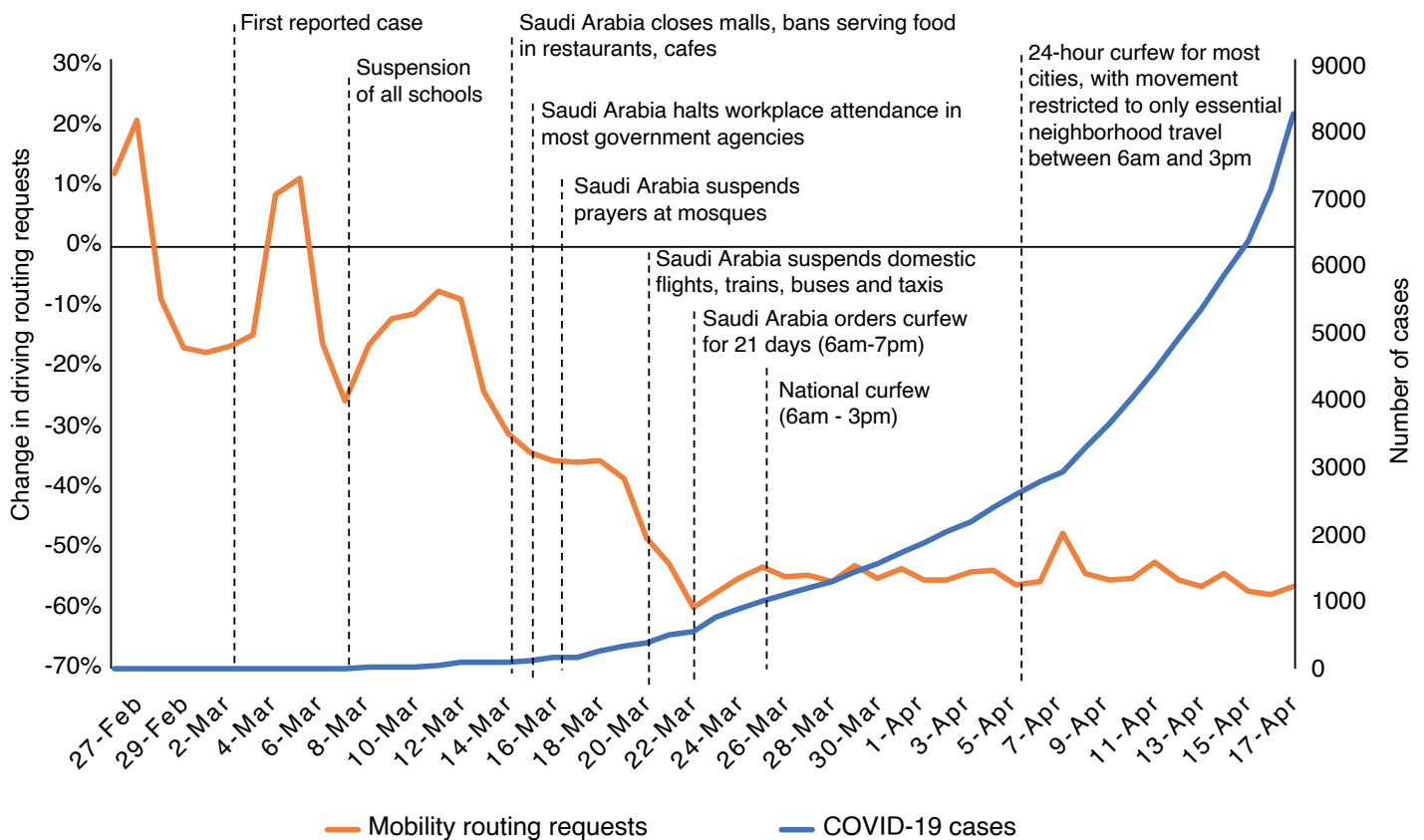


# Data Insight

06/07/2020

## Social Distancing: The Impact of COVID-19 on Mobility in Saudi Arabia

**Figure 1.** Daily change in routing requests submitted to Apple Maps since January 13, 2020, and the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases.



Sources: Apple Maps; Johns Hopkins University.

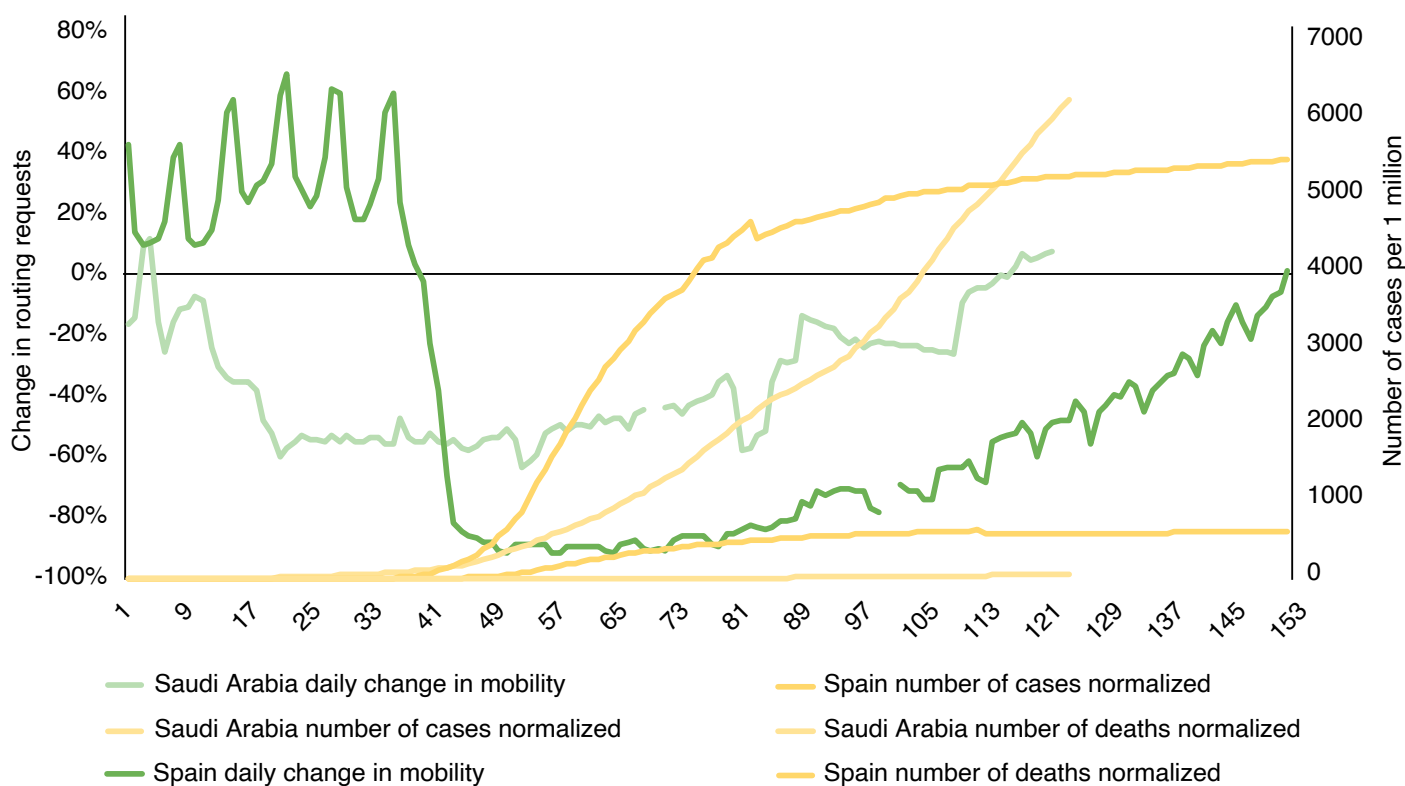
- Saudi Arabia took early measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 by enforcing social distancing measures.
- Figure 1 compares the daily change in mobility<sup>1</sup> requests submitted by users of Apple Maps in Saudi Arabia since February 27, 2020 (left axis) with the confirmed cumulative number of COVID-19 cases in the country (right axis).

<sup>1</sup> Mobility is defined in this insight as an individual user, whether driving, using public transit or walking, submitting a routing request on Apple Maps.

- On March 3, 2020, less than a week after the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Saudi Arabia, the country's government announced the suspension of all schools. This measure alone reduced driving mobility by 20% from the baseline, according to data from Apple Maps.
- The multiple precautions taken by Saudi Arabia from March 16–26 reduced mobility by 60% from the baseline, according to data from Apple Maps. However, the 24-hour curfew imposed in many cities on April 6 did not cause a further reduction in mobility requests from users of Apple Maps. This could be due to several factors, including the exemption of essential workers from the curfew (healthcare, food delivery, and repair workers) and the continued limited movement within neighborhoods to access essential services such as grocery stores, pharmacies and gasoline stations.

### Early vs. late measures of social distancing

**Figure 2.** Daily change in routing requests submitted to Apple Maps since January 13, 2020, and the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases for Saudi Arabia and Spain.



Sources: Apple Maps; Johns Hopkins University.

- Figure 2 compares the number of COVID-19 cases in Saudi Arabia and Spain from when each country reported its first case (March 3 for Saudi Arabia, January 31 for Spain). This data is plotted against the changes in the mobility of both countries' citizens.
- Social distancing measures in Spain were brought in 35 days after its first case on January 31. In contrast, Saudi Arabia introduced social distancing measures five days after its first reported case on March 3. The light-yellow line in Figure 2 shows fewer cases in Saudi Arabia than in Spain.
- On January 31, when the first case was reported in Spain, mobility was up by 40% from the baseline of January 13, according to data from Apple Maps. However, according to the same data, mobility in Saudi Arabia decreased by 18% between January 13 and when the country reported its first case on March 3.

- The reduction in mobility in Saudi Arabia stems from the precautionary measures taken by the government to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Figure 1).
  - Early social distancing measures enforced in Saudi Arabia have been key to preventing an even wider spread of COVID-19 in the country.
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Access related machine-readable datasets [here](#) and [here](#).

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**Sources:**

- Johns Hopkins University. 2020. "Mapping 2018-nCoV." January 23.
  - Apple. 2020. "Mobility Trends Reports."
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View this Data Insight online with interactive charts

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