



## The monster at our doorstep: How COVID-19 has affected our mental health

- Almost 1 in 3 Europeans report increased levels of anxiety due to the pandemic
- Inner restlessness and stress affect one in four Europeans, 15 % have trouble sleeping
- Self-assessed percentage of Europeans at risk of burnout remains high at 54 %
- Europeans are less bothered by the possibility of contracting COVID-19 than being unable to meet with family and friends

The challenges the last few months held for Europeans were manifold. But even amid hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 induced casualties across the continent, daily life went on: granted, in a fundamentally different way. In addition to newly required organisational skills to reconcile round the clock childcare with a 9 to 5 job, the danger of being infected with the virus loomed seemingly everywhere. Measures taken to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 caused families and friends to be separated for long periods of time, leaving many to feel lonely and isolated, exacerbating existing mental health issues and undoubtedly breeding new ones. What did Europeans worry about most during these trying times? What helped them to stay strong? Are we already on the verge of a new pandemic, namely that of mental health issues?

### Need for human contact trumps fear of infection

Out of all the challenges they have faced since the beginning of the pandemic, more than half of Europeans (52 %) feel that being unable to see their families and friends has been their greatest burden. This is especially true for people in France and Austria (63 %), the UK (62 %) and Switzerland (61 %). Becoming infected with COVID-19 is the second most stressful idea for people across the continent: 42 % of Europeans are worried

about contracting the virus. This fear is particularly pronounced in countries with high mortality rates, especially Spain (54 %) and Italy (53 %). Possible financial and professional repercussions of the pandemic are causing roughly one third of Europeans (32 %) to worry about what will happen after Corona. Loneliness, a potential trigger and simultaneous result of mental health issues, is affecting around one in four Europeans (26 %). Italians feel particularly forlorn: One in three (33 %) report feeling isolated in their homes. In Russia, on the other hand, people do not seem to mind staying at home nearly as much (17 %). Notably, young Europeans (33 %) are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness than people aged between 50 and 99 (24 %).



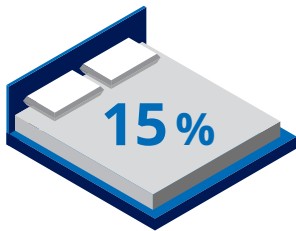
**42 %**  
of Europeans  
are worried  
about contract-  
ing the virus.

Due to travel restrictions and quarantine requirements, escaping the “new normal” by going on holiday has been out of the question for the vast majority of people. Roughly one in four (24 %) Europeans feel that not getting a little time away from home has been one of the things that most affected them. Germans (35 %) and Belgians (31 %) are among those who are particularly fed up after staying home for the better part of the recent months. With almost one in five people across the continent (19 %) admitting to feeling overwhelmed by everyday life with working from home, home schooling and the like, this appears to be a reasonable enough belief.

## Lockdowns fuel anxiety and stress

Almost one in three Europeans (29 %) say they now feel more anxious than prior to the pandemic. The proportion of people affected is particularly high in Ukraine (45 %) and Poland (42 %). Stress and inner restlessness have also become a problem for one in four Europeans (25 %). Across all nationalities surveyed, Czechs and Serbs are most troubled by this – there, almost one in three

people struggle to unwind (31 % each). On top of that, 15 % of Europeans are having trouble sleeping due to the pandemic. Online classes for yoga or meditation that aim to help people reduce stress do not seem to do it for Europeans: 11 % have given them a try.



of Europeans are having trouble sleeping due to the pandemic.

Lockdowns have not only taken their toll on people's psyche: 19 % of respondents say that changes in their everyday lives are having a significant impact on their physical fitness. With gyms, swimming pools and other sports facilities closed for months on end, this comes as no surprise. One in ten Europeans are counteracting this with the targeted intake of nutritional supplements and vitamins in an attempt to do their bodies some good.

Remarkably, the people that remains largely unfazed by all this are the Dutch: 44 % report that they have not noticed any effects of the pandemic on their general or mental well-

being – across Europe, this applies to just under one in three people (32 %). A full 37 % of male respondents say they have not observed any changes worth mentioning – compared to only 27 % of women, who generally feel more anxious and stressed. Another compelling finding: Young people between the ages of 18 and 34 are generally more stressed, more frequently experience anxiety and sleep worse than people between the ages of 50 and 99 who are, generally speaking, more at risk of suffering from a serious disease. This illustrates that, while COVID-19 is a major threat to any person's physical health, the psychological implications of the measures taken to combat it have left significant damage in their wake, the extent of which we are yet to discover.

## Burnout: One of the few constants in times of the Covid pandemic

Among all the psychological consequences of this past year, one of the usual suspects must not be missed: Compared to 2019, the proportion of those who have already suffered from burnout or know the feeling of being on the verge of it remains unchanged at 54 %. It is not unlikely that this number may increase significantly in the coming months and years due to the long-term effects of the pandemic.

Today, 38 % of respondents say they have never had the feeling of being a risk candidate for burnout – in Portugal (47 %) people do not worry too much about this. A mere 8 % of Europeans are convinced that they will probably never suffer from burnout.

## 2 in 3 familiar with feelings of burnout

# 65 %

of 18 – 34 year old women have had a burnout or the feeling of being on the verge of it. Average of all respondents: 54 %.

