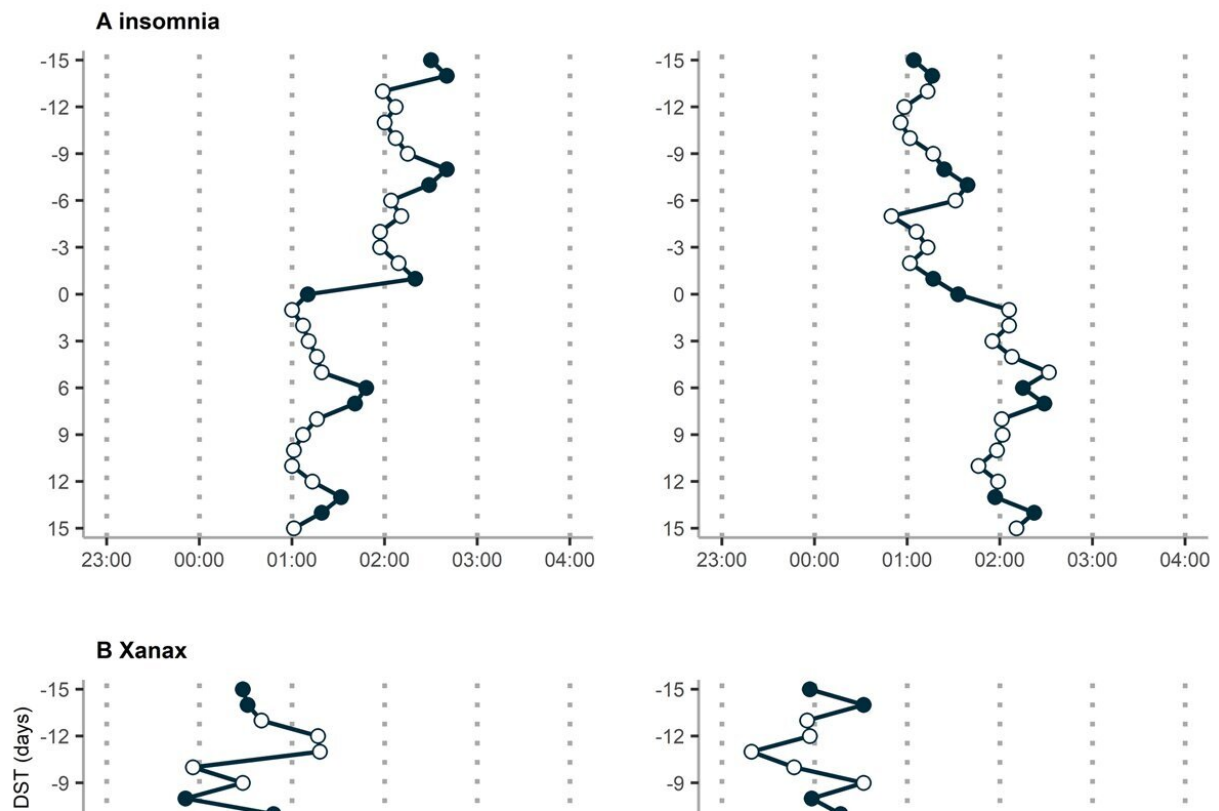


# What happens to our online activity over the switches to and from Daylight Saving Time?

January 9 2024



Phase of three relevant words for the 15 days prior to and after the switch to (left) and from (right) DST. The phase values for the words "insomnia"(A), "Xanax"(B) and "taxi"(C) in 2018, chosen as an example year, are shown. Time is expressed as UTC. Weekend days are marked as full and weekdays as open circles. The day of the switch to/from DST is marked as "0" on the y axis. A phase advance can be observed over the Spring transition, while in Autumn there is a phase delay, both being most obvious for the word insomnia. Credit: *Journal of Circadian Rhythms* (2023). DOI: 10.5334/jcr.230

Daylight Saving Time (DST) might be influencing our internet habits, according to research from the University of Surrey and the University of Padova (Italy).

Researchers noticed that after switching to DST, certain Google searches took place up to an hour earlier than usual. On the other hand, when clocks went back to standard time in autumn, these searches tended to occur later.

The shift in search times varied across different search categories. Notably, the time of searches around sleep and health varied by less than 60 minutes over DST changes, hinting at a strong and robust role of the internal body clock in driving them.

The study has been [published](#) in the *Journal of Circadian Rhythms*.

Professor Sara Montagnese, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, said, "Our research calls for wider discussions about the health and well-being impact of DST and the complex relationship between our internal body clock and the [time constraints](#) imposed by society, which are collectively known as the 'social clock,' of which DST is part."

Researchers analyzed Google Trends data from Italy, covering 2015 to 2020. The team examined the relative search volume for 26 keywords, grouped into three categories:

- Sleep/health-related: includes [search terms](#) related to sleep patterns, [sleep disorders](#), and overall [health concerns](#). Terms such as "insomnia" and "melatonin" fall under this category.
- Medication: this category includes terms concerning drugs and

pharmaceuticals. Terms like "painkiller" and Xanax" are included in this category.

- Non-sleep/health-related: this category covers terms that are unrelated to sleep or health. Examples include "spa" and "taxi."

**More information:** Esther Dingena Domenie et al, The Alarm Clock Against the Sun: Trends in Google Trends Search Activity Across the Transitions to and from Daylight Saving Time, *Journal of Circadian Rhythms* (2023). [DOI: 10.5334/jcr.230](https://doi.org/10.5334/jcr.230)

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