

Sustaining lives and livelihoods: a decision framework for calibrating social and movement measures during the COVID-19 pandemic



Key messages

Full report and associated materials available at:
<https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2020/12/17/default-calendar/sustaining-lives-and-livelihoods>

Public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19

- Public health and social measures (PHSM) are

“measures or actions by individuals, institutions, communities, local and national governments and international bodies to slow or stop the spread of an infectious disease”

 - personal protective measures (e.g. hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, mask wearing);
 - environmental measures (e.g. disinfection, ventilation);
 - surveillance and response measures (e.g. contact tracing, isolation);
 - physical distancing measures (e.g. limiting the size of gatherings, maintaining distance, restricting domestic movement);
 - international travel-related measures (e.g. advising, issuing warnings, restricting exit/entry, closing borders)
- PHSM have proven critical to limiting COVID-19 transmission and to reducing deaths; they “act in concert”



Social and movement measures

- Reduce significantly face-to-face interactions and movement
- Stringent social and movement measures can be helpful in situations of high incidence or uncontrolled epidemic
- But, can exacerbate the slowdown of economic activity and can worsen inequalities
- Making decisions on these measures is challenging as impacts the societal concerns of “lives and livelihoods”
- Countries likely to continue experiencing community transmission and use these measures



Health impact of COVID-19 and the health response

- COVID-19 responsible so far for > 1.6 million deaths and > 72 million confirmed
- Estimated health impact of COVID-19 differs across contexts
 - COVID-19 epidemiology
 - Health system capacity to respond, but also to ensure continuity of other essential services
 - Adherence to public health and social measures and pandemic fatigue
 - Other contextual factors e.g. living conditions, contact-intensive economic activities
- Longer-term impact
 - Post-COVID-19 sequelae
 - Delayed diagnosis and treatment of other conditions
 - Increased prevalence of mental disorders, domestic violence and malnutrition



Economic impact of COVID-19 and the economic response

- COVID-19 triggered a global recession through increased uncertainty and loss of confidence
- First increase in global poverty since 1998, with additional 150 million extreme poor by 2021 due to COVID-19.
- More stringent social and movement measures associated with worse economic outcomes
- Contact intensive sectors and workers with more precarious jobs and limited or no access to social protection or social safety nets
- Worsening inequalities: low paid, women and young people. Decline in remittance flows exacerbate shock in recipient countries.
- Primary and secondary children that experienced school closures could lose in future income, > \$15,000 over a working life
- Recovery scenarios depending on public health and economic response
 - Vaccine roll-out and in meantime sustained support to mitigate unemployment and poverty and support effectiveness of other public health and social measures (e.g. through paid sick leave)



Many calibration options



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Which measures?

Which calibration?

How? When?

For how long?

Sub-class of measures	Possible types of actions	Possible calibration options
Social and physical distancing measures	Restricting domestic movement	by area by age group by time, e.g. ≤ 1 h; once a day by size, e.g. ≤ 1 person from same household by type, e.g. for essential needs only, to exercise
	Closing schools	by area by school by classroom within a school by education level by category by time
	Closure of workplaces	by area by sector by type of goods or services produced by time, e.g. regulated closing hours
	Cancellation of public events	by area by threshold, e.g. > 1000 people by type, e.g. sport vs concert
	Closure of public transport	by area by time, e.g. outside working hours of essential services by type, e.g. selected transport type
International travel-related measures	Screening, quarantine, travel ban, border closure	by area, e.g. country of origin by sector, e.g. essential workers allowed to commute across

Characteristics of the decision-making process

- **Complexity**
 - interactions between the health sector and the economy
 - non-linearity of the impact over time
 - deciding on measures but also on mitigation strategies
- **Uncertainty**
 - novelty of illness, continuous new evidence, need to adjust strategies
 - behavioral responses, depending on risk perception, motivation and state of livelihoods
- **Urgency**
 - devastating health and economic impacts
 - when to introduce? when to ease or lift measures?
- **Uneven distribution of impacts**
 - Everyone is affected, often in different ways
 - Most vulnerable, in health or socioeconomic terms suffer the most
- **Multiple layers of decision making**
 - Whole-of-government approach and multisectoral stakeholders, and civil society

5-Step Decision Framework

1. Assess the situational level and optimize health system response
2. Identify possible social and movement measures for each context and possible calibration options, and assess their health impacts
3. Develop and populate an “extended assessment matrix” of important non-health dimensions
4. Establish dialogue and a decision-making process
5. Monitor, adapt and communicate regularly throughout steps 1–4.



Step 1

Assess the situational level and optimize health system response

- Develop a matrix of transmission intensity level and response capacity
- Proposed set of primary and additional indicators depending on surveillance capacity
- Proposed thresholds to be contextualized to lowest admin area
- Use of routine data, or modelling and qualitative data if necessary
- Assess and optimize adherence to existing public health measures
- Increase health system capacity for COVID-19 and other essential services, where possible
- Grading 0-4 to determine situational level

Transmission level	Response capacity		
	Adequate	Moderate	Limited
No cases	0	0	1
Imported/Sporadic cases	0	1	1
Clusters of cases	1	1	2
Community - CT1	1	2	2
Community - CT2	2	2	3
Community - CT3	2	3	3
Community - CT4	3	3	4

Source: Considerations for introducing or adjusting PHSM. Interim Guidance 4 November 2020. World Health Organization.
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/considerations-in-adjusting-public-health-and-social-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19-interim-guidance>

Step 2

Identify possible social and movement measures for each context and possible calibration options, and assess their health impacts

Situational level from transmission and response capacity matrix	Sub-classes of social and movement measures (illustrative)	Health Dimension (illustrative)		
		COVID-19 Health Impact	Non-COVID-19 Health Impact	Health System Impact
Level 3: Community transmission with limited additional capacity to respond and a risk that health services will be overwhelmed. More measures might have to be put in place to limit transmission, manage cases and ensure control of the pandemic.	Limit access to non-essential businesses.	Medium	Low	Medium
	Limit in-person teaching, and institute e-learning.	Medium	Low	Low
	Limit gatherings to ≤ 50 people.	Medium	Low	Low
Level 4. Uncontrolled epidemic with limited or no additional health system response capacity, thus requiring extensive measures to avoid overwhelming health services and substantial excess morbidity and mortality.	Close non-essential businesses.	High	Medium	High
	Close schools	High	Low	High
	Limit gatherings to ≤ 10 people.	High	High	High

- Areas with situation level 3 or 4 may require more stringent social and movement measures to avoid overwhelming health services and excess burden from COVID-19
- Considerations of non-COVID health impact may also be relevant where continuity of other essential services is at risk

Step 3

Develop and populate an “extended assessment matrix” of important non-health dimensions

Situational level (indicative)	Sub-classes of social and movement measures (illustrative)	Health Dimension (illustrative)			Non-Health Dimensions (<i>illustrative</i>)			
		COVID-19 Health Impact	Non-COVID- 19 Health Impact	Health System Impact	Implementation Cost	Economic Cost	Impact on Equity	Political Barriers
Level 3: Community transmission with limited additional capacity to respond and a risk that health services will be overwhelmed. More measures might have to be put in place to limit transmission, manage cases and ensure control of the pandemic.	Limit access to non-essential businesses.	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Limit in-person teaching, and institute e-learning.	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	High	Medium
	Limit gatherings to ≤ 50 people.	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low
Level 4. Uncontrolled epidemic with limited or no additional health system response capacity, thus requiring extensive measures to avoid overwhelming health services and substantial excess morbidity and mortality.	Close non-essential businesses.	High	Medium	High	Medium	Low	High	High
	Close schools	High	Low	High	Low	Low	High	High
	Limit gatherings to ≤ 10 people.	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium

Step 4

Establish dialogue and the decision-making process

- Trust in authorities and in the decision-making process is key when making difficult choices
- Establish dialogue to set-up clear objectives, develop and refine the framework and allow adaptive process for learning
- Need for a whole-of-government approach to go through the framework, supplemented by consultations with multisectoral stakeholders
- Increase the predictability of the decision-making process and minimize the perception that choices are arbitrary or unfair
- Improve co-ownership and co-responsibility, and accountability
- The case for open and inclusive decision making available from <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2020/12/17/default-calendar/sustaining-lives-and-livelihoods>



Step 5

Monitor, adapt and communicate regularly throughout steps 1–4

- Monitor the situation every 2-4 weeks to observe and interpret trends, and establish regular feedback to the decision making group
- Review steps 1-4 to refine and calibrate measures through open and inclusive approach
- Communicate clearly, frequently and consistently, including on uncertainties and be receptive to feedback



Key messages

- Several social and movement measures and many calibration options
- No “one-size-fits-all” strategy and many countries are likely to continue experiencing community transmission and evolving socio-economic situation
- Need for a transparent, predictable, evidence-based and inclusive process to decide on measures and calibration options
- Support the legitimacy of decisions and the effectiveness of measures

