

North Carolina (USA) SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 Pandemic Response

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What is your understanding about the emergence, spread across countries and scientific understanding of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19?

As a policy scholar, I'm not comfortable giving an opinion on my scientific understanding of the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19.

When did global or regional bodies issue what/which key information, alerts or recommendations?

I am studying the policy response in North Carolina, a state in the southeastern United States. The case study may be relevant to the work of the Independent Panel because, as Panel members are likely aware, the US Federal government took a very fragmented approach to the pandemic. Each state determined its own pandemic response, social distancing guidelines, and mask wearing regulations.

In North Carolina, pandemic response occurred through a number of Governor Executive Orders. In almost all cases, justification for the executive orders rested on three things: WHO declaration of a global pandemic on 11 March 2020, Federal emergency declaration on 13 March 2020 and a Major Disaster Declaration on 25 March 2020, and state collected data on cases, deaths, and hospitalizations.

On 15 April 2020, the Governor established a “dimmer switch” pandemic response plan describing three phases of “reopening” from the March Stay at Home order. Justification of this plan rested on science advice to the Governor and the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on epidemiological modeling in respect to viral spread in the community and hospital capacity. Advice on the models was provided by an informal group of researchers under the auspices of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Sheps Center for Health Services Research. Information on the work of this group can be found here:

www.shepscenter.unc.edu/2020/04/06/covid-19-north-carolina-collaborative

The Governor's office announced the dimmer switch plan via press release, but it is not yet clear to me if the plan is established also by executive order. The “phases” are clearly invoked in the executive orders but I'm unclear if the plan itself is established by the orders.

The dimmer switch response plan created metrics to be applied to state collected statistical for guiding reopening. These included:

- Trajectory in COVID-Like Illness (CLI) Surveillance Over 14 Days
- Trajectory of Confirmed Cases Over 14 Days
- Trajectory in Percent of Tests Returning Positive Over 14 Days
- Trajectory in Hospitalizations Over 14 Days

It is worth noting that the Governor and the Secretary of the DHHS give regular public media briefings on these trends and associated policy actions.

What actions were taken by countries, and when, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19?

This is a list of select Executive Orders that established significant state response to COVID-19. There are many other Executive Order responses particularly in regards to the economic impacts of the disease on the public. [Some researchers](#) argue that North Carolina experienced significant coronavirus spread due to evictions.

- 10 March 2020: The Governor issued its first Executive Order on the pandemic making a Declaration of a State of Emergency
- 14 March 2020: Mass gathering prohibited, statewide closure of K-12 public schools
- 27 March 2020: State at home order
- 15 April 2020: Press Release announcing reopening plans in three phases
- 05 May 2020: Phase 1 of Reopening
- 20 May 2020: Phase 2 reopening begins
- 24 June 2020: Extension of Phase 2 and a broader mask mandate is put in place (which continues to be in place at the time of this writing 09 December 2020)
- 30 September 2020: Phase 3 begins
- 10 November 2020: Phase 3 extended
- 08 December 2020: Modified stay at home order and requirement of some business closures between 10:00PM and 5:00AM (effectively a curfew)