

# The Importance of Social Capital in New Zealand's COVID-19 Response

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New Zealand is “a country in which competent government relied on science and expertise to make decisions, **a country where there is a high level of social solidarity – citizens recognize that their behaviour affects others – and trust, including trust in the government**” Joseph Stiglitz, 2020



# Our Conjecture

Social capital was important in New Zealand's response to COVID-19 in that it led to high compliance with the requirements of the initial lockdown

- In a democratic country a lockdown as strict as New Zealand's would have been impossible to police without the broad consent of the population
  - New Zealand's lockdown was strict
  - Compliance was reasonably high
  - New Zealand has high levels of social capital

# Defining Social Capital

Most definitions include at least one of:

- Trust
- Cooperative Norms
- Networks

Putnam (1993, p.167)

“features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society”

New Zealand Treasury

“[t]he norms, rules and institutions that influence the way in which people live and work together and experience a sense of belonging. [Social capital] includes **trust**, reciprocity, the rule of law, cultural and community identity, traditions and customs, common values and interests.”

# Measuring Social Capital

Typically measured using the generalised trust question:

- “Generally speaking do you think that most people can be trusted?”
- The proportion answering yes is the country’s TRUST score
  - How good a proxy for trust is this?

Country	TRUST	Country	TRUST
Norway	74	USA	38
Netherlands	66	UK	30
Sweden	64	Mali	17
China	62	Malaysia	9
Finland	57	Zimbabwe	7
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>56</b>	Colombia	4
Australia	54	Philippines	3

New Zealand's TRUST score has been increasing over time

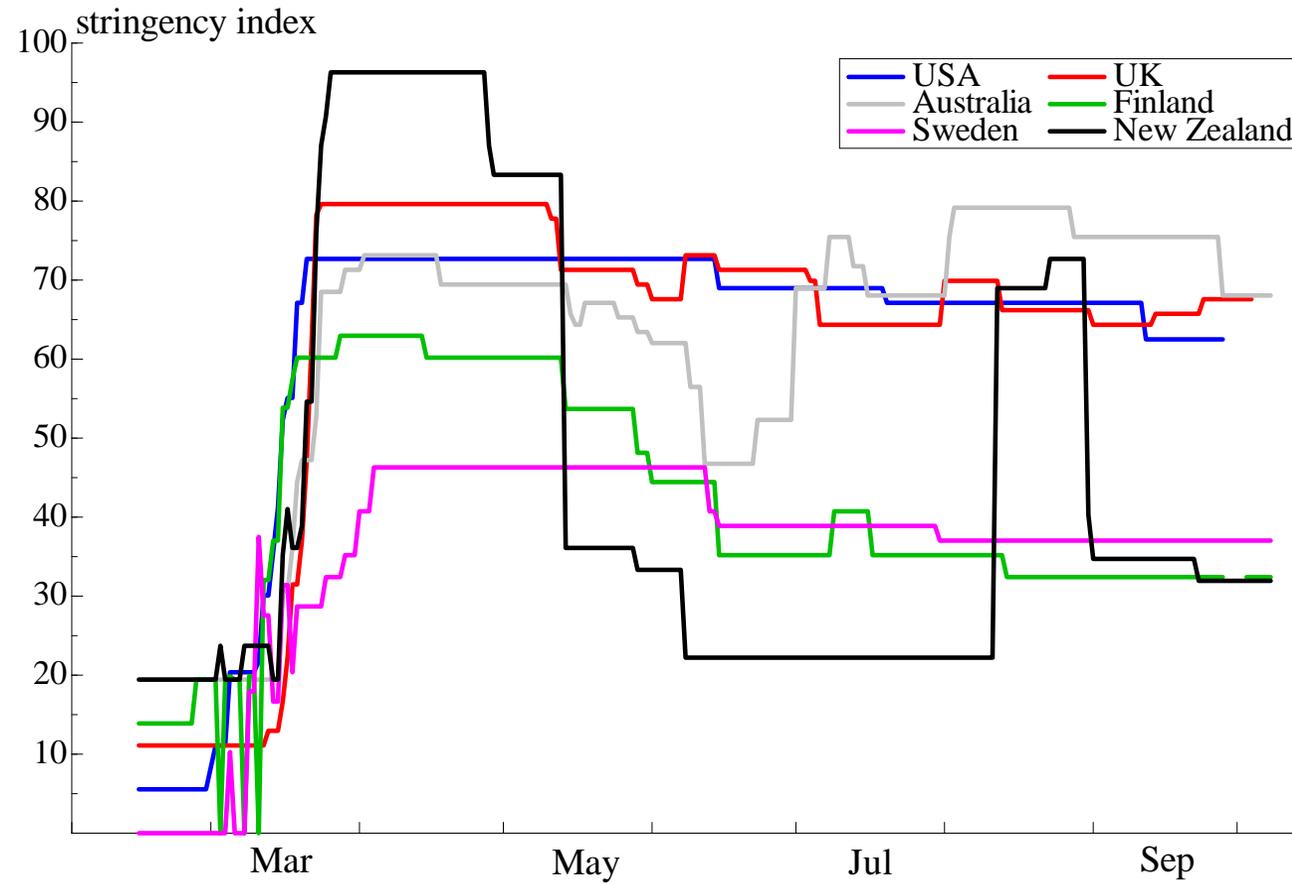
- 1998 = 48
- 2009 = 51
- 2014 = 56

# Trust in Politicians

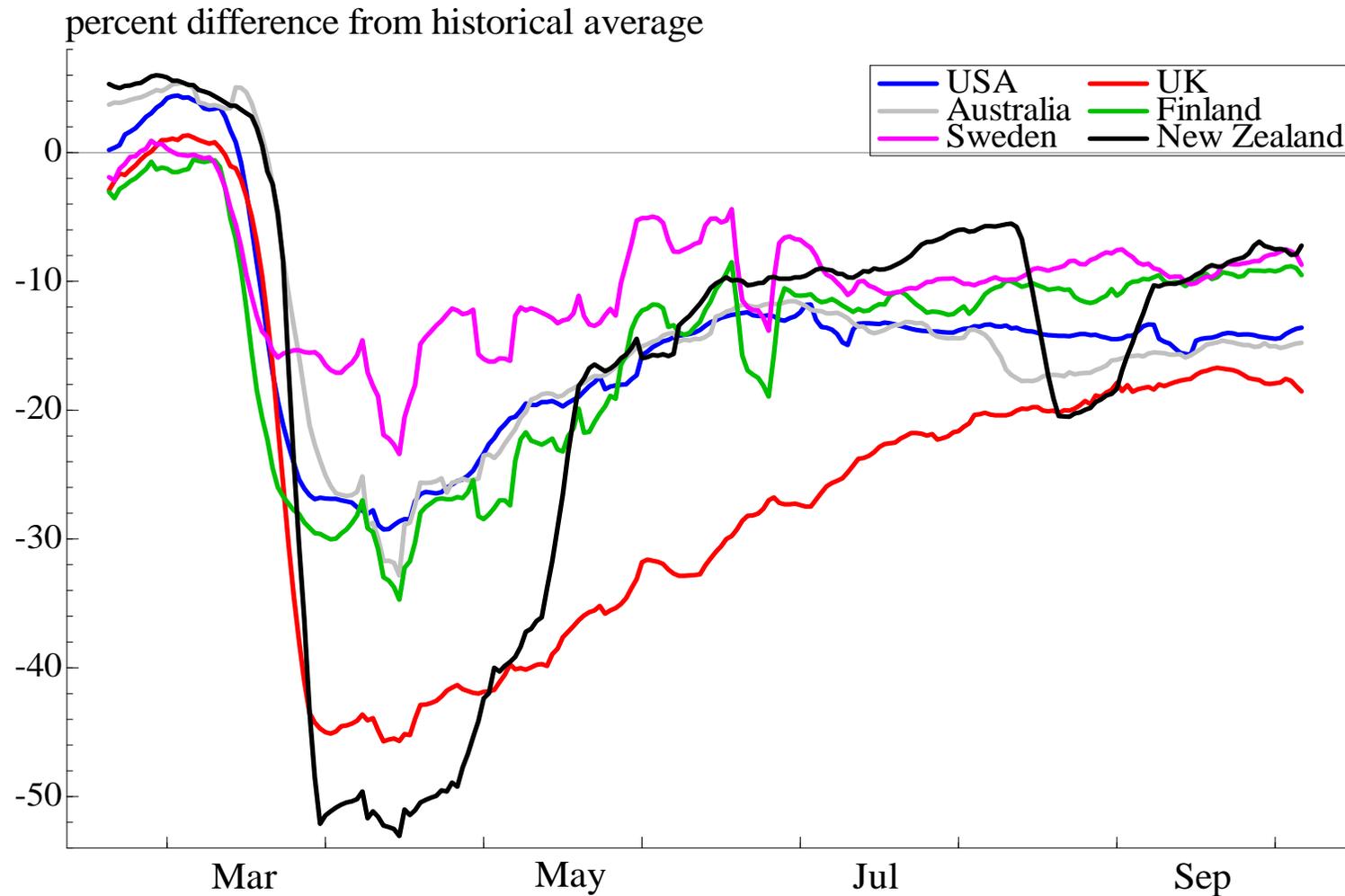
(Source: OECD, 2020)

Country	Trust in Govt	Country	Trust in Govt
Chile	82	Finland	55
Luxembourg	73	Sweden	51
Norway	69	Australia	46
Netherlands	63	UK	42
Canada	63	US	33
New Zealand	61	Greece	14

# OxCGRT Stringency Index



# New Zealand's Lockdown Compliance



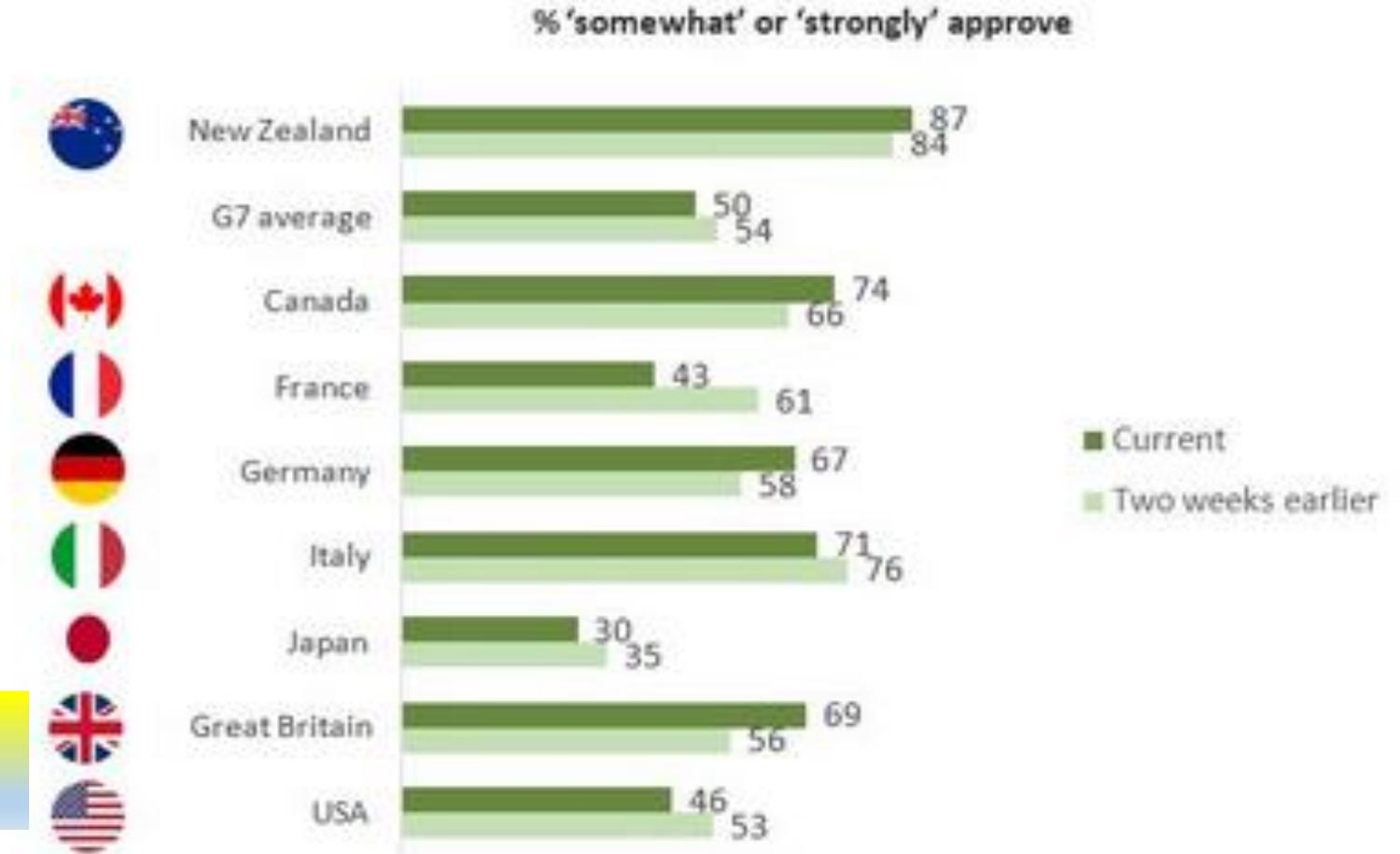
# Support for Government COVID-19 Response

- Early April = 84%
- Mid April = 87%
- End of May = 93%

Mid April:

- 93% said they were complying with lockdown
- 6% described the behaviour of others as poor

There were 5,857 breaches reported during Level Four



# Conclusion

- New Zealand's lockdown was strict
- Compliance was very high
- New Zealand has high levels of social capital
- The vast majority of New Zealanders approved of the government's COVID-19 response