

Weekly COVID Update:

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

August 17, 2020

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Foreword

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

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

On our Dashboard, we present unique quantitative data on:

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

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

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

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

Data Visualizations from Dashboard

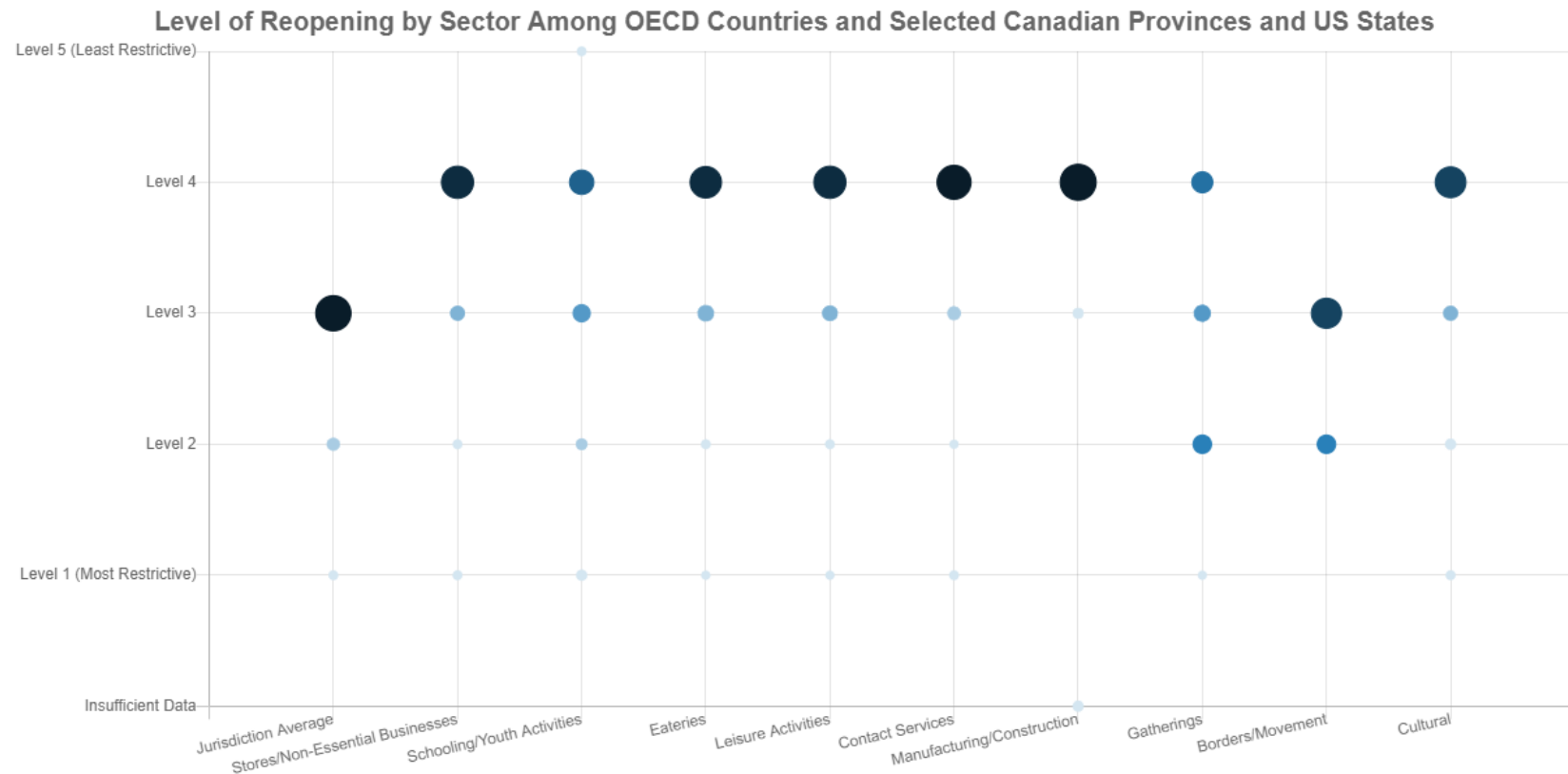


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of August 17. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, Schooling/Youth Activities, Eateries, Leisure Activities, Contact Services, Manufacturing/Construction, Gatherings, Borders/Movement, and Cultural. Each sector is assigned a level of reopening from Level 1 (Complete Lockdown) to Level 5 (Unrestricted Access). The larger and darker a dot is, the more jurisdictions are at that level of reopening. For details, see www.reopeningaftercovid.com.

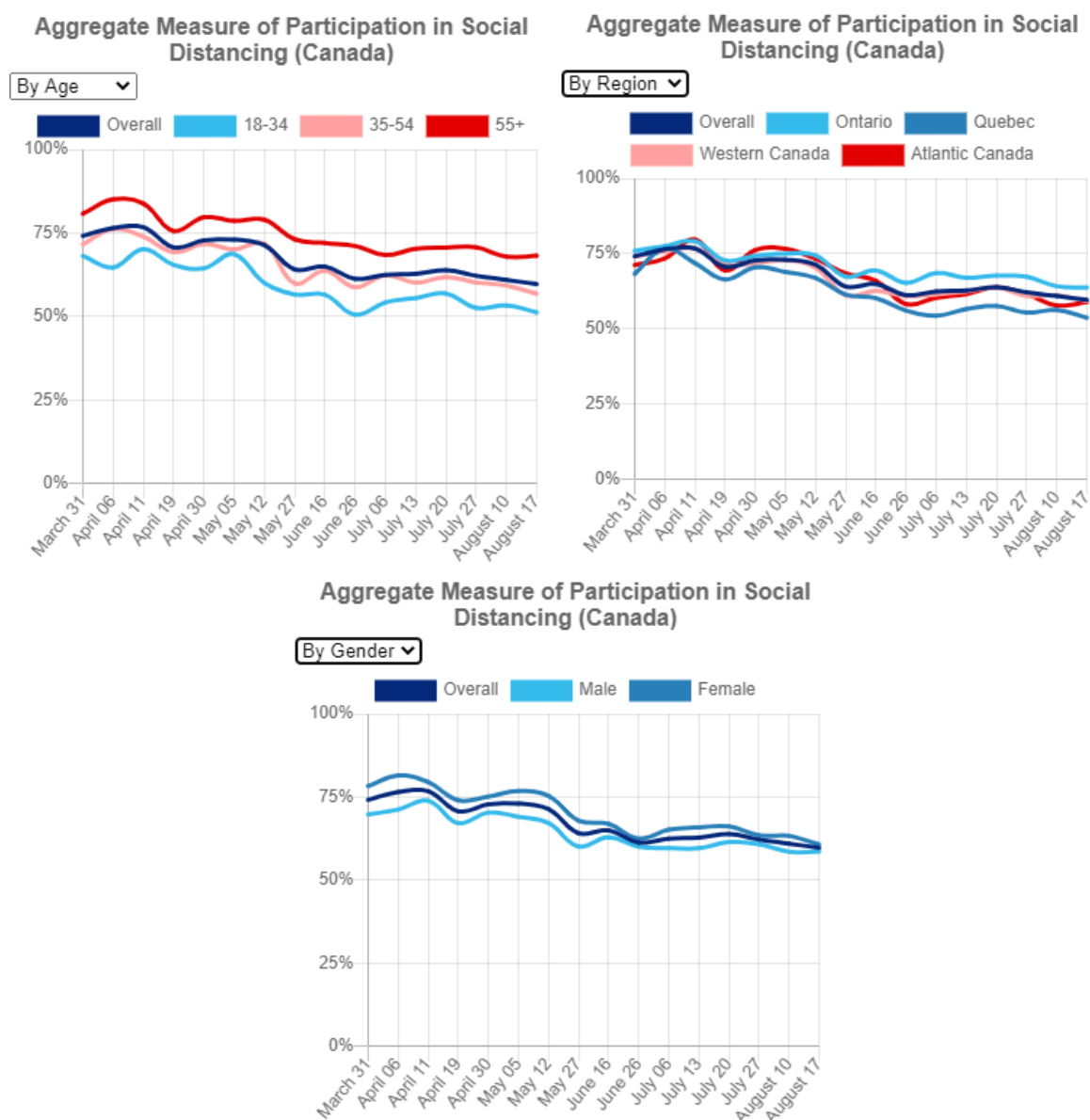


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada). We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance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

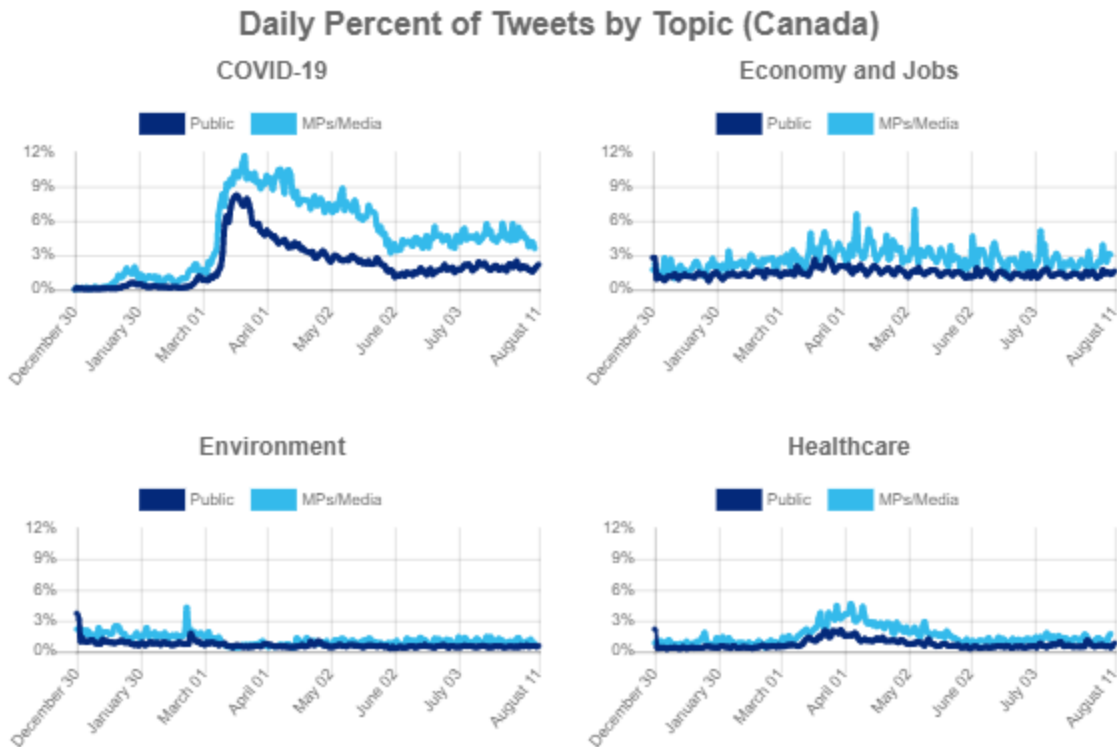


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

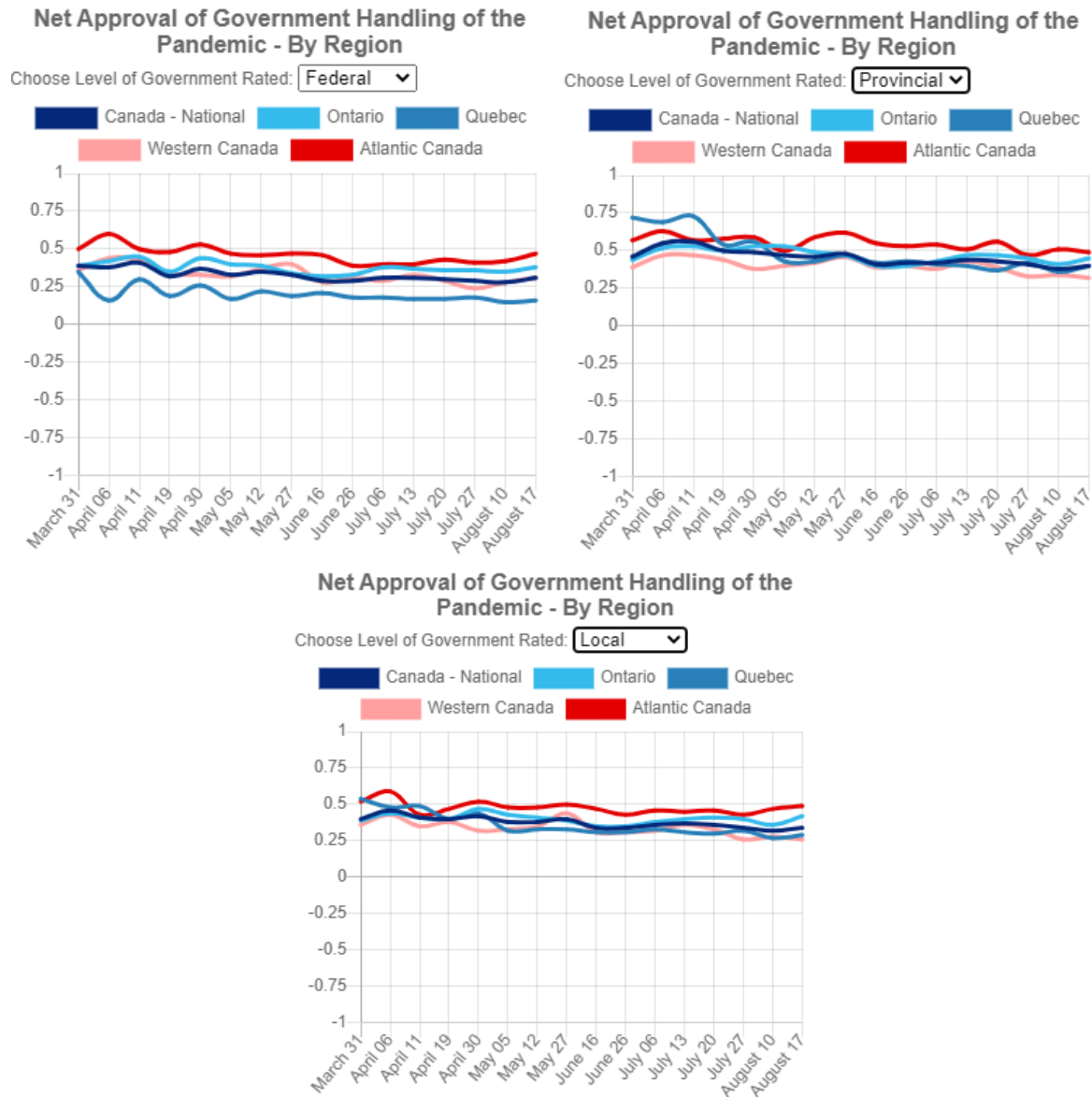


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score,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

Individual OECD Country Profiles

THE AMERICAS

Canada

→ *Alberta*

Alberta remains in Stage 2 of its reopening plan with public health measures still in place. Alberta will switch from its ABTraceTogether app to the federal COVID-19 notification app. This decision comes after the Premier accused the federal government in mid-July of preventing the province from working with Apple and Google to fix their app's problems.¹ In Calgary, all staff and students from kindergarten to Grade 12 will be required to wear masks in public and Catholic schools. The new Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District mandates go beyond provincial guidelines, which require masks from Grade 4 to 12.² Some southern Alberta First Nations will adopt a separate arrangement for the reopening of schools on reserves. Students at Kainai Nation will implement a hybrid model that splits students into two cohorts; the cohorts will attend classes on alternating days of the week.³

→ *British Columbia*

British Columbia now faces an alarming and sustained surge in daily new cases. According to new modelling released by health officials, the daily number could soon surpass the numbers seen at the height of the crisis in March and April. The modelling also warns that the reproductive number has been hovering slightly above 1.0 since June. Young adults are now overrepresented in B.C.'s infection tally.⁴ A surge of patients is causing backlogs at some testing sites in the Lower Mainland. Health officials are planning to ramp up testing in the fall as B.C. braces for a second wave. The target is 20,000 tests a day.⁵ B.C. is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Most businesses are open, subject to restrictions. Updated K-12 operating guidelines for COVID-19 and other restart materials are set to be released this week. School districts and independent schools have until August 21 to finalize their restart plan before sending it to the Ministry of Education for approval. The BC Teachers' Federation has expressed concern over the limited time left for frontline educators to prepare.⁶

→ *Manitoba*

On August 13, the government announced new measures for school reopening in the fall. On school buses, drivers and students in Grade 5 and up will be required to wear non-medical masks. Masks are strongly recommended--but not mandatory--for students from grades 5 to 12 in common areas and in spaces where physical distancing isn't possible. If a COVID-19 case is detected at a school, closures will be considered as a last resort--and only if there is evidence of transmission among multiple groups of students or staff. Extra handwashing and sanitation stations will be set up and schools will need to clean commonly touched surfaces (like door handles), washrooms, and lunchrooms at least twice daily. Water fountains that are not touchless will be turned off. Staff will serve all food in cafeterias, and no shared containers will be allowed in lunchrooms. Schools are also asked to take ventilation into account in their back-to-school plans by avoiding air recirculation and by making sure air filters are clean. Schools will need to schedule classes to avoid giving students spare periods, to limit bathroom occupancy at any given time, and to make sure students stay in smaller cohorts when two-metre distancing isn't possible. Parents who are uncomfortable sending their kids to school can homeschool them, but they won't be allowed to just keep them at home.⁷

→ *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick announced its plan for the upcoming school year, which is focused on traditional methods of in-person teaching--with hygienic protocols in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Students of all ages will be asked to bring a clean face mask to school with them every day, which they will be required to wear in hallways, common areas, and at assemblies.⁸ Students will not be required to wear their masks inside the classroom while working with other students--as long as a safe physical distance can be maintained. In addition to mask protocols, class sizes will be reduced where necessary in order to ensure that students are able to maintain a safe distance from each other.⁹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Newfoundland and Labrador remains at Alert Level 2. Parents and teachers are asking for greater clarity regarding mask requirements and class sizes before schools reopen in September. Specific details on school reopening have not been provided; many aspects of the plan are being left to the discretion of school boards.¹⁰ The opposition leader wants COVID-19 testing to be increased for travellers entering the province from outside the Atlantic bubble. He suggested the province look to different jurisdictions when creating their approach to travel and recommended requiring travellers to download the federal contact tracing app. He also called for an audit of how well the province is processing people at entry points and keeping track of them after arrival.¹¹

→ *Northwest Territories*

The Northwest Territories has no active cases once again. A miner who previously tested positive has returned to Alberta “following all public health protocols.” The chief public health officer said that the investigation into the positive case has been closed, and there is no risk to communities in the territory.¹² NWT is still at Phase 2 of its reopening plan and is not expected to move on to Phase 3 until the situation in the country as a whole is well under control. In most cases, indoor gatherings and events can have a maximum of 25 people, with 50 allowed outdoors. Similar limits apply to businesses and services. A one-time \$1.5 million funding program has been launched to help the tourism industry recover.¹³

→ *Nova Scotia*

As of August 17, Nova Scotia has four active cases of COVID-19, one of which was identified on August 16.¹⁴

→ *Nunavut*

Nunavut continues to report no cases of COVID-19 in the territory. In contrast to the government’s plan for elementary and secondary schools, Nunavut Arctic College plans to have its students and staff practice social distancing when on campus and in class.¹⁵ Most programs will have a smaller class size, with assigned seating and designated classrooms. All those on campus will need to sign in each day in order to perform contact tracing if necessary. Campus amenities like libraries and computer labs will operate at 50% capacity.¹⁶

→ *Ontario*

As of August 12, all regions in Ontario are now in Stage 3, as the province continues to report a 7-day rolling average of less than 100 cases per day. Sixty-five per cent of cases were found in people aged 39 or younger.¹⁷ A new poll for the Toronto Star found that four out of five Ontarians support making it mandatory to wear masks indoors to curb the spread of COVID-19: 63% of respondents “strongly support” compulsory indoor masks, while only 6% “strongly oppose” such a rule.¹⁸ As September approaches, most COVID-19 related news concerns school reopening plans. The provincial government has instructed school boards to come up with reasonable plans based on guidelines from the Ministry of Education. The government rejected the Toronto District School Board’s (TDSB) proposals for reopening--saying the board’s plan did not give students enough time in class.¹⁹ A TDSB spokesperson said the government took issue with the board’s plan to reduce the average size of classrooms to 15 students for kindergarten to grade three and to 20 students for grades four to eight. The plan would have seen the board hire 200 additional teachers at a cost of \$20 million.

→ *Prince Edward Island*

Prince Edward Island remains in Phase 4 of its reopening plan. Public schools will return to full time, in class learning on September 8. The government's plan includes several safety measures such as physical distancing, staggered recess times, and cohort classes. The province announced that additional staffing resources will be provided to allow for increased cleaning measures and to address learning gaps for students impacted by COVID-19.²⁰ All 56 individual school plans that fall under the Public Schools Branch in the province are available online. The government has outlined its plans for post-secondary students arriving from outside the Atlantic bubble. International students arriving from other countries must quarantine in designated hotels and will be tested on day 10-12. All students from outside the bubble will require pre-travel approval to enter the province. Health PEI is hiring additional staff for numerous health-care service roles in order to prepare for a second wave of COVID-19.²¹

→ *Quebec*

On August 12, Quebec reported for a third consecutive day of less than 100 new daily cases.²² Quebec's premier reiterated that students will be returning in-person in the fall and addressed their new back to school plan. The new plan has students in grades five and up wearing masks in common areas but not in classrooms. The plan no longer has bubbles of six students within the class but instead makes the entire class the social bubble.²³ On August 11, Premier Legault said that there would certainly be a second wave but that it would not be as bad as the first wave because Quebec prepared for it by hiring orderlies, acknowledging the importance of PPE, and ensuring that there would be many tests available.²⁴ Opposition parties and some unions have criticized the government for omitting details from their plan and for failing to address how students will catch up academically.²⁵ Opposition parties in Quebec have not been eager about supporting the federal COVID Alert contact tracing app or about developing an app specific to Quebec.²⁶

→ *Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan has 193 active cases as of August 16. Most infections are concentrated in Regina, Saskatoon, and Hutterite communities in the province.²⁷ The Far North region of the province now has zero active cases for the first time since a major outbreak began there near the beginning of the pandemic.²⁸ The city of Regina will recommend the use of masks on public transit and indoor public spaces, and may implement a mandatory policy in the weeks and months ahead. The Mayor of Regina said the provincial government was not opposed to a potential bylaw. Other municipalities expressed hope that the province would implement the policy universally.²⁹ Two Saskatchewan First Nations communities released their school reopening guidelines. In contrast to the province's plan, the communities plan to implement smaller class sizes, mask-wearing when distancing is not possible, and plexiglass barriers between desks.³⁰ The Saskatchewan Teachers Federation is reportedly exploring the possibility of a strike if the province's guidelines on school reopening are not altered.³¹

→ *Yukon*

One Yukon resident currently has COVID-19. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has put out a release on the COVID Alert app, stating that privacy risks associated with the app are found to be very low. Yukon is not currently participating in the app.³² Yukon is now in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Students and teachers are returning to school on August 20. The original start date was pushed back by one day to allow for teacher training. Each school has submitted an individual COVID-19 Operational Plan. In addition to social distancing and previously announced changes to daily schedules, students will have assigned seating on buses and children 10 and older are recommended to wear masks in situations where social distancing is difficult.³³

The United States

→ *California*

While the COVID-19 transmission rate in LA County is declining, the rate is still increasing in some California counties.³⁴ Hospitalizations are falling in the state after seeming to peak in late July, but deaths appear to have accelerated--with most of the state's deaths occurring after Memorial Day. LA's mayor is working with scientific experts, bioscience firms, government leaders and foundations to develop at-home COVID-19 testing.³⁵ LA County's public health director said that college and university classes would need to be remote because the rate of the disease is still too high.³⁶

→ *Illinois*

For the last three days in a row, Region 4 (Southern Illinois) has reported three consecutive days of positivity rates above 8%, automatically triggering the new restrictions under the state's regional mitigation plan.³⁷ The new restrictions include the closure of bars, restaurants and casinos in the region by 11 pm, the closure of all party buses, and a reduction in indoor gathering sizes to 25 people or 25 percent of room capacity--whichever is lower.³⁸ These restrictions will remain in effect for 14 days, and if numbers don't begin to improve, more measures--including the total closure of indoor bars and dining--could be implemented. Some school boards have joined a growing list of districts across the state that have cancelled plans for in-person learning in September.³⁹

→ *Michigan*

The state's seven-day moving average is now just more than 750 new cases per day. Michigan lawmakers are firming up a framework for schools to get kids back to the classroom this fall - whether it's in-person, virtual or some mix of both. The Michigan Senate passed bipartisan legislation on August 15 leaving it to local districts to determine reopening methods and guidelines. Districts could take local COVID-19 metrics and recommendations from individual health departments into account.⁴⁰ While most are encouraged to rely on virtual learning, school boards will be required to review their district's instruction plans on a monthly basis and provide opportunity for public comment before re-certifying the method of instruction or making any changes.⁴¹

→ *New York*

On August 17, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced guidelines for the reopening of gyms. Bowling alleys are now allowed to reopen at 50 percent capacity, with every other lane closed, mandatory face coverings, and a prohibition on food and drink services. Gyms will likely operate under reduced capacity and more frequent cleaning.⁴² Museums have been approved to reopen in New York City on August 24. Capacity will be limited to 25% and visits will be staggered.⁴³ Cuomo said New York's stable COVID transmission rate, which has remained at or below 1 since the reopening, was key to his decision.⁴⁴

→ *Texas*

During the week of August 8, Texas reported a 42% drop in the number of tests conducted. The positivity rate increased 20% on average.⁴⁵ Harris County's school reopening plan includes suggestions from local leaders that schools should not open in person as long as the county's COVID-19 threat level indicator is at level one or Code Red.⁴⁶ To reopen schools in Houston, officials want the city's positive test rate to reach 5% or lower.⁴⁷ Before reopening bars, Texas's governor wants to see hospitalizations decrease and the state's positive rate of infections fall under 10% for a sustained time period.⁴⁸

Mexico

The Airbus has donated PPE to the Mexican armed forces.⁴⁹ Mexico and Argentina signed a deal to produce the British AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for the majority of Latin America.⁵⁰ In

collaboration with two Chinese and one American medical company, the federal government has allowed phase three trials of COVID-19 vaccines in Mexico.⁵¹ Mexico was the first country to address the need for universal access to COVID-19 vaccines in the G20 and presented a resolution addressing this in the UN.⁵² As of August 16, Campeche will be the first state in the yellow stage on the government's reopening stoplight, after a 23% decrease in cases. All businesses and public spaces may open, although public spaces will be at reduced capacity. Six states remain in red, 25 in orange, one in yellow, and zero in green, according to the government's reopening stoplight.⁵³ Although the federal traffic light identifies Mexico City as orange, the head of the Mexico City government explained that the capital's museums and other cultural sites will open at 30% capacity beginning August 11 and 12.⁵⁴ Movie theaters reopened on August 12 in Mexico City.⁵⁵ Playa del Carmen is reopening beaches as a test. Public beaches in Cancun remain closed.⁵⁶ Foreign Policy magazine ranked Mexico 34th of 36 nations for their policy response during the pandemic and claimed that it was amongst the worst because of a weak financial response, limited testing, and bad public health policy.⁵⁷

Chile

Case and fatality rates have been declining in Chile over the past two months.⁵⁸ On August 11, it was reported that in 24 hours, 39 people had died from COVID-19.⁵⁹ The Airbus Foundation, the Chilean Red Cross, Servicios Aereos Kipreos and Servicios Aereos SumaAir have transported over 600kg of medical supplies and PPE to Chile.⁶⁰ Students in the San Fernando commune will not return to in-person classes this year for their safety.⁶¹ On August 17, Chile lifted its quarantine on Santiago--one of the longest quarantines in the world--and moved the city into the transitional phase, or phase two of reopening.⁶² The government is working to verify that companies in the Mayor of Providencia region adhere to COVID-19 health measures. Chile's government will establish a forum for people to anonymously report companies that do not comply with COVID-19 health measures.⁶³

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's seven-day moving average of new cases now stands at 2,364 after the weekend of August 15-17, which saw the country add 10,000 cases. Paris and Marseille have both been declared COVID-19 "red zones," meaning that the virus is actively and rapidly circulating among inhabitants. However, hospitalizations and ICU admission levels remain relatively stable in part because younger people--who have experienced bigger increases in infection compared to older individuals--are less likely to develop complications from the virus.⁶⁴ The government is set to propose the introduction of compulsory masks in shared workspaces later this week and Paris authorities have expanded their list of outdoor spaces/streets where mask wearing is mandatory.⁶⁵ France is deploying riot police to enforce masks after violence broke out last week.⁶⁶ Due to the recent surge, the United Kingdom has enforced a two-week quarantine requirement for people coming from France starting August 15. France is set to apply reciprocal measures this week.⁶⁷ France will release more details regarding school reopening this week.

Germany

Germany's 7-day R-value is 1.13--still above the 1.0 target.⁶⁸ For the first time since May 5, the 7-day moving average of new cases is above 1,000 per day. In the early days of the pandemic, the average age of people infected was 50; it is now 34.⁶⁹ As mentioned last week, education delivery is devolved to each state. Days after the start of the new school year in Berlin last week, COVID-19 cases were

reported in a number of schools--leading to closures. The GEW teachers union said that several reopening plans were "negligent." Older teachers and those with chronic lung or heart problems are also afraid to attend classes out of fear of contracting the infection.⁷⁰ Although no official closure policies have been implemented, Health Minister Jens Spahn has warned that stricter event bans on weddings and large gatherings could be put in place amid the surge in cases.⁷¹

Belgium

In response to rising infection rates, Belgium has reintroduced restrictions on social gatherings. The government announced households will no longer be able to see 15 different people each week, but instead can see only 5. Masks are mandatory in many indoor and public environments, including crowded streets.⁷² In the Brussels-Capital region, COVID-19 fatigue has been connected to a lack of compliance with mandatory mask rules. The mandatory mask requirement in the region was implemented after the average number of new infections passed the threshold of 50 per 100,000 people.⁷³ More than 200 people demonstrated in Brussels against COVID-19 restrictions after the regional government mandated wearing face masks in public.⁷⁴ Despite having one of the highest mortality rates in the world, Belgium still lacks a full-time government 18 months since the last cabinet resigned.⁷⁵

Netherlands

On August 15, the Netherlands placed Paris, Ibiza, Madrid and Brussels on its code orange list of places where all but essential travel is advised against. The French, Spanish and Belgian capitals have been added to the orange list, as have the Balearic islands (including Majorca and Ibiza), and the Spanish provinces of Burgos, Salamanca, Almeria and Navarra. The French Bouches-du-Rhone region, close to Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, is also out of bounds. The Health Ministry has warned against all non-essential travel to these places. Anyone returning to the Netherlands from these cities and regions are required to quarantine for 14 days. Britain has also been added to the code orange list, but travellers will not have to quarantine on their return to the Netherlands. Travel advice to the UK has been tightened up as a warning--following the quarantine requirements set by the UK for people arriving from the Netherlands.⁷⁶

Spain

As of August 13, Spain's new daily COVID-19 infection rates were as high as those from before their lockdown ended. However, officials say that the situation is manageable.⁷⁷ The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control says Spain has an infection rate of 100 per 100,000.⁷⁸ Between August 3 and 9, the 20-29 age group reportedly had the largest increase in positive cases.⁷⁹ At the request of the Aragon government, the army constructed a field hospital in Zaragoza to accommodate the number of COVID-19 patients and to evaluate those with COVID-19 symptoms. As of August 11, Zaragoza was still the epicenter of the outbreak in Aragon.⁸⁰ Some Spanish territories have reimposed earlier restrictions, such as a ban on smoking in public areas in Galicia and the Canary Islands.⁸¹ The government anticipates that Radar Covid, Spain's new contact tracing app, will be available nationally around September 15.⁸² While the app is still available in the Canary Islands, it is not the final version. The app does not collect personal information. In addition to informing people if they have come into contact with a COVID-19+ person, it also provides COVID-19 resources to users.⁸³ Aside from Spanish, authorities intend to make the app available in other Spanish dialects like Catalan, as well as in English for tourists.⁸⁴ In response to the increasing COVID-19 presence in Spain, Italy will carry out rapid COVID-19 testing on Spanish tourists at ports of entry and isolate them, before eventually

requiring them to do another test.⁸⁵ Belgium has prevented Belgians from traveling to certain Spanish regions; Denmark has included Spain on its red list.⁸⁶

The United Kingdom

The UK has reported more than 1,000 new COVID cases each day for the past week.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, PM Johnson moved forward with the government's reopening plan on August 15. Indoor theatre, music and performance venues can now reopen with socially distanced audiences; indoor wedding receptions for up to 30 guests is permitted; casinos, bowling alleys, skating rinks and soft play centres can reopen; and "close contact" beauty services such as facials, eyebrow threading, eyelash treatments, makeup application and microblading will resume.⁸⁸ England's Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty, said that England has "probably reached the limits" of how open it can be given the number of COVID-19 cases in the country. School plans are still vague at this point, but critics are worried about the opening of bars and schools simultaneously. Government sources do not believe that the issue is a zero-sum game and that both sectors can open with proper precautions.⁸⁹

Ireland

As of August 17, the Irish government's advice against all non-essential foreign travel--regardless of whether or not a country is on the green list--remains in place. Options are being prepared by the government on how to restrict non-essential travel from countries outside the UK and EU, including the US.⁹⁰ A proposed colour-coded warning system will be implemented soon. The model is expected to have yellow, orange, red and blue alert levels and is set to replace the current phased roadmap for altering lockdown restrictions. According to the Ministry of Health, the system could be required for another two years, depending on when a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available. The Ministry also warned that more localised lockdowns--such as those currently in place in counties Laois, Kildare and Offaly--may be required elsewhere in the country in response to future outbreaks. The yellow code reflects where most of the country is a present--with community transmission low and measures in place to prevent the spread of the virus. Orange would indicate an upsurge in cases, with a requirement for tighter infection control measures. The red code would be applied when a major outbreak occurs, such as the nationwide lockdown that was introduced at the beginning of the COVID-19 emergency. The blue status will be achieved when the virus is successfully suppressed in the country, or when a vaccine or effective treatment becomes available.⁹¹

Luxembourg

Following a rise in the number of COVID-19 infections in Luxembourg over the past week, the opposition has demanded that everyone returning from holidays be tested.⁹² Luxembourg is likely to extend laws aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19 by restricting public gatherings, fining people who don't comply with distancing measures, and increasing fines for offending businesses. The laws passed at the end of July are expected to be extended beyond their expiration at the end of September. The laws restricted private gatherings to 10 people, allowed fines for people violating isolation and quarantine measures, and permitted the revoking of business licenses for three months from companies that repeatedly failed to enforce distancing rules.⁹³ Luxembourg City's traditional street market is scheduled to take place on August 31 with a variety of measures in place. Face masks are mandatory for both employees of the shops and visitors. The sale of alcoholic beverages in the public space will be prohibited and food stands will not be permitted in shopping streets. While previous editions of the street market also allowed shops located outside of Luxembourg City to rent spaces, this edition will be limited to shops located in the capital itself.⁹⁴

Portugal

Lisbon will remain under tougher COVID-19 restrictions than the rest of the country until at least the end of August. Even though the number of infections in Lisbon has fallen again, the government wants to proceed slowly--considering that some of Europe's top soccer teams are in the city for a special 'Final Eight' UEFA Champions League mini-tournament. Greater Lisbon will stay under the so-called state of contingency, meaning most commercial spaces, excluding restaurants, must shut by 8 pm. There is also a 10-person limit for gatherings, compared to a 20-person limit across the rest of the nation. The PM has nevertheless encouraged fans and tourists to visit the country during the Champions League tournament, which kicked off on August 12--even though supporters have been barred from the stadiums.⁹⁵ As of August 13, Poland became the latest EU state to lift travel restrictions on Portugal. The UK has still not added Portugal to their list.⁹⁶

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

Austria continues to experience a slight increase in daily new infections. Face masks remain mandatory in all public and indoor spaces. Sweden is no longer advising its citizens to avoid non-essential travel to Austria.⁹⁷ However, Austria is warning against travel to Croatia after 57 new cases were found in travellers returning from the country. Effective August 17, people returning to Austria from Croatia will be required to present a negative COVID-19 test from within the last 72 hours.⁹⁸

Greece

The Greek government announced several new measures that will be in effect until August 24. A night time curfew from midnight to 7 am has been imposed for bars, restaurants, and cafes in Athens and the islands.⁹⁹ Public events where people are standing customers in bars, nightclubs, or concerts are banned until August 31. All processions and rural trade fairs have been suspended indefinitely.¹⁰⁰ There will be a 50-person limit on all public gatherings except where protection measures are in place--such as in restaurants and theatres.¹⁰¹ All passengers travelling to Greece from Bulgaria, Malta, Romania, and the United Arab Emirates will be obliged to provide a negative test on arrival to Greece, taken no more than 72 hours prior. Negative tests will also be required for passengers arriving from Albania, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Spain, and Sweden. The government has extended its ban on the entry of non-EU citizens to Greece with some exceptions--including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.¹⁰² Greek scientists are warning that the country may be entering a second wave after a rise in cases, especially among young people.¹⁰³

Italy

Travellers arriving in Italy from Croatia, Greece, Malta, and Spain will be tested for COVID-19.¹⁰⁴ Many clusters have emerged in central and southern Italy, linked to foreigners returning for work at farms, restaurants, and hotels. In the southern region of Puglia, recent infections have been traced back to returning travellers. In the northeastern region of Veneto, new infections were found in residents returning from Spain, Malta, Croatia, and Greece.¹⁰⁵ Italy has ordered the three-week closure of all

dance venues. The government has made face masks mandatory in public areas between 6 pm and 6 am.¹⁰⁶

Slovenia

In Slovenia, the majority of new cases are in people aged 15-34.¹⁰⁷ A government speaker blamed young people for the continuous spread of COVID-19 due to their disregard for social distancing when attending parties. The government plans to resume school as normal but is preparing for the option of remote learning.¹⁰⁸ The Slovenian Football Association has postponed the start of the new premier league season as players test positive for COVID-19.¹⁰⁹

Switzerland

On August 12, the Swiss Federal Council announced an extension to the current restrictions on public gatherings and major events until September 30. Effective October 1, events of more than 1,000 people may resume but strict measures will be in place, with each required authorization by cantons. This localized approach is aimed at taking into account the individual situations of each canton and their contact tracing capacity.¹¹⁰ Due to the limit on public gatherings and events, the 2020 Road World Championship set for September 20-27 has been cancelled.¹¹¹

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

As of August 17, the Prague and Frýdek-Místek regions remain in the green/low-risk zone of the Czech Ministry of Health's regional COVID-19 risk map, while all other regions in the country have maintained no, or negligible, risk of infection.¹¹² Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has announced the government's decision to make the wearing of face masks mandatory again in all Czech regions from September 1 while using public transport and while visiting many indoor venues.¹¹³ Public schools are expected to reopen on September 1, and students will be expected to wear masks in common areas of the school.¹¹⁴

Hungary

The Hungarian government has announced its decision to allow the upcoming school year to be planned according to the usual schedule.¹¹⁵ Schools will receive state mandated protocols regarding COVID-19 control measures.¹¹⁶ The 2020/21 Hungarian football season is also set to begin on September 1 with a new set of protocols. If a Hungarian football team returns home from a country with a "yellow" or "red" rating, players and coaching staff must pass two COVID-19 tests, 24 hours apart, after their return.¹¹⁷ Until their results arrive, they are only permitted to travel between their home and training venues. If a foreign team travels to Hungary from a country with a yellow or red rating, its players and coaching staff must submit upon arrival two negative COVID-19 tests taken at least 48 hours apart and not older than 5 days.¹¹⁸

Latvia

The Latvian government has continued easing restrictions related to COVID-19 this week, despite a series of contained outbreaks in recent weeks. As of August 17, up to 1000 people are permitted to gather indoors. The limit on outdoor gatherings remains at 3000.¹¹⁹ Restrictions previously reimposed on catering establishments following a series of outbreaks among restaurant customers have also been

lifted--allowing up to eight people at one table indoors (up from 4).¹²⁰ Catering establishments can now remain open until 2 am. Similar restrictions have been lifted for cultural establishments, sporting events, and religious services--which can all now remain open and provide services until 2 am.¹²¹

Lithuania

On August 12, the Lithuanian government announced its decision to increase the maximum number of participants at indoor events to 600 people.¹²² From September 1 onwards, the number of participants will no longer be restricted.¹²³ Medical personnel will be allowed to travel with their teams in the upcoming sports season.¹²⁴ With the school year fast approaching, students will be allowed to come to Lithuania.¹²⁵ In addition, the entry ban will not apply to foreigners who are partners of Lithuanian citizens or permanent residents.¹²⁶

Poland

As of August 12, travellers from more than 40 countries have been banned from flying to Poland for at least two week--including China, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States.¹²⁷ The list was produced on the basis of analyses of the epidemiological status of each given country, taking into particular consideration the 14-day moving average of the number of COVID-19 infections per 100,000 people.¹²⁸

Slovakia

Amid a resurgence in COVID-19 infections, Slovakia is beginning preparations for the expected “second wave” of the virus. Part of these preparations includes the Health Ministry’s decision to allocate a total of 3503 hospital beds around the country – about 233 beds per hospital – for COVID-19 patients in anticipation of a second outbreak this coming fall.

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

Denmark will mandate the application of face masks on public transit across the entire country on August 22, due to the recent surge in cases.¹²⁹ Mandatory mask policies on public transit had previously been implemented in seven Danish cities in response to the outbreak in Aarhus.¹³⁰ Despite the rising infection rate, the government announced that it was moving ahead with Phase 4 of its reopening plan. Under this phase, Denmark plans to abolish the requirement that foreign tourists spending at least six nights in the country. It will also allow bars and restaurants to remain open until 2 am. However, a planned expansion of the private gathering limit to 200 and plans to reopen nightclubs were both pushed back to the next phase, which is scheduled to begin on October 31.¹³¹ Denmark will perform random antibody testing on tens of thousands of residents in an attempt to monitor the true spread of COVID-19.¹³² The second quarter of this year saw Denmark’s GDP experience its largest quarterly drop since the early 1990s, when the country began keeping quarterly records of economic data.¹³³

Estonia

Despite recent COVID-19 outbreaks, the Health Board said that Estonians do not need to worry because the outbreaks have been contained to local areas. Public health officials said they have been able to contact trace around 90% of newly discovered cases and the positivity rate of tests conducted has remained relatively stable.¹³⁴ The Ministry of Education will release its school reopening guidelines by

August 25, though they are recommendations for each school and are not mandated.¹³⁵ The acting director of the Health Board said that her agency views outbreaks among schoolchildren as unlikely. Students return to school on September 1 and the school year is scheduled to proceed as normal.¹³⁶ Authorities in Estonia are not expected to mandate mask-wearing, though they agreed that wearing them in crowded indoor spaces would be a reasonable precaution to take.¹³⁷ The Minister of Culture has proposed removing capacity limits on indoor cultural events, though gathering limits remain in place.¹³⁸ The Scientific Council said it did not support lifting capacity restrictions, but said it may make exceptions for certain events.¹³⁹ The Foreign Minister said that the EU should revise its travel policies to emphasize testing in response to new outbreaks across the continent.¹⁴⁰

Finland

Finland plans to mandate compulsory quarantine for two weeks upon arrival for travellers from high-risk countries. Travellers who violate quarantine rules will face a possible fine or jail time.¹⁴¹ The government will pay full salaries to low-income earners if they must enter the mandatory quarantine.¹⁴² The Finnish government has asked public health officials to develop a ‘traffic light’ system for travel restrictions. Any changes to the system would be updated weekly, and may take regional situations into account.¹⁴³ Finland announced it will recommend the use of face masks on public transit and in other crowded public spaces. It also reintroduced its recommendation to work from home, if possible, due to a rising infection rate in certain areas of the country. Finland reported 41 new cases on August 13, the country’s largest daily increase since May.¹⁴⁴

Iceland

Starting on August 19, every traveller to Iceland (including Icelanders) will be required to be tested upon arrival, spend four or five days in quarantine, and then get tested again to limit the effect of false negatives.¹⁴⁵ The new restrictions come into effect after the Chief Epidemiologist recommended them due to increasing domestic infection levels in Iceland. However, public health officials said the government did not need to introduce further domestic restrictions at this time.¹⁴⁶ Spectators will be allowed at professional sports events from August 14, though all attendees must respect social distancing guidelines and stay in their assigned section. Physical contact between athletes is also permitted, but they must maintain two metres of distance in all locker room areas.¹⁴⁷

Norway

Norway reintroduced travel restrictions on Iceland, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Cyprus, and two regions in Denmark due to rising infection rates. All travellers from restricted countries must quarantine for ten days upon their arrival in Norway.¹⁴⁸ The government also announced that it is recommending against all international travel for the time being, even if countries don’t have required quarantine periods for Norwegians. Norway reported 357 new infections last week, significantly more than the week before.¹⁴⁹ The Norwegian Directorate of Health said they are recommending the use of face masks on public transit in Oslo. The measure comes into effect on August 17. Authorities may recommend masks in all indoor public spaces if infection rates continue to rise.¹⁵⁰ A referral from a doctor is no longer needed to get tested for COVID-19 in Norway.¹⁵¹

Sweden

Sweden lifted its recommendation against non-essential travel to Austria and Liechtenstein, but extended restrictions on non-exempted EU countries and the UK until August 26.¹⁵² The government also reintroduced restrictions on Morocco starting August 15. The ban on non-exempted third countries is set to expire on August 31, but may be extended depending on the epidemiological situation

elsewhere.¹⁵³ Sweden released its reopening guidelines for secondary schools, which are recommended but not mandatory. The guidelines include staggered start times, social distancing in class, enhanced cleaning measures, and distance learning if necessary.¹⁵⁴

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

The number of daily new infections has stayed above 1,000 for most of the past two weeks. A significant portion of cases are linked to community transmission. As the health system faces the risk of being overwhelmed, the Tokyo Governor has called on the central government to provide funding for hospital beds and ventilators and to enhance immigration control to prevent the further spread of the virus ahead of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games scheduled for next year.¹⁵⁵ The National Governors' Association is asking for additional subsidies to businesses to effectively implement closure requests. Legal measures, including penalties, are also being requested in order to put pressure on businesses that reject governors' requests or refuse to cooperate in contact tracing.¹⁵⁶ Facing a growing risk of cyberattacks aimed at stealing information on vaccine development, Japan's health ministry is urging pharmaceutical companies and research institutes to exercise caution. Tokyo residents are still asked to use the most caution in their everyday life. Many festivals for the summer holiday have been curtailed.

South Korea

South Korea has experienced a dramatic increase in new, locally acquired cases--mainly due to outbreaks at churches in the Greater Seoul area. Cases linked to community transmission are increasingly becoming a concern. The president has warned of stern responses to unlawful rallies by some church members that have violated the state ban.¹⁵⁷ Doctors launched strikes across the country in protest of the government's medical reform plan to recruit more doctors, the majority of whom will be deployed in rural areas. The striking doctors are worried that the additional healthcare workforce will be abused by the industry to exploit the existing workers.¹⁵⁸ The government has tightened social distancing in Seoul and its neighboring areas to Level 2 (in the three-tier system) for two weeks starting from August 16. All indoor gatherings of 50 or more people and outdoor gatherings of 100 or more will be banned. Public facilities are shut down and high-risk facilities, such as bars, should suspend their business. Professional sports will revert to having no spectators.¹⁵⁹ As more schools are considering larger in-person instruction in the upcoming semester, the government said the decision lies with each autonomous office as to what type of instruction it will institute. But a cap on student numbers is strongly recommended at two-thirds of full attendance for schools with more than 1,000 students and classrooms with more than 30 students.¹⁶⁰

New Zealand

After reporting the first, locally-acquired new cases in almost four months, the number of active cases in the community has risen quickly to 58--as of August 17. The testing and contact tracing regime has been expanded to handle the sudden high demand; record-high numbers of tests have been completed and processed over the past few days.¹⁶¹ It is now mandatory for frontline border staff to be tested. All businesses and services are required to display the QR code for the contract tracing app at all entry points from August 19.¹⁶² Shortly after the discovery of the locally acquired cases, Auckland was placed under alert level 3, and the rest of the country under level 2, for three days. This was later extended until August 26.¹⁶³ In Auckland, people are asked to stay in their bubbles and work from home unless

they are essential workers. Bars and restaurants have to close except for delivery service, and gatherings are only permitted for funerals and weddings-up to a maximum of 10 people. Childcare and schooling are only available for essential workers. Roadblocks and checkpoints have been set up at the exits from Auckland. For the rest of the country, up to 100 people are allowed at gatherings and businesses can open with restrictions, including social distancing and entry logging.¹⁶⁴ All rest homes in New Zealand are under a self-imposed full lockdown now.

Australia

Australia continues to battle a second wave in its southeast, with more than 7,000 active cases in Victoria and smaller clusters in New South Wales. Financial assistance for people's self-isolating after the test will be increased from \$300 to \$450. The Victorian government is taking over the operation of private aged care homes which are of concern.¹⁶⁵ The Prime Minister has apologized for failures in the aged care sector--most of the country's COVID-19 deaths linked to aged care.¹⁶⁶ The South Australian Government will ban aged care workers from working in multiple facilities effective August 27.¹⁶⁷ The New South Wales Premier reiterated that extracurricular school activities should not take place.¹⁶⁸ States and territories are maintaining strict control over their borders. For at least another 18 months, the Northern Territory will require travellers from COVID-19 hotspots to undertake a mandatory hotel quarantine at their own cost.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, South Australia is preparing to welcome the country's first group of about 300 international students back to their universities. The students are expected to land in September and undertake hotel quarantine paid for by their schools.¹⁷⁰

Turkey

Turkey plans to reopen schools on September 21 with measures in place to counter COVID-19. Education will resume in the distance learning program on August 31, with a gradual return to classrooms by September. Private schools may start online classes on August 17. Classrooms will be arranged in accordance with social distancing rules and schools will be provided with disinfectants and masks. Measures will be taken if students' families or nearby circles are diagnosed with COVID-19. Over 2,000 inspectors have been checking the standards of schools ahead of the planned reopening.¹⁷¹ Even though the COVID-19-associated hospitalization rate has been declining, severe infection care is rising in Turkey. The number of seriously ill people continues to rise--with most of the new cases recorded in Istanbul, the Central Anatolian province of Konya, and the southeastern provinces of Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa. Officials earlier this week suggested that the government may consider introducing stricter measures in September to curb the spread of the virus as daily new infections have spiked above 1,000. Authorities suggested that restrictions like the ones introduced in April may be reimposed starting mid-September.¹⁷²

Israel

The number of new daily infections in Israel has continued to hover around 1,700 for most of the past two weeks. Reportedly overwhelmed hospitals are now considered "under capacity" after officials rectified the capacity calculation.¹⁷³ Meanwhile, the National Security Council has warned that Israel could face a shortage of the protective equipment needed by medical staff as soon as next month. The clinical trial of a drug made from antibodies began in Jerusalem, with three patients in moderate condition released from hospital days after receiving the drug.¹⁷⁴ Using recordings collected in India, Israeli engineers are working on a system that uses voice detection to screen for potential virus carriers.¹⁷⁵ The Health Minister said that Israel is interested in holding discussions with Russia about its claims of a working, ready-for-use vaccine. Workers at national laboratories have threatened to go on strike as of August 30 amid a breakdown in talks over pay and working conditions.¹⁷⁶ The coronavirus cabinet has approved additional restrictions on indoor spaces while easing other limits

against crowding in open-air spaces that came into effect on August 16. Closed spaces such as businesses and restaurants that are smaller than 80 square meters can have no more than 10 people. Up to 20 people are allowed in larger settings. In open spaces, crowds of up to 30 people will be permitted—an increase from the previous 20-person limit.¹⁷⁷ A plan for outdoor performances has been approved. Performances will now take the form of "capsules" containing up to 20 people and the performances with an audience of no more than 500 people will get immediate approval.¹⁷⁸ A color-coded system has been developed in which cities and towns will see restrictions adapted to their local situations. In "red" cities, the highest level, schools may not open in the fall.¹⁷⁹ Starting August 16, Israelis returning from 17 countries designated as "green" are now allowed to enter Israel without needing to quarantine. Israeli tourists will be able to enter Greece, Croatia and Bulgaria without compulsory quarantine, but with some other restrictions.¹⁸⁰

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Links

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

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