

Ireland to accelerate end of lockdown: PM

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Ireland plans to accelerate the lifting of its coronavirus lockdown for the second time in the coming weeks, prime minister Leo Varadkar said Friday.

Churches, hairdressers, cinemas, theatres and gyms will now open on

June 29, ahead of the government's initial schedule,

All sporting activities will also be allowed and mass gatherings permitted, of 50 people indoors and 200 outdoors.

"The spirit of hope proved to be contagious and has brought us to where we are now—ahead of schedule, able to accelerate the reopening of our society and our economy," said Varadkar at a post-cabinet press conference in Dublin.

"We'll be living a very different type of life, but a life where we can again do so many things that are important to us and our families."

The changes to lockdown—in place for three months—will come into effect if the spread of the virus remains under control in the days leading up to 29 June.

The Republic has suffered 1,714 deaths from the coronavirus according to department of health figures released on Friday.

The daily toll peaked at 77 in April but in recent days has dropped to single digits, and there have been some days with no new mortalities recorded.

Earlier this month Varadkar announced the nation's first accelerated step out of lockdown.

Deviating from a cautious "roadmap" to release the nation from restrictions published in May, citizens were permitted to travel more widely and all shops were allowed to start trading on 8 June.

Restaurants, hotels and pubs serving food were also approved to open on 29 June.

Meanwhile the final stage of the plan was brought forward, meaning nearly all [lockdown](#) measures are set to be lifted in July rather than August.

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