

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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## State allows indoor fitness classes to resume; restaurants can reopen Feb. 1

CHAD LIVENGOOD

- Restaurants, bars will be subject to a new curfew next month
- COVID cases, hospitalizations, positivity rate halved in six weeks
- Indoor fitness classes, non-contact sports can resume under new MDHHS order

Chad Livengood/Crain's Detroit Business

Michigan diners won't be limited to outdoor-ish tents and igloos after the Whitmer administration lifts a weekslong ban on indoor service.

The "pause" has turned into a two-and-a-half month shutdown of Michigan's dine-in restaurant industry.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced Wednesday that the state will lift the ban on indoor dining on Feb. 1, after an order that first took effect before Thanksgiving amid a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations.

Restaurants and bars will be allowed to reopen dining rooms next month with limits on capacity, masking requirements and a curfew, Whitmer said. The governor said details on those requirements would be announced at a later date.

The state's new order allows noncontact indoor sports and fitness classes to resume starting Saturday. Contact sports remained banned, with the exception of professional sports and high school football.

Nightclubs and water parks remained closed under the new order and office work is supposed to be done from home.

Since Nov. 18, restaurants have only been allowed to be open for take-out, delivery or with outdoor seating under heated tents, decks and canopies.

The mid-November shutdown was originally billed as a three-week "pause" amid surging cases of COVID-19.

On Dec. 3, [Whitmer said at a news conference](#) that her administration was watching three key COVID-19 metrics to determine when to let bars and restaurants resume indoor dining with mask-less patrons. In all three of Whitmer's metrics, there has been dramatic improvement in the data, a Crain's analysis shows:

- The seven-day average number of new cases has fallen from 6,712 on Dec. 3 to 3,029 on Tuesday.
- The COVID testing positivity rate on Dec. 3 was 14 percent. On Tuesday, it was 7.2 percent. The seven-day average positivity rate is 9.2 percent, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.
- The percentage of adult hospital beds in Michigan occupied by COVID-positive patients has fallen from 20 percent on Dec. 3 to 9 percent on Tuesday.

"It's a pause that continues to not have a plan — and we're 75 days in now," said Justin Winslow, president and CEO of the Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association. "It can't be the data. So what is it?"

Whitmer cited an "uptick" in testing positivity rates as a reason for extending the indoor dining ban by another two weeks.

"When you see an uptick in those numbers, often two weeks later you see an uptick in hospitalizations," Whitmer said. "That's why it's really important that we promulgate mitigation measures ... and it's my fervent belief and hope that we'll continue to proceed, that we've got a date that we can work toward that with the industry to make sure we keep their patrons and their employees safe as they reopen."

Whitmer and her health department director said the coronavirus remains a public threat inside restaurants, despite average daily cases, the positivity rate and the number of COVID-19 patients occupying hospital beds falling by half since the first week in December.

"Indoor dining brings risks because it involves taking off masks," state health department Director Robert Gordon said. "Now is not the time to let down our guard."

The governor's office confirmed the extended ban on dine-in service Wednesday morning following a [statement](#) issued on social media by the Michigan Licensed Beverage

Association. The current order prohibiting indoor dine-in service was due to expire Friday. Gordon's [new epidemic order](#) takes effect Saturday and will remain in place until Jan. 31.

Michigan is among just a few states to ban indoor restaurant dining and was the only one without a detailed plan on how and when reopening can occur, according to the Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association.

Since the Whitmer administration closed restaurants and bars Nov. 18, it has let high schools resume in-person instruction and allowed entertainment businesses to reopen with restrictions.

Nikolai Vitti, superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Community District, blasted the decision to not allow contact sports.

"I supported the decision to suspend athletics when rates were on the rise but @GovWhitmer it simply does not make sense to allow the football playoffs to move forward and call for the reopening of schools and not resume basketball and other winter contact sports now," he tweeted.

"Let me get this straight: football and volleyball are now safe, teenagers can sit in classrooms, walk in hallways, go to the mall, movies, bowling. The vulnerable elderly can sit in casinos and bingo halls but healthy teenagers cannot play basketball because it's not safe?"

Recent survey data from the Michigan Licensed Beverage Association depicts that, on average, bar owners are facing \$28,000 per month in expenses, while losing out on \$48,000 in potential revenue per month.

The Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association, which has long advocated for the reopening of businesses, on Tuesday launched a [tool](#) that allows people to send a pre-written message asking Gordon and the governor to end the ban on indoor dining.

On Monday, Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel and other state officials commended the majority of bar and restaurant owners for their ongoing compliance with the state's emergency health orders.

Of the approximately 8,500 on-premises liquor licensees in the state, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission has suspended the liquor licenses of a total of 34 establishments for violations due to the COVID-19 pandemic since September. Violations include allowing

nonresidential in-person gatherings and failure to require face coverings for staff and patrons.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

### **The latest numbers**

As of Tuesday, there have been 525,612 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, resulting in 13,501 deaths.

# Positive Diagnostic Coronavirus Tests

The percentage of diagnostic tests for coronavirus that have come back positive, by date.



Chart: Sonya D. Hill • Source: Michigan Department of Health & Human Services • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

# 7-day rolling average deaths

The average number of COVID-19 deaths reported per day in Michigan for the previous seven-day period is shown on each date. The average is intended to smooth out daily bumps caused by anomalies in reporting.

**Beginning Sept. 6, MDHHS will be reporting data on cases, deaths and testing on Monday-Saturday. Sunday and Monday data will be reported on Mondays.**



Chart: Sonya D. Hill • Source: Michigan Department of Health & Human Services • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

# 7-day rolling average new positive tests

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# COVID-19 Hospitalizations

**Note:** Southeast Michigan includes the Region 2N and Region 2S healthcare networks of Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Monroe, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

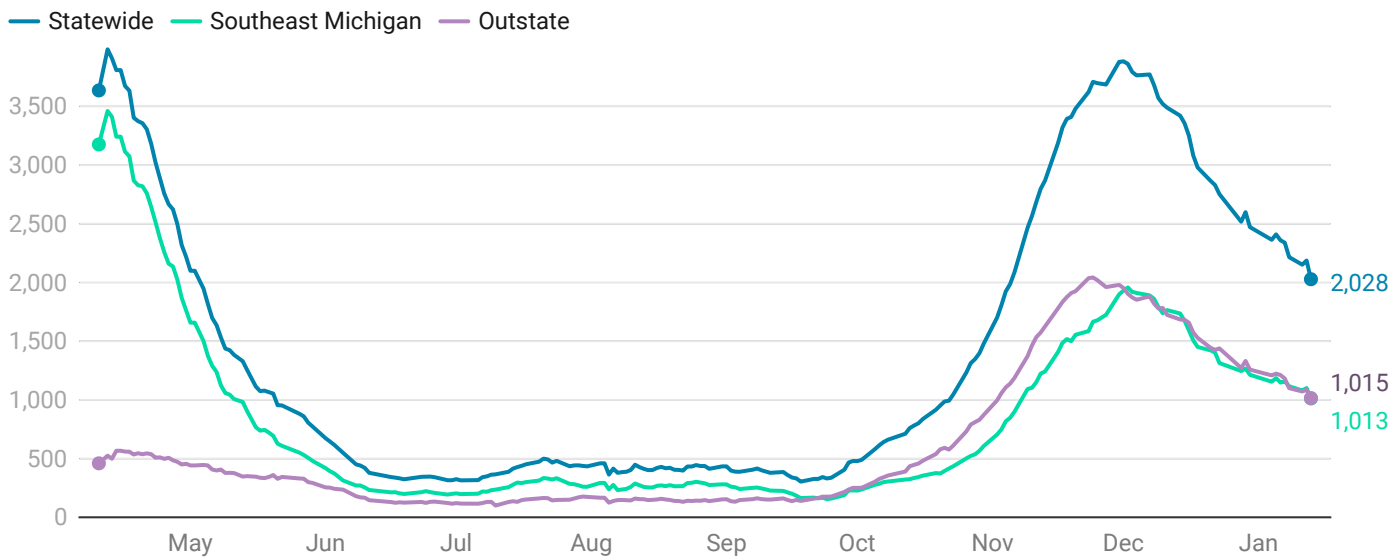


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Inline Play

**Source URL:** <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/coronavirus/state-allows-indoor-fitness-classes-resume-restaurants-can-reopen-feb-1>