

Circuit breakers

25. The “effectiveness” of a circuit breaker depends on the long-term strategy it forms part of and therefore how “effectiveness” is defined. For that reason, it is difficult to be precise in stating the conditions in which a circuit break would be most effective. However, it is clear that:

- Prevalence in most regions of England is now too high for a single circuit break to return prevalence to levels low enough to allow the test and trace system to play a major role in reducing transmission.
- A single circuit break would save most lives if it is followed by policies which sustain R at or below 1.

26. Broadly, the epidemiological effects of a circuit breaker in a particular region will be similar, whether that circuit breaker is a national one or region-specific. However, there are two important issues that should be considered:

- The impact of a circuit breaker is critically dependant on how far it pushes R below 1. It therefore requires good adherence. SPI-M-O's expertise does not lie in behavioural science, but it is possible that adherence to national and regional circuit breakers would not be the same.
- Regional circuit breakers would pose challenges across borders. Given the high prevalence seen across the country at present and the interconnectedness of different parts of the UK, the spread of the virus between regions and nations will reduce the effectiveness of a circuit breaker that does not extend to the whole country.

Annex: PHIA framework of language for discussing probabilities

