

Yale SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Department of Health Policy & Management ([HPM](#))

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HPM Colloquium in Health Services Research

Wednesday, February 3, 2021

12:00-1:00 PM

Virtual Seminar via Zoom

“Policy, poverty, and politics: How public health, inequality and political leadership shaped the COVID-19 pandemic”



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Abstract:

In early 2020, countries worldwide implemented a range of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to slow the spread of the COVID-19. NPIs varied between countries in the degree/level and timing of implementation. Effectiveness of NPIs depends on public compliance with them and the extent to which the NPIs implemented resulted in population mobility reductions in countries varied. We assess the effects of NPIs on numbers of new COVID-19 cases over time from February 20th to August 17th in 93 countries controlling by the ability and willingness to comply with government restrictions. We used data from the Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker, Google’s Community Mobility Reports, and the World Bank. We constructed a dataset on political leadership using information on populist political parties from the Global Party Survey. We use a panel model with random effects to identify the effect of policy response on the number of daily cases. Countries are included when 300 cases are reported. We use a lagged dependent variable with 14 days between NPI implementation and new cases. We find variation in both responses and epidemics. We find that compliance helps explain the impact of policy responses – the association between government responses and new cases is moderated by the level of mobility. We also find strong associations between the GINI coefficient and populist leadership and new cases. As a number of prior studies have also shown, our study suggests that NPIs implemented in early 2020 substantially reduced COVID-19 cases. We also show that public compliance was fundamental to the effectiveness of NPIs. Unlike previous studies, we further explain the heterogeneity in cases by including measures of inequality and type of political leadership to identify the impact of ability and willingness of populations to comply with restrictions. These findings have implications for future waves of the pandemic and the government responses that are implemented.

To request Zoom link, please contact carolyn.cummings@yale.edu