



INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Situational awareness for stakeholders and decision makers.



Report # 21-023

02 April 2021

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1. CURRENT SITUATION

The Commission of Public Inquiry on the scope of money laundering in British Columbia has been administering witnesses since February 2020. The inquiry is looking into the issues of money laundering in various sectors of the economy through fact finding testimony and the collection of recommendations for future consideration. Recent testimony suggests that the 2020 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games were a convergence zone for various transnational criminals, including Mexican cartels, Chinese triads and Iranian terrorist groups.

A retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer advised during the commission that the RCMP is not structured in a manner conducive for investigations of this type of crime and is often also underfunded for such endeavors. As such, a recommendation was made for a new law enforcement agency, similar to the US Drug Enforcement Agency, which would be able to be more effective at working with international partners and enforcing cross-border crime and money laundering - which are said to be “two sides of the same coin”.

During his time at Integrated Proceeds of Crime (IPOC) and Federal Serious Organized Crime (FSOC) he worked files on various high level organized crime members, including people connected to Mexican cartels, Iranian Hezbollah, and Chinese triads. These groups were collaborating, making Vancouver a significant place for trading high-grade cocaine and other narcotics like heroin and methamphetamine. Additionally, the city’s port is one of the largest in North America and does not have a Port Police which often makes smuggling drugs, easier.

The RCMP appears to have also had challenges with heightened concerns related to casino gambling and organised crime; pertaining to Vancouver casinos where it is believed that illicit money from illegal drug proceeds were laundered. The officer advised that due to limited resources, law enforcement was constrained in its ability to respond to the concerns. Consequently, the money laundering activity connected to casinos was assessed from a cost versus benefit perspective which, at the time, was ultimately ruled out due to the likelihood of a successful prosecution.

Money laundering through regulated agencies may pose a greater risk of corruption and political destabilization. The rational being that what was presented as innocuous, but wealthy, Chinese businesspeople gambling at casinos was transnational organized crime giving locally obtained narcotics cash to casino patrons who would then repay the loans in back China; or by signing over real estate and luxury cars. To counter transnational organised crime, an independent agency which retains its expertise and does not have members who move around, would assist in ensuring the investigations are conducted more thoroughly. Furthermore, Canada has not only failed in prosecuting many people for money laundering but is seen as a hinderance by international partners for impeding investigations due to requiring court proceedings for simple wiretaps.

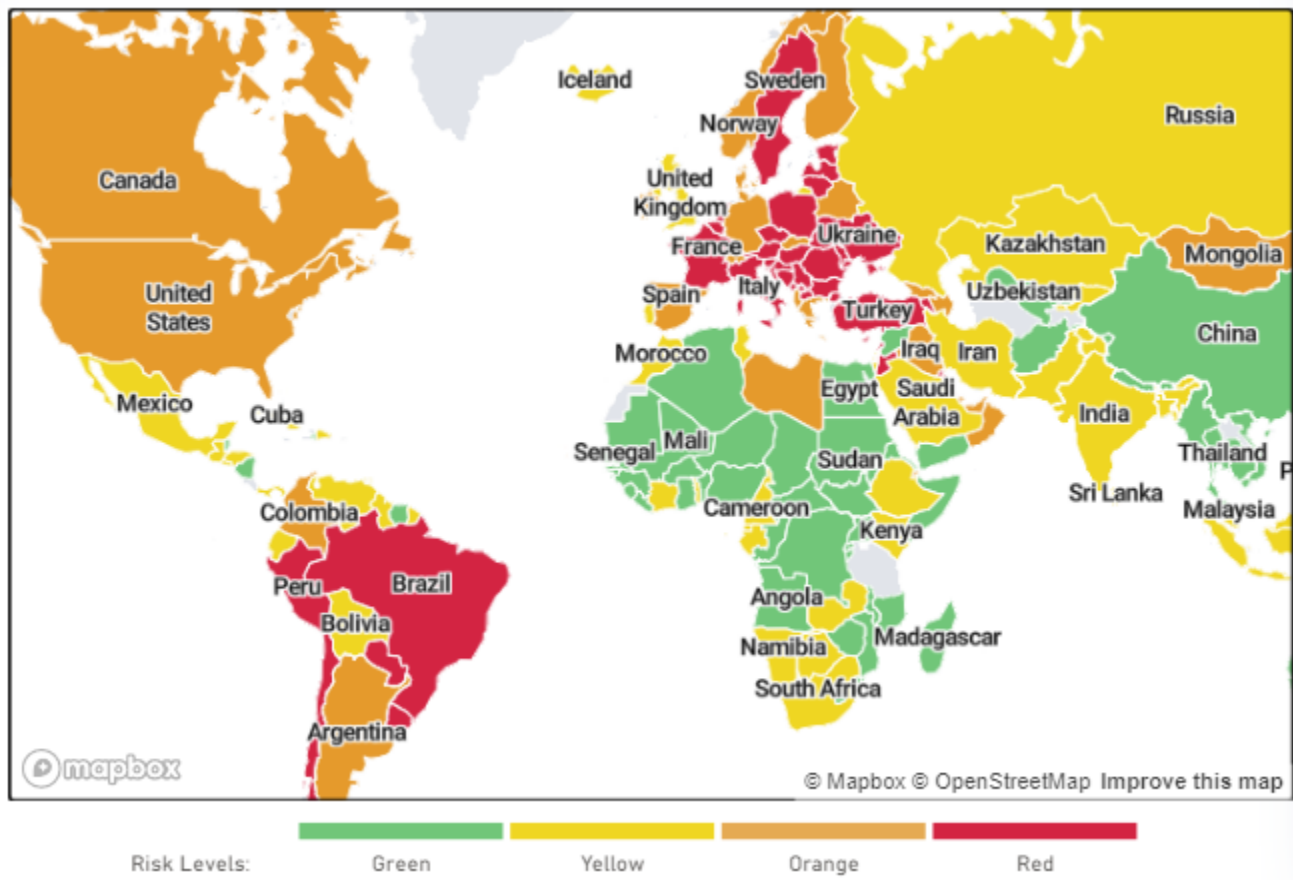
Transnational organized crime often takes on the appearance of regular corporate enterprise and even conducts business with legitimate, law-abiding companies. Utilizing a service with Intelligence oversight that incorporates enhanced due diligence can assist in mitigating potential fines from regulatory agencies, ensure customer privacy, and safeguard your company from political risk. It is therefore of the utmost importance to ensure that when dealing with other companies, with whom the business relationships may be perceived as a reputational risk by others, you engage a trusted partner like Paladin Risk Solutions.

2. GLOBAL

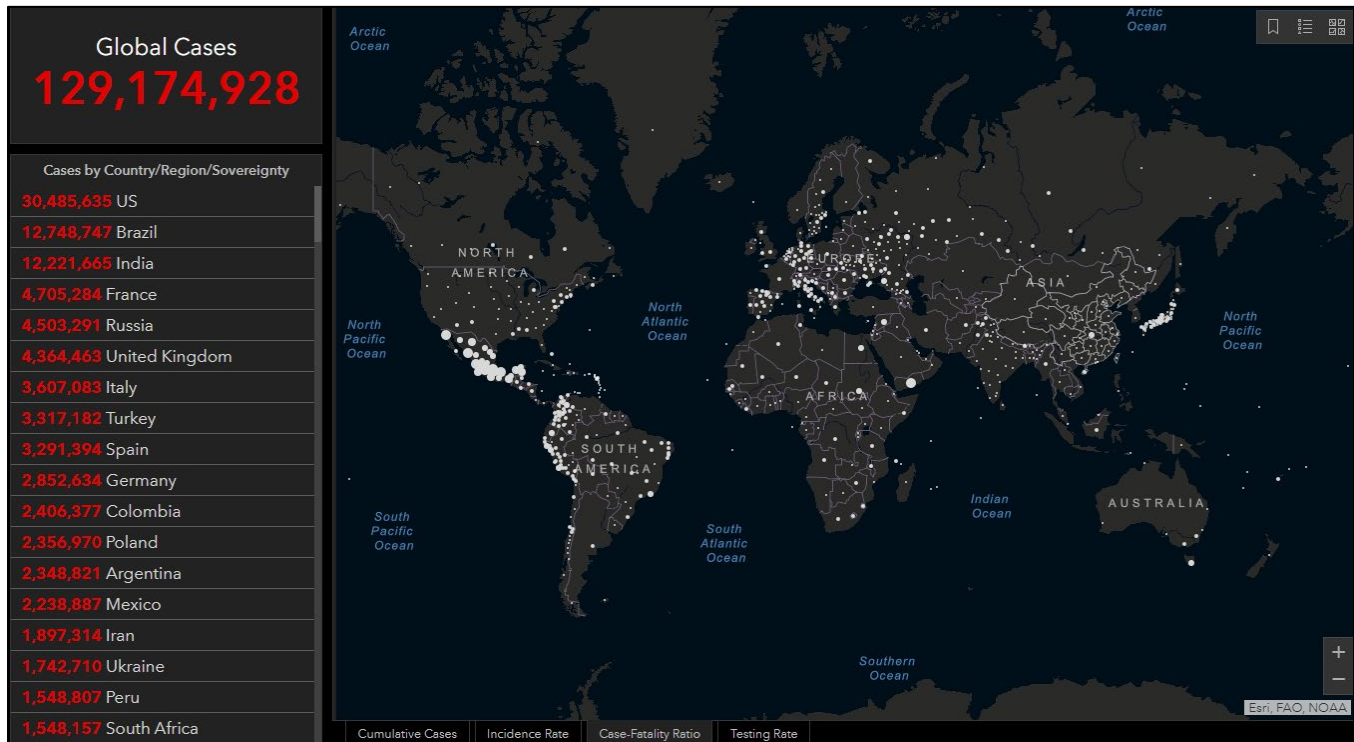
2.1 COVID UPDATE

Country/Region	United States	Country/Region	Canada
Daily new cases per 100k people (7d moving avg.)	20.2	Daily new cases per 100k people (7d moving avg.)	12.0
Risk level	Orange	Risk level	Orange
Total cases	30,354,677	Total cases	965,404
Total deaths	549,564	Total deaths	22,880

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	129,868,983	+406,672	2,833,211	+5,653	104,665,440	22,370,332	96,701	16,661	363.5			
1	USA	31,175,882	+9,538	565,331	+75	23,674,406	6,936,145	8,754	93,775	1,700	403,540,880	1,213,830	332,452,650
2	France	4,644,423		95,640		294,638	4,254,145	5,053	71,036	1,463	64,823,784	991,469	65,381,564
3	Brazil	12,753,258		321,886		11,169,937	1,261,435	8,318	59,682	1,506	28,600,000	133,840	213,687,606
4	Belgium	882,453	+5,611	23,016	+50	57,110	802,327	738	75,895	1,979	11,161,544	959,941	11,627,325
5	India	12,302,092	+81,423	163,428	+468	11,522,877	615,787	8,944	8,850	118	244,798,621	176,098	1,390,123,549
6	Italy	3,607,083	+23,649	109,847	+501	2,933,757	563,479	3,681	59,725	1,819	50,258,742	832,164	60,395,224
7	Poland	2,356,970	+35,251	53,665	+621	1,882,179	421,126	3,143	62,328	1,419	12,145,470	321,176	37,815,563
8	UK	4,350,266	+4,478	126,764	+51	3,860,174	363,328	547	63,831	1,860	127,546,869	1,871,493	68,152,475
9	Ukraine	1,691,737	+17,569	33,246	+421	1,323,083	335,408	177	38,858	764	8,179,905	187,886	43,536,618
10	Turkey	3,357,988	+40,806	31,713	+176	3,035,043	291,232	2,135	39,498	373	38,821,795	456,643	85,015,665
11	Russia	4,554,264	+9,169	99,233	+383	4,176,419	278,612	2,300	31,198	680	120,600,000	826,133	145,981,306
12	Mexico	2,238,887	+5,977	203,210	+577	1,773,236	262,441	4,798	17,230	1,564	6,089,631	46,864	129,942,784
13	Hungary	661,721	+9,288	20,995	+258	410,565	230,161	1,512	68,629	2,177	4,649,596	482,225	9,641,968
14	Germany	2,840,489	+10,154	77,139	+100	2,535,000	228,350	3,680	33,822	918	50,399,177	600,102	83,984,285
15	Ireland	236,600	+746	4,705	+18	23,364	208,531	63	47,521	945	4,025,669	808,546	4,978,900



2.2 COVID-19 World News

- [Why indoor spaces are still prime COVID hotspots](#)

As COVID-19 is believed to be spread through aerosols, ventilation of indoor places is of outmost importance, especially with the higher transmissibility of the new variants. It is nearly impossible for the public to visually inspect how well ventilated an indoor area is. Most governments do not provide any guidelines pertaining to ventilation of indoor spaces, and the WHO had released at the beginning of March a document outlining specific targets that can be taken to improve ventilation. The WHO guidelines are a minimum, and the science is not clear what exact thresholds are required in an indoor area to provide a lesser risk of transmission of COVID-19. This is especially important in areas where masks are not worn indoors, such as establishments where individuals are eating. Despite low transmission through surfaces, most businesses have sanitizer at the front door, while ignoring ventilation, which is not only more difficult to fix, but is also not always in the hands of the business who often leases the space from a landlord. However, if the effort spent on sanitization was spent on airborne transmission and increase in ventilation, it is likely that the impact will be substantial. Governments and health authorities should invest in providing a better understanding to both businesses and persons regarding the recent scientific findings regarding surface and airborne transmission in an effort to provide more detailed understanding of the scientifically proven modes on transmission.
- [Ultrasound has potential to damage coronaviruses, study finds](#)

A recent study has found that COVID-19 cells are vulnerable to ultrasound vibrations, the frequencies used in the medical diagnostic imaging test. The computer simulation study has found that vibrations at a specific frequency caused the virus' shell and spikes, the part that latches onto human cells, to collage and rapture almost instantly. It is yet unclear how this can be utilized as a treatment for COVID-19, but the researchers are conducting further studies to better understand the practical implications of this finding.
- [AstraZeneca: German team discovers thrombosis trigger](#)

As reports of blood clotting caused by the AstraZeneca vaccine are growing, a German team has discovered the cause of the rare thrombosis in the brain. Targeted treatment can now be offered to those who have suffered the clotting with a common medication. However, this treatment can only be provided to those that are showing the blood clots and cannot be taken as a preventative measure. Side effects such as dizziness, an ongoing headache or impaired vision which last longer than three days after the vaccination may require a medical investigation. Although these findings have not been peer reviewed, Germany and other European countries have suspended the vaccination due to the blood clots, but the European Medicines Agency (EMA) found that no links have been associated between the vaccination and the blood clots and reiterated that the benefits of the vaccination outweigh the possible risks. Germany has since advised that due to the updated guidelines by the EMA it will restart the vaccinations today.
- [Living with Kids May Increase Risk of Contracting COVID-19](#)
- [Latin America's latest Covid surge could be worse than last year's, experts warn](#)
- [T cells induced by COVID-19 infection respond to new virus variants -U.S. study](#)
- [Your Immune System Evolves to Fight Coronavirus Variants](#)
- [Pfizer COVID-19 shot 91% effective in updated data, protective against South African variant](#)

2.3 Global Awareness

- [Belgium must lift 'all Covid-19 measures' within 30 days, Brussels court rules](#)
The Belgian League for Human Rights won a lawsuit which it filed weeks years which challenged the system in Belgium which does not require input from the parliament to implement measures using its Ministerial Decrees. The court has ordered the government lift all COVID-19 measures within 30 days as it has not provided a sufficient legal basis for them. The country is also looking into a new pandemic law which would include a permanent legal basis for these types of measures in the future. The court showcases how the Belgian government relied on a law whose aim was not to be used for the COVID-19 measures as it was not its intended purpose. This showcases the possible challenges put through in democratic countries as many COVID-19 laws infringe on fundamental rights and freedoms. Even during emergency situations, the government must justify violating the rights of its citizens. Similar challenges have been put forth in other jurisdictions, with the US state of Wisconsin court recently striking down the mask mandate put together by the state's Governor.
- ['We have your porn collection': The rise of extortionware](#)
Cyber-security experts are sounding the alarm about a new form of fraud called extortionware, where the hackers attempt to embarrass their victims into paying a ransom. For companies, it is not just operational damage that should be concerning, but also reputational damage. Recently, hackers who run a blog on the dark web posted about getting a hold of a USA company's IT director's porn collection, which was reportedly kept on his work computer. A screenshot of the file library was posted which contained various pornographic folders. The blog post has since been deleted, likely suggesting that the extortion worked and that the data was returned to the company, with no further information published. The same group is trying to extort a USA utility company into paying a ransom by publishing an employee's credentials for a porn website. Ransomware is not a new type of fraud, but in 2019 it appears that a change in methods, whereas the hackers are not only encrypting the ransomed data, but are also downloading it which means they can charge more to get it back, as it could be resold. It is estimated that 2020 ransomware attempts have cost almost \$170 billion in payments, downtime and disruption. It is important for companies to ensure that their employees are not storing information on their company computers or servers which may harm the business's reputation. As ransomware is getting more frequent and sophisticated, it is prudent that companies provide proper training to employees, showcasing the detrimental and embarrassing consequences of being the victim of such tactics.
- [These 3 countries are winning the COVID-19 vaccine rollout race. Here's the result](#)
- [As Tesla takes the plunge, wary insurers watch crypto craze from the sidelines](#)
- [The West waits for Putin's next move as Russia-Ukraine tensions rise](#)
- [Politicians, academics warned over foreign interference threat](#)
- [Iran adds advanced machines enriching underground at Natanz: IAEA](#)

2.4 Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism

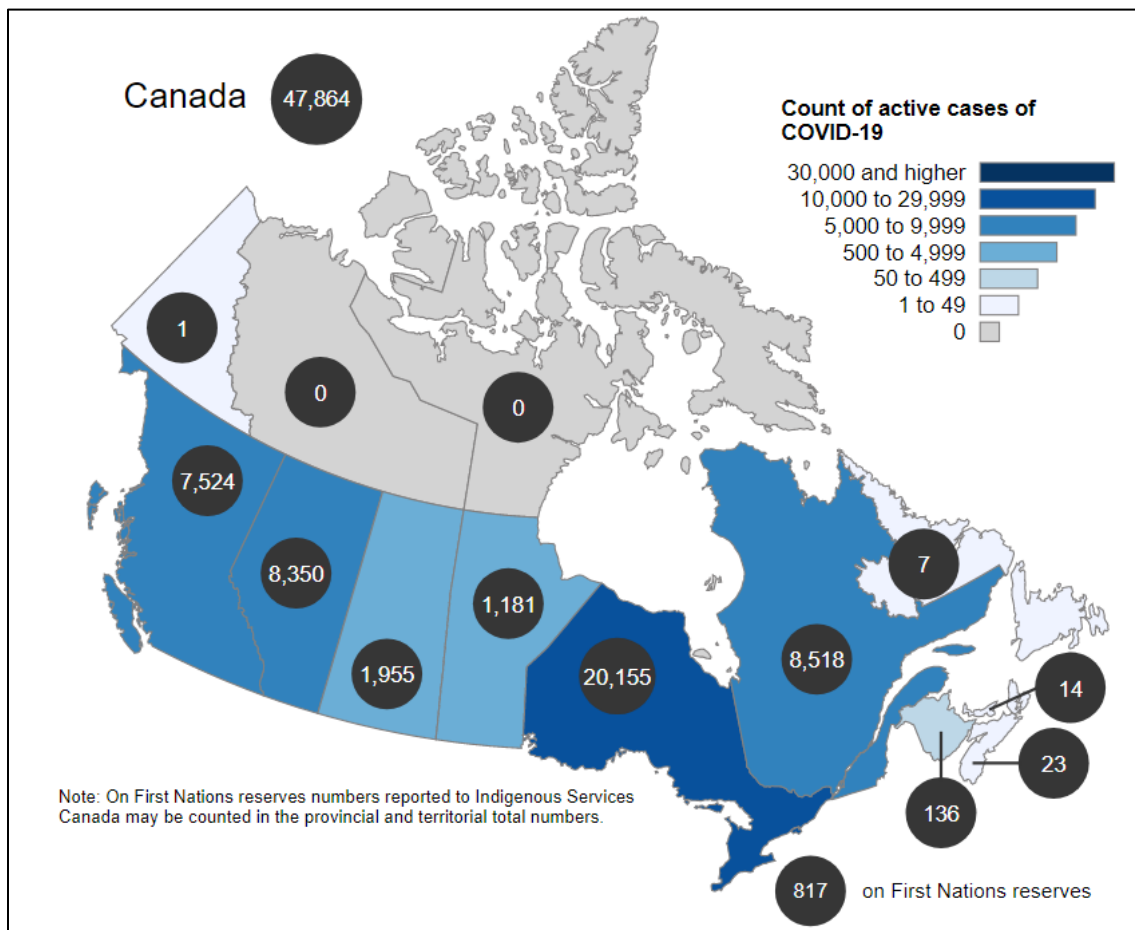
- [Death toll from Myanmar anti-coup protests surpasses 500 as activists change tactics](#)
Since the February 1, 2021, military coup in Myanmar, over 500 people have died. Activists have now began a new civil disobedience campaign in which they throw garbage onto the street. Military forces used heavier caliber than usual weapons; "riot weapons", as stated by security forces, used on "violent terrorist people". One of the protesting group "General Strike Committee of Nationalities" has called on ethnic minority forces


to assist those who are standing up to the military’s “unfair oppression”. Other groups have written a joint letter advising that if the military does not stop killing peaceful protestors, they will have to cooperate with the activists in their “spring revolution” and have to act in self-defense. For decades, the Myanmar military has tried to stay in power by saying that it is the only institution in the country that can preserve national unity. This year, it detained Myanmar interim leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who was in power with the military’s permission, and again took over power. It is likely that activists in Myanmar will not stop their campaign for democracy in the country, and until other groups or countries steps in, the military will not waver and will continue its heavy-handed approach.

- [Russia: Navalny on hunger strike to protest prison treatment](#)
- [Hundreds take part in peaceful ‘kill the bill’ protest in Bristol](#)

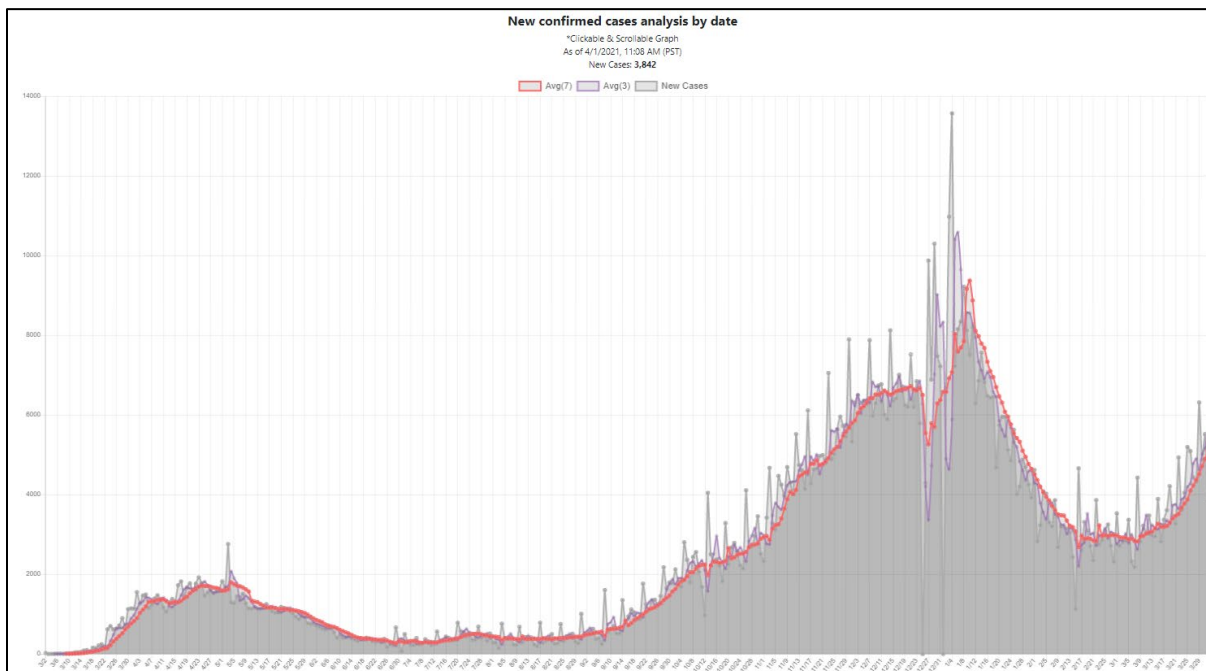
3. CANADA

3.1 COVID UPDATE



Prov.	Total Confirmed	Total Deaths	Total Recovered	Total Active
Total	985,964 (↑3,842)	22,991 (↑32)	913,860 (↑2,562)	49,113 (↑1,248)
BC	100,048	1,458	91,066	7,524
ON	352,460 (↑2,557)	7,389 (↑23)	324,196 (↑1,814)	20,875 (↑720)
QC	312,362 (↑1,271)	10,676 (↑9)	292,648 (↑742)	9,038 (↑520)
AB	148,332	1,990	137,992	8,350
MB	34,122	935	32,006	1,181
NB	1,623 (↑10)	30	1,451 (↑4)	142 (↑6)
SK	33,590	436	31,199	1,955
PEI	159	0	145	14
NL	1,020 (↑1)	6	1,006	8 (↑1)
NS	1,719 (↑3)	66	1,629 (↑2)	24 (↑1)
YT	74	1	71	2
NT	47	0	47	0
NU	395	4	391	0
	13	0	13	0
Rate of Change	↑ 0.4%	↑ 0.1%	↑ 0.3%	↑ 2.6%

Prov.	Total Test	Total Waiting	Total Hosp	Total ICU
Total	28,276,197 (+103,343)	-	-	-
BC	2,192,813	-	301	80
ON	12,613,463 (+62,290)	42,057 (+1,591)	1116 (+5)	433 (+37)
QC	7,552,305 (+41,053)	-	487 (+2)	119 (-1)
AB	3,706,367	-	301	63
MB	582,697	-	63	12
NB	256,317	-	5	2
SK	665,449	-	166	23
PEI	121,643	-	-	-
NL	124,261	-	0	0
NS	426,519	-	1	0
YT	8,471	20	-	-
NT	16,044	16	0	0
NU	9,848	245	0	0
Rate of change	↑ 0.4%	-	-	-



Source: <https://www.covid-19canada.com>

3.2 COVID-19 Canada News

- [Trudeau pushes back against Premier Ford's criticism of federal vaccine procurement](#)

Ontario Premier Doug Ford blamed the federal government for not being able to secure sufficient doses on a reliable timeline and advised that the Trudeau government “dropped the ball majorly”. Meanwhile, Trudeau said that Canada is still on track to give one dose of a vaccine to “most Canadians” by June. Meanwhile, Trudeau praised Procurement minister Anita Anand for an “incredible job”. Canada first relied on a vaccine from China, which China did not deliver. This reliance put Canada at a disadvantage, becoming the only G7 country requesting vaccines from COVAX, which is meant for countries with low income, and receiving assistance from the USA with the AstraZeneca.
- [Ontario to have 800 COVID-19 patients in ICUs by end of April with month-long stay-at-home order: modelling](#)

Even with implementation of a two to four week stay at home order, modelling shows that the province of Ontario will have about 800 patients in the ICU. Due to highly contagious variants of concern, Canada is seeing itself in a new third wave which is causing an increase in hospitalizations and cases. The new variants are already causing an impact for Ontario’s healthcare system, with numbers at a 21% higher than they were when the province entered a lockdown in December. The variants now account for almost two thirds of all cases in the province, with the B.1.1.7. variant making up the majority of the infectious cases. In December, people under the age of 29 only accounted for 30% of the ICU admission, while last week they accounted for approximately 46% of new admissions. Ontario was recently going to remove restrictions, but Ontario will now prohibit indoor dining, personal care service and indoor fitness activities in order to ensure reduction in virus transmission and impact on the healthcare system.
- [Pfizer says COVID-19 vaccine safe, effective for adolescents in trial](#)

Pfizer has released its clinical trials results in children aged 12 to 15, which found that the vaccine is not only safe but is also 100% effective against the virus. It is believed that this will allow Pfizer to apply for emergency approval of the vaccine for those age groups, allowing more of the population to be vaccinated, a step closer

to herd immunity. Children are less likely to see severe consequences from the virus, which means they are more likely to spread the virus without knowing. Asymptomatic spread is especially concerning as individuals do not know to isolate, and thus are putting other individuals at risk. As such, vaccinating these individuals will assist in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in a faster manner.

- [Canada's health minister, Ontario premier and Toronto mayor urge people stay home for Easter](#)
- ['Hit the hardest': Why COVID-19 cases are rising among young Canadians](#)
- [Federal government to spend \\$415M on influenza vaccine plant in Toronto](#)
- [Canada's Surprise Argument to Lure Vaccine Makers: We're Small](#)

3.3 Canada Awareness

- [Canadian tourism sector shrank by nearly half in 2020 as COVID-19 ravages industry](#)
Canada's tourism sector has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with Statistics Canada advising that it reduced by nearly half in the year 2020. Tourism jobs have taken a hit, falling by almost 30% with the most happening in the second quarter. The food and beverage services saw a 32% decline and the accommodation sector saw a 35% decrease. Due to restrictions on international travel, domestic tourism has not taken an almost 93% share of the total tourism spending, while before it accounted for almost 80%. With the increase in vaccination numbers, it is believed that the tourism sector will see an explosion once the restrictions are removed, and travel is permitted. Summer numbers will also increase, unless additional restrictions are implemented should current ones not quell the increase in the variants of concern.
- [New round of inflation fears as investors demand higher rates](#)
This week, the US ten-year Treasury bond is seeing an increase that was not seen before the pandemic, possibly foreshadowing risk of inflation as investors look for higher returns on their investments. The bond is perceived as safe as it is backed by the USA government, and investors are willing to receive a lower interest rate in return for safety. Bonds, then, set a global standard for low rates, and the more risk, the higher the interest rate (also known as yields in bonds). In comparison to last summer, investors are no longer willing to accept a low interest rate for parking their money, as confidence in the economy grows and the ability to receive better interest rates is available. This means that inflation means that governments must choose between various options for paying off public debt – austerity, default or inflation. It is likely most will choose inflation, seen as a better option than austerity.
- [Military facing 'reckoning' over misconduct but no details yet on action: Monsef](#)
- [El Chapo, Hezbollah and triads deluged RCMP in Vancouver, inquiry hears](#)
- [This is your brain on pandemic: What chronic stress is doing to us](#)
- [A Roaring 20s economic rebound for Canada depends on these things](#)

3.4 Canada – Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism



welund

During the week of 25 March – 1 April 2021, the majority of activity in Canada noted by Welund focused on the government sector (53%), followed by oil

and gas (13%). Protests made up the majority of activity (31%), followed by marches (12%).

Activists opposed to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (TMX) project continued their ongoing campaign in BC with protests in Vancouver and Victoria. In light of recent activity, Indigenous campaign groups Tiny House Warriors and Braided Warriors announced a collaboration effort on future campaigns against the pipeline project.

Environmental groups also engaged in series of direct actions and protests in solidarity with the protection of 'critical' forest areas across the country. In-person protests in Vancouver and Halifax resulted in a series of arrests.

Protests: Environmental activist opposition against forestry permits provided by the government led to large, in-person actions by campaigners. On 27 March, Extinction Rebellion Vancouver occupied the Cambie Bridge in Vancouver in solidarity with the Fairy Creek Blockade campaign opposing old-growth logging in BC. The occupation was a coordinated action with protests held in Victoria. The group started the action at Vancouver city hall before marching to, and occupying, the bridge. Six activists were arrested during the direct action.

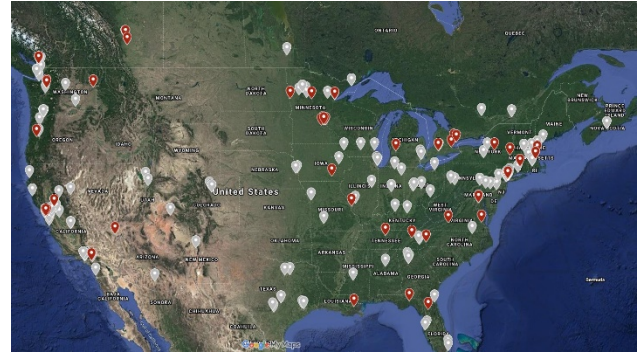


Figure 1: Past and upcoming protest activity as noted by Welund between 24 March – 7 April 2021

On 30 March, Extinction Rebellion Nova Scotia (XRNS) members occupied the offices of multiple provincial land, forestry, and environmental departments in solidarity with their campaign demanding a moratorium on clearcutting Crown land forests in the province. During a direct action at the Department of Lands and Forestry in Halifax, two XRNS members glued themselves to the floor in the lobby. The two activists were later removed and arrested. The direct action was executed ahead of a larger protest at the Provincial Legislature building in which XRNS 'hunger striker' Jacob Fillmore and supporter Kathrin Winkler were arrested after they tried to occupy the office of Premier Iain Rankin.

Anti-TMX activists organized a 'red line of resistance' protest in Victoria on 28 March. Participants were socially distanced holding a red line to demonstrate their opposition against the TMX project and the anticipated increase in tanker traffic in the inlet. Activists in Burnaby also celebrated 100 consecutive days occupying the 'tree-sit' along the construction route.

Outlook: The Extinction Rebellion Vancouver 'Spring Rebellion' is set to begin on 1 May 2021. In addition to a series of actions planned for the week, the group has specifically made a call out for its members and supporters to sign an 'arrest pledge'. Organizers explained that it was looking for 300-500 supporters to 'pledge' to be arrested during a protest at Vancouver City Hall. XR Vancouver members also still plan to march from Vancouver to Victoria on 16-19 April to advertise and increase support for the 'Spring Rebellion' event.

Historically, Spring is the season in which activist groups target large corporations, oil and gas companies, and the finance sector during their annual general or shareholder meetings. Campaigners are still in the process of organizing actions and adapting tactics in response to the likelihood that these meetings will be happening virtually. Campaign groups have openly called for actions targeting Canadian banks for their perceived fossil fuel investments. Other actions will likely be planned as more companies announce specific dates for their annual meetings.



Figure 2 Total activist activity in Canada as noted by Welund.

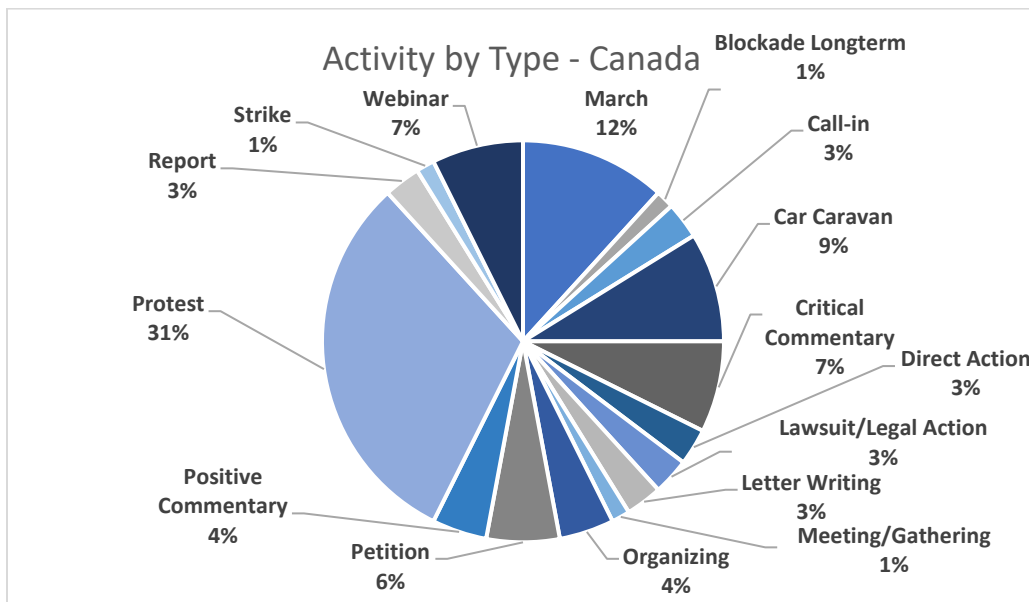


Figure 3 Activist activity in Canada by type as noted by Welund

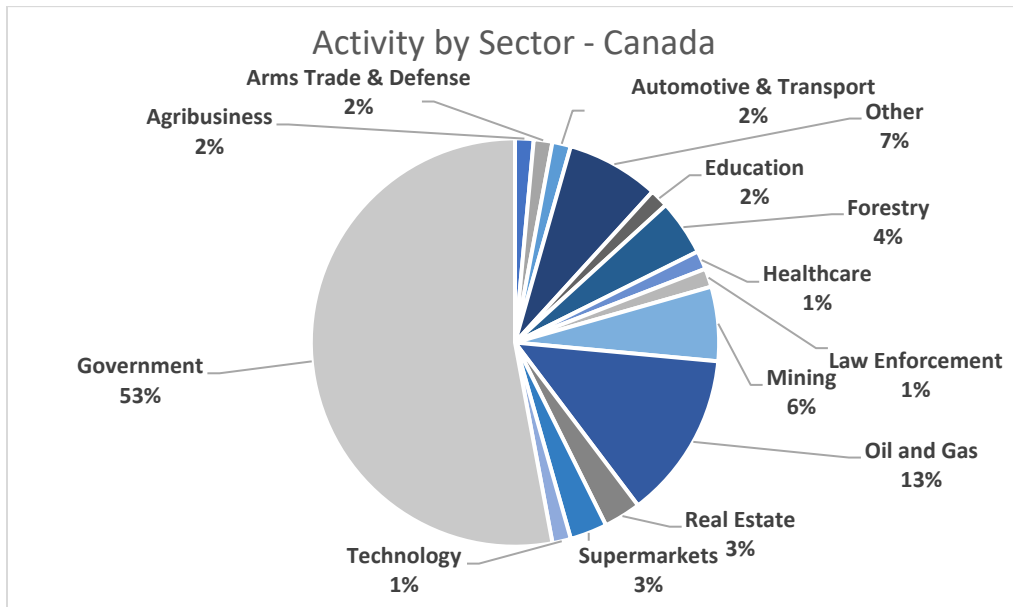
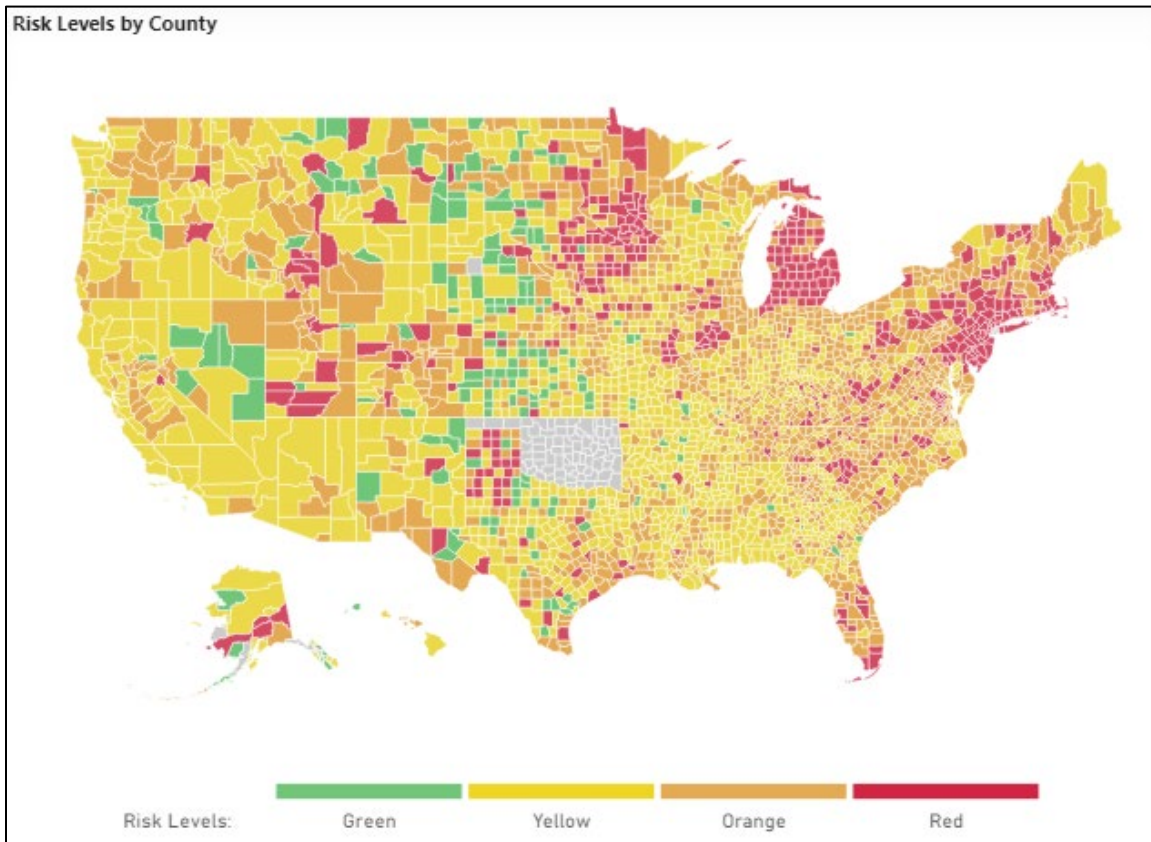


Figure 4 Activist activity in Canada by sector as noted by Welund.

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
	USA Total	31,175,882	+9,538	565,331	+75	23,674,406	6,936,145	94,186	1,708	403,540,880	1,219,147	
1	California	3,669,253		58,938		1,940,569	1,669,746	92,864	1,492	53,786,487	1,361,262	39,512,223
2	New York	1,915,254		50,587		1,124,544	740,123	98,453	2,600	44,936,152	2,309,919	19,453,561
3	Virginia	620,801	+1,825	10,268	+16	51,481	559,052	72,731	1,203	8,429,025	987,523	8,535,519
4	Florida	2,057,735		33,450		1,520,607	503,678	95,808	1,557	25,367,915	1,181,126	21,477,737
5	Maryland	412,928	+1,584	8,303	+17	9,875	394,750	68,301	1,373	8,800,105	1,455,602	6,045,680
6	Kentucky	426,876		6,090		49,678	371,108	95,548	1,363	4,949,269	1,107,796	4,467,673
7	Georgia	1,059,548		19,055		692,672	347,821	99,793	1,795	8,291,638	780,946	10,617,423
8	New Jersey	908,816		24,561		685,539	198,716	102,319	2,765	12,100,950	1,362,384	8,882,190
9	Alabama	515,388		10,554		315,743	189,091	105,113	2,152	2,534,623	516,934	4,903,185
10	Washington	367,228		5,300		179,778	182,150	48,225	696	5,912,472	776,435	7,614,893
11	Michigan	746,351		17,119		569,460	159,772	74,733	1,714	12,065,261	1,208,114	9,986,857
12	Missouri	577,008		9,081		428,548	139,379	94,015	1,480	6,191,242	1,008,768	6,137,428
13	Colorado	462,081		6,238		328,754	127,089	80,240	1,083	2,725,439	473,270	5,758,736
14	Rhode Island	137,329		2,619		8,300	126,410	129,634	2,472	3,518,593	3,321,430	1,059,361
15	Texas	2,795,916		48,504		2,648,579	98,833	96,425	1,673	25,536,604	880,698	28,995,881

4.2 COVID-19 USA News

- [Cases and hospitalizations are on the rise. 'We cannot afford to let our guard down,' CDC director says](#)
 The USA CDC Director urged Americans this week to not let their guard down as the country is seeing increases in their seven-day average of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations despite having almost 150 million doses administered to Americans. The seven-day average has increase by approximately 12% since the previous week, suggesting that the new variants may be accelerating the transmission of COVID-19. Over 10 states in the USA have now increased the vaccination eligibility for any adult over 16 years old or are doing so in the upcoming weeks. The USA is likely in a place where a short circuit breaker measure may assist in reducing the overall cases in the next few weeks while more individuals are vaccinated. The USA is still on track to offer the vaccine to all adults by July 4, as planned.
- [U.S. joins 13 other nations in criticizing WHO for a lack of transparency in China Covid report](#)
- Fourteen nations, including the USA, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom, and Israel, have signed a joint statement this week which criticizes the WHO report on the origins of COVID-19. The statement states that the investigation to the origins was “significantly delayed” and was not provided access to the “complete, original data and samples”. WHO must be able to conduct a rapid and independent investigation of the pathogen which stopped the world, not only to better understand what occurred but also to ensure that any future pandemics are handled better. This may only occur by learning what went wrong in a similar situation, making this investigation integral to the safety of the world’s future. The report did not find the source of the virus, but the investigation will continue, and WHO did not discount any possibility of the virus, including the theory that it escaped from the Wuhan Virology Lab. The report, however, did add that it was extremely unlikely that this occurred, despite not providing any evidence to why it was assessed

as extremely unlikely. The Biden administration expressed their disappointment with the lack of transparency and scientific data and advised they did not feel that China cooperated with the investigation. A country like China does not admit its mistakes, and as such, a joint statement signed by many countries will likely put pressure on China, which may cause China to close even further as it feels cornered by more countries than previous to the WHO investigation. It is likely that China will not cooperate voluntarily, and it is unclear what type of pressure may assist the world in gaining information about the pandemic from China, with the exception of the usual economic sanctions.

- [Wisconsin Supreme Court strikes down governor's mask mandate](#)
- [States have given out billions in unemployment benefit overpayments during pandemic, watchdog reports](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine batch fails quality check in U.S.](#)
- [FDA authorizes rapid at-home Covid-19 tests without a prescription](#)

4.3 USA Awareness

- [Biden kicks off effort to reshape U.S. economy with infrastructure package](#)
Biden has begun promoting his \$2 trillion infrastructure plan. The proposal would rebuild 20,000 miles of road and repair 10 economically important bridges, as well as remove lead pipes from water supplies. It is believed that in the short term, this plan will create million of jobs, and eventually strengthen the competitiveness of the American economy in the long term. The plan will also increase the corporate tax rate to 28% from the previous 21% and would stop multi-national corporations from using loopholes to be able to reduce their tax payments on profits that were earned abroad. Together with a new minimum tax on global income of large multi-national corporations, it is believed that changes on global income would raise about \$1 trillion over 15 years. The plan contains \$16 billion to help fossil fuel workers to transition to new work such as reclamation of no longer used fossil fuel infrastructure. Furthermore, money would be set aside for electrical grid modernization and creation of a "Clean Electricity Standard" which would require a specific percentage of the USA electricity to be generated by zero-carbon energy sources such as wind, solar and possibly nuclear. This mandate would have to be approved by congress, where attempts to pass similar programs have failed in the past 20 years.
- [Real-economy stirrings show U.S. leaves Europe in the dust](#)
Economic data from the USA and Europe is showing the advantage the USA is in due to its accelerated vaccination plan, with at least 30% of the population receiving at least one dose of the vaccine. Of all adults 16 and older in the USA, 36.5% have now been vaccinated with at least one dose. Meanwhile, Europe and Canada are not even close in comparison, with Canada providing about 9% of its population with at least one dose, with 7.5% receiving only one dose. Furthermore, Canada may be at a disadvantage as it is unknown how effective the vaccine is against the variants, and with Canadian protocols calling for months between doses, it is likely that the vaccine will not protect individuals to the extent it has been found with the original virus and two doses given a few weeks apart. New infections in the USA are lower now per capita than Italy, Germany, and France, who are mulling new restrictions. France has just announced a new national lockdown, and Italy has also placed new restrictions. According to restaurant data, the USA is seeing an overall incline in dining numbers which are getting closer to the pre pandemic levels, while Europe and specifically Germany are seeing the numbers stay flat since their lockdown measures in 2020, where restaurants are closed.

Similarly, retail and air travel data suggest that the economy is coming back to life in the USA, while European countries are again starting to see a decline. Job postings in the USA are increasing slightly, while those from Europe are still lower than they were in February 2020. It is likely that the recent USA stimulus cheques provided to citizens have been spent and made their impact on the economy, and the Federal Reserve is projecting a 6.5% growth for the USA while Europe’s growth is projected for 3.7%.

- [Hedge fund fallout wipes over \\$9 billion from market value of Credit Suisse, Nomura](#)
- [The hybrid office is here to stay. The shift could be more disruptive than the move to all-remote work](#)
- [Violations at ICE facility threatened the health and safety of detainees, watchdog report says](#)
- [US receives \\$335M from Sudan for victims of terrorist attacks](#)

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



welund

During the week of 25 March - 1 April, the majority of activist activity in the US noted by Welund took place in the government sector (66%), followed by finance (11%), and oil and gas (10%). Protests made up most activity (68%), followed by webinars (6%), meetings/gatherings (6%), and critical commentary (4%).

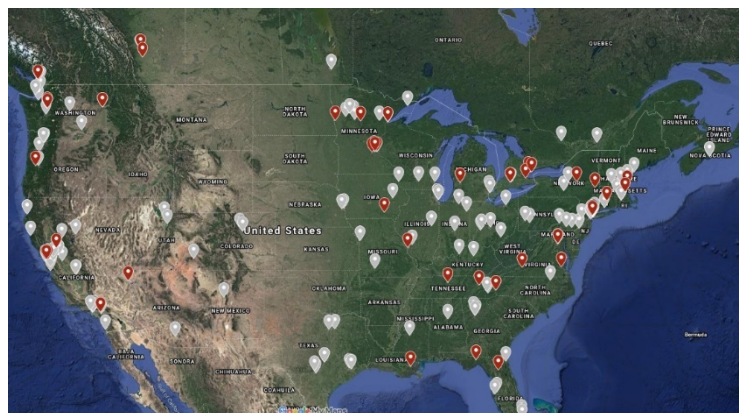
Overall activity remained steady after an increase last week. Higher activity can be attributed to protests related to the ongoing Defund Line 3 campaign targeting banks invested in the Line 3 pipeline and increased activity related to solidarity with Asian Americans following the shooting in Atlanta, Georgia.

Shareholder season has begun to attract activist attention. Events have been organized to prepare for upcoming shareholder meetings. Majority Action has issued a proxy voting guide across four sectors and 20 companies that have “failed to address the climate crisis.”

The situation on the US-Mexico border continues to motivate activism against the Biden administration. Immigrant rights activists have called on the Biden administration to address the crisis and the detention of immigrants.

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, New York, and Minnesota saw the most protests this week.

Protests and direct actions have continued in northern Minnesota where construction of Line 3 is underway. On 25 March, Camp Migizi held a direct action protest against Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline at a pump station construction site. Two activists locked on to the front of an entrance to an Enbridge site while protesters gathered nearby.



Past (grey) and upcoming (red) protest activity as noted by Welund between 24 March – 7 April.

On 27 March, Answer Coalition and held a ‘national day of action’ in the US to protest against racism against Asian Americans. Welund has observed an increase in activity from Asian American activist campaigns in response to the 16 March shooting Atlanta.

Complete details on upcoming protests as of 1 April can be requested [here](#).

Outlook: In the aftermath of the two mass shootings in Atlanta and Boulder, Welund expects continued activity from left-leaning campaigners focused on gun control in US.

On 1-9 April, the Build Back Fossil Free (BBFF) campaign will host a ‘week of action’ to “escalate the demand for President Joe Biden to be a real Climate President.” Actions, including “banner drops and virtual lobbying, to murals and projections,” will take place across the US during the week. On 1 April, activists affiliated with the BBFF campaign held an action in Washington, DC to demand that the Biden Administration “shut down” Line 3 and the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).

On 11 April 2021, anti-fascist groups have called for counter-protests in the US against proposed actions by ‘white supremacists. The ‘White Lives Matter’ day of action has attracted interest from far-right and far-left groups after the event was announced on Telegram.

Welund is monitoring three upcoming events for protest organizing: the trial of Derek Chauvin and related protest activity; Earth Day on 22 April; and May Day on 1 May.

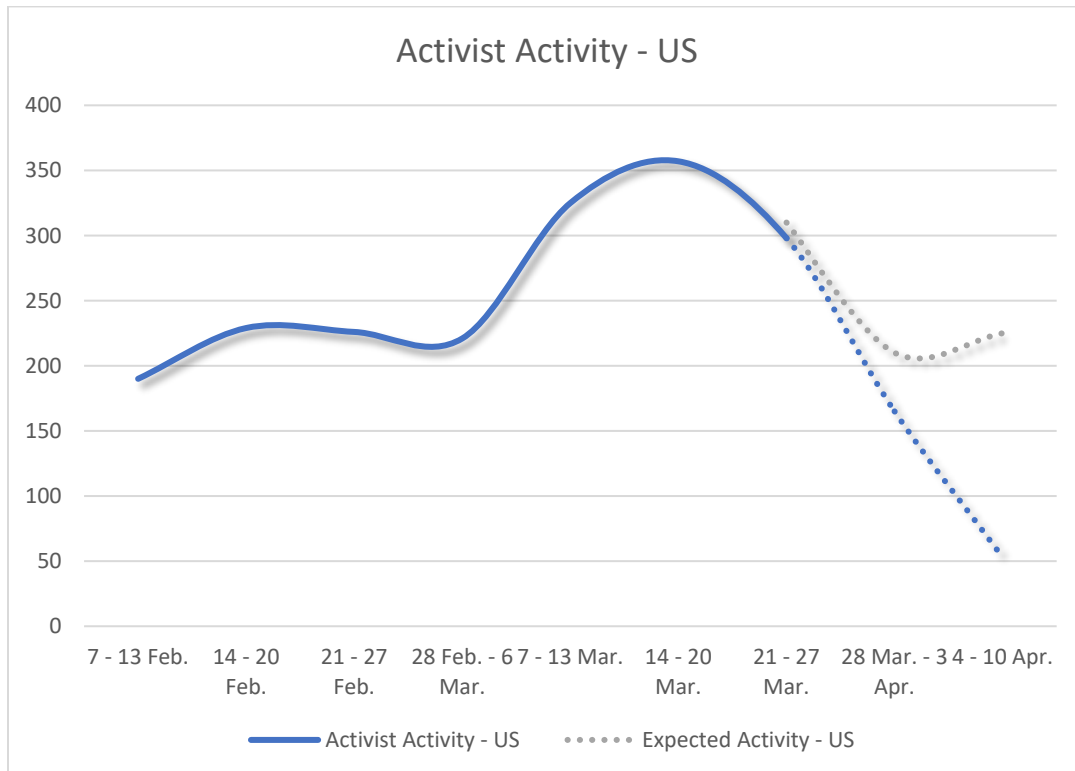


Figure 5 Total activist activity in the US as noted by Welund.

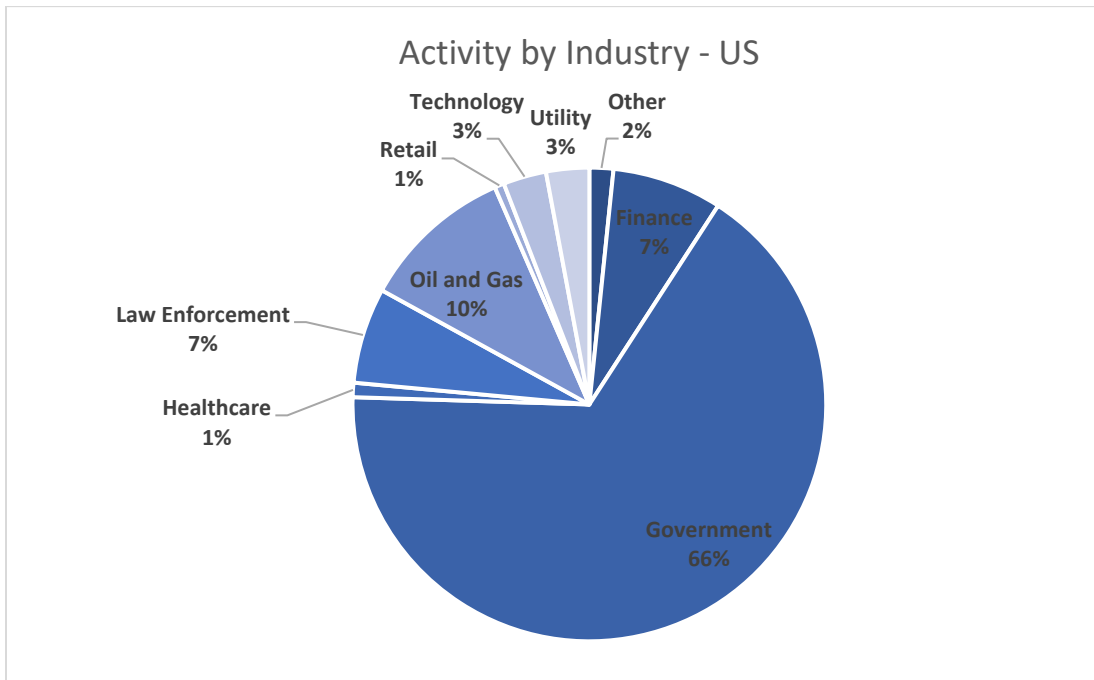


Figure 6 Activist activity in the US by industry as noted by Welund

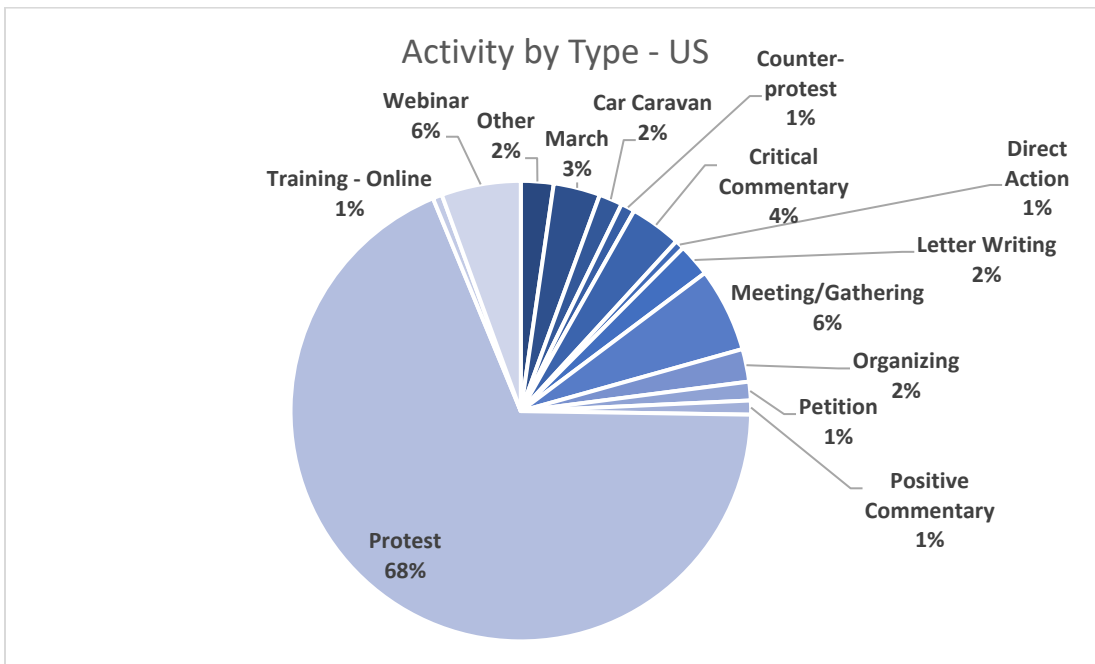



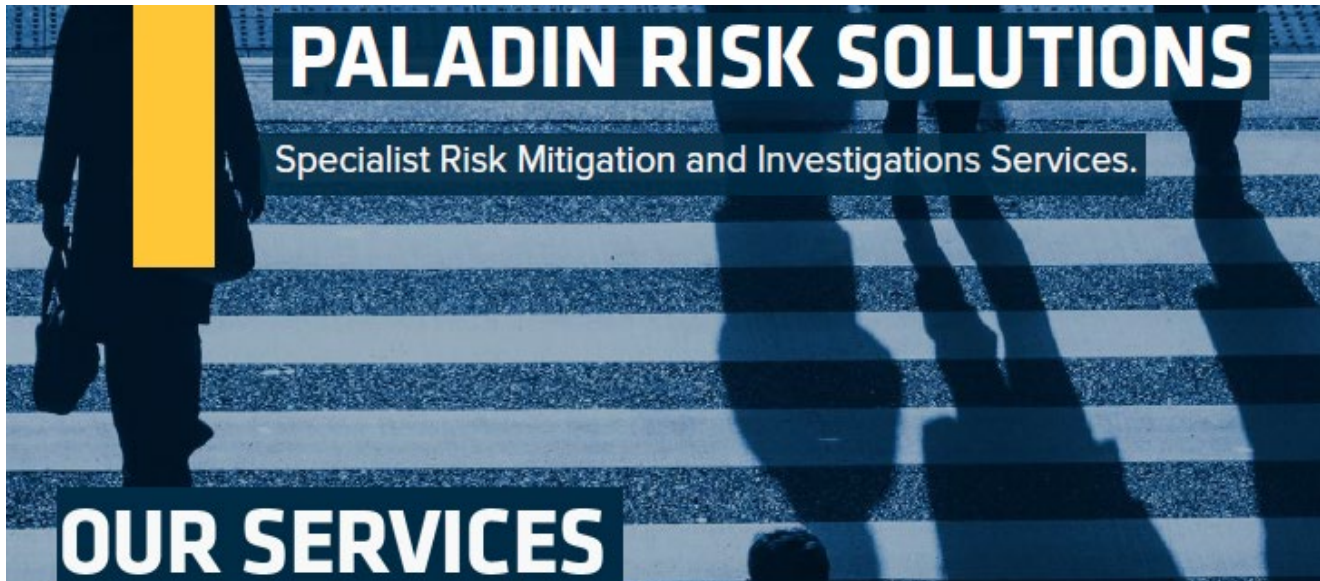
Figure 7 Activist activity in the US by type as noted by Welund.

End Report

Please submit feedback to:

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