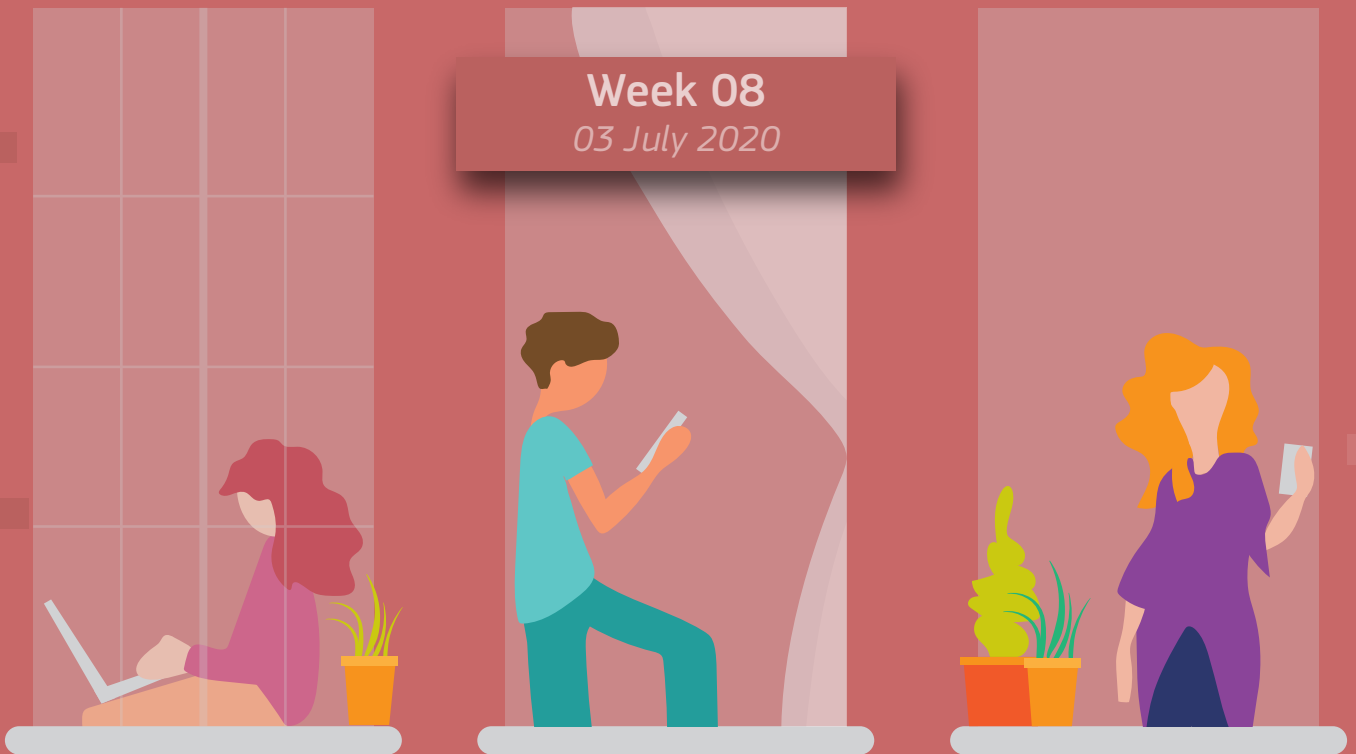


# Tracking EU Citizens' Concerns using Google Search Data

Week 08

03 July 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 week the report explores citizens' solidarity during lockdowns.
- ▶ When the covid-19 pandemic hit Europe, EU citizens immediately reacted. In the wake of lockdowns, the search volume in queries related to donations surged. People searched how to donate money to hospitals and charitable organisations as well as how to donate blood to ensure hospitals could continue operating.
- ▶ EU citizens' generosity can also be observed by how their interest in food banks skyrocketed in the wake of the pandemic. This trend was particularly pronounced in those countries more severely affected by the pandemic.
- ▶ Finally, people actively searched for how to volunteer to help during an unprecedented crisis. The increase in searches related to volunteering is visible, and sizable, in the vast majority of EU countries. Searches related to volunteering include both nation-wide organisations and local-level associations.

## 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 20<sup>th</sup>, 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

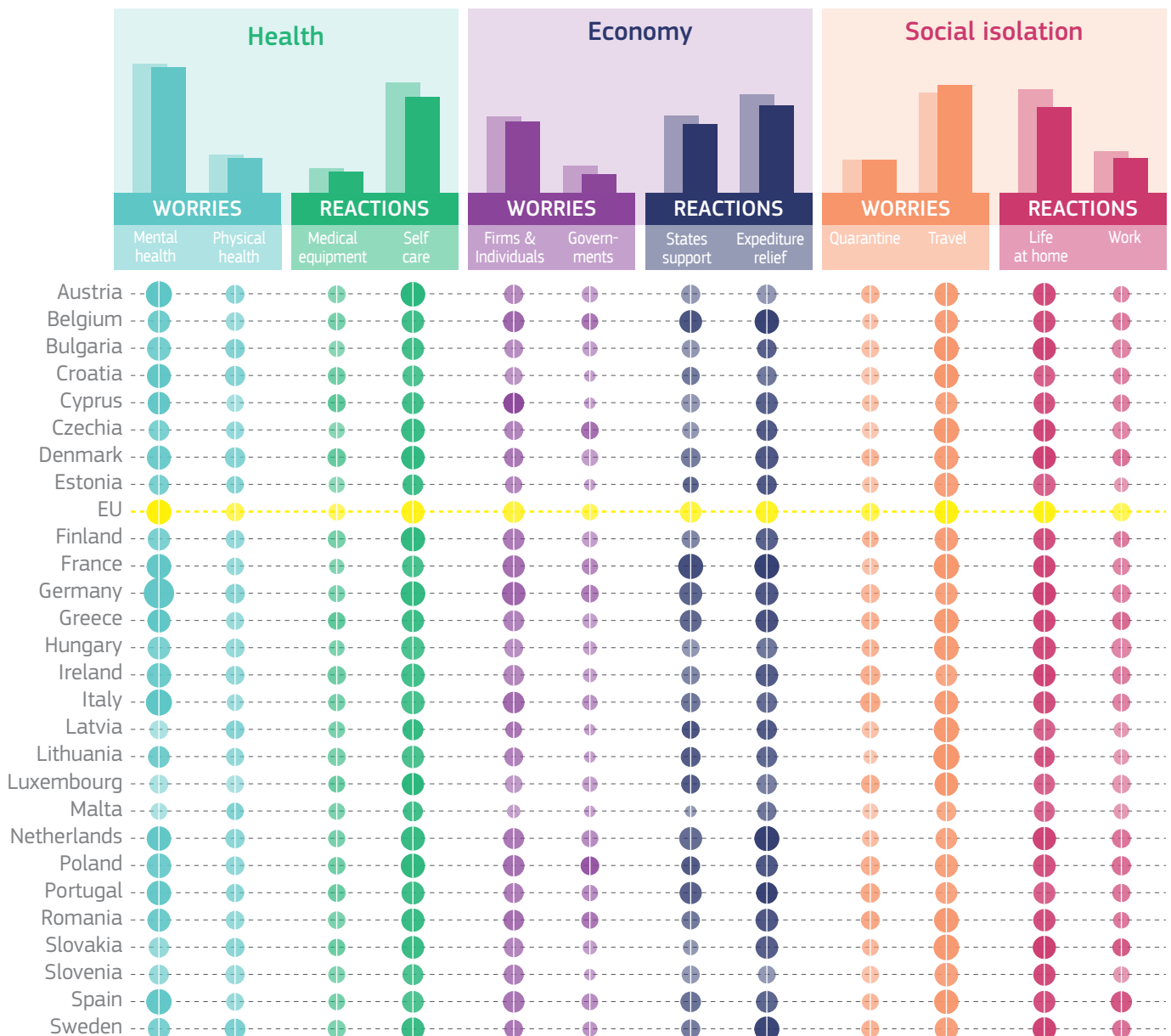
The search volumes observed over the last week for the domains health, economy and social isolation confirm the positive trends that emerged in June. Interest in topics related to unemployment benefit and state aids continue slowing down. At the same time, worries related to physical health and quarantine measures are now at the levels recorded in February 2020. A rapid and constant increase can be instead observed for the search volume of travel-related queries. EU citizens are looking at how to move within and outside their countries during this 'new normal' summer.

## CHART KEY

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

31/05/2020-20/06/2020  
21-27/06/2020

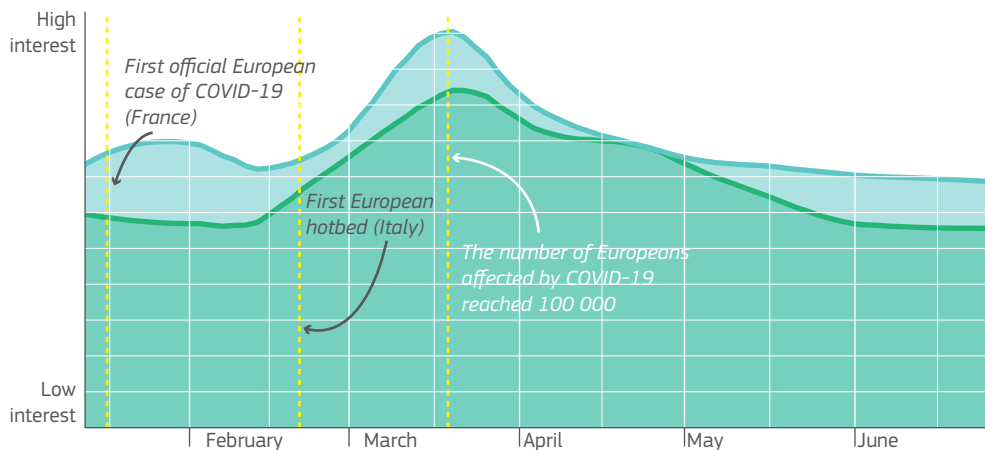
The **Bubbles size** shows the amount of Google searches for each topic in each country



■ Overview of the amount of Google searches in the 27 EU countries (reference period 21-27/06/2020).

# Health

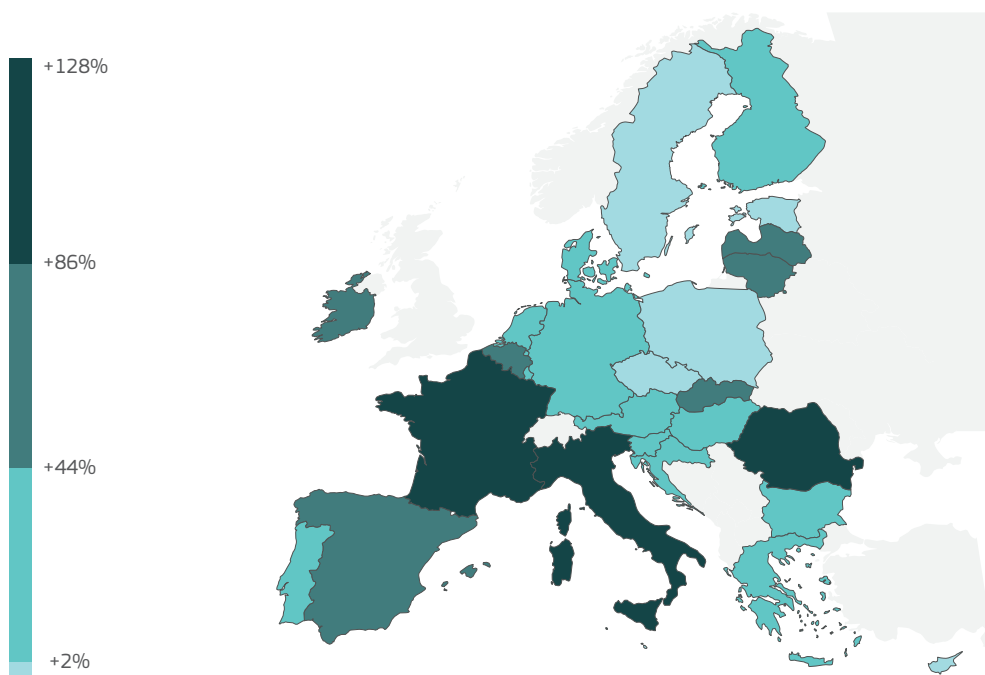
Following the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, Europeans' interest in health-related topics became particularly intense. This domain encompasses worries for physical and mental health, and it captures as reactions changes in lifestyle and habits, such as medical equipment (e.g., searches for dust masks 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 27/06).

When the covid-19 pandemic hit Europe, EU citizens immediately reacted. In the 30 days between the 9th of March (the date of the first lockdown in Europe) and the 9th of April, the in donations surged in the vast majority of the EU Member States. People searched how to donate money to hospitals and charitable organisations helping those families in financial distress as well as how to donate blood to ensure hospitals could continue operating.

As an example, the interest in financial donations to hospitals in France has been particularly high, increasing by about 90% from the pre-pandemic period. In Italy instead searches in donations-related topics surged by about 130%, with a particularly pronounced interest in blood donations.



■ Increase of interest in the topic 'Donation' in the 27 EU countries (from 09/02-09/03 to 09/03-09/04).

## 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 21-27 June 2020.

## WORRIES

Anxiety

Panic attack

Shortness of breath

Symptom

Cough

## REACTIONS

Psychotherapy

Yoga

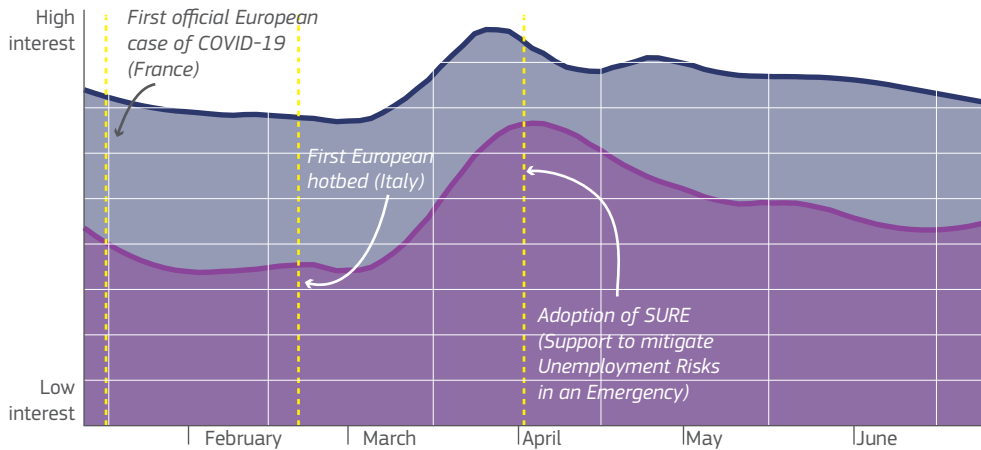
Exercise

Nutrition

Vaccine

# Economy

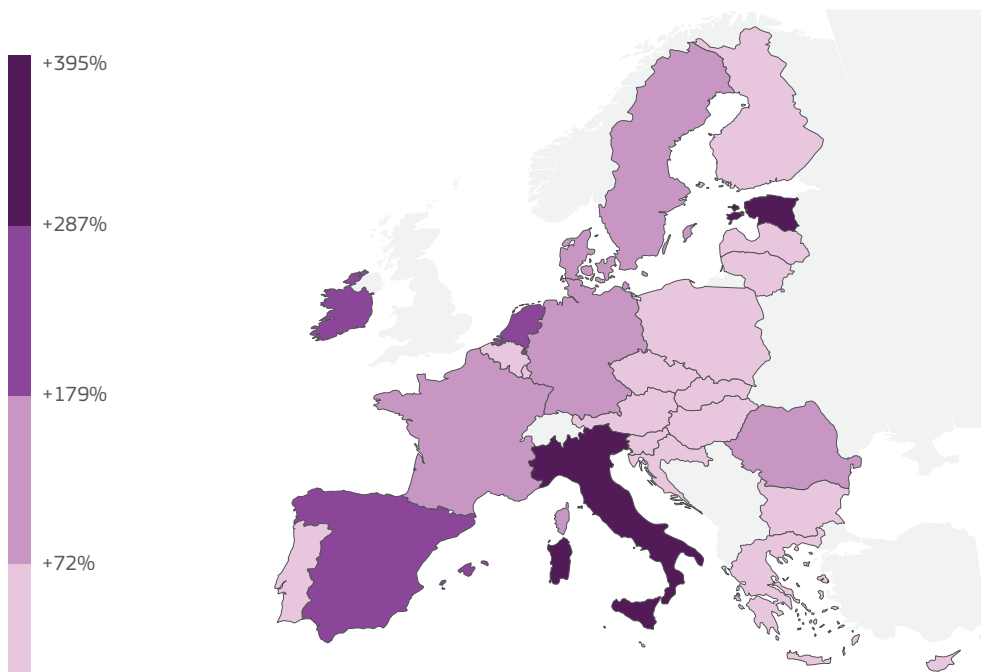
This domain encompasses evolutions in the volume of searches capturing both worries and reactions related to the economy. Among worries, terms related to the economic effects of the lockdown have been included, focusing on the consequences for Governments as well as for Firms and Individuals. Reactions, 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 27/06).

EU citizens' generosity can be observed by how their interest towards food banks skyrocketed in the wake of the pandemic. In the month after the SARS-CoV-2 virus hit Europe, an increase of up to 300% (in Italy and Estonia) was observed in searches for food banks.

Importantly, EU citizens not only looked at how to donate food or money to food banks or directly to fellow citizens; they also searched how to actively volunteer to help bring foods and other essential goods to those facing severe financial difficulties. This trend was particularly pronounced in those countries more severely affected by the pandemic.



■ Increase of interest in the topic 'Food Bank' in the 27 EU countries (from 09/02-09/03 to 09/03-09/04).

## 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 21-27 June 2020.

## WORRIES

Dismissal

Unemployment

Bankruptcy

Layoff

Government debt

## REACTIONS

Mortgage suspension

Loan

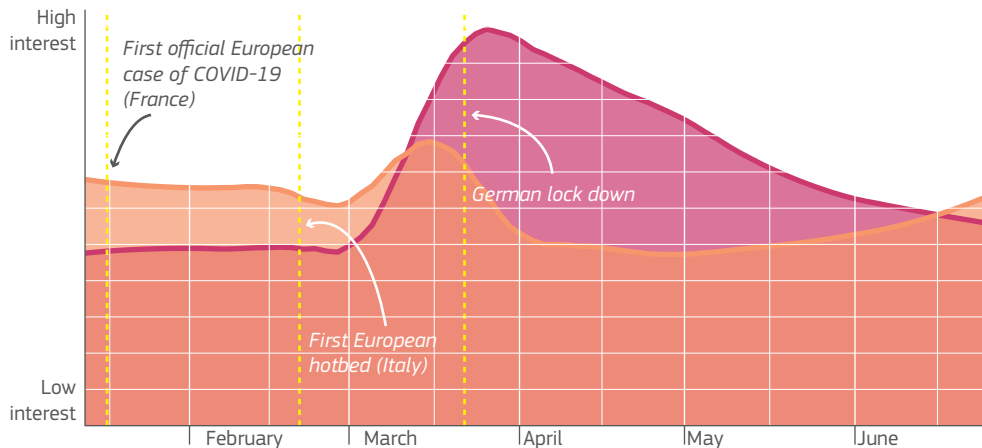
Subsidy

Unemployment benefits

Moratorium

# Social isolation

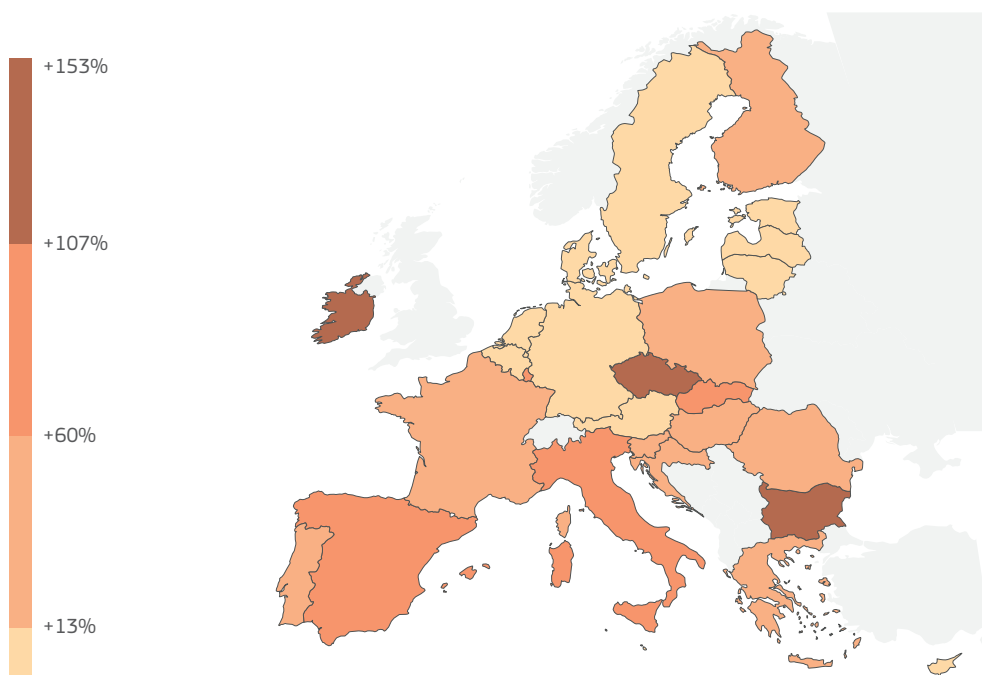
One of the consequences of the restrictive measures adopted in Member States is the social isolation of citizens, who are asked to limit their social interactions. Therefore, this domain encompasses evolutions in the volume of searches capturing both topics related to travel and quarantine expectations (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 27/06).

Not only Europeans' interest in topics related to donations and food banks increased in the wake of the pandemic. They actively searched for how to volunteer to help during an unprecedented crisis. The increase in searches related to volunteering is visible, and sizable, in the vast majority of EU countries. Searches related to volunteering include both nation-wide organisations and local-level associations.

The EU average increase in topics related to volunteering has been roughly 35%. Among the countries most hardly hit by the pandemic, Spain and Italy stand out, with an increase from the pre-pandemic period of, respectively, about 60% and 90%.



■ Increase of interest in the topic 'Volunteering' in the 27 EU countries (from 09/02-09/03 to 09/03-09/04).

## 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 21-27 June 2020.

## WORRIES

Bus

Train

Flight

Social distancing

Lockdown

## REACTIONS

Book

Do-it-yourself

Gardening

Recipe

Streaming media



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