

Lisbon tightens restrictions as Delta variant spreads

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Lisbon residents appeared resigned to new restrictions brought in on Friday to limit the growing spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 in

the Portuguese capital region.

The city is one of the areas now subject to tighter controls, including shorter opening hours and lower occupancy rates for businesses and restaurants, as well as restrictions on weekend travel.

But people who can show a European vaccination pass or negative coronavirus test are free to move around.

"The measures change all the time! It's hard to keep track," said Isabel Goncalves, a shop worker in Lisbon's historic centre.

"I honestly don't think these measures will have much effect, but we have to do it," said pensioner Maria Casales.

Forced to close their doors at 10:30 pm on weekdays and 3:30 at the weekend, restaurant and cafe owners like Joao Gomes fear a new financial blow.

"Saturday and Sunday are my best working days. What am I going to do?" he complained.

"It would be better for the police to focus on gatherings of people" who fail to maintain social distancing, he argued.

The Delta variant first identified in India has become the dominant strain of coronavirus in and around Lisbon, sparking a resurgence of infections nationwide.

Figures published Friday showed Portugal had detected 1,600 new cases in 24 hours, over 1,000 of them in the Lisbon region.

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