

Weekly COVID Update:

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

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**Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto
PEARL (Policy, Elections, and Representation Lab)
Professor Peter Loewen, Lab Director (peter.loewen@utoronto.ca)**

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Foreword

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

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

On our Dashboard, we present unique quantitative data on:

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

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

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

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

Data Visualizations from Dashboard

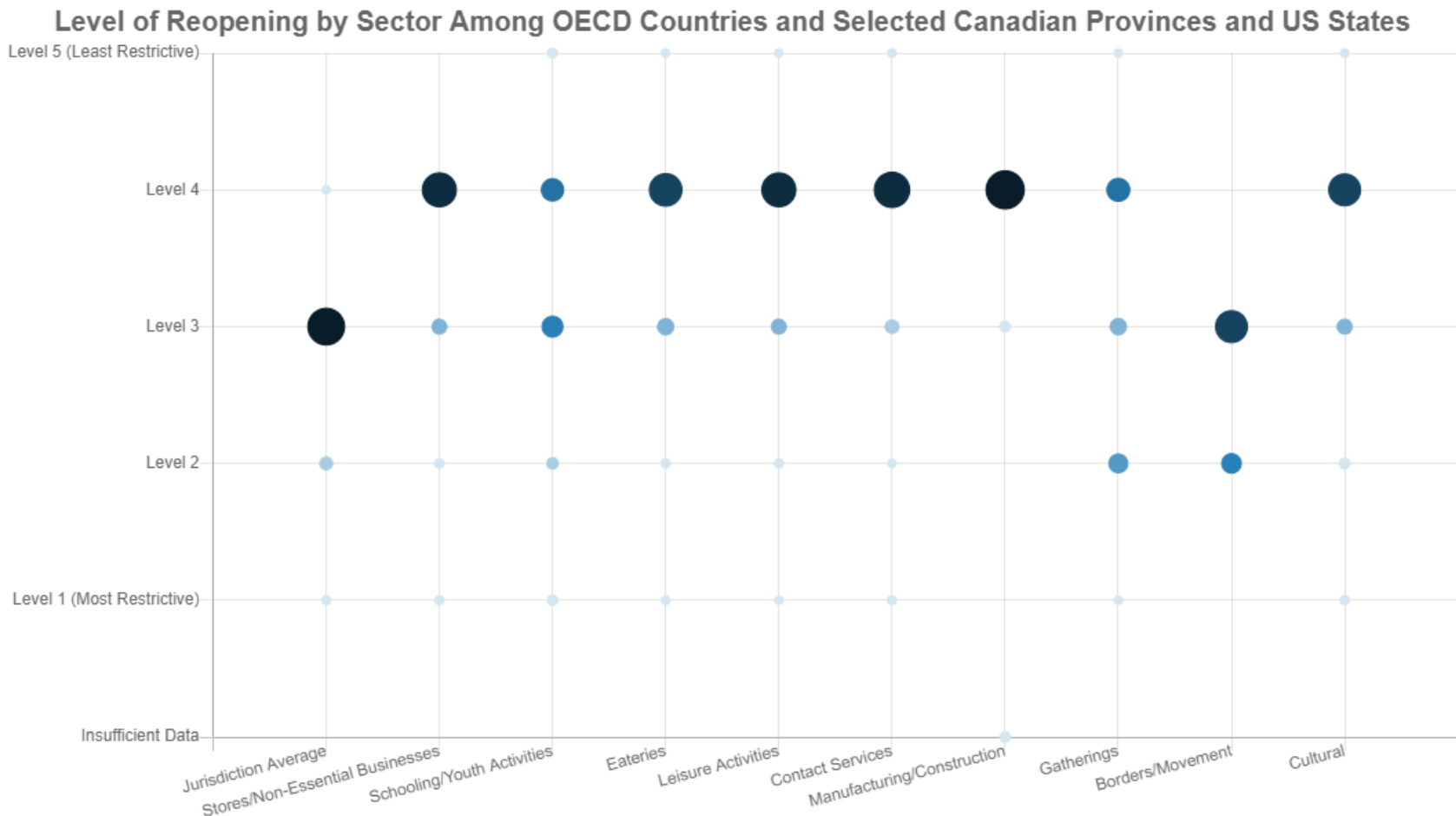


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of August 10. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses,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

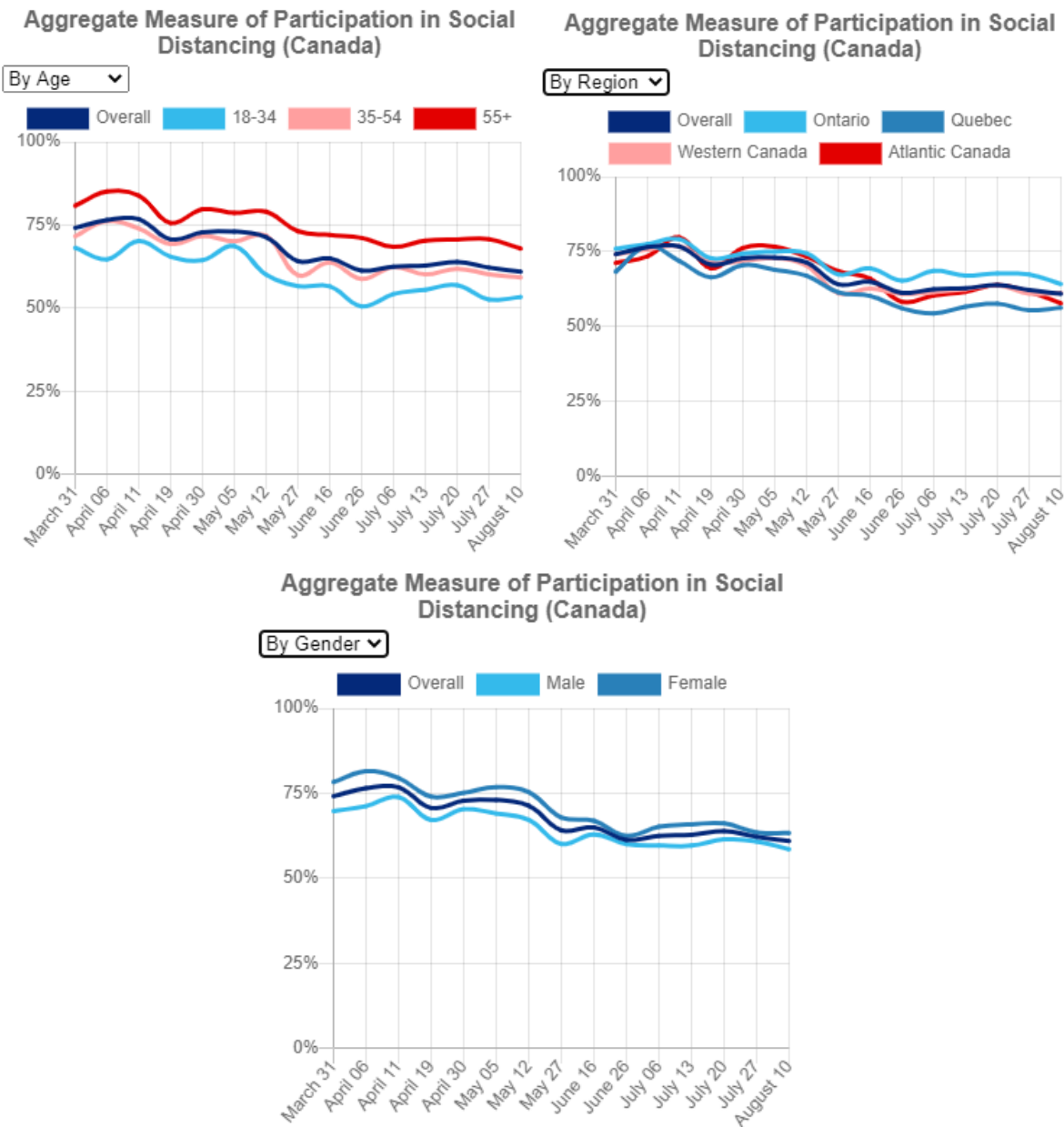


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada). We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance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

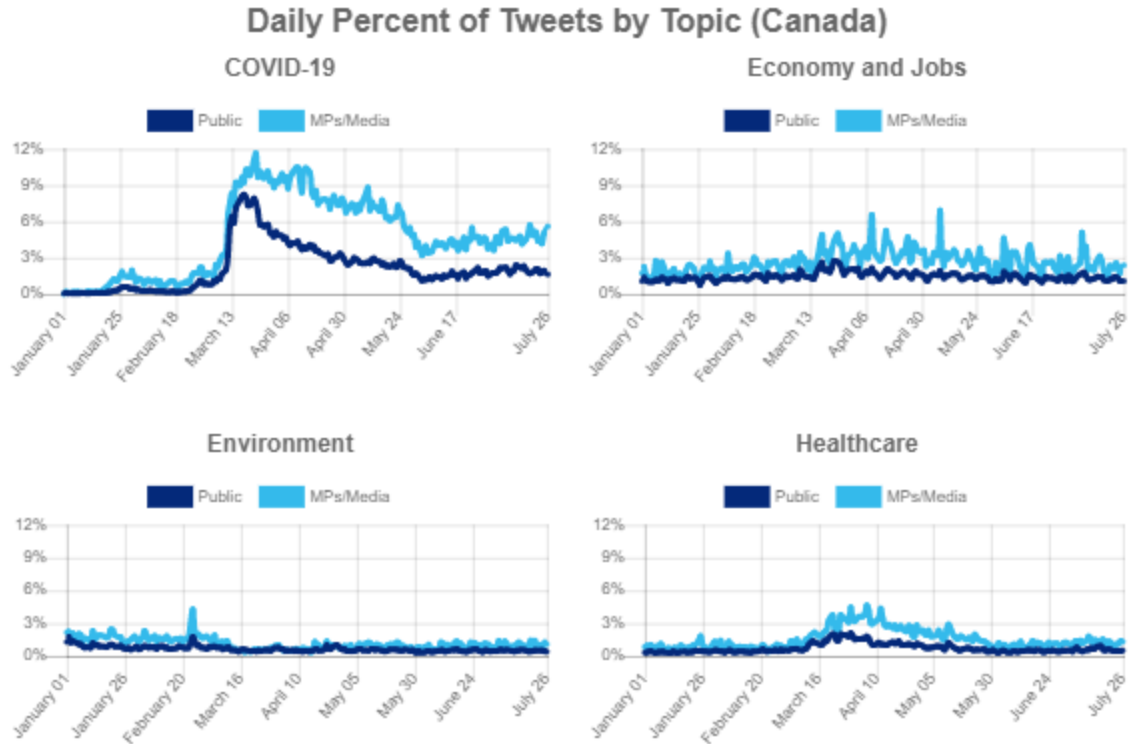


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

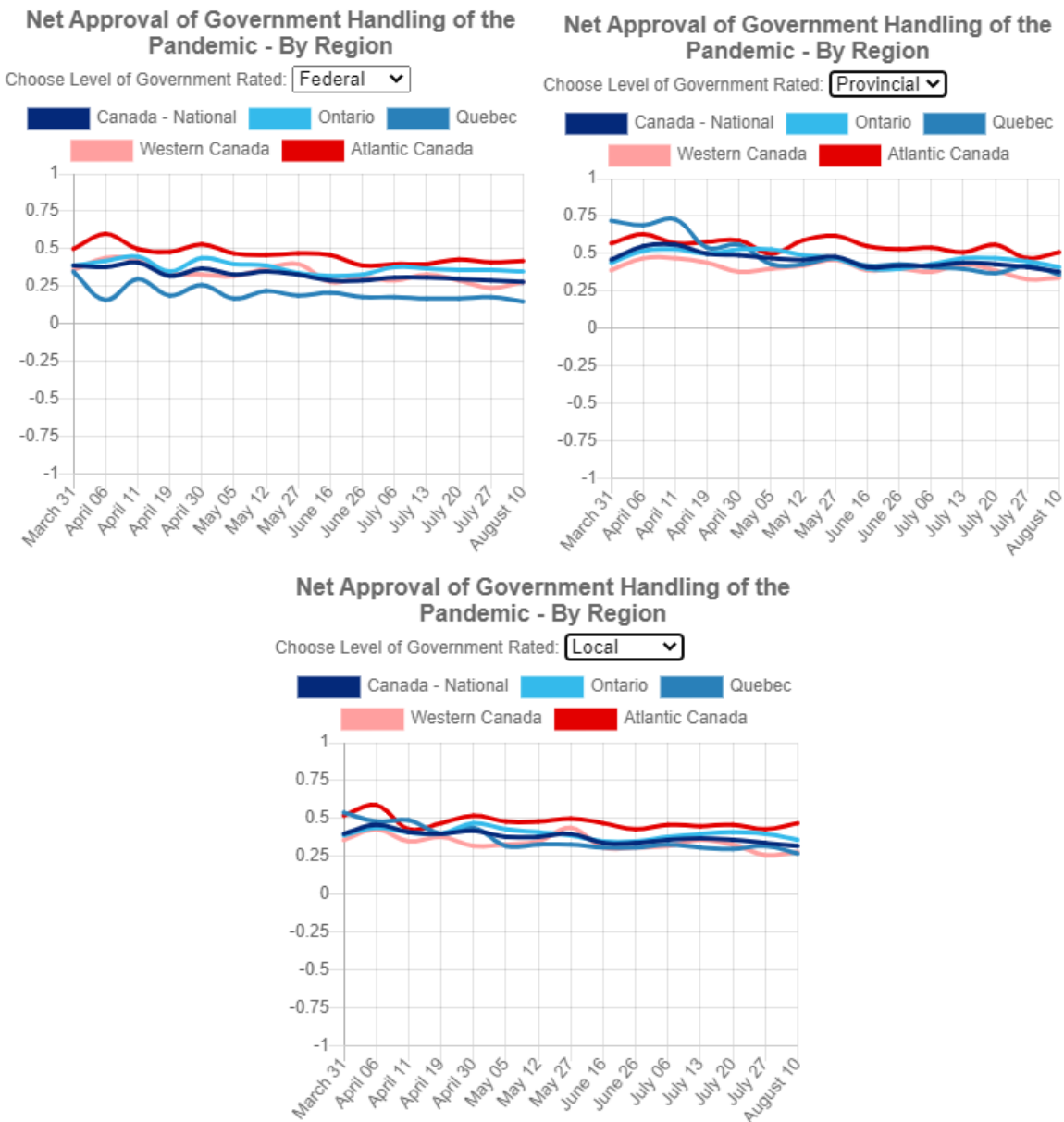


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score,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

Individual OECD Country Profiles

THE AMERICAS

Canada

→ *Alberta*

The government has made several adjustments to its original back to school plan. Masks will be mandatory for all school staff and students grade 4-12 in public spaces. Teachers and staff will be supplied one face shield to be used alongside a mask. For younger students, masks will be optional. The decision is based on evidence that children 10 and under are less likely to transmit COVID-19.¹ Students can choose to remove their masks when they are seated in class. The government will provide schools with two contactless thermometers and school districts will share 466,000 litres of hand sanitizer. The government will provide two reusable masks to every student, teacher, staff, and bus driver in the province.² Approximately 1.6 million masks will be distributed.³ Diploma exams have resumed for grade 12 summer students, but students and parents want the government to make these mandatory exams voluntary. Public libraries in Edmonton reopened on August 4 with restrictions including mandatory masks, physical distancing, capacity limits, and shortened visits.⁴

→ *British Columbia*

British Columbia continues to experience slight increases in daily new infections. The B.C. government has formally extended the provincial state of emergency through August 18.⁵ The government has also requested federal help getting information from airlines that it says is critical for tracing passengers who may have been exposed to COVID-19.⁶ B.C. is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Most businesses are open subject to restrictions.

→ *Manitoba*

As of August 7, new cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Manitoba, with most of them linked to a cluster in Brandon or to the close contacts of known COVID cases. The new cases include several young people, including some as young as 10.⁷ Manitoba's Premier warned Manitobans to follow health measures and orders to help stop the spread of COVID-19, but did not mention the possibility of mandatory face masks.⁸

→ *New Brunswick*

The province of New Brunswick reported four new cases of COVID-19 on August 4, and two new cases on August 6. All 6 of these have been attributed to a group of temporary migrant workers arriving in Moncton who tested positive for the virus during their mandatory quarantine period. As of August 10, they are the only active cases in the province.⁹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

There are currently no active COVID-19 cases in Newfoundland and Labrador. The province has shifted away from the development of its own provincial contact tracing app and plans to use the federal app. People can download the app but cannot use it to report exposure yet; it could be up to a month before this functionality is ready.¹⁰ Andrew Furey was selected as the new premier designate. Newfoundland and Labrador's COVID-19 travel ban has been challenged in court on the grounds that it violates the Charter and falls outside of provincial jurisdiction.¹¹

→ *Northwest Territories*

The Public Health Emergency in the Northwest Territories has been extended until August 18.¹² Travelling within the NWT is still restricted upon arrival, with limited exceptions. The territory is still at Phase 2 of its reopening plan and is not expected to move to Phase 3 until the situation in the whole country is well under control. In most cases, indoor gatherings and events can have a maximum of 25 people while 50 are allowed outdoors. Similar limits apply to businesses and services.

→ *Nova Scotia*

Nova Scotia's emergency order, which was set to expire on August 10, has been extended until at least August 23. This is despite there being only 2 active cases in the province and no new cases since August 3.¹³

→ *Nunavut*

Nunavut extended its public health emergency order to August 20.¹⁴ Nunavut government officials no longer need to self-isolate when going to and from the territory--as long as they are travelling on official business.¹⁵ Authorities still have the option to enter an isolation hub if they wish, and the exemption does not apply to family members or staff. The isolation period is expected to remain in place until the territory obtains adequate testing capacity.¹⁶ The school year began this week in some parts of Nunavut with all students expected to attend in-person. Enhanced cleaning protocols are in place and limited group activities will be conducted. No guests (including parents) will be allowed into schools.¹⁷

→ *Ontario*

Last week, Ontario reported less than 100 cases a day for 7 days. This trend was encouraging--especially since all regions except Windsor-Essex advanced to Stage 3 on July 31.¹⁸ There are currently 49 patients infected with the virus in Ontario hospitals. Of those patients, 25 are being treated in the intensive care unit and 14 are on a ventilator. Windsor-Essex will advance to Stage 3 on August 12.¹⁹ The government's back-to-school plan is largely in keeping with expert recommendations on cohorting teens, revising high school schedules, mandatory mask use, testing, isolation and sustained surveillance. However, the plan has received criticism over its ability to achieve physical distancing among students at the elementary level.²⁰

→ *Prince Edward Island*

Prince Edward Island has no active cases. The province is working with UPEI and Holland College to determine best practices for September as Canadian and international students arrive from outside the Atlantic bubble.²¹ 300 soccer players, coaches, staff, and media from the Canadian Premier League arrived in the province. Players were in self-isolation prior to their arrival and are now in their own bubble for the duration. Parks Canada is adapting its services to better adhere to public health and safety measures. Campsites are operating at 40% capacity and are not accepting walk-in campers. Fewer washroom services are available and are being cleaned every 2 hours.²²

→ *Quebec*

As of August 6, Quebec's five-day average of new cases was 135. This is the lowest that it has been since approximately mid-July.²³ The majority of new cases are located in Montreal.²⁴ Since events of up to 250 people are permitted, festivals and events in Quebec may resume with social distancing and masks.²⁵ Survey results indicate that approximately half of Quebecers are afraid to return to work.²⁶ The government is facing a potential court challenge from a constitutional lawyer arguing that children should be given the option to return to online studies in the fall.²⁷ A teachers union in Quebec is calling for the delay of school until after Labour Day. The union also raises questions about poor ventilation in schools, classes with windows that do not open, and whether masks will be mandatory and who will

supply them.²⁸ Quebec's public health director said that it is unlikely that Quebec will impose a partial lockdown in the event of a second wave because of the negative impacts for the elderly and youth.²⁹

→ *Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan began to release more detailed COVID case information on August 4, with new maps showing the spread in various parts of the province.³⁰ The province also announced its school reopening plan on August 4. All students are expected to attend in-person and are not required to wear masks. The plan does not include a reduction in class sizes. The Ministry of Education is planning to purchase several million additional masks for staff and students if the situation in the province worsens.³¹ The NDP's education critic and the leader of the province's teachers union criticized the reopening plan, saying it did not offer clear guidelines for moving from one stage to another and did not prioritize the safety of students and educators.³² A number of teachers, parents, and students also criticized the plan, with some teachers saying they would rather retire or teach from home than return under the circumstances.³³ Education Minister Gord Wyant defended the plan, saying the decision to not mandate the use of masks was up to the province's Chief Medical Health Officer. A number of school boards in the province will recommend their use anyway.³⁴

→ *Yukon*

As of August 7, one Yukon resident has COVID-19--the first in-territory case since April. The government considers the new case indirect and travel-related, not the result of community transmission. Yukon is now in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. The restrictions on the number of people allowed at gatherings — 10 indoors, 50 outdoors — are unchanged. Parents and guardians no longer have to fill in a daily assessment tool when they take children to child care. The government is still planning for the 2020–21 school year. Opposition parties are demanding that the legislature be reconvened to hold the government accountable over its school reopening plan.³⁵ Yukon University has provided more details about the fall semester, saying that teaching and learning will take place primarily online. As of September 1, YukonU campuses across the territory will be open to students and employees; however, access will be restricted and campuses will remain closed to the general public.³⁶

The United States

→ *California*

California has reported the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the US: a total of approximately 530,000 cases and 9,800 deaths.³⁷ Approximately 40% of California's cases have either been in or near Los Angeles County. In late July, California's governor expressed concern over COVID-19 becoming the second leading cause of death in LA County, after deaths caused by heart disease.³⁸ As of August 7, LA authorities were granted permission to cut back on water and power supply to homes and businesses that repeatedly hosted large gatherings.³⁹ California released guidance for colleges and universities to reopen, including with regards to testing and housing.⁴⁰ A University of California, San Francisco epidemiologist suggests that, while California's second wave is ending, the state will not be able to achieve a baseline of cases prior to a third wave.⁴¹ California's public health director resigned days after a glitch in the system led to a delay in reporting COVID-19 test results used for reopening decision making.⁴²

→ *Illinois*

On August 8, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported the state's highest single-day increase in COVID-19 cases in more than two months: 2,190 cases.⁴³ With cases increasing across the state, Governor J.B. Pritzker announced new rules and fines on Friday for businesses and schools that repeatedly ignore COVID-19 restrictions and mask requirements.⁴⁴ Pritzker emphasized that state authorities will focus enforcement on businesses that don't comply with the rules, not individuals.⁴⁵

Springfield Public Schools established a remote learning dress code, forbidding students from wearing pajama pants, slippers or hats while on camera.⁴⁶

→ *Michigan*

New cases have begun plateauing in Michigan, stabilizing at 660 daily cases.⁴⁷ Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer said she is “trying to avoid” moving the state back a phase in the reopening plan, before schools resume on August 26.⁴⁸ Michigan will not have a uniform, statewide K-12 reopening plan this school year for its 544 traditional school districts and nearly 300 public school academies.⁴⁹ Instead, each district is required to have a plan approved and in place by August 17. Gov. Whitmer has voiced concerns about schools reopening to in-person instruction this fall and has opposed proposals to mandate it. A majority of districts will adopt 100% online learning, with limited in-person options for K-8 students.⁵⁰

→ *New York*

New York continues to keep COVID-19 metrics low, with a 0.78% positivity rate. Over the weekend, the State Liquor Authority and State Police Task Force recorded violations of state laws (indoor service and serving alcohol without food) at 60 establishments.⁵¹ Governor Andrew Cuomo announced on August 7 that all school districts in the state can reopen for in-person teaching if the district chooses to do so. However, he acknowledged that there is “significant anxiety” among teachers and parents in taking this collective step.⁵² New York’s threshold for keeping schools open is a 3 percent COVID positive rate.⁵³ On August 9, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that 74% of the city’s students will take part in a mix of in-person and online learning; the remaining students will do all learning online.⁵⁴ New York City’s public school teachers, citing safety concerns, are calling for schools to remain closed this fall and for a continuation of online learning.⁵⁵

→ *Texas*

On August 4, a temporary health care facility that can treat approximately 250 patients opened in the Rio Grande Valley.⁵⁶ On August 8, the Houston Astros and the Texas Division of Emergency Management opened a free COVID-19 testing centre at Minute Maid Park in Houston; the centre can process up to 2000 tests daily.⁵⁷ Texas’ governor urged Texans to get the flu vaccine and reminded the public to wear masks, social distance, sanitize and avoid gatherings.⁵⁸ The governor also said that masks are needed to slow the spread of the virus and decrease the need to shut down again.⁵⁹ Texas is preparing to send PPE (masks, sanitizer, thermometers and face shields) to Texas school districts for the 2020-2021 school year, at no cost to the school districts.⁶⁰ Local school boards can decide how and when they would reopen in-person. School boards will have a four-week transition where they can operate remotely if needed. Remote learning can be extended for an additional four weeks with a school board vote and a waiver. Extension beyond eight weeks will be reviewed by the Texas Education Agency on a case-by-case basis.⁶¹

Mexico

The government reported that as of August 6, seven states were still experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases. By contrast, 14 states are now stabilizing or experiencing a decrease in cases.⁶² The deputy minister of health appealed to people to wear masks, particularly indoors.⁶³ Most car assemblers have increased production in Mexico in order to return to their production levels prior to COVID-19.⁶⁴ From August 6 to 21, registration and re-registration for schools are scheduled to take place; the school year will begin remotely by August 24.⁶⁵ Teachers will receive training on digital tools and equity between August 10 and September 11. Schools are only permitted in person once the region has been

given a green light on the federal government's reopening stoplight system. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) predicts that the pandemic in Mexico will peak in August and that, while the government had helped to slow the spread of the virus, it has not brought virus transmission fully under control.⁶⁶

Chile

On August 6, Chile's minister of health reported a decrease in COVID-19 cases nationally. He said that cases had decreased drastically in 11 regions over the last seven days, and in eight regions over the last two weeks.⁶⁷ However, Punta Arenas regressed from phase three of reopening to phase two, following a 200% increase in new cases over the past week.⁶⁸ The government anticipates that their Paso-a-Paso reopening plan will remain in effect until the end of November.⁶⁹ The Chilean government is working on gradually reopening national parks with restrictions. These include: limiting groups, short safety presentations, encouraging credit card payment, and encouraging visitors to sanitize personal items before and after visiting.⁷⁰ The Alerce Costero National Park in the Los Rios region reopened on August 5. 62 other national protected areas are expected to reopen as municipalities enter phases two to five of reopening.⁷¹ The government published a document with recommendations for employers and employees to return to work safely. The document recommends: staying informed; consulting labour unions and creating health and safety committees with experts; increasing awareness and training; adapting the physical workspace; mental health support; traceability; and continuously evaluating and updating their plans.⁷² A sanitary residence has also been created for pregnant and lactating women who test COVID-19 positive.⁷³ The government will financially support a COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial by Universidad Catolica and Sinovac that is entering phase three of clinical trials. Authorities suggest that the vaccine could be ready by 2021.⁷⁴

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's seven-day moving average of new cases--now standing at 1,351--has risen in the last week by almost 50 percent. Despite the surge in new cases, the number of people hospitalized for the disease continues to go down, by 88 to 5,060--extending a 10-week-long trend.⁷⁵ Because of the increase in cases, wearing a face mask in busy outdoor parts of Paris (river banks, Champs-Elysee Avenue, markets, parks, etc.) is mandatory as of August 10.⁷⁶ Executives from Air France-KLM and Lufthansa Group have called on the Canadian government to remove travel restrictions on EU nationals.⁷⁷ As the epidemiological situation of France worsens, executives in the tourism industry worry that countries (even within the EU) will add France to their quarantine list.⁷⁸

Germany

Compared to last week, Germany's 7-day R-value has increased to 1.17.⁷⁹ On August 10, millions of students across Germany, including in Berlin, go back to school.⁸⁰ Each state is taking different measures, mostly regarding face masks. The least restrictive state is Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which has no mask requirement but does apply the "remaining in your cohort all day" principle. Two schools in the state closed on Friday due to COVID infections among students.⁸¹ The most restrictive state, North Rhine-Westphalia, is enforcing a mask requirement in class. Berlin requires face masks as students enter the schools and in the hallways, but not in class.⁸² German firms in many sectors (e.g., service, manufacturing, and leisure) believe that current COVID-19 restrictions will remain in place until April 2021.⁸³

Belgium

In Belgium, the number of new cases continue to rise, as authorities work to curb incidence rates and boost the capacity of testing centres.⁸⁴ The government's Autumn Strategy contains plans to increase testing from 28,000 tests to between 50,000-70,000 tests daily, increasing the country's lab capacity, and additional testing stations.⁸⁵ In Brussels, the use of face masks are mandatory on all commercial streets and in busy pedestrian zones.⁸⁶ Health experts and officials disagree over whether Belgium is experiencing a second wave of infections.⁸⁷

Netherlands

On August 7, Amsterdam's regional health board announced its decision to cut back on tracing the contacts of people who tested positive for COVID-19. This is due to a shortage of capacity. The surge in infections within the region has made it impossible to carry out thorough tracing until more staff are trained. Those who test positive are being advised to inform their own network about possible transmission.⁸⁸ New measures were announced by the government effective August 6, including holding of freshers' week activities online, as much as possible, with physical meetings only permitted to introduce a sport or an educational programme. Cafes, bars and restaurants are advised to use a reservation system and register the contact details of all guests so they can be traced in case of an outbreak. Should there be an outbreak, the local authorities must close down the cafe, cinema, museum or amusement park for 14 days. Testing will be introduced at all Dutch airports for people returning to the Netherlands from high risk areas. Checks based on passenger lists will be done to make sure arrivals are staying in quarantine for 14 days. Local public safety boards have been given the power to introduce localised measures. These include the right to impose curfews on cafes and night shops, the introduction of face masks, the closure of shopping centres and parks, the power to ban on large events and the right to scale up policing.⁸⁹

Spain

New COVID-19 clusters have led Spain to become the Western European country with the most confirmed cases.⁹⁰ The COVID-19 contact tracing app that was tested in the Canary Islands doubled the detection of suspected cases. The Canary Islands and the Balearic Islands are discussing the probable installation of the app during the week of August 10.⁹¹ The Valencian health minister announced that long term care residents in areas experiencing an increase in cases, or with health departments experiencing an increase of cases, won't be permitted to go on outings--nor will they be allowed to accept visits from family and friends.⁹² In Cantabria, students are scheduled to return to school with no complementary activities allowed outside of school. Students over the age of five are required to wear masks; younger students are recommended to wear one.⁹³ The Basque Country said that their sharp increase in cases was a second wave that resembled the outbreak in March.⁹⁴ The Basque health minister said that a new normality was not possible and explained that the government was concerned with people going to second homes and travelling to other parts of the country.⁹⁵ While hospitals are not yet full, Basque officials reminded people that the ability for COVID-19 to spread was still possible.⁹⁶ Authorities suspect that COVID-19 is being spread through nightlife, terraces and in coastal areas.⁹⁷ A Spanish Ministry of Health spokesperson said that Spain needs to prevent community transmission before September when schools and general labour interaction are set to resume.⁹⁸

The United Kingdom

For the first time since June, the UK reported more than 1,000 new COVID-19 cases on August 9. Manchester will likely remain in lockdown until next week.⁹⁹ On August 9, Prime Minister Johnson wrote that there is a "moral duty" to get all children in England back to school in September.¹⁰⁰ Scientists, however, warn that the country could be placed 'right back' in nationwide lockdown if the

government does not improve its track and trace system by the time schools reopen.¹⁰¹ Currently, patients who test positive for COVID-19 get a phone call regarding their results and instructions on how to self-isolate. The UK does not have a contact-tracing app; the nations within the UK are developing their own, such as Northern Ireland's StopCovid NI.¹⁰² Gyms, pools and play centres in Wales reopened on August 10; businesses are legally required to ensure people maintain a two-metre distance and to provide hygiene stations where appropriate.¹⁰³ After pausing his government's reopening plan on August 1, Johnson announced that indoor performances, casinos, bowling alleys, skating rinks, and close contact services will not resume until August 15.¹⁰⁴

Ireland

Recently, Ireland had recorded one of the lowest infection rates in Europe. However, last week COVID-19 cases surged--with the average infection rate doubling to more than 50 cases per day. The three adjoining counties of Kildare, Laois and Offaly account for almost half of the new cases over the last two weeks.¹⁰⁵ Ireland announced new restrictions for all three counties effective midnight, August 7, for a period of two weeks. Restaurants, cafes and pubs in the counties are allowed to serve food in outdoor areas to small groups for the next two weeks. Residents permitted to leave their county only in limited circumstances. Movement within the counties are also restricted--with the exception of work-related travel and other essential journeys. All kinds of indoor entertainment and sport venues, such as cinemas, theatres, museums, galleries and bingo halls, will close down for the period. Visits to prisons, acute hospitals and nursing homes will be suspended except on compassionate grounds. Childcare and schools that are open will remain open, along with outdoor amenities including playgrounds--with social distancing measures in place. Retail shops can remain open with the compulsory application of face masks. Households in these counties are asked to restrict visitors to their homes to no more than 6 people from no more than 3 households. Outdoor gatherings are also limited to 15 people for organised activities.¹⁰⁶

Luxembourg

Effective August 6, travellers from Luxembourg to Germany are required to carry their test results or get tested on arrival, with the cost of testing paid by the government.¹⁰⁷ As the number of new cases in Luxembourg has risen, manual contact tracing has become more vital than ever before. The infrastructure requires a large number of staff to not only contact those who have tested positive for COVID-19, but also all those who have been in contact with them.¹⁰⁸ Luxembourg's businesses are facing a potential wave of bankruptcies in the autumn as the pandemic weakens the economy and many businesses are forced to close again for weeks this summer.¹⁰⁹

Portugal

Portugal's national tourism authority, Turismo de Portugal, has launched a travel insurance scheme for foreign tourists that covers COVID-19 related claims. Visitors who are planning their holidays in Portugal will be able to acquire Portugal Travel Insurance, a policy adapted to the new reality the pandemic has brought about. The initiative is promoted by RNA Seguros de Assistência and is available online. Coverage extends to the entire national territory and includes medical, surgical, pharmaceutical and hospital expenses associated with COVID-19--as well as cancellation, interruption or extension expenses.¹¹⁰ On August 7, the President of the Republic announced the resumption of all major events planned for September as long as public health rules are respected.¹¹¹ Bars and clubs, which have been closed in Portugal since March, were allowed to function as cafes and pastry shops effective August 1.

Bars and clubs that opted for the reopening can operate until 8 pm in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and until 1 am (with entry limit at midnight) in the rest of the continental territory.¹¹²

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

Vienna's International Airport announced new entry regulations for citizens arriving in Austria from high risk countries. The decision came into effect on August 1, after the country lifted its travel ban on flights from 18 countries. The new entry regulations will include arrivals taking a mandatory COVID-19 test.¹¹³ The government announced an extension to the work scheme introduced in March to prevent layoffs until March 2021. The scheme aims to help counter shortages in the care sector and support retraining to help businesses find qualified staff.¹¹⁴

Greece

As the number of domestic infections continues to rise, the government is urging citizens to strictly adhere to current rules in order to avoid new restrictions in August. The adoption of new restrictive measures would be harmful to Greece's economy and could put its crucial tourism season at risk.¹¹⁵ Effective August 4 to 18, masks will be mandatory on ferry decks, extending the requirement beyond indoor public spaces. Beginning August 6, Cyprus said it will begin testing arrivals from Greece.¹¹⁶

Italy

The government has issued the August decree under Italy's COVID-19 state of emergency, which will come into effect on August 10.¹¹⁷ The measures will be in place until at least September 7. The new decree keeps in place Italy's rules related to travel and to the mandatory use of face masks in enclosed public spaces. Cruise ships can resume from August 15, but will only be able to sail between countries in the EU. Safety precautions should be taken on board. Effective September 1, fans will be allowed to watch minor sporting events: 1,000 spectators will be allowed to attend outdoor events and 200 will be permitted indoors. The same cap applies to audiences at concerts and events.¹¹⁸ Schools in Italy will reopen in September following a protocol signed by the Education Ministry and trade unions on August 6. The government has committed to passing a legislation that will set a maximum number of students per class. All visitors to the school must be registered and staff will undergo tests at the start of the term.¹¹⁹ The Health Minister ordered train and bus operators to continue leaving seats empty to limit contact between passengers after companies began selling all available seats. However, some regional governments have allowed local transport to continue running at full capacity.¹²⁰

Slovenia

The number of active cases in Slovenia is approximately 167.¹²¹ Slovenia has added Bulgaria, Romania, the Bahamas, and India to its red list of countries that require 14-day quarantine at arrival. Spain, Belgium, Australia, and Canada have been moved from Slovenia's travel green list and to its yellow list.¹²²

Switzerland

Cases are quickly rising in Switzerland, causing concern that restrictions may need to be tightened to avoid a second wave of infections. However, on August 5, the Health Minister said new countrywide measures were unlikely. A senior advisor to the government has made several recommendations, such as compulsory mask wearing in all indoor spaces and a limit of 100 people at all events.¹²³ Since August

1, passengers arriving from Israel, Serbia, and Turkey must undergo a COVID-19 test at the airport. Effective August 8, the list of 42 high risk countries will be expanded to 46 and will include mainland Spain and Romania. In Geneva, the canton has ordered the closure of all nightclubs and cabarets until August 23.¹²⁴

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is experiencing a resurgence in COVID-19 infections. The country confirmed 323 new cases on August 7 – its third highest daily increase since early March – and a record high of 5180 active cases as of August 10.¹²⁵ Despite the resurgence in new infections, daily deaths have remained at a relatively low level, comparable to June and July. As of August 4, the number of active hospitalizations was at a record low of 94.¹²⁶ The Czech Ministry of Health has identified the Prague and Frydek-Mistek regions as the main areas of concern with respect to the virus's resurgence. It classified these regions as “without the risk of community transmission, but with the occurrence of local outbreaks” (green level)--in contrast to the rest of the country, which has been classified as having “zero risk of transmission” (white level).¹²⁷ Prague's mayor announced on August 3 that wearing face masks in indoor public spaces is likely to once again become mandatory in Prague starting in September.¹²⁸

Hungary

The epidemiological situation in Hungary remains stable. Authorities have emphasized a need for increased controls at the Serbian border in recent weeks, citing the “extreme threat” to the country's “favourable epidemiological situation” posed by illegal migration.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, Hungary's National Chief Medical Officer announced on August 7 that Spain's risk advisory level has changed from “green” to “yellow”--meaning that anyone travelling to Hungary from Spain will have to complete a mandatory 14-day home quarantine.¹³⁰

Latvia

Latvia's Center for Disease Prevention and Control (SPKC) has revised and extended its list of countries from which travellers are required to undergo 14 days of self-isolation upon arrival in Latvia.¹³¹ 20 European countries – including Luxembourg, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands – have been added to Latvia's “red” list. The list includes countries with a 14-day cumulative COVID-19 incidence rate of over 20 people per 100,000.¹³²

Lithuania

Since August 3, all forms of non-essential travel to Lithuania has been prohibited for Belgian residents, while Lithuanians returning home from Belgium face mandatory isolation for at least 14-days.¹³³ On August 8, the Lithuanian government also placed Poland, the Netherlands, Iceland, Cyprus, and Turkey on their restriction list, meaning that foreigners travelling from any of the aforementioned countries will be banned from entering Lithuania, while Lithuanians must self-isolate for 14-days upon returning home.¹³⁴

Poland

Poland reported record highs with respect to daily COVID-19 infections for 3 days in a row between August 6 and 8: 726, 809, and 843 cases were confirmed on each day, respectively.¹³⁵ On August 8, the Polish government implemented a new regional alert system, classifying each of its counties as either red, yellow, or green--based on their relative level of epidemiological stability.¹³⁶ Based on the assigned level, each county may have varying levels and types of restrictions, such as mandatory mask wearing and limits on the organization of public and private events such as weddings, concerts, and fairs.¹³⁷ Nine of Poland's counties -- mainly in the country's southern region near the Slovak border -- are currently classified as "red" and a further 10 have been classified as yellow. The rest of Poland's 380 *powiats* are classified as "green."

Slovakia

On August 6, Slovakia reported 63 new cases of COVID-19 -- its largest daily increase in new infections since late April. It also recorded its first death since mid-May.¹³⁸

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

Denmark reported 169 new cases of COVID-19 on August 8, the country's largest daily increase since April 25.¹³⁹ Much of the growth in new cases has been driven by outbreaks at a meat processing plant in Ringsted and in Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city. In response to the outbreak, face masks are now mandatory on public transit in Aarhus. The government has indicated that it may extend this rule to other cities if outbreaks continue.¹⁴⁰ PM Fredericksen urged Danes to maintain social distancing in order to limit the spread of COVID-19 and said that a planned expansion of the private gathering limit from 100 to 200 people would be postponed.¹⁴¹ The government plans to meet on August 12 to discuss any further reopening, with delays expected for certain aspects of nightlife. Fredericksen said that the government was willing to implement a mandatory mask policy if the infection rate continues to rise.¹⁴² The Danish Foreign Ministry advised against non-essential travel to Spain and Andorra due to an increase in COVID-19 cases in those countries.¹⁴³

Estonia

Estonia reported 78 new cases of COVID-19 last week, recording the country's largest weekly increase since late April. Most of the new cases are connected to an outbreak in Tartu, which started when a symptomatic person visited several public places.¹⁴⁴ Alcohol sales in Tartu have been restricted after 11 pm, and the mayor has urged residents to avoid crowded and enclosed spaces if possible--and to wear a mask if they cannot.¹⁴⁵ Despite the growing outbreak, the government and the Health Board agreed that it was not necessary to introduce a mandatory mask policy at this point, but said they may be useful when taking public transit.¹⁴⁶ The Minister of Social Affairs said the coming weeks would be crucial in determining if the government needs to reintroduce restrictions. PM Ratas said that the government would likely focus any new restrictions locally.¹⁴⁷ Travellers from Iceland, France, the Netherlands, and San Marino were added to the list of arrivals to Estonia who are required to self-isolate for two weeks on arrival. A total of 19 EU countries are now on the list--up from only six at the beginning of July.¹⁴⁸

Finland

The Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare (THL) has tightened its restrictions on Finns returning from travel abroad, forbidding them from going to work and school for two weeks upon return. If violations are suspected, officials from THL would consider implementing a mandatory quarantine order.¹⁴⁹ The updated guidelines came after public health officials reported poor compliance with their recommendations.¹⁵⁰ Public health officials also said that they are likely to introduce a mask-wearing recommendation in the coming weeks, possibly on a regional basis. The Minister of Social Affairs said the government may also reconsider its earlier decision to lift the recommendation to work from home.¹⁵¹ Finland reinstated travel restrictions on Belgium, the Netherlands, and Andorra due to rising infection rates in the three countries.¹⁵² The school year begins in Finland this week, though some uncertainty remains over the guidelines for reopening issued by the Ministry of Education. Most students will attend classes in-person with enhanced cleaning measures being implemented.¹⁵³

Iceland

Iceland reported 17 new domestic cases on August 6, recording the country's largest single-day increase since April 9.¹⁵⁴ After exiting the country's border testing scheme in mid-July, deCode Genetics has offered its assistance to the government due to the strain on the country's testing capacity.¹⁵⁵ Iceland is considering limiting the number of passengers who arrive in the country, though the Transport Minister said that this would only be implemented as a last resort. Due to the worsening situation in Europe, it is unlikely that any more countries will be exempted from border testing for the foreseeable future.¹⁵⁶ The government is set to meet in the coming days to discuss expanding border testing, implementing a five-day quarantine period for those who are tested, and another possible reduction in the gathering limit. Elementary schools in Iceland are expected to open as scheduled in late August; secondary schools and universities will have the option to continue remote learning.¹⁵⁷ Icelandic police said they will begin to fine businesses who do not respect social distancing regulations after weekend inspections revealed crowded bars and restaurants in Reykjavik.¹⁵⁸

Norway

Norway reported 196 new cases of COVID-19 during the week of July 27 to August 2, after reporting 94 cases the week before.¹⁵⁹ In response to the rising infection rate, the government postponed some planned reopening measures and instead implemented new restrictions. A national ban has been implemented on serving alcohol after midnight. Working from home is recommended as much as possible. The gathering limit is expected to remain at 200 people. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health is expected to recommend wearing masks on public transit in the coming days.¹⁶⁰ Arrivals from Switzerland and France will need to quarantine for 10 days due to rising infection rates.¹⁶¹ The Norwegian school year begins this week, with students and staff in all schools expected to follow social distancing regulations and enhanced cleaning measures.¹⁶²

Sweden

Most new cases in Sweden are connected to younger people. The government has asked Swedes to remain vigilant to prevent further spread.¹⁶³ Sweden reported no new deaths related to COVID-19 on August 7 for the first time since mid-March.¹⁶⁴ Massive crowds were reported at several beaches in southern Sweden over the weekend--public bathing areas are exempt from the gathering limit of 50 people.¹⁶⁵ State epidemiologist Anders Tegnell said that testing and contact tracing are crucial to Sweden's next phase of the pandemic. He also stressed that it is important not to relax the restrictions, even as the number of new cases have fallen over the past month. Tegnell highlighted that the number of tests performed has also fallen and it is possible that the virus is more widespread than the number of cases indicates.¹⁶⁶

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

The number of new daily infections continues to increase in Japan, which has been above 1,000 for almost two weeks. Despite that, the Prime Minister said that there are sufficient medical resources to handle the continued outbreaks. Meanwhile, an association of prefectural governors is urging people to carefully consider whether to visit their hometowns during the summer holidays and is calling on the central government to step up testing.¹⁶⁷ Government advisors plan to set up a series of indexes, such as hospital bed occupancy rates, to help local authorities gauge the spread of the virus in their regions.¹⁶⁸ The clinical tests of an experimental vaccine jointly developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University will begin this month.¹⁶⁹ As of August 2, the re-entry of foreign nationals with residency status who left Japan before their destination became subject to denial of landing will be permitted to re-enter Japan--conditional on a confirmation letter and a negative result on a COVID-19 test conducted within 72 hours prior to travel. Permanent residents and the spouses or children of a Japanese national or permanent resident will be required to follow this measure effective September 1.¹⁷⁰

South Korea

South Korea continues to report a limited level of daily new infections. Health authorities are now concerned about fluctuations in locally acquired new cases. New clusters of infections linked to churches remain one of the top concerns--even when targeted restrictions have been lifted. Infection prevention functions are being incorporated into some of the smart bus shelters in Seoul, equipping them with ultraviolet light air sterilizers and thermal imaging cameras that could check people's body temperature.¹⁷¹ South Koreans have been cautioned that, even after a vaccine is developed, there will be no immediate change to infection prevention rules: people will still have to wear masks and maintain social distancing. An antibody treatment for COVID-19 has been authorized by the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety on July 17 and is now in a phase 1 clinical trial.¹⁷² Four out of 106 patients in South Korea have shown side effects after being administered remdesivir.¹⁷³ Restrictions on arrivals from Hubei province in China will be lifted on August 10.

New Zealand

As of August 9, it has been 100 days since the last case of COVID-19 was acquired locally from an unknown source in New Zealand. To discover if there has been undetected transmission within the community, pop-up testing stations are being set up across the country.¹⁷⁴ On August 6, the government announced that it would start the trial of the CovidCard, a Bluetooth-based device worn on a lanyard when in public. The device works independently from the contact tracing app.¹⁷⁵ New Zealanders are encouraged to store sufficient masks in preparation for the possible outbreaks in the future. The legislation charging certain returnees part of the costs for their stay in isolation facilities passed all stages and will come into force around mid-August. The government is also in the process of developing technological measures such as CCTV, door alarms, and motion detection systems for managed isolation and quarantine facilities.¹⁷⁶ The Ministry of Health has released its Aged Residential Care Action Plan, which addresses the response to COVID-19 within the aged care sector.¹⁷⁷ Although business leaders have been pushing for privately-run managed isolation to accelerate border reopening, the government is not considering the proposal at the moment.

Australia

Except for a spike on August 6, the number of daily new infections in Australia has hovered around 400 over the past week. There are more than 7,000 active coronavirus cases in Victoria, the worst

affected state, with a significant portion of them related to community transmission. The Victoria government has launched an in-home testing program for people who cannot easily travel to testing sites. The program could serve about 200 people every day.¹⁷⁸ Door-to-door checks to ensure that stay-at-home orders are being followed will be expanded and, by this week, 4,000 household visits by authorities are expected every day.¹⁷⁹ While Victoria and New South Wales continue with their restrictive measures, the other states are weighing their pace of reopening with more caution. Further stage 4 shutdown regulations have taken effect across Melbourne from August 6. Employees will be required to carry a permit when travelling to and from their workplace. Private construction for buildings taller than three storeys should be reduced to 25% of their operations, and smaller residential work is limited to five staff on site at any time. Supermarket and warehouse distribution centres that deal with medical equipment and pharmaceuticals have been given extra time to comply with restrictions that would force them to reduce their workforces.¹⁸⁰ The police will continue to monitor the border of metropolitan Melbourne to ensure that travel to other parts of Victoria only happens for permitted reasons. Non-urgent elective surgeries in regional Victoria will be put on hold until further notice. Further relaxation of coronavirus restrictions in Western Australia has been delayed again due to the outbreak in Victoria.¹⁸¹ On August 10, the Australian Capital Territory reopens food courts, gaming, steam rooms and saunas--with the same social distancing rule and public gathering cap at 100 people.¹⁸²

Turkey

A surge in COVID-19 cases has prompted the Turkish government to debate new restrictions, including changes to the school calendar. Since the Muslim holiday of Eid al Adha earlier in August, the outbreak has spread fast in major cities including Ankara, Konya, Sanliurfa and Bursa, according to Health Ministry data. Over the past few weeks, health authorities have warned citizens to be very careful about the threat. As of August 3, daily new cases have surpassed 1,000 for the first time in about a month. School reopenings, currently scheduled for August 31, may now vary by province--with some provinces cancelling their school reopening plan for the current academic year. In the Central Anatolian province of Konya, authorities have scrapped a plan to open private schools on Aug. 15. Among the options being discussed are online lessons, a full opening or a hybrid. While ruling out city-wide curfews, the government is discussing restrictions on movement or limiting social interaction in certain districts. The Health Ministry has strongly urged provincial governors to exercise their authority.¹⁸³ Turkey's interior ministry announced new measures on August 6, with "one-on-one monitoring" for people who have been required to self-quarantine--especially in the first seven days of isolation. The ministry warned it would not accept any violations of mandatory mask rules, as well as the requirement to maintain social distancing in gatherings such as weddings or circumcision ceremonies.¹⁸⁴

Israel

New daily cases in Israel have hovered around 1,700 in recent days. COVID-19 wards in hospitals have been overwhelmed far beyond their capacity. In a policy reversal, the Health Ministry reportedly said that anyone exposed to virus carriers can be tested--even if they are not displaying symptoms.¹⁸⁵ The government will begin implementing a color-coded system by September 1 under which cities and towns have their policies adapted to the local situation.¹⁸⁶ On August 6, the government approved an end to the weekend closure of shopping centers, stores, markets and public playgrounds.¹⁸⁷ Cultural events will be opened immediately in 'capsules' of 20 people in open spaces.¹⁸⁸ However, the government has also approved a series of restrictions that would take effect on August 11. This includes extending the cap on public gatherings (currently, 20 people outdoors and 10 indoors), and keeping bars, nightclubs, water parks, event halls and other entertainment venues closed. Shared eating spaces in open-air markets and in shopping malls will also be closed. Deliveries must be left outside recipients'

doors. Businesses will be prohibited from serving customers not wearing a mask and temperature checks must be conducted before entry.¹⁸⁹ The Education Minister has promised to open schools on September 1. A \$1.2 billion school plan has been approved, with a significant portion dedicated to improving remote learning infrastructure.¹⁹⁰ A plan for reopening air travel is being developed to allow flights again on August 16.¹⁹¹

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Links

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