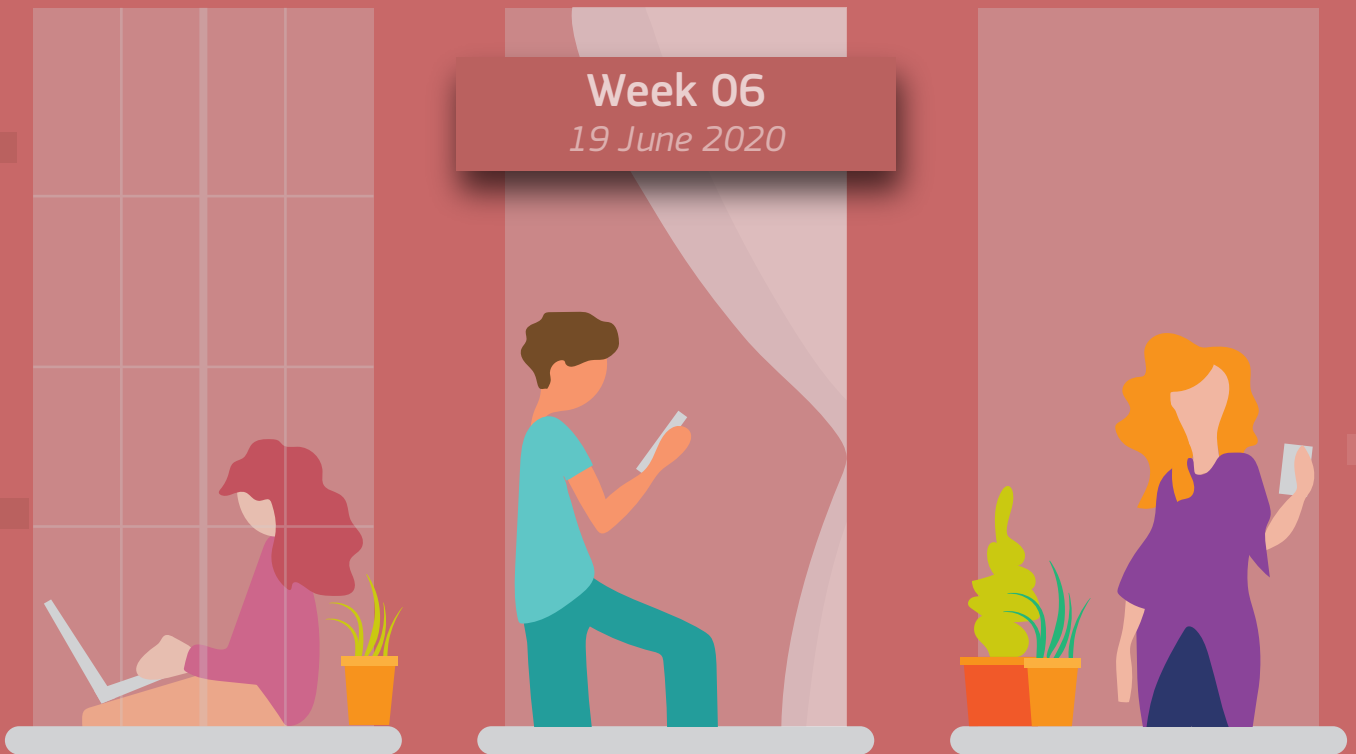


Tracking EU Citizens' Concerns using Google Search Data

Week 06
19 June 2020



Search



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Tracking EU Citizens' Concerns using Google Search Data

Highlights

- ▶ Analysing the evolution of EU citizens' Google searches provides timely insights on their concerns in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic. This issue focuses on how EU citizens leisure activities are evolving in this new normal phase.
- ▶ Despite numerous countries are lifting containment measures, the interest in gyms remains far below the pre-pandemic level. On the contrary, interest in physical exercise at home remains higher than its pre-pandemic average. Given the economic relevance of the fitness market, it is important assessing whether such a shift in preferences will be sustained in the future or it is just a temporary feature.
- ▶ Searches for art- and entertainment-related tickets plunged in mid-March. Conversely, the usage of streaming activities surged. Cultural establishments are particularly exposed to the economic consequences of the covid-19 outbreak as the crisis has endangered more than seven million jobs in the cultural and creative sectors.
- ▶ When containment measures were introduced and restaurants closed, EU citizens began searching online about how to cook their preferred meals at home. Interest in restaurants is now recovering. While the volume of searches has not yet reached the values recorded over the past years in June, there are signs of optimism for the restaurant businesses around Europe.

Overview

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic abruptly changed the life of European citizens. Starting from the first recorded EU hotbed in Northern Italy on February 20th, the virus rapidly spread across several EU countries. In this context, Google searches by EU citizens provide timely insights about Europeans' concerns. As about 90% of EU-27 households have home internet access and the number of internet-connected mobile devices is rapidly increasing, Google searches provide a rather detailed picture of the concerns of the whole EU population.

Against this background, the JRC created a set of indicators to track the evolution over time of Europeans' worries and reactions related to three key domains: health, economy and social isolation. While worries are defined as the instances that might cause difficulties to the EU citizens, reactions include actions and behaviours enacted to cope with the consequences of the pandemic. Each indicator is the result of the aggregation of several topics (groups of keywords queried on Google Search), allowing detailed analyses of different phenomena that are of paramount importance not only in the midst of the pandemic but also in its aftermath.

Weekly updates

Worries related to physical health kept decreasing over the last week, and they are now recording values in line with their pre-pandemic levels. Yet, while the most acute phase of the pandemic seems to be behind, consequences are still developing.

Issues related to mental health, such as anxiety and panic attacks, are on the rise. Searches related to unemployment benefits and firms' subsidies do not show any sign of halting. While searches related to travel are on the rise, the overall interest in home-related activities is still high in almost all EU countries. This suggests that EU citizens are not yet back to their pre-pandemic lives.

CHART KEY

The **Histogram** shows the difference in the amount of Google searches for each topic

17/05/2020-06/06/2020
07-13/06/2020

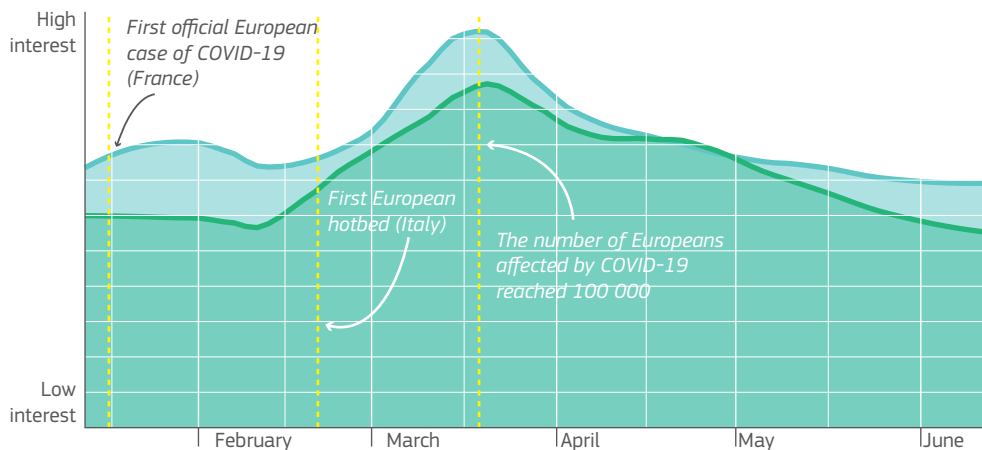
The **Bubbles** size shows the amount of Google searches for each topic in each country



■ Overview of the amount of Google searches in the 27 EU countries (reference period 07-13/06/2020).

Health

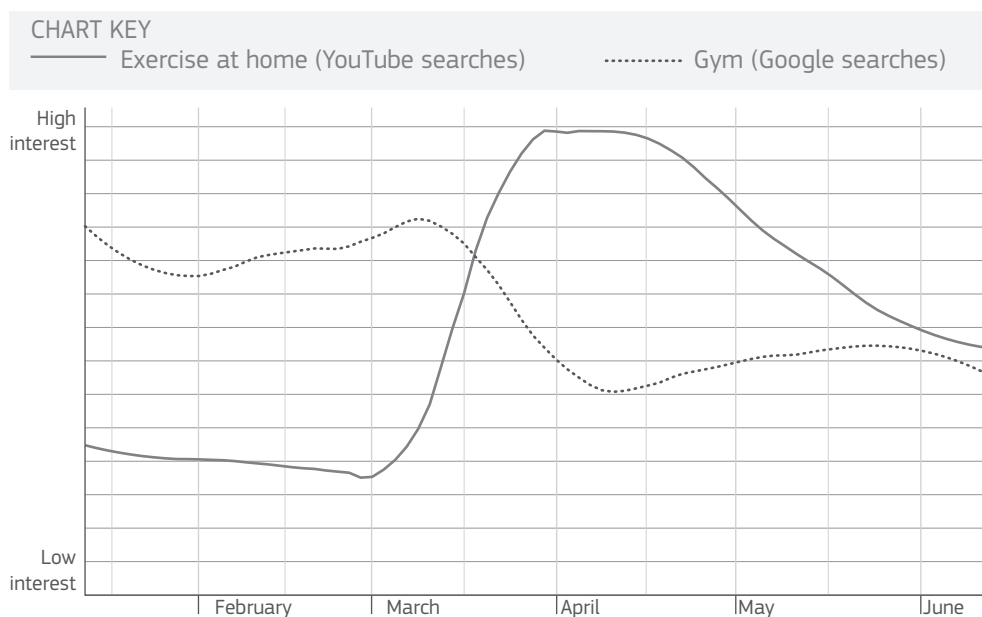
Following the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, Europeans' interest in health-related topics became particularly intense. This domain encompasses worries for physical and mental health, and it captures as reactions changes in lifestyle and habits, such as medical equipment (e.g., searches for dust masks and sanitizers) and self care (such as physical exercises and nutrition).



■ Trends of interest in health-related issues in the 27 EU countries (from 13/01 to 13/06).

When the pandemic hit Europe and countries began adopting lockdown measures, EU citizens began looking at how to do physical exercise at home. At the same time, interest in gyms and related fitness locations dropped considerably.

Despite numerous countries are now steadily lifting containment measures, interest in gyms remains far below the pre-pandemic level. On the contrary, while interest in physical exercise at home has decreased from its peak in April, it is now higher than its pre-pandemic average. As the European health and fitness market generated revenues for about EUR 27 billion in 2018, it is important assessing whether such a shift in preferences (from gyms to home-activities) will be sustained in the future or it is just a feature of the 'new normal' phase.



■ Trend of interest in the topics 'Exercise' and 'Gym' in the 27 EU countries (from 13/01 to 13/06).

WORRIES

Physical health

Cough, Immunity, Symptom, Shortness of breath

Mental health

Anxiety, Panic attack

REACTIONS

Medical equipment

Antiviral drug, Dust mask, Hand sanitizer, Vaccine

Self care

Exercise, Nutrition, Psychotherapy, Yoga

MOST SEARCHED TOPICS

Here listed the most searched topics composing the health related indicators in the week 07 - 13 June 2020.

WORRIES

Anxiety

Panic attack

Shortness of breath

Symptom

Cough

REACTIONS

Psychotherapy

Yoga

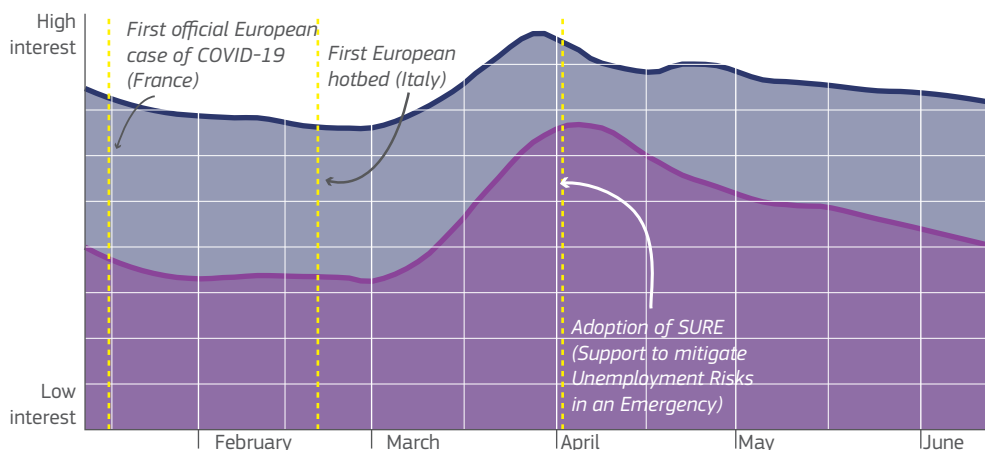
Exercise

Nutrition

Vaccine

Economy

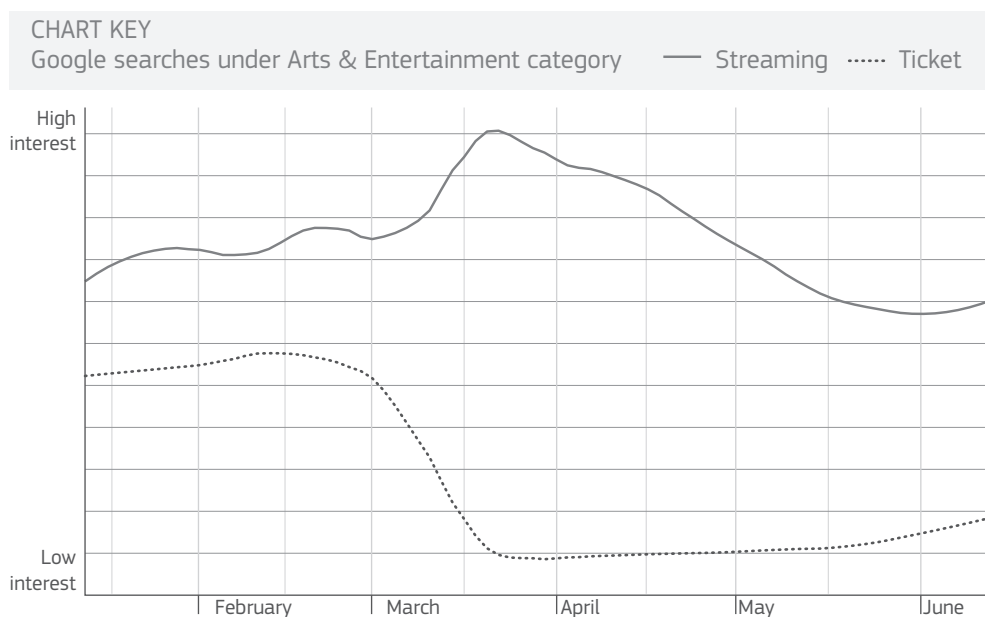
This domain encompasses evolutions in the volume of searches capturing both worries and reactions related to the economy. Among worries, terms related to the economic effects of the lockdown have been included, focusing on the consequences for Governments as well as for Firms and Individuals. Reactions, on the other hand, capture how citizens are trying to get through the crisis either by looking at how to reduce their expenditures or with the help of governments' interventions.



■ Trends of interest in economy-related issues in the 27 EU countries (from 13/01 to 13/06).

Searches for art- and entertainment-related tickets plunged in mid-March. Conversely, the usage of streaming activities surged. And while streaming content is now back to its pre-pandemic levels, interest in art- and entertainment-related tickets shows only weak signs of recovery.

Cultural establishments, requiring the physical presence of an audience to work, are particularly exposed to the economic consequences of the covid-19 outbreak and consequent lock-downs. While some countries are already experimenting with new event formats to ensure the financial sustainability of cultural activities, the crisis has endangered more than seven million jobs in Europe.



■ Trend of interest in the topic 'Streaming' and 'Ticket' in the 27 EU countries (from 13/01 to 13/06).

WORRIES

Firms & individuals

Bankruptcy, Dismissal, Layoff, Unemployment

Governments

Eurobond, European Stability Mechanism, Government Debt

REACTIONS

Expenditure relief

Loan, Moratorium, Mortgage suspension

States support

Subsidy, Unemployment benefits

MOST SEARCHED TOPICS

Here listed the most searched topics composing the economy related indicators in the week 07 - 13 June 2020.

WORRIES

Dismissal

Unemployment

Layoff

Bankruptcy

Government debt

REACTIONS

Loan

Mortgage suspension

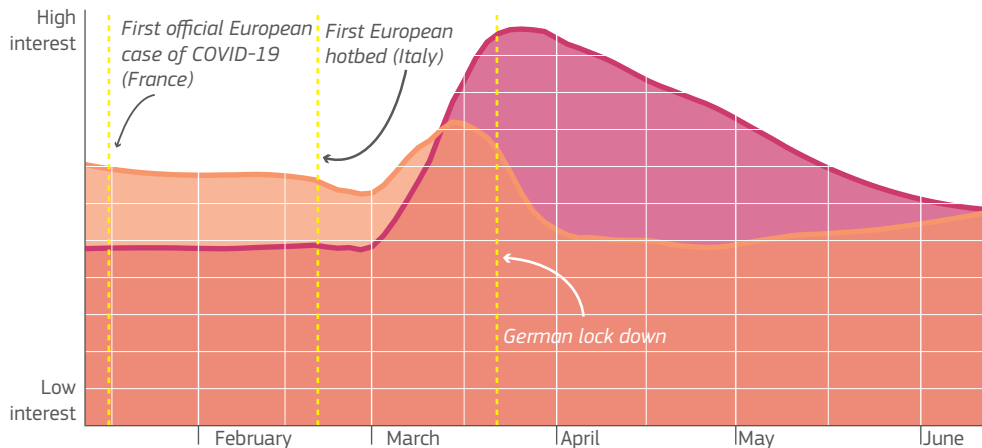
Subsidy

Unemployment benefits

Moratorium

Social isolation

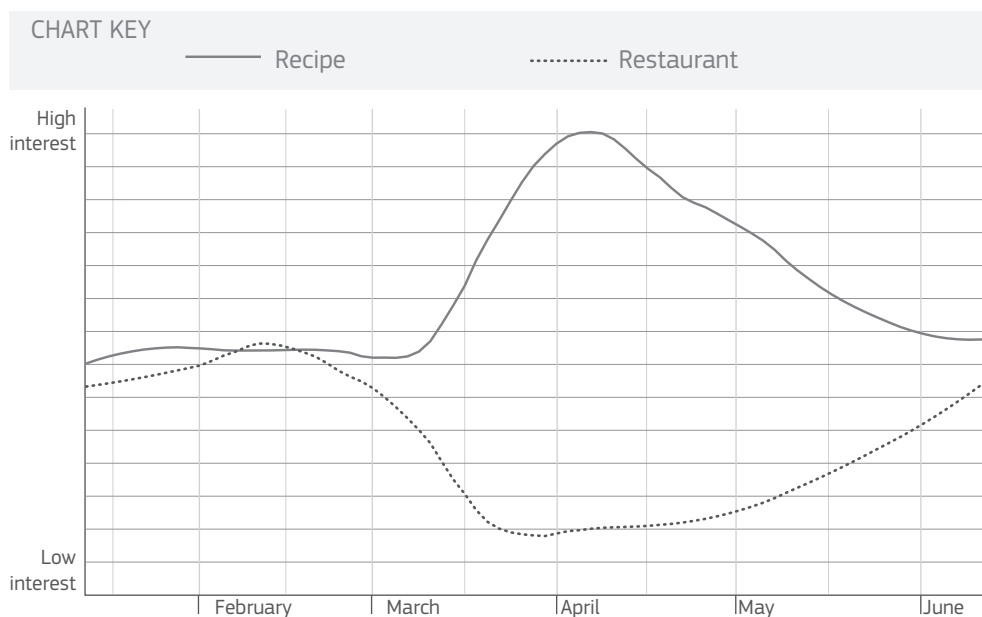
One of the consequences of the restrictive measures adopted in Member States is the social isolation of citizens, who are asked to limit their social interactions. Therefore, this domain encompasses evolutions in the volume of searches capturing both topics related to travel and quarantine expectations (worries) and topics describing how citizens are coping with restrictive measures, in terms of work and private life (reactions). Looking at how citizens have been adapting to life at home, the analysis considers both online activities and offline activities.



■ Trends of interest in social isolation-related issues in the 27 EU countries (from 13/01 to 13/06).

When containment measures were introduced and restaurants closed, EU citizens began searching online about how to cook their preferred meals at home. At the same time, in spite in several countries take-away and home-delivered meals were allowed, interest towards restaurants and other food facilities dropped substantially.

While lockdowns will leave scars on the EU food industry, it is now possible to see that the interest in restaurants is recovering, quickly rising towards its pre-pandemic level. As citizens start returning to their daily lives, they are gradually restarting to be interested in spending time out to eat or drink. While the volume of online searches has not yet reached the average recorded over the past years in the same month, there are signs of optimism for the restaurant businesses around Europe.



■ Trend of interest in the topics 'Recipe' and 'Restaurant' in the 27 EU countries (from 13/01 to 13/06).

WORRIES

Quarantine expectation

Lockdown, Quarantine, Social distancing

Travel

Bus, Flight, Train

REACTIONS

Life at home

Book, Do it yourself, Gardening, Online game, Recipe, Streaming media

Work

Telecommuting, Video conference, Videotelephony

MOST SEARCHED TOPICS

Here listed the most searched topics composing the social isolation related indicators in the week 07 - 13 June 2020.

WORRIES

Bus

Train

Flight

Social distancing

Lockdown

REACTIONS

Book

Do-it-yourself

Gardening

Recipe

Streaming media



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