



INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Situational awareness for stakeholders and decision makers.



Report # 20-007
31 December 2020

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1. CURRENT SITUATION

The World Health Organization (WHO) has advised that they believe that COVID-19 may not be “necessarily the big one” when it comes to viruses or pandemics which may wreck global havoc. The WHO expressed the possibility that COVID-19 may never go away, and the world will be required to live with this new virus indefinitely. Additionally, WHO’s Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan advised that it has not yet been determined if the COVID-19 vaccines beginning to be approved in various countries have any effect on the prevention of the transmission. The vaccines have been found effective in stopping the infection, or preventing a severe infection, they have not been tested for effectiveness on whether the virus is still spread between individuals. They are recommending that even those who have been vaccinated quarantine after travelling and adhere to public health measures such as social distancing and wearing masks. For vaccine makers, the highest priority goal is to prevent a symptomatic illness or death, and not to eradicate the virus completely. Moderna has recently expressed that it is unclear yet, but hopefully will be known soon after many receive the virus whether the vaccine is successful at preventing transmission.

The WHO also advised that it is likely that COVID-19 will become an endemic, occasionally mutating and changing. Furthermore, the concept of full immunity may not work should the virus mutate, causing it to become more influenza-like and requiring possible tweaks for the vaccine. Instead, WHO is identifying the complex global society that we are living in, with such infectious disease threats believed to only be increasing as humans venture more and more into wild territories interacting with wildlife, whether by consuming or interacting due to proximity.

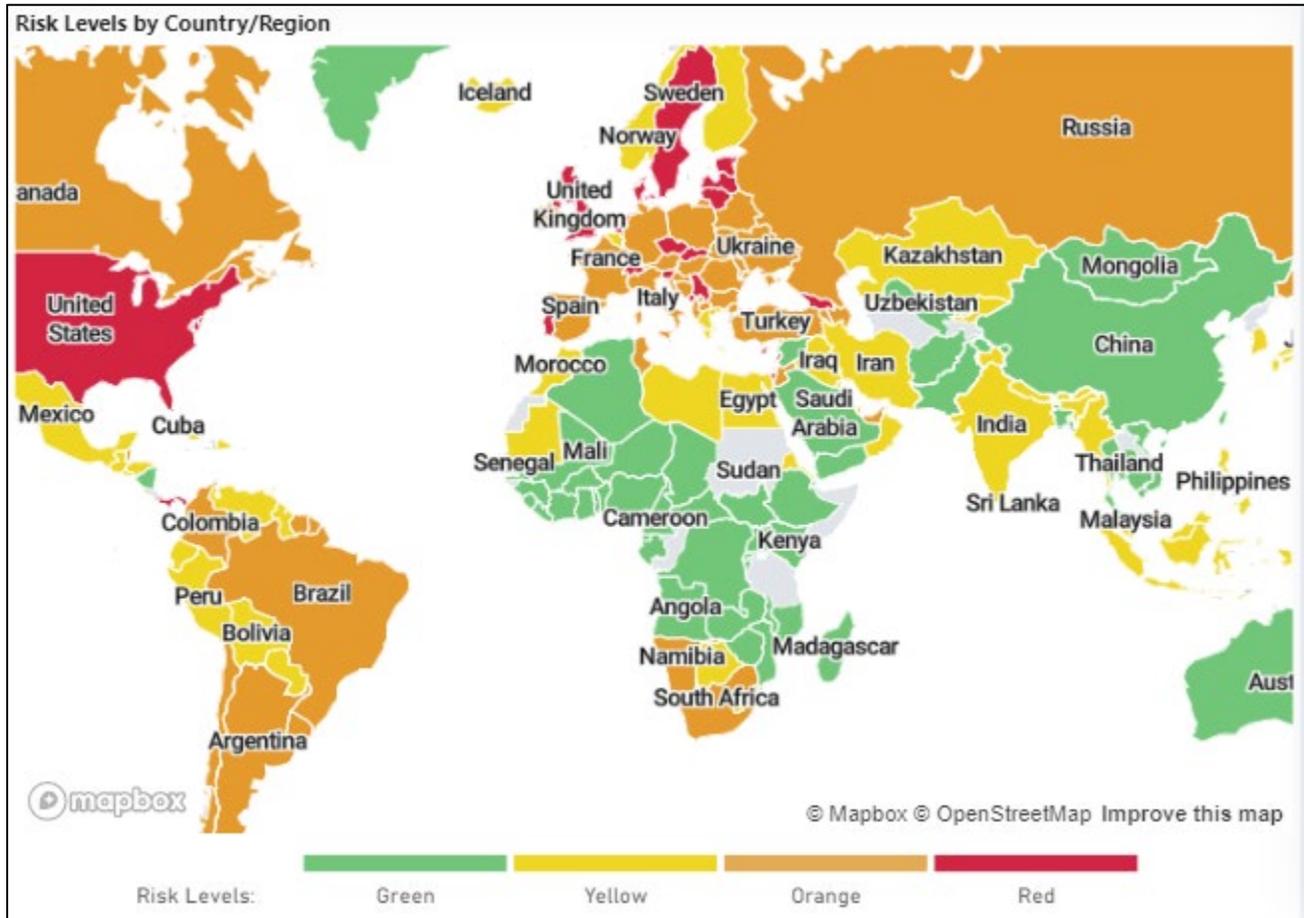
Personal motivations are important in a pandemic where health officials are trying to persuade individuals to act a certain way for the greater good. Some are wondering what it means when the vaccine may not stop transmission even if most people are vaccinated and why this was not expressed earlier to the public. Public health officials would require similar, if not stricter, adherence to public health measures should COVID-19 or any other future infectious disease which may have a much higher death rate. As such, health officials should not only be focusing on increasing adherence to public health measures for the current pandemic but coming up with psychologically viable ways to positively influence the thinking and behaviors of the public to persuade them to work together to reduce the spread of this or any future infectious diseases. For those who are not afraid of catching the virus or believe they do not have anyone to transmit the virus to, vaccinations may be seen a futile personal choice, with little repercussions for not taking the vaccine. With extensive global travel occurring even during the pandemic, it would be very difficult to educate the public to understand the gravity of such situations.

Pleading for people to do the right thing has clearly not worked as planned. Many jurisdictions first tried to ask people to follow the rules and then once a large enough number of individuals did not follow the guidelines, implemented enforcement measures. For example, BC did not institute a mandatory mask policy in November, despite months of public outcry due to a small number of people not following measures. Even though only a small number of individuals are not following the rules, it is the actions as a whole that are required to ensure the spread of transmission is reduced. Even a small group can undo the work of the majority. This would be even more important for a possible future pandemic which may be more lethal in nature. It is unclear whether the public has understood the gravity of the current pandemic, likely setting the stage for the next pandemic. However, should the next pandemic have a much higher death or disability rate

than COVID-19 does across all age ranges, such as Ebola whose fatality rate is about 50%, it is possible the gravity of the situation would be understood by more members of the public. It is important that government and healthcare officials adapt current strategies and learn from the responses they observe.

2. GLOBAL

2.1 COVID UPDATE



2.2 COVID-19 World News

- [AstraZeneca vaccine not ready for quick European approval, watchdog official says](#)
However, on Thursday, Britain became the first country in the world to approve the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, and will begin to be administered to patients starting next week. The vaccine is likely having more issues than the two already approved vaccines due to issues with its clinical trials and the dosage found in each vial, showcasing difficulties with clinical trials. Additionally, the European regulators suggested that an application has not yet been filled in by the makers of the vaccine, and the information which they have seen is not sufficient to provide any license or conduct a full review. The UK has now secured enough doses for its entire population between its three approved vaccines.
- [UK can avert new catastrophe, needs tighter rules, epidemiologist warns](#)
As the UK is seeing a new variant of the virus, they are also suggesting that soon, a complete lockdown may be necessary as the numbers are surging, raising fears the new variant is already more widespread than thought. The variant has been found in various other areas such as Canada and the USA, but appears to so far have caused, from what is known, causing mild disease. Travel bans may reduce the numbers, but the variant is likely already also somewhat widespread globally.
- [New Covid variant linked to higher viral load in respiratory samples](#)
The new COVID-19 variant is believed to be more transmissible due to its association with a higher viral load in respiratory samples. The variant was discovered after an investigation was opened to high COVID-19 cases in a specific region, despite a lockdown. 35 % of individuals with the new variant had a high viral load, in comparison to 10% of patients with the normal variant. Although no links have been found for an increase in infection, death or likelihood of reinfection, scientists are still studying the new variant for these, and deaths are still likely to increase by virtue of more individuals infected.
- [Russian Covid deaths three times the official toll](#)
Russia had a relatively low rate of COVID-19 deaths considering its case count, and it has previously advised that its death count from COVID-19 included only those who underwent a postmortem examination that lists the virus as the cause of death. This means that many deaths were not included in the tally, and estimates were at about 55,000 people who have died. However, Russia has admitted that adding excess deaths, which are deaths above and beyond the previous year's number of deaths, would mean that 186,000 individuals have passed away from the virus in Russia.
- [Viral Load in Bodies Could Predict Course of Patients' Illness](#)
Generally, it has been supported so far that COVID-19 transmission risk is dependent on the amount of viral load, More and more studies are finding that those who have a higher viral load are more likely to have a more severe course of illness, which may also explain why health care providers are about seven times more likely to be at risk of a severe COVID-19. It is believed that the higher transmission rate for the UK variant of COVID-19 is associated with a higher viral load in respiratory samples. As the new variant is just beginning to be studied, it is possible an association would be found between a more severe illness and the new variant. This month, the FDA advised that American labs should report on how much virus is estimated to be in the infected person's blood together with their positive status.
- [UK woman who was first in world to receive vaccine has second dose](#)
The UK grandmother who has received the first Pfizer vaccination in the world has now received her second dose, reporting no side effects. The UK has now vaccinated almost a million people.
- [Spain will keep a register of those who refuse the coronavirus vaccine](#)

Spain becomes the first country in the world to keep a list of individuals who were offered the COVID-19 vaccine and did not take it. The vaccinations are not mandatory and the list will not be publicly available; however, will be shared with other European bodies. Critics are fearful that the list is a “naughty list” that may infringe on the liberties of individuals. The information is reportedly used for research purposes and is kept anonymous; however, critics advise that otherwise, it is unclear why this information is being documented.

- [World’s vaccination date](#)
As of December 30, 2020, Israel has vaccinated approximately 7.44% of the population, while Bahrain is second at 3.37%. the UK has gotten to just over one percent and the United States is currently at 0.78%. Countries which will provide vaccinations to its people first will find themselves in an economically advantageous position, and it is believed that mostly richer countries will be able to provide widespread vaccination campaigns, while poorer countries may not see any vaccines until 2023 or later.
- [Britain could be due for third national lockdown as country smashes daily record with over 40,000 new cases](#)
- [‘The big one’: WHO warns future pandemics could be worse than coronavirus](#)
- [WHO chief scientist not confident vaccines prevent transmission](#)

2.3 Global Awareness

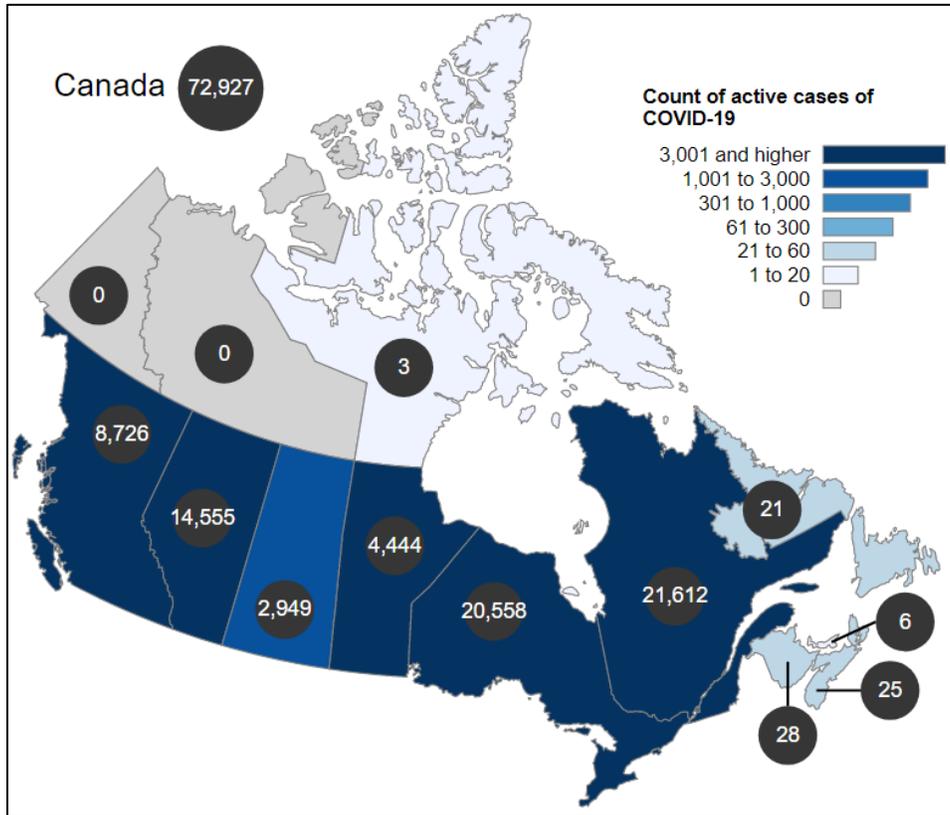
- [Mexico Set to Become World’s Largest Legal Cannabis Market](#)
Mexico is home to the world’s most powerful drug cartels, who have terrorized the country for years. But the country is poised to try something different in tackling the gangs by legalizing at least one of their products; marijuana. Mexico’s Senate passed a bill in late November legalizing recreational marijuana. Lawmakers in the lower house say they will approve a bill by February, though they want to raise the amount of pot consumers may possess in public beyond the Senate bill’s limit of 28 grams. Currently in Mexico, one can possess up to five grams of marijuana without being arrested and use of marijuana for medicinal purposes has been legal since 2017.
- [EU top diplomat accuses Russia of spreading COVID-19 disinformation to sell its vaccine](#)
The European Union accused Russia public media or spreading misinformation about non-Russian COVID-19 vaccine to find a larger market for its own vaccine. Russia state media found in various language often mocks Western vaccines and even suggest they turn people into monkeys, spread in countries where Russia wants to sell its own vaccine. Russia denies this and instead suggests that its vaccine has been the target of Western misinformation campaigns instead. Such campaigns and attempts to creating distrust and doubt regarding non-Russian vaccines is a national security matter which is practically impossible to stop while the global world begins to rely on social media for its information consumption. This causes difficulties in verifying the truthfulness of a piece of information due to the sheer number of differing and contradicting data, making it difficult for people to decipher truth from the lies and purposeful propaganda.
- [Stocks Give Up Gains After Record-Setting Rally](#)
- [U.S. accuses Ukrainians of using misappropriated funds for Ohio real estate](#)
- [As Aftershocks Rattle Croatia, Quake Recovery Is Slow and Perilous](#)
- [U.S. demands release of Uighur doctor who family say is sentenced to 20 years](#)

2.4 Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism

- [Thousands protest in Nepal against PM dissolving Parliament](#)
- In Nepal, protests were taking place against the Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, due to his recent decision to dissolve parliament and calling for an election ahead of its schedule. Peaceful protestors marched through the streets with the police keeping an eye. The Prime Minister's Nepal Communist Party won the election after merging with another party, forming a unified communist party, and Oli promised to share the five-year term with the leader of the other party; however, has not allowed him to take over yet. Protestors are calling the early election call as unconstitutional and have accused the government of corruption and a mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [‘Won’t withdraw protest’: Farmers stick to resolve as talks yield little progress](#)
Indian farmers have continued their demonstrations against the country’s new agricultural laws, not giving up or giving in. The farmers are not agreeing to form a committee to look at the legislation, as proposed by the government, which they believe will allow corporations to have more control the farming sector, which will reduce the incomes of farmers. A meeting is scheduled for the beginning of next year between the two sides, although both appear to hold their position, with the farmers unwilling to negotiate.
- [Argentina legalizes abortion after green wave protests.](#)
- Argentina, with some of the most restrictive abortions laws in the world, has legalized abortion up to the 14th week of pregnancy after ongoing demonstrations, leading to a wave of progress for women’s rights in Latin America. A region highly associated with Catholicism, religious beliefs have often dominated politics, while recent numbers suggest that people are identifying less with religion and that religious attitudes are generally changing. It is believed that this wave may continue and affect change as other countries including Brazil and Colombia are also reconsidering their abortion restrictions.
- [Hong Kong Protesters Who Fled by Boat Are Sentenced to Prison in China](#)

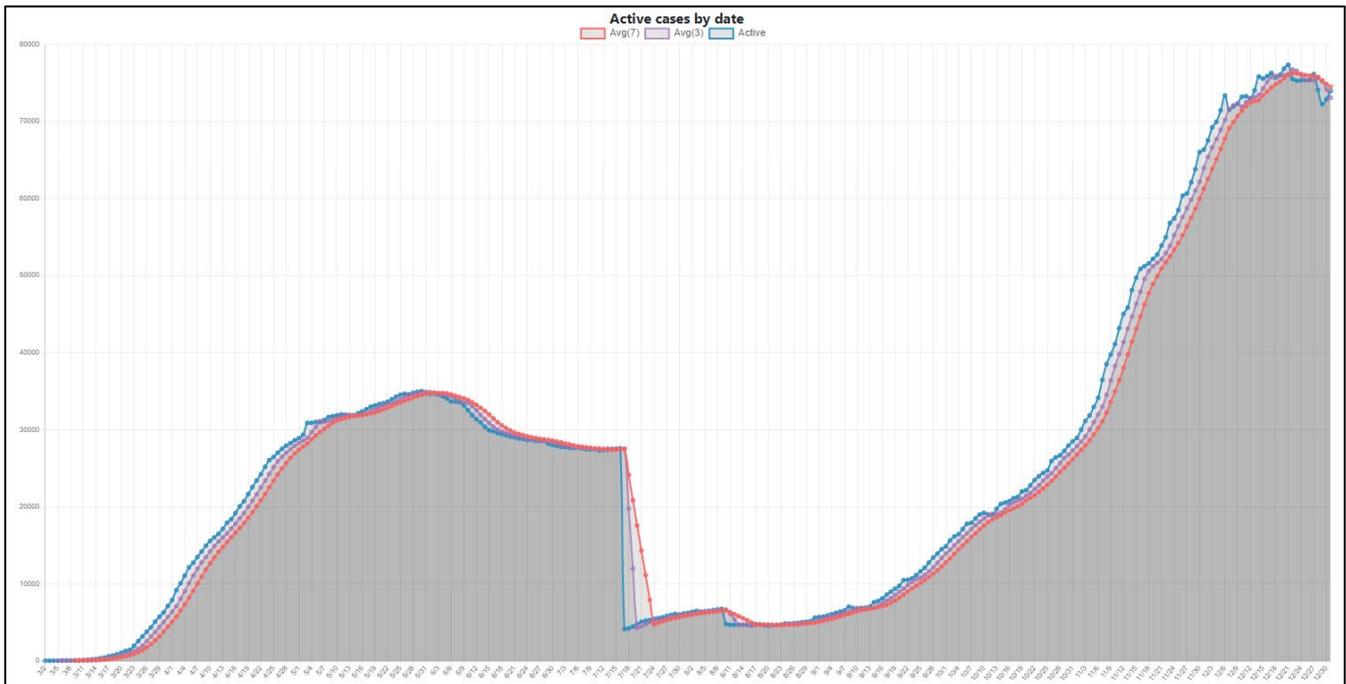
3. CANADA

3.1 COVID UPDATE



| Prov. | Total Confirmed | Total Deaths | Total Recovered | Total Active |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Total | 576,308 (↑3,328) | 15,528 (↑56) | 486,795 (↑2,213) | 73,985 (↑1,059) |
| BC | 51,300 | 893 | 41,681 | 8,726 |
| ON | 182,159 (↑3,328) | 4,530 (↑56) | 156,012 (↑2,213) | 21,612 (↑1,059) |
| QC | 199,822 | 8,165 | 170,045 | 21,612 |
| AB | 100,428 | 1,046 | 84,827 | 14,555 |
| MB | 24,513 | 661 | 19,408 | 4,444 |
| NB | 596 | 8 | 560 | 28 |
| SK | 15,160 | 154 | 12,057 | 2,949 |
| PEI | 94 | 0 | 89 | 5 |
| NL | 390 | 4 | 365 | 21 |
| NS | 1,483 | 65 | 1,393 | 25 |
| YT | 60 | 1 | 59 | 0 |
| NT | 24 | 0 | 24 | 0 |
| NU | 266 | 1 | 262 | 3 |
|  | 13 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| Rate of change | ↑ 0.6% | ↑ 0.4% | ↑ 0.5% | ↑ 1.5% |

| Prov. | Total Test | Total Waiting | Total Hosp | Total ICU |
|----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------|
| Total | 18,399,479 (+63,858) | - | - | - |
| BC | 1,451,775 | - | 379 | 77 |
| ON | 7,922,058 (+63,858) | 72,283 (+17,328) | 1235 (+58) | 337 (+14) |
| QC | 4,845,631 | - | 1211 | 152 |
| AB | 2,780,732 | - | 921 | 152 |
| MB | 419,542 | - | 248 | 32 |
| NB | 152,108 | - | 2 | 1 |
| SK | 424,533 | - | 151 | 32 |
| PEI | 75,295 | - | - | - |
| NL | 72,147 | - | 1 | 0 |
| NS | 234,515 | - | 1 | 0 |
| YT | 5,921 | 17 | - | - |
| NT | 9,744 | 51 | 0 | 0 |
| NU | 5,478 | 631 | 0 | 0 |
| Rate of change | ↑ 0.3% | - | - | - |



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

3.2 COVID-19 Canada News

- [Canada to require all arriving air passengers to show negative COVID-19 test](#)
Canada is now requiring all passengers coming into the country to show a negative COVID-19 test taken three days before arriving in the country. Canada Border Services Agency will have more officers at border crossings

in an effort of educating the public regarding the new rules. The test taken must be PCR test, which must be processed in a lab and takes approximately a day for its results. The new rule does not mean that individuals who test negative can skip the 14-day quarantine requirements, and travel is still discouraged outside the country, and only specific individuals allowed into Canada, such as Canadians or family members of Canadians, amongst others. It is up the airlines to ensure that each passenger shows a negative COVID-19 test, which will likely be a logistical difficulty for airlines, who are already hard hit by the pandemic and may not have the resources to be able to ensure that each passenger proves their COVID-19 status. Furthermore, it is likely that this will increase the market for fraudulent COVID-19 tests and vaccine proof, which is gaining traction as more places are requiring negative tests and as vaccination efforts continue.

- [Ontario expects to vaccinate up to 8.5 million people by end of June](#)

On Tuesday, Ontario officials released figures suggesting that up to 8.5 million people, approximately half of the Ontario population, could be vaccinated against COVID-19 by the end of June. Phase 1 of the vaccination plan is expected to be completed around the end of March, with approximately one to one and a half million Ontarians getting vaccinated, including health care workers and First Nations individuals. Ontario was criticized for closing many of its vaccination clinics on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, with critics suggesting that COVID-19 does not take holidays off and neither should the vaccination campaign. The vaccinations are not mandatory, and a possible concern is distrust in the vaccination process, even with healthcare workers. For example, in BC, the BC Nurses' Union has successfully fought a rule requiring nurses to have the flu vaccine or wear face masks at work. As such, it is believed that even within an occupation such as nurses and other healthcare workers, there exists a pushback regarding some personal choices despite their effect on others' health or even public safety. For countries valuing individualistic values such as Canada and the USA, it is believed that there will be many people who are unwilling to take the vaccine until others have, with no negative consequences. Education and public health awareness campaigns must continue, with celebrities holding a strong place in being able to persuade the public in one way or another. The use of social media and newer marketing avenues must also be utilized to reach the younger demographic, who appears to care less about the effects of COVID-19 as they see little effect from it, and who are typically higher in risk taking in general in comparison to other age groups.

- [Visit restrictions contributed to depression among care home residents: doctor](#)

Doctors are reporting that seniors are becoming depressed due to lack of ability to see their loved ones due to restrictions. In Ontario, a family council association is included in consultations about issues which affect those who live in long term care homes or assisted living homes. Critics have called on the BC government to form such an association that will assist or at least provide their say on some decision.

- [B.C. records 74 COVID-19 deaths over five days along with 2,206 new cases](#)

BC provided an update for the first time in five days, reporting a decrease in case numbers likely due to the public health measures. However, it is likely that numbers will see a slight increase after the holiday season.

- [Quebec reports first case of new COVID-19 variant as officials demand tighter rules for travellers](#)

- [Oxford researcher confident Covid vaccines can be adapted to protect against future virus strains](#)

- [Canadian politician faked Twitter posts to conceal Caribbean holiday](#)

3.3 Canada Awareness

- [UBC grad sentenced to 6 years in Saudi prison for defying ban on women driving](#)
A graduate of UBC, Loujain al-Hathloul who defied the Saudi Arabian driving ban on women, has been sentenced this week to almost six years in prison for violating vaguely worded counterterrorism law, including “agitating for change” and “pursuing a foreign agenda”. al-Hathloul has already been imprisoned since May 21018 in pre-trial. In court, she stated that she was sexually assaulted and tortured using canes, electrocutions and waterboarding. Reportedly, she is happy to rescind the torture allegations for early released, which she may get and may occur as early as 2021. It is believed that her sentence will be a point of contention between the USA/Canada relationship with Saudi Arabia, possibly causing further rifts and problems within the relationship with other countries in the middle east.
- [Canada is turning asylum seekers away at the border, and then changing its mind](#)
Since the pandemic, the USA and Canada have agreed that their borders will not be open to refugees entering from unauthorized entry points. However, Canada has requested that those individuals who are turned back are not deported from the USA, and this has not been true in at least one case, while another eight cases are currently being held in a federal USA facility with final removal orders for deportation. Canadian immigration officials are not advising that those who are going to be deported from the USA will be welcome in Canada, which will provide an exemption in exceptional circumstances. It is unclear how many of these exceptions have been made, but it is likely that a small number of individuals will not make become a transmission safety issue for Canada; however, should word get out that Canada is changing its mind and allowing refugees who have been denied by the USA to come back, it may be that Canada will be seeing an increase in these types of border crossing and applications, possibly effecting public safety during the pandemic.
- [40% of Canadians struggling with mental health, addiction amid coronavirus pandemic: Ipsos](#)
An Ipsos poll has found that about 40% of Canadians are struggling with mental health and addiction problems in the past year. Additionally, people aged 18 to 34 are reporting struggling with addiction due to the mental health issues, and 28% report generally struggling with mental health during this year. People appear to be coping with the pandemic by increased drinking and drug use, as can be seen by an increase in alcohol sales and opioid overdoses across the country. Young people have also been found to be most hit financially by the pandemic, seeing the highest job losses from most age groups. Together with social isolation which many are experiencing as they are less likely to have live in partners and often rely on social interaction with people from other households, and young people appear to be most likely to say their financial situation is not good and are reporting higher mental health problems, doubling the rate of people over the age of 55. However, with the benefits provided, approximately 66% of Canadian of all ages report their financial situation as “good”, showcasing that the majority of Canadians have either not been as strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, or are being mostly helped by the benefits provided. Although countries should focus on increasing the mental health of their residents, it is also likely that some form of mental health reprieve would occur once more activities are permitted, and individuals are able to fill their time with meaningful social activities. Winter is a particularly difficult time which does not allow for many (free or cheap) outdoor activities, and people’s spirits will likely increase again as vaccination efforts are underway and the weather improves, allowing individuals to again receive mother nature’s often free mental health treatment.
- [Vancouver party host spends Christmas in jail after repeated fines for violating COVID-19 public health orders](#)

- [Businesses faced ruin from the pandemic. Then Canada came calling for vital supplies](#)
- [TransLink warns staff hackers accessed personal banking information in cyberattack](#)

3.4 Canada – Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism



welund

During the week of 23-30 December 2020, most of the activist activity noted by Welund in Canada took place in the government sector (58%). Protests made up most of the activity (27%), followed by reports, organizing, and fundraising (11%).

Historically, the week following Christmas has low activity from campaign groups. Activists tend to use this time to recuperate from the year, celebrate perceived victories, and fundraise for future actions.

Protests: Campaigns directly or tangentially connected to the covid-19 pandemic remained one of the largest sources of protests and actions over the past week. Various campaigns focused on rent relief, anti-lockdown and anti-mask activities, and covid-19 outbreak awareness at Canadian correctional facilities.

Anti-Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (TMX) campaigners also remained active, especially along the construction route in BC. Environmental activists criticized BNSF Railway – an American railway provider – for enforcing its ‘right-of-way’ mandate close to an anti-TMX tree-sit encampment near Lost Creek in Burnaby, BC. Campaign groups also detailed the ‘next steps’ of their anti-TMX activism during a recent webinar hosted by Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver.

Outlook: Welund projections suggest that overall activist activity in Canada will remain low into the first week of 2021. That said, over the past two years, activist activity against TC Energy’s Coastal GasLink (CGL) pipeline experienced a sharp increase in January following the annual renewal of an injunction against Indigenous and environmental campaign groups opposing the project. This trend may continue in 2021, especially if activists seek to commemorate the anniversary of its resistance against the large enforcement actions executed by the RCMP in 2020. Activism surrounding the covid-19 pandemic will likely continue into the new year as most provinces are scheduled to have lockdown mandates in place until mid- to late-January 2021. Anti-mask and anti-lockdown campaign groups continue weekly protests in most major municipalities and large towns. There will likely be a growing campaign focused on equitable access to the covid-19 vaccine or against vaccinations in general.

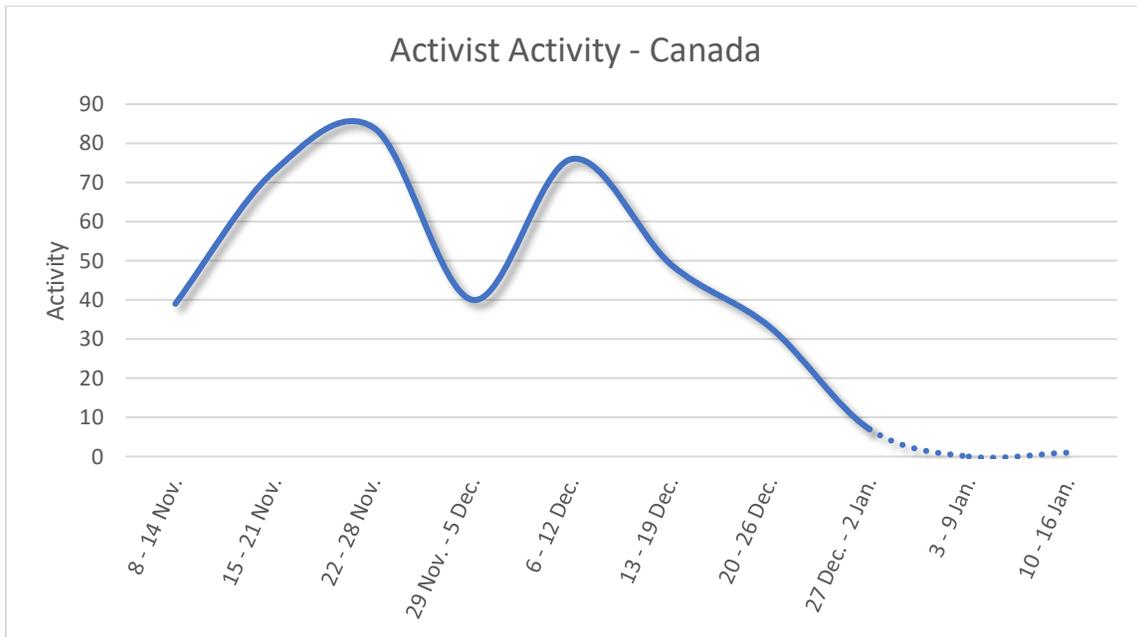


Figure 1 Total activist activity in Canada as noted by Welund.

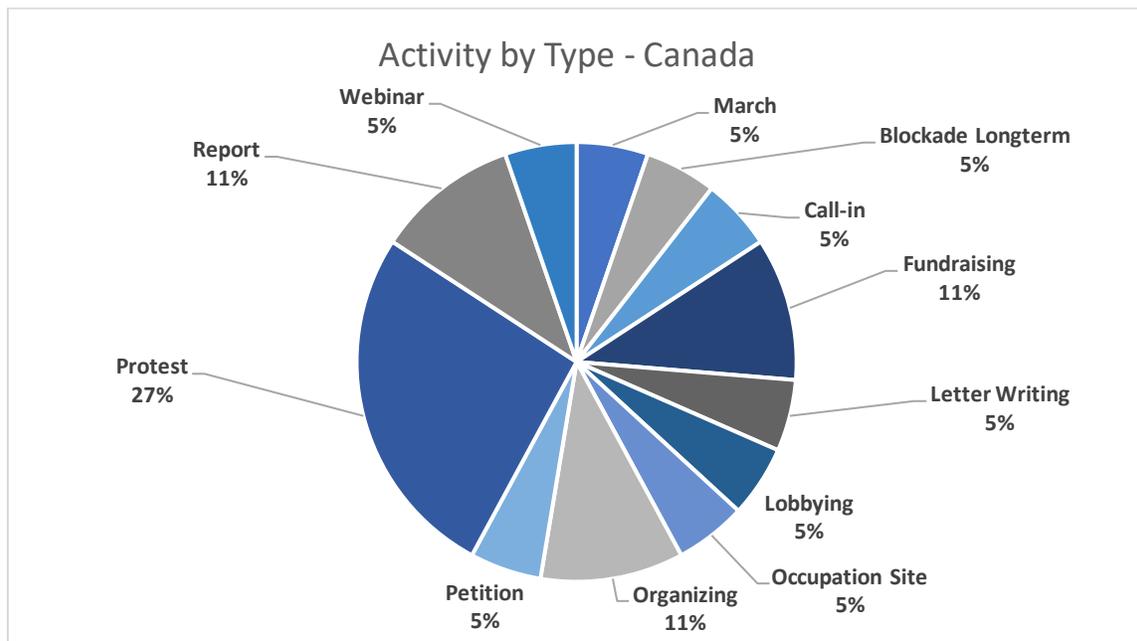


Figure 2 Activist activity in Canada by type as noted by Welund

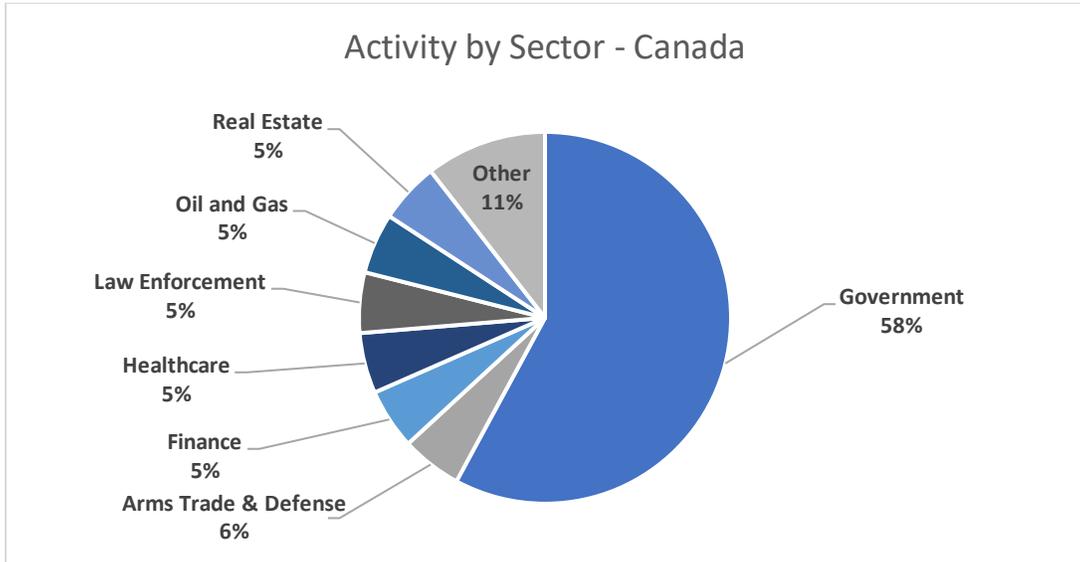
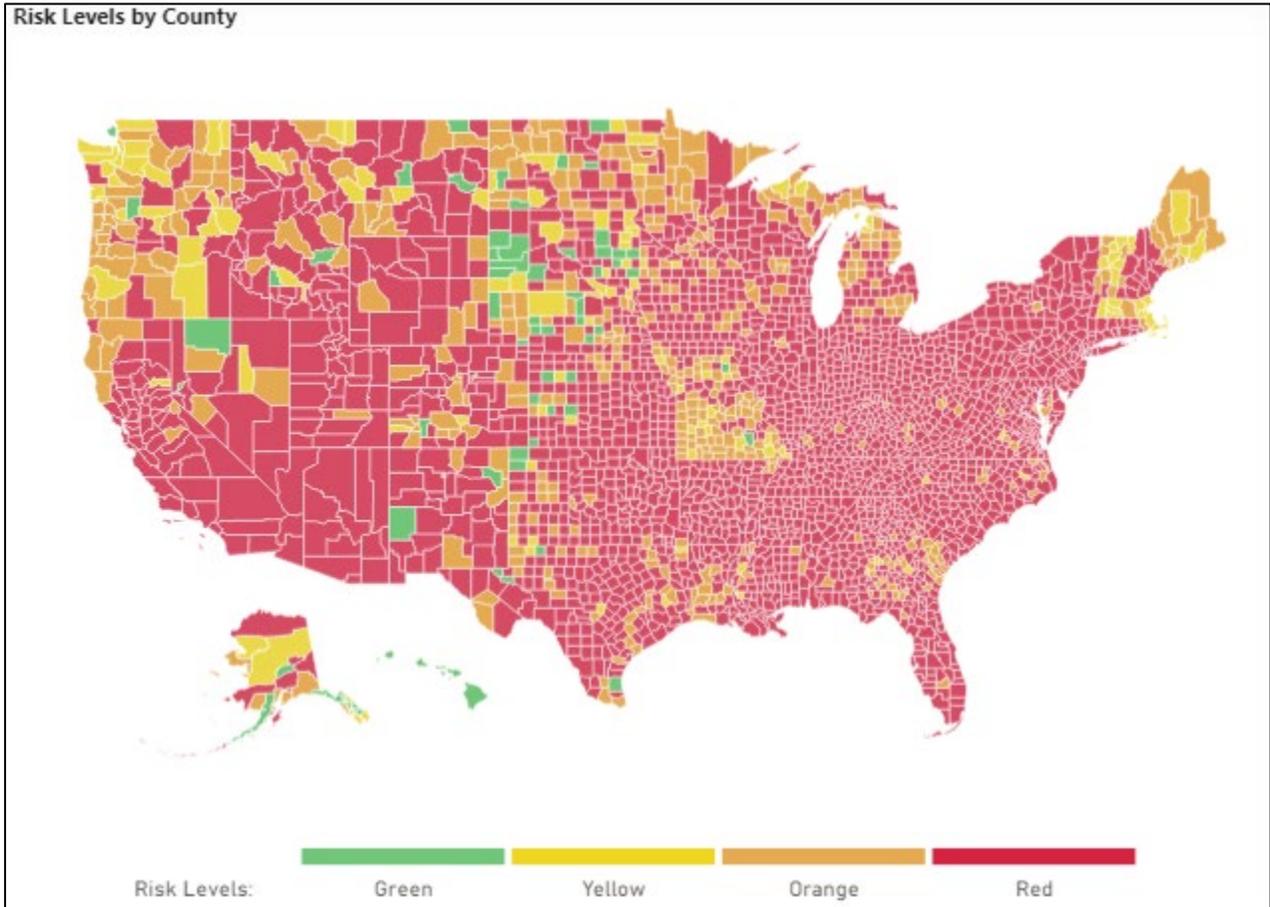


Figure 3 Activist activity in Canada by sector as noted by Welund.

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 |
|----|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|------------|
| | USA Total | 20,230,246 | +13,005 | 350,981 | +201 | 12,004,898 | 7,874,367 | 61,118 | 1,060 | 251,878,808 | 760,957 | |
| 1 | California | 2,267,290 | | 25,387 | | 941,720 | 1,300,183 | 57,382 | 643 | 32,623,076 | 825,645 | 39,512,223 |
| 2 | Florida | 1,306,123 | | 21,550 | | 731,424 | 553,149 | 60,813 | 1,003 | 15,584,370 | 725,606 | 21,477,737 |
| 3 | New York | 998,524 | | 37,868 | | 476,066 | 484,590 | 51,329 | 1,947 | 25,068,473 | 1,288,632 | 19,453,561 |
| 4 | Arizona | 512,489 | | 8,718 | | 75,095 | 428,676 | 70,409 | 1,198 | 3,202,150 | 439,933 | 7,278,717 |
| 5 | Virginia | 349,584 | +5,239 | 5,032 | +48 | 30,707 | 313,845 | 40,956 | 590 | 5,096,024 | 597,037 | 8,535,519 |
| 6 | Georgia | 654,743 | | 10,846 | | 342,819 | 301,078 | 61,667 | 1,022 | 5,706,057 | 537,424 | 10,617,423 |
| 7 | Texas | 1,759,131 | | 27,898 | | 1,433,194 | 298,039 | 60,668 | 962 | 15,521,258 | 535,292 | 28,995,881 |
| 8 | Missouri | 417,272 | | 6,010 | | 128,734 | 282,528 | 67,988 | 979 | 4,080,302 | 664,823 | 6,137,428 |
| 9 | Maryland | 276,662 | +2,973 | 5,895 | +47 | 9,355 | 261,412 | 45,762 | 975 | 5,708,030 | 944,150 | 6,045,680 |
| 10 | Colorado | 330,859 | | 4,750 | | 69,046 | 257,063 | 57,453 | 825 | 2,126,572 | 369,278 | 5,758,736 |
| 11 | Illinois | 955,380 | | 17,811 | | 682,644 | 254,925 | 75,394 | 1,406 | 13,178,017 | 1,039,947 | 12,671,821 |
| 12 | New Jersey | 482,852 | | 19,109 | | 235,935 | 227,808 | 54,362 | 2,151 | 7,693,486 | 866,170 | 8,882,190 |
| 13 | Kentucky | 265,262 | | 2,623 | | 36,740 | 225,899 | 59,374 | 587 | 3,414,879 | 764,353 | 4,467,673 |
| 14 | Pennsylvania | 636,749 | | 15,780 | | 416,679 | 204,290 | 49,738 | 1,233 | 7,365,543 | 575,344 | 12,801,989 |
| 15 | Michigan | 528,621 | | 13,018 | | 318,389 | 197,214 | 52,932 | 1,304 | 8,630,181 | 864,154 | 9,986,857 |
| 16 | Indiana | 505,017 | | 8,160 | | 339,416 | 157,441 | 75,015 | 1,212 | 5,627,342 | 835,882 | 6,732,219 |
| 17 | Alabama | 356,820 | | 4,774 | | 202,137 | 149,909 | 72,773 | 974 | 1,949,042 | 397,505 | 4,903,185 |
| 18 | South Carolina | 303,475 | | 5,249 | | 149,770 | 148,456 | 58,942 | 1,019 | 3,630,067 | 705,043 | 5,148,714 |
| 19 | Washington | 246,182 | | 3,540 | | 100,574 | 142,068 | 32,329 | 465 | 3,805,390 | 499,730 | 7,614,893 |

4.2 COVID-19 USA News

- [Wealthy hospitals rake in U.S. disaster aid for COVID-19 costs](#)
 The Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided billions of dollars in cash reserves and investments to large healthcare system, which have seen nothing but profits. Despite being non-profits, large and highly capitalized healthcare systems, some have received enough money from the government and do not require the FEMA money, which is usually used for natural disasters. The USA considered COVID-19 a natural disaster, thus allowing nonprofit hospitals to apply for this program, which does not look at financial need while covering up to 75% of hospital expenses including PPE, ventilators, employee overtime, and other expenses. Private hospitals are not eligible as FEMA only provides funding to non-profit organizations.
- [Renewed COVID lockdowns likely in Southern California as ICUs stay filled](#)
- [Operation Warp Speed chief says Covid vaccine distribution 'should be better' as U.S. misses goal](#)
- [Your brain on cortisol: Why overstressed gray matter is leading us astray in lockdown](#)
- [Colorado identifies first known case of UK coronavirus variant in US](#)
- [Emergency U.S. authorization for AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine likely in April](#)
- [TSA screened nearly 1.3 million travelers in one day, setting a pandemic record](#)

4.3 USA Awareness

- [Push for Bigger Stimulus Checks Is Running Out of Time](#)
The prospect of the Senate quickly approving \$2,000 stimulus checks dimmed further, with the chamber focused on overriding President Trump's veto of the annual defense-policy bill before the end of the session and Republican leaders brushing aside Democratic demands for a stand-alone vote on the larger payments. Trump's late push to increase the size of direct payments in the recent \$900 billion coronavirus-relief legislation to \$2,000 from \$600 has scrambled the final days of the 116th Congress. Democrats took up Mr. Trump's push for larger checks, rapidly passing a bill through the House with some Republican support and attempting to approve it in the GOP-led Senate.
- [Florida couple allegedly used fraudulently obtained PPP loan to buy \\$3.5 million mansion](#)
A couple who lied about their business in order to score a \$7.2 million PPP loan in late May used the funds to buy a \$3.5 million, seven-bedroom house, several expensive cars and paid off a loan to a relative, according to the federal government. The couple alleged the company had an average monthly payroll of \$2.9 million, 108 employees at exactly \$85,000 a year each, and instead bought a home, Lincoln Navigator, Mercedes Benz and other luxury cars.
- [Small drones allowed to fly over people and at night in new rules, making way for drone delivery](#)
The American Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has approved drones, or UAVs, (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) to fly at night and over people, contributing to the ability of commercial deliveries being done by drones. Previously, drones could not fly over people unless they knew and consented to it, were under a covered structure or inside an idle vehicle. These drones will require a remote identification technology so they can be identified from the ground and will allow 18 months for drone manufacturers to begin making these UAVs and their remote IDs. Walmart has started a pilot to test the delivery of grocery and household items but has admitted that it is still "some time" before there will be large numbers of packages delivered via drones. It is believed that it will be some time before drones will become profitable to use for deliveries, considering the sheer number of deliveries required and the weight of the packages alone, which would be required to be held by the drone. This will require quite large machines, which regulators may need to review before having large, unmanned machines carrying your and your neighbours' new PlayStation 5, flying in between high rises.
- [She didn't know her kidnapper. But he was using Google Maps — and that cracked the case](#)
A victim of rape noticed that her attacker was using Google Maps during the crime. The police department then requested a "geofence warrant" which provides them with data regarding people who were around the area from Google. This has been used in numerous crimes and led to successful prosecutions against perpetrators. However, critics advise that track people that had nothing to do with crimes, and cases where these have caused suspicion in people who were not the perpetrators just by virtue of being associated with the area via digital means. Google has reportedly received so many requests that it takes them months to produce them, and for this reason used as a last resort. Police says that geofencing warrants are legal because Google users have consented to location tracking, and use steps in the geofencing warrant, with first using anonymized data and then getting more specific information about each device and the suspect. It is also fearful that these warrants can be used to track people going to protests, abortion clinics or churches.
- [Investigators hunt for a motive in blast that shook Nashville](#)

- [McConnell blocks Schumer's bid to unanimously pass \\$2,000 stimulus checks](#)

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



During the week of 23-30 December 2020, most of the activist activity in the US noted by Welund took place in the government sector (60%), followed by oil and gas (11%). Protests made up most of the activity (55%), followed by organizing (10%) and petitions (8%). Overall activity has continued to decline since a peak around the election. Welund expects activity to remain low during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Activist campaigns have been promoting end of year fundraising efforts. In addition to calls for donations, campaigns have been listing 2020 successes and goals for 2021.

Protests: Despite the pandemic, activists continue to organize in-person protests to broadcast their campaigns and demands. 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.

A direct action of interest was held on 28 December. MN350 activist Emma Harrison ascended a tripod blockade at an Enbridge Line 3 pipe yard in Backus, Minnesota. She was subsequently arrested after spending several hours on the tripod. The action followed weeks of ongoing protests against the project in Aitkin County, Minnesota.

An upcoming protest of interest will take place on 2 January 2021. Activists are planning to storm the home of Florida senator Rick Scott to convince him to challenge Democrat Joe Biden's Electoral College victory when the results arrive in Congress for certification on 6 January. Roger Stone allies have launched a national website announcing plans to rally at homes and offices of Republican Senators.

Another upcoming protest of interest will take place on 6 January in Washington, DC. Supporters of President Trump have called for a 'Million MAGA March' to protest the results of the presidential election. Counter-protests can be expected to oppose the pro-Trump demonstration.

Outlook: Welund expects overall activist activity to remain relatively lower through New Year's Day. The lead up to the presidential inauguration in January has the potential to see tensions between the left and right spark protest activity between now and Inauguration Day on 20 January. Rising covid-19 cases across the US may see some states reimpose restrictions not seen since the spring. Should this happen, the right-wing, anti-lockdown movement may organize protests and demonstrations like those that attracted nationwide media attention in April and May. The rollout of the coronavirus vaccine has resulted in increased activity from anti-vaccine groups. The spread of misinformation about the vaccines has also increased across social media platforms. There will likely be a growing campaign focused on equitable access to the covid-19 vaccine.

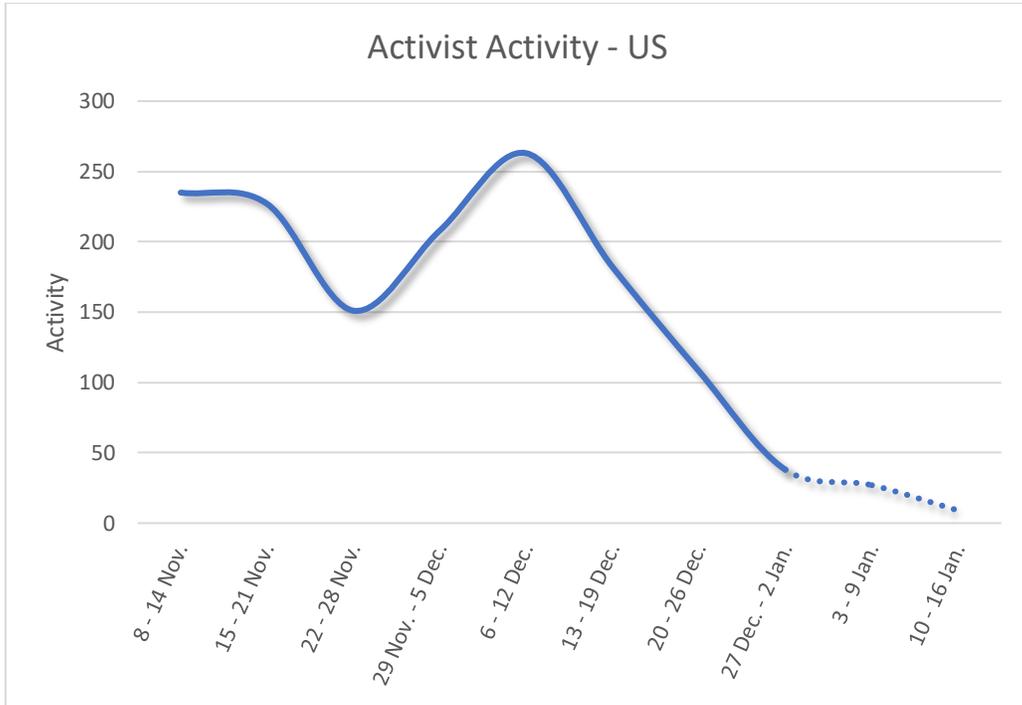


Figure 4 Total activist activity in the US as noted by Welund North America.

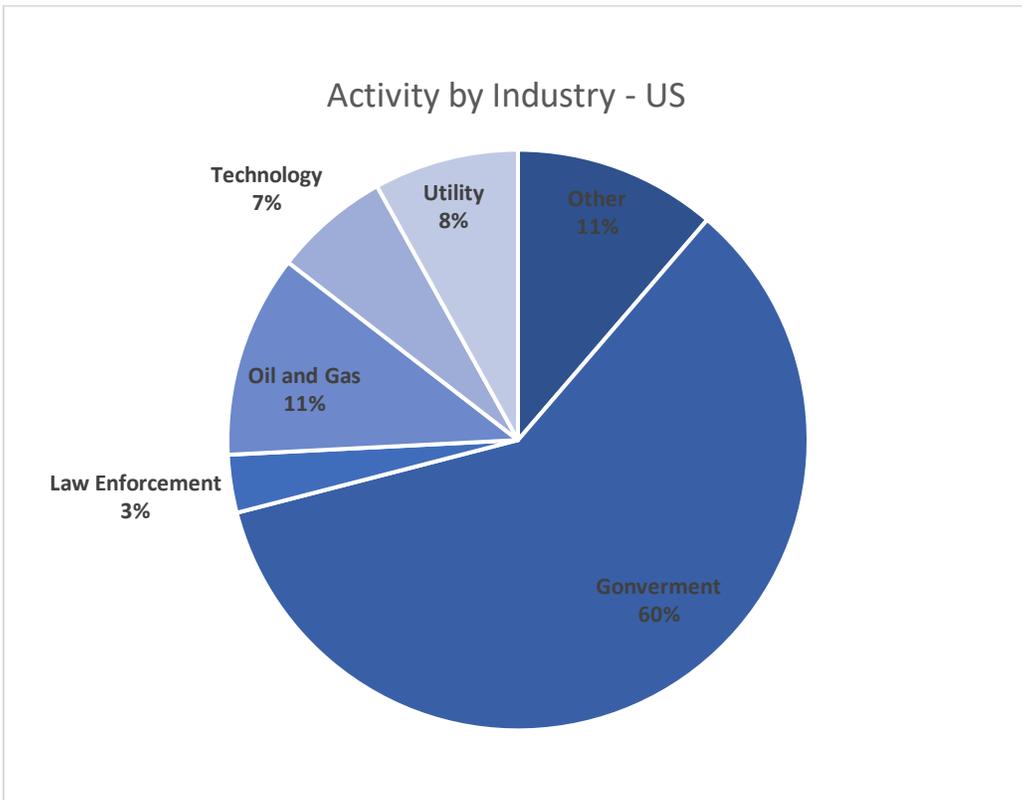


Figure 5 Activist activity in the US by industry as noted by Welund

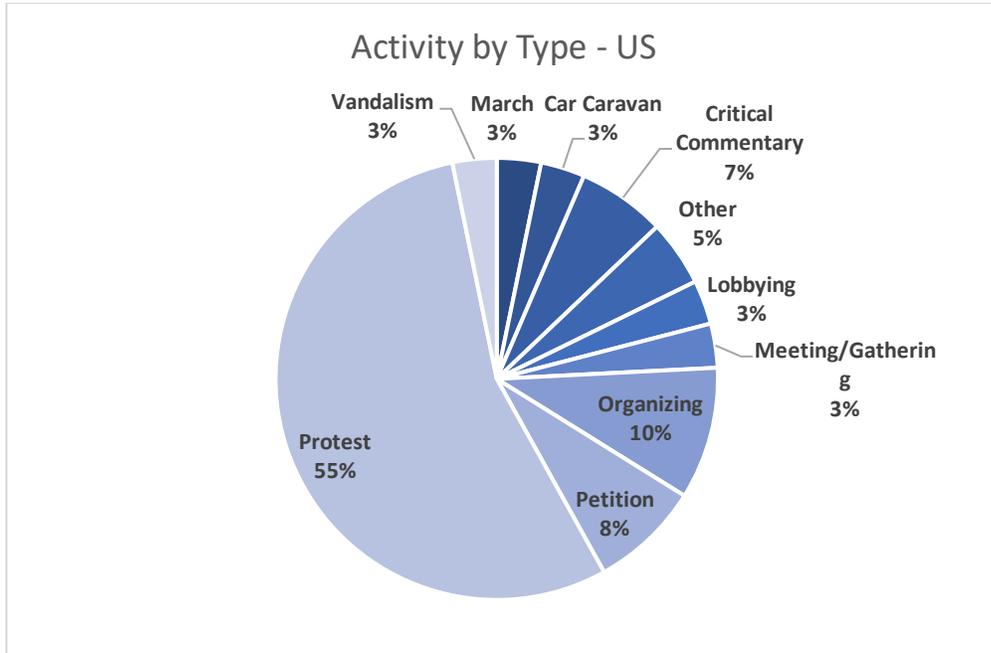


Figure 6 Activist activity in the US by type as noted by Welund North America.

End Report

Please submit feedback to:



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