ECONOMIC PULSE

EASING OF THE PANDEMIC AND GROWTH IN FOOTFALL TO RETAIL AND LEISURE FACILITIES

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to slow around the world. According to the latest figures from Johns Hopkins University, 4.4 million new cases were recorded around the world in the week of 12-18 May, a 16.2% drop on the previous week. The biggest fall came in Europe, with 23.1%, followed by Asia with 19.2%, but the trend was also visible in India (down 20%). Case numbers were also down in North America (by 13.3%). By contrast, South America saw an 8.7% increase (chart 1). Vaccination campaigns also continued to gain ground around the world, most notably in the European Union, where a rapid acceleration was seen; 32.7% of the population has now received at least one vaccine dose, and all member states are above the symbolic threshold of 30% (chart 2).

As health protection measures are gradually relaxed, footfall to retail and leisure facilities continued to rise in the main developed economies. The biggest increase in the week from 7 to 14 May came in Belgium, with a rise of 17.1 points relative to the previous week. This took visit numbers from a rolling 7-day average of 28% below the benchmark level to 10.9% below*. Over the same week, visit numbers gained 9 points in Germany, after a fall in the previous week. Italy and France both made further gains, with increases of 4.3 points and 2 points respectively. However, there was a sharp drop in Japan, where numbers fell by 11 points, from 8% to 19% below the benchmark (chart 3).

Finally, the OECD Weekly Tracker of annual GDP growth in the main advanced countries continued to weaken. This said, there have been recent improvements in this indicator in the UK, whilst in Belgium it has continued to rise (Chart 3). The OECD Tracker, which is based on Google Trends resulting from queries on consumption, the labour market, housing, industrial activity and uncertainty, should be interpreted cautiously since it reflects a base effect due to the comparison with poor data when the pandemic started to spread last year.

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Google Mobility Reports show how visits and length of stay at different places change compared to a baseline. The baseline is the median value, for the corresponding day of the week, during the 5-week period Jan 3–Feb 6, 2020. A figure of negative 30% indicates that traffic was down 30% compared to a baseline. The reports show trends over several weeks with the most recent data representing approximately 2-3 days ago—this is how long it takes to produce the reports. In order to smooth the series, we use a seven-day moving average of the raw data in the Google Mobility Reports. Source: Google.

### DAILY CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES (7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE)
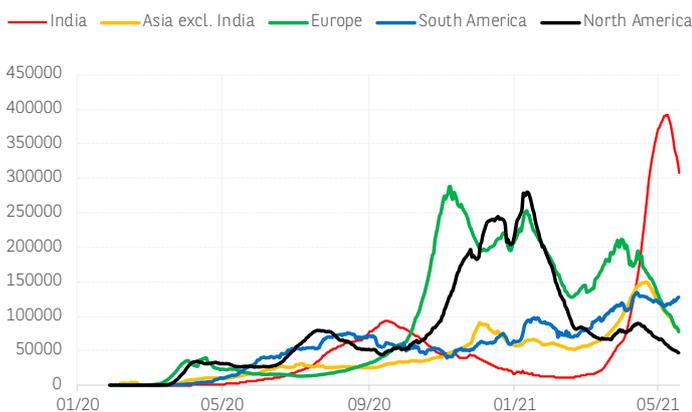
CHART 1   SOURCE: JOHNS-HOPKINS UNIVERSITY (05/19/2021), BNP PARIBAS

SHARE OF PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF VACCINE
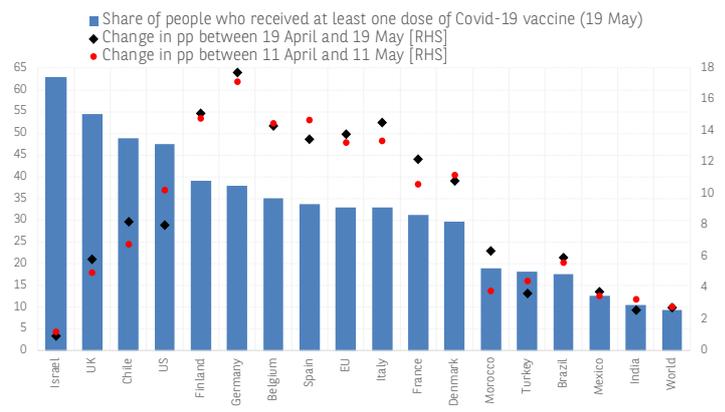
CHART 2   SOURCE: OUR WORLD IN DATA (05/20/2021), BNP PARIBAS

RETAIL AND RECREATION MOBILITY & OECD WEEKLY TRACKER

— Retail and recreation mobility (7-day moving average, % from baseline*)   — OECD Weekly tracker, y/y GDP growth [RHS]
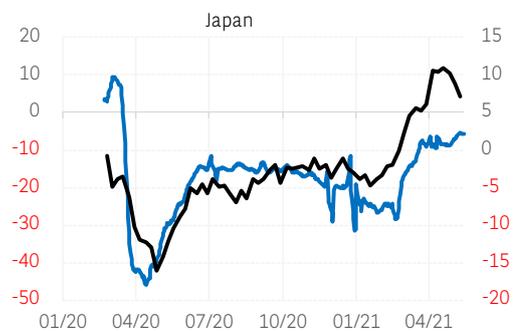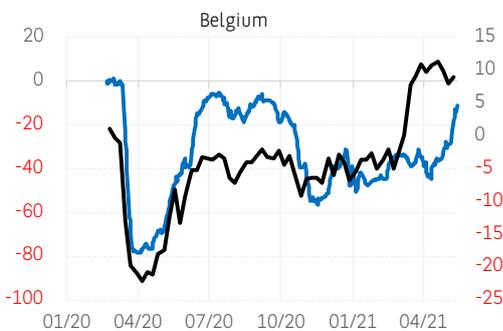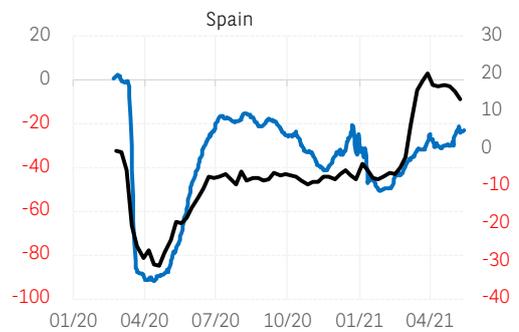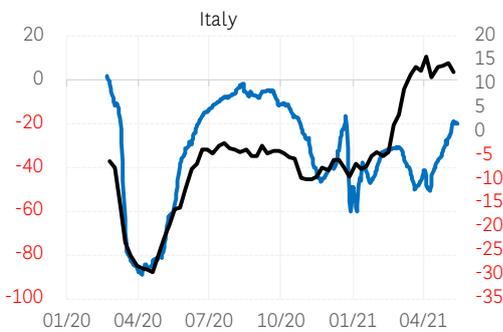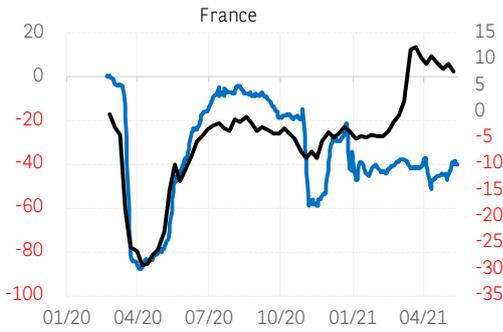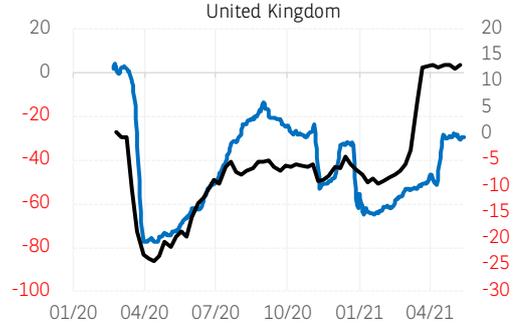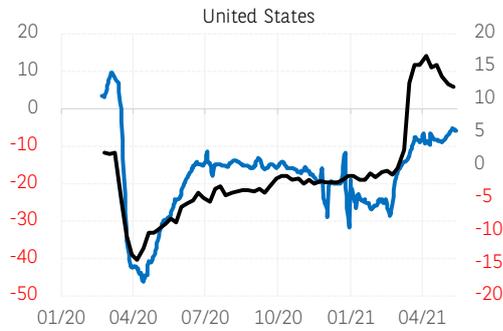
SOURCE: OECD (05/19/2021), GOOGLE (05/19/2021), BNP PARIBAS

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