

Weekly COVID Update:

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

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Foreword	4
Data Visualizations from Dashboard	5
Individual OECD Country Profiles	10
THE AMERICAS	11
Canada	11
The United States	13
Mexico	14
Chile	14
WESTERN EUROPE	15
France	15
Germany	15
Belgium	15
Netherlands	15
Spain	16
The United Kingdom	16
Ireland	16
Luxembourg	17
Portugal	17
CENTRAL EUROPE	17
Austria	17
Greece	18
Italy	18
Slovenia	18
Switzerland	18
EASTERN EUROPE	19
Czech Republic	19
Hungary	19
Latvia	19
Lithuania	19
Poland	19
Slovakia	20
NORTHERN EUROPE	20

Denmark	20
Estonia	20
Finland	21
Iceland	21
Norway	21
Sweden	21
ASIA/PACIFIC	22
Japan	22
South Korea	22
New Zealand	22
Australia	23
Turkey	23
Israel	24
Endnotes for Country Summaries	25
Partnerships and Contributors	34

Foreword

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

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

On our Dashboard, we present unique quantitative data on:

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

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

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

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

Data Visualizations from Dashboard

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

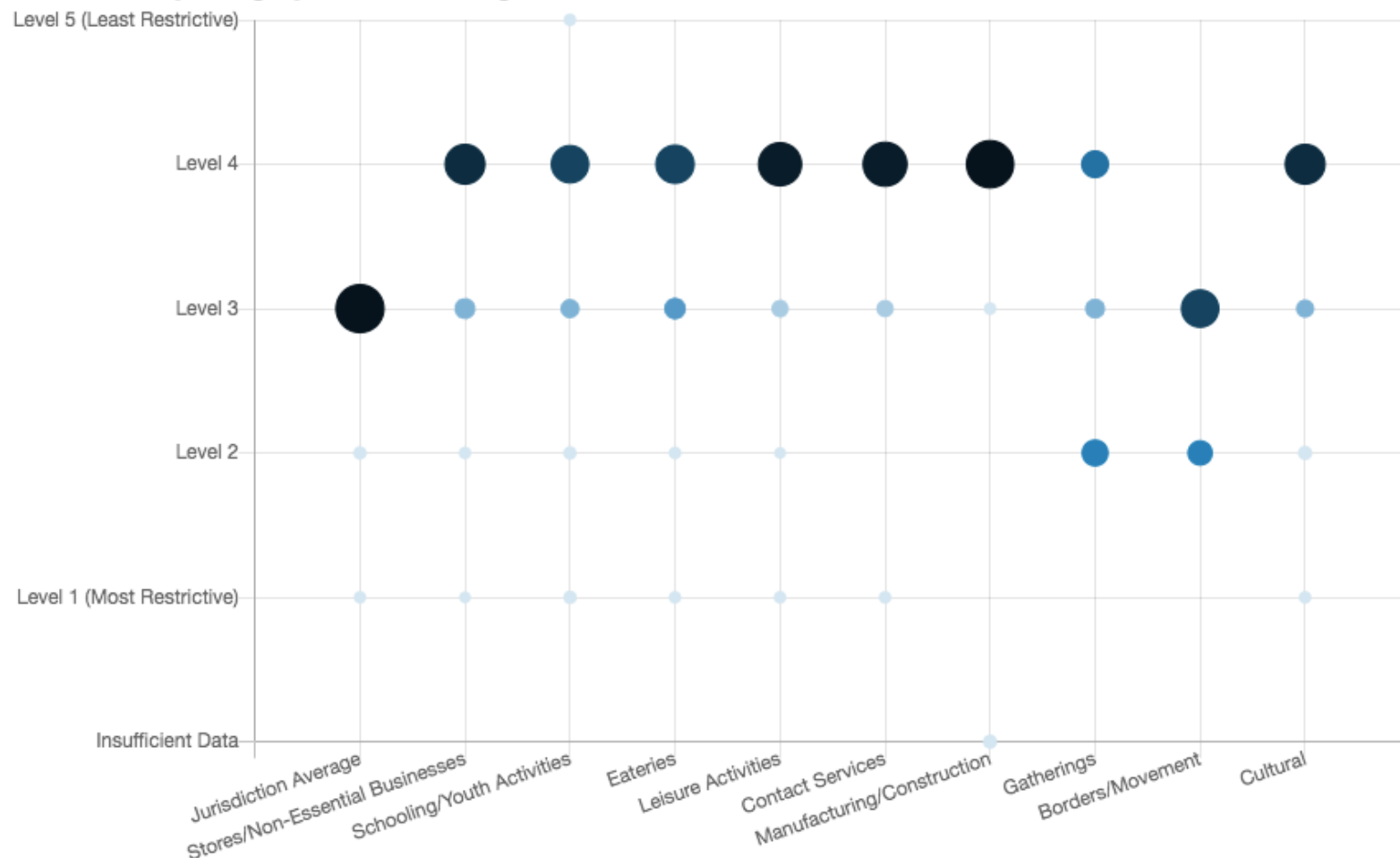
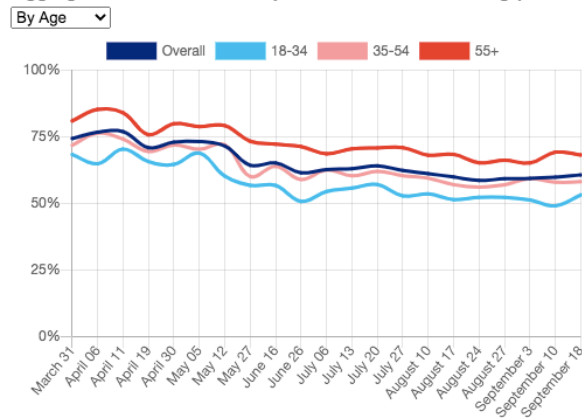
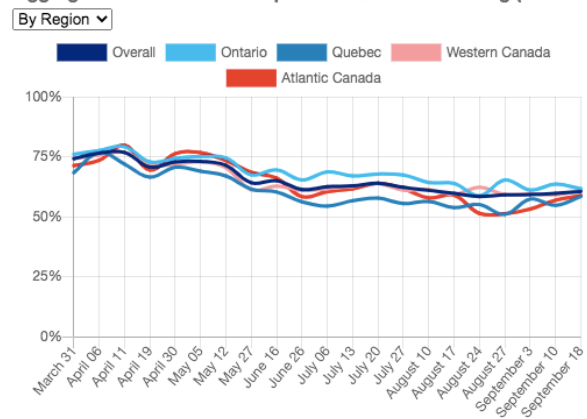


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of September 22. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, 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.

Aggregate Measure of Participation in Social Distancing (Canada)



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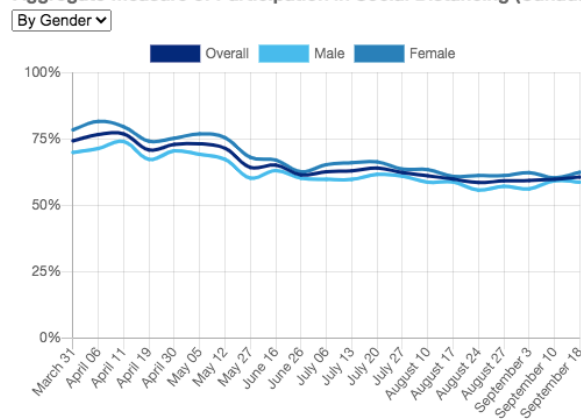


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada). We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance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

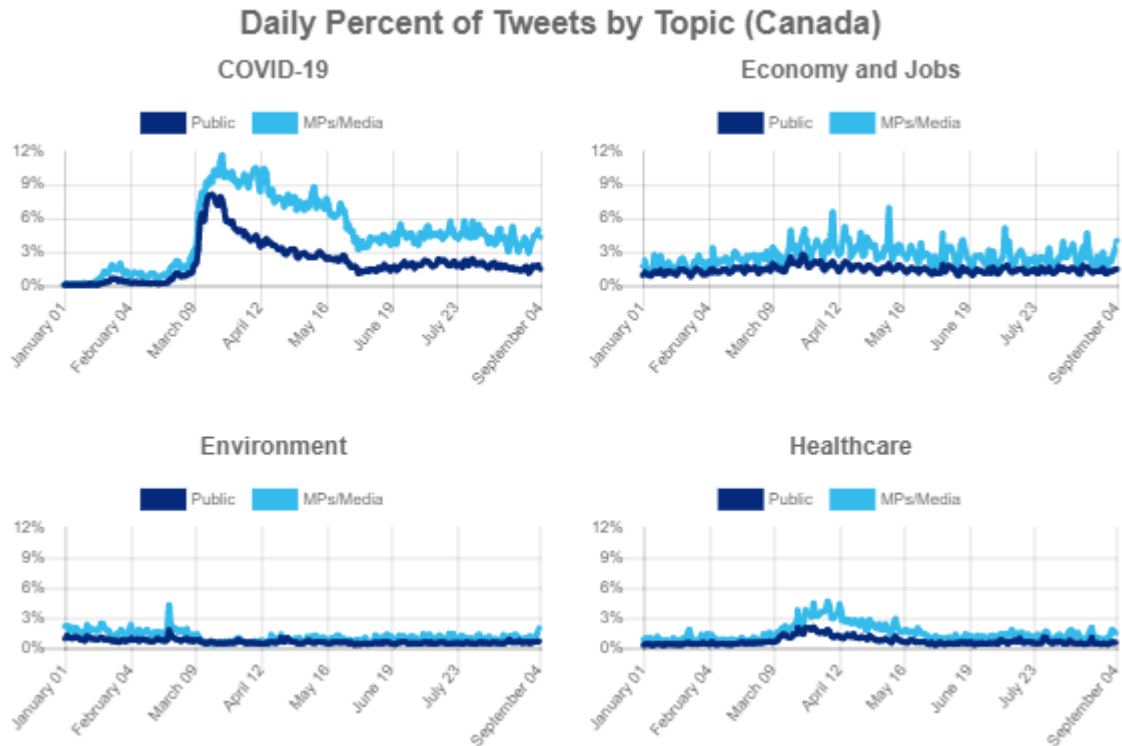
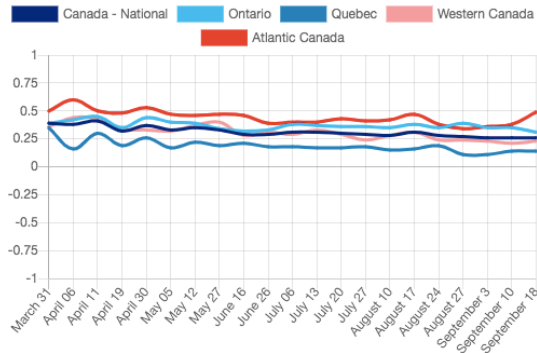


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

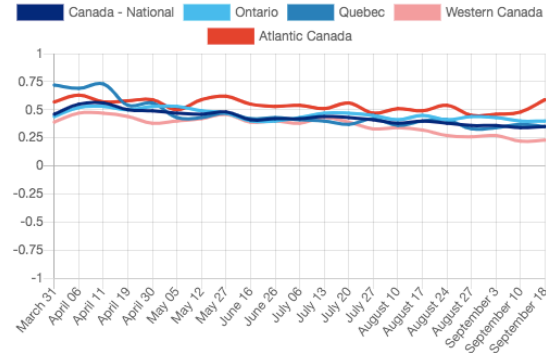
Net Approval of Government Handling of the Pandemic - By Region

Choose Level of Government Rated: **Federal**



Net Approval of Government Handling of the Pandemic - By Region

Choose Level of Government Rated: **Provincial**



Net Approval of Government Handling of the Pandemic - By Region

Choose Level of Government Rated: **Local**

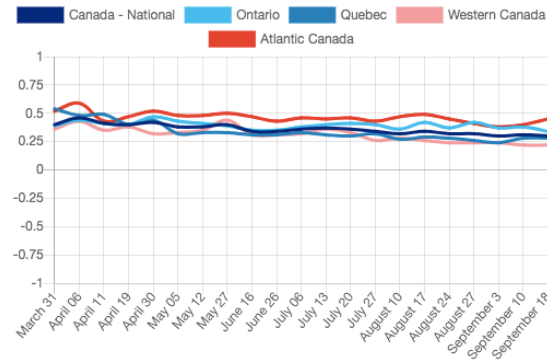


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score, 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 remains in Stage 2 of its reopening plan. With COVID-19 case counts rising in many communities, kids back in schools, and more people returning to work, many public health experts agree that the "social bubbles" that worked as a safe approach earlier in the pandemic now come with more risk.¹ Following their reopening, Alberta schools have reported a number of outbreaks.² In response, an online map was launched that lists every school with an outbreak. The map will be used to help parents track outbreaks. Alberta Health Services is launching a booking tool in the next few weeks for people to schedule visits with loved ones living in continuing care and hospice settings.³

→ *British Columbia*

The number of daily new infections in British Columbia is still on the rise. The provincial state of emergency has been extended again through September 29. A new mouth rinse, gargle, and spit test -- which was developed in the province -- is being introduced for students from kindergarten to grade 12 to help make it easier to check whether they have COVID-19. The test can be done by parents or children themselves.⁴ To better enforce COVID-19 public safety, the range of activities subject to ticketing and enforcement has been expanded. Starting September 20, activities subject to fines include nightclub operations and onsite liquor consumption after 10pm.⁵ BC is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Most businesses are open subject to restrictions.

→ *Manitoba*

As of September 21, Manitoba has 29 new COVID-19 cases -- with possible transmission occurring on public transport and at restaurants. The health minister has warned Manitobans to comply with the safety measures in place in order to avoid the reinstitution of restrictions.⁶ On September 17, following a rise in COVID-19 cases in schools, the head of the union representing Manitoba teachers requested that the provincial government do more to reduce class sizes.⁷

→ *New Brunswick*

The province currently has one active case of COVID-19.⁸ Universities across New Brunswick are reviewing policies that would allow them to take disciplinary action against students who violate COVID-19 regulations.⁹ The RCMP would typically be responsible for disciplining off-campus student behaviour, but these policy changes would make the possibility of university discipline available if deemed necessary.¹⁰ Mount Allison University, for example, has said that if a student's off-campus behaviour is found to put the university's community at risk, then disciplinary action would fall within the scope of the school's updated code.¹¹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Newfoundland and Labrador remains at Alert Level 2. As schools reopen with COVID-19 checklists, parents are confused about what symptoms -- and how many -- would require a student to be kept home from school. Long telephone wait times to get guidance, along with difficulty booking a COVID-19 test, may result in parents avoiding reporting symptoms.¹²

→ *Northwest Territories*

No active cases remain within the Northwest Territories. The Public Health Emergency has been extended until September 29. To enhance NWT's ability to detect and react to COVID-19, the government has expanded the number of in-territory rapid tests and procured additional equipment to expand this capacity further in the coming weeks. Four additional rapid testing units are on their way for installation. It is

expected that, in the coming weeks, the territory should be able to conduct 500 rapid, in-territory tests per week as human resource and supply capacity allow.¹³

→ *Nova Scotia*

As of September 20, Nova Scotia has reported no new cases of COVID-19 for the 13th day in a row.¹⁴ This also marks the third day with no active cases in the province. On September 18, the province announced that it is easing restrictions by increasing the gathering limit for organized sports and performing arts. The number of people allowed to participate -- including coaches, crew and anyone involved -- is now 50.¹⁵

→ *Nunavut*

The government of Nunavut has extended its public health emergency orders for another two weeks -- through October 1.³⁷ Two cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed at the Hope Bay gold mine in western Nunavut. The two workers are asymptomatic and were infected prior to their arrival in Nunavut.³⁸ Another presumptive case has been reported at the Mary River mine. There is no evidence of further spread at either site and operations continue as normal. There is no threat of transmission to Nunavut communities since all workers at both mines are from outside the territory and have no off-site access to the territory.³⁹ The territorial government is looking for ways to limit alcohol access at isolation hubs in Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Ottawa following reports of unruly behaviour at all three facilities.⁴⁰

→ *Ontario*

As of September 20, Ontario's 7-day rolling average is 335 cases per day, which is double what it was ten days ago.²⁰ As a result, the Ontario government reintroduced restrictions on gathering. Across Ontario, and for the next 28 days, private, unmonitored gatherings will be limited to ten people indoors and 25 people outdoors.²¹ Events held in staffed facilities are excluded -- such as movie theatres, schools, places of worship, gyms and convention centres. 70% of Saturday's cases were among people under 40. The official opposition NDP criticized the government over class sizes.²²

→ *Prince Edward Island*

Prince Edward Island remains in Phase 4 of their reopening plan. "Public health officials reversed an earlier decision and approved a plan that will allow UPEI and Holland College to co-host a varsity soccer league during the fall term for men's and women's teams."²³ In terms of economic recovery, the province is slightly ahead of the rest of Canada. Unemployment in the province is mostly in tourism-related industries. However, some farmers are concerned that CERB is worsening the ongoing labour shortage in the province.²⁴

→ *Quebec*

Quebec's premier says that, while the province is not in a second wave, the trend is not promising.²⁵ Quebec's health minister similarly suggests that so long as cases per million does not pass 25, the situation can be kept under control.²⁶ Since their August reopening, approximately 246 schools in Quebec have reported at least one COVID-19 case.²⁷ In the 24 hours between September 15 and 16, 303 additional people tested COVID-19+, which is the highest daily case increase since June.²⁸ On September 11, karaoke was banned in bars and other public venues.²⁹ As of September 12, Quebec began fining people who fail to wear masks in indoor public spaces; new COVID-19 fines range from \$400 to \$6000.³⁰ All Quebec bars are required to retain a customer registry to permit contact tracing.³¹ As of September 14, Quebec students are permitted to participate in up to two extracurricular activities outside of the main classroom.³² A Quebec teachers union is suing the government for access to documents about the province's back to school plans.³³ The union and its members are concerned about a lack of transparency regarding the number of schools with infections and about provincial plans for school access to accelerated COVID-19 testing.³⁴ A request from a group of parents for an online learning alternative was denied by a judge. The only children permitted

to learn from home are those at increased risk of severe COVID-19 complications, or who live with someone at increased risk.³⁵ On September 12, thousands of Montrealers protested mask wearing.³⁶

→ *Saskatchewan*

As of September 20, there are 140 active cases of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan. Testing figures in the province have hit record highs this week.³⁷ Over 20 cases of COVID-19 in the province are linked to a single social gathering in Saskatoon, including transmission to people who did not attend the gathering. The gathering had more attendees than permitted by the provincial government.³⁸ The federal COVID-19 Alert app is now available in Saskatchewan. The provincial government has encouraged all Saskatchewan residents to download the app, which is voluntary.³⁹ Jury trials in the province will resume later this month, with all trials held at a larger location than a courthouse to ensure social distancing regulations are followed.⁴⁰ Increasing demand for online learning in Regina has caused a number of teachers to be shuffled into the program. Prior to moving additional staff into the program, there was a 67-to-1 student-teacher ratio.⁴¹ The Leader of the Opposition, Ryan Meili, has criticized Premier Moe for his comments on anti-mask protests in the province. Meili said that the premier needs to issue clear guidelines for when masks are appropriate to use -- and offer a stronger condemnation of the protests.⁴²

→ *Yukon*

No active cases remain in Yukon. New symptom criteria have been published for parents to judge when to keep children home from schools and daycares. The new criteria categorize symptoms with three colours: green which indicates safety, yellow which requires close monitoring, and red which necessitates testing or self-isolation.⁴³ Residents of Yukon's five long-term care homes can now receive two designated visitors indoors.⁴⁴

The United States

→ *California*

Over the week of September 14, the positivity rate in California was 3.5% -- which is the lowest that it has been since March.⁴⁵ In August, positivity rates were almost double the current rate.⁴⁶ California is the first state to conduct 13 million COVID-19 tests.⁴⁷ The governor says that the government will continue including the number of college students with COVID-19 in their count of active cases.⁴⁸ The suggestion to exclude college students with COVID-19 from the count of active cases came as San Diego reported more than 700 college students with COVID-19.⁴⁹ While California over the past few weeks has reported fewer COVID-19 cases, San Diego County experienced an increase of cases and may implement additional restrictions.⁵⁰ Guidelines for reopening theme parks in the state are expected soon.⁵¹ The Pac-12 university athletic conference said that they are delayed from joining the Big Ten in playing football this season because of necessary California and Oregon local approvals, but California's governor said that the state's law is not preventing the Pac-12 from playing.⁵² California fitness centers filed a lawsuit against the governor alleging that they were unfairly targeted when the state forced them to close.⁵³

→ *Illinois*

Illinois' test positivity rate -- the metric that experts use to gauge how rapidly the virus is spreading -- is at 3.5%, the lowest since July. Although between 1,500 and 2,000 new cases have been added per day this month, positivity rates have decreased across most of the state thanks to booming testing capacity.⁵⁴ Last week, 30 counties were at a "warning level." This week, the number fell to 24. Following a high positivity rate in Regions 4 and 7 in August, indoor dining and bars were closed. As of September 20, Region 7 returned to Phase 4 guidelines and Region 4 is on track to return to Phase 4 by the end of the week.⁵⁵ Both regions previously struggled with positivity rates higher than 8%, but the automatic mitigation mechanism and increased testing capacity proved to be successful in lowering the rate.⁵⁶

→ *Michigan*

The state's seven-day moving average is approximately 700 new cases per day. The test positivity rate is 2.5%.⁵⁷ On September 9, Governor Gretchen Whitmer allowed indoor services at gyms, fitness centers, bowling alleys, roller rinks, ice rinks, swimming pools and similar businesses to reopen at 25% capacity.⁵⁸ However, this week Whitmer said that a backwards step is possible for Upper Michigan based on the state's recent increase in numbers.⁵⁹

→ *New York*

New York continues to enjoy a COVID-19 test positivity rate below 1 percent. The state processed over 100,000 tests daily in the past week.⁶⁰ Starting September 30, restaurants with indoor seating can reopen with a 25% occupancy limit.⁶¹ Indoor pools will also be allowed to reopen on the same day, although with strict occupancy limits of 33% of their capacity.⁶² Although New York City students were scheduled to begin in-person instruction on September 21, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on September 18 that only the youngest students, in 3-K and Pre-K, and those with significant special needs, would be coming back on the 21st.⁶³ The return of the remaining students will be phased in by grade level through October 1 -- though the details of this plan are still vague.

→ *Texas*

As of September 16, Texas became the state with the second highest number of COVID-19 cases, leaving only California with more cases.⁶⁴ Texas changed its way of calculating positivity rates and will now take the date that the test was conducted into account, instead of relying solely on the date when the COVID-19 case was confirmed.⁶⁵ As of September 17, gyms, museums, libraries, restaurants, retailers and other businesses can operate at 75% capacity.⁶⁶ As class resumed in person, hundreds of Texas teachers reported that districts in the state were not abiding by COVID-19 health regulations. Teachers are also concerned about insufficient ventilation, a lack of space for social distancing, a lack of PPE, and a lack of access to accommodations for employees at the school and their family members. Teachers in Texas must return in person or may face unemployment.⁶⁷ A bipartisan group of Texas lawmakers -- noting disparities in internet access -- called on the governor to create a plan for increased broadband to permit remote learning and working.⁶⁸

Mexico

A Mexico City government report indicates that COVID-19 deaths in the city were under-reported by approximately 10,000 deaths between March and August.⁶⁹ The US-Mexico land and sea border closure to non-essential travel has been extended until October 21.⁷⁰ For the two week period of September 14 to September 27, Mexico's stoplight indicator system shows, for the first time, no states in the red or maximum risk category. Instead, 24 states are in the orange or high risk category, and eight states are in the yellow or medium risk category.⁷¹ No states are in the green or low risk category.⁷² Public use of Cancun beaches is now permitted.⁷³ Hotel occupancy in Tulum in the Quintana Roo region is at approximately 32%, which is the highest that it has been since the area reopened.⁷⁴ For the first time since February, Mexico's employment rate is rising; 92,000 jobs were recovered in August. This represents approximately 8.2% of the jobs lost over the last five months.⁷⁵ Six former health ministers published a report that criticized the federal COVID-19 response. Their report advocates for a national testing campaign, localized lockdowns and mandatory mask use. The deputy minister of health publicly mocked the report and its suggestions.⁷⁶

Chile

As of September 13, Chile's national PCR positivity rate fell from 17% to 6%.⁷⁷ As of September 13, the positivity rate for the Metropolitan region remained around 4%. Over the September 18 national holidays, Chile intended to deploy additional inspectors to ensure compliance with COVID-19 regulations in the

Metropolitan region.⁷⁸ A collaboration between the Chilean Ministry of Women and Gender Equity, UN Women and Entel led to the development of a mobile survey called the Rapid Assessment Survey, which will be used to determine the impact of COVID-19 on Chileans.⁷⁹ Similar surveys have been conducted in Europe and Asia, but Chile is the first Latin American country to conduct the survey.⁸⁰

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's 7-day moving average of new cases is 10,230, which is a record for the country during the pandemic.⁸¹ France uses hospitalization and ICU capacity as metrics to help with their reopening and closing policies. Over the past 7 days, there were 3,223 more hospitalisations -- of which 535 were intensive care admissions.⁸² Across the country, 50 departments are now above the alert threshold of 50 new cases per 100,000 people. Every department has reached the threshold of "vigilance", meaning there have been more than 10 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the past seven days.⁸³ Infections are particularly high among young people, prompting the government to mandate face masks outdoors and in workplaces.⁸⁴ The government also pledged to boost COVID-19 tests, reinforce control of self-isolation conditions, and impose stricter rules in high risk zones -- but it has ruled out a new nationwide lockdown. Instead, France's major southern cities of Bordeaux, Marseille and Nice -- classified as red zones -- have banned public gatherings of 10 people in parks and beaches and have reduced the public-event attendance capacities to 1,000 people from the previous 5,000 person limit. People are urged to limit visits to nursing homes and not to eat and drink in bars while standing.⁸⁵

Germany

Although Germany continues to experience a resurgence in the number of cases, it is currently not at the same level of intensity as France and Spain. The country's 7-day R-value is 1.17, slightly above the 1.0 target.⁸⁶ The 7-day moving average of new cases is 1,740, a steady increase from early September. The federal government has not brought in any new restrictions nationwide, but several German cities and towns imposed their own rules after exceeding 50 cases per 100,000 citizens.⁸⁷ For example, Munich is set to ban groups of more than 6 people meeting up in private. Indeed, September 19 should have marked the start of Oktoberfest celebrations in Munich, but events were canceled due to the pandemic. Authorities announced an alcohol ban on Theresienwiese -- where the main celebration is usually held -- to stop would-be revelers from hosting replacement parties.⁸⁸ Although the number of new daily cases in Germany is rising, schools have not been identified as a driver of infections.⁸⁹ The key factor is keeping community transmission rates low and having a rapid contact tracing mechanism in the inevitable case of outbreaks.

Belgium

In Belgium, the number of new cases is increasing across the country -- unlike in July when infections rose mainly in city centres. The rise in infections may be related to the reopening of schools and travellers returning from high-risk countries. Health officials announced that "the number of new coronavirus infections is currently highest in the group of 10 to 20-year-olds."⁹⁰ Experts are concerned about the spike in cases and are recommending unilateral measures related to face masks to ensure rules do not vary by municipality.⁹¹

Netherlands

For any gatherings that include more than 50 people, a permit from local authorities will have to be provided.⁹² Effective September 19, teaching staff and healthcare workers will be given priority at COVID-

19 testing centres. The aim is to test essential workers in the morning so they have their results in the afternoon and know whether or not they can continue to go to work. They will be able to use a special phone line to make an appointment, which will guarantee priority. The new situation will apply to primary and secondary school workers who cannot be replaced, and whose classes would be sent home if there was no supervision. In healthcare, nursing and other staff whose services are essential for patient care will be given priority if there is no suitable replacement.⁹³

Spain

Spain's COVID-19 situation has been on high alert since September 11 after reporting 11,370 cases and 900 hospital admissions.⁹⁴ Madrid has been unable to stop the spread and is in a critical situation. The city has recently become Spain's COVID-19 epicenter;⁹⁵ approximately 25% of people who get tested are COVID-19+.⁹⁶ Consequently, Madrid may impose health restrictions and a partial lockdown.⁹⁷ Catalonia and Aragon, which were the epicenters of the COVID-19 outbreak in July and August, have since stabilized.⁹⁸ While Aragon has begun seeing an increase of cases, the situation in the Canary Islands, Basque Country and la Rioja have either calmed or have seen a decrease in cases.⁹⁹ Between September 15 and 16, the COVID-19 death toll in Spain rose by 239, but authorities emphasize that the number of deaths is still fewer than in March and April.¹⁰⁰ The government reports that detection rates have increased, that younger people are now contracting the virus, and that there are fewer deaths and hospitalizations.¹⁰¹ However, Spain's hospitalizations and death toll is rising.¹⁰² Spain's first clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine, the Janssen vaccine, began on September 14 in two Madrid hospitals. It will be tested on 190 volunteers from two groups: one group aged 18 to 55 years old and another group aged 65 years and older.¹⁰³ The trial will last between four to six months and will be tested on people who are healthy and have not had COVID-19.¹⁰⁴ Phase three will evaluate the drug and vaccine's efficacy before the vaccine is ready in one to two years.¹⁰⁵ As of September 21, Madrid began a partial lockdown.¹⁰⁶ Protestors took to the streets on September 20 because many areas entering lockdown had many low income and essential workers.¹⁰⁷

The United Kingdom

According to the health minister, Britain is at a tipping point regarding COVID-19 and a second national lockdown could be imposed if people do not follow government rules designed to stop the spread of the virus.¹⁰⁸ In the last two weeks, cases have risen sharply to more than 4,000 per day. The recent surge is related to people returning to work and school.¹⁰⁹ Opposition Labour Party Leader Keir Starmer said he would support whatever measures the government brings forward, but criticized the government's testing system for not having the capacity to deal with increased demand as schools returned to in-person learning.¹¹⁰ Stricter local lockdown measures have been introduced across the country -- with London possibly next in line. Local lockdowns include curbs on the hospitality sector, such as pubs and restaurants, and may involve curfews as well.¹¹¹ Scotland has not seen the spike in infections it feared. Among Scottish students who have tested positive for the virus, almost all contracted it outside of the school setting.¹¹² More nationwide measures are expected to be announced this week.

Ireland

On September 15, a Framework for Restrictive Measures was published that consists of 5 levels, with level 1 being the least restrictive. The Framework is designed so that either national or county level restrictions can be applied.¹¹³ The whole of Ireland is currently set at level 2. However, due to the rise in the number of cases in the capital city, the government placed Dublin at level 3, effective midnight September 18, for three weeks. Under level 3, the public has been encouraged to work from home where possible and only make essential journeys on public transport. Visitors to private homes and gardens are limited to 6 people. No indoor gatherings are allowed. Outdoor gatherings are capped at 15 people. Restaurants and pubs that

had been serving food will only be allowed to cater outdoors or provide a take-away service. Outdoor dining should be limited to a maximum of 14 customers. Pubs in the rest of Ireland will be allowed to open on September 20, but nightclubs, discos and casinos in Dublin will remain closed. The number of people allowed to attend weddings and funerals will be restricted to 25 (down from 50), effective September 21. Sports training can continue, but only outdoors and in pods of up to 15. Gym classes are not permitted. Schools, creches and outdoor play areas remain open with restrictive measures in place.¹¹⁴ Effective September 20, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland will be added to Ireland's green list for travel. However, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Greece, Norway and Estonia have been removed from the list.¹¹⁵

Luxembourg

Luxembourg's education ministry has formulated a plan to make school during COVID-19 as normal as possible. Three scenarios have been established if infections arise among the students. Should an individual infection occur, the class will undergo distancing from the rest of the school community but will not have to go into quarantine. A quarantine will only be implemented if there are multiple infections within one class. If a chain of infections is identified, new measures will be taken. The class that undergoes distancing due to an individual infection will have to adhere to further measures. The students will no longer be allowed to attend after-school child care or participate in extracurricular activities. As soon as the child has been officially traced and given a statement by the Ministry of Health, one parent may work part-time (this family leave will not be deducted from the normal allowance). In terms of tracing, the process should not last longer than a day. The Ministry of Social Security clarified that parents will normally be notified about their family leave the day after a classmate has been tested positive. However, parents that stay at home because the child is at-risk and has to take online classes will no longer have the right to additional family leave. The process thus has returned to pre-lockdown measures -- only those affected by an infection have the right to family leave, as do those who have been ordered to self-isolate.¹¹⁶

Portugal

On September 15, mainland Portugal limited gatherings to 10 people. Additional measures are in place for the Lisbon and Porto Metropolitan areas, where the risk of COVID-19 is higher. In the Autonomous Region of Madeira, the calamity situation has also been extended by the regional government until the end of September. In the Autonomous Region of the Azores, the same level was extended until September 15. The measures implemented by the government in mainland Portugal include closing times for some establishments, with restaurants allowed to remain open until 1 am and receive customers until 12 am for meals. In shopping centre catering areas, a maximum of four people per group are allowed. The return to school in person means the adoption of new health measures, including the distribution of personal protective equipment and a maximum of four people per group allowed in restaurants and cafes 300 meters away from schools. Sporting venues continue without spectators.¹¹⁷

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

Chancellor Kurz reinforced the need for Austrians to follow COVID-19 measures as the country begins to experience a second wave of infections. The chancellor suggested that employees work from home where possible.¹¹⁸ More than half of the new cases are in the capital, Vienna.¹¹⁹ In response, the government is restricting events and reinstating mandatory mask regulations. Private indoor gatherings have been limited

to a maximum of 10 people.¹²⁰ Masks remain mandatory on public transit but, effective September 14, are now mandatory in all public areas -- including supermarkets, retail shops, and schools. In restaurants and bars, only seated customers can be served -- with a maximum of 10 people per table.¹²¹ The Austrian government does not expect the situation to improve and plans to keep these measures in place throughout the winter.¹²²

Greece

In Greece, students returned to school on September 14 with several new measures in place. Students and staff must wear masks indoors at all times and outdoors when physical distancing is not possible.¹²³ A majority of new cases in Greece are within the Greater Athens Area, prompting the Health Minister to discuss the government's plans to introduce additional restrictions on specific municipalities if needed to control the spread.¹²⁴ Effective September 16, masks are mandatory in the Greater Athens Area in all closed work spaces and in open areas where 1.5 metres distance cannot be maintained. The operation of live music establishments has been suspended for 14 days and restaurants can only seat 6 people per table. Cinemas and theatres will now only be permitted to operate at 60% capacity.¹²⁵

Italy

Students from 13 of 20 regions in Italy resumed in-class lessons on September 14.¹²⁶ Days before schools reopened, 13,000 teachers and staff tested positive for COVID-19 and are not allowed to return to work until they test negative. The Union of Italian Students is planning demonstrations regarding the insufficient number of teachers and the lack of transport services.¹²⁷ Due to rising case numbers, Italy will begin mandatory COVID-19 testing for travellers returning from Paris and other areas of France effective September 22.¹²⁸ Fears of a second wave of infections has impacted tourism with many overseas visitors cancelling travel plans. Also, Italy's largest source of tourism comes from the United States and the ongoing travel ban preventing Americans from entering the country is having an impact.¹²⁹

Slovenia

The Slovenian government has shortened the mandatory quarantine requirement from 14 to 10 days, following recommendations from the medical task force for COVID-19. The task force acknowledges that this may increase the risk of infection but the change will significantly reduce economic burdens.¹³⁰ Pivka, a municipality in south-western Slovenia, is the first to impose local restrictions after a rise in infections. The local government has placed a 10-day ban on the use of indoor sporting facilities, as well as all cultural and sporting events held indoors.¹³¹

Switzerland

Swiss universities reopened on September 14, with a mix of on-campus and online teaching for the fall semester.¹³² Effective September 14, regions bordering Switzerland will not be included on the Swiss list of high-risk countries due to social, cultural, and economic interactions. As a result, quarantine obligations for people travelling from these regions are no longer in place. Some cantons are concerned about this change and are worried it could lead to higher costs and reduced compliance with quarantine rules.¹³³ The government added 9 of 13 French regions and Vienna, the capital of Austria, to its list of high-risk regions.¹³⁴

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

As new cases of COVID-19 continue to rise across the Czech Republic, the country's Health Minister unexpectedly announced his decision to step down on September 20 in order to "create space for a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic."¹³⁵ The Czech Republic reported a record high of 3,130 new cases on September 17. This is the country's third straight daily record, comparable to the spread of the virus during the entire month of March.¹³⁶ In response, the Czech government has ordered bars and nightclubs to close between 24:00 and 6:00, and has made face masks mandatory in classrooms for students over the age of 11.¹³⁷ As of September 18, indoor mass events and gatherings exceeding 10 participants -- including bars and nightclubs -- can only be held if each attendee is assigned a specific seat.¹³⁸

Hungary

The Hungarian government has decided to implement some minor preventative measures across the country, which take effect on September 21, in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 amid a major resurgence of the virus across parts of Europe.¹³⁹ Among these measures is the requirement that face masks be worn at all times in most public places, including malls, cinemas, museums, and stores -- as well as while using and waiting for public transit. Mandatory daily temperature checks will also be introduced for all kindergarten and public school students effective October 1. Hungary's Chief Medical Officer, has noted that -- while the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic primarily affected the elderly -- the vast majority of recent positive cases come from the 20-29 age group.¹⁴⁰

Latvia

On September 15, the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers decided to reduce the self-isolation period required upon entering Latvia from 14 to 10 days.¹⁴¹ Medical staff, social care providers, and educational staff who are in close daily contact with patients, clients, or children, respectively, will only be allowed to follow the shorter, ten-day self-isolation period after leaving a so-called "red country" if they test negative for COVID-19 on the eighth day upon their arrival.¹⁴² Lithuanian and Estonian citizens, who were previously exempt from self-isolation requirements as part of the Baltic travel bubble, are now subject to the same requirements as other foreigners.¹⁴³

Lithuania

Effective September 14, self-isolation will not be required for arrivals from Germany, Sweden, Poland, Bulgaria, Norway, Iceland, Serbia, and Liechtenstein due to the Lithuanian government's decision to raise its threshold for COVID-19 alert levels.¹⁴⁴ Countries will now be deemed "virus-affected" where their COVID-19 incidence rate exceeds 25 cases per 100,000 people in the last 14 days. Lithuania's own incidence rate currently stands at 15.6 cases per 100,000. The required self-isolation period for those returning from affected countries has also been reduced from 14 to 10 days.¹⁴⁵

Poland

As of September 19, six Polish poviats (counties) are classified at the "yellow" zone under the country's regional COVID-19 alert system; three have been moved to the "red" zone. Poviats classified at these two levels are subject to more restrictive measures regrading, for example, mask wearing, organization of mass events, transport, and leisure activities. Poviats classified as "red" are prohibited from holding mass events exceeding 100 people and anyone residing in the poviat must wear a mask at all times while in public.¹⁴⁶

Slovakia

From September 14 until at least October 1, wearing a mask will be mandatory in all public indoor places -- with some exceptions.¹⁴⁷ Slovakian authorities have decided to remove the Czech Republic from its list of coronavirus-safe countries, while adding Bulgaria, Canada, and Sweden to the list.¹⁴⁸ EU citizens from high-risk countries who wish to enter Slovakia will be obliged to present a negative COVID-19 test, or quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in the country.¹⁴⁹ Effective September 18, it is recommended that all retail and service establishments provide a distance of one customer per 10m² in their sales areas and that customers maintain a distance of 2 metres between each other at all times.¹⁵⁰

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

Denmark reported 589 new cases of COVID-19 on September 19, the country's largest daily increase since the beginning of the pandemic. Testing has vastly increased since March, but officials remain worried about the rising rate of infection.¹⁵¹ New cases are spread throughout the country, with 84 of Denmark's 98 municipalities reporting at least one case in the past week.¹⁵² Due to the rising number of active cases, the Danish government announced a number of new restrictions set to take effect nationwide. Bars and restaurants across the country must close at 10 pm, and all guests who are not at their table must wear a mask.¹⁵³ The gathering limit has been reduced to 50 people, though exceptions remain for some seated events. Denmark has also recommended that residents who can work from home do so and that those who cannot should avoid public transit during peak hours.¹⁵⁴ All of these restrictions were already in place in the Copenhagen area, but were implemented nationally due to the rising infection rate outside the capital region. The restrictions are set to last until at least October 4.¹⁵⁵ Denmark's infectious diseases agency has recommended that residents avoid contact with people outside a 'social bubble' of 5 to 10 people and should avoid socializing entirely if they can.¹⁵⁶ Parents will be able to receive up to 10 days of parental benefits from the government if their child is sent home from school due to COVID-19 -- effective October 1.¹⁵⁷ The Danish government is advising against non-essential travel to Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, and Portugal due to a rising infection rate in those countries.¹⁵⁸ They are also likely to add the UK and Iceland to this list in the coming days.¹⁵⁹

Estonia

Estonia reported 61 new cases of COVID-19 on September 19, the country's largest daily increase since the beginning of April.¹⁶⁰ Estonia increased its infection rate threshold for quarantine requirements to 25 new cases per 100,000 over the past two weeks for Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania. The changes only apply to those countries for now, with the Estonian government saying that this was due to a 'mutual level of trust' between the nations.¹⁶¹ Despite the changes to the quarantine threshold, starting on September 28 quarantine-free travel between Estonia and Finland will only be permitted if it is work-related.¹⁶² The Ministry of Education said that individual schools cannot impose greater restrictions than the ones recommended by the Health Board or Scientific Council. Complaints were made after a few students were sent home after schools saw that they had recently travelled to Italy -- at the time considered a 'safe' country by public health officials.¹⁶³ A ban on the sale of alcohol between 10 pm and 10 am will be implemented nationally starting next weekend. Bans had already been in place in Ida-Viru and Harju Counties.¹⁶⁴ Direct flights to Sweden and Norway were suspended this weekend when both countries passed Estonia's threshold for restrictions.¹⁶⁵ A rural municipality in Tartu County has implemented restrictions on the same scale as the national lockdown in the spring. However, the Chancellor of Justice said that local officials did not have the authority to implement such restrictions, saying that it is the sole authority of the Estonian Parliament to restrict fundamental freedoms.¹⁶⁶

Finland

Effective September 19, Finland eased travel restrictions on all EU countries with an infection rate of less than 25 new cases per 100,000 people over the previous two weeks.¹⁶⁷ The Finnish government will continue internal border controls in order to monitor the implementation of a test-based entry model, which is expected to come into effect in November. Travellers from countries with infection rates higher than the limit will be subject to a mandatory COVID-19 test upon their arrival.¹⁶⁸ Country specific travel restrictions will remain in place until at least October 18 and Finnish authorities will continue to carry out weekly assessments of the COVID-19 situation around the world.¹⁶⁹ As a result of the change, non-essential travel from Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Cyprus, and Poland was permitted effective September 19. Restrictions were also put in place on Hungary and Italy.¹⁷⁰ A variety of stakeholders have expressed concern about this plan, with shipping and travel companies saying it should not be their responsibility to ensure that a potential traveller has the correct testing information.¹⁷¹ Similar to most of the EU, a significant proportion of new cases in Finland have been among young people, with the infection rate among at-risk groups substantially lower than it was in the spring.¹⁷²

Iceland

Iceland reported 75 new cases of COVID-19 on September 18 in the country's largest daily increase since April 1. People under the age of 40 make up 80% of the cases diagnosed in the past week.¹⁷³ Random testing will be performed in the Reykjavik area due to the increase in new cases, and the Chief Epidemiologist reminded Icelanders to stay home if they experience any symptoms of COVID-19.¹⁷⁴ Pubs and nightclubs in Reykjavik will be closed from September 18 to September 27 in response to the spike in cases. Restaurants and cafes will be permitted to remain open.¹⁷⁵ A mandatory mask policy has been put in place at all secondary schools and universities in Reykjavik after a number of cases were connected to schools in the capital region.¹⁷⁶ The two-test border entry system that was put in place in August will remain until at least October 5. The Icelandic government also announced that those who are exposed to infected persons now only need to spend 7 days in isolation if they are able to present negative test results.¹⁷⁷

Norway

Norway will impose a quarantine period on all travellers from Denmark; all Danish regions have surpassed the Norwegian infection threshold for restriction-free entry. The Norwegian government also imposed the requirement on one Finnish region, while removing the restriction for Poland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, two Swedish regions, and another Finnish region.¹⁷⁸ PM Solberg has warned Norwegians that additional national restrictions may be put in place due to an increasing infection rate in the country. Special restrictions have already been put in place for the city of Bergen, including a lower gathering limit and mandatory mask policy.¹⁷⁹ Infection rates in Sweden have been lower than those in Norway for the entire month of September, leading to some speculation that the travel restrictions between the two countries will be eased. However, Sweden's infection rate remains higher than the Norwegian threshold for quarantine-free travel.¹⁸⁰ Norway's Chief Epidemiologist Frode Forland has also rejected his Swedish counterpart's theory that Sweden's high COVID-19 death rate is due to a comparatively mild flu season in recent years. Forland said that the flu seasons in Sweden and Norway have been very similar, and the higher death rate in Sweden is due to a lack of lockdown restrictions early on in the pandemic.¹⁸¹

Sweden

Sweden will lift its nationwide ban on visits to long-term care facilities on October 1. The ban was introduced on April 1 after COVID-19 outbreaks occurred at the facilities throughout the country. Since the ban was introduced, infection and fatality rates in the facilities have dropped precipitously.¹⁸² The ban was one of the few national restrictions introduced by the Swedish government throughout the pandemic.

Sweden lifted its recommendation against non-essential travel to the UK after the UK did the same for Sweden.¹⁸³ The Swedish government also lifted its restrictions on travel to Finland and Slovakia.¹⁸⁴ Public health officials will shift to updating their COVID-19 statistics four times a week rather than every weekday.¹⁸⁵ State Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell said that Sweden's excess COVID-19 fatality rate was due to a mild flu season in recent years. After his Norwegian counterpart pushed back against this idea, Tegnell said that it was too early to make a definitive determination on the source of the high number of deaths.¹⁸⁶

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

The number of daily new cases in Japan has stayed around 500 over the past 10 days. The online system for sharing data on COVID-19 infections nationwide is expected to connect to all municipalities in October, although some challenges related to data accuracy are expected.¹⁸⁷ Despite a new Prime Minister coming into office on September 16, Japan's COVID-19 policy is expected to remain the same as it was under the previous prime minister. Effective September 16, bars and restaurants in Tokyo are permitted to stay open after 10 pm. The national government is planning to ease gathering limits at public events, allowing professional sports to fill their venues to 50% capacity. In the meantime, Tokyo still has to wait to be included in the nationwide tourism campaign.¹⁸⁸ The Japanese government has allowed short-term business trips to and from Singapore, effective September 18. Businesspeople from Singapore will be exempt from a 14-day quarantine period if they meet certain requirements, including submitting their itineraries in advance. Expanded PCR testing capacity is planned at airports.¹⁸⁹

South Korea

The number of daily new cases in South Korea has stayed under 200 for more than two weeks, but a significant proportion of infections has been untraceable since mid-August. Due to an upcoming major holiday, the government and local offices are encouraging people to spend the holiday with only close family members and refrain from long-distance travel.¹⁹⁰ The government has entered into an arrangement to secure COVID-19 vaccines for 30 million people, or roughly 60% of the total population. A two-track approach will be adopted, with some of the doses sourced through the COVAX Facility, a global vaccine initiative, and others through private companies.¹⁹¹ The export of protective face masks was permitted starting on September 14, subject to certain quotas. After a local person was confirmed to have both the flu and COVID-19, South Korea is now directly facing the intersection of the two epidemics. The government decided on September 13 to ease many restrictions on the Seoul Metropolitan Region for two weeks -- although the region has not met the designated benchmarks -- out of economic considerations. Dining in is once again permitted at coffee chains and other food outlets after 9 pm. All visitors are still required to provide contact details at restaurants. "High-risk" businesses such as gyms, private tutoring services, and computer game rooms can resume operations under limited conditions. The ban on in-person church activities continues.¹⁹² Despite the relaxation, local officials in Seoul have decided to extend a ban on rallies of 10 or more people until October 11.¹⁹³ Starting September 21, schools in Seoul and its surrounding regions have resumed in-person classes, subject to a two-thirds capacity cap on high schools and a one-third cap for all other schools. Schools in the rest of the country enjoy the discretion to set their own limits based on the local situation.¹⁹⁴

New Zealand

New Zealand has once again come close to eradicating COVID-19 within its borders. However, while the country has been able to contact trace most cases, authorities are worried about the identified close contacts

not moving into isolation fast enough.¹⁹⁵ Some additional defence force personnel have been assigned to the isolation hotels in Hamilton to help with security work. From now on, public transport operators, including airlines, buses and trains, no longer need to maintain any seating restrictions or passenger capacity limits at level 2 and above. Mask use will continue to be compulsory.¹⁹⁶ The government has decided to move Auckland to Alert Level 2. The gathering limit in the city was expanded to allow groups of up to 100, effective September 24. The rest of the country will be at Alert Level 1 from September 22. There will be no restrictions on movement, gatherings, businesses, or services. However, people are encouraged to stay vigilant and take records of close contacts. That level will be in place for at least 14 days, with the cabinet set to review those settings on October 5.¹⁹⁷ The government has loosened the criteria for admitting overseas workers to access critical labour shortages experienced by several industries.¹⁹⁸

Australia

Australia is returning to limited levels of daily new cases, with Victoria reducing its case numbers faster than what was predicted by modelling. The Northern Territory has clinically eradicated COVID-19. Some of the restrictions will be relaxed in Melbourne as early as September 28 if it is able to get to a lower level of new infections. Regionally, Victoria has managed to progress to the next step of its roadmap. There will no longer be restrictions on leaving home. The gathering limit in the state was expanded to allow groups of up to 10 people outdoors. Residents of Victoria may create a social bubble with one additional household. Masks remain mandatory and there will still be tight restrictions on the number of people who visit other's homes. Eateries are now able to offer table service subject to capacity limits. Up to 10 people are allowed to dine inside cafes and restaurants, and up to 50 people in outdoor areas. All shops and markets can open. Services involving close contact, including hairdressers, are allowed to resume if mask wearing is enforced. Every business across Victoria will be required to have a COVID-safe plan, which will be enforced from September 28. Travelling around the state is permitted for all residents outside Melbourne. The loosening of restrictions in Victoria will coincide with more police checkpoints and tougher questioning of those trying to enter the rest of the state from Melbourne. Outdoor contact and non-contact sports for children are also allowed, but only non-contact sports are permitted for adults. Both groups are subject to caps on the number of participants, depending on the type of sport. Accommodations will reopen in time for the school holidays and students in regional Victoria will return to the classroom in the fourth term of the year.¹⁹⁹

Turkey

First graders & kindergarten students returned to school on September 21, with strict preventive measures in place. Masks are mandatory; teachers are required to wear an additional face shield. Students are required to enter school in single file to avoid overcrowding. Sanitizers are mounted on the walls in all corridors. Classrooms have desks rearranged with at least 1 metre between each student to ensure social distancing. Staff and parent-teacher meetings are also required to be held online. School meals will involve wrapped food, such as sandwiches. The September 21 reopening has been limited to one day only; as of September 28 students may be asked to attend classes for only two days a week. The number of students in each classroom has been reduced, with separate school hours for students. Every class will last only 30 minutes followed by 10-minute breaks. In the meantime, all other students will continue their courses online. No decision has been yet made for the other grades, but authorities plan to launch in-person classes in "a number of weeks."²⁰⁰ Effective September 18, alternate working hours for public servants were announced in a bid to halt a resurgence in COVID-19 cases by reducing crowds on mass transit vehicles during rush hour.²⁰¹ The government also announced its plan to tighten measures and reimpose stricter restrictions in closed and crowded places, such as shopping malls, markets and parks. The measures come into effect in the first week of October.²⁰²

Israel

Israel experienced a dramatic increase in new cases last week, prompting the government to give final approval to an indefinite nationwide lockdown. Nearly 7,000 police officers and soldiers were deployed throughout the country amid concerns over public defiance of the lockdown.²⁰³ While the public has largely adhered to the pandemic-related restrictions, there have been a number of reports of recent violations.²⁰⁴ Hospitals have been ordered to open new COVID-19 wards. The healthcare system is approaching its capacity for patients in serious condition.²⁰⁵ Massive protests, which are exempt from the lockdown, have continued. However, police announced that protesters would be divided into groups of 20 and would be required to follow social distancing regulations within and between groups.²⁰⁶ The lockdown began on September 18. People are not allowed to move beyond 500 meters from their home, which was expanded to 1 km on the first day of the lockdown. Exceptions are granted for attending to essential activities, such as going to work or accessing healthcare. Visiting the homes of other people is banned. Gatherings are capped at 10 people indoors and 20 people outdoors. Malls, swimming pools, gyms, hairdressers, hotels, and other leisure services are closed. Supermarkets, pharmacies, hardware stores, electronic stores, laundromats and additional stores deemed essential will remain open. No more than three people can travel in the same car except for members of the same family. Only a limited number of passengers are allowed on public transportation. Workplaces in the private sector are not permitted to hold meetings with more than 10 people present; in-person services are prohibited. However, there are a number of exceptions to the current lockdown that were not present during the spring lockdown. Schools were closed one day earlier on September 17.²⁰⁷

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Links

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