

Report on online **dis**information

SPECIAL ISSUE ON CORONAVIRUS

Table of contents

1. What information and disinformation offer about the coronavirus

- 1.1 Information: media coverage of the coronavirus in Italy ▶
- 1.2 Disinformation: space dedicated to the coronavirus ▶
- 1.3 Information vs. Disinformation about the coronavirus in social networks ▶
- 1.4 Weight of disinformation on the coronavirus online news ▶
- 1.5 5G: main facts and false information related to the coronavirus ▶

2. What Italians watch online about the coronavirus

- 2.1 Information vs. Disinformation: the consumption of Italians during the epidemic ▶
- 2.2 Emotions raised among Italians by the online news during the epidemic ▶
- 2.3 Interactions of the Italians on social media: how they react to coronavirus contents ▶
- 2.4 Social engagement: how much and what Italians comment on the coronavirus ▶
- 2.5 Online video: the most viewed contents about the coronavirus ▶

3. How the internet consumption changes during the epidemic in Europe

- 3.1 Online news: the consumption in Europe during emergency and reopening ▶
- 3.2 Institutional sites: the consumption in Europe during emergency and reopening ▶
- 3.3 Social media: the consumption in Europe during emergency and reopening ▶

4. Cybersecurity threats and coronavirus

- 4.1 Cyber attacks: most frequent types and techniques ▶
- 4.2 Growth of cyber threats during the epidemic ▶
- 4.3 Cyber attacks related to the coronavirus in Italy and worldwide - April ▶
- 4.4 Cyber attacks related to the coronavirus in Italy and worldwide - May ▶
- 4.5 Phishing campaigns related to the coronavirus in Italy ▶

Methodology

In this Report we refer to the term "coronavirus" in a broad sense to describe all topics related to the current epidemic emergency. More precisely, the scientific name of "new coronavirus" (namely, the virus belonging to the coronaviruses «family» that had never been found in humans before) is "SARS-CoV-2", while the term "Covid-19" identifies the infectious disease caused by the virus

This issue of the Report on Online Disinformation is dedicated to the analysis of information and disinformation production on the Covid-19 theme, consumption of coronavirus news, as well as cybersecurity threats.

The figures shown are updated to May 2020 in order to outline the evolution of information scenarios from the beginning of the spread of contagion to the phase of gradual reopening.

The special issue on the coronavirus of the Report on Online Disinformation is part of the activities of the **Roundtable on Digital Platforms and Big Data - Covid-19 Emergency** set up by AGCOM to contribute, among other things, to the fight against online disinformation on issues related to the epidemic.

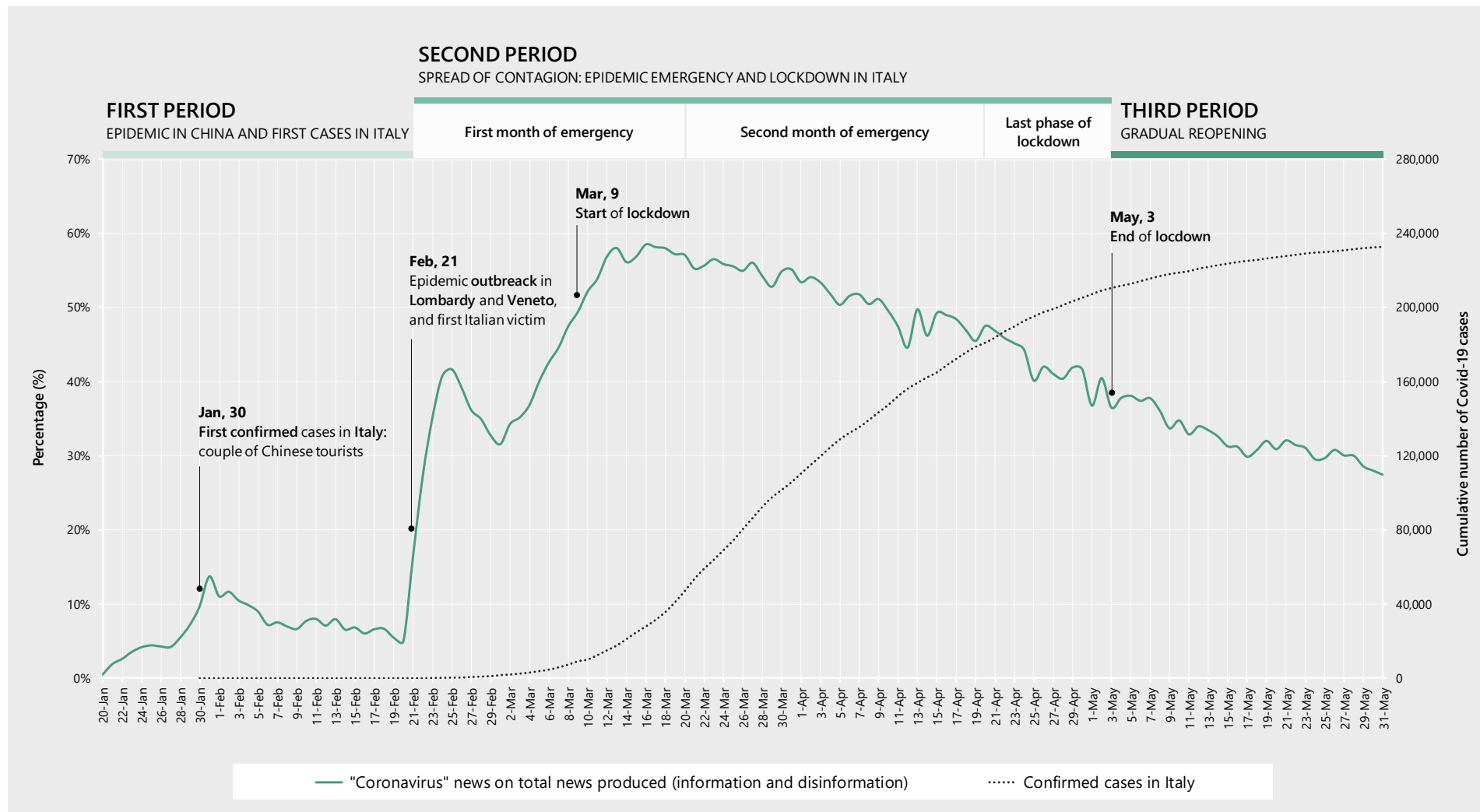


1

WHAT INFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION OFFER ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

1.1 Information: media coverage of the coronavirus in Italy

Daily incidence of coronavirus news on total news produced



In the last phase of the lockdown and in May, when the gradual reopening of activities and movements has been arranged, the **media coverage** of issues related to the coronavirus continues to progressively decrease

CORONAVIRUS NEWS IN THE WEEK

29% MAY,
of the total 25-31

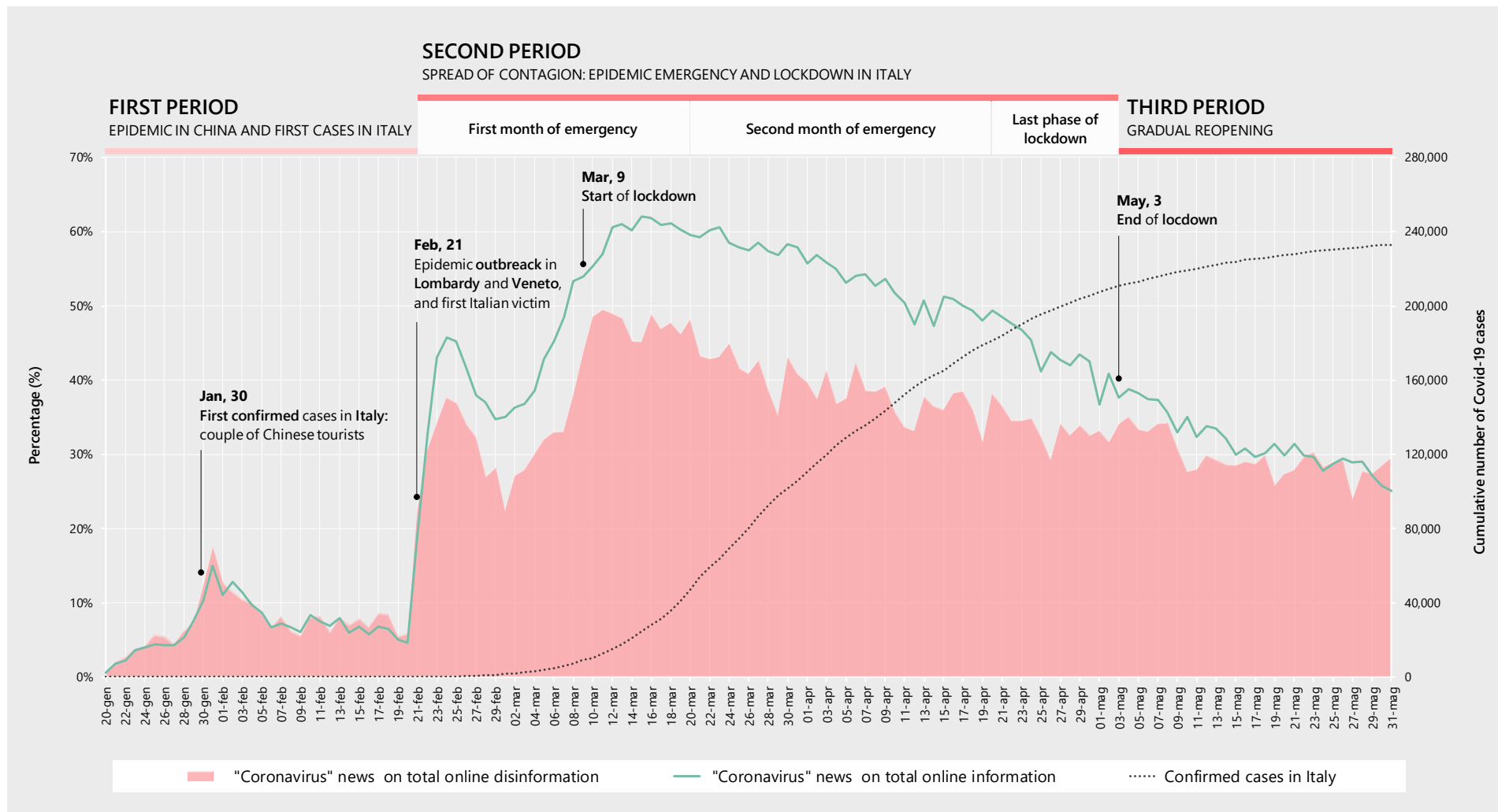
↓ **-2 p.p.** compared to May, 18-24

↓ **-11 p.p.** compared to Apr, 27-May, 3

In May, the total **amount** of coronavirus news produced by TV, newspapers, radio and internet remains **considerable** (about 400,000 contents)

1.2 Disinformation: space dedicated to the coronavirus

Daily incidence of coronavirus news on total disinformation: comparison with online information



As the days go by, even the space dedicated by the sources of online **disinformation** to the coronavirus also shows a **decreasing trend**, although at a less pronounced rate than that observed for information

CORONAVIRUS NEWS IN THE WEEK

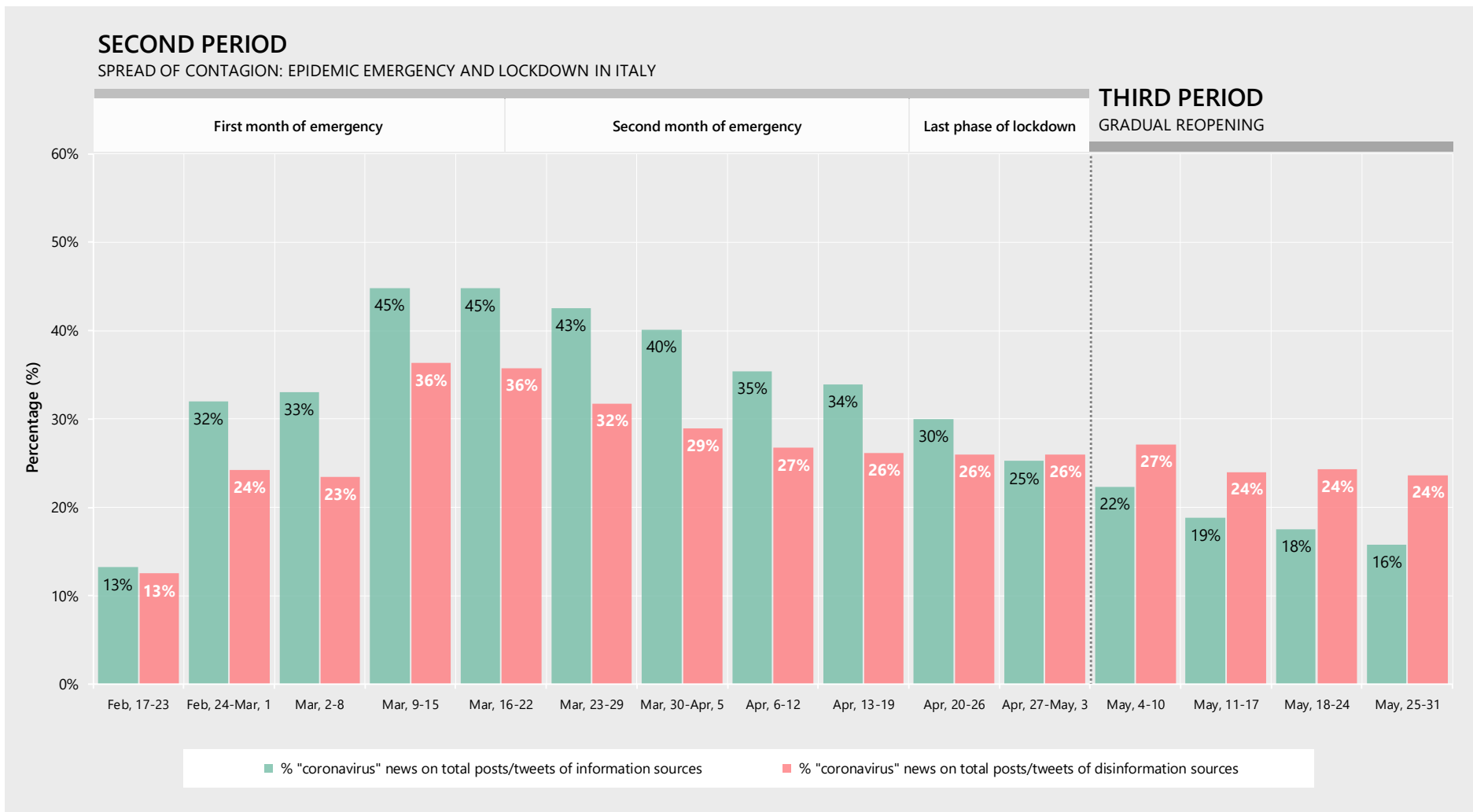
28% MAY,
25-31
of total
disinformation

↓ **-1 p.p.** compared to May, 18-24

↓ **-5 p.p.** compared to Apr, 27-May, 3

In the last few weeks, the coverage values of the epidemic issues have tended to get closer and closer for online disinformation and information, and from 25 to 31 May both stand at 28%

Incidence of coronavirus posts/tweets on total: information and disinformation (% in the week)



POSTS/TWEETS ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS IN THE WEEK

16% MAY, 25-31
of the totale social information sources

24% MAY, 25-31
del totale social disinformation sources

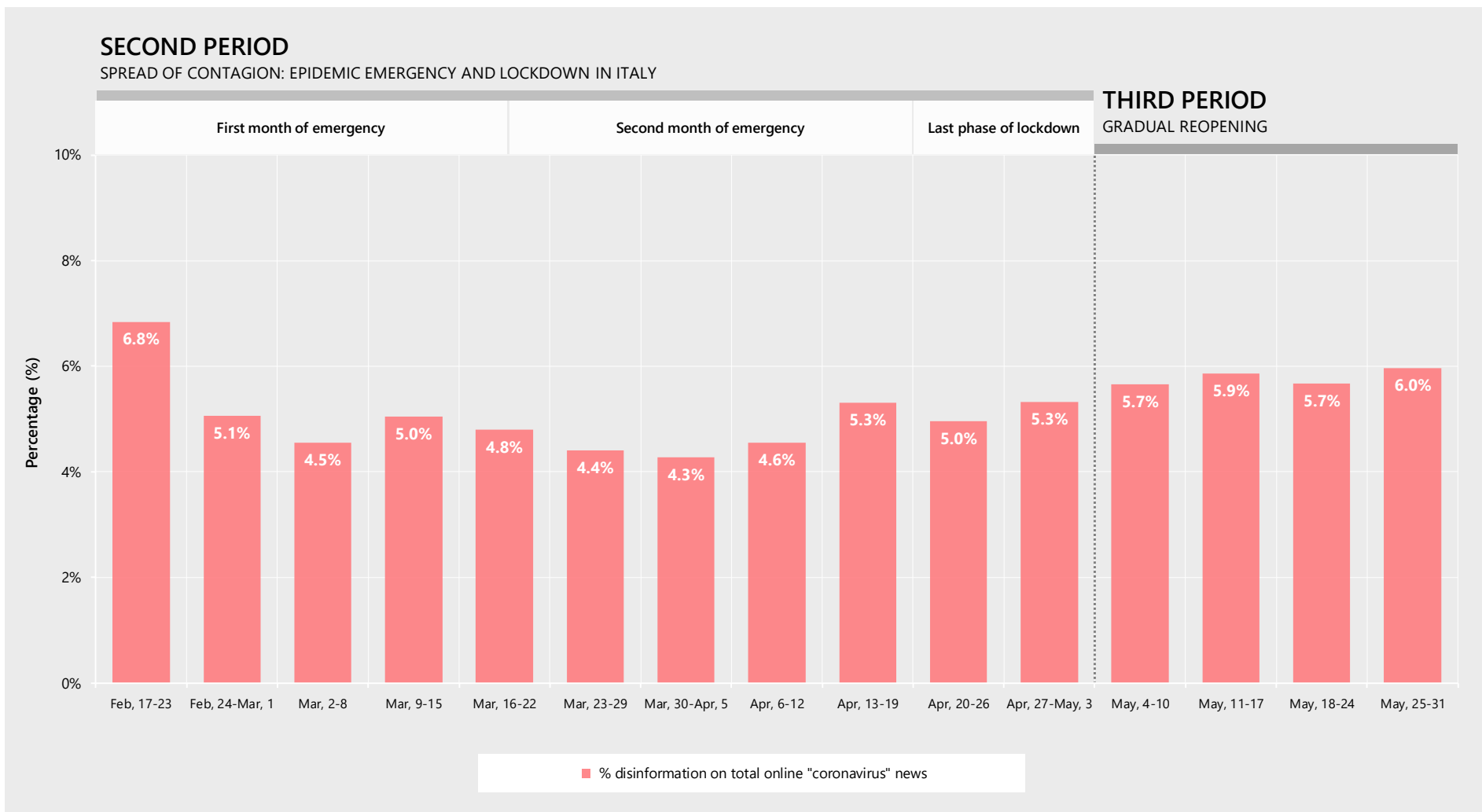
For **information** sources, there is a continuous **decrease** in the space allocated on their social pages and accounts to coronavirus news, while for social sources of **disinformation**, at least in the last 3 weeks, the focus on the topic remains **almost constant**.

As a result, since the end of April, the percentage of coronavirus posts/tweets of the total is **higher for sources of disinformation** than for sources of information

Note: the figures indicated refer to the posts and tweets published by the pages and social accounts (Facebook and Twitter) of the sources of information and sources of disinformation identified as such by external debunking specialists. Therefore, they do not include users' posts/tweets. The figures indicated for the first 9 weeks may differ slightly from those reported in the previous issue of the Report, in view of the inclusion in the analysis of further sources

1.4 Weight of disinformation on the coronavirus online news

Disinformation on total online coronavirus news (% in the week)



Compared to the most critical period of the medical-health emergency, in which the information component's attention to the issue was at its peak, in recent weeks the **weight of disinformation** on the total amount of coronavirus-related news circulated online **has increased again**, exceeding 5% earlier and rising to 6% at the end of May

INCIDENCE OF DISINFORMATION IN THE WEEK

6% MAY, 25-31
of the total online "coronavirus" news

The incidence of disinformation on the total news related to the epidemic is even greater if the analysis focuses only on the **social content** produced. In fact, considering all the posts and tweets on the **coronavirus** published by the sources examined, those of **disinformation** represent **13%** in the last week of May

Note: the figures indicated for the first 5 weeks may differ slightly from those reported in the previous issue of the Report, in view of the inclusion in the analysis of further sources of disinformation identified by external debunking specialists, which made it possible to make adjustments also with reference to previous periods

MAIN FACTS ABOUT 5G

5G USES RADIO FREQUENCIES THAT HAVE BEEN LARGELY IN USE ALREADY SINCE MANY YEARS [Go to the link](#)

The fifth generation of mobile radio networks (5G) represents an evolution of the previous ones, which uses frequencies already used for years with other technologies or quite similar (from July 2022, 5G will use the 700 MHz band, so far used by TV broadcasters, which has similar characteristics to the 800 and 900 MHz bands already used for many years for 2G, 3G and 4G services; since 2008 the 3.6 GHz band is used by WiMAX systems and then also 4G; the 26 GHz band has already been used for over 15 years in Italy)

5G DOES NOT LEAD TO AN INCREASE IN THE PERMITTED LIMITS FOR ELECTROMAGNETIC EMISSIONS [Go to the link](#)

The limits set in Italy are among the lowest (and therefore the most precautionary) in the world and well below the average value applied by other EU countries, where the limits are already at least 50 times lower than those for which a potential impact on health would not be negligible. 5G does not increase the electromagnetic emission thresholds permitted by law, which must be respected also by new networks. Moreover, these thresholds are cumulative, so the limits will be met by the sum of the emissions of all technologies and operators in a given area

5G IS MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT THAN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OF MOBILE RADIO NETWORKS [Go to the link](#)

Thanks to the application of innovative technologies, 5G networks allow signals to be dynamically routed to terminals only where and when needed, thus using electromagnetic energy more efficiently (for example, 5G requires less energy than 4G to transmit the same amount of data) and avoiding sending signals where they are not needed

INCREASING THE DENSITY OF 5G STATIONS ALLOWS TO REDUCE ELECTROMAGNETIC EMISSION LEVELS [Go to the link](#)

Distributing a greater number of cellular antennas throughout the territory, in compliance with current regulations on authorizations, makes it possible to reduce the average distance between base stations and user terminals (smartphones, tablets, etc.) and consequently reduce the intensity of the electromagnetic signals transmitted; although this may seem counterintuitive, this circumstance, combined with the innovative transmission techniques introduced by 5G, allows to decrease the average electromagnetic field around the user. In addition, this allows for longer battery life of the terminals, higher overall network capacity, better quality of service and higher transmission speeds

5G DOES NOT INCREASE RISKS TO HUMAN HEALTH [Go to the link](#)

According to the latest (March 2020) guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) there is no scientific evidence that 5G technology may represent a threat to human health. In particular, on the basis of the most recent scientific evidence, the new ICNIRP guidelines confirm the adequacy of the existing EU limits for exposure to electromagnetic fields, with some necessary adaptations in the bands above 6 GHz, and which at the moment do not require changes to the Italian legislation. The conformity of the 5G technology with the new ICNIRP guidelines will continue to ensure the highest level of protection, without the need for any further study in this respect

FALSE INFORMATION ABOUT 5G AND CORONAVIRUS

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SAID THAT 5G ACCELERATES THE PANDEMIC


FALSE There is no communication from the EU Parliament to that effect. On the contrary, the EU Parliament expressly states in a communication that there is no link between 5G and the coronavirus  [Go to fact-checking](#)

COVID-19 IS CAUSED BY THE REACTION IN THE BODY OF THE BIOENGINEERED VIRUS TO 5G AND WILL BE CURED BY A VACCINE WITH AN RFID CHIP

FALSE There is no evidence that the virus is artificial and according to WHO 5G does not spread Covid-19. Firstly, the vaccine is not a cure, secondly, the hypothesis that it can be developed with an RFID chip has been called "preposterous" by experts

 [Go to fact-checking](#)

AN ANTENNA TECHNICIAN REVEALS THE EXISTENCE OF A PLAN TO CONTROL CITIZENS THROUGH 5G AND A LINK BETWEEN 5G AND COVID-19

FALSE The man who appears in a very popular video in chat and social networks is actually a known creator of hoaxes  [Go to fact-checking](#)

THE CORONAVIRUS IS NOT A VIRUS, BUT A BACTERIUM AMPLIFIED BY THE ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATIONS OF 5G

FALSE The new coronavirus is a virus: Covid-19 is not caused by bacteria. There is no evidence linking Covid-19 and 5G technology. In fact, as observed by members of the scientific community, considering the size of the virus and the wavelength of the electromagnetic radiation, an interaction between the two would be impossible

 [Go to fact-checking](#)

A BRACELET IS ABLE TO COUNTER COVID-19 AND 5G

FALSE The statements used to describe the product (actually sold as a "parapharmaceutical" for more than 600 euros on an e-commerce site) do not have any scientific testing and validation process behind them. The Antitrust Authority, evaluating the deceptiveness of the product, has therefore ordered the elimination from the e-commerce site of any reference to the effectiveness of the bracelet

 [Go to fact-checking](#)

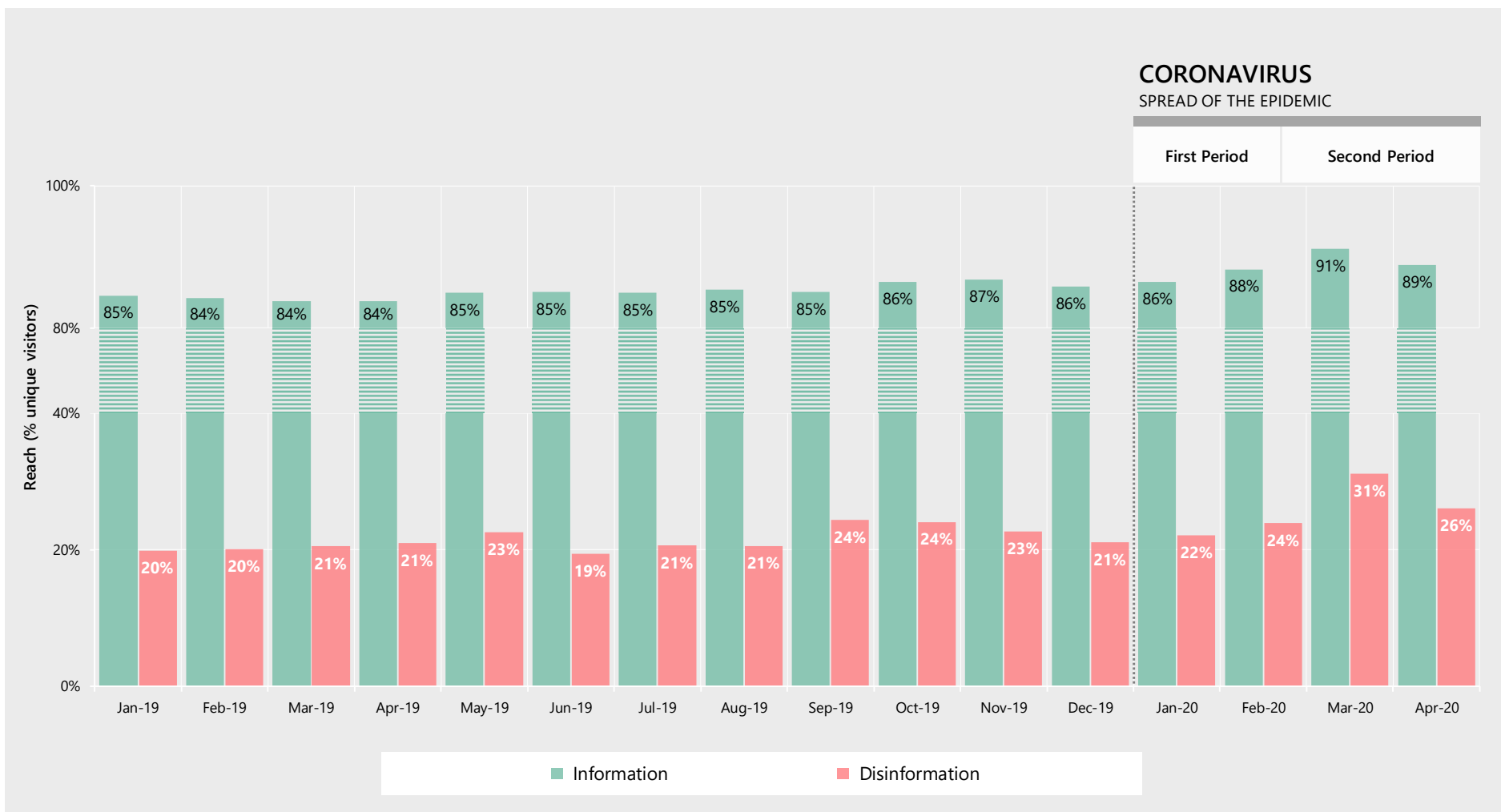
2

WHAT ITALIANS WATCH ONLINE ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS



2.1 Information vs. Disinformation: the consumption of Italians during the epidemic

Unique visitors of information and disinformation sites/apps (% of total internet users in the month)



During the epidemic, mainly in the second Period of time, both **information and disinformation sites/apps grew in consumption**, with values well above the average and those of the same period in 2019

REACH OF DISINFORMATION SITES

MARCH

31%

of internet
users

↑ **+10 p.p.**
compared to
March 2019

APRIL

26%

of internet
users

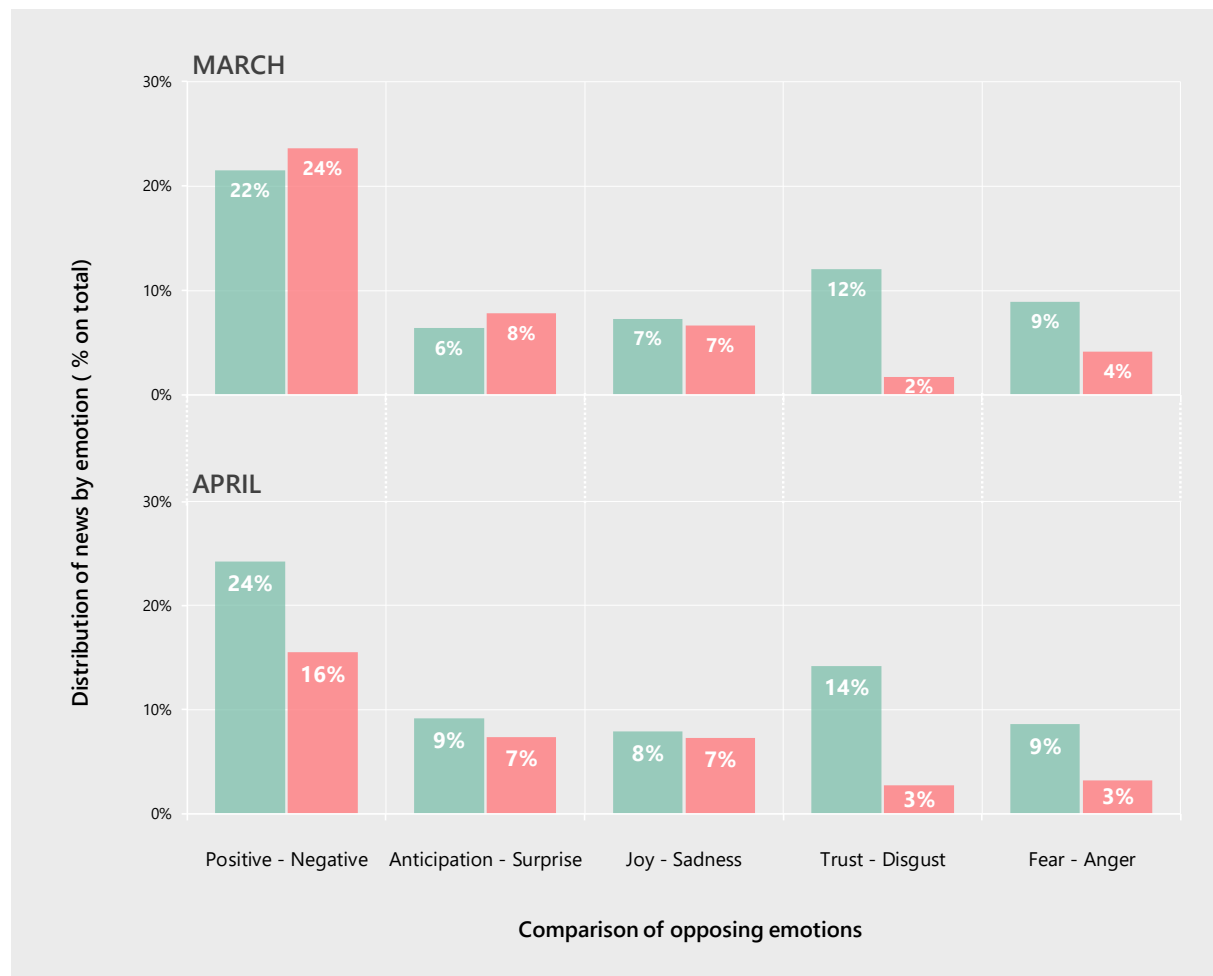
↑ **+5 p.p.**
compared to
April 2019

In addition to the growth of unique visitors (who access information and disinformation sites directly or through redirection from social networks and search engines), in the emergency months there has been also an **increase in time spent and pages viewed per person**

Source: elaborations on Audiweb data

2.2 Emotions raised among Italians by the online news during the epidemic

Emotional analysis of online news



Note: online news distribution for the 10 emotions is obtained through semantic analysis software based on statistical inferences and language libraries. ESA (Emotional Sentiment Analysis) is based on the representation of phenomena from the point of view of the emotions they express (positive or negative emotions) in a scale of differentiation on 10 levels

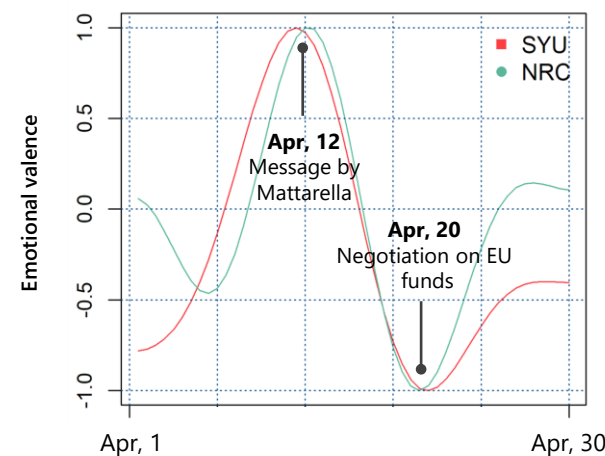
MARCH

In March, the first month of emergency and lockdown in Italy, the **negative emotion** is the most expressed one by in the online news (24%), an indication of a widespread feeling of uncertainty and concern emerging from the chronicle of the pandemic

APRIL

In April, there is a change in the trend: **positive emotions grow** in online news articles. In particular, a greater feeling of confidence in a positive resolution of the emergency period is evident

TREND OF THE EMOTIONAL CURVE OF ONLINE NEWS (APRIL)



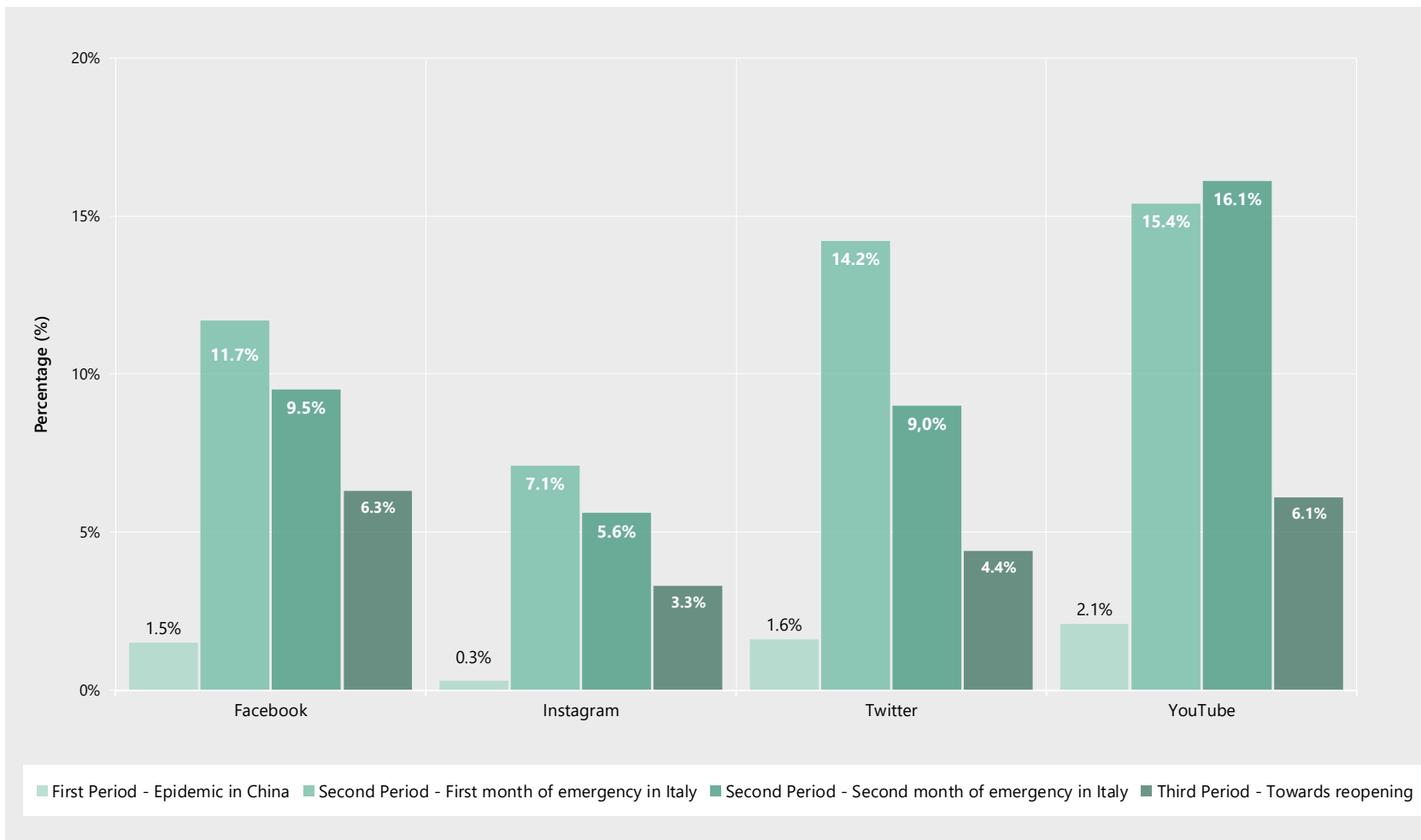
April is marked by two moments of discontinuity in the emotional curve: a **positive peak** at Easter, with the reassuring **message of the President of the Republic**; a **negative peak** at the difficult **negotiations on European funds** for economic recovery

Note: the "emotional" trend of online news (about 392,000) is obtained through the Syuzhet and Nrc English Text Lexicon methods (on R software). The curve oscillates between -1 (max negative) and 1 (max positive)

Source: Sogei-Extrapola elaborations

2.3 Interactions of the Italians on social media: how they react to coronavirus contents

Social contents dedicated to the coronavirus: the share of actions/views on total interactions per platform



ACTIONS/VIEWS ON THE CORONAVIRUS

First Period vs. Second Period

Although **YouTube** has reached the **highest share** of views achieved by coronavirus content in both periods, the **highest** percentage (+1,559%) and absolute (+39 million) **increase** in coronavirus actions between the first Period and the second Period (two-month average) is recorded by **Instagram**

Second Period vs. Third Period

Between the **second Period** (two-month average) and the **third Period**, as lockdown measures gradually fade, there is a significant **decrease** in actions/views on the coronavirus, more evident, in percentage terms, on **Twitter** and **YouTube** (-67%), and, in absolute terms, on **Instagram** (-20.5 million), confirming a trend already underway

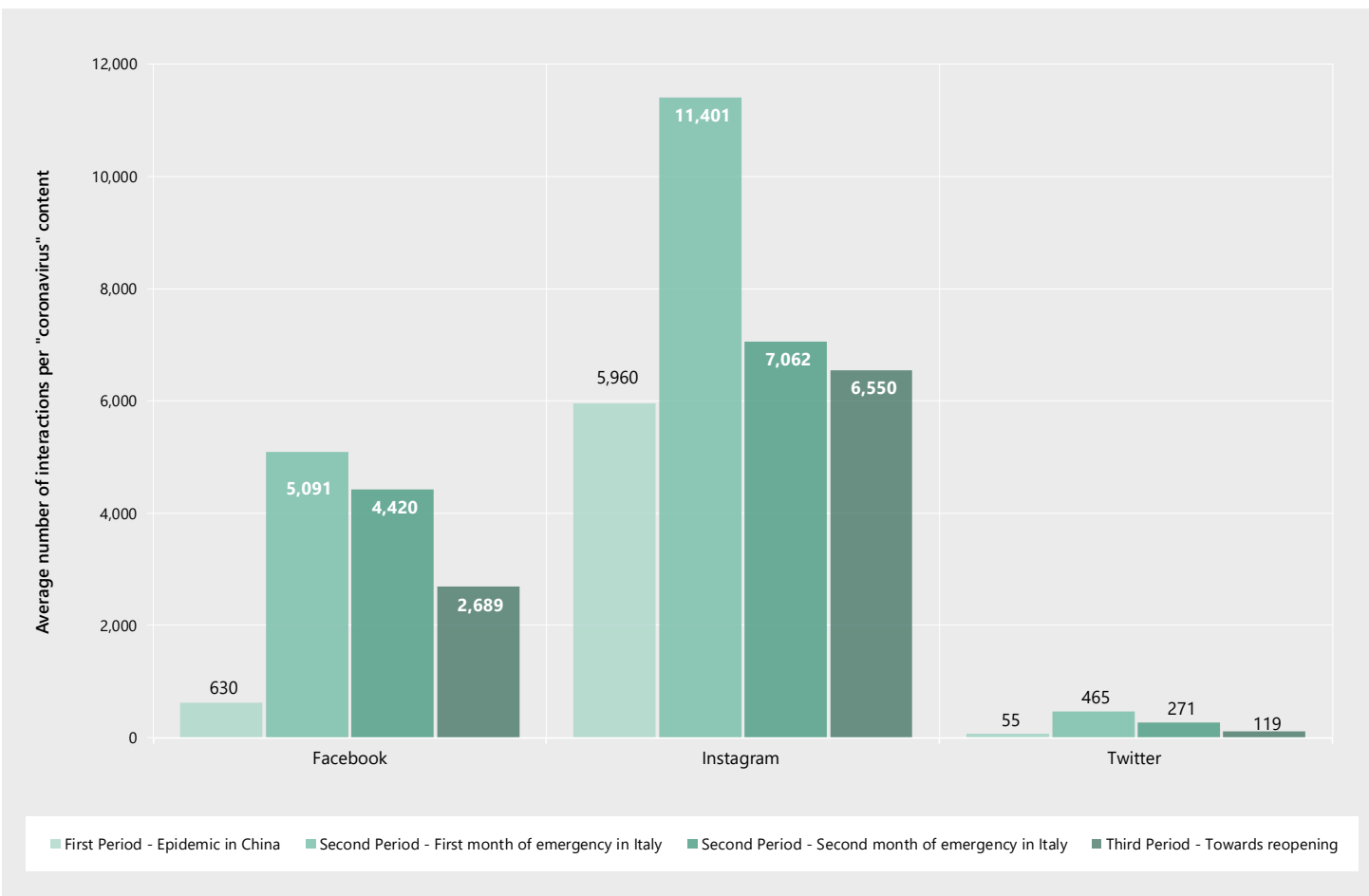
In the third period, only **1 action out of 20** concerned content on the **coronavirus**, in particular due to the drop in attention to issues related to the health emergency on **Instagram**, which catalyses the majority of total actions and is the only social network to present an increase in total reactions and comments compared to the lockdown period (+2.3%)

Note: the percentage of actions (for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and views (for YouTube) indicates the share of actions (comments + reactions) or views reached by the main contents dedicated to the coronavirus (max. 5,000 for each platform) compared to the total contents published on each platform analyzed in the 4 months under review

Source: elaborations on Sensemakers-Shareablee data

2.4 Social engagement: how much and what Italians comment on the coronavirus

Social contents dedicated to the coronavirus: the average engagement

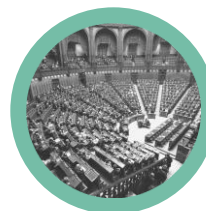


Note: the average engagement is calculated by dividing the total number of actions (comments + reactions) related to content (posts, images, videos) on the coronavirus by the total number of content dedicated to the theme (max. 5,000 for each social network). It was not possible to calculate the average engagement of content on the coronavirus published on YouTube

Source: elaborations on Sensemakers-Shareablee data

TOP 10 CONTENUTI CORONAVIRUS

FACEBOOK



If in the first Period the content on the coronavirus with greater engagement is that published by editorial organizations and satirical pages, and in the initial phase of the second Period the content conveyed by influencers and entertainment pages emerge, in the **third Period**, it is **institutions** and **political subjects** that find the greatest interest of users

INSTAGRAM



A clear difference emerges between the first Period, in which the first 10 contents are published only by political subjects and journalists, and the second and third Period, in which **influencers** and **entertainment pages** rediscover, also on emergency issues, the centrality already gained among users on the soft themes typical of the social network

TWITTER



Twitter remains the only social network in which statuses (texts) find space among the most engaged content. Even in the **third Period**, it is **journalists** and **politicians** who attract the most interest from users. In the same period, the tweet about the coronavirus that collects more actions is a photo shared by the account of a soccer team

YOUTUBE



If in the first and second Periods it is mainly institutional subjects and, even more so, publishers who find the interest of users on emergency issues, in the **third Period**, following a trend already observed in the second month of the second period, some **influencers** and **companies producing consumer goods** also emerge

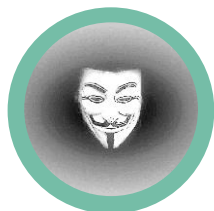
2.5 Online video: the most viewed contents about the coronavirus

Most popular online videos by total viewing time (top 15 videos for each period)

MOST VIEWED VIDEOS
IN THE THIRD PERIOD



INQUIRY ON CORONAVIRUS
AS DIVINE PUNISHMENT
8.4 mln min



INQUIRY ON
CONSPIRACY THEORIES
6.4 mln min



INQUIRY ON WUHAN
AND ITALY
5.1 mln min



INQUIRY ON
WHO
3.6 mln min



DISINFORMATION
STRATEGIES
3 mln min

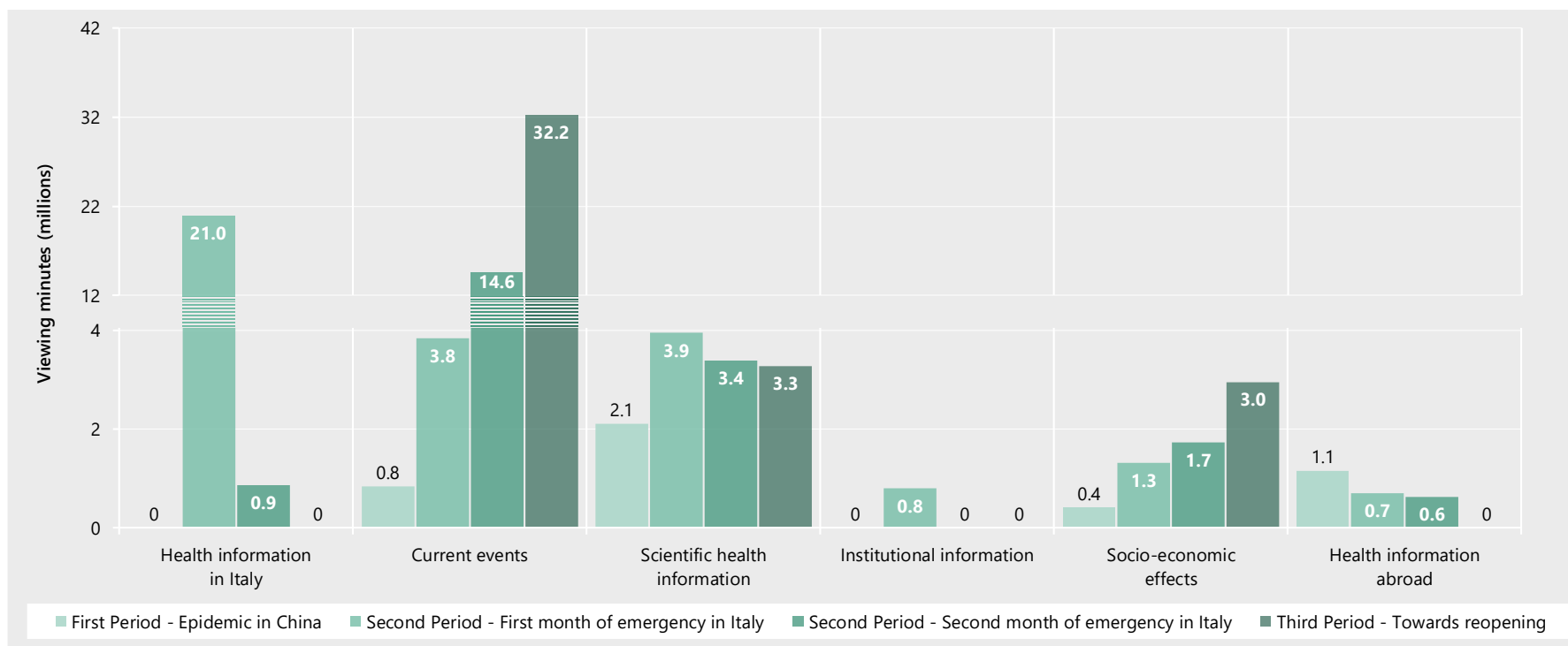


INQUIRY ON THE
WET MARKET
2.1 mln min

TIME SPENT FOR VIDEOS ON THE CORONAVIRUS

During the medical-health **emergency**, the attention of Italians for **online videos on the coronavirus** is always **higher** than those recorded in the first period (at least 7 times more).

Subsequently, with the **end of lockdown**, there is a **contraction in consumption**, which is in any case greater (5 times more) than the values recorded before the spread of contagion in Italy



TOP 15 VIDEOS ON THE CORONAVIRUS

Scientific-health information videos confirm its relevance also in the **third Period** and are more and more focused on possible **treatments** and **behaviors** or **measures** to be taken to avoid the spread of contagion

From the **second month of the emergency** and in the phase of **gradual reopening**, the focus is more on **current events**, in particular inquiries to clarify the possible reasons for the spread of the virus and the theories on the origins of the virus

During the emergency and later on, there is growing interest in the **socio-economic effects** of the pandemic and in particular in the risks related to **disinformation strategies**

Note: the values refer to the total number of minutes of viewing (Total Time Spent) of the single video content on demand or of the video category through the online platforms of the publishers RAI, Mediaset, Sky Italia and La7

Source: elaborations on Auditel data

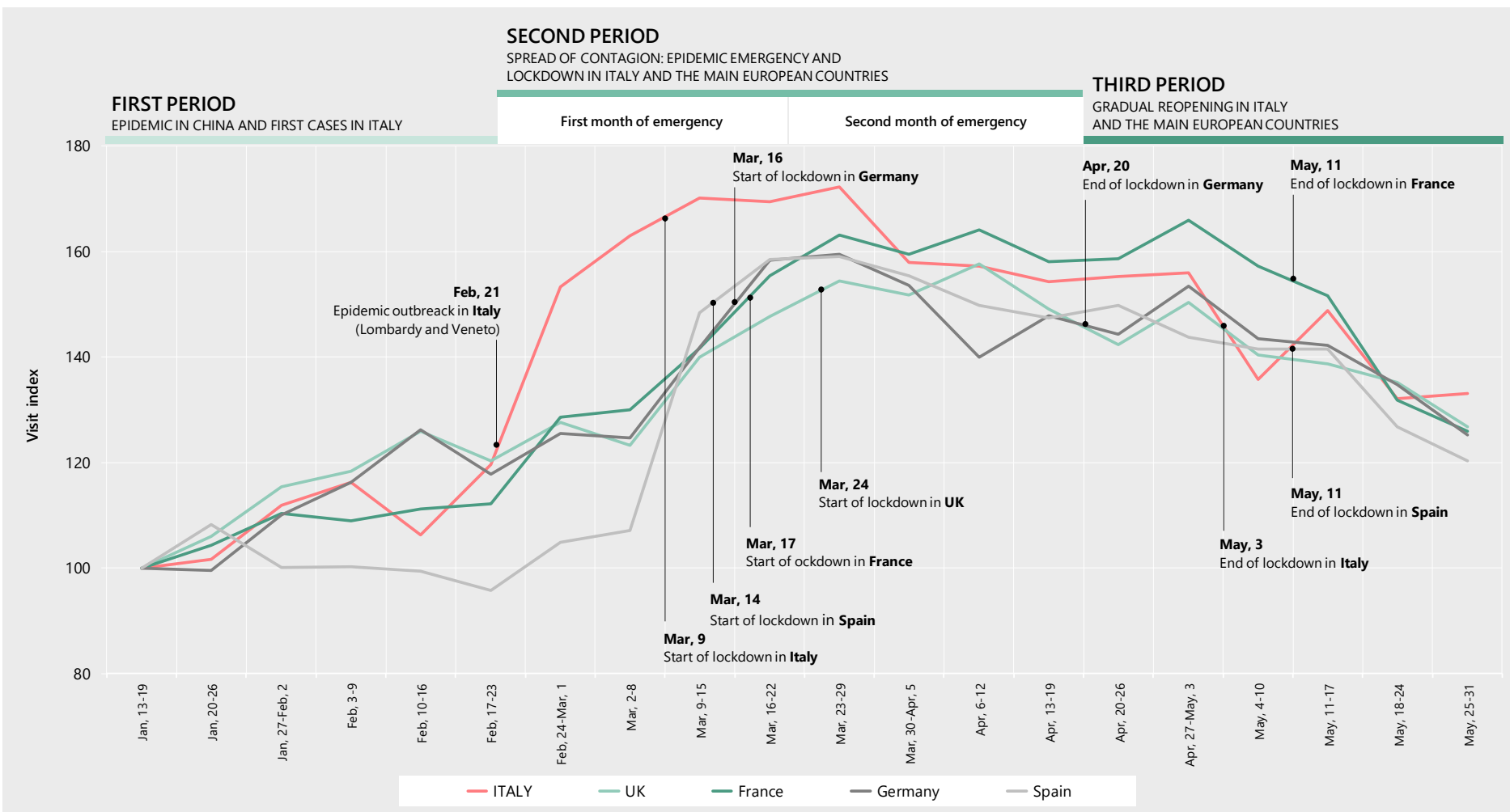


3

HOW THE INTERNET CONSUMPTION CHANGES DURING THE EPIDEMIC IN EUROPE

3.1 Online news: the consumption in Europe during emergency and reopening

Total visits to news and information sites and apps (index)



The interest in news about local, national and international facts, after the growth in correspondence with the spread of the epidemic in different countries, **is already reduced** in the second month.

Attention to this content, however, **increases** again in the first few weeks of the gradual reopening of activities and movements and then **decreases** again

TREND OF TOTAL VISITS

APR, 27-
MAY, 3

compared to
Mar, 2-8

- +34% Spain
- +28% France
- +23% Germany
- +22% UK
- 4% ITALY

MAY,
25-31

compared to
Apr, 27-May, 3

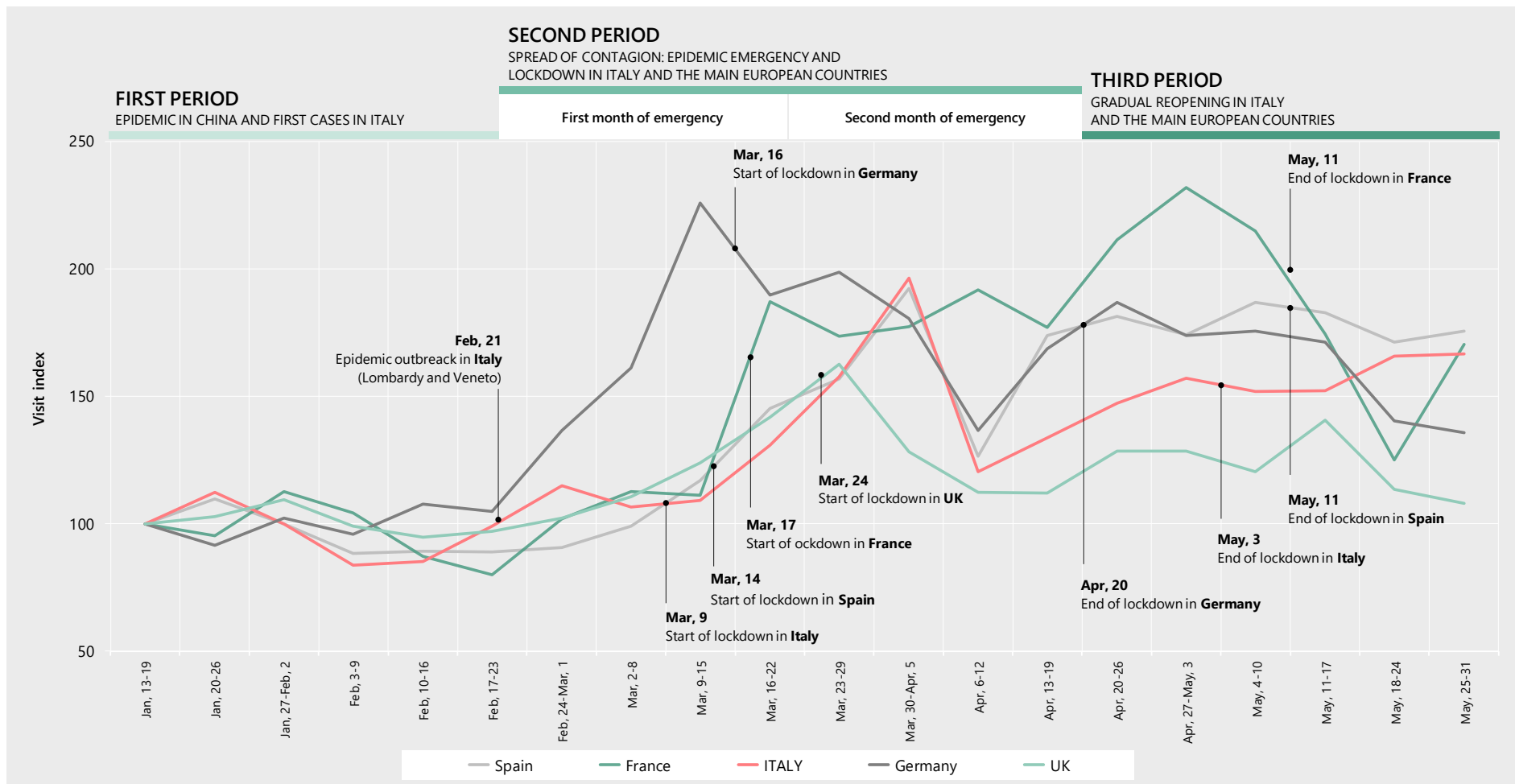
- 24% France
- 18% Germany
- 16% Spain
- 16% UK
- 15% ITALY

Note: for the Third Period, data on total visits to the sites in the "News & Information" category are available until the week May, 25-31

Source: elaborations on Comscore Custom Reporting,, Jan-May 2020, Italy

3.2 Institutional sites: the consumption in Europe during emergency and reopening

Total visits to institutional sites (index)



The traffic on institutional sites **increases** with the **spread of contagion** in Italy and other countries and then decreases in the last emergency period.

Attention to this content **increases again** in the weeks of gradual **reopening** of activities and movements and then decreases later on

TREND OF TOTAL VISITS

APR, 27-
MAY, 3
compared to
Mar, 2-8

+106% France
+76% Spain
+47% ITALY
+16% UK
+8% Germany

MAY,
25-31
compared to
Apr, 27-May, 3

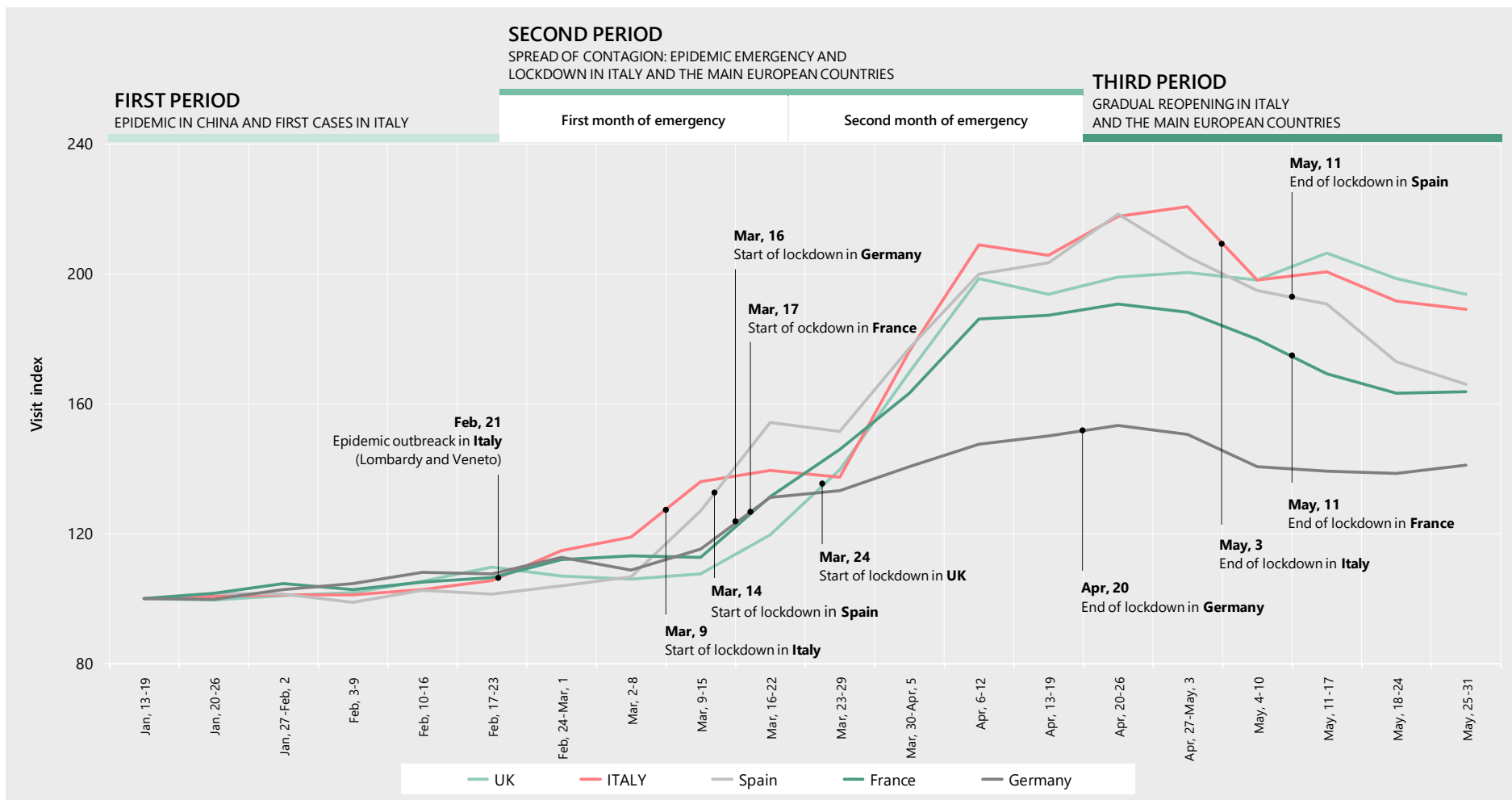
+6% ITALY
+1% Spain
-16% UK
-22% Germany
-27% France

Note: for the Third Period, data on total visits to the sites in the "Government" category are available until the week May, 25-31

Source: elaborations on Comscore Custom Reporting,, Jan-May 2020, Italy

3.3 Social media: the consumption in Europe during emergency and reopening

Total visits to social media (index)



Visits to social networks and instant messaging sites/apps remain **very high** until the end of April. In the following weeks, with the **gradual reopening**, the consumption of social media tends to **decrease**

TREND OF TOTAL VISITS

APR, 27-
MAY, 3

compared to
Mar, 2-8

- +92% Spain
- +89% UK
- +86% ITALY
- +66% France
- +39% Germany

MAY,
25-31

compared to
Apr, 27-May, 3

- 19% Spain
- 14% ITALY
- 13% France
- 6% Germany
- 3% UK

Note: for the Third Period, data on total visits to the sites in the "Social media" category are available until the week May, 25-31

Source: elaborations on Comscore Custom Reporting,, Jan-May 2020, Italy

4

CYBERSECURITY THREATS AND CORONAVIRUS



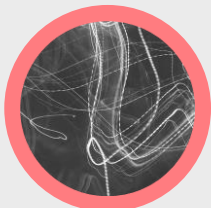
4.1 Cyber attacks: most frequent types and techniques

APT (HACKERS)



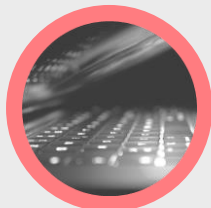
Targeted and persistent cyber attacks by subjects with considerable technical skills and resources

DARK WEB



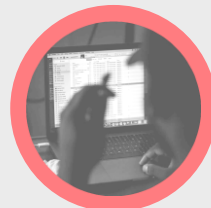
Online content (not indexed by search engines) present in networks (darknets) reachable only through specific software and used for illegal activities

DDoS



Attack, often aimed at creating image and credibility damage, based on the saturation of a computer system's resources, to make it unusable

MALSPAM

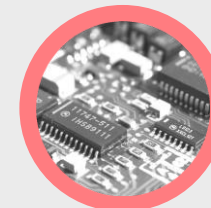


Massive sending of emails containing malicious attachments in order to infect computer systems and steal confidential information

MALWARE (MALICIOUS SOFTWARE)



Any form of code used to bring a computer system to perform unplanned operations. Examples of malware are: **Keylogger** and **Spyware** (that record the user's actions);



MIRAI (that attacks IoT devices); **RAT** (that captures credentials and checks the machine); **Trojan** (that hides in seemingly harmless apps) e **Stealer** (that subtracts credentials and data)

PHISHING



Email artifacts and/or malicious sites to induce the user to provide personal information or download files to infect the system. Similar attacks via SMS are called **Smishing**

PASSWORD SPRAYING



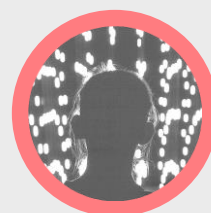
Attack based on attempting to access multiple accounts using a small number of commonly used passwords (such as "Password1" or "Summer2017")

RANSOMWARE



Malicious program that restricts the use of the user device by encrypting the data and asking the owner for a ransom to unlock it

SOCIAL ENGINEERING



Attack (not of a cyber type) based on socio-psychological strategies to extort personal or known confidential information from the user

SPEAR PHISHING



Phishing aimed at specific categories of users. The emails are built ad hoc, with content targeted to a specific field

SPOOFING

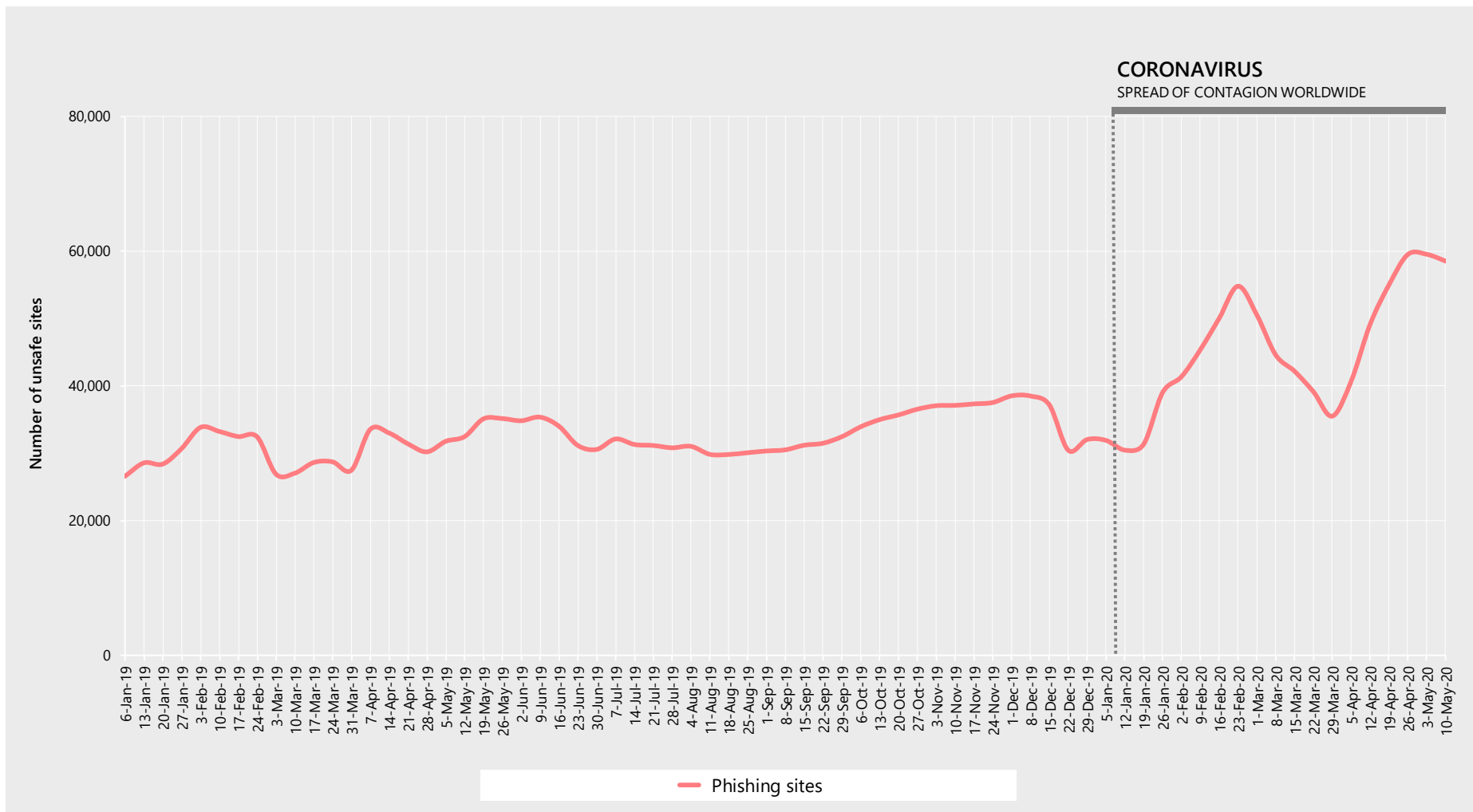


Attack technique that, in the context of e-mail, concerns the masking for malicious purposes of the source address of an e-mail

Source: Sogei

4.2 Growth of cyber threats during the epidemic

Phishing sites detected per week



Source: elaborations on Google "Navigazione Sicura" data

PHISHING SITES



In the months of the spread of contagion in the world, there has been a **significant increase** in phishing sites, with very high values especially at the **end of February** and **from mid-April** onwards

NEW INTERNET DOMAINS RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS

(MAR, 9-APR, 26)

↑ **1.2 mln**
in total

↑ **86,600**
"high-risk" or
"malicious"

On average, **1,767** new malicious coronavirus-related domains **per day**.

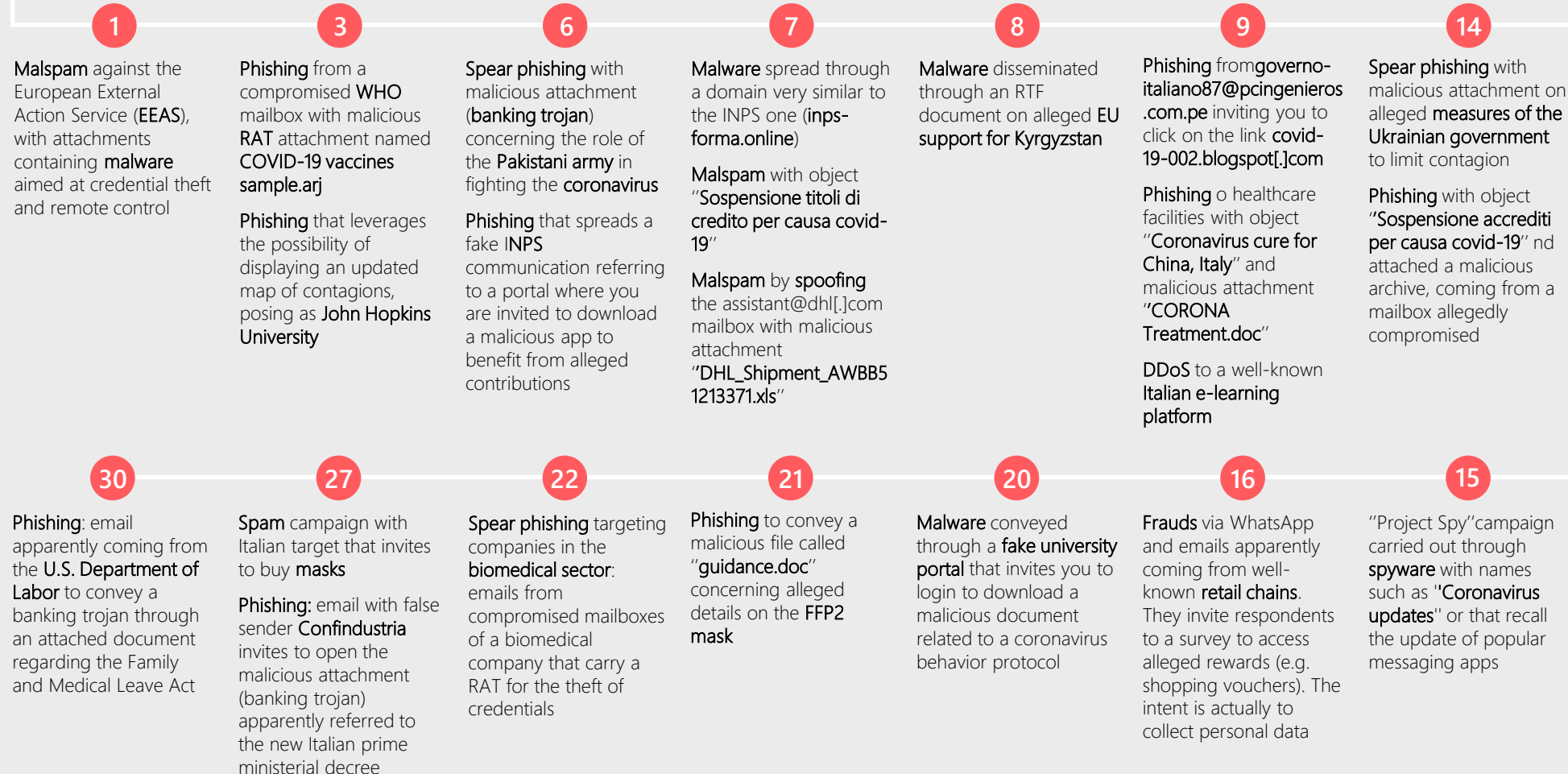
Italy is the **first** country in **Europe** and the **second** in the **world** (after the US) for number of malicious domains registered with the Covid-19 theme. Germany and Russia follow

Source: Palo Alto Networks

4.3 Cyber attacks related to the coronavirus in Italy and worldwide - April

Timeline of the main cyber attacks detected in April

APRIL
2020



In April, there was a significant increase in coronavirus-related cybersecurity threats and a greater diversification of attack techniques used.

MOST FREQUENT MALWARE

TROJAN specialising in theft of bank credentials

SPYWARE able to collect information about the user's online activity without his consent and capture credentials

In Italy, there is a further expansion of the attack surface (target), with a variegated offer of malicious contact tracing apps

Worldwide, there is an increase in attacks on video conferencing services and the spread of frauds through e-commerce sites (containing words like "corona" or "covid" in the name), especially for the sale of pharmaceuticals and biomedical products

Source: Sogei

4.4 Cyber attacks related to the coronavirus in Italy and worldwide - May

Timeline of the main cyber attacks detected in May

MAY
2020

4

Spear phishing aimed at **medical device vendors**: email containing several misspellings with malicious attachments that exploit the vulnerability of Microsoft Office CVE-2017-11882

5

Malevolent app called "koronavirus haqida". It is a **ransomware** that, after blocking the smartphone screen, asks for a ransom payment

6

Attacks by **hacker groups** targeting **pharmaceutical companies, public and government agencies**, aimed at obtaining personal and intelligence information

8

Spear phishing addressed to the **WHO** with emails apparently coming from the BBC and a conservative American institution, containing a link that, if clicked, downloads **malware** that can steal credentials

11

Password spraying, attacks targeting **doctors and healthcare facilities** to remotely access centralized databases containing patient information and other sensitive data

Malspam campaigns targeting **government agencies and healthcare facilities** in US, Australia, Canada and Europe

13

Malspam to disseminate a **malicious .lnk file** concerning policies and guidelines on online teaching methods during the closure of Air University (public university with offices in the Pakistani cities of Islamabad and Multan) due to the pandemic

27

Attack to **steal sensitive data** via the **Etheraz app** for tracking potentially infected people, mandatory for **Qatar** citizens

25

Phishing that exploits the release of the **Immuni app**. It induces you to download an app from the website apparently of the Federazione Ordini Farmacisti Italiani. It hides a **ransomware** that, if executed, encrypts all files on the disk by changing the extension to .fuckunicornhtrhrtrjry. The ransom for decryption is 300€ in bitcoin

20

Ransomware addressed to healthcare professionals: emails containing a malicious attachment "**CORONAVIRUS_COVID-19.vbs**"

18

Attack with probably Italian origins: **phishing** through emails containing a malicious executable that downloads a **trojan** to the user's computer

15

Phishing aimed at **industrial companies** in Europe, Middle East and South Korea

14

Cyber-espionage campaigns against the corporate network systems of two high-profile Asian companies

In **May**, **phishing** campaigns and **malicious apps** were confirmed as the most common types of cyber attacks

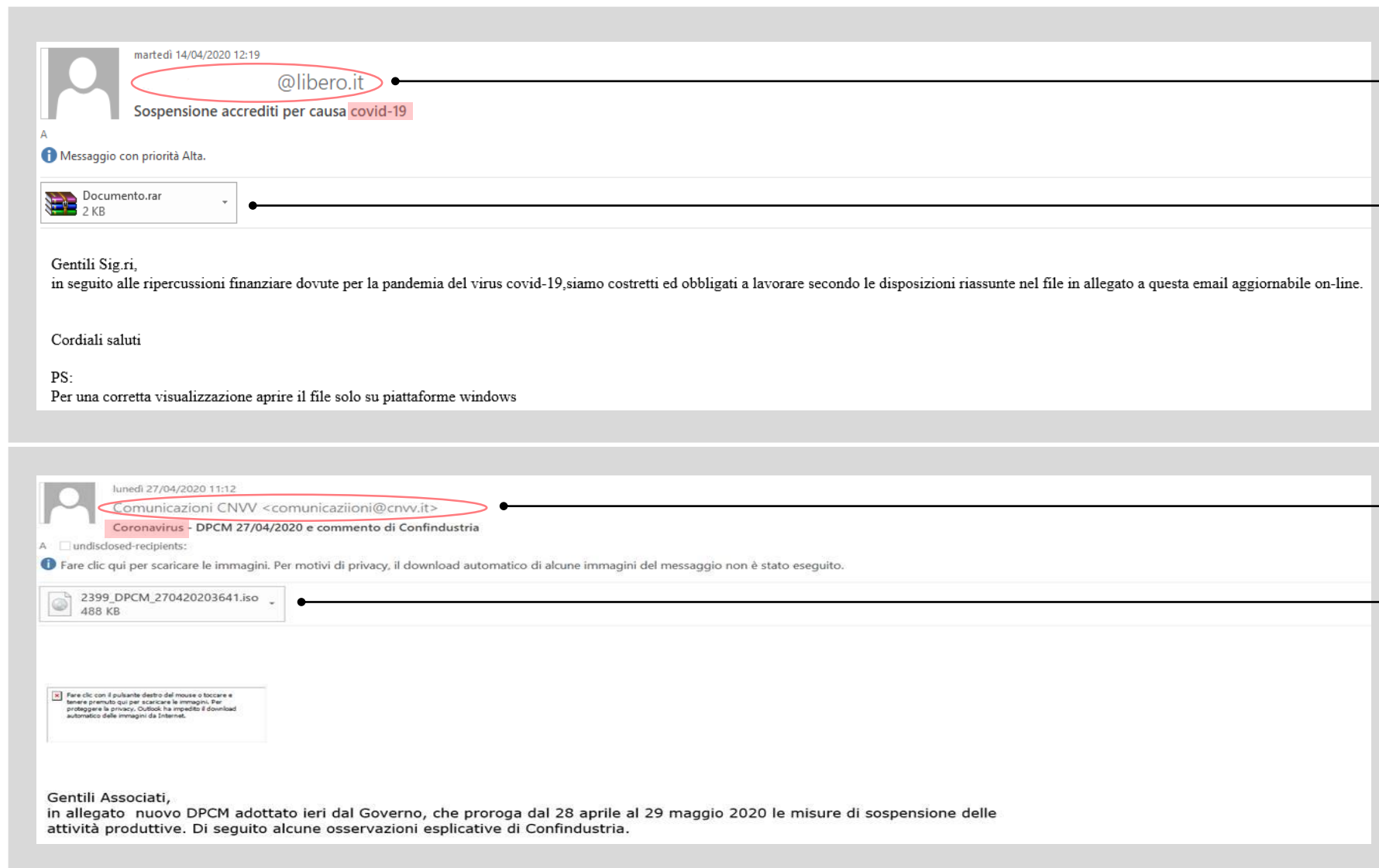
MOST HARMFUL SECTORS

- **RESEARCH**: in Italy, too, there are threats to cybersecurity towards computers of university institutes and research institutes (such as CINECA), whose enormous computing capacity is exploited to fight contagion
- **HEALTHCARE**: both hospitals and national (ISS) and international (WHO) institutions, with the risk of seriously compromising the availability of essential services to combat Covid-19 and treat patients, as well as the confidentiality and integrity of sensitive data
- **SMART WORKING**: particularly frequent the techniques of Business Email Compromise or CEO Fraud

Source: Sogei

4.5 Phishing campaigns related to the coronavirus in Italy

Examples of phishing campaigns conveyed through malicious email about the coronavirus



Sender: mailbox, presumably compromised, is used to spread the attack

Attachment: malicious archive containing a .html file. If displayed, it opens an excel that downloads the malware via macro

False sender: in order to give credibility, use the name of the well-known Italian association

Attachment apparently related to the new prime ministerial decree, which is actually an .iso file containing the malware

Source: Sogei

COMPOSITION OF DATABASES

If not differently stated, the figures reported in Section 1 of this Report, are the result of AGCOM elaborations carried out on a database built from data extrapolated through the platform developed by *Volocom Technology*.

More specifically, the analyzes were conducted on the entire textual content extrapolated from around **6 million documents** created in Italy (from January 1 to May 31, 2020) by **more than 2,000 information sources** (national television and radio channels, newspapers, news agencies, websites of traditional publishers, native online news outlets, and related pages and accounts of social networks), and **sources of disinformation** (websites and social pages/accounts) identified as such by external subjects specialized in debunking activities. The amount of online disinformation produced in Italy was therefore estimated using a subjective methodology, i.e. considering the total number of documents created monthly by the aforementioned sources of disinformation.

The database is composed by the entire textual content of all documents produced during a day by every information and disinformation source. For document, we mean the entire article, in the case of newspapers and websites; the transcription of a transmission segment; in the case of Tv and radio; all tweets/posts in the case of online platforms.

The reference set of sources of information and disinformation is constantly updated. As a result, adjustments may need to be made to the estimates for previous periods, so that, for some indicators, there may be slight deviations in the values reported in different issues of the Report.

The same subjective definition was also used for the analyses in Section 2.

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

Further studies and updates on the AGCOM initiatives regarding online disinformation and the Covid-19 epidemic are available in a dedicated area of the AGCOM website: [Tavolo piattaforme digitali e Big data – Emergenza Covid-19](#), and in the related pages [Covid-19 per gli utenti](#), [Fact-checking](#) and [GitHub](#)

A more detailed description of the methodology is presented in the AGCOM Report (2018),

[News vs. fake in the information system](#)

More in-depth analysis on the definitions and technical dimensions of online disinformation are in the AGCOM Report (2018), [Online disinformation strategies and the fake content supply chain](#), conducted within the [Roundtable on pluralism and online platforms](#)

The AGCOM policy recommendations and action plan on the online news system have been recently published in the [document closing the Sector Inquiry on digital platforms and the online information system](#) (2020)

www.agcom.it/osservatorio-sulla-disinformazione-online

CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The realization of the Report on online disinformation – Special issue on Coronavirus is the result of monitoring activities based on the integration of multiple sources and the analysis, among other things, of a large amount of data made available by the participants of the **Roundtable on Digital Platforms and Big Data – Covid-19 Emergency**.

For the precious and active collaboration in the production of this issue, we would like to especially thank:

- Auditel
- Audiweb
- Comscore
- Sensemakers-Shareablee
- Sogei

The Report and, more generally, the Roundtable on Digital Platforms and Big Data can also benefit from the research results of the **Data Science Task Force** activated by AGCOM - Economic-Statistics Department on the theme of online disinformation during the Covid-19 emergency.

For the scientific cooperation and the continuous comparison on the most advanced study techniques and methodologies, we thank the research centres and academic institutions involved in the Task Force:

- Sapienza - University of Rome, Physics Department
- Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia - Research Institute for Complexity
- SONY Computer Science Lab - Paris
- CNR - Institute for Complexity Systems
- Enrico Fermi Study and Research Center



www.agcom.it



ses@agcom.it