



THE GOAT HILL INTELLIGENCER

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Coronavirus Restrictions by State: October 2020

Introduction

Southeastern states responded to the novel coronavirus in remarkably similar ways at the beginning of the pandemic. Shutdowns and stay-at-home orders were the norm.

In recent months, however, some states have reopened more than others. For example, Mississippi used to have a state-wide mask mandate, like Alabama does currently. Today, none of Alabama's neighboring states have comprehensive mask requirements.

The purpose of this survey is to provide a current view of what restrictions southeastern states are implementing within their borders.

Alabama

Mask Mandate?

Yes

Business Restrictions/Capacity

Allowed to open with 6 feet between tables at restaurants and social distancing in retail settings

Gathering Sizes

No restrictions on size

Benchmarks to Return to Normal

Alabama's Department of Public Health has offered guidance depending on the status of coronavirus spread in Alabama's counties. This depends mainly on the increase or decrease of cases in a county. Even so, the least restrictive guidance still requires social distancing and masks. There is no clear and well publicized guidance on when these restrictions will be undone.

ISSUE SNAPSHOT

- To some level, coronavirus restrictions continue to exist in every southeastern state.
- Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, and North Carolina continue to have statewide mask requirements while other states have allowed those orders to expire.
- No state has demonstrated clear benchmarks, outside of a vaccine, that would allow all restrictions to end.

Georgia

Mask Mandate?

No, but strongly encouraged. Localities can require masks.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

Social distancing required between tables.

Gathering Sizes

50 person limit (does not seem to apply to religious gatherings, whether they are Sunday morning at church or Saturday nights at Sanford Stadium)

Governor Kemp Trusts Residents to "Do the Right Thing"

"We shouldn't need a mask mandate for people to do the right thing," Governor Bryan Kemp said this summer when pushed to establish a statewide mask order.¹

Florida

Mask Mandate?

No. Localities can require masks.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

None statewide, cities can impose capacity limits of 50% if they want to.

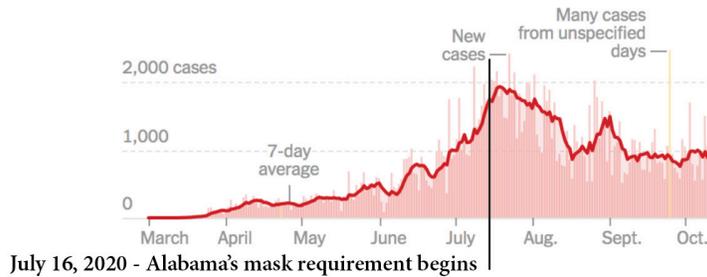
Gathering Sizes

No restrictions on size.

The Effect of Alabama's Mask Mandate vs. Neighboring States Without a Statewide Requirement

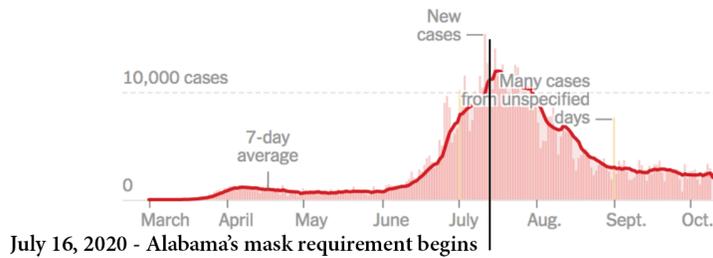
Graphs courtesy of the New York Times, effective date of Alabama's mask mandate (July 16, 2020) imposed by API.

Alabama Coronavirus Cases



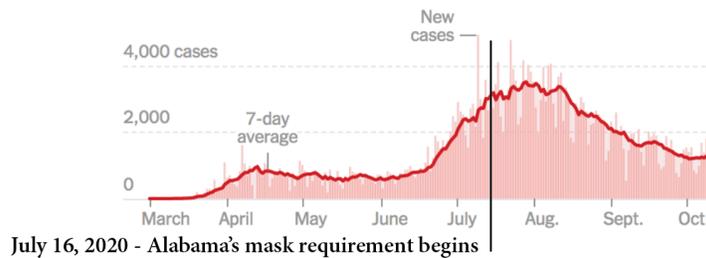
New cases of the novel coronavirus fell in Alabama after Governor Ivey implemented the statewide mask order.

Florida Coronavirus Cases - No Statewide Mandate



In Florida, where no mask mandate was ever introduced statewide, cases fell soon after July 16th, the day Governor Ivey's mask order went into effect in Alabama.

Georgia Coronavirus Cases - No Statewide Mandate



Likewise in Georgia did coronavirus cases fall after July 16, 2020. No statewide mask mandate was ever implemented in Georgia.



Governor DeSantis Trusts Residents to “Make Good Decisions”
“We’re gonna continue to put out the messaging, we’re gonna continue to put out the guidance, and we’re gonna trust people to make good decisions,” Governor DeSantis said in a June press conference in which he disregarded the idea of a state-wide mask mandate.

Mississippi

Mask Mandate?

No, though they are required at schools. From August through September, however, Mississippi did have a statewide mask requirement.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

Most businesses are limited to 75% capacity. Visitors to restaurants have to be screened for health before entering. Alcohol cannot be served after 11 pm.

Gathering Sizes

20 person limit indoors, 100 person limit outdoors. Does not apply to churches, classrooms, arenas and stadiums, and other areas that have other specific restrictions.

Governor Reeves Against Unjustified Use of Government Power

In regards to the end of the statewide mask requirement, Governor Tate Reeves argued that “We should not use the heavy hand of government more than it is justified.”²

Tennessee

Mask Mandate?

Not statewide, executive order allows counties to decide mask requirements.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

No restrictions on capacity

Gathering Sizes

No restrictions on size

Governor Suggests Need for a Vaccine to Return to Normal

Tennessee’s governor has said in the past, however, that social distancing and other mitigation efforts will need to continue until a vaccine or effective therapy is developed and, at the same time, that the “economy can’t stay shut for months on end.”³

Louisiana

Mask Mandate?

Yes, required for all individuals age 8 and older where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

75% capacity for most businesses. Bars in areas where COVID-19 is spreading quickly are banned from serving food or drink on their property. Bars in areas where COVID-19 is not spreading as quickly may open with limited capacity, though they must close at 10 pm.

Gathering Sizes

250 for indoor gatherings. Outdoor gatherings of over 250 are allowed if social distancing can be maintained.

Governor Suggests Need for a Vaccine to Return to Normal

“I also want people to be realistic, as Phase 3, with perhaps some relatively minor modifications, is likely where we stay until a vaccine is widely available,” Gov. Edwards said in October in regard to his most recent lifting of restrictions to those detailed above.⁴

Arkansas

Mask Mandate?

Yes, required for all individuals 10 and older where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

Limited to the number of people that can maintain six feet of distance.

Gathering Sizes

Events allowed up to 66% capacity.

South Carolina

Mask Mandate?

Not statewide, though many counties and cities have implemented their own mask mandates.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

Restaurants may open at 100% capacity, though tables must be 6 feet apart and patrons must wear a mask when they are not eating or drinking. Alcohol sales are prohibited past 11 p.m.



Gathering Sizes

50% normal capacity or 250 people, whichever is smaller.

North Carolina

Mask Mandate?

Yes, required for all individuals age 6 and older where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Business Restrictions/Capacity

As of October 2nd, bars are allowed to reopen with outdoor service only and 30% capacity.

Gathering Sizes

Large outdoor venues (stadiums, etc) limited to 7% capacity.
50 person limit outdoors and 25 person limit indoors.



Endnotes

- 1 Raymond, Jonathon. “Gov. Kemp Says He Doesn’t Have Time for ‘pandemic Politics.’” 11Alive.com. July 01, 2020. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/georgia-governor-brian-kemp-covid-mask-debate/85-a7f4324d-3663-4c7e-b537-6b54ed1c5f93>.
- 2 Ramseth, Luke. “Reeves Lifts Most of Statewide Mask Mandate, Tweaks Other Coronavirus Rules.” Ledger. September 30, 2020. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/politics/2020/09/30/gov-tate-reeves-lifts-most-mississippi-covid-19-mask-mandate/3586158001/>.
- 3 Mojica, Adrian. “Tennessee ‘Stay-At-Home’ Order Continues through April 30 with Look to Open Economy in May.” WCYB. April 13, 2020. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://wcyb.com/news/local/tennessee-stay-at-home-order-continues-through-april-30-with-look-to-open-economy-in-may-04-13-2020-204119892?fbclid=IwAR0-enjivw0iuvDNpNC8CeebyjTW82VKZOZKYdIpIjbWzd9-mN0nlo-fX7s>.
- 4 Office of the Governor of Louisiana. “Gov. Edwards Outlines COVID-19 Restrictions as Louisiana Moves Cautiously into Phase 3 Until October 9.” News release, September 11, 2020. Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://gov.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/news-room/detail/2679>.