



## New Zealand Scraps Nearly All COVID-19 Restrictions, Including Mask and Vaccination Mandates

### Description

**NEW ZELAND: New Zealand will be retiring its COVID-19 traffic light system and significantly scaling down COVID restrictions from Sept. 13 so Kiwis could “move forward with certainty,” Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced.**

“It’s time to safely turn the page on our COVID-19 management and live without the extraordinary measures we have previously used,” Ardern said, calling it a “milestone.”

With the abolishment of the traffic light COVID protection framework, mask mandates will be lifted in all areas except in health care and aged care settings.

Household contacts will no longer need to isolate, while people testing positive for COVID-19 will continue to be required to isolate for seven days.

All government vaccine mandates will end on Sept. 26, and all vaccination requirements for incoming travellers and aircrew will also be removed.

After restrictions are lifted, it will be up to the employer’s discretion whether they will require workers to wear masks or get vaccinated for COVID-19.

“In short, we now move on to a simple two requirements system of masks in healthcare settings and seven days isolation for positive cases only,” Ardern said.

The COVID-19 protection framework, or traffic light system, set out the rules for different traffic light settings, where red was the highest alert setting, and green meant no restrictions. At the time of removal, New Zealand was at orange.

The government also confirmed that COVID leave payments will continue.

COVID-19 Minister Ayesha Verrall also announced the purchase of an additional 40,000 anti-viral medicine courses, expected to arrive in New Zealand within days.

“So now, anyone over the age of 65, and Maori and Pacific people over the age of 50, or anyone who meets Pharmac requirements, can access the treatment in the early stages of contracting the virus.

“This means more than double the number of New Zealanders will be able to access these medicines if they need them than previously,” Verrall said.

## Decision Welcomed Across the Board

Retail NZ welcomed the move to return New Zealand to a “sense of normality.”

“After over two years of being at the forefront of COVID-19 rules, alert level changes, low foot traffic, and nonsensical mask rules, retailers across New Zealand will be pleased with today’s revised approach,” Retail NZ Chief Executive Greg Harford said.

“The revision today largely brings New Zealand in line with most of the rest of the world.”

But Harford encouraged the government to further revise the isolation period down to between three to five days.

ACT party agreed with the idea, with ACT Leader David Seymour noting that New Zealand had among the strictest isolation rules in the world.

“Keeping people locked in their houses longer than is necessary imposes real costs to them and the economy without improving our COVID-19 response,” [he said](#).

“New Zealand is holding on to a long COVID hangover. It turns out an ‘abundance of caution’ is an abundance of cost for New Zealanders.”

by Rebecca Zhu

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