AN EXIT STRATEGY FROM LOCKDOWN

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ABSTRACT**:**

This article talks about the strategy in which the activities should be resumed while we come to the end of the covid-19 lockdown. Our clauses are supported by the geographical and occupational specific data. The ways in which the resumption of a life close to pre pandemic levels is discussed below.

INTRODUCTION**:**

With high hopes to start a fresh year anew, the coming of Novel Coronavirus made the entire world standstill. COVID-19 has not only affected millions of lives but also the economy as a whole. On 24th march 2020, lockdown was imposed in India which saved the lives of many but also pushed masses into poverty. This has caused severe repercussions by forcing a large fraction of workforce into involuntary joblessness and has shut down many thriving businesses. Being a developing country with many miles to go to achieve the status of a developed country, the lockdown further took away "at least two years" of India's economic growth upon comparing the current data with pre pandemic levels [Samrat Sharma, 2021]. However, the lockdown cannot go on forever and the economic activities have to be resumed. The crucial question is the manner in which the activities must be resumed so as to sustain the economy.

Geographical distribution of the infection

One of the crucial questions is which geographical area must be opened up. It is necessary to find out which locations must be kept under lockdown and which ones must be relived from it. Using inputs from the health professionals, the districts in India can be classified into 3 zones- high, medium and low risk based on infection rate cut offs. Activities carried out in these 3 zones would be of different nature. However, basing our decision only on the infection rate cut-offs will not be enough. A workplace is a common source where the chances of contracting COVID-19 are high. Thus, it is likely that infection will spread to those areas which generate more income and are densely populated. It is observed by WHO that the places which were affected the most by this virus were Mumbai, Delhi, Indore and Noida.

In order to check the fact whether areas with high economic activity have higher infection rates, the team at "Economic Political and Weekly" carried out an analysis. They regressed the number of COVID-19 infections in a district as of 12 April 2020 using the data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on night light data of 2013 from each district. Night light data represents the visible lights which were on throughout the night and acts as a proxy for economic activity in that district. Higher density of night lights implies more economic activity in that district.

OLS Estimates of the Effect of Night Light and COVID-19 Infections

Variables	**Number of Reported Cases of COVID-19**		
Average Night Light 2013	1.631*** [0.24]	3.282*** [.38]	3.32*** [.39]
Constant	1.202 [4.04]	3.17 12.85	0.37 14.63
State fixed effects	N	Y	Y
With covariates	N	N	Y
Observations	320	320	320

Standard errors in brackets.
****p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.*

Source: vol LV no 22, Economic & Political Weekly p.39

The team at "Economic Political and Weekly" carried out an analysis and the results aligned with our expectations. There is a positive correlation in all three regressions between night light density and the number of COVID-19 infections in a district. We can conclude that the spread of infection is more in areas which have higher productivity. Therefore, if those districts which have high and medium risk of infection are shut down, it means activities in those districts are being shut down which are more productive than low or no infection areas.

Part Of Workforce Which Can Continue Work from Home

Work from home is a term that several people have got used but the extent of which is still yet to be determined. Unfortunately, not all jobs can be done remotely and thus "identifying which jobs can and cannot be performed from home is useful as policymakers try to target social insurance payments to those that most need them." [Neiman, 2020 p]

The data on the classification of the number of workers and employees along with the sectors they are employed in is obtained from the O*NET database. "It contains hundreds of standardized and occupation specific descriptors on almost 1,000 occupations" [Neiman, 2020]. In India, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) surveys are conduced once in a decade. The last data was conducted in 2011-2012 and thus these numbers will be used to

estimate the number of people who can work from home for each type of occupation. The data includes people working in both the formal and informal sector.

Table 2: Number of Workers and Share of Workers Who Can Work from Home by Occupation

Occupation	Number of Workers	Share of Total	Work from Home Score	Work from Home Nos
Computer and mathematical occupations	14,33,664	0.39	1	14,33,664.00
Education, training, and library occupations	84,43,946	2.32	0.98	82,75,067.08
Legal occupations	5,32,536	0.15	0.97	5,16,559.92
Business and financial operations occupations	60,11,561	1.65	0.88	52,90,173.68
Management occupations	3,50,44,624	9.65	0.87	3,04,88,822.88
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	5,65,001	0.16	0.76	4,29,400.76
Office and administrative support occupations	18,70,891	0.52	0.65	12,16,079.15
Architecture and engineering occupations	15,40,818	0.42	0.61	9,39,898.98
Life, physical, and social science occupations	9,26,413	0.26	0.54	5,00,263.02
Community and social service occupations	10,69,812	0.29	0.37	3,95,830.44
Sales and related occupations	2,01,55,490	5.55	0.28	56,43,537.20
Personal care and service occupations	40,66,056	1.12	0.26	10,57,174.56
Protective service occupations	24,38,263	0.67	0.06	1,46,295.78
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	22,97,608	0.63	0.05	1,14,880.40
Transportation and material moving occupations	1,67,43,618	4.61	0.03	5,02,308.54
Healthcare support occupations	92,073	0.03	0.02	1,841.46
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	6,72,90,246	18.53	0.01	6,72,902.46
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	48,43,430	1.33	0.01	48,434.30
Production occupations	3,08,96,466	8.51	0.01	3,08,964.66
Food preparation and serving related occupations	10,01,66,075	27.58	0	0.00
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	3,28,53,826	9.04	0	0.00
Construction and extraction occupations	2,29,05,311	6.31	0	0.00
Customs	1,71,041	0.05	0.52	88,086.12
Misc	8,80,680	0.24	0	0.00
Total	36,32,39,449	100		5,80,70,185.39

Source: vol LV no 22, Economic & Political Weekly p.40

Using O*NET, the share of working population that can work from home is calculated with respect to the total number of workers of each occupation working from home. We see that every occupation demands different range of activities which may require one to be on-site regardless of minding any externalities.

Here, we see that food servicing occupations, construction sites, security & protective services, etc are some examples which cannot operate when on a complete lockdown. The supply chains in respect of farm products were severely hit towards the early stages of lockdown, because transportation across the country was brought to a standstill. Agriculture being the backbone of the economy took a severe hit in these stages. Thus, to keep the supply chain in track, there should be a heavy emphasis on the reopening of the manufacturing and agricultural sector.

CONCLUSION:

The world saw another pandemic after the Swine Flu influenzas of 2009, and this time, it's far more severe and has had a harsh effect on the economy. Continuation of the strategy of lockdown is not viable for a developing country like India. Prolonged loss of business and income will have catastrophic impacts. Therefore, this article emphasises on the resumption of limited economic activities with necessary precautions.

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