

Google searches about finances spike in US amid coronavirus pandemic

The query 'coronavirus money help' has upticked over the last month.

The coronavirus pandemic has created a public health crisis around the world that has also caused financial hardships for millions of people. Some of those concerns have played out on Google's search engine, where queries can be a window of insight into what people are thinking.

The query "coronavirus money help" has spiked 3,600% over the last month in the US, according to a report Tuesday from Google, which analyzed trends on the search engine. The uptick comes after the federal government approved a \$2 trillion stimulus package earlier this month that includes sending a \$1,200 relief check to Americans who qualify.



Searches for the phrase "mortgage payments during state of emergency" have also quadrupled in the US over the past week. While several regions have issued stay-at-home orders and much of the country's economy has shut down, some states have tried to ease the burden on people strapped for money. In California, for example, Gov. Gavin Newsom last week announced a 90-day grace period for mortgage payments.

"The outbreak has caused economic chaos and uncertainty," the Google Trends report said.

As the US has responded to the pandemic, workers have dealt with layoffs, pay cuts and mandatory furloughs, or unpaid leaves. (Furloughs have also been a point of confusion for Americans. Google searches for "do furloughed employees have health insurance" went up more than 2,000% over the past week.)

Last week, the US Labor Department reported 3.28 million unemployment claims for the week prior, a record that eclipsed the peak of the Great Recession of 665,000 claims in March 2009. Some economists have said 40 million Americans could lose their jobs in April, according to The Washington Post.

Google controls about 90 percent of web search and runs more than a trillion searches a year. So top trending queries on the search engine offer a glimpse of what's on the mind of populations at a given moment in time. In 2019, the top trending search of the year was the streaming service Disney Plus. The next two spots were celebrity deaths -- the Disney Channel star Cameron Boyce and the rapper Nipsey Hussle.

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