



INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Situational awareness for stakeholders and decision makers.



Report # 21-017

12 March 2021

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1. CURRENT SITUATION

The GameStop (NYSE: GME) name has been dominating the frontpages of financial journals and general press for almost two months now and this week was no different as the stock saw its biggest rally in over a month. The stock has a very interesting price trajectory going from \$20/share on January 12th, to \$350/share on January 27th, with few ups and downs since then: GME sits at \$260/share as of March 11th. The GME ticker generated buzz when a user named Keith Gill made multiple pitches on a popular forum on Reddit called WallStreetBets. Gill posted daily portfolio balances on the forum other users to follow his suit. Based on his last update, it appears he made around \$20 million pre-tax from GameStop stock and options.

Before the rally in January, the GME stock was heavily shorted because their brick-and-mortar business model was pretty much going extinct due to debt, competition, and other factors. On the other hand, a group of Redditors led by Gill believed that this was a company that would not go bankrupt, and they made a bet based on that belief. The idea behind this bet is to make the institutional investors who happened to be 'short position holders' panic and have to sell, or rather close (their positions). Short sellers then have to buy them (the shares they borrowed to sell) back on the open market, where the sellers (if any) can jack the price up, which causes other short holders to panic creating a feedback loop.

As this bet started to pay off, institutional investors started losing money as the stock price was going up and their market positions were expiring. As some retail investors saw their holdings skyrocket by 400%, popular retail trading platforms halted trading of the stock. At the height of the meme-trading frenzy, Robinhood and other brokerages pulled the plug on GameStop stock, prompting lawmakers like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) to call for a hearing to investigate the company's relationships with hedge funds. Robinhood's actions caused a huge wave of retail investors to log claims against the platform accusing it of stock manipulation and playing to the direction of institutional investors and hedge funds. Melvin Capital, a New York hedge fund, seems to have lost about \$6 billion from the short squeeze in GameStop. They were then bailed out by Citadel and Point 72.

The House Financial Services Committee heard these complains and pulled all of the major players including CEO's of Robinhood (Retail investing platform), Reddit, Melvin Capital, Citadel and Keith Gill. Robinhood was the focus. At the hearing, Robinhood's CEO Vlad Tenev has made it clear that the app does not answer to hedge funds and serves millions of small investors who use the platform every day to invest. Throughout the hearing, Tenev assured lawmakers that Robinhood had to halt meme stock trading because its business partners — the clearinghouses that perform the trades — bumped up how much money it would cost the company to finish them out.

These events made the U.S Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) re-think how the Securities and Exchange Commission's Regulation best interest applies to regulating game-like features offered via brokerage apps. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., prodded Robert Cook, FINRA's CEO, in a letter Feb. 12 to review Robinhood's activities during the GameStop trading frenzy.

In her letter, Warren asked Cook to explain how FINRA will respond to Robinhood's role "in recent market volatility, its decision to cut off customers' trading, and the broader concerns about market fairness that these events represent." In his response, Cook pointed to FINRA's 2021 Examination and Risk Monitoring Report, which noted member firms' use of emerging digital communication channels, "including app-based platforms with interactive or 'game-like' features that may be intended to influence customers, and related forms of marketing."

The game-like features “we have seen across multiple firms include, among others, items such as badges that serve as visual markers of achievement, leaderboards that rank participants, social networking features (including in-app messaging) and prizes for games (such as free stock) to encourage account sign-ups,” Cook said.

Some of these game-like offerings, he said, “may also result in increased risks to customers if not designed with appropriate compliance considerations in mind, raising important regulatory questions.”

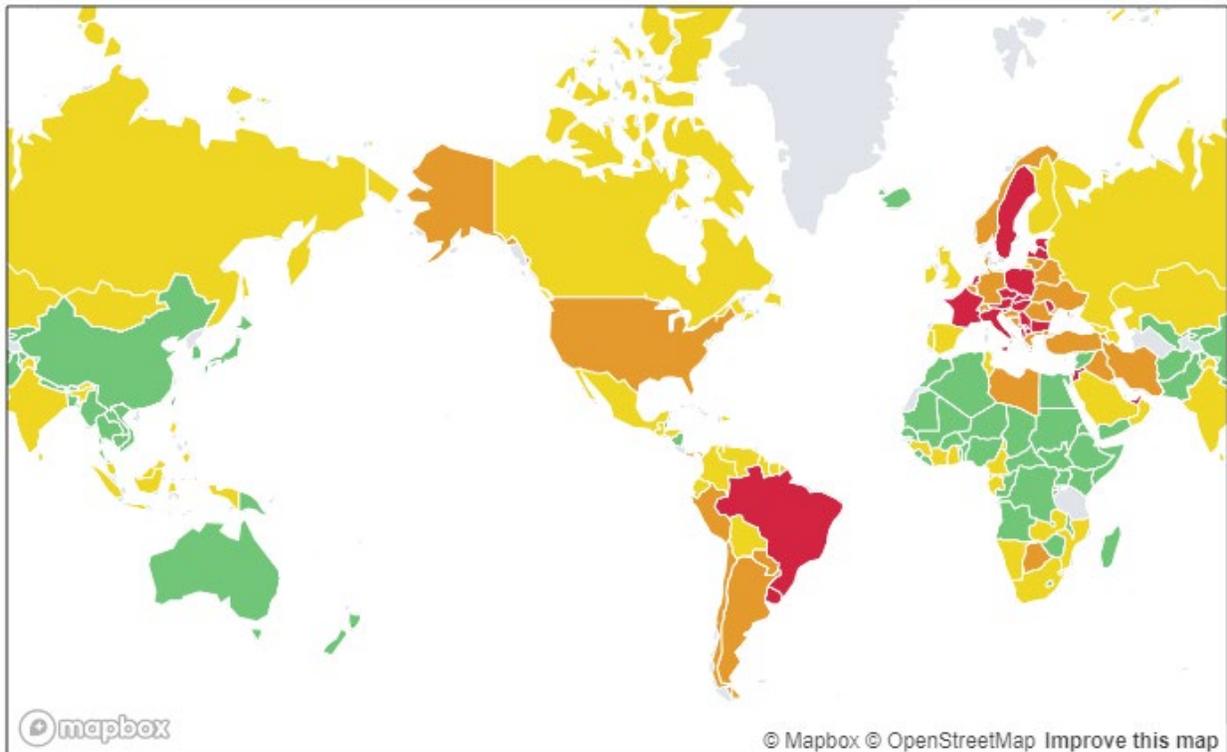
Both the SEC and FINRA have said their agencies are probing for any wrongdoing, but they have declined to disclose specific details. For now, it looks like significant regulatory changes are coming to the online brokerage industry.

2. GLOBAL

2.1 COVID UPDATE

	Country/Region	United States	Country/Region	Canada
Daily new cases per 100k people (7d moving avg.)		19.5		7.9
Risk level		Orange		Yellow
Total cases		29,246,970		893,518
Total deaths		528,857		22,304

Risk Levels by Country/Region



#	Country, Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Serious, Critical	Tot Cases/ 1M pop	Deaths/ 1M pop	Total Tests	Tests/ 1M pop	Population
	World	119,385,721	+278,606	2,645,919	+4,772	95,631,715	21,108,087	90,164	15,316	339.4			
1	USA	29,937,268	+11,366	543,890	+169	21,496,820	7,896,558	12,490	90,078	1,637	374,738,556	1,127,553	332,346,783
2	France	3,990,331		89,830		270,433	3,630,068	3,992	61,039	1,374	56,091,946	858,020	65,373,694
3	Brazil	11,284,269		273,124		9,958,566	1,052,579	8,318	52,828	1,279	28,600,000	133,892	213,605,166
4	Belgium	798,108	+3,503	22,370	+23	54,044	721,694	452	68,657	1,924	9,954,558	856,337	11,624,575
5	UK	4,248,286	+6,609	125,343	+175	3,424,092	698,851	1,194	62,353	1,840	103,053,938	1,512,540	68,133,028
6	Italy	3,175,807	+26,824	101,564	+380	2,564,926	509,317	2,914	52,580	1,682	43,976,394	728,085	60,400,064
7	Russia	4,370,617	+9,794	91,220	+486	3,973,029	306,368	2,300	29,940	625	114,400,000	783,680	145,977,899
8	Poland	1,868,297	+18,775	46,724	+351	1,530,484	291,089	1,982	49,403	1,236	10,535,957	278,598	37,817,820
9	Mexico	2,151,028	+6,470	193,142	+654	1,691,093	266,793	4,798	16,563	1,487	5,711,049	43,976	129,868,807
10	Spain	3,183,704	+5,348	72,258	+173	2,857,714	253,732	2,186	68,075	1,545	40,292,390	861,550	46,767,349
11	India	11,333,484	+27,505	158,483	+157	10,971,329	203,672	8,944	8,157	114	224,998,638	161,941	1,389,382,743
12	Ireland	225,820	+641	4,518	+9	23,364	197,938	87	45,383	908	3,688,558	741,286	4,975,888
13	Ukraine	1,438,468	+12,946	27,915	+230	1,214,876	195,677	177	33,030	641	7,235,711	166,144	43,550,899
14	Iran	1,731,558	+8,088	61,069	+53	1,477,588	192,901	3,829	20,435	721	11,467,053	135,328	84,735,009
15	Czechia	1,376,998	+11,083	22,865	+122	1,191,782	162,351	1,940	128,418	2,132	9,390,615	875,764	10,722,763



Global Case to Fatality Ratios

2.2 COVID-19 World News

- [World economy bouncing back from COVID-19 faster than expected, OECD says](#)
The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) raised its expectations for global GDP growth to 5.5 per cent this year and four per cent next year. That is up from a December forecast of 4.2 per cent growth in 2021 and 3.7 per cent for 2022. After the virus plunged the world economy into crisis last year, the OECD now expects global output to surpass pre-pandemic levels by the middle of this year. OECD had also warned of a divergence in progress, with faster growth in China and the U.S., while some other regions are expected to continue struggling until the end of 2022. "The top policy priority is to ensure that all resources necessary are used to produce and fully deploy vaccinations as quickly as possible throughout the world, to save lives, preserve incomes and limit the adverse impact of containment measures on well-being," the report said.
- [Hospitals overwhelmed as Brazil reaches new daily Covid-19 death record](#)
The Health Ministry in Brazil reported a daily total of 1,972 new deaths in the country on Wednesday, March 11th, which has the world's second-highest overall toll, exceeded only by the United States. It also reported 70,764 new cases of Covid-19, meaning 11.1 million people have now caught the virus in the country, while a total of 268,370 have died. The previous daily death record was set on March 3 with just over 1,900 fatalities. The figure has been rising steadily over the past two weeks. Brazil is facing a dire situation with intensive care units more than 80 percent occupied in 25 of Brazil's 27 capital cities, according to a report released Tuesday by public health institute Fiocruz. President Jair Bolsonaro, who flouts expert advice on fighting the coronavirus, last week urged Brazilians to "stop whining" about Covid-19 and renewed his attacks on stay-at-home measures.
- [Higher airborne pollen concentrations correlated with increased SARS-CoV-2 infection rates, as evidenced from 31 countries across the globe](#)
- [Fast-spreading variants boost coronavirus surge across Europe](#)
- [Pfizer data finds vaccine prevents 94% of asymptomatic infections](#)
- [Russia to make Sputnik V vaccine in Italy; a 1st in EU](#)
- [Rajasthan scales down vaccinations, citing shortage](#)

2.3 Global Awareness

- [India now as autocratic as Pakistan, worse than Bangladesh: Sweden institute's Democracy Report](#)
The fifth annual democracy report by the organization titled 'Autocratisation goes viral', has downgraded India from "the world's largest democracy" to an "electoral autocracy", citing "muzzling" of the media, and overuse of defamation and sedition laws. V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) claims to produce the largest dataset on democracy with almost 30 million data points for 202 countries from 1789 to 2020. The report notes that the global decline during the past 10 years is steep and continues in 2020, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Additionally, the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2020 is down to levels last found around 1990. The report concludes that an accelerating wave of autocratisation engulfing 25 nations, home to one-third of the world's population — that is 2.6 billion people. "Several G20 nations such as Brazil, India, Turkey, and the United States of America are part of this drift".
India's problems are directly related to its malapportionment. It is currently the least representative democracy in the world. There is 1 elected representative per 2.5 million people, which means that minorities are very likely to be underrepresented, and coalition governments that might find compromises and share

political capital are becoming increasingly rare. When looking at religious groups, Muslims for example, are 20% of the population but only have 4% of representation in India government (as of 2014). In comparison, based on this proportion, the United States will have 140 congressmen, U.K will only have 26 M.P's and Canada will only have 13 MP's.

The 52nd amendment to the constitution added the tenth schedule. The intention was apparently noble - to prevent party-hopping of legislators after they got elected. Basically, termed the anti-defection law, it places a lower limit on the percentage of legislators that can defect from a party. If the number is lower than the limit, then the membership of the legislators is voided, although they can seek re-election from the same constituency.

The peculiarity of this amendment is that it also allows the parties to declare their members as having defected, if they vote against party lines on any bill. Effectively, legislators are reduced to puppets controlled by party leaders, and the whole point of representative democracy is defeated. The amendment almost turns India into an oligarchy under the control of the heads of a few major parties. The only thing the elections change is which party head is in control.

- [Rebel attack on world's largest crude terminal sends oil prices surging](#)

Oil surged in Asian trading after Saudi Arabia said the world's largest crude terminal was attacked, although output appeared to be unaffected after the missiles and drones were intercepted. The attacks follow a recent escalation of hostilities in the Middle East region after Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a series of attacks on Saudi Arabia. The new U.S. administration has also carried out airstrikes in Syria last month on sites it said related to Iran-backed groups.

Benchmark Brent climbed as high as \$71.38 a barrel in early Asian trade, its highest since Jan. 8, 2020. It settled down \$1.12 or 1.6% at \$68.24. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled down \$1.04 or 1.6% at \$65.05. The session high was \$67.98 a barrel, its highest since October 2018. Brent and WTI prices have climbed for four consecutive sessions.

- [Oil settles lower, shrugs off Saudi attack after climbing above \\$70/bbl](#)
- [UK overseas territories top list of world's leading tax havens](#)
- [Norway suspends Rolls-Royce asset sale on security grounds](#)
- [Germany is main target of Russian disinformation, EU says](#)

2.4 Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism

- [Myanmar's military on 'killing spree' against protesters: Amnesty](#)

"These Myanmar military tactics are far from new, but their killing sprees have never before been live-streamed for the world to see," said Joanne Mariner, the director of Crisis Response at Amnesty International. The latest findings bolster a February report from Amnesty that concluded security forces deployed machine guns against peaceful protesters and shot one woman in the head during a anti-military government demonstration. On Wednesday, police officers who fled to India, told the Reuters news agency that they were instructed by the military to single out demonstrators and to "shoot 'till they are dead".

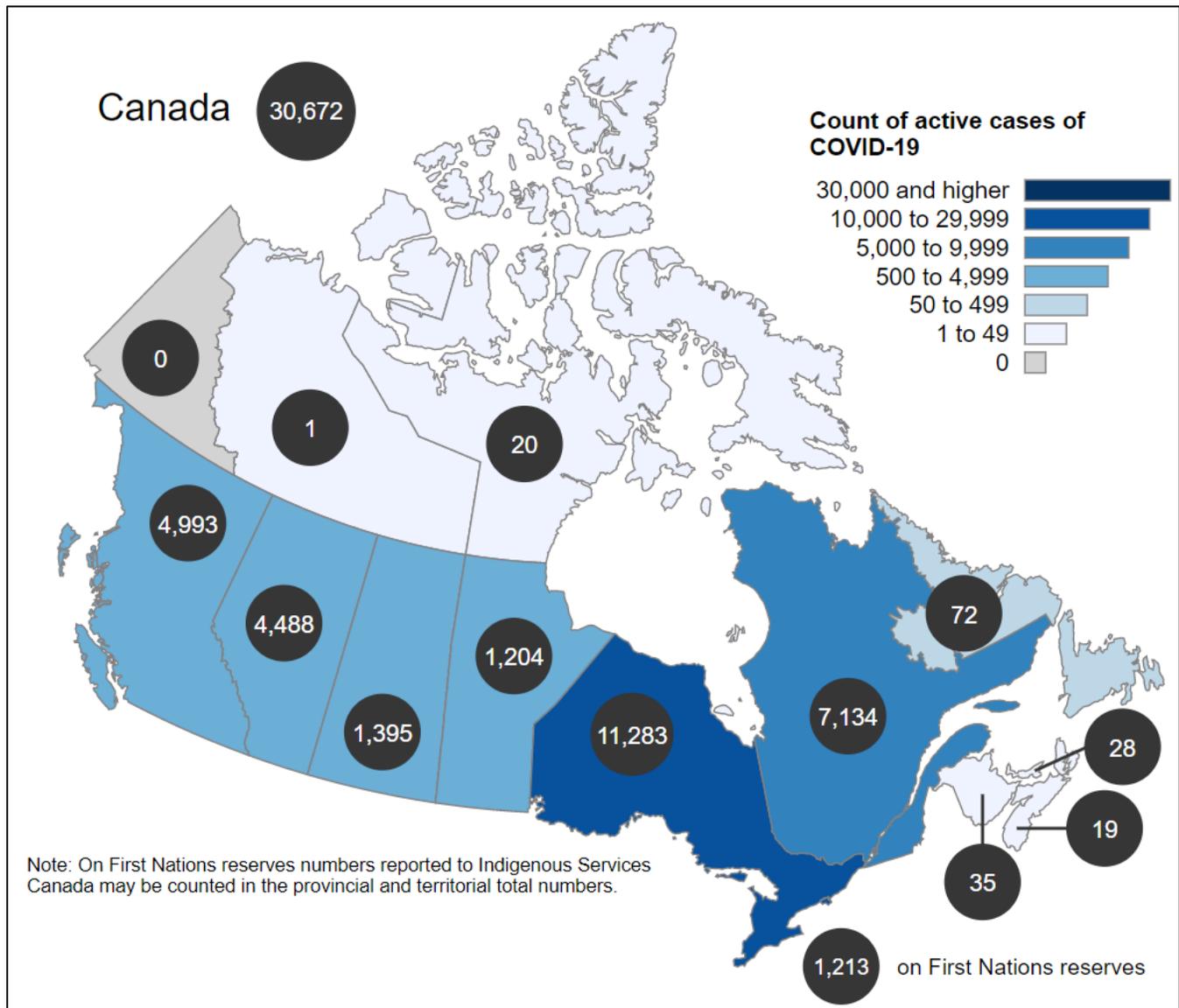
The United Nations human rights investigator on Myanmar said on Thursday the military junta had "murdered" at least 70 people since its Feb. 1 coup, committing killings, torture and persecution that may constitute crimes against humanity. More than half of those killed were under the age of 25, Thomas Andrews told the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

“There is extensive video evidence of security forces viciously beating protesters, medics, and bystanders,” he said. “There is shocking video of the aftermath of attacks, including fatal gunshot wounds to the heads of protesters, and video of soldiers dragging or carrying away the dead bodies of their victims.”

- [Greek students keep up protests amid police brutality claims](#)
- [Algerian president sets early election date after protests](#)
- [India's farmers' protests mark 100 days](#)
- [The arrest of an opposition leader sparks protests in Senegal](#)

3. CANADA

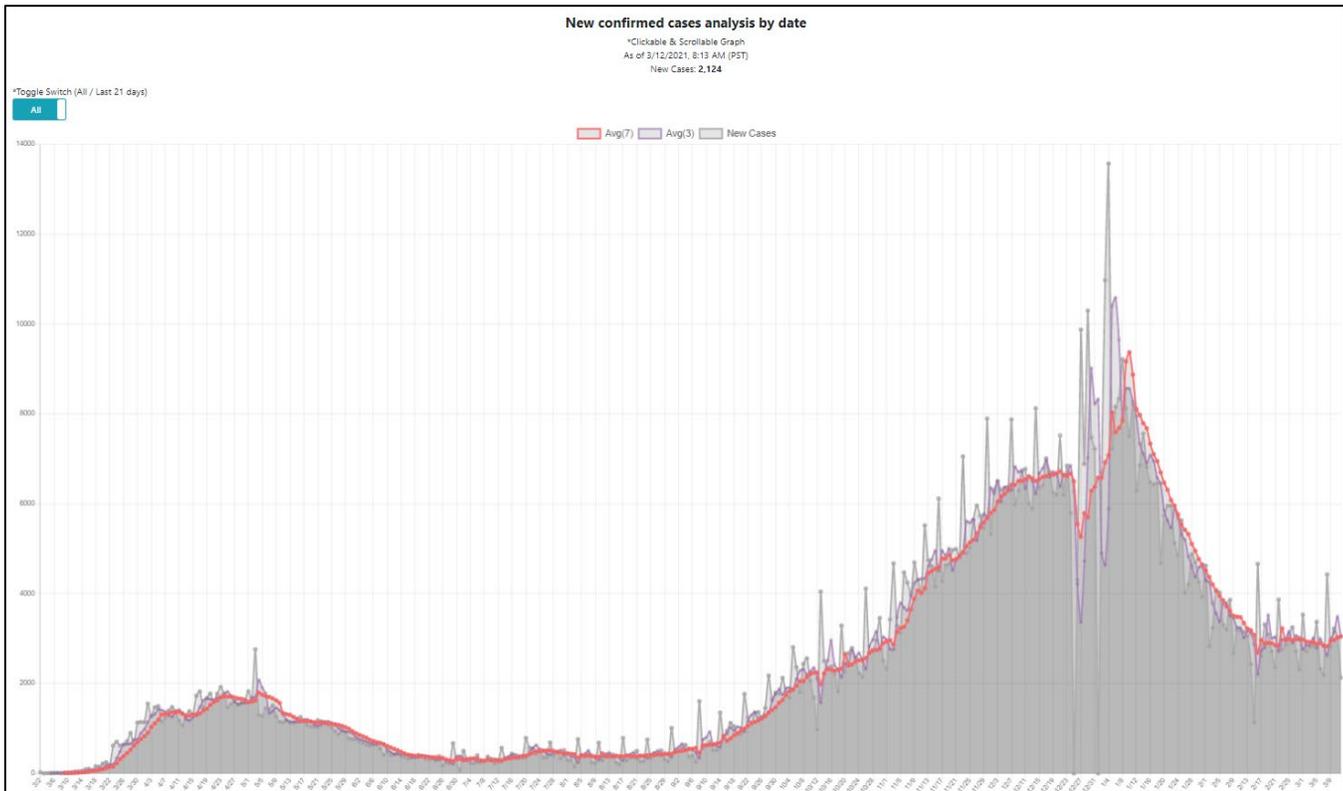
3.1 COVID UPDATE



Prov. ↕	Total Confirmed ↕	Total Deaths ↕	Total Recovered ↕	Total Active ↕
Total	901,133 (↑1,371)	22,389 (↑18)	847,843 (↑1,124)	30,901 (↑229)
BC	86,219	1,397	79,829	4,993
ON	314,891 (↑1,371)	7,127 (↑18)	296,252 (↑1,124)	11,512 (↑229)
QC	295,390	10,518	277,738	7,134
AB	137,137	1,933	130,716	4,488
MB	32,509	911	30,394	1,204
NB	1,462	29	1,398	35
SK	30,193	401	28,397	1,395
PEI	143	0	115	28
NL	1,011	6	933	72
NS	1,665	65	1,581	19
YT	72	1	71	0
NT	47	0	46	1
NU	381	1	360	20
	13	0	13	0
Rate of change	↑ 0.2%	↑ 0.1%	↑ 0.1%	↑ 0.7%

Grand Princess Cruise + Repatriated travellers
*Confirmed cases include presumptive cases
Active cases include presumptive cases (Active = Confirmed - Recovered - Death)

Prov. ↕	Total Test ↕	Total Waiting ↕	Total Hosp ↕	Total ICU ↕
Total	26,134,691 (+64,611)	-	-	-
BC	2,022,956	-	244	68
ON	11,649,060 (+64,611)	36,744 (-5289)	676 (-4)	282 (+5)
QC	6,931,151	-	563	111
AB	3,502,457	-	259	38
MB	544,042	-	54	8
NB	238,409	-	3	2
SK	602,992	-	137	27
PEI	110,858	-	-	-
NL	119,054	-	3	0
NS	380,986	-	1	1
YT	8,223	15	-	-
NT	15,175	17	0	0
NU	9,328	341	0	0
Rate of change	↑ 0.2%	-	-	-



3.2 COVID-19 Canada News

- [B.C. gets 1 million calls within 1st hour of opening phone lines to vaccine appointments for elderly](#)
 Nearly 15,000 vaccine appointments were booked for seniors across British Columbia Monday as the province opened the next phase of its immunization rollout plan. Over half of the appointments were booked for 8,722 seniors in the Fraser Health Authority, the province's most populous health region. It was also the only health authority to make web-based booking available on the first day. Meanwhile, call centres in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority only registered 369 seniors for appointments.
 The call centres opened at 7 a.m. at the Fraser, Island, Interior, Northern and Vancouver Coastal health authorities to allow appointments for people 90 years and older and Indigenous people who are 65 and older or identify as elders. In less than three hours they received 1.7 million calls.
- [Variants of concern cause more than 40% of new COVID-19 cases in Ontario, experts say](#)
- [Ontario pharmacy COVID-19 vaccine pilot ramping up in three regions](#)
- [B.C. allows outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people](#)
 British Columbians can gather outside in groups of up to 10 people, effective immediately, following four months of restrictions on social gatherings. "You can meet friends outside and have a coffee, have a chat, have a connection, have a picnic in the park," Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry said Thursday. But she stressed the province's restrictions on indoor gatherings will remain in place for now. Only people who are part of the same household can meet indoors, including at restaurants.

Henry updated her public health order on the same day the province recorded 569 new cases of COVID-19 and 3 more deaths. A total of 244 people are in hospital, with 68 people in intensive care. The province has 4,912 active cases, with another 8,900 people under public health monitoring.

New modelling presented by Henry shows the number of contacts people are having are at about 50 to 60 per cent of normal. The modelling projects a 50 per cent contact rate could lead to a peak in mid-March followed by a gradual decline into the spring months, but a 60 per cent contact rate could result in cases surging back up.

There are currently four vaccines that have been approved for use by Health Canada — Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca-Oxford and Johnson & Johnson — and more than three million eligible British Columbians who have yet to receive a shot.

- [Workers at federal quarantine hotel near Vancouver airport issue 72-hour strike notice](#)
- [Two Vancouver men thrown in jail for hosting party during pandemic](#)
- [Ontario will need even harsher third lockdown soon due to COVID-19 variants, top epidemiologist says](#)

3.3 Canada Awareness

- [Chinese media report Michael Kovrig, Michael Spavor to face first trial 'soon'](#)
- [Canada blows past estimated cost of Canada Recovery Benefit at \\$2,000 a month](#)

The Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) — which pays unemployed Canadians \$2,000 a month — was initially estimated by Finance officials to cost \$6.3 billion by the end of March. But it has now almost doubled to \$11.1 billion as of Feb. 28, according to data posted by the government. Prior to CRB, Ottawa spent a total of \$74 billion on the CERB, which has since been wound down. Applicants to the CRB were previously eligible for 26 weeks of coverage, but Ottawa in February extended eligibility to 38 weeks in total. The program is currently scheduled to end at the end of September 2021. Government estimates suggest elderly benefits costs will be \$62 billion in 2021-22 — or roughly one out of every five public dollars spent — reflecting Canada’s quickly aging population. A January 2020 report by economists at RBC estimated that elderly benefits costs in Canada would reach \$99 billion by 2030, doubling in cost in a single decade.

“Despite the record increase in federal debt in 2020-21, PBO expects the federal debt servicing burden to continue to decline due to low interest rates throughout the medium term,” said the PBO report.

- [B.C. housing minister pledges shelter spaces for homeless in Victoria parks](#)
- [First Nation asks UN expert to probe systemic racism in Canada](#)
- [Canada to benefit from U.S. rebound, says OECD](#)

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development says Canada could benefit from a faster economic rebound in the United States this year. The OECD’s new forecast says the world economy is bouncing back from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis faster than expected thanks in part to successful coronavirus vaccines and U.S. stimulus efforts, but the improvements are uneven and joblessness remains a big concern. The OECD now expects global output to surpass pre-pandemic levels by the middle of this year and raised its expectations for global gross domestic product growth this year and next year. But the organization warned of divergence in progress, with faster growth in China and the U.S. while some other regions are expected to continue struggling until the end of 2022. The report says Canada’s economy is expected to grow 4.7 per cent this year, while the U.S. is slated to grow 6.5 per cent.

3.4 Canada – Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism



welund

During the week of 4-11 March 2021, the majority of activist activity noted by Welund in Canada took place in the government sector (42%), followed by oil and gas (27%). Protests made up the majority of activity (27%), followed by critical commentary (13%).

Opposition campaigns targeting the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (TMX) project continued to be a focus for activists, with groups targeting insurers and financiers, and holding ‘flash’-actions along the construction route. Anti-TMX groups also held an organizing webinar to discuss current and future ‘frontline actions’.

Anti-lockdown protesters executed weekly marches in most major cities and townships across Canada. Despite the majority of provinces announcing a ‘reopen’ strategy, campaigners continued to organize large-scale marches to demand an immediate end to covid-19 public health restrictions.

Protests:

Burnaby tree-sit occupier Timothee Govare suggested organizing a ‘new movement’ as TMX crews prepared to cut down trees along the pipeline route in Burnaby. Activists held a ‘flash’-action at Holmes creek, and protesters held a solidarity march and rally to support the tree-sit and celebrate the three-year anniversary of the Protect the Inlet campaign and the building of the ‘Watch House’.

Groups called for an end to the TMX project as construction resumed in certain areas of the lower mainland in BC. Wilderness Committee released a construction update listing all the sections of TMX that were resuming construction. Indigenous campaigners also called for an end to the pipeline project. The groups claimed that a report by Kerr-Wood Leidal and MarineLabs outlined the damaging effects of increased marine vessel traffic that TMX would bring to the Burrard Inlet.

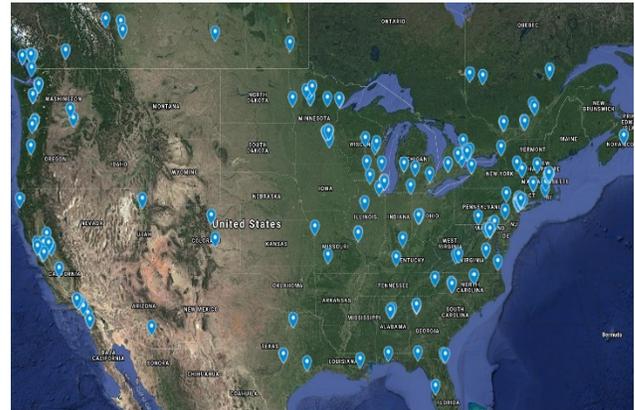


Figure 1: Past and upcoming protest activity as noted by Welund between 3-17 March 2021

Outlook:

Anti-fossil fuel protests and direct actions will likely continue into next week. Greenpeace Quebec also started a three-day campaign on 10 March to oppose GNL Quebec after a cohort of solidarity groups executed a banner drop and billboard reveal against the project.

The ‘Worldwide Rally for Freedom and Democracy’ on 20 March has seen a steady increase in support from Canadian anti-lockdown groups. The list of participating cities has grown especially in BC and Ontario. Additional protests in other cities across Canada will likely be announced by the group as the date for the action approaches.

Extinction Rebellion organized a march from Vancouver to Victoria on 28 April-1 May 2021. The Vancouver chapter also plans to occupy the Cambie Bridge on 27 March.

Annual actions held by environmental groups are also upcoming. Fridays for Future will hold its Global Climate Strike on 19 March. Extinction Rebellion’s ‘Spring Rebellion’ is also being organized for the near future.

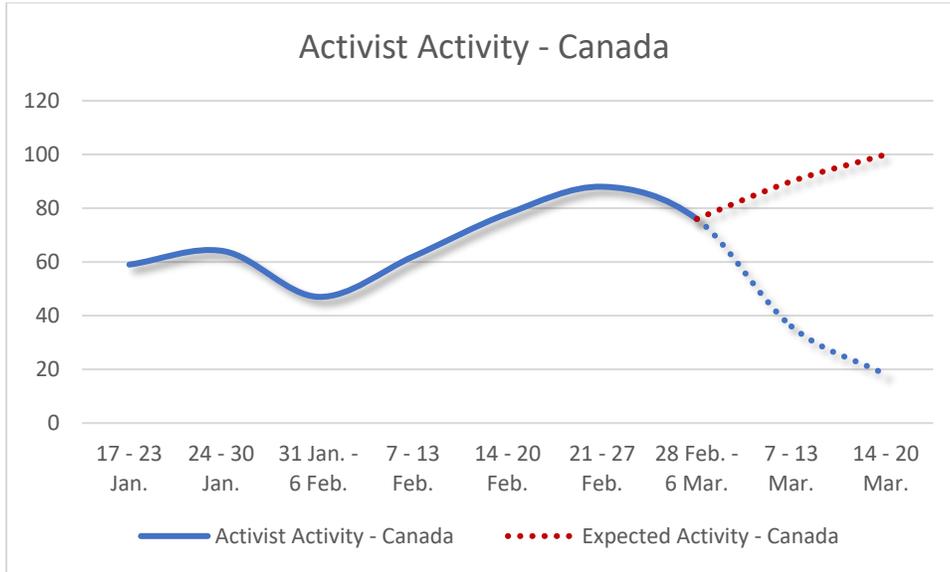


Figure 1 Total activist activity in Canada as noted by Welund.

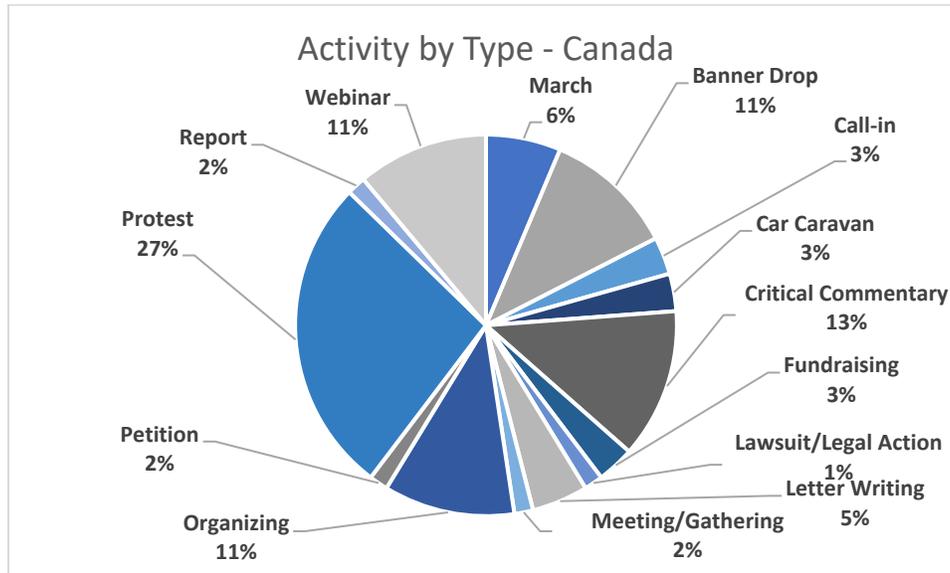


Figure 2 Activist activity in Canada by type as noted by Welund

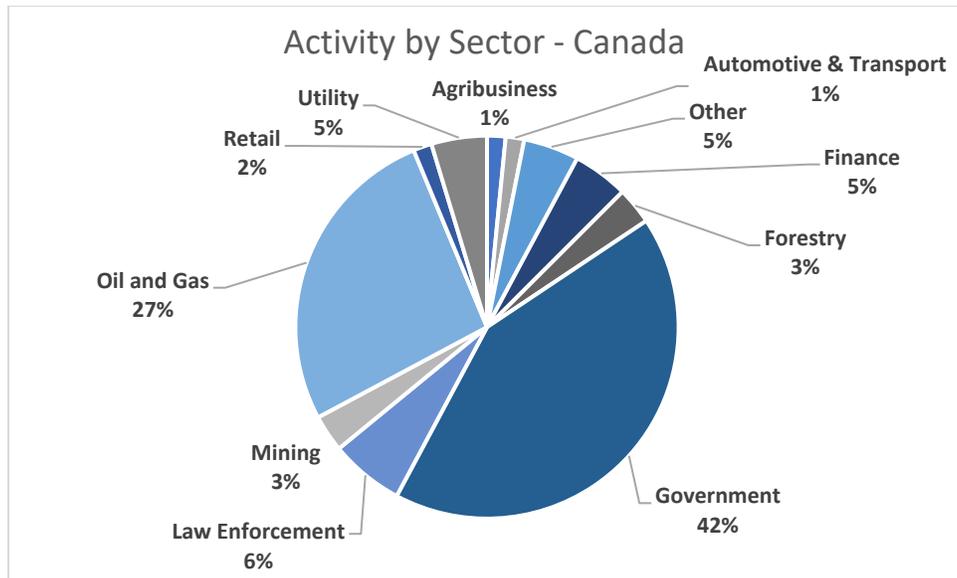
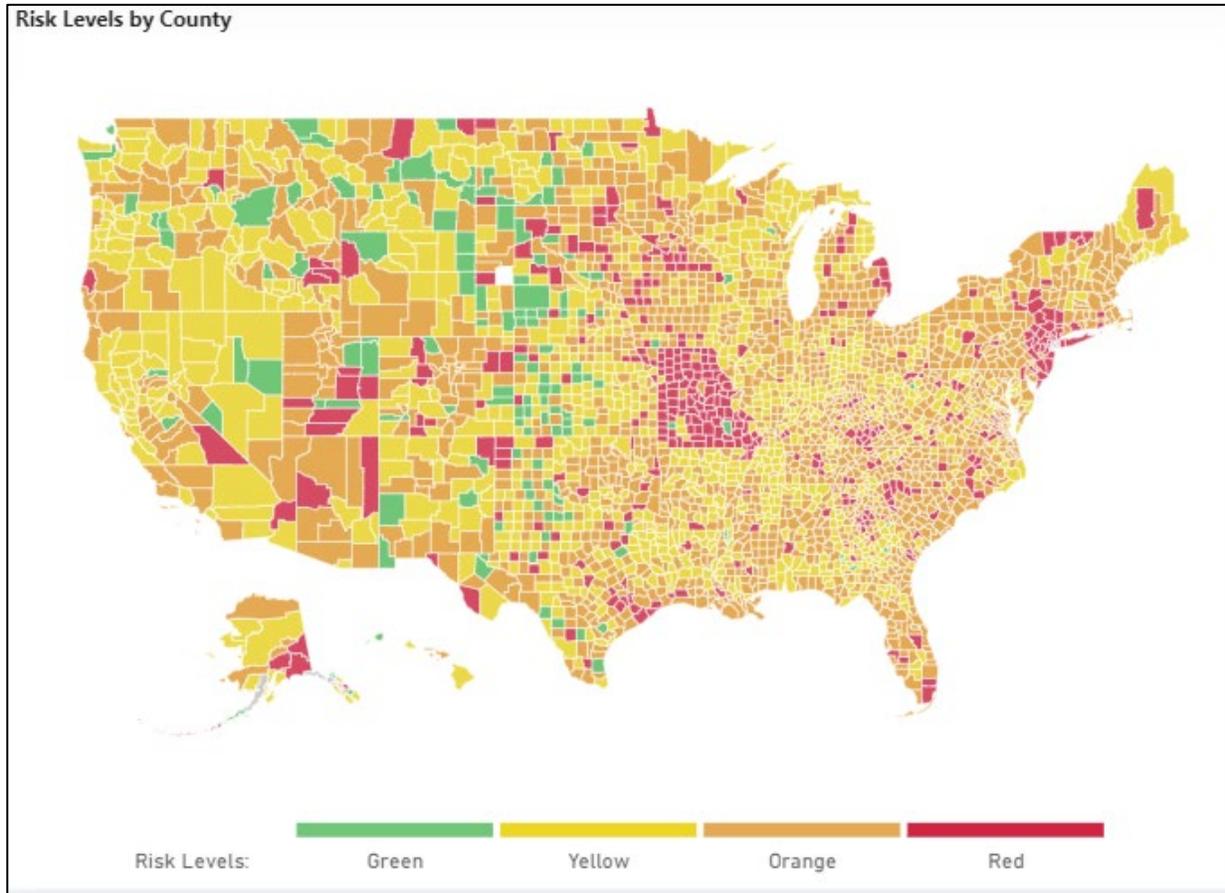


Figure 3 Activist activity in Canada by sector as noted by Welund.

4. USA

4.1 COVID UPDATE



#	USA State	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Tot Cases/ 1M pop	Deaths/ 1M pop	Total Tests	Tests/ 1M pop	Population
1	California	3,615,395		55,137		1,897,729	1,662,529	91,501	1,395	50,316,151	1,273,433	39,512,223
2	New York	1,759,610		48,950		858,227	852,433	90,452	2,516	40,464,839	2,080,074	19,453,561
3	Florida	1,967,865	+5,214	32,145	+66	1,240,582	695,138	91,623	1,497	22,339,182	1,040,109	21,477,737
4	Virginia	592,214	+1,589	9,961	+59	48,804	533,449	69,382	1,167	7,867,384	921,723	8,535,519
5	Georgia	1,030,146		18,117		549,454	462,575	97,024	1,706	7,917,785	745,735	10,617,423
6	Maryland	391,480	+990	8,030	+16	9,748	373,702	64,754	1,328	8,236,204	1,362,329	6,045,680
7	Kentucky	414,131		4,921		48,500	360,710	92,695	1,101	4,644,779	1,039,642	4,467,673
8	South Carolina	530,880	+1,488	8,833	+11	238,343	283,704	103,109	1,716	6,276,613	1,219,064	5,148,714
9	New Jersey	826,632		23,814		593,633	209,185	93,066	2,681	11,071,961	1,246,535	8,882,190
10	Alabama	502,263		10,274		303,746	188,243	102,436	2,095	2,458,100	501,327	4,903,185
11	Washington	350,530		5,162		173,352	172,016	46,032	678	5,470,909	718,449	7,614,893
12	Missouri	527,353		8,903		355,746	162,704	85,924	1,451	5,716,145	931,358	6,137,428
13	Connecticut	289,392		7,761		122,134	159,497	81,169	2,177	7,066,838	1,982,123	3,565,287
14	Colorado	440,220		6,021		277,081	157,118	76,444	1,046	2,633,031	457,224	5,758,736
15	Indiana	670,074		12,802		513,207	144,065	99,532	1,902	8,353,553	1,240,832	6,732,219

4.2 COVID-19 USA News

- [EU told to expect no AstraZeneca vaccines from U.S. in near future](#)
Washington has told the European Union that it should not expect to receive AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the United States any time soon, two EU sources said on Thursday, in a new blow to the bloc's supplies. AstraZeneca told the EU earlier this year it would cut its supplies in the second quarter by at least half to less than 90 million doses, EU sources told Reuters, after a bigger reduction in the first three months of the year. A senior EU diplomat said the European Commission told member states' diplomats at a meeting in Brussels on Wednesday that the bloc should not expect any exports from the United States "at this point in time".
- [Texas attorney general files lawsuit against Austin leaders over mask requirement](#)
Texas' top law enforcement officer is suing leaders in the state's capital for maintaining local coronavirus mask requirements, saying they illegally defy the governor's order ending a statewide mandate. The lawsuit, filed Thursday in Travis County District Court, names Austin Mayor Steve Adler, Travis County Judge Andy Brown and Mark Escott, the interim medical director, and Health Authority for Austin, as defendants. State Attorney General Ken Paxton is asking for a temporary restraining order requiring Austin and Travis County officials to refrain from enforcing their mask rules.
- [Biden Ordering 100 Million More Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 Vaccine Doses To Cover U.S Population](#)
- [U.S. administers 93.7 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines: CDC](#)
- [Mexico leans on China after Biden rules out vaccines sharing in short term](#)
- [The White House is monitoring Russian disinformation efforts about vaccines](#)
Russian efforts to spread disinformation about the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are being monitored by the Biden administration, the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, said on Monday. "We will fight with every tool we have," she said. "We are aware of it, we are monitoring it and we are taking steps to address." Three publications run by Russian intelligence services have been identified as seeking to undermine the vaccines, a spokeswoman for the State Department said, according to Reuters, confirming an earlier report by The Wall Street Journal. Though the publications have a small reach, they have emphasized the risk of the vaccines' side effects and cast doubts about their efficacy, The Journal reported.
- [One year after the pandemic was declared, 1 in 10 Americans have been fully vaccinated](#)
- [AP-NORC poll: 1 in 5 in US lost someone close in pandemic](#)

4.3 USA Awareness

- [Biden Signs \\$1.9 Trillion Stimulus Bill](#)
President Joe Biden signed his \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill into law on Thursday, commemorating the one-year anniversary of a U.S. lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic. The package provides \$400 billion for \$1,400 direct payments to most Americans, \$350 billion in aid to state and local governments, an expansion of the child tax credit and increased funding for COVID-19 vaccine distribution. An analysis by the Tax Policy Center published this week estimated that middle-income families — those making \$51,000 to \$91,000 per year — would see their after-tax income rise by 5.5 percent as a result of the tax changes and stimulus payments in the legislation. This is about twice what that income group received as a result of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The size of the payments are scaled down for individuals making more than \$75,000 and married couples

earning more than \$150,000. And they are cut off for individuals making \$80,000 or more and couples earning more than \$160,000. Those thresholds are lower than in the previous relief bills, but they will still be one of the biggest benefits enjoyed by those who are solidly in the middle class. After four years of being on life support, the Affordable Care Act is expanding, a development that will largely reward middle-income individuals and families, since those on the lower end of the income spectrum generally qualify for Medicaid. Because the relief legislation expands the subsidies for buying health insurance, a 64-year-old earning \$58,000 would see monthly payments decline to \$412 from \$1,075 under current law, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

- [Stimulus checks could hit some bank accounts as soon as this weekend, White House says](#)
- [Republican donations surge despite corporate boycott after Capitol riots](#)
- [CDC says antibiotic resistance from six pathogens costs US more than \\$4.6B annually](#)
- [New York mayor joins calls for Cuomo to resign over sexual misconduct claims](#)

4.4 USA – Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism (Provided by Welund)



During the week of 4-11 March 2021, the majority of activist activity in the US noted by Welund took place in the government sector (53%), followed by law enforcement (15%) and finance (10%). Protests made up most activity (54%), followed by organizing (8%) and meeting/gatherings (7%).

The trial of ex-Minneapolis cop Derek Chauvin in George Floyd’s death has begun in Hennepin County. On 8 March, campaigners held a ‘national day of action’ to mark the start of the trial and in solidarity with social and racial justice movements in the US. The trial began on 9 March due to a delay over a ‘disputed’ additional charge. The trial is expected to last two to four weeks.

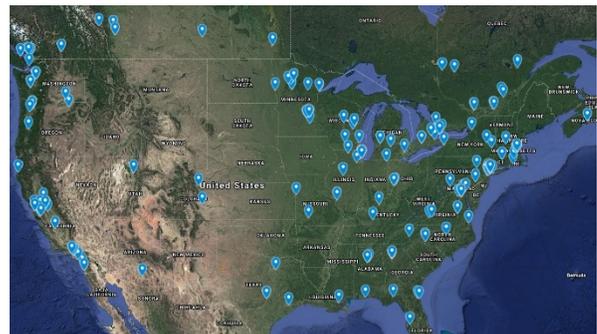
Despite the pandemic, activists continue to organize in-person protests to broadcast their campaigns and demands. Many organizers have incorporated physical distancing and mask-wearing adaptations to limit the risk of gathering for protests. California, New York, and Minnesota saw the most protests this week.

Protests:

Despite the pandemic, activists continue to organize in-person protests to broadcast their campaigns and demands. Many organizers have incorporated physical distancing and mask-wearing adaptations to limit the risk of gathering for protests. California, Massachusetts, and Washington saw the most protests this week.

Extinction Rebellion (XR) groups across the US opposed to Enbridge’s Line 3 pipeline promoted an XR week of action on 8-14 March 2021, and criticized the financial institutions supporting the project as part of the ‘Defund Line 3’ campaign

As part of the campaign this week, there were actions against banks in Portland, Chicago, Northfield, and Richfield, Minnesota.



Past and upcoming protest activity as noted by Welund between 3-17 March.

Outlook:

Analysts are watching how the vaccine rollout and the ‘re-opening’ of some US states will affect in-person and anti-vaxx protests.

STMP noted that “between now and 31 March, we’re going to do everything we can to get those banks to walk away” [from Line 3]. Welund expects additional actions targeting banks funding Line 3 to continue throughout the month. From 14-20 March, activists will focus on “raising money for the frontlines” and “calls, emails and meetings with thousands of branch managers.”

On 6 March 2021, Full-Stop Affinity, a “youth liberation anarchist environmentalist affinity group that organizes under the Green Anti-capitalist Front and the Youth Liberation Front,” has called for an “autonomous day of action against the state” in the US. FSA has promoted tactics that seek to create ‘chaos’ to address climate change rather than relying on protests such as marches and youth strikes.

Minnesota authorities are preparing for the murder trial of ex-Minneapolis cop Derek Chauvin in George Floyd’s death in Hennepin County. On 8 March 2021, the trial will begin with selection and opening arguments scheduled to begin no earlier than 29 March. The trial is expected to last two to four weeks.

On 13 March 2021, Seattle Black Anarcho Coalition has called for a day of action to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Breonna Taylor who was killed by police in Louisville, Kentucky in 2020.

On 20 March, Support Alabama Amazon Union (SAAU) will hold an international day of action to support Amazon workers voting to unionize at the company’s BHM1 Fulfillment Center in Bessemer, Alabama. Protest actions have been scheduled in several cities across the US, either at Amazon warehouses or distribution facilities, as well as at Amazon-owned Whole Foods. On 20 February 2021, SAAU promoted a similar ‘national day of action’ in the US supporting unionizing efforts at BHM1.

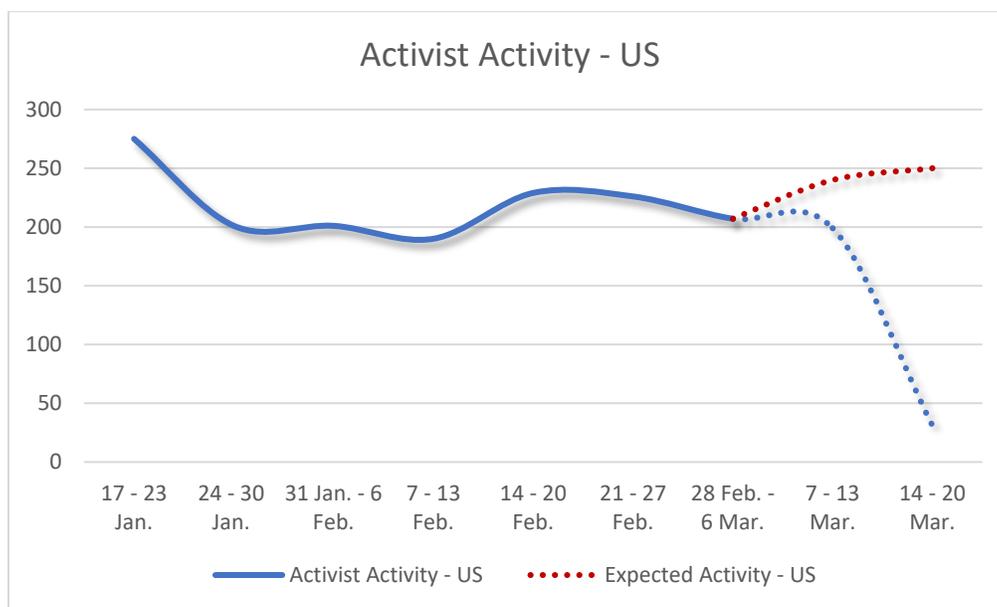


Figure 4 Total activist activity in the US as noted by Welund.

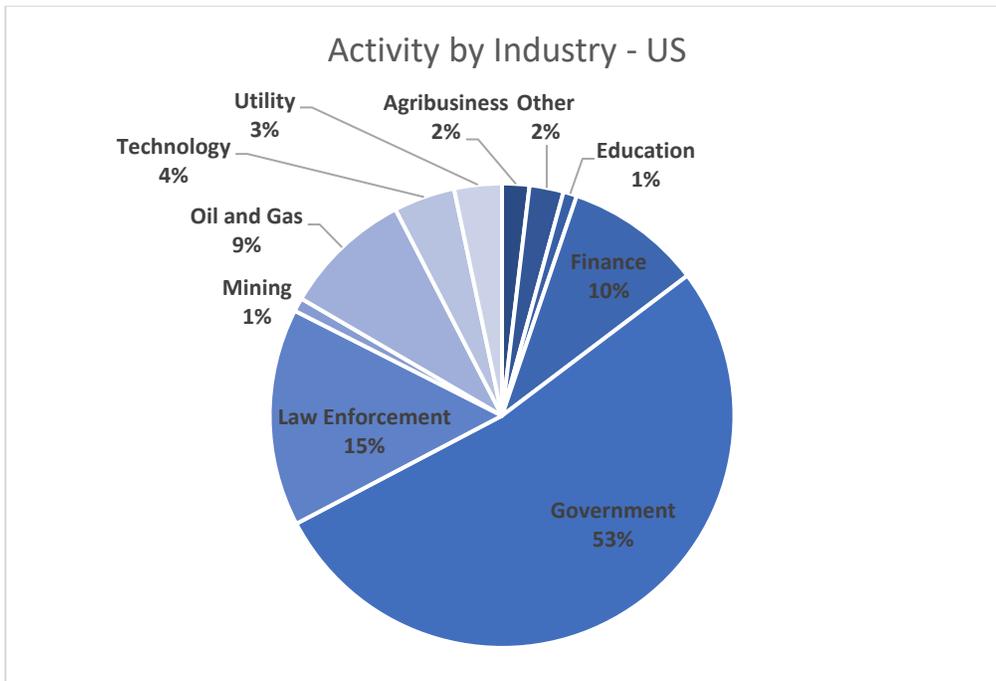


Figure 5 Activist activity in the US by industry as noted by Welund

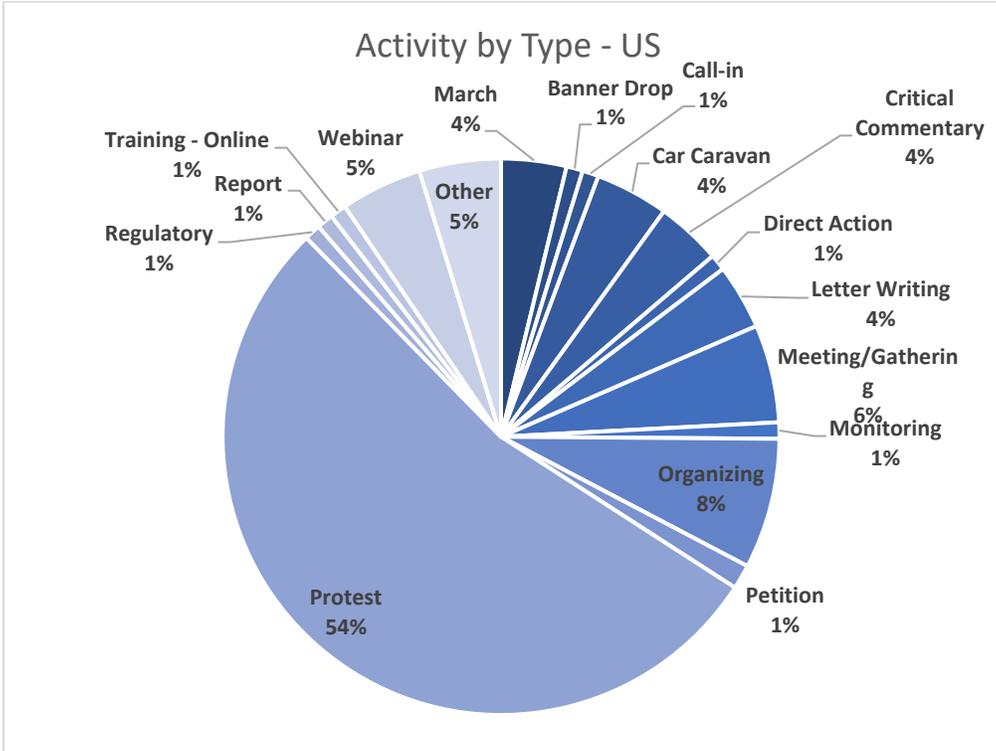


Figure 6 Activist activity in the US by type as noted by Welund.

End Report

Please submit feedback to:

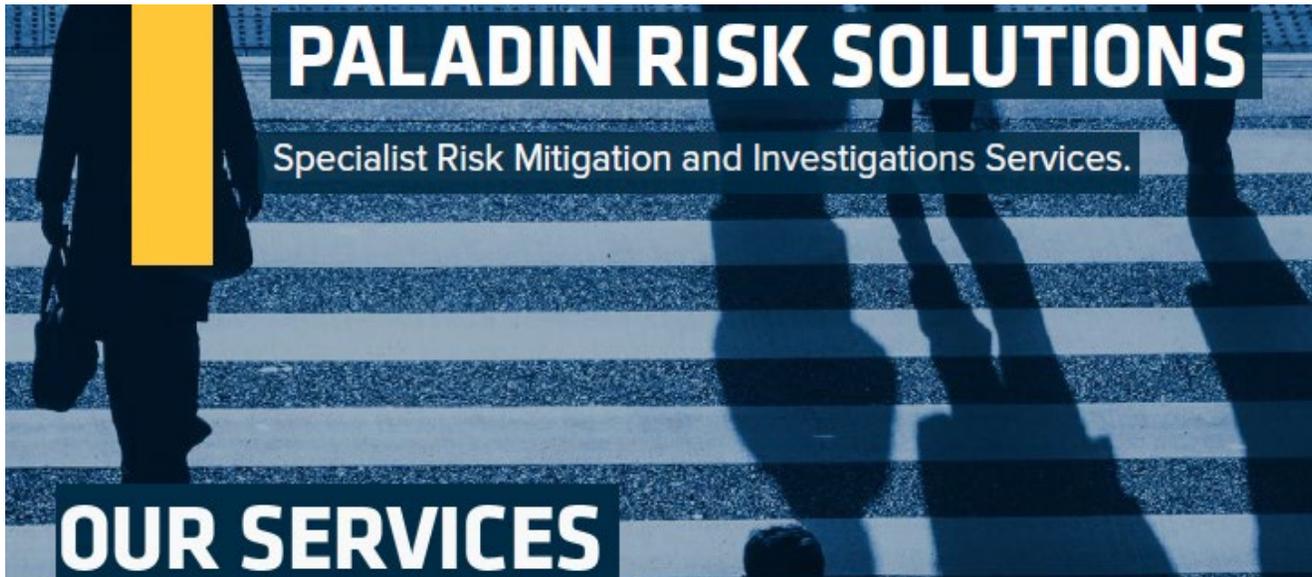


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5. PALADIN RISK SOLUTIONS - SERVICES



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