RETURN TO OFFICE 2020

Comparison of social distancing guidance across countries amid the COVID-19 crisis

06 May 2020
INTRODUCTION

Background

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it to be a *Public Health Emergency of International Concern* on January 30th, 2020. From February onwards, COVID-19 continued to spread on a global scale, causing WHO to declare the outbreak as a pandemic.

Over this period, many countries have reacted to this outbreak by imposing nation-wide restrictions on non-essential movement and lockdowns. As of the 24th of April 2020, there have been 2.76 million confirmed cases globally, with 760,000 people recovered and 194,000 deaths.\(^1\)

Development

As the infection rates of the COVID-19 begin to fall, several countries have started taking steps to lift their nation-wide restrictions including, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. These countries are taking a phased approach, with schools and shops being gradually reopened.

This report reviews the restriction and reopening policies of the following countries post the coronavirus crisis:

- Australia
- Canada
- France
- New Zealand
- Philippines
- Qatar
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

\(^1\)https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports
AUSTRALIA
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

Australia is steadily reviewing measures taken to tackle the coronavirus outbreak. There are no current plans to lift the lockdown implemented after Australian borders were closed to all non-residents on the 20th March 2020. Social distancing measures were imposed on the 21st of March 2020, with non-essential services asked to close (e.g. social gathering venues, pubs, clubs [2]).

### Business and Work Measures

**4**

Physical distancing of **1.5 metre between people, and 4 m² per person** in workplaces, including in recreational areas such as tea rooms.

Restrictions on elective surgeries will be gradually eased **from 28th April 2020**.

People are instructed to stay home unless it is for essential personal movement i.e. going to work or school if it is necessary[3].

**Essential businesses are to remain open:** health care settings, pharmacies, food shopping.

Employers should continue to support their employees to work from home, if possible.

Employers should hold only essential meetings and do so via video conferencing, phone or outside in the open air if possible.

### Public and Social Measures

**2**

People should stay at home unless shopping, receiving medical care, exercising or travelling to work or education.

No more than **2 people** should be out in public together, except for family and household groups.

Public spaces such as playgrounds, skate parks and outside gyms in public spaces will be closed.

Physical social distancing should be adhered to i.e. **1 person per 4 m²**.

Schools are to remain open, with states having the authority to end their first term early. This may be subject to change after review from the Health Protection Principal Committee.

Weddings can be conducted with no more than 5 people including the couple. Funerals must be limited to no more than 10 people. The **4 m² rule** must be observed.

Public transport is essential at this time. Social distancing measures should be observed. Non-essential travel is to be avoided.

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States of emergency were declared across all of Canada's provinces and territories in Mid-March. On March 18, a mutual agreement was reached with the United States to ban travellers, while entry restrictions were limited only to Canadian citizens and their immediate families. Provinces that are currently reopening or due to reopen by mid-May include: Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Alberta.

### Business and Work Measures

- Non-essential travel at the Canada-US border is prohibited until the 21st May 2020 e.g. tourism, recreation, entertainment. Essential travel includes work and study, critical infrastructure support, shopping for essential goods.

- Employers should continue to support their employees to work from home, if possible.

- All travellers are required to wear non-medical face masks while departing and arriving on air travel.

- Essential businesses e.g. medical services and food, are to remain open.

- Medical services and elective surgeries are to reopen in the first phase of most province's reopening plans, from the week commencing the 4th of May.

### Public and Social Measures

1. Physical distancing of 2 metres outside home (including on public transport).

2. People should stay at home unless shopping, receiving medical care, exercising or travelling to work.

3. High schools and post-secondary institutions are to remain closed. Some provinces (Quebec, Saskatchewan) plan to gradually reopen primary schools and daycares by June, with non-mandatory attendance. Other provinces (Ontario) have no immediate plans to reopen.

4. Some non-essential businesses will be reopened including retail businesses, salons, museums, libraries and restaurants. In the first phase of reopening, restaurants may operate walk-up services only, at half capacity.

5. Certain outdoor spaces are to reopen e.g. provincial parks and golf courses, but just for hiking. Low risk outdoor recreational activities are allowed e.g. jogging, fishing, boating and golfing.

6. Non-essential gatherings should be avoided. Public and private gatherings will still be capped at up to 10 people in some provinces.

7. Public transport is essential at this time. Social distancing measures should be observed. Non-essential travel is to be avoided outside of individual provinces.

Based on Guidelines released by the Canadian Government [16] [25].

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FRANCE
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

It was announced that all schools and universities would close from the 16th of March, until further notice. All non-essential public places, including restaurants, cafes, cinemas and nightclubs, were ordered to close from the 18th of March. A 15-day mandatory home confinement commenced on the 17th of March, and has been extended twice until the 11th of May. The government seeks to extend the health emergency until the 24th of July. The deconfinement plan is set to be gradually rolled out from the 11th of May and is detailed below.

### Business and Work Measures

- Employers should continue to support their employees to work from home, if possible, at least for the next 3 weeks.
- Employers are to equip all their employees with masks, to the best of their abilities.
- For employees that are unable to work from home, shift schedules should be encouraged.
- Employers are to follow the approaches in the new work guides, released by the Minister of Labour. Changes to work timetables, physical distancing barrier implementation and changes to workspace layouts are expected.

### Public and Social Measures

1. Physical distancing of 1 metre outside home (including on public transport).

2. Crèches (limited to 10 children per group) and primary schools are to reopen (capped at 15 children per class). Attendance is non-mandatory. Staff are to wear masks.

3. Public parks and gardens, forests, libraries, small media/cultural centres, small museums are to reopen. Cinemas, theatres, large museums, beaches, sports halls are to remain closed.

4. Shops and commercial centres with a surface area less than 40,000 m² are to reopen. Open-air markets, hairdressers, barber shops and beauty salons are to reopen. Bars and cafes are to remain closed.

5. Individual outdoor sports are permitted, if social distancing rules are respected. Individual indoor sports (swimming, gyms), group sports or contact sports are not permitted.

6. Churches and religious centres (no ceremonies or events allowed) are to reopen. Weddings, ceremonies and groups of more than 10 people are not permitted.

7. Public transport is permitted. Wearing a mask is obligatory and social distancing measures must be observed. Journeys of more than 100km away from home, except for immediate family or professional reasons (with a new attestation form), are not permitted.

Based on Guidelines released by the French Government [26] [27]

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NEW ZEALAND
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

New Zealand plans to move down to alert level 3 in the week commencing the 27th of April 2020. This action is following the lockdown implemented on the 19th of March 2020, which required all returning citizens and residents to self-isolate. The country plans to remain at alert level 3 for at least two weeks, before the decision to move down to level 2 is reassessed on the 11th of May 2020. Alert levels are cumulative and include the restrictions of the levels below them.

**Level 3 - Restrict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business and Work Measures</th>
<th>Public and Social Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Physical distancing of 1 metre in workplaces.</td>
<td><strong>1</strong> Physical distancing of 1 metre in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People must work from home unless that is not possible.</td>
<td>Schools (year 1 to 10) and Early Childhood Centres are to reopen, but at limited capacity. Children should stay at home if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses can reopen premises, but cannot physically interact with customers.</td>
<td>Physical distancing of 2 metres outside home (including on public transport).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare services are to use virtual, non-contact consultations where possible.</td>
<td>Public venues are to remain closed (e.g. libraries, museums, cinemas, food courts, gyms, pools, playgrounds, markets).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People instructed to stay home within their bubble other than for essential personal movement i.e. going to work or school if it is necessary.</td>
<td>Low-risk local recreation activities are allowed e.g. solitary jogging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gatherings of up to 10 people are allowed but only for wedding services, funerals and tangihanga. Physical distancing and public health measures must be maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-regional travel is highly limited (e.g. for essential workers, with limited exemptions for others).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Level 3 Guidelines released by the NZ Government [1]

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NEW ZEALAND
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business and Work Measures</th>
<th>Public and Social Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most businesses open, and business premises can be open for staff and customers with appropriate measures in place.</td>
<td>Physical distancing of 1 metre outside home (including on public transport).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate ways of working are encouraged e.g. remote working, shift-based working, physical distancing, flexible leave.</td>
<td>Schools and Early Childhood Centres open, with distance learning available for those unable to attend school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare services operate as normally as possible.</td>
<td>Gatherings of up to 100 people indoors are allowed and 500 outdoors. Physical distancing and contact tracing requirements must be maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public venues can open but must comply with conditions on gatherings and undertake public health measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports and recreation activities are allowed if conditions on gatherings are met, physical distancing is followed, and travel is local.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People are advised to avoid non-essential inter-regional travel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Level 2 Guidelines released by the NZ Government [1]

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THE PHILIPPINES
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

On the 16th of March 2020, an enhanced community quarantine (total lockdown) was placed on Luzon and Metro Manila. The following day, the President of The Philippines declared a state of calamity for a tentative period of 6 months. The enhanced community quarantine is currently extended until the 15th of May 2020 in Metro Manila, Regions 3 & 4-A and some places in Luzon. Some provinces are subject to rechecking while a general community quarantine has been implemented in some places in the Philippines.

**Business and Work Measures**

1. People must work from home, except for workers providing food and medicine, utilities, banks and logistics firms.

2. Physical distancing of 1 metre in workplaces.

3. All domestic flights and sea travel, except for those transporting essential goods, have been suspended.

4. Businesses that provide food and medicine (supermarkets, hospitals etc) are allowed to operate. In such establishments, a strict skeletal workforce is required to support operations.

**Public and Social Measures**

1. Physical distancing of 1 metre outside home.

2. In areas where the lockdown has been eased, colleges and universities may also resume classes. Schools are to remain closed in other areas.

3. Public venues are to remain closed (e.g. libraries, museums, cinemas, food courts, gyms, pools, playgrounds, markets).

4. People below 21 years old and above 60 years old must remain at home. People should remain at home unless leaving the house for necessities, for which only a single person per household can go outside.

5. All gatherings are currently prohibited. Large public events are suspended until further notice.

6. In areas where lockdown has been eased, public transportation will resume at a reduced capacity. Land travel and public transport in other areas are suspended.

Based on Guidelines released by the Philippines Government [12][13][14][15]

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QATAR
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

Qatar announced a closure of all schools and universities on the 9th March 2020 and placed a travel ban on 15 countries. On the 9th of April 2020, the Supreme Committee for Crisis Management decided to stop all commercial activities in stores and offices on Fridays and Saturdays, except for essential commerce e.g. food and supply outlets, pharmacies, clinics. There are no current plans to lift the imposed restrictions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business and Work Measures</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employees can work in offices only if it is absolutely necessary. Their numbers should not exceed 20% of the total workforce.</strong></td>
<td>1. Physical social distancing of at least 1 metre is to be maintained in all common areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The remaining 80% of the workforce should continue working remotely from home.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working hours for the 20% in the workplace will now begin at 7am and end at 1pm. The following are excluded: military, food stores, pharmacies, health sector, oil and gas sector, security sector.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work meetings should be held at the office only if absolutely necessary. Attendees should not exceed 5 people and each person should maintain the 1 metre physical distance from others.</strong></td>
<td>5. Family entertainment, changing rooms, prayer rooms, retail stores and cinemas are to remain closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everyone is to wear face masks while at the workplace. Daily sterilisation of the workplace is mandatory. Employees and visitors should be provided with sanitisers at all times.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inbound flights to Doha are currently suspended. Flights will continue for cargo and returning Qatari citizens, who will be subject to quarantine for 14 days.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Guidelines released by the Qatar Government [9][10][11]
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**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (ABU DHABI & DUBAI)**

**WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES**

From the 23rd April 2020, Abu Dhabi and Dubai governments plan to reduce some of the restrictions in place due to the coronavirus outbreak. This action is following measures implemented including the 11-day sterilisation campaign (22nd March 2020) and night curfew (26th March 2020). All businesses are expected to remain on standby for official announcements on the date of reopening (date not yet announced).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business and Work Measures</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Businesses and administrative offices can reopen after they have complied with the guidelines and protocols set out by the government.</td>
<td>Physical social distancing of 2 metres is to be maintained in all common areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are allowed to work in offices only if it is absolutely necessary. Their numbers should <strong>not exceed 30%</strong> of the total workforce.</td>
<td>Schools are to remain closed until the end of the academic year (<strong>June 2020</strong>). Online distance learning is to continue until the end of the academic year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rest of the workforce should continue working remotely from home.</td>
<td>Shopping Malls, High-Streets, Souqs and Wholesale are <strong>to reopen at 30% capacity</strong>, operating at 10 hours maximum per day. Those <strong>over 60 years old</strong> and children between <strong>3-12 are not permitted</strong> to visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work meetings should be held at the office only if absolutely necessary. Attendees should <strong>not exceed 5 people</strong> and each person should maintain the <strong>2 metre</strong> physical distance from others.</td>
<td>Family entertainment, changing rooms, prayer rooms and cinemas are to remain closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies should constantly monitor the number of employees and visitors entering and leaving the workplace every day.</td>
<td>People should remain at home unless leaving the house for necessities (for which masks should be worn).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is to wear face masks while at the workplace. Daily sterilisation of the workplace is mandatory. Employees and visitors should be provided with sanitisers at all times.</td>
<td>Gatherings are restricted to <strong>up to 10 people</strong> in private places, including no weddings or funerals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai Metro and Dubai Tram are to remain suspended until <strong>30th April 2020</strong>, from when phased operation shall take place. Metros will be allowed to operate for a <strong>12-hour period</strong> across the Red and Green lines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Guidelines released by the Dubai Government [6][7][8]

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**UNited Kingdom**
**Workplaces and Public Spaces**

On the 15th of March 2020, the UK government stated that everyone should avoid all non-essential travel and contact with others, avoid crowds and work from home if possible. This was then escalated to a lockdown on the whole population on the 23rd of March 2020, with non-essential contact and travel banned, as well as a shutdown of most businesses, venues and places of worship. A draft lockdown review document released on the 3rd of May proposes a range of guidelines for businesses, including health and safety requirements.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare services are to use virtual, non-contact consultations where possible.</td>
<td>Physical distancing of 2 metres outside home (including on public transport).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers should continue to support their employees to work from home, if possible. For employees at heightened risk, they should be placed in the “safest possible roles” if they can’t work from home.</td>
<td>A phased return is currently under consideration, with older primary school children prioritised. Children aged 10 and 11 (Primary Year 6) may potentially return to school on the 1st of June. Their return will be closely followed by other primary school years, and years 10 and 12 in secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees who have people in their offices and onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England guidelines, including maintaining a 2 metre distance from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often.</td>
<td>Bar areas and seated restaurants and cafes are to remain closed until further notice. Non-essential retail is to remain closed until further notice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical screens and the use of protective equipment should be used in instances where employees cannot work 2m away from each other.</td>
<td>Non-essential gatherings should be avoided. Low risk local recreation activities are allowed e.g. solitary jogging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtailing hotdesking, closing staff canteens and limiting the number of employees allowed in lifts at any one time should be considered.</td>
<td>Public transport is deemed essential and is running at reduced capacity. Social distancing measures should be observed. Non-essential travel is to be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction sites are to remain open as long as workers are able to follow social distancing measures. Some contractors plan to reopen sites under a managed and gradual framework, following a revised set of working practices and precautionary measures including changes to site format, bespoke PPE and revised Risk Assessments.</td>
<td>To promote the safe use of public transport, proposed workplace measures include staggering shift times to avoid rush hour peaks, encouraging walking/cycling to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should remain at home unless leaving the house for necessities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Guidelines released by the UK Government [17][18][19][20] [21] [22] [23] [24]

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UNITED STATES
WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

A public health emergency was declared in the United States on the 31st of January. A national emergency was declared on the 13th of March, with gatherings of more than ten people disallowed from the 16th of March. All U.S. citizens were advised to avoid international travel from the 19th of March. States have responded to the outbreak by restricting commerce and public movement, and the closure of schools and large-scale gatherings. A 3-phased reopening approach has been proposed.

**Business and Work Measures**

- Employers should continue to support their employees to work from home, if possible and feasible with business operations. If possible, employees should return to work in phases.

- Common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact should be closed, or if possible, strict social distancing protocols should be enforced.

- Special accommodations should be considered for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population.

- Employers that have on-site employees should implement and develop appropriate policies informed by industry best practices regarding social distancing and protective equipment, temperature checks.

- Workplaces should follow appropriate sanitisation protocol. Common and high-traffic areas should be disinfected regularly.

- Business travel should be limited where possible.

- Elective surgeries can resume, as clinically appropriate.

**Public and Social Measures**

- Physical distancing of 2 metres outside home (including on public transport).

- Members of households with vulnerable residents are advised to remain at home.

- Schools and organized youth activities that are currently closed should remain closed.

- Large venues (e.g. sit-down dining, movie theaters, sporting venues, gyms, places of worship) can operate under strict physical distancing and sanitisation protocols. Bars should remain closed.

- Low risk local recreational activities are allowed e.g. solitary jogging.

- Non-essential gatherings should be avoided, of more than 10 people should be avoided in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.

- Non-essential travel should be avoided. CDC guidelines regarding isolation following travel should be followed, if travel is necessary.

Based on Guidelines released by the US Government [28]

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