

A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit



The EIU tracker ranks the quality of policy responses to the pandemic given countries' risk profiles.

The Economist Intelligence Unit has constructed an index to rank the quality of the policy response to coronavirus across 21 OECD countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US). Countries are assessed against three "quality of response" criteria (number of tests, provision of non-Covid-19 healthcare and the number of above-average excess deaths). Three mitigating factors adjust scores to take pre-existing risk factors (share of older population, obesity prevalence and number of international arrivals) into account. The resulting index shows which countries have so far managed the pandemic best, given their risk profiles.



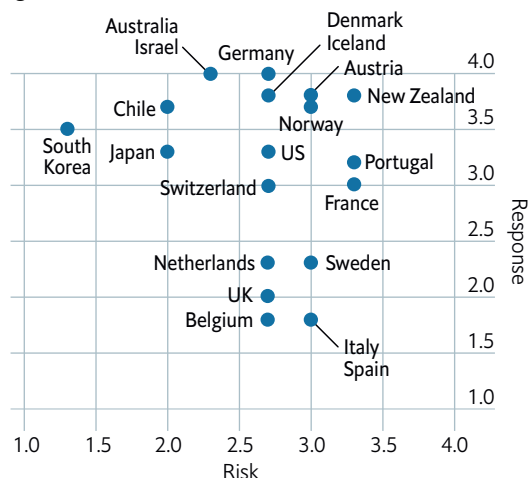
Assessing the quality of OECD countries' responses to Covid-19

	Quality of response			Risk factors			Assessment	
	Tests	Provision of non Covid-19 healthcare	Death rate	Obesity prevalence	Share of population aged 65+	International arrivals	Score	Category
1 - worst response/lowest risk ; 4 - best response/highest risk								
Australia	4	4	4	3	3	1	3.44	Very good
Austria	4	3	4	2	3	4	3.56	Very good
Belgium	4	3	1	2	3	3	2.11	Poor
Chile	3	3	4	3	2	1	3.11	Good
Denmark	4	3	4	1	3	4	3.44	Very good
France	3	3	3	2	4	4	3.11	Good
Germany	3	4	4	2	4	2	3.56	Very good
Iceland	4	3	4	2	2	4	3.44	Very good
Italy	4	3	1	1	4	4	2.22	Poor
Israel	4	4	4	3	2	2	3.44	Very good
Japan	1	3	4	1	4	1	2.89	Fair
Netherlands	2	3	2	2	3	3	2.44	Fair
New Zealand	4	3	4	4	3	3	3.67	Very good
Norway	3	3	4	2	3	4	3.44	Very good
Portugal	4	3	3	2	4	4	3.22	Good
South Korea	2	3	4	1	2	1	2.78	Fair
Spain	4	3	1	2	3	4	2.22	Poor
Sweden	3	3	2	2	4	3	2.56	Fair
Switzerland	3	3	3	1	3	4	2.89	Fair
UK	4	4	1	3	3	2	2.22	Poor
US	4	4	3	4	3	1	3.11	Good

HOW WELL HAVE OECD COUNTRIES RESPONDED TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS?

Response to coronavirus vs. risk factors

(1 - worst response/lowest risk ; 4 - best response/highest risk)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

swiftly. Not all of them introduced stringent lockdowns, but all implemented aggressive testing and tracing programmes.

At the other end of the spectrum, **Belgium, Italy, Spain** and the **UK** record the lowest scores. This is partly understandable in the case of Italy and Spain: these countries were the first in Europe to be hit by the pandemic and had little time to prepare. However, it is harder to explain the UK's poor score. The global connectivity of the UK—and especially London—may help to explain its high excess death toll (as at early June, UK statistics show that the number of extra deaths per million people is the second highest in the world, after Spain), but the country had a slower build-up of cases than other European countries and more time to prepare. In addition, Britain's centralised public healthcare system provided the government with crucial data as to who was most at risk. An insufficiently fast and co-ordinated response, an initial lack of testing capacity, and a decision to suspend track and trace in early March may help to explain why the UK became an outlier.

In the middle category, **France, Chile, Portugal** and the **US** tackled the pandemic well; **Japan, the Netherlands, South Korea, Sweden** and **Switzerland** did slightly less well. Three countries stand out: Sweden, the US and Chile. Sweden's response to the pandemic was highly debated and widely criticised inside and outside of the country. Epidemiologists advising the Swedish government bet on herd immunity (herd immunity assumes that if a significant share of the population catches a virus, the pathogen will cease to circulate, hence protecting the rest of the population). As a result, Sweden did not impose a lockdown, and social-distancing measures were mild compared with those imposed in other countries. Despite its controversial approach, Sweden's number of excess deaths is lower than that of Spain or Italy, each of which had a similar risk profile and imposed stringent lockdowns.

The US ranking also provides interesting insights. The country records the highest number of deaths worldwide, partly reflecting population size and, perhaps, the poor initial response of the US

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administration. However, the high number of deaths also reflects existing risk factors, such as a high prevalence of obesity and an ageing population. When assessed against these risk factors, the US's performance is not as poor as the crude data may suggest. In fact, it is better than that of most of the countries that shared a similar risk profile.

Finally, Chile's performance is comparable to that of France or the US, and much better than that of the UK, for instance. This shows that richer countries did not necessarily tackle the pandemic better than less affluent ones.

Methodology:

A weight of four is applied to the number of excess deaths per million people; all other criteria are weighted as one. The score is then calculated as an average of the six criteria.

1) *Tests*

Tests per million people

<15,000 scores 1, 10,000-20,000 scores 2, 20,000-50,000 scores 3, >50,000 scores 4 Source: Latest available government data (as at June 9th)

2) *Provision of non-Covid 19 healthcare*

Share of cancer-related surgeries cancelled

>50% scores 1, 40-50% scores 2, 30-40% scores 3, <30% scores 4

Source: "Elective surgery during the SARS CoV-2 pandemic", A. Bhangu et al., British Journal of Surgery, 2020

3) *Death rate*

Excess deaths per million people

>600 scores 1, 400-600 scores 2, 200-400 scores 3, <200 scores 4

Source: Financial Times; latest available national data (as at June 9th); Johns Hopkins University; EIU calculations

4) *Obesity prevalence*

Share of obese people (age-standardised)

<20% scores 1, 20-25% scores 2, 25-30% scores 3, >30% scores 4

Source: World Health Organisation (2016 data)

4) *Share of population aged 65+*

Percentage of the population aged 65 and over

<10% scores 1, 10-15% scores 2, 15-20% scores 3, >20% scores 4

Source: The EIU (2018 data)

5) *International arrivals*

Number of international arrivals as a share of the population

<40% scores 1, 40-70% scores 2, 70-100% scores 3, >100% scores 4

Source: The EIU (2018 data)

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