



Restrictions

REOPENING

What is the reopening plan for Nova Scotia? How soon can we get back to normal?

Nova Scotia is reopening gradually under a five-phase plan. It focuses on allowing Nova Scotians to safely enjoy summer with public health measures in place while we work at getting most of our population fully vaccinated. Once that happens, we should be able to further ease restrictions in the fall and ease in to a new normal of living with COVID-19.

Each phase is based on COVID-19 activity, public health and testing capacity, hospitalizations and vaccination rates. Phases are expected to last between two and four weeks as long as certain criteria are met in these areas. The plan is flexible to respond as the pandemic evolves – a phase may need to last a little longer or the restrictions in a phase may need to change depending on the circumstances. The more people get vaccinated, the more we can reopen the province.

What will happen in each of the five phases?

Please see the [our reopening plan](#) on the website. Some details are yet to be determined for later phases. More information will be available as the date for each new phase is announced.

Are the restrictions ever going to be lifted completely?

In Phase 5 (date to be determined), we will enter an extended period of living with COVID-19. In this phase, we anticipate being able to further ease our public health measures.

Gathering limits are likely to increase. There may be fewer requirements for businesses. Things like masks and physical distancing are likely to become optional. We anticipate being able to further ease border restrictions and isolation requirements. They are partly dependent on federal regulations and requirements.

More information will be provided closer to when this phase begins.

GENERAL GATHERING LIMIT

What is the gathering limit?

In phase 4, people can have informal gatherings with their household members and close social contacts to a maximum of 25 indoors or 50 outdoors without physical distance or masks, unless they are in a public place where masks are required. Any events that are not hosted by a recognized business or organization need to follow these informal gathering limits.

What if some of the people are small children or babies, do they count toward the total number of people?

It doesn't matter how old they are, each person counts.

Can I still have my neighbour down the street or family in another community look after my children?

For unregulated or unlicensed child-care settings, such as neighbours or family who care for children, they can continue to follow regulated ratios for school aged children; eight children or less per caregiver,



including their own. For younger age groups, the ratio is six children or less per caregiver, including their own.

Can child custody agreements continue?

Child custody agreements can continue within Nova Scotia. The child is considered a member of each parent's household. The only change would be if someone develops symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, in which case Section 5 of the [child custody protocol](#) must be followed.

Can people carpool?

People can carpool, although you should keep the group consistent and wear masks.

What can you do to keep your household safe?

- Follow basic public health measures:
 - If you are unwell, stay home
 - Practice good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette
 - Wear a mask when required and anytime physical distancing is a challenge
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth without washing hands first
 - Test tested for COVID-19 regularly
- Understand who is at high-risk/vulnerable and continue to protect them
- Understand your own risk/vulnerability and consider who you are joining a group with
- Maintain physical distancing with anyone outside of your household
- Consider using non-medical masks even when you're not in a place that requires them if there are people in your group who are at higher risk

GATHERING LIMIT FOR EVENTS

What are the limits for community events?

Events that are hosted by a recognized business or organization can have 50% of capacity to a maximum of 150 indoors or 250 outdoors in phase 4.

The recognized business or organization must have a plan and take on responsibility for ensuring public health measures are followed. Typically, these types of events are held in public places where masks are required. Physical distance is required, **except among close social contacts or people from the same household following the informal gathering limits.**

When the event is not hosted by a recognized business or organization, people must follow the informal gathering limits **of up to 25 household members and/or close social contacts indoors or 50 outdoors without physical distance or masks, unless they are in a public place where masks are required. You cannot have 50 random people at an outdoor event, for example.**

Can there be church services or other faith gatherings?

In phase 4, the limit for faith gatherings is 50% of indoor capacity to a maximum of 150 or 250 outdoors. Masks are required. Physical distance is required, **except among close social contacts or people from the same household following the informal gathering limits.** [Guidelines for faith gatherings](#) must be followed.



What are the limits for weddings and funerals?

When a wedding or funeral (and associated reception or visitation) is hosted by a recognized organization, they can have 50% of indoor capacity to a maximum of 150 or 250 outdoors in phase 4.

The recognized business or organization must have a plan and takes on full responsibility for ensuring public health measures are followed.

Typically, these types of events are held in public places where masks are required. Physical distance is still required except among **household members and/or close social contacts**.

Can 25 people indoors or 50 outdoors sit together without physical distancing for a performance, faith gathering or other event?

A group of 25 or 50 random people cannot sit together without physical distance for a performance, faith gathering or other event. Only an existing group of household members and/or close social contacts can be together without physical distance for these types of activities.

For example, if a theatre is hosting a performance, they can have 50% of capacity to a max of 150 spectators indoors or 250 outdoors. People in the audience can sit with their household members and/or close social contacts within the informal gathering limits (25 indoors or 50 outdoors). These groups need to be distanced from each other.

If that is operationally difficult for the business or organization hosting the gathering, they could choose to only seat people in smaller blocks.

Can there be dancing at events like weddings, even if alcohol is served?

Starting in phase 4, there can be dancing at events like weddings, even if alcohol is served. Our event guidelines will be updated to reflect this change.

When people are at a larger event, they can sit or dance with their close social contacts within the informal gathering limits. For example, if a business or organization is hosting your indoor wedding, you could seat a group of 25 family members and close social contacts at a few tables together and they could dance together, staying distanced from other groups.

Can there be high school proms?

Community groups can engage a recognized business or organization to host an event that follows all public health rules, including [gathering limits in place at the time of the event](#) and the [guidance for events](#).

How can a person plan an event if the rules keep changing?

We understand it is challenging to plan an event. However, we are in the middle of a pandemic. This situation demands that we respond to changing epidemiology in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. That means the public health measures will continue to evolve as we gradually reopen. If it is possible to postpone your event until after the pandemic, that will give you more certainty to make plans. If you choose to keep planning your event during the pandemic, there will be a risk of the rules disrupting your plans.



How do people know what is considered a recognized business or organization?

People have to use common sense. It needs to be a business or organization that has experience with events. For example, a hotel is a recognized business that can host events like fundraisers or weddings in its ballrooms. A church is a recognized organization that can host faith gatherings of various types, as well as weddings and funerals. A theatre is a recognized business that can host performances.

Can someone call themselves a wedding planner just for one family wedding in order to have the bigger limit?

They could if they want to take on full responsibility for ensuring that everyone at the event follows all the public health. They would also have to follow business and tax laws.

If I rent a space for an event like a wedding but I do all the work myself, how many people can attend?

If you are renting a space from a recognized business or organization, then that business/organization takes on responsibility for ensuring that everyone at the event follows all the public health measures.

Given that they are taking on this responsibility, they can have larger gathering limits for events. The business/organization should be aware of its responsibilities and ensure it has a solid contract with the renters.

If the owner of the space or other business/organization does not want to take on this responsibility, they should not rent the space or host the event. The owner of the space or a business like a wedding planner cannot ask clients to sign a waiver absolving them of this responsibility.

Can people have backyard weddings and other events at home?

When private, invitation only events that are hosted by a recognized business or organization at a private property (such as a home, cottage, AirB&B), they must follow the [guidelines for events at private properties](#) and [gathering limits for events hosted by a recognized business or organization](#).

When events are not hosted by a recognized business or organization, you can have no more than the [informal gathering limit](#). That includes the officiant. You should follow our [guidance for holidays and celebrations](#).

Because things can evolve quickly in a pandemic, please check for updates to guidelines and other public health measures as you plan your event and be prepared to adapt as necessary.

Is a tent considered an indoor or an outdoor space?

A tent (with or without sides) or any partially enclosed structure like a barn or garage with large doors open is considered an indoor space. If the event is partly in the tent and partly outside, you need to consider the entire event to be an indoor event.

Are masks required in a tent for a wedding reception or other special event?

If the tent is set up for special events, festivals or other gatherings where the general public is expected to be and it is difficult to maintain physical distance, then it is a public space and masks are required. If the tent is set up on a person's private property for an invitation-only event, then it's not a public space. Masks are not mandatory but they are strongly recommended because it can be difficult to maintain physical distance at larger private gatherings.



Does an event venue have to follow the sector plans for restaurants and bars?

If the venue holds a permanent food establishment permit, it must follow the RANS reopening plan. For licensed events serving alcohol, the protocols for licensed establishments must be followed, as outlined in the public health order. In phase 4, the licensed establishment hosting the event returns to its normal service hours.

Does the gathering limit include the workers at an event?

Generally, no, they are in their workplace which is not subject to the gathering limit unless the event is held at a [private property](#). However, if the space is too small for physical distancing, such as a kitchen in a firehall, then there can be no more than 10 workers in the space at a time and they must practice physical distancing as much as possible. Service providers are included in the gathering limits when the event is a private property like a person's home.

If bars and restaurants host events (like a concert or a wedding reception) do they follow the gathering limit for events?

No, when hosting events, bars and restaurants continue to follow the rules and plans for their sectors.

Will large event venues be able to have larger groups or multiple groups?

Specific organizational plans will be reviewed for large venues such as Scotiabank Centre, Halifax Exhibition Centre, Halifax Convention Centre, and Speedworlds.

What happens if a game goes into overtime?

A sport event hosted by a business or organization can continue beyond midnight if the natural course of events leads to extended time of play such as overtime, but food and alcohol service must still stop at the same time as bars and restaurants.

Where can I find more information about safe gatherings?

Here are some useful resources for gatherings and events (note that these guidelines are being updated to reflect the rules for phase 4):

- [Guidance for holidays and celebrations](#)
- [Event guidelines](#)
- [Guidelines for venues and facilities](#)
- [Guidelines for events at private properties](#)
- [Guidelines for outdoor events](#)

BUSINESSES

Does the gathering limit apply to my retail business/office workplace, etc?

Gathering limits do not apply to businesses. Businesses and workplaces need to ensure employees and customers can maintain 2 metres/6 feet physical distance. So the number of people in the space will vary from business to business. If your space is too small for physical distancing, then you can have no more than 10 clients or customers on the premises at a time.

What's the limit for meetings and training? Is physical distancing required?

When meetings or training are hosted by a recognized business or organization, including:

- provincial and municipal governments



- private businesses and organizations
- first responder organizations
- mental health and addictions support groups
- organized clubs

They can have 50% of indoor capacity to a maximum of 150 or 250 outdoors in phase 4. The recognized business or organization hosting the event must have a plan. Typically, these types of events are held in public places where masks are required. Physical distance is required, although emergency first responders are exempt when necessary.

In what parts of a workplace do people have to wear masks?

Masks are mandatory in most [indoor public places](#) – many of which are also workplaces such as bars, restaurants, stores, gyms and more. Masks are also mandatory in private indoor workplaces (such as offices or warehouses) in all common areas, areas where there is interaction with the public, areas with poor ventilation, and areas where distance cannot be maintained.

What are the rules for bars and restaurants?

Through the first four phases of reopening, bars and restaurants can operate at their maximum capacity with physical distance between tables. Masks are required when people are not eating or drinking. They can continue to offer takeout, delivery and drive through service.

Customers can go to the bar to order if they follow social distancing and mask requirements. Live music is permitted following the limits for arts and culture performers – they must wear a mask (except while singing or playing a wind instrument) and follow the [Guidelines for Musicians \(PDF\)](#).

In phase 4, they return to regular hours of operation as per their licensing and can increase the number of people per table to 25. Dancing is allowed following the indoor gathering limit (whether it is indoors or on a patio). For example, a table of 25 household members or close social contacts can sit at a table together (or a group of up to 25 split between two or more tables) and can dance together, but must be distanced from other groups.

Can wineries, distilleries and tap rooms be open?

Wineries, distilleries and tap rooms follow restrictions for restaurants and licensed establishments when serving food and alcohol. They follow restrictions for retail when selling product in retail space or storefront.

Can wineries, distilleries and tap rooms offer tastings?

Wineries, distilleries and tap rooms can offer tastings following their sector plans.

Are the casinos, First Nations gaming centres and VLTs allowed to operate?

Casino Nova Scotia in Halifax and Sydney, First Nations gaming centres and VLTs can operate at maximum capacity possible with physical distancing. They follow the same hours of operation and mask requirements as bars and restaurants.

What are the restrictions for recreation and leisure businesses? What are some examples?

Businesses that offer indoor recreation activities can operate at maximum capacity possible with public health measures in place in phase 4. Physical distance is required. Masks required except during physical activity that makes it difficult to wear one, like singing lessons or playing a wind instrument.



There is a wide variety of these types of businesses – some examples dance classes and music lessons, climbing facilities, escape rooms, pottery painting, indoor play places, arcades, shooting ranges, go-carts, and outdoor adventure and more.

What are the rules for golf courses?

Golf courses continue to operate with one group at a time at each hole, including for tournaments. If they have restaurant or bar patio, it must follow the rules for restaurants and licensed establishments. If the green is licensed, we would consider food or alcohol service on the green to be delivery service. Masks are not required on the green. Lessons are allowed, outdoors, one-on-one, with distancing.

Can marinas be open?

Outdoor areas of marinas can be open. If they have restaurant or bar patio, it must follow the rules for restaurants and licensed establishments.

How are fitness and recreation facilities operating?

Fitness facilities (like gyms and yoga studios) and recreation facilities (like arenas, tennis courts, and large multipurpose recreation facilities) can operate at maximum capacity possible with physical distance in Phase 4. Masks continue to be required except during physical activities that make it difficult to wear one. Physical distance is required. They can offer 1:1 personal training without physical distance but masks are required.

Can pools reopen?

In Phase 4, pools can operate at maximum capacity possible with physical distance. Masks continue to be required except while in the pool.

Can hotel, condo and apartment building gyms and pools be open?

Hotel gyms and pools can be open to guests who are not in quarantine and to other users and it no longer needs to be by appointment. Gyms and pools in apartment and condo buildings can be open to people who live there. Physical distance is required except among people from the same household or social group. These are common areas so masks are required except while in the pool or doing exercise that makes wearing a mask difficult.

Can personal services businesses be open, like hair salons, barbers, spas and tanning beds?

In phase 4, personal services businesses can continue offering all services and resume taking drop-ins as well as appointments. There is no change from phase 3.

Can retail stores operate?

In phase 4, retail stores can operate at maximum capacity possible with physical distance. Masks continue to be required. These types of businesses must:

- Ensure customers and staff can maintain physical distance (2 metres/6 feet apart)
- Customers must maintain physical distance and wear non-medical masks when lined up to enter a retail business – both indoors and outdoors
- The business cannot play music louder than 50 decibels so that normal conversation is possible

What's the definition of a retail business?

A retail business is one that engages in the retail sale or rental of items to the public on ongoing basis at a fixed location.



If I have reached my store's maximum occupancy, there isn't enough room for everyone to stay 2 metres/6 feet apart. What should I do?

In this case, you set a lower limit on the number of people who are on the premises at a time to ensure physical distancing.

Are there rules for shopping malls?

In addition to the retail rules outlined above, the following is also required for malls:

- No more than 10 people at a time can line up at a retail business inside the mall and they must maintain physical distance
- People are not permitted to loiter in any area of the mall
- Directional markings are provided to manage the flow of people within the mall
- Furniture in common areas of the mall is removed or inaccessible
- Non-retail public areas in the mall must be closed, other than public washrooms, breastfeeding stations, and hallways that give access to stores
- The mall cannot play music louder than 50 decibels so that normal conversation is possible

Can farm farmers and flea markets be open?

These markets are considered retail operations if they have regular hours every day or week, the majority of their vendors are always the same, and the market serves as their retail outlet. They follow the same reopening phases as retail businesses (see above) indoors or outdoors, including vendors and customers. They need a COVID-19 prevention plan. Physical distancing is required. Masks are required indoors.

If the market is not a regular daily or weekly operation, they are considered special events. In phase 4, they can only happen if hosted by a recognized business or organization with 250 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 150 indoors.

Can dog grooming, daycares and training businesses operate?

Dog grooming and daycares services can continue to operate. Owners need to ensure physical distancing and avoid crowds so they should consider staggering appointments and arrival/departure times. The safest approach would be to have owners drop off/pick up their dogs for these services without coming inside.

Dog training/obedience classes would be considered a form of recreation. In phase 4, recreation and leisure businesses can operate at maximum capacity with public health measures like distancing and masks.

Can photography studios open?

Photographers can continue to work outdoors. Their studios follow the same reopening phases as retail businesses (see above). Clients must follow informal gathering limits and can remove their masks for photos. Physical distance is required between the photographer and clients.

Can driving schools operate?

Driving schools and exams resumed in phase 2. Masks are required in the car and the classroom, and physical distance is required in the classroom sessions.

Can boat and bus tours operate?



In phase 4, businesses and organizations offering tour bus and boat services can operate at 100% capacity following their sector-specific plan. Wearing a mask is required. They also need to follow their sector-specific plan for other services offered (like serving alcohol).

Can walking tours operate?

Walking tours can operate provided that all participants, staff and volunteers follow public health measures according to the setting where they are. This includes using masks in indoor public places (and anywhere it is difficult to maintain physical distance) and respecting gathering limits in some spaces. Physical distancing is required indoors and outdoors except between those who are members of the same household or are close social contacts. Given these requirements, businesses and organizations offering walking tours need to be mindful how many people they can safely manage.

Can you have a cleaner come into your home? What about a nanny? What about a plumber, electrician or other service provider?

Service providers can enter your home if necessary. People should wear masks, maintain physical distance where possible, and clean high touch surfaces frequently.

Can a landlord show an apartment unit? Can a realtor show a home?

Realtor's and landlords can show properties, however, landlords must gain the tenants' consent for in-person showings for the purpose of renting or when the property is being sold. If a tenant chooses not to allow in-person viewings, they must allow the landlord, and up to one other person, entry into the premises to film/photograph the property for virtual viewings. The landlord must give notice to the tenant 24 hours before entry.

Everyone needs to wear masks and maintain physical distance. High touch surfaces should be cleaned frequently. There is some [further guidance](#) on the website. If tenants are concerned, they could leave an apartment unit while it's being shown.

ACTIVITIES

What are the restrictions for sports?

In phase 4, there can be 25 indoors and 50 outdoors. Games, regular league play are allowed. Tournaments are allowed if they are run by/affiliated with a provincial sport organization following a Return to Sport plan. Masks are recommended when possible (indoors and outdoors).

Spectators indoors and outdoors are allowed based on gathering limits for events hosted by a recognized business or organization. If the event is not hosted by a recognized business or organization, informal gathering limits must be followed.

What is the limit for beer leagues and pick-up games and practices?

In phase 4, there can be 25 indoors and 50 outdoors without physical distance for practices, games, regular league play and tournaments if they are run by a league or official organization.

Informal competition, like friends organizing a ball game, cannot host tournaments but follow the same gathering limits for people on the field of play.



What are the restrictions for arts and culture?

In phase 3, professional and amateur arts and culture rehearsals and performances can have 15 people indoors and 25 outdoors without physical distance. Professionals must have a plan for their workplace. Masks are recommended when physical distance cannot be maintained indoors.

Spectators indoors and outdoors are allowed based on gathering limits for events hosted by a recognized business or organization. If the event is not hosted by a recognized business or organization, spectators must follow the informal gathering limit.

In phase 4, their indoor limit is 25 and their outdoor limit is 50 and masks continue to be recommended.

Why are masks required or recommended in some instances where were not required before?

The third wave of the pandemic has been driven by variants of the virus that are more contagious. That's why we're making these mask requirements and recommendations for some activities, particularly those involve getting closer than 2 metres.

Can movie theatres open?

Movie theatres can have 50% of indoor capacity to a maximum of 150 people per theatre. They must follow their sector plan, including staggering showtimes to avoid crowds. Physical distance is required except among people in the same household or close social group. Masks are required except when people are eating or drinking.

Can people get together to play darts, cards, pool, bowling, or karaoke?

In phase 2, both licensed establishments and unlicensed establishments (such as community centres and charities) were able to resume hosting activities like darts, cards, pool, bowling, or karaoke. Both licensed and unlicensed establishments must follow [guidelines for these activities](#).

Can bingo resume?

Bingo operators must follow the same rules as licensed establishments and [their guidelines](#).

Can libraries, museums or the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia be open?

In phase 4, museums, libraries and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia can operate at maximum capacity possible with physical distance. Masks and distance continue to be required.

Can there be overnight/sleepover camps such as for Girl Guides or children with disabilities?

In phase 4, overnight camps can continue operating with cohorts of 15 including participant, not including staff and volunteers. They follow the [overnight camp guidelines](#). Masks are no longer required for campers aged 12 and under, although there may be specific situations where masks are required.

What is the limit for day camps?

In phase 4, day camps can operate with 30 campers per group plus staff and volunteers, following the [day camp guidelines](#). **Masks are no longer required for campers aged 12 and under.**

Has anything changed for day cares?

The limit of 15 without physical distancing remains in place for day cares. **Masks are no longer required for children aged 12 and under in child care settings.**

How many people can be at a playground? Can 10 kids be in close contact at a playground?



The gathering limits do not apply to people going to parks, beaches, trails, playgrounds, etc for recreation. You should primarily stick to your own household and close social group when you go to these places. Children at a playground should not spontaneously form a group.

Masks are no longer required outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained, including playgrounds and parks.

Are parks, trails and beaches open?

Yes, parks, trails and beaches are open but people should not travel into or out of any restricted area to use them.

Can campgrounds and rental cottages be open?

[Provincial park campgrounds](#) opened June 2. Private campgrounds can be open for both seasonal and short-term campers with distance between campsites following their sector plan.

Can people go to their cottage or seasonal campsite?

There are no restrictions on travel within Nova Scotia will be lifted. That allows people to go back and forth between their homes and their cottage or seasonal campsite.

Can people do door-to-door canvassing? Can they do this for the census?

If this activity can be avoided, it should be, although there are ways to do it safely. The census is an important national process managed by the federal government. Their website says:

Census employees must wear a mask and practise physical distancing, in accordance with guidelines from public health authorities. Statistics Canada will do everything it can to get Canadians to respond to the census without an in-person visit from a census employee. In-person visits will take place only when other options (e.g., online, by phone) are not available. If you have further questions, you should contact Statistics Canada.

Can there be yard sales?

People can host yard sales as long as they ensure the numbers remain within the informal gathering limit. People should wear masks because it may be difficult to maintain physical distance.

COMPLIANCE

What should I do if there's a large informal gathering like a house party or other rules being broken?

If you have a concern about a particular instance of public health measures not being followed, you can call your local non-emergency police number. Each person at an illegal event can be fined \$2000.

What should I do if rules aren't being followed at a business?

If you have concerns about how a business is operating, you could speak with the manager. If you feel it's necessary, you could contact the Safety Division at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education at 1-800-952-2687 or LAESafetybranch@novascotia.ca.

What should I do if I'm concerned about my employment rights in relation to the pandemic?

You can contact the Labour Standards division at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education at 1-888-315-0110 or LabourStandards@novascotia.ca.

CONTINUING CARE

Can a long-term care resident go to their family's home for a visit? Can family visit a resident in their facility?

In phase 1, outdoor visits can resume at long-term care facilities. Physical distance is required unless the resident is fully vaccinated. Two designated caregivers can help care for a resident of a long-term care facility at the same time. Recreational activities and personal services like hairstyling can resume within the facility for long-term care residents who are fully vaccinated.

In phase 2, all long-term care residents can go for a walk off grounds and use drive-thrus when they go for a drive with a designated care provider. Vaccinated residents can also access outdoor public areas. Recreational activities and personal services like hairstyling can resume for residents who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated. Residents no longer need to be in the same groups for dining and group activities. Volunteers can resume their activities in long-term care facilities.

In phase 3, indoor visits can resume in designated visitation areas at long-term care facilities if residents are fully vaccinated. Physical distance is no longer required for outdoor visits at long-term care if the resident is not fully vaccinated. Long-term care residents who are not fully vaccinated can access outdoor public areas and those who are can access indoor public places.

In phase 4, indoor visits can resume in a resident's room at long-term care facilities if the resident is fully vaccinated and in designated visitation areas if the resident is not fully vaccinated. Visits to their family's home, including overnight stays, can resume if residents are fully vaccinated.

What does reopening look like for adult residential centres and regional rehabilitation centres?

Adult residential centres and regional rehabilitation centres licensed by the Department of Community Services can resume visitation in phase 1. Residents are permitted to leave the facilities for work, therapy, recreation and family visits if they follow public health measures like social distancing and masks.

Can adult day programs operate?

Community-based adult day programs for seniors and for people with disabilities were able to resume in phase 2 and need to follow public health guidelines for their sector.