

## COVID-19 Country Response Analysis: May Update 2

This update covers the period May 1 to May 4.

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### Global trends<sup>1</sup>

- 3,563,718 cases and 248,147 deaths globally
- The world took 73 days from the first reported case on 31 December to reach one million cases on 2 April. It took a further 13 days to reach two million and then 11 days to reach three million. It has taken another six days to reach 3.5 million cases.
- While global new cases were trending last week at around 75,000 daily, that increased to 94,000 on 1 May, the second highest number ever. Over the weekend that figure has decreased to 82,200 on 3 May.
- Trends in reported cases have not changed significantly since last Friday (1 May) with Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Turkey and Iran showing sustained declines in daily new cases.
- The US and the UK continue to show high and unstable daily new cases. On 1 May, the US reported 36,007 new cases, the second highest ever. On the same day, the UK reported 6,201 new cases, also the second highest ever.
- Russia has the most rapidly escalating epidemic in the world, with an 8.7% increase in daily new cases on 3 May. Russia is followed by Peru (8% increase on 3 May), Ecuador (7.5%), India (7.1%), Chile (7%), Qatar (6.5%), Saudi Arabia (6.3%), and Pakistan (5.2%).
- Brazil has replaced China in the 10 most affected countries based on cumulative reported cases.
- The global case-fatality ratio (CFR) remains at 7%.
- The ranking of CFRs has not changed with Belgium and the UK both greater than 15%. The lowest are Qatar and Singapore (0.1%). The CFR in the US is 5.9% and in Australia 1.4%<sup>2</sup>.
- Among countries reporting more than 5,000 cases the highest cumulative testing rates continue to be UAE (12,133 per 100,000), Kuwait (4,599), Israel (4,587), Portugal (4,186), Spain (4,133) and Denmark (4,036). The lowest are Indonesia (41), Bangladesh (49), Mexico (73), and India (76).
- Australia (2,483) ranks #15 compared with #16 last Friday.

### Australian trends<sup>3</sup>

- Australia has reported more than 20 new daily cases for the first time since 19 April. 26 new cases were reported on 4 May, including 22 new cases in Victoria. This might reflect expanded testing.
- In the past 5 days, 52 of the 70 (74%) positive tests in Australia were in Victoria.
- A record number of 25,227 people were tested on 1 May. This is equivalent to 1,009 per 100,000, which is very high by global standards. On Sunday 3 May, 21,524 people were tested for a positivity rate of 0.1% -- low by global standards.
- On 4 May, Australia has 900 active cases.
- The cumulative CFR is 1.4%.

<sup>1</sup> <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/new-cases>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.covid19data.com.au/>



## Update on easing restrictions<sup>4</sup>

The first most important point is that most of the restrictions being eased around the world (with the exception of some states in the US) are restrictions that were never imposed in Australia.

Having reviewed a number of countries (below), there are a few lessons that may be worth considering in Australia.

- Phased easing of restrictions based on the incidence of new cases in different regions (France is classifying regions as red or green).
- Require people to wear face masks on public transport, taxis and school buses.
- When opening restaurants, begin with confining customers to outdoor terraces (with heaters in the southern states).
- As physical distancing rules are relaxed, require people over the age of 65 to adhere to more rigorous distancing than younger people.
- Learn from the experiences of other countries introducing tracing apps, such as Norway and France.
- Playgrounds, museums, libraries, and zoos could be among the first public spaces to reopen with strict physical distancing

### Italy

Italy has the second highest number of COVID-19 cases and the highest number of deaths in Europe. However, the number of new daily cases has been steadily declining to 1,389 new cases on 2 May, the lowest since 7 March.

From Monday, the country will further relax measures after nearly two months of strict lockdown. People will be allowed to move around their own regions, and face masks will be required on all public transport. Restaurants will also reopen for takeaway services. They are expected to reopen to diners from 1 June, along with hairdressers, salons and bars. Schools are not expected to open until September. Social distancing measures will continue and places of worship remain closed for religious ceremonies.

### France

France has reported the fourth highest number of both cases and deaths in Europe. However, daily new cases have been in steady decline since 16 April with 1,050 new cases reported on 3 May, the lowest since 14 March. However, France has one of the lowest testing rates in Europe.

Last week France set out plans for a phased ending of its coronavirus lockdown beginning on 11 May (like Australia, this date is mentioned in many countries' plans to ease restrictions). The prime minister said regions would be labelled red or green on 7 May for the proposed easing of restrictions four days later. The decision will be based on the number of new cases, as well as capacity in hospitals and for testing.

As in Italy, it will be compulsory to wear masks on all public transport, in taxis and on school buses. Face masks will also be compulsory for all staff and customers when shops are allowed to reopen from 11 May.

Crèches, nurseries and primary schools are also set to open as France eases lockdown. Secondary schools will be able to reopen a week later in regions where the virus circulation is low.

Stricter coronavirus lockdown restrictions will continue for those over-65 even after 11 May.

Like the UK, testing remains an issue with an insufficient number of tests making contact tracing difficult. The government aims to carry out at least 700,000 tests per week by 11 May.

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<sup>4</sup> Various media sources, including the NY Times, Washington Post, CNN, Politico and Bloomberg.

**France had settled on the least intrusive form of tracing app — the Singaporean app, called “TraceTogether.”**

But there are concerns that the app, relying mainly on a sense of civic duty, will be so watered down in France that it will prove ineffective. The app — called “StopCovid” in France — would be installed voluntarily on people’s smartphones, would not track their locations or movements, and would use only Bluetooth technology to help trace a person’s recent contacts. The app has not yet been released.

**Spain**

Spain has the highest number of cases in Europe and the second highest number in the world. It has the third highest number of deaths in Europe after Italy and the UK. However, the number of new cases has been steadily declining since 23 April to 1,533 on 3 May, which was the lowest since 14 March.

The first relaxation of restrictions was enacted yesterday (3 May) when people older than 14 could take one-hour walks, accompanied by one person, once a day within 1 km of their homes, or do sports like riding a bike alone within their city. They are allowed to do this from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. The elderly had their turn a little later, with a special timetable to avoid crowds: from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and in the evening, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

From today (4 May), coronavirus lockdowns will ease on smaller Spanish islands. Some local shops will be allowed to reopen, with restaurants and bars opening for takeaway services. Mainland Spain will enter the first phase of transition a week later, but the government has said decisions will be based on local circumstances. Shops and markets can reopen with social distancing measures still in place. Restaurants will be allowed to open outside terraces as long as no more than 30 per cent of places are occupied. Similarly, places of worship can open with reduced capacity in an eased coronavirus lockdown. Schools remain closed.

**Germany**

Germany has reported the fifth highest number of cases in Europe but has had a much lower CFR (4.1%) than other large European countries, which have ranged from 10% to more than 15%.

Germany began easing its coronavirus lockdown measures last month, as smaller shops reopened with strict social distancing measures in place. Face masks are mandatory on public transport.

Schools will start to reopen for exam year students on 4 May, with pupils attending in groups on alternating days or weeks. Playgrounds, museums, zoos and places of worship can now reopen with strict physical distancing.

The decisions on when to open other schools, restaurants and resume top-flight football have been pushed back to next week.

**United Kingdom**

The UK has the fastest growing epidemic in Western Europe, as recently as 1 May reporting its second highest number of daily new cases (6,201). It has the second highest number of deaths in Europe but will overtake Italy in the next few days.

The government has set out five tests for easing the coronavirus lockdown in mid-April, which have yet to be met. A key requirement is that the NHS should have enough virus testing capacity and PPE. No detailed plan for easing restrictions has been announced.

**Norway**

Norway, with a population of 5.4 million, has reported almost 8,000 cases and 211 deaths. The number of daily new cases has been in steady decline since 15 April reaching 38 on 3 May, the lowest since 8 March.

Some of Norway's restrictive emergency measures are in process of being relaxed. This includes the reopening of kindergartens and schools for the youngest children. Businesses such as hair salons are now permitted to reopen, and the controversial ban on cabin stays has been lifted. The government announced an extension of the ban on



major events until 1 September. However, the ban on smaller events is also being relaxed. Events of up to 50 people will be permitted from 7 May. This also means that cinemas will reopen, albeit with a screen limit of 50.

The government has encouraged all Norwegians to download the new **Smittestopp smartphone app**, designed to help control the spread of the virus. However, many security issues and privacy concerns have been identified.

### **Portugal**

Portugal has implemented one of the most effective responses in Europe with the highest testing rate on the continent. Daily new cases have been in decline since 16 April with 92 cases reported on 3 May, the lowest since 16 March.

The Portuguese government has approved a roadmap to relax pandemic restrictions over the next month, starting with the reopening of small shops, hairdressers, beauty salons, car showrooms and bookstores today. By starting the reopening with stores with less than 200 square meters, the government is hoping to revive neighborhood businesses without triggering large gatherings or travel.

If the number of new COVID-19 infections continues to decline, a second stage of the reopening will begin in the second half of May. It will cover larger stores up to 400 square meters, crèches, classes for senior high school students, cafes and restaurants. Larger stores, shopping malls, pre-school classes, gymnasiums, cinemas and bars are set to open June 1, if the evolution of the disease allows. Major league football is also due to resume in early June albeit in empty stadiums.

In all cases, reopened businesses will face restrictions limiting the number of people allowed into establishments and mandating barriers between staff and customers. Restaurants will only be able to use half their seats. Masks will be obligatory on public transport and in businesses open to the public.

### **Greece**

Greece has so far registered 2,566 coronavirus cases including 138 deaths, much fewer than many other European nations, thanks partly to the swift imposition of its lockdown on March 23.

The government has announced that restrictions on citizens' movements would be lifted and more shops allowed to reopen from May 4 in a gradual easing of a lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the new coronavirus. Some retail stores, including book shops and hair salons, will reopen on May 4 and others later in the month. Schools will open gradually, starting on May 11.

Year-round hotels, restaurants, cafes and shopping malls will reopen on June 1, but distance rules will apply and staff will have to wear masks.

### **South Africa**

South Africa has reported 6,783 cases, the highest in Africa just ahead of Egypt, and 131 deaths. Daily new cases continue to rise exponentially reaching 447 cases on 3 May, by far the highest number ever. So, the timing of the relaxation of restrictions is surprising. Restoring the economy, which has been devastated by COVID-19 is probably the driving force. South Africa was already in recession prior to the pandemic.

South Africa has been in total lockdown with Stage 4 restrictions since 27 March. Thousands of people left their homes to exercise between 6:00 and 9:00, the first time in five weeks in which they have been able to do so. The government reduced the Covid-19 lockdown to a partial Level 3 and many companies will be able to open again. A maximum of one-third of workers will be allowed to return to work.

Public transport can restart, but with limited numbers of passengers, while cars are supposed to be restricted to three people per vehicle. Schools are expected to reopen at the start of June with a phased restart.

The nation's borders will remain closed, travel between provinces is banned, no large gatherings other than funerals will be allowed and bars must stay closed. Restrictions on the sale of cigarettes and some other goods



(but not alcohol) will be lifted and people will be allowed to exercise outdoors under strict conditions. Buses and trains can resume operating.

To ensure the response to the pandemic remains targeted, there will be a national alert level and separate levels for each province, district and metropolitan areas, allowing for differentiated restrictions.

### **United States**

The US has experienced by far the worst COVID-19 epidemic in the world. The country has reported around one-third of global cases and one quarter of global deaths.

While the federal government has outlined criteria for easing restrictions, such as a 14 day sustained decline in new cases and greatly expanded testing and tracing capacity, some states have announced the easing of restrictions since last week. They do not include the most heavily affected states in the Northeast or California and the other states in the Western Consortium.

The state of Georgia has announced the most ambitious easing of restrictions despite the fact that the state reported more than 700 new cases on 1 May. A writer in *The Atlantic* called Georgia's actions as "*An experiment in human sacrifice.*"

The state governor has allowed hair and nail salons, bowling alleys and tattoo parlours to open again. On 25 April, restaurants were permitted to resume dine-in service. Georgia's stay-at-home order ended on 1 May.

Given the current chaotic situation in the US I do not think that it is worth reviewing the different approaches by the states until those states that have clear plans and criteria, such as California, implement the relaxation of restrictions.

