PANDEMIC POLICY · GLOBAL COMPARATIVE REVIEW

The Great Avoidance

What Covid inquiries investigated—and what they did not

Five years after Covid transformed societies around the world, governments have conducted dozens of inquiries into the pandemic. This project examines what those inquiries investigated, what they overlooked, and how their findings continue to shape future governance.

CGHA FLAGSHIP RESEARCH · IN DEVELOPMENT



THE CENTRAL TEST

The issue is not whether inquiries occurred. The issue is whether they investigated the decisions that mattered most.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Inquiries do more than explain the past.

Official inquiries help determine which failures enter the public record, which lessons institutions carry forward, and which powers or procedures are treated as legitimate in the next emergency. Their mandates and omissions therefore matter as much as their final recommendations.

The Great Avoidance treats every inquiry as both an account of Covid and an instrument of future policy. Comparing them reveals not only what governments learned, but what they were prepared to question.

THE COMPARISON

SCOPE	What did they investigate?
EMPHASIS	What received sustained attention?
OMISSIONS	What remains unresolved?
LEGACY	What is shaping future governance?

THE INQUIRY LANDSCAPE

One pandemic. Different institutions, mandates, and records.

The project brings four kinds of review into a common framework so their scope and emphasis can be compared without assuming that every inquiry was designed to do the same job.

Public inquiries

Formal national reviews with mandates to examine pandemic decisions and institutional performance.

Commissions

Independent or government-appointed bodies established to assess preparedness and response.

Parliamentary investigations

Legislative reviews that question officials, examine evidence, and report on public policy.

International reviews

Cross-border assessments of global institutions, coordination, guidance, and future governance.

WHAT INQUIRIES INVESTIGATED

A scrutiny ledger for the decisions that shaped daily life.

Each topic will be reviewed through the same lens: inquiry scope, depth of attention, unresolved questions, and the governance lessons carried forward.

POLICY AREA	QUESTION FOR THE INQUIRY RECORD

Preparedness	Which assumptions, plans, and institutional capacities were examined before the emergency began?
Lockdowns	How were their rationale, proportionality, duration, and wider consequences scrutinized?
School closures	Did reviews test the evidence, decision thresholds, and effects on children and families?
Mandates	Were the evidence standards, trade-offs, and mechanisms for reconsideration made visible?
The WHO	How did international guidance influence national choices, and how was that influence assessed?
Scientific dissent	How did institutions handle uncertainty, disagreement, and evidence that challenged prevailing policy?
Information governance	What scrutiny was given to public communication and the management of contested claims?

These are the project's comparison questions, not claims about completed findings.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

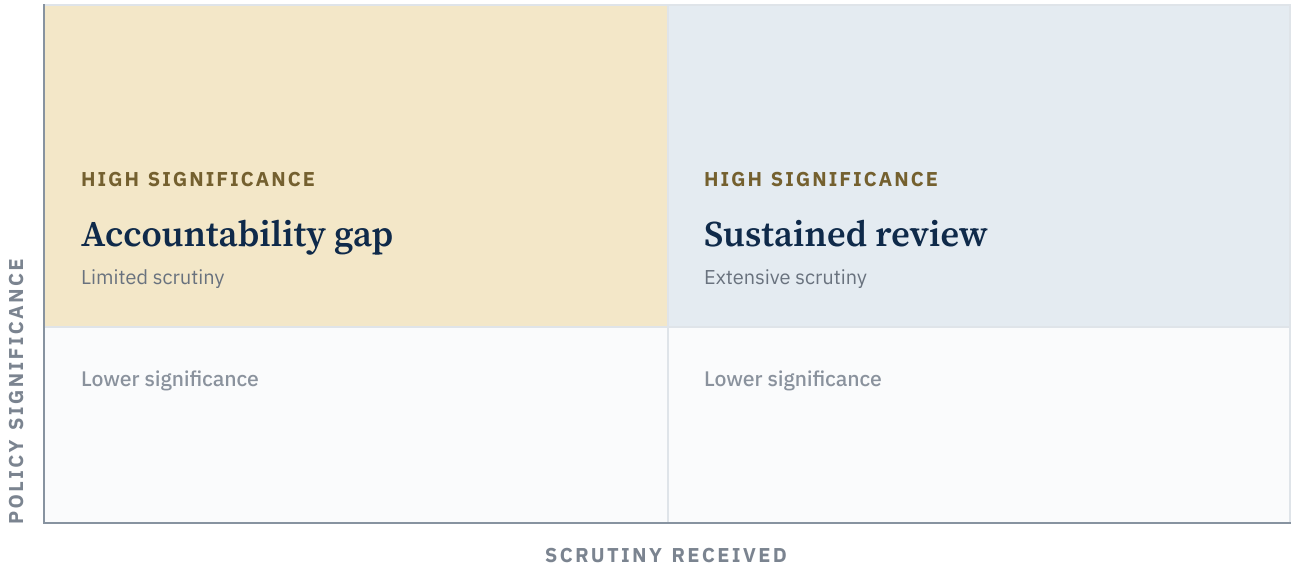
Was scrutiny proportionate to significance?

The project's main analytical test compares the public significance of a policy with the amount and depth of scrutiny it received. The largest accountability gap appears where consequential decisions receive limited examination.

This is a framework for organizing the evidence. Country and institutional findings will be added as the comparative review develops.

Conceptual model

Not a presentation of project findings



WHAT THE PROJECT WILL DELIVER

From inquiry documents to a comparable public record.

The work is designed to make different mandates and findings legible side by side, while preserving the context of individual countries and institutions.

Comparative inquiry map

A structured view of major inquiries across countries and institutions.

Topic-by-topic analysis

A consistent comparison of what each inquiry examined, emphasized, or left unresolved.

Accountability-gap assessment

A way to compare the significance of a policy with the scrutiny it received.

Country profiles

Individual records of inquiry scope, findings, governance lessons, and open questions.

OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

The omissions may be as consequential as the conclusions.

A serious review of pandemic governance must identify where the official record remains incomplete, not simply catalogue the recommendations already made.

- ? Did the policies with the broadest social consequences receive proportionate examination?
- ? Did inquiry mandates permit difficult questions, or place important decisions outside their scope?
- ? How were uncertainty, competing evidence, and scientific dissent represented in the official record?
- ? Which conclusions are now shaping preparedness, emergency powers, and international coordination?

COUNTRY PROFILES

Every inquiry needs its own record.

Country profiles will document each inquiry's mandate, institutional setting, principal areas of scrutiny, emerging lessons, and questions that remain open.

01	Mandate and timeline
02	Evidence and witnesses
03	Topics examined
04	Findings and recommendations
05	Outstanding questions

PROFILES FORTHCOMING

CONTINUE EXPLORING

Research built around outcomes, evidence, and accountability.

View all research

Pandemic policy work