



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund

Internal Awards 2020

2 COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund

The London School of Economics and Political Science and the COVID-19 Crisis

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the LSE community started to think about how social science research and expertise could help address the challenges we face, both in terms of limiting the social and economic effects of the pandemic and helping to shape a better post-COVID-19 world. In the short term, policy-makers need to understand behavioural responses to social distancing and other measures, the economic impact of the crisis on individuals, firms, sectors and regions, public attitudes to policy decisions and expert advice, and many other issues. Then, in the medium term, a whole host of questions need to be answered relating to how the crisis will shape our economy, society, politics, and education and healthcare systems in the coming years. These questions need social science answers.

To encourage researchers to respond to these challenges, Pro-Director for Research, Professor Simon Hix launched the **LSE COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund**, to support new research by individuals or groups of academic staff. Priority was given to research that was likely to have an impact on policy-making in response to the crisis. The call raised interest, drawing in 145 applications from across all departments in the School. These proposals ranged from PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, to junior and senior Professors and experienced research leaders. The proposals were carefully evaluated by the Research Development Panel, with support from Professor Andrés Velasco, Dean of the LSE School of Public Policy. A total of 23 projects were selected for funding.

At the same time, the LSE School of Public Policy started leading efforts to draw together colleagues from across the School, to offer expert knowledge, analysis and advice to national and international policy-makers.

The awarded projects are summarised below, in alphabetical order. Results will be shared as they become available through the School's media channels and on the [School of Public Policy's COVID-19 Social Science response page](#).

Contents

A net wealth tax for the UK: rebuilding public finances after COVID-19	4
A scorecard to inform policy: assessing risk & ensuring reproductive rights during COVID-19.....	4
Combating fake news to prevent COVID-19 spread in informal settlements	4
COVID-19 and the erosion of liberal democratic norms	4
COVID-19 public policy implementation: interventions & local innovations from Sub-Saharan Africa.....	4
COVID-19 response plans in conflict and weak governance zones: the case study of Syria.....	5
Innovations in care: supporting vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic	5
Measuring the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on rural Indian households	5
Mutual Aid and community responses to the coronavirus pandemic	5
Policing the COVID-19 outbreak	5
Public policies and the cost of social distancing: what works to mitigate the firm-level impact of social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis?	6
Social Data Science versus Virus: Coronavirus Hackathon	6
Socio-economic inequalities and the duration of lockdown measures	6
State/market/community in the time of coronavirus	6
Sustaining pro-social and environmental behaviours beyond COVID-19	6
The challenge of mass deaths for social order	7
The COVID-19 crisis in divided societies: an international survey to explore the actual and perceived consequences in India, South Africa and Brazil	7
The evolution of preferences at a time of crisis.....	7
The impact of COVID-19 on the availability of temporary housing in London.....	7
The impacts of temporary price controls during disasters	7
The policy challenge of vulnerable groups and multigenerational households in the COVID-19 crisis	8
The self-employed and COVID-19.....	8
The wellbeing impacts of lockdown	8

A net wealth tax for the UK: rebuilding public finances after COVID-19

Dr Andrew Summers

Dr Arun Advani, University of Warwick, LSE

The project aims to design a 'ready to legislate' proposal for a net wealth tax that is both costed and administratively feasible. It will generate a robust evidence-base drawing on international experience, propose solutions to key design challenges, and make policy recommendations to government. The work will help understand how much revenue a net wealth tax could raise, its distributional effects, and the administrative barriers to successful implementation.

A scorecard to inform policy: assessing risk and ensuring reproductive rights during COVID-19

Dr Clare Wenham

Liana Woskie, LSE

The purpose of this research is to develop a risk scorecard that extends beyond what is already known on the intersection of epidemic disease and reproductive health. It will benefit policymakers, women impacted by policies and advocates for reproductive rights. In order to develop the card understanding which metrics are most relevant to family planning, where hot spots will occur, and the real-time risks developing due to social isolation, is incredibly important.

Combating fake news to prevent COVID-19 spread in informal settlements

Antonella Bancalari

Dr Alex Armand, Nova School of Business and Economics

Dr Britta Augsburg, Institute for Fiscal Studies

This project aims to analyse to what extent slum dwellers can and do respond to COVID-19 advice, such as washing hands frequently with soap. Making use of technology for phone messages will support analysis as whether this technology can be successfully used to counter the spread of misinformation and fake news and who should be the sender.

COVID-19 and the erosion of liberal democratic norms

Professor Sara Hobolt

Professor Catherine De Vries, Bocconi University

Pandemics, and other acute crises, call for strong executive action. In the case of COVID-19, this has involved radical policies across the globe, including the ban on public gatherings, closure of borders, and restrictions on individual movement to contain the spread of the virus. While such measures have sound public health foundations, there is also a danger that some executives may use the pandemic to undermine core liberal democratic institutions and norms. This project will assess whether the COVID-19 crisis has eroded support for, and sensitivity to, core liberal democratic norms. It will build understanding of which individual and contextual-level factors shape support for different policy responses.

COVID-19 public policy implementation: interventions & local innovations from Sub-Saharan Africa

Dr Catherine Jones

Dr Emmanuel Bonnet, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, UMI Résiliences

Dr Sarah Dalglisch, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Institute for Global Health, UCL

Dr Fatoumata Hane, Université Assane Seck de Ziguinchor

Dr Kadidiatou Kadio, Institut de recherche en science de la santé du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique

Dr Valéry Ridde, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, UMR CEPED

Dr N'koué Emmanuel Sambieni, l'Université de Parakou, Laboratoire de Recherches et d'Etudes sur les Dynamiques sociales et le Développement Local

This pilot project will inventory examples of public health and community-based interventions for prevention, screening, mitigation, control and treatment in lower and lower-middle income countries on COVID-19. Data collection will be conducted in English and French on local innovations through crowd-sourcing techniques and from case studies on government policy measures in three Francophone West African countries. The study will assess interventions implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa to provide a snapshot of innovations accompanied

by in-depth analysis to inform policy adaptation. Methodologically, the project will pilot a networked, open approach to collect, collate, and circulate innovations that profile African expertise in health.

COVID-19 response plans in conflict and weak governance zones: the case study of Syria

Dr Rim Turkmani

Zaki Mehchy, LSE

Mazen Garibah, LSE

Yazan Douedari, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Tayseer Alkarim, M.D.

Response policies to the COVID-19 outbreak need to factor that the pandemic is unfolding differently across countries. Containment and mitigation strategies designed for high-income countries are unlikely to be effective in conflict-affected low-income countries. Syria is a typical case study for such context. This research investigates the context specific factors affecting the spread of the pandemic in Syria, dominated mainly by three different authorities. It is a foundation for future in-depth analysis on each factors' group.

Innovations in care: supporting vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic

Professor Laura Bear

Professor Deborah James, LSE

Nikita Simpson

This research will explore how policy could support vulnerable households in the United Kingdom during, and beyond, the coronavirus epidemic. To achieve these goals existing care networks, innovations in social support, near-term stressors and long-term consequences of the pandemic need to be mapped. The project will unpick how households are receiving new policies, what the consequences would be of measures and communications for vulnerable households and how to prepare vulnerable households for the longer-term uncertain future.

Measuring the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on rural Indian households

Professor Om Narasimhan

Iris Steenkamp, London Business School

Professor Rajesh Chandy, London Business School

Gaurav Mehta, Dharma Life

Despite its significance, little work has been done on the impact of pandemics on rural populations in the developing world. This study will document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural Indian households and communities. In particular, details will be gathered on the financial implications, awareness and information, the role of returning migrants, and the impact of the pandemic on women.

Mutual Aid and community responses to the coronavirus pandemic

Professor Anne Power

This project will examine the community responses to the coronavirus pandemic. It is important to understand what drives development of 'Mutual Aid' groups, the forms of help available and how the emergence of neighbourhood support groups can help inform the government's policy development to combat the worst effects of COVID-19.

Policing the COVID-19 outbreak

Dr Chris Pósch

Dr Ben Bradford, University College London

This project aims to understand how people's views about governmental institutions and especially legal authorities change over time during the COVID-19 outbreak. It will explore behaviours, norms and attitudes regarding the crisis, the Government's response and handling of the situation, social isolation, and the role that the police is and should be taking. This study will be co-funded with the Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science at University College London.

Public policies and the cost of social distancing: what works to mitigate the firm-level impact of social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis?

Dr Riccardo Crescenzi and Dr Mara Giua

This project will apply state-of-the-art counterfactual methods to assess the firm-level impact of public policies for the adoption of digital technologies on the propensity to adopt work-from-home solutions vs. furlough leave or redundancy in response to social distancing measures. The project will offer timely new evidence on how public policies can mitigate the trade-off between social distancing and economic activity. Italy will be used as a case study.

Social Data Science versus Virus: Coronavirus Hackathon

Professor Ken Benoit

This project will harness the collective energies of social data scientists to turn concerted attention to insights and potential solutions to the problem through a data science “hackathon”. A hackathon is an organised event to bring together people with different social science backgrounds but lots of data science and computing skills, to focus around a problem or idea and collectively devise innovative solutions from scratch. These solutions will take the form of computer programs, data analyses, visualizations, or applications. This Hackathon will focus on insights into the specifically social, political, economic, demographic, or epidemiological aspects of the pandemic.

Socio-economic inequalities and the duration of lockdown measures

Lars Ludolph

Dr Mikkel Barslund, Centre for European Policy Studies
Dr Pieter Vanhuysse, University of Southern Denmark
Dr Nazeya Laurentyeva, LMU Munich

If lockdown measures impact different groups of the population differently, different groups are likely to have different views on the duration and strictness of lockdown measures. This project will explore the distributional differences in the impact of lockdown measures on welfare and subjective well-being and ask if those differences are drivers of varying preferences on the duration and severity of lockdowns.

State/market/community in the time of coronavirus

Dr Mukulika Banerjee and Professor Maitreesh Ghatak

Dr Rebecca Bowers, LSE

Ramya Raghavan, LSE

The COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a public health crisis, but one also inextricably linked with global economic shock. In this project, the roles State, Market and Community play in India will be examined in the context of the current lockdown. The study will be done in cooperation with ‘citizen scientists’. The conditions created by a lockdown furthermore exacerbate pre-existing and structural problems for women, with domestic violence being one of the most damaging. With this in mind, the project will also explore how women access safe spaces or indeed, their own communities of care during this time.

Sustaining pro-social and environmental behaviours beyond COVID-19

Dr Roger Fouquet

Dr Tanya O’Garra, LSE

A global pandemic presents a unique opportunity to assess our current economic trajectory, and to identify the mechanisms needed to shift direction onto a more sustainable pathway. This project seeks to address this opportunity by identifying which current pro-environmental and pro-social behaviours can be sustained beyond the lifetime of the pandemic, and the mechanisms and/or policy decisions that would support these longer-term changes. This research will be used to inform policy makers (via Grantham Research Institute policy briefs targeted at Parliament’s Knowledge Exchange Unit) about the optimal mix of behaviours and supporting mechanisms needed to shift trajectory onto a sustainable pathway beyond the lifetime of the pandemic.

The challenge of mass deaths for social order

Dr Katharine Millar

Dr Yuna Han, LSE

Dr Martin Bayly, LSE

COVID-19 is producing substantial British fatalities. Medical and mortuary systems have been overwhelmed. Mass deaths create ruptures to 'normal' funeral practices and grieving rites. Effective management of fatalities and public grief is essential to the reestablishment of public trust and cohesion after mass deaths. This study will examine death management, crisis narrative, and mourning and commemoration.

The COVID-19 crisis in divided societies: an international survey to explore the actual and perceived consequences in India, South Africa and Brazil

Dr Mylene Lagarde

Dr Irene Papanicolas, LSE

As the epidemic is growing in developing countries, and many people face a trade-off between costs and health risks, it is urgent to understand the indirect health and economic consequences of lockdowns for different socio-economic groups in these societies. This project will evaluate the barriers or enablers to following public health recommendations, the trade-offs people make between potential health risks and economic costs and how they perceive the health risks posed by COVID-19. This will help to understand how framing of messages on the COVID-19 health crisis influences public perception.

The evolution of preferences at a time of crisis

Professor Paul Dolan

Amanda Henwood, LSE

Professor Aki Tsuchiya, University of Sheffield

Understanding how citizen preferences evolve during a time of crisis can help inform difficult decisions about which types of policies to pursue and for which ends. By eliciting preferences and behavioural responses in people as the crisis and responses to it unfold, our findings will be of direct relevance to policymakers who are struggling to balance several competing concerns, such as the health and wellbeing costs and benefits of social distancing and the value deaths prevented now versus those caused later.

The impact of COVID-19 on the availability of temporary housing in London

Professor Christine Whitehead and Dr Nancy Holman

Fanny Blanc, LSE

Anne Edge, LSE

Beth Crankshaw, LSE

Martina Rotolo, LSE

The COVID-19 crisis has led to the closure of hotels that have been temporarily accommodating households. Whilst the government has brought in a requirement that evictions be halted, anecdotal evidence suggests that illegal evictions are increasing. Government has also required boroughs to ensure all rough sleepers are accommodated. As a result, boroughs face increasing pressures. The decisions they make now will impact on their longer-term capacity to move homeless households into secure accommodation. This project will help understand how the numbers, types of households and the reasons for being accepted as homeless in London have changed; how landlords' attitudes have changed with respect both to providing temporary accommodation and making move-on accommodation available; and how policies might be modified to improve outcomes.

The impacts of temporary price controls during disasters

Julio Brandao-Roll

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused major increases in demand for certain goods. Ordinarily, increases in demand would cause price increases for these goods, however, many countries and states have laws which prevent such price increases. An empirical investigation will be undertaken into the effects of these laws during the health crises, including impacts on prices, quantities sold, economic efficiency, and any redistributive effects impacting inequality. By seeing how prices and quantities of scarce goods vary with states' price-gouging laws and product category, the efficiency of laws can be estimated.

The policy challenge of vulnerable groups and multigenerational households in the COVID-19 crisis

Dr Tania Burchardt

Dr Eleni Karagiannaki, LSE

This project will deliver an evidence base for policymakers in Public Health England and other central government and devolved administrations on the extent to which vulnerable individuals are supported through co-residence with younger generations but also potentially exposed by them to infection risk. This will ensure that decisions about the phased lifting of restrictions (such as school closures and working from home) reflect the actual living arrangements of the UK's elderly population.

The self-employed and COVID-19

Jack Blundell and Professor Stephen Machin

The current crisis presents an unprecedented challenge for the UK labour market. It is already evident that it is going to have a big impact on the labour market, for traditionally vulnerable groups, but also for those in jobs that have been historically much less exposed to job loss and wage falls. This research will monitor and quantify the effect that the current crisis and corresponding policy responses are having on the self-employed and provide sharp policy-relevant, up-to-date information that can have a significant impact on government decisions and the economic circumstances of UK workers.

The wellbeing impacts of lockdown

Dr Christian Krekel

Professor Lord Richard Layard, LSE

Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, LSE, University of Oxford

Dr Andrew Clark, LSE, Paris School of Economics

This project will study the wellbeing impacts of lockdown. After having looked at the costs and benefits associated with lockdown and its release (published as a CEP Occasional Paper that is now in the peer-review process), the study will consider (a) whether wellbeing predicts compliance behaviour with lockdown measures (as adherence to these measures is decreasing due to behavioural fatigue) and (b) how wellbeing has changed before, during, and after lockdown, relative to other crises in history.



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