

Mobility measures alone will not stop COVID-19 spread

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Researchers from The University of Western Australia have found that mobility and activity restrictions alone are not as effective in halting the spread of COVID-19 in developing countries, compared to developed countries.

At a time when COVID-19 infections are rising in the [developing world](#), the researchers recommended combining such restrictions with immediate steps to improve healthcare, awareness about the [best practices](#) in case of infection and economic assistance for those at risk.

The study, published in the Center for Economic Policy Research's *COVID Economics*, assessed the effectiveness of policy responses implemented to combat COVID-19 across 117 developing and developed countries.

Countries across the world responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with what was possibly the largest set of state-led mobility and activity restrictions in the history of mankind.

But it was accompanied by an intense 'lives versus livelihoods' debate, particularly in developing countries where a majority of jobs are informal.

The research team from UWA's Business School, Adnan Fakir and Dr. Tushar Bharati, used global indicators that compared the stringency of policy responses around the world to estimate the causal effect of these restrictions on mobility, the growth rate of confirmed cases and deaths attributed to COVID-19.

They found that while stricter concurrent measures reduced mobility, measures introduced seven to 14 days earlier were more effective at containing the contagion.

Although stricter restrictions reduced mobility more in less-developed countries, it was more effective at limiting the spread of the virus in more developed countries.

Factors such as lower levels of awareness, limited health infrastructure,

higher comorbidity, worse air pollution and weaker governance had a significant impact on how much restricting people's movements contributed to slowing the growth of cases and fewer deaths attributed to COVID-19.

Mr Fakir said that the results showed that less-developed countries had relatively less to gain from stricter mobility restrictions alone.

"What is worse is that on top of the lower relative effectiveness of reduced mobility in controlling the spread, the economic cost of these restrictions is also higher in these countries," Mr Fakir said.

Dr. Bharati said the results called for a country-specific policy response suited to the capacity and socio-economic circumstances of the country.

"Our results highlight that to combat the COVID-19 pandemic effectively, we must combine mobility and activity restrictions with awareness campaigns and effective economic and health assistance schemes," Dr. Bharati said.

More information: cepr.org/content/covid-economy-d-real-time-papers-0

Provided by University of Western Australia

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