

**Weekly COVID Update:**

**Cross-National Policy Comparisons and Canadian Trends in Social  
Distancing, Social Media Activity, and Government Support**

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## Foreword

Canada, like many countries around the world, is beginning to reopen its economy. At the same time, we are still confronting a serious public health threat in the SARS-CoV-2 virus and in COVID-19.

How are we reopening, compared to other countries? And how are we doing as a country at maintaining social distancing and the public support and attention necessary to sustain the fight against COVID-19?

On our Dashboard, we present unique quantitative data on:

- The openness of the economy on nine different dimensions in 52 different jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories.
- Trends in social distancing in Canada.
- Trends in social media attention to COVID-19 and selected other topics.
- Trends in support for federal, provincial, and local government management of COVID-19.

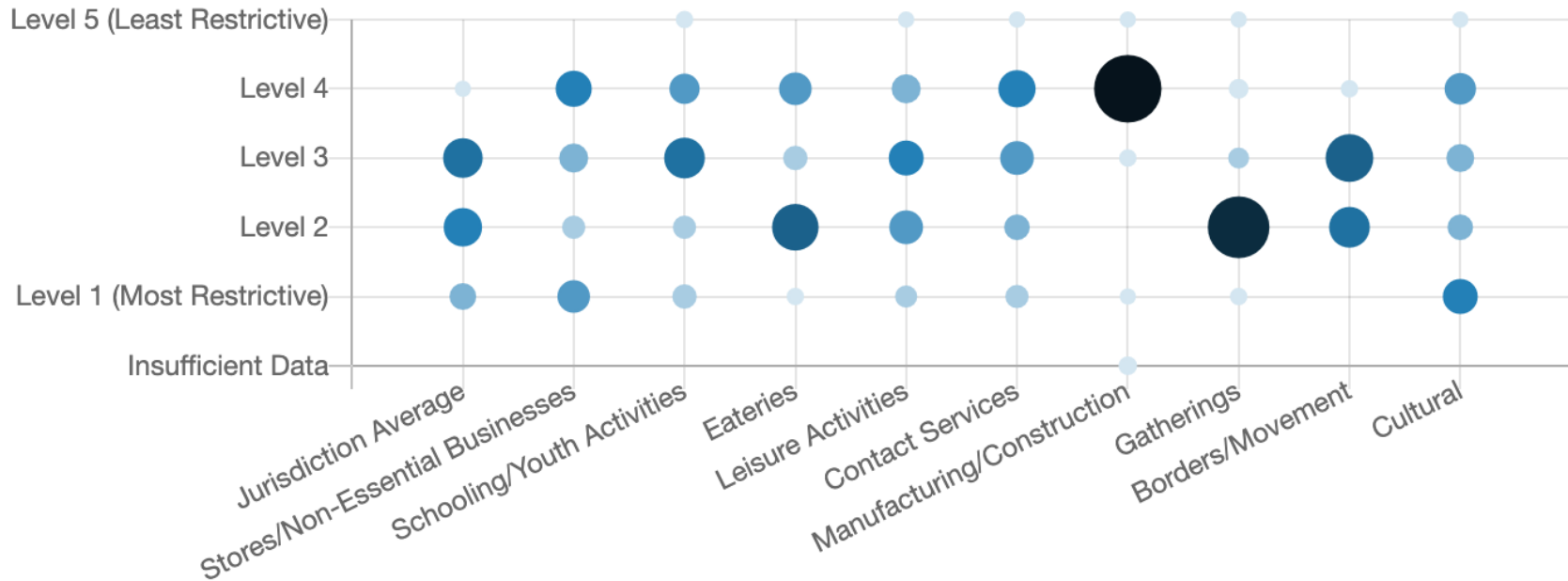
We also provide a weekly qualitative summary of the actions governments are taking and considering taking to reopen their economies and manage the coronavirus.

Our data are updated weekly. You can subscribe to a weekly update by visiting our website: [www.reopeningaftercovid.com](http://www.reopeningaftercovid.com).

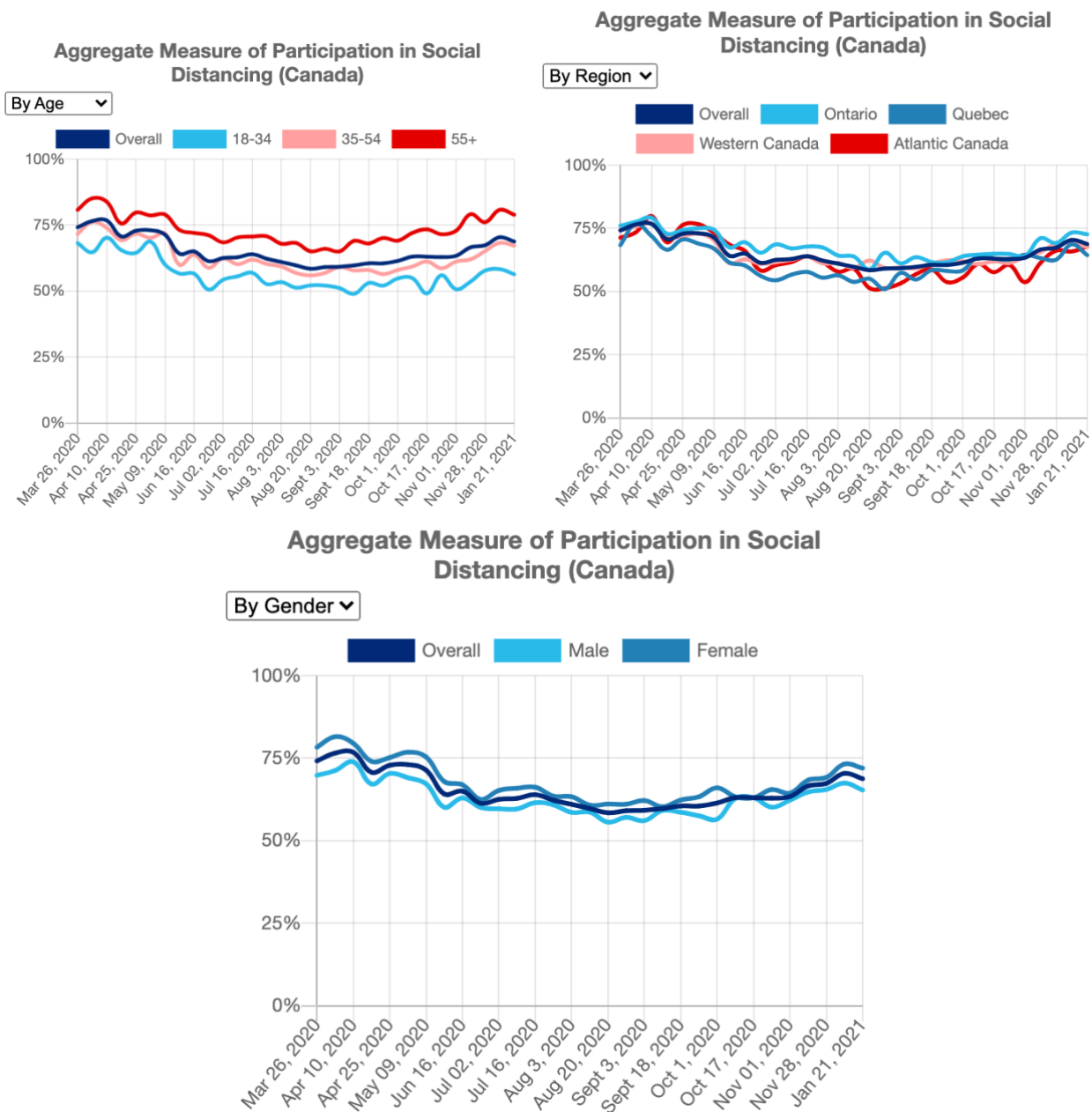
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## **Data Visualizations from Dashboard**

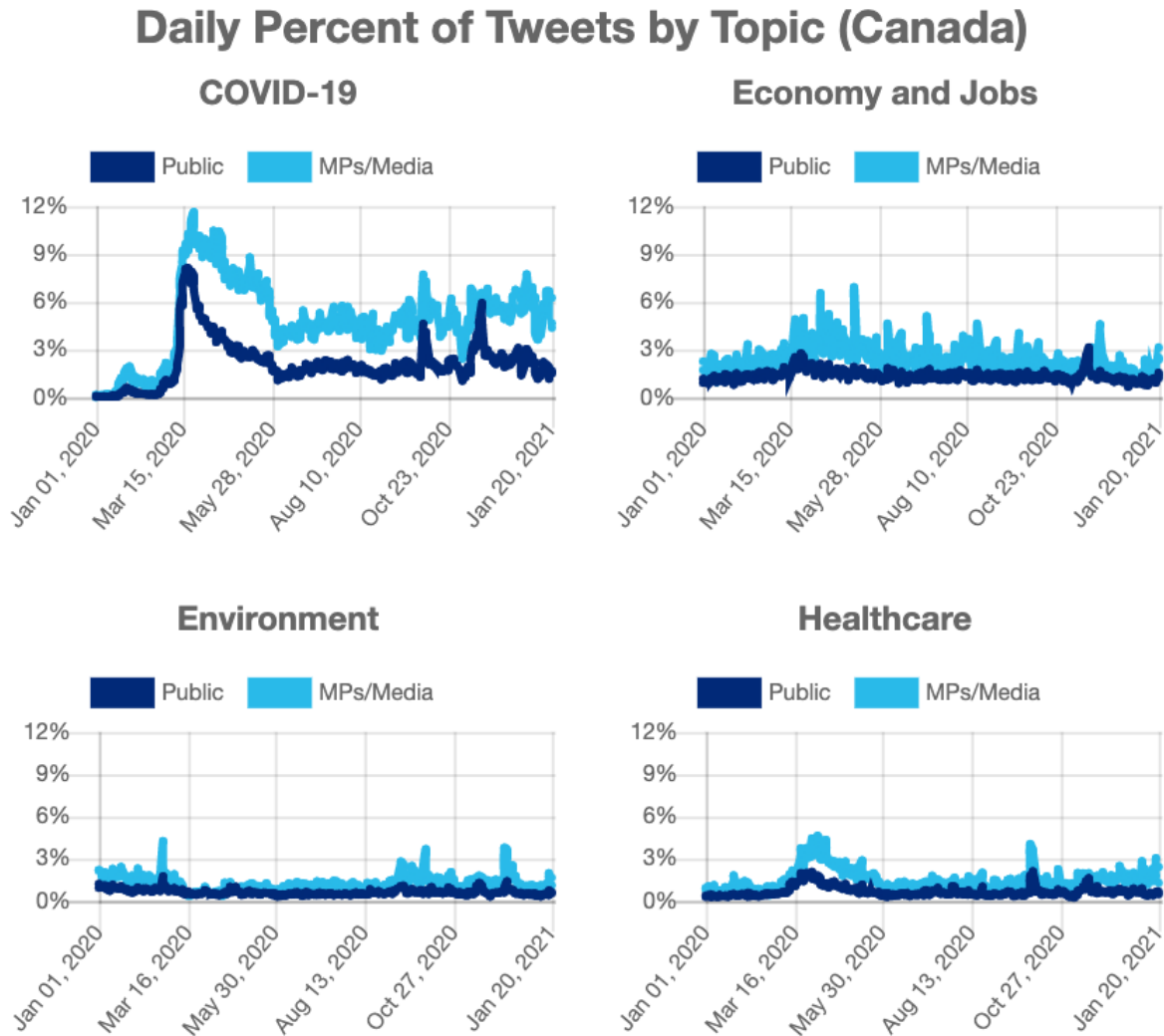
## Level of Reopening by Sector Among OECD Countries and Selected Canadian Provinces and US States



**Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of January 25.** The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, Schooling/Youth Activities, Eateries, Leisure Activities, Contact Services, Manufacturing/Construction, Gatherings, Borders/Movement, and Cultural. Each sector is assigned a level of reopening from Level 1 (Complete Lockdown) to Level 5 (Unrestricted Access). The larger and darker a dot is, the more jurisdictions are at that level of reopening. For details, see [www.reopeningaftercovid.com](http://www.reopeningaftercovid.com).

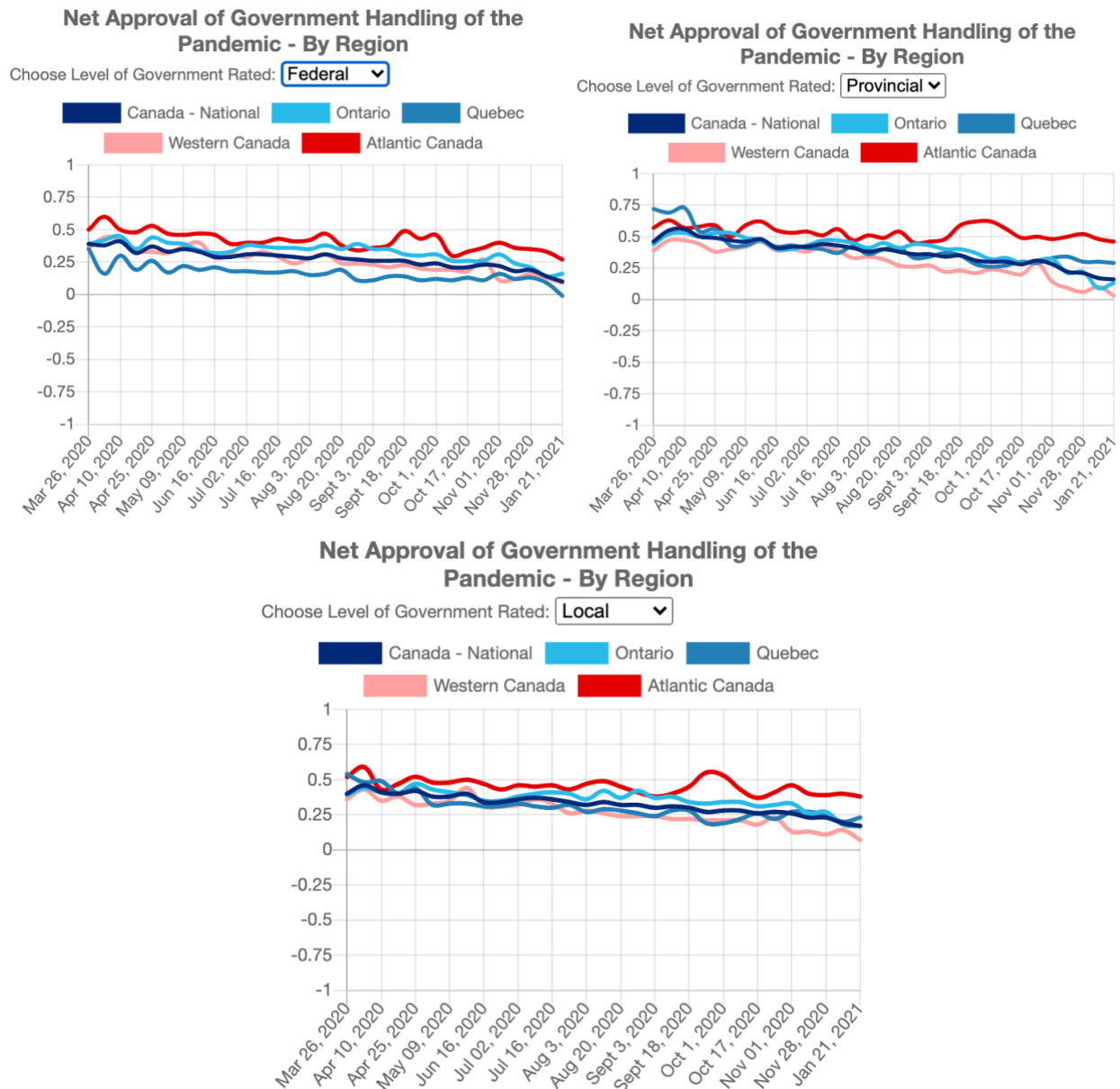


**Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada).** We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance from others; avoided domestic travel; avoided public transit; and avoided the grocery store at peak times. The graph displays the percentage of these measures taken by the average survey participant. The surveys used to collect these data were run in partnership with the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO). Each survey has a sample size of approximately 2,500 people. For each survey, we worked with a leading sample provider to generate a nationally representative, online sample of Canadians. In addition, following data collection, we applied survey weights to each survey so that—within each province—the sample is representative of the population age and gender.



**Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada).** The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other. The Twitter data are provided by the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO). It aims to capture the entire Canadian Twitter conversation. To do so, MEO identified a set of politicians, political journalists, public intellectuals, and Canadian-specific hashtags and collected every Twitter user that touched one of these themes or individuals. MEO then evaluated each individual, looking at their follower or friending behaviour, biographies, self-identified location, and hashtag use and included them in the sample if they were determined to be algorithmically likely to be Canadian. The dataset contains approximately 200,000 tweets a day. The analysis uses a 10% sample of the public’s daily tweets and the full set of daily tweets from MPs, senators, and journalists.





**Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region.** We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score, participants’ answers were coded as follows: strongly approve (1); somewhat approve (0.5); neither approve, nor disapprove (0); somewhat disapprove (-0.5); and strongly disapprove (-1). The graph displays the average score. The surveys used to collect these data were run in partnership with the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO). Each survey has a sample size of approximately 2,500 people. For each survey, we worked with a leading sample provider to generate a nationally representative, online sample of Canadians. In addition, following data collection, we applied survey weights to each survey so that—within each province—the sample is representative of the population age and gender.

## **Individual OECD Country Profiles**

## THE AMERICAS

### *Canada*

#### → *Alberta*

On January 21, there were 678 new daily cases of COVID-19 in the province.<sup>1</sup> There are currently mandatory restrictions in place that apply province-wide. Restrictions were eased slightly for outdoor gatherings, funerals, and contact services but recreation facilities, in-person dining, museums, libraries, and theatres remain closed. Following the announcement that “Canada will not receive any Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines next week, Alberta has changed its vaccination plan to focus on providing second doses;”<sup>2</sup> all new first-dose appointments have been postponed and the expansion of vaccinations to seniors over 75 and people over 65 in Indigenous communities has been delayed.<sup>3</sup>

#### → *British Columbia*

The number of daily new cases continued to hover around 500 in British Columbia. The provincial state of emergency has been extended through February 2. The province-wide strict restrictions will remain in place until February 5. The government has released additional details and timelines regarding the immunization plan, which consists of four phases based on risk considerations. The ongoing Phase 1, which lasts until February, will prioritize those who are most vulnerable to severe illness and death, including long-term care residents and the health-care workers who care for them, remote and at-risk Indigenous communities, and seniors. The other high-risk populations will receive vaccination in Phase 2. The vaccination is scheduled to be available to more general populations in Phase 3 and 4 from as early as April this year.<sup>4</sup>

#### → *Manitoba*

On January 21, the province reported 173 new cases, the majority of which were reported in the northern health region.<sup>5</sup> On January 23, new health orders came into effect allowing stores, barbershops, and hair salons to reopen in some regions. The province introduced a new rule of two, which allows two designated people to visit inside homes. The province confirmed this rule applies for an entire household regardless of the number of residents, meaning homes that include roommates or renters must still designate only two people for the entire house.<sup>6</sup>

#### → *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick reported 20 new cases of COVID-19 on January 24, bringing the total number of active cases up to 334, the largest number since the beginning of the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of the new cases were located in Zones 1 (Moncton) and 4 (Edmundston).<sup>8</sup> Zone 4 was moved from the “red alert” level to a full lockdown on January 23, forcing non-essential businesses to close, and schools to transition to remote learning.<sup>9</sup> Additional lockdown measures include the prohibition of non-essential inter-regional and inter-provincial travel.<sup>10</sup> Zones 1, 2 and 3 have remained at the red level, while zones 5, 6 and 7 remain at the “orange” level.<sup>11</sup> Red-alert restrictions include the closure of many non-essential businesses, including gyms, spas, barbershops, hair salons and bars, while catering establishments must transition to take-out and delivery services only.<sup>12</sup>

#### → *Newfoundland and Labrador*

On January 21, Newfoundland and Labrador reported 1 new case of COVID-19.<sup>13</sup> The province remains at Alert Level 2 and has eased restrictions to permit eateries, leisure, and cultural facilities to reopen and operate with reduced capacity.<sup>14</sup> Due to high rates of infection in New Brunswick, the premier has decided to remain outside of the Atlantic bubble until early February.<sup>15</sup> On February 3, there will be a provincial election in Newfoundland and Labrador.<sup>16</sup>

→ *Northwest Territories*

Three new cases of COVID-19 were recorded in the Northwest Territories last week. The territory-wide public health emergency has been extended through February 2. A public health order was issued on January 16, mandating containment measures in the hamlet of Fort Liard for 14 days. Private gatherings are prohibited, non-essential businesses and facilities must close, essential businesses and facilities cannot have more than 10 people in an indoor location at one time, schools are required to close to in-person learning, remote working is encouraged wherever possible, and people must wear masks in public indoor spaces.<sup>17</sup> The rest of the territory stays in Phase 2 of its reopening plan. Extended dates from January 25 to 28 and an online booking option for COVID-19 vaccine appointments are now available for Yellowknife residents aged 60 and older.<sup>18</sup>

→ *Nova Scotia*

Nova Scotia has reported only one positive test result for the virus since January 22, the same day that the province identified one case each of the UK and South African COVID-19 variants.<sup>18A</sup> There are currently 15 active cases in the province, the lowest tally since early November.<sup>18B</sup> There are no Nova Scotians in hospital due to the virus.<sup>18C</sup> Some restrictions on sports, arts and culture were eased on January 25.<sup>18D</sup> Sports teams are now permitted to play games against each other without spectators; art and theatre performances can also take place without an audience.<sup>18E</sup>

→ *Nunavut*

Fifteen new cases of COVID-19 were discovered in Arviat this week, the territory's first diagnosed cases in nearly a month. As a result, the territorial government announced that travel to and from the community is restricted, non-essential businesses must close, all gatherings are prohibited, and schools must move to online learning. Arviat was the epicenter of the previous outbreak in the territory, and no cases have been found in any other community. Despite the lockdown, vaccinations in the community will continue until supply of the Moderna vaccine runs out.<sup>19</sup> Another presumptive case involving a person who recently arrived in the territory from Ottawa was found to have been a false positive.<sup>20</sup> To incentivize individuals in Arviat to get vaccinated, local officials said that they would give \$2,000 to five random people in the community who receive the COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>21</sup>

→ *Ontario*

Ontario's seven-day moving average of new cases now stands at 2,371 per day, about 20% less than last week.<sup>22</sup> There are now 23,620 active cases across the province, down by approximately 2,000 from the past week.<sup>23</sup> Public health officials have confirmed that the variant of COVID-19 first identified in the United Kingdom was responsible for the local outbreak that killed 41 people and infected all but two residents at a long-term care home in Barrie.<sup>24</sup> Schools in 7 public health units across southern Ontario reopened for in-person classes on January 25, which means that 100,000 students will be returning to the classroom for the first time since December.<sup>25</sup> The province is implementing safety measures in areas where schools are reopening, including requiring students in grades 1 through 3 to wear masks indoors and when physical distancing is not possible outdoors.<sup>26</sup>

→ *Prince Edward Island*

In Prince Edward Island, no new cases were reported on January 21.<sup>27</sup> On January 23, the government eased measures that were put in place as part of the post-circuit breaker restrictions in December. Retail businesses, markets, gyms, fitness facilities, museums, and libraries can now operate at full capacity as long as physical distancing is maintained. At fitness centres, 3 metres distance must be maintained during high intensity activities. Restaurants and bars can now stay open for in-person dining until midnight, rather than closing at 11 pm.<sup>28</sup> Up to 200 people can now attend organized gatherings but personal indoor gathering limits remain at ten additional people outside of the household.<sup>29</sup> All people living or working in long-term

care and community care facilities have received their first dose of the vaccine and will begin receiving their second dose this week.<sup>30</sup>

→ *Quebec*

On January 22, Quebec reported 1,631 cases, 681 of which were in Montreal; 1,426 people were hospitalized and 212 people were in the ICU.<sup>31</sup> Montreal has reported 400 COVID-19 outbreaks in workplaces, schools and daycares. However, officials believe that the lockdown is working due to a falling caseload. The city's positivity rate was 8.8% on January 22, with a reproduction rate below 1.<sup>32</sup> If hospitalizations do not decline, officials said they may extend the lockdown beyond February 8.<sup>33</sup> Up to ten people can now gather in places of worship during the lockdown, with funerals allowed to have up to 25 people, but singing is not permitted.<sup>34</sup>

→ *Saskatchewan*

As of January 24, the seven-day average of daily new cases in Saskatchewan is 22.5 per 100,000 people. There are 3,251 active cases in the province.<sup>35</sup> Sask. reported 13 deaths from COVID-19 on January 21 in the province's deadliest day of the pandemic.<sup>36</sup> Despite the high rate of active cases, the province's rate of testing is well below the national average.<sup>37</sup> Local public health officials in northern Saskatchewan said that further restrictions are needed there due to the severity of the epidemiological situation there.<sup>38</sup> The premier said that the provincial government will not bring in new restrictions now, but floated the idea of revoking the business licenses of those found to be violating restrictions.<sup>39</sup> Saskatchewan exhausted the last of its vaccine supply on January 24.<sup>40</sup>

→ *Yukon*

No active cases of COVID-19 remain in Yukon. The territory stays in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. A mouth-rinse-and-gargle test for COVID-19 is now being offered to school-aged children and youth (generally ages 5 to 18 years old), as well as to children with mild or moderate illness.<sup>41</sup>

*The United States*

→ *California*

California reported a single-day record of 764 deaths on January 22.<sup>42</sup> However, hospitalizations have fallen 10% in the past two weeks, with the positivity rate falling 15%.<sup>43</sup> Sacramento's stay home order was lifted, allowing outdoor dining, hair salons, and places of worship to reopen, with a higher capacity limit for retailers.<sup>44</sup> Despite a revision, a large number of educators indicated their displeasure with the state's return-to-school plan.<sup>45</sup> The governor's proposal requires that schools provide COVID-19 testing for staff and students, creating additional costs.<sup>46</sup> Residents have expressed frustration with the governor's decision to expand priority access to the vaccine to people between the ages of 65 and 74 alongside healthcare workers and long-term care staff.<sup>4</sup> Some Californians are concerned that the vaccination process will become more confusing when the government begins vaccinating people with a second dose while some residents are still receiving their first dose.<sup>48</sup>

→ *Illinois*

The seven-day positivity rate in Illinois dropped to 4.8% as of January 24. Different regions of the state are moving towards further reopening at varied paces. As of January 25, Regions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 have moved to Phase 4, while Regions 7, 10 and 11 are facing Tier 1 mitigations and Regions 4, 8 and 9 are in Tier 2.<sup>49</sup> Phase 4 is less restrictive and provides the basic requirements for all regions to follow: meetings and social events are limited to a maximum of 50 people or 50% room capacity, whichever is lower; restaurants and bars can resume indoor services for groups of up to 10 people; museums and zoos can open at 25% capacity; seated theater, cinemas and performing arts centers are capped at 50% capacity indoors (up to 50 people) and 20% outdoors; select indoor recreation facilities can reopen while outdoor recreation allows for group

sizes of up to 50; retail, personal care, and health and fitness venues should not exceed 50% capacity; and working from home is encouraged.<sup>50</sup> Tier 1 faces additional restrictions in terms of hospitality establishments, meetings and gatherings; Tier 2 adds even more restrictiveness based on Tier 1.<sup>51</sup>

→ *Michigan*

As of January 23, the 7-day moving average for daily cases in Michigan was 1,791, the lowest since last October. With the existing COVID-19 rules set to expire at the beginning of February, the government has announced the relaxation that will go into effect on February 1. Indoor gatherings of up to 10 people from two households are allowed; restaurants and bars can resume their indoor services at 25% capacity with up to 100 people, subject to a density limit and a 10 pm closing time; concessions at casinos, movie theaters and stadiums are permitted; stadiums can allow up to 500 people at venues that seat over 10,000 people, and venues that seat less than 10,000 are allowed up to 20% capacity or 250 people, whichever is lower; personal services requiring mask removal can also resume.<sup>52</sup> The governor has been encouraging public schools in Michigan to reopen for in-person learning by the beginning of March.<sup>53</sup> Almost 300 additional members of the Michigan National Guard are being deployed to support the vaccination and testing efforts across the state.<sup>54</sup>

→ *New York*

As of January 24, the statewide test positivity rate in New York was 5.09%. There were 8,613 hospitalizations.<sup>55</sup> However, 54 ZIP codes in New York City have reported 7-day average positivity rates above 10%, with the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island all reporting borough-wide positivity rates above 9%. Public health officials in the city have urged at-risk individuals to only leave home for essential purposes, with some calling for further restrictions to combat the spread.<sup>56</sup> The governor sent a letter to the CEO of Pfizer asking to purchase doses of the vaccine directly now that the company is no longer a part of the federal Operation Warp Speed.<sup>57</sup> The governor also said that the state would run out of vaccine doses this week, specifically citing the delayed delivery schedule as the root cause. Both the governor and the mayor of New York City said that they were hopeful that the new Biden administration would expand their ability to access doses.<sup>58</sup>

→ *Texas*

On January 20, Texas reported 2,200 COVID-19 deaths over the past week. On the same day, the weekly averages were 17,360 new daily cases, 13,903 current hospitalizations and 317 new daily fatalities.<sup>59</sup> The hospitalization rate in Angelina and Nacogdoches counties has been greater than 15% for 35 days. Both counties cannot increase capacity limits for non-essential businesses until their hospitalizations fall below 15% for seven consecutive days.<sup>60</sup> The military was deployed to assist a hospital in Lufkin.<sup>61</sup> Doctors, nurses, and other health care workers in close contact with COVID-19 patients, people over 65, and people with serious health conditions are now eligible to be vaccinated.<sup>62</sup> Over one million people in Texas have been vaccinated with their first dose; 185,000 people have been fully vaccinated.<sup>63</sup> Dallas County commissioners are allowing the Fair Park vaccination site to prioritize vaccinating eleven predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods due to health inequities and higher COVID-19 infection rates.<sup>64</sup>

*Mexico*

Mexico reported 22,339 new COVID-19 cases on January 21, with 1,803 deaths reported the following day.<sup>65</sup> Mexico City is still the epicenter of the virus in the country with 89% of hospital beds full.<sup>66</sup> Reports from the US-Mexico border communities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez indicate that hospitals and funeral homes are overwhelmed.<sup>67</sup> Department stores may reopen in Mexico City by February 1 depending on hospitalizations and infections in the area.<sup>68</sup> Campeche has maintained a low number of cases; following the vaccination of teachers and other school staff in the state, schools there will reopen in February.<sup>69</sup> CureVac and Novavax are starting phase three of their COVID-19 vaccines clinical trials in Mexico.<sup>70</sup> The

second round of Pfizer vaccine doses may be delayed to allow the government to provide the first dose to more people. The gap between doses may be prolonged to 35 days for some people who were waiting for their second dose.<sup>71</sup> Pfizer is currently the only vaccine being administered in Mexico.<sup>72</sup>

### *Chile*

On January 22, Chile reported 4,956 new COVID-19 cases in the country's largest daily increase since June, along with 84 deaths in the past day.<sup>73</sup> CoronaVac from China's Sinovac Biotech company was approved by Chilean officials for emergency use. Chile paid \$3.5 million to host a clinical trial of the vaccine and ordered 60 million vaccine doses.<sup>74</sup> Chile is also considering approving the AstraZeneca vaccine for emergency use and has bought 14.4 million doses of the vaccine.<sup>75</sup> Chile also ordered enough Pfizer vaccine doses for 29,000 people.<sup>76</sup> 54,458 people have received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with 8,364 people fully vaccinated.<sup>77</sup>

## **WESTERN EUROPE**

### *France*

On January 22, France reported 23,292 new cases and 649 additional deaths in the past day. There is increasing pressure on the French hospital system with more than 2,900 people in the ICU; however, the number of people in intensive care has fallen over the past few days.<sup>78</sup> Ski resorts will not reopen by February as was previously hoped for, and the government said it may impose additional restrictions.<sup>79</sup> The national assembly indicated its support for extending the country's health emergency from February 16 until June 1, allowing the government to impose additional restrictions.<sup>80</sup> The senate will receive the bill for the extension on January 27.<sup>81</sup> The national curfew between 6 pm and 6 am remains in place, but schools, offices, department stores, and hairdressers remain open.<sup>82</sup> Approximately one million people in France have been vaccinated.<sup>83</sup>

### *Germany*

On January 21, German health officials reported 20,398 new COVID-19 infections, with the number of infections per 100,000 residents in seven days at 119, the lowest level since November 1.<sup>84</sup> Despite a slowdown in the rate of infections, Germany's health minister announced the continuation of stringent lockdown conditions to prevent a worsening of the current situation.<sup>85</sup> On January 22, Germany detected its first case of a newly discovered Brazilian COVID-19 variant. Experts from Germany's Robert Koch Institute say the Brazilian mutation is similar to the South African variant, which is seen as more contagious than the original virus. Germany has already imposed travel restrictions on people from affected nations and are asking for negative COVID-19 tests prior to departure.<sup>86</sup>

### *Belgium*

In Belgium, 2,571 new daily cases of COVID-19 were reported on January 22.<sup>87</sup> The current measures have been extended by an additional two weeks until March 1.<sup>88</sup> Non-essential stores, museums, and swimming pools are open with safety measures in place. Non-medical contact services, eateries, and amusement parks remain closed.<sup>89</sup> On January 27, a ban on non-essential travel will take effect and applies both to people within the country and foreign residents planning to travel to Belgium. The borders will remain open, but travel will only be permitted for professional or family reasons.<sup>90</sup> The hospitality industry is pressuring the government to allow bars and restaurants to begin reopening in phases by March 1.<sup>91</sup>

### *Netherlands*

On January 20, 5,615 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 were reported by RIVM.<sup>92</sup> Mass testing in a small town near Rotterdam, where the more infectious variant of COVID-19 had formed a cluster at a primary school, revealed that the new strain of the virus is not extremely widespread. Only 12% of those tested had the B-117 or 'British' variant.<sup>93</sup> The Netherlands imposed a curfew from 9 pm to 4:30 am, effective January 23, following a vote by MPs. There is a 95 Euro fine for breaking the curfew without a valid reason and a larger fine and criminal record for those who forge an employer's declaration stating they are permitted to be out past curfew.<sup>94</sup>

### *Spain*

On January 21, Spain reported a record-high 44,357 new cases, 404 deaths and 1,314 new hospitalizations.<sup>95</sup> As of January 25, new restrictions in Madrid will require restaurants and bars to close by 9 pm (before traditional Spanish dinner hours) and limit the number of people per table to four. The curfew will now begin an hour earlier, at 10 pm.<sup>96</sup> Galicia will allow outdoor dining until 6 pm. As of January 23, Navarre has closed indoor dining, while social gatherings may only be with one person from another household.<sup>97</sup> Castilla y Leon imposed an 8 pm curfew, which the national government is appealing.<sup>98</sup> Several regions increased restrictions in January and following the detection of the B.1.1.7 strain.<sup>99</sup> The national government has said that it does not want a full lockdown,<sup>100</sup> though officials in Andalusia, Castilla y Leon and Murcia support it.<sup>101</sup> Spain's vaccine distribution process is being criticized after reports of politicians and other affluent people skipping the line.<sup>102</sup>

### *The United Kingdom*

On January 22, 40,261 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 were recorded in the UK, bringing the total number of positive tests in the country to 3,583,907, since the start of the pandemic.<sup>103</sup> The prime minister is warning that the new variant of the virus may be associated with a higher mortality rate. However, evidence shows that both the vaccines being used in the country are effective against it. The UK has been under lockdown since the beginning of January to help curb the rise of the new highly transmissible variant of COVID-19.<sup>104</sup>

### *Ireland*

On January 22, 2,371 new cases of COVID-19 were reported by the National Public Health Emergency Team. The government announced its plans to extend the lockdown restrictions, which were due to remain in place until January 31, into the month of February. A final decision will be made on January 26 regarding the reopening of schools and a mandatory quarantine requirement for people coming into Ireland.<sup>105</sup> On January 22, the government announced its plan to vaccinate every citizen and resident by the end of September. This projection is based on approval of the AstraZeneca vaccine by the European Medicines Agency, scheduled for January 29.<sup>106</sup>

### *Luxembourg*

On January 22, the Ministry of Health reported 119 new cases of COVID-19, with the R rate standing at 0.98.<sup>107</sup> The current COVID-19 restrictions will be extended until February 21. Incoming travellers to Luxembourg may be subjected to new measures, such as providing a negative test result upon arrival. A travel ban is not amongst the country's priorities, but certain safety measures would need to be installed both for foreign arrivals and residents returning home from abroad.<sup>108</sup>



### *Portugal*

On January 20, Portugal's new daily COVID-19 cases rose to more than 14,600, setting a new national record, as the country faces one of the worst pandemic surges in the world.<sup>109</sup> New measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 came into force on January 20, including the closure of schools, effective January 22, for at least 15 days. In addition to the new measures, several restrictions remain in effect, including stay-at-home orders, teleworking, and the closure of trade, with the exception of essential goods and services establishments.<sup>110</sup> Effective January 23, Portugal suspended flight connections with the UK in light of the rapid spread of the British variant of the virus.<sup>111</sup>

## **CENTRAL EUROPE**

### *Austria*

On January 22, Austria reported 1,702 new daily cases of COVID-19 infection.<sup>112</sup> Austria has extended its third lockdown until February 8, due in part to the UK COVID-19 variant.<sup>113</sup> Current restrictions include the closure of all non-essential stores, culture and leisure facilities, and eateries for indoor dining. On February 8, students will return to school for in-person instruction.<sup>114</sup> The government has extended the minimum social distancing requirement from 1 to 2 metres, and now requires FFP2 masks on public transport and in retail stores;<sup>115</sup> previously, “cotton masks or scarves were sufficient to satisfy the mask regulations.”<sup>116</sup>

### *Greece*

On January 22, Greece reported 506 daily new cases of COVID-19 infections in the country.<sup>117</sup> Retail stores have reopened with limits on the number of customers permitted inside and a shopping limit of two hours. Contact services such as hairdressers and salons have reopened but require appointments. A curfew remains in effect and the use of masks indoors and outdoors is mandatory.<sup>118</sup> On January 20, 144 vaccination centres were open in Greece as a part of the plan for the gradual opening of more than 1,000 centres.<sup>119</sup> The prime minister proposed an EU-wide vaccination certificate to expedite travel and economic recovery, which has led to disagreement between world leaders, stakeholders, and international authorities.<sup>120</sup>

### *Italy*

In Italy, 14,055 new daily cases of COVID-19 infection were reported on January 22.<sup>121</sup> The current measures have been extended until March 5. 1.1 million people have received the first doses of vaccines, the highest number in the EU. Italy's second phase of their vaccination campaign will be slowed due to delivery delays caused by a change to the Pfizer-BioNTech's production process that has reduced its supply by 165,000 doses.<sup>122</sup> The prime minister, who recently won a vote of confidence, will lead a minority government after the Italia Viva party left the ruling coalition last week.<sup>123</sup>

### *Slovenia*

On January 22, 1,455 daily new cases of COVID-19 infection were recorded in Slovenia.<sup>124</sup> On January 25, restrictions will be eased in 9 of the country's 12 regions. On January 26, students in grades K-3 will return to school with smaller class sizes and shorter school hours. Museums, libraries, galleries, and businesses will also be permitted to reopen.<sup>125</sup> The remaining three regions will continue to follow the current restrictions in place. The “leftist opposition submitted a no-confidence motion against the centre-right government of the prime minister and a secret parliamentary ballot is expected next week.”<sup>126</sup>

### *Switzerland*

On January 22, Switzerland reported 2,205 new daily cases of COVID-19 infection.<sup>127</sup> Teleworking is mandatory and service providers and gas stations are subject to a 7 pm curfew. The closure of non-essential stores, sports facilities, museums, libraries, and eateries has been extended until the end of February.<sup>128</sup> The rollout of Switzerland's vaccination campaign has been slow due to difficulties related to its highly decentralized government structure.<sup>129</sup>

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

### *Czech Republic*

The Czech Republic reported 4,256 new cases of COVID-19 on January 24, while its reproduction number increased for the eighth day in a row and is now at 0.9.<sup>130</sup> The PES coronavirus risk index of the Czech Republic's epidemic system has remained at 69 on a scale of 100 for the third day in a row today, which would usually prompt a move down to red-level restrictions (level 4 out of 5).<sup>131</sup> Despite the country's improving epidemiological situation, the health minister said on January 24 that the move down to level 4 will not occur before mid-February due to concerns over the recent detection of the UK variant.<sup>132</sup> The Czech Cabinet of Ministers will discuss modifications to the PES system on January 25 that, if approved, would take effect as of February 1.<sup>133</sup> On January 22, the Czech government extended its state of emergency and its corresponding anti-epidemic measures until February 14.<sup>134</sup>

### *Hungary*

Hungary reported 1,257 new cases of COVID-19 on January 24, which is above the country's 7-day moving average of about 1,106 new cases per day. Hungary has signed a deal to buy two million doses of Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine - the first European Union country to do so - even though it has not been approved by the European Union's medicine regulators. Hungary has repeatedly criticized the slow pace of vaccine approval and procurement by EU authorities. The Hungarian prime minister has said the country needs a new facility to ensure steady domestic vaccine production, and to manufacture its own COVID-19 vaccine, due to the fact that "a serious country cannot rely on getting vaccines and other vital medical supplies from abroad alone."

### *Latvia*

Latvia reported 910 new cases of COVID-19 on January 23, followed by 512 cases on January 24, and another 223 on January 25.<sup>135</sup> The Latvian cabinet of ministers has extended many of the country's ongoing safety measures until February 7, which means that all public events, as well as the operation of all entertainment venues, bars, skating rinks, cultural sites, museums, and food service venues, remain prohibited.<sup>136</sup> In-person shopping remains limited to establishments providing essential services, and the national curfew remains in effect between the hours between 10 pm and 5 am on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. As of January 25, only one type of COVID-19 test, the internationally recognized Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, will be valid for entry into Latvia.<sup>137</sup>

### *Lithuania*

On January 18, Lithuania reported 476 new cases of COVID-19, which was the country's lowest single-day tally since October. On January 25, it reported 773 new cases. The nationwide lockdown, which has been in effect since November 7, is set to expire on January 31. The lockdown means that Lithuanians are forbidden from leaving the jurisdictional boundaries of their home municipality unless they are attending a

funeral, going to work, accessing healthcare services, or taking care of a family member. Non-essential movement within municipalities is also forbidden, with the same exceptions. Services that require physical contact for more than 10 minutes are prohibited and all non-essential business must operate online.

### *Poland*

Poland reported 4,566 new cases of COVID-19 on January 24.<sup>138</sup> The entire country will remain in the “red” alert zone until January 31, with restaurants, cinemas, theaters, and gyms required to remain closed. Students in grades 1–3 returned to in-person classes on January 18, while all students in grade 4 and above continue to learn remotely. The Polish government has announced that Moderna has cancelled a delivery of its COVID-19 vaccine, originally planned for January 26, forcing the country to consider modifying its vaccination schedule.<sup>139</sup>

### *Slovakia*

Slovakia reported 1,905 cases of COVID-19 on January 24, a significant improvement from its single-day record of 6,315 new cases on December 31.<sup>139A</sup> The country will remain in lockdown until January 31, with ongoing restrictions shuttering all non-essential establishments, including theatres, hairdressers, driving schools, and fitness centres. Only essential businesses, such as pharmacies and grocery stores, can remain open at this time. All mass events, including those with fewer than 6 people, remain prohibited.

## **NORTHERN EUROPE**

### *Denmark*

The epidemiological situation in Denmark has rapidly improved, with the country reporting its lowest daily case numbers since October.<sup>140</sup> On January 19, the positivity rate of testing was below 1% nationally and the estimated R0 number was 0.6. However, the prime minister said that the government was likely to extend their lockdown measures further.<sup>141</sup> On January 22, Denmark imposed a ban on incoming flights from the United Arab Emirates due to suspicions that their pre-flight testing regime is unreliable. The ban is in effect for at least five days while the issue is investigated. All incoming air travellers must produce a negative COVID-19 test from no more than three days prior to their arrival in Denmark.<sup>142</sup> The ban on public use of the Christiania area of Copenhagen will continue until at least January 27, with violators facing a fine of up to 2,500 kroner.<sup>143</sup> The government will receive 100,000 fewer doses of the Pfizer vaccine than it was expecting due to production delays. Denmark has vaccinated over 3% of its total population, among the highest rates in the EU.<sup>144</sup>

### *Estonia*

As of January 25, the two-week average infection rate in Estonia is 540 per 100,000 people, with a positivity rate of 8.4%.<sup>145</sup> This represents relative stability over the past few weeks, with the national R0 number now estimated to be below 1 -- though with substantial regional variation.<sup>146</sup> The head of the scientific council said that they would not advocate for removing restrictions, and would wait to see if the infection rate continues to fall.<sup>147</sup> The outgoing minister of social affairs said that the new government, which is set to be sworn in next week, will decide on the implementation of additional national restrictions.<sup>148</sup> The incoming minister of education said that the new government will avoid closing schools for as long as possible, with hybrid learning to be used if feasible.<sup>149</sup> The Labour Inspectorate of Estonia said that it is legal for employers to require their employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to them. In extraordinary circumstances, they would be able to terminate their employment if they refuse to be inoculated.<sup>150</sup>

### *Finland*

The number of daily new cases in Finland has remained relatively stable over the past week.<sup>151</sup> However, public health officials have expressed concern that the true spread is much higher due to low testing figures and a rising positivity rate.<sup>152</sup> The government announced that they will ramp up border testing and prohibit non-essential travel into the country on January 27. Only work-related and urgent family-related travel will be permitted until at least February 25. The minister of social services also urged Finns to avoid all international travel.<sup>153</sup> Public health officials said that the large-scale vaccination program for the general public will be delayed due to AstraZeneca production issues, with no timetable set for a new start date.<sup>154</sup> Public health officials also said they were considering halving the second dose of the vaccine following a study that showed even small booster shots were effective at increasing immunity.<sup>155</sup>

### *Iceland*

As of January 25, Iceland had a two-week domestic infection rate of 9.3 new cases per 100,000 people.<sup>156</sup> The number of active cases has fallen to just 64, its lowest point since September, but authorities expressed concern that Icelanders are relaxing their vigilance more than is warranted.<sup>157</sup> The government clarified that all individuals who reside in Iceland will have access to the vaccine, no matter their immigration status. In order to make an appointment, residents need to have an address registered with the government and provide their health information to determine priority access.<sup>158</sup>

### *Norway*

The number of daily new cases in Norway has remained relatively stable over the past week.<sup>159</sup> However, an outbreak of the UK variant in the Oslo area prompted the government to impose further restrictions there on January 24. Non-essential stores have closed, schools have moved to remote learning, all public events have been cancelled, restaurants are takeout only, and residents have been urged to restrict their movements until January 31.<sup>160</sup> Local officials in Oslo had previously extended their social lockdown restrictions until February 4.<sup>161</sup> Nationally, the government lifted its ban on serving alcohol in restaurants and bars on January 22. However, no new guests may be admitted to restaurants and bars after 10 pm. Alcohol must be purchased with food, and selling alcohol is prohibited after midnight. The prime minister said that the government will wait to lift other restrictions.<sup>162</sup>

### *Sweden*

As of January 22, the two-week infection rate in Sweden was 588 cases per 100,000 people. This represents a slight decline over the past few weeks but is still among the highest in Europe.<sup>163</sup> The government announced extensions to a number of restrictions on January 22, and said they would update them every two weeks going forward. Upper secondary schools will continue distance learning until April 1, though individual schools may decide if they want to have some in-person elements. The ban on the sale of alcohol after 8 pm and the closure of non-essential public services will continue until February 7. The recommendation to wear masks on public transit during rush hour has been extended indefinitely.<sup>164</sup> On January 24, Sweden announced that it had prohibited travel from Norway and advised against non-essential travel there due to an outbreak of the UK variant of COVID-19. The measures will be in place until at least February 14 but may be extended.<sup>165</sup>

## ASIA/PACIFIC

### *Japan*

Japan reported about 2.8 new cases of COVID-19 per ten thousand people last week. The health ministry is planning to set up a follow-up center to check with people who have arrived from countries where new strains of the virus are spreading.<sup>166</sup> Japan's cabinet approved a set of draft bills related to COVID-19, granting more authority to governments at lower levels -- including imposing penalties for businesses and individuals not complying with the restrictions.<sup>167</sup> Local governments have been busy taking different measures to support people self-isolating at home after testing positive, the number of which has topped 35,000 recently.<sup>168</sup> Railway operators in greater Tokyo are now stopping their services earlier in response to the state of emergency.<sup>169</sup> The government has signed a contract with Pfizer to receive vaccines for 72 million people this year.<sup>170</sup> Moderna joined Pfizer and AstraZeneca last week in launching clinical trials of their COVID-19 vaccines in Japan.<sup>171</sup> Japan has not publicized its vaccine rollout plan yet.

### *South Korea*

South Korea reported about 0.5 new cases of COVID-19 per ten thousand people last week. The country is preparing 250 vaccination centers nationwide as 100,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines are expected to arrive before February 11. The government will also designate 10,000 medical centers to participate in the vaccination.<sup>172</sup> Foreign residents in South Korea will be given the vaccine for free, as will Korean nationals.<sup>173</sup> According to the minister of health and welfare, social distancing is likely to remain in place for the rest of the year even if herd immunity is achieved.<sup>174</sup> The ban on flights from the UK has been extended until January 28. The negative PCR test required from foreign entrants now has to be taken within the last 24 hours, rather than 72, of their arrival.<sup>175</sup>

### *New Zealand*

The first community case of COVID-19 since November was recorded last week in New Zealand, which is likely to be linked to the government managed isolation. As a result, voluntary saliva testing is now offered to border workers in isolation facilities, in addition to the regular weekly testing.<sup>176</sup> Air New Zealand has made masks mandatory on all its flights to and from New Zealand.<sup>177</sup> The government is planning to make vaccines available to the public by the middle of the year. Training to administer vaccines is likely to start in February, involving 2,000 to 3,000 healthcare staff.<sup>178</sup>

### *Australia*

Few community cases have been recorded across Australia in recent weeks. Interstate border restrictions against New South Wales and Queensland are being gradually eased. COVID-related restrictions are also being relaxed in some states. The restrictions have gone back to the same level for the entirety of Queensland effective January 22: gatherings are capped at 50 people at homes and 100 in public spaces; up to 200 people can attend a wedding; a maximum of 500 people are allowed at indoor events and 1,500 outdoors; the one person per 2 square metre density requirement applies to all indoor facilities while open-air venues can return to full capacity; all hospitality venues have to collect contact information electronically.<sup>179</sup> Starting January 22 in South Australia, the cap on private gatherings is raised from 50 to 200.<sup>180</sup> That cap in Victoria is raised from 15 to 30 starting January 23.<sup>181</sup> A negative PCR test conducted within 72 hours prior to departure is required from international travellers effective January 22. Masks are now mandatory on all international flights.<sup>182</sup> The Pfizer vaccine has become the first approved COVID-19 vaccine in Australia.<sup>183</sup>

### *Turkey*

On January 22, Turkey reported new 6,289 cases, including 743 symptomatic patients.<sup>184</sup> Last week, Turkey began a mass COVID-vaccination campaign, starting with health care workers and top officials, to encourage public confidence in the vaccines. 10 million doses of Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Turkey over the weekend. Those who recovered from COVID-19 will not be vaccinated until four to six months following their recovery.<sup>185</sup> On January 23, the health minister announced a temporary halt on flights from Brazil due to the prevalence of a more infectious COVID-19 variant. Turkey had previously stopped flights from the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, and South Africa because of the more transmissible variant.<sup>186</sup>

### *Israel*

Israel reported more than 50 new cases of COVID-19 per ten thousand people last week, with a very high test positivity rate. The national lockdown has been extended through January 31. The government has approved the near-complete shuttering of the country's main international airport from January 26 to 31, with minor exceptions.<sup>187</sup> It is also requiring a negative test undertaken within 72 hours before landing from anyone entering the country effective January 24.<sup>188</sup> Meanwhile, the national legislature has allowed some top-level professional sports to resume games and training from January 29, subject to public health guidelines.<sup>189</sup> Israel's first pediatric intensive care unit for COVID-19 has opened in Jerusalem.<sup>190</sup> People aged 16-18 and over 40 have now been included in the vaccination campaign.<sup>191</sup> The health ministry is also advising pregnant women to get vaccinated after a number of serious cases.<sup>192</sup> A military-led task force has warned that the ongoing vaccination campaign parallel to the outbreak might cause "evolutionary pressure" on the virus to mutate, and the government should be cautious about potential infections among people who have had the vaccine or the virus.<sup>193</sup>

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## **Partnerships and Contributors**

The Media Ecosystem Observatory – a joint effort of Peter Loewen (Toronto), Taylor Owen (McGill), and Derek Ruths (McGill) – is responsible for the social media and behavioural data on our dashboard. The leads on these projects are Eric Merkley (Toronto) and Aengus Bridgman (McGill).

Reopening data and summaries are produced by a team at PEARL (The Policy, Elections, and Representation Lab) at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy: Mitchell Anderson, Haobo Chen, Jad El Tal, Kulsoom Khalid, Blake Lee-Whiting, Anthony Moniuszko, Erika Porco, and Sapphira Thompson-Bled.

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### *Links*

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