

COVID-19 Special Issue No. 2**GRID™ Index 2: Ostrich Leadership and Ostrich Reactions**

Chris D'Souza¹

An ancient Chinese curse which is often quoted is *'May you live in interesting times'*. Ironically, in 2020 the *'interesting times'* we live in comes from a virus that originated in China. China it seems has since largely recovered and moved on to less-interesting times, while the rest of the world still finds itself in different stages of recovery. Regardless of where and how the virus originated, the stage at which different countries find themselves has been shaped by their own leadership's response to the virus. The responses have varied from the very good, to the bad, to the downright ugly, with some mediocre ones in between. The stage at which countries find themselves today is driven largely by the leaders of those countries. It is said that people end up with the leaders that they deserve and to some extent, directly or indirectly, the citizens themselves also have an influence in shaping the responses of their countries.

Before I proceed; a disclaimer: *As the author of this article and the lead researcher of the attached Grid™ Index, I do not have a political agenda and am not responsible for any misuse of the contents by politicians or their supporters for their own political purposes.*

The disclaimer is a result of the political uproar that my first article on the subject created in some countries, notably Sri Lanka and Spain. In Sri Lanka, opposition party politicians and their followers wrongly accused me on television of being sponsored by their President to give Sri Lanka a relatively high ranking. In Spain, the article was discussed in their Parliament as Spain ranked last; resulting in the supporters of the Government accusing me of not being qualified to pass judgement on their leadership; even though death rates as a result of COVID-19 showed that Spain had fared really badly in this crisis. I will analyse the Spanish leadership response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in detail later, but the critics of my earlier article are *'barking up the wrong tree'*.

Let this not be a case of *'if you do not agree with the message, shoot the messenger'*. Many articles in the Spanish press criticised the audacity of a mere *'accountant'* to comment on a matter which should be left to health professionals. As I pointed out to the numerous Spanish journalists who contacted me, that the Grid™ Index is not about epidemiology, but about leadership; and that management accountants are well qualified to comment on strategic leadership. In case of each country's leadership response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we will continue to evaluate leadership performance, based on both actual quantitative numbers and qualitative assessments, to rank countries on the Grid™ Index.

The second iteration of the Grid™ Index is attached herewith (see Appendix 1). After publishing the first iteration we have come to agree with numerous academics and commentators that ranking countries on leadership response is highly complex. The numbers (both infection rates and fatalities) seem to vary, often inexplicably, between countries. Covid-19 has touched almost every country on earth, but its impact has seemed capricious. Global metropolises such as New York, Paris and London have been devastated, while teeming cities such as Bangkok, Baghdad, New Delhi and Lagos have – so far – largely been spared. The question of why the virus has overwhelmed some places and left others relatively untouched is a puzzle that has spawned numerous theories and speculations but no definitive answers. That knowledge could have profound implications for how countries respond to the virus, for determining who is at risk, and for knowing when it is safe to go

¹ Calwest University, USA

out again². The more we get to understand this complexity, the more we can fine tune our Grid™ Index algorithm.

The detailed methodology used in creating this *Grid™* index is listed in Appendix 2. In the 2nd iteration of Grid™ Index, we have given weightage to two additional factors:

1. Credit to the countries who seem to have bent the curve – overcome the virus attack with relatively low casualties in the first phase.
2. Minus score to countries which are lacking in transparency and are alleged to have either hidden or fudged the actual numbers. [The CPI Index is still used as a surrogate for the level of information reliability and transparency in each country – but this is further modified by reports of the on-ground content analysts].

Based on the 2nd iteration of the Grid™ Index, I have written my own opinion piece of the reasons that I perceive have led to the positioning of some countries at the top, middle and bottom of the index. This is my opinion based on both the reports of content analysts in each country, and also my own extensive secondary research. I do not claim that the opinions expressed are either exhaustive or have the scientific rigour required by a peer-reviewed journal – and it is not to support, condemn or glorify of any particular government. Nor are my views cast in stone. The Global Covid-19 scenario can change rapidly.³

Dr Ashish Jha, the director of the Harvard Global Health Research Institute, puts it best: *"We are really early in this disease. If this were a baseball game, it would be the second inning, and there's no reason to think that by the ninth inning the rest of the world that looks now like it hasn't been affected won't become like other places."*¹

Clearly, it is only when the virus is history and researchers have a chance to evaluate all the information will we be able to give an accurate evaluation of the responses. My classifications of the responses into Good, Bad and Ugly are based on the best information available today, and the ranking obtained in this 2nd iteration of the Grid™ Index.

The Good; The Bad; and the Ugly Covid-19 Responses

The Good Covid-19 Responses

The countries with good Covid-19 responses can be said to be those who have successfully flattened the curve without a significant health cost. Some of these countries have formed an exclusive **'first movers club'**. This club consists of Denmark, Norway, Greece, the Czech Republic, Israel, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia. These countries have come out of the crisis with flying colours. These countries are now cautiously reopening their economies and the first movers club has been formed to learn from each other's experiences and exchange ideas on the road ahead. It is no surprise that most of these countries are currently highly placed on the *Grid™ Index* - especially New Zealand and Australia - who remain first and second in this second iteration of the index. Prime Ministers Jacinta Arden and Scott Morrison have both led their respective countries exceptionally well. In Australia, the Prime Minister has united all states and territories behind him, forming an inclusive National Cabinet. The messaging has been focused and clear; and the people of Australia have supported

² Hannah Beech, Alissa J. Rubin, Anatoly Kurmanaev and Ruth Maclean, "Coronavirus' pandemic puzzle: why do some nations fare worse than others?" *The Age* 11th May, 2020.

<https://www.theage.com.au/world/asia/coronavirus-pandemic-puzzle-why-do-some-nations-fare-worse-than-others-20200511-p54rx5.html>

³ This articles release follows the new norm for scientific research. Pre-publication before peer review, especially when there is an immediate crisis like COVID-19. See <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2020/05/07/scientific-research-on-the-coronavirus-is-being-released-in-a-torrent>

their government. He has been backed by excellent Premiers at the state level who have been firm and honest with their constituents. Australia now has a clear three stage road map to recovery. Each of the states and territories will implement the 'road map' at their own pace. It is cooperative Federalism at its best - in stark contrast to countries like the USA (and India where the virus seems to be steadily growing in momentum).

A cautious approach to lifting restrictions is a characteristic of Australia and New Zealand. The other aspects of the Australia and New Zealand (ANZAC) response have been the qualities of trust and transparency. The ANZAC Governments at all levels have been clearly transparent; and this transparency has won them the trust of the majority of their citizens. The qualities of uniting the nation, clear messaging, cooperative Federalism, transparency and trust are the hallmarks of success of top performers during this Covid-19 crisis.

There are a few countries that could be considered outliers but could also form part of this group. Vietnam is one of these countries. Two of the three content analysts in that country have said it has performed excellently. However, with the result of zero deaths, the judge-raters perceived that there was a lack of transparency and a deficit of trust in this country, and as such, Vietnam has been excluded in the Grid™ Index. In the case of Vietnam, only the Ministry of Health can declare the number of positive cases. Hospitals and clinics cannot independently publish numbers, while any unofficial counts can be subjected to a penalties.⁴ As such, Vietnam lacks the same level of transparency as the other countries to make ranking comparisons.

Another outlier is Sri Lanka, which has reported a single digit number of deaths (just 9);⁵ and has had only 0.4 deaths per million of population. However as reported in my previous article, this could be due to the excellent health system that Sri Lanka has, comparable to most Western countries. In this 2nd iteration of the Grid™ Index, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's military-style leadership response has ensured that it has remained in the top ten.

This was confirmed by all 3 content analysts in that country; who reported that, by-and-large, his actions of island-wide curfews have had the support of the general population. However, as Sri Lanka's high ranking in the 1st iteration was a cause if much politicising by opposition parties; the judge-raters looked for independent scholarly reports on Sri Lanka's COVID-19 response. This was obtained by a study done at the University of Massachusetts Amherst that showed that Sri Lanka's performance was very good in comparison to its neighbours.⁶ Hence, we can confidently say that Sri Lanka deserves its high leadership response ranking.

Two other countries which have also been hit hard by Covid-19 are Canada and Germany. The leadership response in these countries has been excellent. The Canadian and German government responses have been very similar to Australia and some other good 'first movers' listed above. A civil and courteous response in the spirit of cooperative federalism accompanied by transparency and humane leadership forms the hallmark of the German and Canadian responses.

⁴ Khang Vu, "Vietnam, North Korea, politics and Covid-19: The numbers tell a story", *lowy Institute*, 10th April, 2020 <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/vietnam-north-korea-politics-and-covid-19-numbers-tell-story>

⁵ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

⁶ Deepankar Basu and Priyanka Srivastava, "In South Asia, Lanka Leads and India Lags in Infrastructure, Medical Response to COVID-19", *The Wire*, 11 May, 2020, <https://thewire.in/health/in-south-asia-lanka-leads-and-india-lags-in-infrastructure-medical-response-to-covid-19>

The Bad Covid-19 responses

In the middle of the index are countries which, though not yet badly affected, seem to have botched their response in many areas.

Amanda Glassman, the chief executive of the Centre for Global Development's European branch say: *"If you look at the leadership in Brazil, Russia, India and China, we're talking about autocratic populists. Once you're facing a crisis, that leadership style doesn't hold up very well."*⁷

This is proved by the response of all these **four BRIC countries** to the crisis.

Brazil is led by its own version of Donald Trump; President Jair Bolsorano. His handling of the crisis places him in the ugly 'Ostrich Alliance' category as discussed in the next section. The Chinese handling of the case is well documented. The initial silencing of the doctors who tried to raise the alarm was instrumental in the global spread of the virus. China, however, was arguably taken by surprise and did not understand the full impact of the virus.

Russia does not have that excuse. The Russian response has been haphazard. In a move similar to that of China, the Russian Government arrested the head of the country's *Alliance of Doctors* who has been highly critical of Russia's response to the pandemic. Like Boris Johnson did in the UK, Putin himself visited a Moscow hospital and shook hands with the chief doctor of a hospital treating COVID-19 patients. This move was criticised for disregarding health requirements as the doctor subsequently tested positive for COVID-19. Luckily for Putin, he did not get infected himself; however, his Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin was infected. Currently, Russia is emerging as a new virus hotspot with over 262,000 cases, and an official death toll of 2,418 and rising.⁸ However, given the poor transparency record of Russia, these figures are probably underestimated.

India is a huge country with the second largest population in the world, and its response cannot easily be compared to countries in other continents or even in South East Asia. Deepankar Basu, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and; Priyanka Srivastava, Associate, Professor in the Department of History, both from University of Massachusetts Amherst, have published a study of government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in four South Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Their conclusion is that in terms of the spread of COVID-19, Sri Lanka has the best position and India is the worst hit. India has consistently recorded the highest cumulative and daily case count. Its daily case count has kept increasing, and it has recorded by far the highest death rate among these four countries.⁹ The mismanagement of the migrant crisis and the treatment of its poorest citizens during the pandemic is to India's shame.¹⁰ Some migrant workers were shockingly sprayed with disinfectant. And, at the time of writing this article, the migrant crises still remains very poorly managed across India. The situation for these migrants would have been much worse but for the good work done by NGOs and ordinary citizens who stepped in to help.

⁷ Reid Wilson, "Russia, Brazil struggle with coronavirus response", *The Hill*, 8th May, 2020.
<https://thehill.com/policy/international/496714-russia-brazil-struggle-with-coronavirus-response>

⁸ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

⁹ Deepankar Basu and Priyanka Srivastava, "COVID-19 Data in South Asia Shows India is Doing Worse than Its Neighbours", *The Wire*, 9th May 2020.

¹⁰ Geeta Pandey, "Coronavirus in India: Desperate migrant workers trapped in lockdown", *BBC News*, New Delhi.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52360757>

The closure and subsequent reopening of alcohol stores is another example of the utter mismanagement and illogical thinking on part of its government. Control of alcohol sales should have been ideally left to the states and it did not make sense to close them down in the first place. But the sudden reopening of the stores created an uncontrollable run on alcohol sales in many places leading to a complete disregard for health and safety measures. The Supreme Court of India had to step in and ask the states to consider allowing home delivery of liquor to mitigate the situation.

India is led by an 'autocratic populist'⁵ leader Narendra Modi - who has communally divided the country with controversial legislation just prior to the crisis. Interested more in populism than in the welfare of its citizens, the total disregard for the welfare of migrant workers in India is appalling. Unlike the cooperative Federalism, which was successful in Australia, the Modi government has played politics with states.

The Modi government has in fact gone beyond recommending policies. It has asserted its control by reprimanding States that are viewed as being insufficiently compliant with its directives. It has sent inter-ministerial teams to West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana to file compliance reports. It has even warned the government of Kerala, arguably a state that has performed better than most industrial countries in handling the coronavirus crisis, about premature relaxation of the centrally formulated lockdown criteria¹¹. Amarinder Singh, chief minister of Punjab, begged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to let him have a say in restarting some parts of the industrial centres of Ludhiana and Jalandhar. Both have been marked as red zones by New Delhi, forcing a halt to everything except essential services. This situation is still salvageable. The government, and the central bank, must work with states to make available the resources they need to restart safely.¹²

Albeit reluctantly, because their response is scientific (albeit different), I have to place Sweden in this category of 'not so good' responses to COVID-19. The Government of Sweden took a calculated risk and did not go into complete lockdown like its neighbours and paid the price of a very high mortality rate. Should they have been more conservative like Denmark and Norway; and thereby saved more lives? What price can you put on human life? Sweden has persisted with the strategy of coronavirus mitigation or 'herd immunity' that the UK government eventually abandoned in March.

This policy seems to be widely supported by the Swedish citizens despite a rising death count. Denmark and other countries who have had great success with the lockdown like the ANZACs have been criticised by Swedish Professor Johan Giesecke. In an interview with far-right TV hosts on Sky news Australia, he makes the case that Swedish response is based on the premise that all countries will eventually end up with the same number of fatalities. He says that lockdown countries will eventually have the spike in fatalities after the lockdown. For most countries this is a dubious argument given that surely more people will die if the hospitals are overwhelmed at once; rather than if it occurs over a period of time.

Professor Giesecke went on to say that even if Australia manages to eradicate the virus, how will they manage to keep it out for the next 30 years? I am not sure where he got the 30 years from, but he misses the important point that the lockdown has bought these countries time to develop a strategy for their health systems to deal with the virus; and to give valuable time during which a vaccine or a cure or both can be found.

No one on that TV show asked him about this. But as things stand, the mortality rate of Denmark is at 93 per million of population and that of neighbouring Sweden stands at 351 per million of

¹¹ Amartya Lahiri "Indian states can absorb diverse Covid response models, but Modi govt using one size for all", *The Print*, 6 May, 2020 <https://theprint.in/opinion/indian-states-can-absorb-diverse-covid-response-models-but-modi-govt-using-one-size-for-all/415244/>

¹² Andy Mukherjee "Modi's Need for Control Impairs India's Virus Recovery" *Bloombergquint* <https://www.bloombergquint.com/opinion/modi-s-need-for-control-impairs-india-s-coronavirus-recovery>

population. And in Australia it stands at just 4 per million of population. Are these countries only delaying the inevitable as per Professor Johan Giesecke claims; or have they dodged a bullet – and saved valuable lives? Time will tell. As for me I am glad to be living in Australia... glad for our people who have had the chance to survive this first phase.

The Ugly ‘Ostrich Alliance’ COVID-19 responses

The *ostrich effect* is a *cognitive bias* that causes people to avoid information that they perceive as potentially unpleasant. For example, the ostrich effect can cause someone to avoid looking at their bills, because they are worried about seeing how far behind they are on their payments¹³. Oliver Stuenkel, a Brazilian professor from Sao Paulo coined the term ‘Ostrich Alliance’ grouping together the leaders of Brazil, Belarus, Turkmenistan and Nicaragua. This new grouping of world leaders comprises those who are in denial of the threat posed by COVID-19. The Brazilian professor was no doubt referring mainly to his President Bolsonaro, whose reaction to COVID-19, is one of Ostrich-like denial of reality. On March 24, Bolsonaro dismissed the disease as no more than a “gripezinha” (small flu) and suggested that Brazilians have somehow acquired an immunity to disease by “diving into sewers”. In the middle of the Pandemic, on April 16, he sacked his Health Minister, Luiz Henrique Mandetta. On April 20, he knelt before an evangelical pastor who declared that Brazil was free of the virus. On April 24th, Brazil's star Justice Minister Sérgio Moro resigned accused him of potentially criminal meddling in law enforcement. This ugly ‘ostrich’ response from Brazil has resulted in over 203,000 cases (6th highest in the world) with 14,000 deaths (66 deaths per million of population and rising).¹⁴

At the beginning of the Pandemic, the Ostrich effect seems to have afflicted China, which caused them to deny the existence of the disease during the early stages. Thereafter the leaders of Italy and Spain suffered from the Ostrich effect. In Italy the politicians and public were in denial throughout the month of February as the disease spread across its country.

Finally, on March 8th, when a lockdown was imposed on Northern Italy, it created an inexplicable exodus to Southern Italy which inadvertently resulted in fast tracking the spread of the virus across the entire country. Meanwhile, as northern Italy was going into lockdown, across the Mediterranean, the Spanish government allowed 120,000 people to gather in its city centre in support of gender equality. At the time of this event, on 8th of March, there were already 10 deaths and over 500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Spain. The first lady of Spain and three Cabinet ministers who were part of the event, were later diagnosed with COVID-19. This Ostrich effect on the leaders of Italy and Spain has resulted in 519 deaths per million of population in Italy and 587 per million in Spain at this time (about 20% of the worldwide tally to date).¹⁵

The next two members of the Ostrich Alliance were President Donald Trump (USA) and Prime Minister Boris Johnson (UK). Both suffered from the Ostrich effect resulting in their countries leading the global death count due to COVID-19. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will probably forever regret boasting about those infamous deliberate handshakes with COVID-19 patients, and he almost paid for this irresponsible behaviour with his life. He has recovered, but over 33,600 others were not so lucky; paying the price for the Ostrich effect suffered by their Government in the early stages of the pandemic.

Then there are many other leaders across the world who fall into the ugly category. Broadly speaking, illiberal leaders who run authoritarian regimes, refuse democratic and legal constraints, abuse civil and women’s rights, reject media scrutiny, tolerate corruption, and believe that they,

¹³ <https://effectiviology.com/ostrich-effect/>

¹⁴ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

¹⁵ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

personally, know best are the worst-behaved, least effective pandemic performers. President Donald Trump ticks all the boxes. He is the COVID-19 champ of chumps. His advice last week to inject disinfectant hit new heights of toxic idiocy, even for him.¹⁶

Award for the Worst Ostrich of COVID-19 – President Donald Trump of USA

With nearly 90,000 deaths, the USA is by far to date the country worst affected by COVID-19. These mass casualties are a result of the chaotic, disastrous and arguably worst response to COVID-19 by any country. Donald Trump's main ostrich response was to delay any response for many weeks and then once the virus really hit, he has chopped and changed the message and supported protestors who openly violate the social distancing orders.

Last week, as Trump toured a mask factory in Phoenix, a song was playing loudly in the background: 'Live and Let Die' performed by Guns N' Roses. This song epitomizes the Trump policy of putting himself before everyone else, of prioritizing the economy over the loss of human life. The White House blocked the *Center for Disease Control and Prevention* from releasing detailed guidelines to help schools, restaurants and churches to safely re-open because it feared they were too prescriptive and would slow the economic recovery.

As Yale epidemiologist Gregg Gonsalves said forcefully on Twitter:

*"This is getting awfully close to genocide by default. What else do you call mass death by public policy?"*¹⁷

Stephen Walt, professor of international relations at Harvard University, in summarising Trump's response to the Pandemic, wrote:

*"The Trump administration's self-centred, haphazard, and tone-deaf response [to COVID-19] will end up costing Americans trillions of dollars and thousands of otherwise preventable deaths,"*¹⁸

And President Obama said:

"It has been an absolute chaotic disaster when that mindset of 'what's in it for me' and 'to heck with everybody else', when that mindset is operationalised in our government".

This last quote probably sums up Trump's response quite well. All that Trump seems to be concerned with is his own re-election, his preoccupation with himself forms the basis of his COVID-19 response. In recent days, Trump has made a concerted effort to control the information on COVID-19, and he is being aided in this misinformation campaign by many Republican Governors. Governors in Georgia, Texas, Iowa and elsewhere have been praised by Trump as they ignored recommendations from doctors and health officials in their states to begin phased re-openings. States such as Florida have limited or redacted public information about their coronavirus deaths.¹⁹

Barbara Petersen, President Emeritus of the First Amendment Foundation, an open-government watchdog in Tallahassee, Florida said:

¹⁶ Simon Tisdall, "From Trump to Erdoğan, men who behave badly make the worst leaders in a pandemic", *The Guardian*, 26th April, 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/26/trump-to-erdogan-men-who-behave-badly-make-worst-leaders-pandemic-covid-19?>

¹⁷ Matthew Knott, "Genocide by default: America prepares for a brutal coronavirus slow burn", *The Age*, 8th May 2020 <https://www.theage.com.au/world/north-america/genocide-by-default-america-prepares-for-a-brutal-coronavirus-slow-burn-20200508-p54qzc.html>

¹⁸ Simon Tisdall, "US's global reputation hits rock-bottom over Trump's coronavirus response" *The Guardian*, 12th April 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/12/us-global-reputation-rock-bottom-donald-trump-coronavirus>

¹⁹ Toluse Olorunnipa, "Trump tightens grip on coronavirus information as he pushes to restart the economy", White house reporter, *Washington Post*, 8th May 2020 – <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-tightens-grip-on-coronavirus-information-as-he-pushes-to-restart-the-economy>

“For whatever reason, our governor is trying to hide information — first about nursing homes, and now from medical examiners. They are trying to paint a rosy picture by refusing to provide us accurate information that allows us to make informed decisions about the health and safety of our families.”²⁰

COVID-19 – the Leadership Response is the difference between Life and Death

As I said in my first article - “The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted each country in a different manner and consequently the measures taken by leaders of different countries have varied. However, it is said that difficult times bring out the best in great leaders and arguably shine the spotlight on deficiencies and shortcomings of other leaders.”²¹

The difference between good and bad leadership will be the difference between life and death for many people. The good leaders have put the health of their citizens above all other concerns; the bad leaders seem to have mixed motives juggling between the economy and health; the ugly leaders have been affected by a mix of authoritarianism, over-confidence, self-interest and mostly the ‘ostrich effect’ in their response.

*“When a society laments the loss of an economy over the loss of humanity, it doesn't need a virus, it's already dead” – **Anonymous***

Appendix 1

GRID™ Index - Methodology

In constructing a *GRID™ Index* to evaluate the Global Response and Leadership in the COVID-19 Pandemic, a ranking algorithm was developed incorporating both quantitative and qualitative information. This approach is common in social science research. The ICMA has over 15 years’ experience in supporting research that develops ranking indexes; the most well-known being the *5-STAR Reporting Index™* which rates the quality and comprehensiveness of economic, environmental, social, governance and empowerment frameworks in listed companies in Australia and Internationally.²²

The *GRID™ Index* is a composite of:

A. Publicly available Quantitative information:

1. The ratio of tests per million of population (to indicates readiness of the health system to handle a pandemic).
2. The ratio of deaths per cases (to indicate the community spread of the disease).
3. The ratio of deaths per million of population (to indicate the efficiency of health care system).
4. The ratio of cases per million of population (to indicate the overall performance effectiveness of a country’s response).

²⁰ Carol Marbin Miller, Sarah Blaskey, Nicholas Nehamas, Mary Ellen Klas, and Ben Wieder, “FDLE releases list of COVID-19 deaths. Top medical examiner calls it a sham” *Miami Herald*, May 06, 2020. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/coronavirus/article242552796.html>

²¹ Chris D’Souza “GRID Index: Tracking the Global Leadership Response in the COVID-19 Crisis”, *On Target*, March-April 2020, <https://www.cmaweblines.org/ontarget/grid-index-tracking-the-global-leadership-response-in-the-covid-19-crisis/>

²² For full description of the 5-Star Index methodology, see: Ratnatunga, J. and Jones, S. (2012), “A Methodology to Rank the Quality and Comprehensiveness of Sustainability Information Provided in Publicly Listed Company Reports, in *Contemporary Issues in Sustainability Reporting and Assurance*, Chapter 10, Stewart Jones & Janek Ratnatunga (Editors), Emerald, Bingley, UK.

B. Publicly available **Qualitative information:**

1. The **Corruption Perception Index (CPI)** (used as a surrogate for the level of information reliability and transparency in each country. Countries high on the list are perceived as being less corrupt and more transparent, and thus the COVID-19 information from them could be assumed to be more reliable.

C. Privately obtained **Judge-Ratings (Qualitative)**

In most countries where ICMA had a presence, Information content on a particular country's performance was collected by 3 senior members of ICMA (working independently of each other) on the following 5 leadership responses:

1. Speed and Efficiency of Social Distancing and Lock-downs
2. Safety and Protections of its Citizens overseas.
3. Effectiveness in Measures taken to Flatten the Curve.
4. The Accuracy of Testing, Recovery and Death numbers.
5. The Functioning of Business and the Economic Hurt.

Once the content analysis was completed, the collected data for each country was given an individual 'judge rating' on a 5-point Likert scale²³, i.e. each leadership response was given a rating score in terms of its focus and measures provided. The recommendations of Yin (1994) with regards to judge-ratings was followed closely, i.e. these judge-ratings were done by at least two individuals who were both independent of the content analysts. Before obtaining these independent judge ratings, the country names were removed from the data set so as not provide any preconceptions as to reporting quality, although it will often be easy to guess the country's name, based on the information being examined. These judge-rating were then used to develop weights for each of the quantitative ratios calculated.

An algorithm was developed incorporating these 'weights' to drive the final Index score either in a positive direction or negative direction, as follows:

- Ratio of tests per million of population (weighted positive score)
- Ratio of deaths per cases (weighted negative score)
- Ratio of deaths per million of population (weighted negative score)
- Ratio of cases per million of population (weighted negative score)
- The *CP Index* above a median benchmark (weighted positive score).

The ICMA (Australia) is at an advantage in getting at judge-rated weights fast as it has members in almost all countries affected. But these weights are being constantly tweaked as our members feeding us information from the ground on a weekly basis; that are then being rated by the judges. This is similar to how Transparency International constructs its CPI; i.e. it uses real data and perceptions from its representative on the ground. More information on the actual weights used will be provided in a more scientific forum, at a later date when the issues become less politically charged, and more information is obtained. For example, the *Economist Magazine* recently published graphs that tracked COVID-19 excess deaths across countries between the same periods in 2019 and 2020. The premise was that the "excess deaths" were caused by COVID-19.²⁴ If more information on these 'Total Deaths' numbers become available; this could well replace the CPI index as a surrogate in adjusting the official COVID-19 death tolls that under-count the true number of fatalities for various reasons.

²³ The reporting relating to each criterion should be rated: 1= very poor; 2=poor; 3=Average; 4=Good; 5=Excellent. A zero should be given if there was no information regarding a particular 5-Star reporting bottom line.

²⁴ https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/04/16/tracking-covid-19-excess-deaths-across-countries?utm_campaign=coronavirus-special-edition&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_term=2020-05-09&utm_content=cover_text_url_2

Appendix 1: GRID™ Index – 2nd Iteration – May 15 2020

Country	COVID-19 RESPONSE Rank	COVID-19 Response Score (Normalized)	CPI Rank	Variation CPI v CRI Rank
New Zealand	1	85	1	0
Australia	2	82	12	10
Korea, South	3	81	39	36
Taiwan	4	80	28	24
Singapore	4	80	4	0
Denmark	6	76	1	-5
Iceland	6	76	11	5
Czech Republic	8	75	44	36
Israel	8	75	35	27
Austria	10	74	12	2
Germany	10	74	9	-1
Hong Kong	10	74	16	6
Japan	10	74	20	10
Jordan	10	74	60	50
Norway	10	74	7	-3
Sri Lanka	10	74	93	83
Greece	10	74	60	50
Finland	18	68	3	-15
Canada	18	68	12	-6
United Arab Emirates	18	68	21	3
South Africa	18	68	70	52
Uruguay	18	68	21	3
Slovakia	18	68	59	41
Georgia	18	68	44	26
Mauritius	25	67	56	31
Cyprus	25	67	41	16
Costa Rica	25	67	44	19
Estonia	25	67	18	-7
Saudi Arabia	29	66	51	22
Kuwait	29	66	40	11
Qatar	31	65	30	-1
Bahrain	31	65	77	46
Latvia	31	65	44	13
Kazakhstan	34	64	113	79
Chile	35	63	26	-9
Cuba	36	62	60	24
Malaysia	37	60	51	14
Poland	38	59	41	3

Belarus	39	57	66	27
Argentina	40	56	66	26
India	40	56	80	40
Thailand	42	55	101	59
Azerbaijan	43	53	126	83
Montenegro	43	53	66	23
Tunisia	43	53	74	31
Armenia	46	52	77	31
Morocco	46	52	80	34
Malta	48	51	50	2
Bulgaria	48	51	74	26
Bangladesh	50	49	146	96
Colombia	51	48	96	45
Croatia	51	48	63	12
Lebanon	53	47	137	84
Nigeria	54	46	146	92
Niger	55	45	120	65
Kyrgyzstan	55	45	126	71
Ukraine	55	45	126	71
Egypt	58	44	106	48
Kenya	59	43	137	78
Venezuela	60	42	173	113
Serbia	60	42	91	31
Philippines	62	41	113	51
Indonesia	63	40	85	22
Bolivia	64	39	123	59
China	64	39	80	16
Iraq	66	38	162	96
Slovenia	67	37	35	-32
Pakistan	67	37	120	53
Algeria	69	36	106	37
Albania	70	35	106	36
Bosnia and Herzegovina	70	35	101	31
Romania	72	33	70	-2
Peru	73	32	101	28
Moldova	74	31	120	46
Mexico	75	30	130	55
Dominican Republic	75	30	137	62
Hungary	77	29	70	-7
North Macedonia	78	28	106	28
Portugal	79	26	30	-49
Ecuador	80	24	93	13
Switzerland	81	23	4	-77
Ireland	82	21	18	-64

Sweden	83	20	4	-79
Netherlands	83	20	8	-75
Panama	83	20	101	18
Russia	86	19	137	51
Belgium	86	19	17	-69
France	86	19	23	-63
Spain	86	19	30	-56
Italy	90	17	51	-39
Iran	90	17	146	56
Brazil	90	17	106	16
United Kingdom	90	17	12	-78
Turkey	90	17	91	1
United States of America	90	17	23	-67

Note: Above version of **GRID™** Index includes the countries on top and at the bottom of the table and some in between which might be of interest to our readers.