



Effective restrictions on gatherings

As of Friday 25 February 2022 all public restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be lifted, both domestically and at the border.

Limits to the number of people at gatherings are none

Social distancing rules are none

Masks are not mandatory anywhere

Restrictions on any kind of operations are no longer applicable, neither the obligation to register guests nor restrictions on opening hours

Personal infection preventative measures are encouraged and if we experience symptoms [we get tested](#).

Infection prevention

Surfaces commonly touched by many people, such as door handles and handrails, should be properly cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Offer access to disinfectant at entrances and near surfaces touched by large numbers of people, such as touch keypads, shopping trolleys and cash registers.

Applicable restrictions

When the COVID-19 pandemic was on the rise in March 2020, it was clear that action was needed to prevent exponential growth, with the associated strain on the healthcare system and society. It would also protect the most vulnerable groups in society, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. People were therefore encouraged to use personal infection prevention measures, such as washing and spraying their hands with disinfectant, making sure they did not sneeze or cough into their hands and keeping common surfaces clean. In addition, public action was later taken and regulations were issued on limits on public gatherings, the obligation to wear masks and proximity rules.

Restrictions on public gatherings

The public gathering restriction was first imposed on 16 March 2020, and the limit was set for gatherings with 100 people or more. As early as 22 March, the rules were further tightened and the number limit was set at 20 people. Public gathering restrictions were used throughout the pandemic, albeit intermittently, until 25 February 2022, when all restrictions were lifted in Iceland. When the rules were the strictest, only 10 people were allowed to come together, but at its most lenient, restrictions were set at 2,000 people. However, there were at times even stricter recommendations, for example in the northern Westfjords, where everything was closed and the number of people was limited to 5 people in April 2020.

Despite the general restrictions on gatherings, special rules applied to various activities such as shops and services, as the restrictions could take into account the size of the premises, whether guests sat in seats, whether they all faced the same direction and so on. The Icelandic Sports Confederation set rules on activities during the pandemic and stipulated the number of guests as a percentage of the premises' operating license, for example at swimming pools and fitness centres. Various business owners soon

implemented the use of compartments, for example in restaurants, so that more people could be received than would otherwise be the case, without compromising infection prevention measures.

During some time periods of the pandemic, it was decided to close all gyms, swimming pools, meeting places and bars, in addition to which the opening hours of restaurants were severely limited depending on the status of the pandemic at any given time.

At the end of August 2021, a new rule was introduced that it was permissible to receive more people than was generally the case, or even deviate from the rules on the maximum number of people at events, provided that all guests presented a negative rapid test that was not older than 48 hours. Thus, it was expected that the particularly negative impact of COVID-19 on the performing arts and culture could be reduced.

Masks

At the beginning of the pandemic, the use of masks was not required, but in the autumn of 2020, a regulation was issued that masks should be used in jobs that required close proximity, such as hairdressing salons and massage parlours but also in public transport other than buses.

There was also a mask obligation where it was not possible to follow the rules on proximity, and there were examples of restaurant owners and representatives of shops and services setting rules on the use of masks that went beyond the regulations.

During certain periods when the pandemic was growing, masks were imposed in shops and malls, as well as in restaurants and in the performing arts.

Distance limits - proximity limits

Special rules were set for distance between those who were considered unrelated. Thus, the so-called two-metre rule was introduced, which was common in all services, and people were asked to respect it. Many companies and organisations, for example, put signs on the floor to help guide people about the distance needed. During periods when the number of infections decreased, the gap was shortened to one metre but then lengthened again when rules needed to be tightened.

Distance limits and the obligation to wear a mask often went hand in hand, so people were asked to keep their distance, but if this was not possible, the obligation to wear a mask applied.

Colour coded warning system

As the pandemic and regulations began to increase in number, ways were sought to simplify the rules and their presentation. That is why, amongst other things, the COVID-19 colour coded warning system was developed. It took effect at the beginning of December 2020. The whole of Iceland was then in red, which was the highest level of risk, but each colour had certain criteria in terms of restrictions on public gatherings and school operations, and a map of Iceland was published on covid.is. The system was intended to increase the predictability of the pandemic and give people the opportunity to make informed decisions about their own behaviour based on the risk of infection.

In July 2021, all public gathering restrictions were lifted, as the pandemic situation was very good, and vaccinations were also well under way and high expectations were attached to them. However, when it was discovered that vaccination was not sufficient to stop the transmission of new strains of the virus, action was taken again. However, the colour coded warning system was not used, as the reasons for it had changed significantly with general vaccination.

School operations

Special regulations were set for school operations, which stipulated, amongst other things, the number of children in each room, the number of staff, mixing between groups, the obligation to wear a mask, proximity limits and more. In the first wave of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, it was decided to teach

preschool and primary school children in groups of 20 or less, alternately. This meant, for example, that in most pre-schools and primary schools, children only attended school every other day. At the same time, distance learning was almost exclusively used in colleges and universities.

As the pandemic progressed, however, it became clear that it was important to try to disrupt children's daily lives as little as possible, and therefore to try to adapt to allow all children to be at school all day. This was done through the continued use of compartments, sometimes-closed canteens, limited communication during play time, mask wearing by older children and staff, a ban on parents' access to school premises and more.

The same rules applied to sports and leisure activities for children at any given time as were applied in schools.

Pre-school children were exempted both from the 2-metre rule and the use of masks, as they were not mature enough for anything else.

All of these restrictions were based on the authorisation from the Act on Infectious Disease and with the regulations from the Minister.

[Back to home page](#)

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