

Weekly COVID Update:

**Cross-National Policy Comparisons and Canadian Trends in
Social Distancing, Social Media Activity, and Government
Support**

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Foreword

Canada, like many countries around the world, is beginning to reopen its economy. At the same time, we are still confronting a serious public health threat in the SARS-CoV-2 virus and in COVID-19.

How are we reopening, compared to other countries? And how are we doing as a country at maintaining social distancing and the public support and attention necessary to sustain the fight against COVID-19?

On our Dashboard, we present unique quantitative data on:

- The openness of the economy on nine different dimensions in 52 different jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories.
- Trends in social distancing in Canada.
- Trends in social media attention to COVID-19 and selected other topics.
- Trends in support for federal, provincial, and local government management of COVID-19.

We also provide a weekly qualitative summary of the actions governments are taking and considering taking to reopen their economies and manage the coronavirus.

Our data are updated weekly. You can subscribe to a weekly update by visiting our website: www.reopeningaftercovid.com.

Please direct any questions or comments to peter.loewen@utoronto.ca.

Data Visualizations from Dashboard

Level of Reopening by Sector Among OECD Countries and Selected Canadian Provinces and US States

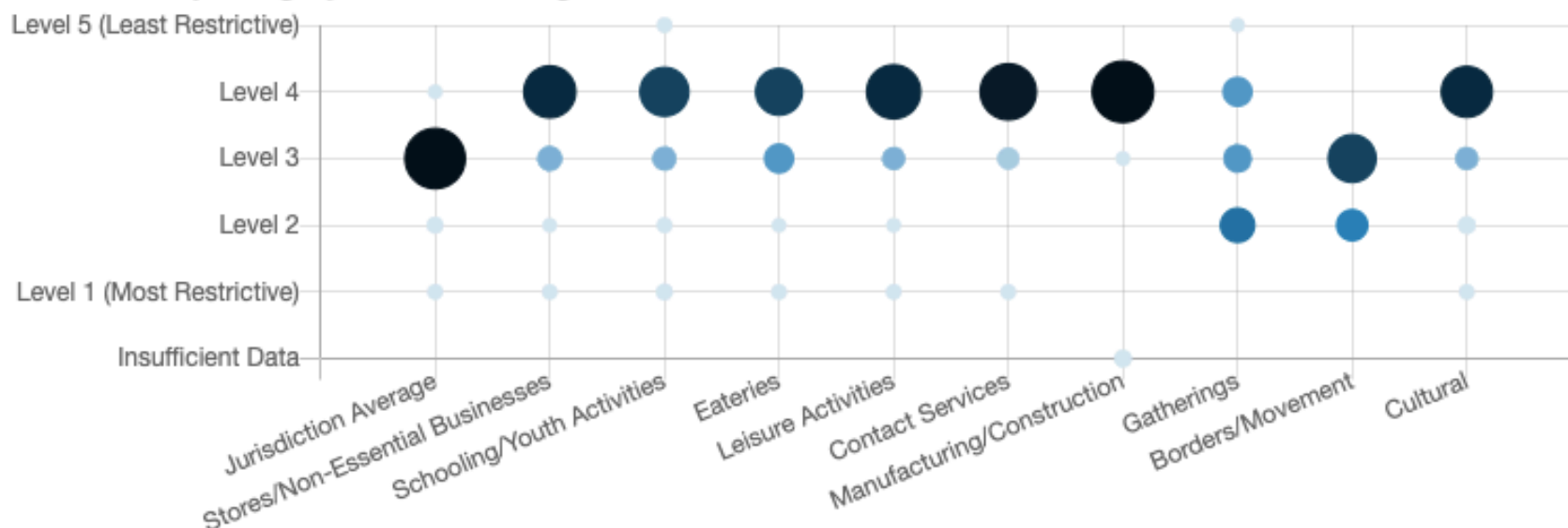


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of October 5. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, Schooling/Youth Activities, Eateries, Leisure Activities, Contact Services, Manufacturing/Construction, Gatherings, Borders/Movement, and Cultural. Each sector is assigned a level of reopening from Level 1 (Complete Lockdown) to Level 5 (Unrestricted Access). The larger and darker a dot is, the more jurisdictions are at that level of reopening. For details, see www.reopeningaftercovid.com.

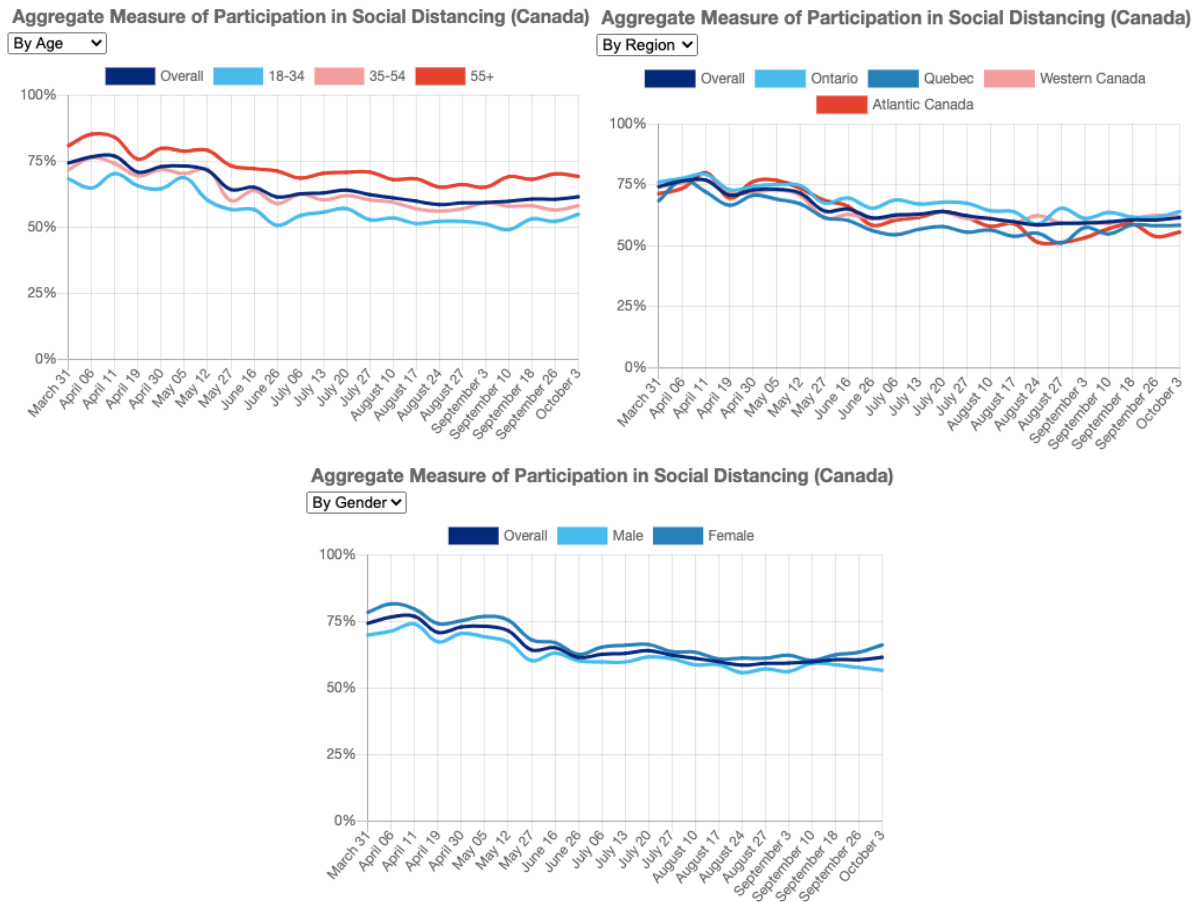


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada).

We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance from others; avoided domestic travel; avoided public transit; and avoided the grocery store at peak times. The graph displays the percentage of these measures taken by the average survey participant. The surveys used to collect these data were run in partnership with the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO). Each survey has a sample size of approximately 2,500 people. For each survey, we worked with a leading sample provider to generate a nationally representative, online sample of Canadians. In addition, following data collection, we applied survey weights to each survey so that—within each province—the sample is representative of the population age and gender.

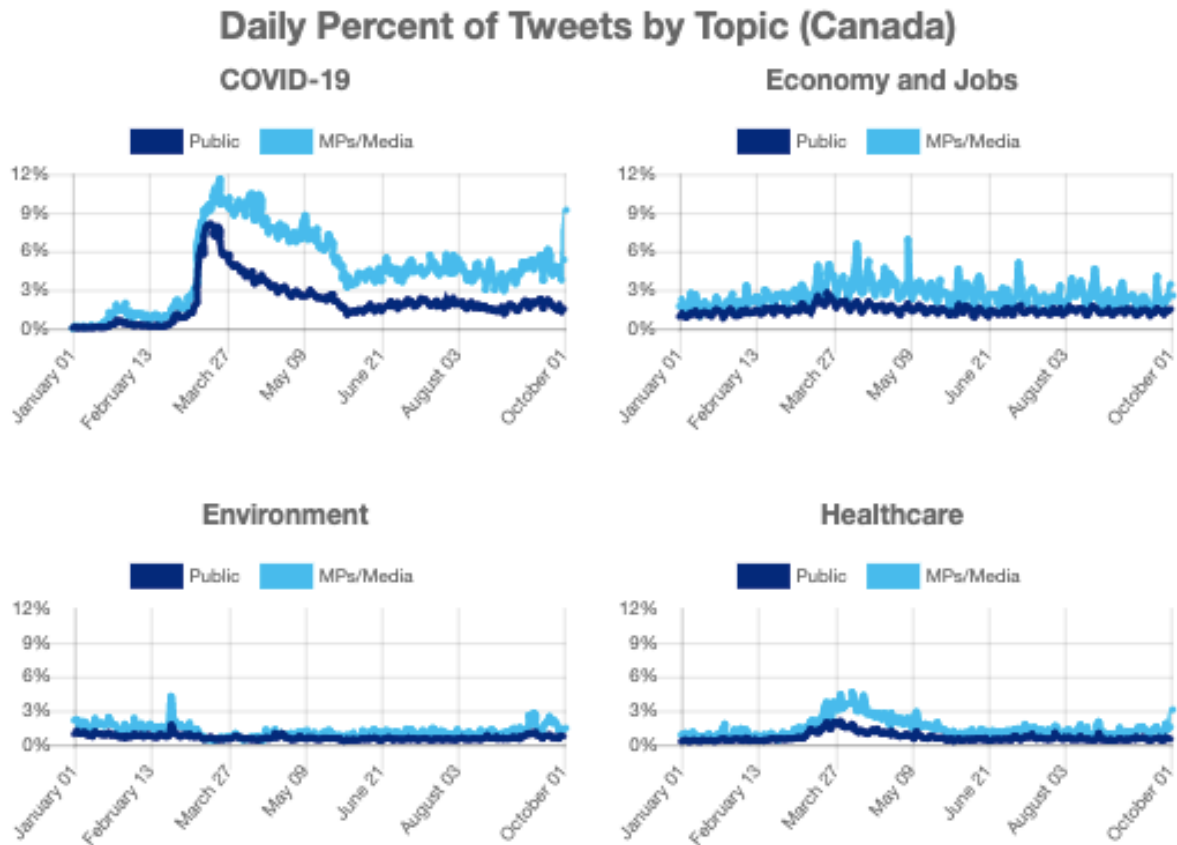


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other. The Twitter data are provided by the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO). It aims to capture the entire Canadian Twitter conversation. To do so, MEO identified a set of politicians, political journalists, public intellectuals, and Canadian-specific hashtags and collected every Twitter user that touched one of these themes or individuals. MEO then evaluated each individual, looking at their follower or friending behaviour, biographies, self-identified location, and hashtag use and included them in the sample if they were determined to be algorithmically likely to be Canadian. The dataset contains approximately 200,000 tweets a day. The analysis uses a 10% sample of the public's daily tweets and the full set of daily tweets from MPs, senators, and journalists.

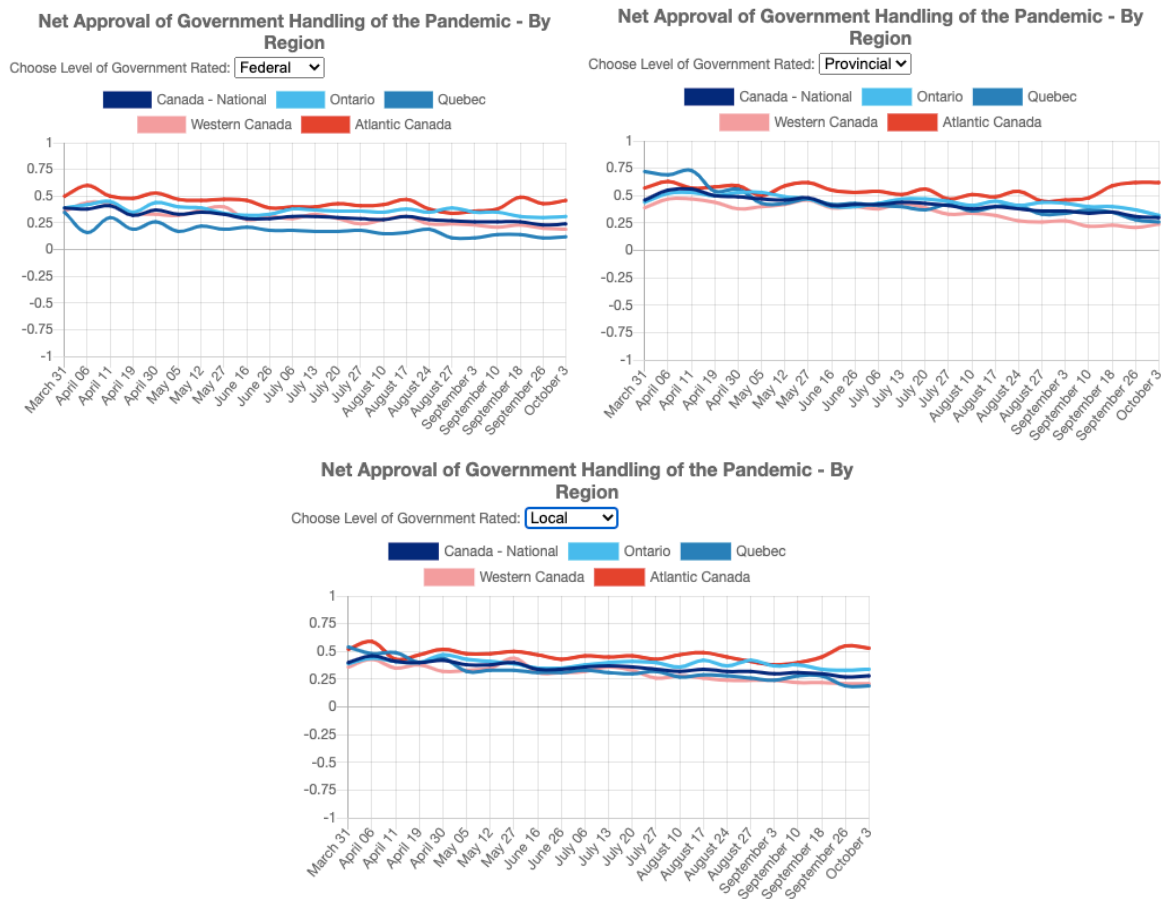


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score, participants' answers were coded as follows: strongly approve (1); somewhat approve (0.5); neither approve, nor disapprove (0); somewhat disapprove (-0.5); and strongly disapprove (-1). The graph displays the average score. The surveys used to collect these data were run in partnership with the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO). Each survey has a sample size of approximately 2,500 people. For each survey, we worked with a leading sample provider to generate a nationally representative, online sample of Canadians. In addition, following data collection, we applied survey weights to each survey so that—within each province—the sample is representative of the population age and gender.

Individual OECD Country Profiles

THE AMERICAS

Canada

→ *Alberta*

The number of cases in the province continue to rise with the majority of cases in Edmonton and Calgary. Alberta remains in Stage 2 of its reopening plan with several schools reporting outbreaks.¹ “Alberta Health data shows that the number of new daily cases is increasing among school-aged children and teens, but so too has the number of young people being tested.”² After parents expressed confusion about what symptoms warrant keeping their children home from school, the province has added an information chart online to improve their communication efforts surrounding school reopenings safely.³

→ *British Columbia*

The number of daily new cases in British Columbia has been largely stable, with some minor fluctuation. The provincial state of emergency has been extended through October 13. B.C. is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. No significant changes to current restrictions have been observed. Most businesses are open subject to hygiene and social distancing measures.

→ *Manitoba*

Members of a Manitoba First Nation went into lockdown after several people tested positive for COVID-19, possibly due, according to provincial health officials, to several people from the community attending events at a recreation centre from September 24-27. People in the community are being told to leave their homes only to seek testing, for medical care, or to send one person from a household for essential supplies; travelling to Winnipeg from the affected area has also been banned.⁴

→ *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick reported one new case of COVID-19 on October 3, and currently has 3 active cases.⁵ Public Health New Brunswick has released a series of guidelines for participating in fall activities safely, with special attention given to Thanksgiving and Halloween.⁶ New Brunswickers are encouraged to hold small Thanksgiving gatherings this year, and to hold them outside if possible.⁷ Those planning to participate in Halloween activities are encouraged to sanitize their hands between visits, keep high-touch areas such as door handles and railings clean, and consider offering non-food treats such as stickers or coloured pencils.⁸ There is no indication that the province will impose any compulsory restrictions on Thanksgiving gatherings or trick-or-treating activity.⁹ Premier Blaine Higgs has also reminded New Brunswickers that using face masks continues to be mandatory in public whenever safe physical distancing is not possible, and that failing to comply with the province’s emergency order could lead to a provincial mandatory mask policy being implemented as soon as October 8.¹⁰

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Newfoundland and Labrador remains at Alert Level 2. In the province, COVID-19 infections are under control with a few cases related to travel. On October 7, the trial period ends for the easing of quarantine restrictions for rotational workers returning from outside the Atlantic bubble. In preparation for a potential second wave, the province has boosted their contact tracing efforts, stockpiled PPE, and decided to take a regional approach to restrictions based on localized conditions.¹¹

→ *Northwest Territories*

No active cases remain within the Northwest Territories. The territory-wide Public Health Emergency has been extended through October 13. On October 1, the government announced \$12.371 million in

new funding to support schools with extra costs incurred due to COVID-19 regulations. The funding will go towards additional teacher recruitment, personal protective equipment, cleaning and sanitizing supplies, and remote learning infrastructure, among other requirements.¹² The Territories are still at Phase 2 of its reopening plan. In most cases, indoor gatherings and events can have a maximum of 25 people; gatherings of up to 50 are allowed outdoors. Similar limits apply to businesses and services.

→ *Nova Scotia*

As of October 2, Nova Scotia has three active cases of COVID-19, with one new case identified on October 1.¹³ The province has also renewed its state of emergency, effective from October 4 until October 18, unless the government decides to terminate or extend it.¹⁴ The province of Nova Scotia has provided residents with guidance for Thanksgiving gatherings and reminded them of applicable restrictions on gatherings.¹⁵ People are allowed to gather in close social groups of up to 10 without physical distancing gatherings, and 250 people indoors with social distancing.¹⁶ Nova Scotians are being strongly encouraged to celebrate Thanksgiving with family and friends from their consistent group of 10.¹⁷ Anyone who leaves the Atlantic Bubble for Thanksgiving celebrations must self-isolate for 14 days upon returning to Atlantic Canada.¹⁸

→ *Nunavut*

Ten cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed at the Hope Bay gold mine; these newly diagnosed cases will be the first to count as part of the territory's total, as all previous cases were found to have originated elsewhere in the country.¹⁹ Another confirmed case at a separate mine in Rankin Inlet resulted in the infected person, who did not come into contact with any residents of Nunavut, being sent back to their home province.²⁰ While the government said there is minimal risk of transmission to community members, they reminded residents to follow all public health recommendations.²¹ The territorial government has extended their public health emergency orders another two weeks to October 15.²² The chief public health officer of Nunavut announced that essential workers who enter the territory without completing an isolation period must wear a mask at all times when outside of their dwelling for the first two weeks of their residency.²³

→ *Ontario*

As of October 6, Ontario's 7-day rolling average has increased by a third to 624 cases per day.²⁴ There has been a significant backlog in testing due to an exponential increase of cases and community transmission, causing the government to suspend walk-in testing across the province in favor of an appointment based system.²⁵ Experts say that this transition will cause an artificial drop in confirmed cases, as healthcare providers cope with the changing rules.²⁶ Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health said that additional restrictions may be coming to regional hotspots.²⁷ As part of the government's Fall Preparedness Plan, the government has invested money into supporting public health and long term care homes.²⁸ Casinos opened across Ontario on September 28.²⁹

→ *Prince Edward Island*

The province has adopted a new COVID-19 alert system with three levels: new normal, caution, and restricted. These levels will be used to describe the current set of restrictions in place and are subject to changes. The decision-making process is based on a set of core criteria, which include transmission, public health capacity, outbreak risk, and importation.³⁰ The chief public health officer warned citizens about a potential second wave, but COVID-19 cases remain low.

→ *Quebec*

On October 1, Quebec reported 933 new COVID-19 cases,³¹ the highest daily case increase since early May. Over the past two weeks, Quebec has had approximately 8,500 new cases and cumulatively Quebec has reported approximately 75,000 COVID-19 cases.³² The Greater Montreal area, Quebec

City, and the majority of the Chaudiere-Appalaches region have been designated Red Zones, where restaurants may only do delivery and take out, public gatherings can have maximum 25 people, and gatherings with people who live at different addresses is forbidden.³³ Red zones must stay red for a minimum of 28 days.³⁴ In Red Zones, there are contactless book lending, no audiences in community and cultural centres, but sports facilities and outdoor sports can continue.³⁵ Fines of \$1000 will be issued for illegal gatherings and for protestors who gather without masks. Police will have the ability to get emergency warrants from judges over the phone if people refuse to cooperate.³⁶ The City of Montreal denied a protest permit request for a protest against COVID-19 related health regulations on October 11.³⁷ On October 7, bars and restaurants will protest the Quebec government's decision to close eateries and beverage establishments in areas designated red zones.³⁸

→ *Saskatchewan*

Ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday, Saskatchewan's chief medical health officer issued a reminder that private gatherings should be limited to 30 people, and that social distancing must be maintained, recommending that private gatherings only include members of your household or extended household.³⁹ A number of outbreaks have been reported in the Yorkton area, although extensive local restrictions are not expected to be implemented.⁴⁰ The Saskatchewan Health Authority said that outside visitors to the hospital and long-term care facility in the town will be severely limited.⁴¹ Saskatchewan's election campaign is underway in advance of the provincial election on October 26.⁴² Elections Saskatchewan said they are able to receive up to 40% of total vote through mail-in ballots, though only around 10% of voters are expected to exercise that right.⁴³

→ *Yukon*

There are no active cases among residents of Yukon. On September 25, the territorial government filed a response to a legal challenge against the extension to the territory's state of emergency, arguing that "the decision was grounded in reality and legislation."⁴⁴ Yukon is now in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Restrictions on the number of people allowed at gatherings, 10 indoors and 50 outdoors, remain.

The United States

→ *California*

On September 30, the governor enacted various bills that: prevent eviction and foreclosure, provide economic recovery packages, expand paid sick and family leave for front line workers and increase access to workers' compensation. He also passed bills related to some of the governor's executive actions taken as part of the pandemic response.⁴⁵ California's governor advocated for the HEROES act and encouraged White House and Senate officials to pass the bill that supports state, local, territorial and tribal governments and delivers economic relief to Americans.⁴⁶

→ *Illinois*

On October 3, Illinois surpassed 300,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases. The state's test positivity rate, the metric that experts use to gauge how rapidly the virus is spreading, is lower than last week's 3.7% at 3.3%.⁴⁷ The government scales back reopening when a region reaches or surpasses the state-set threshold of 8% positivity rate for three consecutive days.⁴⁸ Accordingly, on September 29, the Governor of Illinois announced that Region 1 would close again due to the rising positivity rates in northwestern Illinois. New restrictions were imposed, including closing indoor bar and restaurant service. Lawmakers in the region responded negatively by claiming that "the positivity rate is only one piece of the puzzle," and that "Region 1 has not reached warning levels on hospital bed and ICU utilization."⁴⁹ Chicago's mayor announced on September 28 a plan to ease restrictions put in place, allowing indoor bar service to resume, increasing indoor capacity at restaurants, health and fitness centers, personal services, non-essential retail and all other establishments from 25% to 40%.⁵⁰

→ *Michigan*

Michigan's seven-day moving average has increased to 870 new cases per day, its highest point since April.⁵¹ The state has reported an increase in COVID-19 related hospitalizations in the last two weeks. On September 18, 481 were hospitalized with COVID-19, whereas 674 were hospitalized on September 30. On October 2, the Michigan Supreme Court struck down the Governor's emergency powers, rendering all executive orders regarding COVID-19 past April 30 unconstitutional without approval from Michigan's GOP-led House and Senate. This effectively terminates all remaining restrictions and precautionary measures related to COVID-19 in the state, until the Governor reaches a deal with the state legislature.⁵² Accordingly, this next week will be crucial to determine the trajectory of the state.

→ *New York*

New York has increased its testing capacity to 120,000 tests per day, as the state is coping with early signs of a surge.⁵³ On September 29, elementary school students went back to classrooms across New York City, with middle and high schools following suit on October 1. Families have the option of choosing all-remote learning, and 48% of families have chosen to do as of October 2, up from 30% six weeks earlier.⁵⁴ Simultaneously, New York City restaurants reopened their indoor dining areas on September 30 at reduced capacity. Nevertheless, as COVID-19 cases surged over the weekend in local clusters, Mayor Bill de Blasio is now seeking state approval for local lockdowns in nine ZIP codes where COVID-19 positivity rates have spiked. Local lockdown measures would include shutting non-essential businesses as well as schools in those nine neighborhoods identified as hotspots in Brooklyn and Queens.⁵⁵

→ *Texas*

Texas health officials are preparing for an increase of cases in the fall because of the return to school and COVID-19 preventive measures being eased in parts of the state that are seeing a rise in cases.⁵⁶ A partnership between the US Department of Health and Human Services and Texas governments is supporting increased testing in McLennan County by establishing new testing sites.⁵⁷ Sam Houston State and the Texas State University System are hiring approximately 200 COVID-19 contact tracers.⁵⁸ More inmates have died from COVID-19 in Texas than in any other prison system in the US, with a death toll of approximately 162 inmates. A federal judge is requiring the Texas prison system to increase their COVID-19 protective measures, such as providing hand sanitizer to some inmates in a geriatric facility.⁵⁹ Some local Texas business owners and the Texas Border Coalition are asking the Department of Homeland Security Secretary to reopen the US-Mexico border to nonessential travel to prevent negative economic repercussions.⁶⁰ Earlier in September, U.S. House of Representatives Congressman, Henry Cuellar, proposed a plan to allow nonessential travel into Texas.⁶¹

Mexico

While the COVID-19 positivity rate fell nationally, the rate has stagnated at around 40%.⁶² A mathematician from the National Autonomous University explained that this rate should be at around 5% to qualify as having controlled COVID-19.⁶³ As of September 30, Mexico continues to record hundreds of daily COVID-19 fatalities.⁶⁴ In comparison to other countries, Mexico has a high positivity rate because it is only testing people with COVID-19 symptoms, which means approximately every 13,000 people per 1 million residents.⁶⁵ On October 8, the government is aiming to release information about the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.⁶⁶ As of June, authorities began to allow restaurants to reopen at 30% to 50% capacity.⁶⁷ Approximately 90,000 restaurants, or 15% of eateries in Mexico, have had to close due to the pandemic.⁶⁸

Chile

Chile authorized two clinical studies for the vaccines developed by Biotech CO., Ltd. and Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies.⁶⁹ Chile's new national budget shared by the president allocates approximately 9 billion pesos to the health budget⁷⁰ for vaccine purchase, shorter wait times prior to consultations, surgeries, and primary health care. The country will also continue with their plan to construct 54 hospitals and 120 clinics and to support the Health Mind Program which was designed to combat unhealthy eating and inactive lifestyles.⁷¹ The government designed a new program that dispatches teams into communities to educate people about COVID-19 risks and ways people can protect themselves.⁷² In order to respond to the need for economic reactivation, and to support job creation, the president announced an employment subsidy plan.⁷³ On October 1, five schools reopened in the Pirque community.⁷⁴ Teachers and representatives protested reopening schools because the Mayor did not consult the return in person and teachers felt pressured to return.⁷⁵

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's 7-day moving average of new cases is 11,500, which is slightly lower than last week. Hospitalizations and ICU capacity continue to rise at an alarming rate, with 4,000 new Covid-19 admissions in the past 7 days and 844 Covid-19 patients are currently in intensive care.⁷⁶ The Conseil Scientifique says that hospitals could be overwhelmed "within a few weeks" and there could be a "rise in mortality linked to Covid-19, but also other illnesses due to disorganization in the health care system."⁷⁷ Data shows that new COVID-19 cases in Paris are above the 250 per 100,000 threshold, triggering the maximum alert protocol. Accordingly, Paris will shut all bars completely from October 6 for at least two weeks.⁷⁸ Restaurants in the city will have to put in place new sanitary arrangements in order to stay open, and university lecture halls must be no more than half-full. Marseille bars, restaurants and gyms will stay closed for at least one more week.⁷⁹ Despite the second wave, downloads of France's StopCovid app remain at 3 million, not having increased since the Fall surge began.⁸⁰

Germany

Germany's case count is steadily increasing, as the federation's 7-day R-value increased from last week by 0.1 (currently at 1.14).⁸¹ The federal government remains on watch, but it has thus far not brought in any new restrictions nationwide. Germany lifted its blanket warning against travelling to all countries outside the European Union on October 1;⁸² under new criteria, warnings will be issued for regions across the world when infections rise above the level of 50 cases per 100,000 people over a week. Travelers from regions below that threshold will be able to return to Germany without going into quarantine pending a negative test.⁸³ Thus far, Germany's biggest cities have collected more than €3 million in penalties from violators of COVID-19 restrictions.⁸⁴ Despite being one of the most open countries in Europe and adopting extremely local lockdowns, thousands of Germans protested against COVID-19 restrictions over the weekend.⁸⁵

Belgium

Despite the rising number of new COVID-19 infections, Belgium continues to ease restrictions.⁸⁶ In Brussels, face masks are no longer required in public, and will only need to be worn inside shops or in busy areas. Outside of the city centre, local authorities will have the jurisdiction to designate mask zones. The quarantine period has been reduced from 14 to 7 days.⁸⁷ A COVID-19 Barometer has been introduced that will gather information from doctors on patient consultations related to complaints of

respiratory problems, and the “frequency of complaints will be utilized as an indicator for the prevalence of COVID-19 in local areas and lead to targeted testing in certain areas of the country.”⁸⁸ On September 30, the Coronalert smartphone app was launched following the decentralizing proximity tracing Apple-Google framework.⁸⁹ Alexander De Croo has become the new prime minister in Belgium, more than a year after the last federal election.⁹⁰

Netherlands

On October 3, the Dutch government formally recommended face masks, despite disagreement by public health advisors on its effectiveness, in restaurants, cafes, theatres, bars, contact-based services such as salons, and concert halls, unless people are seated. Non-medical masks are now recommended in indoor public spaces for those aged 13 and older. The education ministry has decided to recommend masks be worn in all secondary schools, but not at colleges and universities where social distancing is easier, however it is up to schools themselves to decide whether or not to make masks a requirement.⁹¹ Following a rise in the number of new cases, nearly all of the Netherlands has been declared an international risk area by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) in Germany. Residents of Germany are being warned against visiting ten of the twelve Dutch provinces.⁹² As of October 5, churches have been advised to limit the number of worshippers to 30, hold services online as much as possible, and ban singing.⁹³

Spain

Measures approved on September 30 in a meeting between the prime minister and the heads of Spain’s autonomous regions will implement restrictions in areas where they have more than 500 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents, 35% or higher COVID-19 related ICU occupancy, or where the positive COVID-19 test result rate is higher than 10%.⁹⁴ Since the capital Madrid and nine surrounding areas meet these criteria, they were required to partially lockdown. During the lockdown, social gatherings are limited to six people, and restrictions are implemented on hotels and places of worship. People are permitted to leave home for work, school, shopping, or medical purposes, and bars and restaurants may only accommodate a seating capacity of up to 50% and must close earlier.⁹⁵ The government for the region of Madrid wanted to maintain the 45 restrictions that they had implemented and did not want to put the city or surrounding areas on lockdown.⁹⁶ During the meeting between the prime minister and the heads of the autonomous governments, Madrid, Catalonia, and three other regions voted against the restrictions.⁹⁷ On September 30, regional authorities in the Balearic Islands implemented restrictions on Ibiza in response to a growing spread. Alongside suggesting people stay home, the government is limiting gatherings to five people, closing playgrounds, bars, and restaurants at 10pm.⁹⁸ On October 3, flights between the Canary Islands and Germany resumed despite a recommendation from Berlin not to travel to Spain.⁹⁹

The United Kingdom

The UK’s 7-day rolling average has increased by half in the last week, now amounting to 8,500 new cases per day.¹⁰⁰ Manchester, Glasgow, Cardiff and Swansea are currently the only cities subject to local lockdown restrictions. Despite 45% of UK COVID-19 infections being from schools, colleges and universities, the Prime Minister made clear that classroom closures would be a last resort, even in the strictest levels of the UK’s new three-tier lockdown system.¹⁰¹ Despite being well into the second wave, saunas and steam rooms were given the green light to reopen in England, as the last remaining beauty sector services to reopen.¹⁰² England and Wales launched its new COVID-19 tracing application, NHS Covid-19, on September 24, and it has already been downloaded over 12 million times (roughly 20% of the population), rendering it a success.¹⁰³

Ireland

The Irish government has been advised by the National Public Health Emergency Team to raise all 26 counties to level five, the strictest level of measures, for the next four weeks. In Dublin and Donegal, level three restrictions are currently in place, with the rest of the country at level two. At level five, visits between households are not permitted, only 10 people would be allowed to attend funeral services, weddings would be limited to 6 people, bars and restaurants would only provide takeaway, only essential retail shops would remain open, people would be asked to work from home, limit their exercise to within five kilometers of their home, and avoid public transport. Visits to care homes would be suspended except for in compassionate circumstances,¹⁰⁴ however schools would stay completely open.

Luxembourg

Effective October 3, residents will be allowed to enter Saarland and the Rhineland-Palatinate for 24 hours at a time, without providing a negative COVID-19 test. This rule will apply to everyone, not only cross-border employees.¹⁰⁵ On October 5, The Horesca federation requested to allow bars and restaurants to stay open past midnight because, as outside temperatures are falling and fewer patrons can be seated outside, establishments could dedicate more attention to properly organizing distance rules inside their facilities thereby also discouraging private parties where people break social distancing rules. The federation has also emphasized that establishments would continue to uphold all safety regulations.¹⁰⁶

Portugal

The government announced a prolongment in the state of contingency until October 14 due to the increase in COVID-19 cases recorded over the past weeks. The contingency in mainland Portugal has been in place since September 15. Public gatherings have been limited to 10 people, unless each member belongs to the same household, and a ban is in place on the sale of alcoholic beverages applying from 8pm onwards. The opening hours of establishments are determined by each local council and are based upon the decisions of local health authorities and security forces. In restaurants, cafes, and pastry shops located 300 metres from schools, there is a maximum limit of four people per group, unless they belong to the same household.¹⁰⁷ A free mobile app has been created for psychological intervention in crisis for those who need it as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The promoters of the app "Psicovida" explained that the application allows users to speak directly with "accredited" psychologists through video calls, stressing that the platform "is confidential and safeguards users' rights."¹⁰⁸

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

Effective September 30, Vienna has been added to Germany's list of high risk COVID-19 areas.¹⁰⁹ Currently, the capital makes up more than half of Austria's COVID-19 infections, prompting authorities to introduce a vaccine tram. The vaccine tram will provide residents with free seasonal flu vaccines in efforts to reduce overcrowding at hospitals. The tram will be used until November 13, but vaccines will continue to be administered at health centres and doctors' offices.¹¹⁰

Greece

Several COVID-19 related travel restrictions have been extended until October 12 regarding travel restrictions from certain countries, negative COVID-19 tests, and passenger location forms. Passengers arriving in Greece from Poland, Belgium, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the UAE, Malta, Albania, and North Macedonia, must present a negative test upon arrival. Also, flights remain suspended between Greece and Turkey, and Greece and the Catalonia region in Spain.¹¹¹ As cases continue to rise in Athens, additional measures have been introduced, including additional testing centres, more rapid testing in hot spots, and the creation of temporary isolation facilities for the city's vulnerable groups.¹¹² The first cruise ship to visit Greece since March has had a COVID-19 outbreak, resulting in more than 1,500 people isolating onboard after crew members tested positive.¹¹³

Italy

Daily case numbers are rising, but Italy has a fraction of the number of new cases when compared to neighboring countries.¹¹⁴ The current state of emergency expires mid-October, prompting the prime minister to extend the state of emergency until the end of January. Under a state of emergency, the central government has greater powers which makes it easier to bypass the civil service.¹¹⁵ The culture minister announced that free admission to state museums on Sundays will end this fall in efforts to avoid undervaluing the sites and reducing large crowds of tourists arriving on free days.¹¹⁶ The government approved the use of airport style rapid 30 minute COVID-19 tests in schools in order to ensure wider testing and results.¹¹⁷ "The central Lazio region, which includes Rome, has issued an order making it mandatory to wear masks in public, including outdoors, effective October 3."¹¹⁸

Slovenia

The number of new cases per day is rising. The interior minister announced that the government is deciding whether or not to formally declare an epidemic again in Slovenia: "In the coming weeks, the decision will be made based on the epidemiological situation and the health care system's capacity."¹¹⁹ If an epidemic is formally declared, formal legal measures would permit the government to better allocate resources. Effective September 30, passengers arriving to Slovenia from red or orange listed countries will not be required to quarantine if travelers can provide a negative test result that is less than 48 hours old.¹²⁰

Switzerland

Effective September 25, Switzerland has imposed quarantine requirements on arrivals from regions of France, the Liguria region in Italy, and Upper and Lower Austria.¹²¹ Beginning October 1, "concerts, football matches, conferences, and other large-scale public and private events of more than 1,000 people can resume." Organizers require permission from local authorities whose decision will be made based on public health conditions and their tracing capacities. Masks must be worn, people must remain seated where possible, and ticket sales cannot exceed $\frac{2}{3}$ of the normal capacity. Despite a rising number of infections, and recommendations by the government's COVID-19 task force not to ease restrictions, Switzerland is one of the first to allow for the return of mass events.¹²²

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

After reporting 3,793 new cases of COVID-19 on October 2, a second straight record for a single-day increase in cases, the Czech government announced its decision to implement a renewed state of emergency, starting October 5.¹²³ It will last at least 30 days and enforce strict physical distancing by closing secondary schools in areas with a large number of infections, banning spectators from sports events, banning musicals and opera, and limiting the number of people allowed to participate in weddings.¹²⁴ Indoor gatherings are currently being limited to a maximum of ten people, while outdoor gatherings can be held with up to twenty.¹²⁵ These restrictions do not currently include gatherings such as weddings and funerals, which can still be held with up to 100 participants with appropriate safety measures in place. Masks have again been made mandatory at all times in all indoor and outdoor places outside of the home.¹²⁶

Hungary

Hungary's National Chief Medical Officer has said that "we are in an emerging, active phase of the second wave of the coronavirus epidemic, with the number of people infected rising across Europe."¹²⁷ From October 1 until further notice, all students, teachers, and staff of Hungarian kindergartens, primary, and vocational schools are required to have their body temperature measured before entering the premises.¹²⁸ If their body temperature is found to exceed 37.8 degrees Celsius, they will be asked to return home for the day.¹²⁹ The Hungarian government has also decided to extend its border closure from October 1 until at least November 1, with the expectation that it will be extended further as the second wave of COVID-19 sweeps across Europe.¹³⁰ Under the border closure, foreigners are not allowed to enter Hungary except for exceptional circumstances.¹³¹

Latvia

Latvia's Director of the State Chancellery said on October 2 that restrictions on public gatherings are not currently being considered, despite a surge of new COVID-19 cases.¹³² When asked if the country's current epidemiological situation could serve as a reason to implement new restrictions, the government said that there are no plans to do so at the moment, despite an emergency task-force meeting set to take place on October 5 to discuss the spread of COVID-19 in Latvia.¹³³ On the same day, the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (SPKC) increased its COVID-19 infection threshold so that self-isolation will now be required when entering Latvia from countries with a 14-day cumulative COVID-19 incidence of 25 per 100,000, instead of the previous 16.¹³⁴ This means that only Finland, Cyprus, the Vatican, and Liechtenstein are currently on the so-called "white list" of countries not requiring compulsory self-isolation.¹³⁵ From October 7 it will again be compulsory to wear protective face masks when using public transport services in Latvia, as ordered by the government.¹³⁶

Lithuania

On September 30, the Lithuanian government approved a proposal from the Ministry of the Interior to provide additional conditions for smoother entry of highly-qualified staff, lecturers, and researchers.¹³⁷ Their applications for temporary residence permits in Lithuania will be processed online.¹³⁸ Where entry is granted, the original biometric data of the documents will need to be submitted only upon arrival.¹³⁹ The Cabinet meeting has also made a decision to waive the requirement for foreign nationals to present a negative test result for COVID-19 done 72 hours prior to arrival.¹⁴⁰ These changes have come after

concerns were heard from Lithuania's public and private sectors over a lack of professionals and high-quality researchers in Lithuania since the start of the pandemic.¹⁴¹

Poland

Poland reported a single-day increase in COVID-19 cases over 2,000 for the first time on October 2, while their total number of cases exceeded 100,000 as of October 4.¹⁴² As new cases of COVID-19 continue to rise, restaurants and bars across Poland's most affected Powiats at the "red" and "yellow" alert levels are being asked to close at 22:00.¹⁴³ Poland's health minister has said that there would be no nationwide lockdown, and that the government will continue to maintain a regional approach to restrictions.

Slovakia

Along with Czech, the Slovak government has declared a national state of emergency for at least 45 days, starting on October 1, due to a sustained increase in COVID-19 infections over the past few weeks.¹⁴⁴ The new measures include prohibiting many outdoor gatherings including all family, sports, cultural, and religious events.¹⁴⁵ Exceptions to the mandate include weddings, baptisms, and funerals, and sporting competitions provided that all involved test negative for COVID-19 in the preceding 12 hours.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, all bars, restaurants, and clubs are required to close at 22:00.¹⁴⁷

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

The director of the Danish Health Authority has advised all those who experience even minor symptoms of an illness to stay home from work, reminding Danes that anyone who has had close contact with an infected person or has travelled to a high-risk country should self-isolate.¹⁴⁸ The reproduction rate in Denmark is currently estimated to be 1.1, having fallen from between 1.3 and 1.5 in the past week. The restrictions on nightlife and assemblies implemented in Copenhagen last week have been extended two weeks. They are now set to expire on October 18.¹⁴⁹ A technical error at the Danish Health Data Authority has caused the mass deletion of thousands of emails sent by staff at SSI, the country's infectious diseases agency. The error may prevent access to the decision-making process during the country's response to the pandemic, which would normally be ensured under Denmark's freedom of information laws.¹⁵⁰

Estonia

Estonia reported 81 new cases of COVID-19 on October 1 in one of the country's largest daily increases since the beginning of the pandemic.¹⁵¹ Public health officials in Estonia are strongly encouraging the use of masks nationwide. Despite the recommendation, mask use is not expected to become compulsory.¹⁵² The Estonian government has altered its direct flight restrictions. All flights will be permitted into Estonia if the infection rate in their country of origin is no more than double the EU average.¹⁵³ As of October 2, this restriction would allow flights from all EU countries except France, Spain, and the Czech Republic. The threshold for quarantine requirements upon arrival remains the same: 25 per 100,000 over the past two weeks for Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland; 16 per 100,000 for all other countries.¹⁵⁴ However, the government will discuss changing this threshold next week after the minister of social affairs said it was outdated due to the high infection rates throughout Europe.¹⁵⁵ The foreign minister also said that the government hopes to re-establish the travel bubble with the other

Baltic nations, but it requires reaching a level of epidemiological stability.¹⁵⁶ Professional athletes arriving in Estonia no longer need to quarantine themselves if they test negative for COVID-19 in their country of origin and upon their arrival.¹⁵⁷

Finland

Following a rise in infections throughout Finland, public health officials have recommended the use of masks nationwide when social distancing cannot be maintained, when accessing local services, and when taking public transit.¹⁵⁸ Beginning October 8, bars and restaurants across the country must stop serving alcohol by midnight and close by 1am. The restrictions are stricter in the Helsinki region, where bars and restaurants must stop serving alcohol at 10pm and close by 11pm. Bars and restaurants in regions considered to be in the ‘acceleration’ stage of the pandemic will also be limited to half capacity.¹⁵⁹ Nearly 200 cases of COVID-19 in recent weeks have been connected to the food and drink industry, with more than 40 cases connected to a single bar.¹⁶⁰ Local officials in some regions are considering implementing stricter restrictions than are currently in place nationally.¹⁶¹ The Finnish government has survived its first vote of no-confidence since the beginning of the pandemic. Opposition parties brought the motion forward due to what they viewed as “irresponsible” economic policy. All partners in the governing coalition voted to retain confidence, giving the government a clear majority of parliamentarians present during the vote.¹⁶²

Iceland

Iceland currently has the highest per capita infection rate among all Nordic countries.¹⁶³ As of October 2, there are over 600 active cases of COVID-19 in the country, including 13 who have been hospitalized.¹⁶⁴ The Icelandic government introduced a number of new restrictions on October 5 to combat the rising infection rate in the country.¹⁶⁵ Gatherings will be limited to a maximum of 20 people, with a few exceptions for funerals, schools, large stores, and theatrical performances.¹⁶⁶ Bars, nightclubs, and gyms must close for at least the next two weeks. Swimming pools may stay open, but are restricted to half of their normal capacity.¹⁶⁷ Masks are now mandatory for all services where social distancing cannot be maintained, including public transit.¹⁶⁸ Iceland’s border testing scheme, where individuals must receive two negative COVID-19 tests to be let out of quarantine, is expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.¹⁶⁹

Norway

Norway will ease some of their remaining national restrictions on October 12. The gathering limit at outdoor events will be expanded to 600 people, although attendees must be divided into groups of 200 and practice social distancing. Recreational sports for adults will be permitted and serving alcohol will be allowed after 12am.¹⁷⁰ Despite the easing of national restrictions, local officials in Oslo have announced harsher measures due to a rising infection rate in the city. Indoor events where attendees are not seated will be limited to 50 people, a mandatory mask policy will be implemented on public transit, and customer registration at restaurants all came into effect on September 29.¹⁷¹ Norway’s health minister advised that municipalities in Oslo’s surrounding area also implement similar restrictions. A number of the municipalities have complied with the advice.¹⁷² Prime Minister Solberg has ruled out an exemption from travel restrictions for Sweden after Swedish officials and residents of border towns had lobbied the government for a change. Regional travel restrictions for Nordic countries are expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.¹⁷³

Sweden

The number of COVID-19 patients in Sweden who have been admitted to the ICU has doubled in the last three weeks.¹⁷⁴ Due to a rising infection rate across the country, the Swedish government has decided to postpone a planned expansion of the gathering limit for public seated events until at least October 15. Bars, restaurants, and cafes will be permitted to cater to more than the current gathering limit of 50 people from October 8.¹⁷⁵ Public health officials announced that people who live in the same household as an infected person must self-isolate with them until they recover. Those who have recovered from COVID-19 in the past six months, have antibodies, or attend a special needs school are exempt from the restriction.¹⁷⁶ Sweden's top public health official said that the country's COVID-19 restrictions will likely remain in place for at least the next year, and local restrictions may be implemented in the coming months.¹⁷⁷

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

Japan has experienced a slight increase in the average level of daily new cases over the past week. The health minister has vowed to double the antigen testing capacity at airports to 20,000 per day as the country eases some border restrictions.¹⁷⁸ The government put forward a vaccination plan on October 2, saying that they would cover all costs associated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Anyone who develops adverse side effects will receive compensation to cover them as well.¹⁷⁹ Despite the resurgence of COVID-19 in many parts of the world, foreigners who have qualified for mid-term or long-term visas, including medical and educational professionals, businesspeople, and students, are permitted to enter Japan after October 1 so long as their sponsor ensures that they comply with a two-week quarantine period upon their arrival.¹⁸⁰ After waiting for months, Tokyo was finally included in the nationwide tourism campaign on October 1, even as it did not experience a significant reduction in its daily new cases.

South Korea

The number of daily new cases in South Korea has largely stayed below 100 in recent days, however concerns remain over potential spread of COVID-19 during the extended holiday this week. Effective November 13, a fine will be imposed on people who fail to wear a mask in public spaces and on public transportation.¹⁸¹ A 30-day grace period to implement the mandatory mask policy starts on October 13, and officials retain the ability to remove the grace period if the infection rate in the country demands it. On September 29, the Seoul Administrative Court upheld bans on anti-government protests planned for the weekend due to concerns over the transmission of COVID-19.¹⁸² All restrictions implemented during the "special quarantine period" announced last week continue to be in place.

New Zealand

No locally acquired cases of COVID-19 have been reported in New Zealand in the past week and no one is receiving hospital care due to COVID-19. To better manage the capacity of government-run isolation facilities, a voucher allocation system was launched on October 5 to enable registration for isolation space. The system will be compulsory starting November 3 and passengers will need to present the voucher to board their flight to New Zealand.¹⁸³ New requirements for personal protection equipment use and isolation from New Zealand communities came into effect for flight crews on October 5.¹⁸⁴ The prime minister has confirmed that Auckland will join the rest of New Zealand at alert

level 1 on October 7;¹⁸⁵ after that date, there will be no restrictions on movement, gathering or activities across the country once again.

Australia

The number of daily new cases in Australia has dropped to just above 10 in recent days. The situation in Victoria has also improved, and the state is returning to in-person learning at schools in a staggered process, with Year 7 students going back to classrooms on October 12 and Years 8, 9 and 10, returning on October 26.¹⁸⁶ The government of South Australia permits people to drink while standing outdoors in licensed venues, and dance at private functions such as weddings.¹⁸⁷ In Queensland, drinking while standing is also allowed from October 2, and on November 1, up to 40 people can gather in private and public spaces.¹⁸⁸ After multiple delays, the ‘travel bubble,’ consisting of Australia and New Zealand, is going into effect; Australia will begin admitting travelers from New Zealand without a quarantine requirement on October 16, as long as they have not been in a designated COVID-19 hotspot in the preceding 14 days. New South Wales and the Northern Territory will be the first two states to reopen their international borders.¹⁸⁹

Turkey

On October 1, the UK added Turkey back to its quarantine list, following Turkey’s announcement that it will only be publishing symptomatic COVID-19 cases.¹⁹⁰ Effective October 3, travelers arriving in the UK from Turkey will need to quarantine for two weeks, with fines raised for those who fail to self-isolate. The initial penalty remains £1,000, but the maximum fine for someone who repeatedly flouts the rules is rising from £3,200 to £10,000.¹⁹¹ Following the statement, WHO has also urged Turkey to follow its COVID-19 reporting guides and report asymptomatic positive cases as well.¹⁹²

Israel

Almost three weeks into the second nationwide lockdown, the positivity rate of testing has remained around 15%. Without any clear signs of substantial improvement, the prime minister has warned of even tighter restrictions. The health minister said that 1,500 additional beds, 20% of which are for critical patients on ventilators, would be provided to hospitals nationwide by mid-October.¹⁹³ The police are moving to ramp up lockdown enforcement, especially in the ultra-Orthodox communities that have been criticized for violating restrictions. Amid heavy criticism, military forces sent to assist police in enforcing the lockdown will retreat from their mission. Border police will take their place.¹⁹⁴ The restriction on outgoing flights has not been enforced at the country’s largest airport due to legal difficulties, and the government is working on a solution.¹⁹⁵ On September 30, the legislature approved the government’s controversial plan to curtail public protests, and removed the exemption enjoyed by protesters and religious services from general gathering limits. Protesters can no longer travel beyond 1 kilometer from their home.¹⁹⁶ The protests against the prime minister were then converted into hundreds of smaller and localized gatherings across the country in adherence to the new restrictions.¹⁹⁷

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Partnerships and Contributors

The Media Ecosystem Observatory – a joint effort of Peter Loewen (Toronto), Taylor Owen (McGill), and Derek Ruths (McGill) – is responsible for the social media and behavioural data on our dashboard. The leads on these projects are Eric Merkley (Toronto) and Aengus Bridgman (McGill).

Reopening data and summaries are produced by a team at PEARL (The Policy, Elections, and Representation Lab) at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy: Mitchell Anderson, Haobo Chen, Jad El Tal, Kulsoom Khalid, Blake Lee-Whiting, Anthony Moniuszko, Erika Porco, and Sapphira Thompson-Bled.

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Links

<https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/>

<https://www.pearlmunk.com/>