

# Full lockdown takes effect in Turkey, people leave cities

April 29 2021, by Suzan Fraser

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People shop at the local market in Istanbul, Thursday, April 29, 2021, a few hours before the start of the latest lockdown to help protect from the spread of the coronavirus. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet came into effect late Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries and it's the first time that it is imposing a nearly three-week lockdown

for the whole of the country. (AP Photo/Emrah Gurel)

People in Turkey stocked up on groceries, filled markets and left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast Thursday before the country entered its strictest lockdown of the pandemic.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" that took effect at 1600 GMT (12 p.m. EDT) and will last until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 cases and deaths. It is the first nationwide lockdown lasting nearly three weeks. The Turkish government had previously opted for partial lockdowns or weekend curfews in a bid to reduce the economic impact.

Under the new restrictions, residents are required to stay home except for grocery shopping and other essential needs, while intercity travel is only allowed with permission. Restaurants are allowed to deliver food.

Some businesses and industries are exempt from the shutdown, including factories and agriculture, health care and supply chain and logistics companies. Lawmakers, [health care](#) workers, law enforcement officers and tourists are also exempt from the stay-home order.

Many people left [large cities](#) such as Istanbul and Ankara to spend the shutdown—which spans the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, as well as the three-day Eid holiday—at vacation homes on the coast. Bus terminals and airports were packed with travelers, while vehicles backed up in severe traffic at the entrance of the Aegean coastal resort of Bodrum, broadcaster Haberturk and other media reported.



People ride horses on the beach in Kilyos, northern Istanbul, Thursday, April 29, 2021, a few hours before the start of the latest lockdown to help protect from the spread of the coronavirus. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet came into effect late Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries and it's the first time that it is imposing a nearly three-week lockdown for the whole of the country. (AP Photo/Emrah Gurel)

People crowded shops to stock up on food and other supplies even though grocery stores will remain open.

Shops selling alcohol weren't exempted and are being forced to close



during the lockdown. Social media saw an uproar as users accused Erdogan's conservative government of trying to impose its Islamic values.

This month, Turkey's confirmed COVID-19 infections averaged around 60,000 per day during the peak week. The country recorded its highest daily death toll on April 21, with 362 fatalities.

On Thursday, the country reported 37,674 new confirmed cases and 339 deaths. Turkey's total death toll in the pandemic now stands at 39,737.

Erdogan said daily confirmed cases would have to rapidly drop below 5,000 for Turkey "to not be left behind" as many European countries start reopening. The country relies heavily on tourism to bring in foreign currency and wants to slow infection rates before the season starts.



People sit in a park in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, April 29, 2021, just hours before the start of a three-week full lockdown. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet comes into effect later on Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" from Thursday evening until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries. (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)



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People queue for drinks at a park in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, April 29, 2021, just hours before the start of a three-week full lockdown. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet comes into effect later on Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" from Thursday evening until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries. (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)



People visit the beach in Kilyos, northern Istanbul, Thursday, April 29, 2021, a few hours before the start of the latest lockdown to help protect from the spread of the coronavirus. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet came into effect late Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries and it's the first time that it is imposing a nearly three-week lockdown for the whole of the country. (AP Photo/Emrah Gurel)





A couple walk a baby as people sit in a park in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, April 29, 2021, just hours before the start of a three-week full lockdown. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet comes into effect later on Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" from Thursday evening until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries. (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)





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A chair on the beach in Kilyos, northern Istanbul, Thursday, April 29, 2021, a few hours before the start of the latest lockdown to help protect from the spread of the coronavirus. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet came into effect late Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries and it's the first time that it is imposing a nearly three-week lockdown for the whole of the country. (AP Photo/Emrah Gurel)





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A woman reads a book as people sit in a park in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, April 29, 2021, just hours before the start of a three-week full lockdown. People stocked up on groceries, shoppers filled markets and many left cities for their hometowns or the southern coast as Turkey's strictest COVID-19 lockdown yet comes into effect later on Thursday. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed a "full lockdown" from Thursday evening until May 17 amid soaring COVID-19 infections and deaths. Turkey now ranks among the world's worst-hit countries.(AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)

Erdogan's government has come under intense criticism for holding mass party congresses across the country, in breach of social distancing rules. Opposition parties have blamed his ruling party for the surge in cases.

Top government officials were also seen attending crowded funerals

while many businesses remained closed and the public was required to keep attendance at funerals small.

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