

Play in Lockdown:

An international study of government and civil society responses to Covid-19 and their impact on children's play and mobility

*Tim Gill (independent researcher and International Play Association member) and
Robyn Monro Miller (President, International Play Association)*

Summary

This report sets out the findings of a global study of the impact of measures prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic on the play and mobility of children. The aim of the study is to provide baseline information, to make international comparisons, and to gather emerging good practice on how these measures (which have significant adverse consequences for children's health and well-being) can be mitigated. The report starts with some context, including an overview of the clinical and epidemiological evidence, and a discussion of the emerging evidence and arguments about the collateral damage to children of lockdown measures. The study uses a specially-created 'Child Lockdown Index' to allow for meaningful comparisons between countries.

It is clear that children face a very small direct risk from the disease. Hence the implementation of measures that harm them are a judgement – implicit or explicit – that this collateral damage is a price worth paying, because of the greater good. This report does not comment on that judgement, not least because the picture is still incomplete. However, the study is important in bringing to light the sacrifices that children have been asked to make, and the potential consequences for their rights, health and well-being. Advocates across the world need to work with governments to find solutions that address play deprivation and minimise the impact on children's development.

Context¹

Clinical and epidemiological picture

Covid-19 is unusual for an infectious disease, in that children are at very low risk. Statistics from many countries show that children are far less likely than adults to be seriously affected. In the UK, mortality figures show that between March and May 2020, five children under the age of 15 died as a result of the disease, out of a total of over 44,000 fatalities across all age groups. Figures

¹ This section draws on David Ball, Tim Gill and Andy Yates, *Covid-19 and Children's Play* <https://playsafetyforum.wordpress.com/covid-19-and-childrens-play/>

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

from other countries show a similar picture. Indeed Covid-19 has been described by a global expert on risk as posing – to children - a level of risk that “would normally be deemed an acceptable part of life.”² Some media reports have suggested higher mortality rates for children in some low and middle income countries, including Brazil and Indonesia, possibly due to malnutrition and lower background levels of child health.³ However, there is some uncertainty about the statistics. Even in these contexts, the risk to children is significantly lower than the risk to adults.

While children are very rarely badly affected by the disease, they do become infected, and can pass the disease on to others. However, emerging evidence suggests that children are less likely to become infected, and may have a less important role in transmission, than adults. The picture is not entirely certain, because of the challenges of gathering robust data on prevalence and transmission episodes. But a growing number of studies are pointing in this direction.⁴

Risks to children from pandemic control measures

As the pandemic has spread, many governments have put in place drastic measures that have transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of children. These measures represent an infringement of children's basic rights as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (though it should be noted that parallel human rights infringements have also been experienced by adults). What is more worrying is their potential impact on children's health, well-being and development.⁵

Consideration of the policy side-effects for children has largely focused on their formal education. The wider child health and well-being impacts of lockdown and other measures have received less attention (although the topic has featured in media coverage)⁶ and has been the focus of academic research⁷ and professional debate.

One obvious consequence of infection control measures is that children are less able to play freely, especially out of doors. The benefits of play are widely recognised, and cut across physical and mental health, child development and well-being. Play is both a way for children to keep healthy, and a process that helps them to deal with everyday uncertainties, stresses and anxieties.⁸ Opportunities to play may be even more beneficial during a pandemic. To

² <https://medium.com/wintoncentre/what-have-been-the-fatal-risks-of-covid-particularly-to-children-and-younger-adults-a5cbf7060c49>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-indonesia-children-idUSKBN2311D7>

⁴ <https://dontforgetthebubbles.com/the-missing-link-children-and-transmission-of-sars-cov-2/>

⁵ [https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182;](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182)

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/play-for-a-change-play-policy-and-practice-a-review-of-contemporary-perspectives/>

⁶ <https://www.tes.com/news/taped-playgrounds-leave-hole-our-communities>

⁷ Graber, K., Byrne, E. M., Goodacre, E. J., Kirby, N., Kulkarni, K., O'Farrelly, C., & Ramchandani, P. G. (2020). [A rapid review of the impact of quarantine and restricted environments on children's play and health outcomes;](#)

⁸ <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-just-letting-children-play-will-help-them-and-their-parents-cope-134480>

Covid-19 and Children’s Play and Mobility

quote from the 2018 IPA report *Access to Play for Children in Situations of Crisis*: “In situations of crisis, stress, weakened physical and emotional development, feelings of lack of control and loss of trust steadily multiply if children lack everyday opportunities for play.”⁹

Outdoor play is particularly important, because of the greater sense of freedom and control that children can enjoy and because it allows for more energetic activity. Even where children have been allowed out of doors, the typical justification – physical exercise – has in some countries been interpreted in highly adult-centred and restrictive ways. It has failed to recognise that for many children – and especially younger children – play takes the form of physical exercise.

Children in disadvantaged circumstances are hit hardest, especially those with no access to private gardens, or in neighbourhoods with little or no public space.¹⁰ In response, the International Play Association (IPA) has raised children’s loss of play opportunities as an issue of concern and developed resources for children and caregivers.¹¹

This study

The variation in national responses, and their potential impact on children’s play and mobility, provide the foundation for this study. It collates baseline facts on relevant infection control measures introduced by national governments, along with emerging responses from government and NGO sectors. Future work may build on this. We set out some tentative ideas for extending the project in the closing section of this report.

The findings are based on replies from 25 countries to an email survey sent to either active national IPA branches or known play advocates. In most cases, one reply was received from each country. In a few cases, two replies were received, but these were largely consistent. Appendix 5 gives a list of respondents. Table 1 below sets out the key survey dates.

Table 1: Phase 1 survey process

Action	Date/s
Survey tool agreed	Week ending 3 May 2020
Survey tool distributed	4 – 17 May
Results analysed	26 May onwards

⁹ Martin King-Sheard, Marianne Mannello, Theresa Casey (ed) (2018) [Access to Play for Children in Situations of Crisis: Play: rights and practice: A toolkit for staff, managers and policy makers](#),

¹⁰ <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/alisonstening/improving-safe-access-to-street-space-for-childrens-play-and-physical-activity/>

¹¹ <http://ipaworld.org/resources/for-parents-and-carers-play-in-crisis/>

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

The survey form was drawn up by the authors, and covered the following topics:

- Schools & childcare closures (see Appendix 1)
- Lockdown/stay at home measures (see Appendix 2)
- Measures in public open spaces (see Appendix 3)
- Support, advice, advocacy and policy (see Appendix 4)

Where possible, the results were cross-checked against data from the Oxford University Blavatnik School of Government Coronavirus Government Response Tracker.¹² This dataset contains international information on a range of government measures including school closures and lockdowns. The data on playground closures for the USA is taken from the Kaboom! website.¹³

In order to allow for meaningful comparisons between countries, this study developed a new analytical tool: the 'Child Lockdown Index' (CLI). This is a numerical score for each country that aims to capture in a single number both the severity and the longevity of the measures that have been imposed. It embraces school/childcare closures, and also restrictions on children's freedom to be out of doors and play. The score is derived using the following formula:

<p>Child Lockdown Index (CLI)</p> <p>=</p> <p>Number of weeks of full school closure (ignoring exemptions)</p> <p>+</p> <p>Number of weeks of public playground closure</p> <p>+</p> <p>Number of weeks of child lockdown (ie children prohibited from leaving home for any reason, including exercise)</p>
--

The CLI has both spatial and temporal components, mirroring two of the conditions recognised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as essential for play.¹⁴ It covers two key physical spaces in which children play (schools and playgrounds) and children's basic access to public space; and it increases the longer the relevant measures last. The CLI scores in this report are based on the period 1 Jan – 31 May 2020. Table 2 shows CLI scores for the UK, Spain and Taiwan (see Appendices 1 – 3 for relevant dates).

Table 2: Examples of CLI scores for 3 countries: the UK, Spain and Taiwan.

¹² <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/coronavirus-government-response-tracker>

¹³ <https://kaboom.org/covid-19/playground-closures-america>

¹⁴ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)', United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013, p.3.

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	UK	Spain	Taiwan
Weeks of school closure	10	12	3
Weeks of playground closure	10	11	0
Weeks of full child lockdown	0	6	0
Total (Child Lockdown Index)	20	29	3

The CLI was inspired by the 'Government Response Stringency Index' used by the Blavatnik School of Government (BSG) at Oxford University. It is a work-in-progress. As with the BSG index - questions can be asked both about the idea itself, and the formula set out above. Appendix 6 gives a brief methodological note exploring some of the issues.

Results

Table 3 below sets out the CLI scores for each country. The same data is presented graphically in Figure 1, which follows the table.

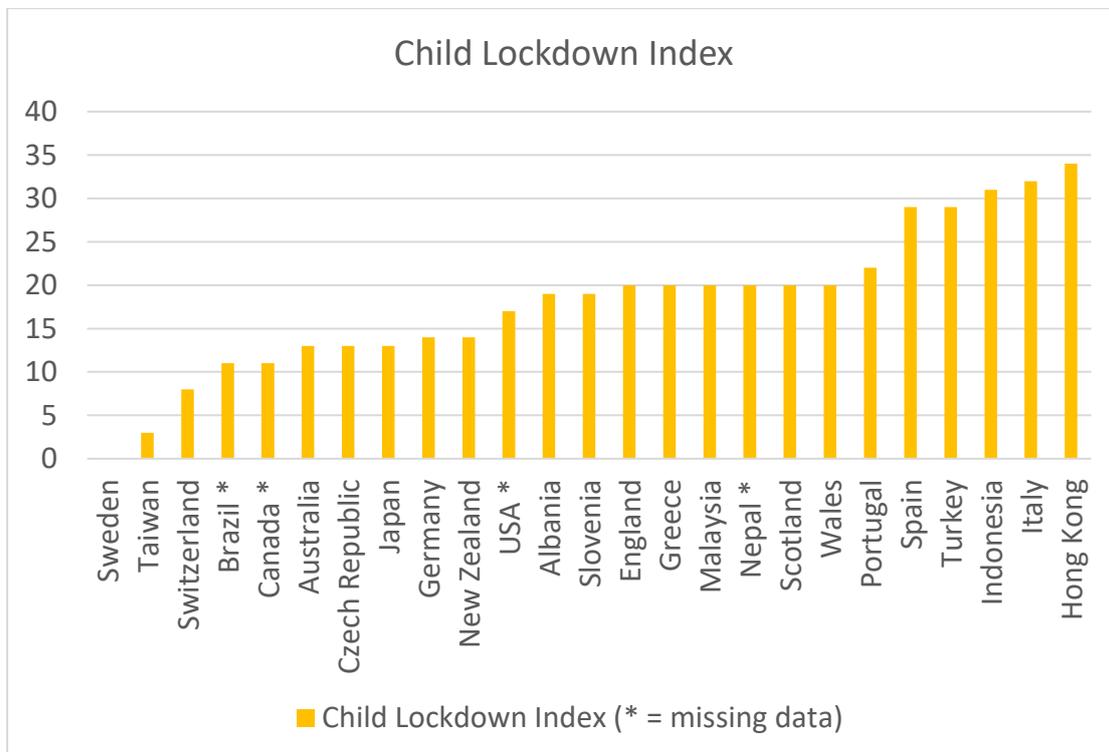
Table 3: Child Lockdown Index (CLI) for each country

	Schools	Lockdown	Playgrounds	Total CLI
Albania	12	4	3	19
Australia	4	0	9	13
Brazil	11	0	?	11+
Canada	11	0	?	11+
Czech Republic	6	0	7	13
England	10	0	10	20
Germany	7	0	7	14
Greece	9	0	11	20
Hong Kong	17	0	17	34
Indonesia	17?	7	7	31
Italy	14	8	10	32
Japan	13	0	0	13
Malaysia	10	0	10	20

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

Nepal	10	10	?	20+
New Zealand	7	0	7	14
Portugal	11	0	11	22
Scotland	10	0	10	20
Slovenia	9	0	10	19
Spain	12	6	11	29
Sweden	0	0	0	0
Switzerland	8	0	0	8
Taiwan	3	0	0	3
Turkey	11	7	11	29
USA	12	0	5+	17
Wales	10	0	10	20

Figure 1: CLI by country



Appendices 1 – 4 below give more detailed summaries of the relevant measures that – according to respondents - have been implemented in each country. For consistency, and to reflect the focus of this report, these appendices focus on actions that have a direct effect on children's play and

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

mobility. They include information on school and childcare closures, but omit general information about economic measures such as income support, employment retention schemes, grants and loans. Some country respondents gave extensive information on these wider topics, while others did not.

The summaries in Appendices 1 - 4 show a very mixed picture, both in terms of lockdown measures themselves, and the supportive responses from governments, NGOs and others. The picture on NGO and community responses in particular is difficult to interpret or analyse. Nonetheless some noteworthy differences are evident. For example, while almost no national governments made any supportive policy moves, in a few cases (including New Zealand and Scotland) the heads of state spoke directly to children, in what can be seen as a public expression of support. Play and children's sector NGOs in most countries took action at various levels to support children and families and raise concerns.

Discussion

A mixed picture is emerging of pandemic responses and their impact on children's play and mobility. Some countries (including Sweden and Taiwan) have mostly kept schools and playgrounds open, and introduced few if any measures restricting freedom of movement. Some (including Indonesia, Italy, Nepal, Spain and Turkey) prohibited children from leaving home altogether for at least a month, on top of school and playground closures. This effectively left millions of children imprisoned inside their apartments. Most others (including the four UK nations) have allowed children outside the home with family members only for limited reasons, alongside widespread school and playground closures.

On a more positive note, as Appendices 1 - 3 show, a number of countries are reopening schools and childcare (often taking a phased approach) and many countries are relaxing some lockdown and social distancing measures, including opening up previously closed parks and playgrounds, more permissive guidance around social gatherings, and phased opening of schools and childcare settings. In a few countries, municipalities have been taking advantage of plummeting traffic levels to temporarily close streets to cars, widen pavements, or introduce other highway measures, partly to make it easier to follow social distancing rules and partly to promote walking and cycling.¹⁵

Conclusions

Almost all of the 25 countries covered in this study have implemented measures that have transformed children's lives, and dramatically curtailed their play opportunities. Children in some countries have been particularly hard-hit. Some measures were brought in at an early stage in the spread of the disease, when there was considerably more uncertainty about the science

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/cleaner-and-greener-covid-19-prompts-worlds-cities-to-free-public-space-of-cars>

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

than there is now. We know that these restrictions will leave their mark, although the full impact may not be apparent for many months or years.

We should not forget that millions of children have experienced months under what is in effect house arrest. Many millions more have faced social isolation and domestic stress. They may be anxious for their own health, worried about sick friends and relatives, and grieving for loved ones who have died before their time. The most vulnerable children are likely to be particularly badly affected, including those in poor housing and homeless circumstances, and children with special educational needs and disabilities. All the while, in being deprived of play, they have been denied one of the simplest and most effective ways to maintain their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being.

As the pandemic evolves, it will be vital to track its ongoing impact on children. While illness is part of this, perhaps even more important, given what is known already, is to track the impact of infection control measures. Sadly, it seems likely that restrictions on movement and activity may need to be reintroduced in some countries, at least at a local or regional level, to control infection outbreaks.

As knowledge about the virus and children's role in its spread grows, governments need to take a balanced approach to the measures it introduces, and to pay more attention to how these measures may restrict children's play opportunities. One approach that will help in this respect is to adapt the risk-benefit assessment tool that has been developed by play advocates in several countries, including the UK, Canada and Australia.¹⁶

The implementation of measures that harm children represent the view – implicit or explicit – that this collateral damage is a price worth paying because of the greater good. It is not the place of this study to pass judgement on that view. However, it is important in bringing to light the sacrifices that children are being asked to make, and the potential consequences for their rights, health and well-being. Advocates across the world need to work with governments to find solutions that address play deprivation and minimise the impact on children's development.

Finally, IPA is well placed to build on this study, as the leading international NGO that focuses exclusively on the child's right to play, with membership stretching across over 50 nations. External funding would enable the following improvements and additions to be added:

- Better country and topic coverage
- Repeat surveys to track changes
- Research on the play experiences of children and families

¹⁶ Tim Gill, *Playing it Safe? A global white paper on risk, liability and children's play in public space*, Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2018, <https://bernardvanleer.org/publications-reports/playing-it-safe-a-global-white-paper-on-risk-liability-and-childrens-play-in-public-space/>

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

- Support for advocacy work at national and international levels
- Further resources to support children and families

Robyn Monro Miller and Tim Gill
August 2020

Acknowledgement: the authors wish to thank all those who responded to the survey for their time, expertise and patience.

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

Appendix 1: Schools & childcare closures

	1.1 School & childcare closures	1.2 Exemptions (eg vulnerable or key worker children)	1.3 Phased re-openings	1.4 Other measures and notes	CLI Score for schools
Albania	From 8 March.	No.	May 18-June 5 only for senior high school students, to complete exams.		12
Australia	24 March – 18 April.	Children of essential services workers but not strictly enforced.	Gradual reopening from 18 April.	Significant regional variation; school reopening was highly contentious.	4
Brazil	From 12 March.	Yes.	Very limited.	Significant regional variation.	11
Canada	From 16 March.	Yes in some provinces.	Yes.	Significant regional variation.	11
Czech Republic	From 12 March.	Organised care for children of key workers.	Partial reopening from 19 April [BSG]. Primary schools reopened from 25 May, and some year groups for exams.	School reopening is voluntary and managed.	6
England	From 23 March.	Key workers, vulnerable children.	Partial reopening of primary schools for some year groups from 1 June.	School attendance voluntary. Significant variation at school level.	10

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	1.1 School & childcare closures	1.2 Exemptions (eg vulnerable or key worker children)	1.3 Phased re-openings	1.4 Other measures and notes	CLI Score for schools
Germany	From 16 March.	Yes.	11 May: 4 th grade; secondary school diploma year group.	Some regional variation, esp with secondary school and childcare closures.	7
Greece	From 5 March.	Unclear.	4 May (not elementary schools). New academic year to start 1 Sept for all levels of education.	Some regional variation in measures.	9
Hong Kong	From 25 Jan.	Children who would otherwise be unattended at home.	Reopenings planned for some special schools.	Child and family welfare services to restart from 27 May.	17
Indonesia	From 10 April [BSG: 3 Feb].		From June 15 with shift system.	Regional variation.	17? (BSG differs)
Italy	From 5 March [BSG: 23 Feb].	No.	Maybe summer camps and summer centres from June.	Regional variation.	14
Japan	From 1 March – 31 May.	Children of key workers.	From 1 June.	No national childcare closures.	13
Malaysia	From 18 March.	Children of emergency services workers.	Under government review.	Govt reversed decision to reopen childcare in May.	10

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	1.1 School & childcare closures	1.2 Exemptions (eg vulnerable or key worker children)	1.3 Phased re-openings	1.4 Other measures and notes	CLI Score for schools
Nepal	From 18 March.	No official exemptions.	Uncertain.	No formal decision on childcare. Some schools set up online classes.	10
New Zealand	24 March – 14 May.	Yes, dependent upon national risk level at different dates.	Yes.		7
Portugal	From 16 March.	800 schools opened for health professionals' children and to give meals to children in need.		From 18 May: final exams for grade 11 and 12 students, and childcare reopened.	11
Scotland	From 23 March.	Key workers and vulnerable children.	No.		10
Slovenia	From 16 March.	Children of key workers, in groups of <7 children.	From 18 May for some grades.	Problems with communication to schools.	9
Spain	From 9 March.	No.	Some regions considering opening preschools before the summer.	Distance education.	12
Sweden	No.	Not applicable.	From August.	High schools closed [dates?]	0
Switzerland	13 March – 11 May.	Healthcare professionals, emergency workers.		Regional variations.	8

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	1.1 School & childcare closures	1.2 Exemptions (eg vulnerable or key worker children)	1.3 Phased re-openings	1.4 Other measures and notes	CLI Score for schools
Taiwan	2 – 24 Feb.	Unclear.	All schools reopened.	Local school closures where cases confirmed.	3
Turkey	From 16 March.	No.	Reopening from 31 May.		11
USA	Yes in 48/50 states. [BSG: from 5 March]	Varies.	Varies.	Significant regional and local variation, especially with childcare.	12
Wales	From 23 March.	Key workers and vulnerable children.			10

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

Appendix 2: Lockdown/stay at home measures

	2.1 Stay at home orders, quarantines	2.2 Relevant exemptions: eg exercise, children	2.3 Other measures and notes	CLI score for lockdown
Albania	Quarantine orders and curfews from 16 March (times and sanctions varied). Still in place in 'red zones' (defined by number of cases).	Permits for shopping from 30 March; children under 10 allowed out with mothers on 19 April and subsequent Sundays, with further relaxations for children under 15 on 3 May.	Weekend curfews from 21 March to 2 May. Regional variations from 27 April, with more stringent measures in 'red zones'.	4
Australia	Stay at home orders from 24 March to 28 May.	Various exceptions, including recreation.	Significant regional variation in measures, enforcement and dates.	0
Brazil	No statutory measures in most states. From 15 March, citizens were advised to socially isolate by staying at home.	Not applicable.	Significant variation across states and municipalities.	0
Canada	No statutory measures in most provinces. Voluntary stay at home requests from 14 March.	Can go outdoors to exercise, walk pets, and for essential trips.		0
Czech Republic	12 March.	Various exceptions including leisure/exercise.		0
England	23 March	Exercise, health service visits.		0

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	2.1 Stay at home orders, quarantines	2.2 Relevant exemptions: eg exercise, children	2.3 Other measures and notes	CLI score for lockdown
Germany	16 March.	Outdoor activities in a family group; with one friend from 11 May.	Some regional variation.	0
Greece	23 March.	Exercise and other exemptions.		0
Hong Kong	3 Feb: also compulsory home quarantine for some groups.	Religious gatherings (from 22 May); relaxation of some social distancing rules from May.		0
Indonesia	10 April: 'semi-lockdown'. Phased relaxation planned from 1 June.	None; plans to allow outdoor exercise from 15 June.		7
Italy	5 March; measures relaxed from 4 May [BSG].	Exercise and other exemptions (but not for children).	Travel restrictions; significant variation across regions and municipalities.	8
Japan	Voluntary stay-at-home recommendation: 6 April – 25 May.	Exercise, walk.		0
Malaysia	No statutory measures [BSG]; recommendation from 18 March.	No.		0
Nepal	24 March.	Shopping.		10

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	2.1 Stay at home orders, quarantines	2.2 Relevant exemptions: eg exercise, children	2.3 Other measures and notes	CLI score for lockdown
New Zealand	23 March – 14 May (tighter restrictions 26 March – 27 April).	Varied according to national risk level. At higher levels outdoor play, walking, cycling was allowed within household 'bubble'.		0
Portugal	19 March – 4 May.	Exercise, 30 minutes' children's play, shopping, work.		0
Scotland	23 March	Exercise, health.		0
Slovenia	16 March – late April/early May (depending on institution/sector).	Exercise; food shopping.		0
Spain	14 March.	Children had to remain indoors until 27 April (except food shopping by single parent families).		6
Sweden	No.	Not applicable.	School compulsory unless someone in the family shows symptoms.	0
Switzerland	No: restrictions on group numbers and recommendations on distancing, physical contact.	Not applicable.	Regional variations.	0
Taiwan	No.	Not applicable.	Most public indoor services closed; reopening early June.	0

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	2.1 Stay at home orders, quarantines	2.2 Relevant exemptions: eg exercise, children	2.3 Other measures and notes	CLI score for lockdown
Turkey	Stay-at-home rules for children <20 from 16 March. Weekend stay-at-home rules for all ages from 11 April.	No exceptions for children.	Rules began to be relaxed from mid-May.	7
USA	Yes in 42/50 states.	Exercise.	Significant variation at state and local levels.	0
Wales	Yes.	Exercise.	Guidance amended to reflect needs of disabled children and families.	0

Appendix 3: Measures in public open spaces (playgrounds, parks, streets)

	3.1 Public parks closed	3.2 Playgrounds closed	3.3 Regional/national parks closed	3.5 Initiatives to open up streets	3.6 Other measures and notes	CLI score for playgrounds
Albania	From 30 March. Opened for 1 day on 18 April; opened longer hours from 3 May.	From March 30; gradually reopened as per public parks.	From March 16.	No.	From May 2 Tirana and Shkoder are expanding their cycle network, through pop-up cycling lanes.	3
Australia	24 March - 28 May.	24 March - 28 May.	24 March - 28 May.	Yes in some states & territories.	Significant regional variation.	9
Brazil	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	No.	Measures decided at the municipal/state level.	?
Canada	No.	Yes.	Yes; reopening in some provinces.	Yes in some provinces and municipalities.	Significant regional variation.	?
Czech Republic	No.	From 12 March – 30 April	No.	No.	Laws on masks and multiple gatherings	7

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	3.1 Public parks closed	3.2 Playgrounds closed	3.3 Regional/national parks closed	3.5 Initiatives to open up streets	3.6 Other measures and notes	CLI score for play-grounds
England	No.	From 18 March..	No.	Some local initiatives; Govt announced transport funding and invited bids in late May.	Anecdotal reports of excessive police responses to children playing out of doors.	10
Germany	No.	From 20 March [check] until 11 May.	No.		Beaches closed until 11 May.	7
Greece	From 23 March.	From 12 March.	From 23 March.		Beaches closed on 14 March.	11
Hong Kong	No.	From 1 Feb.	March.	No	Some indoor leisure facilities opened, then closed, then reopened. Beaches closed from 1 Feb.	17
Indonesia	From 10 April.	From 10 April.	From 10 April.	Yes; also some allowance for outdoor play and exercise in dense housing contexts		7

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	3.1 Public parks closed	3.2 Playgrounds closed	3.3 Regional/national parks closed	3.5 Initiatives to open up streets	3.6 Other measures and notes	CLI score for play-grounds
Italy	20 March – 4 May.	From 20 March.	From 20 March.	Milan.	Some measures to open some parks for children with autism, for example.	10
Japan	No.	No (but use of most equipment banned).	No.		Beaches closed with some exceptions.	0
Malaysia	From 18 March.	From 18 March.	From 18 March.			10
Nepal	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	No.		?
New Zealand	No, but some facilities closed for periods of higher risk levels.	23 March – 14 May.	Yes for periods of higher risk levels.	Yes, in some downtown areas.	Beaches not closed.	7
Portugal	From 16 March.	From 16 March.	From 14 March (varies for different parks)	Some municipalities have allowed bars and other businesses to take over public space.	Beaches closed from 19 March – 4 May.	11

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	3.1 Public parks closed	3.2 Playgrounds closed	3.3 Regional/national parks closed	3.5 Initiatives to open up streets	3.6 Other measures and notes	CLI score for play-grounds
Scotland	No.	From 18 March.	No.	28 April: £10 million funding for temporary pop up infrastructure programme		10
Slovenia	No.	From 19 March.	No.	No.	Public transport closed 17 March – 11 May.	10
Spain	From 14 March.	Yes.	Varies.	Yes, eg Barcelona		11
Sweden	No.	No.	No.	Not applicable		0
Switzerland	No.	No.	No.	No.	Regional variations.	0
Taiwan	No.	No.	No.	No.	Mobile alert system encourages people to avoid popular spots.	0
Turkey	From 16 March.	From 16 March.	From 16 March.			11

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	3.1 Public parks closed	3.2 Playgrounds closed	3.3 Regional/national parks closed	3.5 Initiatives to open up streets	3.6 Other measures and notes	CLI score for play-grounds
USA	Varies.	Varies. In Colorado playgrounds were closed from 27 April if not earlier, and remained closed through to the end of May.	Varies.	Yes.	Significant variation at state and local levels.	5+
Wales	Varies.	From 18 March.	Varies.	Possibly: Govt invited expressions of interest.	Beaches closed.	10

Appendix 4: Support, advice, advocacy and policy

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Albania		Online service where children can contact psychologists; children's mental health monitored through surveys; psycho-social workers providing indoor play materials for children of kindergartens and nurseries.			
Australia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Significant regional and local variation
Brazil	None at federal level	None at federal level	Limited (NGO sector struggling)	Mutual aid at community level	Some regional/state governments have been active.

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Canada	Reopening plans published for each province/ territory	Guidance for various groups including schools and health professionals	Statements from Outdoor Play Canada and IPA Canada	Online resources from various agencies covering support for parents/children, and calls for opening up public space	
Czech Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (masks, shopping etc)	
England	No.	No.	Limited.	Local and online support groups and activity.	
Germany	Yes, from the beginning	Yes, from the beginning	Yes, from May	Yes, people discuss how they can provide play without contact to children	

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Greece	Govt set up and subsidised 'special purpose leave' for working parents.	Official public health guidelines	The Smile of the Child NGO offered text and video support for parents to help them talk about Covid-19 with their children. NGO campaigning and support for unaccompanied refugee children.	Many small-scale initiatives created stay-at-home learning and creative activities for children. Most cultural institutions in Greece provided art works and performances on-line for free.	
Hong Kong	Yes.	Yes.	Playright, in partnership with the YMCA, has supplied a 'playbox' and produced and shared other resources and information, including IPA material.	Children playing where they can in outdoor spaces.	Playright called for greater attention to children's right to play, and direct engagement with children.

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Indonesia		Online guidance for children.	Response coordination and online learning materials.	Offline learning from home kits and other learning from home and parenting resources.	
Italy		Yes.	Information and prevention advice.	Yes.	
Japan	Statement that children allowed to play.	Advice on playing.	Statements from NGOs	Sharing ideas of games and play activities.	Some reported incidents of hazardous items left out deliberately for children to find, by people who thought children should not play outdoors.
Malaysia	Yes.	Yes.	Yes: survey of impact on childcare centres, and other sector support activities.	Childline Foundation / Toy Libraries Malaysia have joint project with toy suppliers to give away toys to children in high density, low cost flats, refugee and migrant children.	

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Nepal	No.	Call for child-friendly environments for isolated and quarantined children.	Information and psycho-social support.	Youth groups running online storytelling sessions.	
New Zealand		Online guidance on keeping children safe and reassured.	NGOS published online ideas for playing at home.	Online and neighbourhood support networks and activities.	Media offered support and ideas for play.
Portugal		Guidelines for group childcare.	Webinars, World Play Day activities, support for local play agencies, online training for adults, online information for parents	Online and neighbourhood support networks and activities.	Several research studies

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Scotland	Statement on play; First Minister spoke with children on TV; Perinatal and Early Years Mental Health Third Sector Fund; Govt funding for youth consultation; online health resources for children and parents.	Guidance on outdoor play in emergency childcare settings.	Play Scotland to host play resources for parents (online and hard copy). NGO sector liaison with Govt, including lobbying for more guidance and support on play.	Widespread play-based activity in areas of highest need.	
Slovenia			Initiative to reallocate streetspace for pedestrians.	Parents petition to reopen primary schools.	
Spain	Unclear.	Confused communications.	Unclear.	Yes. One example is the international 'Frena la Curva' citizen platform.	Severe restrictions for children prompted experts and activists to push Govt to reconsider some measures.

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
Sweden		General advice	Advice on communicating with children.	Various.	
Switzerland	Unclear	Unclear	Initiatives on children and education and play.	Various.	
Taiwan	Yes.	Encouragement of outdoor play and exercise. Child journalists involved in press conference.	No.	No.	No confirmed local cases for several months.
Turkey		Supportive statements and resources on play for parents (based on IPA resource).	Yes.		

Covid-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

	4.1 Supportive government policies and statements	4.2 Supportive guidance/advice from government	4.3 National NGO initiatives	4.4 Community/grassroots initiatives	4.5 Other measures and notes
USA	No at federal level. Yes from some state governors.	Confusing, inaccurate and at times contradictory information from federal govt. CDC has guidance on use of playgrounds.	Yes from National Assn for Education of Young Children.	Yes, including groups in some states calling for stay-at-home orders to be overruled.	Significant variation at state and local levels.
Wales	Funding for mental health and counselling services; temporary changes to childcare regulations; consultations and surveys involving children.	Some signposting to Play Wales resources.	Online and hard copy resources produced by Play Wales.	Yes: varies locally, but can include play resource packs, staff for childcare hubs, social media activity.	

Appendix 5: Respondents

Country	Name or Agency
Albania	Simon Battisti
Australia	Barbara Champion
Brazil	Janine Dodge
Canada	Louise de Lannoy
Czech Republic	Mirjana Petrik
England	Tim Gill
Germany	Spielmobile e.V.
Greece	TIE Lab, Technical University of Crete
Hong Kong	Kathy Wong
Indonesia	Marini Widowati
Italy	Ali Per Giocare
Japan	Hitoshi Shimamura
Malaysia	Da Tin Ph Wong
Nepal	Santosh Maharjan
New Zealand	IPA Aotearoa NZ
Portugal	IPA Portugal
Scotland	Marguerite Hunter Blair, Anne-Marie Mackin
Slovenia	Urska Kranjc
Spain	Irene Quintáns
Sweden	Nik Dahlström, Krister Svensson
Switzerland	Fabian Carlo
Taiwan	Christine Lee
Turkey	Mine Göl Güven
USA	Deb Lawrence
Wales	Mike Greenaway

Appendix 6: Methodological note on Child Lockdown Index (CLI)

The CLI emerged as a tool during this study, as a way of analysing responses. While no firm views were taken as to its purpose, it may have value as both an advocacy and research tool. When shared on twitter, the resulting exchanges revealed some interest - including thoughts on how the idea could be expanded to include health, welfare, education and other measures – and also some questions and constructive criticism.¹⁷

The very idea of a single index is of necessity a simplification. For one thing, it cannot reflect potentially important demographic considerations (such as the differential impact on children of different ages, or in different socio-economic groups). For another, in the formulation above, it does not consider other policies of interest to children's advocates, such as those relating to health (eg access to food), social welfare (eg access to child protective services) or economic support for parents and caregivers. However, it would be possible to augment the CLI to cover such topics (as is the case with the BSG stringency index, which brings together a number of sub-indices).

In terms of the application of the above formula, one obvious issue arises with regional/state differences. The BSG index gives a national score largely based on 'most stringent' region/state, with a modest adjustment to score if not national. We adopted the same approach here, as far as possible. Other approaches could theoretically be taken (for example, deriving scores based on the length of time that the measures applied to a certain proportion of the population). However, they are likely to be more complicated and time-consuming to both collect and calculate.

Another issue is length of school closures. We considered simply using the BSG 'school closure' indicator. But it is not clear what BSG counts as reopening: for example, the opening of schools for some year groups solely for state exams appears to lead to a lower score. Clearly this is not helpful in the context of this report, with its focus on play and mobility. Hence in deciding on the duration of school closures, we relied on information from our respondents.

Finally, the focus on playgrounds is not ideal, in that children play out of doors in a range of spaces, of which playgrounds are but one. That said, the playground is a familiar and widespread form of child-oriented public space. Moreover, national playground closure policies are comparatively easy to document.

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/timrgill/status/1272812196469387265>