

Germany's Data Driven Recovery Approach

Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD)

In Brief

- Germany has now declared its [coronavirus outbreak under control](#), with its person-to-person infection rate at 0.7% (i.e. each person with the virus now infects less than one person).
- Successful exit strategies leverage data for decision-making, as Germany has [done](#)

Germany has now declared its [coronavirus outbreak under control](#). As of April 20, Germany began taking tentative steps to loosen its lockdown policies. Attributable to its data driven approach, high rates of testing, and contact tracing to prevent infection, Germany has succeeded in **dropping its person-to-person infection rate to 0.7%**. This means that each person carrying the virus now infects less than one person. This is a key statistic that has been integral to political decision-making to decide when and how to begin reopening society.

The German response to COVID-19 has been dubbed a [hammer and dance](#), by [blogger Tomas Pueyo](#). The two-pronged approach includes: hard-hitting measures (the hammer), followed by a delicate rebalancing of lockdown measures based on the transmission rate (the dance).

The weight of the hammer, as described by [France24](#), is easing as Germany uses a combination of rapid tracing of infection chains, mandatory mask-wearing in public and limits on gatherings as part of its exit strategy. The dance will rely largely on big data and location tracking, which is garnering a fair deal of controversy with memories of the “East German Stasi secret police and its extensive network of informants,” as [Reuters](#) noted.

A [New York Times article](#) profiled the German approach to testing. With the aim of testing the entire population for antibodies, German scientists are hoping to better understand the virus, its spread, and levels of immunity in the months to come. Germany's approach to testing highlights its commitment to developing data sets and applying data for better decision-making during and post-pandemic.

To help to trace infections, the German government has [expressed openness](#) to the development of a European COVID-19 application that does not store the location of users. With location data, the application's users would receive a message if they are perceived to have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive with the virus. According to [NPR](#), the information of those who test positive would be put into a central database for tracking (with the permission of those patients). This would be an important data source to inform the government's exit strategy and to contain future flare-ups of the virus.

A [Financial Times](#) opinion piece sums up a successful exit strategy: “gather intelligence to inform a fluid response,” just as Germany and South Korea have done.

