

# Ireland comes back to life as lockdown eased

June 8 2020

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Ireland's shops and workplaces lurched back to life on Monday, as the nation pressed ahead with its plan to lift coronavirus lockdown restrictions ahead of schedule.

As the new week started, all shops were permitted to trade and travel limits were massively relaxed in a dramatic quickening of the

government's reopening plans.

Employees able to maintain social distancing were also encouraged to return to their workplaces as Ireland took its largest step yet since lockdown was imposed on March 28.

"This is a great day for our country," health minister Simon Harris told state broadcaster RTE.

"It's a day of hope, it's a day that we weren't guaranteed to get to."

Ireland has suffered 1,679 deaths in the outbreak, according to the latest official figures.

Deaths recorded in a single day peaked at 77 mid-April but on Sunday the figure had fallen to just one.

Prime Minister Leo Varadkar announced the accelerated slackening of restrictions on Friday, and brought forward the planned date to drop almost all [coronavirus](#) containment measures from August to July.

## **A new plan**

Under the new blueprint, social home visits were permitted for the first time, with up to six allowed to meet indoors or outdoors. Vulnerable people "cocooning" are allowed "a small number of visitors".

Meanwhile citizens were allowed to travel anywhere in their county of residence or up to 20 kilometres (12 miles) from home, in an unexpected extension of the previous five-kilometre limit.

Nonetheless radio broadcasts on Monday urged citizens to "stay local".

Harris urged the public to visit only a modest list of friends and family, to strictly maintain [social distancing](#) and to log names in case they are needed for purposes of contact tracing.

Livestock markets and elite sports training facilities were also opened as scheduled under the second stage of the government roadmap.

Under the government plan, shops are not permitted to open before 10.30 am in order to prevent overcrowding on [public transport](#) and will allocate time for vulnerable customers.

Shopping centres will not reopen until next week, and must put in place measures to prevent the public congregating in shared spaces.

"Over the last few months fear has exerted a kind of gravity pulling us down, but now we find there is hope lifting us up again," Varadkar said on Friday.

"We are making progress, we are heading in the right direction and we have earned the right to be hopeful about the future again."

Ireland began its tentative first step out of lockdown on May 18, allowing [small groups](#) to meet outside, outdoor shops to reopen and activities such as golf to tee off.

On Friday, Varadkar signalled he intends to press ahead with the accelerated ending of lockdown by allowing hotels and pubs serving food to open on June 29.

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