

Expert talks to us about new health regulations in Great Britain



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Boris Johnson, the British Prime Minister, has announced that the rule which allowed a limited number of people to go out only once a day has been removed, and now everyone can be on the streets for an unlimited time.

The UK will have a slight **amount of flexibility from the restrictions imposed** while facing the coronavirus, as the nation gradually lifts other rules in the coming months.

Andrew Lee Davis Blake, a professor from the Department of International Business at **Tecnológico de Monterrey** in **Santa Fe**, gives his opinion on the decision issued by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The internationalist believes that around the world, restrictions are presently being lifted at all levels (social, industrial, corporate, recreational, educational), and in measured stages. He believes it is **probably too soon** to resume economical activities due to exposure to health risks.

“However, it is clear that the economic urgency is beckoning governments all over the world to jump-start activities. The new UK ruling this week allows for the resumption of office work where possible, family visits and unlimited outdoor activities.”

From the point of view of somebody living in an emerging economy (Mexico), where formal and informal economies function concurrently, this does not seem so dramatic.”



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Davis Blake says it is true that in the UK there is a considerable 'gig economy,' where there is still significant activity (traffic, pedestrians) despite the lockdown, as much as in the Mexican middle class.

"Official government policy is probably more symbolic and respected more exclusively by those on the payroll rather than by freelancers, the unemployed, or entrepreneurs. Perhaps even more attention is paid to private organizational human resource policy by this particular demographic"

Another point exposed by the professor is that the UK government, much like the US and Mexican governments, have lost much of their credibility due to their slow reaction to the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic in February and March, resulting in considerable apathy towards their policies.

"The UK is still part of Western Europe, where the institution of government is more solidly founded, and its legal framework is more widely recognized by citizens than in an emerging economy."

The professor believes that it is too early to determine which national policy has been the most effective in absolute terms. It also depends on many environmental factors: political system, population size and density, economic development, health care system and infrastructure.

“Certain small countries have been more effective in controlling the virus (like New Zealand), and countries with previous bad experiences have gone through a learning curve and were very well prepared with technological solutions despite having certain institutional gaps (Taiwan, for example).”

Some developed countries showed poorly maintained public health infrastructure (Spain and Italy). Economies such as Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Mexico and Turkey have shown that their official statistics are still unreliable.”

As to the fines for those who break the rules and how his family and friends who live there appreciate the situation, he says that it is easier to levy fines in the UK as there is less of an informal economy as such.

Homelessness has become a greater problem recently and poverty forces many to work, so there is an increasing ethical issue. Fines are still not as strict as in other Western European countries and are only imposed as a last resort.

According to the professor, we also have to remember that many in the UK have been temporarily laid off or ‘furloughed’, meaning that the government is subsidizing a large part of the workforce. These citizens have more of an obligation to abide by the rules, as the taxpayer is supporting them.

“My acquaintances in the UK find these times difficult, of course, and liken them to WWII. The UK is a high uncertainty avoidance culture, meaning they are very uncomfortable and psychologically unprepared for such an unexpected break with routine.”

As the UK is now so cosmopolitan, certain business associates are from countries such as Egypt, and prefer to be with their family members in their nations during these difficult times”

Regarding the difference between how Mexico and the United Kingdom have handled the situation, he says that both countries were slow to react to the seriousness of the pandemic; both have also been relatively weak on testing.

“Mexico is using statistics to forecast the spread, peak and decline of official COVID-19 cases. Whereas, in the UK, the Conservative government originally insisted that the best policy was ‘herd immunity’ (allowing the virus to spread evenly throughout the population until a substantial proportion would become immune to its effects).”

This was never stated officially; however, it was implied/understood, and has since been replaced in favor of complete lockdown along the lines of the Italian/Spanish/French model”.

The professor states that it is important to note there has been much political division recently in the face of the Brexit debate, so this is a difficult time to collaborate politically.

“Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the two main political parties (Conservatives and Labour) have been collaborating more due to the crisis situation. The opposition is technically/theoretically working in conjunction with the government as the country is going through a national crisis”.

According to Davis Blake, another distinction between the UK and Mexico is that decisions are more centralized in the latter.

“There is more executive decision-making power concerning emergency measures of this kind, and there is a greater government-backed majority in the legislative branch. In the UK, there is basically a two-party system, and power is more evenly distributed.”

For him, it is important to have a positive outlook. He expresses that the UK must also become more conscious of its responsibility in leading and reacting to global sanitary and environmental issues, finding solutions, and filling the void left by the United States.

“By breaking away from Europe, the UK has a choice: to be an example to follow in the face of a crisis or a sorry victim”, he concluded.

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