

## Is Reopening Schools Safe? These Countries Say Yes

### [Wall Street Journal](#)

A number of countries that have reopened schools in the past two months have reported no resulting increase in coronavirus infection rates, an encouraging sign for authorities around the world that are contemplating how and when to [safely bring children back](#) to the classroom.

Authorities in many hard-hit countries such as Italy and the U.S. have so far [resisted reopening schools](#) for fear of triggering an increase in infections. In the U.S., schools have been drawing up plans to reopen in September, partly based on the experience of other countries.

Researchers and European authorities said the absence of any notable clusters of infection in reopened elementary schools so far suggested that children [aren't significant spreaders](#) of the new coronavirus in society.

They acknowledged that their findings might change with the onset of winter and cold weather, and a recent outbreak at a Jerusalem high school affecting students and staff was a reminder of the higher risk to teenagers and adults.

But Denmark, Austria, Norway, Finland, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and most other countries that [have reopened classrooms](#) haven't had outbreaks in schools or day-care centers.

In Denmark, the opening of schools had no impact on the progress of the epidemic, said Tyra Grove Krause, a senior official with the State Serum Institute, the country's disease control agency.

[Denmark became the first](#) Western country to reopen schools on April 15 and maintains a sophisticated monitoring system to detect any increase in infection and identify its source.

"Our interpretation is that it may be that the children aren't that important for the spread of infection," Dr. Krause said. Infections in Denmark among all age groups have been decreasing since schools reopened, she added.

Denmark has imposed a number of precautions on teaching establishments, from maintaining air circulation to rules on distancing and hygiene.

In Norway, the government won't close schools again even if the number of cases starts rising in the country because there have been no negative consequences from reopening schools on April 20, said Education Minister Guri Melby.

Since Austria reopened on May 18, no increase in infections has been observed in schools and kindergartens, a spokesman for the government said.

Schools in some German states have been open for almost a month. While Germany has since experienced outbreaks at slaughterhouses, migrant shelters, a church and a restaurant, schools have been spared.

Finland hasn't recorded any increase in infections since it reopened schools and day-care centers on May 14, Mika Salminen, director of health security at the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare, said on Thursday.

Why children rarely develop serious Covid-19 symptoms, how susceptible they are to getting infected and why they don't appear to be effective spreaders of the disease are among the most discussed riddles of the epidemic among scientists.

One reason for the absence of infections in schools could be that children below 10 have fewer of the receptors the virus uses to enter the body, said Prof. Herman Goossens, a medical microbiologist and coordinator of a European Union task force for researching Covid-19.

The number of so-called ACE2 receptors in some cells in the upper respiratory tract that the novel coronavirus uses as a gateway only starts to increase from the age of 10, making younger children comparatively less susceptible, he said.

His advice to EU governments: Bring children up to the age of 12 back to school.

Data from around the world showed children in this age group accounted for less than 1% of total infections, Prof. Goossens said.