



Effect of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns on planned cancer surgery for 15 tumour types in 61 countries: an international, prospective, cohort study

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Summary

Background Surgery is the main modality of cure for solid cancers and was prioritised to continue during COVID-19 outbreaks. This study aimed to identify immediate areas for system strengthening by comparing the delivery of elective cancer surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic in periods of lockdown versus light restriction.

Methods This international, prospective, cohort study enrolled 20 006 adult (≥ 18 years) patients from 466 hospitals in 61 countries with 15 cancer types, who had a decision for curative surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic and were followed up until the point of surgery or cessation of follow-up (Aug 31, 2020). Average national Oxford COVID-19 Stringency Index scores were calculated to define the government response to COVID-19 for each patient for the period they awaited surgery, and classified into light restrictions (index < 20), moderate lockdowns (20–60), and full lockdowns (> 60). The primary outcome was the non-operation rate (defined as the proportion of patients who did not undergo planned surgery). Cox proportional-hazards regression models were used to explore the associations between lockdowns and non-operation. Intervals from diagnosis to surgery were compared across COVID-19 government response index groups. This study was registered at ClinicalTrials.gov, NCT04384926.

Findings Of eligible patients awaiting surgery, 2003 (10.0%) of 20 006 did not receive surgery after a median follow-up of 23 weeks (IQR 16–30), all of whom had a COVID-19-related reason given for non-operation. Light restrictions were associated with a 0.6% non-operation rate (26 of 4521), moderate lockdowns with a 5.5% rate (201 of 3646; adjusted hazard ratio [HR] 0.81, 95% CI 0.77–0.84; $p < 0.0001$), and full lockdowns with a 15.0% rate (1775 of 11 827; HR 0.51, 0.50–0.53; $p < 0.0001$). In sensitivity analyses, including adjustment for SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates, moderate lockdowns (HR 0.84, 95% CI 0.80–0.88; $p < 0.001$), and full lockdowns (0.57, 0.54–0.60; $p < 0.001$), remained independently associated with non-operation. Surgery beyond 12 weeks from diagnosis in patients without neoadjuvant therapy increased during lockdowns (374 [9.1%] of 4521 in light restrictions, 317 [10.4%] of 3646 in moderate lockdowns, 2001 [23.8%] of 11 827 in full lockdowns), although there were no differences in resectability rates observed with longer delays.

Interpretation Cancer surgery systems worldwide were fragile to lockdowns, with one in seven patients who were in regions with full lockdowns not undergoing planned surgery and experiencing longer preoperative delays. Although short-term oncological outcomes were not compromised in those selected for surgery, delays and non-operations might lead to long-term reductions in survival. During current and future periods of societal restriction, the resilience of elective surgery systems requires strengthening, which might include protected elective surgical pathways and long-term investment in surge capacity for acute care during public health emergencies to protect elective staff and services.

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Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, government restrictions have aimed to control community SARS-CoV-2 transmission and included reducing population movement, closing public facilities, and restricting gatherings.¹ Restrictions have varied worldwide in stringency, with the most severe leading to so-called lockdowns.² Although

public and media attention has largely focussed on the economic impact of lockdowns, the broader effects on general health are poorly understood.³ Lockdowns might have had collateral effects beyond controlling community SARS-CoV-2 rates alone, due to changes in both public behaviour and health system performance.⁴ These might have disproportionate effects on vulnerable and

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See Online for appendix

Research in context

Evidence before this study

Guidance from health ministries and national surgical associations prioritised time-dependent cancer surgery to continue during societal restrictions related to COVID-19. We searched PubMed and Embase on Feb 12, 2021, without date limits, for prospective, multicountry studies describing non-operation rates for patients planned to undergo elective surgery during national or regional COVID-19 lockdowns using primary data. We used the search terms “COVID-19”, “SARS-CoV-2”, “coronavirus”, “lockdown” and “pandemic”, in combination with “surgery” and “non-operation”, “cancellation”, “postponement” or “delays”, and applied no language restrictions. Several modelling studies estimated total elective surgeries cancelled due to COVID-19, but no primary studies described the impact of lockdowns on non-operation rates for patients due to undergo curative cancer surgery.

Added value of this study

There is limited evidence of the collateral effects of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns outside of modelling studies. Uniquely, this international study prospectively enrolled patients with a decision for curative surgery awaiting surgery during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and tracked their care pathways

prospectively. It included data from the 15 most common solid cancer types across all country-income settings, providing wide generalisability to global policy. The analysis allowed a direct comparison of full and moderate lockdowns to light restrictions, accounting for their dynamic nature, where different patients from the same country were exposed to different lockdown states.

Implications of all the available evidence

This study has direct policy, organisational, and clinical implications. It has revealed the fragility of elective cancer surgery systems to lockdowns, particularly health systems in lower-middle-income countries. This study demonstrates the need for system strengthening in elective surgery across all settings to mitigate against impending COVID-19 lockdowns and future pandemics. This should include both global reorganisation to provide protected COVID-19-free elective surgical pathways (and staffing) that sustainably allow safe surgery to continue, and improved surge capacity for acute care during public health emergencies. The potential long-term effects for patients who underwent delayed surgery may require closer follow-up for metastatic disease. This study could inform policy makers' planning regarding the collateral effects of societal restrictions.

marginalised communities.^{5,6} Understanding these effects will justify expenditure on targeted system strengthening, as further societal restrictions are predicted at a global level.

In the first COVID-19 waves (ie, the 12 weeks of peak disruption), at least 21 million elective operations were cancelled globally, partly due to concerns over post-operative SARS-CoV-2 infection and partly due to capacity issues within hospitals.^{7,8} There was, however, general guidance from health ministries and national surgical associations that time-dependent surgery should continue.⁹ This included curative cancer surgery, which is a priority among the oncology community and a high-value topic for society.^{10,11} Surgery remains the primary method of cure for most solid cancers.

Since surgical databases and cancer registries do not capture prospective decision making, they lack fidelity to detect patients who did not undergo planned surgery. In the case of curative surgery, these are the patients who might have suffered the most harm.^{12,13} Resection margins alone are an inadequate marker of success, as selection bias in patients who are able to undergo surgery risks underestimating harm from treatment delays, and neglects whole-system effects. We planned the prospective COVIDSurg Cancer study to address these areas and provide an accurate, whole-system analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on planned cancer surgery. Understanding any harms could allow for immediate local and national policy changes, in preparation for future societal restrictions.

Methods

Study design and participants

This international, multicentre, prospective cohort study included adult patients (≥ 18 years) with a diagnosis of a surgically curable cancer during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was conducted in accordance with a preregistered protocol (NCT04384926). Local principal investigators were responsible for obtaining clinical audit, institutional review board, or ethical approval in line with local and national regulations. In most settings, a waiver of individual patient consent was obtained. In other countries, formal written or verbal consent was required based on recommendations of local ethics and governance committees. Data were collected online and stored on a secure server running the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) web application.¹⁴

Any hospital worldwide that performed elective cancer surgery in an area affected by the COVID-19 pandemic was eligible to participate. Patients listed for surgery to cure a solid cancer were included in each centre for 3 months from local emergence of COVID-19, defined on a centre-by-centre basis as the date where first notification of SARS-CoV-2 cases occurred in the local area (between Jan 21 and April 14, 2020). Participating centres identified all patients with a decision for surgery (or would have had a decision for surgery under normal, prepandemic circumstances) from multidisciplinary team meetings, tumour board, outpatient clinics, or local equivalents. Previous international outcomes studies from our group have shown that this method achieves greater than

For the protocol see <https://globalsurg.org/cancercovidsurg/>

95% case ascertainment and greater than 98% data accuracy during external validation.¹⁵ If a specialty within a hospital was unable to confirm consecutive enrolment, their data were excluded from analysis. Patients' care pathways were followed up until the point of surgery or until cessation of follow-up at Aug 31, 2020. This date was selected to ensure all patients had a minimum of 12-weeks follow-up. Where a patient underwent surgery, outcome data was collected up to 30 days after surgery. Where patients remained non-operated, their last known status was recorded.

The 15 most common solid cancer types were included in this study, including colorectal, oesophageal, gastric, head and neck (oral, oropharyngeal, laryngeal, hypopharyngeal, salivary, thyroid, paranasal sinus, skin), thoracic (lung, pleural, mediastinal, chest wall), liver, pancreatic, prostate, bladder, renal and upper urinary tract urothelial, gynaecological (uterine, ovarian, cervical, vulval, vaginal), breast, soft-tissue sarcoma, bony sarcoma, and intracranial malignancies. Participating centres could contribute data for either single or multiple cancers. Early cancers that were planned to be managed with endoscopic surgery alone (eg, transurethral resection of bladder tumour, transanal endoscopic microsurgery) were excluded. Patients who were suspected to have an operable cancer, but were later identified to have a non-cancerous condition (eg, on postoperative histopathology), or were treated as benign and unexpectedly identified to be malignant on postoperative histopathology were also excluded.

Definition of lockdowns

We used the Oxford COVID-19 Stringency Index to define each country's national government response to COVID-19. This index is a composite of 19 indicators including measures and behavioural interventions related to containment and closure, economic response, and health systems. Each indicator is scored using an ordinal scale (0 to 2, 3, 4, or 5), with an overall score calculated by adding together individual indicator scores (appendix p 56). Total scores can range from 0 (no restrictions) to 100 (most stringent restrictions). The index has been previously validated by demonstrating associations with population SARS-CoV-2 infection rates and mobile phone mobility data.¹

The average national Oxford COVID-19 Stringency Index scores were calculated for each patient for the period they waited for surgery. To define cutoffs that were reflective of real-world policy, we sampled reported lockdown dates from a sample of high-income countries, upper-middle-income countries (UMICs), and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs; appendix p 55). Dates were taken from national policy, media, and press sources. On the date of transition into lockdown, the point estimate for the COVID-19 Stringency Index score was extracted (appendix p 55). This point estimate was used to classify patients into three stringency groups:

light restrictions (index <20), moderate lockdowns (20–60), and full lockdowns (>60). These groups allowed a direct comparison of full and moderate lockdowns to light restrictions, accounting for their dynamic nature, whereby different patients from the same country were exposed to different lockdown states. For each patient, a median average score while waiting for surgery and the number of weeks in full lockdown were calculated and used in analyses. Full details are given in the appendix (pp 2, 57–58).

Definition of SARS-CoV-2 rates

The case notification rate was calculated at an individual patient level as a median average between the date of local emergence of COVID-19 and the date of surgery or cessation of follow-up via the Our World in Data portal.¹⁶ A high COVID-19 burden area was classified as a median of at least 25 cases per 100 000 per 14 days, representing WHO recommendations at the time of the study (ie, in keeping with first pandemic wave levels). Case rates were used for exploratory analyses only, and stratified by World Bank income tertile (appendix p 58).^{17,18}

Other definitions

The World Bank index (2019/20 update) was used to classify countries and patients into three groups based on Gross National Income per capita (US\$) calculated using the Atlas method: high-income countries, UMICs, and LMICs (including patients from both low-income countries and LMICs). Data on baseline patient status was collected for the purpose of adjustment for case-mix in exploring associations between lockdowns and surgical capacity (appendix p 59).

Patients were classified into three groups according to their neoadjuvant treatment group: (1) no neoadjuvant therapy (ie, straight to surgery); (2) neoadjuvant therapy, standard care (where the treating clinician administered neoadjuvant treatment in accordance with their usual care); (3) neoadjuvant therapy, COVID-19 decision (where the treating clinician administered a neoadjuvant treatment where this would not typically be indicated). To estimate the impact of lockdown on treatment delays, the relationship between lockdowns and the interval from diagnosis to decision for surgery to surgery was measured. The interval from date of diagnosis to the date of surgery was calculated in whole weeks to identify points of system friction (appendix p 60).

Outcomes

A resilient elective surgical care system is defined as a hospital or network of hospitals that is able to maintain both its capacity and safety during public health crises.¹⁹ As a measure of the ability of surgical systems to maintain their capacity, the primary outcome measure was the non-operation rate. This non-operation rate was defined as an eligible patient (ie, with a plan to undergo surgery) not undergoing their planned operation during

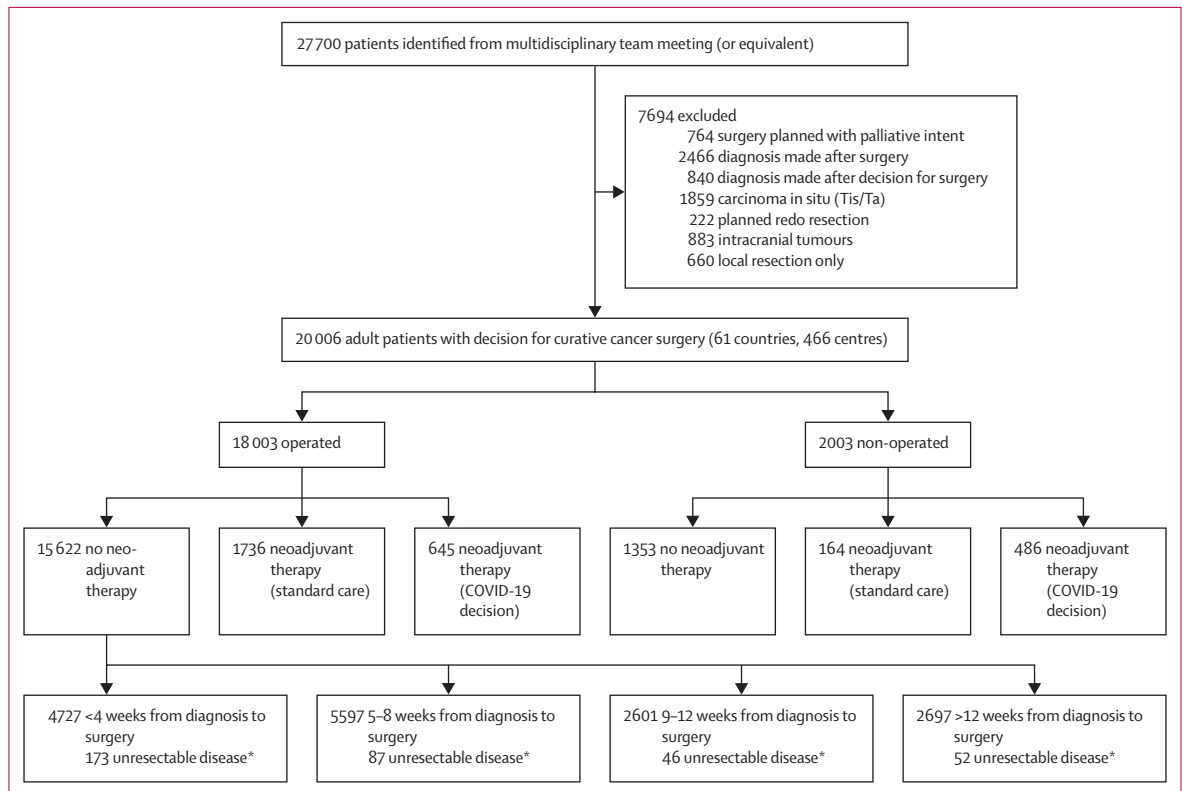


Figure 1: Flowchart of included patients

*Found clinically, radiologically, or during surgery.

the study window. Patients were classified as being operated if they underwent surgery, regardless of whether there was a change to the planned urgency (eg, from elective to emergency) or intent (eg, from curative to palliative). Patients who died or progressed to unresectable disease before surgery were classified as non-operated, so these did not act as competing risks.

For patients who did not receive their surgery as planned during the follow-up window, the treating clinical team selected one or more reasons that the patient had not had surgery. These reasons included those explicitly COVID-19 related (eg, decision to delay surgery due to patient risk during COVID-19), and those non-COVID-19 related (eg, delay due to other unrelated medical or surgical condition). More than one reason for non-operation could be selected for each patient, representing the complexity of decision making (full details are given in the appendix p 61).

Secondary outcome measures related to safety of surgery were presented for patients who underwent surgery during the follow-up period: (1) resection margin status for those selected for surgery; (2) resectable disease at the time of surgery; (3) preoperative cancer complication requiring emergency surgery; (4) 30-day postoperative SARS-CoV-2 infection rate; (5) 30-day postoperative mortality rate; (6) new detection of metastatic disease up to a maximum of 30 days after surgery. As neoadjuvant therapy has a

complex interplay with treatment interval, an a-priori decision was made to only include patients who went straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy) in exploration of the effects of treatment delay on secondary outcomes (appendix p 62).

Statistical analysis

The full statistical method is presented in the appendix (p 63). Cox proportional hazards regression modelling was used to explore associations between lockdowns and the primary outcome, presented as adjusted hazard ratios (HRs) and 95% CIs. Operation was included as the outcome event, and no censoring was performed for death or progression to unresectable disease to deal with competing risks, given individuals had the same follow-up time (ie, describing sub-distribution rather than cause-specific hazards). An α level was set at 0.05 (5%) for interpretation of significance. Several preplanned sensitivity analyses were conducted for the primary analysis to examine robustness of findings; namely, (1) including elective operations only in the definition of the primary outcome; (2) accounting for an interaction effect between World Bank income group and COVID-19 stringency index group; and (3) accounting for local SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates, stratified by World Bank income group. Two further sensitivity analyses were performed to

ensure that differences in cancer case-mix across income settings were not responsible for residual confounding; these included, (1) cancer location removed from the model; and (2) patients older than 50 years only. A secondary analysis was used to explore the incremental effect of weeks in lockdown on a patient's likelihood of non-operation. Intervals from diagnosis to surgery were compared across COVID-19 government response index groups. We only analysed the interval between diagnosis and surgery for patients who did not receive neo-adjuvant therapy to avoid confounding due to legitimate delays to surgery in patients who receive neo-adjuvant therapy. All analyses were carried out using R, version 3.1.1 (packages `finalfit`, `tidyverse`, `ggsurvplot`).

Role of the funding source

The funders of the study had no role in study design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, or writing of the report.

Results

20006 patients were eligible for inclusion in 466 hospitals in 61 countries (figure 1). Of these patients, 1891 (9.5%) were from 17 UMICs and 2249 (11.2%) were from 12 LMICs. A wide range of patients, tumours, and operations were included. The most common tumour types included were breast ($n=3896$; 19.5%), head and neck ($n=3517$; 17.6%), colon ($n=3428$; 17.1%), and gynaecological ($n=2169$; 10.8%). Distribution of patients and cancers across income groups and countries is shown in the appendix (pp 8–9).

Of patients planned for cancer surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic, 4521 (22.6%) of 20006 were awaiting surgery during a period of light restrictions, 3646 (18.2%) during moderate lockdowns, and 11827 (59.1%) during full lockdowns ($n=12$ missing data; appendix p 4). The proportion of patients awaiting surgery in full lockdowns was higher in areas with high than low community SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates and in UMICs and LMICs than in high-income countries (appendix p 10). Patients awaiting surgery during light restrictions had a lower mean number of weeks in full lockdown (2.4 weeks [SD 1.7]) compared with patients awaiting surgery during moderate (5.5 weeks [2.9]) or full lockdowns (12.7 weeks [5.4]; $p<0.0001$, from one-way ANOVA).

Most patients (16975 [84.8%] of 20006) had a plan to progress straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy), with 1900 (9.5%) receiving standard care neoadjuvant therapy, and 1131 (5.7%) receiving a COVID-19 decision for neoadjuvant therapy. During full lockdowns, patients were more likely to have a COVID-19 decision for neoadjuvant therapy than during moderate lockdowns or light restrictions (appendix p 3).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 2003 (10.0%) of 20006 patients did not undergo their planned surgery by the end of follow-up (figure 2; appendix p 12). Patients

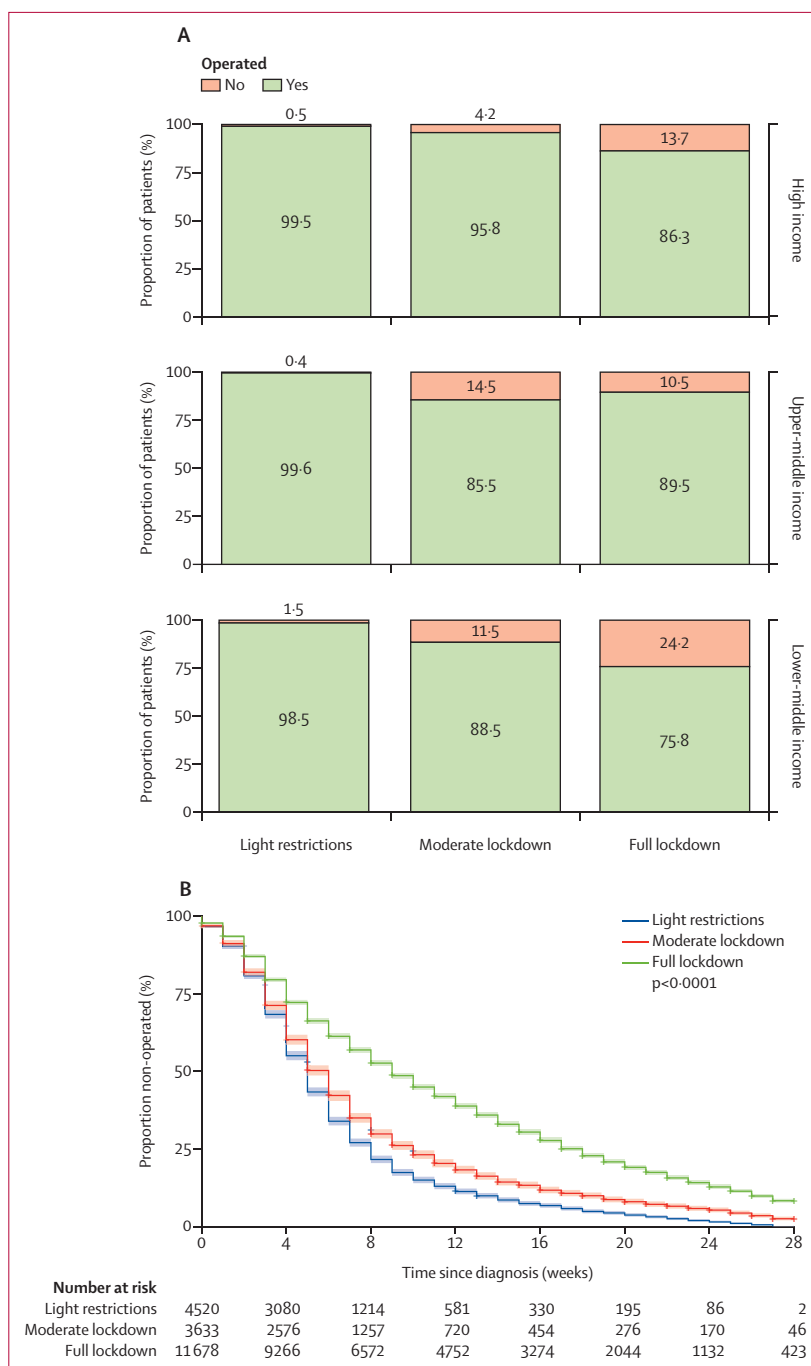


Figure 2: Effects of lockdowns on surgical capacity

(A) Differences in resilience of surgical systems across income settings by COVID-19 stringency index group. Percentages represent proportion operated by group. (B) Kaplan-Meier plot demonstrating proportion of patients remaining non-operated over time from cancer diagnosis grouped by COVID-19 stringency index group. Plot censored at 28 weeks maximum follow-up from cancer diagnosis. Shading represents this represents the 95% CI, using the statistical package `ggsurvplot`.

awaiting surgery during periods of light restrictions had a lower rate of non-operation (26 [0.6%] of 4521) than those in moderate lockdowns (201 [5.5%] of 3646) or full lockdowns (1775 [15.0%] of 11827; appendix p 5).

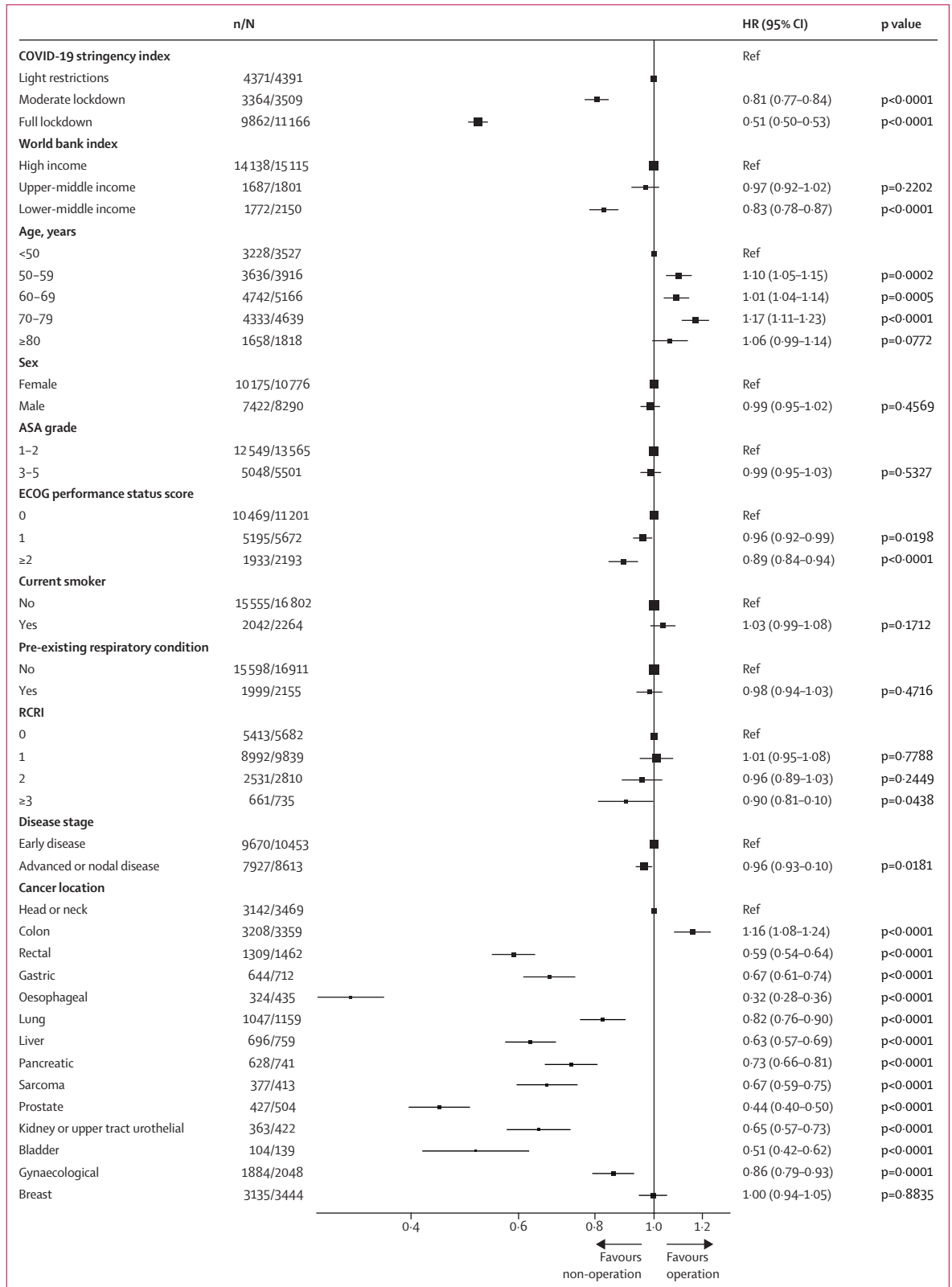


Figure 3: Multivariable Cox proportional hazards model of factors associated with non-operation during COVID-19
 19 832 in dataframe, 19 066 in model, 766 missing. 17 597 (91.8%) of 19 066 patients included in this model were operated by the end of follow-up. Missing data are described in the appendix (p 10), as well as the full model (p 12).
 ASA=American Society of Anesthesiologists Physical Status Classification System. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. RCRI=Revised Cardiac Risk Index.

1775 (88.7%) of 2003 patients who remained non-operated were in regions with full lockdowns (appendix p 11). The baseline rate of non-operation was low across all income settings during periods of light restrictions (22 [0.5%] of 4089 in high-income countries; one [0.4%] of 228 in UMICs; three [1.5%] of 204 in LMICs), and high during periods of full lockdown (1188 [13.7%] of 8644 in high-income countries; 139 [10.5%] of 1329 in UMICs; 448 [24.2%] of 1854 in LMICs). At 12 weeks after diagnosis, 581 [12.8%] of 4520 patients under light restrictions remained non-operated, 720 (19.9%) of 3622 patients during moderate lockdowns, and 4752 (40.7%) of 11678 patients during full lockdowns (figure 2). After multivariable adjustment, both moderate (HR 0.81, 95% CI 0.77–0.84; $p < 0.0001$) and full lockdowns (HR 0.51, 0.50–0.53; $p < 0.0001$) were associated with a lower likelihood of a patient receiving their planned cancer surgery (figure 3; appendix p 10). This was consistent across planned sensitivity analyses (appendix pp 13–16). The overall level of missingness was low (<1%) for all variables included in the models.

Being in an LMIC, increasing frailty (Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group 1 or ≥ 2), comorbidity (Revised Cardiac Risk Index ≥ 3), and having locally advanced or nodal disease, or both, were all independently associated with increased likelihood of non-operation. There was significant variability in the likelihood of non-operation by cancer site. Where the primary outcome definition was revised to include elective surgery only, both UMICs and LMICs were observed to have a higher adjusted non-operation rates than high-income countries (appendix p 13). The effect of lockdown on non-operation differed by income group, with LMICs broadly less likely to operate at a given level of lockdown compared with the high-income group (appendix p 15). Patients waiting for surgery in LMICs during full lockdowns were most likely to remain non-operated compared with patients in LMICs during light restrictions (HR 0.41, 95% CI 0.38–0.44; $p < 0.0001$; appendix p 16). In the secondary analysis, waiting for surgery for 5–6 weeks or more in full lockdown was associated with a reduced likelihood of a patient undergoing their cancer operation compared with 0 weeks in full lockdown (5–6 weeks in full lockdown HR 0.86, 95% CI 0.80–0.93, $p < 0.0001$; appendix p 6).

Patients younger than 50 years were less likely than patients 50 years and older to receive their planned surgery across several sensitivity analyses. Patients planned to have surgery aged younger than 50 years were more commonly from LMICs than UMICs or high-income countries commonly from LMICs (appendix pp 18–19). In a sensitivity analysis including only patients older than 50 years, the effect of lockdowns on surgical capacity remained consistent with the primary result (ie, moderate and full lockdowns were associated with a significant increase in the odds of

All patients	
COVID-19 related	
Multidisciplinary team decision to delay surgery due to patient risk during COVID-19	1456 (72.8%)
Change to alternative treatment modality because of COVID-19	533 (26.6%)
Patient choice to avoid surgery during COVID-19 pandemic	460 (23.0%)
Ongoing neoadjuvant therapy (COVID decision)	378 (18.9%)
No bed, critical care bed, or operating room space available due to COVID-19	299 (14.9%)
Change of recommendations in society guidelines related to COVID-19	220 (11.0%)
Patient unable to travel to hospital related to COVID-19	140 (7.0%)
Collateral impact on supporting services causing delay	24 (1.2%)
Patient delayed due to SARS-CoV-2 infection	23 (1.1%)
Died of COVID-19 while waiting for surgery	14 (0.6%)
Total	2001 (100.0%)
Non-COVID-19 related	
Progression to unresectable disease	179 (8.9%)
Delay due to other unrelated medical or surgical condition	59 (2.9%)
Died unrelated to COVID-19 while waiting for surgery	34 (1.7%)
Patient unable to afford surgery	24 (1.2%)
Patient choice to avoid surgery unrelated to COVID-19	35 (1.7%)
Total	306 (15.3%)

We anticipated that decisions to delay or cancel surgery during COVID-19 would be complex. Therefore, selecting more than one reason for non-operation during the follow-up window for each patient was permitted. One patient could have both one or more COVID-19-related and non-COVID-19-related reasons selected. Where it was unclear whether a reason was directly COVID-related (eg, disease progression) this was classified as not COVID-19-related. Two patients (0.1%) had no reasons given for non-operation during the follow-up window selected (missing data). Proportions are therefore expressed as a percentage of 2001 non-operated patients and with data available.

Table 1: Reasons that patients did not received planned surgery

non-operation compared with light restrictions; appendix p 20).

Increasing SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates were associated with increasing non-operation rates (appendix p 21). Both moderate and full lockdowns were consistently associated with an increased likelihood of non-operation, even after adjustment for local SARS-CoV-2 rates (appendix p 22). The largest magnitude of effect was seen when transitioning from light restrictions or moderate lockdowns to full lockdowns across all income and SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate groups. LMICs were particularly fragile to increasing SARS-CoV-2 rates and full lockdowns, with a non-operation rate of 381 (58.7%) of 649 (appendix p 21).

By the end of the follow-up (median 23 weeks, IQR 16–30), 2003 patients had not undergone planned surgery. 453 (22.6%) of 2003 patients had been formally re-staged. Detection of new metastatic disease is shown in the appendix (p 26).

Of non-operated patients for whom data were available ($n=2001$; two missing data), all had at least one COVID-19-related reason provided for non-operation (table 1); most commonly this involved a team decision to delay surgery during COVID-19 due to individual patient risk (1456 [72.8%] of 2001). 533 (26.6%) of 2001 patients were provided an alternative treatment modality as a result of COVID-19. 306 (15.3%) patients had at least one non-COVID-19-related reason provided for non-operation.

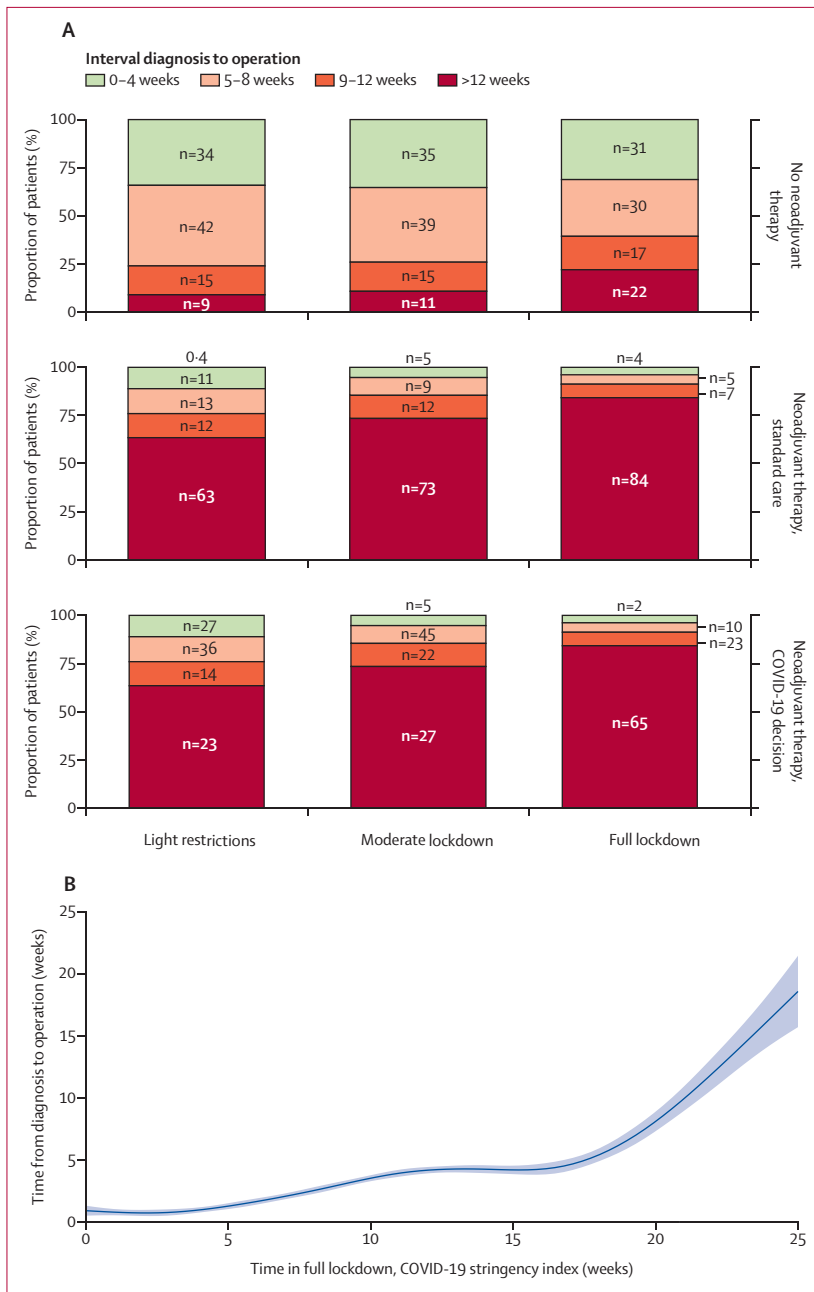


Figure 4: Lockdown and delay to surgery (A) Delay from diagnosis to surgery during lockdowns (according to COVID-19 stringency index group) by neoadjuvant therapy group. Percentages represent proportion of operated patients who were in each interval from diagnosis to operation group. (B) Weeks in full lockdown and interval from cancer diagnosis to operation. Plot displays patients who went straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy only). Full lockdown defined as a COVID-19 stringency index score of more than 60. Plotted line represents a smoothed conditional mean from a fitted generalised additive model. The shaded area denotes bounds of the 95% CI.

179 (8.9%) patients progressed to unresectable disease. 48 (2.4%) patients died before their planned surgery (14 due to COVID-19-related complications, and 34 due to non-COVID-19-related causes).

Delays from diagnosis to operation were observed during full lockdowns for operated patients (n=18003)

across all neoadjuvant treatment groups (figure 4). In patients who went straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy; 15 622 [86.3%] of 18 003), full lockdown was associated with 2001 [23.8%] of 11 827 patients not receiving surgery within 12 weeks of diagnosis compared with 317 (10.4%) of 3646 patients during moderate lockdowns, and 374 (9.1%) of 4521 patients under light restrictions (appendix p 25). For these patients, each additional week in lockdown was associated with treatment delay ($p < 0.0001$; figure 4). Increasing SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates were also associated with increased delays beyond 12 weeks across income groups, with the longest delays observed in UMICs and LMICs during periods with high SARS-CoV-2 rates (appendix p 23). The point of system friction was different across different income groups (appendix p 7). Full lockdown was associated with an increased interval from decision to surgery across all settings compared with both light restrictions and moderate lockdown (figure 4; appendix p 24).

In patients who went straight to surgery (n=15 622), postoperative histopathological and clinical outcomes during light restrictions, moderate lockdowns, and full lockdowns were similar (table 2). Characteristics and outcomes of patients by interval from diagnosis to operation are in the appendix (pp 25–26). Variation in outcomes by income group are shown in the appendix (p 27).

Discussion

The design of this study allowed a holistic overview of different health systems' surgical capacity and outcomes during lockdowns. The analysis allowed a direct comparison during full and moderate lockdowns to periods with light restrictions, taking account of the dynamic nature of government policies, where different lockdown states. During full lockdowns, one in seven patients did not receive their planned operation, all of whom had a pandemic-related reason for non-operation. This finding was robust, and consistent in sensitivity analyses. In a secondary analysis, awaiting surgery in a full lockdown for greater than 6 weeks was associated with an increased likelihood of non-operation. These data reveal the fragility of elective cancer surgery to lockdowns, which was independent of both local SARS-CoV-2 rates and case-mix. Patients with cancer in LMICs, of increasing frailty, or with advanced disease were most vulnerable to lockdown effects. Capacity for major elective cancer should be part of every country's strategy to address whole-population health needs and prevent further collateral harm.

Identifying at-risk groups allows targeted system strengthening during both COVID-19 lockdowns and future pandemics. Firstly, vulnerable patient groups (eg, those with a poorer performance score, more cardiac comorbidities, or advanced cancers) were all less likely to receive surgery. Secondly, certain operation types that

require more intensive perioperative care, including those for oesophageal and pancreatic cancer, were at increased risk of cancellation. Thirdly, patients in LMICs were less likely to undergo surgery during lockdowns and SARS-CoV-2 surges, which included a high proportion of young patients (<50 years). Protected elective surgical capacity might include protected COVID-19-free pathways (including dedicated surgical, anaesthetic, and theatre staff) within larger hospitals, or smaller bespoke elective surgery units that function as part of cancer treatment networks.²⁰ This also requires long-term investment in surge capacity for the acute care workforce and formal operational planning to manage public health emergencies without major disruption to elective care (further details are in the appendix p 64). Together, protected elective surgical capacity might allow essential elective surgery to continue despite external system shocks.²⁰

The least resilient systems were in LMIC settings, exacerbating resource scarcity and capacity issues that were present pre-pandemic in the management of non-communicable diseases.^{11,21} Elective cancer surgery systems in LMICs are typically under pressure from a high burden of expedited and emergency presentations.^{11,15,21} This pressure was seen in our study, where the likelihood of non-operation was higher in both UMICs and LMICs, despite patients being younger and having fewer comorbidities. These young patients were more frequently affected by financial and geographical causes for non-operation, revealing a particularly vulnerable group. Measures to strengthen the security of global elective cancer surgery must be implemented across all settings, and as a priority in LMICs.⁶ Despite data demonstrating the safety of neoadjuvant treatment during COVID-19, the overall rate of neoadjuvant therapy as standard care or a COVID-19 decision was low (15.2%). This low rate might represent safety concerns or highlight capacity issues elsewhere in the cancer care pathway.²² Developing robust pathways from diagnosis through to definitive surgical treatment, supported by public health teams and financial protection mechanisms, will help to create both pandemic-proof and more equitable systems.

Although we did not find an increase in the positive resection margin rate or new metastatic disease associated with increasing delays, these were highly selected patients and with short-term follow-up only. The high proportion of patients who did not receive planned surgery reveals the true extent of potential harm. This part of our analysis focussed on patients who were treated without neoadjuvant therapy, who are likely to represent the group at highest risk from unplanned delays. Evidence from modelling studies and meta-analyses suggest that 4-week incremental delays before surgery are associated with increased rates of recurrence and excess mortality.¹³ Taken together, patients who experienced a delay to surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic might warrant strategies that support closer

	Light restrictions (n=4152)	Moderate lockdown (n=3057)	Full lockdown (n=8402)	Total* (N=15 622)	p value†
Margin status					
R0	3471 (83.7%)	2619 (85.8%)	7238 (86.3%)	13 328 (85.5%)	0.0011
R1	381 (9.3%)	223 (7.4%)	581 (6.9%)	1185 (7.7%)	..
R2	79 (1.9%)	61 (2.0%)	157 (1.9%)	297 (1.9%)	..
Pathology unavailable	214 (5.2%)	147 (4.8%)	407 (4.8%)	768 (4.9%)	..
Missing	7	7	19	33	..
Resectable disease at time of surgery					
Resectable	4069 (98.0%)	2967 (97.1%)	8213 (97.8%)	15 249 (97.7%)	0.045
Unresectable	81 (2.0%)	90 (2.9%)	187 (2.2%)	358 (2.3%)	..
Unknown	2	0	2	4	..
Pre-operative cancer-related complication requiring emergency surgery‡					
Elective	4071 (98.2%)	2989 (97.8%)	8199 (97.8%)	15 259 (97.9%)	0.27
Emergency	74 (1.8%)	67 (2.2%)	185 (2.2%)	326 (2.1%)	..
30-day SARS-CoV-2 infection rate‡					
No	4083 (98.3%)	3039 (99.4%)	8362 (99.5%)	15 484 (99.2%)	<0.0001
Yes	69 (1.7%)	18 (0.6%)	40 (0.5%)	127 (0.8%)	..
30-day postoperative mortality rate‡					
No	4080 (98.3%)	3016 (98.7%)	8307 (99.0%)	15 403 (98.8%)	0.0045
Yes	70 (1.7%)	41 (1.3%)	84 (1.0%)	195 (1.2%)	..
Missing	2	0	11	13	..
New detection of metastatic disease§					
No	2191 (98.3%)	1625 (98.3%)	4946 (98.2%)	8762 (98.2%)	0.87
Yes	38 (1.7%)	28 (1.7%)	93 (1.8%)	159 (1.8%)	..
Missing	7	5	15	27	..

Data are n (%) or n. Patients with metastatic disease at baseline removed from denominator (N=8957). Percentages presented by column total; missing data are excluded. R0=no microscopic or macroscopic disease. R1=microscopic disease at the margin. R2=macroscopic disease at the margin. *11 missing this data point. † χ^2 comparing light versus moderate versus full lockdowns for each outcome. ‡Subgroups defined in the appendix (p 62). §Detailed data on detection of new metastatic disease not collected for liver, pancreatic, breast, and gynaecological cancers.

Table 2: Outcomes across COVID-19 stringency index groups for patients going straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy)

follow-up for metastatic disease. It is possible that there will be a reverse trend towards worsening cancer survival rates over the next 5 years as a consequence of these capacity issues, although the present study was not designed to directly capture these long-term effects. We acknowledge that for some cancer types, neoadjuvant therapy has equivalent outcomes to the adjuvant application of the same treatment and might be a reasonable strategy to safely delay treatment where this is required (eg, endocrine therapy for oestrogen-receptor-positive breast cancers).²³ The impact of changes to neoadjuvant treatment pathways and both short-term and long-term oncological outcomes requires further exploration.

This study had several further limitations. First, effects seen during lockdowns could be interpreted as normal practice, which would have occurred outside of the pandemic era. We dealt with this by including an internal comparison (light restrictions), which is akin to normal conditions and carried a non-operation rate of 0.5%. We also collected clinicians' reasons for non-operation, which

were overwhelmingly COVID-19 related. Second, we used the Oxford COVID-19 Stringency Index to define lockdowns,¹ calculated for each patient as the median average during their wait for surgery. Although this index has been validated, it is not yet widely used, and the COVIDSurg Collaborative is an early adopter of this metric for research purposes. This health policy measure demonstrated association with patient level outcomes in our dataset. However, we used an aggregate summary statistic that did not reflect all changes in policy during the study period. More work is required to understand the best method to apply this measure in future epidemiological studies. Third, as part of the exposure period to lockdowns occurred after study entry (ie, decision for surgery), this might have been subject to future information bias, where patients remaining non-operated for a longer time might have been more likely to await surgery during different lockdown states, therefore have a central tendency in their median average score.²⁴ Fourth, this study required prospective capture of team decision making, which might have been subject to biases, although the scale and diversity of the study mitigated against this. Fifth, definition of SARS-CoV-2 rates is dependent on testing performed and reported, so might vary at global scale.^{17,18} We present exploratory analyses around SARS-CoV-2 rates stratified by income setting and provide sensitivity analyses to demonstrate that findings were robust. Sixth, we did not present more detailed analyses of between-country or within-country variation. Despite the large numbers in this study, individual numbers per country were low enough to risk type 1 error through multiple hypothesis testing. Seventh, in this analysis we did not explore different hospital types or delay in care for different cancers. There might have been hospitals that shutdown completely and did not take part in this study, meaning outcomes might have been worse. There might be specialty specific findings that allow future strategies to become stratified—eg, patients with rectal and prostate cancer might benefit from scaling up alternative neoadjuvant treatments; breast and gynaecological cancer surgery might be amenable to day case pathways; kidney, bladder, thoracic, and oesophagogastric surgery might require the advanced support of surgical units with critical care facilities; colon cancer could be performed in standalone surgical units. Eighth, we did not capture data on delays to diagnosis. Lockdowns are a system-level issue and high friction in diagnostic pathways was likely to have led to an increasing number of tumours left undetected in the community.²⁵ When considering resilience of a complete elective surgery system, there is a vital role of timely diagnostics in preventing harm, which might be just as important as delays between diagnosis and surgery. Finally, cancer care is just one component of a functioning health system. When making policy decisions about resourcing to improve resilience, cancer must be balanced with other high-burden conditions (eg, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease).²⁶

At the time of publication, lockdowns of varying magnitude remain in place across many countries around the world, and further measures might be imposed related to novel variants of concern and variability in vaccine availability around the world (appendix p 64); however, threats to stable elective surgical systems are not limited to COVID-19; other viral pandemics, seasonal pressures, and natural disasters all affect surgical patients on an annual and recurring basis. The lessons from this study might be used to inform surgical system strengthening both during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Contributors

The writing group (JCG, AAde, AAdi, EA, APA, FA, JA, AMB, AC-C, JE, ME, MF, CF, GG, DG, EAG, EH, PH, IL, SW, HL, SL, EL, GMAG, HM, EJM, JM, DM, KM, MM, RM, DM, FN, FP, MP, PP, AR-DM, KR, ACR, RKS, RS, JFFS, NS, GDS, RS, SS, ST, EHT, RV, DN, AAB) and the statistical analysis group (JCG, KAM, DN, EH, AAB) contributed to writing, data interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. The writing group, operations committee, and dissemination committee contributed to study conception, protocol development, study delivery, and management. The collaborators contributed to data collection and study governance across included sites. All members of the writing group had full access to the data in the study, and JCG, KAM, DN, EH, and AAB verified the underlying data in the study. AAB or JCG and the writing committee had final responsibility for the decision to submit for publication. Detailed role descriptions of all contributing collaborating authors are shown in the appendix (pp 28–54).

Declaration of interests

All authors declare no competing interests.

Data sharing

Anonymised individual participant data will be made available upon request to the corresponding authors after the date of publication, with approval of the operations and dissemination committees, and completion of a data sharing agreement.

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Supplementary appendix

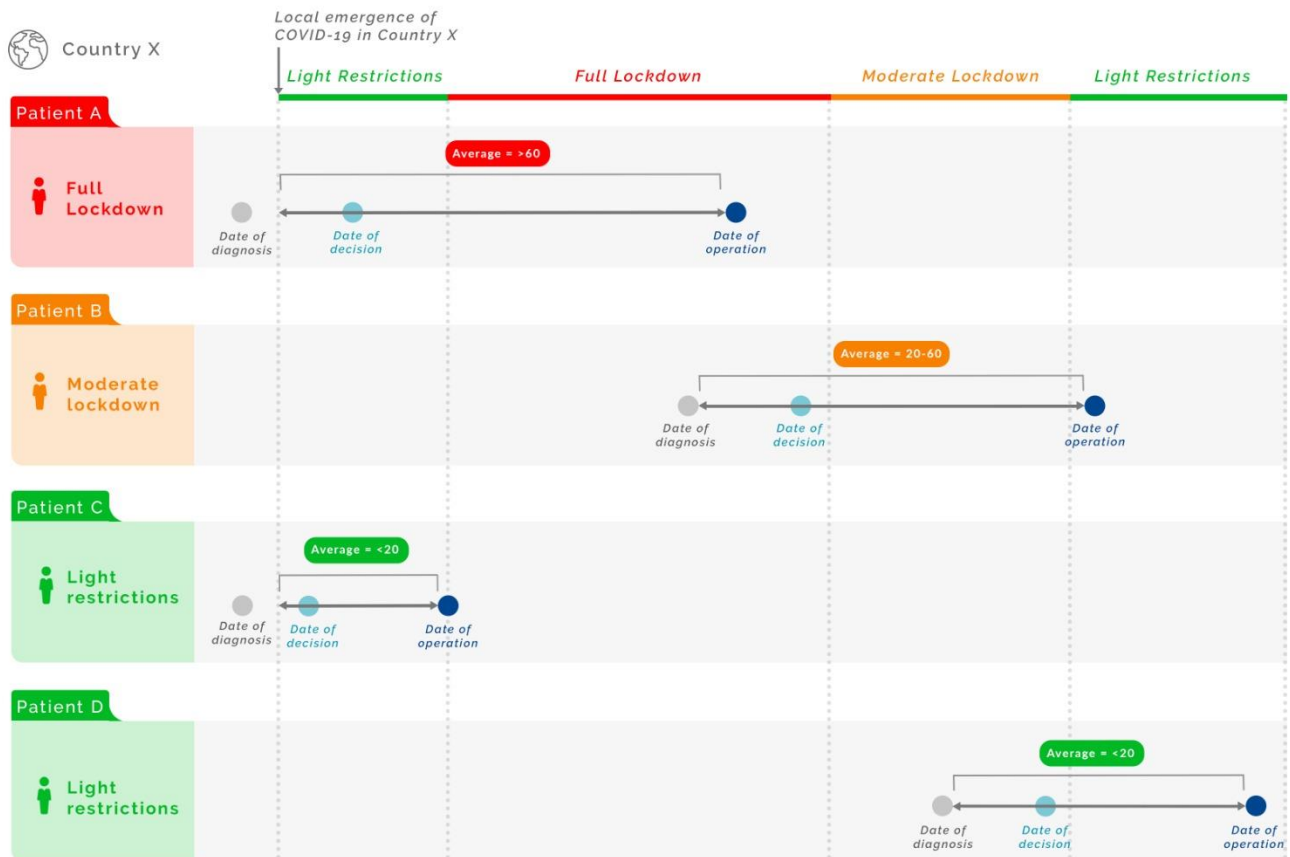
This appendix formed part of the original submission and has been peer reviewed. We post it as supplied by the authors.

Supplement to: COVIDSurg Collaborative. Effect of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns on planned cancer surgery for 15 tumour types in 61 countries: an international, prospective, cohort study. *Lancet Oncol* 2021; published online Oct 5. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045\(21\)00493-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(21)00493-9).

Web Appendix

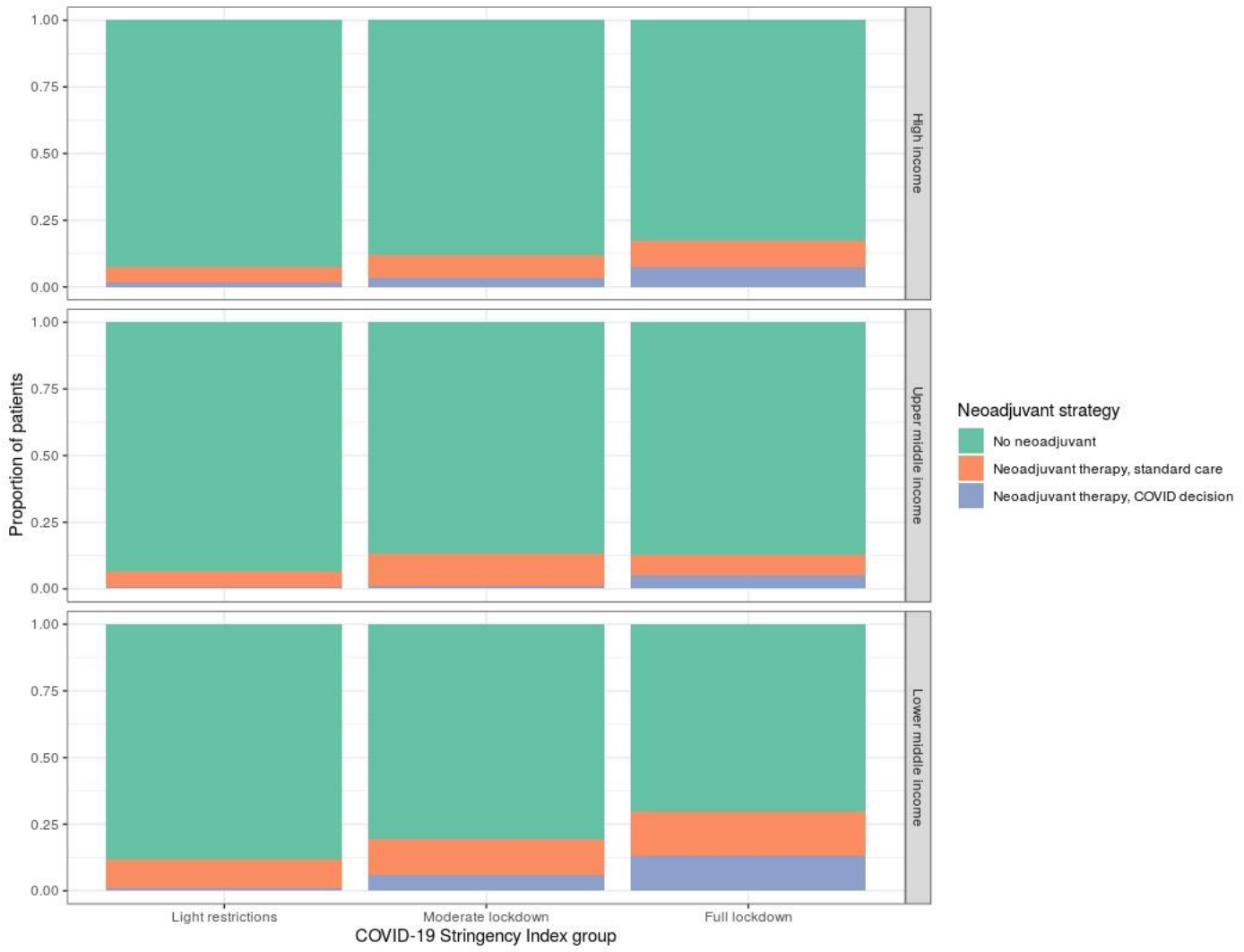
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Supplementary figure 1. COVID-19 government index response index classification.



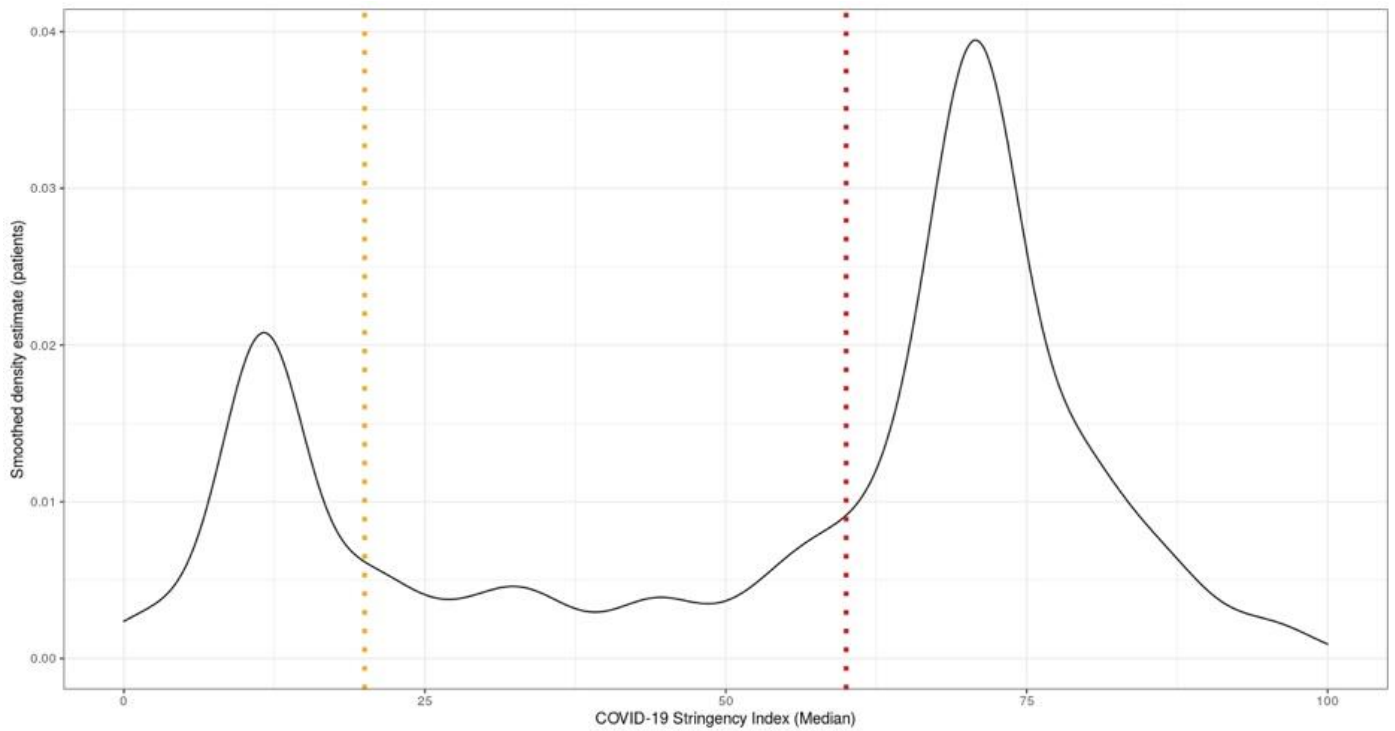
The median Oxford COVID-19 government response index score was calculated for each patient as a median average between local emergence of COVID-19 or data of diagnosis (whichever was latest) to the date of operation or cessation of follow-up if the patient remained non-operated. A representative example country is shown. The final classification is shown beneath each patient example.

Supplementary figure 2. Variation in use of neoadjuvant therapy across lockdowns across income groups



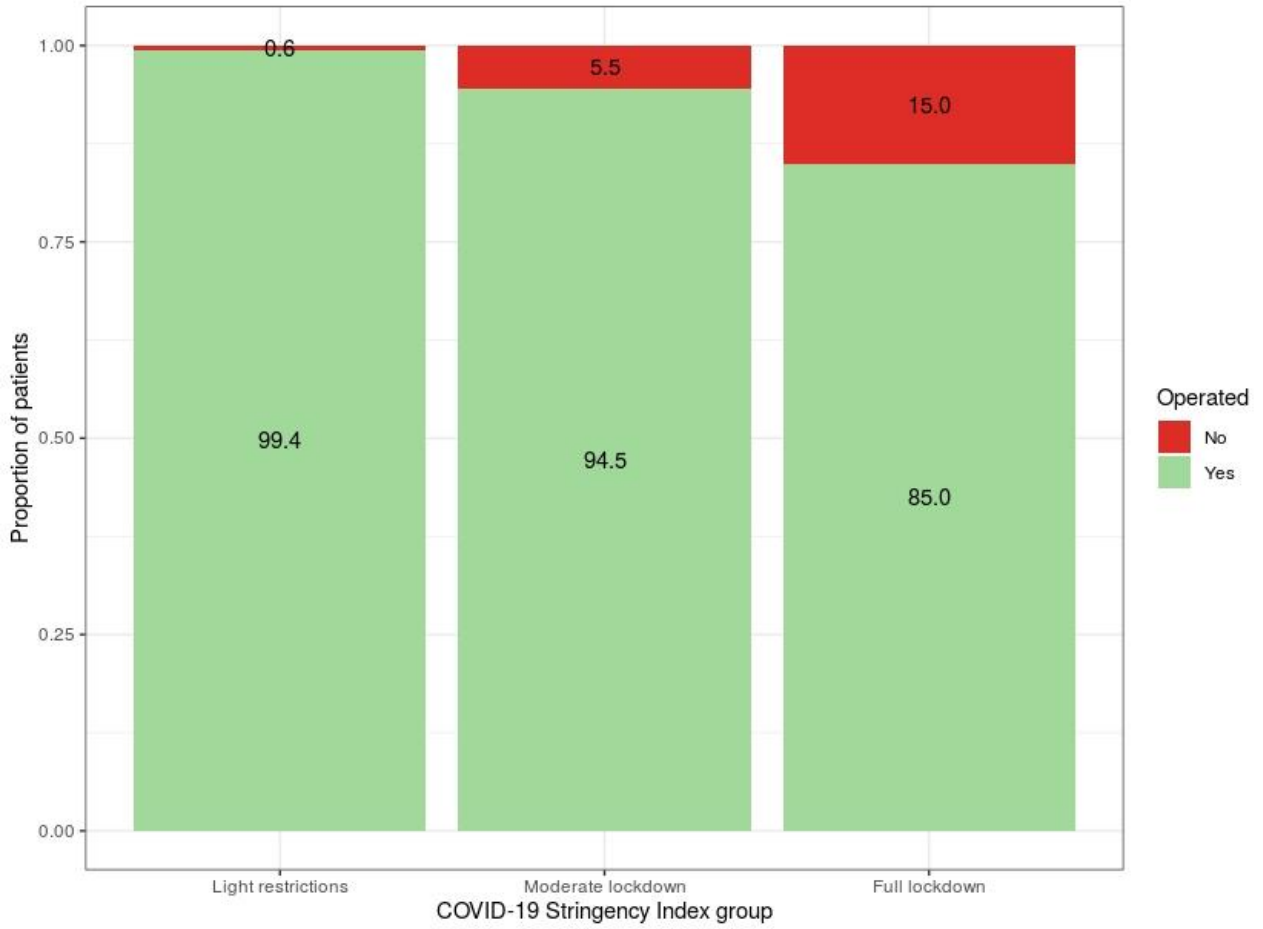
COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019.

Supplementary figure 3. Distribution of median COVID-19 Stringency Index scores



A median average COVID-19 stringency index score was calculated for each patient based on the date of first local COVID-19 cases up to the date of operation (operated patients) or cessation of follow-up (non-operated patients) in each included country (Supplementary figure 1). Patients were grouped based on their corresponding COVID-19 stringency index light restrictions (median index score <20 (orange)), moderate lockdown (median index score 20-60) and full lockdown (median index score >60 (red)).

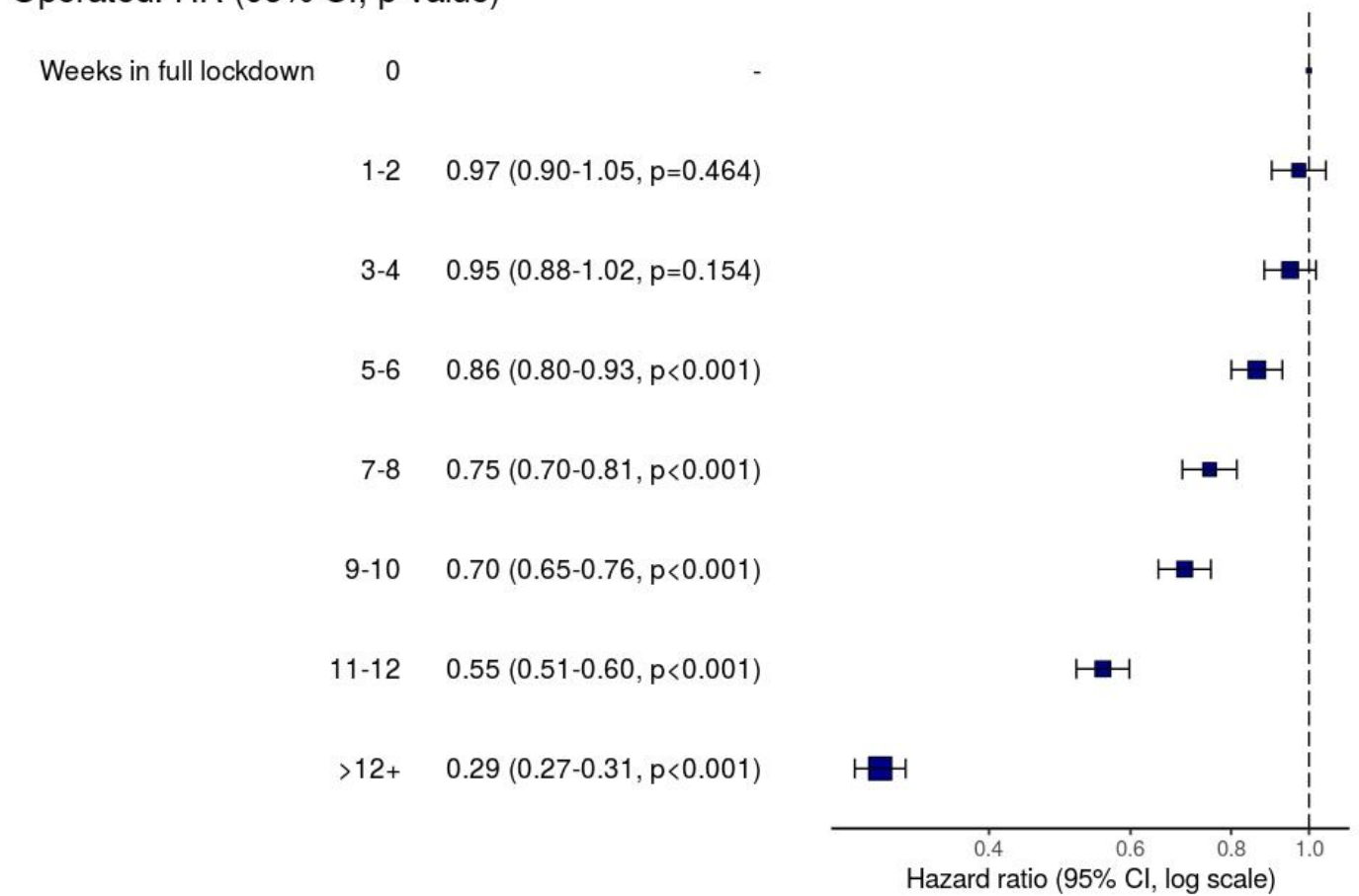
Supplementary figure 4. Differences in overall surgical capacity during lockdowns



Percentages displayed represent proportion operated by group

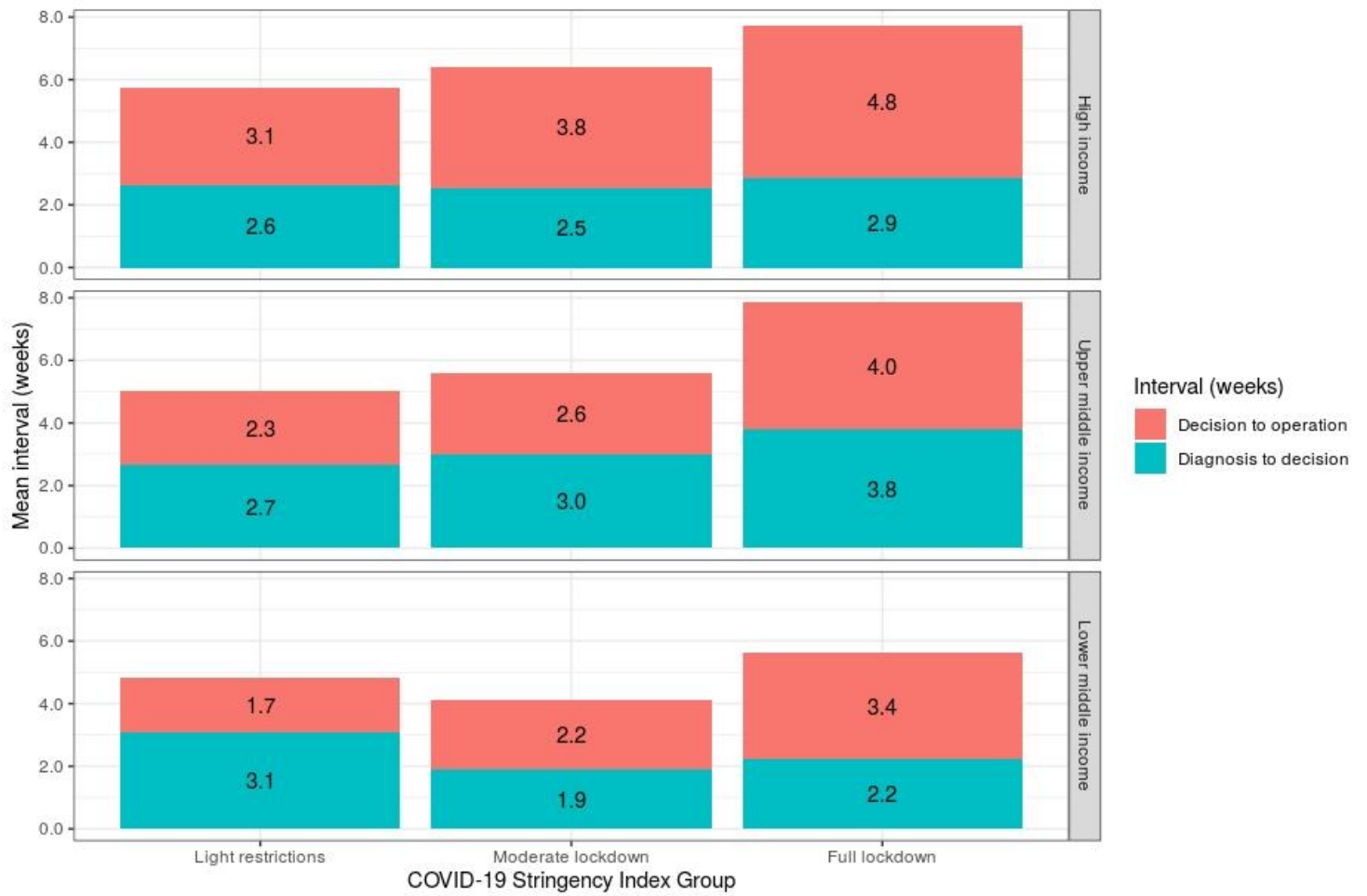
Supplementary figure 5. Hazard ratio plot for secondary analysis of weeks in full lockdown

Operated: HR (95% CI, p-value)



Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Full lockdown defined as full weeks with COVID-19 stringency index score ≥ 60 . Upon testing for a non-linear relationship between weeks in full lockdown and the outcome variable using a penalised spline on the exposure, a significant non-linear relationship was demonstrated ($p < 0.001$). This was confirmed graphically using a spline plot. Therefore, weeks in lockdown were grouped in 2-week increments for the purpose of modelling. The same covariables were included in this secondary analysis as the primary model.

Supplementary figure 6. Variability in system friction from diagnosis to decision for surgery to operation



Plot displays patients that went straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy only). Mean interval by group displayed. The point of system 'friction' was different across income and lockdown groups. Lockdown typically increased the interval from decision to operation across all settings. The interval from diagnosis to decision was a higher contributor to overall delay in UMICs and LMICs than in HICs.

Supplementary table 1a. Cancer types across World Bank income groups

Cancer location	High income	Upper middle income	Lower middle income	Total
Head and neck	2480 (15.6)	448 (23.7)	589 (26.2)	3517 (17.6)
Colon	2955 (18.6)	287 (15.2)	186 (8.3)	3428 (17.1)
Rectal	1235 (7.8)	138 (7.3)	139 (6.2)	1512 (7.6)
Gastric	515 (3.2)	119 (6.3)	89 (4.0)	723 (3.6)
Oesophageal	391 (2.5)	23 (1.2)	37 (1.6)	451 (2.3)
Thoracic	1172 (7.4)	10 (0.5)	10 (0.4)	1192 (6.0)
Liver	649 (4.1)	38 (2.0)	88 (3.9)	775 (3.9)
Pancreatic	571 (3.6)	77 (4.1)	128 (5.7)	776 (3.9)
Sarcoma	353 (2.2)	17 (0.9)	68 (3.0)	438 (2.2)
Prostate	511 (3.2)	13 (0.7)	13 (0.6)	537 (2.7)
Kidney or upper tract urothelial	389 (2.5)	22 (1.2)	31 (1.4)	442 (2.2)
Bladder	108 (0.7)	5 (0.3)	34 (1.5)	147 (0.7)
Gynaecological	1776 (11.2)	236 (12.5)	157 (7.0)	2169 (10.8)
Breast	2758 (17.4)	458 (24.2)	680 (30.2)	3896 (19.5)
Intracranial*	653 (2.9)	110 (3.7)	120 (4.7)	883 (3.2)

Percentages expressed of column total. Country income defined in accordance with World Bank income (2019/20) classifications. Lower middle income included patients from both lower-middle income and low-income countries. *Surgical intent data was unavailable for intracranial tumours. Treatment pathways and outcomes related to delay were considered too disparate from other tumour types for combined analysis. Therefore, data for intracranial tumours was not included in further analyses in this paper, nor the summary flowchart in Figure 1.

Supplementary table 1b. Patients included by country and income group

High income			Upper middle income			Lower middle income		
Country	Patients	Centres	Country	Patients	Centres	Country	Patients	Centres
Australia	716 (4.5)	18	Argentina	71 (3.8)	2	Egypt	287 (12.8)	12
Austria	163 (1.0)	2	Azerbaijan	3 (0.2)	1	Ghana	14 (0.6)	1
Barbados	19 (0.1)	1	Botswana	9 (0.5)	1	India	1566 (69.6)	15
Belgium	25 (0.2)	3	Brazil	430 (22.7)	8	Indonesia	90 (4.0)	1
Canada	373 (2.4)	10	Colombia	138 (7.3)	5	Morocco	140 (6.2)	1
Chile	50 (0.3)	2	Guatemala	1 (0.1)	1	Nigeria	50 (2.2)	6
Croatia	19 (0.1)	1	Jordan	31 (1.6)	2	Pakistan	81 (3.6)	8
Czech Republic	3 (0.0)	1	Libya	66 (3.5)	3	Philippines	5 (0.2)	1
Denmark	174 (1.1)	2	Malaysia	194 (10.3)	7	Reunion	3 (0.1)	1
Finland	103 (0.6)	2	Mexico	128 (6.8)	1	Sudan	11 (0.5)	3
France	508 (3.2)	14	Peru	34 (1.8)	1	Syria	2 (0.1)	1
Germany	399 (2.5)	9	Romania	17 (0.9)	2	Uganda	1 (0.0)	1
Greece	266 (1.7)	11	Russia	4 (0.2)	1	Yemen	2 (0.1)	1
Hong Kong	62 (0.4)	3	Serbia	179 (9.5)	4			
Hungary	45 (0.3)	1	South Africa	92 (4.9)	1			
Ireland	177 (1.1)	8	Sri Lanka	19 (1.0)	1			
Italy	2291 (14.4)	47	Turkey	475 (25.1)	15			
Japan	19 (0.1)	1						
Kuwait	7 (0.0)	1						
Netherlands	234 (1.5)	7						
Oman	2 (0.0)	1						
Portugal	435 (2.7)	15						
Saudi Arabia	373 (2.4)	11						
Singapore	191 (1.2)	2						
Slovak Republic	3 (0.0)	1						
Slovenia	51 (0.3)	1						
Spain	1478 (9.3)	38						
Sweden	171 (1.1)	5						
Switzerland	127 (0.8)	5						
United Kingdom	6160 (38.8)	113						
United States	1219 (7.7)	21						

Percentages expressed of column total.

Supplementary table 2. Characteristics for patients awaiting surgery during light restrictions, moderate and full lockdowns

Factor	Levels	COVID-19 Stringency Index group			P-value
		Light restrictions	Moderate lockdown	Full lockdown	
Health system factors					
Weeks in full lockdown	Mean (SD)	2.4 (1.7)	5.5 (2.9)	12.7 (5.4)	<0.001
World Bank Income Classification	High income	4089 (90.4)	3130 (85.8)	8644 (73.1)	<0.001
	Upper middle income	228 (5.0)	325 (8.9)	1329 (11.2)	
	Lower middle income	204 (4.5)	191 (5.2)	1854 (15.7)	
Community SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate*	High income, low COVID	2952 (65.3)	1144 (31.4)	367 (3.1)	<0.001
	High income, high COVID	1137 (25.1)	1986 (54.5)	8277 (70.0)	
	Upper middle income, low COVID	228 (5.0)	248 (6.8)	262 (2.2)	
	Upper middle income, high COVID	0 (0.0)	77 (2.1)	1067 (9.0)	
	Lower middle income, low COVID	204 (4.5)	181 (5.0)	1205 (10.2)	
	Lower middle income, high COVID	0 (0.0)	10 (0.3)	649 (5.5)	
Patient factors					
Age	<50 years	775 (17.1)	562 (15.4)	2355 (19.9)	<0.001
	50-59 years	962 (21.3)	764 (21.0)	2409 (20.4)	
	60-69 years	1222 (27.0)	1048 (28.7)	3144 (26.6)	
	70-79 years	1176 (26.0)	927 (25.4)	2740 (23.2)	
	>80 years	386 (8.5)	345 (9.5)	1179 (10.0)	
Sex	Female	2711 (60.0)	2100 (57.6)	6666 (56.4)	<0.001
	Male	1810 (40.0)	1546 (42.4)	5161 (43.6)	
ASA grade	Grade 1-2	3274 (72.7)	2493 (68.6)	8381 (71.2)	<0.001
	Grade 3-5	1230 (27.3)	1143 (31.4)	3382 (28.8)	
	Missing	17	10	64	
ECOG performance score	0	2785 (63.0)	2157 (60.3)	6595 (56.7)	<0.001
	1	1186 (26.8)	1005 (28.1)	3645 (31.3)	
	>2	448 (10.1)	417 (11.7)	1397 (12.0)	
	Missing	102	67	190	
Current smoker	No	4026 (89.1)	3202 (87.8)	10437 (88.2)	0.195
	Yes	495 (10.9)	444 (12.2)	1390 (11.8)	
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	3950 (87.4)	3219 (88.3)	10571 (89.4)	0.001
	Yes	571 (12.6)	427 (11.7)	1256 (10.6)	
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	1355 (30.0)	1121 (30.7)	3603 (30.5)	0.032
	1	2331 (51.6)	1820 (49.9)	6092 (51.5)	
	2	691 (15.3)	541 (14.8)	1684 (14.2)	
	>3	144 (3.2)	164 (4.5)	448 (3.8)	
Disease factors					
Disease stage	Early disease	2582 (57.4)	1960 (54.4)	6226 (54.2)	<0.001
	Advanced/nodal disease	1919 (42.6)	1641 (45.6)	5258 (45.8)	
	Missing	20	45	343	
Site specific cancer	Head and neck	672 (14.9)	649 (17.8)	2193 (18.5)	<0.001
	Colon	902 (20.0)	609 (16.7)	1913 (16.2)	
	Rectal	313 (6.9)	272 (7.5)	926 (7.8)	
	Gastric	83 (1.8)	148 (4.1)	492 (4.2)	
	Oesophageal	62 (1.4)	59 (1.6)	329 (2.8)	
	Thoracic	350 (7.7)	197 (5.4)	645 (5.5)	
	Liver	139 (3.1)	165 (4.5)	471 (4.0)	
	Pancreatic	138 (3.1)	145 (4.0)	493 (4.2)	
	Sarcoma	76 (1.7)	89 (2.4)	273 (2.3)	
	Prostate	123 (2.7)	61 (1.7)	353 (3.0)	
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	119 (2.6)	66 (1.8)	257 (2.2)	
	Bladder	35 (0.8)	24 (0.7)	88 (0.7)	
	Gynaecological	547 (12.1)	439 (12.0)	1183 (10.0)	
Breast	962 (21.3)	723 (19.8)	2211 (18.7)		
Treatment factors					
Neoadjuvant therapy	No neoadjuvant	4177 (92.4)	3187 (87.4)	9600 (81.2)	<0.001
	Neoadjuvant therapy, standard care	272 (6.0)	340 (9.3)	1287 (10.9)	
	Neoadjuvant therapy, COVID decision	72 (1.6)	119 (3.3)	940 (7.9)	

Percentages expressed of column total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative

case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings.

Supplementary table 3. Characteristics of operated and non-operated patients during COVID-19

Factor	Levels	Status at cessation of follow-up		P-value
		Non-operated	Operated	
Health system factors				
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	26 (1.3)	4495 (25.0)	<0.001
	Moderate lockdown	201 (10.0)	3445 (19.1)	
	Full lockdown	1775 (88.7)	10052 (55.9)	
Weeks in lockdown (COVID-19 stringency index)	Mean (SD)	20.3 (5.7)	7.8 (5.0)	<0.001
World Bank Income Classification	High income	1342 (67.0)	14521 (80.7)	<0.001
	Upper middle income	187 (9.3)	1704 (9.5)	
	Lower middle income	473 (23.6)	1776 (9.9)	
Community SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate*	High income, low COVID	1297 (64.8)	10103 (56.1)	<0.001
	High income, high COVID	58 (2.9)	680 (3.8)	
	Upper middle income, low COVID	129 (6.4)	1024 (5.7)	
	Upper middle income, high COVID	82 (4.1)	1508 (8.4)	
	Lower middle income, low COVID	391 (19.5)	268 (1.5)	
	Lower middle income, high COVID	45 (2.2)	4418 (24.5)	
Patient factors				
Age	<50 years	405 (20.2)	3287 (18.3)	0.001
	50-59 years	399 (19.9)	3739 (20.8)	
	60-69 years	555 (27.7)	4865 (27.0)	
	70-79 years	424 (21.2)	4422 (24.6)	
	>80 years	220 (11.0)	1690 (9.4)	
Sex	Female	1008 (50.3)	10472 (58.2)	<0.001
	Male	995 (49.7)	7531 (41.8)	
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	1380 (70.8)	12777 (71.1)	0.822
	Grade 3-5	568 (29.2)	5190 (28.9)	
	Missing	55	36	
ECOG Performance Score	0	1004 (51.5)	10541 (59.6)	<0.001
	1	622 (31.9)	5217 (29.5)	
	>2	325 (16.7)	1938 (11.0)	
	Missing	52	307	
Current smoker	No	1741 (86.9)	15933 (88.5)	0.04
	Yes	262 (13.1)	2070 (11.5)	
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	1801 (89.9)	15948 (88.6)	0.081
	Yes	202 (10.1)	2055 (11.4)	
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	537 (26.8)	5544 (30.8)	<0.001
	1	1048 (52.3)	9202 (51.1)	
	2	336 (16.8)	2582 (14.3)	
	≥3	82 (4.1)	675 (3.7)	
Disease factors				
Disease stage	Early disease	889 (53.3)	9886 (55.1)	0.164
	Advanced/nodal disease	778 (46.7)	8045 (44.9)	
	Missing	336	72	
Site specific cancer	Head and neck	344 (17.2)	3173 (17.6)	<0.001
	Colon	170 (8.5)	3260 (18.1)	
	Rectal	188 (9.4)	1325 (7.4)	
	Gastric	75 (3.7)	648 (3.6)	
	Oesophageal	125 (6.2)	326 (1.8)	
	Thoracic	124 (6.2)	1068 (5.9)	
	Liver	77 (3.8)	698 (3.9)	
	Pancreatic	145 (7.2)	631 (3.5)	
	Sarcoma	49 (2.4)	389 (2.2)	
	Prostate	93 (4.6)	444 (2.5)	
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	69 (3.4)	373 (2.1)	
	Bladder	40 (2.0)	107 (0.6)	
	Gynaecological	183 (9.1)	1986 (11.0)	
Breast	321 (16.0)	3575 (19.9)		
Treatment factors				
Neoadjuvant therapy	No neoadjuvant	1353 (67.5)	15622 (86.8)	<0.001
	Neoadjuvant therapy, standard care	164 (8.2)	1736 (9.6)	
	Neoadjuvant therapy, COVID decision	486 (24.3)	645 (3.6)	

Percentages expressed of column total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients.

Supplementary table 4. Multivariable cox proportionate regression model of factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (presented in Figure 2)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	4520	-	-
	Moderate lockdown	3622	0.78 (0.74-0.81, p<0.001)	0.81 (0.77-0.84, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown	11678	0.47 (0.46-0.49, p<0.001)	0.51 (0.50-0.53, p<0.001)
World Bank Income Classification	High income	15733	-	-
	Upper middle income	1864	0.93 (0.88-0.98, p=0.004)	0.97 (0.92-1.02, p=0.220)
	Lower middle income	2232	0.74 (0.70-0.78, p<0.001)	0.83 (0.78-0.87, p<0.001)
Age	<50 years	3669	-	-
	50-59 years	4102	1.07 (1.02-1.13, p=0.003)	1.10 (1.05-1.15, p<0.001)
	60-69 years	5362	1.05 (1.00-1.10, p=0.037)	1.09 (1.04-1.14, p=0.001)
	70-79 years	4804	1.12 (1.07-1.17, p<0.001)	1.17 (1.11-1.23, p<0.001)
	>80 years	1895	1.06 (1.00-1.12, p=0.066)	1.06 (0.99-1.14, p=0.077)
Sex	Female	11398	-	-
	Male	8434	0.89 (0.86-0.92, p<0.001)	0.99 (0.95-1.02, p=0.457)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	14033	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5722	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.307)	0.99 (0.95-1.03, p=0.533)
ECOG Performance Score	0	11445	-	-
	1	5789	0.93 (0.90-0.96, p<0.001)	0.96 (0.92-0.99, p=0.020)
	>2	2247	0.90 (0.86-0.95, p<0.001)	0.89 (0.84-0.94, p<0.001)
Current smoker	No	17521	-	-
	Yes	2311	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.108)	1.03 (0.99-1.08, p=0.171)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	17591	-	-
	Yes	2241	1.02 (0.97-1.07, p=0.391)	0.98 (0.94-1.03, p=0.472)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	6059	-	-
	1	10137	0.90 (0.87-0.93, p<0.001)	1.01 (0.95-1.07, p=0.779)
	2	2882	0.87 (0.83-0.91, p<0.001)	0.96 (0.89-1.03, p=0.245)
	≥3	754	0.85 (0.78-0.92, p<0.001)	0.90 (0.81-1.00, p=0.044)
Disease stage	Early disease	10695	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	8748	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.008)	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.018)
Cancer location	Head and neck	3505	-	-
	Colon	3419	1.21 (1.15-1.27, p<0.001)	1.16 (1.08-1.24, p<0.001)
	Rectal	1491	0.63 (0.59-0.67, p<0.001)	0.59 (0.54-0.64, p<0.001)
	Gastric	717	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.61-0.74, p<0.001)
	Oesophageal	444	0.33 (0.30-0.37, p<0.001)	0.32 (0.28-0.36, p<0.001)
	Thoracic	1184	0.93 (0.87-1.00, p=0.036)	0.82 (0.76-0.90, p<0.001)
	Liver	762	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.63 (0.57-0.69, p<0.001)
	Pancreatic	749	0.75 (0.69-0.82, p<0.001)	0.73 (0.66-0.81, p<0.001)
	Sarcoma	426	0.71 (0.64-0.79, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.60-0.75, p<0.001)
	Prostate	522	0.51 (0.47-0.57, p<0.001)	0.44 (0.40-0.50, p<0.001)
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	433	0.72 (0.65-0.80, p<0.001)	0.65 (0.57-0.73, p<0.001)
	Bladder	142	0.59 (0.49-0.72, p<0.001)	0.51 (0.42-0.62, p<0.001)
	Gynaecological	2159	0.95 (0.90-1.00, p=0.062)	0.86 (0.79-0.93, p<0.001)
Breast	3879	0.88 (0.84-0.92, p<0.001)	1.00 (0.94-1.05, p=0.884)	

Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings. Number in dataframe = 19832, Number in model = 19066, Missing = 766, Number of events = 17597, Concordance = 0.627 (SE = 0.002), R-squared = 0.147 (Max possible = 1.000), Likelihood ratio test = 3027.320 (df = 31, p = 0.000)

Supplementary table 5. Sensitivity analysis of primary model for factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (outcome definition including elective surgery only)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	4520	-	-
	Moderate lockdown	3622	0.78 (0.75-0.82, p<0.001)	0.82 (0.78-0.86, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown	11678	0.48 (0.46-0.49, p<0.001)	0.53 (0.51-0.55, p<0.001)
World Bank Income Classification	High income	15733	-	-
	Upper middle income	1864	0.84 (0.80-0.89, p<0.001)	0.87 (0.82-0.92, p<0.001)
	Lower middle income	2232	0.72 (0.69-0.76, p<0.001)	0.80 (0.75-0.84, p<0.001)
Age	<50 years	3669	-	-
	50-59 years	4102	1.09 (1.03-1.14, p=0.001)	1.11 (1.06-1.17, p<0.001)
	60-69 years	5362	1.05 (1.01-1.10, p=0.027)	1.10 (1.05-1.16, p<0.001)
	70-79 years	4804	1.13 (1.08-1.18, p<0.001)	1.19 (1.13-1.26, p<0.001)
	>80 years	1895	1.05 (0.99-1.11, p=0.124)	1.08 (1.01-1.15, p=0.033)
Sex	Female	11398	-	-
	Male	8434	0.87 (0.84-0.90, p<0.001)	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.388)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	14033	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5722	0.97 (0.94-1.00, p=0.059)	0.98 (0.94-1.02, p=0.281)
ECOG Performance Score	0	11445	-	-
	1	5789	0.91 (0.88-0.94, p<0.001)	0.95 (0.92-0.99, p=0.006)
	≥2	2247	0.86 (0.82-0.91, p<0.001)	0.87 (0.82-0.92, p<0.001)
Current smoker	No	17521	-	-
	Yes	2311	1.03 (0.98-1.08, p=0.273)	1.02 (0.98-1.08, p=0.331)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	17591	-	-
	Yes	2241	1.02 (0.98-1.07, p=0.323)	0.99 (0.94-1.04, p=0.607)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	6059	-	-
	1	10137	0.87 (0.84-0.90, p<0.001)	1.00 (0.94-1.07, p=0.886)
	2	2882	0.82 (0.78-0.86, p<0.001)	0.94 (0.87-1.02, p=0.138)
	>3	754	0.80 (0.73-0.87, p<0.001)	0.89 (0.79-0.99, p=0.026)
Disease stage	Early disease	10695	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	8748	0.93 (0.90-0.96, p<0.001)	0.94 (0.91-0.97, p<0.001)
Cancer location	Head and neck	3505	-	-
	Colon	3419	1.14 (1.08-1.19, p<0.001)	1.08 (1.00-1.16, p=0.040)
	Rectal	1491	0.60 (0.57-0.65, p<0.001)	0.57 (0.52-0.62, p<0.001)
	Gastric	717	0.66 (0.61-0.73, p<0.001)	0.65 (0.59-0.72, p<0.001)
	Oesophageal	444	0.33 (0.30-0.37, p<0.001)	0.31 (0.28-0.36, p<0.001)
	Thoracic	1184	0.95 (0.89-1.02, p=0.153)	0.83 (0.76-0.90, p<0.001)
	Liver	762	0.68 (0.63-0.74, p<0.001)	0.62 (0.56-0.68, p<0.001)
	Pancreatic	749	0.74 (0.68-0.81, p<0.001)	0.71 (0.64-0.79, p<0.001)
	Sarcoma	426	0.72 (0.64-0.80, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.59-0.75, p<0.001)
	Prostate	522	0.53 (0.48-0.58, p<0.001)	0.44 (0.39-0.50, p<0.001)
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	433	0.67 (0.59-0.74, p<0.001)	0.59 (0.52-0.67, p<0.001)
	Bladder	142	0.58 (0.48-0.71, p<0.001)	0.50 (0.41-0.62, p<0.001)
	Gynaecological	2159	0.95 (0.90-1.01, p=0.083)	0.85 (0.79-0.93, p<0.001)
	Breast	3879	0.90 (0.85-0.94, p<0.001)	1.01 (0.96-1.07, p=0.729)

Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings. Number in dataframe = 19832, Number in model = 19066, Missing = 766, Number of events = 16754, Concordance = 0.627 (SE = 0.002), R-squared = 0.143 (Max possible = 1.000), Likelihood ratio test = 2931.812 (df = 31, p = 0.000)

Supplementary table 6. Sensitivity analysis of primary model for factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (cancer location removed)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	4520	-	-
	Moderate lockdown	3622	0.78 (0.74-0.81, p<0.001)	0.80 (0.76-0.83, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown	11678	0.47 (0.46-0.49, p<0.001)	0.51 (0.49-0.53, p<0.001)
World Bank Income Classification	High income	15733	-	-
	Upper middle income	1864	0.93 (0.88-0.98, p=0.004)	1.01 (0.96-1.06, p=0.733)
	Lower middle income	2232	0.74 (0.70-0.78, p<0.001)	0.86 (0.81-0.90, p<0.001)
Age	<50 years	3669	-	-
	50-59 years	4102	1.07 (1.02-1.13, p=0.003)	1.08 (1.03-1.14, p=0.001)
	60-69 years	5362	1.05 (1.00-1.10, p=0.037)	1.07 (1.02-1.12, p=0.005)
	70-79 years	4804	1.12 (1.07-1.17, p<0.001)	1.19 (1.13-1.25, p<0.001)
	>80 years	1895	1.06 (1.00-1.12, p=0.066)	1.17 (1.09-1.25, p<0.001)
Sex	Female	11398	-	-
	Male	8434	0.89 (0.86-0.92, p<0.001)	0.88 (0.85-0.90, p<0.001)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	14033	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5722	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.307)	1.01 (0.97-1.05, p=0.547)
ECOG Performance Score	0	11445	-	-
	1	5789	0.93 (0.90-0.96, p<0.001)	0.97 (0.93-1.00, p=0.088)
	≥2	2247	0.90 (0.86-0.95, p<0.001)	0.95 (0.89-1.00, p=0.047)
Current smoker	No	17521	-	-
	Yes	2311	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.108)	1.06 (1.01-1.11, p=0.023)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	17591	-	-
	Yes	2241	1.02 (0.97-1.07, p=0.391)	1.00 (0.95-1.05, p=0.880)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	6059	-	-
	1	10137	0.90 (0.87-0.93, p<0.001)	0.80 (0.77-0.83, p<0.001)
	2	2882	0.87 (0.83-0.91, p<0.001)	0.76 (0.72-0.80, p<0.001)
	>3	754	0.85 (0.78-0.92, p<0.001)	0.75 (0.69-0.82, p<0.001)
Disease stage	Early disease	10695	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	8748	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.008)	0.98 (0.95-1.01, p=0.190)

Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings. Number in dataframe = 19832, Number in model = 19066, Missing = 766, Number of events = 17597, Concordance = 0.596 (SE = 0.003), R-squared = 0.095(Max possible = 1.000), Likelihood ratio test = 1893.143 (df = 18, p = 0.000).

Supplementary table 7a. Sensitivity analysis of factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (World Bank Income groups, with interaction term by COVID-19 stringency index group)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
Full lockdown * Upper middle income	Interaction	-	0.85 (0.74-0.99, p=0.033)	0.85 (0.73-0.99, p=0.031)
Full lockdown * Lower middle income	Interaction	-	0.88 (0.75-1.02, p=0.096)	0.83 (0.71-0.97, p=0.019)
Moderate lockdown * Upper middle income	Interaction	-	0.57 (0.47-0.68, p<0.001)	0.64 (0.54-0.77, p<0.001)
Moderate lockdown * Lower middle income	Interaction	-	1.09 (0.88-1.34, p=0.430)	1.29 (1.04-1.59, p=0.019)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	4520	-	-
	Moderate lockdown	3622	0.81 (0.77-0.85, p<0.001)	0.82 (0.78-0.86, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown	11678	0.48 (0.47-0.50, p<0.001)	0.52 (0.50-0.55, p<0.001)
World Bank Income Classification	High income	15733	-	-
	Upper middle income	1864	1.27 (1.11-1.45, p=0.001)	1.17 (1.02-1.34, p=0.021)
	Lower middle income	2232	0.95 (0.83-1.10, p=0.511)	0.94 (0.81-1.08, p=0.396)
Age	<50 years	3669	-	-
	50-59 years	4102	1.07 (1.02-1.13, p=0.003)	1.10 (1.05-1.15, p<0.001)
	60-69 years	5362	1.05 (1.00-1.10, p=0.037)	1.09 (1.04-1.14, p<0.001)
	70-79 years	4804	1.12 (1.07-1.17, p<0.001)	1.17 (1.11-1.23, p<0.001)
	>80 years	1895	1.06 (1.00-1.12, p=0.066)	1.07 (1.00-1.14, p=0.067)
Sex	Female	11398	-	-
	Male	8434	0.89 (0.86-0.92, p<0.001)	0.99 (0.95-1.03, p=0.562)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	14033	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5722	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.307)	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.419)
ECOG Performance Score	0	11445	-	-
	1	5789	0.93 (0.90-0.96, p<0.001)	0.96 (0.92-0.99, p=0.017)
	≥2	2247	0.90 (0.86-0.95, p<0.001)	0.89 (0.84-0.94, p<0.001)
Current smoker	No	17521	-	-
	Yes	2311	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.108)	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.144)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	17591	-	-
	Yes	2241	1.02 (0.97-1.07, p=0.391)	0.98 (0.94-1.03, p=0.478)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	6059	-	-
	1	10137	0.90 (0.87-0.93, p<0.001)	1.00 (0.94-1.07, p=0.897)
	2	2882	0.87 (0.83-0.91, p<0.001)	0.95 (0.88-1.03, p=0.221)
	>3	754	0.85 (0.78-0.92, p<0.001)	0.90 (0.81-0.99, p=0.038)
Disease stage	Early disease	10695	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	8748	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.008)	0.96 (0.93-1.00, p=0.025)
Cancer location	Head and neck	3505	-	-
	Colon	3419	1.21 (1.15-1.27, p<0.001)	1.15 (1.07-1.23, p<0.001)
	Rectal	1491	0.63 (0.59-0.67, p<0.001)	0.58 (0.54-0.63, p<0.001)
	Gastric	717	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.61-0.74, p<0.001)
	Oesophageal	444	0.33 (0.30-0.37, p<0.001)	0.32 (0.28-0.36, p<0.001)
	Thoracic	1184	0.93 (0.87-1.00, p=0.036)	0.82 (0.75-0.90, p<0.001)
	Liver	762	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.62 (0.57-0.69, p<0.001)
	Pancreatic	749	0.75 (0.69-0.82, p<0.001)	0.73 (0.66-0.81, p<0.001)
	Sarcoma	426	0.71 (0.64-0.79, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.59-0.75, p<0.001)
	Prostate	522	0.51 (0.47-0.57, p<0.001)	0.44 (0.40-0.50, p<0.001)
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	433	0.72 (0.65-0.80, p<0.001)	0.65 (0.57-0.73, p<0.001)
	Bladder	142	0.59 (0.49-0.72, p<0.001)	0.52 (0.43-0.64, p<0.001)
	Gynaecological	2159	0.95 (0.90-1.00, p=0.062)	0.85 (0.79-0.92, p<0.001)
Breast	3879	0.88 (0.84-0.92, p<0.001)	0.98 (0.93-1.04, p=0.501)	

Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings. Number in dataframe = 19832, Number in model = 19066, Missing = 766, Number of events = 17597, Concordance = 0.629 (SE = 0.002), R-squared = 0.149 (Max possible = 1.000), Likelihood ratio test = 3082.513 (df = 35, p = 0.000)

Supplementary table 7b. Sensitivity analysis of factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (World Bank Income groups, with stratified hazard ratios by stringency index group)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group by income group	Light restrictions * High income	4088	-	-
	Light restrictions * Upper middle income	228	1.27 (1.11-1.45, p=0.001)	1.17 (1.02-1.34, p=0.021)
	Light restrictions * Lower middle income	204	0.95 (0.83-1.10, p=0.511)	0.94 (0.81-1.08, p=0.396)
	Moderate lockdown * High income	3116	0.81 (0.77-0.85, p<0.001)	0.82 (0.78-0.86, p<0.001)
	Moderate lockdown * Upper middle income	316	0.58 (0.51-0.66, p<0.001)	0.62 (0.55-0.70, p<0.001)
	Moderate lockdown * Lower middle income	190	0.84 (0.72-0.98, p=0.024)	1.00 (0.85-1.16, p=0.960)
	Full lockdown * High income	8529	0.48 (0.47-0.50, p<0.001)	0.52 (0.50-0.55, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown * Upper middle income	1311	0.52 (0.49-0.56, p<0.001)	0.52 (0.49-0.56, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown * Lower middle income	1838	0.41 (0.38-0.43, p<0.001)	0.41 (0.38-0.44, p<0.001)
Age	<50 years	3669	-	-
	50-59 years	4102	1.07 (1.02-1.13, p=0.003)	1.10 (1.05-1.15, p<0.001)
	60-69 years	5362	1.05 (1.00-1.10, p=0.037)	1.09 (1.04-1.14, p<0.001)
	70-79 years	4804	1.12 (1.07-1.17, p<0.001)	1.17 (1.11-1.23, p<0.001)
	>80 years	1895	1.06 (1.00-1.12, p=0.066)	1.07 (1.00-1.14, p=0.067)
Sex	Female	11398	-	-
	Male	8434	0.89 (0.86-0.92, p<0.001)	0.99 (0.95-1.03, p=0.562)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	14033	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5722	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.307)	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.419)
ECOG Performance Score	0	11445	-	-
	1	5789	0.93 (0.90-0.96, p<0.001)	0.96 (0.92-0.99, p=0.017)
	≥2	2247	0.90 (0.86-0.95, p<0.001)	0.89 (0.84-0.94, p<0.001)
Current smoker	No	17521	-	-
	Yes	2311	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.108)	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.144)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	17591	-	-
	Yes	2241	1.02 (0.97-1.07, p=0.391)	0.98 (0.94-1.03, p=0.478)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	6059	-	-
	1	10137	0.90 (0.87-0.93, p<0.001)	1.00 (0.94-1.07, p=0.897)
	2	2882	0.87 (0.83-0.91, p<0.001)	0.95 (0.88-1.03, p=0.221)
	≥3	754	0.85 (0.78-0.92, p<0.001)	0.90 (0.81-0.99, p=0.038)
Disease stage	Early disease	10695	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	8748	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.008)	0.96 (0.93-1.00, p=0.025)
Cancer location	Head and neck	3505	-	-
	Colon	3419	1.21 (1.15-1.27, p<0.001)	1.15 (1.07-1.23, p<0.001)
	Rectal	1491	0.63 (0.59-0.67, p<0.001)	0.58 (0.54-0.63, p<0.001)
	Gastric	717	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.61-0.74, p<0.001)
	Oesophageal	444	0.33 (0.30-0.37, p<0.001)	0.32 (0.28-0.36, p<0.001)
	Thoracic	1184	0.93 (0.87-1.00, p=0.036)	0.82 (0.75-0.90, p<0.001)
	Liver	762	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.62 (0.57-0.69, p<0.001)
	Pancreatic	749	0.75 (0.69-0.82, p<0.001)	0.73 (0.66-0.81, p<0.001)
	Sarcoma	426	0.71 (0.64-0.79, p<0.001)	0.67 (0.59-0.75, p<0.001)
	Prostate	522	0.51 (0.47-0.57, p<0.001)	0.44 (0.40-0.50, p<0.001)
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	433	0.72 (0.65-0.80, p<0.001)	0.65 (0.57-0.73, p<0.001)
	Bladder	142	0.59 (0.49-0.72, p<0.001)	0.52 (0.43-0.64, p<0.001)
	Gynaecological	2159	0.95 (0.90-1.00, p=0.062)	0.85 (0.79-0.92, p<0.001)
Breast	3879	0.88 (0.84-0.92, p<0.001)	0.98 (0.93-1.04, p=0.501)	

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Supplementary table 9. Differences in proportions of patients in each age group across settings

Status at cessation of follow-up SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate group	Age group									
	<50 years*		50-59 years		60-69 years		70-79 years		>80 years	
	Not operated	Operated	Not operated	Operated	Not operated	Operated	Not operated	Operated	Not operated	Operated
High income, low COVID	10 (2.5)	685 (20.8)	9 (2.3)	925 (24.7)	13 (2.3)	1228 (25.3)	6 (1.4)	1135 (25.7)	7 (3.2)	445 (26.3)
High income, high COVID	153 (37.8)	1296 (39.4)	203 (51.0)	1904 (50.9)	390 (70.3)	2832 (58.2)	358 (84.4)	2905 (65.7)	193 (87.7)	1166 (69.0)
Upper middle income, low COVID	9 (2.2)	208 (6.3)	12 (3.0)	160 (4.3)	20 (3.6)	186 (3.8)	13 (3.1)	97 (2.2)	4 (1.8)	29 (1.7)
Upper middle income, high COVID	33 (8.1)	287 (8.7)	35 (8.8)	241 (6.4)	35 (6.3)	293 (6.0)	18 (4.2)	167 (3.8)	8 (3.6)	36 (2.1)
Lower middle income, low COVID	24 (5.9)	679 (20.7)	29 (7.3)	441 (11.8)	19 (3.4)	276 (5.7)	8 (1.9)	100 (2.3)	2 (0.9)	12 (0.7)
Lower middle income, high COVID	176 (43.5)	132 (4.0)	110 (27.6)	68 (1.8)	78 (14.1)	48 (1.0)	21 (5.0)	18 (0.4)	6 (2.7)	2 (0.1)

COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Included patients <50 years of age, and 50-59 years of age were more likely to be from lower middle income countries. This may explain the reduced odds of patients <50 years undergoing surgery during the follow-up window (residual confounding after multivariable adjustment).

Supplementary table 10. Reasons that patients remained non-operated <50 versus >50 years of age

Reasons	<50 years (N=405)		≥ 50 years (N=1598)		Total
	N=	Proportion (%)	N=	Proportion (%)	N=
COVID-19 related					
Multidisciplinary team decision to delay surgery due to patient risk during COVID-19	335	82.7%	1121	70.2%	1456
Change to alternative treatment modality because of COVID-19	48	11.9%	485	30.4%	533
Patient choice to avoid surgery during COVID-19 pandemic	72	17.8%	388	24.3%	460
Ongoing neoadjuvant therapy (COVID-decision)	94	23.2%	284	17.8%	378
No bed/critical care bed/operating room space available due to COVID-19	87	21.5%	212	13.3%	299
Change of recommendations in society guidelines related to COVID-19	42	10.4%	178	11.1%	220
Patient unable to travel to hospital related to COVID- 19	67	16.5%	73	4.6%	140
Collateral impact on supporting services causing delay	3	0.7%	21	1.3%	24
Patient delayed due to SARS-CoV-2 infection	2	0.5%	21	1.3%	23
Died of COVID-19 whilst waiting for surgery	0	0.0%	13	0.8%	13
Not COVID-19 related					
Disease progression leading to change in treatment plan	10	2.5%	154	9.6%	164
Delay due to other medical or surgical condition	3	0.7%	56	3.5%	59
Died unrelated to COVID-19 whilst waiting for surgery	6	1.5%	29	1.8%	35
Patient unable to afford surgery	5	1.2%	19	1.2%	24
Patient choice to avoid surgery unrelated to COVID-19	5	1.2%	14	0.9%	19
Disease regression leading to change in definitive treatment plan	1	0.2%	7	0.4%	8

COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. Reasons which were more common in the <50 years age group are highlighted in bold. Two patients (0.1%) had no reasons given for non-operation during the follow-up window selected (missing data). Proportions are therefore expressed as a percentage of 2001 non-operated patients with that reason given and with data available. We anticipated that decisions to delay or cancel surgery during COVID-19 would be complex. Therefore, selecting more than one reason for non-operation during the follow-up window for each patient was permitted. One patient could have both one or more COVID-19 related and not COVID-related reason(s) selected.

Supplementary table 11. Sensitivity analysis of primary model for factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (patients >50 years old only, N=16163)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	3745	-	-
	Moderate lockdown	3061	0.78 (0.75-0.82, p<0.001)	0.81 (0.77-0.85, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown	9345	0.48 (0.46-0.50, p<0.001)	0.52 (0.49-0.54, p<0.001)
World Bank Income Classification	High income	13603	-	-
	Upper middle income	1331	0.93 (0.88-0.99, p=0.017)	0.95 (0.90-1.01, p=0.113)
	Lower middle income	1226	0.78 (0.73-0.84, p<0.001)	0.87 (0.81-0.93, p<0.001)
Age	50-59 years	4102	-	-
	60-69 years	5362	0.98 (0.94-1.02, p=0.272)	0.99 (0.95-1.04, p=0.795)
	70-79 years	4804	1.04 (1.00-1.09, p=0.048)	1.07 (1.02-1.12, p=0.005)
	>80 years	1895	0.98 (0.93-1.04, p=0.580)	0.97 (0.91-1.04, p=0.374)
Sex	Female	8828	-	-
	Male	7335	0.88 (0.85-0.91, p<0.001)	0.98 (0.94-1.02, p=0.404)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	10750	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5345	0.97 (0.93-1.00, p=0.056)	0.99 (0.95-1.03, p=0.529)
ECOG Performance Score	0	8578	-	-
	1	5160	0.93 (0.89-0.96, p<0.001)	0.95 (0.92-0.99, p=0.014)
	≥2	2122	0.90 (0.86-0.95, p<0.001)	0.89 (0.84-0.94, p<0.001)
Current smoker	No	14315	-	-
	Yes	1848	1.04 (0.99-1.10, p=0.114)	1.02 (0.97-1.08, p=0.385)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	14108	-	-
	Yes	2055	0.99 (0.94-1.04, p=0.686)	0.98 (0.93-1.03, p=0.393)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	4079	-	-
	1	8581	0.84 (0.81-0.87, p<0.001)	1.01 (0.94-1.08, p=0.767)
	2	2756	0.81 (0.77-0.85, p<0.001)	0.96 (0.89-1.04, p=0.339)
	>3	747	0.79 (0.72-0.85, p<0.001)	0.90 (0.81-1.01, p=0.069)
Disease stage	Early disease	8758	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	7109	0.96 (0.93-1.00, p=0.030)	0.95 (0.92-0.99, p=0.007)
Cancer location	Head and neck	2598	-	-
	Colon	3125	1.10 (1.04-1.16, p=0.001)	1.10 (1.02-1.18, p=0.015)
	Rectal	1307	0.59 (0.55-0.63, p<0.001)	0.57 (0.53-0.63, p<0.001)
	Gastric	610	0.64 (0.58-0.70, p<0.001)	0.65 (0.58-0.72, p<0.001)
	Oesophageal	408	0.30 (0.26-0.34, p<0.001)	0.30 (0.26-0.34, p<0.001)
	Thoracic	1099	0.85 (0.79-0.92, p<0.001)	0.80 (0.73-0.87, p<0.001)
	Liver	682	0.64 (0.59-0.70, p<0.001)	0.61 (0.55-0.67, p<0.001)
	Pancreatic	643	0.70 (0.63-0.76, p<0.001)	0.70 (0.63-0.78, p<0.001)
	Sarcoma	261	0.64 (0.56-0.73, p<0.001)	0.60 (0.52-0.69, p<0.001)
	Prostate	513	0.47 (0.42-0.52, p<0.001)	0.43 (0.38-0.48, p<0.001)
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	370	0.66 (0.58-0.74, p<0.001)	0.62 (0.54-0.70, p<0.001)
	Bladder	127	0.51 (0.42-0.63, p<0.001)	0.46 (0.37-0.57, p<0.001)
	Gynaecological	1669	0.87 (0.82-0.93, p<0.001)	0.81 (0.75-0.89, p<0.001)
Breast	2751	0.83 (0.78-0.87, p<0.001)	0.96 (0.90-1.02, p=0.164)	

Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings. Number in dataframe = 16163, Number in model = 15539, Missing = 624, Number of events = 14369, Concordance = 0.629 (SE = 0.003), R-squared = 0.152 (Max possible = 1.000), Likelihood ratio test = 2566.579 (df = 30, p = 0.000)

Supplementary table 12. Non-operation rate during lockdowns across SARS-CoV-2 rate groups

SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate group	Full lockdown		Moderate lockdown		Light restrictions	
	Operated	Not operated	Operated	Not operated	Operated	Not operated
High income, low COVID	345 (94.0)	22 (6.0)	1138 (99.5)	6 (0.5)	2935 (99.4)	17 (0.6)
High income, high COVID	7111 (85.9)	1166 (14.1)	1860 (93.7)	126 (6.3)	1132 (99.6)	5 (0.4)
Upper middle income, low COVID	245 (93.5)	17 (6.5)	208 (83.9)	40 (16.1)	227 (99.6)	1 (0.4)
Upper middle income, high COVID	945 (88.6)	122 (11.4)	70 (90.9)	7 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Lower middle income, low COVID	1138 (94.4)	67 (5.6)	169 (93.4)	12 (6.6)	201 (98.5)	3 (1.5)
Lower middle income, high COVID	268 (41.3)	381 (58.7)	0 (0.0)	10 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019.

Supplementary table 13. Secondary analysis of factors associated with surgical capacity during COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate groups)

Factor	Levels	N=	HR (univariable)	HR (multivariable)
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	4520	-	-
	Moderate lockdown	3622	0.78 (0.74-0.81, p<0.001)	0.84 (0.80-0.88, p<0.001)
	Full lockdown	11678	0.47 (0.46-0.49, p<0.001)	0.57 (0.54-0.60, p<0.001)
Community SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate*	High income, low COVID	4459	-	-
	High income, high COVID	11274	0.60 (0.58-0.62, p<0.001)	0.89 (0.85-0.93, p<0.001)
	Upper middle income, low COVID	727	0.77 (0.71-0.83, p<0.001)	0.91 (0.84-0.99, p=0.030)
	Upper middle income, high COVID	1137	0.57 (0.53-0.61, p<0.001)	0.85 (0.78-0.92, p<0.001)
	Lower middle income, low COVID	1587	0.76 (0.72-0.80, p<0.001)	1.06 (0.99-1.14, p=0.076)
	Lower middle income, high COVID	645	0.17 (0.15-0.20, p<0.001)	0.27 (0.24-0.31, p<0.001)
Age	<50 years	3669	-	-
	50-59 years	4102	1.07 (1.02-1.13, p=0.003)	1.11 (1.05-1.16, p<0.001)
	60-69 years	5362	1.05 (1.00-1.10, p=0.037)	1.09 (1.04-1.15, p<0.001)
	70-79 years	4804	1.12 (1.07-1.17, p<0.001)	1.18 (1.12-1.24, p<0.001)
	>80 years	1895	1.06 (1.00-1.12, p=0.066)	1.06 (1.00-1.14, p=0.067)
Sex	Female	11398	-	-
	Male	8434	0.89 (0.86-0.92, p<0.001)	1.00 (0.97-1.04, p=0.938)
ASA Grade	Grade 1-2	14033	-	-
	Grade 3-5	5722	0.98 (0.95-1.02, p=0.307)	0.98 (0.94-1.02, p=0.267)
ECOG Performance Score	0	11445	-	-
	1	5789	0.93 (0.90-0.96, p<0.001)	0.94 (0.91-0.98, p=0.002)
	≥2	2247	0.90 (0.86-0.95, p<0.001)	0.90 (0.85-0.95, p<0.001)
Current smoker	No	17521	-	-
	Yes	2311	1.04 (0.99-1.09, p=0.108)	1.05 (1.00-1.10, p=0.039)
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	17591	-	-
	Yes	2241	1.02 (0.97-1.07, p=0.391)	0.98 (0.93-1.03, p=0.417)
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	6059	-	-
	1	10137	0.90 (0.87-0.93, p<0.001)	1.00 (0.94-1.06, p=0.938)
	2	2882	0.87 (0.83-0.91, p<0.001)	0.94 (0.87-1.02, p=0.120)
	≥3	754	0.85 (0.78-0.92, p<0.001)	0.88 (0.80-0.98, p=0.021)
Disease stage	Early disease	10695	-	-
	Advanced/nodal disease	8748	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.008)	0.96 (0.93-0.99, p=0.012)
Cancer location	Head and neck	3505	-	-
	Colon	3419	1.21 (1.15-1.27, p<0.001)	1.13 (1.05-1.21, p=0.001)
	Rectal	1491	0.63 (0.59-0.67, p<0.001)	0.57 (0.52-0.62, p<0.001)
	Gastric	717	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.65 (0.59-0.72, p<0.001)
	Oesophageal	444	0.33 (0.30-0.37, p<0.001)	0.30 (0.27-0.35, p<0.001)
	Thoracic	1184	0.93 (0.87-1.00, p=0.036)	0.80 (0.73-0.87, p<0.001)
	Liver	762	0.69 (0.63-0.75, p<0.001)	0.60 (0.55-0.66, p<0.001)
	Pancreatic	749	0.75 (0.69-0.82, p<0.001)	0.70 (0.64-0.78, p<0.001)
	Sarcoma	426	0.71 (0.64-0.79, p<0.001)	0.63 (0.56-0.71, p<0.001)
	Prostate	522	0.51 (0.47-0.57, p<0.001)	0.42 (0.37-0.47, p<0.001)
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	433	0.72 (0.65-0.80, p<0.001)	0.61 (0.54-0.69, p<0.001)
	Bladder	142	0.59 (0.49-0.72, p<0.001)	0.50 (0.41-0.62, p<0.001)
	Gynaecological	2159	0.95 (0.90-1.00, p=0.062)	0.85 (0.78-0.91, p<0.001)
Breast	3879	0.88 (0.84-0.92, p<0.001)	0.91 (0.86-0.96, p<0.001)	

Surgical capacity defined as patients booked for surgery undergoing an operation during the follow-up window. Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. *Community SARS-CoV-2 rates were defined as the median 14-day cumulative case notification rate per 100,000 population between the date of local emergence of the pandemic up to the date of surgery for operated patients or cessation of follow-up (31st August 2020) for non-operated patients, and were stratified by World Bank income group to account for differences in access to SARS-CoV-2 testing and reporting across settings. Number in dataframe = 19832, Number in model = 19066, Missing = 766, Number of events = 17597, Concordance = 0.636 (SE = 0.002), R-squared = 0.171 (Max possible = 1.000), Likelihood ratio test = 3574.260 (df = 34, p = 0.000)

Supplementary table 14. Treatment intervals across SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate groups

Interval diagnosis to surgery	High income, low COVID	High income, high COVID	Upper middle income, low COVID	Upper middle income, high COVID	Lower middle income, low COVID	Lower middle income, high COVID	P-value
Straight to surgery							
0-4 weeks	1263 (31.2)	2318 (26.6)	228 (37.9)	302 (32.5)	545 (49.5)	70 (33.0)	<0.001
5-8 weeks	1755 (43.4)	3111 (35.6)	175 (29.1)	207 (22.3)	295 (26.8)	53 (25.0)	
9-12 weeks	596 (14.7)	1632 (18.7)	99 (16.4)	131 (14.1)	121 (11.0)	22 (10.4)	
>12 weeks	432 (10.7)	1669 (19.1)	100 (16.6)	290 (31.2)	139 (12.6)	67 (31.6)	
Neoadjuvant therapy (standard care)							
0-4 weeks	29 (8.9)	64 (6.9)	7 (9.7)	1 (1.6)	7 (2.3)	2 (5.1)	<0.001
5-8 weeks	25 (7.7)	48 (5.1)	6 (8.3)	2 (3.2)	14 (4.6)	0 (0.0)	
9-12 weeks	37 (11.4)	73 (7.8)	11 (15.3)	4 (6.5)	15 (4.9)	1 (2.6)	
>12 weeks	234 (72.0)	749 (80.2)	48 (66.7)	55 (88.7)	268 (88.2)	36 (92.3)	
Neoadjuvant therapy (COVID decision)							
0-4 weeks	10 (21.3)	20 (4.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.1)	2 (1.9)	1 (5.9)	<0.001
5-8 weeks	10 (21.3)	78 (17.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (6.2)	6 (5.8)	3 (17.6)	
9-12 weeks	8 (17.0)	104 (23.7)	2 (33.3)	5 (15.6)	18 (17.3)	2 (11.8)	
>12 weeks	19 (40.4)	237 (54.0)	4 (66.7)	24 (75.0)	78 (75.0)	11 (64.7)	

Percentages presented by column total. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019.

Supplementary table 15. System friction during lockdowns

Interval	Summary	Light restrictions	Moderate lockdown	Full lockdown	P-value
Straight to surgery					
Weeks diagnosis to operation	Mean (SD)	5.7 (4.4)	5.9 (4.6)	7.8 (5.9)	<0.001
<i>Weeks diagnosis to decision</i>	Mean (SD)	2.8 (3.5)	2.7 (3.5)	3.1 (3.9)	<0.001
<i>Weeks decision to operation</i>	Mean (SD)	2.9 (2.4)	3.2 (2.8)	4.7 (4.5)	<0.001
Neoadjuvant therapy (standard care)					
Weeks diagnosis to operation	Mean (SD)	15.3 (8.1)	15.8 (7.0)	17.4 (6.1)	<0.001
<i>Weeks diagnosis to decision</i>	Mean (SD)	11.6 (8.3)	9.7 (8.4)	9.7 (30.3)	0.488
<i>Weeks decision to operation</i>	Mean (SD)	3.7 (3.0)	6.1 (5.4)	9.4 (30.1)	0.001
Neoadjuvant therapy (COVID decision)					
Weeks diagnosis to operation	Mean (SD)	8.4 (6.5)	9.9 (6.2)	14.7 (6.1)	<0.001
<i>Weeks diagnosis to decision</i>	Mean (SD)	4.8 (6.9)	3.6 (5.8)	4.9 (5.8)	0.214
<i>Weeks decision to operation</i>	Mean (SD)	3.6 (3.3)	6.3 (4.6)	9.8 (5.9)	<0.001

Supplementary table 16. Characteristics of operated patients that went straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy) grouped by time from diagnosis to operation (N=15622)

Factor	Levels	Interval diagnosis to surgery				P-value
		0-4 weeks	5-8 weeks	9-12 weeks	>12 weeks	
Health system factors						
COVID-19 Stringency Index group	Light restrictions	1372 (33.0)	1813 (43.7)	588 (14.2)	379 (9.1)	<0.001
	Moderate lockdown	1020 (33.4)	1244 (40.7)	476 (15.6)	317 (10.4)	
	Full lockdown	2333 (27.8)	2533 (30.1)	1535 (18.3)	2001 (23.8)	
Weeks in full lockdown	Mean (SD)	7.2 (4.9)	6.8 (4.8)	7.7 (4.5)	10.0 (5.0)	<0.001
World Bank Income Classification	High income	3581 (28.0)	4866 (38.1)	2228 (17.4)	2101 (16.4)	<0.001
	Upper middle income	530 (34.6)	382 (24.9)	230 (15.0)	390 (25.5)	
	Lower middle income	615 (46.9)	348 (26.5)	143 (10.9)	206 (15.7)	
SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate	High income, low COVID	1263 (31.2)	1755 (43.4)	596 (14.7)	432 (10.7)	<0.001
	High income, high COVID	2318 (26.6)	3111 (35.6)	1632 (18.7)	1669 (19.1)	
	Upper middle income, low COVID	228 (37.9)	175 (29.1)	99 (16.4)	100 (16.6)	
	Upper middle income, high COVID	302 (32.5)	207 (22.3)	131 (14.1)	290 (31.2)	
	Lower middle income, low COVID	545 (49.5)	295 (26.8)	121 (11.0)	139 (12.6)	
	Lower middle income, high COVID	70 (33.0)	53 (25.0)	22 (10.4)	67 (31.6)	
Patient factors						
Age	<50 years	940 (35.1)	852 (31.8)	409 (15.3)	480 (17.9)	<0.001
	50-59 years	1003 (31.5)	1174 (36.8)	493 (15.5)	519 (16.3)	
	60-69 years	1234 (29.2)	1525 (36.0)	723 (17.1)	749 (17.7)	
	70-79 years	1087 (27.7)	1501 (38.2)	698 (17.8)	644 (16.4)	
	>80 years	463 (29.1)	545 (34.3)	278 (17.5)	305 (19.2)	
Sex	Female	2726 (30.2)	3464 (38.4)	1441 (16.0)	1386 (15.4)	<0.001
	Male	2001 (30.3)	2133 (32.3)	1160 (17.6)	1311 (19.8)	
ASA Grade	ASA grade 1-2	3406 (30.9)	4005 (36.4)	1746 (15.9)	1853 (16.8)	<0.001
	ASA grade 3-5	1312 (28.6)	1576 (34.4)	851 (18.6)	841 (18.4)	
	Missing	9	19	5	3	
ECOG Performance Score	0	2778 (30.4)	3335 (36.5)	1439 (15.8)	1573 (17.2)	0.002
	1	1332 (29.6)	1590 (35.4)	810 (18.0)	764 (17.0)	
	≥2	560 (32.1)	567 (32.5)	297 (17.0)	321 (18.4)	
	Missing	60	110	68	69	
Current smoker	No	4153 (30.1)	4931 (35.7)	2294 (16.6)	2424 (17.6)	0.054
	Yes	574 (31.5)	666 (36.6)	307 (16.9)	273 (15.0)	
Pre-existing respiratory condition	No	4249 (30.8)	4920 (35.7)	2262 (16.4)	2355 (17.1)	<0.001
	Yes	478 (26.0)	677 (36.9)	339 (18.5)	342 (18.6)	
Revised Cardiac Risk Index	0	1534 (32.4)	1810 (38.3)	751 (15.9)	637 (13.5)	<0.001
	1	2372 (29.7)	2814 (35.3)	1310 (16.4)	1485 (18.6)	
	2	654 (28.6)	775 (33.9)	429 (18.8)	430 (18.8)	
	≥3	167 (26.9)	198 (31.9)	111 (17.9)	145 (23.3)	
Disease factors						
Disease stage	Early disease	2434 (27.0)	3271 (36.3)	1613 (17.9)	1685 (18.7)	<0.001
	Advanced/nodal disease	2271 (34.7)	2300 (35.1)	981 (15.0)	1002 (15.3)	
	Missing	22	29	9	12	
Cancer site	Head and neck	1011 (33.2)	1083 (35.6)	486 (16.0)	461 (15.2)	<0.001
	Colon	1221 (38.6)	1004 (31.7)	503 (15.9)	439 (13.9)	
	Rectal	232 (26.5)	306 (35.0)	130 (14.9)	206 (23.6)	
	Gastric	149 (32.7)	126 (27.6)	76 (16.7)	105 (23.0)	
	Oesophageal	26 (22.8)	32 (28.1)	13 (11.4)	43 (37.7)	
	Thoracic	242 (23.3)	427 (41.1)	187 (18.0)	184 (17.7)	
	Liver	98 (16.5)	182 (30.6)	153 (25.7)	162 (27.2)	
	Pancreatic	203 (35.4)	187 (32.6)	86 (15.0)	98 (17.1)	
	Sarcoma	78 (27.3)	79 (27.6)	57 (19.9)	72 (25.2)	
	Prostate	20 (5.0)	86 (21.4)	82 (20.4)	213 (53.1)	
	Kidney or upper tract urothelial	87 (23.4)	124 (33.3)	70 (18.8)	91 (24.5)	
	Bladder	14 (14.4)	39 (40.2)	27 (27.8)	17 (17.5)	
	Gynaecological	515 (28.4)	750 (41.4)	261 (14.4)	287 (15.8)	
Breast	831 (29.8)	1172 (42.0)	470 (16.8)	319 (11.4)		
Treatment factors						
Operation grade	Major	3658 (29.7)	4303 (34.9)	2060 (16.7)	2297 (18.6)	<0.001
	Minor	1042 (32.4)	1268 (39.4)	530 (16.5)	381 (11.8)	
	Missing	21	22	10	18	

Percentages expressed of row total. SD=Standard deviation. ASA=American Society of Anaesthesiologists classification. ECOG=Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

Supplementary table 17. Outcomes by interval from diagnosis to operation for patients going straight to surgery (N=15622)

Outcome	Levels	Interval diagnosis to surgery					Total	P-value
		0-4 weeks	5-8 weeks	9-12 weeks	>12 weeks			
Margin status	R0	4043 (85.6)	4791 (85.8)	2222 (85.2)	2280 (84.7)	13336 (85.1)	0.019	
	R1	328 (6.9)	441 (7.9)	202 (7.9)	217 (8.1)	1188 (7.7)		
	R2	100 (2.1)	107 (1.9)	53 (2.0)	37 (1.4)	297 (1.9)		
	Pathology unavailable	251 (5.3)	247 (4.4)	116 (4.5)	154 (5.7)	768 (4.9)		
	Missing	5	11	8	9	33		
Resectable disease at time of surgery	Resectable	4553 (96.3)	5508 (98.4)	2554 (98.2)	2645 (98.1)	15260 (97.7)	<0.001	
	Unresectable	173 (3.7)	87 (1.6)	46 (1.8)	52 (1.9)	358 (2.3)		
	Unknown	1 (0.0)	2 (0.0)	1 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.0)		
Pre-operative cancer-related complication requiring emergency surgery	Elective	4468 (94.7)	5547 (99.2)	2581 (99.4)	2674 (99.4)	15270 (97.9)	<0.001	
	Emergency	252 (5.3)	43 (0.8)	16 (0.6)	15 (0.6)	326 (2.1)		
30-day SARS-CoV-2 infection rate	No	4685 (99.1)	5557 (99.3)	2577 (99.1)	2676 (99.2)	15495 (99.2)	0.698	
	Yes	42 (0.9)	40 (0.7)	24 (0.9)	21 (0.8)	127 (0.8)		
30-day postoperative mortality rate	No	4652 (98.5)	5533 (98.9)	2570 (98.9)	2659 (98.9)	15414 (98.8)	0.008	
	Yes	73 (1.5)	62 (1.1)	29 (1.1)	31 (1.1)	195 (1.2)		
	Missing	2	2	2	7	13		
New detection of metastatic disease*	No	2694 (98.1)	2967 (97.8)	1454 (98.7)	1656 (98.4)	8771 (98.1)	0.085	
	Yes	51 (1.9)	66 (2.3)	18 (1.3)	24 (1.6)	159 (1.9)		
	Missing	4	5	4	14	27		

COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019, SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. Resection margin status classified as R0=No microscopic or macroscopic disease, R1=Microscopic disease at the margin, R2=Macroscopic disease at the margin. *Detailed data on detection of new metastatic disease not collected for liver, pancreatic, breast and gynaecological cancers. Patients with metastatic disease at baseline removed from denominator (N=8957). Chi-squared tests do not include missing data. Percentages presented by column total.

Supplementary table 18. Outcomes across SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate groups for patients going straight to surgery (no neoadjuvant therapy) (N=15622)

Outcome	Levels	SARS-CoV-2 case notification rate group						Total	P-value
		High income, low COVID	High income, high COVID	Upper middle income, low COVID	Upper middle income, high COVID	Lower middle income, low COVID	Lower middle income, high COVID		
Margin status	R0	3397 (84.1)	7462 (85.7)	509 (84.8)	797 (85.9)	975 (88.8)	194 (91.5)	13334 (85.5)	<0.001
	R1	372 (9.2)	683 (7.8)	35 (5.8)	66 (7.1)	28 (2.6)	4 (1.9)	1188 (7.7)	
	R2	90 (2.2)	144 (1.6)	14 (2.3)	30 (3.2)	17 (1.5)	2 (0.9)	297 (1.9)	
Resectable disease at time of surgery	Pathology unavailable	182 (4.5)	420 (4.8)	43 (7.1)	35 (3.8)	76 (7.0)	12 (5.7)	768 (4.9)	<0.001
	Missing	5	21	1	2	4	0	33	
	Resectable	3970 (98.1)	8567 (98.1)	580 (96.3)	895 (96.2)	1040 (94.5)	206 (97.2)	15258 (97.7)	
Pre-operative cancer-related complication requiring emergency surgery	Unresectable	74 (1.8)	161 (1.8)	22 (3.7)	35 (3.8)	60 (5.5)	6 (2.8)	358 (2.3)	<0.001
	Unknown	2 (0.0)	2 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.0)	
	Elective	3978 (98.4)	8562 (98.3)	581 (97.0)	893 (96.0)	1052 (95.7)	202 (95.3)	15268 (97.9)	
30-day SARS-CoV-2 infection rate	Emergency	63 (1.6)	151 (1.7)	18 (3.0)	37 (4.0)	47 (4.3)	10 (4.7)	326 (2.1)	<0.001
	No	3988 (98.6)	8697 (99.6)	601 (99.8)	916 (98.5)	1081 (98.3)	210 (99.1)	15493 (99.2)	
	Yes	58 (1.4)	33 (0.4)	1 (0.2)	14 (1.5)	19 (1.7)	2 (0.9)	127 (0.8)	
30-day postoperative mortality rate	No	3980 (98.4)	8641 (99.1)	594 (98.7)	917 (98.6)	1074 (97.6)	206 (97.2)	15412 (98.8)	<0.001
	Yes	65 (1.6)	77 (0.9)	8 (1.3)	13 (1.4)	26 (2.4)	6 (2.8)	195 (1.2)	
	Missing	1	12	0	0	0	0	13	
New detection of metastatic disease*	No	2223 (98.1)	5105 (98.2)	266 (97.4)	541 (97.7)	510 (97.9)	124 (98.4)	8769 (98.1)	0.741
	Yes	42 (1.9)	85 (1.8)	7 (2.6)	13 (2.3)	10 (2.1)	2 (1.6)	159 (1.9)	
	Missing	6	18	0	0	3	0	27	

COVID=Coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2=severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. Resection margin status classified as R0=No microscopic or macroscopic disease. R1=Microscopic disease at the margin. R2=Macroscopic disease at the margin. *Detailed data on detection of new metastatic disease not collected for liver, pancreatic, breast and gynaecological cancers. Patients with metastatic disease at baseline removed from denominator (N=6957). Percentages presented by column total.

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Appendix B. Definition of “lockdowns” in sample of participating countries

ISO3 code	Country	World Bank income group	Date of first lockdown (full or moderate)	COVID-19 stringency index score
ARE	United Arab Emirates	High income	Full, 26th March 2020	73.2
AUT	Austria	High income	Full, 16th March 2020	81.5
BEL	Belgium	High income	Full, 18th March 2020	73.2
BRB	Barbados	High income	Full, 28th March 2020	73.2
CAN	Canada	High income	Moderate (regional), 17th March 2020	43.5
CHE	Switzerland	High income	Full, 17th March 2020	73.2
CYP	Cyprus	High income	Full, 24th March 2020	92.6
CZE	Czech Republic	High income	Full, 16th March 2020	79.6
DEU	Germany	High income	Full, 22nd March 2020	76.9
DNK	Denmark	High income	Moderate (national), 12th March 2020	38.0
ESP	Spain	High income	Full, 14th March 2020	67.1
FRA	France	High income	Full, 17th March 2020	88.0
GBR	United Kingdom	High income	Full, 23rd March 2020	78.2
GRC	Greece	High income	Full, 23rd March 2020	84.3
HRV	Croatia	High income	Moderate (national), 19th March 2020	50.0
HUN	Hungary	High income	Full, 28th March 2020	76.9
IRL	Ireland	High income	Full, 28th March 2020	85.2
ITA	Italy	High income	Full, 9th March 2020	74.5
JPN	Japan	High income	Moderate (national) only, 7th April 2020	43.5
KWT	Kuwait	High income	Full, 10th May 2020	100.0
LTU	Lithuania	High income	Full, 16th March 2020	81.5
NLD	Netherlands	High income	Moderate (national), 15th March 2020	53.7
OMN	Oman	High income	Full, 10th April 2020	92.6
PAN	Panama	High income	Full, 25th March 2020	75.9
POL	Poland	High income	Moderate (national), 13th March 2020	41.7
PRT	Portugal	High income	Full, 19th March 2020	82.4
SAU	Saudi Arabia	High income	Moderate (regional), 9th March 2020	30.6
SGP	Singapore	High income	Full, 8th April 2020	76.9
USA	United States	High income	Moderate (regional) only 17 March 2020	55.1
ALB	Albania	Upper middle income	Full, 13th March 2020	78.7
ARG	Argentina	Upper middle income	Full, 19th March 2020	100.0
AZE	Azerbaijan	Upper middle income	Full, 31st March 2020	88.89
BGR	Bulgaria	Upper middle income	Moderate (national), 13th March 2020	50.93
BRA	Brazil	Upper middle income	Moderate (regional) only, 17th March 2020	57.9
BWA	Botswana	Upper middle income	Full, 2nd April 2020	86.11
COL	Colombia	Upper middle income	Full, 25th March 2020	87.96
JOR	Jordan	Upper middle income	Full, 18th March 2020	100
LBY	Libya	Upper middle income	Full, 22nd March 2020	77.78
LKA	Sri Lanka	Upper middle income	Full, 18th March 2020	81.48
MEX	Mexico	Upper middle income	Moderate (national), 24th March 2020	52.78
MYS	Malaysia	Upper middle income	Full, 18th March 2020	73.15
PER	Peru	Upper middle income	Full, 16th March 2020	90.74
ROU	Romania	Upper middle income	Full, 25th March 2020	78.7
RUS	Russian Federation	Upper middle income	Full, 28th March 2020	71.7
SRB	Serbia	Upper middle income	Moderate (national), 15th March 2020	49.07
TUR	Turkey	Upper middle income	Full, 28th March 2020	75.9
ZAF	South Africa	Upper middle income	Full, 26th March 2020	88
EGY	Egypt	Lower middle income	Full, 25th March 2020	84.3
ETH	Ethiopia	Lower middle income	Full, 8th April 2020	80.6
GHA	Ghana	Lower middle income	Moderate (regional) only, 26th March 2020	52.8
IND	India	Lower middle income	Full, 25th March 2020	100.0
MAR	Morocco	Lower middle income	Moderate (national), 19th March 2020	55.56
MDG	Madagascar	Lower middle income	Full, 23rd March 2020	91.67
NGA	Nigeria	Lower middle income	Moderate (regional) only, 23rd March 2020	48.6
PAK	Pakistan	Lower middle income	Full, 24th March 2020	93.5
PHL	Philippines	Lower middle income	Full, 15th March 2020	75.0
PSE	Palestine	Lower middle income	Full, 7th March 2020	74.07
TUN	Tunisia	Lower middle income	Full, 22nd March 2020	90.74

Appendix C. Indicators in the Oxford COVID-19 government response index

Indicator	Name	Type	Targeted/general?	Maximum value (levels)
<i>Containment and closure</i>				
C1	School closing	Ordinal	Geographic	3 (0, 1, 2, 3)
C2	Workplace closing	Ordinal	Geographic	3 (0, 1, 2, 3)
C3	Cancel public events	Ordinal	Geographic	2 (0, 1, 2)
C4	Restrictions on gathering size	Ordinal	Geographic	4 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4)
C5	Close public transport	Ordinal	Geographic	2 (0, 1, 2)
C6	Stay-at-home requirements	Ordinal	Geographic	3 (0, 1, 2, 3)
C7	Restrictions on internal movement	Ordinal	Geographic	2 (0, 1, 2)
C8	Restrictions on international travel	Ordinal	No	4 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4)
<i>Economic response</i>				
E1	Income support	Ordinal	Sectoral	2 (0, 1, 2)
E2	Debt/contract relief for households	Ordinal	No	2 (0, 1, 2)
<i>Health systems</i>				
H1	Public information campaign	Ordinal	Geographic	2 (0, 1, 2)
H2	Testing policy	Ordinal	No	3 (0, 1, 2, 3)
H3	Contact tracing	Ordinal	No	2 (0, 1, 2)
H6	Facial coverings	Ordinal	Geographic	4 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4)
H7	Vaccination policy	Ordinal	Funding	5 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

13 indicators are included in the Oxford COVID-19 government response index (overall) which are used for this analysis. Published in Hale, T., Angrist, N., Goldszmidt, R. et al. A global panel database of pandemic policies (Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker). *Nat Hum Behav* 5, 529–538 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01079-8>

Appendix D. Use of the Oxford COVID-19 Government Stringency index

In order to define the national government response to COVID-19 for each patient in each included country, we used the stringency index from the Oxford COVID-19 government response tracker. The COVID-19 stringency index is a data-driven tool for policy and research that measures how the response of governments has varied in response to COVID-19 at a national level with across 19 indicators including 'lockdown' measures and behavioural interventions aimed at reducing population mobility (1). The index has been validated by demonstrating associations with population SARS-CoV-2 infection rates and Google mobile phone mobility data. The stringency index was highly associated with population mobility in validation data and was best targeted towards the impact of restrictive governmental interventions on surgical capacity, so was chosen for use in this study.

In this study, three groupings of the level of 'lockdown' based on COVID-19 stringency index scores were adopted: (1) Light restrictions (index score <20); (2) Moderate lockdown (index score $20 \leq x \leq 60$); (3) Full lockdown (index score >60). Recognising variability in definitions of lockdown across included countries, the selection of a cut-point for a 'full lockdown' was validated by using national policy, media and press sources to identify the date of first national 'lockdown' for a sample of participating high-income, upper middle-income and lower middle-income countries, and extracting the point estimate for the COVID-19 stringency index score on the date of lockdown (**Appendix C**). If no 'full lockdown' was reported to have occurred, a representative date where some restrictive measures were imposed at either a national or regional level (i.e., a 'moderate lockdown') was selected. Whilst all participating hospitals were in areas affected by COVID-19, the definition of 'light restrictions' aimed to emulate 'normal circumstances' as closely as possible to allow internal comparison within the dataset between periods of 'full lockdown' and essentially normal care.

For each patient, a median average score whilst waiting for surgery and the number of weeks in full lockdown were calculated and used in analyses. We considered several methods of measuring the overall exposure of each included patient including median average from diagnosis to surgery or censorship, point estimates at the time of diagnosis or decision for surgery (study entry) and 'area under the stringency curve' (sum of stringency scores multiplied by duration of exposure). Whilst the point estimate at the time of

study entry (date of decision for surgery) would minimise any impact of future information bias, whereby patients may be more likely to be exposed to several lockdown states therefore demonstrate a central tendency (i.e., classified as moderate lockdown overall) we felt that this would misrepresent the complex and dynamic nature of lockdowns, and risk underestimating or overestimating patients' overall exposure. Supporting this decision, we did not see a central tendency in the distribution of calculated median. Balancing the risks and benefits of each method of processing the Oxford COVID-19 government response index we took a pragmatic decision to adopt the median average score for all included analyses.

Appendix E. Challenges with use of SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates

Accurate estimation of a country's SARS-CoV-2 burden is challenging. For example, studies from Zambia and India using post-mortem records and population level sampling have demonstrated a significant underestimation (100-times and higher) of SARS-CoV-2 infection rates and subsequent COVID-related deaths (2, 3). Cross-reactivity with other pathogens endemic in Sub-Saharan Africa has also been reported. Therefore, case rates were used for exploratory analyses only, and stratified by World Bank income tertile. Data on SARS-CoV-2 rates were extracted from the World Health Organisation, European Centre for Disease Control, US Centre for Disease Control and specific national registries via the Our World in Data portal (4). Case notification rates for SARS-CoV-2 reflect the ability of health systems to identify exposed patients, perform accurate tests, and report these to international registries.

Appendix F. Patient level variable descriptions and definitions

Patient level variables included age, sex, American Society of Anaesthesiologists grade, Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) performance status, smoking status, pre-existing respiratory condition, and Revised Cardiac Risk Index (RCRI). To account for different tumour grading and staging systems across the included cancer types, disease status was classified at the time of decision for surgery as early stage (organ confined, non-nodal, non-metastatic, fully resectable) or advanced stage (growth beyond organ, nodal, metastatic operated with curative intent). For analyses of surgical outcomes, grade of surgery was categorised based on the Clinical Coding & Schedule Development Group as either Minor (minor/intermediate) or Major (major/complex major) (5)

Appendix G. Estimation of treatment intervals

In order to estimate the impact of lockdown of treatment delays, the relationship between lockdowns and the interval from diagnosis to surgery was explored. The date of diagnosis was defined pragmatically as the date when diagnostic imaging, laboratory samples, multidisciplinary team discussion, or an outpatient clinic diagnosis was made (whichever was earliest). The interval from date of diagnosis to the date of surgery was calculated in whole weeks. Accepting that there are likely to be significant differences in the 'normal' interval from diagnosis to surgery across different health systems, a 'delay' from diagnosis to surgery was not specifically defined. Several different interval groups were defined pragmatically in 4-week epochs according to describe differences between intervals from diagnosis to surgery and surgical quality. The association between lockdowns and interval from diagnosis to surgery was primarily explored in patients with neoadjuvant therapy (i.e. that went 'straight to surgery').

In secondary exploration, the point of 'system friction' was also reported to compare differences in intervals from diagnosis to decision for surgery, and from decision to operation. Date of decision for surgery was again defined pragmatically as the date of multidisciplinary team discussion, or surgeon's decision to book the patient for an operation.

Appendix H. Classification of reasons for non-operation

Reflecting the complexity of surgical decision making during the pandemic, more than one reason could be selected for non-operation for any single patient. One patient therefore could have both COVID-19 related and not COVID-related reason(s) selected. Where it was unclear whether a reason was directly or indirectly COVID-related (for example, disease progression leading to change in treatment plan) this was attributed as a non-COVID-19 related reason. In practice, it is complex to summarise the exact processes underpinning reasons for treatment delay in this complex multi-specialty and multi-country dataset. These reasons are provided to illustrate the common themes in the data and explore: (1) to what extent cancellation and delay could have been expected as part of 'normal' (pre-pandemic) practice; (2) estimate harms incurred to patients as a result of delay or cancellation of surgery due to COVID-related and unrelated causes.

Appendix I. Definitions of secondary outcomes for operated patients

The full protocol definitions of each included secondary outcome were:

- Resection margin status: R0: No microscopic or macroscopic disease, R1: Microscopic disease at the margin, R2: Macroscopic disease at the margin, Pathology unavailable: No histopathological analysis performed or reported, Missing: Missing data).
- Resectable disease at the time of surgery (resectable/unresectable). Unresectable disease was defined by the operating surgeon as surgery performed with a palliative intent (i.e., for symptomatic management, non-curative only) or an abandoned procedure due to concerns around resectability.
- Pre-operative cancer-related complication requiring emergency surgery e.g., obstructed bowel, bleeding at the tumour site. Emergency surgery was defined as an unplanned admission requiring surgery within hours of decision to operate.
- 30-day postoperative SARS-CoV-2 infection rate, confirmed by RT-qPCR testing of a nasopharyngeal swab, or an indicative CT thorax or clinical diagnosis of symptomatic COVID-19 in patients for whom swab testing was unavailable (6, 7).
- 30-day postoperative mortality rate (8-10).
- New detection of metastatic disease up to a maximum of 30-days after surgery. Metastatic disease was defined upon postoperative histological staging, or upon restaging radiological examination where this was performed. Data on detection of new metastatic disease was not collected for liver, pancreatic, breast and gynaecological cancers, therefore rates of detection of new metastatic disease removed these patients from the denominator of estimates of proportions.

Appendix J. Full statistical methodology

No pre-specified sample size calculation was performed. Missing data were included in flowcharts and summary tables, but excluded from the models. We pre-planned to conduct multiple imputation by chained equations if the level of missingness for variables included in the model was greater than 5%. Non-parametric data were summarised with medians and interquartile ranges and differences between groups were tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. Parametric data were summarised with mean average and standard deviation. Differences between groups were explored using two-tailed Student's t-test (two comparator groups) or one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA, three or more comparator groups) The χ^2 test was used for categorical data. Cox proportional hazards regression modelling was used to explore association between lockdowns and the primary outcome, presented as adjusted hazard ratios (HR) and 95% confidence intervals. Operation was included as the outcome event, and no censoring was performed for death or progression to unresectable disease to deal with competing risks, given individuals had the same follow-up time (i.e., describing sub-distribution rather than cause-specific hazards). The proportional hazards (PH) assumption was checked using the Schoenfeld individual test and graphical diagnostics based on the scaled Schoenfeld residuals. The proportional hazard assumption was accepted if a non-significant relationship was detected between residuals and time. Clinically plausible health-system, patient, and disease-related factors were selected *a priori* for inclusion in adjusted analyses. Testing for non-linear relationship with the outcome variable was performed for continuous variables by including a penalised spline on the exposure, and plotting a spline term. Where significant non-linear relationships were demonstrated, variables were categorised before inclusion in the model. An alpha level was set at 0.05 (5%) for interpretation of statistical significance.

Appendix K. Further discussion of study topics

Protecting elective surgery pathways

The demand on critical care services during COVID-19 has been unprecedented. Protecting a small proportion of dedicated critical care beds, even when community SARS-CoV-2 incidence is high, will support vulnerable patients and those with advanced disease to undergo the cancer surgery they require. Newer ways of working, including dedicated postoperative units that can provide adequate support for several surgical patients with lower staffing demands, may be necessary (7). These may need to be away from acute sites that may be subject to COVID-19 surges.

Relationship between COVID-19, lockdowns and non-operation

Whilst all patients had a stated reasons for non-operation related to COVID-19, only a proportion of this were seemingly directly attributable to lockdown measures (for example, patients being unable to travel to hospital during periods with travel restrictions). We hypothesise that country-level stringency measures have a direct impact on hospital procedures and planning through lockdown-related hospital/institutional policies i.e., that health systems change to reflect stringent government policies on containment and movement restriction. This is corroborated by a sensitivity analysis which demonstrated that full and moderate lockdowns independently increased the likelihood of non-operation after adjustment for local SARS-CoV-2 case notification rates. This has important policy implications. Whilst the collateral impact of COVID-19 on other health conditions has been widely discussed, there is little published primary data (i.e., not modelled) that provides information about the direct effects of lockdowns on non-communicable disease (11). These data provide important insight for governments when balancing decisions about whether to extend, increase or decrease the stringency of lockdowns, and the broader societal consequences.

Perspectives for policy during future waves

Resilience of elective cancer surgery remains low across all settings (12). Stepping back up to a full capacity service requires advanced planning to cope with future predicted demand. The added complexities of potential future lockdowns mean that expenditure on protected elective capacity for cancer surgery should be considered now by policy makers at national levels. Future lockdowns under current conditions

will worsen outcomes for patients needing cancer surgery against a background of mounting backlogs and delays in many countries.

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