

**Weekly COVID Update:**

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

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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:

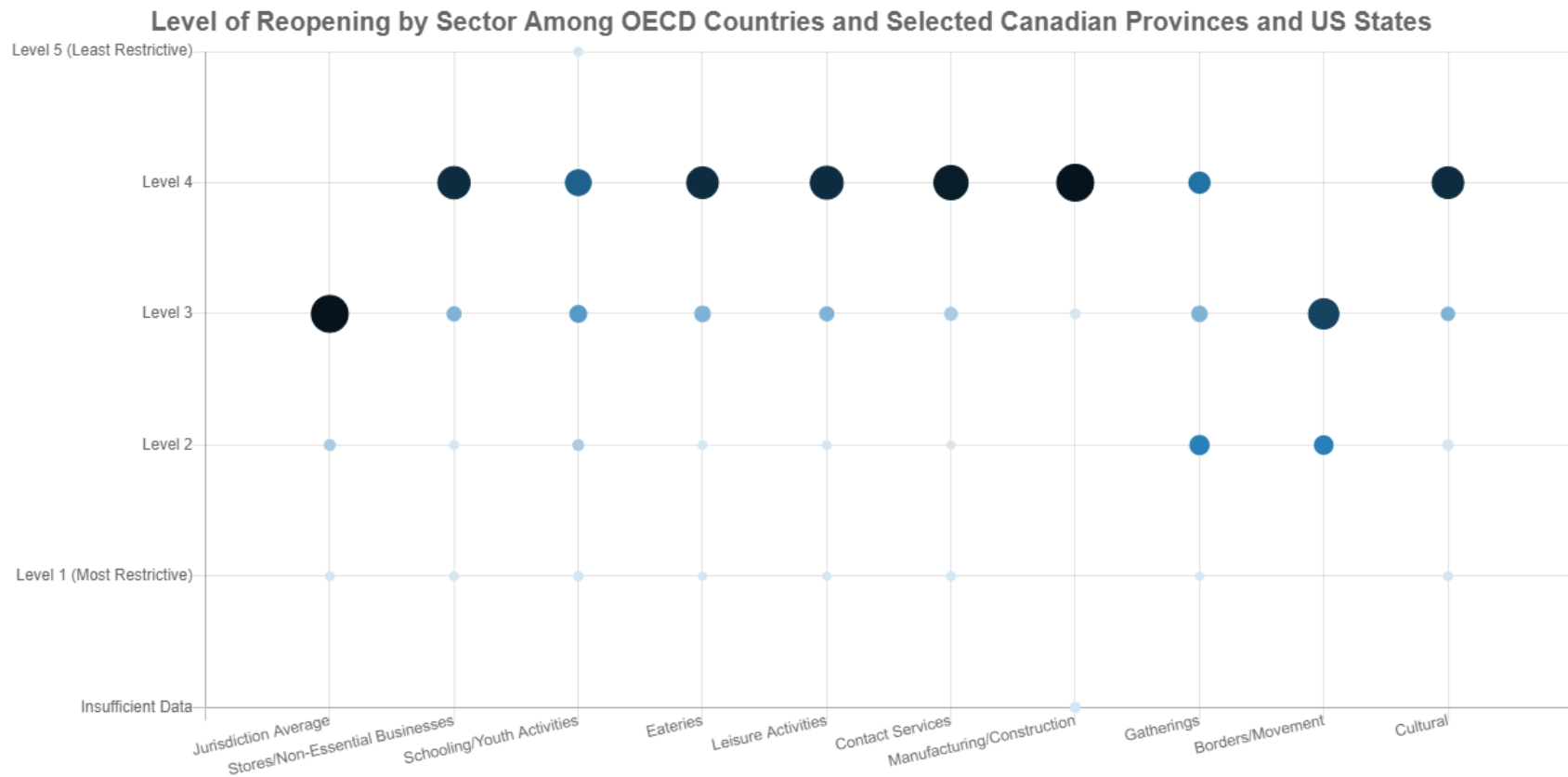
- The openness of the economy on nine different dimensions in 52 different jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories.
- Trends in social distancing in Canada.
- Trends in social media attention to COVID-19 and selected other topics.
- Trends in support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

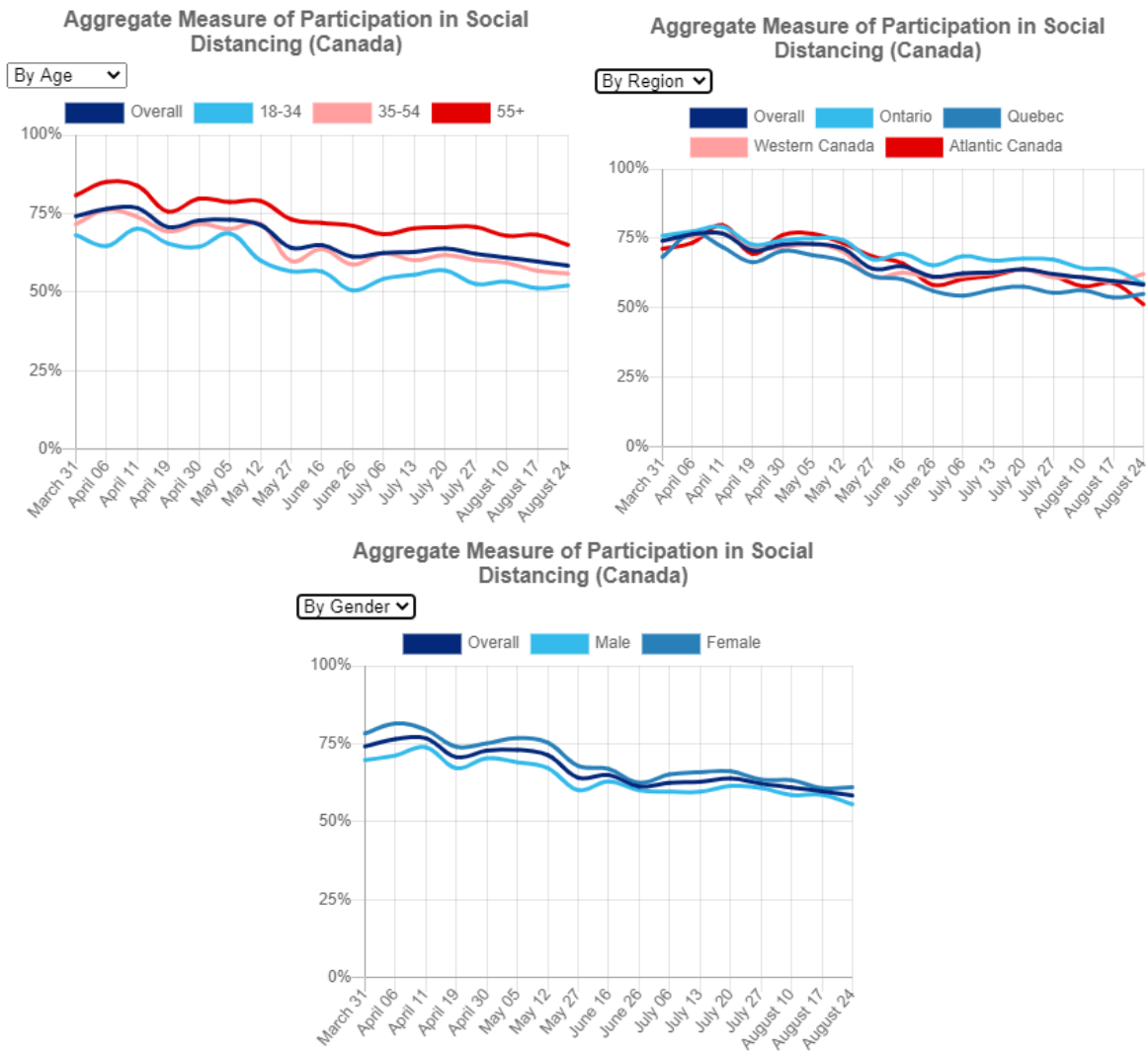
Our data are updated weekly. You can subscribe to a weekly update by visiting our website: [www.reopeningaftercovid.com](http://www.reopeningaftercovid.com).

Please direct any questions or comments to [peter.loewen@utoronto.ca](mailto:peter.loewen@utoronto.ca).

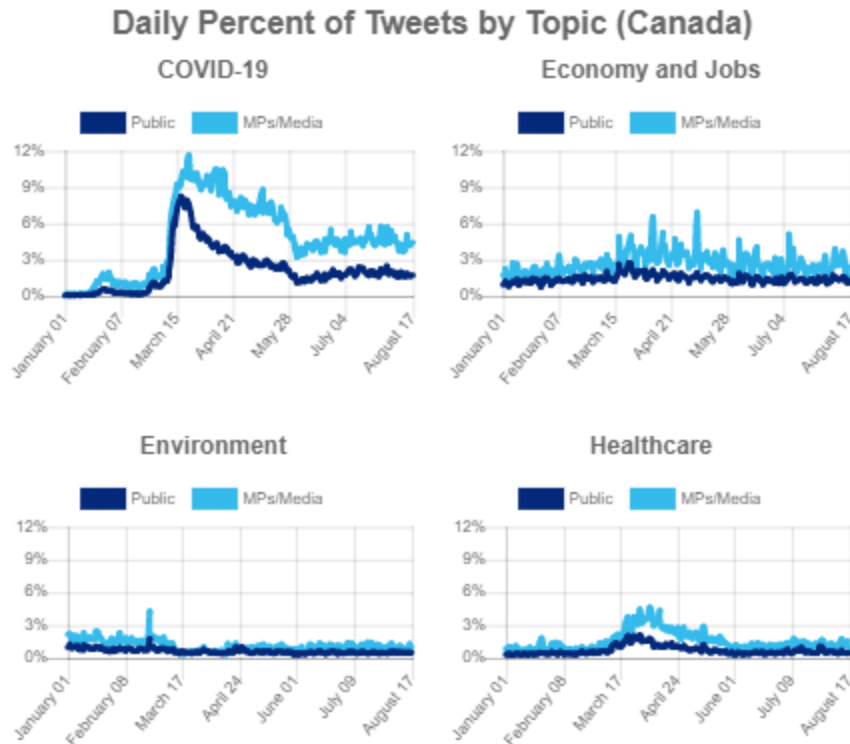
## **Data Visualizations from Dashboard**



**Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of August 24.** 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](http://www.reopeningaftercovid.com).

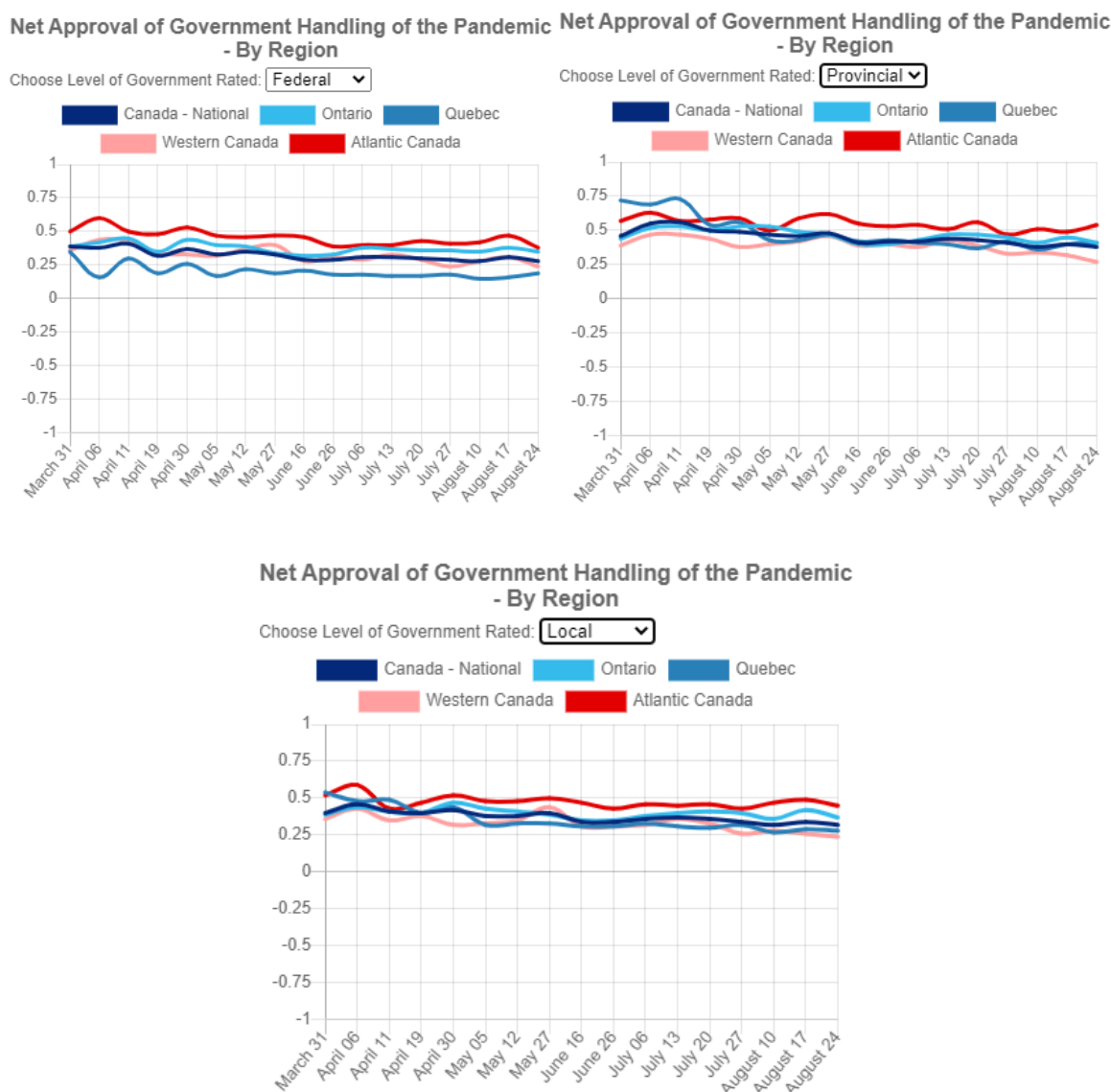


**Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada).** We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre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

More than half of the active cases in Alberta are in Edmonton. The majority of the city's outbreaks are among people under age 40 with links to household transmission, social gatherings, and faith-based groups.<sup>1</sup> In the province, COVID-19 discussions are focused on reopening schools in September prompting the government to release protocols for possible outbreaks. Protocols will be triggered if there are two or more confirmed cases and will result in a decision about whether to go online or close schools.<sup>2</sup> Parents, teachers, and educational assistants want the government to fund a better plan for kids to safely return to school that includes emotional support for students, adequate equipment, and an effective online learning plan.<sup>3</sup> Effective September 1, 234 pharmacies owned by Loblaws, including Superstore and Shoppers Drug Mart, will offer asymptomatic testing in an effort by Alberta Health Services to boost the province's testing capacity. This additional capacity is needed to test 90,000 teachers and school staff in the next few weeks.<sup>4</sup>

#### → *British Columbia*

The number of daily new infections in British Columbia is still increasing. Anyone onboard a TransLink or BC Transit bus, boat or train, as well as passengers onboard BC Ferries vessels, will be required to wear a mask starting August 24.<sup>5</sup> B.C. is still at Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Most businesses are open subject to restrictions. Updated K-12 operational guidelines for COVID-19 have been distributed to school districts. Masks will be required for staff, middle and secondary students in high traffic areas such as buses and in common areas such as hallways, or anytime outside of their learning group when social distancing cannot be maintained. Additional funding will be provided to support the purchase of up to 1.5 million masks, enough for every public-school staff member and student to have at least two masks. Another key health and safety measure is the establishment of learning groups consisting of students and staff who remain together throughout the school quarter, semester or year; these could be made up of a single class or multiple classes of students. Learning groups will sometimes join for activities like physical education or music, or they may be secondary students taking the same courses. The province is also providing an additional \$45.6 million to school districts for enhanced cleaning, handwashing stations, reusable masks and other safety measures.<sup>6</sup>

#### → *Manitoba*

Manitoba unveiled a new colour-coded system on August 19 that will allow the government to roll out COVID-19 restrictions targeting specific regions, communities or industries in the province. The new system has four risk levels, each triggering possible measures that public health officials can take to limit the spread of the virus. Similar to the existing forest-fire risk system, the pandemic response tool uses the colours green, yellow, orange and red. At each level, public health officials have a range of restrictions that could be imposed on different sectors, such as schools, restaurants, child-care centres and community gatherings. As risk levels rise in a community or region, the province could tighten restrictions, such as reducing the size of gatherings or restricting travel in and out of an area. Manitoba as a whole is currently under the yellow "caution" risk level, meaning community transmission of COVID-19 is considered to be at low levels. The yellow level includes many restrictions Manitobans are already familiar with, such as limits on gathering sizes, restrictions on people returning from out of province, and directions to practise good hygiene and physical distancing.<sup>7</sup> However, following the rise in COVID-19 cases in the southwestern region of Manitoba, gathering sizes will be restricted to 10 and face masks will be mandatory in public places within the Prairie Mountain Health region effective August 24. More clusters of infection, a higher test positivity rate and a number of large potential

exposures at beaches and parks in the region led to the decision to raise the region's response level to orange.<sup>8</sup>

→ *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs called an election on August 17 to take place on September 14, making it the first major vote to be held in Canada since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>9</sup> Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the province's electoral agency has tweaked its mail-in voting procedures so that they can be used to serve vulnerable individuals – primarily those residing in hospitals and long-term care homes – who would normally require special on-site polling locations. The agency is also preparing for an increase in mail-in votes, requesting more supplies and staff than normal in light of the changed circumstances.

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Effective August 24, non-medical masks will be mandatory for people older than 5 in indoor public spaces such as retail businesses, office buildings, and places of worship.<sup>10</sup> A recognized business or organization may now host up to 100 people inside a venue (up from 50 people)--as long as this is still less than 50% of the venue's capacity. Organizers must record and keep a list of those in attendance for at least 2 weeks following an event.<sup>11</sup> The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District presented its back to school plan with classes set to resume on September 9. Masks will only be mandatory for high school students on buses and in common areas. Each school will develop a plan that works best for the space and size of the school's population. If a moderate or widespread outbreak occurs, schools will move to online learning. The Newfoundland Teachers Association has concerns related to classes of more than 30 students, the additional workload teachers will take on with extra supervision, and the planning required to keep up with health directives.<sup>12</sup>

→ *Northwest Territories*

No active cases remain in the Northwest Territories. The Public Health Emergency has been extended through September 1. All 49 schools in the NWT have had their detailed risk assessment and exposure plans for reopening approved by the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer.<sup>13</sup>

→ *Nova Scotia*

In light of the province's favourable epidemiological situation, Nova Scotia's government has begun to consider expanding the Atlantic travel bubble to include the rest of Canada--thereby allowing Canadians to travel to Nova Scotia without a mandatory 14-day quarantine upon arrival.<sup>14</sup> Nova Scotia premier Stephen McNeil is particularly keen on reopening the province to the rest of Canada, saying the province's economy "requires an open border."<sup>15</sup> There were no new cases of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia on August 24; 7 active cases remain in the province.<sup>16</sup>

→ *Nunavut*

There continue to be no cases of COVID-19 in Nunavut. It remains the only province or territory in Canada to have not had a single case. The territorial government extended its public health emergency order until September 3 after it was set to expire on August 20.<sup>17</sup>

→ *Ontario*

On August 24, Ontario reported more than 100 new cases of COVID-19 for the fourth day in a row, as the number of active cases crept up. Majority of the province's new cases are among individuals between the ages of 20 and 50.<sup>18</sup> Late last month, the provincial government released its back-to-school plan, which includes elementary students returning to the classroom full-time with regular class sizes.<sup>19</sup> Students up to grade 8 will be with one cohort for the entire day, with enhanced health and safety

protocols in place. Premier Doug Ford said he would close schools again if Ontario is hit with a second wave of COVID-19.<sup>20</sup> Halton District School Board chair Andréa Grebenc said that the government's messaging about school reopening this month has been difficult to follow.<sup>21</sup> The Ministry pointed to repeated assurances from Chief Medical Officer Dr. David Williams that the school plan meets his grade for safety--due, in large part, to the significant declines in community transmission of COVID-19 this summer.<sup>22</sup>

#### → *Prince Edward Island*

Prince Edward Island remains in Stage 4 with a plan to ease measures to a new normal by early October. A new normal in the province would include fewer restrictions on sports and recreation activities and increased capacity limits for restaurants. Overall, the future reopening of the province will be contingent on low rates of community infection.<sup>23</sup> The province announced that it will be increasing its limits on public gatherings to 150 people effective immediately. Up to 3 cohorts of 50 people can attend events as long as there is an approved plan that addresses physical distancing. This increase will allow more people to attend worship services, concerts, and sporting events. Singing is now permitted at these events if performers remain at a 2 metre distance from each other and wear a mask.<sup>24</sup> MLAs on the Standing Committee on Health want the government to address several issues before the possible arrival of a second wave in the province. The Committee's priorities include how the start of the school year could influence testing capability and when the government will roll out the mobile mental health crisis units.<sup>25</sup>

#### → *Quebec*

Quebec's Health minister says he thinks that Quebec is currently between the first and second wave of COVID-19. He underlined that, while cases are declining in the province, Quebec's health network must still prepare for another wave of the virus.<sup>26</sup> On August 18, Quebec presented a nine-point plan to address the expected second wave.<sup>27</sup> The plan addresses the following topics: elderly living situations, vulnerable populations, the workforce, testing, outbreak prevention and control, clinical organization and services, procurement, and governance and communications. The government will also dedicate an emergency fund to hiring in public health and to procuring material resources.<sup>28</sup> Despite urging parents to allow their children to resume physical school attendance from the start of the upcoming school year, Quebec's provincial government has asked that public school boards provide contingency plans for remote schooling by September 15.<sup>29</sup> Protestors have called upon the provincial government to adjust its back to school plan before classes restart. Quebec students are required to attend school unless they have a medical exemption. While physical distancing and frequent hand washing will be recommended, masks will only be required in school common areas for students in Grades 5 and up.<sup>30</sup>

#### → *Saskatchewan*

As of August 23, Saskatchewan had 106 active cases of COVID-19. This represents the lowest number of active cases in over a month; daily increases have remained under 10 for the past week. 65% of all active cases are linked to communal living settings.<sup>31</sup> Masks will be mandatory for all bus passengers in Regina on August 31; buses will return to full capacity on the same date.<sup>32</sup> Elections Saskatchewan said it would allow all those fearing the risk of COVID-19 to vote by mail in the upcoming provincial election.<sup>33</sup> Premier Scott Moe announced that the government has pushed back the start of the school year to September 8. Moe also said that \$40 million will be dedicated to costs associated with the school reopening plan. Additional contingency plans for outbreaks in schools will be released in the coming days.<sup>34</sup> The provincial government rejected the Saskatchewan NDP's motion for an emergency debate on the school reopening plan, saying it was unnecessary. Leader of the Opposition Ryan Meili said that his party does not want the school year to be pushed back any further and that the government needs to find solutions to a variety of problems with their plan for schools.<sup>35</sup>

→ *Yukon*

No active cases remain in Yukon. The government has committed to implementing all of the recommendations laid out in an independent review of the territory's health and social services. These include replacing private doctors' clinics with a polyclinic network and changing doctors' payment structures. The change has caused surprise and disappointment among the doctors.<sup>36</sup> The majority of students have physically returned to school on August 20. Masks are not mandatory, but recommended for students age 10 and older in situations where distancing is not possible. Grade 8 and 9 students will attend full-day class, while Grade 10, 11 and 12 students will attend half-day classes.<sup>37</sup>

*The United States*

→ *California*

COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations are beginning to decrease in California.<sup>38</sup> California removed San Diego County from its COVID-19 monitoring list, which is used to determine and limit the activities permitted in different counties.<sup>39</sup> The Glendale Unified School District will reopen some of their elementary schools as a supervised location for the children of essential workers to complete remote school work. The supervisors will not be teachers and will only monitor mask use, distancing, keeping the children focused and assisting with technology problems. There will be 12 children per classroom, with breakfast and lunch delivered, and technology devices provided.<sup>40</sup>

→ *Illinois*

On August 21, Illinois health officials said that 20 out of 102 counties were now considered at a warning level for COVID-19--with cases of the virus connected to schools being reported.<sup>41</sup> Contact tracing data shows the spikes being fueled by people congregating at weddings, businesses, neighborhood gatherings, parties, bars, and travelling to other states and sports camps.<sup>42</sup> Movie theatres across the state reopened on August 22, as part of Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois plan. Theaters are allowed to host audiences of up to 50 people per auditorium or 50% of normal capacity, whichever is less. Moviegoers are required to wear masks unless they're eating popcorn or drinking soda.<sup>43</sup>

→ *Michigan*

Michigan's seven-day moving average is now at 582 new cases per day.<sup>44</sup> As of August 20, Michigan health officials reported 14 COVID-19 outbreaks at K-12 schools and universities. While some districts started the school year offering in-person classes, the overwhelming majority of districts are starting it virtually or adopting a hybrid style.<sup>45</sup> Although the state allows outdoor gatherings of up to 100 people, Washtenaw County has restricted outdoor gatherings in Ann Arbor to 25 people due to increased risks of transmission.<sup>46</sup>

→ *New York*

For the 16th day in a row, New York's rate of positive tests has been less than 1 percent. Hospitalizations and ICU admissions continue to decrease.<sup>47</sup> Starting August 24, gyms and fitness centers reopened to local officials who will assess the health and safety standards of the locations; they can then open the public by September 2. Gyms can reopen at 33 percent capacity. Clients are required to wear masks at all times.<sup>48</sup> Also on August 24, museums will reopen in New York City, where capacity will be limited to 25% and visits timed and staggered.<sup>49</sup> NY Governor Cuomo said that New York's stable COVID transmission rate, which has remained at or below 1 percent since the reopening, was key to his decision.<sup>50</sup>

→ *Texas*

The North East and San Antonio Independent school districts intend to hold in-person classes for students in stages. Students will begin virtually and gradually progress to in-person classes.<sup>51</sup> If the

number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations decreases and Texas' positivity rate falls below 10% for a sustained period of time, the Governor may allow bars to reopen.<sup>52</sup> Several bars in San Antonio reopened in August by classifying their establishments as restaurants with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. This classification means that they must have a full kitchen and that food and merchandise constitute more than 51% of their sales.<sup>53</sup> The Commission said they will conduct up to 2000 inspections weekly to ensure compliance.<sup>54</sup>

### *Mexico*

Mexican officials reported a decrease in new cases nationally, along with a significant decrease in fatalities<sup>55</sup> and a reduction in hospitalization.<sup>56</sup> However, the number of COVID-19 cases in Baja California and Zacatecas has increased substantially. Germany is donating 100,000 PCR tests to Mexico.<sup>57</sup> AstraZeneca will conclude phase three of its vaccine trials in November or December and will then solicit government permission to sell it. If the process goes according to plan, Mexico will begin administering the vaccine around April. Mexico and Argentina intend to produce 150 million doses in early 2021, with a minimum of 400 million doses available for distribution in Latin America.<sup>58</sup> Aguascalientes regressed from orange to red on the federal government's traffic light indicators; however, the region disagrees with the federal government's reclassification. Aguascalientes officials said that they should instead be classified as yellow since their number of new COVID-19 cases is stable and--despite of the recent rise in hospital occupancy--they argue that they have enough hospital space and medical supplies. The officials also said they have one of the highest testing rates in Mexico.<sup>59</sup> The US-Mexico land border will remain closed to nonessential travel until September 21. While there are currently no general restrictions on American tourists flying into Mexico, screening levels vary depending on which Mexican airport visitors arrive at.<sup>60</sup> Many American tourists are visiting the Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta and Cancun areas.

### *Chile*

As of August 19, Chile and Peru were reported as having the worst deaths per capita in Latin America.<sup>61</sup> Santiago continues to reopen slowly: restaurants, bars and clubs remain closed, but people are permitted to go for walks. Fears are rising in Santiago that people are not socially distancing and that, if this continues, the city's reopening will be short-lived.<sup>62</sup>

## **WESTERN EUROPE**

### *France*

For the first time since the two-month lockdown ended in May, France reported more than 4,500 cases on August 23. The nation's seven-day moving average of new cases increased by one thousand since last week, now standing at 3,481.<sup>63</sup> Health Minister Olivier Véran said infections were four times higher in the 20 to 40 age group than the rest of the population--the result of summer parties. Veran has ruled out another nationwide lockdown because all other metrics (namely hospitalizations, ICU capacity and deaths) are generally stable.<sup>64</sup> The application of masks has been made compulsory in the workplace as of September 1, after a quarter of COVID-19 clusters were discovered to have originated in the workplace.<sup>65</sup> Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer said that students in secondary and high schools must wear a mask--regardless of distancing measures. In September, in-person schooling will be compulsory for all.<sup>66</sup>

### *Germany*

Germany's 7-day R-value is 0.97 -- finally below the 1.0 target.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the 7-day moving average of new cases is currently 1,356. Similar to other European countries, the steady rise in cases is being attributed to private parties.<sup>68</sup> Each state has its own limit on the number of people who can attend small private parties and events at large venues. While Hamburg caps parties at 50 people, Berlin currently allows up to 500 people at gatherings. A main topic this week will be possible federal curbs on private parties and celebrations--in order to standardize the rules.<sup>69</sup> Experts said that not enough people are using the country's coronavirus tracking app for it to be effective. Even though more than 17 million people have downloaded the app, the number of downloads needs to double for the country to be prepared for a second wave.<sup>70</sup> Hundreds of students and teachers have been in quarantine, two weeks after school reopenings in Berlin: COVID-19 cases were reported in 41 out of 825 schools in the district. Critics argue that health guidelines are too lax in Berlin since students are allowed to take their masks off at their desk.<sup>71</sup>

### *Belgium*

In Belgium, the average number of daily new infections is declining, but not quick enough. The government has chosen to prioritize the reopening of schools, prompting concern about the number of cases at the beginning of September.<sup>72</sup> All students will be able to return to school full-time on September 1. Students over the age of 12 and teachers will be required to wear a mask. The national mandate to wear a face mask, where necessary, remains in effect. Effective August 24, up to 50 people will be allowed to attend funerals. The limit on public gatherings has been expanded to 200 people indoors and 400 outdoors. Shopping with a maximum of 2 people will be allowed, with a time limit no longer than 30 minutes. However, shopkeepers can decide to stick with a 1-person rule. Until the end of September, social contact bubbles of 5 will remain in effect.<sup>73</sup>

### *Netherlands*

Effective August 18, new measures have been implemented in the Netherlands--including a restriction on the gathering limit to 6 people. Working from home is encouraged to continue in fall. However, the duration of home quarantine has been reduced from 14 days to 10. The PM said Amsterdam and Rotterdam could expect extra measures since both cities became significant hotspots around the end of June.<sup>74</sup> Most universities are starting their introductory weeks online, with in person meetings allowed only if essential. However, some universities are opting for in person classes with strict measures in place. At Delft University of Technology, for instance, most studying and working will take place outside the TU Delft buildings, according to its new protocol. To help spread out the number students, study days will start at 8am and last until 8pm, and on-campus teaching will be in groups of 10 to 20 students.<sup>75</sup> With schools starting to reopen after summer vacation, several concerns have been raised about the safety of children. Since the end of June, the total number of infections among those aged 15 to 19 saw an almost four-fold increase according to RIVM. A number of Dutch schools have made face masks compulsory even in the absence of a clear guideline from health institute RIVM, the Outbreak Management Team and the cabinet. However, not all schools have imposed the same rules. Some schools only require pupils and staff to wear the masks in the corridors, while others have made face masks compulsory for year 4 pupils and up--including in the classroom.<sup>76</sup>



### *Spain*

On August 18, Spain's Ministry of Health reported 2,128 new COVID-19 cases--the third highest number reported since July.<sup>77</sup> As of August 19, Spain reported 3,715 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, a daily record since the end of Spain's lockdown near the end of June. European Union data suggests that Spain now has the most cases in Western Europe.<sup>78</sup> Since the beginning of the pandemic in Spain, Catalonia and Madrid have seen the most confirmed COVID-19 cases.<sup>79</sup> Spain has reported COVID-19 cases in dozens of nursing homes during this potential new wave of COVID-19. In response, some regions have limited visits to nursing homes.<sup>80</sup> Nightclubs have begun closing again across Spain after the government said that they may be contributing to the resurgence in COVID-19 cases.<sup>81</sup> Basque Country declared a health emergency on August 17 and reintroduced measures such as limiting gatherings to 10 people.<sup>82</sup> There were protests in Madrid against mandatory masks and restrictions on smoking in public. Protestors included anti-mask groups, anti-vaccination groups and pandemic denier groups.<sup>83</sup>

### *The United Kingdom*

The UK continues to report more than 1,000 new COVID cases per day for a second consecutive week. Chief medical adviser Chris Whitty has warned that children are more likely to suffer long-term harm by not returning to school next month than if they were to catch COVID-19. PM Boris Johnson has appealed to parents in England to send their children back to school next week.

### *Ireland*

Ireland's cabinet reversed some of its lockdown relaxation measures in an attempt to deal with rising COVID-19 case numbers. The tightening of restrictions comes ahead of the reopening of schools over the next two weeks. The new restrictions will continue until September 13. They include a limit of 6 people at indoor gatherings (excluding shops, restaurants and other businesses) and a limit of 15 people at outdoor gatherings. Visits to homes should be limited to six people and involve no more than three households. People over 70 are encouraged to limit their interactions to a small network for short periods of time. All businesses are advised to facilitate remote working. Restaurants should be closed by 11:30 pm. Sports events should be held behind closed doors, with no social gatherings before or after. Public transport should be avoided where possible and face masks should be worn on private transport when households are mixed. Gardaí (national police services) are to be given new powers to enforce the public health measures.<sup>84</sup>

### *Luxembourg*

Effective August 17, Luxembourgers returning from holidays will be able to request a voucher for a free, voluntary COVID-19 test.<sup>85</sup> The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs confirmed Luxembourg's removal from the German government's list of COVID-19 risk areas--effective August 19. Germany's Robert Koch Institute classified Luxembourg as a risk zone for the virus on July 14, setting off shockwaves around the Luxembourg-Germany border region.<sup>86</sup> Following collective leave, all construction workers and cleaners returning to work will be tested for COVID-19 effective August 17. Every project involving at least three people will receive vouchers allowing them to test at least 55% of their staff. The distribution of these vouchers will continue until the end of September.<sup>87</sup>

## *Portugal*

On August 20, Portugal was added to the UK's air travel corridor list which exempts visitors from the need to quarantine upon return to the UK. Effective August 22, passengers arriving in the UK from Portugal are no longer required to self-isolate--so long as they have not been in, or transited through, any non-exempt countries in the fourteen days preceding their arrival. Passengers arriving in the UK before that deadline will be required to complete the full 14 day self-isolation period.<sup>88</sup> On August 21, the Prime Minister confirmed Portugal's purchase of 6.9 million vaccines--the result of coordination with other European Union countries.<sup>89</sup> Largo da Sé, in Faro, plans to host 20 live concerts until 13 September to celebrate Festival F. The vice-mayor of Faro said that this alternative format will present a concert per night at 10pm, outdoors, with a capacity of 937 seats. The use of masks will be mandatory.<sup>90</sup>

## **CENTRAL EUROPE**

### *Austria*

In Austria, the government is expanding its travel warning for Spain to include the Balearic Islands, which include Mallorca and Ibiza. The travel warning came into effect on August 24, with travellers required to present a negative test or quarantine on arrival.<sup>91</sup> The Austrian government rejected the Croatian government's request that new travel restrictions only be imposed on certain areas of Croatia.<sup>92</sup> The UK has removed Austria from its travel corridor list, subjecting arrivals to quarantine for two weeks.<sup>93</sup>

### *Greece*

New localized restrictions have been imposed on several regions in Greece, including Mykonos, Crete, and Corfu, in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19. Wearing a mask will be mandatory in public, both indoors and outdoors. Festivities, markets, and religious ceremonies have been prohibited and restaurants can only seat a maximum of 4 people per table.<sup>94</sup> On August 21, the government announced its plan to provide a vaccine free to all Greek citizens once it becomes available. Face masks will also be made available for all students and staff when schools reopen in September--following criticism by opposition parties and parent organizations. Local authorities will be given a grant of 15.2 million euros to cover the cost of masks to ensure that all students, regardless of their family income, have access. The use of masks will only be made mandatory in the classroom, not outdoors, in the gym, or during breaks.<sup>95</sup>

### *Italy*

The daily number of new cases in Italy continues to rise. Travellers from several non-EU countries have been banned from entering Italy. Restrictions and testing requirements have been imposed on people returning from hard-hit European countries.<sup>96</sup> In Italy, the majority of new cases stem from young holidaymakers returning from Greece, Spain, Malta, and Croatia--prompting the government to implement mandatory testing on arrival.<sup>97</sup> Airport testing is occurring mainly in two regions: Lombardy, which includes Milan, and Lazio, which includes Rome.<sup>98</sup> Some airports are not offering on-site tests, forcing people to go to local screening centres in order to comply with regulations.<sup>99</sup> Italy

has taken additional countermeasures, including closing nightclubs and discos and making masks mandatory at night in public spaces.

### *Slovenia*

Effective August 21, Croatia is on Slovenia's red list of countries from which travellers must quarantine for 14 days. More than 140,000 Slovenian citizens visited Croatia this month, prompting the government to ask its citizens to return home.<sup>100</sup> Almost half of Slovenia's new cases were imported from Croatia, with the most infected people under 35 years of age.<sup>101</sup> The increase in infections was attributed to visits to mass entertainment venues, such as beach parties and nightclubs, where social distancing measures are not being respected.<sup>102</sup> Slovenian health authorities expect infections to rise in the coming weeks as holidaymakers return from Croatia. All primary and secondary school children will return to school on September 1. Social distancing and hygiene measures will be in place. Face masks are not mandatory for students in classrooms. Slovenia's contact tracing app, StayWell, has been approved by authorities and is now available for installation on Google Play.<sup>103</sup>

### *Switzerland*

Restrictions on public gatherings and major events were extended until September 30. On August 18, Switzerland updated its list of high-risk countries, which now includes Albania, Belgium, Malta, India, and Spain. Croatia remains on Switzerland's list of safe travel countries, despite the high number of infections.<sup>104</sup> Most students in Switzerland have returned to school; two more cantons will resume classes soon. Despite a rising number of infections in Switzerland, masks are not compulsory for primary school students because--according to Swiss health authorities--children under 12 are not prone to COVID-19 infection.<sup>105</sup>

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

### *Czech Republic*

On August 20, Czech Health Minister Adam Vojtěch reversed a previously announced decision that face masks would be required in nearly all indoor places across all Czech regions starting September 1.<sup>106</sup> Based on the Ministry of Health's most recent announcement, face masks will be mandatory in the Czech Republic from September 1 only while using public transport and while visiting public service offices and healthcare facilities.<sup>107</sup> Despite previous reports, masks will not be mandatory in schools, shops, restaurants, hairdressers, or other service establishments – except in regions where the COVID-19 situation has been upgraded to a higher risk status that warrants such restrictions.<sup>108</sup>

### *Hungary*

In anticipation of the beginning of the new school year on September 1, the Hungarian ministries of Human Resources, Health, and Education have prepared and distributed an action plan for public schools at the kindergarten, primary, and high school levels.<sup>109</sup> The protocol covers – among other things – disinfection and cleaning before the start of each school day, rules for washing hands, physical distancing, wearing masks within the school, organizing events, and eating.<sup>110</sup> Higher education institutions have also received assistance from the Hungarian Ministry of Innovation and Technology in order to prepare options for online learning and virtual classrooms.<sup>111</sup> On August 19, the head of the Prime Minister's Office Gergely Gulyás advised the Hungarian public against any non-essential travel outside of Hungary after September 1 and suggested that stricter travel restrictions will be announced sometime next week.<sup>112</sup>

### *Latvia*

On August 19, Latvia's Ministry of Education and Science announced that it will wait until August 25 for each of the country's schools to individually develop their own plans for the upcoming school year.<sup>113</sup> Schools are expected to inform the ministry of how they plan to organize events associated with September 1 – the first day of school – and which of three organizational models they plan to implement throughout the school year.<sup>114</sup> The first model entails an entirely in-class approach to teaching, the second provides for a mixture of in-person and online teaching, and the third provides for entirely virtual teaching.<sup>115</sup> New laptops will be supplied to each public school by the end of 2020 in order to facilitate online learning.<sup>116</sup>

### *Lithuania*

As of August 17, Lithuania will allow arrivals of all citizens and permanent residents of EU+ countries.<sup>117</sup> Those who travel to Lithuania from countries with COVID-19 incidence rates above 16 confirmed cases per 100,000 people will be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival. Those travelling to Lithuania from countries where the COVID-19 incidence rate exceeds 25 confirmed cases per 100,000 people will be required to submit a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 3 days before arrival.<sup>118</sup> A 14-day isolation upon arrival in Lithuania will be required regardless of their test results.<sup>119</sup>

### *Poland*

From August 26 to September 8, the Polish government is expected to resume air travel between a number of countries, including Russia, China, Singapore, Gabon, and Serbia.<sup>120</sup> At the same time, Poland's "black list" of countries from which air travel to Poland is banned has been expanded from 44 to 63 countries. It now includes Albania, Belgium, Venezuela, India, Spain, Lebanon, Romania, and the US.<sup>121</sup>

### *Slovakia*

In anticipation of the upcoming school year and an expected "second wave" of COVID-19, Slovakia has announced a number of new measures that will come into effect on September 1.<sup>122</sup> With respect to schooling – which will resume across the country on September 1 – parents will be required to sign an affidavit regarding their child's health status upon starting school, including information on whether they have been abroad or participated in a mass event since August 17.<sup>123</sup> Masks will be mandatory for the first 2 weeks of school for secondary school students. Primary school students will be required to wear masks only outside of the classroom (i.e. in hallways).<sup>124</sup> From September 1 to October 1, outdoor mass events will be limited to 1000 people. Indoor events will be limited to 500 people and will only be allowed to run until 11 pm (with the exception of weddings).<sup>125</sup>

## **NORTHERN EUROPE**

### *Denmark*

A number of measures introduced to contain the spread of the outbreak in Aarhus have been extended until September 4. The measures include a recommendation to work from home, avoid crowded public places, and use distance learning when possible. Although the situation in the city has improved, authorities warned residents of high infection rates.<sup>126</sup> 71 new infections were reported in Denmark on

August 21, the country's lowest daily increase since new outbreaks began at the beginning of August.<sup>127</sup> Public health officials said that while the decline is encouraging, infections have been largely stable for the past two weeks.<sup>128</sup> As demand for testing in Denmark has grown, wait times have been reported to be as much as a few days in some areas. Opposition parties expressed concern to the Minister of Health, who said that the government was working to increase testing capacity as soon as possible.<sup>129</sup>

### *Estonia*

Estonia's Minister of Culture said that all indoor capacity restrictions at seated cultural venues will be lifted in September. The Scientific Council recommended against this change last week, but the Minister said that this was due to a misunderstanding about the proposal.<sup>130</sup> Estonia will allow travellers from high-risk countries to avoid a two-week quarantine period by getting tested twice upon arrival. Travellers will take their first test as soon as they arrive in the country, and then take another a week or two later. In the interim period they will be allowed to go to work or attend essential activities, but cannot go to social gatherings or school.<sup>131</sup> The Ministry of Social Affairs is considering implementing a customer registration regulation for a number of indoor public spaces. An official from the Ministry said that this would be used to avoid implementing further restrictions and forcing businesses to close.<sup>132</sup> The Minister of Education said that all students are expected to attend class on September 1.<sup>133</sup> If one student contracts the virus, their entire class will move to distance learning until the student has recovered.<sup>134</sup> A former high-ranking official at the Health Board said that the government actively obstructed the Health Board's decision-making process at the beginning of the pandemic. The government eventually set up the Scientific Council for advisory purposes, but has yet to appoint a representative from the Health Board to the Council.<sup>135</sup>

### *Finland*

Finland reintroduced travel restrictions on Cyprus, Ireland, San Marino, Japan, Iceland, Greece, Malta, Germany, Norway, and Denmark due to a rise in their infection rates.<sup>136</sup> The government clarified that only those presenting symptoms will be subjected to a mandatory quarantine order, while all other arrivals may voluntarily self-isolate. Those who need to cross the border into Norway or Sweden on a daily basis will not be given a quarantine order.<sup>137</sup> Finland will increase its testing capacity from 14,000 to 20,000 a day, after reports of days-long wait times for both the test and results.<sup>138</sup> Helsinki may end its publication of local infection hotspots due their small sample sizes. The local government may release them again in the future if the infection rate worsens in the city.<sup>139</sup>

### *Iceland*

The Chief Epidemiologist of Iceland said that he is encouraged by the declining number of cases domestically and remains optimistic that the country has its recent outbreaks under control.<sup>140</sup> Police may now issue fines to anyone who violates mandatory mask or social distancing regulations. Businesses or persons who do not enforce the regulations are also subject to a fine.<sup>141</sup> Nearly all members of the Icelandic government will be tested for COVID-19 twice over the coming days after they were exposed to a staff member at a hotel who later tested positive.<sup>142</sup> All ministers returned a negative result for their first test, but will be tested again as a precaution. More than five cases are now connected to the staff member and the hotel where they worked is now shut down temporarily.<sup>143</sup>

### *Norway*

Norway will reintroduce travel restrictions for the UK, Ireland, Austria, Greece, and the Copenhagen region of Denmark.<sup>144</sup> Travellers from these countries will have to self-isolate for 10 days upon arrival. All of them surpassed 20 new cases per 100,000 people over the past two weeks. One region in Sweden

was moved to Norway's 'yellow' list -- meaning that the government has warned against travel to and from the country, but no restrictions remain in place.<sup>145</sup> The number of new cases fell to 261 last week, but the infection rate is still much higher than it was a month ago. Public health officials said they do not feel the need to reintroduce a lockdown because they have a better understanding of what it takes to contain an outbreak.<sup>146</sup>

### *Sweden*

The Swedish government said that it was considering an exemption to the country's 50-person gathering limit for some seated events. Any exemption applied to sporting events or performances would only occur if social distancing is guaranteed.<sup>147</sup> These events would still be subject to a maximum number of people, though an exact number has not yet been released. The government plans to implement these exemptions on October 1, but is announcing the change now so as to allow companies enough time to prepare. The private gathering limit of 50 people is expected to remain in place indefinitely.<sup>148</sup> The Head of the Swedish Public Health Agency said that authorities may still recommend the use of face masks in the future, but will not do so now due to fears of complacency over the recommendations already in place.<sup>149</sup> The Minister of Education said that remote learning remains a possibility for all schools in Sweden, with each district allowed to take their local situation into account before the start of the school year next week.<sup>150</sup>

## **ASIA/PACIFIC**

### *Japan*

Japan has reported around 1,000 new infections per day for the past two weeks. The government has separately agreed with the UK pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca and Pfizer of the US on a supply of vaccines once they are developed. According to the discussion among ministers and experts, the plan is to prioritize the vaccination of medical workers, the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions.<sup>151</sup> The welfare ministry has opened six bases this month to support companies developing robots that can assist in nursing care, as well as 11 consultation centers for operators of nursing-care businesses across the country.<sup>152</sup> The Tokyo Governor is urging residents to take thorough precautions in every aspect of daily life, asking people who live together to not share tableware, towels, or toothpaste. The key western port of Hakata has drawn up a policy that rejects port calls by cruise ships until an effective treatment or vaccine for COVID-19 is ready.<sup>153</sup> Japan entered into an agreement with Cambodia and Laos to allow long-term residents to travel between the countries as early as September. The governments are still working on admitting government-sponsored students and short-term visitors, including businesspeople.

### *South Korea*

Having experienced a relatively limited level of daily new infections for three months, South Korea saw a dramatic spike--which is still on the rise. An August 15 rally has emerged as a center of concern. Health authorities are now facing an overwhelming workload to trace and test tens of thousands of people, the vast majority of whom are not identified. Nearly 70% were in their 60s or over.<sup>154</sup> On August 21, police raided a church associated with the rally following a failed attempt to secure a full list of its members.<sup>155</sup> The president has called for measures including criminal charges for anyone trying to impede epidemiological investigation. Joining other provinces and cities, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has made mask wearing in public mandatory starting at midnight on August 24. Heightened social distancing rules have been expanded from Seoul and its surrounding areas to the whole country. Any indoor gatherings of 50 people or more and outdoor gatherings of 100 or more are

banned. Seoul separately bans street rallies of 10 or more. Public facilities and high-risk facilities such as nightclubs, karaoke bars, buffets, gyms and private cram schools are shut down. In-person church services are now prohibited. All beaches around the country are closed.<sup>156</sup> Starting August 26, kindergartens, elementary schools and middle schools in Seoul and the surrounding province will have to reduce student attendance to one-third of the total. High schools will lower attendance to two-thirds. The government is going to run 130 learning support centers throughout the country to support the academic efforts of students found to be behind others.<sup>157</sup>

### *New Zealand*

As of August 25, it has been two weeks since the re-emergence of COVID-19 in New Zealand. Almost 100,000 tests have been processed over the past week. The prime minister has announced that the government is deploying an extra 500 defence force personnel at government managed isolation facilities, which could reduce reliance on private security firms. The government has also been testing technologies such as thermal CCTV to help manage the facilities.<sup>158</sup> COVID testing is now mandatory for all staff working at the border. The Director-General of Health is urging district health boards to upgrade hospital IT systems.<sup>159</sup> There have been growing calls to review and revise New Zealand's generic pandemic plan--last updated after the 1918 flu--to address the issues of vaccines and the border.<sup>160</sup> The election has been delayed for four weeks to October 17, which has been welcomed by most of the parties. Taking into consideration the risk associated with regional travel, the prime minister has announced that current restrictions -- Auckland at alert level 3 and the rest of the country at level 2 -- will remain until at least August 30. Masks will also be mandatory as of August 31 when using public transport at level 2 and above.<sup>161</sup> Two major changes to travel in Auckland came into effect starting August 24. People can now transit through Auckland without stopping in order to work. In addition, patients who need to travel to Auckland for hospital appointments do not need an exemption now.<sup>162</sup> While Auckland's schools are shut for the level 3 lockdown, the education ministry says they can apply for permission to have in-person learning in bubbles of up to 20 senior students.<sup>163</sup> The New Zealand Aged Care Association has reiterated that its 600 rest homes would still be operating at alert level 4.<sup>164</sup>

### *Australia*

Australia has experienced a marked decrease in daily new infections and active cases over the past week. Victoria remains the epicentre and its state of emergency has been extended until September 13. In New South Wales, authorities are now concerned about cases with untraceable origins. The National Cabinet has agreed to release a weekly dataset on the common operating picture of COVID-19 responses across states and territories. The federal government will invest an additional \$171.5 million in aged care support programs and \$25 million in clinical trials for prevention and treatment of COVID-19.<sup>165</sup> An agreement has been signed with AstraZeneca to secure a potential vaccine. If the vaccine clears trials, the government would manufacture it and make it free for all Australians. According to the health minister, those who refuse vaccination could lose access to some welfare payments.<sup>166</sup> Queensland is stockpiling more than 120 million pieces of personal protective equipment.<sup>167</sup> States and territories have not yet relaxed their interstate border restrictions. The New South Wales Chief Health Officer has tightened the restrictions around community sport for the next six weeks. Zone, regional, and state championships, as well as state-based competitions, are banned. Activities other than the competition itself--such as award ceremonies--will not be allowed.<sup>168</sup>

### *Turkey*

Figures released by Turkey's Health Ministry show that COVID-19 infections are rising slowly but steadily. However, Turkey's largest medical association says that the country's actual number of COVID-19 cases is much higher than in reported figures. Turkey has decided to report only cases of

COVID-19 that are confirmed with a PCR test, which goes against World Health Organization guidelines. One Turkish ICU doctor reported that even some patients who test positive for COVID-19 and receive treatment may not be included in the official tally.<sup>169</sup> Following the recommendations of the health officials, local authorities across the country have recently adopted a series of new measures for those over 65 years old, the most significant risk group. The elderly in over 20 provinces, including the capital Ankara, are now prohibited from using public transportation during rush hour, as well as prohibited from entering crowded locations at certain hours of the day. The Interior Ministry has launched its seventh comprehensive inspections since May to monitor compliance with COVID-19 rules across the country. Inspections have been carried out in markets, workplaces, groceries, bazaars, public transport vehicles, restaurants, cafeterias, and taxis.<sup>170</sup>

### *Israel*

Israel has seen a persistently high level of daily new cases over the past several weeks. The Health Ministry admitted to undercounting some COVID-19 deaths at senior living homes. The Ministry of Health's Director General has created a uniform system for reporting deaths at all medical facilities.<sup>171</sup> A cabinet vote on the “traffic light” plan, which implements restrictions based on local morbidity rates, has been postponed for a third time to August 24--reportedly due to opposition to shutting some synagogues.<sup>172</sup> In trials involving hundreds of patients, the Israeli gargle-and-spit test yielded COVID results in one second with 95% accuracy.<sup>173</sup> Meanwhile, an Israeli COVID-19 breath test using nanotechnology has correctly identified all positive patients in a clinical trial involving 140 people in Wuhan, China.<sup>174</sup> Border officials now suspect that some travellers presented forged papers showing negative COVID tests.<sup>175</sup> The Corona Cabinet has approved an amendment to the restrictions on gatherings starting August 17. Restaurants, public places, businesses and houses of worship are now capped at 20 people in a closed space regardless of size. The limit is 30 people in an open space.<sup>176</sup> The top COVID-19 health official said that he backed the full reopening of almost all schools, even as infections showed few signs of slowing down.



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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, Anthony Moniuszko, Erika Porco, and Sapphira Thompson-Bled.

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### *Links*

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