

How do PHSM work during health emergencies?

Public health and social measures (PHSM) refer to non-pharmaceutical interventions implemented by individuals, communities and governments to protect the health and well-being of communities affected by health emergencies.

PHSM aim to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases by reducing transmission-relevant exposures and/or making them safer. Examples of PHSM include hand washing, mask-wearing, physical distancing, modifications to schools and businesses and travel and trade measures, among others.

PHSM are often the first, and sometimes the only, intervention available at the onset of an outbreak when effective vaccines and therapeutics are not (yet) available or equitably distributed. PHSM play a critical role throughout the health emergency and act in concert with medical countermeasures.

Recent health emergencies have revealed, however, that individuals and communities experienced unintended negative consequences of PHSM, including unemployment, interrupted education, domestic violence etc. People living in vulnerable conditions disproportionately experienced these consequences, highlighting the critical importance of social protection policies to reduce those consequences.

Collaboration

The PHSM initiative is based on collaborations and contributions from multisectoral, multidisciplinary technical experts representing WHO Member States, public health agencies, academia, international organizations, communities and civil society organizations.



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PHSM



Public Health and Social Measures (PHSM) during Health Emergencies

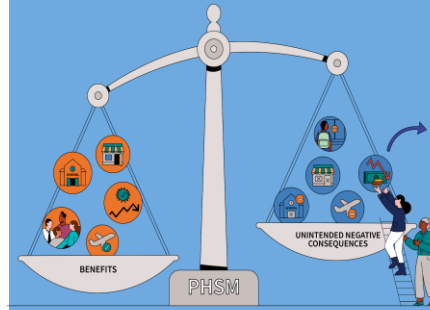




WHO's approach to strengthening PHSM

The WHO initiative on public health and social measures (PHSM) during health emergencies aims to strengthen the evidence base on PHSM and support evidence-informed decision-making for equitable, proportionate and effective implementation of PHSM. The Secretariat's strategic areas of action include:

1. **Carrying out global monitoring and reviews of data and research** to support countries in accessing and using multidisciplinary and context-specific knowledge to strengthen understanding of the effectiveness of PHSM, their unintended negative consequences and implementation strategies.
2. **Advancing research methodology and capacity-building** to support countries to conduct and contribute to research based on a harmonized conceptual understanding of PHSM, and to address methodological, legal, ethical and political challenges.
3. **Developing frameworks, guidance and tools for risk-based, evidence-informed, equitable decision-making** to enable countries to develop national, context-specific policies on PHSM that are informed by robust evidence, while considering epidemiological and socioeconomic impacts of such measures.
4. **Ensuring the systematic integration of public health and social measures into existing leadership and governance** across health emergency management plans, policies, financing and decision-making across all relevant sectors and levels of government, throughout an emergency.



DECISION-MAKING

Strengthening PHSM decision-making, supporting countries to develop evidence-informed, context-specific, and equitable PHSM that balance benefits of measures with their health and socioeconomic impacts.

PHSM Decision Navigator: The first-of-its-kind, threat agnostic framework designed to support countries in selecting, balancing and adjusting PHSM during emergencies.

Navigator modules: Turning the decision framework into action through disease-, setting- and population-specific modules. Currently in the development are:

- **operational guidance module** - outlining practical preparedness and response actions, and
- **epidemic and pandemic influenza module** – providing measures and actions for respiratory threats.

Advances in PHSM Governance and Integration

- The historic PHSM resolution, [Strengthening the evidence base for PHSM](#), was adopted at the 78th World Health Assembly.
- **Third Global Technical Consultation on PHSM during Health Emergencies**, 24-26 March convened 133 experts from 31 Member States.
- PHSM integrated as one of 12 Essential Capabilities for [National Public Health Agencies for Emergency Preparedness and Response](#).



EVIDENCE BASE



Building the PHSM evidence base to support countries in generating and accessing high-quality research on PHSM effectiveness, implementation and unintended negative consequences.

PHSM Knowledge Hub: A go-to resource for the latest evidence, featuring *AI-powered Living Review*, *Bibliographic Library*, and new *Decision Toolbox* - kept continuously updated with the latest evidence and resources.

Global PHSM research agenda 2021-2030: Outlining six priority themes to shape future PHSM research.

Research tools and guidance: Developing draft master protocol templates and a user guide the evaluation of PHSM effectiveness during emergencies.