

New York to lift many COVID-19 restrictions

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New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a major easing of coronavirus restrictions Monday, including the imminent resumption of 24-hour operations on the city subway.

The announcement highlights how far the Big Apple, once the epicenter of the United States's outbreak, has come in getting the virus under

control.

From May 19, percentage limits on occupancy will be scrapped for many business and cultural venues in the city—including shops, restaurants, cinemas and museums, Cuomo said.

These limits currently vary between 33 and 75 percent capacity.

Businesses will be allowed to welcome as many people as they want provided six feet of social distancing is maintained, as recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"It's fully open, subject to six feet," Cuomo told reporters. The six-foot rule does not apply if all customers provide proof of vaccination or a negative test.

"All the arrows are pointing in the right direction," he added, pointing to declining COVID-19 positivity rates and hospitalizations, which are at their lowest since November, and rising vaccination levels.

Outdoor gathering limits will double from 250 to 500 people, while 250 people will be able to get together indoors, up from 100.

Larger gatherings will be allowed if everyone in attendance is either vaccinated or recently tested negative.

The announcement paves the way for New York's famous theaters to plan their return.

"We look forward to reopening at full capacity and are working to safely welcome audiences and employees back to Broadway theatres this fall," said the Broadway League trade association.

Large-scale indoor event venues will be able to operate at 30 percent capacity, up from 10 percent currently, while outdoor sports stadia will operate at 33 percent.

Cuomo said underground trains services in the Big Apple will resume around the clock on May 17.

In May 2020, when New York was being ravaged by the disease, services were halted overnight to allow for trains to be disinfected. Services currently stop running between 2:00 am and 4:00 am.

Monday's announcement, made in coordination with the neighboring states of New Jersey and Connecticut, came as 80,000 [city](#) government workers returned to offices, according to Mayor Bill de Blasio.

De Blasio has said he hopes New York City can "fully reopen" by July 1.

Many private employers have yet to set a return date though, and the business districts in Midtown and Wall Street remain deserted with many staff still working from home.

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