

Georgia eases lockdown; US COVID-19 toll passes 50,000

April 24 2020, by Russ Bynum and David Crary



A customer wears personal protective equipment while riding an MTA bus as it operates without fees, Friday, April 24, 2020, in the Bronx borough of New York. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Barber shops, nail salons, gyms and a few other businesses reopened in

Georgia on Friday as the Republican governor eased a month-long shutdown despite warnings from health experts of a potential new surge of coronavirus infections.

As some customers ventured back to these venues, the confirmed number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States surpassed 50,000, according to a tally compiled by John Hopkins University from government figures. The actual death toll is believed to be far higher.

Even though limited in scope, the reopenings in Georgia and at least two other states marked a symbolic milestone in the debate raging in the United States – and the world—as to how quickly political leaders should lift economically damaging lockdown orders.

With deaths and infections still rising in Georgia, many [business owners](#) planned to stay closed despite of Gov. Brian Kemp's assurance that [hospital visits](#) and new cases have leveled off enough for barbers, tattoo artists, massage therapists and personal trainers to return to work with restrictions.

Kemp's timeline to restart the economy proved too ambitious even for President Donald Trump, who says he disagrees with the fellow Republican's plan.

On Friday, Trump signed a \$484 billion bill to aid employers and hospitals under stress from the pandemic—the latest federal effort to help keep afloat businesses that have had to close or scale down. Over the past five weeks, roughly 26 million people have filed for jobless aid, or about 1 in 6 U.S. workers.



A man wears a mask to protect against the spread of the coronavirus as he walks along the Trocadero square close to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Friday, April 24, 2020. France continues to be under an extended stay-at-home order until May 11 in an attempt to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

Without a tried-and-tested action plan for how to pull countries out of coronavirus lockdown, the world is seeing a patchwork of approaches. Schools reopen in one country, stay closed in others; face masks are an obligation here, a simple recommendation there.

Kids still attend soccer practice in Sweden while they are not even allowed outside in Spain. As governments and scientists fumble around, still struggling with so many unknowns, individuals are being left to take

potentially life-affecting decisions.

In Georgia, David Huynh had 60 clients booked for appointments at his nail salon in Savannah, but a clothing store, jewelry shop and chocolatier that share a street corner with his downtown business, Envy Nail Bar, remained closed as he opened.

"The phone's been staying ringing off the hook," Huynh said. "We've probably gotten hundreds of calls in the last hour."



Staff of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government urge people to go home from the Kabukicho entertainment district in the Shinjuku Ward in Tokyo, Friday evening, April 24, 2020. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expanded a state of emergency to all of Japan from just Tokyo and other urban areas as the virus continues to spread. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Four women clutching [face masks](#) were waiting outside when the salon opened for the first time since March 26.

"Yes, I am ready to get my nails fixed," said Alina Davis, a police officer for the local school system, who kept working throughout the crisis.

Meanwhile, Nikki Thomas is overdue for a visit to her hair stylist, but she's barely ventured outside her house in the six weeks since her employer, an Atlanta advertising company, mandated working from home on March 12. She had no plans to change that now just because of Kemp's decision.

"It's obviously extremely stupid and I'm simultaneously exhausted and so angry I can barely see straight," Thomas, 40, said in a phone interview.

The gradual reopenings come as coronavirus testing continues to lag across the United States. To date, according to data compiled by the COVID Tracking Project, just under 4.7 million people have been tested in the country of 330 million people.



In this Monday, March 9, 2020, photo, students wearing masks to help stop the spread of the new coronavirus, participate in the visual arts mock exam for Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) at the CCC Ming Kei College in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's university entrance examinations have started with social-distancing measures. More than 52,000 students are expected to sit for the city's Diploma of Secondary Education exams over the next month. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

A lack of tests and supplies has hampered the U.S. effort from the beginning. About 193,000 people were tested on Thursday. That's an increase from the two-week daily average of 163,000, but far less than what public health experts estimate is needed to get a handle on the virus.

Researchers at Harvard have estimated a minimum of 500,000 daily tests are needed, and possibly much more, in order to safely reopen the economy.

In Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer lengthened her stay-at-home order through May 15, while lifting restrictions so some businesses can reopen and the public can participate in outdoor activities like golf and motorized boating during the coronavirus pandemic.

Michigan has nearly 3,000 deaths related to COVID-19, behind only New York and New Jersey among U.S. states.

New York reported its lowest number of daily COVID-19 deaths in weeks on Friday. The state recorded 422 deaths as of the day before—the fewest since March 31, when it recorded 391 deaths. More than 16,000 people have died in the state from the outbreak.



People wear face masks to protect against the spread of the new coronavirus as they walk through an outdoor shopping area in Beijing, Friday, April 24, 2020. China reported no new virus deaths for the ninth straight day, and just six new cases on Friday. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

In France, the government is leaving families to decide whether to keep children at home or send them back to class when the nationwide lockdown, in place since March 17, starts to be eased May 11.

In Spain, parents face a similarly knotty decision: whether to let kids get their first fresh air in weeks when the country starts Sunday to ease the total ban on letting them outside. Even then, they will still have to abide by a "1-1-1" rule: no more than one hour per day, within a few minutes walk of their house and with no more than one supervising adult.

The slowing of Spain's horrific outbreak, which has killed more than 22,500 people, made the prospect of letting kids out feasible. For the first time Friday, Spanish health authorities counted more people recovering from the disease in a 24-hour span than new infections.



Muslim men attend a Friday prayer despite concerns of the new coronavirus outbreak, at a mosque during the first day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Lhokseumawe, in the religiously conservative province of Aceh, Indonesia, Friday, April 24, 2020. During Ramadan, which begins Friday, faithful Muslims normally fast during the day and then congregate for night prayers and share communal meals. (AP Photo/Zik Maulana)



A staff member of the local health authority supports a woman using a new coronavirus test kit at a new drive-in testing center in Berlin, Germany, Friday, April 24, 2020. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)



In this photo taken on Thursday April 23, 2020, two women in traditional dress dance by the entrance of their decorated house in the village of Mairena del Alcor, some 21 kilometres (13 miles) from Seville, Spain, during the annual traditional April Fair celebrated across the southern Andulacia Provence. Without breaking the confinement rules and maintaining their distance from each other, the residents of the village have found a novel way of continuing the tradition of the fair which has been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak and normally includes flamenco dancing, bullfighting, eating and drinking. (AP Photo/Miguel Morenatti)



People going to work some wear masks to protect against the spread of the coronavirus ride a subway early morning in Paris, Friday, April 24, 2020. France continues to be under an extended stay-at-home order until May 11 in an attempt to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)



Ultra-Orthodox Jews keep social distancing during a morning prayer next to their houses as synagogues are closed following the government's measures to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, in Bnei Brak, Israel, Friday, April 24, 2020. (AP Photo/Oded Balilty)



A client leaves a bookstore after collecting her order in Lille, northern France, Friday April 24, 2020. French bookstores, which saw sales plunge in the first month of confinement due to the coronavirus outbreak, have won permission to open pick-up windows for customers to fetch books they've ordered online or by phone. The culture minister said book customers can check the box for "purchases of primary necessity" when they fill out the form that all French residents must carry whenever they leave the house explaining why they're not in confinement. (AP Photo/Michel Spingler)



A construction worker passes a mural by artist Casper Cruse, showing a woman with a face mask holding a heart in the colors of the dutch flag as a statement of support for those suffering from the effects of the coronavirus, in The Hague, Netherlands, Friday, April 24, 2020. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)



A man walks down the stairs in a quiet 61st Street–Woodside subway station in the Queens borough of New York, Thursday night, April 23, 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic. More evidence is emerging that far more New Yorkers have had the coronavirus than the number confirmed by lab tests, officials said Thursday, offering insight that could help authorities decide how and how quickly to let people stop isolating from friends and return to work. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)



Neighbors receive a free lunch in a soup kitchen organized by neighbors and financed by the local government, on the outskirts of Lima, Peru, Thursday, April 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



The initiative 'Empty Chairs' have set up almost 800 chairs in front of the Brandenburg Gate to point out the difficult situation of their industry in Berlin, Germany, Friday, April 24, 2020. The federal and state governments have decided to relax a number of coronavirus related restrictions in Germany but restaurants and pubs must remain closed. (Bernd von Jutrczenka/dpa via AP)

Shutdown hotels, restaurants, bars and cafes in Germany placed empty chairs in streets and squares Friday to highlight their economic suffering. The prospect of sipping wine on a Paris sidewalk also is still far off: French authorities announced that restaurants, bars and cafes won't reopen before June.

The [coronavirus](#) has killed more than 190,000 people worldwide, including more than 100,000 in Europe, according to the John Hopkins

University tally. New cases are surging in Africa and Latin America as outbreaks subside in some places that were hit earlier.

In Muslim communities, the pandemic is casting a shadow over the holy month of Ramadan—marked by daytime fasting, overnight festivities and communal prayer. Ramadan begins for the world's 1.8 billion Muslims with this week's new moon. Many Muslim leaders have closed mosques or banned collective evening prayer to ward off infections.

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