

PEARL

**POLICY, ELECTIONS &
REPRESENTATION LAB**



Weekly COVID Update:

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

October 19, 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

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

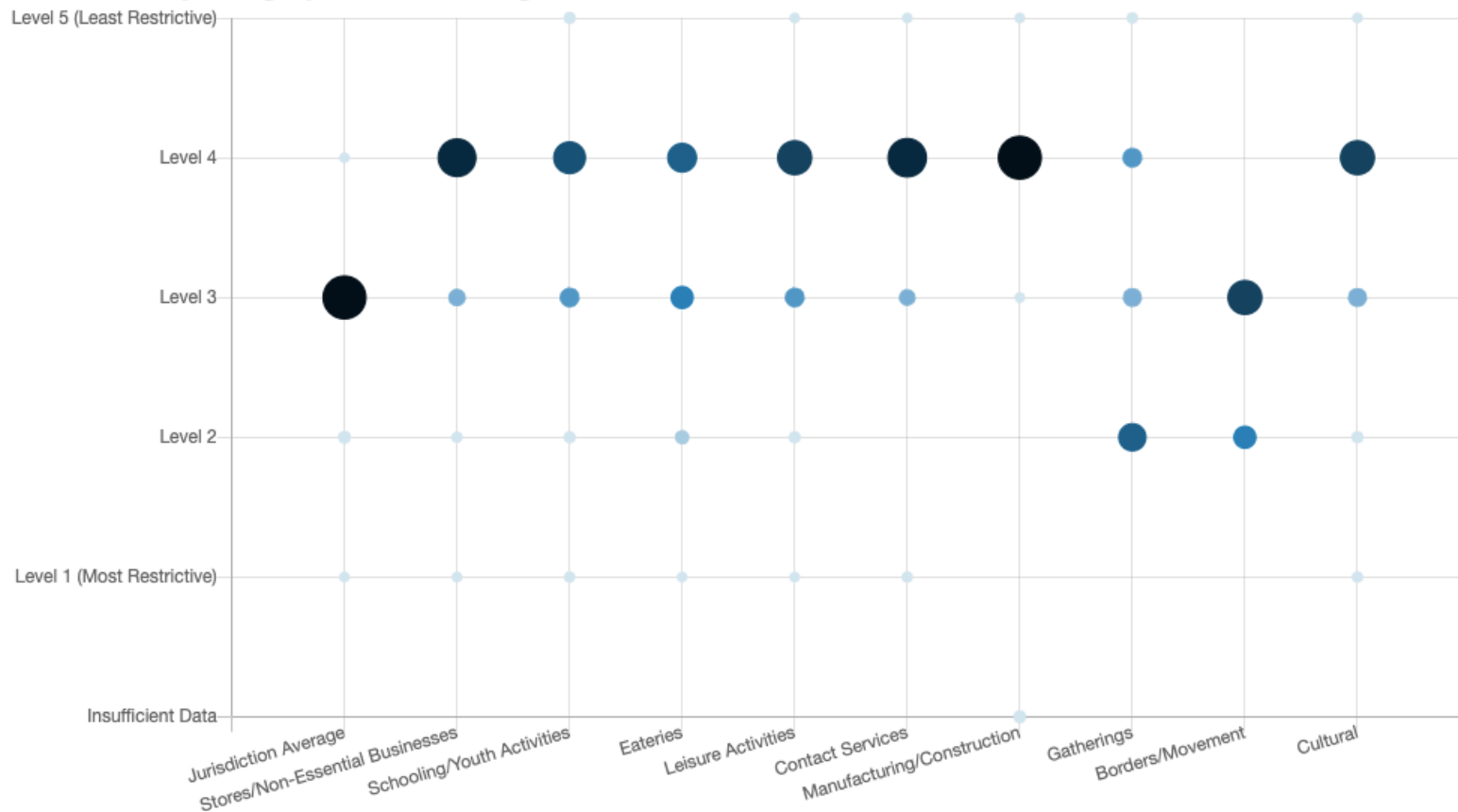


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of October 19. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, 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.

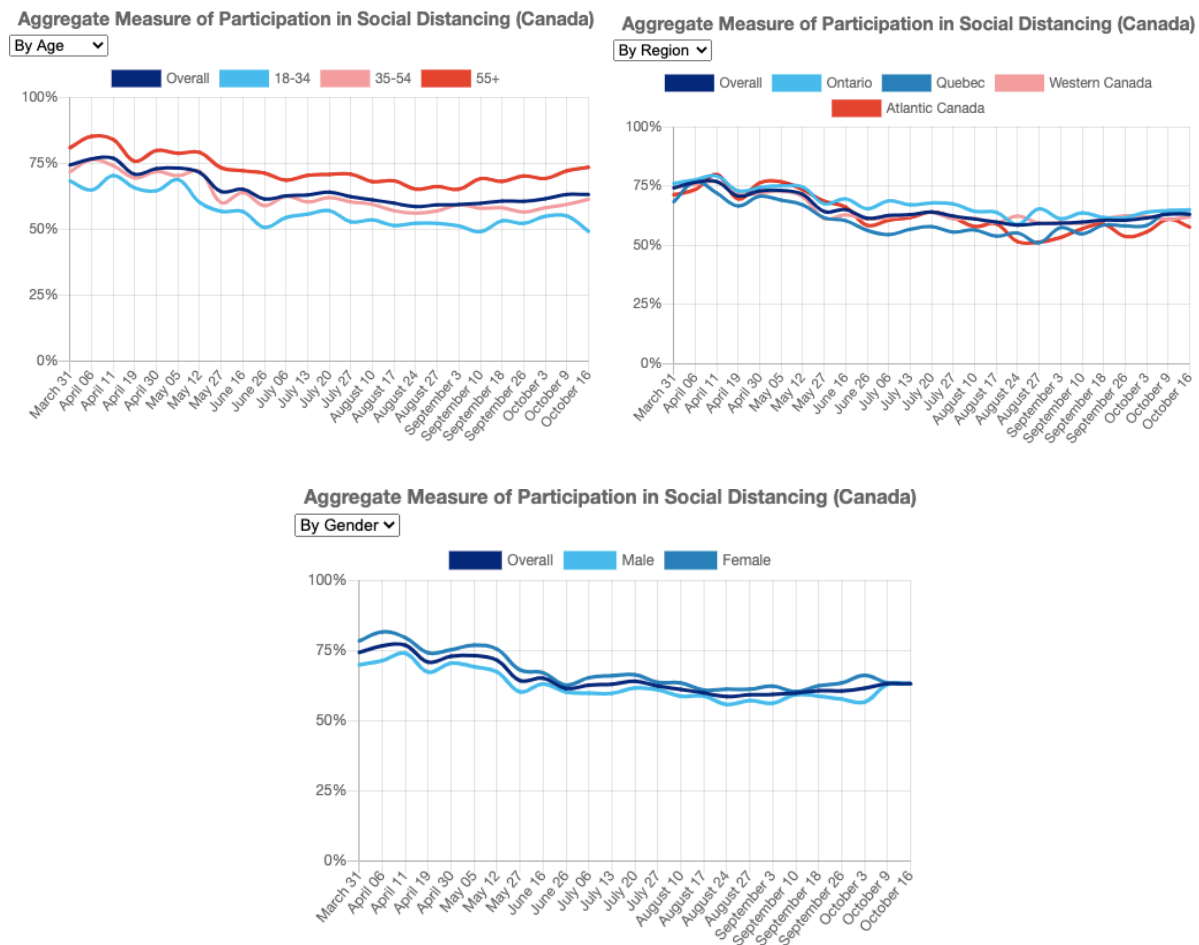


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada).

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.

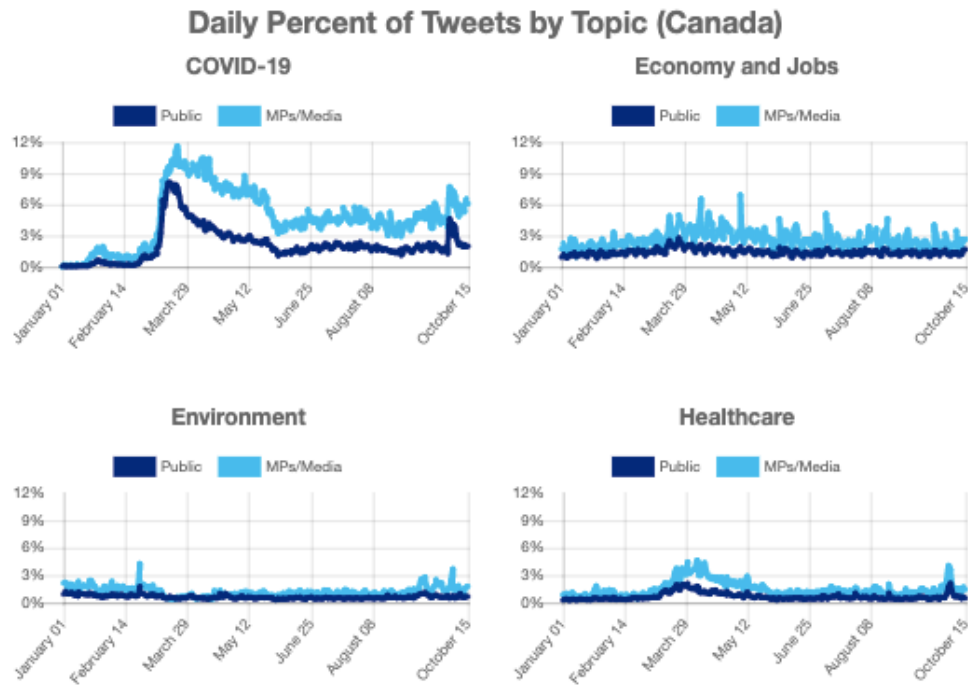


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

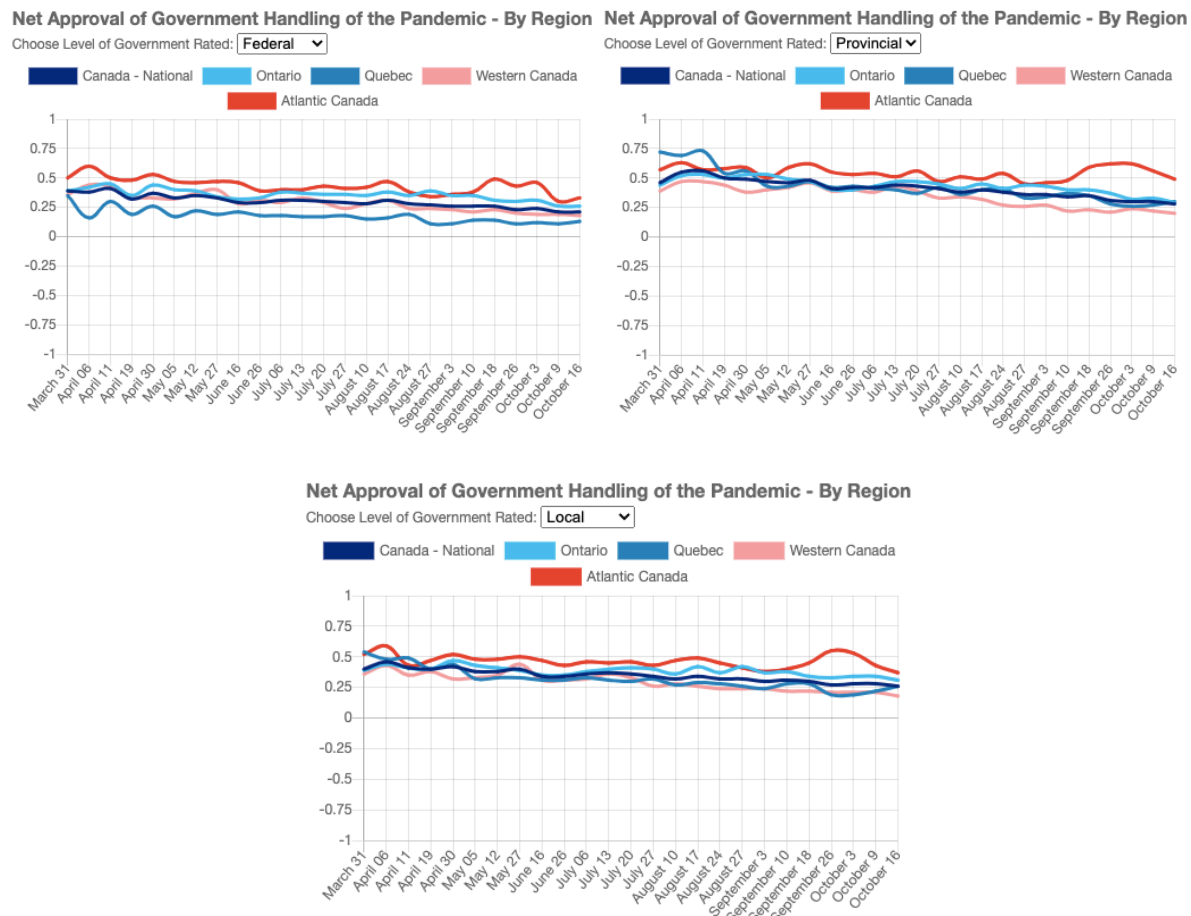


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score,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

COVID-19 cases continue to rise in Alberta, with the highest hospitalization numbers since the pandemic began in March.¹ The majority of infections are in Edmonton and Calgary, with 41% of cases related to outbreaks in acute care.² In response to the voluntary restrictions introduced by the province, Edmonton announced measures limiting the number of spectators to 25% at its public facilities.³ “COVID-19 assessment centres reported a high number of people not showing up for booked tests, resulting in delays in available appointments,” and there is an increasing number of people testing positive for COVID-19 who are not sharing all the necessary information with contact tracers.⁴ With 43% of new cases having no known source, experts are concerned that Alberta will not slow the spread.⁵

→ *British Columbia*

The number of new cases in British Columbia have been largely stable, at 150 per day. The provincial state of emergency has been extended through October 27. B.C. is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. No significant changes to current restrictions have been observed. Most businesses are open subject to hygiene and social distancing measures.

→ *Manitoba*

As of October 18, the current five-day COVID-19 test positivity rate is 4.7%. 44 new cases have been recorded ahead of new restrictions in the province, which will be in effect for two weeks starting October 19. Casinos, bars, and bingo halls will be closed, but restaurants and lounges will remain open at 50% capacity as long as no more than five people can sit at a given table. The province has further restricted public gatherings, from 10 to 5. Retail stores, galleries, museums, and libraries will also have capacity reduced to 50%, while spectator areas at sporting events will be cut to 25%. The chief provincial public health officer has also strongly encouraged Manitobans to reduce the number of close contacts outside their household and avoid closed-in or crowded spaces.⁶

→ *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick reported its third death from COVID-19 on October 17.⁷ Five new confirmed cases were reported by Public Health on the following day, bringing the province’s total up to 104 active cases.⁸ More than half of New Brunswick's active cases are now located in the Campbellton region.⁹ It's been more than a week since the Moncton and Campbellton regions were forced back to the more restrictive “orange phase;”¹⁰ this phase requires masks for all students in grades K-12 at schools in these regions.¹¹ Additional orange-level restrictions include the closure of all personal services - such as barbers, spas, and hairstylists - as well as gyms, fitness facilities, casinos, cinemas and large performance venues.¹² Outdoor gatherings in orange-level regions must be limited to 10 people or fewer, while some indoor events, including weddings, funerals and religious services, will be permitted with 10 or fewer people.¹³

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Newfoundland and Labrador remains at Alert Level 2. As of October 18, there are 11 active cases in the province.¹⁴ There is no evidence of community spread, since recent cases are travel-related.¹⁵ The province is considering restrictions on non-essential visits around the holidays with the goal of tackling potential future outbreaks.¹⁶

→ *Northwest Territories*

Three presumptive cases of COVID-19 were reported in the Northwest Territories on October 16. All cases are pending confirmation from a partner public health laboratory in Alberta. To handle the additional testing demand, the drive-thru testing hours in Yellowknife were expanded over the past weekend from 12pm to 4pm.¹⁷ The territory-wide public health emergency has been extended until October 27. The Territories is still at Phase 2 of its reopening plan, and is not expected to move on to Phase 3 until the situation of the whole country is under control.

→ *Nova Scotia*

2 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Nova Scotia on October 17, bringing the province's total active cases up to 6.¹⁸ Both cases are related to travel, and located in the province's Central Zone.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Nova Scotia Public Health has warned about a possible exposure on a flight from Toronto to Halifax on October 15.²⁰

→ *Nunavut*

No presumptive cases were reported in Nunavut this week. The minister of health extended the territory's public health emergency orders until October 29. All existing restrictions remain in effect.²¹ The territorial government is urging all residents to get their flu shot, which will be available in all communities within the next few weeks.²²

→ *Ontario*

Although Ontario's 7-day rolling average has slightly increased to 745 cases per day; the number of active cases have begun decreasing as the number of recoveries increase.²³ On October 19, York Region will join Toronto, Peel Region and Ottawa in Stage 2, due to a 49% case rate increase and a doubling of the hospitalization rate within one week in the region.²⁴ Accordingly, York residents will see indoor dining (including bars and nightclubs), gyms, cinemas, interactive exhibitions, performing arts centres, casinos, bingo halls, and some personal care services closed for at least 28 days.²⁵ The gathering limit is 10 people indoors, and 25 people outdoors across all sectors, including religious ceremonies, weddings, conferences, and private gatherings.²⁶ Ontario is urging people to limit trips outside of the home, and some restaurants and businesses in Stage 3 regions are banning Ontarians from Stage 2 regions from entering their facilities.²⁷

→ *Prince Edward Island*

Prince Edward Island remains at the New Normal COVID-19 alert level. There are 2 active cases and there has been no hospitalizations, death, or evidence of community spread.²⁸ Active cases in the province are related to travel outside of the Atlantic bubble. The province is strongly discouraging non-essential travel to two regions in New Brunswick and is recommending people wear masks when social distancing is not possible.²⁹ In the province, public health officials will be visiting schools to ensure proper compliance with COVID-19 plans.³⁰

→ *Quebec*

On October 17, Quebec reported a new daily record of positive COVID-19 cases at 1,279 cases bringing the total number of cases to 92,297.³¹ The former high had been October 2 when they reported 1,161 cases. There are currently 517 people hospitalized with COVID-19 and 85 people in the ICU.³² The number of cases is increasing in Mauricie, Quebec City and Lanaudiere.³³ The Listuguj First Nations community is locking down with the exception of critical services after reporting their first case.³⁴ On October 16, the government announced that Ski Hills will be permitted to operate this season, but that hills in red zones could not offer rental equipment, dining or lessons. Hills will require social distancing, masks or scarves, and there are limitations based on family members and social bubbles that influence who people can ride lifts and gondolas with.³⁵

→ *Saskatchewan*

After 36 new cases were reported in Saskatchewan on October 18, the number of active cases in the province reached a record-high of 342. 79 of the cases are connected to the outbreak at a religious gathering in Prince Albert, with more associated cases still expected.³⁶ As a result of the rising number of cases, the provincial government lowered the private gathering limit to 15 people and the public gathering limit to 30 people. The limit does not apply to restaurants, bars, banquet halls, weddings, funerals, or religious gatherings due to other requirements for those establishments.³⁷ Elections Saskatchewan said mask-wearing will be strongly recommended for all those voting in-person, but will not be mandatory, keeping with provincial guidelines.³⁸ The Sask. Junior Hockey League announced that up to 150 spectators will be permitted when they return to play next week, provided they comply with mask and social distancing requirements.³⁹

→ *Yukon*

The previously announced presumptive case in Yukon was determined to be a false positive after secondary testing was performed. No active cases remain among the residents of Yukon. Yukon is now in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Restrictions on the number of people allowed at gatherings, 10 indoors and 50 outdoors, remain unchanged.

The United States

→ *California*

On October 16, California reported 2,979 new cases; California's total COVID-19 cases reached 864,455, with 16,899 deaths.⁴⁰ The COVID-19 case trends in the state have been falling; the weekly death-average fell to 57, which is 6.3% fewer than last week and the daily average of new cases fell to 3,097, which is 7.1% fewer than last week. Sutter County progressed from purple to red or phase one to phase two, Placer, El Dorado, Santa Clara and Alameda counties progressed from red to orange or phase two to phase three.⁴¹ Approximately eight counties are classified as phase four, which occurs when the daily infection rate is lower than 1 per 100,000 residents.⁴² The governor said that to ensure stable economic recovery, unlike after the first wave, California would have to reopen more slowly. The governor did not provide industry specifics, but theme park companies are complaining about the lack of guidelines for them.⁴³

→ *Illinois*

Illinois' test positivity rate continues to increase, rising to 5.2% on October 18.⁴⁴ Illinois confirmed the most cases recorded in a single day with over 4,500 people testing positive on October 16. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools, workplaces and other facilities are driving a surge of new cases.⁴⁵ Illinois' government scales back reopening when a region reaches or surpasses the state-set threshold of 8% positivity rate for three consecutive days.⁴⁶ Chicago reported a positivity rate below 8%, at 5.3%.⁴⁷

→ *Michigan*

Michigan's seven-day moving average has increased by a third, and is now at 1,500 new cases per day.⁴⁸ On October 13, the state's Supreme Court upheld its October 2 verdict to strike down all of the governor's executive orders since April 30, effective immediately.⁴⁹ However, the Director of Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) continues to issue similar COVID-19 regulations. The DHHS' regulations are in effect until October 30. Several counties, including Detroit's Wayne County, have issued stricter rules.⁵⁰ Despite mask and social distancing requirements for organized gatherings larger than 100 outside, President Trump's Michigan rally on October 17 disobeyed those rules.⁵¹

→ *New York*

New York's positivity rate continues to hover around 1%, as the state adopts a micro-cluster lockdown strategy.⁵² The strategy, developed alongside public health officials, has three steps: refined detection, specific and calibrated mitigation, and focused enforcement. Areas with the highest concentration of COVID-19 cases will face the harshest restrictions, whereas surrounding communities will see fewer restrictions, acting as a buffer to ensure the virus does not spread beyond the central focus area. Enhanced focused testing and enforcement will follow.⁵³ On October 18, the governor announced that ski resorts may open on November 6 with 50% indoor capacity. Masks will be required everywhere when not eating, drinking or skiing, and lifts are restricted to members of the same party. As well, movie theaters outside of New York City may open on October 23, with 25% capacity, and no more than 50 people in front of each movie screen.⁵⁴

→ *Texas*

On October 15, Texas reported 4,263 hospitalizations, the most since August. Texas reported an average 3,800 new daily cases, the highest since September.⁵⁵ Experts suggest the rise in cases is due to more social gatherings and COVID-19 fatigue. October 14 was the first day bars could reopen at 50% if their counties met the criteria of having a COVID-19 hospital occupancy rate lower than 15% and as of October 14 approximately 85 out of 254 qualified.⁵⁶ On October 14, certain businesses, like amusement parks, museums and gyms that are in counties that met the same criteria mentioned above could also expand their capacities to 75%.⁵⁷ On October 16, El Paso city and country leaders imposed restrictions on restaurants and businesses following a record high of daily new cases at 717 and a COVID-19 hospital occupancy rate of 28%.⁵⁸ The restrictions cap non-essential business capacity at 50%, stop visitations to elderly care facilities, limit outdoor gatherings to 10, stop indoor sports, prohibit sports spectators and only allow restaurants to offer take-out and delivery after 9pm.⁵⁹

Mexico

Globally, Mexico is ranked fourth for the most COVID-19 related deaths.⁶⁰ On October 17, Mexico reported 5,447 more COVID-19 cases and 355 more deaths making the cumulative totals 847,108 cases and 86,059 deaths.⁶¹ Beaches in Santa Maria Colotepec in Oaxaca, a resort town, were closed and alcohol was banned to contain a COVID-19 outbreak.⁶² On October 15, a law came into force in Oaxaca that allows mayors and municipal councilors to be removed if they fail to impose the state's COVID-19 measures.⁶³ Mexico is making agreements with companies developing vaccines through their COVAX plan to secure vaccines for 90% of Mexicans by 2021.⁶⁴

Chile

On October 16, Chile's minister of health announced that the number of deaths had fallen in 13 regions and that the number of new cases had fallen 7% in the last week, 9% in the last two weeks.⁶⁵ On October 16, there had been 1,689 new cases and 95 additional deaths in the last 24 hours bringing the cumulative total to 488,190 cases, and 13,529 deaths.⁶⁶ Biobio, Los Lagos, Aysen and Tarapaca have had the highest increase in new cases.⁶⁷ On October 19, 6 Metropolitan municipalities progressed to phase four, the second last phase of reopening, for the first time.⁶⁸ Phase four reopens additional business like cinemas, theaters, cafes and restaurants at 25% capacity, but keeps clubs, pubs and gyms closed.⁶⁹

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's 7-day moving average of new cases is 21,000, 5,000 higher than last week; last week's figure also increased by 5,000 from the prior week.⁷⁰ For the first time since July, France is in an official state of emergency, with curfews applying to the eight regions in the maximum alert level, including Paris, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier and Toulouse, affecting nearly a third of the country's population.⁷¹ The curfews, which take effect at 9 p.m. and are lifted at 6 a.m. each morning, will last four weeks and force all non-essential businesses to close during that time. During curfew, people will need a certificate for permitted activities, such as travel to or from work, for medical attention, to visit a dependent relative, or to walk a dog. The government says a curfew is the only way to avoid another crippling lockdown, but critics say that it is counter-intuitive because it comes ahead of a two-week school holiday without travel restrictions, raising the prospect that huge numbers of families will flee cities for the countryside.

Germany

Germany's 7-day R-value remains steady at 1.35.⁷² After a successful control of cases in September, the country has officially joined most other European countries in reporting some of the highest daily case counts since the pandemic began. At more than 7,000 cases per day, case clusters are being reported particularly in the context of family events and in nursing homes.⁷³ On October 15, Chancellor Merkel and the premiers of all 16 states agreed on limiting private gatherings to 15 attendees, mandatory masks outside of the house, and a curfew for bars and restaurants from 11 p.m. in areas with a weekly rate of more than 35 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants.⁷⁴ This is lower than last week's threshold of 50 cases per 100,000 because it does not take long for cases to increase from 35 to 50. Once a threshold of 50 new cases per 100,000 people is exceeded, even tougher restrictions will apply: private gatherings will be limited to 10 people and bars and clubs will have to shut.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the government announced on October 17 that its hospitals were ready once again to admit COVID-19 patients from elsewhere in Europe.⁷⁶

Belgium

In the past week, there has been a sharp increase in cases, with an average of about 4,500 new COVID-19 cases per day.⁷⁵ Belgium is one of ten countries deemed a red zone on the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Controls coronavirus map, meaning the country has crossed the threshold of 120 confirmed infections per 100,000 people over a 14 day period. In response, the government announced several new restrictions: close bubbles have been reduced to a maximum of 3 people, private home gatherings are limited to a maximum of 4 people, bars and cafes have a curfew of 11:00 pm, and only 4 people will be permitted per table.⁷⁶ In the Brussels-Capital region all bars will be closing down, which includes cafes, cafeterias of sports clubs, and event halls.⁷⁷

Netherlands

On October 18, the number of new COVID-19 cases in the Netherlands reached 8,141.⁷⁷ Effective October 14, the Netherlands went into partial lockdown with cafes, bars, and restaurants required to shut down by 10pm for at least 4 weeks, with only take-away permitted. Hotels will stay open, but their restaurants are only available for hotel guests. Indoor and outdoor gatherings are limited to 4 people. Team sports for adults in groups have been stopped. Shops are no longer able to open in the evening, apart from food stores, given they follow proper hygiene rules and store limits. The government plans to make face masks compulsory in all indoor public spaces. The measures implemented would be

assessed after two weeks for progress but if the number of cases continues rising after 4 weeks, a total lockdown may occur.⁷⁸

Spain

As of October 16, Madrid's total number of COVID-19 cases was 283,000 and Spain's total number of cases was 936,500.⁷⁹ On October 16, Catalonia ordered bars and restaurants close indoor dining for two weeks to minimize social interaction and to flatten the curve.⁸⁰ In response, some businesses have threatened to disobey the order. The cumulative 14 day number of cases in Catalonia had reached 290 per 100,000 people as of October 14 and hospitals were worried about the rise in cases.⁸¹ Catalonia's R-value of transmission was 1.3, the hospital occupancy rate was 7% and the ICU rate was 19.5%.⁸² Unlike Madrid, Catalonia did not meet the criteria of having to lockdown the area where in Spain a city of more than 100,000 people must lockdown if their 14 day cumulative number of cases is over 500, their positivity rate is over 10% or their ICU occupancy is over 35%.⁸³

The United Kingdom

The UK's 7-day rolling average, now at 16,500 new cases per day, increased by 2,000 cases since last week. Infections are rising across northern England and is creeping up age bands toward the elderly from those aged 16-29 years. On October 12, PM Boris Johnson announced a new three-tier local lockdown system that will run in four-week blocks, dependent on rates of infection.⁸⁴ Tier 1 will have restrictions similar to the current national one, including the ban on gatherings of 7 or more, 10pm curfew for pubs, group sport only being played outdoors and a maximum of 15 guests at weddings.⁸⁵ London is in Tier 2, which includes Tier 1 restrictions, and different households will not be allowed to mix in any indoor setting. Liverpool is the only city in the third tier, which includes a ban on household mixing indoors and outdoors, complete closure of pubs, bars and bookmakers, and, if local authorities want, closing other venues such as gyms and casinos.⁸⁶ Shops, schools and universities remain open across all tiers.⁸⁷ As of October 16, Northern Ireland and Scotland are under lockdown. Northern Ireland has also cancelled in-person schooling and closed contact services for four weeks, as a result of an 85% occupied ICU.⁸⁸

Ireland

As of October 18, 1,283 new cases have been reported in the Republic, representing a new daily high for the state.⁸⁹ On October 17, the national public health emergency team recommended that the country move to level 5 COVID-19 restrictions. Currently, most of the country is on level 3. However, three border counties, Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan, moved to level 4 of the national framework on October 14. Under this level, weddings are limited to a maximum of 6 people; gyms, pools, leisure centres, and non-essential retail services closed down; and people are being encouraged to work from home.⁹⁰ Government officials have not yet met to discuss whether the recommendations will be followed but there is speculation that a mix of level 4 and 5 measures will be adopted, with the exception of school closures.⁹¹

Luxembourg

As of October 16, 1,870 active infections have been recorded in Luxembourg. The effective reproduction rate stands at 1.29.⁹² The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) updated its map of travel restrictions, and included Luxembourg among 17 countries which have been rated red.⁹³ Despite an increase in the number of cases, which has been blamed on the spread within private households, the prime minister does not plan to implement new restrictions. Voluntary social

isolation is encouraged, rather than the imposition of new restrictions on gatherings or movement, a decision vastly contrasting other EU countries.⁹⁴

Portugal

On October 14, the country hit 2,072 daily cases, the highest number of infections recorded in a single day since the start of the pandemic. On October 13, Portugal raised the alert level in the country, moving from a contingency situation to a state of calamity throughout the national territory.⁹⁵ The government implemented a few fundamental measures to help curb infection rates, which came into effect on October 15. Public gathering has been restricted to 5 people from the previous limit of 10. Events and celebrations, such as weddings and baptisms, are capped at 50 people, with participants required to comply with social distancing rules and wear masks. The use of masks has been strongly advised in public, along with the use of contact tracing apps. Fines of up to €10,000 have been made applicable in commercial and catering establishments that do not ensure compliance with the rules in force, regarding the capacity and the security distance that is necessary to ensure.⁹⁶ The prime minister has warned of a possible lockdown if the number of cases does not decline.⁹⁷

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

On October 18, Austria reported 1,627 daily new COVID-19 cases.⁹⁸ The government reported transmission is likely due to small gatherings.⁹⁹ A two-week local quarantine has been imposed in the Salzburg region, one of Austria's main skiing areas. "The government wants to avoid nationwide lockdown, and is worried about tourism, which provides 6% of the country's economic output."¹⁰⁰ An independent investigation found that one of Europe's first outbreaks at a ski resort in Austria was made worse due to poor communication and slow reactions from government officials.¹⁰¹

Greece

In Greece, COVID-19 infections continue to rise with an increase in the number of fatalities since September.¹⁰² An expert from the University of Geneva said that cases in Greece are likely much higher than what is being reported daily based on the number of fatalities.¹⁰³ Travel restrictions in place to protect passengers and residents of Greece have been extended until October 25.¹⁰⁴ On October 19, new restrictions will come into effect relating to the number of people allowed inside restaurants, museums, and archaeological sites.¹⁰⁵

Italy

On October 18, Italy reported 11,705 new COVID-19 cases within a 24 hour period.¹⁰⁶ In part, the recent rise has been linked to large evening gatherings outside restaurants and bars and vacations at home and abroad.¹⁰⁷ Also, testing capacity has increased due to complaints about long wait times.¹⁰⁸ The government announced several new COVID-19 restrictions that came into effect on October 13 relating to public gatherings, restaurants, recreation activities, and schools. Parties in restaurants and clubs have been banned and a maximum of 30 people can attend ceremonies such as weddings. The government strongly recommends that people do not host more than 6 people in their homes, and that face masks be worn when non-family members are present. At restaurants and bars, a curfew of

midnight has been imposed and people cannot be served when standing after 9:00 pm. Pick-up sports have been banned unless officially organized. Schools remain open, but all non-classroom related activities have been banned.¹⁰⁹ Emergency measures announced on October 18 give mayors the power to close off streets or squares after 9:00, granting access only to businesses and local residents.¹¹⁰

Slovenia

In Slovenia, the number of new cases is rising; most new cases are occurring at care homes and in healthcare institutions.¹¹¹ The government has formally declared an epidemic, with 9 of Slovenia's 12 regions having exceeded the government's threshold of 140 cases per 100,000 residents in a two-week period. On October 14, the government imposed several new restrictions. Beginning in 5th grade, students will begin learning remotely. This rule will also apply to post-secondary institutions. Also, no gatherings of more than 6 people are permitted. Within 9 regions, inter-regional movement has been banned, gatherings are limited to 10 people, masks are mandatory outdoors, and contact services and sporting activities have been cancelled.¹¹² Effective October 20, a curfew has been set to restrict the movement of citizens between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am.¹¹³

Switzerland

On October 16, new daily cases doubled, rising to 3,105.¹¹⁴ On October 15, the government met with the 26 cantonal health directors to discuss new nationwide measures and decided to hold off on additional restrictions.¹¹⁵ On October 18, the government announced tighter restrictions, including the national obligation to wear masks in all indoor public spaces, including on public transport. In public places, gatherings of more than 15 people are now banned.¹¹⁶

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

Police in Prague's historic tourist district fired teargas and water cannons at protesters on October 18 after demonstrations against the country's increasingly strict COVID-19 restrictions turned violent.¹¹⁷ Riot officers entered the Czech capital's Old Town Square with horses and armoured vehicles after protesters among an estimated crowd of 2,000 began hurling projectiles and setting off firecrackers.¹¹⁸ The Czech Republic reported a record 11,105 cases on October 16, followed by another 8,713 on October 17.¹¹⁹ In the past week, bars and restaurants have been ordered to close, and schools have moved to distant learning.¹²⁰ Sport and fitness clubs, theatres and cinemas have also closed, but shops remain open.¹²¹ Deputy Prime Minister has said that the country will wait until at least November 2 before deciding whether to order a full lockdown.¹²²

Hungary

Hungary reported another single-day record of 1,791 new cases of COVID-19 on October 17, followed by 1,474 new cases the following day.¹²³ This comes just one week after setting the previous single-day record of 1,374 new cases on October 10.¹²⁴ 33 COVID-19 patients died in Hungary on October 19, a new single-day record for the country.¹²⁵ Entry restrictions for travelers from abroad remain in force.¹²⁶ In addition to shops and public transport, masks remain mandatory in cinemas, theatres, health

and social institutions, while public offices and clubs are required to close by 23:00.¹²⁷ Further ongoing restrictions include a ban on visiting hospitals and elderly care homes.¹²⁸ Despite the surge in cases and deaths due to COVID-19, Hungary has not announced any plans for a second lockdown or further restrictions.

Latvia

4 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Latvia on October 18, increasing the total number of confirmed cases to 3,494.¹²⁹ Latvian residents have been obligated to wear protective face masks in most public places since October 14. Starting October 17, no more than 30 people have been allowed to gather indoors for private events, and no more than 300 outside.¹³⁰ On October 18, the Latvian National Opera (LNOB) closed until 1 November¹³¹ due to COVID-19 infection confirmation among multiple employees of the opera house.¹³²

Lithuania

Lithuania reported 205 new cases of COVID-19 on October 18, bringing the country's total confirmed cases up to 7,726.¹³³ On October 19, Lithuania added Bulgaria, Liechtenstein, and Italy to its list of epidemiologically unsafe countries for which isolation is required upon entering Lithuania.¹³⁴ Lithuania's list of high-risk countries only includes countries where the COVID-19 incidence rate is 10% higher than it is in Lithuania.¹³⁵ Lithuania's incidence rate was 90.9 cases per 100 thousand people as of October 19 - increased from 55.7 just 1 week ago.¹³⁶ Even if a non-EU country is removed from the affected list¹³⁷, only residents and nationals of EU and EEA countries, including the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland, can enter Lithuania.¹³⁸

Poland

Poland's health ministry reported 7,482 new cases of COVID-19 on October 19, 2 days after setting a new single-day record of 9,622 new cases on October 17.¹³⁹ Poland's government is transforming the National Stadium in Warsaw into a temporary field hospital to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴⁰ The 58,500-capacity stadium will have room for 500 patients, and will be equipped with oxygen therapy, government spokesperson said on Monday.¹⁴¹ Patients will be accommodated in the stadium's numerous conference rooms and multi-purpose facilities located under its stands from the end of this week.¹⁴² Last week, Poland's government announced a series of measures in Warsaw and other major cities, now considered 'red zones', where the wearing of masks is mandatory in the streets.¹⁴³

Slovakia

Slovakia announced on October 17 that the country will test every resident aged 10 and above for COVID-19 in the coming weeks.¹⁴⁴ A pilot run in certain areas is scheduled for the October 25 weekend, while the majority of testing will take place in late October and early November.¹⁴⁵ The government declared a state of emergency earlier this month in response to a surge in infections and introduced new restrictions earlier this week.¹⁴⁶ Secondary schools have switched to remote learning, all mass events—including church services—are banned, fitness centres and pools are closed, and restaurants can only serve clients outdoors.¹⁴⁷ On October 17, the health ministry reported nearly 2,000 new confirmed cases, bringing the total to more than 28,000.¹⁴⁸ On October 17, around 500 people gathered outside the government building in downtown Bratislava to protest the latest anti-virus restrictions, despite a ban on gatherings of more than six people.¹⁴⁹

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

The number of new cases and hospitalizations has remained largely stable over the past week. No new restrictions have been implemented, though current restrictions are expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future,¹⁵⁰ however, the health minister has expressed concern after the amount of testing has dropped considerably over the past few weeks, leading to a higher positivity rate.¹⁵¹ Up to 1.5 million minks in Denmark may be euthanized due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 among animal farms in the country. Public health officials are concerned that a mutated form of COVID-19 found in minks may be vaccine-resistant.¹⁵²

Estonia

Estonia reported 203 new cases of COVID-19 between October 12 and October 18. The two-week average of new cases is 35.29 per 100,000 people, lower than it was last week. Authorities urged residents to continue exercising caution as recent lower numbers do not necessarily indicate a trend.¹⁵³ A nationwide ban on the sale of alcohol between 12am and 7am has been extended until November 29.¹⁵⁴ Asymptomatic travellers from Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland will not need to quarantine upon arrival if they have received a negative COVID-19 test result in the previous 48 hours. A test result is not required for those travelling from the same countries for essential purposes. Travellers from only three other countries in Europe do not need to quarantine upon their arrival: Cyprus, Greece, and Norway.¹⁵⁵ The government will discuss shortening the quarantine requirement from 14 days to 10 days next week.¹⁵⁶

Finland

As of October 19, the two-week average of new cases in Finland is 49.2 per 100,000 people, nearly double the rate from two weeks ago.¹⁵⁷ The government is looking to implement changes to the country's infectious diseases law that would make it easier for regional authorities to impose new restrictions. Critics of the proposal said that they fear the changes may lead to misuse that would limit rights and freedoms. The prime minister said that imposing a national state of emergency would be a "last resort" for the government.¹⁵⁸ Regional authorities in Helsinki have advised that people who work in-person must wear a mask at their workplace.¹⁵⁹ The government has recommended that all those who can work from home should continue to do so until at least the end of the year, and will ban public events in all regions where the infection rate is considered to be accelerating.¹⁶⁰

Iceland

On October 16, Iceland reported its first COVID-19 death since April 20. There are 1206 active cases in the country, with 26 people hospitalized as of the same date. Current restrictions are expected to remain for at least the next few weeks, even as the number of daily new cases has started to fall.¹⁶¹ Some restrictions will be expanded nationwide on October 20. Social distancing will be mandatory across the country, no spectators will be allowed at sports events, and contact sports will be prohibited in the Reykjavik area. The only exception to the gathering limit of 20 people are funerals, where up to 50 people will be permitted to attend.¹⁶² The chief epidemiologist said that current modelling indicates that if Iceland were to remove restrictions now, it would reach 88,000 total cases by the end of the year, including a peak of 3000 a day in late November.¹⁶³

Norway

Norway reported 183 new cases of COVID-19 on October 17.¹⁶⁴ Most cases have been concentrated in the Oslo area. Local officials in the city have extended their restrictions until further notice, including a mandatory mask policy on public transit and a private gathering ban of 10 people.¹⁶⁵ Extended family members from non-EEA countries will be permitted to enter Norway from October 21, but must observe the 10-day quarantine requirement upon their arrival.¹⁶⁶ After negotiators failed to reach an agreement, a doctor's strike may begin across the country on October 26. The strike would impact municipal on-call and emergency services, though negotiations are expected to continue in order to avoid a work stoppage.¹⁶⁷

Sweden

Sweden reported 970 new cases of COVID-19 on October 15 in the country's largest daily increase since the end of June. There have now been more than 100,000 total cases of COVID-19 in Sweden since the beginning of the pandemic.¹⁶⁸ The Swedish government will allow regional authorities to introduce their own non-binding recommendations to the public starting on October 19. These recommendations may include avoiding public transit, non-essential travel, and high-risk activities like fitness centres and shopping malls.¹⁶⁹ A woman in Gothenburg was found to have tested positive for COVID-19 twice; the second infection was due to a different strain of COVID-19, but the symptoms the woman experienced were much milder due to the presence of antibodies.¹⁷⁰

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

The number of daily new cases in Japan has continued to fluctuate around 500, with no signs of further improvement. The government of Tokyo is planning to launch a program that secures nursing care and accommodation facilities for uninfected senior citizens if their close family members are infected.¹⁷¹ With some other jurisdictions relaxing their COVID-19 restrictions, Japan's foreign ministry is considering lowering the travel alert so that Japanese residents will no longer be urged to cancel their international travel.¹⁷²

South Korea

South Korea continues to report a relatively low level of daily new cases. After a major outbreak at a nursing home in Busan, a mass testing campaign will be launched in the Greater Seoul Region on all workers at mental hospitals and nursing homes, as well as 30,000 senior citizens who attend day care facilities.¹⁷³ South Korea is facing a shortage of flu vaccines due to a surge in demand in combination with the withdrawal of over a million doses of reportedly mishandled stock. 15% of the supply initially meant for teenagers will be rationed for the children under 12.¹⁷⁴ South Korea has extended its special travel advisory targeting all countries and territories until November 17, recommending citizens cancel or postpone international travel.¹⁷⁵ In order to stop cases from entering the country through foreign ships, vessels with records of "boarding and disembarking seafarers in high-risk countries in the past two weeks" will now be prohibited from changing ship crew in South Korea.¹⁷⁶

New Zealand

1 new community case was reported on October 18, after New Zealand previously eliminated all community spread for a second time, with "the risk of onward transmission contained." Testing has

been scaled up in order to detect any possible transmission due to the community case.¹⁷⁷ “Corrective action and training” were carried out at a government managed isolation facility in Auckland after a third-party booking not based on isolation needs was made at the facility.¹⁷⁸ All of New Zealand remains at alert level 1, with no restrictions on movement, gathering, businesses, or activities.

Australia

Australia continues to report a low level of daily new cases. An omnibus bill on COVID-19 passed in Victoria, extending the state of emergency until next April and authorizing police to enforce pandemic-related measures.¹⁷⁹ Further reopening has been announced in Melbourne, which allows people to travel up to 25 kilometers from home as long as they remain within city limits, scraps the time limit on exercise and socializing outdoors, reopens hairdressers and resumes real estate auctions.¹⁸⁰ Other states have also been easing their restrictions gradually. In Queensland, the private and public gathering limit was raised to 40 people, up to the same number may dance at weddings, and long-term care facility residents may go on excursions from October 16.¹⁸¹ In New South Wales, the limit for gatherings at outdoor public spaces and group bookings at restaurants will be increased to 30 people on October 23. Starting December 1, a maximum of 300 people will be allowed to attend weddings, subject to limits on density.¹⁸²

Turkey

As of October 16, Turkey recorded 1,812 new COVID-19 infections.¹⁸³ Amid rising virus cases and stepped-up measures in many EU states, Turkey also plans to impose new nationwide measures to combat COVID-19 infections. The interior ministry sent a notice to all 81 of Turkey’s provinces that focused on the issues of risk management, social isolation, social distancing, controlling the spread of the virus, hygiene, the use of masks, and other possible risks. To help draw up the new measures, committees will meet next week to analyze and discuss the subjects of tracking, supervision, and warnings.¹⁸⁴

Israel

Israel has reported a dramatic improvement of almost all indicators of the epidemiological situation after a month of nationwide lockdown, showing the lowest daily new cases and positivity rate of testing in several months. Due to suspicion that COVID-19 patients are not revealing all of their close contacts, the national intelligence agency is reported to be involved in contact tracing.¹⁸⁵ The government has approved the relaxation of some lockdown restrictions nationwide, except for in designated COVID-19 hotspots, and vowed to follow a gradual reopening process this time. Starting on October 18, people may move beyond 1km from home and visit others if they adhere to the gathering limit of 10 people indoors and 20 people outdoors. Restaurants can resume their takeout services, businesses which do not receive customers can reopen, and beaches and national parks can have visitors. Preschools and daycares are permitted to open even in designed hotspots,¹⁸⁶ so long as preschool teachers and aides get tested prior to returning to school.¹⁸⁷ The ban on outgoing flights was lifted on October 16.¹⁸⁸

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