

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.

Please direct any questions or comments to peter.loewen@utoronto.ca.

Data Visualizations from Dashboard

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

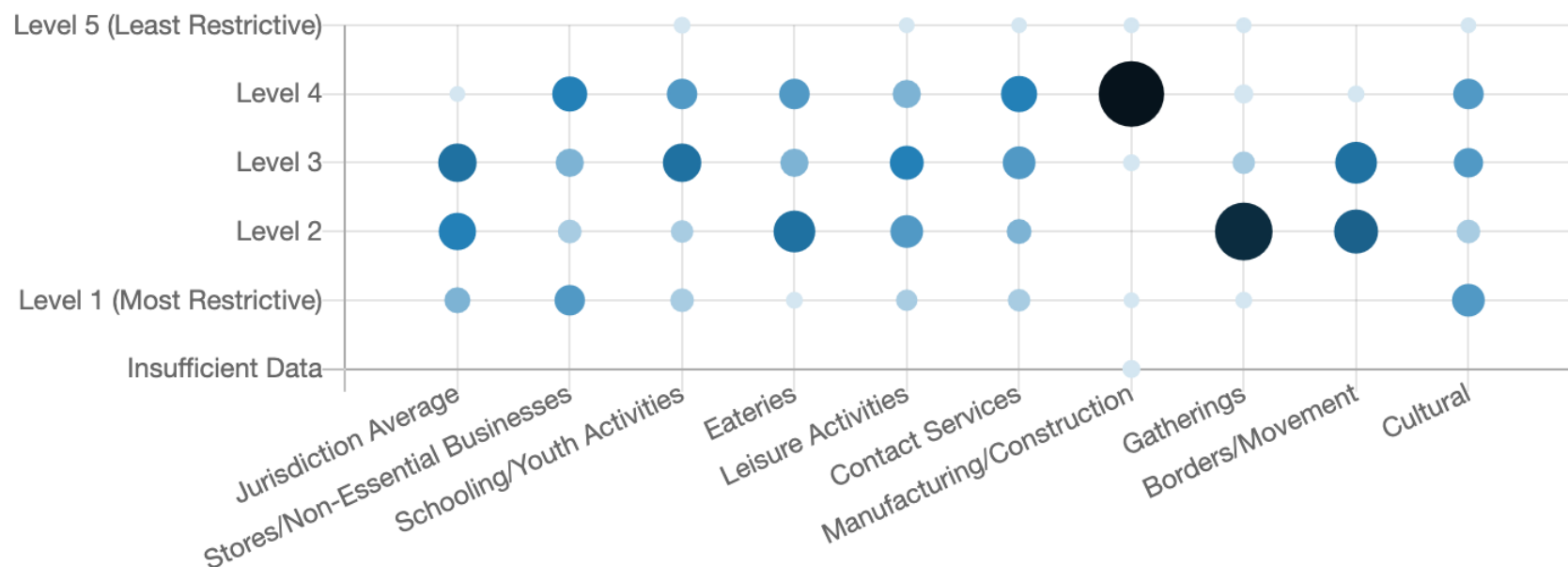


Figure 1 – Level of reopening among 52 different jurisdictions as of February 01. The reopening policies of 52 jurisdictions: 34 OECD countries, 5 US states, 10 Canadian provinces and 3 Canadian territories. For each jurisdiction, we classify a total of 9 different sectors: Stores/Non-Essential Businesses, 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.

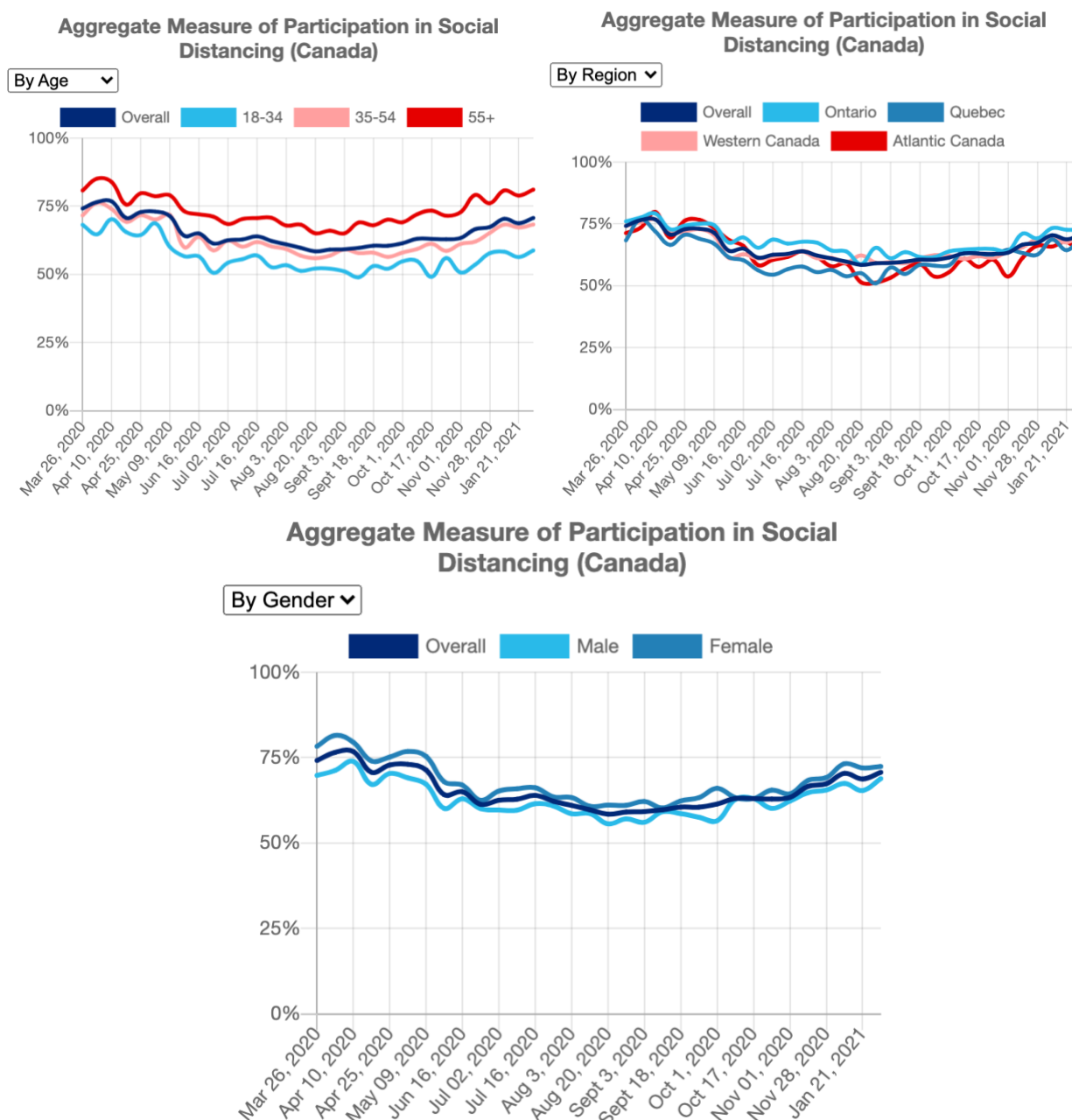


Figure 2 – Aggregate survey measure of participation in social distancing (Canada). We asked Canadians whether, as a result of the pandemic, they had taken any of the 6 following actions: avoided crowded places; avoided in-person contact with friends, family, and acquaintances; maintained 2 metre distance 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.

Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada)

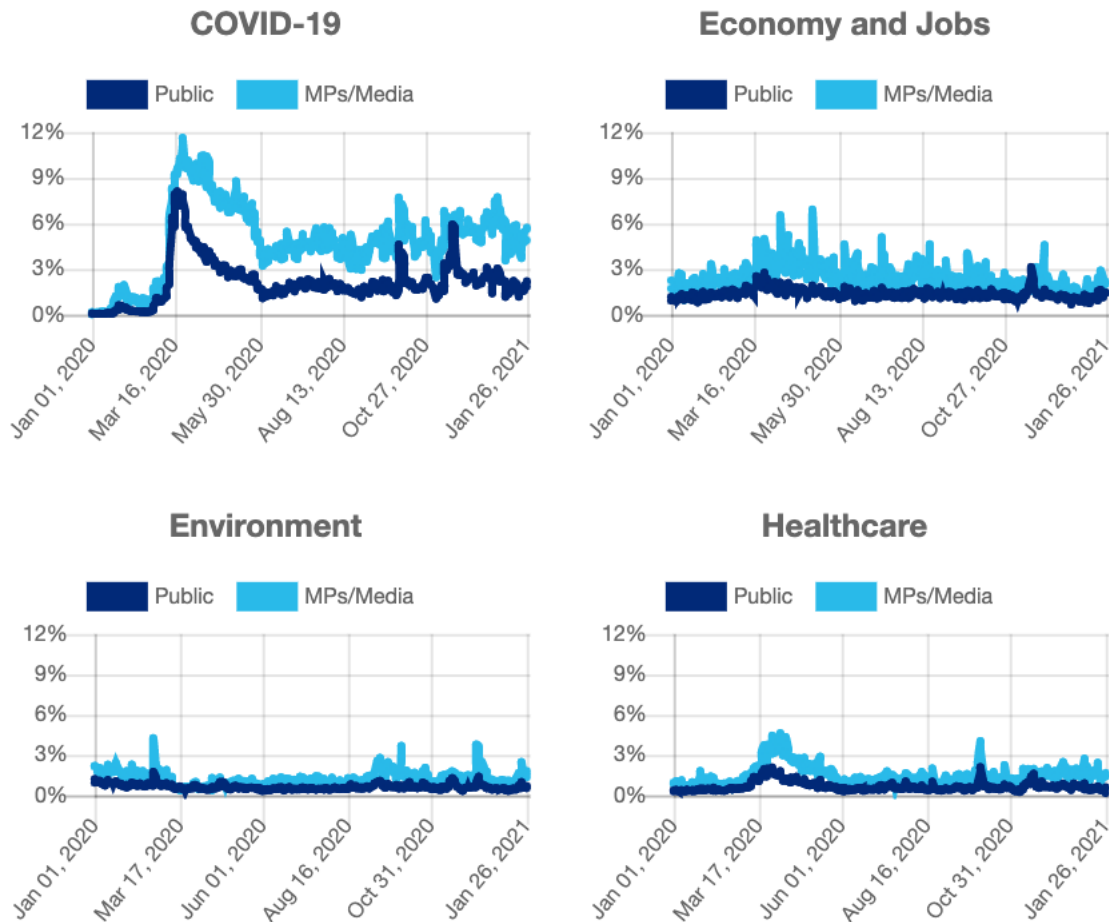


Figure 3 – Daily Percent of Tweets by Topic (Canada). The graphs report the percentage of daily tweets containing one or more keywords associated with the particular topic. The results are presented separately for MPs, senators, and journalists, on the one hand, and for the Canadian public, on the other. 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.

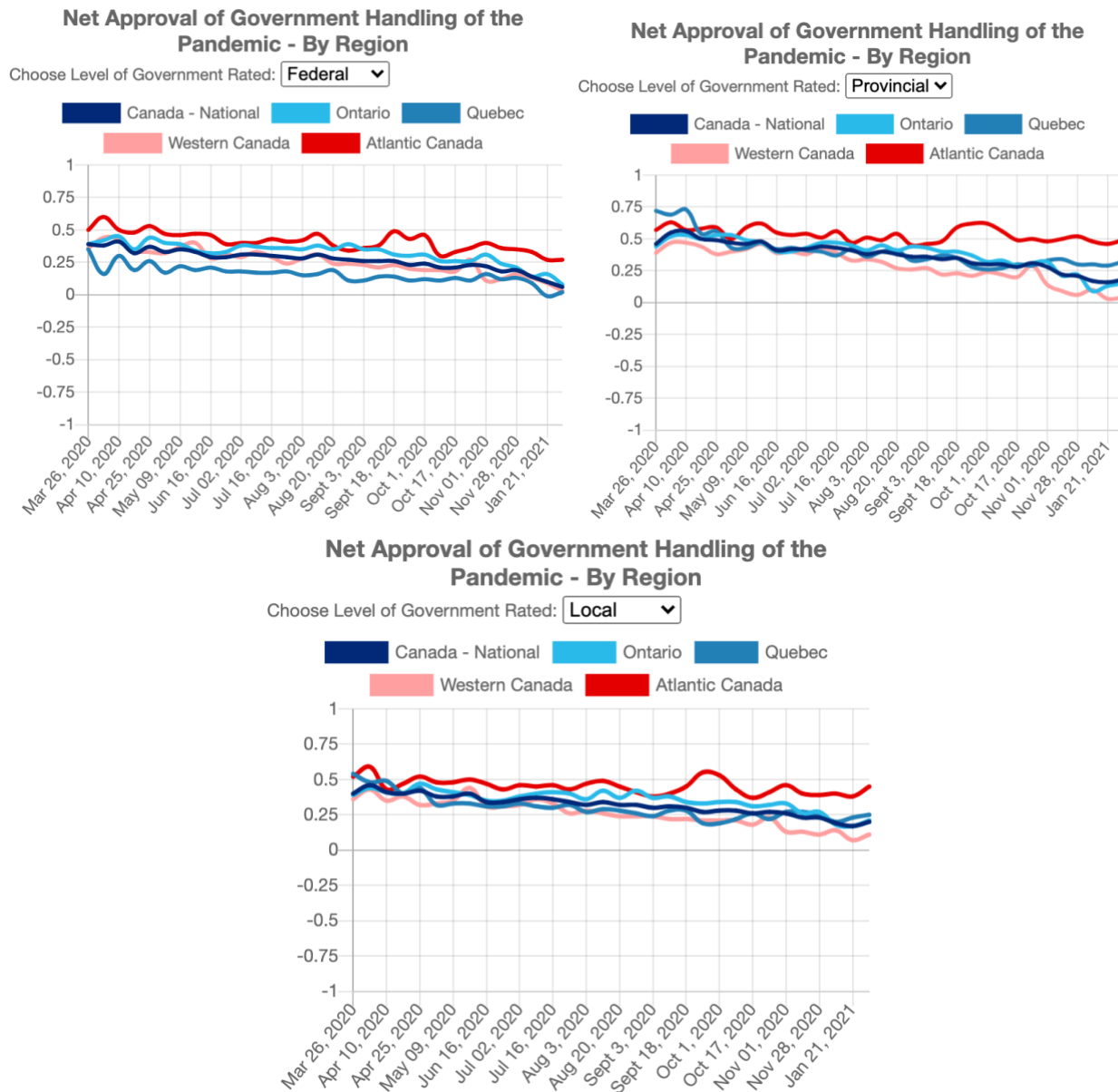


Figure 4 – Net approval of government handling of the pandemic by region. We asked Canadians whether they approved of how each level of government (the federal government, their provincial government, and their local government) was handling the coronavirus pandemic so far. To obtain a net approval score, 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 28, there were 461 new daily cases of COVID-19 in Alberta.¹ 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. Numerous restaurants have reopened for in-person dining in defiance of the current restrictions; health officials have warned that violators of the in-person dining restrictions could be subject to fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000.² Alberta will “receive 63,000 fewer vaccine doses by the end of March than were promised by the federal government.”³ No new first-dose appointments will be booked for the next few weeks.

→ *British Columbia*

British Columbia reported about 64 new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people over the 7 days prior to January 28. Provincial restrictions will remain in place until February 5. Residents and staff at long-term care facilities in the province have now been offered a vaccine. An anticipated shortfall in the coming weeks is going to be a challenge for the provincial rollout plan.⁴ Echoing the international travel restrictions announced by the federal government, the BC government is also discouraging people from travelling beyond their local community.⁵

→ *Manitoba*

On February 1, 3,503 active cases of COVID-19 were recorded in Manitoba.⁶ Effective January 28, anyone travelling to Manitoba for non-essential reasons will have to self-isolate for two weeks, as the new public health order comes into effect. The amendment aims to stop non-essential air and land travel. No cases of the COVID-19 variants from the UK and South Africa have been reported in the province so far. By closing the provincial border, the hope is that variants will not spread within Manitoba. People who provide essential services in Manitoba are exempted from self-isolating; film crews, professional hockey teams, and construction or maintenance workers who live outside Manitoba, but work on a project inside the province, are also exempt.⁷ Manitoba will be receiving close to 13,000 fewer Pfizer vaccine doses by the end of March than first expected.⁸

→ *New Brunswick*

New Brunswick reported 26 new cases of COVID-19 on February 1, leaving the province with a total of 286 active cases -- down from 334 one week ago.⁹ Zones 2 (Saint John), 3 (Fredericton), 5 (Campbellton), 6 (Bathurst), and 7 (Miramichi) were moved down to the less restrictive “orange” level on January 30, while Zone 4 (Moncton) remains at the “red” level with 75 active cases.¹⁰ Households in orange-level regions are permitted to have up to 10 “steady” contacts from outside the home, and outdoor gatherings of up to 50 people are permitted with hygienic measures in place.¹¹ Schools, most non-essential business, cultural institutions, and entertainment venues are also permitted to open under orange-level restrictions.¹² Zone 1 (Edmunston) remains in the province’s most restrictive “lockdown” phase with 158 active cases.¹³ Lockdown measures include the restriction of non-essential business, compulsory remote-learning, and the prohibition of non-essential inter-regional and inter-provincial travel.¹⁴

→ *Newfoundland and Labrador*

On January 28, Newfoundland and Labrador reported four new cases of COVID-19.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ On February 13, there will be a provincial election in Newfoundland and Labrador.¹⁷

→ *Northwest Territories*

Two new cases of COVID-19 were recorded in the Northwest Territories last week. The state of emergency in the city of Yellowknife has been extended through February 11. The containment order in Fort Liard was lifted on January 30. The entire territory is now in Phase 2 of its reopening plan. Starting last week, residents and staff in long term care facilities have begun receiving second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁸

→ *Nova Scotia*

Nova Scotia reported 8 new cases of COVID-19 in the past 7 days.¹⁹ There are currently 10 active cases in the province.²⁰ Ongoing health measures are mainly limited to hygienic and physical distancing guidelines, and a limit of 60 participants (increased from 50 as of February 1) for public gatherings, such as cultural and sporting events.²¹ The province remains in a state of emergency.²²

→ *Nunavut*

As of January 31, there are 27 active cases of COVID-19 in Nunavut, all of which are in Arviat.²³ Public health officials said that none of the recent cases have experienced symptoms, and everyone with COVID-19 is isolating at home. All of the cases have been linked to private gatherings in the community. The chief medical officer of health encouraged all residents to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they are eligible to receive it.²⁴ The family of a man who died of COVID-19 in Ottawa has called on the territorial government to count Nunavut community members who catch and die of the virus in official statistics due to the necessity of medical travel from the territory.²⁵

→ *Ontario*

Ontario reported 1,969 new cases of COVID-19 and 36 deaths due to the virus on February 1.²⁶ The province's seven-day moving average now stands at 1,889 cases per day, down from 2,459 one week ago.²⁷ There are currently 19,017 active cases in Ontario, down from 24,153 one week ago.²⁸ Officials have also confirmed a total of 69 cases of the UK variant as of February 1.²⁹ The head of Ontario's COVID-19 Science Table says the variant will be the dominant strain in the province by March.³⁰ On February 1, schools in the public health units of Ottawa, Eastern Ontario, Middlesex-London and Southwestern Ontario are allowed to return to in-person learning.³¹ Schools in northern Ontario were permitted to reopen on January 11.³²

→ *Prince Edward Island*

In Prince Edward Island, one new case was reported on January 28.³³ Retail businesses, markets, gyms, fitness facilities, museums, and libraries can now operate at full capacity, as long as physical distancing is maintained. Restaurants and bars can now stay open for in-person dining until midnight, rather than closing at 11 pm.³⁴ Prince Edward Island "remains on track to have all frontline health care workers and both staff and residents in long-term care homes vaccinated by February 16."³⁵

→ *Quebec*

Quebec reported 1,367 new COVID-19 cases and 46 deaths on January 30.³⁶ The province's curfew is scheduled to end on February 8, and retailers may see a reduction in restrictions. Non-essential businesses have been closed since December 25, with an 8 pm to 5 am curfew in place since January 9.³⁷ A judge ruled that the province's curfew does not apply to those experiencing homelessness.³⁸ International flights must now arrive at international airports in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver or Calgary, where travellers will be tested for COVID-19 and will have to wait for their results in designated hotels for up to three days at their own expense.³⁹ Hospitals may resume some surgeries that had to be postponed when the healthcare system was overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases.⁴⁰ Quebec has invested \$11 million in increasing its ability to detect new variants of the virus.⁴¹ Some skate parks in Montreal were converted into shelters and warming areas for those experiencing homelessness.⁴²

→ *Saskatchewan*

As of January 31, the seven-day average of daily new cases in Saskatchewan is 19.7 per 100,000 people. There are 203 hospitalizations, 31 in intensive care.⁴³ The province reported a record-high of 14 deaths on January 26, leading the provincial government to announce that all existing restrictions have been extended until February 19.⁴⁴ The province's top public health official said that the discovery of the B117 variant in the province would not prompt the introduction of new restrictions, and there are no plans to implement travel restrictions for Canadians from other provinces.⁴⁵ Opposition MPs said that the current restrictions were not enough to contain further spread and advocated for bars to be limited to takeout only.⁴⁶ The premier said that the province is functionally out of vaccine doses and cannot continue their program until they receive their next shipment in early February.⁴⁷ Despite the delivery delays, provincial officials said that they hope to vaccinate all long-term care residents and staff by the end of March.⁴⁸

→ *Yukon*

No active cases of COVID-19 remain in Yukon. The territory remains in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. There are currently 14 mobile vaccine clinics scheduled in rural and remote areas, and residents aged 18 and older within the designated communities can receive the vaccination. A mobile clinic will also be offering the second dose to all staff and residents of long-term care homes starting this week.⁴⁹

The United States

→ *California*

The rate of COVID-19 deaths in California has been increasing over the past week, with the average number of daily deaths now approximately 544.⁵⁰ California reported over 40,000 cumulative deaths, leaving the state with the second most total deaths in the US.⁵¹ The number of new cases and hospitalizations has been declining.⁵² The regional stay-at-home orders were lifted on January 25, but counties may continue to have their own restrictions that local officials can make stricter. By lifting the regional restrictions, this allows some businesses like restaurants to reopen outdoors and lifts the curfew.⁵³ The Santa Clara Amusement Park was the first amusement park to announce its reopening, scheduled for May 22.⁵⁴ California has received enough vaccines for 4.5% of state residents, but the state's supply is diminishing and demand is high.⁵⁵ There are only enough vaccines for 9% of eligible people in northern California.⁵⁶ Some healthcare centres have introduced additional eligibility criteria for the vaccine, saying that people must have been treated in that centre at some point in the past three years.⁵⁷

→ *Illinois*

Illinois reported about 193 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week, with a 3.89% positivity rate of testing. Different regions of the state are moving towards further reopening at varied paces. As of February 1, Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 11 are in Phase 4, while Regions 8, 9 and 10 are in Tier 1 mitigations, and Region 4 is in Tier 2.⁵⁸ Chicago, Region 11, moved to Phase 4 on January 31, even as restrictions on indoor dining remain in place. Indoor dining and events are limited to 25% capacity or 25 people per space; establishments must stop serving alcohol at 11 pm and close for in-person service at midnight; capacity caps for most other industries will remain at 40% or 50 people -- whichever is less. Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union were unable to reach an agreement over the weekend and public schools in the city have delayed the return of students to in-person classrooms until February 2.⁵⁹ To boost ongoing vaccination efforts, state officials have announced that dentists will now be able to volunteer to administer shots at vaccination sites.⁶⁰

→ *Michigan*

Michigan reported about 134 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week. Previously announced relaxations of COVID-19 rules came into effect this week. Restaurants and bars will officially be allowed to resume indoor dining starting February 1, subject to a 25% capacity cap with up to 100 people

and a 10 pm closing time. Tables must be six feet apart with no more than six people per table; contact information must be collected from diners.⁶¹ The government is expanding its Safer Dining Program, which helps restaurants to improve circulation within their workplace to promote safe operation.⁶²

→ *New York*

On January 31, New York reported 7,976 hospitalizations and a statewide positivity rate of 4.44%. The statewide positivity rate has declined for 23 consecutive days.⁶³ The governor announced that indoor dining at 25% capacity would be allowed to resume in New York City on February 14. All restaurants must adhere to the statewide closing time of 10 pm. Larger wedding ceremonies may resume throughout the state on March 15 if approved by the local health department, all guests are tested, and there is a limit of 150 people or 50% capacity -- whichever is lower.⁶⁴ The mayor of New York City said that local officials have set a goal of vaccinating five million city residents by the end of June.⁶⁵ A report released by the state attorney general's office said that the state government had undercounted the number of deaths from COVID-19 in nursing homes by as much as 50%. The report said that a death was only counted if it took place in the nursing home itself, and the total did not include those who were hospitalized and died there. The governor and the state health commissioner denied that they were deliberately undercounting the deaths.⁶⁶

→ *Texas*

Texas has reported more than two million total COVID-19 cases and over 35,600 deaths.⁶⁷ Nearly 20,000 additional cases were reported on January 30, as well as 332 new deaths. As of January 29, the seven-day average positivity rate was 14.77% for molecular tests and 7.93% for antigen tests.⁶⁸ Texas will receive over 700,000 additional vaccine doses, with 520,425 for first dose vaccinations and 188,225 for second doses.⁶⁹ 1.8 million Texans have received their first dose so far; approximately 448,000 people have been fully vaccinated.⁷⁰ Approximately 1.6% of vaccine doses that have been allocated to Texas have been wasted, most of which from syringe contamination.⁷¹ The Texas National Guard was deployed on January 28 to assist with vaccination efforts in rural communities as part of the State Mobile Vaccine Pilot Program.⁷²

Mexico

Mexico reported 18,670 new cases and 1,506 new deaths on January 28. Mexico has the third most deaths globally.⁷³ Canada's four major airlines halted flights to Mexico and the Caribbean.⁷⁴ Mexico City's international airport is setting up capacity to test arriving passengers, who must show that they are negative for COVID-19.⁷⁵ Thirteen states are at the red level, 17 states are orange and two are yellow on the country's reopening indicators.⁷⁶ The president of Mexico is recovering from COVID-19.⁷⁷ Mexico will import the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine from India, and has also placed orders for the CanSino and Russian Sputnik vaccines.⁷⁸ Mexico anticipates that it will have acquired 6 million vaccine doses by the end of February, and 12 million doses by the end of March.⁷⁹ Importing more vaccines will allow Mexico to deliver a minimum of one dose to elderly populations. To date Mexico has only used Pfizer vaccines; however, the 760,000 Pfizer doses received so far are only enough to vaccinate approximately half of Mexico's front-line healthcare workers.⁸⁰

Chile

Chile reported 3,371 new COVID-19 cases and 17 deaths on January 27. Five regions reported a decline in cases over the past week.⁸¹ Between January 28 and 31, the country as a whole reported over 4,000 new cases daily.⁸² Approximately 56,759 people in Chile have been vaccinated with their first dose; 10,315 people have been fully vaccinated.⁸³ A mass vaccination campaign is expected to begin in February.⁸⁴ Two million doses of the Sinovac vaccine arrived on January 28 and two million more doses are expected.⁸⁵

Eligibility criteria for the vaccine was expanded to anyone over the age of 18.⁸⁶ The AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine is now approved for emergency use in Chile.⁸⁷

WESTERN EUROPE

France

On January 31, France reported 19,235 new cases, bringing the country to 3.19 million total cases -- the second most cases in Europe.⁸⁸ Over 60% of ICU beds in the country are being used for COVID-19 cases. There have been over 75,000 COVID-19 deaths nationwide, the seventh most deaths globally.⁸⁹ The number of COVID-19 infections, hospital admissions, and deaths have been increasing steadily.⁹⁰ The country's border closed to non-EU citizens on January 31 to stop the spread of COVID-19.⁹¹ People from EU countries are required to provide a negative COVID-19 test upon arrival.⁹² On the same date, France closed large shopping centres and is discouraging overseas travel.⁹³ The prime minister implemented additional police checks to catch curfew violators, to stop parties and to prevent restaurants from reopening.⁹⁴ Some health professionals expressed their disagreement with the government's decision not to implement a lockdown to curb the spread, saying there could be another wave of COVID-19 due to the B117 variant.⁹⁵

Germany

On February 1, 11,192 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported in Germany.⁹⁶ Effective January 28, Germany restricted entry for travelers from Britain, Brazil, Portugal, and South Africa, as concerns of more contagious COVID-19 variants rise. The government is looking at stricter border checks, "but also reducing air travel to Germany to almost zero, as Israel is currently doing."⁹⁷ Germany's vaccine commission, STIKO, said that AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine should only be administered to people aged 64 and under. The panel of medical experts cite a lack of data regarding the vaccine's effectiveness for older people.⁹⁸

Belgium

In Belgium, 2,775 new daily cases of COVID-19 were reported on January 29.⁹⁹ Currently, non-essential stores, museums, and swimming pools are open, with safety measures in place. Non-medical contact services, eateries, and amusement parks remain closed.¹⁰⁰ On January 27, a ban on non-essential travel took effect that applies both to people within the country and foreign residents planning to travel to Belgium.¹⁰¹ The regional governments reached an agreement on stricter measures for youth activities but this still requires federal approval. The proposed measures would allow children to continue activities in bubbles of up to 10 and would limit their participation to one organized activity or group.¹⁰²

Netherlands

On January 31, 3,280 confirmed cases were recorded in the Netherlands.¹⁰³ On January 23, a night-time curfew from 9 pm to 4 am was imposed and those in violation can face fines of up to 95 euros. The measure was introduced following the discovery of a new infectious variant of COVID-19 in the Netherlands, which resulted in rising hospitalizations and could lead to a potential new wave of infections. Riots erupted in response to the curfew measures, with hundreds of rioters in several towns and cities clashing with police. In some areas, COVID-19 testing centres were attacked and knives were thrown at police officers. The Netherlands was already under tough lockdown measures, with bars and restaurants closed since October and schools and non-essential shops shut down since December.¹⁰⁴

Spain

Spain reported over 513 deaths on January 29 in the country's largest daily increase since the first wave of COVID-19.¹⁰⁵ 44% of ICU beds in Spain are being used to COVID-19 patients. An outbreak at a nursing home in Madrid has infected 48 residents and 17 staff members and caused 11 deaths.¹⁰⁶ Spain and Portugal announced that they will be restricting travel at their land border until February 10 to stop the spread of COVID-19.¹⁰⁷ Doctors have criticized the government's vaccine delivery plan, saying that it has prevented them from vaccinating people with their first dose. The system prioritizes vaccines for those who have already received their first dose.¹⁰⁸ Spain is scheduled to receive 2.3 million vaccine doses from Pfizer and Moderna in February.¹⁰⁹

The United Kingdom

On January 29, 29,079 people tested positive for the virus, bringing the total number of cases in the UK to 3,772,813.¹¹⁰ The prime minister announced that the government is looking at toughening border quarantine rules because of the risk of new coronavirus variants. New variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 are opening up the prospect of a much longer battle against the pathogen than previously thought. Scientists fear the new variants may be more deadly and that vaccines may be less effective against them.¹¹¹

Ireland

On January 29, 1,254 cases were confirmed in Ireland.¹¹² On January 27, the government decided to extend the Level Five restrictions until March 5 due to a rise in cases. Ireland has been operating on a five-level plan that includes a ban on all household visits, the closure of non-essential retail, and a 5 km limit on travel. Additionally, sports activities, with the exception of professional or elite sports, are prohibited for the first six months of 2021.¹¹³ The government expects large-scale vaccinations to be achieved by summer. However, the prime minister has said that the issues affecting the EU's supply of vaccines has impacted Ireland. The production problem with the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has meant that the number of initial doses delivered to the EU will be lower than expected.¹¹⁴

Luxembourg

On January 28, the ministry of health recorded 138 new cases of COVID-19 in Luxembourg.¹¹⁵ Effective January 29, all persons seeking to enter the country by air will be obliged to present the negative results of a COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, upon their arrival. This requirement also affects citizens residing in countries that belong to the list of third countries whose residents are permitted to enter Luxembourg, such as South Korea, Australia, Rwanda, New Zealand, Thailand, and Singapore. The decision will exempt persons employed in the transport sector, members of diplomatic corps, those who have been infected three months prior to travel and those who have completed their quarantine period in their respective country.¹¹⁶

Portugal

On January 28, Portugal reported a record 303 deaths from the virus and 16,432 new cases. The current lockdown, which came into effect on January 15, will be in place until at least February 14. Non-essential services remain closed, remote work is compulsory where possible, and schools remain shut. The Portuguese government also announced the temporary closure of its border with Spain for two weeks, effective January 29. The prime minister said that the situation has worsened partly because his government relaxed restrictive measures between Christmas and the end of the year, but also because of the virulence of a new variant of the virus first detected in Britain.¹¹⁷

CENTRAL EUROPE

Austria

On January 29, Austria reported 1,449 new daily cases of COVID-19 infection.¹¹⁸ Austria has extended its third lockdown until February 7.¹¹⁹ Current restrictions include the closure of all non-essential stores, culture and leisure facilities, and eateries for indoor dining. All events, such as concerts or plays, remain cancelled and travel is permitted only for essential purposes. The government plans to re-evaluate the country's COVID-19 situation in mid-February to determine whether restrictions should be eased.¹²⁰

Greece

On January 29, Greece reported 713 new cases of COVID-19.¹²¹ The government has reintroduced the color-coded risk assessment map, giving areas a yellow or red risk rating.¹²² At both levels, the curfew remains in effect but retail stores, hair salons, primary schools, and kindergartens are permitted to open.¹²³ On February 1, middle schools will reopen in both levels. The government has delayed its plans to reopen high schools in red areas due to rising infections in Northern Greece and Attica.¹²⁴ Additionally, public and private gatherings over 100 people have been banned to discourage large parties and demonstrations.¹²⁵

Italy

In Italy, 14,360 new daily cases of COVID-19 infection were reported on January 29.¹²⁶ Effective February 1, the current tiered system of restrictions remains in place with the majority of the country in the yellow zone.¹²⁷ In yellow zones, eateries can stay open until 6 pm and takeaway services at restaurants are permitted until 10 pm. Museums can reopen during the week and hairdressers can resume services. High schools can begin teaching in person at 50-75% capacity.¹²⁸ Across Italy, a nighttime curfew remains in effect from 10 pm to 5 am, while gyms, cinemas, theme parks, pools, and theatres remain closed. The ban on non-essential movement between regions will remain in effect until February 15.¹²⁹ The country's vaccination rollout has slowed, with the government blaming Pfizer for its delay in delivering new doses.¹³⁰ On January 26, the PM resigned.¹³¹

Slovenia

On January 29, 1,573 new cases of COVID-19 infection were recorded in Slovenia.¹³² In 9 of Slovenia's 12 regions, students in grades K-3 have returned to school following the mass, rapid testing of teachers. Museums, libraries, galleries, and businesses have also been permitted to reopen in these regions.¹³³ A new "political movement called Unite Slovenia has emerged and aims to bring smaller parties, local initiatives, and citizens together to form a joint slate for the next general election."¹³⁴

Switzerland

On January 29, Switzerland reported 1,669 new cases of COVID-19 infection.¹³⁵ 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.¹³⁶ Effective February 8, people coming from high-risk countries will need to present a negative test prior to arriving in Switzerland, with exceptions for cross-border workers;¹³⁷ the 10-day quarantine period will be shortened if, after 7 days, people test negative. The government plans to pay to test people who are asymptomatic as an incentive for people to get tested in nursing homes, schools, hotels, and large companies.¹³⁸ The Federal Council aims to vaccinate six million people by the summer of 2021 and anyone over 75 or those with serious health conditions by the end of February.¹³⁹

EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic reported 4,060 new cases of COVID-19 on January 31, below its 7-day moving average of 6,736 cases per day.¹⁴⁰ As of January 30, tourists and foreigners are banned from entering the country.¹⁴¹ Exceptions will be made for essential travel, such as work and school.¹⁴² The Czech government announced several new restrictions on January 28, including the closure of farmers' markets, limitations on hotel accommodation to business trips only, and a ban on the operation of ski lifts.¹⁴³ The health minister said that the PES index is "no longer relevant" to the development of epidemic measures.¹⁴⁴ The PES coronavirus risk index has remained at the second highest degree for more than two weeks -- but the framework's most restrictive level of lockdown measures have been in force since December 27, with officials repeatedly saying that they have no plans to loosen restrictions.¹⁴⁵

Hungary

Hungary reported 1,307 new cases of COVID-19 on January 31, above the country's 7-day moving average of 1,287 new cases per day.¹⁴⁶ Hungary became the first EU member state to approve China's Sinopharm COVID vaccine on January 28,¹⁴⁷ one week after the government purchased two million doses of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. The Sputnik V vaccine has not yet been approved by the EU.¹⁴⁸ Hungary has repeatedly criticized what it says is the slow pace of vaccine approval and procurement by EU authorities.¹⁴⁹

Latvia

Latvia reported 411 new cases of COVID-19 and 7 deaths due to the virus on February 1.¹⁵⁰ Last week, the Latvian cabinet of ministers extended a number of 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.¹⁵¹ In-person shopping remains limited to establishments providing essential services, and the national curfew remains in effect for the hours between 10 pm and 5 am on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.¹⁵²

Lithuania

Lithuania reported 355 new cases of COVID-19 on February 1, which is the country's lowest single-day tally since late October.¹⁵³ A nationwide lockdown, which has been in effect since November 7, was extended for one month and will now expire on February 28.¹⁵⁴ This means that a number of ongoing restrictions will remain in effect, and Lithuanians remain forbidden from leaving the boundaries of their home municipality unless they are attending a funeral, going to work, accessing healthcare services, or taking care of a family member.¹⁵⁵ Non-essential movement within municipalities is also forbidden, with the same exceptions.¹⁵⁶

Poland

Poland reported 4,711 new cases of COVID-19 on January 31, below its 7-day moving average of 5,420 cases per day.¹⁵⁷ Poland remains in the "red zone," but some economic restrictions have been relaxed this week.¹⁵⁸ Restaurants, cinemas, theaters, and gyms remain closed, but some cultural institutions including libraries, art galleries, and museums were permitted to reopen under strict sanitary regimes on February 1.¹⁵⁹ Most non-essential business was also permitted to resume under strict sanitary and distancing guidelines as of February 1.¹⁶⁰ Students in grades 4 and above continue to learn remotely.¹⁶¹

Slovakia

Slovakia reported 1,723 cases of COVID-19 on January 31, below its 7-day moving average of 2,062 cases per day.¹⁶² The country will remain in lockdown until February 7, with ongoing restrictions shuttering all non-essential establishments, including theatres, hairdressers, driving schools, and fitness centres.¹⁶³ Only essential businesses, such as pharmacies and grocery stores, can remain open at this time. Gatherings remain limited to two people.¹⁶⁴ As of February 1, Slovaks who can produce a negative COVID-19 test, or prove that they have received an approved vaccine, are exempt from the most restrictive lockdown measures, such as limitations on movement outside of the home during curfew hours.¹⁶⁵

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark

The epidemiological situation in Denmark continues to improve: the number of confirmed cases and hospitalizations have fallen over the past week.¹⁶⁶ However, public health officials reported that the B117 variant now represents over 13% of all positive COVID-19 cases in the country.¹⁶⁷ As a result, the government extended all of its lockdown and travel restrictions until February 28. Incoming travellers will also need to undergo a mandatory 10-day quarantine upon arrival beginning February 2, but this can be shortened by testing negative after four days in isolation.¹⁶⁸ Opposition MPs have called for primary school students to be permitted to return to school before February 28, which public health officials said they were considering.¹⁶⁹ The flight ban from the United Arab Emirates was extended until February 2, when the mandatory quarantine period for arrivals will go into effect.¹⁷⁰ Danish officials are optimistic that they will still be able to vaccinate the entire population by early July, despite production and delivery delays.¹⁷¹

Estonia

On January 31, Estonia reported a two-week average infection rate of 536.8 new cases per 100,000 people, which is stable compared to the previous week.¹⁷² The new government announced that all restrictions will be harmonized nationwide effective February 3. Restaurants will need to close by 9 pm and must stick to a 50% capacity limit. Masks are mandatory in all stores and shopping malls, both of which are subject to a 50% capacity limit. The public indoor gathering limit is 400 people for events with fixed seating, or up to a maximum of 50% capacity. Up to 500 people may gather at outdoor events, with no events permitted to take place between 10 pm and 6 am. Houses of worship, swimming pools, saunas, and spas also have a 50% capacity limit. Indoor leisure activities will continue to have a maximum of 10 people, while up to 50 people may gather for outdoor leisure activities.¹⁷³ The government said it does not plan to implement any more regional restrictions in the near future.¹⁷⁴

Finland

The number of new confirmed cases in Finland has remained relatively stable over the past week.¹⁷⁵ In southern Finland, cultural and sports events with spectators have been prohibited through the end of February.¹⁷⁶ The cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa have decided to allow leisure activities for youth to resume, while extending all other local restrictions until February 28. The prime minister expressed her displeasure with the decision and said that restrictions should not be lifted at this point in the pandemic.¹⁷⁷ The government had previously announced that it would leave all national restrictions in place indefinitely, even as the epidemiological situation improves.¹⁷⁸ Local officials in Jyväskylä have moved upper secondary schools to distance learning, closed libraries and museums, and prohibited all sports activities for children until February 14 due to a surge in infections in the city.¹⁷⁹ The prime minister also expressed her support for mandatory testing at the border in addition to the ban on non-essential travel, but said that introducing the measure is at the discretion of parliament, not the government.¹⁸⁰

Iceland

As of February 1, Iceland is reporting a 14-day average domestic infection rate of 5.7 new cases per 100,000 people, among the lowest in Europe.¹⁸¹ There have been no domestic cases reported among those outside of quarantine since January 20. The chief epidemiologist said that he would submit a proposal to reduce restrictions this week.¹⁸² Iceland is the only country in the EU or EEA that the European Centres for Disease Control has rated 'green', indicating a low spread of COVID-19.¹⁸³ Authorities credited the country's double testing regime at the border for keeping domestic case numbers low and allowing them to prevent a full border closure.¹⁸⁴ Due to production issues, Iceland will receive 13,800 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine in February, which is much lower than anticipated.¹⁸⁵

Norway

As of January 27, the R0 number in Norway was estimated to be 0.6, indicating that the spread was declining.¹⁸⁶ However, concerns over the B117 variant have prompted Norwegian officials to issue new travel restrictions. The border closed to all non-essential travel on January 29. Only Norwegian citizens, residents, and foreign healthcare and supply chain workers are permitted to enter the country. The ban will be in place for at least two weeks. All those who remain eligible to enter the country will still be subject to mandatory testing and a stint in a quarantine facility upon their arrival.¹⁸⁷ Strict restrictions in the Oslo area introduced in response to an outbreak of the B117 variant will begin to ease on February 3, with restaurants, youth leisure activities, and libraries permitted to reopen.¹⁸⁸ Despite AstraZeneca production delays, public health officials said that they will double the amount of vaccine delivered to municipalities.¹⁸⁹

Sweden

The epidemiological situation in Sweden continues to improve: the number of confirmed cases is falling. However, authorities warned that the spread remains very high.¹⁹⁰ The ministry of foreign affairs has extended its advice against travel to non-EU countries until April 15.¹⁹¹ Public health officials advised the government to introduce a requirement to produce a negative test result from the past two days when entering Sweden. They also recommended that the country institute a week-long quarantine period upon arrival, with all travellers undergoing another test five days into their isolation period. The interior minister said that the government would decide on these recommendations in the coming days.¹⁹² Sweden has banned mink breeding until the end of 2021, due to a number of COVID-19 cases found in the animals -- though no cull like the one conducted in Denmark is planned.¹⁹³ Sweden's top public health official is facing criticism after he was seen on public transit without a mask. Several Swedish officials, including the prime minister, have been seen flouting public health regulations in the past few months.¹⁹⁴

ASIA/PACIFIC

Japan

Japan has reported a daily average of over 19 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week. Health officials believe that the first cluster of UK variant infections has hit near Tokyo.¹⁹⁵ The state of emergency covering 11 prefectures is now expected to be extended beyond the planned expiry date of February 7. The government has started sending vaccine freezers to 100 facilities tasked with inoculating medical workers as of January 30. The vaccination rollout is scheduled for late February.¹⁹⁶ An online vaccination booking system has been created by the messaging app provider Line.¹⁹⁷ A vaccination drill was conducted on January 27 and the national government will share the findings with local governments in preparation for the formal rollout.¹⁹⁸

South Korea

South Korea has reported about 6 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week. The cluster of infections related to religious facilities has once again increased concern about the epidemiological situation. The southwestern city of Gwangju has banned all in-person religious activities from January 30 to February 10.¹⁹⁹ The current social distancing rules have been extended through February 14 amid concerns over holiday travel and gatherings. The 9 pm curfew for high-risk venues and the ban on gatherings of 5 people or more will continue.²⁰⁰ The suspension of flights from Britain has been extended through February 11.²⁰¹

New Zealand

New Zealand reported about 0.37 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week. No new community cases have been identified after the previous 3 cases linked to the government managed isolation. Safety measures have been strengthened at the facility effective January 30.²⁰² The government believes COVID-19 vaccines will arrive by the end of March.²⁰³ The single-direction New Zealand-Australia travel bubble resumed on January 31 after a temporary suspension.²⁰⁴

Australia

Australia reported about 0.2 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week. After a quarantine hotel worker tested positive, Western Australia's Perth, Peel and South West regions entered a 5-day lockdown effective January 31: people can only leave home for essential reasons; mask wearing is required at all times outside home; visiting others' homes is not allowed; schools, cultural institutions, indoor sporting venues, outdoor recreational facilities, entertainment venues, personal services, large religious gatherings and places of worship will close; restaurants, cafes and bars have to switch to takeaway service only; funerals will be reduced to 10 guests and weddings must be cancelled; elective surgeries for categories two and three will be suspended; travelers from other states and territories are also recommended not to enter Western Australia.²⁰⁵ Queensland, the Northern Territory, Victoria and the ACT have all adjusted their border control measures as a result of the outbreak.²⁰⁶ Meanwhile, some restrictions have been eased in Greater Sydney effective January 29: up to 30 guests are allowed at people's homes; up to 50 can gather outdoors; weddings and funerals can accommodate a maximum of 300; hospitality venues and places of worship are only subject to density requirements now without strict caps on the number of people.²⁰⁷

Turkey

On January 27, Turkey reported 7,489 new COVID-19 cases.²⁰⁸ Turkey inoculated more than 1.5 million people against COVID-19 in two weeks. Healthcare workers were the first to receive the shots and, on January 28, the vaccination efforts were expanded to people 75 and above. Citizens aged 75 and above will be able to get appointments from hospitals and neighborhood clinics across the country to receive the vaccine. The health ministry's internet portal, smartphone apps, and hotline allow citizens to schedule an appointment in the nearest clinic equipped with designated vaccination rooms separated from other facilities.²⁰⁹

Israel

Israel reported about 508 new cases of COVID-19 per 100 thousand people in the last week, with a very high positivity rate of testing. After a very brief expiry at midnight on January 31, the nationwide lockdown was extended again through at least February 5. The ban on almost all international flights will remain in effect for another week. Meanwhile, a committee was set up to examine exemption requests for Israelis who need to return for humanitarian reasons during the closure. The national legislature has also passed a measure doubling fines for COVID-19 rule violators.²¹⁰ Earlier last week, the health ministry issued a directive that supports vaccinating children under the age of 16 and at high risk of developing serious symptoms after COVID-19 infection.²¹¹

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