

# PANDEMIC Research News - July 21

## Compliance during the pandemic

Compliance with recommendations and rules is essential during health crises, particularly when our behaviour can have a substantial effect on others and society. The more we adhere to good practices in our behaviour in combating the pandemic, the less severe the pandemic will be. With this in mind, we have created a league table of compliance with COVID-19 rules and recommendations in five European Countries. We not only compare countries, but also look at how compliance has changed over time.

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We measure people's adherence to the rules and recommendations regarding behaviour during the pandemic as part of the pandemic-dedicated COME-HERE (COVID-19, MEntal HEalth, REsilience and Self-regulation) survey. This survey covers five European Union countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden. Information on compliance was collected from individuals in August 2020 (from 5,565 respondents), November/December 2020 (5,594 respondents) and March 2021 (4,901 respondents). This report analyses the eight compliance questions that individuals were asked at each of these dates. Having information on behaviour at different points in time is valuable for the evaluation of potential lockdown fatigue, with a gradual abandon of preventive health practices. Our data suggests that this has not yet come about.

### August 2020

The survey collected information from questions about how often respondents complied with various sanitary and social-distancing recommendations.

The answers were on the following six-point scale: Never; Almost Never; Sometimes; Often; Very Often; and All the Time. The table below shows the percentage of individuals who said they complied either Very Often or All the Time with the various measures in the first column.

These measures are ordered by the figure for the overall degree of compliance across all five countries that appears in the last column. The separate country figures show how compliance differs between countries. In each column, the green figures represent the Top Three compliance measures (in terms of the percentage who follow them), and the red figures the Bottom Three.

	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	Sweden	Overall
Washed or disinfected my hands regularly	80.8	79.9	77.9	87.1	74.5	81.6
Were particularly careful around vulnerable persons	80.0	73.0	74.5	86.7	75.4	78.5
Wore a mask when the distance of 2 metres could not be kept	76.1	71.6	77.2	90.5	5.8	68.8
Avoided unnecessary social contacts	62.0	58.5	60.4	74.1	54.7	66.7
Kept a distance of 2 metres to other people	54.4	69.3	51.3	74.6	62.2	62.4
Avoided going out for not immediately necessary activities	53.9	41.6	49.1	58.7	35.5	49.1
Avoided touching my face	40.0	41.9	52.2	53.4	29.9	42.8
Kept a list of people I had close contact with	23.4	15.8	20.0	28.2	8.0	20.1

Across all countries, the top compliance measures are Washed hands and disinfected regularly, Being particularly careful around vulnerable people, and Wearing a mask when social distancing was not possible. Over two-thirds of people said they complied with these measures.

The figure for mask-wearing is driven down by the very low percentage in Sweden, where there was no mask mandate and therefore no rule with which to comply (the figures in the other four countries are all over 70%). On the contrary, under half of respondents avoided going out or touching their face, and only 20% kept a list of contacts.



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## November and December 2020

The top two compliance measures in November and December 2020 are the same as those in August, namely Washed hands and disinfected regularly, and Being particularly careful around vulnerable people. The bottom three compliance measures are also the same. It is, however, notable that the percentage avoiding going out unnecessarily rose from just under one half in August to almost two-thirds at the end of the year, either reflecting more socialising during the Summer or greater pandemic intensity at the end of 2020. In general, the overall column indicates that, in all five countries combined, respondent compliance rose for every measure between August and November-December 2020.

	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	Sweden	Overall
Washed or disinfected my hands regularly	83.2	81.9	84.0	87.2	77.4	83.2
Were particularly careful around vulnerable persons	83.8	81.0	83.5	87.7	80.0	83.7
Avoided unnecessary social contacts	79.7	72.2	79.2	81.1	70.2	77.1
Wore a mask when the distance of 2 metres could not be kept	84.0	78.6	84.6	91.2	11.3	75.3
Kept a distance of 2 metres to other people	65.3	72.5	65.1	77.2	70.9	70.1
Avoided going out for not immediately necessary activities	70.3	51.5	71.6	67.7	53.2	64.0
Avoided touching my face	55.6	44.8	51.3	54.6	35.0	47.3
Kept a list of people I had close contact with	29.0	20.0	27.1	34.4	11.1	25.5

## March 2021

Our latest figures show that compliance dropped off a little by March 2021, but still remains broadly above the figures in Summer 2020.

	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	Sweden	Overall
Were particularly careful around vulnerable persons	81.5	71.7	80.6	88.2	75.7	80.6
Wore a mask when the distance of 2 metres could not be kept	86.6	77.2	86.5	92.9	28.2	79.2
Washed or disinfected my hands regularly	80.7	75.3	80.3	82.3	69.6	78.5
Kept a distance of 2 metres to other people	65.9	75.5	68.7	80.8	73.6	72.8
Avoided unnecessary social contacts	70.7	58.7	73.6	79.1	65	72.1
Avoided going out for not immediately necessary activities	57.4	46.4	63.3	65.9	44.9	56.9
Avoided touching my face	44.3	42	55	60.8	38.1	49.2
Kept a list of people I had close contact with	22.5	18.9	24.8	33.1	8.6	22.9

### Research sponsors



The tables overall reveal a certain amount of similarity in compliance in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, with Sweden being something of an outlier. This is mainly driven by the use of masks when social distancing was not possible. However, this finding does not imply that Swedes are less compliant, as the rules differed between countries. And over time, there is no evidence of individuals treating the pandemic less seriously in 2021 than in 2020: we have no evidence of compliance fatigue. More research is ongoing regarding behaviour during the pandemic and other topics. This information is available online at [www.pandemic.uni.lu](http://www.pandemic.uni.lu).