

How to use WHO risk assessment and mitigation checklist for Mass Gatherings in the context of COVID-19

Interim guidance
20 March 2020



Background

This is an operational tool which offers guidance for organizers holding meetings during the COVID-19 outbreak and which should be accompanied by the WHO COVID-19 Generic Risk Assessment Excel file available on the [WHO website](#).

Routine planning for Mass Gatherings includes conducting risk assessments to determine the overall risk of disease spread. This document provides a COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation checklist for use by host countries and mass gathering organizers and staff. Specifically, this document provides an overview of the following:

- Information to collect about the meeting
- COVID-19 risk assessment tool
- COVID-19 mitigation measures checklist
- Decision matrix that incorporates the risk assessment and mitigation measure scores for the final determination

Instructions

Organizers should be up to date on the outbreak, using the daily [situation reports](#) provided by WHO as well as national reports, if available.

The COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation measures checklist need to be completed in the accompanying WHO COVID-19 Generic risk assessment Excel file, as the scores are able to be automatically calculated. The scores can then be put into the decision matrix for the overall risk score and a recommendation on the implementation of additional measures.

The COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation checklist must be conducted with local public health authorities and ensure that personnel with expertise in mass gatherings, risk assessment, epidemiology, and infectious disease control measures are included from the initial stages of planning.

For the overall determination, factors under consideration include:

- current stage of the outbreak and known transmission dynamics,
- geographic distribution, number of participants, and their individual risk profile
- risk assessment tool
- mitigation measures currently in place or proposed.

It is important to remember that while mitigation measures can reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections, they cannot completely eliminate the threat. This guidance may change as the situation and the knowledge about the disease evolves. The risk assessment should be based on the country strategy for controlling COVID-19. Finally, WHO may provide advice and technical guidance to host countries on public health risks, but has no decision power to uphold, postpone, or cancel mass gatherings hosted by Member States.

Information to collect about the meeting

The following needs to be collected by the meeting organizer. This information will be used to answer some of the questions in the mitigation checklist..

| | |
|---|--|
| Name of event | |
| Organizer / Sponsor of meeting | |
| Contact person | |
| Dates (Start – Finish) | |
| Hosting City and Country | |
| Expected number of participants? | |
| International participation? | |
| Current travel restrictions of host country? | |
| Current health prevention measures in place by host country that may affect the event (e.g. banning gatherings with more than a certain number of individuals, etc.). | |
| The number of participants coming from countries or areas affected by the COVID-19 outbreak* within 14 days before the event? | |
| Estimated percentage of participants who may be considered at risk (age > 65, pre-existing conditions, health care workers, or other responders). | |
| Will there be Head of State / Head of Government / Ministerial or deputy ministerial involvement (number)? | |
| Will there be side events in addition to the main mass gathering? Will there be different meeting sites for the various events? | |
| What measures are in place to minimize close contact between participants? | |
| What measures are in place specifically regarding remote attendance by both participants and speakers? | |
| Briefly, what are seen as the major impact(s) of postponement of the meeting (financial, operational, reputational, etc.)? | |
| Any other information relevant to the meeting that may affect the risk assessment. | |

*See WHO daily COVID-19 Situation Report for list of countries.

COVID-19 risk assessment tool

Please use the accompanying WHO COVID-19 Generic risk assessment Excel file to conduct the risk assessment. The risk assessment tool will enable organizers to review the key considerations for hosting an event, and thus inform their risk assessment of COVID-19 for the event. This will help organizers understand and manage any additional risk for COVID-19.

This risk assessment should be reviewed regularly during planning and updated immediately before handover to the operational phase, especially in light of the rapidly evolving outbreak, with reference to the updated [WHO guidance and situation reports](#). The COVID-19 risk assessment for the event must be coordinated and integrated with the host country's national COVID-19 risk assessment and should include input from the local public health authority, along with consulting WHO's updated technical guidance and ensuring that there is an up-to-date evaluation of the epidemiological situation.

Questions considered for this risk assessment include:

- Will the event take place in a host country with documented active local transmission (community spread)?
- Will the event include international participants from countries that have documented active local transmission (community spread)?
- Will the event include a significant number of participants at higher risk of severe disease (e.g. people > 65 years of age, people with underlying health conditions)?
- Will the event be primarily indoors or will people be in close contact with each another for a prolonged period of time?

COVID-19 mitigation measures checklist

Mitigation measures are meant to reduce the risk that the event will facilitate COVID-19 virus transmission. Together with the risk assessment score, the mitigation measures will contribute to the decision matrix and influence the assessment of the total risk of transmission and further spread of COVID-19, and the recommendation as to whether the mass gathering should be held.

Mitigation measures cover a variety of topics, including:

- Understanding of the overview of the current COVID-19 situation by event organizers
- Event emergency preparedness and response plans
- Stakeholder and partner coordination
- Command and control
- Risk communication
- Public health awareness of COVID-19 before and during the event
- Surge capacity

Please use the accompanying WHO COVID-19 Generic risk assessment Excel file to conduct the mitigation measures checklist.

Decision matrix for final determination

The decision matrix combines the risk score and the mitigation score to provide a color determination, which identifies the total risk of transmission and further spread of COVID-19 and provides a recommendation on whether an event should be held and if further mitigation measures are advised. The color determination key below the decision matrix describes the total risk for each color and if any recommendations are suggested.

Risk versus mitigation matrix

| Total Risk Score | Very Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (76-100) | Somewhat Prepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (51-75) | Somewhat Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (26-50) | Very Unprepared to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts (0-25) |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---|
| 0 (very low risk) | Very low | Very low | Low | Moderate |
| 1 (low risk) | Very low | Low | Low | Moderate |
| 2 (moderate risk) | Low | Low | Moderate | Very High |
| 3 (high risk) | Moderate | Moderate | Very High | Very High |
| 4 (very high risk) | Very High | Very High | Very High | Very High |

Colour Determination Key

| KEY | |
|-----|--|
| | Overall risk of transmission and further spread of COVID-19 is considered very low |
| | Overall risk is low , however recommend checking if mitigation measures can be strengthened |
| | Overall risk is moderate , recommend significant efforts to improve mitigation measures or reduce risk of transmission |
| | Overall risk of transmission and further spread of COVID-19 is considered very high |

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WHO continues to monitor the situation closely for any changes that may affect this interim guidance. Should any factors change, WHO will issue a further update. Otherwise, this interim guidance document will expire 2 years after the date of publication.

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