Stringency Index

Part of: GS-III- S&T (PT-MAINS-PERSONALITY TEST)

A Stringency Index created by Oxford University shows how strict a country’s measures were, and at what stage of the pandemic spread it enforced these. As per the index, India imposed its strictest measures much earlier than others.

What is Stringency index?

The Stringency Index is a number from 0 to 100 that reflects these indicators. A higher index score indicates a higher level of stringency.

1. It is among the metrics being used by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker.
2. The Tracker involves a team of 100 Oxford community members who have continuously updated a database of 17 indicators of government response.
3. These indicators examine containment policies such as school and workplace closings, public events, public transport, stay-at-home policies.

What it says about India?

1. India enforced one of the strongest lockdowns at an early phase of case growth. India indeed had one of the strongest lockdown measures in the world — at a 100 score since March 22.
2. It was relaxed slightly on April 20 after the government eased norms for certain workplaces in regions outside the red zones.
3. When compared to other countries with similar or higher case load, India called its strict lockdown at a much earlier point on its case and death curves.
4. These 18 other countries had more than 500 cases when they called their strictest lockdown, while India had 320.
5. Again, India had only four deaths on March 22, when its score reached 100, while most countries had more deaths at that point (except Switzerland; no deaths).

Relation between death curve and stringency score:

Oxford provides an overlay of countries’ death curve and their stringency score. Some countries saw their deaths just begin to flatten as they reached their highest stringency, such as Italy, Spain, or France.

In countries such as the UK, the US, and India, the Oxford graphs find that the death curve has not flattened after strictest measures were enforced.

From the highest death count at their strongest measures, the countries compared were France, Italy, Iran, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Mexico, Canada, Belgium, Ireland, US, Turkey, Israel, China, India, and Switzerland.

Other countries with 100 score:

Other countries with a 100 score are Honduras, Argentina, Jordan, Libya, Sri Lanka, Serbia, and Rwanda. India now has the highest number of cases in this set.
What are the six World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations for relaxing physical distancing measures?

Control transmission to a level the healthcare system can manage; the healthcare system can detect and isolate all cases (not just serious ones); manage transfer to and from high-risk transmission zones; and community engagement.

How many countries met these recommendations?

India scored 0.7 (below Australia, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea) because it scored 0 for controlling its cases.

The highest scorers on this index, at 0.9, were Iceland, Hong Kong, Croatia, and Trinidad & Tobago. Oxford found no countries meet the four measured recommendations, but 20 are close.