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## **Countries still face risks as they relax, says Oxford's new risk index**

A new index today from Oxford's COVID-19 Government Response Tracker reveals that countries are facing considerable risks as they try to return to 'pre-COVID' life.

After introducing measures to limit the spread of the virus in the first half of the year, governments are now balancing their response between aggressive containment measures and relaxing the 'lockdown' measures. To help countries understand if it is safe to 'open up' or whether they should 'close down' in their fight to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government has today launched the new Risk of Openness Index.

According to the Risk of Openness Index, right now many countries are still facing considerable risks, even as some resist imposing, or re-imposing closure and containment policies. At present, Bulgaria, France, Tunisia, and Haiti stand out as places that have both a high risk of openness and few closure and containment policies\*. Other countries with rising levels of risk, such as Spain, the UK, or Australia have maintained or re-introduced restrictions.

**Thomas Hale, associate professor at the Blavatnik School and lead for the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker, said:** "As the pandemic evolves and countries have eased their 'lockdown' measures, the Risk of Openness Index provides a new tool to assess which countries are facing greater risk and, thus, are not ready to ease restrictions or need to ramp them up."

The Risk of Openness Index seeks to provide information on the risk that a country faces if the government were to adopt an 'open' policy stance – which means no policy measures aimed at containing the virus through reducing physical interaction. The index also makes it possible to see how risk has changed over time, as the pandemic continues to develop.

Risk of openness has also increased recently across much of Europe. Latin American remains the region with the highest average risk of openness, and East Asia the least. In other regions, national positions differ starkly. For example, the risk of openness for the United States in early September is about 70 percent higher than the risk of openness in Canada.

The index combines policy measures tracked by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker with epidemiological, testing, and mobility data, and compares these to the recommendations set out by the World Health Organization for the measures that should be put in place before COVID-19 response policies can be safely relaxed.

/ Ends.

## Notes to editors

*\* N.B. In a previous version of this press release, Israel was included in the list of high risk countries, but has been edited out in this news story due to the recent announcement of a 3-week national 'lockdown'. The announcement was made soon after we completed our analysis for the Risk of Openness.*

For detailed information on the methodology, please visit the project page on the Blavatnik School website [www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker](http://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker)

For more information or to request an interview, please contact:

Giulia Biasibetti, Blavatnik School of Government

[giulia.biasibetti@bsg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:giulia.biasibetti@bsg.ox.ac.uk) | +44(0)1865 616733

- A previous version of this research was called '[Lockdown rollback checklist](#)'. It has been given a new name due to significant revision of the underlying methodology.
- The Risk of Openness is not a measure of how well or effectively countries have responded to the pandemic, nor is it a measure of which countries are 'safe' or 'unsafe'.
- The World Health Organisation's recommendations can be found [here](#).
- The data from Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker currently provides information relevant to recommendations 2, 5, and 6 of WHO. This data is combined with epidemiological data from the [European Centre for Disease Control](#) and the [Johns Hopkins University](#) on cases and deaths, data collected by [Our World in Data](#) on the number of tests conducted in each country, and data from [Apple](#) and [Google](#) on travel and mobility.
- Government responses vary significantly from one country to another, and like any policy interventions, their effect is highly contingent on local political and social context. Moreover, the data only measures four out of six WHO recommended actions. Therefore, the Risk of Openness Index does not infer how countries should change their policies.

## About the Blavatnik School of Government

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](http://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk)