Reopening Schools: Global Update #3
Synthesis & Insights From Countries' Experiences

JULY 15, 2020

INSIGHTS FOR EDUCATION
Evidence Into Actionable Solutions

REOPENING SCHOOLS:
FACTS & INSIGHTS FROM COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

We investigated data from **191 countries** in order to **compare and synthesise key decision-influencing features** for system leaders at national and local levels, and to complement existing closure tracking and reopening frameworks. This summary offers a **pragmatic glance** at the emerging results of an ongoing investigation to illuminate the **factors and influences that guide decisions**.

This is **targeted especially towards COVID-19 response and reopening task forces**, and will be **updated regularly**. At least **three independent sources** were reviewed for each reopened country, and include official databases, ministry websites, country response plans and policies, press reports, and social media announcements.

TOP-OF-MIND CONSIDERATIONS FOR REOPENING:

1. WHEN?

What is the relationship between **infection rates and school closure and reopening**?

2. PRECONDITIONS?

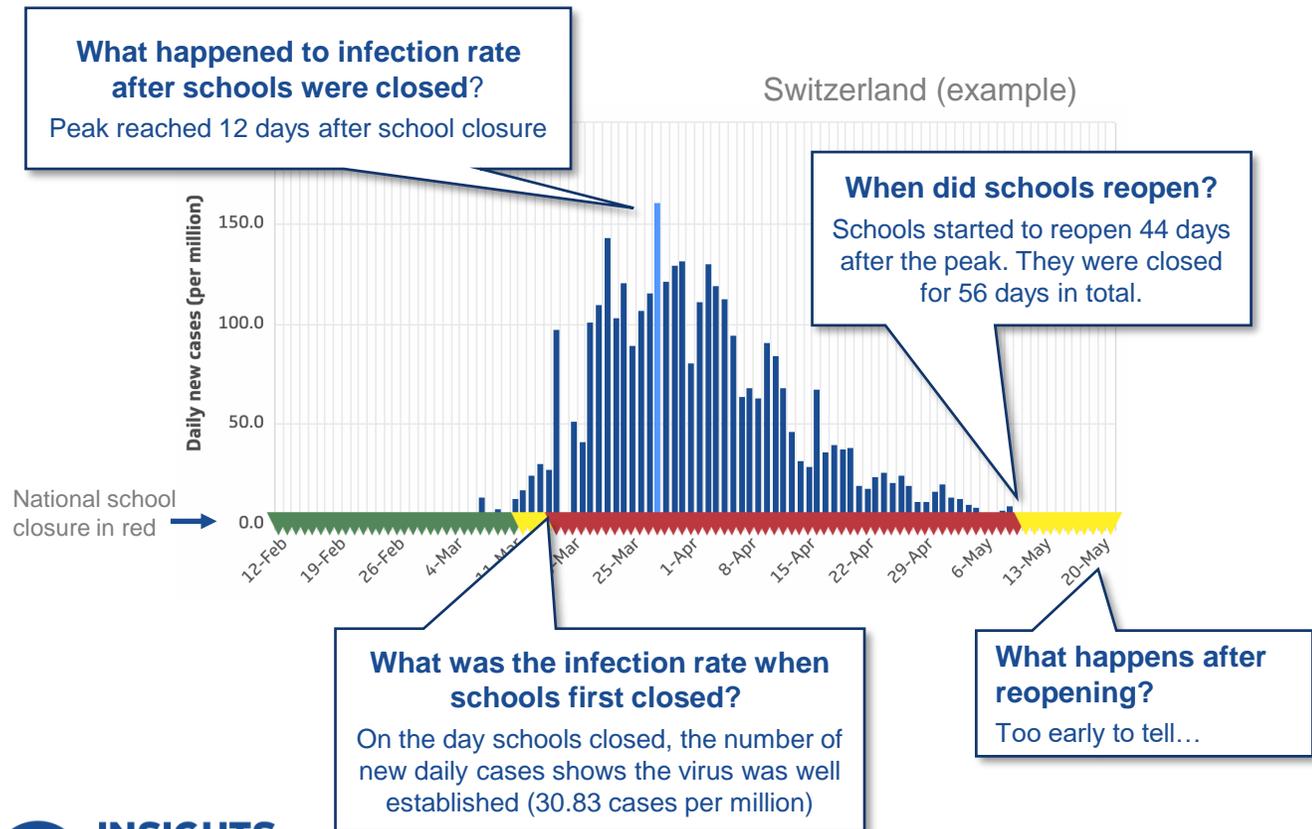What are the observed **must-haves** and critical enablers to put in place before reopening?

3. HOW?

How are countries **staging** reopening, and w**hat can be learned** from country examples?

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GLOBALLY, CLOSURE AND REOPENING ARE NOT FOLLOWING PREDICTABLE PATTERNS

WE COMBINED VIRUS PROGRESSION & SCHOOL CLOSURE DATA FROM 184 (OF 191) COUNTRIES WHO IMPLEMENTED NATIONAL SCHOOL CLOSURES

Switzerland (example)

What happened to infection rate after schools were closed?
Peak reached 12 days after school closure

When did schools reopen?
Schools started to reopen 44 days after the peak. They were closed for 56 days in total.

National school closure in red →

What was the infection rate when schools first closed?
On the day schools closed, the number of new daily cases shows the virus was well established (30.83 cases per million)

What happens after reopening?
Too early to tell…

Daily new cases (per million)

FOR ALL COUNTRIES:

+ 70% of countries closed in the **same ten-day period** from 15th March 2020.

+ Infection rates reflect multiple factors, with school closures being only one contributor. Globally, there is **no consistent relationship** between school closure dates and the reported cases of infection in the population.

+ Since closure, some countries have seen infection levels drop, in many others they have risen – correlations that are likely due to multiple factors.

+ 46 of the 78 countries that closed and have reopened are high income countries. Countries are reopening **on average 23 days after** the peak in infection levels.

*Visit **education.org** for our COVID-19 Infection and School Status Tracker, updated daily.*

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Note: Excludes countries not issuing national school closure order. Closure period does not consider school holidays. Sources: COVID-19 daily infection data: Our World in Data School closures: UNESCO Country data: World Bank

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MORE THAN HALF THE WORLD'S STUDENTS LIKELY TO BE OUT OF SCHOOL MUCH LONGER

WE ANALYSED THE DATA FROM THE 184 COUNTRIES THAT CLOSED SCHOOLS AND FOUND FOUR GROUPINGS THAT HELP TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENT NATIONAL STRATEGIES ADOPTED AS THEY REOPEN
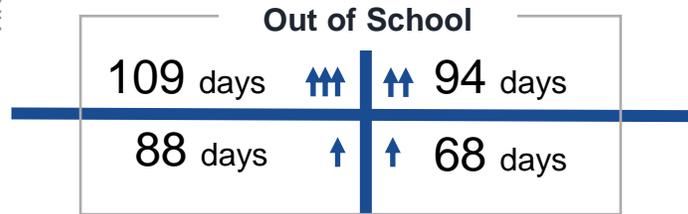
Country examples:

India   Kenya

UK   Croatia

112 COUNTRIES
31 REOPENED

Lower cases on closure
Trend upwards/level

Largest group containing many low- or lower middle-income countries, least likely to meet requirements to open soon.

25 COUNTRIES
11 REOPENED

Higher cases on closure
Trend upwards/level

Mainly high income and middle upper income countries. Stuck longer out of school because of stubbornly high infection rates.

Infection rate trend after closure?

Virus up or level

LIKELY OUT LONGEST

DRAWN OUT CLOSURES

Out of School

109 days ↑↑↑	↑↑ 94 days
88 days ↑	↑ 68 days

Virus down

CAUTIOUS RETURNERS

HEADING BACK FASTEST

12 COUNTRIES
6 REOPENED

Lower cases on closure
Trend downwards

Mixture of income levels, but with low current infection levels which suggests higher potential to return to school.

35 COUNTRIES
30 REOPENED

Higher cases on closure
Trend downwards

Mainly high-income countries, most likely to be heading back to school already.

Thailand   Niger

New Zealand   Switzerland

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When did schools close? (Cases per million, 7-day rolling average)

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THREE "MUST-HAVE" PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL REOPENING

MUST-HAVES

1. SAFETY

Planned in close cooperation with health officials, staff & learners: distancing, sanitation, protective equipment, infection monitoring & response

+ **Distancing protocols** range from 1m – 4m per student; WHO advises 1m minimum, schools on average arrange for **1.5m**

+ **Reorganizing school day** to ensure safety (i.e., implementing half-day shifts to reduce number of people in school spaces upon initial reopening)

+ Where running water is not sufficient, **sanitiser is positioned at entrances or by large areas,** with some systems also **upgrading wash facilities**

+ **Testing is not routinely offered**: In 2 countries for teachers and learners, 1 country for teachers only, and 2 for any at-risk in the school community (note: broad school testing can result in early jump in cases previously undetected)

+ **Temperatures** are recorded upon entry in **only 10%** of countries using thermal scanners.

+ Use of masks and other protective equipment varies;

  + **One-third require masks** for teachers and students 12 years+.

  + When required, **masks are usually provided** by school or subsidised partially.

2. STAFF AVAILABILITY

Availability of educators, school leaders, and support staff

+ **Student Teacher Ratio,** countries fully reopened or on their way to fully reopening have fewer students per teacher compared to those choosing to reopen in a narrow way or those remaining closed

+ **Large at-risk teacher populations,** were cited as reasons for keeping schools closed in four countries, even if reopening had been advised at national level.

+ Advance consideration for all **enabling personnel**, including transport, cleaning, medical, law enforcement – teacher supply has been only one of many shortages

3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Support of health ministry, communication and collaborative planning with parents, teachers, business, and other civil society actors underpins smooth class returns

+ Usually occurring through **multi-stakeholder reopening task forces** or extended committees, and supported by media and in some cases broad SMS messaging

+ Majority of countries reported initial **objections to reopening from parents or teachers due to safety concerns**; in two cases concerns caused postponement

+ Countries that reported **least tension with stakeholders tended to have early and deep community engagement,** and supported effective and broad communication strategies along the way

CRITICAL ENABLERS

POLICY RESPONSES

+ **Alternative forms of assessment** have emerged as a clear trend on how systems are showing flexible responses– including modified exams and converting summative assessments into continuous assessments

+ Policies are required to enact new requirements, for example, ongoing **distance learning, gender & whole-child responsive adjustments,** admission requirements, national exam modifications

OPERATIONAL PLANS

Plans for administering new requirement around safety, school calendar and exam shifts, entrance & exit staging, resurgence response plans, distance learning, teaching, and assessment, and **strengthening resilience** for future challenges
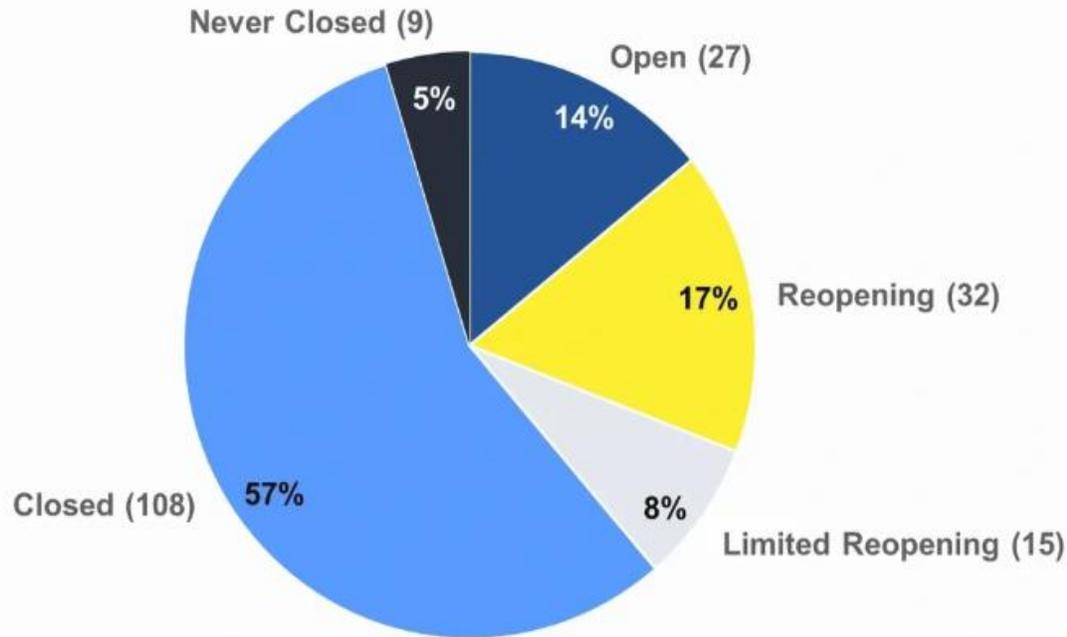
BUDGET & RESOURCES

Financial and other resources required to **enact and maintain reopening** under new requirements, including monitoring and assessment of response.

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WHEN ARE COUNTRIES REOPENING?

WHO IS REOPENING & WHEN?

School Status - 191 countries

Never Closed (9) — 5%
Open (27) — 14%
Reopening (32) — 17%
Limited Reopening (15) — 8%
Closed (108) — 57%

■ Open ■ Reopening ■ Limited Reopening ■ Closed ■ Never Closed

WHO?

- As of July 15th 2020, most of the world's schools remain closed (106)
- 34 countries are fully open
- 36 are in the process of fully reopening
- 15 are opening for exam years only
- 9 countries never issued national school closure orders (e.g. US, Sweden, Iceland), though would anyway be closed for holiday periods

WHEN?

Opening After Peak
- Observed in 67 countries
- In many (e.g. Denmark, France, Latvia) the level of new daily infections has continued to decline or hold steady
- In some countries (e.g. Croatia, Czech Republic, Portugal) infection rates have started to increase again

Opening Before Peak
- Observed in 16 countries (primarily Sub-Saharan Africa for exam years only)
- Most countries opening before the peak have continued to see an increase in the level of new daily infections
- Of the 16 countries, 6 have seen cases decline, while 10 continue to increase

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THERE IS GREAT VALUE IN MAPPING & SHARING COUNTRY EXPERIENCES EXAMPLES, NOT EXHAUSTIVE

School status map: UNESCO
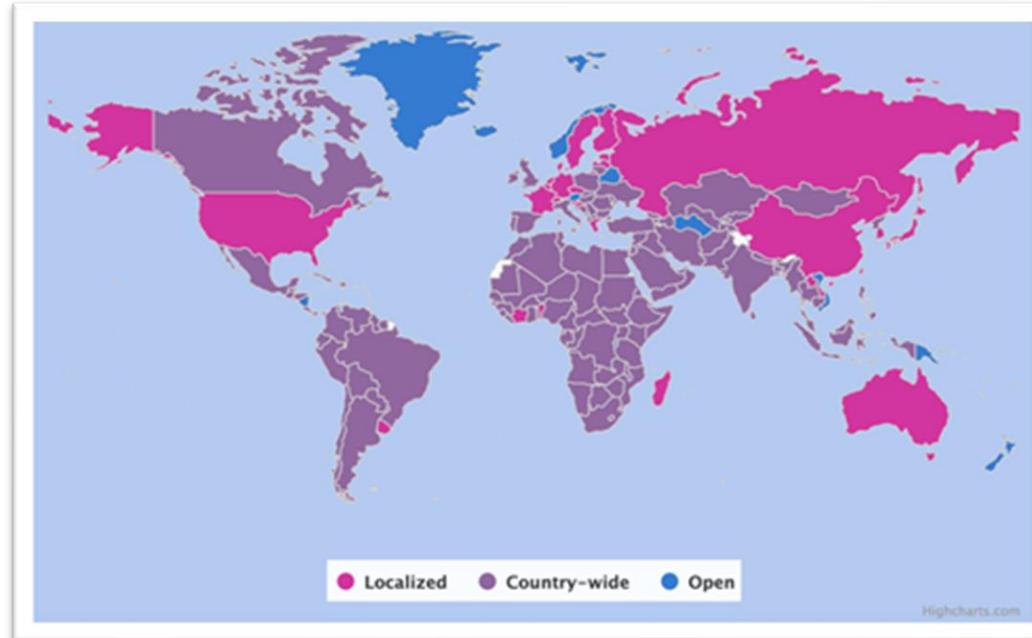
POLICY RESPONSES
High Stakes exams replaced with continuous assessment (e.g. France, Netherlands, UK, Ireland, US)

Prioritising of student well-being and social and emotional support (e.g. Liberia and Sierra Leone proactive about supporting student well-being upon return)

Inclusive policies to target return of most marginalised students (e.g. Guinea through targeted back to school campaigns; Sierra Leonne through focusing on those at risk of drop out via community outreach)

STAFF & SPACE AVAILABILITY
Early graduation of teacher trainees and other critical professions (USA)

Deploying **at-risk teachers for distance teaching** within comprehensive reopening framework and planning (UNESCO)

Using **all available** indoor and outdoor spaces to increase school capacity, **repurposing community spaces**, stadiums (China, Japan, others)

Localized • Country-wide • Open

FOCUS ON EQUITY & INCLUSION

Through fee waiving or fee reduction, facilitating distance learning, flexible attendance and safety polices, prioritising student well-being and psychosocial counselling this is becoming a focus of a number of a growing number of countries. This has also resulted in **equity-advancing policies** (Greece, France, Sierra Leone)

RESILIENCE THROUGH CRISIS
Assume prolonged / repeated closures **and permanently strengthen distance learning & teaching** in parallel to preparing reopening

Establish **new dedicated divisions for distance learning** as part of response plans

Consider **blended learning** and ongoing distance learning policies and infrastructure (Greece, Egypt)

See *how* others are permanently strengthening distance learning (Croatia, Poland) and guides for **virtual learner assessment** & distance school leadership, and even for hygiene training (South Korea)
.
Establish **new dedicated divisions for distance learning**
Apply key lessons from Education in Emergencies in the immediate crisis and for longer term reform:
- Accelerated Education (catch-up learning, Jordan)
- Whole-Child support
- Extra safeguards for most vulnerable (UK, South Africa)

Monitor effect of COVID-19 effect on student **well-being** (Finland, China)

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Questions for a next phase include:

- How can country experiences be harnessed to **better support those who remain out** of school?

- Given that a second (or more) waves are possible, how can systems, teachers and learners be **better prepared for future closures**?

We'd love to learn what would be helpful. Please contact us below to share your suggestions.

Insights for Education is a recently-established global resource for evidence-informed decision-making and implementation in education. Our vision is a world where decision making in education **reflects the best evidence to reach each learner** and improve learning outcomes for **every child.** We aim to do this by synthesising and translating relevant evidence and experience, to **help education leaders solve their toughest challenges** in strengthening equity and outcomes. To learn more please visit **education.org** or contact us: **info@education.org**

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THANK YOU

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