

Restrictions easing – gathering limits

What is changing with public health restrictions?

Effective 12 a.m. Feb. 8 until 11:59 p.m. March 7:

- retail businesses can operate at 75% capacity
- fitness facilities can operate at 75% capacity and must maintain three metres between people during high-intensity activities both indoors and outdoors
- recognized businesses and organizations can resume hosting events with 150 people outdoors, or 50% of a venue’s capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors
 - these events must stop any food or alcohol service by 10 p.m. and end by 11 p.m.
 - these events include social events, arts and culture events, sport, recreation and physical activity events, special events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings and funerals (including receptions and visitation)
 - these events also include bingo, darts and other similar activities hosted by licensed and unlicensed establishments
- these gathering limits also apply to meetings and training hosted by private businesses or organizations, provincial and municipal government, first responder organizations, mental health and addictions support groups, and organized clubs
 - organized clubs can host activities for all ages and follow the [day camp guidelines](#) to have cohorts of up to 15 within the larger indoor or outdoor gathering limit
- spectators are allowed at events, including sports games and practices and arts and culture rehearsals and performances, except when they are held at schools
- large facilities that already have approved plans can resume hosting events with multiple groups of 100 that are kept separate with their own entrances and exits and their own washrooms
 - Centre 200 in Sydney and Scotiabank Centre in Halifax can have multiple groups of 150

Why is there a higher gathering limit if the event is run by a recognized business or organization?

We’re allowing more people in these cases because the recognized business or organization takes on responsibility for ensuring the public health measures are followed. That helps manage risk and keep people safe.

Why are these public health measures only in effect until March 7?

We will closely monitor the epidemiology over the next few weeks and make decisions about whether anything needs to change.

BUSINESSES

What are the rules for bars and restaurants?

Across the province, restaurants and bars can offer dine-in service but must stop service by 10 p.m. and close by 11 p.m. They can offer takeout, delivery and drive-thru later. This isn’t a reflection of how safe bars and restaurants are. It is simply to reduce the opportunity for prolonged social gatherings in close proximity without masks.

Can bars and restaurants have live music?

Yes, they can offer live music.



If bars and restaurants host events (like a concert or a wedding reception) do they follow the gathering limit of 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 people?

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

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

Yes, however, if they are licensed establishments, they must stop service by 10 a.m. and close by 11 p.m.

Can businesses like indoor playgrounds, bowling alleys, shooting ranges, golf courses, putting ranges, go-carts, climbing gyms, trampoline facilities, and escape rooms open? What about music and dance lessons?

Recreation and leisure businesses can operate and must follow public health measures such as physical distancing and masks.

How are fitness and recreation facilities operating?

Across the province, fitness facilities like gyms and yoga studios can operate at 75% capacity. Outdoor fitness classes can operate at full capacity. Indoors and outdoors, there must be 3 metres distance between participants during high intensity activities, as per the [fitness sector's plan](#).

Does the gathering limit apply to indoor or outdoor fitness classes?

Fitness classes are not subject to the gathering limit. Fitness facilities must currently operate at 75% capacity and ensure 3 metres between people doing high intensity activities. Each facility needs to determine how those restrictions affect class sizes depending on the size of their facility and fitness class spaces.

Do the fitness facility rules apply to sport and recreation facilities like rinks, arenas, gymnasiums, golf courses, etc?

Generally, no. However, if the sport and recreation facility has a weight room, a cardio machine area or fitness classes, then the fitness facility rules apply in those areas – 75% capacity and 3 metres between people for high intensity activities.

What are the restrictions for stores?

Across the province, retail businesses can operate at 75% capacity. Other retail rules include:

- 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.

How many people can be in a retail store?

The number of people who can be in a retail store depends on how much space you have. For this period of time, retail stores cannot have more than 75% of their maximum occupancy on the premises at a time. That includes both staff and customers. They must also ensure physical distancing is maintained.



If I have reached 75% of 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
- Food court vendors can open with public health measures in place including 2 metre/6 feet between tables

Can farm farmers markets, flea markets and craft shows operate?

Farmers markets and flea 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. Market operators need to ensure physical distancing and can only have 75% of the maximum occupancy, including vendors and customers. They need a COVID-19 prevention plan.

If the market is not a regular daily or weekly operation, they are considered special events. They must follow the gathering limits (150 outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors) and closing time for events (end any food or alcohol service by 10 p.m. and end the event by 11 p.m.).

GATHERING LIMITS

What is the gathering limit?

The general gathering limit remains 10 both indoors and outdoors. This is for household or informal gatherings and events that are not hosted by a recognized business or organization.

There are different gathering limits for events hosted by recognized businesses and organizations, for meetings hosted by certain groups, and for people involved in sports practices and games and arts and culture rehearsals and performances (see more below).

How many people can you have in your home?

You can have 10 people total in your home without physical distancing. If more than 10 people live in your home, that is fine.

What if some of the people are small children or babies, do they count in the total of 10?

Yes. It doesn't matter how old people are, the limit is 10 people at a gathering in your home, including the people who live there.



Can households with 10 or more people have any visitors?

The limit is 10 people for a gathering in your home.

Can your entire household go out together?

When your household goes out into the community, no matter how many people there are, you can stay together without physical distance. But whole families should not go into stores together if you can avoid it. Ideally, just one person from your household should go into a store. This helps avoid physical distancing challenges for other customers and staff.

Can groups of 10 still get together?

Across the province, you can have a close social group of up to 10 people without physical distancing. This group is typically the people you live with, and maybe a few more. You should try to keep this group consistent and avoid belonging to multiple groups.

This group is for social purposes – it is not for workplaces. If you're doing things like skating at your local rink, having a meal at a restaurant, walking in a park, or attending a faith gathering, you can go with this group without physical distancing.

A random group of 10 people should not form spontaneously. Businesses or organizations should not seat 10 random people together. See more information about choosing a close social group of 10 at the end of this document.

Can a group of 10 kids get together to play?

If your kids are playing with friends, they should be friends who you've chosen to be in your family's close social group. You should keep this group consistent and try not to belong to multiple groups. So you need to think carefully about who to have in your group. A random group of kids should not get together to play.

Can there still be gatherings of 50?

No. Across the province, we are eliminating the general gathering limit of 50 for now. At this time, that is too many people to have together without a recognized business or organization overseeing the event and making sure public health measures are followed.

What's the limit for a business meeting or training? Is physical distancing required?

Meetings and training can have 150 people outdoors or 50% of a venue's capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors if they are hosted by:

- private businesses or organizations
- provincial or municipal government
- first responder organizations
- mental health and addictions support groups
- organized clubs (such as Scouts and Brownies)

Physical distancing is required. There is an exception for first responders – they can be closer than 2 metres/6 feet when necessary for aspects of their training (and to carry out their duties). When it is not necessary to be closer, they must maintain physical distance.

Organized clubs can follow the [day camp guidelines](#) to have cohorts of up to 15 for their activities within the larger indoor or outdoor gathering limit. Within the cohorts of 15, people can be closer than 2



metres/6 feet but should still maintain as much distance as possible. While the day camp guidelines are primarily for children, organized clubs can apply them in this way to activities for all ages.

Can there be church services or other faith gatherings?

Yes, faith gatherings can happen with a maximum of 150 people outdoors or 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 100. Physical distancing is required unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10.

Can a recognized business or organization hold a gathering in someone's home and have 50% of capacity up to 100 people?

No. When a gathering is held in a home, the limit is 10 including the people who live there.

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

The gathering limits of 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 indoors apply when a recognized businesses or organization hosts social events, arts and culture events, sport, recreation and physical activity events, special events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings and funerals (including receptions and visitation).

Otherwise, 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.

If my business is too small for physical distancing, does the close social group of 10 apply?

No, the close social group of 10 is meant for closer social interaction between families and friends. This group of up to 10 people can be closer than 2 metres/6 feet. We strongly encourage people to stick with the same group of 10 rather than switching the people in the group.

This is different from the rule for a business that is too small for physical distancing. These businesses can have no more than 10 clients or customers on the premises at a time and they must do their best to be physically distanced.

EVENTS

What community events are allowed right now?

Starting February 8, most events can resume. When events are hosted by a recognized business or organization, they can have 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. These events must stop any food or alcohol service by 10 p.m. and the event must end by 11 p.m., the same as restaurants and bars.

This applies to social events, arts and culture events (including performances), sport and recreation events, special events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings (including receptions), and funerals (including visitation and receptions). It also applies to bingo, darts and other similar activities hosted by licensed and unlicensed establishments and following [guidelines for those activities](#).

Can community meals and fundraisers happen now? Can movie theatres open? Are weddings and funerals allowed? What about wedding receptions and funeral visitation and receptions?



Yes, when these events are hosted by a recognized business or organization, they can happen with 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors.

These events must end by 11 p.m. If there is food or alcohol involved, requirements for holders of food establishment permits and licensed establishments must be followed and food or alcohol service must stop by 10 p.m. Physical distancing is required unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10.

I was planning my own wedding with the gathering limit of 50. What am I supposed to do now?

For the ceremony, you could engage a recognized business or organization to host it or you could reduce the size to 10 people (including the officiant). Another option is to postpone the wedding.

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. Events must stop any food or alcohol service by 10 p.m. and end by 11 p.m.

Does the gathering limit include the workers at an event?

No, they are in their workplace which is not subject to the gathering limit. 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.

My business rents a room for weddings and parties and our maximum capacity is 150. Since the indoor limit is 100, can I have 100 guests in that room?

No, the order allows gatherings of 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 people with physical distancing. So 50% of your capacity is 75 people.

My business rents a room for weddings and parties and our maximum is 300. Since the limit is 50% of capacity, can I have 150 guests in that room?

No, the order allows gatherings of 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 people with physical distancing. While 50% of your capacity is 150 people, you can only have a maximum of 100.

Do gathering limits apply to restaurants?

The gathering limits of 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 indoors apply when a recognized businesses or organization hosts social events, arts and culture events, sport, recreation and physical activity events, special events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings and funerals (including receptions and visitation).

Otherwise, gathering limits do not apply to businesses.

Restaurants can operate at 100% capacity as long they maintain a minimum physical distance of 2 metres (6 feet) or a physical barrier between tables, booths and single seats, and there are no single groups of diners greater than 10.

How can restaurants operate at full capacity if they have to ensure physical distancing?

Restaurants (or liquor licensed establishments) may not be able to operate at normal, non-pandemic capacity. They can operate at 100% capacity with physical distancing. For some, that may mean having



fewer tables than normal. It depends on how much space they have to work with and what measures they choose to put in place.

How can the Q league have spectators if the indoor limit is 100?

Several large facilities in the province have previously approved plans for hosting events with multiple groups that are kept separate. These facilities can resume operating with a limit of 150 people per group outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. Each group has their own entrance/exit, washroom and concessions. We're giving Scotiabank Centre and Centre 200 a limit of 150 per group indoors.

What happens if a game goes into overtime?

A sport event hosted by a business or organization can continue beyond 11 p.m. if the natural course of events leads to extended time of play such as overtime, but food and alcohol service must still stop at 10 p.m.

Where can I find more information about safe gatherings?

Here are some useful resources for gatherings and events:

- [Guidance for holidays and celebrations](#)
- [Event guidelines](#)
- [Guidelines for venues and facilities](#)
- [Day camp guidelines](#) can be followed by organized clubs to have cohorts of 15 within the larger gathering limits

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

People have to use common sense. 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 the public health measures are followed. 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 all the public health measures are followed for the event. Given that they are taking on this responsibility, you can have 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. The business/organization should be aware of its responsibilities and ensure it has a solid contract with the renters.

SPORTS – PERFORMANCE ART – OTHER ACTIVITIES

How many people can there be for sports practices and games or arts and culture rehearsals and performances?

The limit is 60 people for organized sports practices, training and games and arts and culture rehearsals, classes and performances. That includes people directly involved, such as coaches, officials, drama, music and dance leaders, etc.

Can there be spectators?

Yes, spectators are allowed when a recognized business or organization is hosting a sport, recreation or physical activity event or an arts and culture event. Aside from the people directly involved (noted above), there can be 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors.

These events must end by 11 p.m. If there is food or alcohol involved, requirements for holders of food establishment permits and licensed establishments must be followed and food or alcohol service must stop by 10 p.m. Physical distancing is required unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10.

Can the audience include groups of 10 who sit together but are physically distanced from the rest?

Yes, people in the same household can sit together, and people in a close social group of 10 can sit together, with these groups staying 2 metres/6 feet away from others. Random, spontaneous groups of 10 people should not sit together.

Could organizers of a concert or church service or bingo set up seating in groups of 10 since physical distancing with that size group isn't required?

Businesses and organizations should not set up seating for groups of 10 and randomly seat people together. If you're hosting a concert or a church service or a bingo, you should accommodate people who have formed a group of 10, but you also need to accommodate people who are not in a group of 10 or who are in a smaller group.

Can people travel around the province for sports activities?

There can be no games, tournaments or competitions involving teams or individual competitors who would not regularly play against each other. In some cases, this may mean that there is travel within the province and in others, travel may not be necessary.

What is permitted for school-based sports and performance arts?

School-based sport is following the same rules as non-school sports and performance arts. There can be practices/games or rehearsals/performances with up to 60 participants without physical distancing. There can be no games, tournaments or competitions involving teams or individual competitors who would not regularly play against each other.

Following the provincial Back to School plan, only people who are essential to facilitating the activity (players, coaches, officials, etc) may be present. Other non-essential adults, including spectators, continue to not be permitted into schools.

If a school is holding practices, games, rehearsals, or performances at an outside facility, such as a municipal or privately owned building, spectators must follow the provincial gathering limit for spectators.

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

Recreational league sports like adult hockey can have 60 people without physical distancing. Any games that require close physical contact and are run by a league or official organization should only be played with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10 people.



Can people get together to play darts, cards, pool and bingo?

People can gather for these activities if they are hosted by a recognized business or organization, whether it is a licensed establishment or not. The recognized business or organization takes on responsibility for ensuring that public health measures are followed and that specific [guidance for these activities](#) is followed.

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

We stopped these types of camps early in the pandemic. Overnight camps hosted by recognized businesses or organizations are not permitted for the time being. This does not affect regular camping at campgrounds.

Can a church host a retreat at an overnight camp?

No, overnight camps hosted by recognized businesses or organizations are not permitted at this time. A church is a recognized organization.

Can there be more than 10 people for club meetings and activities, such as Scouts and Brownies?

Yes, organized clubs can have 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. They can follow the [day camp guidelines](#) to have cohorts of up to 15 for their activities within the larger indoor or outdoor gathering limit. Within the cohorts of 15, people can be closer than 2 metres/6 feet but should still maintain as much distance as possible. While the day camp guidelines are primarily for children, organized clubs can apply them in this way to activities for all ages.

CHILD CARE / PARKS ETC / CARPOOL

Can child care centres, day camps or after school programs have 100 indoors/150 outdoors?

Gathering limits do not apply to child care centres, day camps or after school programs. They can operate up to full capacity as long as they can follow the guidelines for their sectors.

In day camps and after school programs, children must be in groups of no more than 15 and the groups must stay 2 metres/6 feet apart. There can be closer contact within each group of 15.

Can there be 150 people 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. If a gathering is planned in these spaces, the gathering limit is 10 unless it's hosted by a recognized business or organization.

If a group of 10 including parents/guardians and children go to a playground, they can be in close contact with each other but they would have to stay 2 metres/6 feet away from other people and groups. If 10 children arrive at a playground, they should not spontaneously form a group.

Can closer contact activities (like therapy horse riding, tutoring, music lessons, etc) happen?

Yes, as long as the group doing the activity together is no larger than 10 people. You should choose your group of 10 carefully and try to stick to the same group.

Can people carpool without worrying about physical distancing?

Yes, although people should carefully choose who to join in a group of 10 (or likely less in a vehicle) and masks are recommended.



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.

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.

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?

Since December 21, each resident can have 2 designated caregivers and facilities can allow a limited number of visitors. Please contact the facility for more information.

Residents can only leave their facilities for medical/dental appointments or to go for a drive with 1 designated caregiver (with no other passengers, no stops or drive-thru). We cannot allow residents to visit their families' homes at this time.

The same is generally true for adult residential centres (ARC) and regional rehabilitation centres (RRC) licensed by the Department of Community Services. However, residents of these facilities can resume community visits for work and volunteering.

Can adult day programs operate?

No, community-based adult day programs cannot operate at this time, unless they offer family caregivers respite from caregiving duties while knowing that their loved one are in a safe place.

These programs are different from general recreation programs for seniors. Adult day programs offer activities in a professional care setting for older adults who require supervised care during the day, or for those who are isolated and lonely. They enable seniors to socialize and enjoy planned activities in a group setting, while still receiving needed health services.

GROUPS OF 10

Does a group of 10 have to be planned or can it be spontaneous? Can 10 people get in an elevator, for example? In a boardroom at the office?

The group of 10 is meant for social purposes, not for things like elevators, meeting rooms, or spontaneous get togethers. You should try to stick to the same people in your group of 10. People also need to make decisions that they are comfortable with and should consider some key things when joining groups of 10 [noted below].

Isn't it risky to gather with different groups of 10 people?

We strongly encourage people to stick with the same close social group of 10 rather than switching the people in the group. If people do have more than one group they should limit the number of close social groups that they join. People also need to make decisions that they are comfortable with. Consider the following when choosing who to join in a close social group of up to 10:

- Is anyone at higher risk – 65 or older, especially with underlying health conditions, chronic disease, or compromised immune systems?
- Does anyone have frequent contact with the general public as part of their job or a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19?
- Is anyone sick or showing symptoms that could be COVID-19?

Are there other things you can do to keep your close social group of 10 safe?

- Follow basic public health measures:
 - If you are unwell, stay home
 - Practice good hand hygiene
 - Cough/sneeze into your elbow, not your hand
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth without washing hands first
- Try to keep the same people in your group of 10 – the more changes there are, the greater risk
- 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 group and between groups
- Consider physical distancing within your group for activities that increase risk (e.g. singing)
- Don't have people in your group who should be self isolating
- 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
- Avoid sharing food and drinks within your group (shared bowls with dips, shared utensils, etc.)