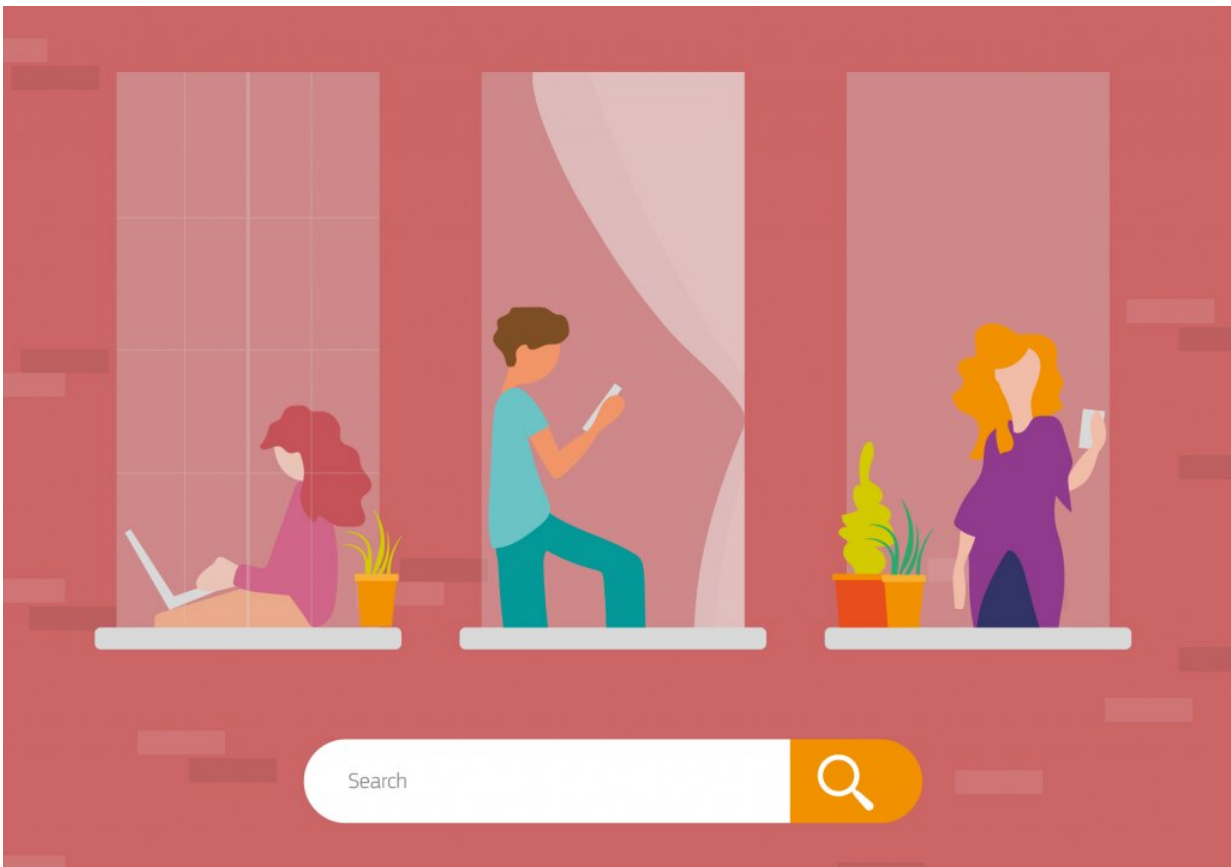


# Google search data provides insights about EU citizens' concerns during the coronavirus pandemic

June 15 2020

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The research is part of activities to analyze public opinion on the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. Credit: The European Commission's science and knowledge service

Using Google search data, a Joint Research Centre team has created a set of indicators to analyze how the worries of EU citizens change as the coronavirus pandemic evolves.

The research focuses on Google searches related to three key domains: health, economy and social isolation.

"The research is part of JRC work to track [public opinion](#) on the pandemic and its consequences. It supports the EU efforts that aim to mitigate the effects of the crisis by providing timely insights about the concerns of EU citizens during the pandemic and in its aftermath," said JRC researcher Marco Colagrossi.

## **From the fear of the virus to economic concerns**

The on-going analysis shows that at the start of the crisis, health-related searches increased in the whole EU as Europeans began looking for COVID-19 symptoms as well as methods to protect themselves.

In the four largest EU countries- Germany, Italy, France and Spain, health-related worries about the virus began declining shortly after governments imposed lockdown measures.

The JRC scientists see this as a possible sign that citizens felt less exposed to the disease as they were confined to their homes.

Shortly after, economic-related concerns increased, with searches for [unemployment benefits](#) and fears of layoffs growing by 35% and 70% respectively from the pre-pandemic period.

Just as EU citizens' economic worries peaked, the European Commission mobilized all of its resources to protect lives and livelihoods through the SURE program, including a €100 billion solidarity instrument to help

workers keep their incomes and help businesses stay afloat.

"Our analysis shows that the adoption of SURE to mitigate unemployment risks came just in the right time, at the moment when unemployment and economic losses were at their highest," Marco said.

As from March, EU citizens started to look for tools to cope with the lockdown measures, prolonged social isolation and smart working.

As countries started lifting the lockdown measures, the focus of health-related searches shifted from mental-health to physical health. EU citizens were looking for ways to do physical exercise and improve their nutrition.

Searches linked to financial relief, measures to help overcome economic difficulties and state aid has remained as high as during the peak of the pandemic.

## **Tourism-related searches are slowly increasing again**

In March when the health-related searches were at their highest, there was little interest among European citizens towards holidays.

In May, as governments began lifting the [travel restrictions](#), searches related to travel and tourism were on the rise for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

The early evidence suggests that the economic consequences of the [pandemic](#) will not be the same for all tourism sectors.

The volume of searches on Booking.com and Airbnb is at a three-year low. However, whereas the [search](#) volumes on Booking.com and camping sites is rapidly recovering, the same does not apply to Airbnb.

Flight searches remain particularly low, although there have been weak signs of recovery.

In April, the volume of flight searches was three to four times smaller compared to searches in April 2019.

Although there are now signs of slow recovery, the trend does not suggest that airline companies will be back at the 2019 levels any time soon.

**More information:** The weekly updates tracking EU Citizens' concerns using Google search data are published on the [Knowledge4policy \(K4P\) website](#).

Provided by European Commission Joint Research Centre

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