

3 months of a global pandemic

What Citizens Advice data
tells us about the nation's
coronavirus concerns

12 June 2020



Summary

- It's been 3 months since coronavirus was declared a global pandemic on 11 March
- Our website was viewed 15.8 million times in that 3 month period
- The most viewed advice pages were on coronavirus and employment, furlough, bills and benefits.
- Over this time, the number 1 most searched for word on the Citizens Advice website was:
 - Month 1: Coronavirus
 - Month 2: Furlough
 - Month 3: Redundancy
- In the first month of the pandemic people's concerns were changing rapidly. This was followed by a month of more consistent demand for advice on furlough, self-employment, benefits and paying bills. In the third month issues became much more varied again, with people seeking support on redundancy, housing and consumer issues amongst other things.
- Demand for redundancy advice is on the rise: redundancy pages made up 4 of the top 10 most viewed pages in month 3 of the pandemic.
- Over the last 3 month advisers have helped over 380,000 people by telephone, email and web chat. Benefits and employment issues were the main reasons for people seeking advice.
- In the last month there's been a 40% increase in people seeking one-to-one advice on housing issues.

3 months since coronavirus was declared a pandemic - our most viewed pages

In the 3 months since coronavirus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March, our website was viewed more than 15.8 million times - a 24% increase on the same period last year.

Our top 5 most viewed advice pages over the 3 months were:

1. [Coronavirus - being furloughed if you can't work](#) - 792,982 views
2. [Coronavirus - what it means for you](#) - 542,426 views
3. [If you can't pay your bills because of coronavirus](#) - 485,214 views
4. [Coronavirus - check what benefits you can get](#) - 379,944 views
5. [Coronavirus- if you're self-employed](#) - 301,839 views

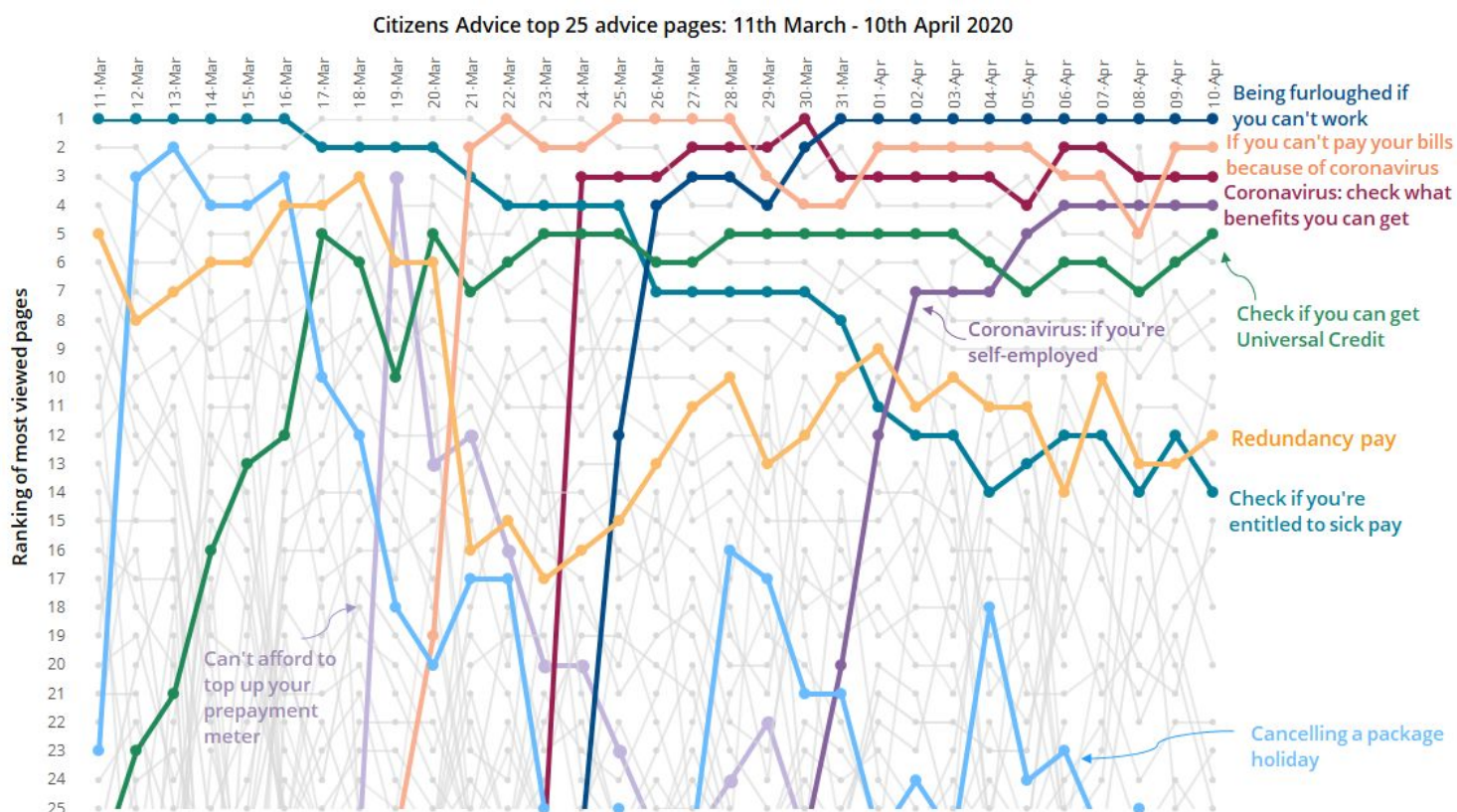
Our top 10 search terms on our website across the 3 months were:

1. Coronavirus
2. Furlough
3. Universal Credit
4. Redundancy
5. PIP
6. Divorce
7. Benefits
8. Housing
9. Debt
10. Self employed

The top 25 most viewed pages on our website each day have varied hugely across the 3 months as people's concerns have changed.

Below we look at each of the 3 months since the pandemic was declared and how demand for advice on different issues varied across them.

Month 1 - rapidly changing concerns



In the first month after the coronavirus was declared a pandemic, the advice people sought out on our website changed rapidly.

In the days following the announcement, there were steep increases in views of our advice pages about sick pay and about cancelling package holidays. These were then overtaken by new pages with specific advice about coronavirus.

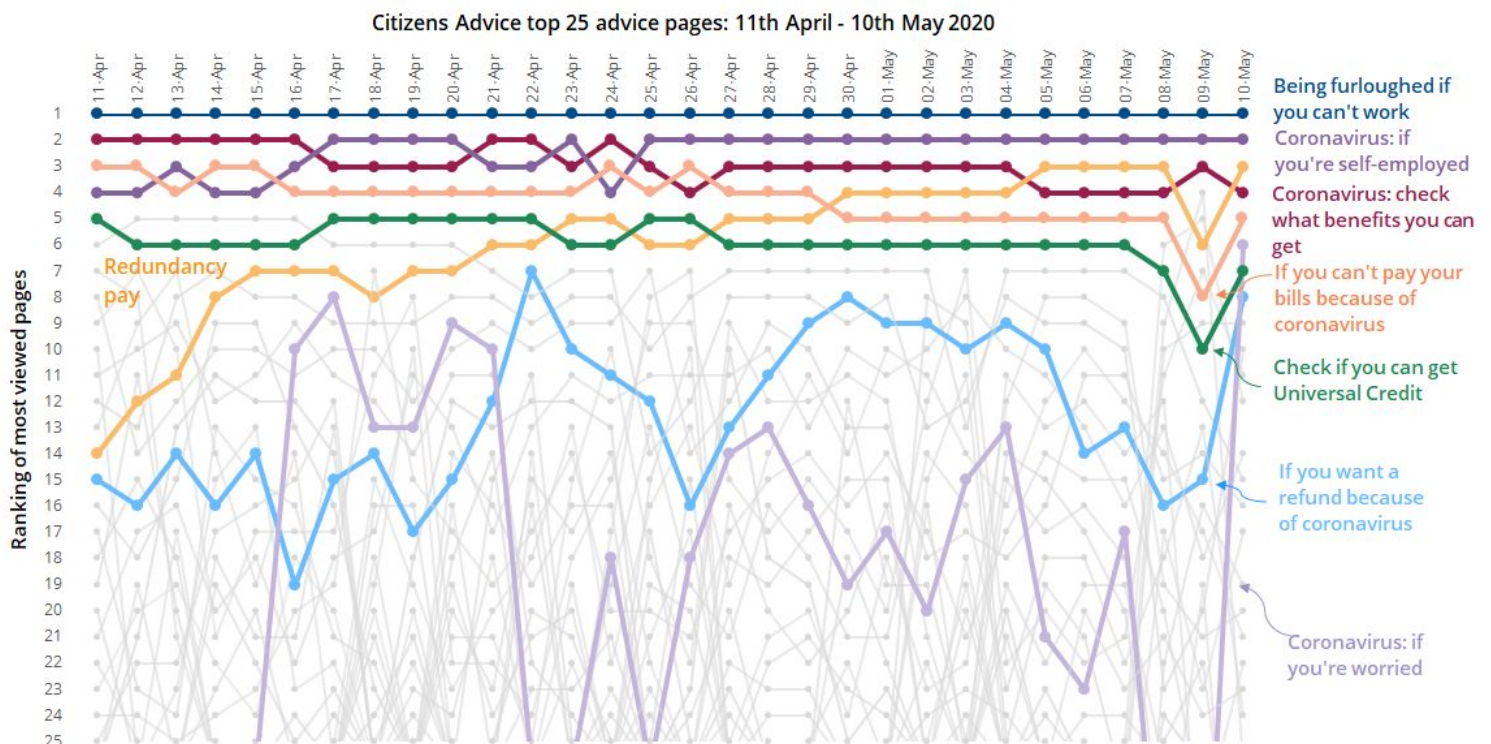
The week the Prime Minister announced the lockdown (w/c 22 March) was the busiest ever on our website with 2.4 million pageviews. In that week, one of our new pages, ['What to do if you can't pay your bills because of coronavirus'](#), became the most visited page with more than 180,000 views.

Our advice pages about work and benefits - in particular the pages on ['Being furloughed if you can't work'](#) and ['Coronavirus: check what benefits you can get'](#) - then overtook advice pages about bills as the most popular.

In the first month of the pandemic our advisers helped 28,700 people with employment issues.

The huge increase in Universal Credit claims at the start of the pandemic meant demand for benefits advice also soared. Our advisers helped over 100,000 people with benefits queries in the first month of the pandemic, more than half of which related to Universal Credit.

Month 2 - concerns become more consistent



Moving into the second month of the pandemic, demand for our advice became more consistent. The top 6 most viewed advice pages remained broadly the same throughout the month.

Our page on being furloughed if you can't work was the most viewed advice page every day throughout the second month of the pandemic. It was viewed

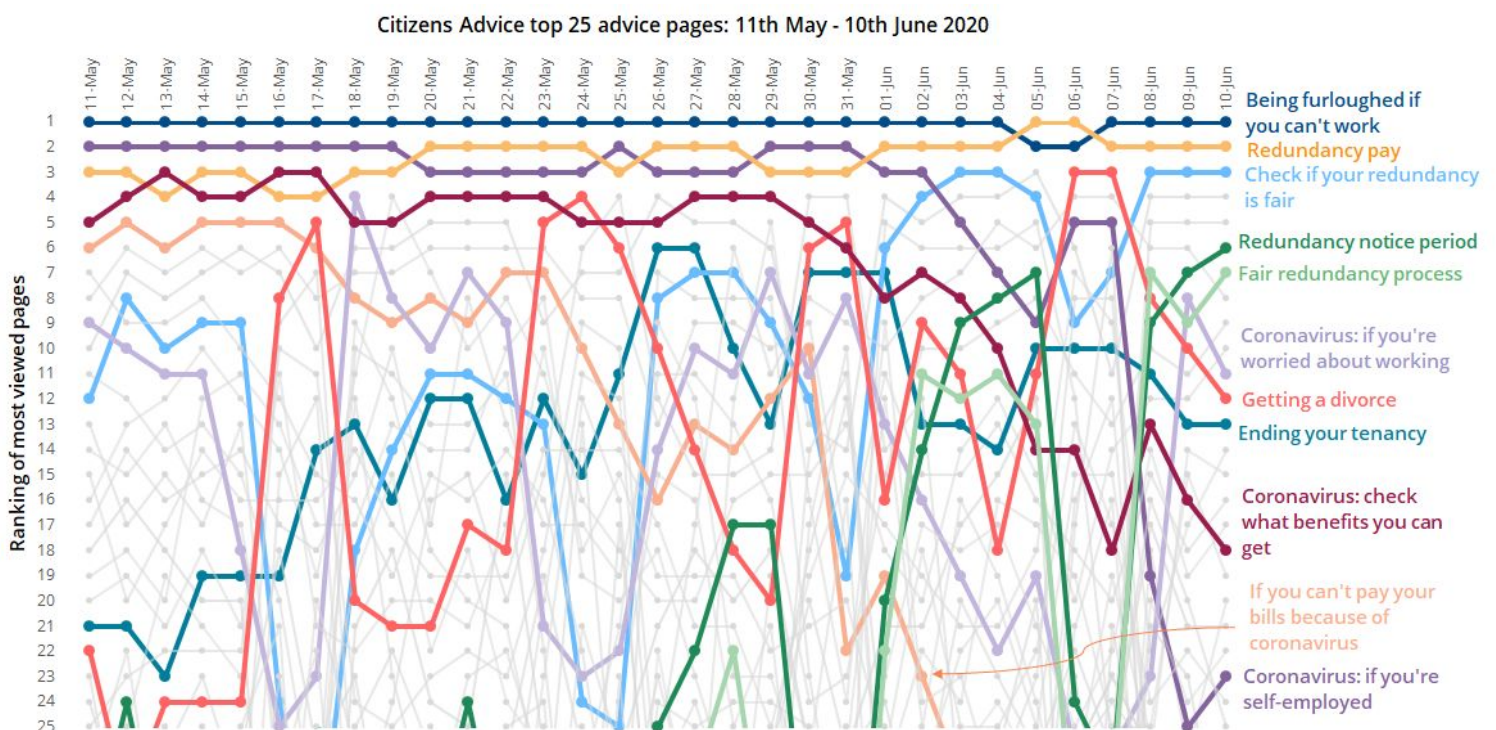
over 270,000 times in that month alone.

Pages on self-employment, benefits and paying bills dominated the top 6 most viewed pages for most of the month.

Over the course of the month, our advice on redundancy pay became more popular. It started off as the 14th most viewed page on 11 April, and became the 3rd most viewed page by 10 May.

During the second month of the pandemic, a quarter of the people our advisers helped were looking for advice on Universal Credit. Our advisers also helped 22,300 people with employment problems.

Month 3 - issues become more varied and demand for redundancy advice rises

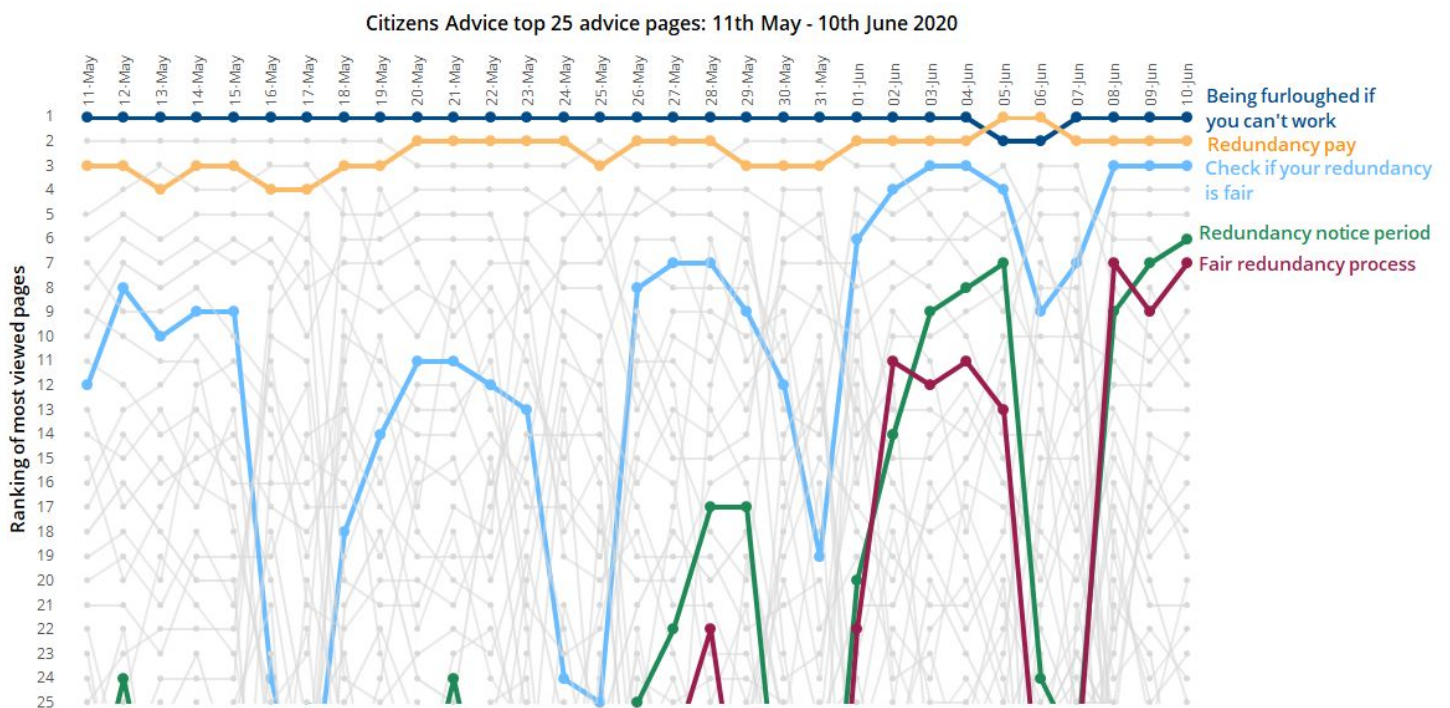


In the 3rd month since coronavirus was declared a pandemic, people's concerns became a lot more volatile, no longer concentrating on the same handful of issues.

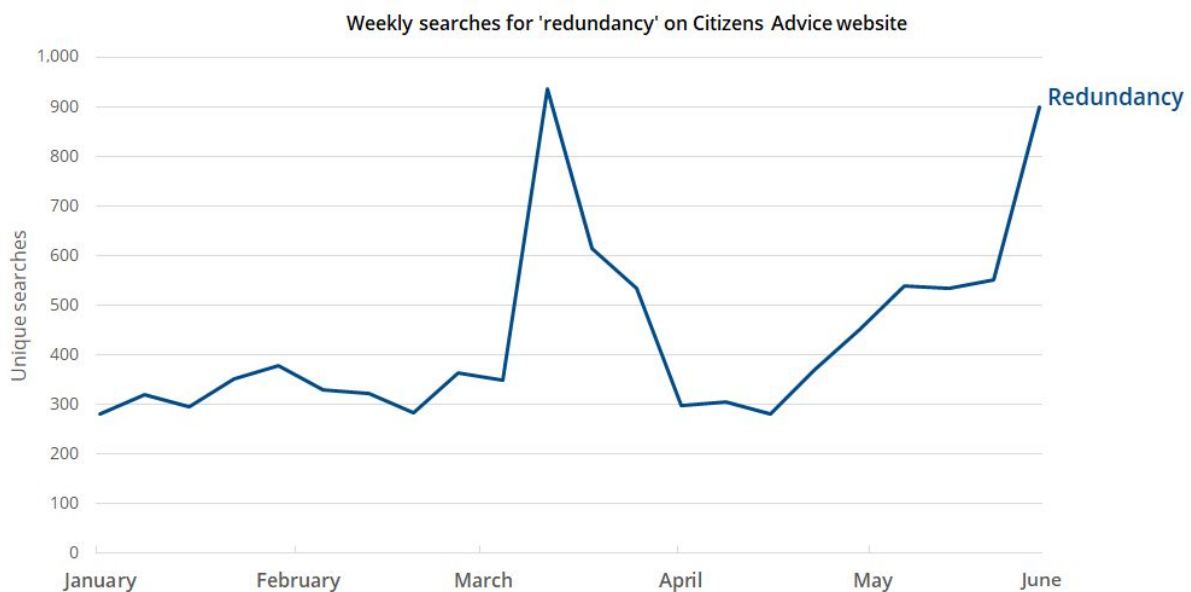
Unlike the previous month, the issues making up our top 25 most popular advice pages changed significantly on a daily basis, much like they did in March.

The most notable trend is that redundancy has emerged as one of the biggest issues people have been seeking advice on. Since 18 May, our page on [redundancy pay](#) has been in the top 3 most popular advice pages on our website. Following 66 consecutive days of our furlough advice page being the most popular on our website, on 4 and 5 June our advice page on redundancy pay broke that streak to become the number one most viewed page.

In the last few days, other pages on redundancy have also become increasingly popular. These include '[Check if your redundancy is fair](#)', '[Redundancy notice period](#)' and '[Fair redundancy process](#)'. On 10 June, redundancy pages made up 4 of the top 10 advice pages.



Searches for the word redundancy on our website are also on the rise again, following an initial peak in March and a reduction in mid-April. In the third month of the pandemic, "redundancy" was the most searched for word on the Citizens Advice website.



A broad range of other issues have also started to emerge in our top 25 advice pages. Advice on [ending your tenancy](#) has crept up the rankings over the course of the month, with the page being viewed over 36,000 times. There's also been an increase in demand for advice on consumer issues. Our page on ['If you want a refund because of coronavirus'](#) was the 4th most viewed advice page on 6th June. Finally, our page on getting a divorce has been in the top five most viewed pages on Sundays since mid-May.

In the 3rd month of the pandemic, our advisers saw 40% more people about housing problems than the previous month. The main housing issues people are facing relate to the private rented sector, environmental and neighbour problems and rent arrears. Whilst overall numbers are relatively small, our advisers have also seen a 63% increase in people looking for advice on discrimination, hate and gender violence issues compared to the first month of the pandemic.

Where our data comes from

We've pulled together data from across our website and local advice services on the issues affecting people in the UK during the coronavirus crisis.

Our website data includes the number of views to our website in total, views to individual pages, rankings of the most viewed pages, and the most popular search terms used on our website.

Our local advice service data comes from our case management system - Casebook. This allows us to record notes each time someone seeks advice, including codes relating to the issues they're looking for advice on. We've recently introduced a new tag for when someone is seeking advice on an issue related to coronavirus.

Finally, we're able to analyse the calls coming through to the Consumer Service and any trends in the issues people are calling about. We have the ability to search case notes for the mention of key terms such as 'coronavirus'

This report covers the time frame: **Wednesday 11 March- Wednesday 10 June**

Good quality, independent advice. For everyone, for 80 years.

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

Our network of charities offers confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free.

With the right evidence, we show companies and the government how they can make things better for people.



citizensadvice.org.uk

Published June 2020

Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Registered charity number 279057.