



# Analysis of the traffic to illegal content portals during the COVID-19 crisis and the return to the new normal





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Project nº 16.762

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## Monitoring of Internet users

### Methodological considerations and objectives



By analyzing the browsing, we are able to determine how many individuals have accessed to illegal content websites based on a monitoring panel representative of the 18+ Spanish Internet population.

This is possible thanks to a tracking software ("passive meter") installed on their electronic devices for personal use (Smartphone, PC and / or Tablet).

The **objective** of this study is to analyse the **evolution of the consumption of illegal content** in the context of lockdown due to the **COVID-19** crisis and back to the new normal, as well as other indicators that allow us to better understand the **intensity of this consumption**.



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## Monitoring of Internet users

### Methodological considerations and objectives



The data included in this report has been obtained from a online panel of internet users in Spain of legal age, representative at the level of gender, age and location, made up of more than 9,000 individuals \*

This panel collects daily the detail of all the browsing done by Internet users through their personal use devices: PC, smartphone and tablet.

*\*Sample error:  $\pm 1\%$*



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## The State of Alarm and the start of lockdown

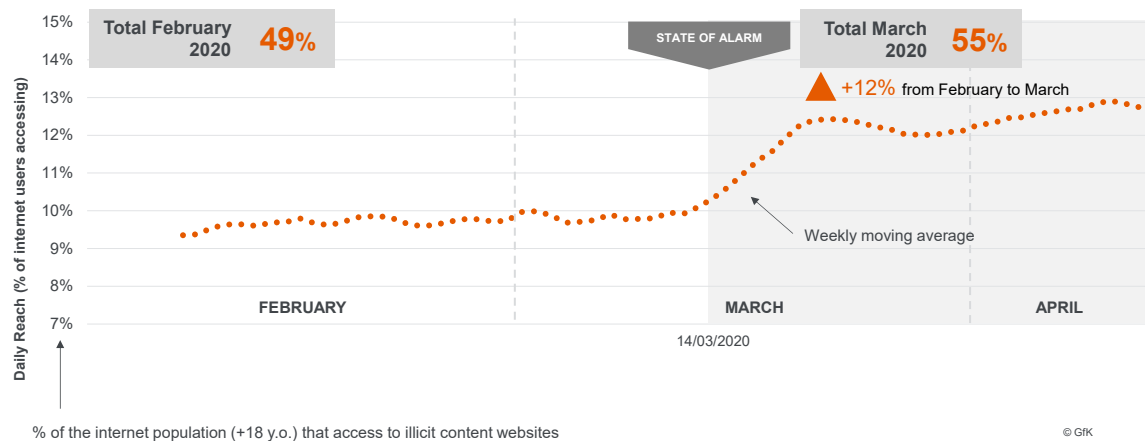
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## Access to illicit content websites



Feb – April 2020

When we analyze the period from February 1<sup>st</sup> to April 12<sup>th</sup>, we observe a remarkable **upward trend in the number of daily users who accessed these portals once the State of Alarm was decreed**. Comparing the traffic during the month of March with that of February, a 12% increase in the number of users was observed, and if we analyze the first 12 days of April, we notice how this growing trend continues, although in a more moderate way.



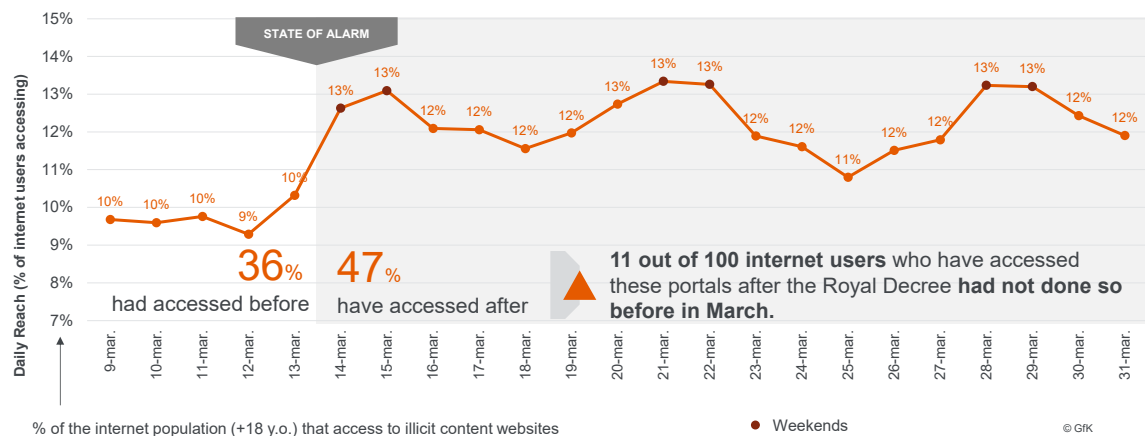
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## Access to illicit content websites



March 2020, within the context of the State of Alarm

With the beginning of the State of Alarm, we observed a **significant increase in the number of users** accessing some portal with illegal content. Before the Royal Decree, 36% of the Internet population had accessed these portals, and after the start of the quarantine this proportion rose to 47%.



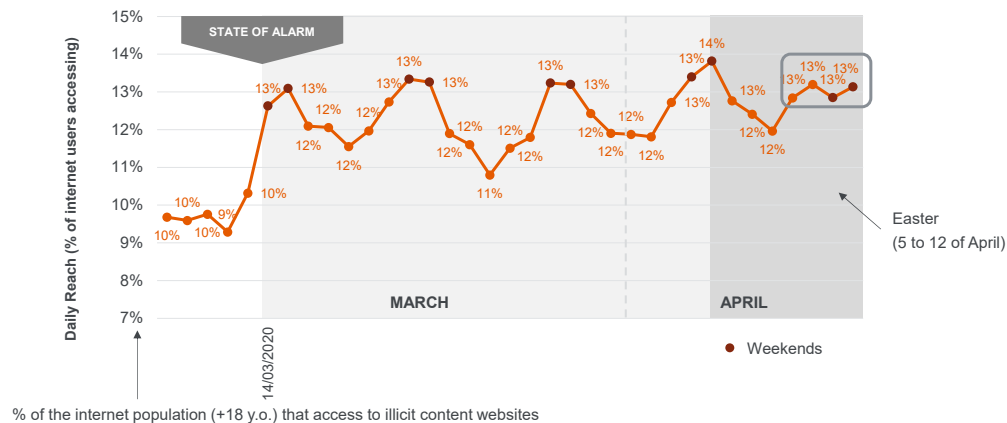
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## Access to illicit content websites



March – April 2020

The trend kept up during the first days of April, reaching on **Sunday, April 5th**, the highest traffic peak of the **historical series analyzed** (since February 1<sup>st</sup>). In addition, we observed an **increase** during the Easter holidays, registering during the four days a **similar traffic than the weekends before Easter after the State of Alarm**, removing the usual differences between weekdays and weekends.

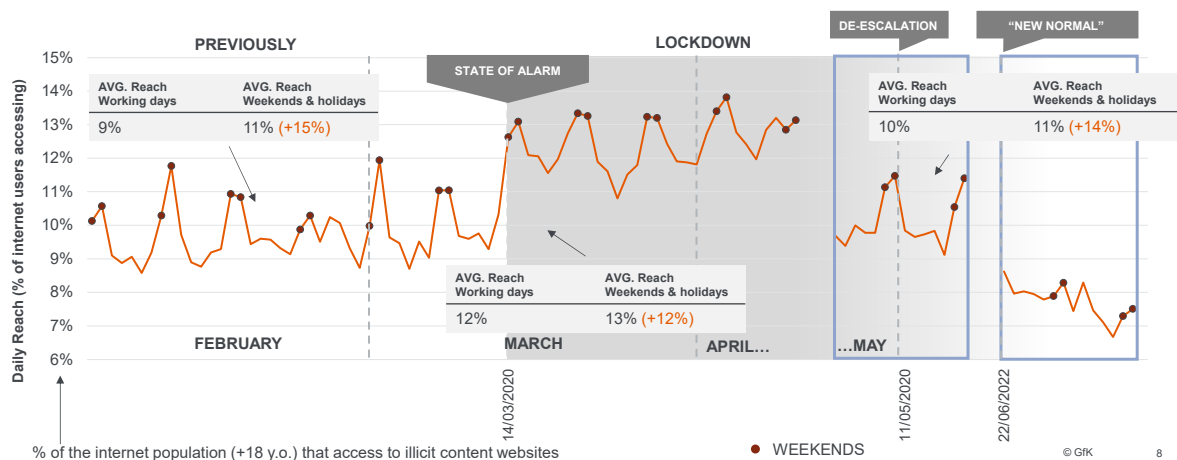


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## What about the return to the “new normal”?



If we analyze the daily reach of these portals during the first two weeks of new normality, we see a clear downward trend, registering the lowest levels of the period. Moreover, during the lockdown, the differences in access between weekdays and weekends are slightly reduced.



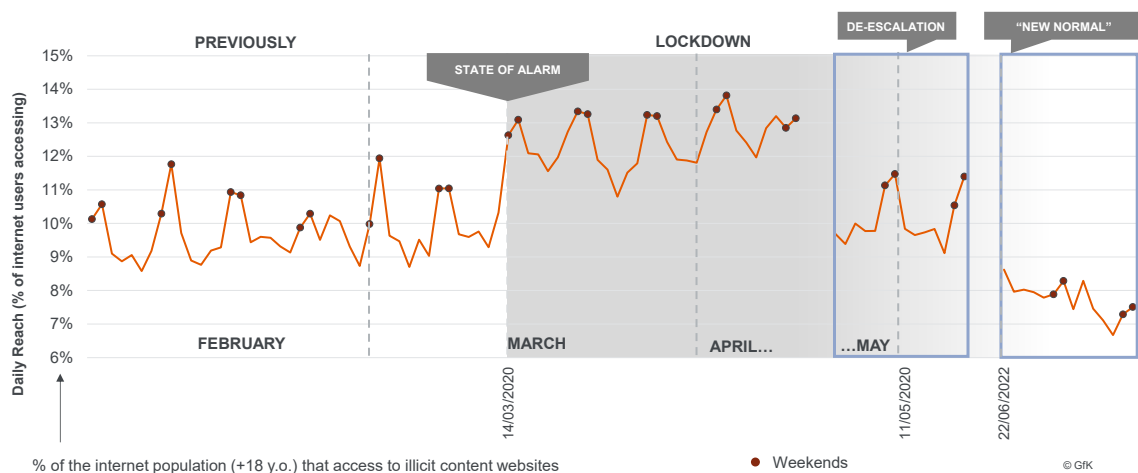
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## De-escalation plan and the “new normal”

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## What about the return to the “new normal”?

If we analyze the daily reach of these portals, we observe how during the first two weeks of “new normal” a clear decreasing trend can be seen, registering the lowest levels of the whole period.



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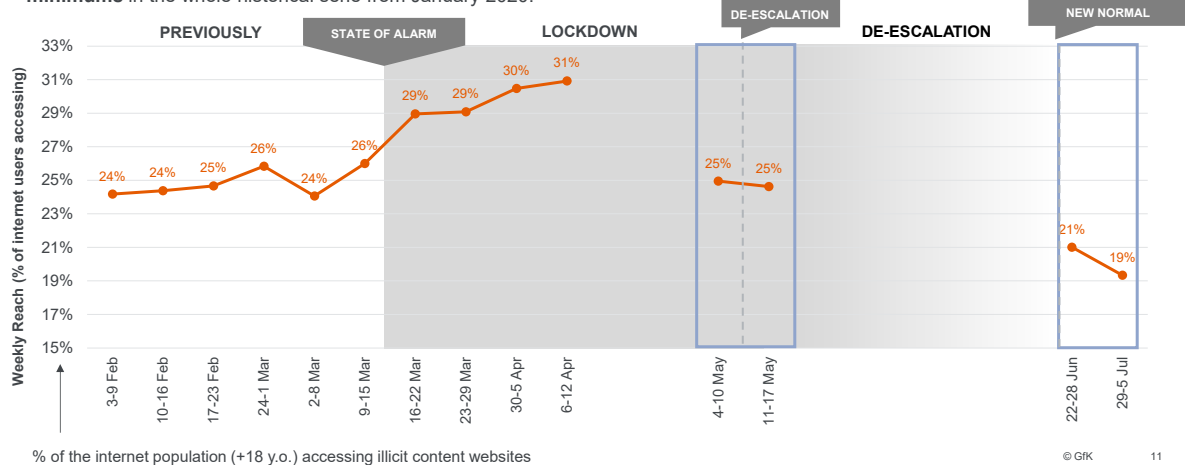


## Weekly access



% weekly Reach (% internet users over 18+ y.o. accessing the websites)

To have a better traceability and temporal comparability after the beginning of the de-escalation, we analyzed the weekly reach. As with the daily reach, **the number of weekly users at the end of the lockdown period and the beginning of the de-escalation return to the levels prior to the State of Alarm.** On the other hand, **the first weeks of the “new normal” mark minimums** in the whole historical series from January 2020:



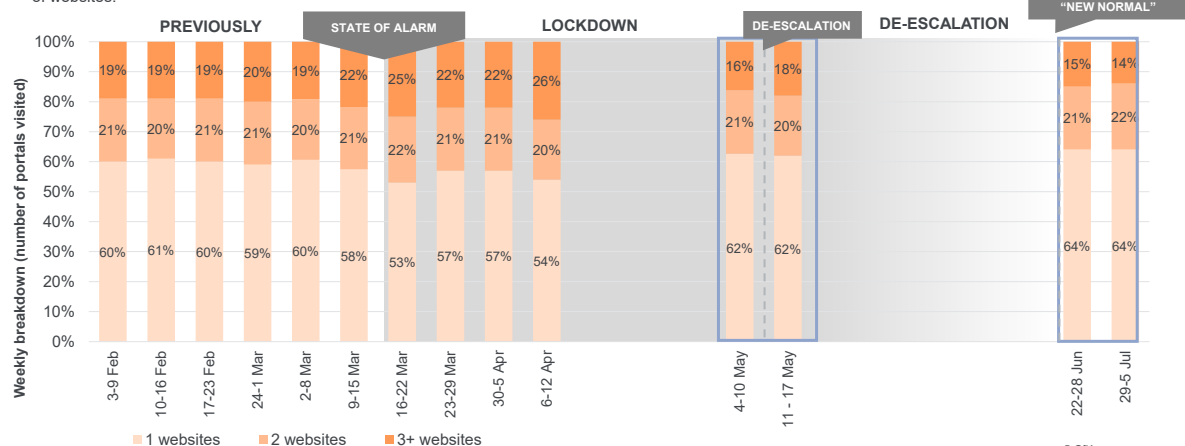
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## Number of illegal portals visited by user and week



There is clearly a significant increase in accesses after the State of Alarm and in a greater number of illicit content websites.

It is also relevant how the consumption of these contents has been diversified in terms of portals: with the declaration of the State of alarm we observe how users begin to consume content from a greater number of different websites (from the 19% of users who visited 3 or more different websites in the week of February 3<sup>rd</sup>, we moved to, for example, 26% in the week of April 6). With the de-escalation, the consumption of this content is concentrated in a lower number of websites.

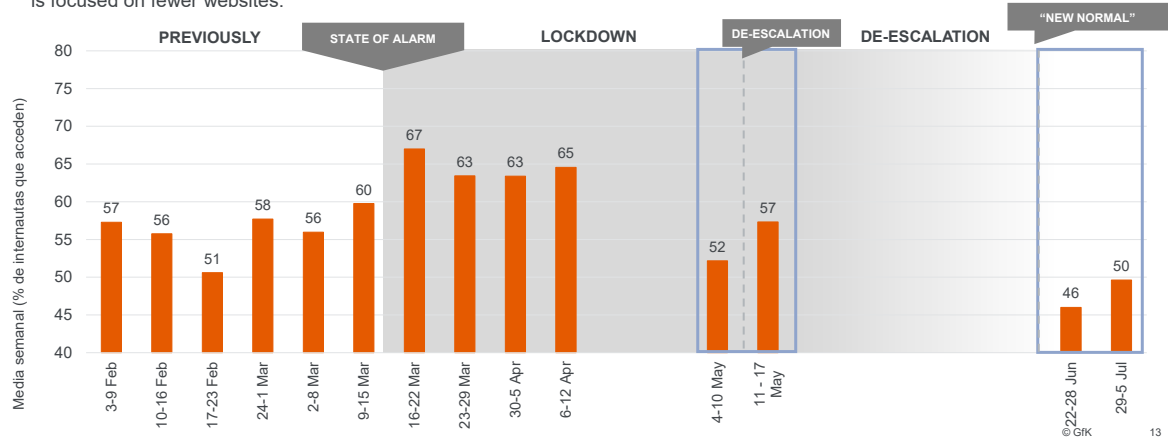


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## Average number of page views per user per week on illegal websites

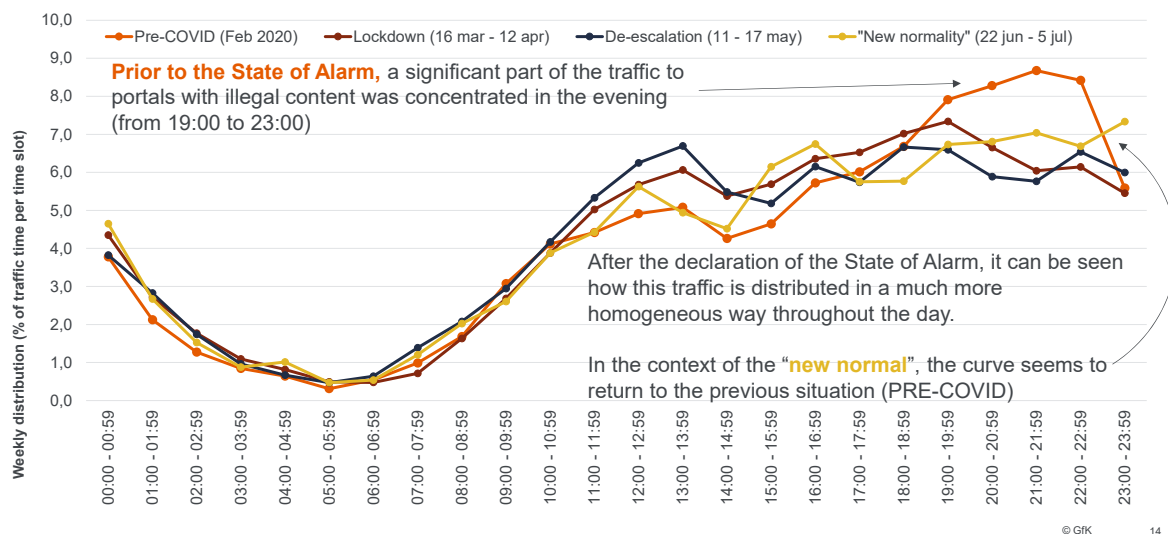


To get an idea of the intensity of this traffic / consumption of illegal contents, we have analyzed the **number of pages viewed** on these websites by each user. We noticed that with the beginning of the State of Alarm, not only there is more traffic (unique users) to these websites as we have previously seen, but also that **this traffic is more intensive, which is likely to mean a greater number of content consumed per user (+15%, from 56 to 65 weekly average)**. With the de-escalation, consumption is focused on fewer websites.



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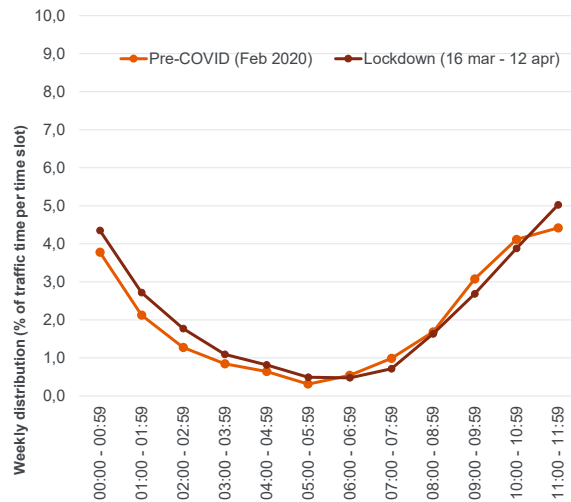
## Distribution of browsing time by slots



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## Distribution of browsing time by slots



### NIGHT and MORNING

If we compare the accesses to illegal content websites before the State of alarm and during the strict lockdown, we observe how **during the lockdown there is a greater consumption in the late-night slot, between 12:00 at night and 4:00 in the morning.**

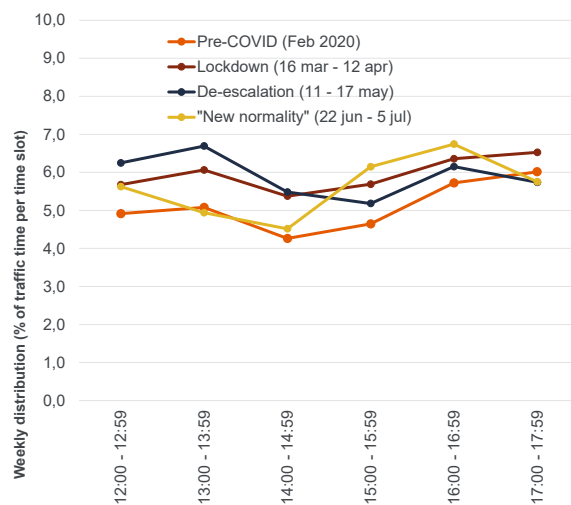
However, during the strict **lockdown** stage, **consumption in the morning** begins a **little later** than in the previous period.

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## Distribution of browsing time by slots



### MIDDAY and AFTERNOON

The stretch from 12:00 to 18:00 concentrates a greater number of accesses during the home confinement and the de-escalation than during the pre-Covid 19 period.

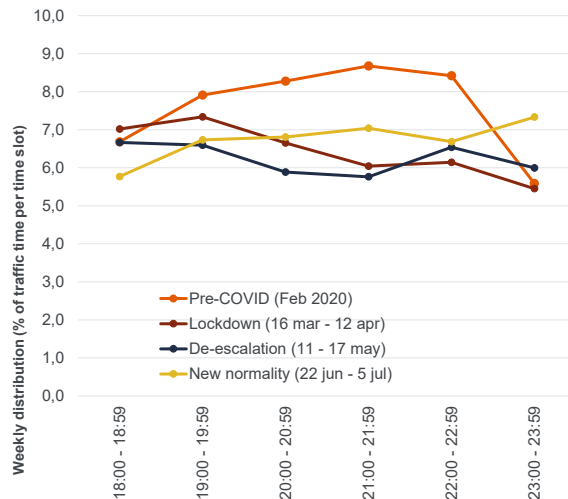
In addition, these accesses are more constant during that time period (12:00 to 18:00)

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## Distribution of browsing time by slots



### AFTERNOON / EVENING

The accesses after 20:00 in the evening **decrease considerably** with the declaration of the State of alarm, while in the previous period they kept a growing and constant trend until 23:00 at night (with a peak from 21:00 to 22:00, prior to the beginning of prime time).

This behavior is very much in line with the total Internet consumption during the weeks of lockdown, when from 20:00 in the evening a decrease in the Internet consumption was observed.

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## Conclusions

1. From the State of alarm, we observed a significant **increase** in the **number of users** who accessed websites with illegal content. 11 out of 100 of Internet users accessed these portals and had not accessed in the days before to the month of March (increase of 29%).
2. In addition, **these users accessed a greater number of illegal websites** (25% accessed 3 or more websites in the first week of strict lockdown, compared to 19% in the previous weeks), diversifying their consumption in more websites of those that they previously visited.
3. They also viewed a greater number of pages on these websites with illegal content (+ 15%, up from 56 to 65 on average per week), which most likely translates into a greater number of content consumed and / or downloaded content.



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## Conclusions



4. During the **lockdown**, we observed important **changes in the consumption habits** of illegal content: more users, more number of different websites consumed, and also that **consumption was more constant throughout the day**, unlike what was going on before the State of alarm was decreed, where a significant concentration of consumption was observed between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. In addition, during lockdown stage, greater access is still observed during weekends, but the difference with working days is not as pronounced as in the previous situation of normality.
5. Coinciding with the return to the new normality, the consumption intensity indicators (portals and pages) return to the levels prior to the alarm state, and the number of users is considerably reduced, with the minimums for the whole period under analysis.



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Thank you!

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