



# INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Situational awareness for stakeholders and decision makers.



**Report # 20-004**  
**11 December 2020**

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## 1. CURRENT SITUATION

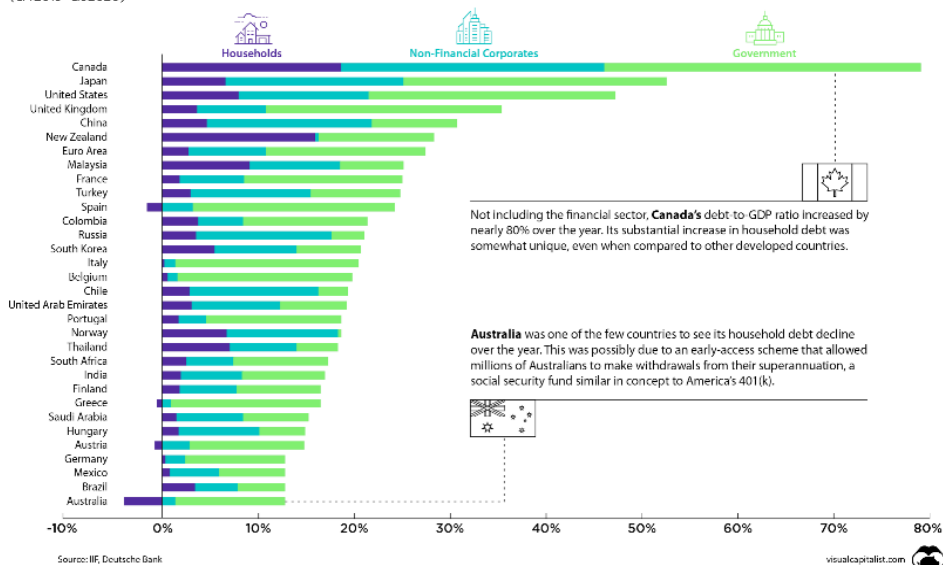
Many developed countries provided various stimulus and benefit measures to their citizens and corporations in an effort to mitigate the economic consequences of the pandemic measures. In Canada, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit provided \$2,000 a month to those who lost their jobs due to the pandemic or had to self-isolate, costing over \$60 billion for just seven months. It is unclear whether Canada has positioned itself in a better place should it not have provided these measures, which were given to many without any substantiation of job loss or need. Furthermore, as the same amount was given to all, some individuals, such as part time employees, may have received more money on the benefit than they would have made while working.

A country's debt-to-GDP ratio measures its debt in comparison to its economic output. The lower a country's debt-to-GDP ratio, the easier it will be for the country to pay off its debt. While a high ratio suggests that a country has a better chance of defaulting. The World Bank defines anything more than 77% of GDP to actually decrease 0.017% of the country's annual growth for every percentage point above. Overall, all developed countries have experienced an increase in their debt-to-GDP ratio, starting with Australia at about 13%.

Currently, the country whose current debt-to-GDP ratio changed the most from its pre-COVID 19 ratio is Canada, which saw a surge of 80% over this year. Even with extensive benefit measures, household debt increased significantly by almost 20%, a larger increase of debt in comparison to other developed countries. Government debt increased by over 30% as well as non-financial corporate debt by the same amount. The country coming in second, Japan, saw household debt slightly increase, while corporations took on almost 20% in debt and the government almost 30%. Due to record low interest rates, the Canadian government states that it is paying less money in interest than it did before the pandemic, but the low global interest rates may not last long enough to pay off all the debt, signaling problems for the future.

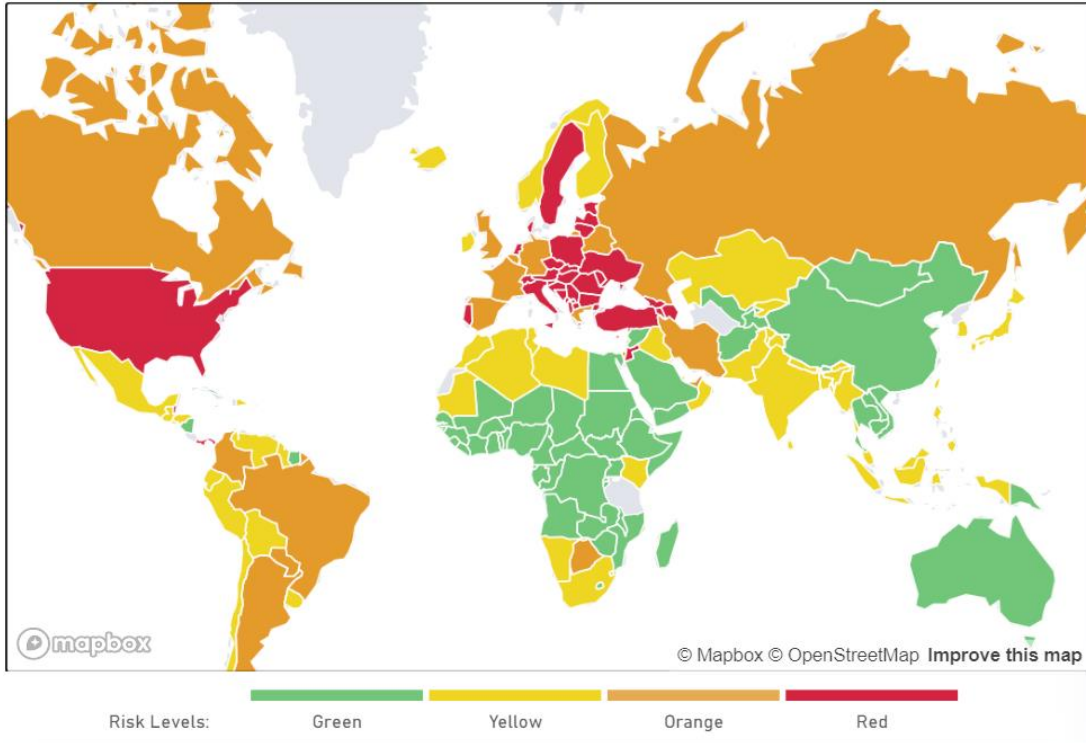
Meanwhile, Australia has seen a decrease in household debt. Australia's COVID-19 benefits allowed Australians to withdraw money from the superannuation program, similar to the Canadian pension program, with little penalty. It is believed that as the vaccine becomes more widespread, measures will be reduced, allowing for more economic output and a decrease in the debt-to-GDP ratio for all countries.

**CHANGE IN DEBT-TO-GDP**  
(Q4 2019–Q3 2020)



## 2. GLOBAL

### 2.1 COVID UPDATE



#	Country, Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Serious, Critical	Tot Cases/ 1M pop	Deaths/ 1M pop	Population
	World	70,943,084	+235,425	1,592,597	+4,790	49,334,674	20,015,813	106,621	9,101	204.3	
1	<a href="#">USA</a>	16,061,576	+22,183	299,988	+296	9,340,220	6,421,368	27,361	48,398	904	331,865,090
2	<a href="#">France</a>	2,337,966		56,940		174,658	2,106,368	2,959	35,783	871	65,337,886
3	<a href="#">Italy</a>	1,787,147		62,626		1,027,994	696,527	3,291	29,578	1,036	60,422,081
4	<a href="#">Brazil</a>	6,783,543		179,801		5,931,777	671,965	8,318	31,813	843	213,230,064
5	<a href="#">Turkey</a>	1,748,567		15,751		1,154,333	578,483	5,943	20,634	186	84,740,585
6	<a href="#">Belgium</a>	600,397	+2,754	17,692	+89	40,789	541,916	657	51,705	1,524	11,612,063
7	<a href="#">Russia</a>	2,597,711	+28,585	45,893	+613	2,059,840	491,978	2,300	17,797	314	145,962,393
8	<a href="#">Ukraine</a>	872,228	+13,514	14,755	+285	480,348	377,125	177	19,998	338	43,615,882
9	<a href="#">India</a>	9,807,841	+10,849	142,340	+118	9,302,089	363,412	8,944	7,076	103	1,386,012,075
10	<a href="#">Germany</a>	1,281,290	+10,858	21,462	+229	942,100	317,728	4,339	15,271	256	83,903,248
11	<a href="#">Poland</a>	1,115,201	+13,110	22,174	+544	815,356	277,671	1,766	29,481	586	37,828,086
12	<a href="#">Iran</a>	1,092,407	+9,384	51,727	+232	787,853	252,827	5,768	12,933	612	84,467,718
13	<a href="#">Serbia</a>	255,758	+6,534	2,227	+55	31,536	221,995	319	29,325	255	8,721,606
14	<a href="#">Mexico</a>	1,217,126	+11,897	112,326	+671	896,130	208,670	3,515	9,396	867	129,532,213
15	<a href="#">Hungary</a>	271,200	+6,197	6,622	+171	78,700	185,878	610	28,105	686	9,649,376
16	<a href="#">Argentina</a>	1,482,216		40,431		1,318,187	123,598	3,665	32,663	891	45,379,520



## 2.2 COVID-19 World News

- [First person receives Pfizer jab in UK](#)

The first individual to receive the Pfizer vaccine was in the United Kingdom, where it was first authorized; a 90-year-old grandmother received the vaccine and advises that she was feeling normal after the shot. Days later, Canada became the second country to approve the vaccine.
- [U.K. to refine allergy warning on Pfizer vaccine sparked by two adverse reactions](#)

Health Officials in the UK are advising that persons with known severe allergic reactions should not receive the inoculation after two individuals who received the vaccine had suffered an adverse reaction. However, this does not mean that anyone with any food allergy is at risk of a side effect. Pfizer advised that it excluded people who have had severe allergic reactions from its vaccine trials, information noted within its emergency approval application. It may be that a new component, polyethylene glycol (PEG), may have caused the reaction, which has not been used in previous vaccines. A recent FDA briefing documents suggests that 0.63% of people may have had an allergic reaction to the virus in the vaccine group of the Pfizer trials, while the placebo group reported 0.51% of allergic reactions. Pfizer will now have to investigate what ingredient caused the allergic reaction, but it is possible that anyone with a history of a severe allergic reaction to food, outdoor allergens, or even pet allergies, will have to wait to receive the vaccine. Children and pregnant women will also have to wait, as they were also excluded from the clinical trials.
- [Hackers steal Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine data in Europe, companies say](#)

Pfizer and BioNTech, the makers of the vaccine, are advising that their COVID-19 vaccine data was illegally accessed during a cyberattack on the European Medicines Agency (EMA). It is believed that state actors, or other groups which may want to delegitimize the West, will attempt to sabotage the vaccinations program in an effort to lengthen the West's recovery from the pandemic. It is also believed that the vaccination data may also be used by groups who may want to steal the intellectual property in an effort to make their own vaccine, bypassing the need for vigorous scientific research. It is unclear who caused the attack or what was compromised, although the companies advised that no personal data of those who participated in the trials

was compromised. Documents provided to the EMA include confidential information about the inoculation's efficacy, mechanism of action, risks and possible side effects, as well as information about third parties involved in the distribution of the vaccine. This attack will not affect the review timeline for the EMA, which believes the vaccine review will be completed by the end of the year. Previously, it has been reported that North Korea, South Korea, Vietnam, Iran, China and Russia have all separately attempted to illegally gain information about the virus and potential vaccines, targeting various vaccine companies, as well as international and regulatory organizations. This showcases the need for top-of-the-line cyber security for organizations which are heavily involved in the recovery efforts from the pandemic, as hackers continue to improve their techniques and capabilities. This further necessitates even stronger controls and constant problem solving and improving of cyber systems for vital organizations in an effort to ensure safety of intellectual property and continuity of business activities. Prevention is most important, but preparation for such events will assist in a quick response and recovery, easing that process.

- ['We need trust': How a COVID-19 vaccine came so quickly](#)  
For many who are hesitant about getting the COVID-19 vaccine because it 'came too quickly'. Most vaccines take years to test and manufacture, and why did the COVID-19 vaccine get not only developed, tested and approved in such a short amount of time? Experts state that this came from a number of factors, including previous research, coordinator global effort and conducting various aspects of the trials at the same time. Coronaviruses have been a threat to humans for a long time, and groundwork set for previous viruses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and are building their research on previous findings. Technologies used for the vaccine had already been developed for other viruses, and just had to be slightly tweaked for COVID-19. Almost all aspects of the virus were expedited, including forming partnerships which usually takes longer; however, due to the urgency of the pandemic, organizations such as Health Canada attended to the application for the vaccine immediately, while it would usually take some time to get through the line. Education on why the COVID-19 vaccine was prepared and approved so swiftly will assist with more individuals agreeing to receive the vaccine, allowing for herd immunity to occur quicker than if individuals refuse to be vaccinated.
- [Infected after 5 minutes, from 20 feet away: South Korea study shows coronavirus' spread indoors](#)
- [China's Sinopharm vaccine 86% effective, say United Arab Emirates officials](#)

## 2.3 Global Awareness

- [EU may fall back into recession, led by consumption](#)  
Despite the final estimate of the European GDP showed a rise of 12.5% from the previous quarter, it is still seeing a 4.3% annual drop. In comparison, the US dropped 2.9% and the UK dropped 9.7%. Consumption in the EU has increased (2.5% decrease from the year prior) while investment is not seeing as much of a rebound (4.7% decrease from the year prior). Employment has increased slightly in the third quarter by 1% but is still 2.3% lower than the previous year. It is assessed that the GDP will continue to decrease throughout the upcoming months due to the increase in COVID-19 transmission and its associated health restrictions, despite vaccine developments. Different EU members are likely to see differences in recovery, which may add to already existing tensions between the various countries.

- [China's sub-national ties face more scrutiny in West](#)  
Australia has passed a law on Tuesday which allows its foreign minister to veto sub-national government agreements with organizations of other states. While the law does not precisely mention China, it is believed Australia's recently strained ties with China may be behind the decision. The world appears to be slowly realizing the threat that China poses to the West, and it may be more difficult for China to be able affect the changes and influences it is prioritizing in other countries for its own economic and political purposes. Dealings between countries and China may be more finely analyzed by the media and critics, possibly cause more friction in domestic politics of some countries. Countries will have more difficulties and will likely look internally in an effort to stay self-sufficient and not rely on China for its manufacturing and other economic activities.
- [Some 270 million people face starvation, WFP chief says, warning of 'hunger pandemic'](#)  
The head of the UN's World Food Program stated that more than 270 million people may be thrust into starvation due to the pandemic, as well as wars, climate change, and the "widespread use of hunger as a political and military weapon". Globally, not all countries have allocated funding for pandemic relief programs, leaving many to fend for themselves. An unbalanced recovery will be seen by many countries, exacerbating other issues as recovery from various disasters can be further impeded by COVID-19 complications.
- [EU Adopts 'Magnitsky Act' Enabling Sanctions on Human Rights Abusers](#)
- [A trillion dollars lost to cyber crime every year](#)

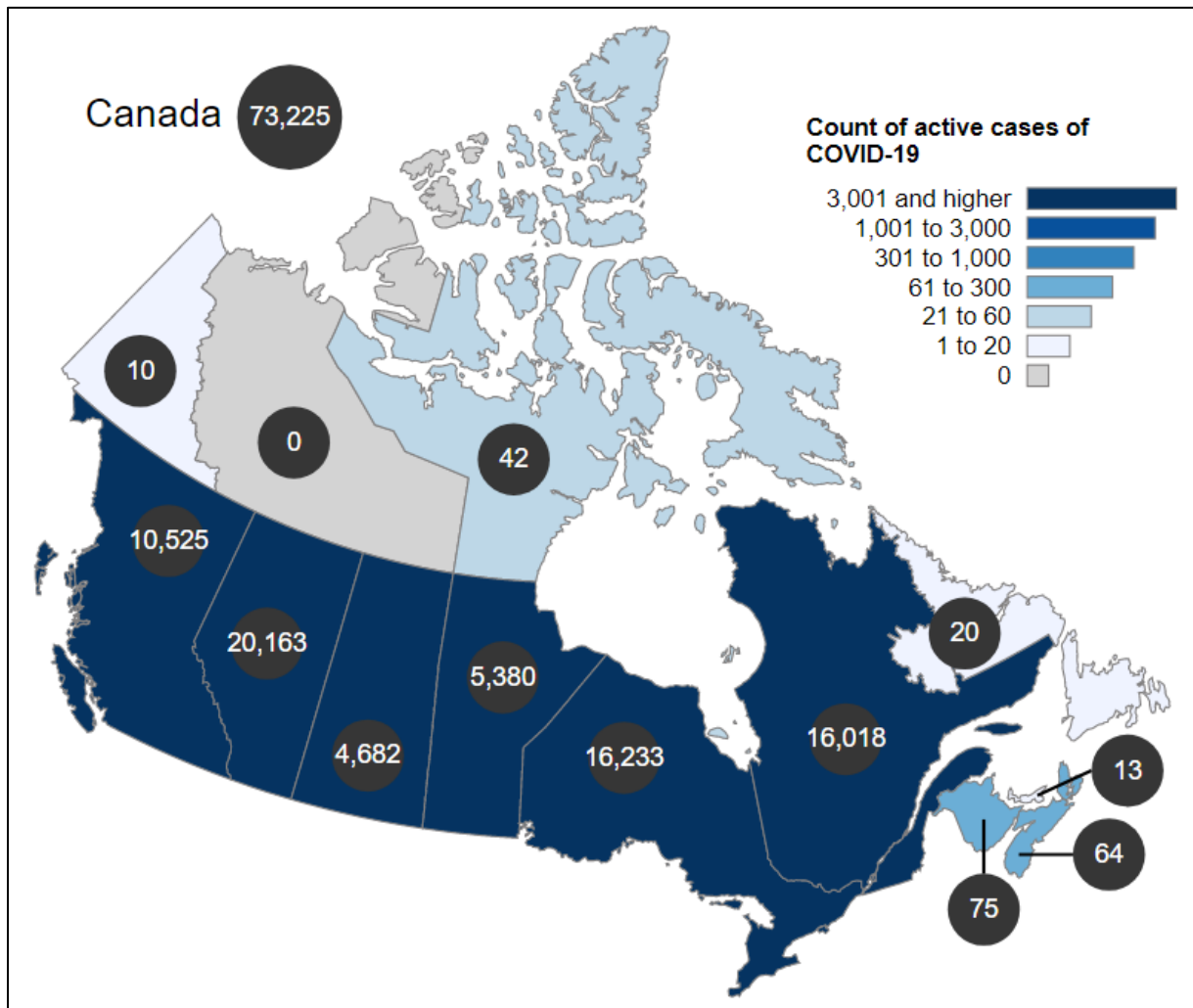
## 2.4 Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism

- [Indian government offers more talks with protesting farmers](#)  
Despite five rounds of talks, no resolutions have been made, and tens of thousands of Indian farmers continue to protest the country's new agriculture laws. Farmers have now called for a countrywide strike of farmers, who have been blocking busy intersections leading to New Delhi and are demanding a repeal of the new law. The protestors are expressing unwillingness to negotiate, and the protests that have taken place for almost two months in some parts of India. Agriculture is the source of income for almost 60% of India's population, making the law impact a large number of its residents. As the farmers advised they are not willing to negotiate, it is believed that protests will continue and the farmers will take more extreme measures such as the nationwide strike. It is possible the government will put a pause on the law for some time in an effort to appease the demonstrators; however, it is unclear whether it would be willing to back down, or whether the police or military will have to take further action on behalf of the government, likely intensifying tensions even further and possibly causing clashes with police.
- [Calgary promises 'escalating' enforcement, court injunctions against anti-mask protests](#)  
Calgary is seeing hundreds of people having weekly protests against COVID-19 restrictions, with officials advising that those who are gathering may be faced with larger fines and possibly even court injunctions. City officials are not comfortable in using force to prevent the weekly protests from taking place, they are going to increase the maximum fines to \$100,000 and use court injunctions to forestall them are possible avenues they are exploring. Alberta recently put forth new measures which include closing gyms, personal service businesses and bars for at least four weeks. These new measures are seen by some to be a violation of their personal rights and freedoms, as well as the effects on people's livelihoods due to the restrictive measures


put forth by the government. Organizers have already received some tickets of either \$1,200 or \$50, and municipalities have hired more bylaw officers to enforce the rules. Constitutional challenges to the Alberta restrictions have been put forth by a legal group “Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms”, stating the measures are an overreach and are not required for the pandemic. The majority of Albertans appear to support the measure and follow health directives, suggesting that only a small yet vocal group may be arguing against them. However, should the court matter succeed, as some did in various American jurisdictions, it is likely it will cause a blow to the Albertan government and its COVID-19 suppression efforts.

### 3. CANADA

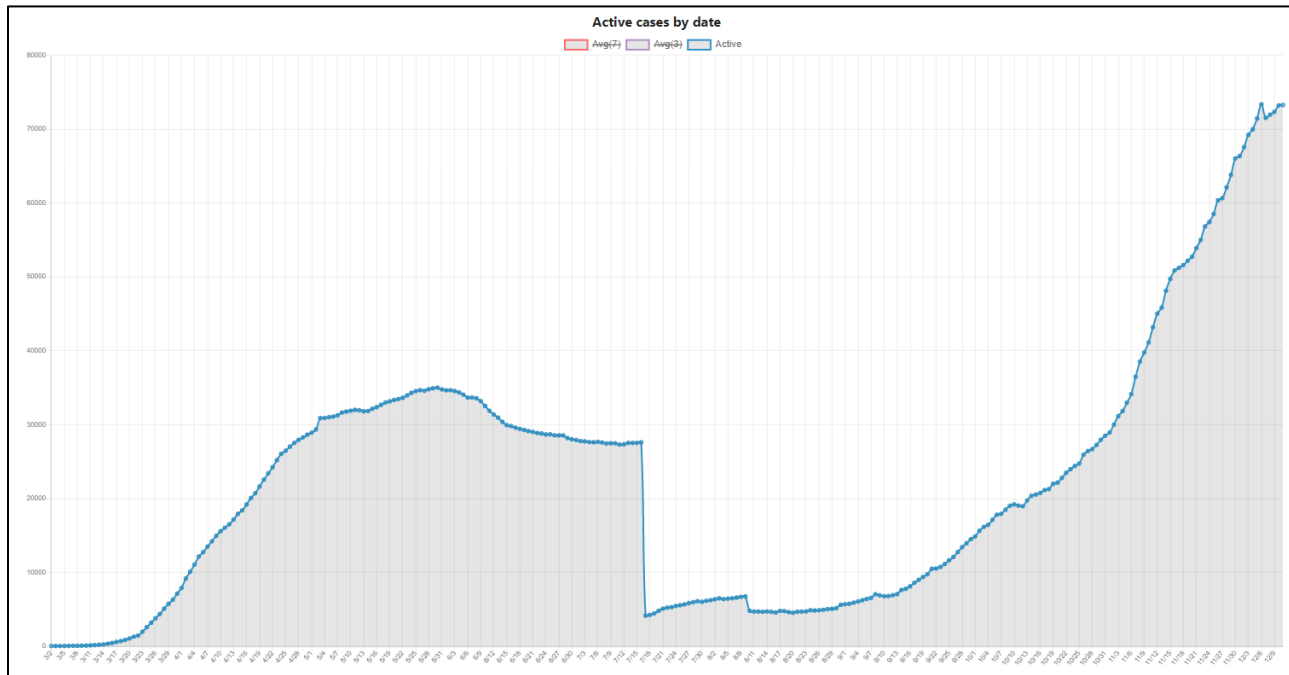
#### 3.1 COVID UPDATE





Prov.	Total Confirmed	Total Deaths	Total Recovered	Total Active
<b>Total</b>	<b>443,917</b> (↑1,848)	<b>13,154</b> (↑45)	<b>357,488</b> (↑1,753)	<b>73,275</b> (↑50)
BC	40,060	587	28,948	10,525
ON	136,631 (↑1,848)	3,916 (↑45)	116,432 (↑1,753)	16,283 (↑50)
QC	158,310	7,382	134,910	16,018
AB	75,054	666	54,225	20,163
MB	19,947	451	14,116	5,380
NB	546	7	464	75
SK	11,223	75	6,466	4,682
PEI	84	0	71	13
NL	354	4	330	20
NS	1,393	65	1,264	64
YT	58	1	47	10
NT	15	0	15	0
NU	229	0	187	42
	13	0	13	0
Rate of change	↑ 0.4%	↑ 0.3%	↑ 0.5%	↑ 0.1%

Prov.	Total Test	Total Waiting	Total Hosp	Total ICU
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,995,331</b> (+63,051)	-	-	-
BC	1,267,521	-	346	75
ON	6,839,193 (+63,051)	69,280 (+2,954)	808 (-21)	235 (+7)
QC	4,199,609	-	848	113
AB	2,444,373	-	682	124
MB	380,664	-	298	43
NB	136,559	-	4	3
SK	375,881	-	138	31
PEI	61,568	-	-	-
NL	65,793	-	0	0
NS	204,884	-	0	0
YT	5,701	52	-	-
NT	8,317	121	0	0
NU	5,268	651	0	0
Rate of change	↑ 0.4%	-	-	-



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

### 3.2 COVID-19 Canada News

- [What Canadians can expect now that Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved](#)  
It is believed that as soon as mid next week, the COVID-19 vaccine will begin to be given to Canadians. At first, 125,000 doses will be available by the end of 2020 and by the beginning of the first quarter, about three million Canadian may be vaccinated. The vaccines will be distributed to the 14 distribution centers in all provinces in shares proportionate to the population of each, while the territories will not receive any early shipments due to their lack of storage capacity for the vaccine, which requires temperatures of about -70 C. Because the vaccines cannot be easily transported due to their storage requirements, those in long term care homes are not believed to be able to receive the vaccine. Health Canada advised that the provinces would keep track of who receives the vaccines, both to ensure they return for the second dose, as well as in an effort to monitor any potential adverse reactions to the inoculation.
- [Here's how Health Canada explains the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine it just approved](#)
- ['Our health system is in trouble,' Alberta's top doctor warns during COVID-19 update](#)
- [Ontario reports new single-day record with nearly 2,000 new COVID-19 infections, testing reaches new heights](#)
- [B.C. supermarket's COVID-19-killing UV cart cleaner a Canadian first](#)
- [Here's the COVID-19 vaccine rollout plan, province by province](#)

### 3.3 Canada Awareness

- [Canadian families to pay hundreds more a year for groceries in 2021: report](#)  
Food prices are set to increase, causing the average Canadian family of four an increase of almost \$700 per year. A number of factors, including wildfires, pandemic, as well as changing consumer habits are to blame for the expected increase. Bread, meat and vegetables are set to increase the most, up 3% to 5%, as meat packing facilities have commonly seen outbreaks due to the close working conditions, and farmers are unable to find farm personnel. Poultry is believed to be the most impacted, as tightly packed poultry processing plants must spend money on equipment to combat the spread of COVID-19. Vegetables, which for Canadians come mostly from California, will see a rise due to devastating wildfires, and wheat will also see a rise, on top of the already seen increase of 50% from a year and a half ago. The increase in the price of bare necessities will be a large hit for those who are already unable to pay for these necessities.
- [Canadians Kovrig and Spavor 'have not been tried' in China](#)  
It was reported by China's foreign ministry that Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who have been detained in China for alleged spying, were tried and indicted. However, when Canadian officials spoke to China, they were advised that no trial had taken place. Tensions between Canada and China continue to rise due to the perceived political detention of the two Michaels, and China's disagreement with Canada's assistance to the USA with the arrest of Meng Wanzhou.
- [Canada's Trudeau Confident in Strong Recovery for 2021](#)
- [Liberals dismayed that military exercises with China were cancelled, secret documents reveal](#)

### 3.4 Canada – Political Extremism, Civil Unrest and Activism



**Overview:** During the week of 3-10 December 2020, the majority of activist activity noted by Welund in Canada took place in the government sector (64%), followed by oil and gas (14%). Protests made up the majority of activity (29%), followed by car caravans (17%), and critical commentary (12%). Overall activity has continued to decline as the holiday season approaches.

The increase in government-related protesting this week is attributed to growing protests in solidarity with farmers in India, as well as continuing weekly protests by anti-lockdown and anti-mask groups. These campaigns also contributed to the rise in car caravan protests, as it was the primary tactic used by organizers as stricter covid-19 restrictions were instituted across Canada.

Protests against oil and gas infrastructure, specifically the Coastal GasLink pipeline (CGL) and the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (TMX) project, also saw an increase this week.

**Protests:** Activity against CGL and TMX increased in response to the resumption of construction in BC for the respective projects. A protection camp near Burnaby, BC opposing TMX was raided by the RCMP and CN Police to facilitate continued construction. In a different event, activists opposing CGL sabotaged a construction site near Houston, BC to prevent construction under the Morice River. Two members of a well-known activist group were also arrested and fined for their actions in blockading CN Rail lines near Burnaby in late November.

Protests in solidarity with Indian farmers were also prevalent this past week. The protests focused on the use of car caravans through dense urban areas and on highways. Some protests culminated in temporary blockades at Consulate General of India locations, such as offices in Toronto and Montreal.

International Human Rights Day on 10 December saw anti-China and anti-Chinese Communist Party actions organized in Canada in solidarity with similar campaigns being held internationally. A second round of solidarity protests with Indian Farmers were also held in conjunction with International Human Rights Day.

**Outlook:** Welund expects overall activist activity to remain low as the Christmas holiday season approaches. Additional lockdown measures in some provinces may act as both constraining and stimulating factors in regards to protest activity.

Anti-lockdown and anti-mask protest activity will likely remain higher than average, especially in provinces that have announced a new wave of lockdown measures in response to growing covid-19 cases and deaths. Alberta and Ontario will likely remain at the top of the list of areas in which anti-lockdown protests are prevalent.

Opposition against TMX and CGL will continue. Campaigners have criticized the projects for continuing construction amid worsening covid-19 conditions.



Figure 1 Total activist activity in the US as noted by Welund North America.

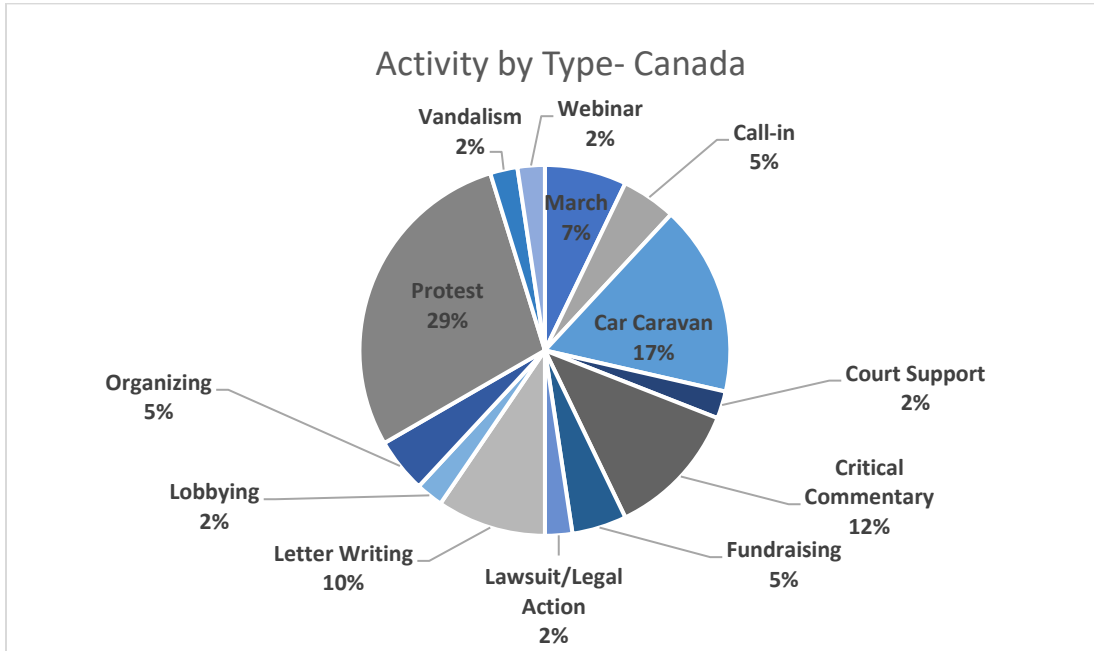


Figure 2 Activist activity in the US by type as noted by Welund

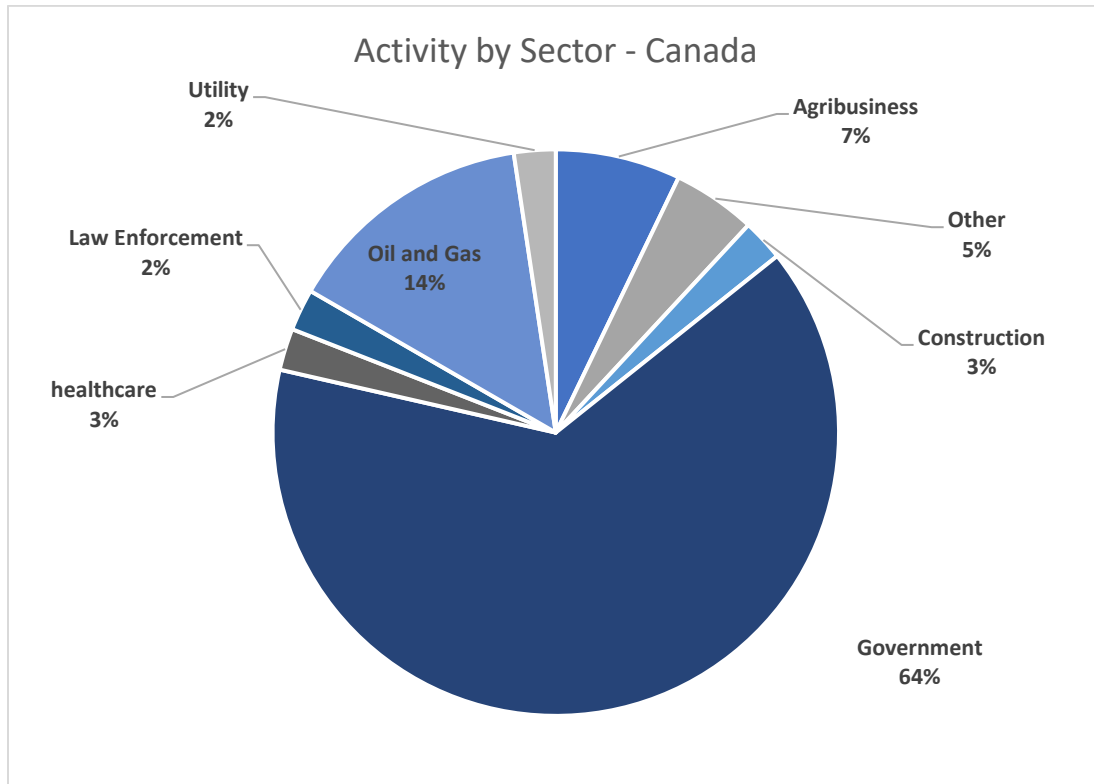
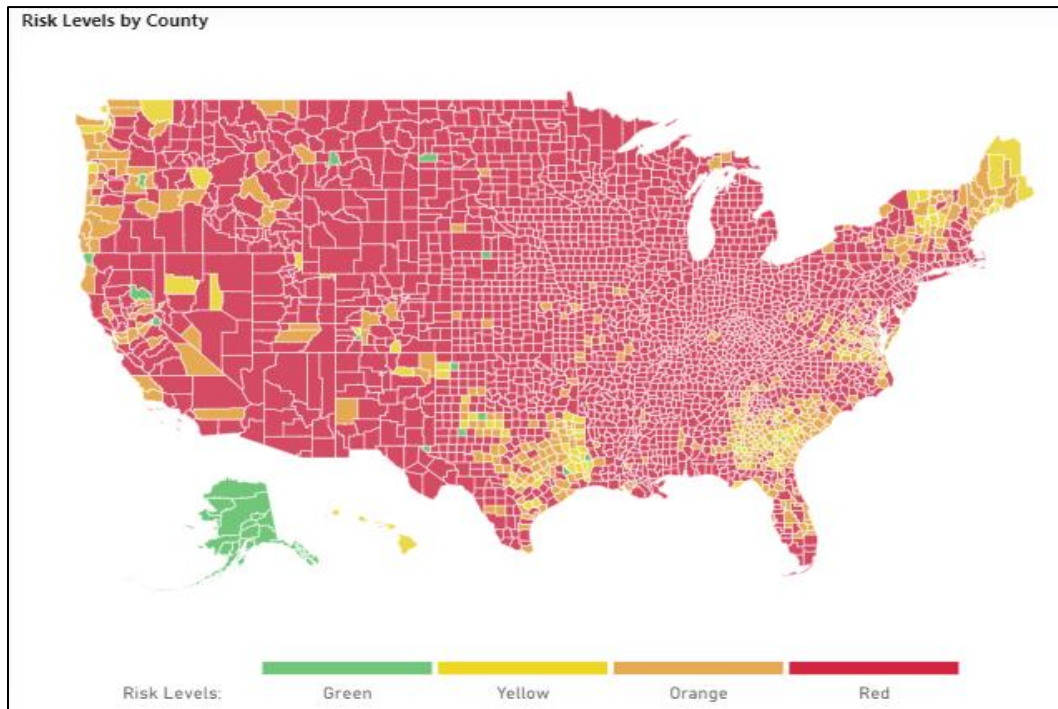


Figure 3 Activist activity in the US by sector as noted by Welund North America.

## 4. USA

### 4.1 COVID UPDATE



#	USA State	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Tot Cases/ 1M pop	Deaths/ 1M pop	Total Tests	Tests/ 1M pop	Population
	USA Total	16,061,576	299,988	9,340,220	6,421,368	48,524	906	215,257,668	650,320	
1	<a href="#">California</a>	1,486,597	20,625	644,729	821,243	37,624	522	26,324,332	666,233	39,512,223
2	<a href="#">Florida</a>	1,094,697	19,591	682,760	392,346	50,969	912	13,490,464	628,114	21,477,737
3	<a href="#">Illinois</a>	823,531	14,845	453,745	354,941	64,989	1,171	11,481,848	906,093	12,671,821
4	<a href="#">Arizona</a>	387,529	7,154	59,155	321,220	53,241	983	2,811,577	386,274	7,278,717
5	<a href="#">New York</a>	782,680	35,326	451,283	296,071	40,233	1,816	21,301,446	1,094,990	19,453,561
6	<a href="#">Texas</a>	1,410,035	24,066	1,117,181	268,788	48,629	830	13,149,143	453,483	28,995,881
7	<a href="#">Missouri</a>	351,613	4,759	97,372	249,482	57,290	775	3,541,543	577,040	6,137,428
8	<a href="#">Michigan</a>	454,720	10,900	197,750	246,070	45,532	1,091	7,694,906	770,503	9,986,857
9	<a href="#">Virginia</a>	274,438	4,370	26,016	244,052	32,152	512	4,237,782	496,488	8,535,519
10	<a href="#">Colorado</a>	276,995	3,759	58,452	214,784	48,100	653	1,914,803	332,504	5,758,736
11	<a href="#">Maryland</a>	228,471	5,064	8,910	214,497	37,791	838	4,904,152	811,183	6,045,680
12	<a href="#">Georgia</a>	525,402	9,975	315,758	199,669	49,485	939	4,997,023	470,644	10,617,423
13	<a href="#">Pennsylvania</a>	463,175	12,104	265,227	185,844	36,180	945	6,242,656	487,632	12,801,989
14	<a href="#">Kentucky</a>	213,450	2,146	30,605	180,699	47,777	480	3,064,833	686,002	4,467,673
15	<a href="#">New Jersey</a>	397,041	17,746	205,608	173,687	44,701	1,998	6,537,755	736,052	8,882,190

## 4.2 COVID-19 USA News

- [CDC recommends people wear masks indoors when not at home](#)  
For the first time ever, the American CDC has recommended universal mask use; anywhere indoors except at home. Furthermore, for those in high-risk jobs, the CDC does recommend wearing masks at home. The report also suggests that mask wearing provides some protection to the wearer. The agency is recommending to not travel this holiday season, but for those that do choose to travel, quarantining for a week after travel and getting tested before and after travelling is suggested. Travelling for the holiday season will likely cause further surges of COVID-19, further straining hospitals and healthcare systems.
- [More than 3,000 Covid deaths reported Wednesday](#)  
The USA has hit a new COVID-19 daily death record, with more than 3,000 deaths reported in one day. Deaths are believed to continue to increase as they are a lagging identifier of an increase in cases. It is believed that deaths will continue to increase, especially as travelling occurs for the holiday season.
- [Paper beats app: Vaccine verification will likely be proven offline. Here's why](#)  
Although it may appear to be a common sense option to have vaccine verification provided digitally, in reality, privacy concerns and medical recording will mean that at first, paper-based cards will likely be the form used for vaccine verification. Yellow fever vaccines, mandatory in some countries, are presented on signed and stamped certificates. Eventually, a digital certificate may be provided; both Microsoft and Google and reportedly worked on a platform that allows individuals to “store and manage their own COVID-19 vaccination or laboratory records and present these records to another party in a verifiable manner.” Some have argued that tech companies are acting greedy in creating such programs, while others see this as the easiest form to ensure that an individual is vaccinated. Fears of creating two classes of people or compromising individuals’ security pertaining to their vaccination status have been voiced by critics, an example cited of a Startup that planned to sell digital COVID-19 vaccine certificates but “social situation”, such as whether a tradesperson should enter a vulnerable person’s home for renovations. Ticketmaster, who first advised they will require proof of vaccination in order to purchase tickets, later advised it was an idea they were toying with and have no current plans to implement. It is yet unknown how businesses will act pertaining to requiring a COVID-19 vaccine, but Ticketmaster’s change of heart suggests that public opinion may not be favorable to mandatory vaccines.
- [For some Americans, the coronavirus vaccine can’t come soon enough. Others are taking a wait-and-see approach](#)
- [New Data Reveal Which Hospitals Are Dangerously Full. Is Yours?](#)
- [Trump asks Supreme Court to let him join another legal attempt to overturn his election loss](#)
- [Americans Struggled to Keep Social Distance for Thanksgiving, Location Data Shows](#)

## 4.3 USA Awareness

- [Federal Trade Commission calls for breakup of Facebook](#)  
The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has put forth a lawsuit in an effort to force the company out of its monopoly position by selling off its various assets such as Instagram and WhatsApp. It argues that Facebook has bought its competitors and imposed its strict policies stop other companies from succeeding. Facebook is

arguing that the acquisition of these two companies has been approved by the FTC, and this lawsuit is the organization going back on its word. Another lawsuit was filed by the governments of 48 states due to the concerns of the power the company has on the internet.

- [U.S. Poised to End Anonymous Companies, UN Urged to Follow Suit](#)

This week, the US Corporate Transparency Act was passed today through the House of Representatives as part of the larger annual bill. It is also believed to be approved in the Senate and is something which both the current and incoming US administration agree upon. This act makes a difference in how police can fight money laundering and tax evasion. As criminals are coming up with better ways of hiding the origins of the illegally obtained money, authorities often see anonymous shell companies who do not indicate their true owners. These are noted by experts to be the biggest weakness in the country's safeguards against money laundering. Many other countries already have such measures in place, such as the EU and the UK, and even the British Virgin Islands, known as a financial haven, also expressed interest in ending anonymous companies. Such a bill will curtail the ability of criminal to launder money obtained via illegal means, making it difficult for them to utilize the profits from their crimes.

- [More Americans are shoplifting food as aid runs out during the pandemic](#)

Reports of an increase in shoplifting of food and hygiene items have been presented by police departments, loss prevention companies and retailers themselves. The uptick is likely due to the growing number of Americans who are unable to pay for their daily necessities, with hunger at level not seen in decades. No new economic stimulus has been agreed upon since the last one has expired, leaving many to fend for themselves. These types of theft include everyday food items such as bread, pasta and baby items. Food prices are believed to continue rising, making it difficult both for families to afford basic items, and also limits the buying power of food banks and other charities providing assistance. The number of hungry Americans has increased by 45% over last year, with 54 million estimated to be struggling with putting food on the table. These individuals are not people who would usually steal, but those that justify their actions with necessity, for survival purposes. Individuals may not feel bad stealing from grocery stores and large corporations or retailers which are seeing an increase in their profits. The growing disparity between the rich and poor will continue, possibly frustrating a subset of individuals who may plan group thefts within large retailers, where a mob of individuals who cannot be stopped loots items, similar to what was seen in some of this year's protests.

- [Weekly initial jobless claims surge to 853,000 vs. 730,000 expected](#)

In the previous week, the increase in COVID-19 cases has caused businesses to have stricter measures, triggering initial jobless claims increased to 853,000. This was not only higher than the previous week, but also higher than the predicted numbers, showing a move in the wrong directions within the labor market. The country has about 9 million less jobs than it did before the pandemic, a number to increase even more due to new measures which are focused on businesses in service sectors which often require more close contact. Customers are also less likely to shop, reducing the need for in person employees. Lawmakers are currently discussing the next stimulus action steps, as the new weeks will mark the end of many important unemployment support programs. Lawmakers have not yet come to an agreement, rejecting a \$916 billion COVID-19 relief proposal which did not include weekly federal benefits demanded by the Democrats. At least



13 million Americans will no longer receive jobless benefits, could face eviction and must begin repaying student debt.

- [Biden tests Congress' desire for norms versus history-making with Pentagon pick](#)
- [Pentagon planning to withdraw support for most CIA counter-terror missions](#)
- [U.S. flew two bombers from Louisiana over the Persian Gulf to deter Iran, says military](#)

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



**Overview:** During the week of 2 December – 9 December 2020, the majority of activist activity noted by Welund in the US took place in the government sector (60%), followed by oil and gas (19%). Protests made up the majority of activity (46%), followed by critical commentary (11%), and call-ins (7%). There has been less overall activity since a peak around the election in early November.

**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. States that impose new restrictions on gathering outdoors may see a decline in in-person protests. California (19) Georgia (10), New York (8) and Washington (5) saw the most protests.

A notable protest from the past week occurred on 8 December. Approximately 100 anti-eviction and anti-fascist activists in Portland, Oregon confronted police officers who were attempting to dislodge an eviction blockade at the Red House on Mississippi – which has been in place since September 2020. Despite over a dozen arrests, the overwhelming numbers of activists forced the police to retreat. Activists have issued many calls to the community to bring food, supplies, and materials to bolster the blockade site.

Activists launched a series of direct actions against the Line 3 replacement project in Minnesota. Actions included tree-sits, equipment lock-on and structure blockades, to block construction, which began this week following the state issuing permits for the pipeline.

Additionally, on 11-12 December, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) will hold two days of protests to demand Congress and the incoming Biden administration enact a Green New Deal, implement ‘Medicare for All’ policies, and provide additional covid-19 stimulus.

**Outlook:** Welund expects overall activist activity to remain relatively lower in the coming weeks in comparison to previous months. Analysts have typically observed less activity between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Although the US election is no longer a major focus of left-wing activists, Welund has continued to observe some ‘Stop the Steal’ activity from conservative and far-right activists. Georgia is seeing additional activity in the lead up to the Senate run-off election. The continued actions of President Trump regarding the outcome of the election may further increase tensions between the left and right and spark protest activity between now and Inauguration Day on 20 January 2021.

On 12 December, the Proud Boys and other far-right activists are planning to return to Washington, DC for a rally. The upcoming protest has garnered the attention of the mainstream media, and is expected to be met with counterprotests, increasing the chance of arrests and violence.

Rising covid-19 cases across the US may see some state 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.

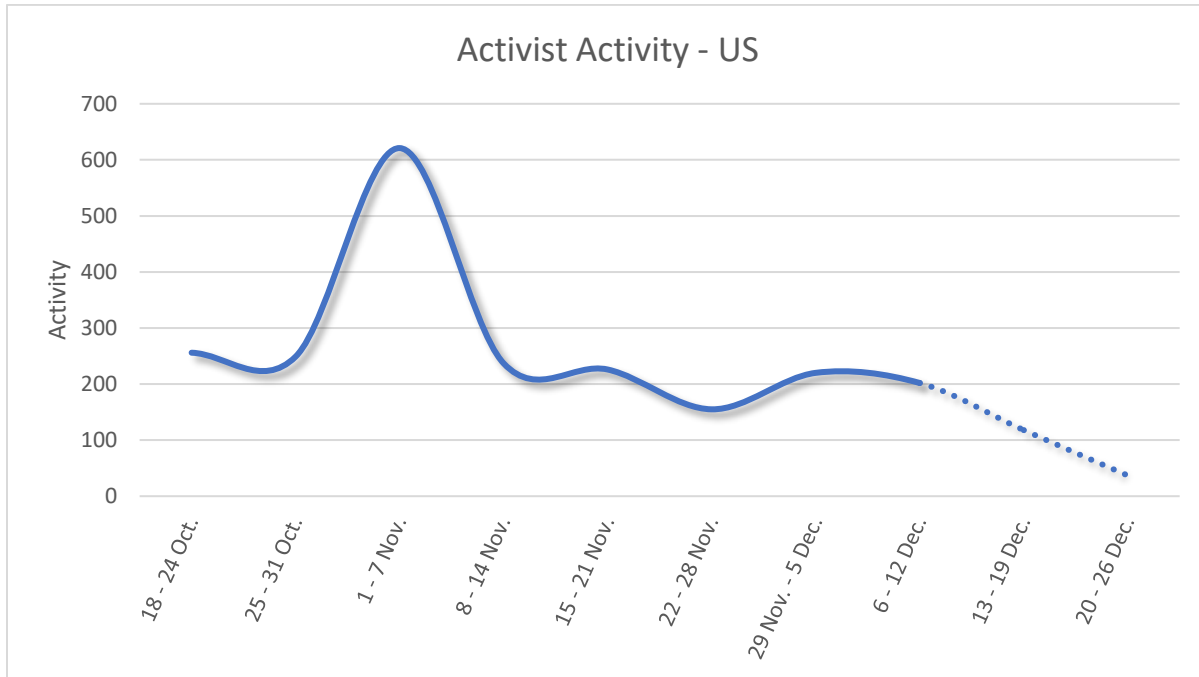


Figure 4 Total activist activity in the US as noted by Welund.

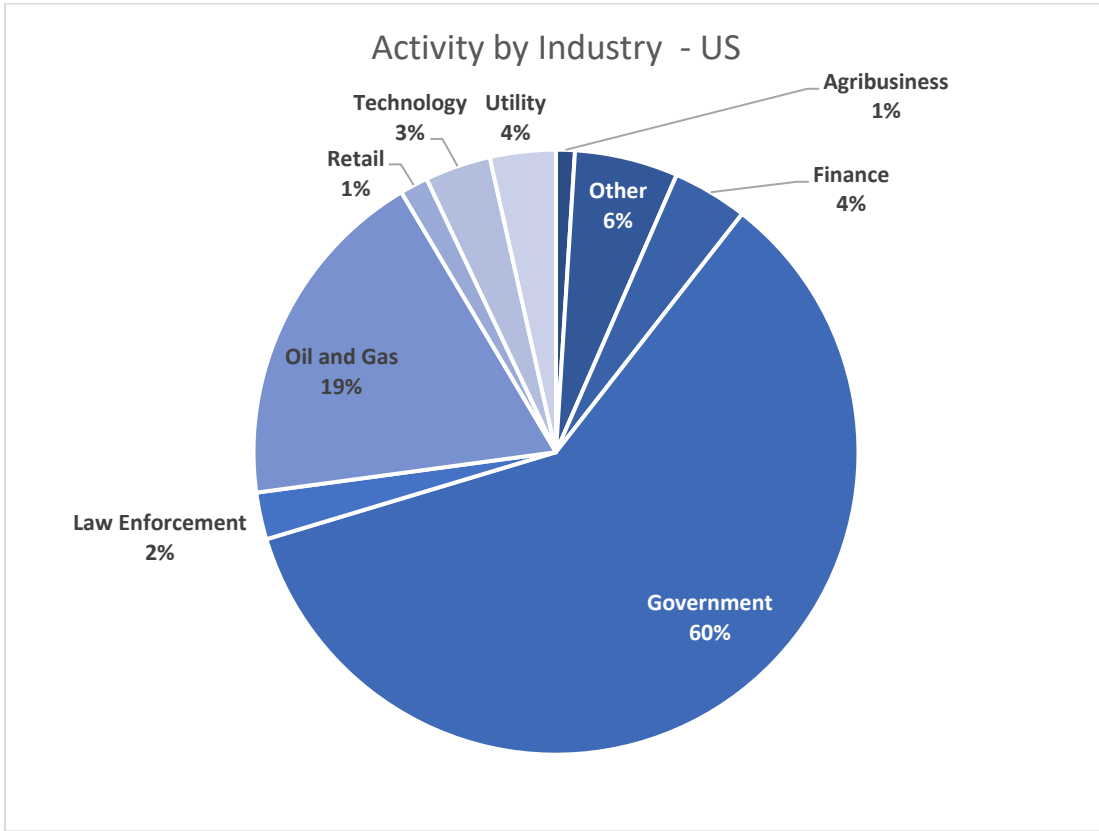


Figure 5 Activist activity in the US by industry as noted by Welund.

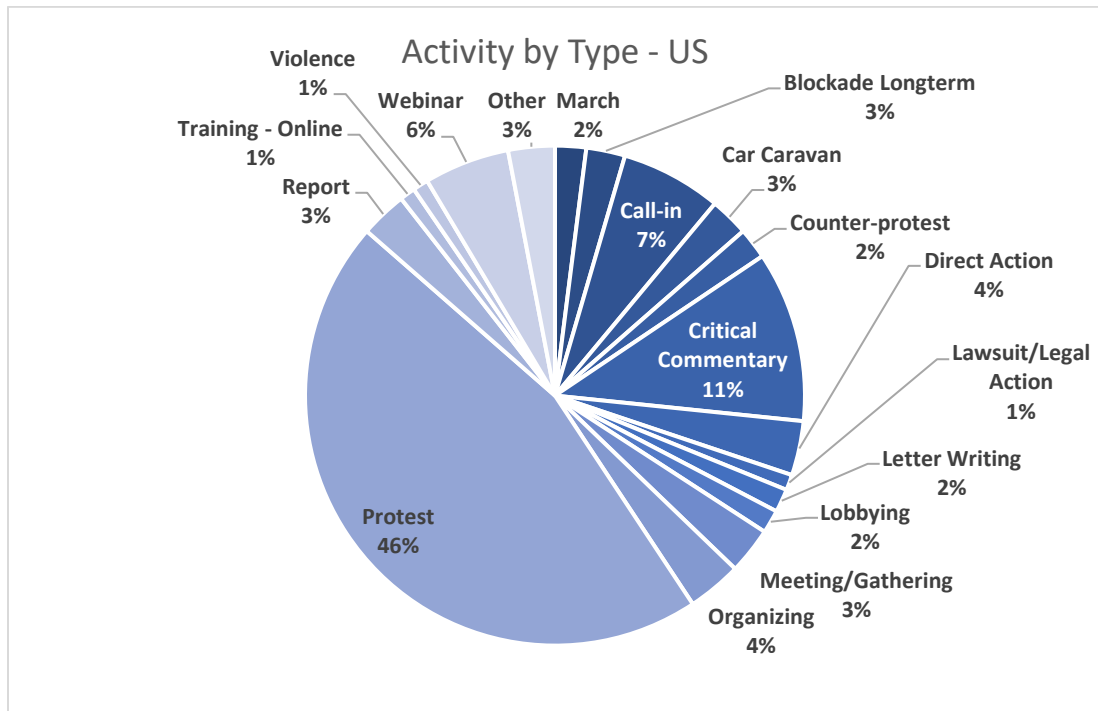


Figure 6 Activist activity in the US by type as noted by Welund.

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## End Report

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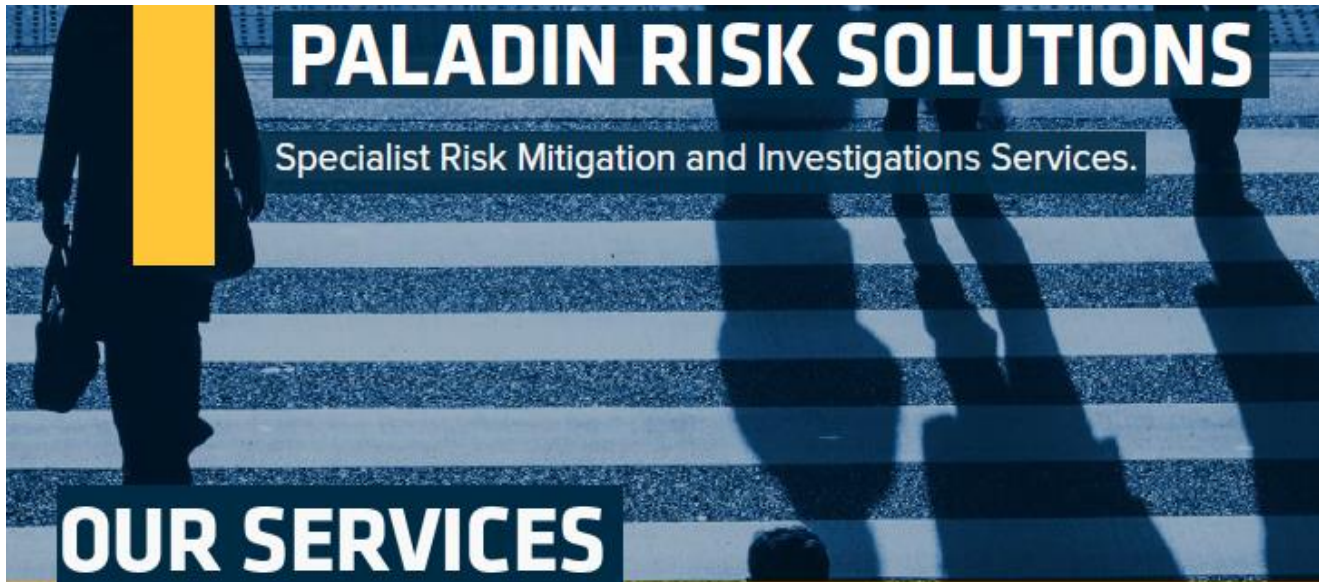
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