



This copy is for your personal non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies of Toronto Star content for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, or inquire about permissions/licensing, please go to: www.TorontoStarReprints.com

GTA

Outside the GTA, COVID-19 cases are headed upward: 4 charts that show the state of the pandemic in Ontario right now

By **Kenyon Wallace** Investigative Reporter

Jenna Moon Staff Reporter

Mon., July 27, 2020 | ⌚ 5 min. read

With the majority of Ontario's regions now in Stage 3 of reopening, with the exception of Toronto, Peel and Windsor-Essex, a trend not seen in months has emerged in the last few days: there are more new [COVID-19 cases](#) being found on average outside the GTA than in it.

Since July 23, the rolling seven-day average of new infections of the new coronavirus in all regions outside of the GTA surpassed those originating in the GTA, largely driven by spikes in new cases in Windsor-Essex and Ottawa. And, in a change from the way the virus was reported predominantly in people over 60 during the initial wave of the pandemic in Ontario, new cases in the last several weeks have been mainly in the under-40 demographic.

"We are seeing that the new spikes are taking place in people who are least risk averse and more likely to congregate, to break the rules and congregate in group settings," said Susan Bondy, associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

"So it's very difficult, people are growing fatigued, people who do not perceive that there's a risk to them are getting together and gathering, and the response is really to try to change the behaviour."

On Monday, a frustrated Premier Doug Ford [railed against the organizers and attendees](#) of three parties in Brampton Saturday night, one which saw some 200 people show up before police broke it up.

"The full extent of the law needs to be thrown at these people. Throw everything in the kitchen sink at them," Ford told reporters. "I've never seen anything like it. You think the cheese slipped off the cracker with these people."

Brampton is part of Peel Region, which remains in Stage 2. Peel reported 16 new and probable cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, for a total of 6,724 cases to date — the majority in Brampton.

Ontario's public health units are reporting a total of 40,873 confirmed or probable cases as of Monday afternoon, up 150 from the day before, with 2,799 deaths.

Stage 2 vs. Stage 3

Ontarians in Toronto, Peel and Windsor-Essex will have to wait a bit longer to find out when the province plans to give the go-ahead for the regions to move to Stage 3 of reopening. An announcement is expected Wednesday.

The rolling seven-day average of new cases in Toronto has been on its most recent downward trend since July 19, with five new cases reported Monday.

Peel's rolling seven-day average shows its most recent downward trend began July 14, while Windsor-Essex saw the same measure begin an upward trend most recently on July 17.

In Ottawa, 28 new cases were reported Monday, while Windsor-Essex reported 41. The two regions have been experiencing notable upticks in infection throughout July and are reporting the worst rates of new infections in the province.

"I would say that our Stage 2 communities in Ontario are doing extremely well because of the hard efforts of our public health units," Bondy said.

"I think the urban public health units deserve an enormous amount of praise and recognition for the fact that they are being effective in taking new outbreaks that have completely new characteristics each time and new challenges each time" and finding intelligent ways to respond, she continued.

Bondy used the expression "whack-a-mole" to describe new outbreaks, saying it is impossible to predict when or where there might be surges.

In Windsor-Essex, which has seen significant outbreaks among migrant workers, the province should consider waiting until the trend of new cases is conclusively declining, said Todd Coleman, an epidemiologist and assistant professor in health sciences at Wilfrid Laurier University. He said there may be strategies the province could use to move the region to Stage 3 if the migrant workers are primarily interacting with each other or effectively isolated.

"Any strategy in an area where there is an active increase in cases should be extremely cautious," he said.

B.C. cases on the upswing

British Columbia, generally lauded for its measured response to the pandemic and for keeping its new infections low, has seen an uptick in new infections in recent weeks.

Nearly 1,000 people are now in quarantine following parties in the Okanagan around Canada Day that resulted in 86 people catching COVID-19. And a packed gathering on a beach in Stanley Park last week for a drum circle had Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer, warning that there is still some risk of catching the virus outside if people don't practise social distancing. On Friday, the province reported an outbreak of 13 cases on Haida Gwaii.

On Monday, B.C. announced 81 new cases between Friday and Monday, bringing the province's total number of cases to 3,500.

While B.C. has seen nowhere near the number of cases Ontario has, the increases on the west coast are a lesson in the importance of remaining vigilant, said Coleman.

"It's the same lesson that we see in many other areas ... how easy it is to pass this infection on from person to person," he said, noting it also represents "how delicate the decision making needs to be around whether we reopen somewhere or not."

Case study: Australia

While Canada has been slowly emerging from its lockdown, Australia is beginning to see a rise in cases. The wave triggered the [state of Victoria](#) to enter a six-week lockdown, with the city of Melbourne making [face coverings mandatory](#) in public spaces.

"With Australia, it is very much localized to one community," Bondy explained. "They're being very aggressive. It's now required to wear a mask when you leave the house in Melbourne, not just when you go inside places."

It's "not so much that we expect a wave — we're going to expect additional outbreaks like this" that are regional and hard to predict, Bondy said. "Every country should be expecting to see outbreaks that will demand a response."

Australia has [14,935 total](#) COVID-19 cases, with 9,311 recoveries. In Victoria there were 532 new cases Monday — the vast majority of the 549 new cases reported countrywide. The border between Victoria and New South Wales has been [closed](#) for several weeks to contain Melbourne's outbreak.

The virus was [initially well-contained](#) in Australia, which had widespread compliance with social distancing measures and a ban on travel from high-risk countries early days on. The country closed its borders March 19 to all non-citizens, while offering widespread testing.

With files from Ed Tubb



Kenyon Wallace is a Toronto-based investigative reporter for the Star. Follow him on Twitter: [@KenyonWallace](#) or reach him via email: kwallace@thestar.ca



Jenna Moon is a breaking news reporter for the Star and is based in Toronto. Follow her on Twitter: [@_jennamoon](#)

More from The Star & Partners

Copyright owned or licensed by Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction or distribution of this content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited and/or its licensors. To order copies of Toronto Star articles, please go to: www.TorontoStarReprints.com