FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oxford's coronavirus policy tracker adds data for US states

Pandemic policy comparison tool by the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government now includes a breakdown by US state, recording significant differences in state response

The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker has today released data measuring policy responses to the pandemic across all 50 US states.

This expands the global policy comparator to examine the state-by-state picture in the USA.

The data shows that while US states responded relatively similarly in the first weeks of the pandemic, by April they began to diverge, and now there are significant differences in state responses across regions, between states with Republican and Democratic governors, and between those that voted for Donald Trump in 2016 versus those that voted for Hilary Clinton. The difference in responses has endured even as the total coronavirus cases across different states and regions has started to converge.

The tracker also highlights a July–August surge in cases in some of the states which rolled back restrictions in May–June.

The tracker systematically records government responses to the coronavirus worldwide on 17 indicators such as school closures and travel restrictions, and allows these to be plotted against coronavirus cases and deaths. It aggregates policy responses into indices between 1 and 100 to reflect the level of government action, providing:

1. a **containment and health** index, showing how many and how forceful the measures to contain the virus and protect citizen health are (this combines 'lockdown' restrictions and closures with measures such as testing policy and contact tracing)
2. an **economic support** index, showing the extent of economic support that has been made available (such as income support and debt relief)
3. a **stringency index,** which records the strictness of 'lockdown style' policies that primarily restrict people's behaviour
4. an **overall government response** index (which records how the response of states has varied over all indicators, and become 'stronger' or 'weaker' over the course of the outbreak).

The score given is not an evaluation of the effectiveness of state responses, nor is it fully comprehensive in terms of measures, but it does allow for simple cross-state comparisons of government interventions – and when combined with data on coronavirus infections and deaths and considered alongside contextual factors, it provides one tool to help policymakers assess what works well.

[Thomas Hale](), Associate Professor of Global Public Policy at the [Blavatnik School of Government]() and lead for this project, says: "As the COVID-19 outbreak enters a new, dangerous phase in the United States, understanding variation in government responses across states is key.

"Since March, the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker has provided a unique global dataset measuring government response across 180 countries globally. The addition of US states creates a new resource that allows researchers, decision-makers, and the public to better understand government responses to the outbreak in the US, one of the most affected countries.

"It's important to note that that a high score – meaning a high level of government measures – does not imply that a state has necessarily been more appropriate or effective in its response. The data does, though, allow policymakers and researchers to learn lessons for the future, by combining the data we provide with important contextual information we don't attempt to cover, such as demographics, population density and the local political and social context.

"Given the political debates in the US, we analysed the data by party. On average, Republican-leaning states have not implemented as robust government responses as Democratic-leaning states, and they roll measures back more quickly. This may be at least partially explained by the fact that Republican-leaning states have in past months experienced a lower caseload. However, 'Red' and 'Blue' states have been converging in terms of caseload – in fact, Republican-leaning states have just overtaken Democratic-leaning states in total number of cases. Their responses remain significantly lower despite this convergence."

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Notes to editor

- The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker's data and its indices are freely available online and will continue to be updated, refined and improved throughout the crisis: [www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker]()

- Detailed analysis of the US state-level data has been published in a working paper here: [https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/publications/variation-us-states-responses-covid-19]()

- Today sees the release of a unique data set covering all 50 US states and DC. It covers a wide range of closure and containment policies (e.g. stay at home orders, workplace closures) as well as health responses (eg testing and contact tracing).
  - It includes daily measures for all 50 states and a number of territories, from Jan 1 to the present
  - Data will be updated continuously going forward

- The tracker data is collected from publicly available information by a cross-disciplinary team of more than 100 academics, students and alumni from every part of the world. Eight of the policy indicators record information on containment and closure policies, such as school closures and restrictions in movement. Four of the indicators record economic policies, such as income support to citizens or provision of foreign aid. Five indicators record health system policies such as the COVID-19 testing regime or emergency investments into healthcare. More information on the methodology is available on the project page on the Blavatnik School website.

- Government responses vary significantly from one country to another and from state to state, and like any policy interventions, their effect is highly contingent on local political and social context. The COVID-19 Government Response Indices, like all aggregate indices which combine different indicators into a general index, should not be interpreted as measuring the appropriateness or effectiveness of a country's or a state's response.

- With the rapidly evolving situation, the data collection is live and ongoing. The project team welcomes specific feedback on both country data and analysis. Please visit the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker page to fill in a feedback form.

The Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford exists to inspire and support better government and public policy around the world. The Blavatnik School teaches current and future public leaders through innovative programmes, conducts independent, evidence-based research into pressing issues facing policymakers – from improving education to reducing corruption – and convenes leaders and experts across disciplines and sectors to share knowledge, exchange ideas and identify solutions. www.bsg.ox.ac.uk