

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.

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

Data Visualizations from Dashboard

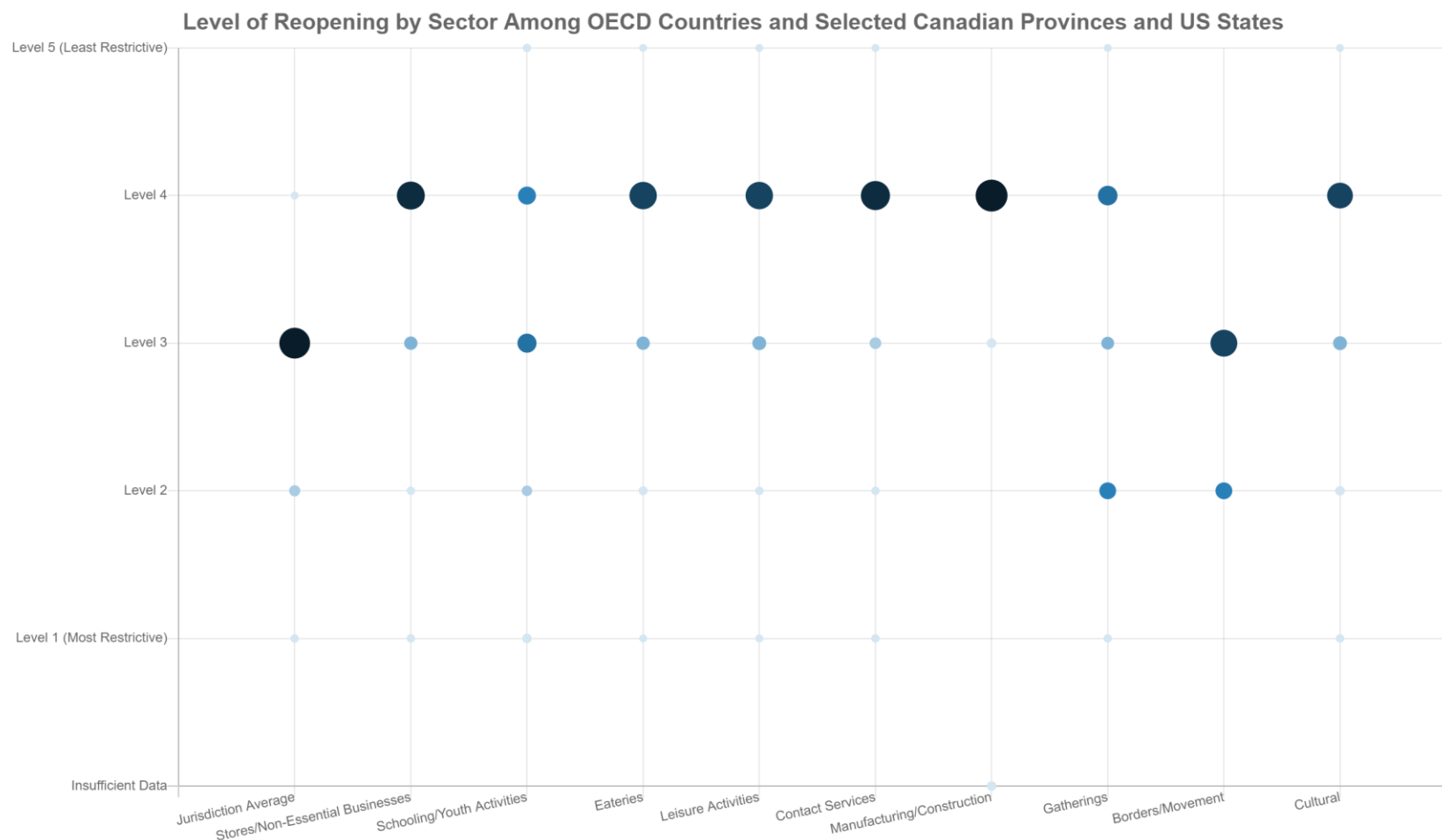


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of July 20. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, Schooling/Youth Activities, Eateries, Leisure Activities, Contact Services, Manufacturing/Construction, Gatherings, Borders/Movement, and Cultural. Each sector is assigned a level of reopening from Level 1 (Complete Lockdown) to Level 5 (Unrestricted Access). The larger and darker a dot is, the more jurisdictions are at that level of reopening. For details, see www.reopeningaftercovid.com.

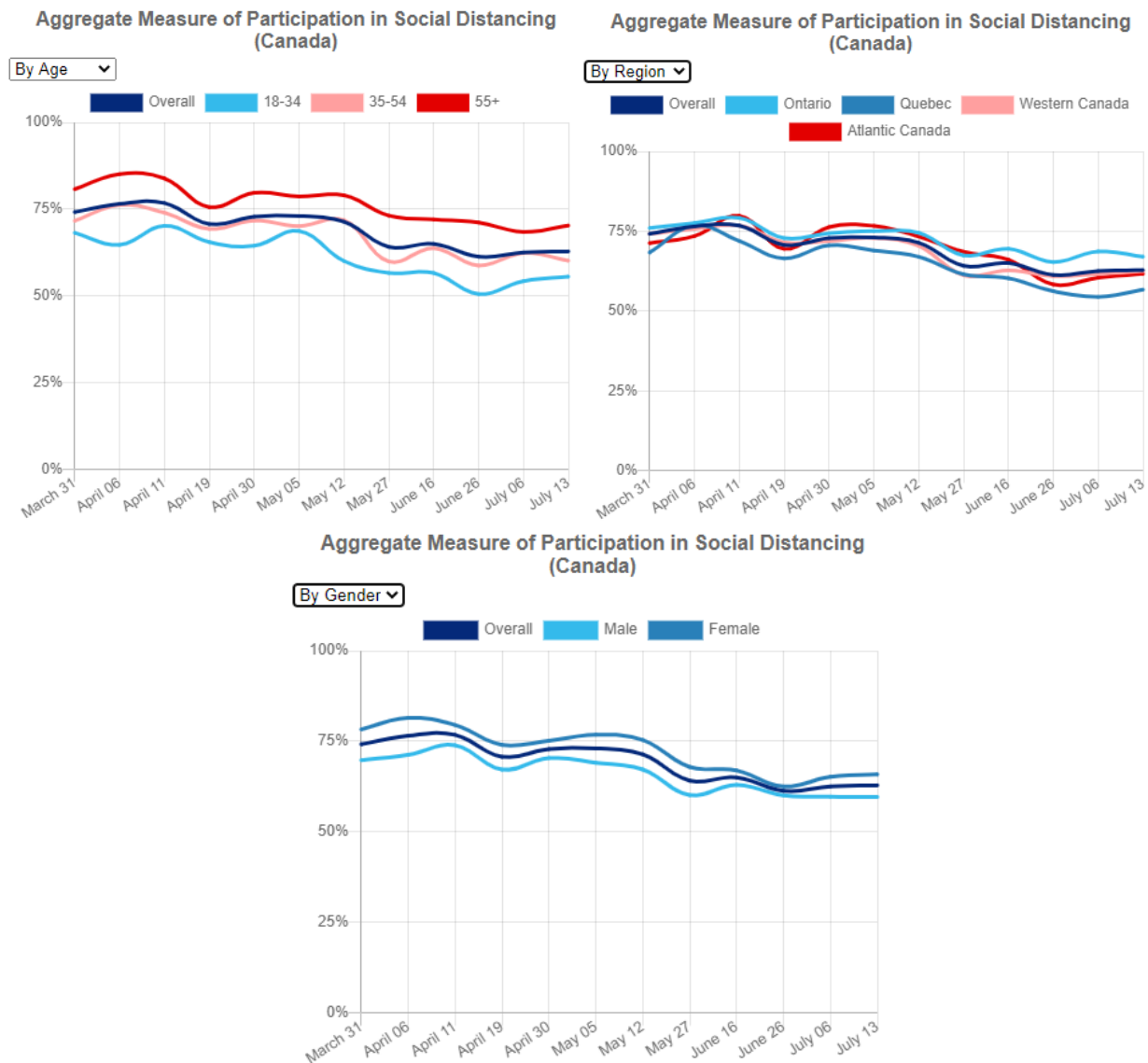


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada). We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance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

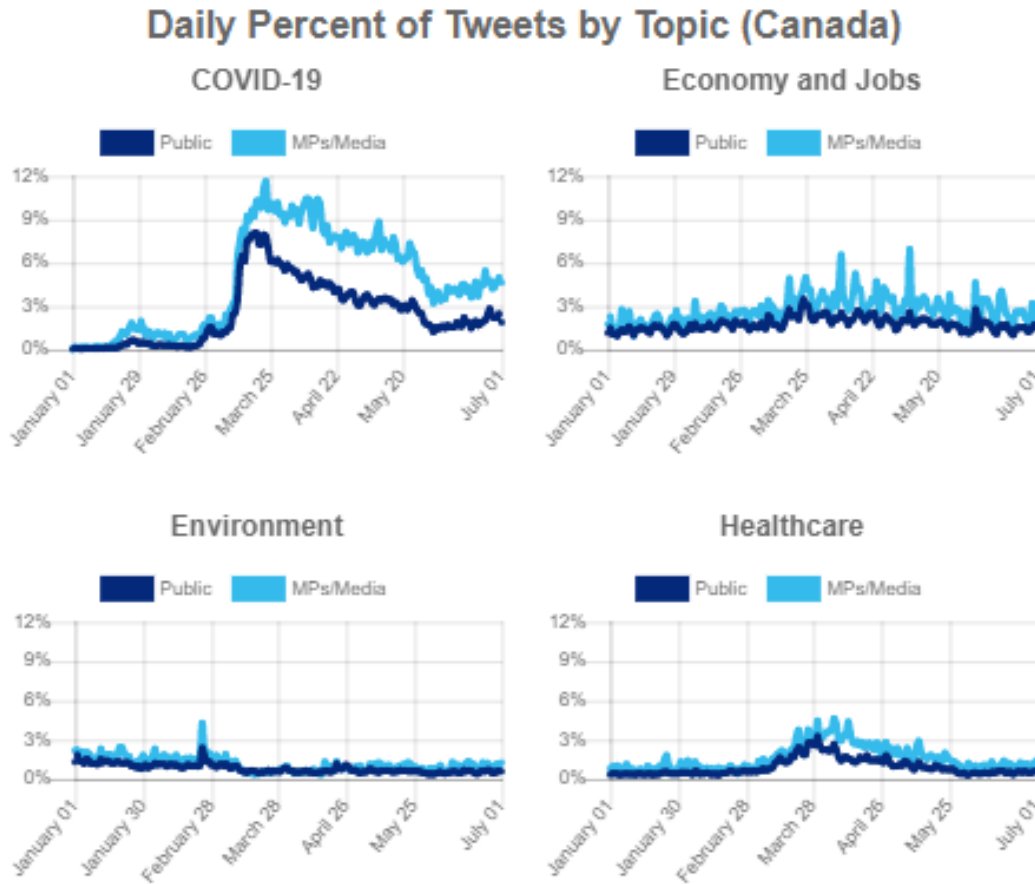


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other.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

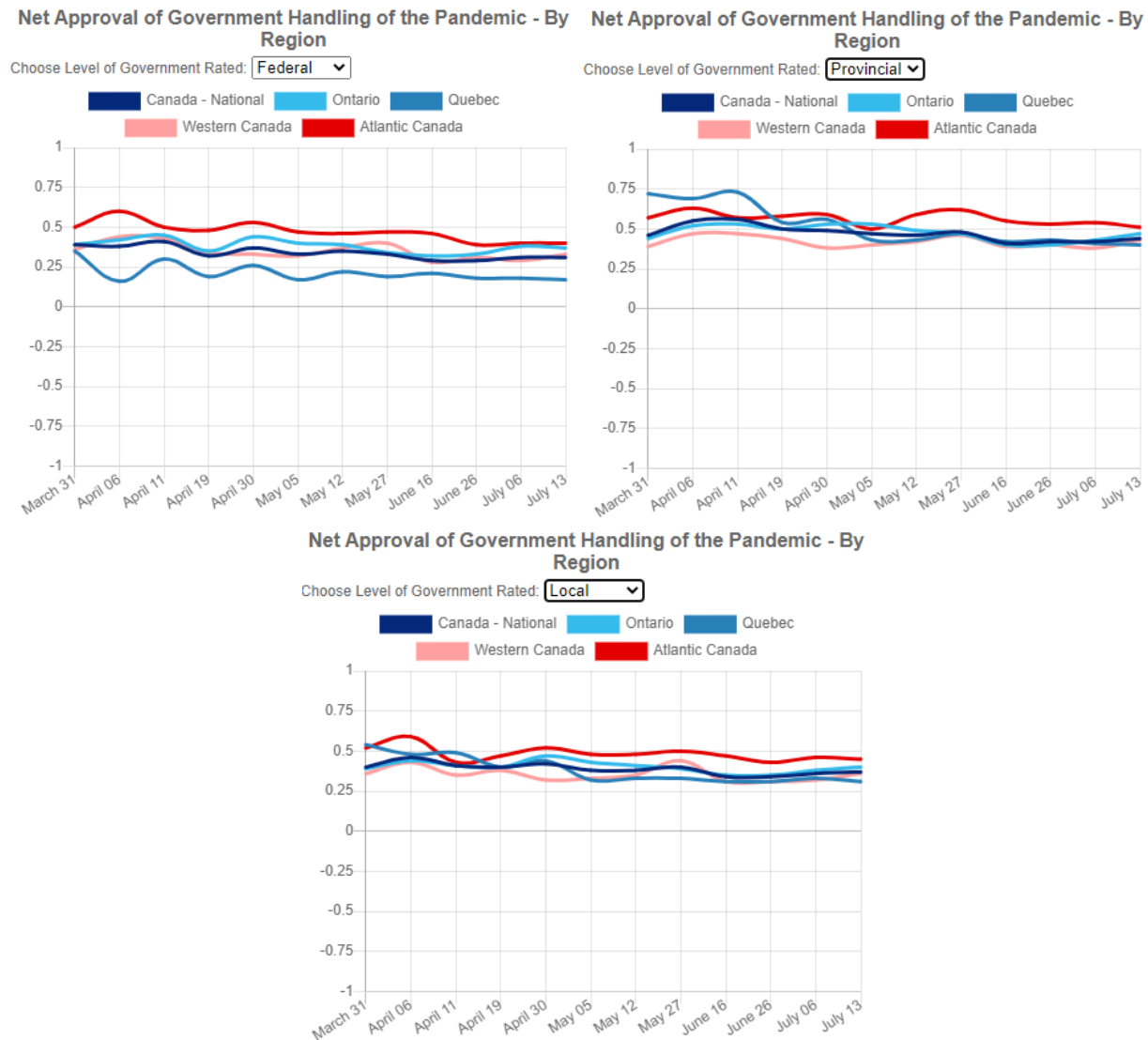


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score,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

Individual OECD Country Profiles

THE AMERICAS

Canada

→ *Alberta*

No date has been set for Stage 3 of Alberta's reopening plan due to an increase in COVID-19 infections. In Calgary, two parts of the city that previously had low infection rates are now on a watch list. Both areas have many bars and restaurants where young people tend to congregate; the majority of new cases are among younger people.¹ Health experts are concerned about COVID-19 fatigue as Albertans appear to be ignoring public health guidelines and protective measures that exist as a condition of the province's reopening plans. The United Nurses of Alberta and the Alberta Federation of Labour called on the government to make wearing a mask mandatory in all indoor public places. Calgary's mayor is planning to bring forward a draft bylaw on July 20 that may make masks mandatory in certain situations in the city.²

→ *British Columbia*

British Columbia has maintained a relatively stable level of daily new infections in the past week. The Provincial Health Officer expressed concern after nearly 30 cases have been connected to Canada Day parties in Kelowna. The results of serology testing in the province were released on July 16. They suggest that fewer than 1% of B.C. residents have antibodies for the virus.³ The premier announced that nearly \$2 billion was coming from the federal government to support the province's restart plan amid the pandemic.⁴ Many postsecondary education institutions have decided to continue with mostly online delivery this fall—delivering hands-on, experiential training, where needed, with physical distancing.

→ *Manitoba*

The government announced an extension to its province-wide state of emergency, effective 15 July, for 30 days. It was first declared on March 20 and was further extended on April 18, May 17 and June 15. Provincial public health officials announced plans for further loosening outdoor gathering restrictions in the coming weeks but hosting large sporting events with an audience this fall will most likely be difficult.⁵

→ *New Brunswick*

The mayors of Sackville, New Brunswick, and Amherst, Nova Scotia, have requested a meeting with New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs to discuss concerns over delays and confusion at the provinces' shared border.⁶ These concerns are primarily related to inconsistencies over what is required from Canadians looking to travel between the provinces.⁷ Uncertainty over wait times at the border have made it difficult for essential travellers and workers to plan their commutes accordingly, with some choosing to stay at home rather than go to work.⁸ Meanwhile, the Government of New Brunswick is reportedly considering reopening two of its border crossings with Quebec's Avignon and Temiscouata regions, whose residents would not have to self-isolate upon entering New Brunswick.⁹

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

Visitor restrictions were loosened at healthcare facilities on July 14. Hospital patients and residents at long-term care and personal care homes are now permitted to select up to 6 visitors according to facility guidelines.¹⁰ The premier's initial plans to allow non-essential Canadian travellers from outside Atlantic Canada to enter Newfoundland as early as July 17 (without a written exemption or 14-day quarantine) will not be going forward. The health minister said borders will not reopen to non-essential travellers from outside the Atlantic bubble until at least August.¹¹

→ *Northwest Territories*

No active cases remain in the Northwest Territories. The territory's public health authority will maintain recommendations for social distancing, despite objections from the NWT Medical Association concerning

their adverse mental health effects.¹² NWT is still at Phase 2 of its relaxing plan and is not expected to move to Phase 3 until the situation in the whole country is under control.

→ *Nova Scotia*

Starting on July 22, residents at long-term care facilities may have up to 1 visitor per resident for indoor visits, and up to 5 visitors per resident for outdoor visits.¹³ During visits, both residents and visitors are required to wear masks and maintain physical distance from one another. Residents and staff at long-term care facilities can gather in groups of up to 10 without physical distancing. Licensed hair salons in long-term care facilities can now reopen to serve residents. All passengers and drivers on public transportation will be required to wear masks as of July 24.¹⁴

→ *Nunavut*

Quarantine is no longer required for travellers between Nunavut and Churchill, Manitoba as long as they have been in either place for at least two weeks prior. All alcohol-licensed establishments can resume their regular operating hours starting July 20, but must continue to follow social distancing.¹⁵ There are two more presumptive cases at the Mary River mine. All three presumptive cases at the mine are linked to a private gathering that took place before the infected individuals entered Nunavut.¹⁶ If there continues to be no cases of COVID-19 in Nunavut communities, all public schools in the territory are likely to open without social distancing protocols in September. A full plan for the upcoming school year is expected to be released early next week after the Iqaluit District Education Authority expressed its frustrations over the lack of information provided by the territory.¹⁷ Premier Joe Savikataaq is defending his decision to bypass an isolation hub and self-isolate at his cabin following a trip to Winnipeg to retrieve his personal plane. Savikataaq has faced criticism over self-isolating at his personal property while all other Nunavut residents must use an isolation hub before returning home.¹⁸

→ *Ontario*

As the province reported some of the lowest case counts since March, Ontario advanced to Stage 3 with a regional approach. On July 17, most Ontarian regions, except the Greater Toronto Area, Hamilton, Niagara and Windsor, were allowed to reopen further.¹⁹ On July 20, Premier Ford announced that all regions, except for Toronto, Peel Region and Windsor Essex, would advance to Stage 3 on July 24.²⁰ In Stage 3, indoor gathering limits increase from 10 to 50 people, while outdoor gathering limits increase to a maximum of 100 people.²¹ Although cinemas are allowed to open, Cineplex Entertainment, Canada's largest chain of movie theatres, announced it did not plan to resume operation immediately in regions entering Stage 3.²² Critics say it is because the government has not thought of a thorough reopening policy for theatres that would keep customers safe while allowing businesses to make profits.²³ Additionally, all restaurants and bars, except buffets, can resume indoor service, and gyms can reopen. Ontario's official opposition is criticizing the government for reopening bars before having a clear in-person school plan for the fall.²⁴ On July 17, the Ontario Medical Association called on the Ford government to rethink opening indoor bars because evidence from other jurisdictions suggested that the reopening of bars carried a significant risk.²⁵ Most municipalities in Ontario continue to enforce face coverings in indoor establishments.²⁶

→ *Prince Edward Island*

New cases in Prince Edward Island could delay further easing of border restrictions. Contact tracing efforts have shown that the latest cases are not connected to the Atlantic bubble. The premier said the government will not begin to consider encouraging broader travel beyond the regional bubble before August.²⁷ Twenty-six public libraries will reopen on July 20 for grab-and-go book services.²⁸ Movie theatres in Charlottetown will begin reopening on July 17 with social distancing, capacity limits, mask recommendations, and other measures in place. Theatres in other areas of the province will open in the coming weeks.²⁹ The government strongly recommends wearing masks in indoor public spaces when physical distancing cannot be

maintained. Small businesses are responding by setting protocols for employees, seeking suppliers, and offering discounts to mask-wearing customers.³⁰

→ *Quebec*

Masks became mandatory in public spaces across Quebec on July 13.³¹ After requesting that everyone who worked in or visited a bar in Montreal after July 1 get tested, the Quebec government is looking to increase Montreal's testing capacity to accommodate demand.³² Experts have suggested that many of Quebec's new COVID-19 cases are connected to the reopening of bars, restaurants, pools and stores. There have also been issues with people forgetting who they had been in close contact with.³³ The Quebec government noted that increases in cases could be tied to private gatherings and bars.³⁴ Officials are concerned after the positivity rate of COVID-19 tests was found to be over 3% last weekend, after being under 1% earlier this month.³⁵ As of July 18, office employees (including non-essential workers) could return to offices with COVID-19 measures in place and a capacity limit of 25%, with the capacity limit expected to increase in the future.³⁶ Criticism has been raised over the province's reopening of bars and other nightlife, which is risking a spike in cases that may prevent schools from reopening in September. A widely circulated gender equality consultant's op-ed suggested that a continued school closure would disproportionately affect women and lower-income children.³⁷

→ *Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan reported 42 new cases on July 16, the largest single-day increase since the pandemic began. Fourteen communities in the province have been identified as having an elevated rate of transmission. Visits to hospitals and long-term care facilities in the South region have been restricted.³⁸ The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses is calling on the province to immediately implement a mandatory mask policy due to the jump in cases.³⁹ The province had previously said it would further monitor the spread of COVID-19 before considering such a policy.⁴⁰ The province will return to providing daily updates on the COVID-19 cases after a jump in cases on the weekend. Saskatchewan NDP Leader Ryan Meili said that only providing updates on weekdays does not give people in Saskatchewan all the information they need to know when entering their community.⁴¹ Meili also questioned the province's different approaches to COVID-19 outbreaks in the North and South regions, with travel restrictions imposed on Northern communities but not on those in the South.⁴²

→ *Yukon*

No active cases remain in Yukon. The government is expanding testing criteria to anyone with COVID-19 symptoms. However, no additional tests have been performed on travellers entering the territory.⁴³ The Whitehorse Public Library will reopen to the public on July 21, with limited computer access and reduced seating. Many government employees have been returning to their offices. A universal early learning program is being worked on that would be available on a sliding scale income model similar to what is offered in Quebec. Yukon is poised to enter Phase 3 of its reopening plan on August 1. While limited details about the next phase have been released, it will stay in place until a vaccine is available.⁴⁴

The United States

→ *California*

Over the past two weeks, COVID-19 related hospitalizations have increased 28% in the state.⁴⁵ As of June 18, masks became mandatory in indoor public spaces including public transit and medical care and in outdoor public spaces if distancing was not possible, but there was no explanation about how this would be enforced.⁴⁶ Two of the largest school districts in California, Los Angeles and San Diego, announced on July 13 that their schools would not reopen in-person in August and would remain online.⁴⁷ As of July 17, Governor Newsom presented guidelines for schools to reopen, which includes a requirement that schools cannot reopen in counties that are on the state's monitoring list (31 of the 58 counties are on this list).⁴⁸ Due

to increasing positive cases and community transmission, on July 13 the California governor ordered that counties close indoor activities like bars, fitness centres, places of worship, non-essential offices, personal care services, hair salons and barbers. Meanwhile, restaurants, wineries, tastings, theaters, zoos and museums could remain open if they operated outdoors.⁴⁹

→ *Illinois*

Illinois is experiencing a resurgence: its daily COVID-19 case count exceeded 1,000 for four days last week—the longest stretch of four-digit daily caseloads since a peak in May.⁵⁰ The virus has infected a rising number of people 18 to 29 years old in recent weeks, many of whom were likely going to bars and acting unsafely.⁵¹ Although some counties have entered the “warning” designation regarding COVID metrics (e.g. test positivity rate), Governor J.B. Pritzker has yet to announce any rollbacks in terms of the state’s reopening plan.⁵²

→ *Michigan*

Michigan’s 7-day average of new infections has increased significantly in the past four weeks from 160 to 620 new cases per day.⁵³ Governor Gretchen Whitmer stated that if the trend continued to increase and community spread persisted, she would move some regions back to phase three, which would prohibit in-person instruction when schools are expected to start in 55 days.⁵⁴ She continues to urge Michiganders to wear masks. Whitmer closed indoor bar services last week after outbreaks were linked to bars in East Lansing, Royal Oak and Romulus and a rise in positive cases in the 20-29 age group.⁵⁵

→ *New York*

Despite increasing infections throughout the United States, New York continues to show progress combatting COVID-19 with low numbers of new hospitalizations and a low rate of positive cases.⁵⁶ Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that New York City will enter a limited version of the state’s fourth phase of reopening starting July 20.⁵⁷ While indoor dining, malls, museums and cultural institutions will remain closed, outdoor venues like zoos and botanical gardens will be allowed to operate at a limited capacity.⁵⁸ Moreover, NYC will allow for gatherings of up to 50 people, as well as indoor religious gatherings with capacity limits. Outdoor TV and film production and professional sports events without spectators can also resume. The state is tackling an increase in “mask-off parties,” where thousands of people gather in close proximity without wearing masks.⁵⁹

→ *Texas*

Effective July 3, masks became mandatory in public in counties with 20 or more active cases and carried fines for failure to comply.⁶⁰ On July 13, the governor announced that the US Department of Defense activated more US Army Urban Augmentation Medical Task Forces to fight COVID-19. One task force arrived on July 6 in San Antonio, another on July 13 in Houston, and four more will be deployed along with a US Navy Acute Care Team and four US Navy Rapid Rural Response teams across Texas for medical support.⁶¹ Texas has been facing a surge since Memorial Day and about one month after reopening.⁶² Several hospitals in Texas are not accepting transfer patients in order to ensure that they are able to handle an anticipated increase in cases. In response, patients have been flown to other hospitals and have to wait for up to 10 hours for hospital admission via ambulance. Other short-of-staff hospitals have refused patients and some are trying extraordinary measures to make additional room. Some hospitals are close to full and doctors have suggested that there may be shortages of antiviral drugs.⁶³ In June, the governor began slowing elective procedures. He later ordered bars to close and lowered the restaurant capacity cap to 50%. As of the week of July 13, Texas was looking at stopping elective surgeries in 100 counties and returning to a lockdown.⁶⁴ The Dallas Independent School District Superintendent is unsure whether the district will be able to reopen in person by August 17; the Board of Trustees will meet to determine how to proceed and establish start date recommendations.⁶⁵

Mexico

As of July 15, Nuevo Leon reported hospital occupancy at 73%; the state is red on the government's traffic light system.⁶⁶ As of July 15, nine Mexican states reported an increase in COVID-19 cases; however, Tabasco and Nuevo Leon have been the only states to report COVID-19 hospitalizations at around 80%.⁶⁷ Federal authorities will release rules for beaches to lower risks associated with the spread of COVID-19. The rules will include masks at beaches and in common spaces, capacity limits, frequently cleaning hammocks, reserving beach time and banning recreational sports.⁶⁸ The government also intends to: launch information campaigns; provide food, medical and financial aid to families of those with COVID-19; close street markets in areas at the red level; and to designate hotspots as such for a minimum of 15 days.⁶⁹ Thirty-four areas are at the red level on the government traffic light map for the week of July 13.⁷⁰ On July 17, the map showed nine states regressing from orange to red, and six states progressing from red to orange.⁷¹ Reports indicate that Mexico is doing 65 tests per million people, which is below the average of 305 for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The reports also suggested that the number of confirmed cases is high based on the available information.⁷² The United Nations Development Program reiterated that underreporting could provide incorrect information for risk assessment and create a false sense of security. It suggested that Mexico should conduct serological research to understand the actual presence of the virus and the influence of potentially contributing factors such as socioeconomic conditions.⁷³

Chile

As of July 14, there were approximately 453 ventilators available and 5,771 patients in the 154 sanitary residences—with 10,088 vacancies remaining.⁷⁴ Chile has reported a drop in positive cases; the past week showed a 15% drop in new cases and the past two weeks showed a 36% drop.⁷⁵ The rate of positive PCR tests is decreasing; it was 15% as of July 14. The government advises Chileans to be cautious in Aysen and Los Rios, where confinement began ending on July 13 and reopening is voluntary.⁷⁶ On July 19, Chile released a five stage reopening plan from total quarantine to advanced reopening that will be based on epidemiological criteria, healthcare capacity and case traceability for each territory.⁷⁷ The first phase is quarantine with limited mobility, permits for movement, and closure of gyms, classes, theaters and more.⁷⁸ The second phase is transitional with increased movement, but includes quarantines on weekends and some other limitations. Professional soccer players, referees and high-performance athletes such as athletes training for the Olympics will have collective permits with capacity limits that allow teams in areas under quarantine to resume training.⁷⁹ During the week of July 6, a record of approximately 15,410 people were detained for health regulation violations.⁸⁰

WESTERN EUROPE

France

As the number of active cases continues to increase in France, the nation's R rate has risen to 1.2. The Brittany region's R rate rose from 0.92 to 2.62 in just five days.⁸¹ President Macron—who had previously announced that face masks would become obligatory on August 1—moved up the date to July 20 following concerns over “slight signs” of resurgence.⁸² Wearing a mask will now be mandatory in public establishments, with a 135-euro fine for non-compliance. On July 15 Disneyland Paris partially reopened, as did the top floor of the Eiffel Tower.⁸³

Germany

On the weekend of July 18, Germany's 7-day R-value edged over 1.2, raising the alarm that this could be the start of a second wave. July 16 saw the biggest daily case increase (534) since June.⁸⁴ Following the localized lockdown in North-Rhine Westphalia last month, the federal government, in coordination with

the state governments, is introducing tougher and even more targeted measures to contain outbreaks. Instead of locking down regions or districts of 100,000 residents, councils will have power to lockdown a certain hotspot or area.⁸⁵ Much of German news coverage of COVID this week has been regarding the EU summit on the \$2.8 trillion European economic recovery package, initiated by France and Germany.⁸⁶ A German study tested for COVID antibodies in 2,000 schoolchildren to see the infection rate in schools. The rate was very low, prompting some states, such as Saxony, to announce that schools would reopen at the end of August with some restrictions such as mask-wearing and social distancing where possible.⁸⁷

Belgium

The government has published an updated list of EU regions and countries considered red or orange zones for travel. Non-essential travel to red zones is not permitted and it is recommended that travellers returning to Belgium from an orange zone self-isolate and get tested. As of July 14, countries in the orange zone include Upper Austria, Luxembourg, the UK, and the Trento region in Italy.⁸⁸ Face masks are mandatory in cinemas and cannot be taken off during the film, with exceptions for the consumption of food or drink. Cinema operators are concerned about the new restrictions' effects on profitability, which is already made difficult due to social distancing and reduced capacity regulations. The National Security Council has postponed its decision to further ease restrictions on August 1 due to a recent rise in infections. A decision on whether or not to move forward with Phase 5 will be made on July 23.⁸⁹ The PM said she could not rule out the reintroduction of lockdowns in the worst affected areas. A ban on nightclubs and other large gatherings remains in effect. The current infection rate is highest among young people.⁹⁰

Netherlands

Effective 16 July, British travellers to the Netherlands will no longer be asked to spend 14 days in quarantine upon arrival. People travelling from the UK and Sweden were strongly advised to go into isolation because of the higher levels of coronavirus infection in those countries when the Dutch border was reopened to EU and UK nationals on July 1. However, the non-binding advice was dropped for the UK after the British government included the Netherlands on its list of countries exempted from its own quarantine regime. The Netherlands is continuing to revise its travel advice in response to changing COVID-19 situations in the rest of Europe. On July 16, Bulgaria's status was changed to code orange – essential journeys only – following an increase in cases in the last few weeks. Travellers from Romania, two areas in Spain and two Portuguese regions are also advised to self-isolate on arrival, but the measure is not legally enforceable. Tourists are subject to the same rules as Dutch nationals, such as maintaining a social distance of 1.5 metres and wearing masks on public transport, and can be fined if they breach them. Another 14 non-EU countries including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Morocco and Algeria are included on a separate list of 'safe' countries that are exempt from quarantine. Sweden remains classified as code orange, along with Ireland; unlike the UK, they still requiring visitors from the Netherlands to self-isolate for 14 days.⁹¹

Spain

Over recent weeks, all 17 regions in Spain, with the exception of Asturias, reported new hotspots.⁹² In Catalonia, the county Segria was recently reported as the most dangerous part of the country for COVID-19. Despite Segria having been cordoned for approximately one week, the numbers of cases and hospitalizations are increasing.⁹³ While Catalonia attempted to issue a stay-home order, it was dismissed by a judge.⁹⁴ Approximately 70% of the cases in Spain are asymptomatic, do not needed hospitalization, and are found using contact tracing.⁹⁵ Although Aragon had the most new cases as of July 15, Catalonia had the second highest and was a bigger concern because of community transmission.⁹⁶ As of June 13, approximately 15 Spanish provinces saw increases of COVID-19 cases; the majority of these places did not see the same type of virus in Spain's first wave in February and March.⁹⁷ On July 15, the army mobilized to help in Aragon and address an outbreak in Huesca where the military may have to help house

asymptomatic seasonal workers who test positive.⁹⁸ Increasing parts of Spain are requiring or intend to require masks.⁹⁹ The cities of Zaragoza and Huesca in the autonomous community of Aragon have regressed to a flexible phase two. The flexible phase two is described as: remaining open to other parts of Spain; closing clubs; reducing capacities for weddings, funerals, restaurants and public spaces; and reducing gathering limits to 10.¹⁰⁰ A University of Cambridge research team has reported that, among the OECD, Spain managed COVID-19 the worst based on indicators like the contagion rate, controlling the spread and the mortality rate.¹⁰¹

The United Kingdom

With more than 45,000 deaths related to COVID, the UK is reviewing potentially faulty COVID-19 death data coming out of England, where anyone who had COVID and died from a non-COVID event (i.e. heart attack) months later is still considered dying from COVID.¹⁰² Last week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he would not impose a second national lockdown in the event of another outbreak; instead, local councils in England have been given a raft of “lightning” lockdown powers.¹⁰³ The UK government is set to roll out speedy finger-prick antibody tests after conducting ‘secret’ human trials, which demonstrated a 98.6% success rate.¹⁰⁴ The lockdown of the Leicester region has been lifted, after an outbreak was contained.¹⁰⁵ Activity day-camps have either not opened or cut the number of places they offer by more than a half to adhere to government guidance that they keep children in “small consistent groups of no more than 15 children.”¹⁰⁶ Many parents have criticized the government for not opening up more childcare opportunities.

Ireland

On July 15, Ireland announced their decision to not move forward to Phase 4 of their deconfinement strategy—amid concerns regarding an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in private households, particularly during the last week. With the current public health measures in place, the government has identified five key priorities for the upcoming weeks. These include the compulsory application of face coverings in all retail settings and shopping centres, with the retail staff required to wear masks unless there is a partition in place or a space of 2 metres between them and the customers. Pubs, bars, hotel bars, nightclubs and casinos, which were due to reopen on July 20, will remain closed until August 10. However, those currently serving food can remain open. Social visits to people’s homes would be limited to 10 people from no more than four different households. The current gathering restriction of 50 people indoors and 200 outdoors has been extended until August 10. The restriction on the size of crowds has made it difficult for cultural and arts facilities, such as theatres, cinemas and galleries, to open their doors. All non-essential travel is still discouraged.¹⁰⁷

Luxembourg

On 14 July, Germany placed Luxembourg on its list of countries considered “at-risk” due to an increase in the number of cases over the past few weeks. Travellers arriving from Luxembourg are required to quarantine for 14 days and to inform the local health authorities upon arrival. Luxembourg residents working in Germany are currently not allowed to drive to Germany for work-related reasons, but can transit through Germany to reach other countries by bus or train and even layover at German airports.¹⁰⁸ On July 19, the PM and health minister announced a new set of measures tightening social distancing and hygiene rules—including a reduction in the gathering limit, indoors and outdoors, to a maximum of 10. Fines of up to €500 will be imposed on symptomatic people who should be self-quarantining but leave their house. Police are advised to intensify checks on businesses, especially cafés. Businesses can be fined up to €8,000 and closed for 3 months if they break social distancing rules for a second time. Medium- and small-enterprises may also risk losing state aid if they do not comply with the rules.¹⁰⁹

Portugal

On 15 July, the Regional Government of the Azores announced its decision to extend the public calamity situation on five islands with air connection to the outside of the archipelago until 1 August.¹¹⁰ Two of the four water parks in the Algarve reopened on 17 July—with new rules including capping the number of visitors at 50% of the original capacity. Signs of security measures are posted at the entrance, including the mandatory use of masks in closed areas. The lawn is also strategically divided to follow all the rules of social distancing. Park staff advised to guide visitors to the least occupied areas.¹¹¹ In an announcement on July 17, the government clarified rules on air traffic and airport management in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rules require passengers arriving in Portugal from the U.S. or any other non-EU country to have a negative RT-PCR test, which should have been carried out within 72 hours before flying. Non-compliance by airlines or airports will result in fines between €500 and €2,000.¹¹² The rules are non-applicable to Portuguese nationals and anyone with a residency permit. Portugal is currently accepting flights without restriction from EU countries, Schengen area countries (Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland) and the UK. However, the government is discouraging non-essential trips abroad.¹¹³

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

Austria's Health Ministry extended until July 31 a flight ban that affects arrivals from several countries. The ban includes Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, and the UK.¹¹⁴ There are exceptions for flights bringing in cargo, repatriated Austrians, medical caregivers, and agricultural workers. On July 16, flights from the Lombardy region in Italy will be permitted.¹¹⁵ Travellers from a list of 30 EU countries can now enter Austria without having to comply with health measures if they can prove they have not been in a country other than Austria or one on the list in the past 14 days. This list includes Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, and Switzerland. Travellers from countries not on this list must show proof of a negative test or quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in Austria. At this time, international travellers from outside the EU and Schengen Area are not permitted.¹¹⁶

Greece

Greek authorities are considering a reintroduction of COVID-19 restrictions following a rise in cases throughout the country. These measures may include a limit of 6 people per table at restaurants and bars, and the use of masks in specific public areas.¹¹⁷ Social distancing regulations and capacity limits at beaches have been extended until July 31, with inspections in place to monitor compliance.¹¹⁸ On July 13, the government announced that a ban on festivals will continue until the end of July. Testing will intensify and be extended to seasonal workers from neighbouring countries at land border crossings with Bulgaria and Albania. Border officials will begin checking the authenticity of negative test results presented by travellers.¹¹⁹ All travellers crossing land borders are required to present negative test results from the past 72 hours. Direct flights from the UK have resumed and the Greek government will allow for the resumption of direct flights from Sweden on July 22.¹²⁰ In response to the rise in cases, the PM is requesting that COVID-19 health and safety measures be strictly enforced to prevent any further outbreaks.¹²¹

Italy

On July 16, the Italian government banned travellers who had been in Serbia, Kosovo, and Montenegro in the past 14 days from entering the country. Italy had already banned entry to travellers from 13 other countries that have a high rate of infection.¹²² Movement remains restricted within the EU, Schengen Area, and the UK—with travellers from all other countries subject to a 14-day quarantine. The Italian government has extended their current Phase 3 emergency rules until July 31. These include social distancing rules,

mask requirements in closed public places and on public transit, and the suspension of large gatherings.¹²³ An activist group is providing testimony to prosecutors investigating whether the failure of political leaders in Lombardy and nationally contributed to the country's COVID-19 death toll. The Lombardy regional government has defended its handling of the pandemic and the region's success in increasing ICU capacity to keep up with patient demand.¹²⁴

Slovenia

Starting on July 20, Slovenia will issue quarantine orders to all Slovenian citizens and residents returning from countries with high infection rates via border crossings with Croatia. Montenegro and Luxembourg were placed on Slovenia's quarantine list on July 17. Poland and the UK have been moved to the safe-country list alongside Austria, Belgium, Canada, and Spain. Some countries have gained or retained their epidemiologically-safe status despite a recent rise in cases due to reliable data and only a slight upward trend.¹²⁵ On July 15, journalists and media workers gathered to protest against media reforms planned by the Slovenian government. The workers believe the proposed changes would undermine the public media's independence and are critical of the government's attempt to interfere with the media's democratic role.¹²⁶

Switzerland

Since July 6, all travellers entering Switzerland from a list of 29 high-risk countries must self-isolate for 10 days or face a possible fine of 10,000 francs. Healthcare workers are exempt due to a staffing shortage in Swiss hospitals.¹²⁷ On July 20, Switzerland will relax entry restrictions for 21 countries including Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, and Thailand.¹²⁸ COVID-19 lockdown restrictions have increased in several cantons across the country. These measures include stricter controls at nightclubs and bars, and a mandatory mask requirement at all educational institutions. Stricter restrictions are in place on gatherings in a number of cantons despite the Federal Council permitting public and private gatherings of up to 1,000 people.¹²⁹

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

On July 13, the government of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš approved the deployment of the Czech military to prevent the spread of COVID-19.¹³⁰ The regulation - which will remain in effect until the end of 2020 - stipulates that a total of up to 68 soldiers in active service will be made available to the Czech Ministry of Health, regional hygienic stations, and health institutes. The 68 active members will be made up of 30 medics, 28 specialists from sampling teams, and 10 specialists from the ranks of analysts and coordinators. The Czech Republic has also changed its entry restrictions for non-married partners separated by travel bans throughout the EU. On July 20, it will be possible for third-country nationals – including those without visas – to visit their partners in the Czech Republic if they meet several conditions.¹³¹ This may include submitting evidence of their relationship – such as a joint lease agreement and/or bank account, or the birth certificate of common children.

Hungary

On July 16, the Minister of the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office announced that public celebrations of State Foundation Day on August 20 will be cancelled due to the ongoing risk of holding mass events during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³² Meanwhile, Hungary has changed its risk classifications for Canada and Portugal to “yellow,” and “green”, respectively. This means that Canadians can now enter Hungary subject to a physiological assessment upon arrival and a mandatory 14-day quarantine. Portuguese citizens can travel to Hungary without restrictions.¹³³

Latvia

On July 15, Latvia's Cabinet of Ministers adopted several decisions that will allow them to more effectively collect information on, and monitor the activity of, both Latvian residents and foreigners entering the country. From July 16, all passengers on international flights will have to submit a questionnaire to the Latvian National Police and the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, indicating any countries they have visited in the last 14 days, their contact information, and the address where they will undergo their 2-week isolation period.¹³⁴ In addition to these measures, a regulatory framework was passed that will allow temporary residence permits and visas to be revoked for third-country nationals who violate self-isolation rules, along with a fine of up to 2000 euros.¹³⁵ Latvia's contact-tracing app reached 100,000 downloads on July 20.¹³⁶

Lithuania

As of July 20, Lithuanian residents travelling from Ukraine will no longer be required to remain in self-isolation for 14 days upon their return. Mauritania, the Virgin Islands, and Guam have also been removed from the country's list of high-risk countries, while 5 new countries have been added: Croatia, India, Andorra, Namibia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. A two-week quarantine is mandatory for all Lithuanian citizens and residents travelling from any of the aforementioned countries, as well as any other countries with infection incidence rates of 25 per 100,000 people over the last 14 days. A two-week quarantine is now recommended – but not mandatory – for Lithuanian travellers returning from Iceland or Spain. Self-isolation remains mandatory for all citizens and residents travelling to Lithuania from countries outside of the EU/EEA, Switzerland, and the UK.¹³⁷

Poland

Starting on July 17, assemblies, parties, events, and other gatherings will be allowed to take place in open spaces without a strict limit on the number of participants—provided that an acceptable distance can be maintained between each individual.¹³⁸

Slovakia

On July 17, Bulgaria and Montenegro were removed from Slovakia's list of low-risk countries from which travellers can enter Slovakia with limited restrictions. This means that travellers looking to enter Slovakia from these countries, as well as any others considered high-risk, must self-isolate until they are able to submit a negative COVID-19 test.¹³⁹

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

The Danish government eased travel restrictions on three more counties in Sweden (Halland, Kalmar and Värmland), and is allowing travellers from Georgia, Uruguay, and Tunisia to enter the country. Denmark is still recommending against unnecessary travel to Georgia and Uruguay due to their quarantine requirements for arriving Danish citizens.¹⁴⁰ The Ministry of Health is encouraging more Danes to download the country's contact tracing app after it successfully warned 4 people of their potential exposure to COVID-19. Around 745,000 people have downloaded the app, and the Ministry hopes to reach a million downloads soon.¹⁴¹ Higher passenger traffic at the Copenhagen Airport has caused its testing centre to expand its operating hours and number of testing stations from two to eight. Testing at the airport is still offered free of charge to arriving passengers.¹⁴²

Estonia

Estonia renewed restrictions mandating that all COVID-19 patients and those living with them not leave their place of residence until the patient has recovered. The restrictions are in place until September 30, and the only exception for patients is for a life-threatening situation. Persons living with a patient may leave to acquire daily necessities if they are not otherwise available.¹⁴³ Not all schools in Estonia would close if there is a second wave of COVID-19 in the country. Cases will be assessed individually, and schools are expected to be in person when the new school year starts on September 1. Some educators have expressed concerns over the lack of information on what to do if there is an infected person at their school.¹⁴⁴ Officials at the Health Board said that they are in short supply of PPE, projecting that they only have about a month's stock if there is a large-scale second wave.¹⁴⁵ The Minister of Public Administration denied that the country was running low. He said more was being procured and some things could be produced in Estonia.¹⁴⁶

Finland

All restrictions on eateries were lifted on July 13, allowing establishments to return to normal operating hours, alcohol serving times and capacity limits. However, social distancing and hygiene regulations must remain in place for the foreseeable future.¹⁴⁷ Upper secondary and vocational school students are expected to resume their studies in-person when the new school year starts in late August. However, they have been told to anticipate rapid changes to restrictions on education in the event of a second wave.¹⁴⁸ More than 200 people may have been exposed to COVID-19 in Rovaniemi after three infected persons were found to have visited a daycare centre, an indoor playground, and a military base.¹⁴⁹

Iceland

On July 16, Iceland exempted travellers from Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Norway from testing at the border to reduce strain on testing capacity.¹⁵⁰ A number of flights to the country were at risk of being cancelled after Icelandic authorities came very close to reaching their testing capacity in recent days.¹⁵¹ DeCode Genetics decided to extend their participation in the border testing scheme by one week (to July 20) due to the strain on the country's testing capacity.¹⁵² Iceland also opened its border to 14 non-EU countries on July 15, and is allowing international students from all countries to enter the country.¹⁵³ Iceland will expand its gathering limit from 500 to 1000 people on August 3, immediately after a major holiday weekend in the country. Restaurants and bars will be able to expand their operating hours on the same date.¹⁵⁴ Public health officials are worried that large groups of people will hold their own events over the summer holidays, despite the cancellation of official festivals. Authorities are highlighting the lack of infrastructure and difficulty of contact tracing that make these spontaneous events so dangerous.¹⁵⁵

Norway

The partners of Norwegian citizens and residents from outside the EU/EEA are permitted to enter the country, effective July 15.¹⁵⁶ Partners must be able to prove that they have been in a relationship for at least nine months, and must have met the Norwegian resident physically at least once to be eligible. The Norwegian resident must fill out a form that confirms these requirements, and must also ensure that the partner quarantines for 10 days upon their arrival.¹⁵⁷ Grandparents and parents of adult children from outside the EU/EEA are still not permitted to enter the country. Some opposition parties have said that the government should allow more exemptions to travel restrictions, but the Minister of Justice said that they will continue to be cautious.¹⁵⁸ More than 100 people in Bergen may need to self-isolate after two infected individuals used public transport, and visited a gym and a restaurant in the city.¹⁵⁹

Sweden

Sweden has lifted its recommendation against non-essential travel to Germany, Poland, and Andorra, but reintroduced the measure on travel to Switzerland.¹⁶⁰ The update to restrictions came a day after Germany allowed Swedish travellers to enter the country without self-isolating. The Swedish government also extended its recommendation against travel to non-exempted EU countries until July 29, while the ban on travel to and from non-EU countries is scheduled to end on August 31.¹⁶¹ Exceptions to the nationwide ban on visits to hospitals and long-term care facilities have been outlined, allowing visitors if they have COVID-19 antibodies, or they are visiting someone receiving end-of-life care.¹⁶² Public health officials are warning that rural areas frequented by tourists in the summer could be the site of potential outbreaks. Authorities highlighted limited hospital capacity and a large proportion of elderly residents as particularly concerning for destinations that have had a limited number of infections thus far.¹⁶³

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

Japan is still grappling with an increasing number of daily new infections. Tokyo has been put on the highest possible COVID-19 alert level. Residents and business owners have been urged to follow infection prevention measures, but businesses have still not been asked to close. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government plans to expand the testing system, and offer support to public health centers facing an increased workload.¹⁶⁴ Japan's health ministry expanded testing to asymptomatic people on July 17. It has been suggested that the government create specific testing guidelines for three categories of people and places, based on the risk of infection.¹⁶⁵ Japan's contact tracing app resumed on July 15 after a second suspension due to notification errors.¹⁶⁶ Japan has asked the U.S. to test all of its military personnel coming to Japan after almost 100 cases have been reported at U.S. bases in Japan. An NHK poll showed that nearly 70 percent of respondents wanted the government to prioritize the fight against COVID-19 over the economy. A domestic travel campaign starting July 22 has been announced, excluding trips to and from Tokyo.¹⁶⁷ More than 10 universities in Tokyo have decided to continue online classes in the fall semester.¹⁶⁸

South Korea

Most new cases in South Korea are related to overseas travel. With the increasing number of foreign arrivals, more public facilities for self-quarantine have been opened. The government said on July 17 that it would send additional chartered flights to Iraq to bring back the workers on a construction site, even though confirmed cases among the workers accounted for a large portion of the overall imported cases.¹⁶⁹ The government is considering requesting that all U.S. military personnel go through testing before departing for bases in South Korea. The Korea Tourism Organization has selected 100 non-contact summer tourist spots to encourage domestic travel, based on criteria such as suitability for solo or family trips, outdoor travel or social distancing.¹⁷⁰ An alert system has been adopted for 50 major beaches that would ban the entry of additional visitors in crowded areas.¹⁷¹ Travellers from high-risk countries will be required to submit proof of a negative PCR test before entry and may face issues in acquiring an entry visa. Regular flights linking high-risk countries and South Korea will fly with less than 60% seat capacity. Starting on July 24, the visa-free entry and screening process for foreign sailing crews entering South Korea will be temporarily suspended.¹⁷²

New Zealand

All of the active cases in New Zealand were imported and identified during their isolation immediately after arrival. There are no hospitalized cases of COVID-19. The government has been seeking and evaluating candidate facilities to expand the capacity of government-managed isolation and quarantine. High-risk

patients with respiratory illnesses are now included in the prioritized targets for COVID-19 testing.¹⁷³ The clinical criteria for recovery from COVID-19 has been brought in line with Australian standards following a review, with 72 hours of no symptoms now needed for the case to be considered resolved (rather than 48).¹⁷⁴ Pharmac, the national medicine-buying agency in New Zealand, has been seeking information from pharmaceutical companies about their plans to provide vaccines to New Zealanders, or if they plan to allow New Zealand to manufacture its own supply should a vaccine become available.¹⁷⁵ The Prime Minister has outlined the government's plan to implement local lockdowns should community transmission return to New Zealand.¹⁷⁶ The reopening of borders is not expected to proceed without significant epidemiological improvement in other jurisdictions. Since roughly 20% of children under 5 are not returning to early childhood centres after lockdown, many centres are struggling due to financial adversity.¹⁷⁷

Australia

Aside from the outbreak in Victoria, New South Wales has also seen an increase in new infections. Victoria recorded a record-high of 317 new cases on July 16. Most elective surgeries have been suspended across Melbourne's public hospitals as a growing number of healthcare workers have been infected, forcing many to self-isolate. Public hospitals will lower their elective surgery capacity to 50% to free up space, and private hospitals will drop to 75%.¹⁷⁸ Nearly 1,000 military personnel will enter Victoria to assist by mid-August. Staff from some private enterprises will also join Victoria's public health unit to do follow-up work, such as making and taking calls. No flights are now arriving in Melbourne.¹⁷⁹ The reopening processes have been somewhat halted by the resurgence. New South Wales and Victoria allow for outdoor gatherings of up to 20 and 10 people, respectively. One hundred or more people can attend gatherings elsewhere.¹⁸⁰ Interstate travel has been severely limited. All other states and territories have either imposed new interstate travel restrictions on Victoria and New South Wales or delayed their overall reopening schedule. Recreational sports may resume in most places in Australia.

Turkey

On July 19, the Turkish Health Minister reported that Turkey had stabilized after a struggle with an increasing number of new cases associated with its reopening. Numerous cases have been linked to a lack of compliance with mandatory mask and social distancing policies. Security forces have also been advised to conduct routine inspections in crowded areas and issue warnings to those without masks. They may impose fines.¹⁸¹ In an announcement made on July 17, the PM ruled out a curfew for Qurban Bayram, a 3-day religious event celebrated in the Muslim world—in contrast to the curfew that was imposed on the previous religious celebration that took place in May. Experts pointed out the high risk of infection at crowded public spaces, though a number of safety measures have been put in place.¹⁸² Turkey suspended all flights to Iran and Afghanistan on July 18 due to an increasing infection and mortality rate in Iran. Cargo flights are exempted from this suspension.¹⁸³

Israel

Daily new infections in Israel are now approaching 2,000. The Health Ministry is planning to allow 8 to 10 samples to be examined at once and conduct individual tests if the batch is positive. This is to cut down on testing time and to allow for more samples to be tested. On July 14, the Israeli Health Ministry admitted under pressure that more than 12,000 citizens had been mistakenly sent into quarantine after being flagged by the country's phone tracking system.¹⁸⁴ Nurses are set to go on strike on July 20 over heavy workload and labour shortages.¹⁸⁵ Israel is under immediate risk of reaching its healthcare capacity, with some saying they could do so in as little as three weeks.¹⁸⁶ Mass protests have broken out against the Prime Minister and the government's economic policy during the pandemic. Reports have also suggested that there is considerable tension among top officials in the government over the handling of the pandemic. A series of new restrictions came into effect on July 17. Gyms and studios are closed again after the legislature

overturned the government's decision to reopen outdoor public pools and gyms on July 13. Eateries are only allowed to offer takeaway services, but the implementation of this restriction was postponed to July 21 due to widespread threats to defy government orders. Indoor gatherings may not have more than 10 people, but there can be up to 20 people outdoors. All stores, shopping malls, open-air markets, hair salons, libraries, petting zoos, museums, pools, tourist attractions, and cable cars will be forced to close on weekends.¹⁸⁷

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Links

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