

Weekly COVID Update:

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

October 13, 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

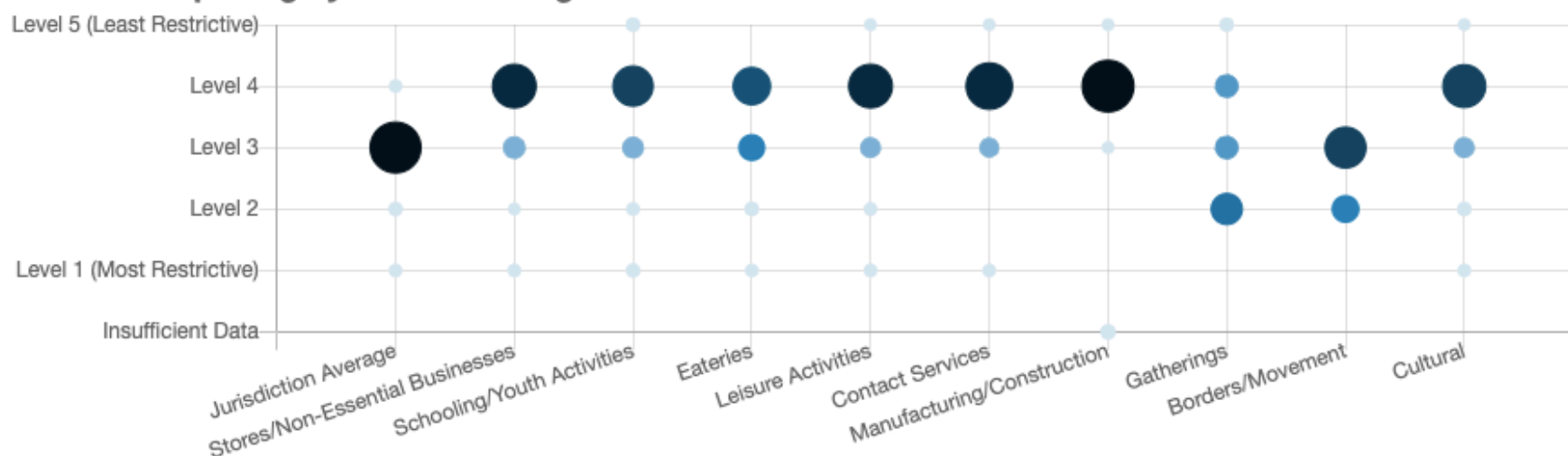
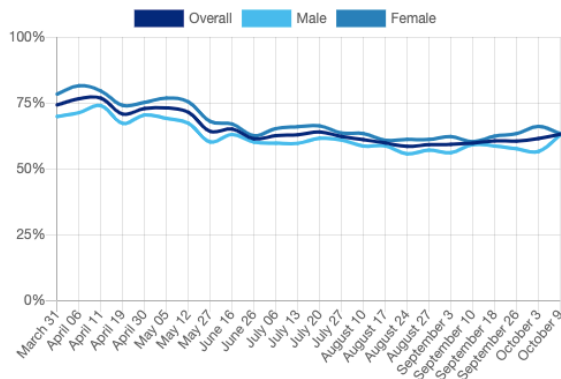


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of October 13. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, Schooling/Youth Activities, Eateries, Leisure Activities, Contact Services, Manufacturing/Construction, Gatherings, Borders/Movement, and Cultural. Each sector is assigned a level of reopening from Level 1 (Complete Lockdown) to Level 5 (Unrestricted Access). The larger and darker a dot is, the more jurisdictions are at that level of reopening. For details, see www.reopeningaftercovid.com.

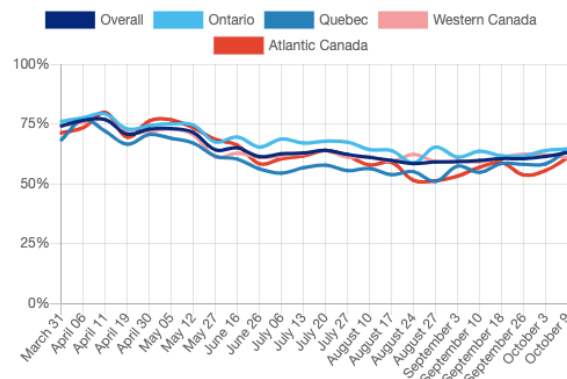
Aggregate Measure of Participation in Social Distancing (Canada)

By Gender ▾



Aggregate Measure of Participation in Social Distancing (Canada)

By Region ▾



Aggregate Measure of Participation in Social Distancing (Canada)

By Age ▾

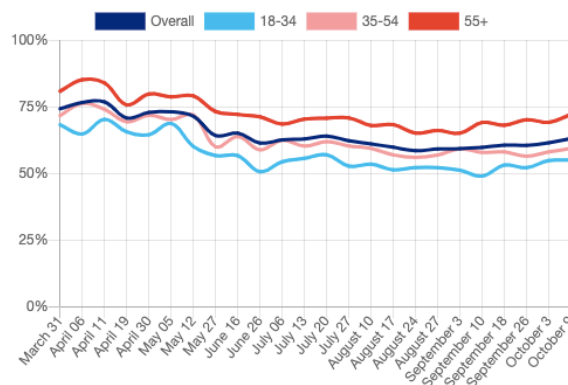


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada).

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.

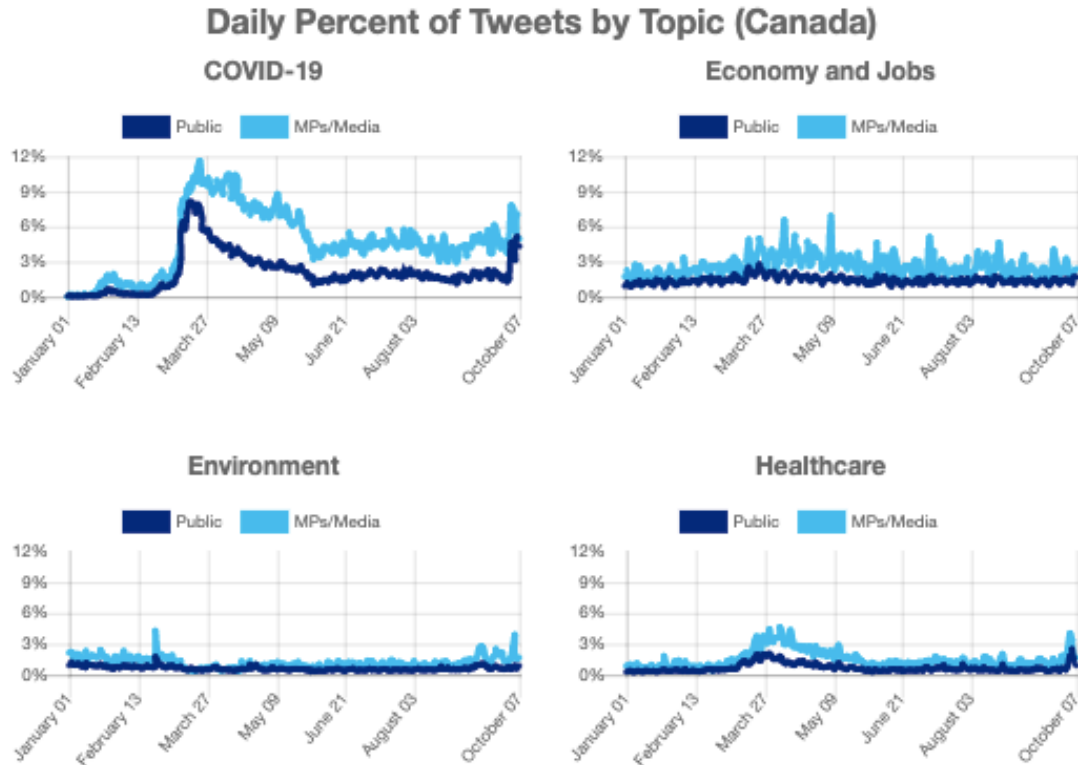


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

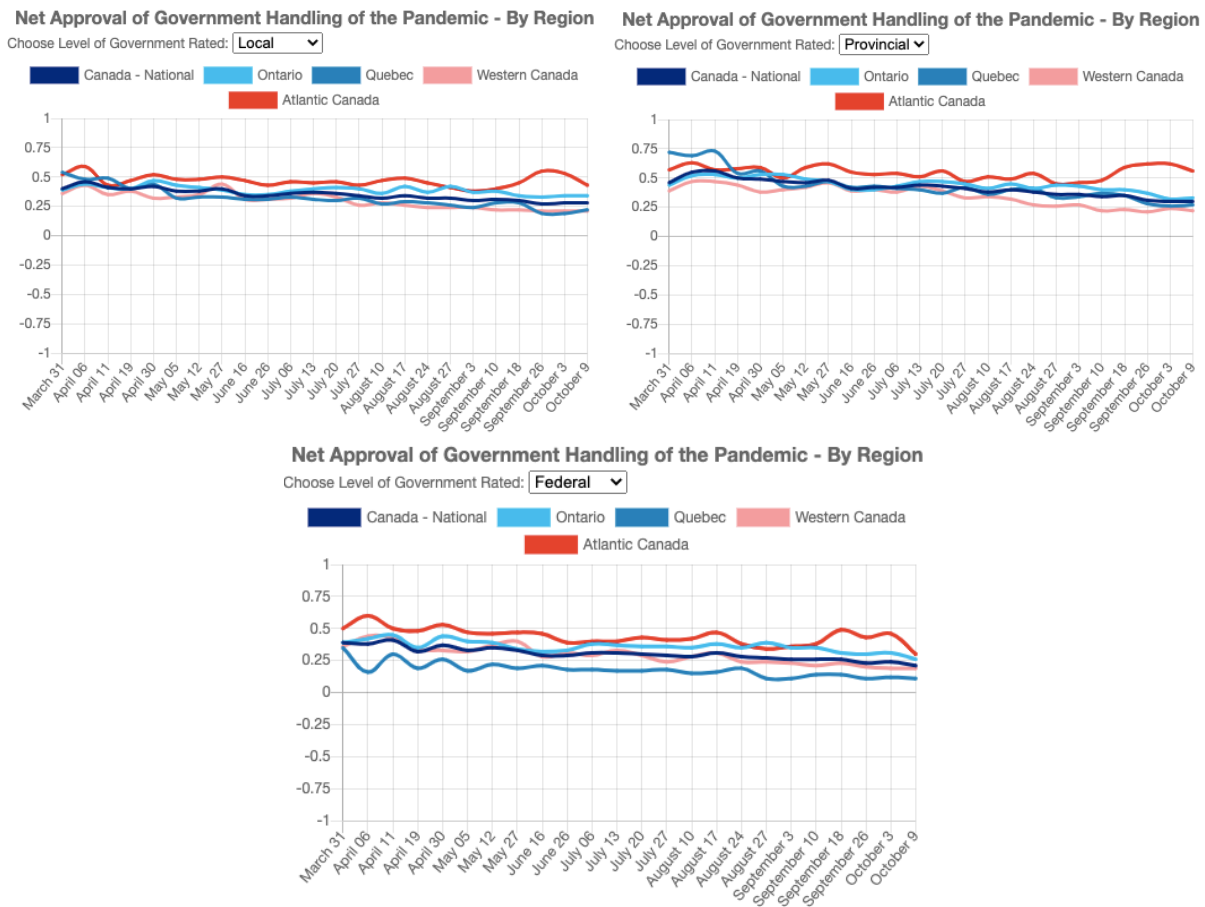


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score, 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 reached its highest number of new cases since April, with a large outbreak in Edmonton.¹ The rise in cases has been linked to outbreaks at continuing care centres and schools in the province. Voluntary health measures were introduced in Edmonton due to a rise in cases linked to “symptomatic people attending work or social gatherings while awaiting test results.”² As of October 8, the province is recommending private gatherings in Edmonton not exceed 15 people and that masks are worn in all indoor settings to help lower the rate of COVID-19 infections.³

→ *British Columbia*

The number of daily new cases in British Columbia has been largely stable at just over 100. B.C. is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. No significant changes to current restrictions have been observed, and most businesses are open, subject to hygiene and social distancing measures.

→ *Manitoba*

The Manitoba government announced 97 new cases of COVID-19 in the province on October 10, setting a new single-day record. The province is warning Manitobans about possible exposure at a school in Brandon, identified on October 2, and is urging the public to be cautious while visiting seniors, after outbreaks were declared at multiple personal care homes.⁴ With cases on the rise in Manitoba, the province introduced additional restrictions which came into effect this week. Under the new public health orders licensed bars and restaurants are no longer allowed to sell or serve alcohol past 10 pm, and all customers must leave by 11 pm.⁵

→ *New Brunswick*

The government of New Brunswick reported six new cases of COVID-19 on October 12, bringing the province’s number of active cases up to an all-time high of 76.⁶ The Moncton and Campbellton regions were forced back to the “orange” recovery phase on October 9 due to recent local outbreaks.⁷ This means that mask use is now required, both indoors and outdoors, for all students in grades K-12 at schools in these regions.⁸ Additional orange-level restrictions include the closure of all personal services, including: barbers, spas, hairstylists, gyms, fitness facilities, recreational centres, casinos, cinemas and large performance venues.⁹ 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 attendees.¹⁰ Public Health New Brunswick has said that anyone who has recently travelled to an orange-level region should observe all orange-level requirements for 14 days after returning home.¹¹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

In Newfoundland and Labrador there are currently nine active cases of COVID-19. The province remains at Alert Level 2. On October 21, flu-shot clinics will open and “the province is hoping for widespread uptake of the seasonal flu vaccine.” The premier encourages people to continue following public health guidelines.¹²

→ *Northwest Territories*

There are no active cases within the Northwest Territories. Travelers and staff are required to wear a mask while inside NWT airport terminal buildings effective October 13.¹³ The territorial government is still at Phase 2 of its reopening plan. The government has released guidelines for Halloween celebrations, recommending that residents keep activities outdoors and practice good hygiene.¹⁴

→ *Nova Scotia*

Three new cases of COVID-19 were identified on October 10, bringing Nova Scotia's total active cases up to six as of October 11.¹⁶ Two of these cases were related to travel outside of Canada, and the third was a close contact of the other two.¹⁷ Nova Scotia Health Authority reported that the three new cases are not related to the recent outbreak in New Brunswick.¹⁸ As of October 13, Nova Scotia has not reported any new cases of COVID-19 for the last 3 days.¹⁵

→ *Nunavut*

Nunavut's chief medical health officer said that the COVID-19 outbreak at the Hope Bay gold mine has been contained and there is no evidence of further transmission. Contrary to initial reports, the cases will not count against the territory's total, as each worker's home jurisdiction has counted the case as one of their own. Those who were not high-risk contacts of the infected persons will be permitted to leave the mine site in the coming days.¹⁹ The territorial government eased a number of restrictions this week. The gathering limit was expanded to 100 people, restaurants and bars can open to 75% capacity, and cultural institutions can have up to 50% capacity. All gym facilities and recreation centres can host individual or group workouts, and athletic events can have up to 50 spectators and 50 participants.²⁰

→ *Ontario*

As of October 12, Ontario's 7-day rolling average has slightly increased to 705 cases per day.²¹ However, health experts warn that case counts were likely "unreliable" in Ontario following the change in testing from walk-in to appointment based. Regardless, there is still a significant backlog in testing.²² On October 9, the Ontario government introduced a modified Stage 2 to combat the increase in cases in Toronto, Peel Region and Ottawa.²³ Effective 12:01 a.m. on October 10, indoor dining, including bars and nightclubs, gyms, cinemas, interactive exhibitions, performing arts centres, casinos, bingo halls, and personal care services where face coverings must be removed will be closed for at least 28 days.²⁴ The government is also enforcing a gathering limit of 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors across all sectors, including religious ceremonies, weddings, conferences, and private gatherings.²⁵ Ontario is now urging people to limit trips outside of their home, except for essential purposes such as work where it is not possible to work from home, school, grocery shopping, medical appointments, and outdoor healthy physical activity.²⁶

→ *Prince Edward Island*

In Prince Edward Island, there are 3 active cases with no hospitalizations or deaths and no evidence of community spread. The COVID-19 Alert Level is set to the New Normal. Effective October 8, travelers will no longer be screened by New Brunswick officials at the PEI border and the federal COVID-19 alert app is available in the province.²⁷ The province has sent 2,000 COVID-19 kits to Ontario, the equivalent of 8,000 tests.²⁸

→ *Quebec*

On October 9, Quebec reported 1,102 new COVID-19 cases, 4 new deaths and 8 additional hospitalizations,²⁹ the highest number of new deaths in 24 hours since July 1. Should this trend for COVID-19 cases continue to increase, authorities fear that hospitals will reach capacity.³⁰ On October 8, the premier said that with the rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations, other health procedures would be delayed and wait times prolonged.³¹ Montreal is on red alert, this means that sports and leisure activities outside of school are cancelled, training is limited, and indoor sports and community centres can remain open to free practice but not to competitions, group sports, the weight room or similar activities.³² On October 10, Trois-rivieres, Beancour, Nicolet-Yamaska, and Drummond in the center of Quebec also entered the red alert.³³ Regulations addressing bars, restaurants and gyms consequently came into force on October 10, while regulations for schools and sports came into force on October 13. Checkpoints

were used over Thanksgiving to limit travel between regions, particularly for travel between red and orange zones.³⁴ In-school vaccinations were postponed this year and the Quebec government ordered 25% additional flu shot doses.³⁵

→ *Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan reported 48 new cases of COVID-19 on October 12 in the province's largest daily increase since late July. A significant proportion of the new cases are connected to a religious gathering in Prince Albert.³⁶ Due to the outbreak associated with the gathering, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation has implemented a lockdown. Only band members and residents will be permitted entry, and all incoming cars will be searched. Residents will be allowed to leave for food or for medical appointments on specific days. No gatherings will be permitted, and all schools will close until at least October 19.³⁷ Due to the rising number of cases, the leader of the provincial NDP called for the government to clarify COVID-19 guidelines and the thresholds used to implement restrictions. The premier said that the NDP was politicizing the pandemic and undermining confidence in public health officials in advance of the provincial election on October 26.³⁸

→ *Yukon*

On October 10, the government of Yukon announced that a new probable case of COVID-19 was found within the territory, and that the potential case is linked to travel outside the territory. Development of a gargle test for children with the government of British Columbia is ongoing and may be introduced "in the near future." A portable rapid molecular test called the Abbott ID NOW is also under review, with ten machines expected to be allocated to the territory.³⁹ Yukon is now in Phase 3 of its reopening plan, with no significant changes to restrictions announced in the past week.

The United States

→ *California*

California's average daily death count hit its lowest point over the past three months, suggesting an end to the wave of infections seen over the summer. The 7-day daily average reached 61, and the average deaths fell approximately 20% compared to last week and 28% compared to the two weeks prior.⁴⁰ The reason behind this fall is connected to a decrease in deaths in Southern California and LA, which previously had accounted for approximately 40% of the state's deaths.⁴¹ On October 9, the overall average of cases was 3300 cases per day.⁴²

→ *Illinois*

Illinois' test positivity rate, the metric that experts use to gauge how rapidly the virus is spreading, rose to 4.3% on October 12, as the state reports between 2,700 and 3,000 new cases daily.⁴³ Illinois' government scales back reopening when a region reaches or surpasses the state-set threshold of an 8% positivity rate for three consecutive days.⁴⁴ Chicago continues to fare well, reporting a positivity rate comparable to the state average. On October 9, Region 4 began to ease mitigation measures due to a positivity rate lower than 8%, allowing the region to return to Phase 4, just like the rest of the state. Region 1 remains under restrictions.⁴⁵

→ *Michigan*

Michigan's seven-day moving average has reached a thousand new cases per day. After a turbulent political week in Michigan, due to the state's Supreme Court verdict on October 2, COVID-19 restrictions previously enforced through the governor's executive orders have been reinstated through other avenues. Throughout last week, several counties issued their own rules, and on October 6, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued sweeping COVID-19 regulations that mirror Governor Whitmer's nullified orders. Unlike the governor's orders, movie theaters and

bowling alleys are now allowed to open, and bars can operate but only serve alcohol to people who are sitting down and 6 feet apart. In accordance with a state law stemming from the 1918 flu pandemic, the director of the DHHS, empowered by the Legislature, has the authority to issue emergency orders to control an epidemic.

→ *New York*

New York's positivity rate dropped to 0.96% yesterday, under 1% for the first time since September 24.⁴⁶ After schools fully reopened in person by October 1, New York is shutting down "tiny areas" of up to two square miles in metropolitan areas to prevent a widespread breakout like the state experienced in the spring.⁴⁷ These areas, called "zones," are required to close nonessential businesses, religious congregations, schools, and indoor dining for at least 2 weeks. Most zones are located in Brooklyn and Queens.⁴⁸

→ *Texas*

On October 9, Texas reported 27.83 cases per 1000 people and 57,278 cases in the past two weeks.⁴⁹ Texas also reported 95 deaths, 3,650 new COVID-19 cases and added 386 cases that had not been counted before.⁵⁰ As of October 14, the governor is allowing bars to open at 50% capacity and with specific health measures if the county qualifies and judges opt their counties in. Qualifying counties must have fewer than 15% COVID-19 hospital occupancy. Business other than bars in those areas will be permitted up to 75% capacity.⁵¹ As of October 7, Texas passed California and became the state with the second most COVID-19 deaths.⁵²

Mexico

Between October 8 and October 9, 5,623 new COVID-19 cases and 411 additional deaths were reported,⁵³ however, the government believes that the number of cases is probably higher than the reported number.⁵⁴ On October 10, seven states imposed additional lockdown restrictions when they moved from yellow, or medium alert, to orange, or high alert, on the federal government's reopening stoplight.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, five states moved from orange to yellow on October 12, and will be at this level for at least two weeks,⁵⁶ bringing the total number of states at the orange level to 17.⁵⁷ Jalisco's governor may impose additional restrictions should the case count continue increasing in the state and will not allow the approximately 8% of economic activities that are closed to reopen now.⁵⁸ The governor believes that the case increase results from young people not abiding by the rules and more participation in non-essential activities.⁵⁹ On October 8, Mexico City's government intended to reopen additional activities without first moving into the yellow stage of reopening.⁶⁰ On October 11, Mexico paid the WHO \$159.88 million to access COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX program; this payment will secure access to vaccines for approximately 20% of Mexicans.⁶¹

Chile

On October 8, Chile reported 1,575 new cases and 77 new deaths, bringing their national totals to 476,016 cases and 13,167 deaths.⁶² On October 12, elderly care homes in communities that are not in quarantine and are in at least phase two, may have visitors up to two times per week with up to two visitors per resident, so long as visitors have a health passport.⁶³ As of October 6, the Magallanes region was considered a high alert threat to the ministry of health because of a possible second wave due to a rate of over 100 cases per 100,000 people. In response, exterior access to the region is restricted, additional medical personnel are available, more patients will be referred to Santiago, and the cause of this increasing rate of infections is being investigated.⁶⁴

WESTERN EUROPE

France

France's 7-day moving average of new cases is 16,000, which is 5,000 more than last week, owing to an alarming surge in cases over the weekend, when confirmed cases reached 27,000 on October 10.⁶⁵ As regions move up the 5-tier system, restrictions are automatically imposed; the country's maximum alert level kicks in when the incidence rate of the virus exceeds 250 cases per 100,000 people, and at least 30% of intensive care beds are occupied by COVID-19 patients.⁶⁶ Hospitals in Paris moved into emergency mode on October 8, after COVID-19 patients took up half of the region's intensive care beds.⁶⁷ On October 10, the cities of Lille, Lyon, Grenoble and Saint-Etienne joined Paris and Marseille reached the maximum alert level. Accordingly, bars are shut, and restaurants are forced to stop service by 10PM.⁶⁸ The federal government continues to be criticized for not requiring people to work from home, a measure that is officially "encouraged."⁶⁹

Germany

Germany's 7-day R-value substantially increased this week from 1.14 to 1.37.⁷⁰ On October 9, the federation confirmed almost 5,000 cases, a figure not seen since the beginning of April. This increase has been attributed to clusters reported in the context of religious or family events, nursing homes, facilities for asylum-seekers and refugees, and meat-processing plants.⁷¹ The federal government reached an agreement with mayors of Germany's 11 largest cities on strict measures that will kick in locally if the rate of infection goes above 50 per 100,000 residents over a period of seven days.⁷² However, the plan was vague, listing possibilities of restrictions instead of requirements for each city; possibilities include stricter rules on wearing masks and social distancing, introducing curfews in the hospitality sector, and tougher limits on public and private gatherings.⁷³ As Berlin's ICU occupancy rate doubled in the last two weeks, all businesses, including bars, restaurants, and late-night shops now have to close between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. until at least October 31.⁷⁴

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 because the country has crossed the threshold of 120 confirmed infections per 100,000 people over a 14 day period. In response to rising infections, hospital admissions and death rate, the government announced several new restrictions that will be in effect on October 9. Close bubbles have been reduced to a maximum of 3 people and private home gatherings are limited to a maximum of 4 people, not including those within the household. At bars and cafes, a curfew of 11:00 pm has been imposed 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

The number of new COVID-19 cases in the Netherlands has been increasing rapidly since early September, and now has one of the highest numbers of infections per capita. Around 6,504 additional people have tested positive, a new single-day record.⁷⁸ The rapid increase in the number of cases has been linked to the reluctant behaviour of the Dutch population to adopt a mandatory face mask rule. The National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM) has also attributed the rise to young people returning from holidays abroad in Spain and France over the summer. The government is

considering enforcing an earlier closing time for the catering industry, but an official curfew seems unlikely.⁷⁹ On October 10, the Dutch COVID-19 app “CoronaMelder” went online for all users across the Netherlands. It was in development for over 6 months, including 2 months of beta testing in 5 of the country's 25 security regions.⁸⁰

Spain

On October 9, Spain reported 890,000 cases and 50,000 deaths in total, and an average of 250 cases per 100,000 residents.⁸¹ Research from Polytechnic University of Catalonia reports that schools are not a significant cause of COVID-19 situation in Spain.⁸² In Andalusia and Catalonia, they had a small increase of cases in school aged children, but this could be because when there is a positive case in one child all of the children in their bubble must be tested.⁸³ On October 9, a state of alarm was declared by Spain's government for Madrid because there have been more than 600 new cases per 100,000 residents in Madrid⁸⁴ over the last 7 days. Before the alarm, Spain's government proposed travel and social restrictions for Madrid, but a Madrid court struck it down. However, the alarm now permits the government to enforce restrictions.⁸⁵ The central government does not intend to influence essential work and in-person school.⁸⁶ An opposition party, Vox, threatened to go to court claiming that the lockdown in Madrid was illegal, excessive and harmful to the economy.⁸⁷

The United Kingdom

The UK's 7-day rolling average has increased by 6,000 cases since last week, now at 14,500 new cases per day.⁸⁸ On October 12, the prime minister announced England's new three-tier local lockdown system that will run in four-week blocks dependent on rates of infection.⁸⁹ Regions in Tier 1 will have restrictions similar to the current national one, including the rule of six, 10pm curfew for pubs, group sport only being played outdoors and a maximum of 15 guests at wedding and civil partnership ceremonies.⁹⁰ Tier 2 includes Tier 1 restrictions, and different households will not be allowed to mix in any indoor setting, just like in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool. The third tier includes a ban on household mixing indoors and outdoors, complete closure of pubs, restaurants, bars and bookmakers, and people advised not to travel beyond their local area except for essential reasons.⁹¹ As of October 10, pubs and restaurants across Scotland's central belt can only open between 6:00 and 18:00 for food and non-alcoholic drinks.⁹²

Ireland

As of October 10, 1,012 new cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the Republic of Ireland.⁹³ Effective midnight October 6 until October 27, the Republic will be placed under level 3 restrictions, contrary to the national public health team's recommendation to move the country to level 5. Under level 3 restrictions, visitors to private homes and gardens are allowed a maximum number of six people from one other household. No social or family gatherings are allowed to take place, with the exception of weddings and funerals, where a maximum of 25 people are permitted. No indoor gatherings should take place, whereas outdoor gatherings are capped at 15. The public is advised to remain within the county, with the exception of those who must travel for essential purposes. All cafes and restaurants are permitted to offer takeaway or delivery and outdoor dining/service for up to 15 individuals. No sporting events are allowed, except for professional matches occurring behind closed doors. Schools, early learning centers, childcare services, and higher education institutions will remain open, with protective measures in place.⁹⁴

Luxembourg

The average daily number of new infections is 88 per 100,000 residents as of October 11, far more than neighboring countries.⁹⁵ On October 9, the government clarified the conditions of working from home, when a period of isolation or quarantine has been applied by the employee. The ministries of labour, health, and social security have indicated that employees must obtain written proof from their employer. The employee must be authorized to work remotely, even if they are subject to a period of isolation or quarantine (i.e. if they are a contact case or contaminated by the virus). Most importantly, working remotely cannot be in conflict with the isolation order issued by the health department.⁹⁶

Portugal

Portugal has reported more than 1,000 new daily COVID-19 cases for the first time since April. The country will remain under a state of contingency until October 14, under which gatherings are limited to 10 people and commercial establishments close between 8pm and 11pm. Mainland Portugal remains on the UK's quarantine list, which includes Lisbon and the Algarve, while Madeira and the Azores are not.⁹⁷

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

On October 8, Austria recorded 1,209 new cases, the highest number of daily new infections since March.⁹⁸ Despite the implementation of stricter COVID-19 measures such as mandatory face mask rules and restrictions on public events, cases continue to rise.⁹⁹ Countries are advising against travel to Austria, “putting the tourism sector under pressure with the ski season approaching.” The government is concerned about the winter tourism season and without a lower infection rate, will likely not be removed from other countries lists of high-risk areas.¹⁰⁰

Greece

In Greece, cases are rising moderately, with 200-400 new daily cases in the last month. Over 50% of all new cases in the country are in the Attica region, which includes Athens.¹⁰¹ The government extended the current restrictions in Attica until October 12, which includes a curfew at restaurants and bars, a ban on gatherings larger than 9 people, and the mandatory use of masks indoors and outdoors. Other restrictions have been extended in some regions.¹⁰² Throughout the country, demonstrations are being organized by students, teachers, and parents in response to inadequate COVID-19 safety measures in schools. Demonstrators want the government to reduce class sizes, hire more teachers, and improve cleaning measures in schools. Confirmed cases in schools have resulted in the closure of 135 schools, and positive cases among young people increased by 30% in September.¹⁰³

Italy

On October 9, Italy had 5,372 new cases of COVID-19, nearly 1,000 more than the previous day. Numbers in the country have not been this high since mid-April with a concerning increase in the regions of Campania, Lazio, Piedmont, and Tuscany.¹⁰⁴ The rise in infection rate has been linked to social gatherings. Effective October 8, people are now required to carry face masks with them at all times and wear masks always when outdoors. Travelers arriving to Italy from the UK, Netherlands,

Belgium, and Czech Republic will be subject to mandatory testing. Mandatory testing is no longer required for travelers arriving from Croatia, Malta, and Greece.¹⁰⁵ Also, the cabinet approved a decree to extend the COVID-19 state of emergency until January 31.¹⁰⁶

Slovenia

In Slovenia, the number of new daily cases is approximately 300 and the number of school aged children testing positive for COVID-19 has doubled over the past week.¹⁰⁷ Rising cases among young people is likely related to face masks no longer being required for students in their classes and for primary school teachers.¹⁰⁸ As of October 9, there is a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people with exceptions for religious ceremonies and supervised sporting events. At restaurants and bars, capacity has been reduced, and guests can only be served when seated at tables. The government announced that hand sanitizer must be installed in all shared areas of multi-apartment buildings.¹⁰⁹

Switzerland

On October 12, Switzerland reported about 4,068 new cases of COVID-19 in a 72-hour period.¹¹⁰ Due to COVID-19, Geneva will introduce a guaranteed minimum wage to address poverty in the city. In Switzerland, wages can be regulated by local authorities in each canton and two other cantons have introduced similar measures to address city economies dependent on tourism.¹¹¹

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is on the brink of a second major lockdown as cases of COVID-19 continue to surge across the country. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has reported that new cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days have totaled at least 55,538 - over 10,000 more than in neighbouring Germany.¹¹² On October 12, the Czech government announced renewed restrictions across the country, all of which will last until at least November 3rd.¹¹³ All primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools are required to close from October 14, while kindergartens will stay open with special provisions made for the children of critical care workers.¹¹⁴ Restaurants will only be allowed to offer take-away services, and all pubs and bars must close.¹¹⁵ Indoor sports centres, such as gyms and pools, and cultural venues such as theatres, cinemas and museums, were required to close on October 12.¹¹⁶ Public gatherings are limited to six people, and mask-wearing will be mandatory in all places outside the home. Public consumption of alcohol will also be banned until November 4.¹¹⁷

Hungary

Hungary reported a single-day record of 1374 new cases of COVID-19 on October 10, followed by an increase of 1173 new cases the following day.¹¹⁸ 28 COVID-19 patients have died in Hungary in the on October 13, a new single-day record for the country.¹¹⁹ Entry restrictions for travellers from abroad remain in force.¹²⁰ In addition to shops and public transport, masks remain mandatory in cinemas, theatres, health and social institutions, and public offices, and clubs are required to close by 23:00.¹²¹ Further ongoing restrictions include a ban on visiting hospitals and elderly care homes.¹²² Despite the surge in cases and deaths due to COVID-19, Hungary has not announced any plans for a second lockdown or new restrictions.

Latvia

There has been a rapid increase of COVID-19 infections in Latvia, reaching 55.63 cases per 100,000 residents as of October 13, in contrast to 31.25 per 100,000 last week.¹²³ As a result, Latvia's Cabinet of Ministers has announced new restrictions to take effect during the week of October 12.¹²⁴ Following autumn break, remote teaching for upper-year students will be imposed for 1 week.¹²⁵ It is now compulsory to wear protective face masks at all stores, public transport stops, and most public venues.¹²⁶ The government has also decided to temporarily ban all indoor sports team exercises.¹²⁷ Indoor private events have been limited to 30 participants, while outdoor events have been limited to 300.¹²⁸ Catering businesses are to close by 24:00.¹²⁹ The number of people allowed to sit at a single table has been limited to four.¹³⁰

Lithuania

Lithuania reported 118 new cases of COVID-19 on October 13, bringing the country's total confirmed cases up to 6366.¹³¹ The number of deaths caused by complications due to the virus has reached 106.¹³² As of October 12, isolation will no longer be required for arrivals from Estonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Norway, Germany, Faroe Islands and another 14 countries.¹³³ Changes in the list of affected countries have been the result of the introduction of a new principle for listing: from now on, the list will only include countries where the COVID-19 incidence rate is 10% higher than it is in Lithuania.¹³⁴ Lithuania's incidence rate was 55.7 cases per 100 thousand people as of October 9.¹³⁵ When listing third countries, additional criteria are taken into account, such as the test coverage rate, percentage of positive tests, availability of information, hospitalisation rate, and the number of infection cases brought from that particular country to Lithuania.¹³⁶

Poland

Poland's Health Ministry reported 5,068 new cases of COVID-19 on October 13, the second time this figure has surpassed 5,000 in a 24-hour period.¹³⁷ New restrictions were announced on October 11 in order to curb the spread of the virus after reporting record infections for a fifth successive day.¹³⁸ The measures included setting aside special shopping hours for senior citizens, and increasing funding to care homes.¹³⁹ Mask-wearing requirements have been implemented for all public spaces, bars, parks, and forests, as well as limited opening times for bars and restaurants.¹⁴⁰ The Polish Prime Minister announced on October 13 that he has gone into quarantine after coming into contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19.¹⁴¹

Slovakia

Slovakia is expected to announce new restrictions on October 15 in order to contain the spread of COVID-19, including a requirement to wear face masks in public, and limits to public gatherings.¹⁴² The country has reported a sharp increase in new coronavirus cases in recent days, recording a total of 19,851 cases as of October 11 - up from 13,139 in just 1 week.¹⁴³ All public events will be banned, and public gatherings will be limited to six people.¹⁴⁴ Restaurants will only be allowed to serve food outdoors or provide takeout.¹⁴⁵ All fitness facilities, swimming pools and saunas will be closed.¹⁴⁶ Shopping centers will be required to provide at least 15 square meters (160 square feet) of space for each customer, while grocery stores and drugstores will have certain times reserved for senior citizens.¹⁴⁷

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

Denmark reported 290 new cases on October 13, the lowest daily increase in over a month.¹⁴⁸ The health minister said that the country's R0 number is below 1 for the first time since the last week of August.¹⁴⁹ Despite the falling infection rate, the Danish government extended all of its current COVID-19 restrictions until October 31. The private gathering limit remains at 50 people, cafes and bars must close by 10pm, and masks are mandatory on public transit.¹⁵⁰ The ministry of foreign affairs advised against non-essential travel to eight Swedish regions, including Stockholm, due to a rising infection rate.¹⁵¹ During the opening session of the Danish parliament, the prime minister said that the government would develop a COVID-19 warning system that would enable them to respond quickly and predictably to clusters of outbreaks.¹⁵²

Estonia

As of October 13, the two-week average of new cases in Estonia is 44.77 per 100,000 people. There are 595 active cases, including 32 hospitalizations.¹⁵³ The Estonian government changed their system for determining quarantine requirements for incoming travellers. No quarantine period is required for those coming from countries with an infection rate below 25 per 100,000 over the past two weeks, while quarantine is always required for travellers from countries with an infection rate above 50 per 100,000 over the past two weeks. For countries with an infection rate in between, no quarantine is required if their infection rate is below 1.1 times the infection rate in Estonia, and is required otherwise. The option of taking two COVID-19 tests to avoid the quarantine period remains an option for all travellers.¹⁵⁴ The prime minister said that he does not support implementing new restrictions as long as Estonians are following the public health guidelines in place.¹⁵⁵

Finland

As of October 9, the two-week average of new cases in Finland is 34 per 100,000 people after having doubled in the past week.¹⁵⁶ As a result, the prime minister said that the government would consider implementing new restrictions next week, including lowering the gathering limit and moving some schools to distance learning. The new restrictions may only apply to certain regions or may be recommendations where the final decision rests with regional authorities.¹⁵⁷ Public health officials said they may require a traveller to present a negative COVID-19 test result from their home country and then take another test upon their arrival in Finland; if both tests are negative, the traveller would be able to travel throughout Finland restriction-free for up to a week.¹⁵⁸ Opposition MPs have accused the health minister of presenting misleading information about masks to Finns throughout the pandemic, and have called for a confidence vote on her leadership to be held.¹⁵⁹

Iceland

The number of daily new cases in Iceland has approached 100 for much of the past week, and the two-week average infection rate sits at 264 per 100,000 people as of October 13, among the highest in Europe.¹⁶⁰ New restrictions have been implemented in the Reykjavik area: limiting the number of exceptions to the gathering limit, making social distancing mandatory, and forcing restaurants to close by 9pm.¹⁶¹ Iceland's chief epidemiologist said that public health officials would not take the herd immunity approach to fighting the pandemic, saying that the healthcare system would be overwhelmed by the time the country got to that point.¹⁶²

Norway

The infection rate in Norway has remained relatively stable over the past month, though cases in Oslo have risen precipitously in recent days.¹⁶³ Due to the situation in Oslo, local officials have extended all COVID-19 restrictions indefinitely, and they appear likely to be in place through the rest of the year.¹⁶⁴ As Norway introduced travel restrictions on Cyprus, Latvia, and Liechtenstein this week, quarantine requirements exist for travellers from all other countries in Europe. The only exceptions are a single region in Sweden and most regions in Finland, although some of the most populated areas (including Helsinki) are restricted.¹⁶⁵ The government announced that a COVID-19 vaccine will be made available to all residents for free whenever it is available.¹⁶⁶

Sweden

The infection rate in several Swedish regions has risen rapidly over the past few weeks, including Stockholm.¹⁶⁷ Public health officials released suggestions for local recommendations in the event of an outbreak, including an advisory against non-essential shopping trips and a warning not to take public transit.¹⁶⁸ Local officials in the Uppsala region said they were considering a mandatory 11pm closure time for restaurants if the infection rate continues to rise.¹⁶⁹ Authorities said that they would indefinitely postpone the planned expansion of the gathering limit for seated public events.¹⁷⁰ Despite the rise in cases locally, the government lifted travel restrictions on Malta and Slovenia.¹⁷¹ The minister of higher education urged students to follow COVID-19 guidelines after eight Swedish regions reported outbreaks connected to universities, totalling over 200 cases.¹⁷²

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

The number of daily new cases has been fluctuating around 500 in Japan. The government is planning to exempt Japanese business travelers and foreign nationals with residency status from the 14-day quarantine requirement when they return from overseas. The exemption will be subject to a quota and conditions such as avoiding public transit for two weeks upon their return.¹⁷³ A research project is being planned by the foreign ministry to help develop international rules on “how to handle infectious disease outbreaks onboard cruise ships.”¹⁷⁴

South Korea

Over the past week, the number of daily new cases has mostly stayed below 100 in South Korea. Starting October 12, mask wearing becomes mandatory, and the entire country is moving to the lowest level of its social distancing guidelines. A number of high-risk facilities, including night clubs and gyms may resume operations; in-person religious services at churches are allowed with capacity limits, and stadiums are permitted to fill 30% of their capacity. There is no nationwide gathering limit in place, but large events in the Seoul region continue to be advised against. Harsher restrictions against high-risk activities will remain in place.¹⁷⁵ Capacity limits at schools will be raised to 66% on October 19, with some schools given the discretion to have a higher limit depending on their situation.¹⁷⁶ The distribution of free flu shots will resume this week after reports of mishandling were alleviated with quality control checks.¹⁷⁷

New Zealand

No active cases remain in New Zealand. The government announced that 250 international graduate students will be granted entry into New Zealand, with the first batch expected to arrive next month while most will arrive early next year.¹⁷⁸ The whole country, including Auckland, is now at Alert Level 1, meaning that there are no longer restrictions on movement, gathering, businesses, or other activities. Travel restrictions and border controls remain, while wearing a mask is recommended on public transit. The government has agreed to purchase 1.5 million doses of a candidate vaccine, which would enable 750,000 people to get vaccinated. It remains to be decided who will be prioritized when the vaccine is ready to be distributed.¹⁷⁹

Australia

Australia continues to report a low level of daily new cases. In Victoria, a mass COVID-19 surveillance program started last week that targets asymptomatic employees at high-risk workplaces using saliva testing.¹⁸⁰ The epidemiological situation in Melbourne continues to improve, but the reopening process will not be accelerated. Therefore, no significant reopening is expected within the next two weeks. At the federal level, the 2020 Federal Budget was introduced with the assumption that all domestic border restrictions would be lifted by the end of the year, except for West Australia. Incoming and outgoing international travel was not forecasted to bounce back even during next year.¹⁸¹

Turkey

After managing to lower the number of daily cases below 1,000, Turkey has been witnessing a resurgence in new infections as of October 15. The government has advised the public to follow the current measures in place, including mandatory use of masks outdoors and boarding mass transit only if necessary. The education ministry will not fully reopen schools, instead opting for a more gradual reopening. Kindergartners and first graders were the first group allowed back into classrooms in September, with more students starting in-person education at schools on October 12.¹⁸² Turkey will start declaring the number of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases, effective October 15, following criticism on its disclosure of declaring only symptomatic cases, thus hiding the real threat of infection.¹⁸³

Israel

Israel has reported a decreasing number of daily new cases and a lower positivity rate of testing. The health ministry has closed its hotline for reporting restriction violations and dismantled the team for overseeing quarantines due to labour constraints.¹⁸⁴ According to the health ministry's plan for exiting the nationwide lockdown, the gradual reopening process is expected to last for at least four months, and it may begin as early as October 18 depending on the level of transmission. If the number of daily new cases drops to 2,000, the first stage of the plan would see preschools reopen, as well as businesses that do not receive customers. The restriction on moving beyond 1 kilometer from home will be lifted, restaurants will be able to offer to-go services, and protests may resume as before.¹⁸⁵ The restrictions on protests and indoor religious services were extended to October 13 by the government, with another extension expected later this week.¹⁸⁶

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Partnerships and Contributors

The Media Ecosystem Observatory – a joint effort of Peter Loewen (Toronto), Taylor Owen (McGill), and Derek Ruths (McGill) – is responsible for the social media and behavioural data on our dashboard. The leads on these projects are Eric Merkley (Toronto) and Aengus Bridgman (McGill).

Reopening data and summaries are produced by a team at PEARL (The Policy, Elections, and Representation Lab) at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy: Mitchell Anderson, Haobo Chen, Jad El Tal, Kulsoom Khalid, Blake Lee-Whiting, Anthony Moniuszko, Erika Porco, and Sapphira Thompson-Bled.

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

Additional support for the data analysis provided by Grant Benjamin.

The overall Project Lead is John McAndrews.

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

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