

Weekly COVID Update:

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

July 27, 2020

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Data Visualizations from Dashboard

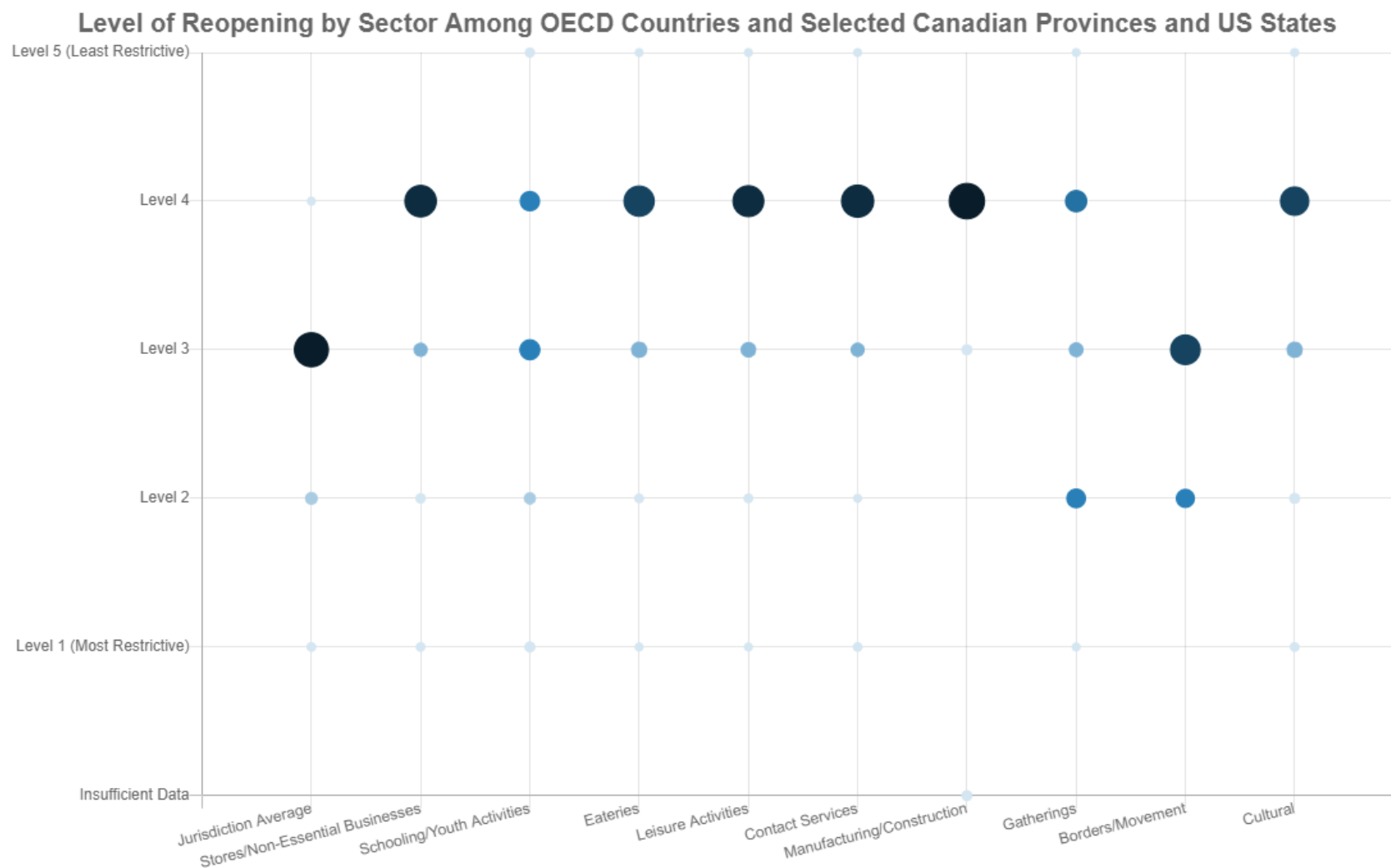


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of July 27. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, 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.

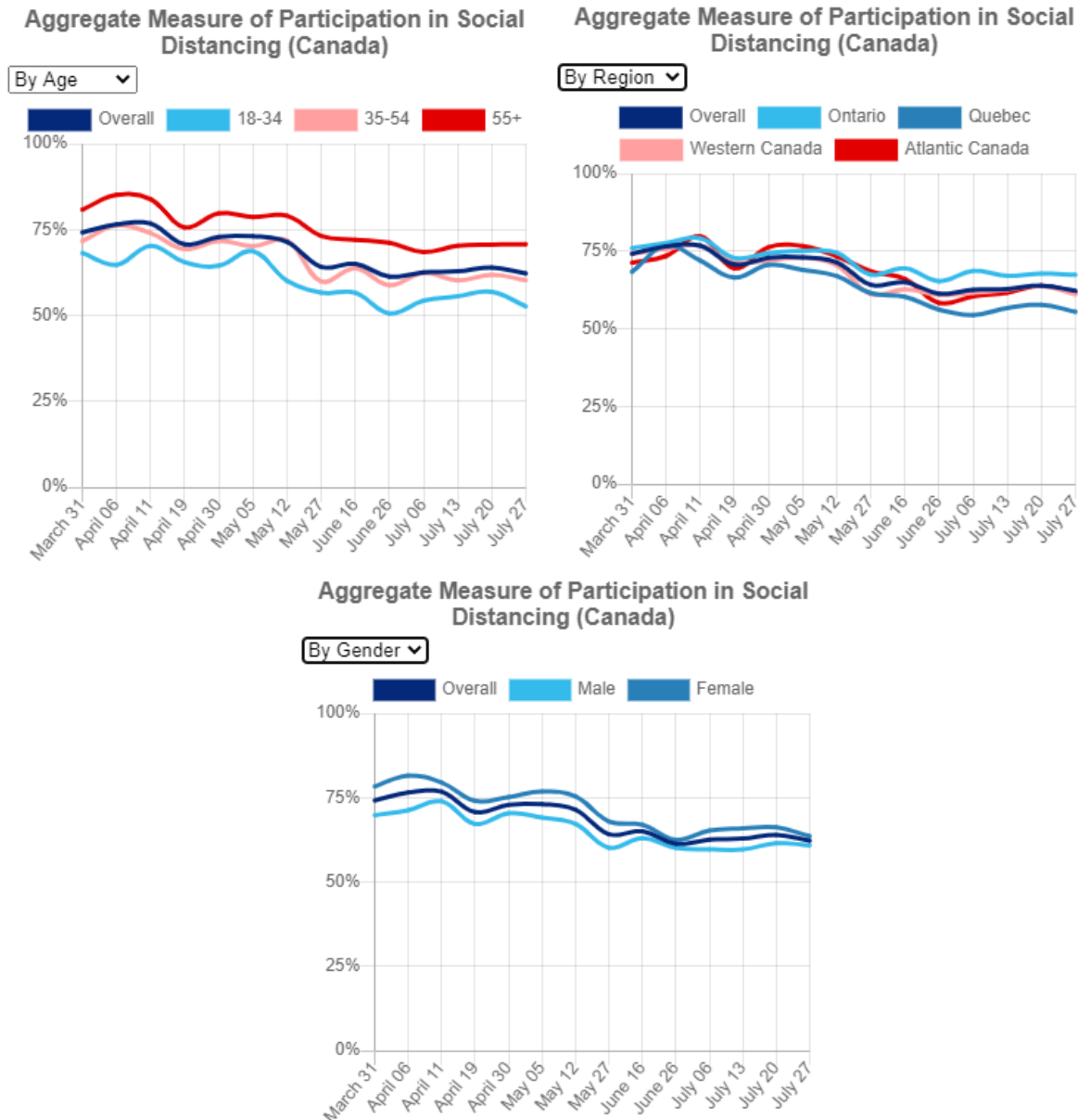


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada). We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance 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.

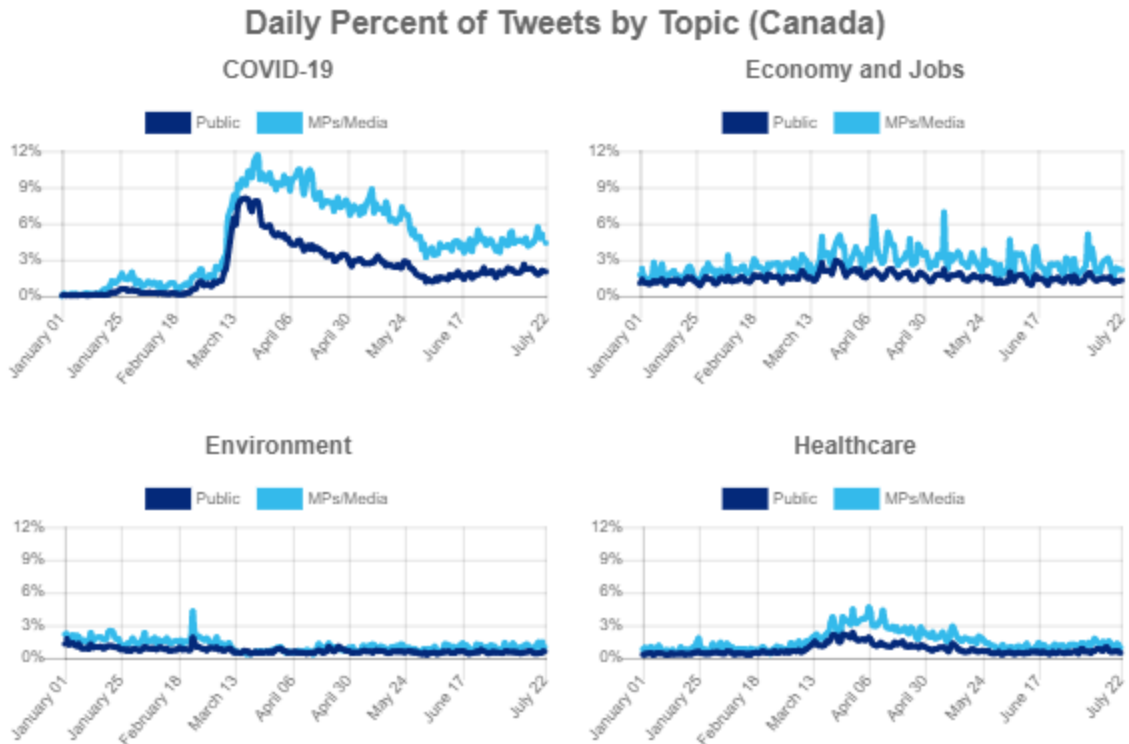


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

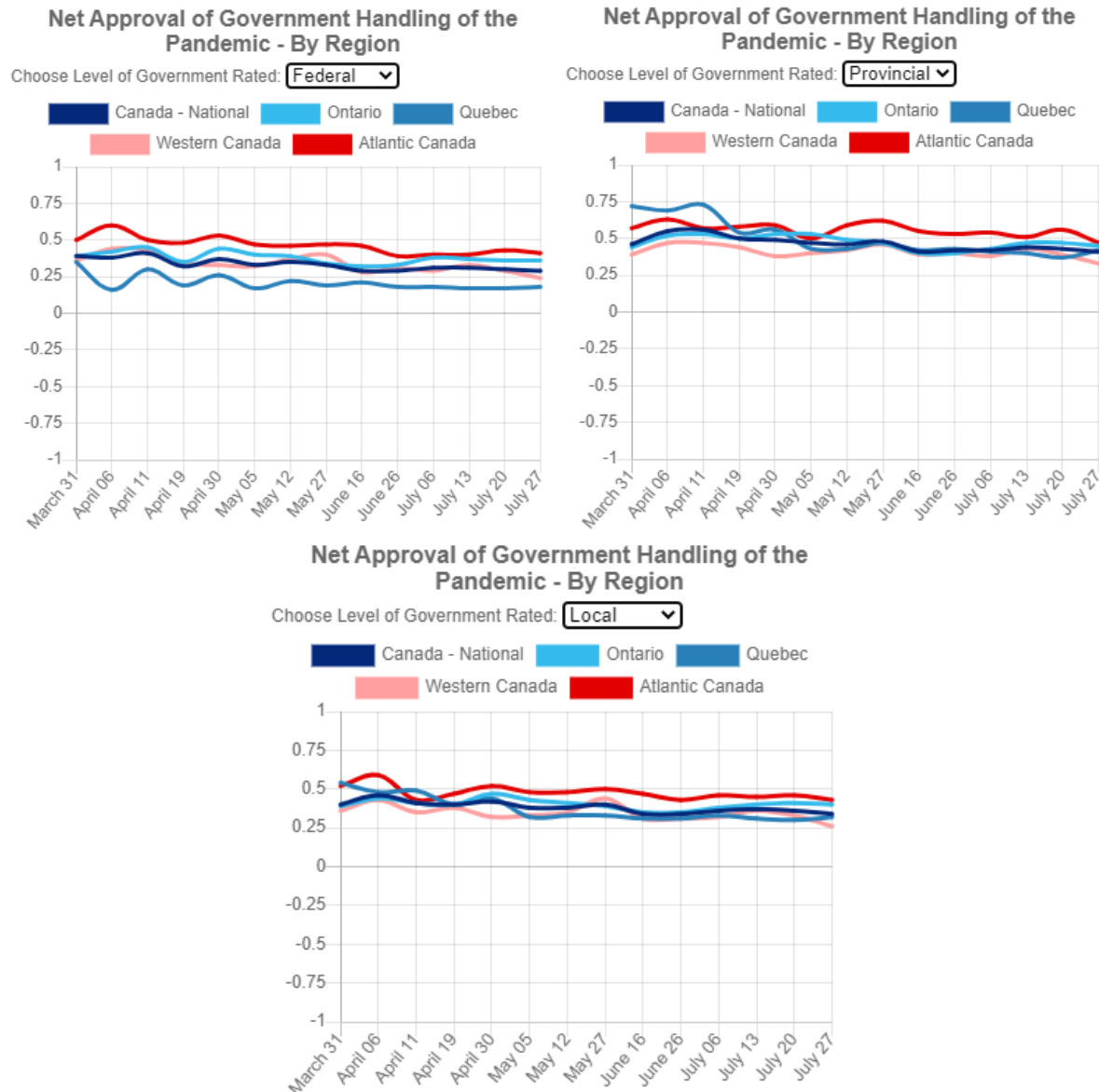


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score,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

Alberta currently has the highest per-capita rate of active cases in Canada, with thirteen regions under a watch designation. The high number of cases has caused concern among experts, doctors, and politicians.¹ Data from Alberta shows more young people are being infected within the 20-29 age group, making up a higher percentage of overall positive COVID-19 cases.² Health experts and business leaders are praising Calgary's City Council after it voted to make masks mandatory in indoor public spaces, including on transport, effective August 1.³ Edmonton's City Council plans to implement a similar mask bylaw. Edmonton's mayor has said enforcement will be difficult and has called on the provincial government to make face coverings in public mandatory. The Education Minister outlined the province's school reopening plan, which included physical distancing and enhanced cleaning measures but did not include limits on class sizes or mandatory mask rules. The Alberta Teachers Association and several school boards are concerned about where the money will come from for classroom retrofits, additional cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer. The Alberta NDP criticized the reopening plan, saying educators and families are being put at risk because of the unclear guidelines on physical distancing and a lack of new funding.⁴

→ *British Columbia*

British Columbia experienced a rise in daily new infections over the past week. The state of emergency has been extended until August 4. British Columbians have been urged to recommit to measures like keeping groups small and meeting outside whenever possible. The government has opted to stick with its strategy of education and advice rather than enforceable measures like mandatory mask wearing.⁵ Health officials are imposing stricter rules on B.C. bars and nightclubs as the province's COVID-19 caseload continues to rise. It was announced on July 22 that patrons in those venues need to stay in assigned seating areas, and are prohibited from standing at the bar to order drinks. The same regulations apply in restaurants, including a six-person limit for group dining. Nightclubs are only allowed to open as lounges or to host events, and can only allow a maximum of 50 people. Events must also end by 11pm.⁶ A new public health order has also been issued to limit the number of visitors (depending on size) to vacation rental properties and houseboats.⁷

→ *Manitoba*

On July 23, the government announced its decision to postpone easing some restrictions following a public backlash to the government's briefing on entering Phase 4 of the deconfinement strategy. The plan for Phase 4 of reopening had proposed relaxing the 14-day self-isolation requirement for travellers from eastern and southern Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada⁸, along with an increase in the limit on public gatherings — to 75 people from 50 indoors, and to 250 from 100 outdoors. Both of these proposed changes are off the table for now. However, effective July 25, cinemas, casinos and movie theatres reopened and stage performances resumed, as planned under Phase 4 — but at 30% capacity instead of the initially planned 50%. The same limits also apply for faith-based gatherings. The easing of restrictions on walk-up counter service in bars, beverage rooms, brew pubs, microbreweries and distilleries has been put on hold for now. Changes to visits at long-term and personal care homes also came into effect; each resident is now allowed to identify two support people who can visit them in their own rooms. Retail businesses and indoor recreation sites are able to use non-permeable barriers where two metre physical distancing is not possible. Although the province has backed off some of its immediate plans to loosen restrictions, the public health officer has warned people to maintain practices like handwashing, mask wearing and physical distancing to protect vulnerable people and reduce strain on the health-care system.⁹

→ *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs has identified August 1 as the province's target date for reopening its borders for day trips to and from Quebec's Avignon and Temiscouata regions.¹⁰ As of July 25, New Brunswick had reported five consecutive days without any new cases of COVID-19. Three active cases remain in the province.¹¹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

The province's Chief Medical Officer of Health noted that new cases have been on the rise across Canada this week, particularly among young people. She attributed the increase to social gatherings where public health guidelines are not being followed. At this time, the province is looking into whether to increase the current limit on public gatherings for weddings, funerals, and outdoor events to more than 50 people.¹² Newfoundland and Labrador's Teachers Association is criticizing the government's decision to call teachers back a week early for orientation and training related to the new public health requirements for schools. The Teachers Association is concerned about the lack of consultation and a number of teachers are concerned about organizing childcare and vacation arrangements.¹³

→ *Northwest Territories*

No active cases remain in the Northwest Territories. The territory-wide Public Health Emergency has been extended once again. Travelling within the NWT is still restricted upon arrival with limited exceptions. The government of the Northwest Territories shuffled its cabinet on July 23 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with Premier Caroline Cochrane saying that the shuffle was meant to protect the health of NWT residents and communities.¹⁴ The government launched its visual COVID-19 data dashboard on July 20.

→ *Nova Scotia*

From July 24, all passengers and drivers of public transport in Nova Scotia are required to wear masks and/or personal protective equipment. As of July 27, the province has reported 12 consecutive days without any new cases of COVID-19, with no active cases remaining in the province.¹⁵

→ *Nunavut*

Nunavut's public health emergency order was extended until August 6.¹⁶ All presumptive cases of COVID-19 at the Mary River mine have come back negative after confirmation testing in Ontario. As a precaution, the two more recent cases and their close contacts will remain in quarantine until July 29 despite the negative tests.¹⁷ Chief Public Health Officer Michael Patterson said it is possible that all three individuals had COVID-19 previously, which is why they returned positive tests at the mine. Patterson defended the testing equipment used, saying that false positives occur all the time in other regions, but they are under a greater spotlight in Nunavut because there have been no confirmed cases.¹⁸ The territory has released its school reopening plan -- confirming that it will resume in-person classes with no physical distancing as long as there continues to be no COVID-19 cases in Nunavut communities. If cases are reported, schools will be shut down gradually in order to prevent further spread. All schools will undergo enhanced cleaning and hygiene procedures.¹⁹

→ *Ontario*

Seven more regions, including parts of the Greater Toronto, Hamilton, Niagara areas, advanced to Stage 3 on July 24.²⁰ Those areas can now enjoy indoor dining and recreation, gyms and an increase to gathering limits (up to 50 indoors). The remaining areas (Peel, Toronto and Windsor-Essex) will receive an update on July 29, based on their metrics.²¹ Ontario has seen an increase in its daily case count average this week, with a majority (around 66%) of people under 40.²² Premier Doug Ford is concerned about this, though indoor dining and bars are open in Stage 3. After a three-week delay, the Canadian Digital Service began beta testing of the tracing app on July 23 in Ontario.²³

→ *Prince Edward Island*

Data from Prince Edward Island suggests that the increase in infections in the 20-29 age group is likely due to COVID-19 fatigue across the country, prompting young people to visit bars and beaches.²⁴ Premier Dennis King emphasized that he is in no hurry to expand the Atlantic bubble and allow visitors from elsewhere in Canada without requiring them to self-isolate for 14 days. Due to concerns about family reunification, Premier King said that provincial officials are considering how to resolve these issues while still respecting the 14-day requirement. School officials continue to work on reopening plans, including issues such as staggering arrival and departure times, mask requirements, and bus transportation. The government is focused on reopening long-term care homes to more visits from relatives. Although still in its initial stages, the plan could involve designating loved ones as essential care providers or allowing residents to go on drives or visits with family.²⁵

→ *Quebec*

As of July 20, Quebec reported stable infection rates despite outbreaks at a healthcare facility and at four bars.²⁶ On July 21, Quebec reported 180 new cases -- their highest increase since June 12. Over half of the new cases are in Montreal.²⁷ Officials suspect that their slight increase in cases is due to increased testing and explain that their rate of positive tests has remained around 2% and the number of hospitalizations has remained steady or decreased. However, officials are worried about reports of private gatherings.²⁸ The Grand Prix cycling races scheduled for September in Montreal and Quebec City have been cancelled.²⁹ Gathering limits in indoor public places will increase from 50 to 250 people on August 3.³⁰ Although preschools and elementary schools outside of the Montreal Metropolitan community (CMM) have been open since May 11, schools in the CMM will remain closed until late August. With some exceptions, secondary schools across Quebec are also expected to remain closed until the end of August.³¹ McGill University expressed some concerns about international students returning to campus and residence for the fall semester.³²

→ *Saskatchewan*

On July 21, the provincial government announced that garage sales and door-to-door canvassing will be permitted going forward.³³ Saskatchewan is the only province with an election scheduled for this year, and parties will be able to send volunteers to canvass potential voters. Fitness facilities may resume operating at all hours, and drive-in theatres may increase their capacity.³⁴ Saskatchewan reported 60 new cases on July 22, another record-high for the province. Many of the cases are linked to Hutterite communities in the South region of the province.³⁵ Despite reports of tension between the province and Hutterite community leaders, Premier Moe said that most communities have been receptive to COVID-19 precautions.³⁶ Premier Moe and Opposition Leader Ryan Meili both said that the long wait times for testing were unacceptable, and that the government is working on expanding test capacity in the province.³⁷

→ *Yukon*

Yukon is moving into Phase 3 of its reopening plan on August 1 as scheduled. Phase 3 is described as “less prescriptive” about maintaining a two-household bubble and more about keeping social circles small and following hygiene practices. Limits on household gatherings will remain at 10 people, although officials are working on guidelines for indoor seated and planned events that would allow events like weddings, funerals or sewing circles.³⁸ Green decals have been handed out since July 20 to vehicles with out-of-territory licence plates whose occupants are allowed to be travelling within the territory.³⁹ More detailed guidelines have been released for how schools should operate amid the pandemic. The guidelines emphasize physical distancing whenever possible, as well as enhanced cleaning protocols and procedures if students get symptoms. Recommendations on school busing were also provided to prevent unnecessary mixing of students. Finalized plans are expected to be released

by August 12.⁴⁰ A protest criticizing the high school reopening plan in Whitehorse was held on July 20. Protesters argued that it was important for students to be in full-time classes in their final years of school and to have full access to services offered through the education system.⁴¹

The United States

→ *California*

There is speculation that California is poised to surpass New York as the state with the most COVID-19 cases.⁴² Epidemiologists suggest that some counties in the state repealed their mask requirements too early and that some patients have gone out in public without masks.⁴³ Data suggests that the group aged 40 and under and the Latino community are experiencing the transmission at higher levels.⁴⁴ On July 15, some of the largest school districts in Orange County said they would not follow the Orange County Board of Education recommendation to reopen in person.⁴⁵ Three churches in Northern California are challenging in court the state's ban on singing and chanting in church -- saying it violates their right to free speech and to religion.⁴⁶

→ *Illinois*

More than 28,000 people in Illinois have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in July to date, surpassing the June total (23,000).⁴⁷ Almost half of this month's new cases were confirmed this past week. Three counties were issued "warnings" for exceeding their limits on covid-related public health metrics.⁴⁸ Governor J.B Pritzker has revised Illinois' reopening strategy by introducing a localized lockdown measure that groups counties into 11 different regions, based largely on shared hospital resources.⁴⁹ Chicago has its own region. No regions have been locked down yet.

→ *Michigan*

Michigan's 7-day average for new infections continues to increase. It now hovers around 680 new cases per day.⁵⁰ The chairman of the Michigan Economic Recovery Council said it was "probably inevitable" that the entire state would need to regress to Phase 3 of its reopening plan, meaning no gatherings, no in-person education, and limiting non-essential retail to curbside or delivery.⁵¹ However, no official announcements by Governor Gretchen Whitmer have been made yet. On July 24, the Governor issued an executive order reinforcing temporary restrictions on entry into long term care facilities and juvenile justice facilities.⁵² Earlier this month, the Governor closed bars and indoor dining after opening them in June. Cross-Border Institute director Bill Anderson said that the Trump administration had no appetite to touch on the border closure issue until after the U.S. election.⁵³

→ *New York*

After one week in Phase 4, New York is reporting a 1% positivity rate of COVID-19 tests and single-digit deaths over the weekend.⁵⁴ New York City was the last county to enter Phase 4, though it was under additional restrictions compared with the rest of the state.⁵⁵ In NYC, indoor eateries and bars are still not open due to the outbreaks raging elsewhere in the world linked to their reopening. Officials banned the sale of alcohol last week to customers who did not buy food simultaneously, in an attempt to crack down on crowds of outdoor drinkers.⁵⁶ On July 26, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that more than 100 bars and restaurants in the NYC area were flagged for social distancing violations this weekend, including employees not wearing masks and serving to-go alcohol.⁵⁷ Establishments that get three warnings will be stripped of their liquor licenses indefinitely.

→ *Texas*

On Monday July 20, Texas reported a 7-day average of 118.57 deaths, an increase of 39% compared to the week of July 13. Similarly, the state reported a 15% increase in new cases and a 6% increase in

hospitalizations compared to the week of July 13.⁵⁸ US House representatives Sheila Jackson Lee and Joaquin Castro urged the Texas governor to scale back Texas' reopening and to permit local jurisdictions to implement stay-at-home orders. They also said that the state was encouraged to reopen by President Trump instead of being guided by scientific evidence. They claim that Texas has become an example of what should not be done and pointed to an unpublished White House document that lists Texas as one of 18 states where the outbreak is out of control.⁵⁹ A pediatrics expert at Northwestern University advised against reopening schools in states like Texas and California that have a high surge of cases now.⁶⁰ On July 25, some Texas bar owners defied bar closure orders, protesting a rule that allows restaurants serving alcohol and food to remain open.⁶¹

Mexico

Three Royalton resort locations are opening in Mexico.⁶² The land border between the US and Mexico is closed to non-essential travel until August 21.⁶³ US visitors are permitted into Mexico through flights where travellers may face temperature checks and other health screening measures.⁶⁴ Local unions and other private actors in Jalisco expressed disagreement with the federal government's traffic light system of state-level COVID classifications because the federal government classified Jalisco at the red level. These local unions and private actors said that the ranking does not accurately reflect the state's COVID-19 situation—pointing to several favourable indicators, including: the fourth lowest incidence per 100,000 inhabitants, the 11th lowest mortality rate, hospital occupancy levels between 25-30%, and the first state to approve prevention and social distancing measures.⁶⁵

Chile

The government is promoting two ventilators that were developed in Chile as part of their COVID-19 response.⁶⁶ The government also released a program called Territorial Viewer to show infections per square kilometer, quarantines, sanitary cordons and other indicators related to the presence of COVID-19 in Chile. The viewer will help the government identify areas that require attention and areas where PCR should be prioritized.⁶⁷ In a July 21 report, President Pinera explained that reopening would proceed gradually, consider community opinions, incorporate WHO recommendations and consider district and regional differences -- particularly regarding regional and district abilities to comply with health criteria. Pinera also suggested that Chile would allow areas to reintroduce lockdown measures if necessary.⁶⁸ The first phase of reopening is "quarantine"; it limits mobility, requires permits for movement, and closes gyms, classes, theaters and more. The second phase is "transitional"; it allows for increased movement but includes quarantines on weekends and some other limitations.⁶⁹ While the government released its reopening plan on July 19 and said that the situation had improved in 12 regions, it did not reveal when Santiago and northern mining regions would reopen.⁷⁰ As of July 27, 65 communities and territories were in the quarantine phase, zero were in the transition phase, 266 were in the preparation phase and 22 were in the initial opening phase.⁷¹ On July 28, Chile's capital will ease some lockdown restrictions.⁷² The government will allow children and people 75 years and older to leave home.⁷³

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's daily coronavirus infection rate is on the rise again. More than 1,130 new cases were reported on July 24, making July's figures similar to those seen in May.⁷⁴ The nation's R-rate has risen to 1.3 from 1.2 last week. Although the country is preparing for a second wave, no closure policies have been reinforced yet. As of last week, people in France must wear face masks in all indoor establishments,

and working from home is still recommended.⁷⁵ Jean Castex, the French Prime Minister, is urging the French not to travel to Catalonia, especially Barcelona, due to an active outbreak there.⁷⁶ France announced mandatory testing for any arrivals from 16 countries, including the US.⁷⁷

Germany

After weeks of progress amidst a local outbreak in the northwest, the state premier of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer, thinks the "second wave is already here" as the daily number of cases increases.⁷⁸ German health authorities have warned that the seven-day R rate is around 1.2. The seven day average of daily cases increased from 430 to 560 in one week.⁷⁹ According to RKI, more than 60% of the new cases are recorded in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia and in the south-western state of Baden-Württemberg.⁸⁰ Health officials say that new clusters have been traced to large celebrations, leisure activities, places of work, and visits to community and health facilities.⁸¹ The increasing number of cases is also being traced to returning travellers. Media outlets have reported that Germany's COVID-19 tracing app was not working properly for up to five weeks because of an issue affecting millions of Android and Apple devices: some operating systems blocked the app from running in the background in order to save power -- preventing the app from using its bluetooth function.^{81A} German authorities plan to set up testing stations at airports to encourage people arriving from high-risk countries to get tested.^{81B}

Belgium

Rather than further relaxing restrictions at Phase 5 on August 1st, the National Security Council will implement new restrictions effective July 25. Face masks are now mandatory in public places such as markets, public buildings, and shopping streets. A curfew starting 10pm has been imposed for night shops, and clients in restaurants and bars will be asked to leave their contact details to facilitate contact tracing. A 15 person contact bubble will remain in place each week and the maximum number of people allowed at events will remain the same. Fairs and shows cannot resume in Belgium before September 1.⁸² Before entering the country, travellers will need to fill out an electronic form listing the places they visited abroad.⁸³ Belgium is facing a second wave of infections after a steady increase in daily new infections. Young adults between 20 to 30 are the most frequently affected and the number of infections reflect more local flare-ups. Experts are emphasizing the importance of local lockdowns to help avoid another nationwide lockdown. Mayors of cities and municipalities will be able to take additional measures to combat local outbreaks, which can range from requiring face masks to implementing lockdowns.⁸⁴

Netherlands

With a rise in the number of daily infections, the Dutch government's special COVID-19 envoy has advised the public to take swift, visible actions to prevent the possibility of a second wave. The rise in infections have been linked to lack of social distancing measures, including non-application of masks, which may become mandatory outdoors in the coming weeks.⁸⁵ Alcohol sales have also been restricted on weekends in one of Amsterdam's busiest tourist areas as a means of curbing transmission in the capital. Effective July 24, shops in the Wallen area, best known for its red light district, have been banned from selling alcohol from 4pm until midnight. However, alcohol can still be served at bars and restaurants.⁸⁶ People from outside the EU are currently banned from entering the country but, effective July 27, the ban on foreign partners of Dutch people and non-temporary residents was lifted. Residents in a long distance relationship are allowed to have their partner visit them in the Netherlands, given that the relationship is at least three months in length and is a lasting one, affirmed through a signed, written statement. The couple must be able to demonstrate that they regularly saw each other before the travel restrictions. Partners must also have a return ticket -- with their visits capped at a maximum of 90 days

within a 180-day period. If the partner comes from a country with code orange travel advice, they will be strictly advised to quarantine themselves for two weeks.⁸⁷

Spain

As of July 22, reports indicated that -- of the autonomous communities -- Aragon had the biggest increase in daily cases, with Navarre surpassing Catalonia for second place two days in a row.⁸⁸ In response to the increasing threat, the Pamplona neighborhood of Menillori in Navarre regressed to phase two of the federal government's original reopening plan, which had officially ended with the state of alarm on June 21.⁸⁹ Phase two limits store, bar and restaurant capacity, reduces hours in entertainment venues and limits gatherings to ten.⁹⁰ Similarly, Catalonia will be closing late night bars and clubs for two weeks.⁹¹ Reports indicate that the increase in cases in Gandia, Valencia can be associated with nightlife in the area.⁹² Similarly, the outbreaks in Navarre are believed to relate to nightlife and around 93% of cases in the area were found among people aged 17 to 28.⁹³ Some Spanish officials believe that Spain may be experiencing a second wave now.⁹⁴ Spanish health authorities are concerned about the connection of new cases to parties and clubs. With more younger people getting COVID-19, reports indicate that instead of burdening hospitals, the increasing presence of the disease in young people is stressing primary healthcare centers.⁹⁵ Spanish health authorities said that, with the exception of Catalan in Lleida, hospitals are experiencing low stress.⁹⁶ In most public places in Spain, masks are mandatory -- with exceptions including Madrid and the Canary Islands.⁹⁷

The United Kingdom

COVID-19 metrics remain stable in the UK. The average number of daily new cases is approximately 650. Nevertheless, the government will pause reporting COVID-19 deaths briefly in order to review its methodology.⁹⁸ New rules on wearing masks in England came into effect on July 24; people entering shops, banks and supermarkets now required to wear face coverings.⁹⁹ People can be fined as much as 100 pounds (\$171 CAD) by police if they refuse. Places like restaurants, pubs, gyms and hairdressers are exempted. This weekend, indoor gyms, leisure centres and pools reopened across England.¹⁰⁰ Indoor gyms have also reopened in Northern Ireland, but they remain closed in Scotland and Wales -- with no date yet given for when this might change. The UK has re-added Spain to the list of countries where travellers must quarantine upon return.

Ireland

On July 22, the Republic of Ireland released a "green list" of 15 countries, excluding the UK and the US, where travellers will be able to visit without the need to self-isolate upon their return. The list is reviewed biweekly for any changes in COVID-19 cases. At present, travellers arriving in Ireland from anywhere other than Northern Ireland are required to self-isolate or quarantine for 2 weeks. Plans for random testing at airports are set to be put in place in the coming weeks for people coming from non-green list countries.¹⁰¹ On July 23, the government announced a plan to launch a new initiative to encourage people to book stay-cations rather than holidaying abroad this summer. People will get money back money for holidaying in Ireland in the form of a tax credit or rebate. Domestic holidaymakers will receive €125 back if they spend roughly €600 on accommodation and restaurant bills. Couples will be able to claim as much as €250 back. The initiative is set to run until October this year and will apply to hotels, restaurants and non-alcoholic drinks.¹⁰² On July 27, the government announced its plan to fully reopen schools by the end of August with extra teachers, extensive cleaning regimes and personal protective equipment in place.¹⁰³

Luxembourg

The COVID-19 task force, made up of experts from the research sector, published their projections on July 20. They highlighted that the Grand Duchy may be experiencing a second wave and it could be worse than the first wave in March and April unless additional measures are put in place to avert further problems.¹⁰⁴ Effective July 25, a third COVID-19 law came into force in Luxembourg, concerning public and private gatherings, sanctions for businesses, and mask wearing. Indoor and outdoor gatherings of people at home or for private events with more than ten people are prohibited (members of the same household are not included in the total). Gatherings that exceed 10 people are permitted, provided there are assigned seats respecting a minimum distance of two metres. If this is not possible, wearing masks is compulsory. The seat rule does not apply to events and funerals, or to fairs, shows, and markets where the public circulates. The rules for distancing and wearing masks do not apply to children under 6 years old, nor to people who are part of a household or cohabiting. The same applies to religious, cultural and sporting practitioners during their activities.¹⁰⁵

Portugal

Portugal may be included in the list of countries exempted from quarantine on arrival in the UK in the next few days when the UK government updates its “air bridge” policy. Once added to the list of 59 countries, passengers would be able to travel without the need to isolate upon return. The move came after intensive lobbying from the Portuguese government, which was angered by the “absurd” decision to leave the country off the original list of COVID-safe travel corridors in July.¹⁰⁶ On July 23, the Portuguese government announced the possible resumption of all team sport competitions by the end of August. While health and safety remain paramount, the government is set to channel additional funding to support clubs and institutions affected by the pandemic.¹⁰⁷

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

Since July 24, everyone in Austria has been required to wear face masks in supermarkets, grocery stores, post offices, and banks due to a rise in infections. Mandatory face mask use was already in place on public transportation and in pharmacies.¹⁰⁸ Restrictions are being reintroduced for religious services and churches after several outbreaks were connected to them. Many Serbian Orthodox churches have been closed and will reopen on August 1.¹⁰⁹ In response to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the Western Balkans, the Austrian government imposed a direct flight ban for all countries in the region until the end of July. Police checks at the border will focus on vehicle plates from countries with rising infection rates.¹¹⁰

Greece

Several restrictive measures have been taken in response to the recent increase in cases in Greece. The Greek government has banned flights to and from Turkey and is only permitting flights from Albania and North Macedonia to land at Athens' International Airport until July 31.¹¹¹ From July 28 to August 4, visitors arriving by air from Bulgaria and Romania will be required to provide a negative test result taken in the last 72 hours before their arrival.¹¹² Effective July 22, essential movement is only permitted through specific check-points, and those with a residence permit must complete a Passenger Locator Form. Seasonal workers who leave Greece before August 4 will be unable to return to the country after being determined as a potential source of the increased spread. The use of face masks or coverings is once again mandatory for all supermarket employees and customers.¹¹³ Greek officials have linked the

rise in cases to international travel and variation in the implementation of health regulations across regions. However, the government still plans to allow more tourists from other countries to travel to Greece on July 31.¹¹⁴

Italy

The Italian government extended their current Phase 3 emergency rules until July 31.¹¹⁵ The Italian media is reporting that the government is expected to extend the state of emergency until October 31.¹¹⁶ Visitors to Italy's island of Capri will be required to wear masks outdoors because crowds have grown at the popular holiday destination. The rule will be in effect until July 31 to help with reduced police staff, limited hospital facilities, and difficulties transporting patients back to the mainland. In Rome, two piazzas were sealed off temporarily over the weekend due to large gatherings associated with nightlife.¹¹⁷

Slovenia

The majority of new infections in Slovenia were transmitted locally, with multiple clusters across the country.¹¹⁸ A long-term care home in eastern Slovenia is a large hotspot with several residents and employees testing positive for COVID-19. Due to the increased number of infections in the country, Slovenia has been put on a list of countries for which restrictions apply upon entering Finland.¹¹⁹ The Slovenian government has changed its criteria for categorizing countries according to its traffic light system (green, yellow, and red) for travel restrictions. The government will no longer only consider the number of infections per 100,000 people over a 14-day period, but will now also assess the possibility of infections spreading or being transmitted to other countries.¹²⁰

Switzerland

On July 20, Switzerland relaxed its entry restrictions for 21 countries, including Canada.¹²¹ The Swiss government has expanded its quarantine watchlist to 42 countries, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Luxembourg, Mexico, and Montenegro. Travellers from countries on the watchlist must enter a 10-day quarantine upon arrival in Switzerland. Public health authorities have removed Belarus and Sweden from this list.¹²²

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

Due to a resurgence in new COVID-19 infections throughout the Czech Republic, the Czech government has decided to reintroduce certain restrictions on mass gatherings until the country's epidemiological situation improves.¹²³ Effective July 25, Czech residents are again obliged to wear masks at all indoor events exceeding 100 participants. From July 27, all indoor events will be limited to 500 participants – decreased from the previous limit of 1000.¹²⁴ This decision comes after a series of outbreaks occurred among participants at large indoor events, including over 100 infections connected to a nightclub in Prague.¹²⁵ The Czech Minister of Health has stressed these measures are “preventive in nature,” and that they are being taken in order to avoid the need for more restrictive measures in the future.¹²⁶ Latvia and Estonia have removed the Czech Republic from their respective lists of low-risk EU countries, which means that Czech citizens and residents will be required to undergo a two-week quarantine upon entry into either of these countries.¹²⁷ 281 new infections were reported in the Czech Republic on Friday – the country's highest daily increase since the end of June, bringing its total number of active infections to 5000.

Hungary

Operational staff responsible for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Hungary have asked that local police step up their efforts to monitor compliance with mandatory quarantine and stay-at-home orders. Authorities cited the reintroduction of COVID-19 from abroad as the country's greatest threat with respect to the virus.¹²⁸

Latvia

Despite reporting 13 new cases of COVID-19 on July 26, Latvian officials have stressed that the country's COVID-19 epidemiological situation is "one of the most secure in the world."¹²⁹ Officials said that most of Latvia's new infections have been brought to the country from abroad.¹³⁰

Lithuania

Following a deterioration in Spain's epidemiological situation, the entry of foreigners travelling from Spain to Lithuania has been prohibited as of July 24. Lithuanian citizens returning home from Spain are required to remain in self-isolation for 14 days. The same rules currently apply to Luxembourg, Sweden, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia -- all of which have reported over 16 new infections per 100,000 people in the last 14 days. Meanwhile, both foreigners and Lithuanian citizens travelling from Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic can now enter Lithuania, subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine.¹³¹

Poland

Effective July 25, it is mandatory for anyone residing in Poland to maintain at least 1.5 metres of distance between themselves and other pedestrians in public places, unless they are wearing a mask. Physical distancing is recommended for pedestrians with masks, but not mandatory. Public sporting events are allowed to take place with up to 250 participants in the crowd effective July 25. International flights to and from Poland are set to resume on July 28. Air traffic was previously limited to domestic carriers.¹³²

Slovakia

Bulgaria and Montenegro have remained on Slovakia's list of countries from which travel is deemed unsafe, while travellers from over 30 countries – both inside and outside of the EU – are able to enter Slovakia without restrictions.¹³³

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

The number of confirmed cases in Denmark has risen sharply over the past two weeks, with 240 new cases diagnosed in the week of July 13 to July 20.¹³⁴ However, the Health Minister said that this rise in infections did not necessarily mean there is a major outbreak, and continued to emphasize hygiene and social distancing regulations. Critics have argued that a mandatory mask policy similar to other EU countries could help prevent further spread, but the government has been hesitant to implement such a policy.¹³⁵ Bulgaria was added to the list of countries to which non-essential travel is unauthorized, joining Luxembourg, Portugal, and Sweden. Travel restrictions for five additional regions in Sweden were relaxed.¹³⁶

Estonia

Travellers entering Estonia from 11 EU countries must self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival, up from only six EU countries four weeks ago. For a country to be taken off the list, they must have fewer than 16 new cases per 100,000 people over the previous two weeks.¹³⁷ The Minister of Culture said that capacity limits on nightclubs (maximum of 100 people) would be among the last restrictions to be lifted by the government.¹³⁸ Numerous nightclub owners had appealed to the government to allow them to raise their capacity to 50% or 500 people, whichever was lower. The Ministry of Economic Affairs had previously said they supported the idea to raise capacity, but nightclubs fell under the Ministry of Culture's portfolio.¹³⁹ The Minister of Culture said that the government hoped to lift the remaining restrictions by early September, but public health officials would need to approve their plan.¹⁴⁰ An infected person in Tartu visited a cinema, spa, nightclub, and shops while being symptomatic over the past week. The Health Board said that similar irresponsible behaviour could lead to another outbreak in the country.¹⁴¹

Finland

Finland reinstated travel restrictions on Slovenia, Switzerland, and Austria on July 27 after a rise in COVID-19 cases in those countries. Finland only allows unrestricted travel from countries with fewer than 8 new cases per 100,000 people over the previous two weeks.¹⁴² Finland's contact tracing app will be available for download on August 31. Public health officials have assured Finns that no data will be sent to them without users' permission, even if they have been exposed to an infectious person.¹⁴³ Finns Party MPs have lodged formal complaints with the country's Chancellor of Justice over PM Marin's negotiation of the EU recovery package.¹⁴⁴ The MPs said that Marin did not have the approval of Finland's Constitutional Law Committee to allow Finnish money to be loaned to other EU countries. Marin said that she complied with all protocols, and offered proof of her contact with relevant officials throughout the negotiation process.¹⁴⁵

Iceland

The number of active cases in Iceland rose sharply over the weekend of July 25 after the first cases of community transmission in over three weeks were reported. Public health officials have been unable to finalize contact tracing for two of the cases, and it is unclear how or when they were infected.¹⁴⁶ A number of cases are connected to a temporary worker who arrived in the country on July 15, and due to a loophole did not undergo a second test or modified quarantine.¹⁴⁷ The government had previously been considering waiving the modified quarantine period for Icelandic residents, though it is unclear how the new cases may impact the plan.¹⁴⁸ The regulation was brought into effect on July 13 after outbreaks were connected to two Icelanders who tested negative at the border but then tested positive less than a week later. There have been no reports of any false negatives from July 13 until this past weekend.¹⁴⁹ The National University Hospital virology department took over the entirety of the country's border testing scheme on July 20, renovating their facilities and hiring new staff to assist in the effort.¹⁵⁰ Around 45,000 Icelanders have taken advantage of the domestic tourism voucher offered by the government to support local tourism companies and encourage domestic travel.¹⁵¹

Norway

Norway re-introduced travel restrictions for Spain and Andorra on July 24 after the countries experienced a number of new COVID-19 outbreaks. The Norwegian government also lifted restrictions against the residents of several Swedish regions and Hungary after their infection rates fell in the past two weeks.¹⁵² Despite the EU's recommendation that face masks be worn on all public transit, Norway has no plans to introduce a mandatory mask policy at this time.¹⁵³ The Institute of Public Health (IPH) said that wearing a face mask gave Norwegians a false sense of security and encouraged them to

disregard hygiene and social distancing measures. Officials from the IPH said they would consider instituting a mask policy if the infection rate in Norway rose again.¹⁵⁴

Sweden

The Public Health Agency of Sweden is changing its test and trace strategy to make it easier to mandate that COVID-19 patients themselves be responsible for tracking their close contacts, rather than healthcare officials.¹⁵⁵ Healthcare officials have cited the difficulty in performing contact tracing duties in addition to their work related to the pandemic. Similar procedures apply to other infectious diseases in Sweden.¹⁵⁶ Swedish authorities do not expect to introduce a mandatory mask policy despite the EU's recommendation that they be worn on public transit.¹⁵⁷ Support for PM Lofven and his government's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic has fallen sharply over the past few months, with the PM's approval rating falling from +7 to neutral, according to a recent poll.¹⁵⁸

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

Japan recorded its highest number of daily new infections on July 23 with more than 920 new cases. Tokyo has continued to record more than 200 new infections a day for the past week, with an increasing number of cases related to community transmission. Japan is planning to expand the PCR testing capacity at airports from the current maximum of 2,300 to 10,000 per day by the end of September to prepare for the easing of travel restrictions.¹⁵⁹ Although a reintroduction of the state of emergency is not expected, some governors are calling for revisions to a special law to make infection prevention measures more enforceable.¹⁶⁰ A decision on whether or not capacity limits at public events can be further relaxed is expected to be made on August 1. The government is set to begin talks with 12 countries and territories, including China and South Korea, on mutually allowing business travel. International students are now allowed to re-enter the country if they meet certain requirements, including testing prior to departure. Relaxed entry for athletes and sports officials coming for the Olympic and Paralympic Games is also being considered.¹⁶¹

South Korea

South Korea has been reporting a low level of locally acquired cases in the past few days. Health officials have suggested that they may start charging passengers arriving with COVID-19 for medical expenses. August 17 has been designated a temporary holiday, creating a one-off long weekend to help relieve public fatigue over the pandemic.¹⁶² As the second wave in the country seems to subside, the reopening of the economy is getting back on track. Museums, art galleries, libraries and performing arts halls in the Seoul Metropolitan Region reopened on July 22 after being closed for two months. These facilities will limit their capacity and use reservation and visitor registration systems. Each facility was able to specify its own guidelines. Sporting events are still prohibited from having spectators.¹⁶³ The ban on small church gatherings other than regular services was lifted on July 24, as new cases linked to such gatherings subsided.¹⁶⁴ Social welfare facilities also resumed operations starting on July 20. A group of Korean businesspeople were allowed to enter Vietnam and China via chartered flights on July 22, although a 14-day quarantine upon arrival was still required.¹⁶⁵

New Zealand

New Zealand has reported no new locally acquired infections for nearly three months. The low level of tests conducted recently has prompted the government to seek further adjustments to its testing criteria.¹⁶⁶ A survey is going out to general practitioners to better understand what is happening with

regard to the number of tests being conducted.¹⁶⁷ The minister in charge of government-managed isolation has said that New Zealand is close to exhausting its nationwide capacity at isolation facilities. The minister also highlighted the importance of a police presence at the facilities after five people escaped their isolation hotel on July 24.¹⁶⁸ The exemption process for people leaving isolation early is now operational, and a new website and web app for exemption applications is expected in the next two weeks. The risk of spreading COVID-19 through nurses working across different facilities simultaneously has received attention recently.¹⁶⁹ A new quota system for airlines is being developed to ensure that New Zealand has enough isolation spaces available at any time to match the number of people flying into the country.¹⁷⁰ The Minister of Health has announced a financial boost for public health services, setting aside more than \$300 million for new PPE, contact tracing, tele-health services and a mass vaccination program for the possible COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁷¹

Australia

Australia reported 502 new cases on July 22, its largest daily increase since the pandemic began. The recent outbreaks in Victoria among health workers and residents in long-term care facilities have raised concerns among public health officials. Victoria has extended its state of emergency until August 16. On July 23, it became mandatory for residents in Melbourne and its suburbs to wear face coverings in public.¹⁷² Despite calls for a complete regional lockdown, the Victoria government does not anticipate locking down any further. All those who self-isolate after being tested are eligible for a \$300 payment.¹⁷³ Despite the second lockdown of the region, data collected shows that residents of Melbourne are not limiting their movement.¹⁷⁴ The federal and Victorian governments have agreed to set up a response centre to coordinate efforts.¹⁷⁵ Paramedic students, retired healthcare workers and the military are now all being used to fight Victoria's surge in cases. New South Wales has reintroduced some restrictions on public gatherings and the number of patrons allowed in certain venues, including restaurants.¹⁷⁶ Queensland reintroduced physical distancing requirements on July 24, forcing patrons to sit at bars, restaurants and hotels (unless ordering a drink).¹⁷⁷ The National Capital Territory is not going to consider any further reopening until at least August 6. The National Cabinet has agreed to protocols that will allow freight to move across state borders, and to allow states and territories to enforce the new guidelines.¹⁷⁸

Turkey

After 86 years of operating as a museum, the Hagia Sophia reopened its doors on July 24 as a mosque, with strict social distancing measures in place. Temperature checks on arrival and the use of face masks are mandatory at all times.¹⁷⁹ After the number of infections remained stable throughout July (less than 1,000 cases reported a day), the government relaxed restrictions on the working hours of eateries on July 21 -- allowing them to remain open until midnight. Businesses in 81 provinces were allowed to return to normal operations. Face mask requirements, social distancing regulations, and weekend restrictions on inter-city travel remain in place. Security forces are required to conduct routine inspections in crowded areas and issue warnings to those without masks.¹⁸⁰

Israel

As of July 21, there are now more than 30,000 active cases in Israel. There has also been a steady decline in the amount of tests processed over the past few days. The government and the parliamentary panel in charge of COVID-19 restrictions have continued to experience significant tension. A controversial law has been passed that grants the government expanded powers to impose wide-ranging restrictions while reducing parliamentary oversight -- a move seen as designed to weaken oversight by the Knesset.¹⁸¹ A number of lawmakers from the Prime Minister's party are planning to join opposition politicians on a committee to challenge the government's handling of the pandemic.¹⁸² Starting on July

22, all COVID-19 patients may leave isolation after 10 days if they had 3 consecutive days with no symptoms.¹⁸³ The Finance Ministry promised to add 2,000 temporary nursing and 400 doctor positions to the public healthcare system after reaching an agreement with the country's nurses. They will also hire additional security personnel at sensitive locations.¹⁸⁴ Mass demonstrations continued against the Prime Minister and his government's handling of the pandemic. After a tumultuous week that saw some planned closures overturned by the parliamentary panel, the approved new restrictions came into effect on July 24. Most stores, markets, shopping centres, personal care services, and gyms must close on weekends. Restaurants are allowed to continue their operations under the existing rules, which allow up to 20 diners indoors and 30 outdoors. Beaches and swimming pools will also remain open. Gatherings are currently permitted for up to 10 people indoors and 20 people outdoors.¹⁸⁵ On July 23, the government announced that new international students would be allowed to enter the country for the next academic year.¹⁸⁶ A new plan on managing incoming air travellers has been proposed. Travellers from low-risk countries will only have to spend 5 days in quarantine, while those from high-risk countries will have to undergo a test prior to their arrival in Israel.¹⁸⁷

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Partnerships and Contributors

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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, Anthony Moniuszko, Erika Porco, and Sapphira Thompson-Bled.

Web development and JavaScript data visualizations by PEARL Research Associate Nicholas Thompson.

Additional support for the data analysis provided by Grant Benjamin.

The overall Project Lead is John McAndrews.

Our work is funded by the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and the Digital Citizen Initiative of the Department of Heritage.

Links

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