxCGRT stringency index for different levels of government.



State and City Government Responses

The first five cases of Covid-19 in the state of Ceará were confirmed on 17 March, and the first three deaths on 26 March. Since then, Ceará has become one of the states with the highest per capita number of cases and deaths in the country, with 841.3 cases and 53.5 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants as of 15 June.

The state government of Ceará acted swiftly. It published a decree declaring a health emergency and established a series of measures to contain the virus, the day before the first case in the state was officially confirmed. This decree required the suspension of public events at which more than 100 people tend to congregate, the closing of all establishments where large numbers of people gather together (including shows, cinemas, theatres, libraries and cultural centres), and the closure of all state schools and universities. Over the following days, the state government implemented additional measures, requiring all non-essential services to close, such as bars, restaurants, gyms, shops and museums, and suspending the activities of churches and other religious institutions. Ceará has been one of the few states in Brazil to impose restrictions on industry, however, it has made exceptions for businesses that produce essential goods, such as pharmaceutical and cleaning products, food, water, as well as energy companies. The state-wide closure and containment measures were in place until 31 May, and thereafter some of the restrictions started to be removed in parts of the state, while in other parts stricter measures were introduced.

Since mid-March, the governor of Ceará has repeatedly addressed the population emphasising the importance of staying at home as much as possible. No state-wide stay-at-home requirements have been established, however. The state transport regulator suspended all intercity trains from 21 March and all intercity buses from 23 March. These public transport closures were initially in place for ten days, but have been extended several times. These services are currently expected to resume only in final phase the reopening plan.

International travel controls have been the subject of legal battles. On 22 March, a legal ruling allowed the state government to implement entry screening of passengers from both domestic flights and international ones (which land in Fortaleza International Airport). The federal health and sanitary regulator appealed against this measure, but on 2 April the Court of Appeals decided in favour of the state governor's proposed screening policy. On 24 March, another court decision provisionally banned departures and arrivals of all international flights in the state of Ceará, but this ban was later overturned.

On 5 May, a state decree established stricter social distancing measures for the city of Fortaleza, which were initially in place from 8 to 20 May, and then extended until 31 May. The mayor of Fortaleza issued a decree with similarly strict measures in response to low levels of social distancing identified through mobility data and the especially fast-growing number of cases and deaths in the capital. In May, Ceará's health system was reaching capacity. These new measures permitted residents of Fortaleza to only leave their homes when necessary, such as when they needed to buy groceries, for health reasons, and for work if they do a job that is considered to be essential. The use of

private vehicles in Fortaleza was also restricted (cars could only circulate within the city to enable people to access essential services). However taxis and ride-hailing vehicles were free to operate as per usual. During the lockdown period, officers from both the state and the city governments controlled the flow of people and vehicles coming in and going out of Fortaleza. Those violating the rules could be subjected to civil and criminal penalties.

In light of the perceived success of these stricter containment policies, in terms of both lowering the number of Covid-19 cases and the volume of public hospital appointments, on 28 May, the state government published a plan to gradually remove some of the restrictions. From 1 June, the transition phase allowed dental practices and medical clinics to reopen, and some industries to partially operate again. From 8 June, Fortaleza was the first city in the state to move into the first phase of the reopening plan, in which construction work, industry, and commerce (including shopping centres) were allowed to operate again with 40% of their employees on site, and as long as physical distancing and hygiene protocols are followed. The majority of the municipalities in Ceará remained in the transition phase, while in some municipalities in the north of the state, stricter distancing measures were brought in.

Fortaleza Survey Results

Fortaleza has 2.7 million inhabitants, with 10% of the population above 60 years of age. Its Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.754 according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), making it the 18th most developed state capital out of 27.

The results show that 17% of the respondents in Fortaleza did not leave their homes in a two-week prior between 22 April and 13 May. Those who did venture out did so on average on 4.7 days. Three quarters of respondents left home to access essential services, such as going to the supermarket, pharmacy or to the bank. Eighteen percent of went out to work during this period (compared to 66% who did in February). Those who went out estimated that 81% of people were wearing masks on the street. Only 4% of respondents had ever been tested for the virus, and 2.5% declared having tried to access a test without success. To put these percentages in context, 10% of respondents in Fortaleza reported having had symptoms.

According to those who had visited hospitals and supermarkets in Fortaleza, mask use was common among employees, soap or alcohol gel were easily accessible for visitors, and distancing measures had generally been established. Among those going to work, 62% said that distancing measures were in place in their where they worked, to keep employees two metres apart. Only a quarter of people in Fortaleza said that they used public transport in February, and 13% stated that they had used it in the two weeks prior to interview. Reduced public transport services prevented 16% of respondents from going about their intended activities.

Levels of knowledge about the symptoms of Covid-19 and about the meaning and practices of self-isolation were similar in Fortaleza to average survey responses across the eight urban populations. Residents of Fortaleza scored on average 82 out of 100 for 'knowledge of symptoms' and 46 out of 100 for 'knowledge about self-isolation'. (See the results section of the main paper for an explanation of these scores.)

When respondents were asked where they get most of their information about Covid-19, a slight majority said TV news shows (52%). Newspapers and newspapers websites were the second most common source (24%). Out of the 69% of respondents who had seen campaigns from the government, 80% saw them on the TV, 35% in newspapers. Most of these people (75%) said they had seen campaigns from the state government, while 33% saw campaigns from the federal government, and 30% saw them from the city government).

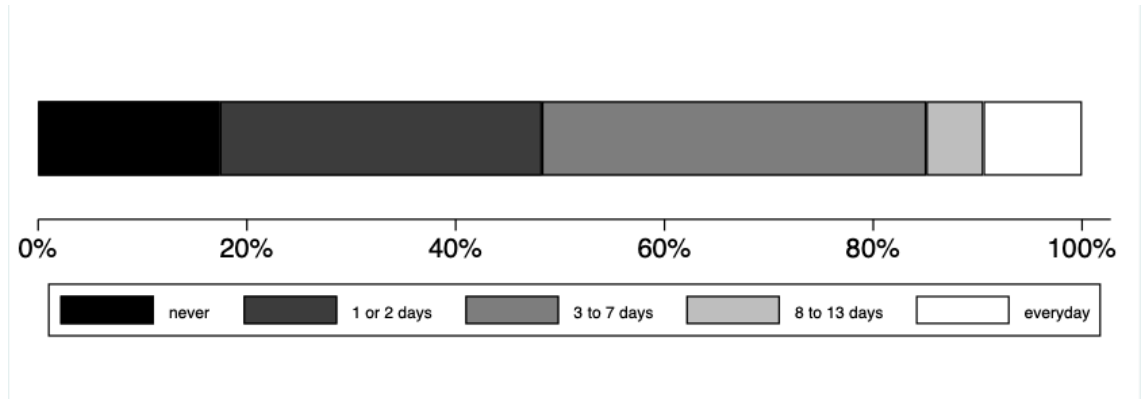
In Fortaleza, only 23% of people believe that the public health system in their region is well prepared (13%) or very well prepared (10%) to handle Covid-19, and 87% of people were either worried (11%) or very worried (76%) that hospital equipment, beds, or doctors, would not meeting demand.

A large majority (82%) of people in Fortaleza perceive Covid-19 to be much more serious than a common flu. Approval of the current public measures to fight the spread of the disease is high, with 56% considering the response to be adequate, while 27% of people of the opinion that the measures are insufficiently stringent, and 17% believing them to be too stringent. Most people think government response policies will be lifted gradually: only 23% said they expected them to be lifted in one go. On average, people in Fortaleza expect it will take 4.9 months for government response policies to be completely removed.

This summary is part of a broader study about Brazil's Covid-19 response policies. Please visit <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/brazils-covid-19-policy-response> for the full report: Petherick A., Goldszmidt R., Kira B. and L. Barberia. 'Do Brazil's COVID-19 government response measures meet the WHO's criteria for policy easing?' Blavatnik School of Government Working Paper, June 2020.

Figure CE.3 – Social distancing, knowledge and testing in Fortaleza.

A. Number of days that respondents left home in the previous two weeks.



B. Testing, knowledge, mask use, and reasons for leaving home.

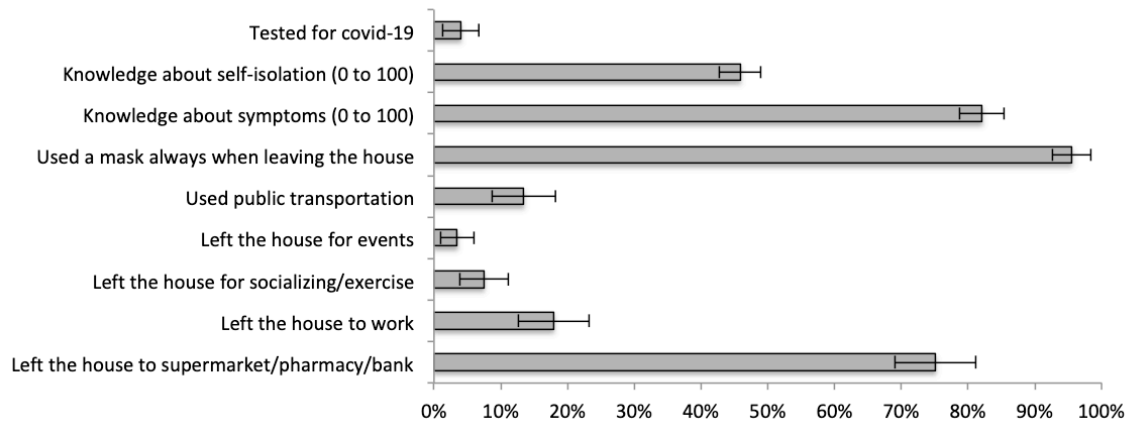


Figure CE.4: Hand hygiene, distancing and mask use.

