

# Managing the COVID-19 pandemic: New results from the European survey on policy support, confidence and vaccination attitudes

## Introduction

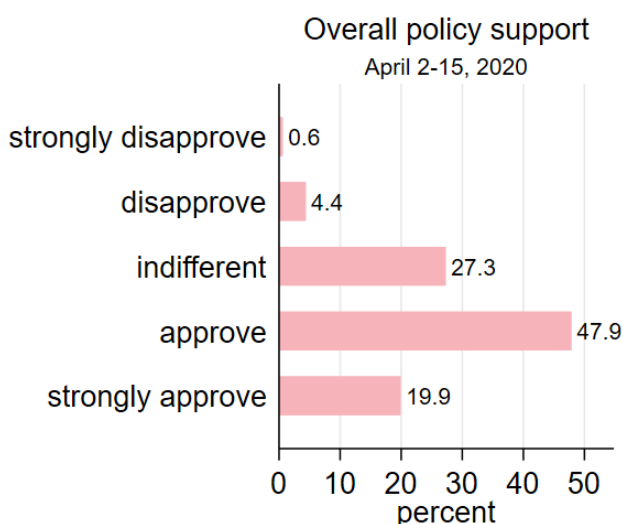
We investigated people's attitudes, worries and confidence with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic in an online survey among representative samples of the population in terms of region, gender, age and education, in seven European countries with more than 7.000 respondents in each wave. The first wave of fieldwork was conducted between 2-15 of April 2020 and the second wave between 9-19 of June 2020. About 60% of respondents from wave one also participated in the second wave of the survey; the remaining sample consists of new respondents, to again ensure the representativeness of the sample. Respondents were recruited using multi-sourced online panels provided by the market research company Dynata. The questionnaire was carefully developed by the authors to ask new and relevant questions, while also adopting some established measures such as the worry items from the (WHO) COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring project. Finally, the survey was translated into six other languages by native speakers and then implemented using the Qualtrics platform.

Here are some highlights from the second wave of the survey.

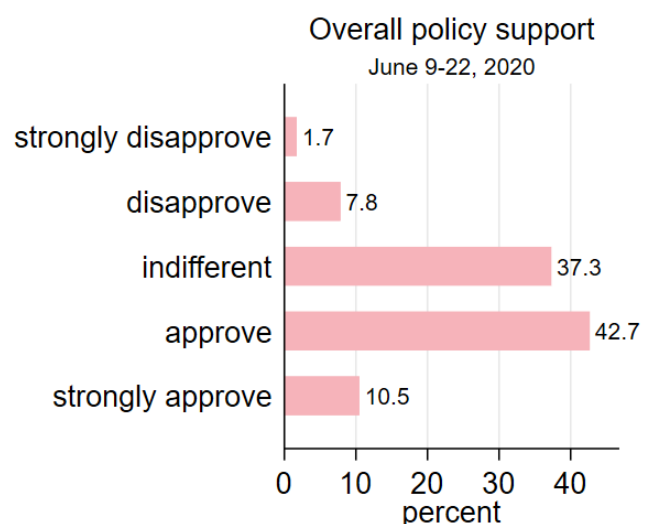
## Policy Support

We asked our respondents about their approval or disapproval of policy measures taken (or likely to be taken) by national governments to fight the COVID-19 outbreak. In particular, we covered such topics as school closures, bans on public gatherings, border closures, bans imposed on export of medical equipment, fines for quarantine violations, random temperature checks, curfews, public transport suspensions and utilization of mobile data for tracking COVID-19 cases and contacts.

Compared to the results in wave 1, the overall share of people who approve of containment policies decreased from 68% to 53%, while the percentage of respondents who are indifferent increased from 27% to 37%. People still widely support school closures, ban on public gatherings, border closures and fining quarantine violations.



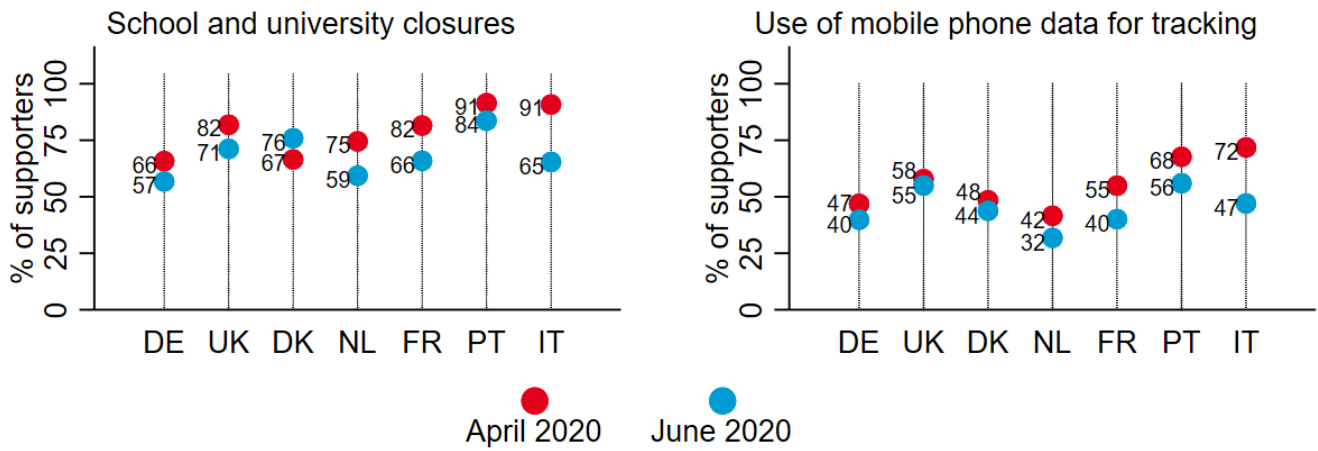
Note: All countries combined



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For each of the containment policies mentioned in the survey, the share of supporters decreased in every country. The only exception was the support of school and university closures in Denmark, where the sentiment of support increased in June as compared to April.

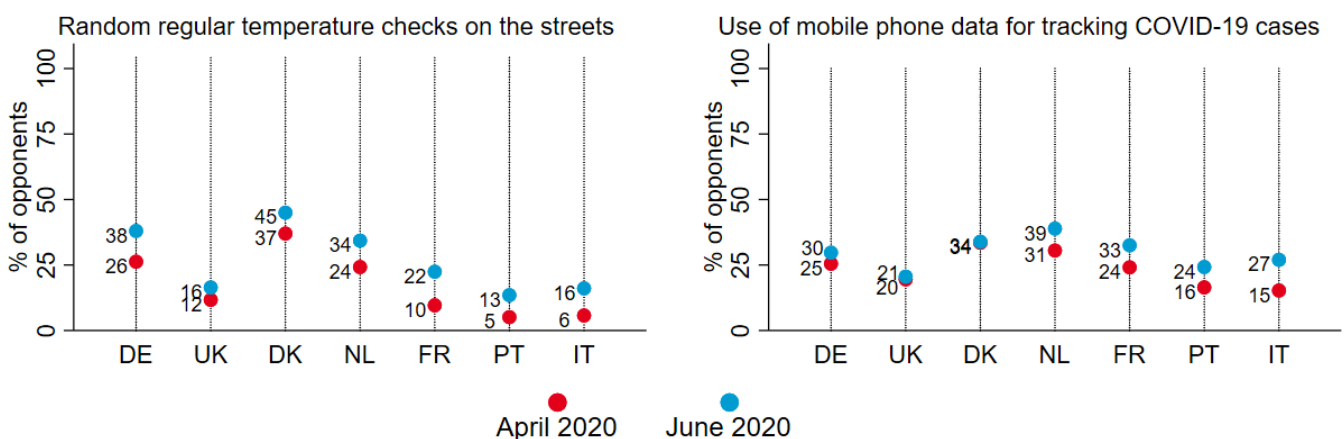
## Change in sentiment



Moreover, shares of people who disapprove of containment policies have also increased for nearly all policies in all countries. The only exception was a decrease in the percentage of people who disapproved of school closures and public transport suspension in Denmark.

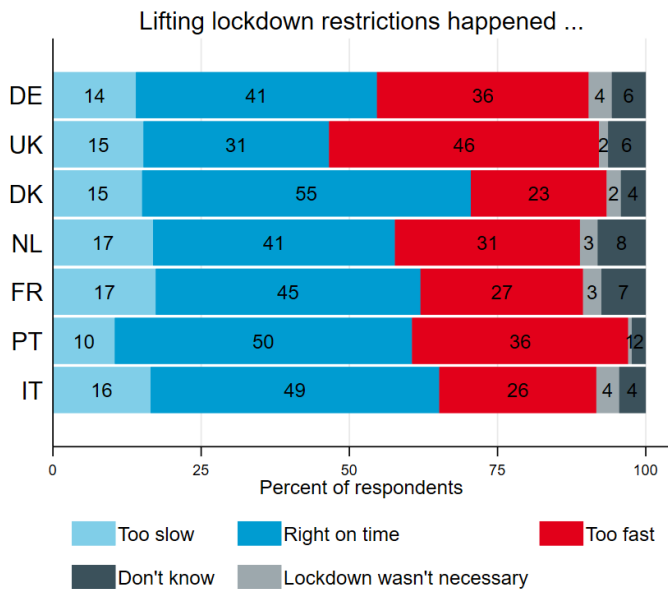
The most significant swing in public sentiment occurred with respect to the use of mobile data for tracking in southern countries (Italy, Portugal, France), where previously the support or this measure was highest among all countries covered by the survey. Such trend makes the successful implementation of COVID-19 tracking apps questionable, since according to experts, the adoption rate must be above 60% for the measure to be effective. In all countries, people would oppose the idea of random regular temperature checks on the streets.

## Change in sentiment

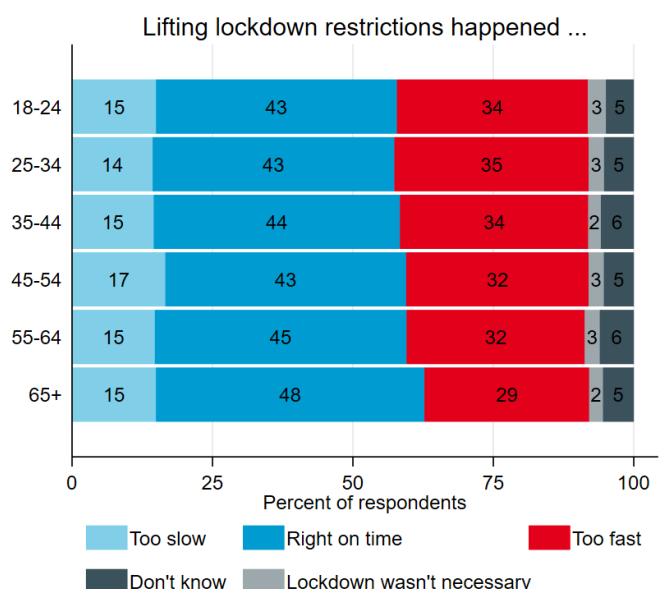


## Speed of lockdown restrictions lifting

People generally agree that lifting lockdown restrictions is not happening too slow: overall, less around 15% of people think that it is happening too slow. On average, 45% of respondents from the total sample believe that their government is lifting the restrictions right on time. The percentage of those who think that their government is doing it too fast is 32% on average, and ranges from 23% in Denmark to 46% in the UK. Interestingly, we do not observe significant differences in opinions across age groups. Female respondents more often think that the exit is happening too fast than male respondents (35% versus 29%). Meanwhile, no significant differences across age groups were observed, except for the oldest age category, where a lower share of respondents perceived the lockdown exit as too fast.



Question: Overall, do you think the lifting of lockdown restrictions (loosen opening cafes, shops, etc) in your country is happening...



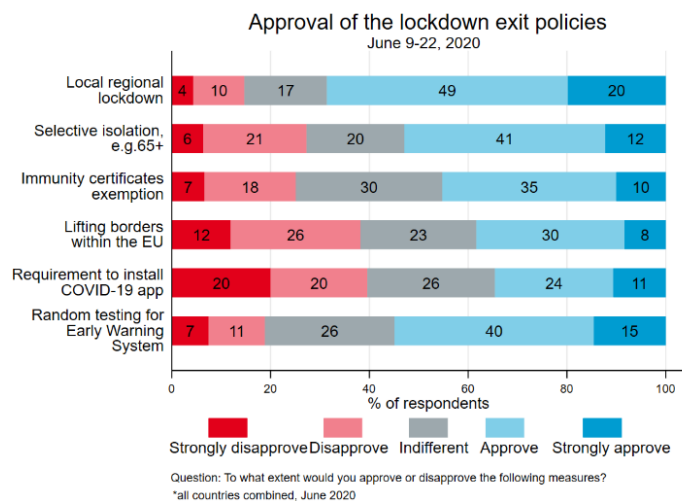
Question: Overall, do you think the lifting of lockdown restrictions (loosen stay-at-home orders, opening cafes, shops, etc) in your country is happening...

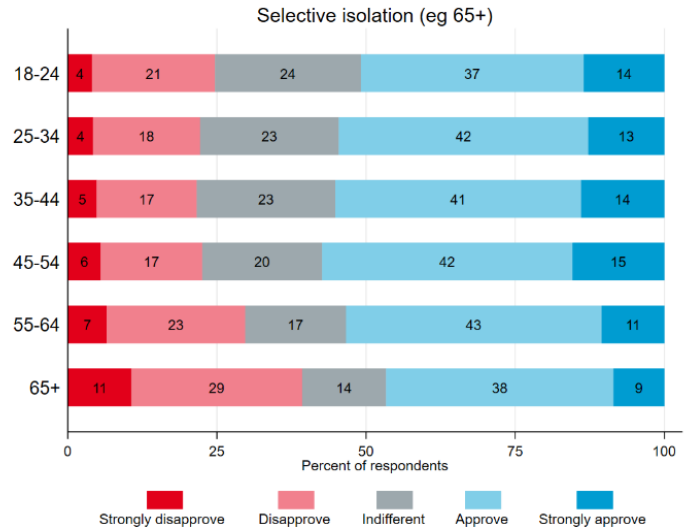
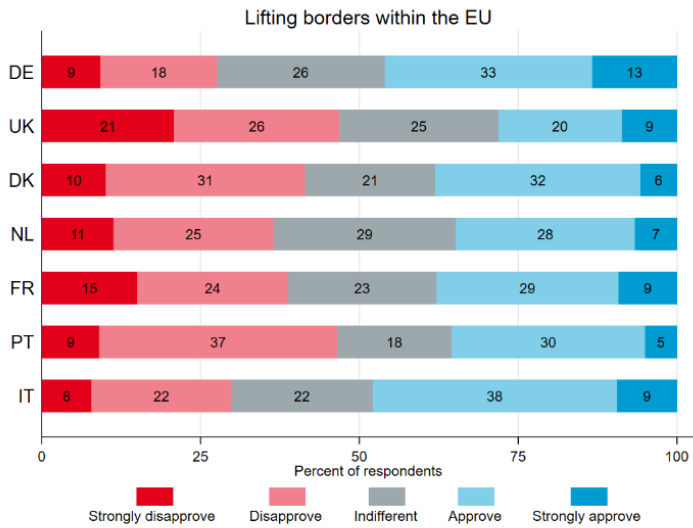
## Lockdown exit policies

We asked respondents about the extent of their approval of certain possible lockdown lifting policies that have been discussed in the media recently. In particular, we assessed support for the following measures: a local “stop and go” approach (lockdown of selected regions that see a spike in COVID-19 cases), selective isolation (for vulnerable people, but not for others), exempting those who recovered from COVID-19 and have immunity certificates from social distancing/isolation requirements, lifting border controls within the EU, a requirement to install the COVID-19 tracing app in the phone, and random selection of citizens for COVID-19 testing with the aim of developing an early warning system.

Overall, people are generally supportive of future restrictions if they are needed, however, the extent of support differs based on the policy.

- People in Denmark (52%) and the Netherlands (60%) would be least supportive of a local lockdown policy, while people in Portugal would be the most supportive (78%).
- The requirement to self-isolate only for vulnerable people had the lowest support in Germany (by 42% of respondents), the Netherlands and Denmark (both 47%), while it was highest in the UK (61%) and Portugal (65%). Overall, at least every third person aged above 55 expressed disapproval of such measure (see graph below).
- The idea with immunity certificates and exemptions for their owners has moderate support, ranging between 41-52% across countries.
- Lifting border controls within the EU has the highest support in Italy (48%) and Germany (46%), while in other countries, support varies between 28% in the UK and around 36% in the remaining states.
- Random testing for the development of an early warning system generally has support above 40% in every country with Portugal, Italy, Denmark and the UK, particularly in favor of it (above 58% support in each).



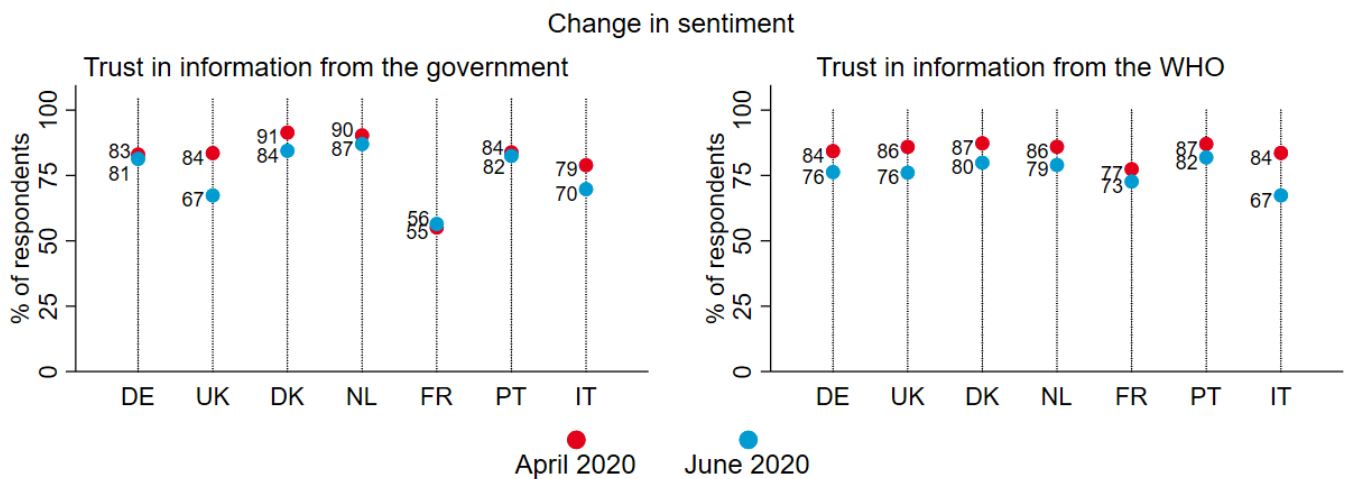


### Trust in sources of information in the COVID-19 context

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they trust the information from the following sources: EU, WHO, national government, news channels, social media, hospitals, doctors, relatives and friends.

Compared to the results in wave 1, the trust in information in the COVID-19 context slightly decreased for all sources and in nearly all countries. The only exceptions were France, where the share of people who trust the information from the government, hospitals and GPs slightly increased, and Portugal, where the percentage of respondents who trust the information from the EU increased.

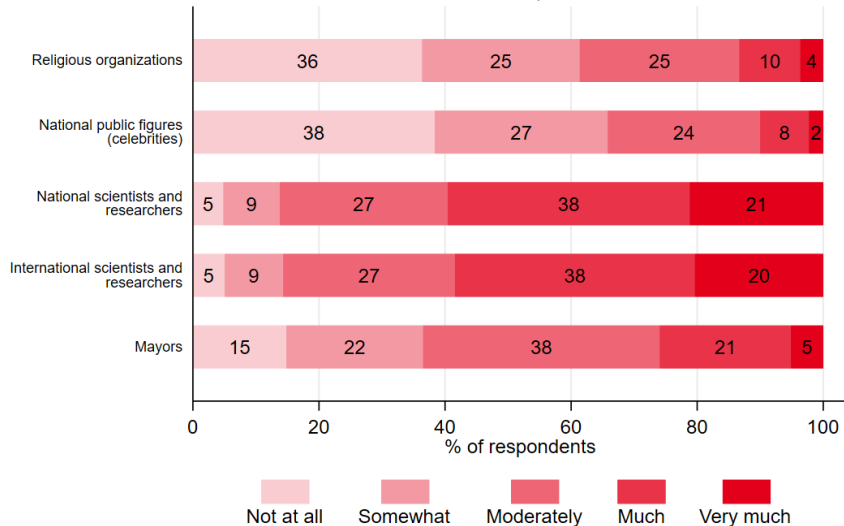
The two figures below reflect the share of respondents who answered that they trust the information from a specific source “moderately”, “much” or “very much”.



Additionally, we measured trust in information from several new sources, including mayors, religious organizations, national public figures, and national and international scientists (results presented on the graph below). Overall, the most trusted sources are the same in all countries and rank as follows: hospitals, GPs, national and international scientists (share of respondents who trust ranges between 82-93% across countries), followed by the WHO, friends, mayors, main national news channels, government and the EU, (share of respondents who trust ranges between 55-85% across countries). The least trusted sources are celebrities, social media, and religious organizations (cross-country range 28-46%).

## Trust in information sources on COVID-19

June 9-22, 2020



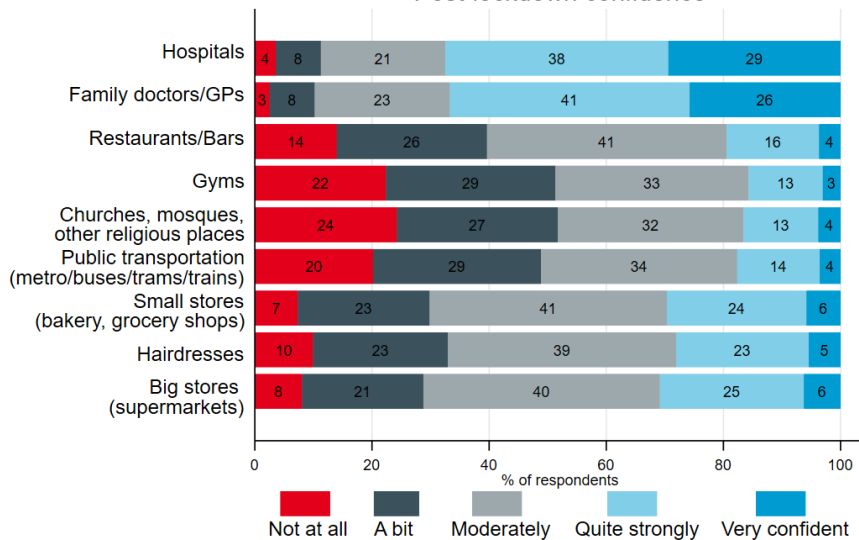
Question: To which extent do you trust the information from the following sources in the context of COVID-19 situation?  
\*all countries combined, June 2020

## Confidence

We asked people about their confidence in various institutions that they would keep people safe after resuming their work following lifting the lockdown.

The picture is fairly uniform: the greatest skepticism is observed with respect to religious sites, gyms, and public transportation companies, while visiting the doctor causes the least concern, followed by small and big stores and hairdressers. Although the basic trend is the same in all the countries, it is clear that in the UK, which is particularly badly affected by COVID-19, confidence is even lower than in the other countries.

## Post-lockdown confidence



Question: How confident are you that these organizations will keep you safe after the lockdown ends (i.e. they will oblige government COVID-19 related hygiene and social distance measures)?  
\*all countries combined

## Worry

We again asked respondents to share the extent to which they worry about certain risks and consequences brought by the COVID-19 outbreak. We addressed concerns about the health system getting overloaded, losing a loved one, becoming unemployed, small companies running out of business, recession, restricted access to food supplies, blackouts and society becoming more egoistic.

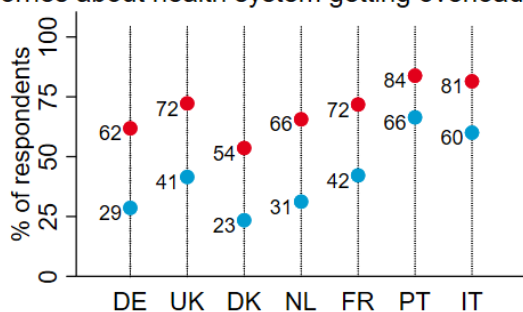
In April, health-related worries prevailed: worry about losing a loved one (share of people who worried much or very much ranged across countries between 44-85%) and concerns that the health system could become overloaded (cross-country values between 54-84%).

In June these concerns considerably decreased in every country. In case of worries about the health system, the magnitude of the decrease ranged between 17-34 percentage points: Germany (-33), UK (-31), Denmark (-30), the Netherlands (-34), Portugal (-17), Italy (-22), and France (-30). There is still a high level of heterogeneity across countries: people in Italy, Portugal and the UK have greater health-related concerns than people in other countries. Similarly, economic worries decreased everywhere in June compared to April, except for worries about the recession in France, where they did not change.

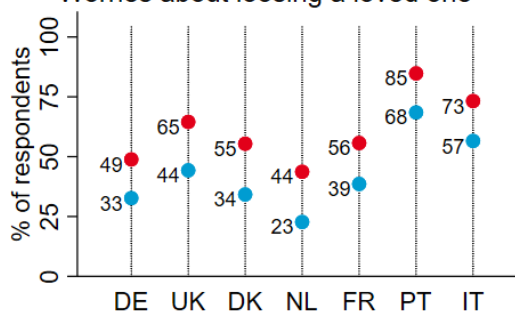
- The most significant drop was observed in Denmark, where concerns about small companies running out of business were down by 20 percentage points, about the recession by 15 pp and about the unemployment by 7 pp. The decrease in other countries was typically smaller in magnitude.
- In case of concerns about the recession, the drop in the share of people who worried “much” or “very much” ranged between 0-15 percentage points: Germany (-9), UK (-3), the Netherlands (-6), Portugal (-2), Italy (-5).
- In case of worries about becoming unemployed, the drop in corresponding shares ranged between 3-11 percentage points: Germany (-8), UK (-7), the Netherlands (-3), Portugal (-11), Italy (-6), and France (-4).
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### Change in worry

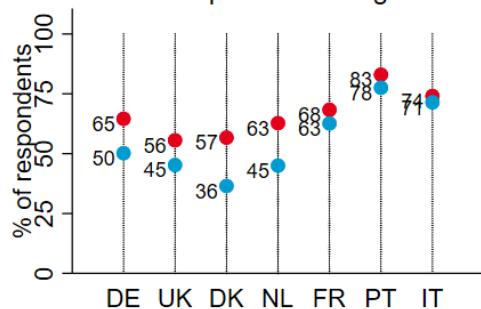
Worries about health system getting overloaded



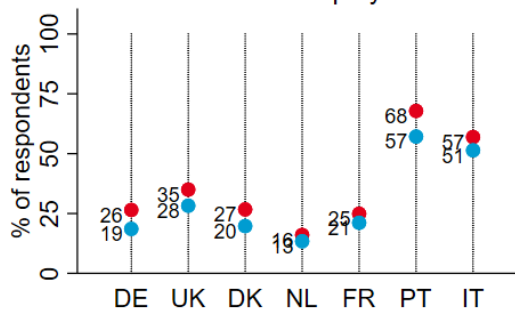
Worries about losing a loved one



Worries about small companies running out of business



Worries about unemployment



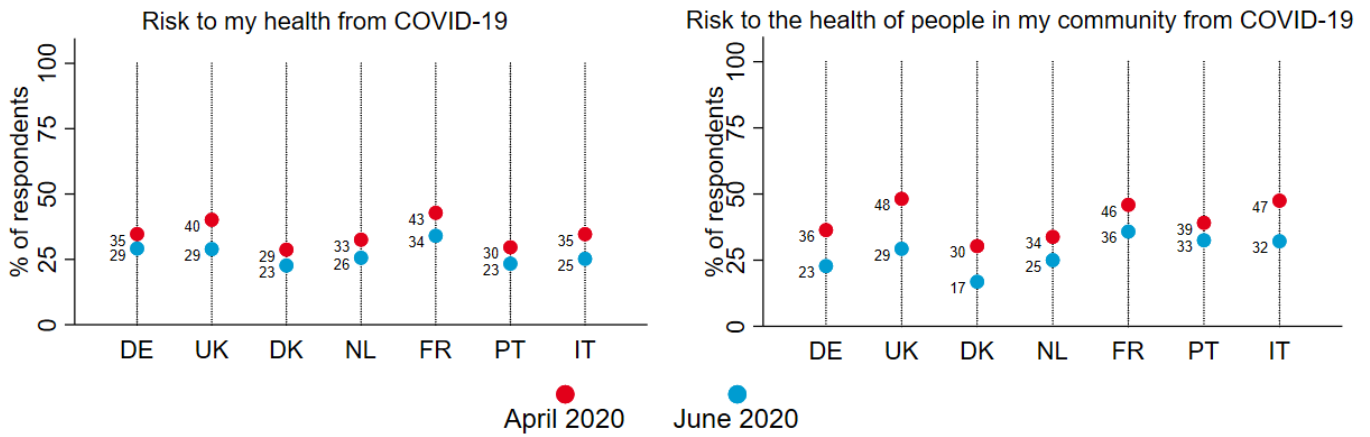
● April 2020    ● June 2020

The decrease in health worries may be related to a general decrease in risk-perceptions. In all countries the share of people who perceive risks of getting infected with SARS-CoV-2 as high or very high decreased: Italy (-8), Portugal (-3), France (-7), Germany (-8), Denmark (-14), the UK (-12), the Netherlands (-11).

Overall, fewer people now believe that the risk from COVID-19 to their own health, health of their family and community is high or very high. Except for the Netherlands and Portugal, the share of people who believe that COVID-19 does not pose any risks or poses very little risk to themselves or others increased everywhere from April to June, which also holds across all age groups and both genders.



## Change in risk perceptions



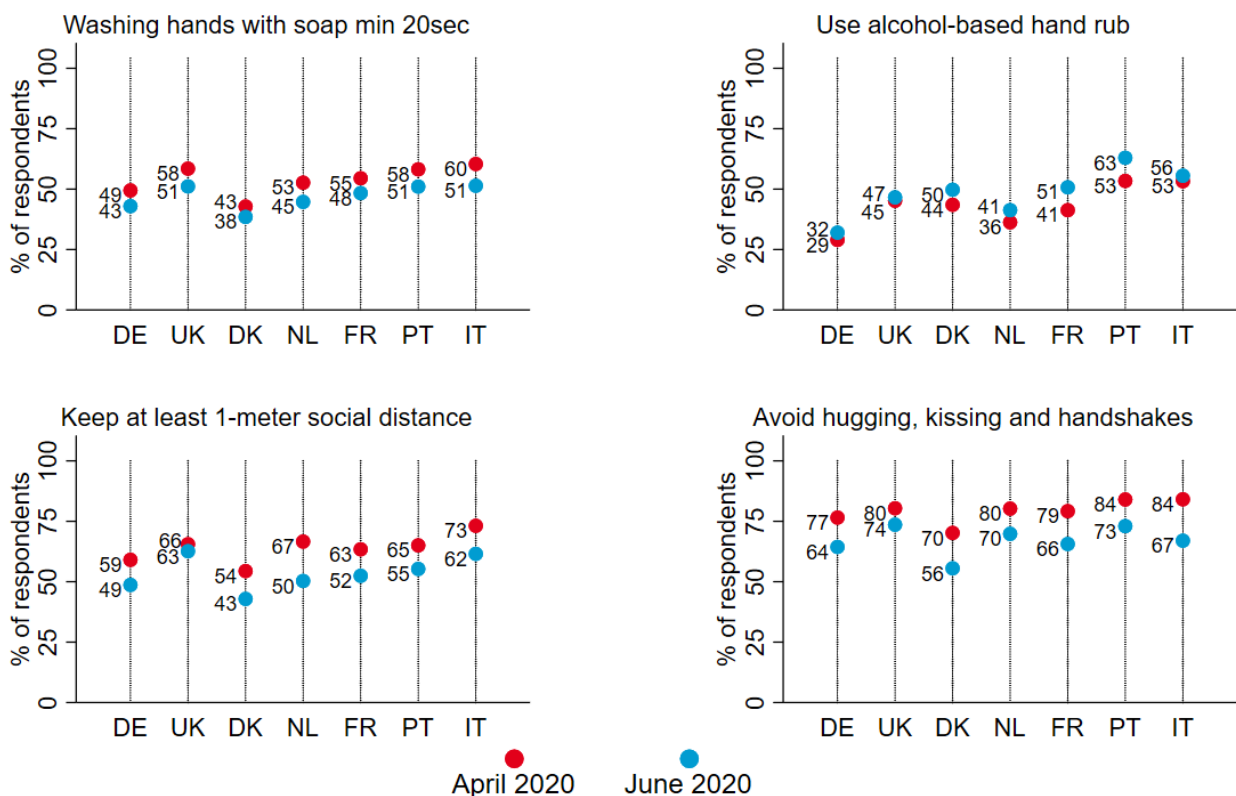
Note: Share of people who perceive risk as high or very high, excluding those who were diagnosed with COVID-19

## Adherence to the WHO basic protective measures

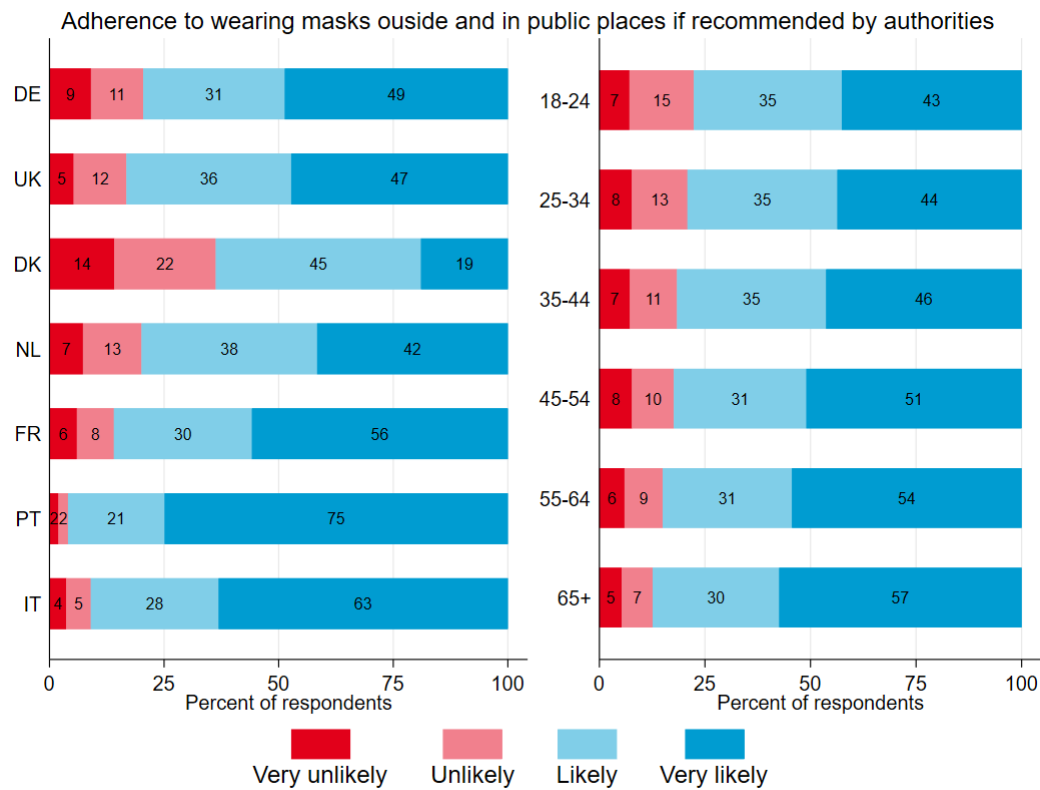
We asked the respondents about their personal adherence to the WHO hygiene recommendations against SARS-Cov-2: washing hands frequently, using alcohol-based hand rub, covering nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing, keeping the social distance of at least 1 meter, avoiding handshakes, hugs, kisses, and touching face. Compared to April, in June adherence to the WHO recommended preventive measures slightly decreased for social behaviors and changed the pattern for some of the hygiene behaviors.

- In all countries, a lower share of people reported a high extent of adherence to washing hands frequently with soap for a sufficient amount of time.
- Meanwhile, it seems that people might have substituted this measure with the use of alcohol-based hand-rub, since the percentage of respondents who reported high adherence to this measure has slightly increased in all countries.
- Interestingly, compared to April, in June people reported that they avoided touching their face more frequently in the UK (+3), Denmark (+2), France (+3) and the Netherlands (+1), while the trend was either reversed or unchanged in Italy (-3), Portugal (-2) and Germany (0).
- There were no differences in adherence across age groups or gender.

## Change in adherence to hygiene and social distance recommendations



Additionally, we asked people about their willingness to comply with the following three recommendations if advised by the national authorities: wear the mask when outside or in public places, stay home (respect confinement rules) and completely self-isolate if having any of COVID-19 symptoms. For each of these measures and in each country, every 4 in 5 people would likely comply (above 80%), except for wearing masks in Denmark, where this measure was supported by only 64%. For each of the three measures there was a clear age gradient: the likelihood of complying increased with age.



## Mobile phone apps

We asked respondents a number of questions related to the use of mobile phone data for COVID-19 tracing. Given the ongoing discussion about data privacy and storage, we asked participants about the extent of their support for various aspects of such policies. Italy and Portugal have slightly larger shares of policy supporters than other countries.

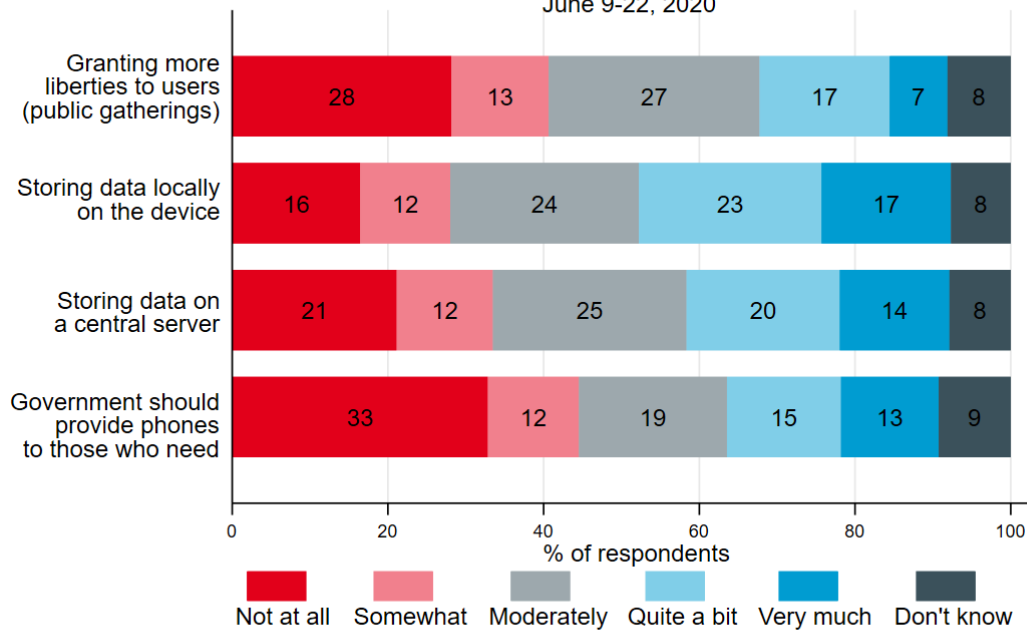
As for the debate between central vs local data storage, there seems to be a slightly higher preference for storing data locally. The share of people who support local storage (moderately, quite a bit or very much) ranges across countries between 56% in France to 71% in Portugal, while the corresponding value for centralized data storage ranges from 51% in the Netherlands to 67% in Portugal.

As for the possible requirement of the government to install a phone app for COVID-19 tracing, the support is below 44% in all countries. In particular, it would be lowest in the Netherlands (25%), France (28%), Denmark (29%) and Germany (32%), while highest in Italy and the UK (both 44%) and Portugal (40%).



## Support of policies related to COVID-19 tracing mobile phone apps

June 9-22, 2020



Question: To what extent would you support the following measures related to a COVID-19 contact tracing app?

\*all countries combined

## Vaccination

Overall, willingness to vaccinate decreased in all countries except for Portugal, where it increased by 1 percentage point. The magnitude of the drop ranged between 3-11 percentage points UK (-3), Denmark (-6), Germany (-9), the Netherlands (-5), Italy (-11), and France (-7). In June, the average willingness to vaccinate in Europe was around 68% as compared to 74% in April.

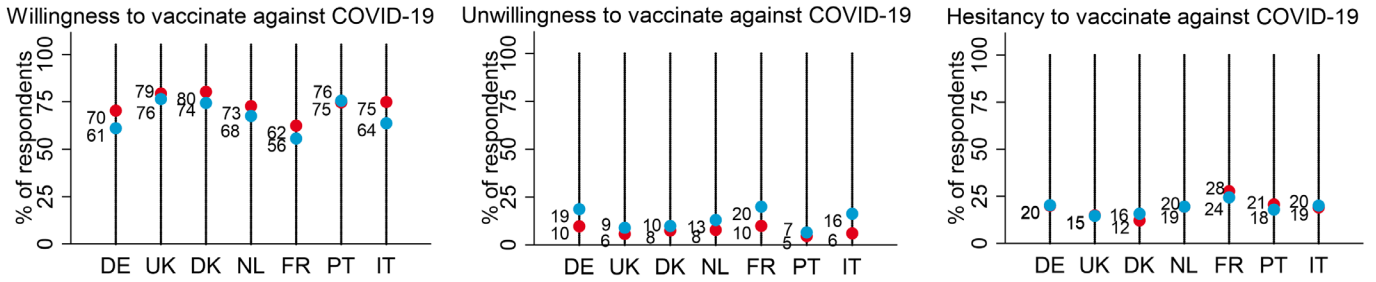
Willingness to vaccinate against COVID19 seems to be slightly higher for people with high income than for those with low income (69% vs 66% as of June, and 75% vs 73% as of April).

Vaccine hesitancy slightly increased in Denmark (+4), Italy (+1), the Netherlands (+1), decreased in France (-4) and Portugal (-3), and did not change in Germany and the UK. In June, the average hesitancy to vaccinate was around 19%, the same as in April.

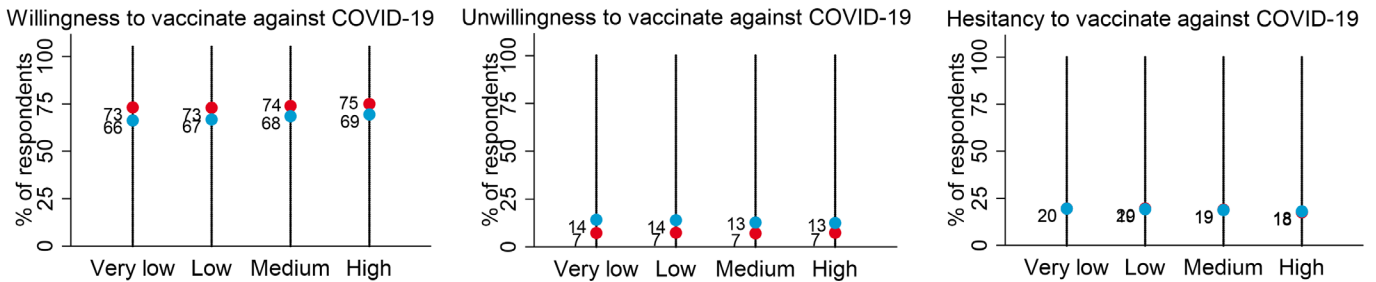
The sentiment against COVID-19 vaccination has increased in all countries. The increase ranged between 2-10 percentage points: UK (+3), Denmark (+2), Germany (+9), the Netherlands (+5), Italy (+10), Portugal (+2) and France (+10). In June, the average unwillingness to vaccinate was around 13% as compared to 7% in April.

It seems that willingness to vaccinate goes together with people's trust in the information from the government, WHO, EU and national scientists: the more people trust, the more willing they are to get vaccinated (significant coefficients in the Probit regression).

### Change in willingness to vaccinate by country



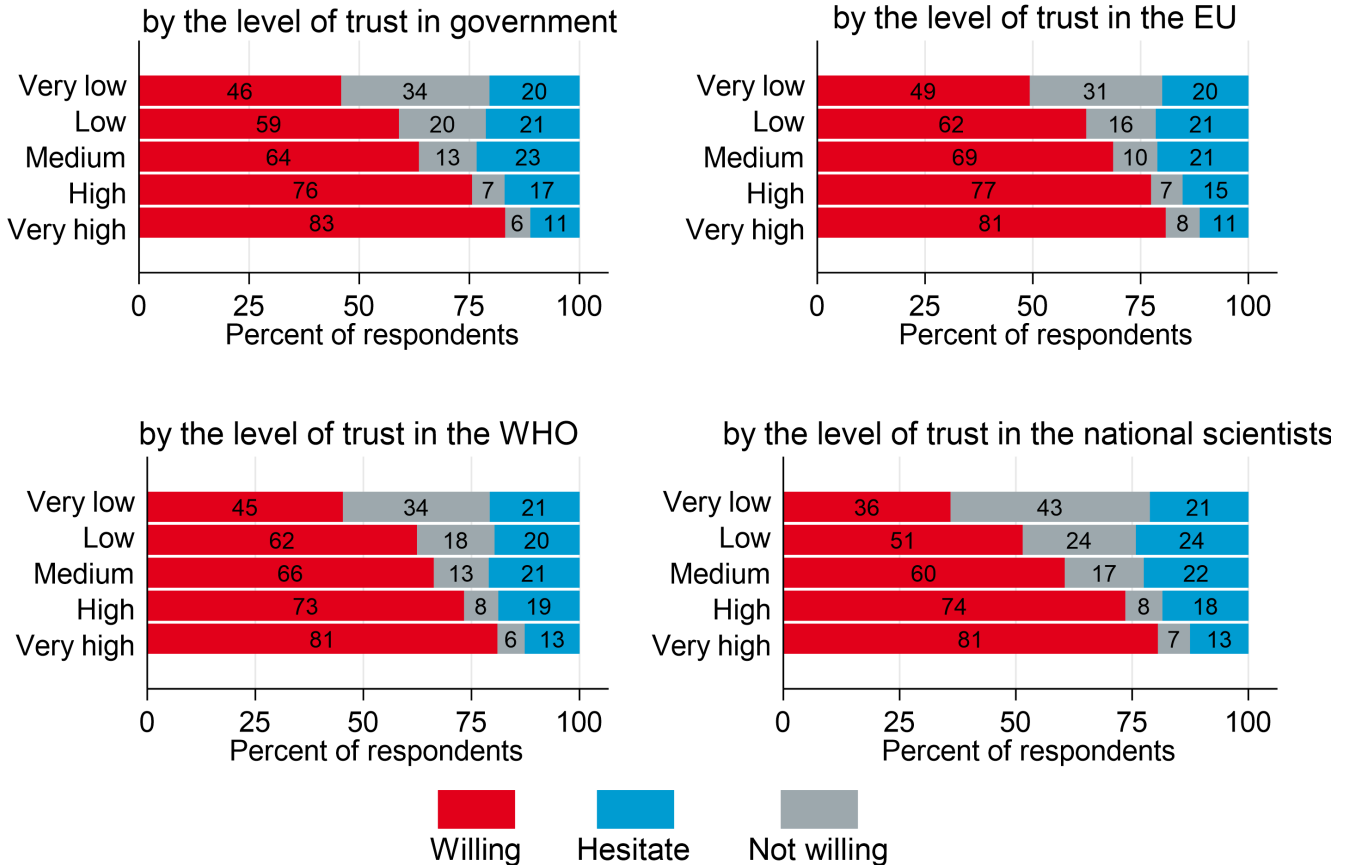
### Change in willingness to vaccinate by income level



● April 2020    ● June 2020

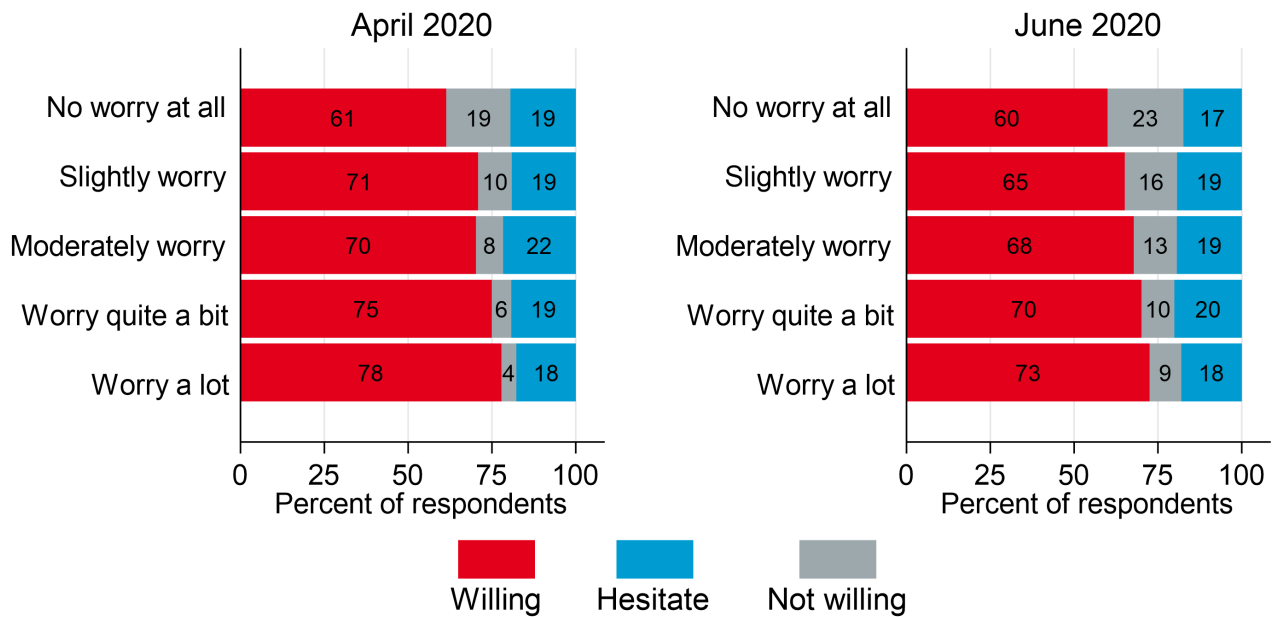
### Willingness to vaccinate by levels of trust

June 2020



■ Willing    ■ Hesitate    ■ Not willing

## Willingness to vaccinate by levels of worry about losing a close person



Note: all countries combined

### Who should decide the priority of access to the vaccine?

The majority of respondents believe that the decision about who gets vaccinated against COVID-19 first should be taken by healthcare organizations administering vaccine, Ministry of Health and/or national team of experts (support ranges between 40-73% across countries). Next on the list of trusted decisionmakers is the national government, supported by 28-45% of respondents depending on the country. The least supported ways to determine the priority would be the lottery (67% of respondents against), citizens voting through referendum (56% against), pharmaceutical company producing the vaccine (55% against) and parliament (46% against).

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