

WHERE IS THE VACCINE BUZZ AROUND EUROPE?

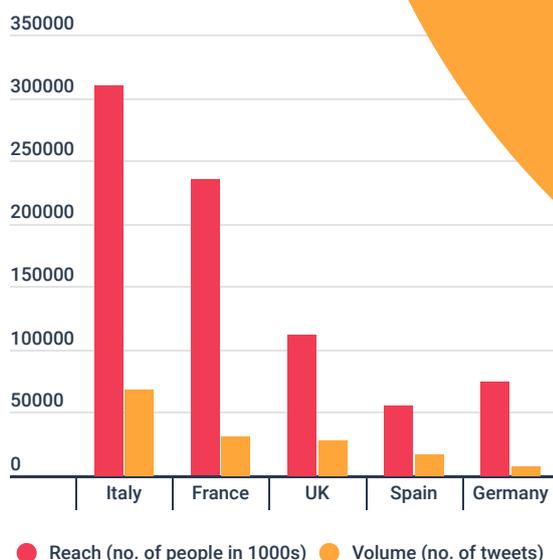
Ever since the smallpox vaccine was invented in 1796, the use of vaccines has grown across the world. In recent years, debates around vaccines are increasingly taking place on social media. Ahead of the European elections, we put the spotlight on Twitter in five European markets, to assess what users have been saying on vaccines between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. This is what we found...

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Questions?
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VOLUME & REACH

With almost 70,000 tweets, Italian Twitter users were the most active on the topic of vaccines, while France came second with less than half the number of tweets compared to Italy. Spain and the UK had similar volumes, whereas the debate on vaccines in Germany has not reached Twitter to the same extent (less than 8,000 tweets throughout the year).

When we looked at the total number of users who saw the tweets (reach), Italy still had the largest audience, but the reach was more comparable with France. Germany had a larger audience than Spain, although there were less tweets in Germany – and there are more twitter users in Spain than in Germany.



Methodology

We collected more than 150,000 tweets from Italy, France, UK, Spain and Germany, to understand how the conversation evolved and where it is going. Our team of local and native speakers of the various languages monitored the debate and chose the relevant hashtags and keywords for each market.

We categorised all these tweets by reach, which estimates the potential viewership of tweets, as well as by engagement, i.e. the number of replies, retweets and likes a single tweet receives. This allowed us to look at the most talked about tweets on vaccines in the different countries, as well as the users who tweeted about the topic the most.

Twitter Accounts per Country

Number of Twitter users is lower

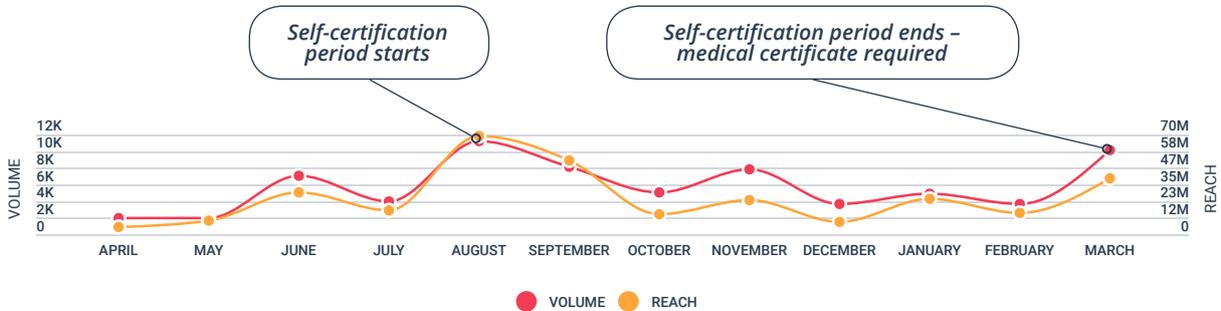
Country	Population	Twitter users	%
France	65 M	9.12 M	14%
Germany	82 M	6.42 M	7.9%
Italy	59 M	7.82 M	13.2%
Spain	46 M	10.52 M	22.7%
UK	66 M	18.92 M	28.5%

Source: We are Social - Global Digital Report 2019

Italy

Italy had by far the largest volume of tweets, especially when considering that it has the second smallest Twitter penetration with 7.82 million Twitter accounts (13.2% of the population). **The debate in Italy was highly politicised.**

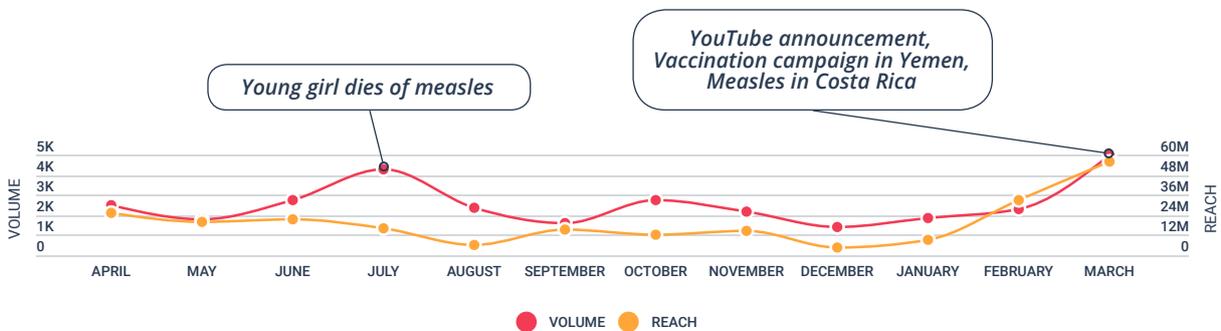
Two major peaks were linked to the political debate around whether it should be mandatory for parents to present a medical certificate to demonstrate that their children have been vaccinated in order to register them to school – tapping into the “right to education” discussion. Self-certification (certificate signed by parents) became mandatory for Italian schoolchildren in September 2018, for a period of six months, after which a medical certificate is required.



France

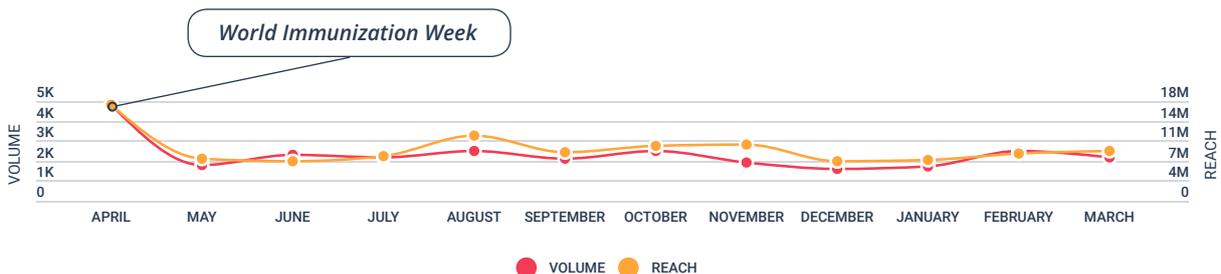
The debate was both political and factual. Many politicians discussed vaccines on Twitter, some using the vaccines debate politically and others discussing the benefits of vaccines with a strong scientific approach. Most peaks related to external events, and not to campaigns. Two main periods of peak activity took place – one on 10 July 2018 when a 16-year-old girl died after having contracted measles. She could not get vaccinated due to a heart surgery she had at a younger age. A second peak period started in March 2019:

- WHO and UNICEF concluded a nationwide measles and rubella vaccination campaign in Yemen
- An unvaccinated French boy was suspected of reintroducing measles to Costa Rica
- YouTube announced its decision to demonetise channels that promote anti-vaccination views



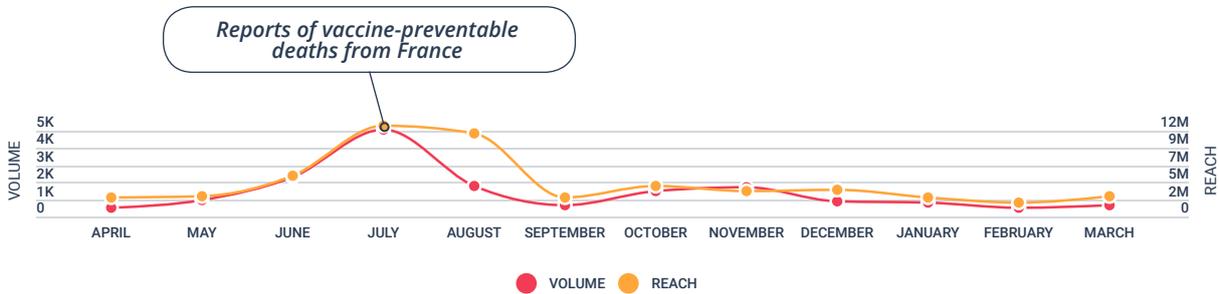
UK

The debate over vaccines in the UK was less political and more factual and scientific than in other countries. There was one main peak in volume, registered between 24 and 30 April 2018. That week, the World Health Organisation launched World Immunization Week, which was well-received by British Twitter users who abundantly used the WHO hashtag, #VaccinesWork.



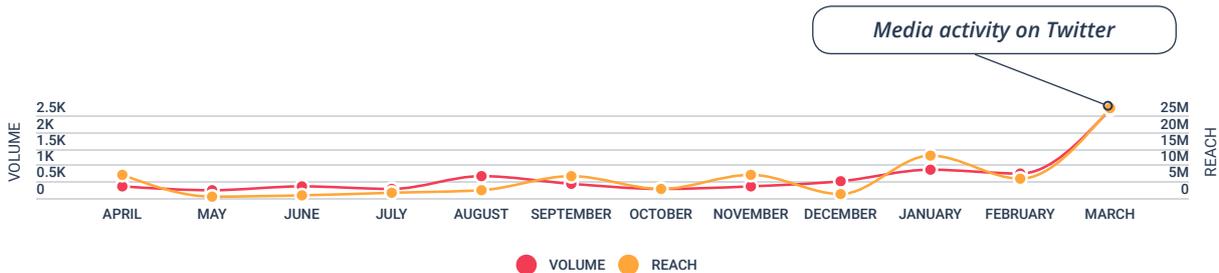
Spain

In Spain there was not much debate on Twitter, considering that the country has a larger Twitter penetration rate with 10.53 million accounts (22.7% of the population). However, a peak was registered over the summer related to stories of people in France who passed away from causes that could have been prevented through vaccination.



Germany

The volume of tweets was **considerably lower compared to every other country analysed**, although the tweets posted reached a wider audience than in Spain (despite the slightly higher overall number of tweets in Spain). Out of all the countries analysed, Germany has the lowest penetration on Twitter considering its population size (6.4 million = less than 8%). In March this year, the Twitter vaccines debate in Germany picked up considerably due to strong media interest. Several key news outlets, such as Tagesschau, Bild and Die Zeit, posted tweets advocating for vaccination based on scientific articles or real-life stories. German users engaged widely with these tweets.



INFLUENCERS & USERS

So, who was leading the discussion on Twitter? To find out, we looked at which users and tweets received the most engagements (likes/shares), what their reach on Twitter was and which users tweeted the most. In some countries, political figures dominated the picture - in others, journalists, authors or anti-vaccination campaigners were the most active.

content mostly in favour of vaccination
 content mostly against vaccination

Italy

Most of the tweets with high levels of engagement were from political figures (in favour of vaccines), along with other public figures such as a professor from the University of Milan. All of the high-volume Twitter accounts did not identify themselves and they all shared posts against the use of vaccines. It is possible that at least some of these accounts were programmed with no human face behind.

Engagement	Tweets
4K - Matteo Renzi, former Italian PM 	1000 tweets - @carlopagliani, unidentified
3K - Roberto Burioni, University of Milan 	800 tweets - @270349, unidentified
2K - Selvaggia Lucarelli, Fatto Quotidiano 	450 tweets - @D77eo, unidentified
2K - Caterina Coppola, Italian Democratic Party 	400 tweets - @Graziel65255465, unidentified
2K - Claudio Cerasa, Il Foglio 	380 tweets - @D777eo, unidentified

France

In France, most of the top tweets were in favour of vaccination. Two political figures (Marine Le Pen and Jean Messhia) featured at the top of the rankings in terms of engagement with their vaccine-related tweets. Le Pen linked the vaccination debate to immigration, in line with her political leanings. The debate in France was a mix between factual and political. The people with the most tweets on the topic did not identify themselves on Twitter.

UK

In the UK, one tweet stood out in terms of engagement from an employee at the National Health Services registrar (Helen Grote). Her tweets received more than 8,500 engagements – significantly more than the second person on the list. Most top influencers were pro vaccines, except one homeopath who specialises in the treatment of autistic children. The people with the most tweets shared mixed sentiments.

Spain

The top users in terms of engagement in Spain were professionals (pharmacists, paediatricians, biologists), and all tweeted in favour of vaccines. The users with high volumes of tweets were also in favour of vaccines, and a mix of unidentified users and a blogger, an academic, and an employee in the private sector.

Germany

In Germany, the top figures tweeting about vaccines were a mix between scientists, TV personalities and one former MP. They all tweeted in favour of vaccines. Individual users did not tweet as frequently as in other countries, and those who did tweet more than 40 times were a mix between healthcare professionals and other professions – all in favour of vaccines. Natalie Grams featured on both “most engaged with” and “most tweets” lists.

Engagement	Tweets
3K - Raphaël Glucksmann, journalist	300 tweets - @France_Mon_Pays, unidentified
2K - Marine Le Pen, political figure	250 tweets - @HAMEL_91, unidentified
1K - France Inter, radio station	250 tweets - @ThomsonAngus, scientist
970 - Jean Messhia, political figure	170 tweets - @ArielBlocker, scientist
900 - Seth Berkley, Vaccine Alliance	150 tweets - @dlang57500, member of city council

Engagement	Tweets
8.5K - Helen Grote, NHS registrar	670 tweets - @DrThomasPaul, therapist
740 - Ciara Kelly, journalist	460 tweets - @Rosewind2007, unidentified
700 - Dr Ranjit "Ranj" Singh, doctor	440 tweets - @andrewmorrisuk, IT specialist
350 - Alan Freestone, homeopath	350 tweets - @postpolionews, news service
300 - Dr Christian Jessen, physician and TV presenter	260 tweets - @LauraMAKerr, activist

Engagement	Tweets
1.5K - Lucía, paediatrician	570 tweets - @quiquejimenez, unidentified
260 - Vicente Prieto, biologist	440 tweets - @parada_mi, unidentified
230 - Pocimas de salud, pharmacist	360 tweets - @RBarbosaLorenzo, researcher-
230 - Dos pediatras en casa, paediatricians	330 tweets - @AngelesRzvz, blogger
200 - Vacunas.org, Spanish Association of Vaccines	300 tweets - @AlsinaMier, Sanofi employee

Engagement	Tweets
680 - DerFlix.de, comics designer	70 tweets - @FrankBettina, healthcare professional
560 - Christopher Lauer, former MP	70 tweets - @haukekalz, healthcare professional
330 - Natalie Grams, doctor & author	65 tweets - @stefanhassler, landscape planner
230 - Michael Beisenherz, radio & TV presenter	45 tweets - @Kay_Rispeter, MSD employee
250 - Adora Belle, Nuclear biologist	40 tweets - @NatalieGrams, author

IN BRIEF

Political figures Matteo Renzi (Italy), Marine Le Pen (France) and Christopher Lauer (Germany) shared some of the tweets on vaccines that received the most engagements on Twitter, showing that the debate is highly political in several markets. While Italian politicians linked their tweets to a larger political agenda, Le Pen used the buzz around vaccines to link into another political topic – immigration. Most of the social media posts that received high levels of engagement shared a pro-vaccine sentiment.

Several healthcare professionals, scientists and journalists across the five markets raised concerns with regard to the increasing hesitancy around vaccines. On the other side of the debate, a number of users expressed their anti-vaccination views often. Several of these users did not identify themselves – notably, Italy's top five users with the most tweets were anti-vaccination users who cannot be identified.