

Global death toll from coronavirus surpasses 200,000

April 27 2020, by Sara Burnett and Kate Brumback



A woman sleeps on Brighton Beach in the Brooklyn borough of New York as seagulls flutter around her, on Saturday, April 25, 2020. With the weather warming up, more people wearing personal protective equipment are venturing out to the parks and streets, though most are still respecting the social distancing guidelines for the COVID-19 coronavirus. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-E)

As the global death toll from the coronavirus surpassed 200,000 on Saturday, countries took cautious steps toward easing some lockdowns, while fears of infection made even some pandemic-wounded businesses reluctant to reopen.

The states of Georgia, Oklahoma and Alaska started loosening restrictions on businesses despite warnings from experts that such steps might be coming too soon. Some owners said they weren't yet ready to reopen or were doing so only on a limited basis, worried about a second surge of COVID-19 infections.

"We've sacrificed so much already," said Shawn Gingrich, CEO and founder of Lion's Den Fitness, who decided after the Georgia governor's announcement that he would not be reopening his Atlanta gym right away. "I feel like if we do this too soon, we'll see a spike in cases and we're back to square one."

The worldwide death toll topped 200,000, according to a tally compiled by John Hopkins University from government figures. The actual death toll is believed to be far higher.

In India, easing restrictions meant reopening neighborhood stores that many of the country's 1.3 billion people rely on for everything from cold drinks to mobile phone data cards. But the loosening didn't apply to hundreds of quarantined towns and other places hit hardest by the outbreak that has killed at least 775 people in the country and terrified its multitudes of poor who live in slum conditions too crowded for social distancing.



In this Thursday, April 23, 2020 photo, Kenia Anzarado, right, and Mae Catalan, left, works on finishing and packing face masks at the Georgia Expo in Suwanee, Ga. The company has pivoted from sewing curtains to sewing cloth face masks. As business restrictions ease companies are preparing to open, but one key ingredient to safety is nearly impossible to find, personal protective equipment. (Curtis Compton/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP)

Shopping malls also stayed closed nationwide. Still, for families that run small stores, being able to earn again brought relief.

"This is a good decision," said Amit Sharma, an architect. "We have to open a few things and let the economy start moving. The [poor people](#)

should have some source of income. This virus is going to be a long-term problem."

Last week, India also allowed manufacturing and farming to resume in rural areas to ease the economic plight of millions left jobless by the lockdown imposed March 24. India's restrictions have allowed people out of their homes only to buy food, medicine or other essentials.

Elsewhere in Asia, authorities reported no new deaths Saturday for the 10th straight day in China, where the virus originated.

And South Korea reported just 10 fresh cases, the eighth day in a row its daily jump came below 20. There were no new deaths for the second straight day.



A man walks along an empty street in downtown Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, April 25, 2020 as the lockdown to combat the spread of coronavirus continues. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

In an announcement that underscored the scientific unknowns about the virus, the World Health Organization said "there is currently no evidence" that people who have recovered from COVID-19 cannot fall sick again.

Some countries extended or tightened restrictions, confirming a pattern of caution.

Sri Lanka had partially lifted a monthlong daytime curfew in more than two thirds of the country. But it reimposed a 24-hour lockdown countrywide after a surge Friday of 46 new infections, the highest increase in a day on the Indian Ocean island. The new curfew remains in effect until Monday.

Norway extended until at least Sept. 1 its ban on events with more than 500 participants.

Pope Francis appealed for prayers for funeral home workers, saying: "What they do is so heavy and sad. They really feel the pain of this pandemic."



Dody's Hair Creation owner and operator Dody Morrison wears personal protective equipment during a haircut service for Evelyn Wilson, Friday, April 24, 2020, at her salon in Ketchikan, Alaska. Both Wilson and Morrison conversed with each other from behind masks. (Dustin Safranek/Ketchikan Daily News via AP)

In Europe, kids in Spain will get their first fresh air in weeks on Sunday when a ban on letting them outside is relaxed. After 44 days indoors, they'll be allowed to take one toy or scooter with them but not play together for the adult-supervised one-hour excursions no farther than 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) from home. Some nervous parents shopped online for child-size masks for their children, as recommended by authorities.

"I really want to get outside, and Ema does as well," said Madrid resident

Eva Novilo, whose daughter Ema is 7. But Novilo predicted "difficult situations" if they see Ema's friends and have to stay apart. "I don't know if we will be able to maintain control."

Belgium sketched out plans for a progressive lockdown relaxation starting May 4 with the resumption of nonessential treatment in hospitals and the reopening of textile and sewing shops so people can make face masks. Bars and restaurants would be allowed to start reopening June 8, although Belgian Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes also cautioned that a surge in infections could alter the timeline and that "nothing is set in stone."

In Italy, authorities warned against abandoning social distancing practices after lockdown restrictions are eased on May 4 and millions return to work. Authorities said free protective masks will be distributed to nursing homes, police, [public officials](#) and transportation workers. Rome's public transit agency painted blue circles on subway platforms to remind people to keep their distance when commuters return in large numbers.



A child with his mother from Makoko Slum, carries their food parcel distributed by the Nigerian Red Cross, provided for those under coronavirus related movement restrictions, in Lagos, Nigeria, Saturday, April 25, 2020. (AP Photo/Sunday Alamba)

The country continues to have Europe's highest death toll, with 26,384 deaths. The 415 deaths registered in the 24-hour period that ended Saturday evening was the lowest toll since Italy registered 345 on March 17, but only five fewer than Friday.

With gatherings banned, Italians celebrated the 75th anniversary of their liberation from occupation forces in World War II, emerging on balconies or rooftops at the same time Saturday to sing a folk song linked to resistance fighters.

Britain is still holding off on changes to its lockdown as the coronavirus-related death toll in hospitals topped 20,000. The figure does not include deaths in nursing homes, which are likely to be in the thousands.

In France, the government is preparing to gingerly ease one of Europe's strictest lockdowns from May 11. The health minister detailed plans to scale up testing to help contain any new flare-ups.



Grocery shops are seen open during lockdown to prevent the spread of new coronavirus in Prayagraj, India, Saturday, April 25, 2020. A tentative easing around the world of coronavirus lockdowns gathered pace Saturday with the reopening in India of neighborhood stores that many of the country's 1.3 billion people rely on for everything from cold drinks to mobile phone data cards. (AP Photo/Rajesh Kumar Singh)

Testing shortages are a critical problem elsewhere, too, including in Brazil, Latin America's largest nation, which is veering closer to becoming a pandemic hot spot.

Medical officials in Rio de Janeiro and four other major cities warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or already overwhelmed. In Manaus, the biggest city in the Amazon, officials said they have been forced to dig mass graves in a cemetery. Workers have been burying 100 corpses a day—triple the pre-virus average.

In the U.S., Republican governors in states including Georgia and Oklahoma allowed salons, spas and barbershops to reopen, while Alaska cleared the way for restaurants to resume dine-in service and retail shops and other businesses to open their doors, all with limitations. Some Alaska municipalities chose to maintain stricter rules.

Though limited in scope, and subject to social-distancing restrictions, the reopenings marked a symbolic milestone in the debate raging in the United States and beyond as to how quickly political leaders should lift economically devastating lockdown orders.



Applicants sit for the written examination during an insurance planner qualification exam in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, April 25, 2020. The qualification exam was held while maintaining social distancing at the outdoor as part of precaution against the new coronavirus and also all applicants had to wear face masks and had their temperature checked. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)



A man poses for a photo holding food he received from a group of neighbors who have formed to help people in need facing hardship amid the new coronavirus pandemic, in the financial district of Montevideo, Uruguay, Saturday, April 25, 2020. (AP Photo/Matilde Campodonico)



A bicyclist wears face protection against the new coronavirus while pedaling through Larimer Square early Saturday, April 25, 2020, in downtown Denver. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

On Friday, President Donald Trump spoke optimistically of the economy but also asked people to continue [social distancing](#) and using face coverings. The same day, he signed a \$484 billion bill to aid employers and hospitals. In the past five weeks, roughly 26 million people have filed for jobless aid, or about 1 in 6 U.S. workers.

Trump also said his widely criticized comments suggesting people can ingest or inject disinfectant to fight COVID-19 were an attempt at sarcasm.

In Texas, where restrictions have been eased to allow retailers to sell items for curbside pickup, Allison Scott said her women's clothing store in a Dallas shopping mall has done a few "to go" orders but most customers seem to still feel more comfortable ordering online. Scott says that as much as she'd like to see things return to the way they were and people allowed to shop in person, she thinks it's too risky health-wise right now, and can't see people wanting to come either.

"I want to be open more than anything but I don't think that society is ready to come out either," she said.

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Citation: Global death toll from coronavirus surpasses 200,000 (2020, April 27) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-global-death-toll-coronavirus-surpasses.html>

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