

Portugal poised to lift more restrictions as pandemic ebbs

April 27 2021, by Barry Hatton



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Six weeks after starting to gradually ease an extended pandemic lockdown, Portugal has kept a lid on the spread of COVID-19 and is on track to further loosen restrictions next week as planned.

That means the southern European country is likely from next Monday to lift limits on the opening hours of restaurants and cafes, allow major

indoor and outdoor events though with limits on capacity, and increase the number of people who can attend weddings and baptisms. Rules on social distancing and the wearing of face masks are to remain in place.

Health experts at a televised meeting with the country's [political leaders](#), including the president and [prime minister](#), on Tuesday said the pandemic trend has remained stable in recent weeks.

Portugal was the world's worst-hit country by size of population in January, weeks after lifting restrictions for four days over Christmas. But the pandemic has ebbed significantly since a strict [lockdown](#) that month which authorities gradually began loosening six weeks ago.

Portugal on Monday officially recorded no deaths from COVID-19 for the first time since early August. Elderly care homes have recorded no deaths for two weeks.

The virus incidence rate per 100,000 population over 14 days—a key [pandemic](#) measure—stands at 67. At the end of January, it was 1,628.

Intensive care units in the country of 10.3 million people were treating more than 900 patients in early February, but now are looking after 91.

Like elsewhere in the European Union, Portugal's vaccination plan is delayed but is picking up speed. The [health ministry](#) said it expected Tuesday to reach the milestone of 3 million doses given. All people over 60 years of age are predicted to be vaccinated by May 23.

The government is due to announce later this week whether the next phase of easing the lockdown will begin on May 3 as planned.

It is also likely that the national state of emergency, decreed just over a year ago to grant the government legal powers for imposing lockdowns,

won't be extended beyond the end of this week.

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