

Norway postpones reopening as COVID cases mount

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Norway on Thursday again postponed the full lifting of its health restrictions as COVID-19 infections reach record highs in the Scandinavian country.

The [government](#) also said it would open vaccination to 12- to 15-year-olds, in a bid to inoculate more people as the highly contagious Delta variant takes hold.

Norway gradually began peeling back restrictions just before the summer as vaccines were rolled out and the number of new infections fell.

Originally, the government had said it hoped to enter the fourth and final phase of the reopening in July. But that has been pushed back several times, most recently in mid-August, because of concerns over how well the virus was being contained.

"A further reopening now leads to an increased risk of spread," Prime Minister Erna Solberg told reporters on Thursday.

"We don't want to take that risk when there is so little time left before all adults have had the opportunity to protect themselves with the [vaccine](#)," she added.

Solberg said she was aiming for a return to normal life "at the end of September" when she hoped about 90 percent of the [adult population](#) will have been vaccinated.

That figure was 71.9 percent on Wednesday, according to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, while 89.1 percent of adults had received a first dose.

The government has also opened vaccines to people aged 12 to 15, who can now get a single dose.

Vaccine have until now been available only to people aged 16 and over.

The number of infections in the country has risen sharply in recent days, reaching record highs.

The rise is blamed in part on the Delta variant, which has taken hold among [young people](#) in particular as the school year began last month.

Among the restrictions that will remain in place is a cap on the size of gatherings, which is 5,000 people indoors and 10,000 outdoors.

The announcement comes ahead of [parliamentary elections](#) on September 13 in Norway, where polls suggest a victory for the opposition even though the current government is generally praised for its handling of the [health](#) crisis.

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