

COVID-19

IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINES



What impact did the pandemic and lockdown restrictions have on helplines for mental health and domestic abuse? How did countries respond in order to ensure continued access to services?

COVID-19: impact on mental health and domestic abuse helplines

Version: 1.0

Publication date: 06/08/20

Status of the document: APPROVED

Authors that contributed to this document:

Marta Azevedo Silva and
Rose Michael - EENA

EENA

European Emergency Number Association EENA 112

Avenue de la Toison d'Or 79, Brussels, Belgium

T: +32/2.534.97.89

E-mail: info@eena.org

LEGAL DISCLAIMER:

This document is authored by EENA staff members with contributions from individual members of EENA and represents the views of EENA. This document does not represent the views of individual members of EENA, or any other parties.

This document is published for information purposes only and it does not declare to be a statement or interpretation of EU law or the national law of EU Member States. This document is entirely without prejudice to the views of relevant national statutory authorities and their legal functions and powers, whether under EU law or the national law of their Member State. Accordingly, under no circumstances may reliance be placed upon this document by any parties in compliance or otherwise with any applicable laws. Neither may reliance be placed upon this document in relation to the suitability or functionality of any technical specifications, or any other matters discussed in it. Legal advice, technical advice and other advice as relevant, may be sought as necessary.

The information in this document is compiled from media sources and it is non-exhaustive. If you believe information should be amended or if you have information to add, please contact Marta Azevedo Silva at mas@eena.org.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1 IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINES.....	6
1.1 EUROPE.....	7
Austria	7
Belgium.....	7
Czechia.....	8
Denmark.....	8
Estonia	8
Finland	8
France	9
Germany.....	9
Greece.....	10
Ireland	10
Italy	10
Lithuania	11
Malta	12
Netherlands.....	13
Norway.....	14
Portugal	14
Slovakia.....	14
Slovenia	15
Spain	15
Sweden	16
Switzerland	16
United Kingdom.....	16
1.2 NORTH AMERICA.....	17
USA	17

Canada	18
2 IMPACT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE HOTLINES.....	19
2.1 EUROPE.....	20
Belgium	20
Bulgaria.....	20
Croatia	21
Czechia	22
Denmark.....	22
Finland	22
France	22
Germany.....	23
Hungary	24
Ireland	24
Italy	25
Latvia	25
Luxembourg	26
Netherlands.....	26
Norway.....	27
Poland	27
Portugal	27
Romania	28
Slovenia	28
Spain	29
Switzerland	30
United Kingdom.....	30
2.2 NORTH AMERICA	31
USA	31
Canada	31
3 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	32



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 outbreak posed and continues to pose significant challenges for emergency services and public authorities. Whilst emergency services call centres have remarked changes in the volume of emergency calls during this period, the pandemic has also considerably impacted helplines for mental health and domestic violence.

Lockdowns in countries across the world have created feelings of anxiety or isolation for many people or have intensified pre-existing mental health issues. Many countries have therefore seen increases in calls to mental health helplines and have taken measures to increase the capacity of their services.

Due to the periods of restrictive measures, authorities and organisations have also expressed serious concerns about the safety of victims of domestic violence. Although some countries have seen increases in calls to domestic violence helplines, others have seen the volume of calls drop as victims are no longer able to access help.

This document will explore the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on mental health and domestic violence helplines, principally in European countries. It will also highlight some of the measures taken in different countries to ensure that people have access to the help they need.



The aim of this document is to highlight how the COVID-19 outbreak impacted services in different countries. In doing so, countries can learn from one another and ensure that the safety of citizens is maintained as authorities respond to future health crises.



Many countries have implemented special measures during lockdowns to ensure that people can continue accessing help. This includes establishing new helplines, using online chat tools, launching awareness campaigns, changing the way people can access help and increasing the capacities of existing services.

1 | IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINES

COVID-19 has posed some unprecedented challenges for people's mental health and wellbeing. The psychological impact is mainly due to elevated rates of anxiety, stress, fear, etc. Isolation, quarantine measures and the closing of schools and workplaces also increase feelings of loneliness, as well as suicidal thoughts.

To help to respond to this issue, the World Health Organisation (WHO) created the "*Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak*."¹

The document, published on the 18 March 2020, compiles different recommendations for the general population, healthcare workers, team leaders or managers in health facilities, carers of children, older adults, people with underlying health conditions and their carers, and people in isolation.

The fact that people are living in precarious situations, such as experiencing unemployment or lay-off, may also contribute to the increase in suicide rates since it has already been proven through studies that during recessions, "*economic suicides*" increase.

The study, carried out by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2014), estimated that the Great Recession (2008 – 2010) is associated with at least 10 000 additional *economic suicides*.²

Other pandemics such as SARS, MERS or Ebola have shown the *negative psychological effects that manifest during quarantines*. "Most reviewed studies reported negative psychological effects including post-traumatic stress symptoms, confusion, and anger. Stressors included longer quarantine duration, infection fears, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, financial loss, and stigma. Some researchers have suggested long-lasting effects."³

As the virus lost some of its initial impact, fewer calls were made to the emergency services. However, in some countries there was a perceptible increase in calls regarding psychological issues.

Below we will examine different examples from across the globe with a special focus on the European continent.

¹ World Health Organization 2020 "Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak", <https://bit.ly/3ed0fTu> - Retrieved 2020-05-06

² Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2014 "Economic suicides in the Great Recession in Europe and North America" by Aaron Reeves , Martin McKee and David Stuckler, <https://bit.ly/3hyPM6Q> - Retrieved 2020-05-06 Published online by Cambridge University Press: 02 January 2018

³ The Lancet 2020 "The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence" by Samantha K Brooks, Rebecca K Webster, Louise E Smith, Lisa Woodland, Prof Simon Wessely, Prof Neil Greenberg, Gideon James Rubin, <https://bit.ly/2MZ89Ur> - Retrieved 2020-05-06 Published: February 26, 2020



1.1 | EUROPE

Austria

The Professional Association of Austrian Psychologists provided acute psychological help during the COVID-19 crisis. Its telephone advice line was available Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm and advice was also possible by email.⁴

The Vienna Crisis Intervention Centre also provided interventions for psychological stress related to COVID-19 by phone and by email. This was in addition to other telephone counselling lines, for instance *Telephon Seelsorge 142*. Psychological advice was also provided for children and adolescents, as well as parents, through the phone number 147 as well as via online chat.⁵

Belgium

The Belgium Suicide Prevention Centre has noticed an increase in calls and messages on the forum of their website since the start of the confinement period.⁶ To respond to the increase in the number of calls, the organisation encouraged volunteers to join and help during this health crisis.⁷

A joint survey between researchers from UCLouvain and the University of Antwerp shows the mental health risks during confinement. The study of 25,000 people indicates that one in two Belgians was in a state of distress during the confinement.⁸

The Belgium National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance, INAMI, during the context of the crisis, started doing video consultations.⁹

⁴ ORF (2020.03.16) "Hotlines, tipsps und Unterstützung" <https://bit.ly/3gvxbHJ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁵ ORF (2020.03.16) "Hotlines, tipsps und Unterstützung" <https://bit.ly/3gvxbHJ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁶ François Garitte (2020.04.03) "Santé mentale et confinement : une hausse des appels chez Prévention Suicide" DH net <https://bit.ly/2B0ItV0> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁷ RTBF BE (2020.03.19) "Coronavirus : tendance à la hausse des appels à Prévention Suicide, qui recrute des bénévoles" <https://bit.ly/37TVPhF> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁸ Le Guide Social (2020.04.20) "Confinement : explosion des appels au centre de prévention au suicide" <https://bit.ly/2YtsBU2> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁹ Le Guide Social (2020.03.30) "Psychologues : consultation par vidéo et davantage de flexibilité" <https://bit.ly/2YtsBU2> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Czechia

The Ministry of Health launched a first psychological emergency helpline – 1212 (option 5). The line is free and intended for all citizens. The operation of the line is provided by medics and psychologists of the Psychosocial Intervention Service System (SPIS), trained to communicate with people affected with mental health issues.¹⁰

Denmark

In April 2020, the Psychiatric Foundation (Psykiatrifonden) saw a 30% increase in calls from citizens to their counselling helpline. A news source suggests that mental health in Denmark is strongly related to work status, making many people vulnerable during the crisis.¹¹

The Psychiatric Foundation helpline is for people that feel the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their mental health in whatever way: anxiety, suicidal thoughts, isolation etc. An online chat is also available.¹²

Estonia

According to the ERR radio news, the number of people calling the crisis line with suicidal thoughts was previously around 10-15 people in a month. Just in the first week of April, the helpline has already received almost as many calls.¹³

Finland

The number of suicides in Finland in March and April 2020 has risen by 15% compared to the same time period in 2019.¹⁴ Several initiatives are available for those experiencing suicidal thoughts, including an SOS Crisis Centre Helpline¹⁵. There is also an online chat available for people under 30 years old¹⁶ and a separate chat for adults over 30¹⁷. The Central Association for Mental Health also runs a counselling service¹⁸.



¹⁰ Reforma péče o duševní zdraví (N/A) "1212 – linka první psychické pomoci" <https://bit.ly/3g2poRI> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹¹ Katrine Vetergaard (2020.06.05) "Genåbningen kalder på at vi lytter til hinanden og sammen forebygger psykiske sygdomme" <https://bit.ly/3fy3qom> - Retrieved 2020-06-24

¹² Danish Health Authority (2020.06.10) "Hotlines" <https://bit.ly/2EP7Omh> - Retrieved 2020-06-24

¹³ DELFI (2020.04.08) "Abitefonid on hakanud saama rohkem kõnesid" <https://bit.ly/2V8pgHW> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹⁴ Pekka Vanttinen (2020.05.20) "Helsinki – suicide spikes amid COVID-19" <https://bit.ly/3i5ChMj> - Retrieved 2020-06-24

¹⁵ Mieli "Support and help for foreigners" <https://bit.ly/39Vx1aa> - Retrieved 2020-06-24

¹⁶ Sekasin (N/A) <https://bit.ly/2BXUIrd> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁷ Mieli (N/A) "Tukinet - tukipisteesi netissä" <https://bit.ly/3i5RwUz> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁸ Mielenterveyden Keskusliitto (N/A) "Mista apua?" <https://bit.ly/2WREqLL> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

France

In France, the SOS Amitié lines at the beginning of the lockdown saw a decrease in calls but quickly saw worrying peaks. Some practical examples below:

Besançon, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region

In Besançon, during the lockdown the number of calls to the helpline, SOS Amitié, exceeded 7,500 calls per day compared with 6,000 calls received per day before the lockdown. The President of the association in Besançon, Agnès Lafond, stated that the centre has been understaffed and they could not reply to a quarter of the calls.¹⁹

Caen, Normandy Region

According to the President of SOS Amitié in Caen, Gérard Massot, speaking to France Bleu on April 1st, the helpline received a big increase of calls. Instead of 1,500 to 2,000 per day, they peaked at 7,000 calls per day: an increase of more than 250%.²⁰

Since the start of lockdown in the country, domestic violence has increased significantly. On 1st April, the French Ministry of Interior put in place a new system for victims to request help by sending a SMS message to 114.²¹

Germany

Hotlines for psychological advice reported increases in calls. The Berlin senior hotline (Silbernetz) reported in April that five times more people called compared to previous periods. Those seeking help were more fit and young seniors and more males than usual. The capacities of the hotline were increased to manage the increase in calls.²²

The Würzburg Telephone Counselling Service reported that the number of daily calls increased from an average of 32 to 50 per day during the period of restrictions. One reason for this was that some in-person psychological help was no longer available, for instance group meetings or joint excursions.²³

Help was available on the national telephone helpline for depression, as well as through an online forum. A telephone counselling hotline could also be contacted and email advice could be used by young people.²⁴ The BDP-Corona Hotline was introduced to provide anonymous services for those seeking psychological support. It was available from 8am-8pm²⁵.



¹⁹ Hélène L. (2020.04.02) "SOS Amitié Besançon : une augmentation des appels suite au confinement" [macommune.info https://bit.ly/2By6uml](https://bit.ly/2By6uml) - Retrieved 2020-05-10

²⁰ Boris Letondeur (2020.04.01) "Coronavirus : le nombre d'appels à SOS Amitié explose depuis le début du confinement" France Bleu Normandie <https://bit.ly/3dqqZoT> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

²¹ Winny Claret, France Bleu, France Bleu Isère (2020.04.01) "Le 114, un numéro d'alerte par SMS contre les violences conjugales pendant le confinement" France Bleu <https://bit.ly/30qN4tj> - Retrieved 2020-08-04

²² Steffen Wolff (2020.04.02) "Experten befürchten mehr Suizide und Depressionen durch Coronakrise" SWP <https://bit.ly/3a0UzUU> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

²³ Anna Carthaus (2020.03.26) "Coronavirus und Psyche: 'Ich könnt' auch einfach liegenbleiben'" Deutsche Welle <https://bit.ly/3gGyPpW> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

²⁴ Steffen Wolff (2020.04.02) "Experten befürchten mehr Suizide und Depressionen durch Coronakrise" SWP <https://bit.ly/2WQuX7R> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

²⁵ Berufsverband Deutscher PsychologInnen und Psychologen (2020.03.24) "BDP-Corona-Hotline: Psychologische Beratung in Corona-Krisenzeiten" <https://bit.ly/3g0afjF> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

Greece

In Greece, the Suicide Intervention Line 1018 has also had an increase in the number of calls. Olga Theodorikakou, coordinator at the Center for Suicide Prevention stated that, according to recent data, they have received twice as many calls every day. Most callers are women.²⁶

Ireland

Data collection by Irish hospitals on the number of suicides was suspended during the lockdown, meaning that there is a lack of figures on the number of suicide and self-harm cases. However, in March and April 2020, 17% of patients who were admitted to the National Spinal Injuries Unit in the Mater Hospital (Dublin) had attempted suicide. This is compared to 1% in the same period last year. A large proportion of consultants have also reported that they have seen an increase in people experiencing new-onset and relapse of mental illness as the lockdown progressed and compared to before the lockdown.²⁷

The organisation Alone launched a national COVID-19 helpline for older people experiencing mental health problems during the pandemic. The helpline has received more than 14,000 calls between the end of March and the end of April. Staff and volunteers had also made 36,000 calls to older people in Ireland. At the beginning, the helpline was receiving 2-3 calls per week from callers expressing suicidal ideation. This increased to 3-4 per week by the end of April.²⁸

The Health Service Executive (HSE) published a list of services available for people experiencing mental health problems during the pandemic.²⁹ Support included the CrisisText Line and the Samaritans helpline. In addition, for health professionals, the HSE published interim clinical guidance on managing self-harm and suicidal ideation during the COVID-19 outbreak.³⁰

Italy

Florence, Tuscany Region

The region has been at the top for the consumption of antidepressants in the last years.

Since March 16, the Order of Psychologists of Tuscany has activated three telephone helplines, one of them which is dedicated to frontline healthcare personnel.

In the beginning of the pandemic, the concerns were regarding anxiety, loneliness, etc. More recent calls were regarding jobs losses, forced coexistence with family, among others.³¹

²⁶ *Suicide Help GR (N/A)* "Ένας μήνας σε απαγόρευση κυκλοφορίας: Διπλάσιες οι κλήσεις στη Γραμμή Παρέμβασης για την Αυτοκτονία" <https://bit.ly/2Yskwie> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

²⁷ *Conor Gallagher (2020.06.09)* "Ireland facing a tsunami of mental health problems" *The Irish Times* <https://bit.ly/2WTlv9X> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

²⁸ *Kitty Holland (2020.04.25)* "Coronavirus: Rise in Calls by Older People having Suicidal Thoughts" *The Irish Times* <https://bit.ly/2Pp8X69> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

²⁹ *HSE (2020.04.22)* "Mental health supports and services during Coronavirus" <https://bit.ly/33sGtAP> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

³⁰ *HSE (2020.07.07)* "Clinical Pathway for people who self-harm or who have suicidal ideation" <https://bit.ly/33ujTb4> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

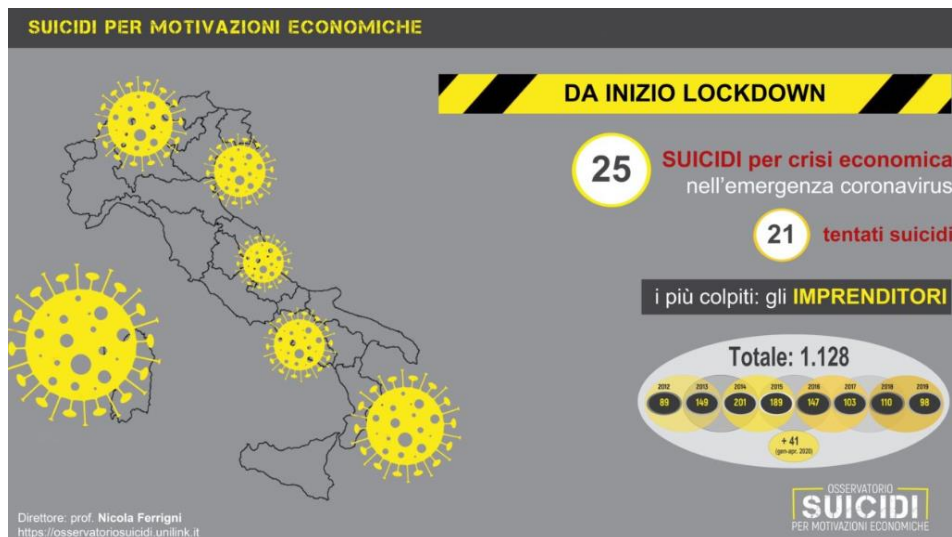
³¹ *Antonio Montanaro (2020.05.06)* "Ansia, stress, depressione da coronavirus: l'emergenza del dopo quarantena" *Corriere Fiorentino* <https://bit.ly/2B5JEIU> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Study

The Link Campus University launched a new study on 'Suicide for economic reasons'.

42 economic suicides have been registered since the beginning of the year, 25 of which were recorded during the weeks of the forced lockdown because of COVID-19: 16 in the month of April alone.³²

To these numbers, which are already significant in themselves, must also be added those relating to attempted suicides: 36 since the beginning of the year, 21 in the lockdown weeks alone.



Source: Osservatorio Suicidi per Motivazioni Economiche

Lithuania

In May, the government announced a long-term plan to manage the negative effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on mental health. This includes increasing the availability of long-term help and developing low-threshold services. The main goal is to encourage people to seek help and ensure the availability of such help.³³

³² *Irpiniatimes* (2020.05.09) "Osservatorio suicidi per motivazioni economiche allerta massima siamo già a 21 casi" <https://bit.ly/3hXbAJi> - Retrieved 2020-05-11

³³ *Lietuvos Respublikos sveikatos apaugos ministerija* (2020.05.20) "Parengtas planas, kaip sušvelninti koronaviruso įtaką psichikos sveikatai" <https://bit.ly/2XuNY6f> - Retrieved 2020-07-24



Luxembourg

On the 21st April, it was reported that there was no significant fluctuation in suicide rates. However, the psychological hotline set up by the government was receiving 2000 calls a day. According to a poll published on 20th April, 10% of citizens were in a critical mental state³⁴. The Minister of Health announced in mid-May that the number of young people attempting suicide had risen during the COVID-19 crisis.³⁵

The COVID-19 hotline – 80028080 – began to provide multilingual psychological support from the beginning of April.³⁶

Malta

To help citizens deal with the mental challenges of COVID-19, the Maltese government launched a 24-hour helpline, 1772, labelled “You are not alone”.

In the first week, the helpline received over 500 calls. The government started diverting mental health related calls made to 111 to the Richmond Foundation’s helpline 1770.³⁷

Kellimni.com is an NGO than offers online support to young people. In the week of 16-20 March, they registered 200 chats on their chatline, which is 80 more compared to the previous week.³⁸

A public sentiment survey carried out between 2nd April and 9th April by Esprimi, in collaboration with Richmond Foundation, analysed the effects of COVID-19 on mental health across Malta and Gozo.

³⁴ Anne Sophie de Nanteuil (2020.04.21) “Le diagnostic mesuré de Paulette Lenert” *Luxemburger Wort* <https://bit.ly/2X8HoCz> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

³⁵ David Marques (2020.05.13) “Luxembourg : les chiffres «effrayants» du suicide chez les jeunes” *Le Quotidien* <https://bit.ly/3jDpuB9> - Retrieved 2020.07.24

³⁶ Ministry of Health of Luxembourg (2020.04.01) “COVID-19: hotline 8002 8080 now provides psychological support” *Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg* <https://bit.ly/33zo70i> - Retrieved 2020.07.24

³⁷ Claudia Calleja (2020.04.05) “Hundreds of calls made to loneliness helpline” *Times of Malta* <https://bit.ly/3fOztB6> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

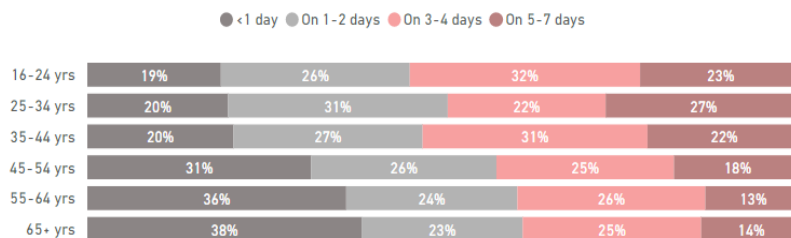
³⁸ Plamen Petrov (2020.03.23) “Psychological support seekers flock to Malta chatlines” *The Mayor* <https://bit.ly/2B3Ipnh> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Unlike older age groups, younger age respondents felt more times depressed or lonely during the last week of March.³⁹

FELT DEPRESSED

How often respondent felt or behaved this way during the past week

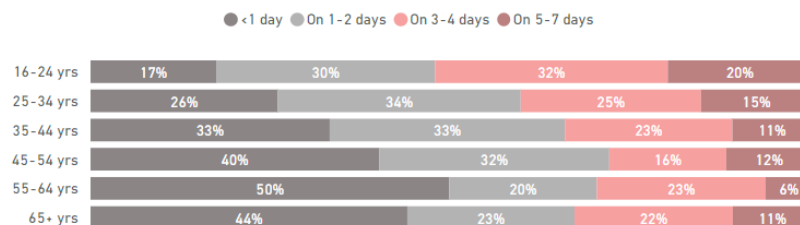
Age



LONELY

How often respondent felt or behaved this way during the past week

Age



Source: Esprimi and Richmond Foundation

Netherlands

At the end of April, the 113 suicide prevention line reported that they had not seen a significant increase in calls so far.⁴⁰ This was also the case in mid-May, when the 113 line reported that they did not see an increase in the number of suicides or in the number of calls to the helpline.

A study also demonstrated in mid-May that during the previous two months, there were 15-20 less suicides and suicide attempts recorded by the police when compared to the same period in 2019. At the same time, police report that episodes of confused behaviour have increased by 18-20%.⁴¹

³⁹ Esprimi and Richmond Foundation (2020.04.10) "COVID-19 Mental Health" <https://bit.ly/2CubmsV> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁴⁰ Hart Van Nederland (2020.04.28) "113 Zelfmoordpreventie bereidt zich voor op toename vragen na coronacrisis" <https://bit.ly/32LDkf0> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁴¹ Bas de Vries (2020.05.21) "Tot 20 procent minder zelfdodingen in coronatijd" NOS <https://bit.ly/2WREH86> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

Norway

The media reported that mental health helplines had received early increases in suicidal ideation during early periods of restriction, however the health authorities stated that there was no sign that more people than usual took their own lives during the first two months of the lockdown.⁴²

Portugal

Mainland

To respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the population, an emergency plan designed after the Pedrógão Grande fires⁴³ was activated.

On April 1st, 2020, the Portuguese Ministry of Health created a psychological support helpline. The psychological counselling service is integrated into the telephone line SNS 24, through 808 24 24 24 (option 4) and it aims to support the psychological concerns and challenges of citizens, including health professionals.

The first days of the helpline saw people calling with anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts.⁴⁴

The oldest suicide prevention helpline in the country, *Linha SOS voz amiga*, also registered an increase in calls from people distressed during COVID-19 pandemic. In the last weeks of April, calls to this helpline doubled.⁴⁵

Azores Region

In this autonomous region, a psychological support helpline for Azorean students displaced outside the region was created. Using this support line, students and their families can request information about returning to the Region and request for financial, social, or psychological support.

Slovakia

To help citizens to cope with COVID-19 and its impact on mental health, the Radio and Television of Slovakia, RTVS, in cooperation with the League for Mental Health, created a new show with experts providing advice on how to deal with the mental health challenges posed by COVID-19.

⁴² Simen Sundfjord Otterlei (2020.05.18) "Ingen tegn til at flere nordmenn har begått selvmord under koronautbruddet" Bergens Tidende <https://bit.ly/2Pn0TD1> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁴³ The Pedrógão Grande fires was Portugal's worst forest fire in more than half a century. More information: <https://bit.ly/39o8bzG>

⁴⁴ Rute Fonseca (2020.04.10) "Crises de ansiedade e tendências suicidas: os primeiros dias da linha de apoio psicológico do SNS" TSF <https://bit.ly/3i02bB5> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁴⁵ Helena Bento (2020.04.29) "Linha de apoio emocional e prevenção do suicídio: "Estamos a receber o dobro das chamadas que recebíamos" Expresso <https://bit.ly/2CypfGJ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10



Slovenia

There were over 40 special numbers available during the COVID-19 pandemic for people suffering from mental health problems or concerns. Some already existed before the pandemic but others were introduced to help direct citizens to healthcare institutions or NGOs.⁴⁶

Spain

The Spanish foundation *ANAR*, responsible for protecting the lives of minors, has reported a rise in violence against children and an alarming increase in teen suicide attempts (9%) during the lockdown period.

According to information provided to TeleMadrid by Benjamín Ballesteros, director of programmes of the ANAR Foundation, they have noticed an increase in the use of their chat by minors. Requests increased from 36.1% to 45.1% in just three weeks. Children have reported physical and psychological abuse and expressed the difficulty of escaping the abusers.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Val 202 (2020.03.20) "Kam poklicati ob psihičnih stiskah, zdravstvenih težavah, nasilju v družini, mislih na samomor?" https://bit.ly/3jAvCdr_- Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁴⁷ TeleMadrid (2020.04.19) "Los intentos de suicidio en adolescentes aumentan a un 9% durante el confinamiento" <https://bit.ly/3fOYoV1> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Sweden

The country was concerned about the increased risk of suicide attempts during COVID-19.

According to Karin Schulz, Secretary General of Mind, in March 2019 they received 16,000 calls on their Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In March this year, they received 25,000 calls, demonstrating a sudden and sharp increase on the number of calls.⁴⁸

Switzerland

On May 4th, an online prevention campaign was launched in French-speaking Switzerland by the STOP SUICIDE association. It specifically targeted young people⁴⁹.

United Kingdom

On 7 May, the UK charity Mind stated that almost a quarter of people who tried to access mental health support in the previous 2 weeks failed to get any help.⁵⁰

HOPELINE UK is a mental health support service accessible via phone, text and email run for young people by Papyrus. On 23rd April, Papyrus stated that 90% of the contacts mentioned COVID-19 in some way.⁵¹

Mental health charities in Greater Manchester reported unprecedented numbers of calls after the lockdown was introduced. One charity for young people reported a 300% increase in calls.⁵²

Measures have also been launched for health workers. The NHS launched a mental health hotline for NHS staff in April.^{53,54}

⁴⁸ Jan Sprangers (2020.04.08) "Los Risk för fler självmordsförsök under coronakrisen" SVT Nyheter <https://bit.ly/2BzYbGm> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁴⁹ RJB (2020.05.02) "La prévention du suicide en milieu confiné" <https://bit.ly/3kbW1Pa> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁵⁰ Mind (2020.05.07) "Mental health charity Mind finds that nearly a quarter of people have not been able to access mental health services in the last two weeks" <https://bit.ly/39XGGgp> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁵¹ Papyrus (N/A) "HOPELINKUK is here for you" <https://bit.ly/2Xub2IU> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁵² Sophie Halle-Richards (2020.04.22) "Mental health charities in Greater Manchester are facing unprecedented numbers of calls" Manchester Evening News <https://bit.ly/2Dlax6F> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁵³ BBC (2020.05.18) Coronavirus: Half a million access suicide prevention course <https://bbc.in/3fYiWuL> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

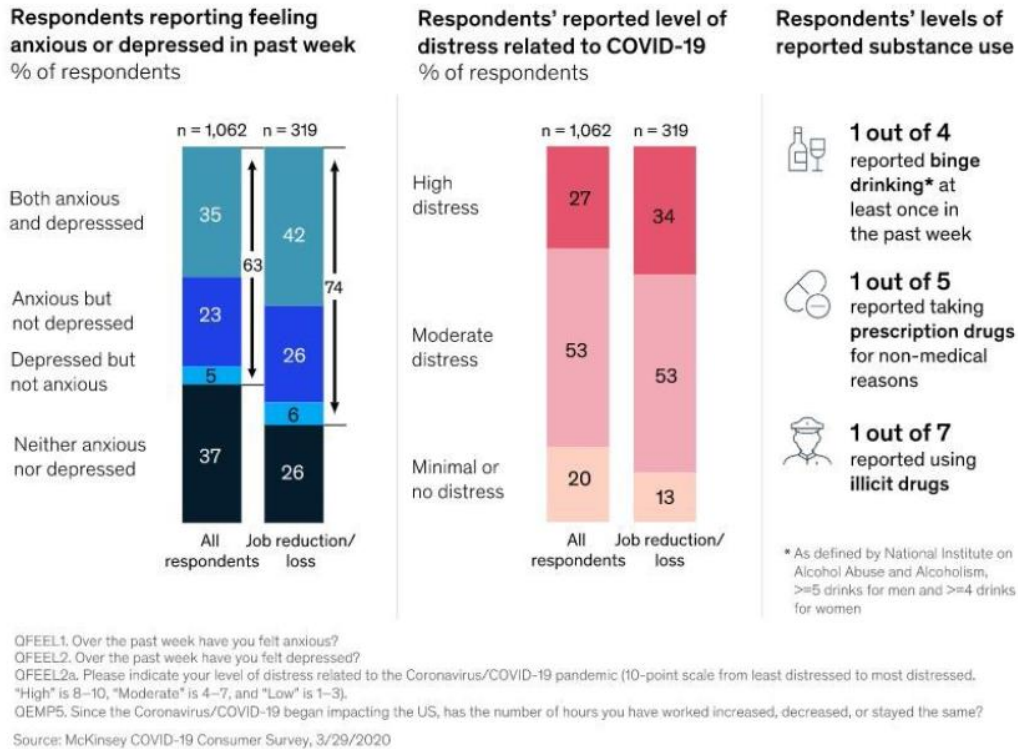
⁵⁴ Samaritans (2020.04.16) "Confidential support line for NHS workers and volunteers in England launched" <https://bit.ly/30tyq4H> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

1.2 | NORTH AMERICA

USA

A survey by McKinsey from March 27-29 shows that people are feeling the pressures of the pandemic. As you can see in the graph below: 35 percent of those assessed felt anxious or depressed, with 42 percent of those assigning it to job reduction or loss. 53 percent of people responding to the survey said they were in moderate distress. 53 percent of people responding to the survey said they were in moderate distress. 53 percent of people responding to the survey said they were in moderate distress.

Reported signs of distress related to COVID-19 in the United States



McKinsey
& Company

Reported signs of distress related to COVID-19 in the US: Source: Graphic and study conducted by McKinsey & Company

Tennessee, Nashville

Former Congressman Patrick J Kennedy, said to Metro Nashville Network on the 14th April that calls to suicide hotlines have increased by **800 percent**.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Caitlyn Shelton (2020.04.14) "Feeling the pressures of the pandemic: Suicide hotlines see 800 percent spike in calls" Fox17 <https://bit.ly/30PKqOu> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

California, Los Angeles

Calls to Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles **increased 8000%** due to COVID-19. The hotline received 1,800 calls in March versus 22 calls in February.⁵⁶

One of the workers of this crisis centre explained that she also comforted frontline workers. "There are nurses worried over a lack of protective equipment and co-workers who have tested positive. People whose spouses work in healthcare, prompting fears that the family will contract the virus."⁵⁷

Recently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved a new national suicide hotline three-digit number (988) for people to call and connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis professionals. With this approval, "all phone service providers will be required to direct all 988 calls to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022."⁵⁸

A US non-profit organisation is also supporting first responders, healthcare workers and their families by giving free mental health assistance.⁵⁹

Canada

Mental health helpline officials in **British Columbia** noted that the volume of calls is much higher than usual and most of these calls are regarding COVID-19. The centre receives an average of 110 calls per day. In March 2020, the average increased to 200 calls.⁶⁰

The same situation was reported on the **Kelowna** crisis line. According to media sources, call-takers have spent 1,500 hours longer than usual on the phone and approximately 40% of calls are about COVID-19.⁶¹

KCR Community Resources chief executive Ellen Boelcke reports to Radio Canada a 140% increase in the number of calls with a high number of people expressing suicidal thoughts.⁶²

Also, on **Vancouver Island** the number of calls has increased. The service managed by the Vancouver Island Crisis Society receives an average of 100 calls per day, but since the start of the pandemic, they are receiving over 400 daily calls.⁶³

⁵⁶ abc7 (2020.04.20) "Calls to suicide and help hotline in Los Angeles increase 8,000% due to coronavirus" <https://bit.ly/3fuUjFv> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁵⁷ Brittny Mejia (2020.04.05) "L.A. suicide hotline sees rise in coronavirus-related calls. Counselors feel the pain" Los Angeles Times <https://lat.ms/3hujJou> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁵⁸ Makena Kelly (2020.07.17) "The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will be available by dialing '988' in 2022" The Verge <https://bit.ly/2PponHC> - Retrieved 2020-08-04

⁵⁹ Wendy Randy (2020.07.22) "Free mental health assistance available for frontline workers, their families amid COVID-19" abc Actions News <https://bit.ly/2DmFgQD> - Retrieved 2020-08-04

⁶⁰ Chad Pawson (2020.04.05) "Hausse importante des appels aux lignes d'aide en santé mentale" Radio-Canada <https://bit.ly/2B0ItV0> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁶¹ Chad Pawson (2020.04.05) "Hausse importante des appels aux lignes d'aide en santé mentale" Radio-Canada <https://bit.ly/2B0ItV0> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁶² Chad Pawson (2020.04.05) "Hausse importante des appels aux lignes d'aide en santé mentale" Radio-Canada <https://bit.ly/2B0ItV0> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁶³ Chad Pawson (2020.04.05) "Hausse importante des appels aux lignes d'aide en santé mentale" Radio-Canada <https://bit.ly/2B0ItV0> - Retrieved 2020-05-10



2 | IMPACT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE HOTLINES

As COVID-19 stormed through Europe, many countries have reported a rise in domestic abuse. Regional Director for Europe for the World Health Organization, Dr. Hans Kluge, stated in May: "Although data is scarce, Member States are reporting up to a 60 percent increase in emergency calls by women subjected to violence by their intimate partners in April this year, compared to last. Online enquires to violence prevent support hotlines have increased up to five times."⁶⁴

In some EU countries, domestic violence rocketed by a third following lockdown. Unfortunately, domestic violence was already a big problem before COVID-19 but that has now taken on new proportions in many countries.

The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres addressed this issue and has urged governments to make the prevention and protection of women a key part in their national response plans for the pandemic. "For many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest. In their own homes," he stated.⁶⁵

Below we will describe the impact on domestic violence hotlines in various countries and the measures take to help protect victims.

⁶⁴ UNRIC (2020.05.07) "WHO warns of surge of domestic violence as COVID-19 cases decrease in Europe" <https://bit.ly/2BxqFRm> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁶⁵ "Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19 - UN chief video message" YouTube, uploaded by United Nations, 6 April 2020 <https://bit.ly/3185j7F> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

2.1 | EUROPE

Austria

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Austrian government increased the capacity of the women's helpline: 0800 222 555. The service is also multilingual. Since the beginning of the campaign to increase the capacity, there was a 50% increase in calls. Half of these were related to actual cases of domestic violence.⁶⁶

The Helpchat for women and girls affected by violence was expanded during the COVID-19 crisis. It was made available every day from 3pm – 10pm from 19 March 2020.⁶⁷

Belgium

On 23 March 2020, the Flemish helpline to report violence (Vlaamse Hulplijn, phone number 1712) stated that many police zones in Belgium reported a rise in domestic violence after the country entered lockdown on 12 March.⁶⁸

On 7 April, the helpline reported a 70% rise in calls for help in the third week of lockdown compared to the first week.⁶⁹

According to women interviewed in Brussels city, since the beginning of the lockdown there had been a severe rise in incidents of street harassment.⁷⁰



⁶⁶ Kosmo (2020.04.28) "Ich dachte, ich würde nicht lebend aus seinem Würgegriff entkommen" <https://bit.ly/2VhaEps> - Retrieved 2020-06-24

⁶⁷ Helpchat (N/A) "Help with violence" <https://bit.ly/3eZpcBf> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁶⁸ Laura Lepla (2020.03.26) "Slachtoffers van huiselijk geweld zoeken uitweg uit coronacrisis" MO* Magazine <https://bit.ly/3fOTMOO> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁶⁹ HLN (2020.04.07) "Zeventig procent meer oproepen over geweld bij hulplijn 1712 sinds lockdown" <https://bit.ly/2ATMD11> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁷⁰ Bruzz (2020.04.12) "Lege straten, geile mannen: vrouwen worden massaal lastiggevallen tijdens de lockdown" <https://bit.ly/2V9XSJo> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Bulgaria

A report was published on 27 May which stated that 8 women had been killed by their partners since March 13.⁷¹ Organisations operating domestic violence hotlines reported a strong rise in calls. The cases for which help was being sought during the COVID-19 crisis were also more severe than before.⁷² Associate Professor Okoliysji, from the World Health Organisation in Bulgaria, reported over 80 reports of domestic violence during the months of isolation. This is double the usual rate.⁷³ Reports at the end of May demonstrated that children's helplines also saw increases in calls about domestic violence: calls to 116 111 jumped by 370.⁷⁴

The Bulgarian Fund for women, together with the BCause Foundation and the Bulgarian Donors' Forum, launched an emergency fund to combat domestic violence during the pandemic. The fund will support victims of domestic violence and their children by providing legal, psychological and social services, running crisis accommodation, counselling centres and mobile services.⁷⁵

Croatia

Croatia has noticed fewer calls from women as explained by Mirjana Kučer from the Domina association in Split. The Ministry of Interior did not record significant increases regarding domestic violence reports – see graphic below.⁷⁶

Promatrani dani (ožujak 2020.)	Ukupno događaja	Kaznena djela	Prekršaji
8.-19.3.	259	37	222
20.-31.3.	237	27	210

Source: Faktograph

⁷¹ Георги Георгиев (2020.07.05) "ТРЕВОЖНА СТАТИСТИКА: Ръст на домашното насилие от началото на извънредното положение" Nova <https://bit.ly/2yA1nki> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁷² Георги Георгиев (2020.07.05) "ТРЕВОЖНА СТАТИСТИКА: Ръст на домашното насилие от началото на извънредното положение" Nova <https://bit.ly/2yA1nki> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁷³ Off News (2020.05.19) "Изоляцията удвои домашното насилие и убийствата на жени" <https://bit.ly/3hC05WZ> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁷⁴ Георги Георгиев (2020.07.05) "ТРЕВОЖНА СТАТИСТИКА: Ръст на домашното насилие от началото на извънредното положение" Nova <https://bit.ly/2yA1nki> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁷⁵ Kanal 13 (2020.05.26) "Стартира спешен Фонд за борба с домашното насилие в условията на COVID-19" <https://bit.ly/3jvva0h> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁷⁶ Ana Brakus (2020.04.03) "Bilježi li i Hrvatska porast nasilja prema ženama u vrijeme korona krize?" Faktograf <https://bit.ly/2BtFsMN> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Czechia

During quarantine, the number of domestic calls has increased in the country. The White Circle of Safety recorded 42 percent more calls in the first month of the emergency than in the same period last year. The organisation is not surprised with the increase since there is a limited personal contact in most counselling centers.⁷⁷

Denmark

There has been a significant increase in inquiries regarding places in shelters for victims of domestic violence. Between January 1 and March 11, the average daily number of inquiries was 2.7 inquiries. Since the evening of March 11, when the first restrictions were announced by the Prime Minister, the number of inquiries jumped to 5.1 per day on average.⁷⁸ In order to cope with this demand, additional shelters were quickly allocated to ensure that the victims could be accommodated during the crisis.⁷⁹

In Copenhagen, inquiries about places in Mandecenter – a men’s shelter – have doubled, with 90% of inquiries being related to domestic violence. Normally only half of inquiries are related to violence.⁸⁰

Whilst inquiries about places in shelters have doubled, the overall total number of inquiries on the national hotlines for domestic violence victims has fallen. The representative of the hotline explained that many women and men called the hotline and explained that had not been able to call previously because they had not been alone.⁸¹

Finland

There has been an increase in domestic violence cases in Finland during March and April. Law enforcement reported that there were 3000 more home disturbance complaints than usual for this time of year.⁸²

⁷⁷ Hop (2020.04.25) "V době karantény roste počet případů domácího násilí. Omezení uzavírají oběti s pachateli" ČT24 <https://bit.ly/2Z12qmH> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁷⁸ Peter Boier (2020.03.20) "Coronakrise kan føre til vold i hjemmet: Dobbelt så mange kvinder søger krisecenter - men der er ikke plads" DR <https://bit.ly/3hyZbKQ> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁷⁹ Lokk (2020.04.04) "COVID-19-krisen øger risikoen for vold mod kvinder og børn og truer kvinders basale rettigheder" <https://bit.ly/3eXwIfY> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁸⁰ Thomas Klose Jensen and Tinna Viskum (2020.04.18) "Flere akutte opkald om vold i familier: Når Danmark åbner, kan det blive endnu værre" DR <https://bit.ly/32MVE7v> - Retrieved 2020.07.24

⁸¹ Thomas Klose Jensen and Tinna Viskum (2020.04.18) "Flere akutte opkald om vold i familier: Når Danmark åbner, kan det blive endnu værre" DR <https://bit.ly/32MVE7v> - Retrieved 2020.07.24

⁸² Pekka Vanttinen (2020.05.20) "HELSINKI – Suicide spikes amid COVID-19" Euractiv <https://bit.ly/3i5ChMj> - Retrieved 2020.07.24



France

France already has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Europe. According to the French Minister of the Interior, Christophe Castaner, at the end of March, there had been a 32 percent increase in domestic violence cases since the start of the lockdown.⁸³

In response to this problem, the government established an alert system. Female victims of domestic violence can go to pharmacies and request help and police protection from police or the gendarmerie.⁸⁴

Germany

A study was published demonstrating that around 3% of women in Germany were victims of physical violence during the period of restrictions.⁸⁵ Around 3.6% of them were raped by their partner. If the women were in quarantine or if the family had financial worries, the numbers were significantly higher. Children were also affected: children received some form of violent punishment in 6.5% of households.

In terms of accessing help, many of the victims were unaware of the support available. Only 48.2% of the victims knew about the pastoral care phone line. Only 3.9% had called the helpline. Only 32.4% were familiar with the Violence Against Women helpline, with only 2.7% having called. In addition, 5.5% knew about the Codeword Mask 19 campaign. This campaign was run with pharmacies so that the authorities could be notified if the customer said the codeword. 1.8% of victims had used this option to seek help.

⁸³ LCI (2020.03.28) "Les violences conjugales en hausse de plus de 30% : l'Intérieur propose de donner l'alerte dans des pharmacies" <https://bit.ly/2YZyYxe> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁸⁴ Ivana Kottasová and Valentina Di Donato (2020.04.06) "Women are using code words at pharmacies to escape domestic violence during lockdown" CNN <https://cnn.it/2NAWV93> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁸⁵ Regensburger Nachrichten (2020.05.02) "Corona-Pandemie: Häusliche Gewalt steigt in Quarantäne" <https://bit.ly/2OSLHNE> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

Hungary

The Women Against Violence Association (NANE) reported receiving more calls than usual to their helpline during the period of restrictions.⁸⁶

The OKIT helpline is a 24-hour toll-free number where people can call for help or for assistance to leave a violent home. The helpline reported in April that during the second month of the emergency, there were twice as many calls regarding domestic violence from a partner compared with before restrictions were introduced. In May, they reported that calls had slowed and were starting to return to the normal rate: around 200 calls a week.⁸⁷

The Ecumenical Relief Organisation also reported that whereas usually they received an average of one or two requests for anonymous online counselling per week, this rose during the period of restrictions to 5 or 10 per week. Twice as many people also applied for Budapest's crisis outpatient clinic during the period of restrictions than before.⁸⁸

Ireland

In some areas, domestic violence reports had increased by almost 25% during the first month of the lockdown. In some areas, this reached 30%.⁸⁹

A paper was published by Ireland's National Parliament on domestic violence during the pandemic.⁹⁰ It states that leading organisations working on domestic violence, such as Women's Aid, had reported an increase in the number of calls to helplines. Several measures were announced, including an awareness campaign (*Still Here*), an extra 160,000 euros allocated to domestic violence organisations and *Operation Faoisimh* launched by the Garda police force to support victims of domestic violence. The Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board also prioritised domestic violence and childcare cases. The Legal Aid Board set up a helpline to assist victims of domestic violence during the pandemic.⁹¹

A list of resources and options to contact help were published on the Women's Aid website.⁹²

⁸⁶ Szántó Eszter (2020.04.05) "Van, akinek még az otthonlét is veszélyesebb a koronavírusnál" 24 HU <https://bit.ly/30G0KQI> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁸⁷ Judit Preinszky (2020.05.19) "Van, aki a fürdőbe bezárkózva suttogva kér segítséget" Index <https://bit.ly/3jxfUjz> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁸⁸ Judit Preinszky (2020.05.19) "Van, aki a fürdőbe bezárkózva suttogva kér segítséget" Index <https://bit.ly/3jxfUjz> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁸⁹ Conor Lally (2020.04.27) "Domestic violence reports up 30% in some areas since lockdown, says Garda" The Irish Times <https://bit.ly/2ZVXpgH> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁹⁰ Jessica Doyle (2020.06.09) "Domestic violence and COVID-19 in Ireland" Oireachtas Library and Research Service <https://bit.ly/39qrGrl> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁹¹ Irish Governmental News Service (2020.04.10) "Ministers Flanagan and Stanton announce campaign to reassure victims of domestic abuse that support is still available despite COVID-19" <https://bit.ly/3hADQ3M> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁹² Women's Aid (N/A) "Domestic violence support during COVID-19 national emergency" <https://bit.ly/3jEzha6> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

Italy

In Italy, there has been a decrease in calls to domestic violence helplines.⁹³ Due to lockdown restrictions, many women may no longer have the freedom to call the toll-free numbers or to ask associations for help.

As Time magazine reports: "mandatory lockdowns ... have trapped them in their homes with their abusers, isolated from the people and the resources that could help them."⁹⁴

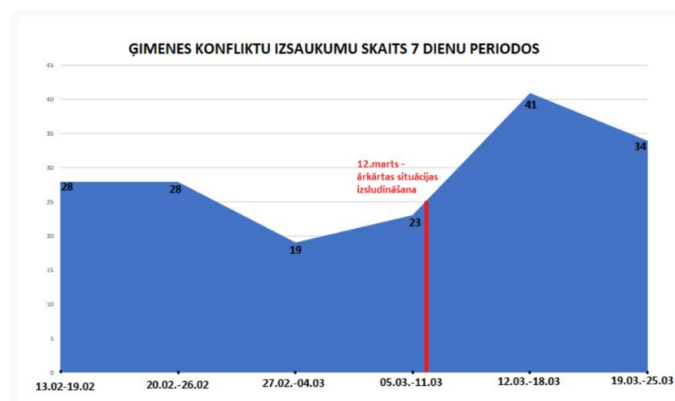
A survey made by the D.i.Re. shows that requests for help increased 74.5 percent over the same period last year.⁹⁵

Latvia

According to the State Police, the number of calls because of family conflicts has increased by 37%. Last year, from March 13 to April 23, 922 calls reporting family conflicts were registered, which is an average of 22 calls per day. This year, 1454 calls were registered in the same period, which is on average 35 calls per day.⁹⁶

Riga municipal police stated on 27 March that the average number of family conflict calls had increased in the previous two weeks. From February 13 to March 25, a total of 174 calls about family conflicts have been made to the Riga Municipal Police.⁹⁷

Although the total number of conflicts has increased, in most cases the conflict was resolved with the arrival of the police.



Source: LSM.LB

⁹³ Claudia Cristoferi and Giuseppe Fonte (2020.04.06) "In Italy, support groups fear lockdown is silencing domestic abuse victims" *The Jakarta Post* <https://bit.ly/2YsoqI4> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁹⁴ Meilssa Godin (2020.03.18) "As Cities Around the World Go on Lockdown, Victims of Domestic Violence Look for a Way Out" *TIME* <https://bit.ly/2E8j7FM> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

⁹⁵ Viola Rigoli (2020.04.29) "Quarantena e lockdown: la violenza sulle donne aumenta in tutto il mondo" *iodonna* <https://bit.ly/2A2wV3a> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁹⁶ TVNET/LETA (2020.05.03) "Ārkārtējās situācijas laikā Latvijā ievērojami palielinājies izsaukumu skaits uz ģimenes konfliktiem" <https://bit.ly/37YWxum> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

⁹⁷ LSM.LB (2020.03.27) "Ministrs: Ārkārtējās situācijas laikā pieaugusi vardarbība ģimenēs" <https://bit.ly/3g3ibR1> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

Luxembourg

Figures for interventions for domestic violence did not show a substantial increase in the first months of 2020, despite the restrictive measures. In 2019, interventions were carried out on average 71 times a month. In 2020, there were 91 interventions in March, 73 interventions in April and 79 interventions in May.

To better monitor the situation, the Ministry of Gender Equality developed a weekly monitoring procedure during the period of restrictive measures, in collaboration with the Prosecutor's Office, social managers and the police. The Ministry also published an FAQ: 'Domestic Violence and COVID-19' on the *violence.lu* website.

A helpline has been set up -2061060 - and an email address – *info@helpline-violence.lu*. The pilot project – set up by the social managers - will be evaluated and could potentially be extended beyond the crisis.⁹⁸

Netherlands

The Chairperson of the National Safe Home Network reported that the Netherlands had not seen an increase in the number of requests for advice or reports concerning domestic violence during the crisis. The Chairperson highlights that this does not necessarily mean that there were less cases of domestic violence, as it could mean that people were unable to report it.⁹⁹

On average, the 26 Safe Home organisations in the Netherlands receives 11,000 reports of domestic violence and child abuse per month. In the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis, the number of reports declined. In Southeast Brabant, it fell by 16%. Since then, the number of requests has returned to the previous levels, but the organisations have noticed that the reports are more concerning high-risk cases.¹⁰⁰

In late April, the government launched an information campaign about domestic violence and specific measures were taken. The *Mask 19* campaign was introduced on 1st May, so that victims could use the codeword in pharmacies to get help. In addition, all 26 Safe Home organisations have offered chat services since mid-May. By 23rd June, 1292 chats had been received. On average, in cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, 100 requests for advice are received per month. In other regions, numbers are around 50-60 per month. About 5% of the requests end up being a report of domestic violence.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Mathilde Obert (2020.06.11) "Pas plus de violences domestiques signalées en confinement" Paperjam <https://bit.ly/30GWNlb> (2020.07.24)

⁹⁹ Karen Eshuis (2020.05.23) "Aantal meldingen huiselijk geweld niet toegenomen sinds corona" NOS <https://bit.ly/3hwwLRx> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁰⁰ Karen Eshuis (2020.05.23) "Aantal meldingen huiselijk geweld niet toegenomen sinds corona" NOS <https://bit.ly/3hwwLRx> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁰¹ Karen Eshuis (2020.05.23) "Aantal meldingen huiselijk geweld niet toegenomen sinds corona" NOS <https://bit.ly/3hwwLRx> - Retrieved 2020-07-24



Norway

Figures from the Directorate of Police on 23 June demonstrate only a small increase in the number of reports from last year (1.5%). The head of the Directorate stated that there is likely to be an increase in the actual number of cases involving domestic violence both at home and online.¹⁰²

Shelters for victims have also experienced a decline in the number of inquiries during the pandemic. However, most of the shelters are already full. The crisis centres anticipate more women and children will come to seek help as lockdown restrictions are gradually eased.¹⁰³

Poland

In March, the Children Foundation received more applications than before. As for violence reports, there were 506 reports in March and 118 in February.¹⁰⁴

Portugal

A recent statement from the Portuguese Republican National Guard (GNR) states that complaints of domestic violence registered in March 2020 decreased compared to the same period in 2019.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Line Fransson (2020.06.23) "Politiet: - Økning i vold i nære relasjoner" Dagbladet <https://bit.ly/3hJSKVt> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁰³ Line Fransson (2020.06.23) "Politiet: - Økning i vold i nære relasjoner" Dagbladet <https://bit.ly/3hJSKVt> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁰⁴ Adam Abramiuk (2020.04.09) "Więcej przypadków przemocy domowej skutkiem pandemii?" Polskie Radio RDC <https://bit.ly/2NqDzmF> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹⁰⁵ Rita Pinto (2020.04.10) "Isolamento social gera aumento de casos de violência doméstica em todo o mundo" Shifter <https://bit.ly/2VbjYuW> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

The decrease in the number of complaints does not mean, however, that there have been fewer cases of abuse. Quarantine measures can create a greater gap between the number of complaints and the number of crimes committed.

To overcome this problem, a new way was created for victims to report abuse through an SMS. It is free, confidential, and is not trackable on the invoice. In five days, the helpline for victims of domestic violence received 41 SMS asking for help.¹⁰⁶

Romania

During March 2020, the number of calls to police about domestic violence increased by 2.3%.¹⁰⁷ The NGO ANAIS also reported that between 13 March – 13 April, they had received 74 calls seeking legal and psychological support compared to less than 50 in the preceding months.¹⁰⁸

ANES, the Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, reported 251 calls had been received between 16 March – 10 April on the helpline for victims of domestic violence. This is compared to 111 calls in the same period in 2019.¹⁰⁹

ANAIS Association and Cheil Centrade launched a campaign #IsolateViolence (#IzoleazaViolenta). The campaign offers victims a dedicated platform ([IzoleazaViolenta.ro](https://izoleazaviolenta.ro)) of support, including legal counselling and practical tips, information on how to signal distress or approach police. The platform also includes encouraging messages of support from women who have managed to escape violence.¹¹⁰

Slovenia

It was reported in early April that there was no significant increase in calls to the SOS Telephone Association during the pandemic. Experts said this was worrying as this would mean victims were finding it hard to call for help.¹¹¹

Police also reported that figures regarding crimes against marriage, family and children since the beginning of the pandemic were similar to last year, but the first months of the year saw a 25% increase in this type of crime compared to the year before. Experts also warned that the specific mechanisms put in place in other countries to help victims during this time were lacking in Slovenia.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Christiana Martins e Raquel Moleiro (2020.04.04) "Violência doméstica na época covid-19: Queixas não estão a aumentar. E isso é mau" *Expresso* <https://bit.ly/2YrNvmk> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹⁰⁷ Romania Insider (2020.04.15) "Coronavirus lockdown: Overall crime rate drops in Romania, but Police see an increase in domestic violence" <https://bit.ly/2CMjsh3> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁰⁸ Xhorxhina Bami, Nedim Dervisbegovic, Milica Stojanovic, Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Madalin Necsutu, Samir Kajosevic, Anja Vladisavljevic, Marcel Gascón Barberá and Svetoslav Todorov (2020.04.21) *Balkan Insight* <https://bit.ly/3g3KM9e> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹⁰⁹ Stirile Pro TV (2020.04.13) "Pandemia de Covid-19 la români. Numărul reclamațiilor de violență domestică s-a dublat" <https://bit.ly/39qu29F> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹¹⁰ EACA (N/A) "Cheil Romania: #IsolateViolence" <https://bit.ly/3hvh11d> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

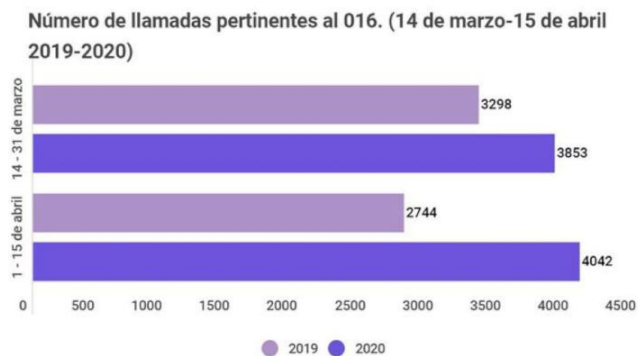
¹¹¹ Urša Vrečar (2020.04.08) "Ujete med štirimi stenami: žrtve težje pokličejo na pomoč, saj so zaprte skupaj z nasilnežem" 24 UR <https://bit.ly/2CA9vDC> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹¹² Urša Vrečar (2020.04.08) "Ujete med štirimi stenami: žrtve težje pokličejo na pomoč, saj so zaprte skupaj z nasilnežem" 24 UR <https://bit.ly/2CA9vDC> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

Spain

Spain's domestic violence helpline had a 47% increase in calls in the first two weeks of April compared to the same period in 2019. There was also a 700% increase of women using social media or emails to report abuses.¹¹³ However, there was a simultaneous drop in domestic violence complaints to the police.¹¹⁴

Calls to 016 regarding male violence increased by 47.3% in the first fortnight of April – see graphic below.¹¹⁵ The victim care service has received 4,042 inquiries, which is 1,298 more inquiries than in the same period of 2019.



Número de llamadas al 016 durante el confinamiento. MINISTERIO DE IGUALDAD

Source: Spanish Ministry of Equality

Sweden

Luis Lineo, the security police spokesperson for the Feminist Initiative shared concerns for the possibility of violence against women during the pandemic. He stated the importance of making hotel rooms available at local hotels to offer women and children protection in a similar way to the actions taken by the government in France.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Stephen Burgen (2020.04.28) "Women killed in Spain as coronavirus lockdown sees rise in domestic violence" The Guardian <https://bit.ly/31bwzIQ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹¹⁴ Stephen Burgen (2020.04.28) "Women killed in Spain as coronavirus lockdown sees rise in domestic violence" The Guardian <https://bit.ly/31bwzIQ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹¹⁵ Noor Mahtan (2020.04.16) "Las llamadas al 016 por violencia machista aumentan un 47,3% en la primera quincena de abril" El País <https://bit.ly/2B49O8D> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹¹⁶ Feministiskt initiativ (2020.04.06) "Coronapandemins isolering medför ökad risk för mäns våld mot kvinnor och barn - Fi vill se förhöjd beredskap" My news desk <https://bit.ly/2NqCefU> - Retrieved 2020-05-10



Switzerland

The Swiss Confederation set up a task force of the responsible public agencies. It works under the lead of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality. The framework allows the situation of domestic violence in Switzerland to be assessed regularly.¹¹⁷

United Kingdom

On 27 May, the charity Refuge reported that calls had increased to its National Domestic Abuse Helpline. During the initial stages of the crisis, there was an around 50% increase in calls to the helpline and over 300% increase in visits to the website. Calls and contacts to the helpline then rose further to a weekly average increase of 66%. Visits to the website saw a 950% rise compared to pre-COVID-19 periods.¹¹⁸ Calls to the Men's Advice Line also increased by 35% in the first week of lockdown.¹¹⁹

Researchers at the Counting Dead Women Project stated at that 14 women and two children had been killed in the first three weeks of lockdown. This is more than double the average number.¹²⁰

The availability of accessible support has been criticised by Human Rights Watch, which states that services struggled to remain fully operational during the pandemic.¹²¹ A survey by Women's Aid highlighted that 38 of 45 service providers had reduced or suspended at least one of their services as of 6 April.¹²²

¹¹⁷ The Federal Council (2020.03.23) "Protection against domestic violence guaranteed also during the coronavirus period" <https://bit.ly/3jB9jV0> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹¹⁸ Refuge (2020.05.27) "Refuge reports further increase in demand for its National Domestic Abuse Helpline services during lockdown" <https://bit.ly/3fSovLj> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹¹⁹ BBC (2020.04.27) "UK lockdown: Calls to domestic abuse helpline jump by half" <https://bbc.in/30ix30X> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹²⁰ BBC (2020.04.27) "UK lockdown: Calls to domestic abuse helpline jump by half" <https://bbc.in/30ix30X> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch (2020.07.08) "UK Failing Domestic Abuse Victims in Pandemic" <https://bit.ly/30XuKHF> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

¹²² Women's Aid (N/A) "The impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse support services: findings from an initial Women's Aid survey" <https://bit.ly/3fWX037> - Retrieved 2020-07-24

2.2 | NORTH AMERICA

USA

The *National Domestic Violence Hotline* counted 951 callers between 10 and 24 March who mentioned COVID-19 while reporting an abuse.¹²³

18 agencies stated a rise of reports in March. Houston (Texas) saw an increase of 20 percent, Phoenix police (Arizona) saw a jump of 6 percent and Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) saw an increase of 18 percent.¹²⁴

"In addition to Houston, Phoenix and Charlotte-Mecklenburg police, law enforcement in Boston; Milwaukee; Seattle; San Antonio; Salt Lake City; Utah County, Utah; Fresno County, California; Montgomery County, Texas; East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana; Buffalo, New York; Sparks, Nevada; Portland, Oregon; Nassau County, New York; Cherokee County, South Carolina; and Charleston, South Carolina said that domestic violence cases increased in their jurisdictions in March."¹²⁵

However, some places reported a decrease in the number of incidents, for instance New York City.¹²⁶

Besides New York, police in Cincinnati, Denver, New Orleans said their rates of domestic violence calls and arrests remained constant.¹²⁷

Canada **Manitoba**

Manitoba domestic violence shelters have received fewer calls than previously since the first case of COVID-19 appeared in the province.¹²⁸

¹²³Sarah Fielding (2020.04.03) "In quarantine with an abuser: surge in domestic violence reports linked to coronavirus" <https://bit.ly/2YrNzTb> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹²⁴ Tyler Kingkade (2020.04.05) "Police see rise in domestic violence calls amid coronavirus lockdown" <https://nbcnews.to/3hTP7wQ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹²⁵ Tyler Kingkade (2020.04.05) "Police see rise in domestic violence calls amid coronavirus lockdown" NBC News <https://nbcnews.to/3hTP7wQ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹²⁶ Ashley Southall (2020.04.17) "Why a Drop in Domestic Violence Reports Might Not Be a Good Sign" *The New York Times* <https://nyti.ms/3euln7N> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹²⁷ Tyler Kingkade (2020.04.05) "Police see rise in domestic violence calls amid coronavirus lockdown" NBC News <https://nbcnews.to/3hTP7wQ> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

¹²⁸ Radio Canada (2020.04.08) "Violence conjugale : les refuges s'inquiètent d'une baisse de la demande" <https://bit.ly/3dzxiQx> - Retrieved 2020-05-10

3 | CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- The COVID-19 outbreak posed unique challenges to emergency and health services, impacting not only emergency numbers but also other helplines.
- Many countries experienced increases in calls to mental health support helplines during the outbreak of COVID-19. This was often intensified during periods of restrictive measures and lockdowns, which could serve to exacerbate feelings of anxiety, depression or isolation. People also experienced difficulties as physical meetings such as in-person counselling or support groups could often no longer take place due to the restrictive measures.
 - Countries responded in different ways to the impacts on the mental health of the population. This included setting up new helplines, increasing the capacity of existing helplines and providing alternative methods of support, for instance through online chat tools.
 - It was not only governmental institutions that implemented such measures, but also non-governmental associations, charities, and psychologists' associations.
- The impact on domestic violence helplines is particularly complex as periods of restrictive measures and lockdowns meant that often victims were forced into close proximity with their abusers.
 - Consequently, although some countries experienced increases in calls to domestic violence helplines, some reported a reduction in calls. Rather than represent a reduction in cases of domestic violence, this was considered a consequence of victims being unable to access help due to the abuser being present.
 - Some countries implemented new methods for victims to contact help, such as through online chat tools, via SMS or through alerting pharmacists with a codeword.
 - Some countries also increased to capacities of crisis shelters in order to ensure that victims could receive the help they needed.
- The impact of widespread crises – medical or otherwise – on mental health and instances of domestic violence should be taken into serious consideration by countries to mitigate the impacts of future similar events.
- Countries should ensure that help is not only available but also accessible for people living in difficult circumstances and efforts should be made to raise awareness of pathways to access help.
- Where access to traditional pathways for help becomes difficult (for instance, by attending in-person psychotherapy sessions or by calling the domestic violence helplines), authorities should be flexible and adaptable in ensuring that everyone who needs help is able to access it.