



Walking the tightrope: avoiding a lockdown while containing the virus

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Context

- Policy question: reduce the spread of the virus while minimising the economic costs of containment (and public health) policies
- Containment measures
 - stay-at-home requirements, school and workplace closings, restriction on gatherings and public events, closure of public transport, travel bans, etc.
- Public health measures
 - TTI, mask-wearing, testing and visit restrictions in care homes, etc.



Context

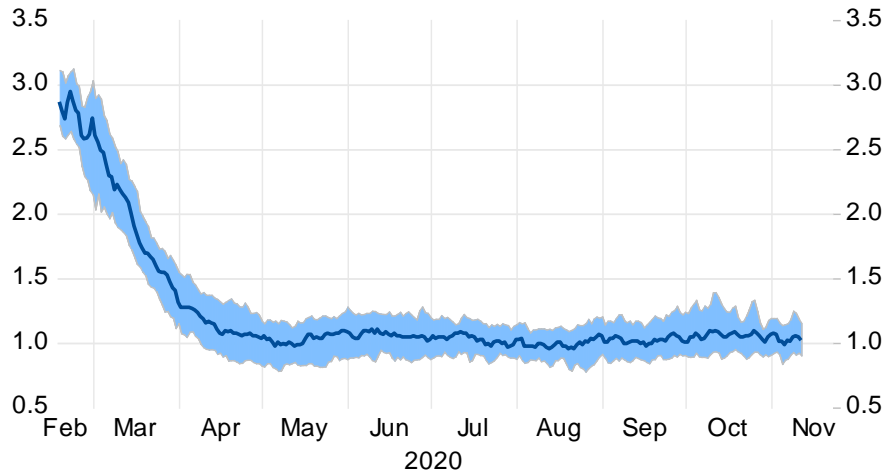
- Empirical evidence based on first wave of pandemic (2021H1)
 - Egert, Guillemette, Murtin and Turner (WP 1633, 2020)
- Analysis of the effects of policies on the reproduction rate, R , and mobility as proxy for economic activity;
 - OECD and Oxford indicators; daily data, 70+ countries



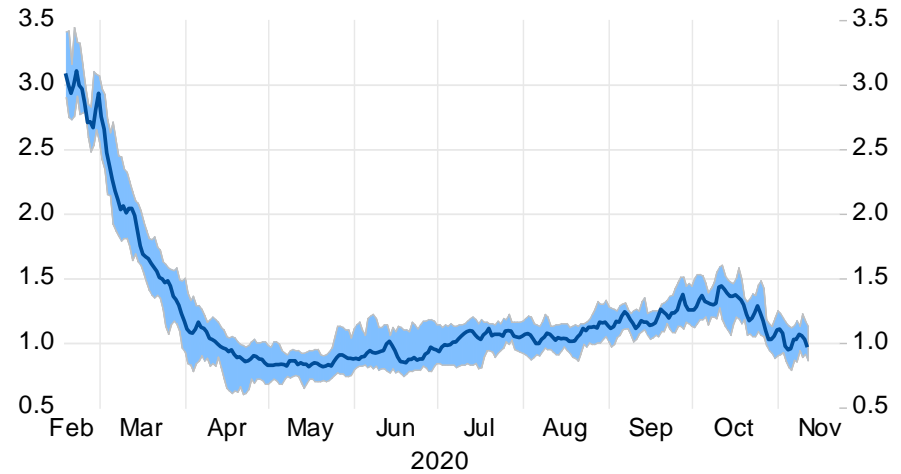
The reproduction rate fell after the first lockdown, but variation across countries

Median and interquartile range for effective reproduction rate (R)

A. Worldwide sample



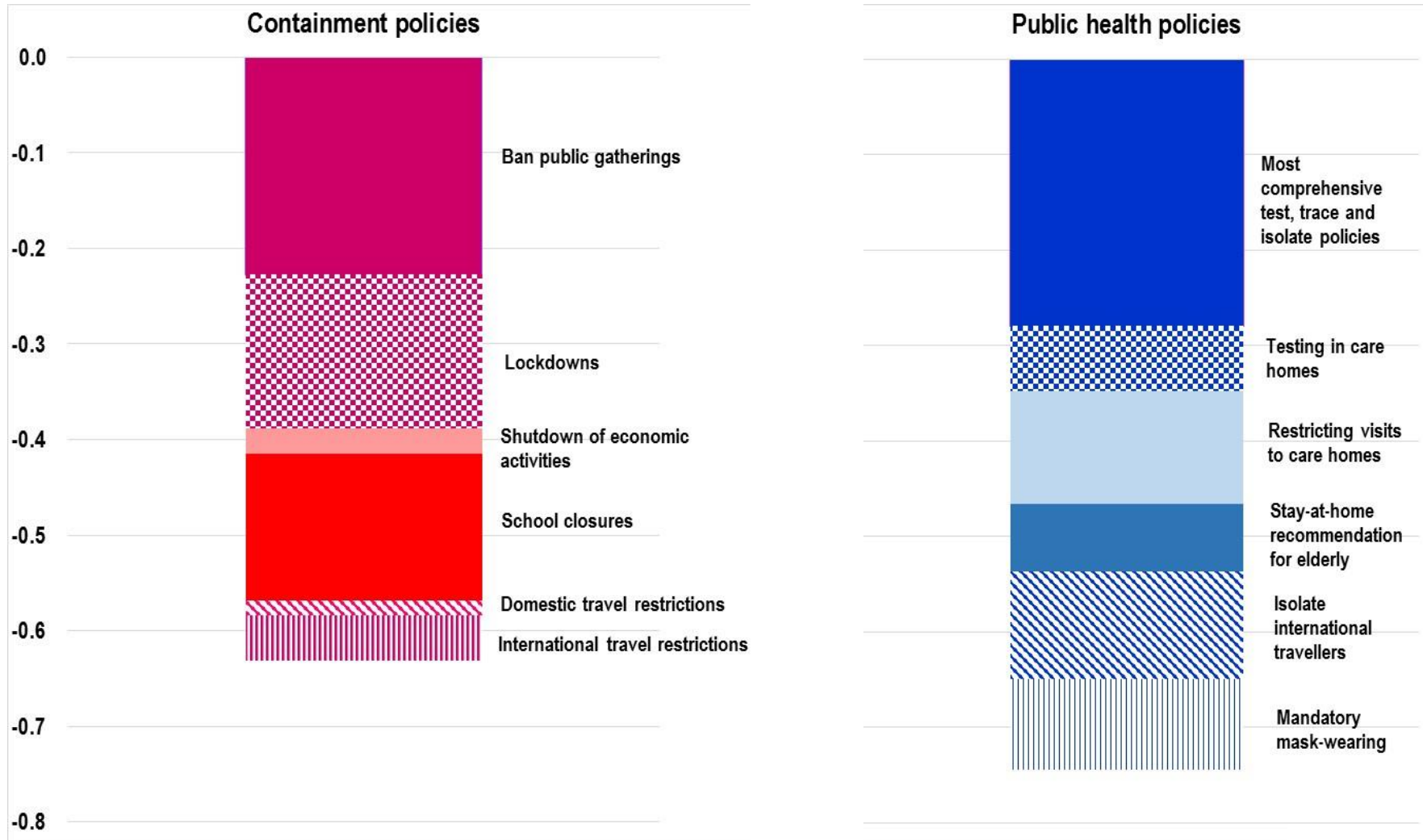
B. European sample



Note: The chart summarises trends in R for a selection of worldwide (Panel A) or European (Panel B) countries for which R can be computed over the full sample period.



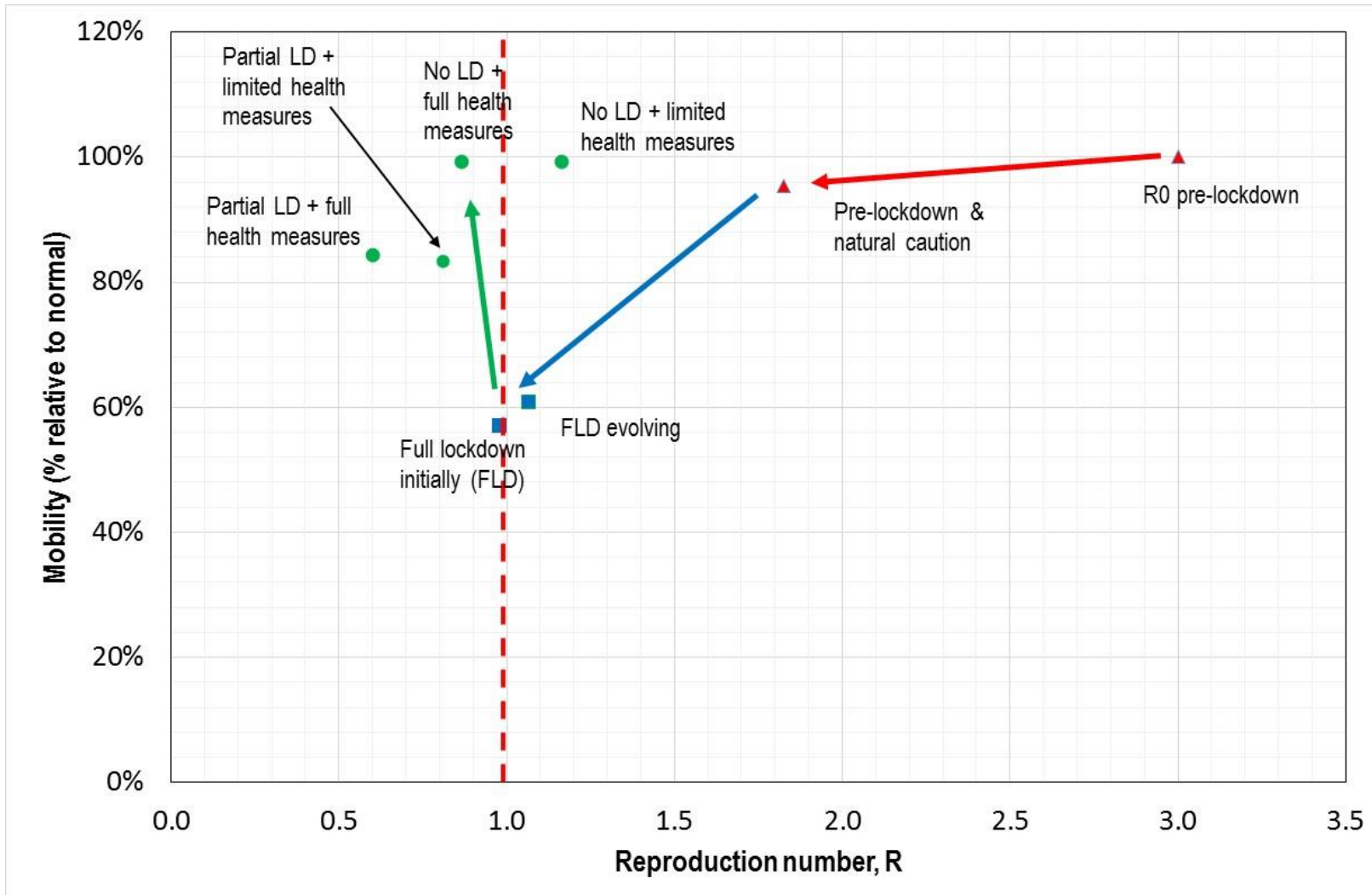
Main finding: policies reduce (logged) R; effects vary across countries



Note: Average of coefficients estimated using OECD and Oxford University policy indicators.



Stylised scenarios: policies to minimise the economic cost of containment





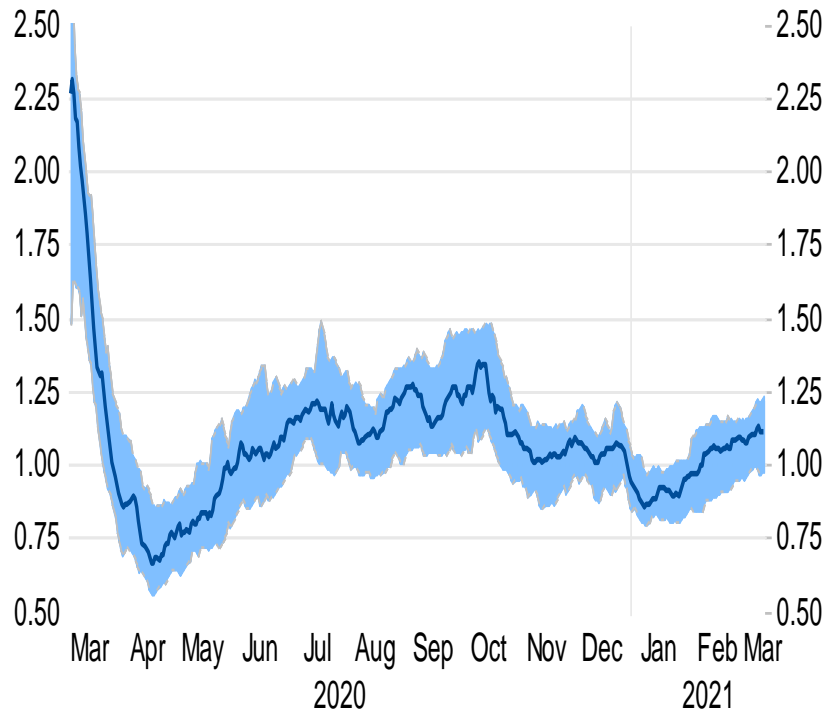
What works best?

- **HIGH infection rate => containment policies required, but big negative effect on mobility**
- **LOW infection rate => test-and-trace a better alternative.**
 - **More effective with comprehensive contact tracing & effective isolation, also extended to care homes.**
- **Other public health policies effective at little or no mobility cost:**
 - **Mandating mask-wearing in public indoor environments;**
 - **restricting visits to care homes;**
 - **and stay-at-home recommendations for the elderly.**
- **Still may need to resort to selective containment measures.**

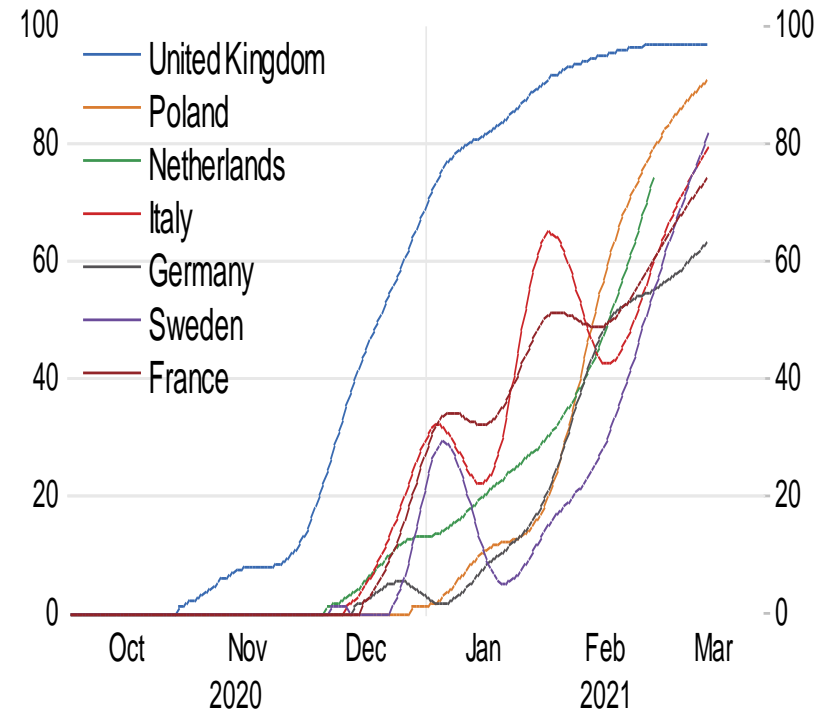


New elements: more infectious variants can boost R for a given policy package

A. Median reproduction rate (R) and interquartile range, OECD countries



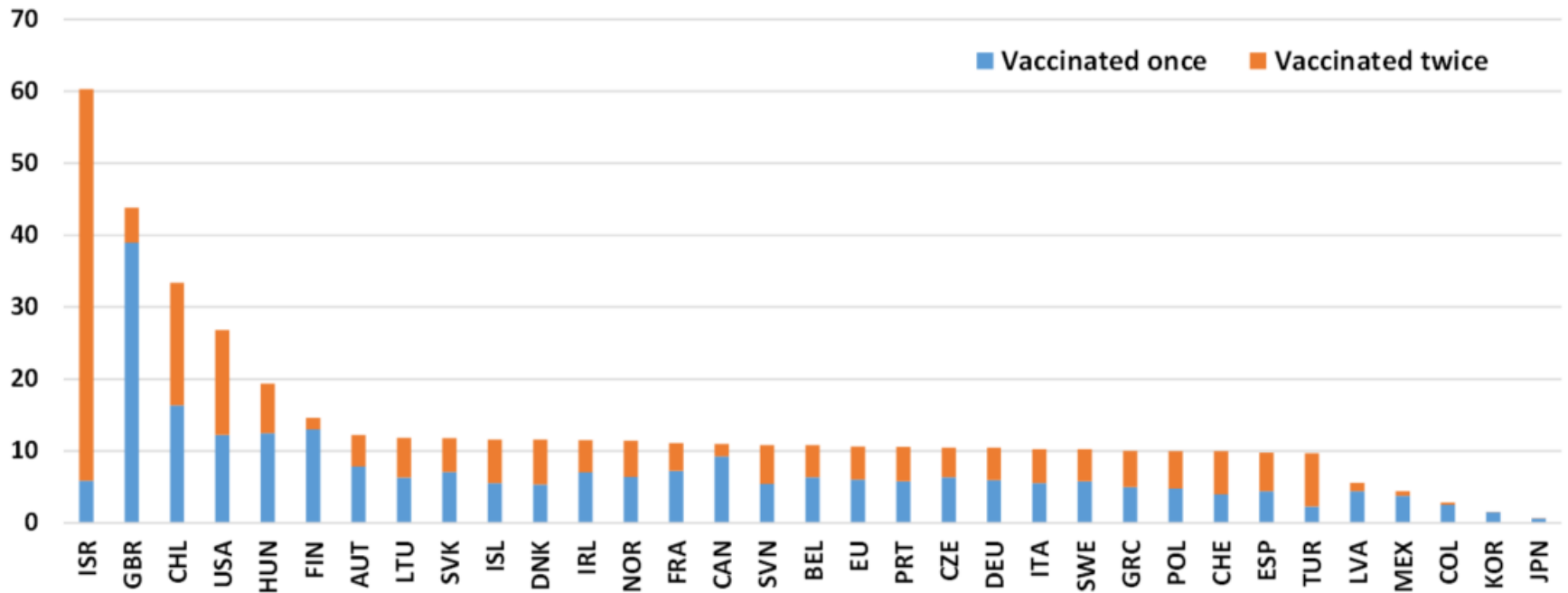
B. Percentage of all sequenced cases of COVID-19 that are from the B.1.1.7 variant, selected countries





To come: the key role of vaccination, but rates vary across countries

Per cent of population vaccinated as of end-March 2021



Source: Official data collated by [Our World in Data](#)



Thank you

Reference: Egert, Guillemette, Murtin and Turner (2020), “Walking the Tightrope: Avoiding a Lockdown While Containing the Virus”, OECD Economics Working Paper, No. 1633, OECD, Paris.