

# Japan lifts coronavirus emergency in all remaining areas

May 25 2020, by Mari Yamaguchi

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Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks at a news conference in Tokyo Monday, May 25, 2020. Abe lifted a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and four other remaining areas on Monday, ending the restrictions nationwide. (Kim Kyung-hoon/Pool Photo via AP)

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lifted a coronavirus state of

emergency in Tokyo and four other remaining areas on Monday, ending the restrictions nationwide as businesses begin to reopen.

Experts on a government-commissioned panel approved the lifting of the emergency in Tokyo, neighboring Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama prefectures, and in Hokkaido to the north, which had more cases and remained under the emergency declaration after it was removed in most of Japan earlier this month.

Abe said the lifting of the emergency does not mean the end of the outbreak. He said the goal is to balance [preventive measure](#) and the economy until vaccines and effective drugs become available.

Japan, with about 16,600 confirmed cases and about 850 deaths, has so far avoided a large outbreak like those experienced in the U.S. and the Europe despite its softer restrictions.

But the world's third largest economy is fallen into a recession, and public discontent over Abe's handling of the [coronavirus](#) has sent his support ratings tumbling. Recent media surveys show [public support](#) for his Cabinet has plunged below 30%, the lowest since he returned to office in December 2012.

Abe declared the state of emergency on April 7 in several parts of Japan including Tokyo, expanded it to the entire nation later in the month, and then extended it until the end of May.



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wears a protective mask as he enters a venue for his news conference in Tokyo, Monday, May 25, 2020. Abe is lifting a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and four other remaining areas, ending the restrictions nationwide as businesses begin to reopen. (Kim Kyung-hoon/Pool Photo via AP)



An employee guides shoppers walking in food section of the Matsuya Ginza department store which partially reopens at Ginza shopping district Monday, May 25, 2020, in Tokyo. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is expected to remove a coronavirus state of emergency from Tokyo and four other remaining prefectures later in the day. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)





An employee wearing a protective mask and a face shield to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus measures the temperature of customers walking in food section of the Matsuya Ginza department store which partially reopens Monday, May 25, 2020, in Tokyo. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is expected to remove a coronavirus state of emergency from Tokyo and four other remaining prefectures later in the day. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)



Shoppers maintain a safe social distance between each other as they wait in line to pay at a food section of the Matsuya Ginza department store which partially reopens Monday, May 25, 2020, in Tokyo. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is expected to remove a coronavirus state of emergency from Tokyo and four other remaining prefectures later in the day. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Under the emergency, people were asked to stay at home and non-essential businesses were requested to close or reduce operations, but there was no enforcement. Since May 14, when the measures were lifted in most of Japan, more people have left their homes and stores have begun reopening.

Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura said recent data suggest that infections have slowed enough and pressure on the medical system has

fallen enough to allow a gradual resumption of social and economic activity. He said Tokyo, Kanagawa and Hokkaido, where the number of infections is still fluctuating, need to be watched closely.

On Monday, Matsuya department store, a landmark in Tokyo's posh Ginza shopping district, resumed operation. Sales staff wearing plastic face shields welcomed customers with bows but no verbal greetings under new guidelines.

Individual prefectures are allowed to impose their own measures. Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike said last week that the capital will reopen in three phases starting with schools, libraries, museums, and longer service hours for restaurants. She said theaters, sports facilities and other commercial establishments will be next, with nightclubs, karaoke and live music houses in the final phase.

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Citation: Japan lifts coronavirus emergency in all remaining areas (2020, May 25) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-japan-coronavirus-emergency-areas.html>

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