

PEARL

**POLICY, ELECTIONS &
REPRESENTATION LAB**



Weekly COVID Update:

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

October 26, 2020

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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

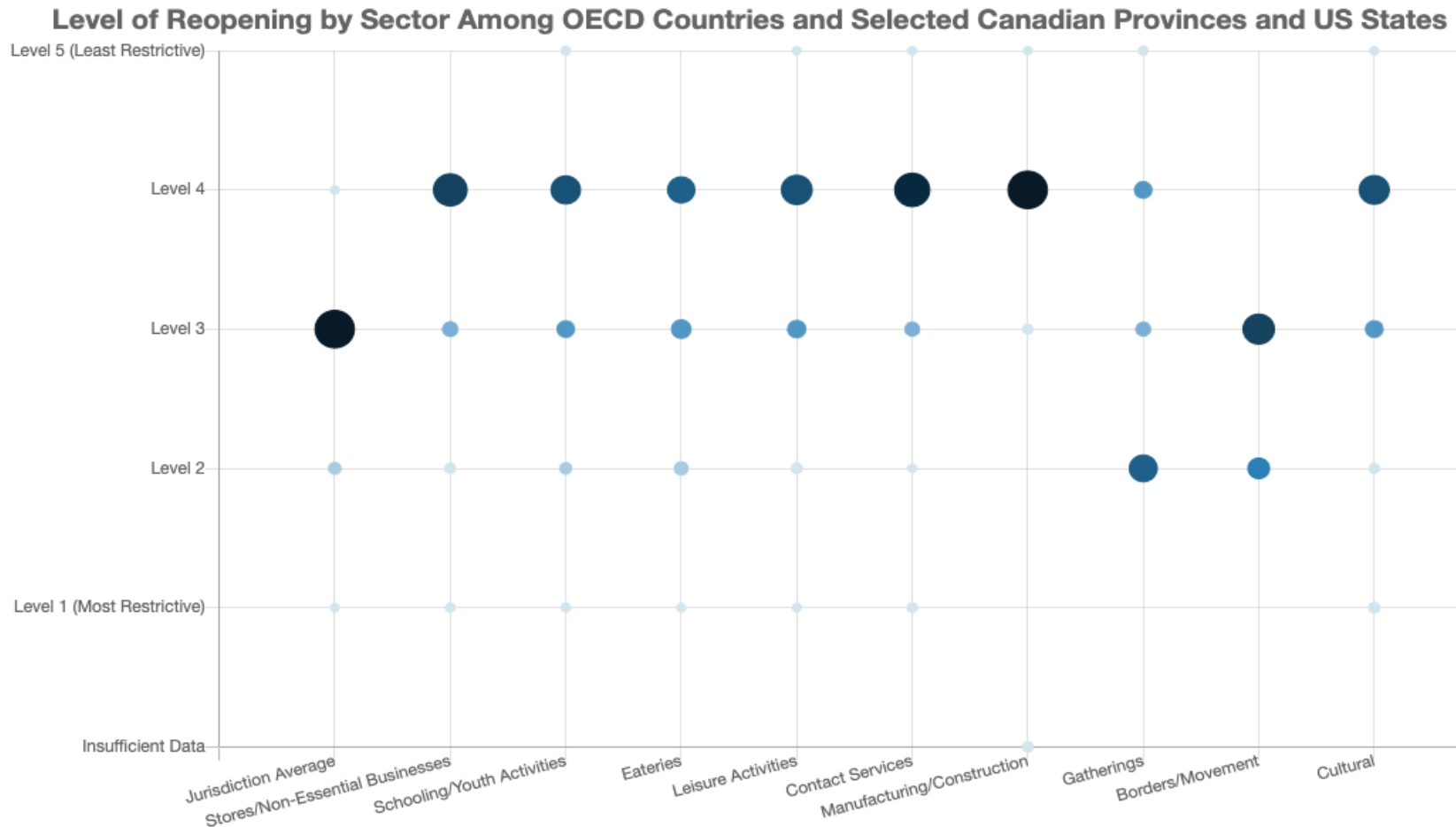


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of October 26. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, 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.

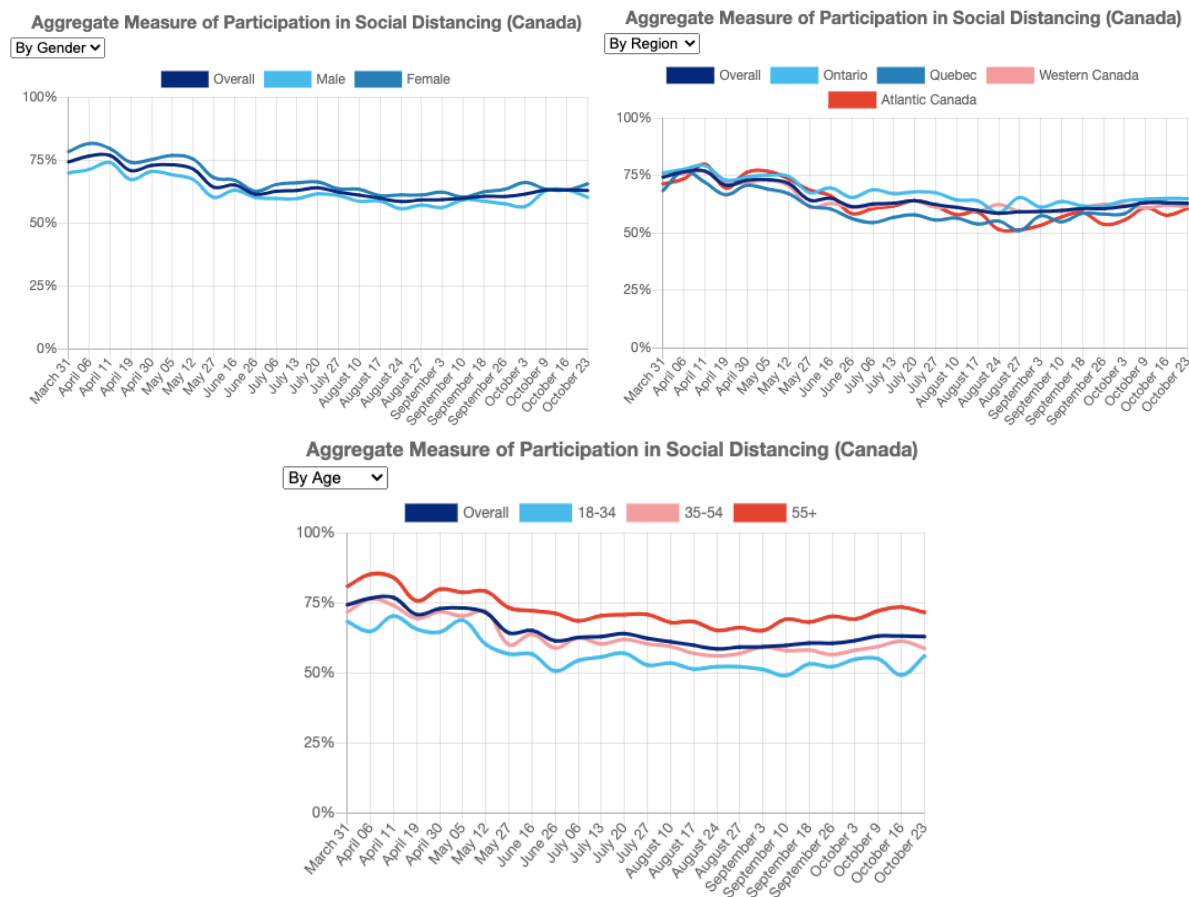


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada).

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.

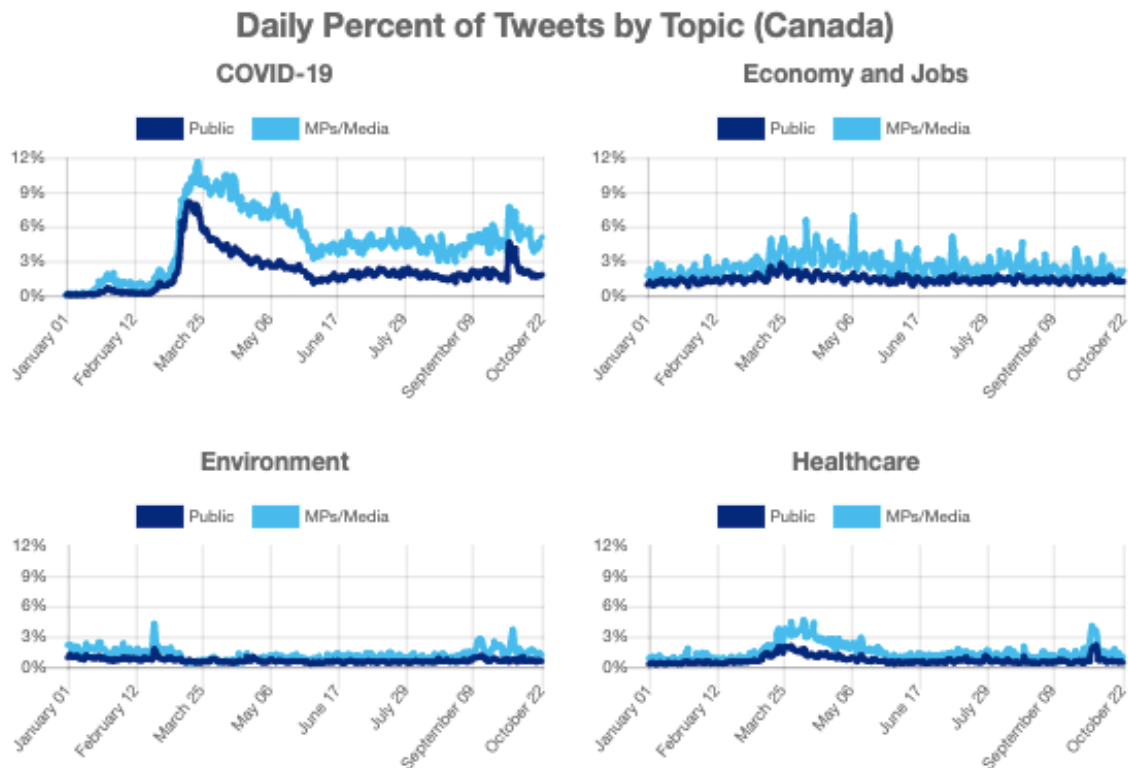


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other. 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.

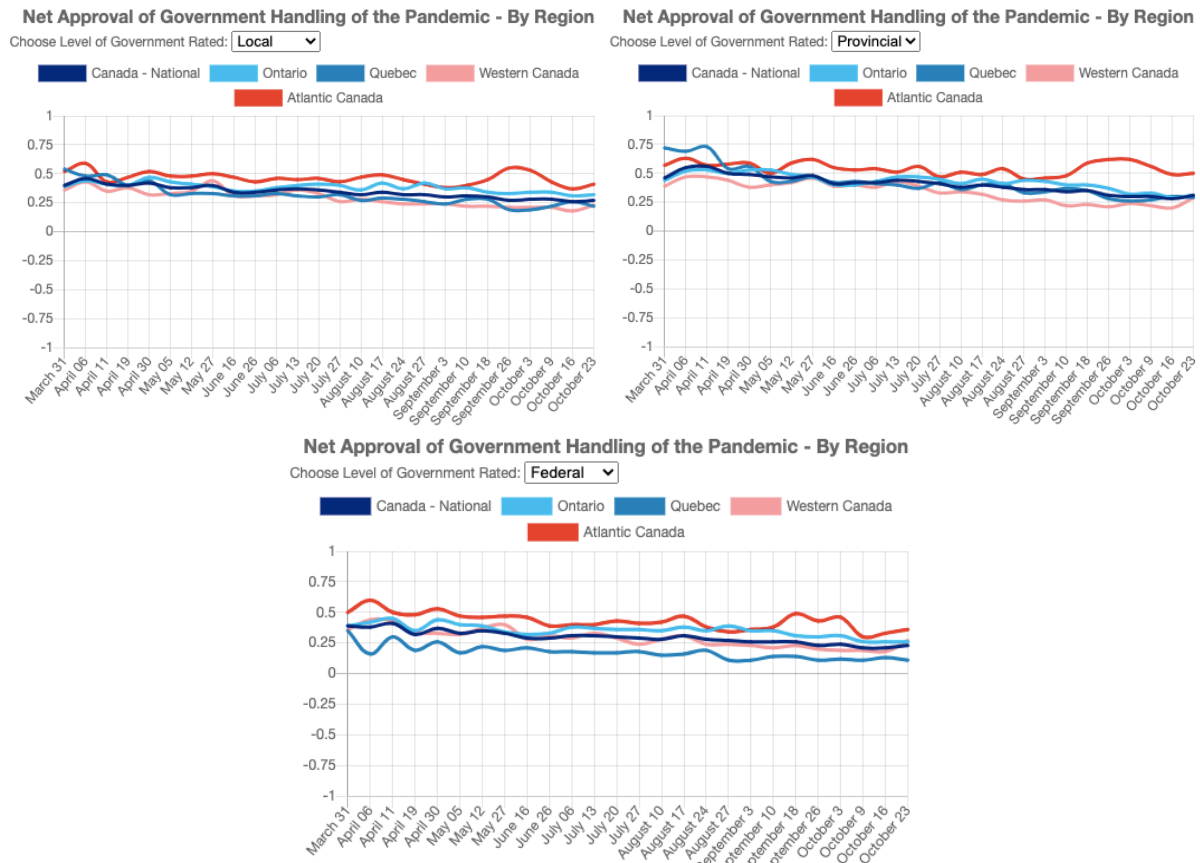


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score, 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*

As of October 23, there are 432 new COVID-19 cases in Alberta.¹ Two weeks since voluntary measures were put in place by the province, Edmonton still has half of the current number of active cases. The government has decided to stop testing people who are asymptomatic or who have not had contact with a confirmed case.² On November 2, a pilot project will be launched for travelers entering Canada by land or air through Alberta. Travelers will have the option of being tested at the border to shorten the self-isolation period from 14 days to 48 hours if they receive a negative test result.³

→ *British Columbia*

The average number of daily new cases in British Columbia has increased to above 200 per day, but the healthcare system has yet to feel the impact of the increase in cases. The provincial health officer declared the arrival of a “second wave” on October 19.⁴ 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 restrictions.

→ *Manitoba*

As of October 25, 161 new cases were identified, bringing the number of confirmed cases in Manitoba to 4,249.⁵ Effective October 26, new rules were implemented for schools in the Winnipeg area and northern Manitoba, as the province's COVID-19 case count continues to rise. Under the new restrictions, schools are required to keep students 2 meters apart “to the greatest extent possible.” Kindergarten to grade 8 students also have the option of temporary remote learning while schools remain in the restricted orange level of the province's pandemic response system.⁶

→ *New Brunswick*

Two New Brunswick residents died from COVID-19 on October 25, bringing the province's total number of COVID-related deaths up to six.⁷ Residents of the Campbellton region are currently being asked to limit their contacts to a single-household bubble, and to wear masks at all times in public places, subject to enforceable fines.⁸ More than half of New Brunswick's active cases are now located in the Campbellton region.⁹ The Moncton and Campbellton regions were forced back to the more restrictive “orange phase” two weeks ago. This includes the closure of all personal services, gyms, fitness facilities, casinos, cinemas and large performance venues.¹⁰ Outdoor gatherings in orange-level regions must be limited to 10 people or fewer, while some indoor events, including weddings, funerals and religious services, will be permitted with 10 or fewer people.¹¹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Newfoundland and Labrador remains at Alert Level 2. There are currently 9 active cases in the province.¹² Effective October 21, free flu shots will be available across the province, with the goal of reducing burden on the healthcare system in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak or second wave.¹³ The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is appealing the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador's decision to uphold the COVID-19 travel ban.¹⁴

→ *Northwest Territories*

After having no new cases for months, as of October 25, the Northwest Territories has 4 active cases of COVID-19. Despite the new cases, no new restrictions have been imposed by the government. The Territories is still at Phase 2 of its reopening plan and is not expected to move on to Phase 3.

→ *Nova Scotia*

Nova Scotia reported 1 new case of COVID-19 on October 26, with 2 recoveries reported on the same day.¹⁵ There are now just 5 active cases in the province.¹⁶ Health officials reported on October 26 that of the province's 1,101 cases since March, 1,031 of them have been resolved.¹⁷ There have been 65 deaths as a result of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia.¹⁸ Health officials have said there are no Nova Scotians in hospital due to the virus at this time.¹⁹

→ *Nunavut*

Nunavut has confirmed a case of COVID-19 at the Mary River mine, although there is no evidence of further transmission at the site.²⁰ Two additional presumptive cases have been reported at the Meliadine gold mine, with those workers and their close contacts now in self-isolation. No Nunavut community members are currently working at either site, and the government has emphasized that the risk of spread remains low.²¹ The territorial government warned that it would consider closing its common travel area with the Northwest Territories and parts of northern Manitoba if the situation continues to deteriorate in the rest of Canada. Authorities continue to advise that residents do not travel outside the territory.²² Concerns have been raised about isolation hub departure protocols after flights to Nunavut were found to have both essential workers, who do not need to isolate, and returning residents.²³

→ *Ontario*

Ontario's 7-day rolling average has climbed to 857 cases per day, and the province reported a record 1,042 new COVID-19 cases on October 25, marking the first time cases have ever surpassed 1,000.²⁴ The minister of health indicated that the increase is likely a result of Thanksgiving gatherings, and that Ontario's numbers should be plateauing this week as a result of public health measures put in place 2 weeks ago.²⁵ The government remains committed to taking swift actions in closing certain regions to keep schools across the province open. Despite resistance from members of the government, Halton Region is expected to join Toronto, Ottawa, York Region and Peel in modified stage 2, where indoor dining, including bars and nightclubs, gyms, cinemas, interactive exhibitions, performing arts centres, casinos, bingo halls, and some personal care services are closed for at least 28 days.

→ *Prince Edward Island*

Prince Edward Island remains at the New Normal COVID-19 alert level. The province has 1 active case with no hospitalizations or deaths. There is no evidence of community spread.²⁶

→ *Quebec*

Over the past 24 hours on October 24, Quebec reported 1009 additional cases, bringing the total to 99,235 COVID-19 cases.²⁷ Quebec City currently has the majority of active cases per 100,000 people in Quebec.²⁸ On October 24, Montreal reported the highest increase in cases with 254 new cases.²⁹ The premier explained that it was unlikely that restaurants in red zones would be permitted to reopen in October, as the three week lockdown for Montreal and Quebec City had closed gyms, bars, entertainment venues and most gatherings. The premier also encourages Quebecers to continue working from home.³⁰

→ *Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan reported 78 new cases of COVID-19 on October 24 in the province's largest daily increase since the beginning of the pandemic.³¹ As of October 25, there are 619 active cases and 25 hospitalizations, also a record-high.³² At least 86 cases have been linked to the Prince Albert religious gathering that caused the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation (PBCN) to enter a lockdown. More than 450 people may have been exposed to COVID-19 due to the gathering.³³ Elections Saskatchewan will deliver voting kits to those on the PBCN who will be unable to reach a polling station on October 26.³⁴ An outbreak on the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation has also been declared, with authorities warning

residents to wear a mask if they must leave their homes.³⁵ Officials do not expect to know the complete results of the provincial election on October 26 due to the large volume of absentee ballots they have received.³⁶

→ *Yukon*

Yukon has 5 active cases of COVID-19 as of October 25. The territory's chief medical officer is releasing a "traffic light model" to guide symptom monitoring for residents. The general public in Yukon will have access to flu shots starting on October 26, with more vulnerable populations given priority.³⁷ Whitehorse is moving into the next stage of its phased reopening plan, with spectators allowed inside the Canada Games Centre. Capacity limits and social distancing measures continue to apply.³⁸ Yukon is now in Phase 3 of its reopening plan, with no significant changes to restrictions announced in the past week.

The United States

→ *California*

On October 22, California reported 6,359 new cases; approximately 2000 cases were from Los Angeles, where there has been a testing backlog.³⁹ The daily average of cases has increased by 5.5%, while the weekly average case rate has increased 15.1%.⁴⁰ As of October 26, California had a cumulative total of cases greater than 906,000 cases, the most cases in any one US state.⁴¹ On October 20, San Francisco entered yellow or phase four, which is the most open.⁴² As of October 20, all personal care services will be allowed indoors with regulations at all phases, meaning that certain personal care services, like estheticians, spas and tattoo parlors, previously forced to close when counties were in phase one can now be open.⁴³ Approximately 60% of elementary and secondary students live in counties that are permitted to reopen in-person learning and some schools have already done so.⁴⁴ California presented guidelines for amusement parks like Disneyland to reopen, but interpretations of the rules suggest that the parks could be closed anywhere from weeks or a year.⁴⁵

→ *Illinois*

Illinois' test positivity rate continues to increase, rising to 6.1% on October 24.⁴⁶ This increase is accompanied by record numbers of daily cases this past week. The metro-east region has hit a seven-day rolling average positivity rate of more than 8% for three days in a row, meaning that the region will undergo "resurgence mitigations," which include a ban on indoor dining and drinking at restaurants and bars. This region underwent mitigations in September, had them lifted in the beginning of October, and will now undergo the mitigations again.⁴⁷ Chicago, or Region 11, is still reporting a positivity rate below 8%, at 6.7%; ICU bed availability sits at 25% according to the IDPH.⁴⁸

→ *Michigan*

Michigan's seven-day moving average has climbed to 1,850 new cases per day.⁴⁹ The state is reeling from outbreaks at two major universities: University of Michigan and Michigan State University.⁵⁰ An emergency stay-in-place order has been issued for University of Michigan students, requiring them to stay at their residences with few exceptions, including attending class, accessing dining services or carrying out approved work that can't be done remotely. Officials say the outbreaks in both institutions originated from fraternity and sorority parties and not in-person classes.⁵¹ A group of healthcare, public health, university, labor and business leaders called on Michigan's political leadership to support mandatory standards for mask usage, workplace practices and public gatherings,⁵² arguing that orders by the Michigan Department of Health should be deployed across the state with "discipline."⁵³

→ *New York*

New York's positivity rate continues to hover around 1%, as the state adopts a micro-cluster lockdown strategy.⁵⁴ The Governor noted that the positive testing rate in all focus areas under the state's micro-cluster strategy is 3.18%, and outside the focus zone areas is 1.06%. With the enhanced focused testing of this strategy, the positivity rates in Brooklyn, Rockland and Orange Counties are all down this week. Once those areas return to at least 1% positivity with regular testing capacity, then their businesses will open up again.⁵⁵ Movie theaters outside of New York City opened on October 23, with 25% capacity, and no more than 50 people in front of each movie screen.⁵⁶

→ *Texas*

Texas reported 81 new deaths and 6,125 new COVID-19 cases on October 24, the highest daily number of new cases since August 19. The positivity rate is 9.28%. The weekly average of cases increased 13% in the last week, hospitalizations increased 17% and testing fell 7%.⁵⁷ As of October 26, Texas had the second most cumulative COVID-19 cases in the US with 892,000 cases.⁵⁸ El Paso County imposed a curfew between 10pm and 5am, where people must stay home unless they are travelling for work or essential services and only one person per family may access essential services at the same time. Fines of \$250 will also be distributed in the county for failing to wear a mask.⁵⁹

Mexico

On October 24, Mexico reported 6,025 new cases and 431 additional deaths, bringing the cumulative totals to 886,800 cases and 88,743 deaths.⁶⁰ On October 23, Chihuahua was classified as red due to the increase in cases and COVID-19 hospitalizations were at 69% with only 23% of ICU beds still open.⁶¹ On October 26, 5 states regressed from yellow to orange; authorities have also suggested that Coahuila, Durango and Nuevo Leon may have to return to red or phase one due to the rise in cases.⁶² Following an increase in hospitalizations, Mexico City's mayor requested people avoid gatherings greater than ten, but said that for the time being Mexico City would remain in orange or phase two and refrain from reopening additional activities.⁶³ Mexico has not approve Gilead's COVID-19 vaccine Remdesivir at this time.⁶⁴

Chile

As of October 24, Chile reported more than 500,000 total COVID-19 cases.⁶⁵ The Magallanes region accounts for many of the cases, although their incidence rate has fallen.⁶⁶ As of October 20, the number of new cases fell 8% in the last week and 15% in the last two weeks.⁶⁷ On October 22, over the last 24 hours Chile had 1,495 new cases and 73 additional fatalities.⁶⁸ Despite the quarantine ending in some areas, Chile remains in a state of emergency.⁶⁹ Throughout the pandemic, Chile completed over 4 million PCR tests and the health minister suggests that approximately 20% of Chileans have been tested meaning they have a rate of approximately 207,000 tests per million people.⁷⁰ In preparation for the October 25 referendum, authorities introduced health measures that included extending voting hours, disinfecting tables, chairs and furniture, and asking voters to come with a pen.⁷¹

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's 7-day moving average of new cases increased by 10,000 cases in one week to 31,000 cases per day.⁷² COVID-19 patients occupy more than 42% of ICU beds nationally, and 64% in the Paris region. The French government has expanded an overnight curfew it imposed in eight urban areas of

France last week to encompass 38 more regions and Polynesia. The 9pm to 6am curfew and other public health measures will last till at least December.⁷³ This means that 46 million of France's 67 million people will be under curfews that prohibit them from being out during those hours except for limited reasons, such as walking a dog, traveling to and from work and catching a train or flight.⁷⁴ On October 22, France rebranded its failed "StopCovid" tracing app and renamed it "Tous Anti-Covid" (all against Covid), which has since seen an additional 1.2 million downloads for a total number of about 4 million. In an effort to assuage concerns of many in France over privacy, the updated app now instructs users to switch Bluetooth on only when they are in close proximity with other people, like on the subway or at parties because "it makes no sense to leave it on all the time."⁷⁵

Germany

Germany's 7-day R-value has increased to 1.39 and has not decreased below the 1.0 target since the beginning of September.⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, Germany recorded record numbers of cases this week, with a 7-day moving average of 9,500 new cases. Case clusters continue to be reported from family/friend events and nursing homes.⁷⁷ Throughout the past week, Chancellor Angela Merkel and government officials from other levels of government have urged citizens to cut down on socializing, encouraging them to stay at home instead. Even though the chancellor and all 16 state premiers agreed on new metrics and restrictions two weeks ago, some experts are starting to call for a return to the nationwide restrictions seen at the start of the pandemic, due to the patchwork of regulations that each state is enforcing.⁷⁸ Berlin, one of Germany's hotspots, implemented new restrictions on October 24, requiring face masks in markets and on 10 particularly busy streets, in shopping malls and in queues. This caused thousands to protest openly defying the rules and calling for the end of restrictions.⁷⁹

Belgium

On October 23, 227 daily new cases were reported with more than 2,700 COVID-19 patients hospitalized. Experts are warning that Belgium's peak number of infections will likely not be reached for another 7-10 days.⁸⁰ Due to an overwhelming demand, testing is now limited to only people with symptoms, while all non-urgent surgeries have been postponed to reduce the burden on hospitals.⁸¹ New measures were implemented on October 23 that will remain in place until November 19. Indoor sports where distancing is not possible, are banned for people over 12, while amusement parks have been closed. In theatres, cinemas, and concert halls, a maximum of 200 people is permitted. At post-secondary institutions, a capacity limit of 20% is allowed in classrooms along with masks deemed mandatory. Youth activities for children over 12 years old must be held outdoors but no overnight stays are permitted.⁸² "A senior virologist said that Belgium may return to a full lockdown if there is no reversal in infection numbers and hospital admissions continue to rise."⁸³

Netherlands

As of October 23, the number of newly registered COVID-19 cases topped 10,000 for the first time in 24 hours. Testing capacity has been expanded considerably since early October, allowing up to 50,000 tests per day.⁸⁴ The government stated that it is too soon to tell if the partial lockdown announced on October 13 has had a positive impact on curbing the spread of infections within the country, which included the closure of all cafes and bars. The government believes that closing schools and nursing homes would have had a greater impact on reducing the infection rate.⁸⁵

Spain

Spain was the first country in Europe to report more than 1 million COVID-19 cases.^{85a} On October 23, Spain reported approximately 20,000 new daily cases and 231 additional deaths bringing the total

deaths to approximately 34,752.^{85b} On October 25, Spain declared a national state of emergency in response to the increase of cases in Spain and across Europe.^{85c} The emergency imposes an overnight curfew between 11pm and 6am, with exceptions for travelling to work, purchasing medicine and caring for the elderly and children.^{85d} The curfew began October 25 and will most likely continue for six months.^{85e} Accordingly, the prime minister will ask Parliament to extend the state of emergency until May.^{85f} Governments in autonomous regions may adjust the curfew to begin anytime between 10pm and 12am and end anytime between 5am and 7am, prevent regional travel or limit gatherings to six people from different households.^{85g} The Canary Islands is excluded from the curfew.^{85h}

The United Kingdom

The UK's 7-day rolling average has increased by 5,000 cases since last week to 21,500 new cases per day.⁸⁶ The proportion of younger adults who publicly admit to flouting England's COVID-19 restrictions has increased in the past two weeks to roughly 1 in 5.⁸⁷ Under the UK's system of devolved authority, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have established their own public health rules. Meanwhile, the national government in Westminster leads the three-tiered alert system that applies to England alone.⁸⁸ On October 24, South Yorkshire became the latest region to join Liverpool, Greater Manchester and Lancashire in Tier 3, which includes a ban on household mixing indoors and outdoors, and the complete closure of pubs, bars, bookmakers, gyms and casinos. The Welsh government has imposed the strictest lockdown, including a ban on non-essential travel, closing most businesses, and restricting high schools to online instruction.⁸⁹

Ireland

As of October 21, 1,167 new COVID-19 cases have been reported in the Republic of Ireland.⁹⁰ Following the continuous rise in cases, the Republic moved to its highest level of COVID-19 restrictions, effective October 21. The measures will be in place for 6 weeks, with review for any changes after 4 weeks. Under level 5 restrictions, people will be able to meet up outdoors with 1 other household away from their home. Social or family gatherings are not allowed in homes or gardens, but visits on compassionate grounds and for caring purposes can continue. Those living alone or parenting alone will be able to pair up with another household as part of a "support bubble". Many non-essential shops and hairdressers will close down, with bars and restaurants permitted to provide takeaway services. The number of wedding guests permitted will remain at 25, while up to 10 people will be allowed to attend funerals. Elite sporting events are permitted to take place and most manufacturing operations will also remain open.⁹¹

Luxembourg

As of October 24, Luxembourg recorded 862 new cases.⁹² New restrictions were imposed in the country on October 26, which included restricting the indoor and outdoor gathering limit to 4 people. If a group meeting of more than 4 people does take place, then the application of masks will be mandatory. In addition, a curfew will be introduced from 11:00 pm to 6:00 am and sporting competitions will be put on hold for the upper and national divisions. The measures will be in force for a month. The measures have been authorized as a last attempt to contain the virus while avoiding a second lockdown. The prime minister said the government hopes to avoid another lockdown at all costs.⁹³

Portugal

Portugal witnessed a record of 3,669 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, as of October 24.⁹⁴ On October 23, the mandatory application of face masks in public places and the mandatory downloading of the

contact tracing app was discussed in the parliament. Mandatory application of face masks was instituted, with a fine of 100 to 500 Euros imposed on those who fail to comply with the rule.⁹⁵

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

On October 24, Austria reported 3614 new daily COVID-19 cases. Restaurants, bars, schools, and theatres remain open.⁹⁶ Effective October 23, a limit on public gatherings has been imposed with 6 people indoors and 12 outdoors. This applies everywhere, spanning from restaurants to weddings but, with exception for funerals. Professionally organized events are permitted to have 1,500 people outdoors and 1,000 indoors.⁹⁷ The Austrian government is working to “avoid a national lockdown for fear of damaging the economy and annoying voters.”⁹⁸

Greece

On October 24, the government reported 935 new daily cases of COVID-19 in Greece.⁹⁹ Young people make up between 60-70% of the infections.¹⁰⁰ Effective October 25, face masks will be mandatory both in public indoor areas as well as outdoors. There will also be a curfew from 12:30 am - 5:00 am in the Attica region, including Athens, and in other high-risk areas. In Northern Greece, two regions, Kastoria and Kozani, are in lockdown.¹⁰¹ The government has decided to cancel its plan to allow 10% of spectators back into sporting stadiums on October 31.¹⁰² The Opposition has accused the government of failing to properly prepare for the second wave during the summer, and instead prioritizing the reopening of the country to tourists.¹⁰³

Italy

On October 25, Italy reported a new daily record of 21, 273 cases.¹⁰⁴ Compared to the first wave, cases are more widely distributed across the country.¹⁰⁵ In efforts to avoid a national lockdown, local authorities have imposed several measures related to shops and schools. In the regions of Lombardy, Lazio, and Campagna, curfews have been imposed with different levels of severity.¹⁰⁶ Effective October 26, Restaurants and bars will close by 6:00 pm and public gyms, cinemas, and swimming pools will be shut down.¹⁰⁷ Also, more than half of high school teaching is being moved online in efforts to limit the number of students in schools.¹⁰⁸

Slovenia

Currently, there are 1, 961 new daily cases in Slovenia.¹⁰⁹ At this rate, experts warn that hospitals could run out of beds.¹¹⁰ The government has closed non-essential shops, hotels, kindergartens, and student dorms with plans to re-evaluate the measures next week.¹¹¹ The Opposition is blaming the government for badly communicating measures, arguing it has led to low public trust and compliance.¹¹²

Switzerland

Over the weekend of October 24-25, Switzerland reported 17, 440 new infections.¹¹³ Unlike the summer months, cases are spread out across all age groups. The Swiss government does not plan to take over management of the pandemic, but imposed some national measures, including making masks mandatory in closed off public spaces and limiting private gatherings to 15 people.¹¹⁴ Some cantons

have imposed new measures related to eateries, public gatherings, and leisure activities. However, measures vary between each of the 26 regions who each have autonomy over health.¹¹⁵

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic reported 7,301 new cases of COVID-19 on October 25, falling below 10,000 new infections in a 24-hour period for the first time since October 19.¹¹⁶ Having already closed schools, restaurants, and most non-essential businesses, the Czech Republic closed its borders on October 22, just after recording an all-time high of over 15,000 cases in a 24-hour period.¹¹⁷ The travel ban will apply to foreigners, tourists, and other non-essential travelers, and will remain in effect until at least November 3.¹¹⁸ The prime minister has called on his health minister to resign after visiting a Prague restaurant on October 22.¹¹⁹ He was appointed only a month ago as a "crisis manager" following the previous health minister's sudden resignation.¹²⁰ Just hours before the incident in the restaurant, it was announced that the country is likely to return to a full-scale lockdown with new restrictions that limit movement and limit public gatherings to two.¹²¹

Hungary

Hungary reported another single-day record of 3,149 new cases of COVID-19 on October 25, followed by an increase of 2,316 new cases the next day.¹²² This comes just one week after setting the country's previous single-day record of 1,791 new cases on October 17.¹²³ Entry restrictions for travelers from abroad remain in force.¹²⁴ In addition to shops and public transport, masks remain mandatory in cinemas, theatres, health and social institutions, while public office and clubs are required to close by 23:00.¹²⁵ Further ongoing restrictions include a ban on visiting hospitals and elderly care homes.¹²⁶ Despite the surge in cases and deaths due to COVID-19, Hungary has not announced any plans for a second lockdown or any further restrictions.

Latvia

259 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Latvia on October 26.¹²⁷ Latvian residents have been obligated to wear protective face masks in most public places since October 14.¹²⁸ Since October 17, no more than 30 people have been allowed to gather indoors for private events, and no more than 300 outside.¹²⁹ On October 27, the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers will meet to discuss the government's strategy for limiting the spread of COVID-19 and the possibility of implementing stricter safety measures.¹³⁰

Lithuania

Lithuania reported 776 new cases of COVID-19 on October 26, bringing the country's total confirmed cases up to 10,949 - over 3000 more than last week.¹³¹ On October 21, the Lithuanian Government approved a three-tiered classification system for individual municipalities based on various epidemiological indicators.¹³² The green zone will indicate that the risk of COVID-19 is low, and will include municipalities with less than 25 cases per 100,000 population.¹³³ The yellow zone will indicate that municipalities should be prepared for an outbreak and some preventative measures, and will include municipalities with less than 50 cases per 100,000 population.¹³⁴ Municipalities in the red zone will be subject to a decision regarding the introduction of a local quarantine, which may include

restrictions in public life, events, and education, and the mandatory use of personal protective equipment.¹³⁵ The red zone includes municipalities with more than 50 cases per 100,000 population.¹³⁶ 13 Lithuanian municipalities are currently under quarantine in the red zone.¹³⁷

Poland

Poland's Health Ministry reported 11,742 new cases of COVID-19 on October 25, two days after setting a new single-day record of 13,332 new cases on October 23.¹³⁸ There have been over 10,000 new infections per day for every day since October 21.¹³⁹ As of October 24, the entirety of Poland has moved to the red zone, which means that all the Powiats are now subject to the same restrictions.¹⁴⁰ All secondary, post-secondary, and primary school students above grade 3 have moved to remote learning.¹⁴¹ All sporting events must be organized without spectators.¹⁴² Cultural events must take place with fewer than 25 people, provided that they are able to maintain at least 1.5 meters of distance between each other.¹⁴³ All restaurants and catering establishments are prohibited from operating, except for take-out and delivery services.¹⁴⁴ Swimming pools, theme parks, spas, and fitness facilities are prohibited from operating.¹⁴⁵ Public gatherings are limited to 5 participants.¹⁴⁶ Wedding and funeral services are prohibited.¹⁴⁷ Masks must be worn at all times outside of home.¹⁴⁸ Contact services are allowed to continue, subject to a strict hygienic regime and staggered appointments.¹⁴⁹

Slovakia

Slovakia's government has begun the process of testing the entire country for COVID-19, with the four most affected provinces having already been tested between October 23 and 25.¹⁵⁰ Slovak health authorities have acquired 13 million rapid antigen tests for the testing of everyone aged 10-65.¹⁵¹ The tests will be voluntary and free of charge.¹⁵² 2,581 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed on October 22, just two days after the previous record of 2,202.¹⁵³ The government declared a state of emergency earlier this month in response to this surge in infections.¹⁵⁴ Secondary schools have switched to remote learning, all mass events, including church services, are banned, fitness centres and pools are closed, and restaurants can only serve clients outdoors.¹⁵⁵

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

Denmark reported 859 new cases of COVID-19 on October 23 in the country's largest daily increase since the beginning of the pandemic. It was the second straight day that Denmark set a record for its largest daily increase.¹⁵⁶ The government introduced a number of new restrictions. Masks must be worn at all indoor public places, the sale of alcohol will be banned after 10pm, and the gathering limit will be lowered to 10 people. The restrictions will be in place until at least January 2.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, all travelers from high-risk countries will be required to present a negative COVID-19 test result from the previous three days upon their arrival. The policy applies to all work and family-related travel. Only Estonia, Greece, and Norway are not currently considered to be high-risk.¹⁵⁸ The requirement for people with mild symptoms of COVID-19 to get a referral from their doctor for a test has been removed.¹⁵⁹

Estonia

Estonia has a two-week average of 41.1 new cases per 100,000 people, among the lowest infection rates in Europe as of October 26.¹⁶⁰ A significant number of the recent cases have been imported from abroad, and public health officials said that they will continue to emphasize the testing of all foreign arrivals.¹⁶¹ Schools in Tallinn are expected to remain in part-time distance learning after the mid-term break despite prominent public health officials saying that they could return to full-time in-school learning.¹⁶² The government announced that only travelers from Norway may enter the country without undergoing a quarantine period due to rising infection rates across Europe.¹⁶³ The late-night alcohol sales ban may be supplemented with a consumption restriction, after numerous accounts of people buying large quantities of alcohol just before the ban came into effect were reported.¹⁶⁴

Finland

The infection rate in Finland has been relatively stable over the past week, with a similar number of cases reported as the week before.¹⁶⁵ The government announced that nightclubs and bars will only be permitted to operate at 50% capacity, while restaurants and cafes can return to 75% capacity. The restrictions only apply in regions in the ‘accelerating’ phase of the pandemic.¹⁶⁶ The government is also finalizing its design of a testing-based entry model. Travellers will need to provide a negative test result from their country of origin if they will be in Finland for up to three days. Travellers who will be in the country for 3 to 7 days will need to take another test while they are in Finland, but will not need to quarantine. Restrictions for those who intend to stay in the country for longer than a week will be made on a case-by-case basis. If the epidemiological situation in a traveller’s country of origin is better than it is in Finland, then no test result will be required at all.¹⁶⁷

Iceland

An outbreak at Iceland’s largest hospital has caused significant strain on the country’s healthcare system, and officials said that the case numbers over the next few days will indicate whether more restrictions need to be implemented. At least 79 cases have been connected to the hospital. Authorities said they are considering making testing for all arriving travellers mandatory due to concerns over individuals not following quarantine rules.¹⁶⁸ Despite confusion over the recommendations of public health officials, fitness centres were allowed to reopen for group lessons of up to 20 people on October 20, as long as each guest is registered, social distancing is maintained, and no equipment is shared. The chief epidemiologist had not recommended that fitness centres be allowed to open, but had said that non-contact sports with up to 20 participants should be permitted. After conferring with the health ministry over opening fitness centres, the country’s top public health official ultimately agreed with the modified restriction.¹⁶⁹

Norway

The number of people with COVID-19 who have been hospitalized in Norway is now at 54, the highest number since late May. Norway has a two-average of 37.7 new cases per 100,000 people as of October 26, the lowest figure in Europe according to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.¹⁷⁰ Nearly 25 doctors in Tromsø, Trondheim, Narvik, Bergen and Stavanger will go on strike this week for the on-call hours only. The strike will not affect their regular hours, and larger cities were chosen in order to ease the strain of the shortage on smaller municipalities during the pandemic. Negotiations between the union and the state are expected to continue well into next week.¹⁷¹

Sweden

Sweden reported 1575 new cases of COVID-19 on October 22, among the country's largest daily increases since the beginning of the pandemic.¹⁷² Despite the rising infection rate, the government announced that seated cultural and sports events will be able to have up to 300 spectators from November 1.¹⁷³ The Skåne region has decided that it will keep its gathering limit at 50 people, and other regions may do the same.¹⁷⁴ The Uppsala region was the first to issue new recommendations to avoid public transit and contact with people outside one's household after the national government gave them that ability last week.¹⁷⁵ Sweden extended its entry ban for travellers from outside the EU until December 22.¹⁷⁶ The government is looking to create a new law that would allow them to limit the number of people on public transit and in stores, but would need the legislature to grant them additional powers to do so.¹⁷⁷

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

The number of daily new cases in Japan has remained around 500 over the past week. On October 23, a panel of experts approved a plan to test the efficacy of infection controls at large events. The minister in charge of the COVID-19 response said that he would ask businesses to extend their year-end holiday period so that people can stagger their travel.¹⁷⁸ The Japanese government is considering exempting business travelers who stay for no longer than 72 hours from quarantine requirements. The exemption, which could come into effect as early as November, would apply to travelers from countries and regions that have the pandemic under control.¹⁷⁹ In anticipation of the potential spread of flu, Tokyo government officials estimated that they may need up to 7.5 times the existing COVID-19 testing capacity.¹⁸⁰ Pfizer is planning to start clinical trials of a COVID-19 vaccine by the end of October.

South Korea

South Korea has been able to maintain a relatively low level of daily new cases, mostly below 100, in the nearly two weeks since the country moved to the lowest level of its social distancing scheme. In response to a recent major outbreak at a hospital, the government has started to inspect the outbreak response systems of all senior care hospitals across the country.¹⁸¹ The topic of flu shots remains at the center of public discussion. Despite a number of deaths and significant side effects reported after receiving the shot, public health officials decided to stick to their scheduled vaccination program after an investigation did not find any link between the flu shot and the reported deaths.¹⁸² On October 23, the government lifted the export ban on non-woven fabrics that are used to produce protective masks.

New Zealand

A small number of community cases were reported over the past week in New Zealand, all believed to be connected to the new case last week. Health authorities are now worried about a lack of community testing centers operating in Auckland, especially when there are none that are open on weekends.¹⁸³ As the number of New Zealanders returning from overseas declines and more vacancies at government managed isolation facilities are available, the minister of health said that more essential workers and international students would be admitted into the country.¹⁸⁴ Due to the pandemic, New Zealand is facing medication shortages which force patients to adjust prescriptions or switch to alternative medications.¹⁸⁵ All of New Zealand remains at alert level 1, with no restrictions on movement, gathering, businesses, or activities.

Australia

Australia continues to report a low level of daily new cases, with promising trends within the border. Victoria reported 0 new cases on October 26 for the first time since June. High school students in Victoria returned to the classroom on October 26. In-person education in the state is now fully restored.¹⁸⁶ New South Wales raised its outdoor gathering limit to 30 people and allowed restaurants to book groups of up to 30 from October 23.¹⁸⁷ The prime minister is pressuring state and territory officials to further raise their limit on international arrivals to allow Australians stranded overseas to return. The Australian Capital Territory and South Australia have joined the state-by-state travel bubble to admit arrivals from New Zealand. However, internal travel controls have not been implemented to prevent New Zealanders from entering states that have not yet joined the travel bubble.¹⁸⁸

Turkey

Turkey reported 2,165 new cases, as of October 23, the highest one-day figure since May, when Ankara imposed a series of restrictive measures. The local officials stated that there had been a spike in the COVID-19 case numbers in 5 provinces in northwest Turkey, with the second wave underway in some cities such as Anatolian Heartland. Measures such as wearing masks, social distancing and flexible working hours are currently in place, but the imposition of lockdowns are currently not being considered.¹⁸⁹

Israel

On October 21, the number of active COVID-19 cases fell below 20,000 for the first time since mid-July. The positivity rate of testing has also remained at a relatively low level. The military COVID-19 task force is working to enhance its capacity to perform 100,000 tests and 4,000 contact tracing probes per day in anticipation of outbreaks in the winter.¹⁹⁰ Only one designated COVID-19 hotspot was unable to join the rest of the country in easing restrictions on October 20, with all others able to do so. The government is considering shortening the timeline for its lockdown exit strategy after it was previously expected to last for at least four months.¹⁹¹ Education and health officials have agreed to return students in grades 3 and 4 to in-person learning on November 1, while still debating the return of grades 1 and 2. The prime minister announced a proposal to increase fines for educational institutions operating in violation of lockdown restrictions in response to the reopening of schools in some ultra-Orthodox communities.¹⁹² The first human trials of an Israeli COVID-19 vaccine will begin on November 1 and are expected to continue through next spring.

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Links

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