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## SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SELF-ISOLATION AND DIGITALIZATION OF SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

This article attempts to analyze an extreme form of isolation of a certain group of people, the cases of their social isolation and self-isolation during complete or complete detachment from the society. The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, which has affected the material and spiritual social lives of many people around the world, is the subject of recent sociological research. When people's lives revolve around Internet and online communication, the use of smartphones leads to a decrease in emotional-ity and eliminates the need for personal interactions. Moreover it causes the strong feeling of isolation; disruption of social ties; degradation of consciousness. The article discusses the main types of social isolation by the initiator, that take place in these kinds of situations. The study also make an attempt to determine what kind of consequences can long and short-term isolation of people from each other lead to, the reasons for such a negative impact.

The focus in this perspective is on isolated loneliness, which is defined as loneliness resulting from social disconnection as a result of forced social distancing and isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article examines the role of digital technologies in the fight against loneliness in isolation during the pandemic. The authors conducted an online survey on the topic "Using digital technologies during social isolation" to determine the level of online use of services among the population of Taldykorgan. The number of respondents is 284.

According to the results of this empirical study, the population is well adapted to digitalization and the time spent on the Internet is increasing. However the article also came to the conclusion that there is a growing demand for some types of activities, the impact of the quarantine situation. Many recognize that digitalization promotes transparency and is very effective, and have shown that information and communication technologies are able to unite people into a single system.

**Key words:** social isolation, self-isolation, quarantine, pandemic, coronavirus, digitalization.

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### COVID-19 пандемия кезінде адамның әлеуметтік оқшаулануы мен өзін-өзі оқшаулауы және қызметтердің цифрландырылуы: әлеуметтанулық талдау

Бұл мақалада белгілі бір адамдар тобынан оқшауланудың, қоғамнан толық немесе толық оқшауланған жағдайда әлеуметтік оқшауланудың және өзін-өзі оқшаулаудың экстремалды түрі дегеніміз не екенін талдауға тырысады. Дүние жүзіндегі көптеген адамдардың материалдық және рухани әлеуметтік өміріне әсер еткен COVID-19 коронавирустық пандемиясы социологиялық зерттеу нысаны болып табылады. Интернетте өмір сүру, смартфондарды пайдалану эмоционалдылықтың төмендеуіне әкеледі және жеке қарым-қатынас қажеттілігін жояды. Және ол ең күшті оқшаулануды, әлеуметтік байланыстарды бұзуды, сананың деградациясын тудырады. Мақалада бастамашы тарапынан әлеуметтік оқшауланудың негізгі түрлері қарастырылады, олардың қайсысы осы жағдайда орын алады. Адамдардың бір-бірінен ұзақ және қысқа мерзімді оқшаулануы қандай салдарға әкелуі, мұндай жағымсыз әсердің себептері айтылған.

Бұл перспективадағы басты назар оқшауланған жалғыздыққа аударылады, ол COVID-19 пандемиясы кезінде мәжбүрлі әлеуметтік дистанция мен оқшаулану нәтижесінде пайда болатын жалғыздық ретінде анықталады. Мақалада пандемия кезінде оқшаулану жағдайында жалғыздықпен күресте сандық технологияның рөлі қарастырылады. Талдықорған қаласының тұрғындары арасында қызметтерді онлайн-пайдалану деңгейін анықтау үшін «Әлеуметтік оқшаулану кезіндегі цифрлы технологияларды пайдалану» тақырыбында онлайн-сауалнама

өткізілді. Зерттеу мақсатын орындау үшін сандық зерттеу әдісі қолданылған болатын. Сауалнамаға 284 респондент сұралды.

Эмпирикалық зерттеу нәтижелері бойынша тұрғындар цифрландыруға жақсы бейімделіп келеді және интернетте отыру уақыты ұлғая түскен. Бірақ кейбір қызметтің түрлеріне сұраныстардың көбеюі, карантин жағдайының ықпалы деуге болады. Көпшілігі цифровизацияның ашықтыққа жол көрсететінін және оның өте тиімді екендігін мойындайды және ақпараттық-коммуникациялық технологиялар адамдарды бір жүйеге біріктіре алатынын көрсетті.

**Түйін сөздер:** әлеуметтік оқшаулау, өзін-өзі оқшаулау, карантин, пандемия, коронавирус, цифрландыру.

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### **Социальная изоляция, самоизоляция и цифровизация услуг во время пандемии COVID-19: социологический анализ**

В данной статье предпринята попытка проанализировать крайнюю форму изоляции определенной группы людей, случаи их социальной изоляции и самоизоляции при полной оторванности от общества. Пандемия коронавируса COVID-19, затронувшая материальную и духовную социальную жизнь многих людей во всем мире, является предметом недавних социологических исследований. Когда жизнь людей вращается вокруг интернета и онлайн-общения, использование смартфонов приводит к снижению эмоциональности и избавляет от необходимости личного общения. Более того, это вызывает сильное чувство изоляции; разрыв социальных связей; деградацию сознания. В статье рассматриваются основные виды социальной изоляции инициатора, имеющие место в подобных ситуациях. В исследовании также сделана попытка определить, к каким последствиям может привести длительная и кратковременная изоляция людей друг от друга, причины такого негативного воздействия.

Основное внимание в этой перспективе уделяется изолированному одиночеству, которое определяется как одиночество, возникающее в результате социальной разобщенности в результате вынужденного социального дистанцирования и изоляции во время пандемии COVID-19. В статье рассматривается роль цифровых технологий в борьбе с одиночеством в изоляции в условиях пандемии. Авторы провели онлайн-опрос на тему «Использование цифровых технологий в условиях социальной изоляции» для определения уровня использования онлайн-сервисов среди населения Талдыкоргана. Количество опрошенных – 284 человека.

Согласно результатам этого эмпирического исследования, население хорошо адаптировано к цифровизации, и время, проводимое в интернете, увеличивается. Однако в статье также сделан вывод о росте спроса на некоторые виды деятельности, влиянии карантинной ситуации. Многие признают, что цифровизация способствует прозрачности и очень эффективна, и показали, что информационные и коммуникационные технологии способны объединять людей в единую систему.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная изоляция, самоизоляция, карантин, пандемия, коронавирус, цифровизация.

## **Introduction**

Social communication, or in the broadest sense – social interaction, is the basis for the functioning of society. But, as the French sociologist E. Durkheim notes, a sociologist should study pathologies, negative activities of society. Social isolation or lack of social connection can be considered as a pathology (Durkheim, 1996 :102). Social isolation is a social phenomenon in which the rejection of an individual or social group from other people or social groups occurs as a result of the termination or sharp

reduction of social contacts and relationships (Latest sociological dictionary, 2010:364).

Social isolation is a global problem that influences the health of individuals across the life-course. Social isolation is the objective physical separation from others and exists in the “absence of social relationships” (Umberson, Montez, 2010:103).

Social isolation is one of the aspects of social exclusion. Social isolation is characterized by a lack of social ties – weak social support provided by social relationships and participation in various social groups. It reinforces the manifestations of social ex-

clusion created by poverty and unemployment (Gal-  
lie, 2004:110).

Social isolation can be the cause or symptom of emotional, psychological problems. The reason is understood as the inability of a person to interact with society and the people around him. He avoids personal contacts, preferring to stay at home in “safety” or to maintain a physical and psychological distance of communication. As a symptom, isolation periods can be chronic or episodic, which depend on any cyclical mood changes. When a person is isolated due to depression, he expects his mood to change for the better. In this way of social isolation associated with mood, the individual tries to define his behavior as pleasant. In fact, it is difficult for a person to accept his loneliness, since this is almost tantamount to admitting the absence of feelings, love, belonging, and attachments, which are the most basic areas of our life. However, self-isolation acts in the opposite direction, increasing the feeling of loneliness and depression, fear of society. The consequence of this is the inability of an individual, and sometimes an entire social group, to adapt to new conditions, which contributes to an increased sense of restlessness and uselessness to society (Urgalkin, Chedzhemov, 2017:243).

The types of social isolation: Complete isolation—a person stops communicating with other people using personal and communication tools. Such isolation can feel like a great happiness or a serious test. The development of bifurcation as a reaction of the body is not excluded. Because a person needs to talk to someone, he talks to himself. Such isolation is observed in cases of solitary confinement or when a person is on an uninhabited island.

Physical isolation—a person does not have personal contact with other people, but communicates with them through internet, phone, video communication. Such isolation can be observed when people live in different cities, are in quarantine zones, or are seriously ill.

Formal isolation—a person is a full member of society, but at the same time he has a minimum of social connections. Examples: being in prison or serving in the army. It is also possible to consider types of social isolation, in particular forced isolation, in which a person is placed in prison or locked up in a hospital for compulsory treatment.

Voluntary—a person is isolated under the influence of his own desires or certain views on life, or some subjective factors. A boycott is when all contact with a particular person is stopped, and he is left alone. Forced—occurs as a result of prolonged stay in an inhuman place or in a hostile environment. Over

time, a person can adapt, but he does not receive absolute satisfaction from new social relationships (House, James, 2001:273).

Having dealt with the main types and types of social isolation, projecting them onto our reality, we should consider the consequences to which it can lead after a long period of time.

Firstly, people will have psychological problems. A person who is alone with himself for a very long time begins to manifest a mental disorder. For family people, self-isolation is a test of compatibility, since it can also cause a crisis in the family. This is evidenced by the effect of mass divorces that began in China after the lifting of quarantine.

We are aware of our emotions only through communication with other people. Biologists are convinced that it was the interaction of our ancestors in the past that contributed to the evolution of human sensory experience (Peplau, Perlman, 1982:8).

The main function of emotions is social. When an individual is alone, in self-isolation, no one can share with us such feelings as fear, anger, anxiety or sadness. There is also no one to assess the relevance of these feelings, and then a person begins to exist with a distorted idea of himself, an irrational perception of surrounding events and phenomena. The longer we stay in self-isolation (especially solitary), the more difficult it will be for us to “re-integrate” into society, since our perception of ourselves and others will gradually be distorted (Zakomoldina, 2011:9).

Now it becomes clear that the society will not soon face the consequences of the pandemic. Social isolation in this situation is a necessary measure, which we have introduced and which remains its main task not only in the knowledge of people who have survived the continuing isolation of the first, but also in society.

If you choose the word of the year in Kazakhstan, the term “self-isolation” can be recognized as the winner of 2020 ahead of schedule. This term is used both in the case and in the wrong way. Firstly, because it is a trend, and secondly, because it is not fully understood what it means.

Self-isolation is defined as «voluntary isolation to prevent the spread of an epidemic» (Radbil, 2020:759).

Yu. G. Panyukova and V. G. Utrobina explain self-isolation as «a forced stay in a relatively limited space, in particular at home, when the possibility of leaving this space is regulated from the outside». From a psychological point of view, this condition is characterized by high stress (Panyukova, Utrobina, 2020:138).

Why is it so difficult for people to resist isolation? One of the reasons for this? Being alone is a very difficult thing for a person, because people are social beings.

Many who have lived in an isolated environment for some time, for example, researchers who worked in Antarctica, report that the most difficult part of their work was precisely the need to spend time alone with themselves. Yossi Ginsberg, an Israeli traveler and writer who lived for several weeks in the Amazon, said that he suffered most from loneliness and that he even invented imaginary friends in order to create company for himself and not feel isolated. How social isolation affects a person. According to the study, socially isolated people are much worse at coping with stressful situations. They are also more likely to experience depression and may have problems processing information. This, in turn, can lead to difficulties with decision-making and cause some problems with remembering things. People who are single are also more susceptible to diseases. Researchers have found that the immune system of a lonely person reacts completely differently to the fight against viruses, which increases the likelihood of developing diseases (Con, 1990:399).

Isolation is not always a bad thing. Some people who have been alone for a long time may show personal growth, a sense of closeness with family and friends, and a change in their attitude to life. Advantages of self-isolation: a sufficient amount of free time, you can develop your hobbies, learn a new language, read books, watch movies, etc. COVID-19 is a new virus that has quickly entered human life. In December last year, the coronavirus with the COVID-19 Index changed the life of the Earth for several months, after which WHO described COVID-19 as a pandemic. The World Health Organization is taking measures to introduce quarantine, declaring this situation a global problem. The main measure taken in the fight against the spread of the virus was strict isolation.

This situation has not bypassed our country either. On January 27, 2020, a commission was established in Kazakhstan to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in response to the threat, and on February 3, air traffic with China was closed. On March 13, authorities reported the first cases of the disease among passengers from Europe, many of whom were civil servants. On March 16, a state of emergency was declared, and on March 19, Almaty and Nur-Sultan were closed for quarantine. On March 26, the first death from coronavirus was recorded (*rus.azattyq.org* «3.7 million ill and loss

*of income. Independent researchers – about the epidemic», November 13, 2020).*

In April, dozens of infections and several deaths were detected in one of the nursing homes; passenger traffic was suspended in the country, and the coronavirus spread to all regions. There have been many cases of infection among civil servants. Nevertheless, air traffic will resume in early May. And on May 11, the state of emergency was lifted, although in May an outbreak of the disease was recorded among employees of manufacturing companies (on May 6 – Kazakhmys, on May 20 – Tengiz).

The XXI century is characterized by digitalization, which affects all spheres of human life. The coronavirus pandemic has turned out to be a challenge, that forced humanity to show how modern technological solutions can withstand traditional biological threats. The Italian philosopher Rocco Ronchi notes that the virus reminded a person that he was “mortal, finite, accidental, ontologically imperfect (Ronchi, 2021:144).

Various new technologies were used in the fight against the virus: drones sprayed antiseptic, a robot dog monitored the observance of social distance in the park, “artificial intelligence” diagnosed lung damage, automated booths disinfected airline passengers, etc., it was information and communication technologies that made possible a more or less normal existence during isolation. Austrian philosopher of technology Mark Coeckelbergh writes that our life now literally depends on digitalization (Coeckelbergh, 2020:28). On the other hand, the pandemic can be viewed as a global forced experiment demonstrating options for a possible digital future.

During the global pandemic, state of emergency, and mandatory quarantine, the internet and electronic public services have become the first necessity. The results of the study showed that compared to last year’s results, the level of use of online services has significantly increased.

## Materials and Methods

The purpose of the study is to determine the level of Internet use of residents during social isolation. The object of the study is residents of Taldykorgan. The research method is an online survey. The number of respondents is 284. The survey was excluded from the results of respondents ‘ responses of any age.

To achieve the purpose of the study, a quantitative research method was used. The method of quantitative research is an individual standardized questionnaire that reflects the wide

range of indicators and the range of variables under study. Quantitative research methods are aimed at determining the response of the target group to the problem under study by involving a large number of people in the study when studying a particular problem. Using quantitative research methods, it is possible to determine the percentage of people's responses to a problem, their actions, and their responsible actions in relation to a particular problem. Quantitative research is also called "statistical". The percentage ratios obtained by large-scale sampling are the basis for statistical conclusions. Under normal conditions, collecting information about target objects requires the use of qualitative and quantitative methods to identify their needs and requests, which allows you to obtain complete information about the topic under study (Singleton., Straits, 2017:344).

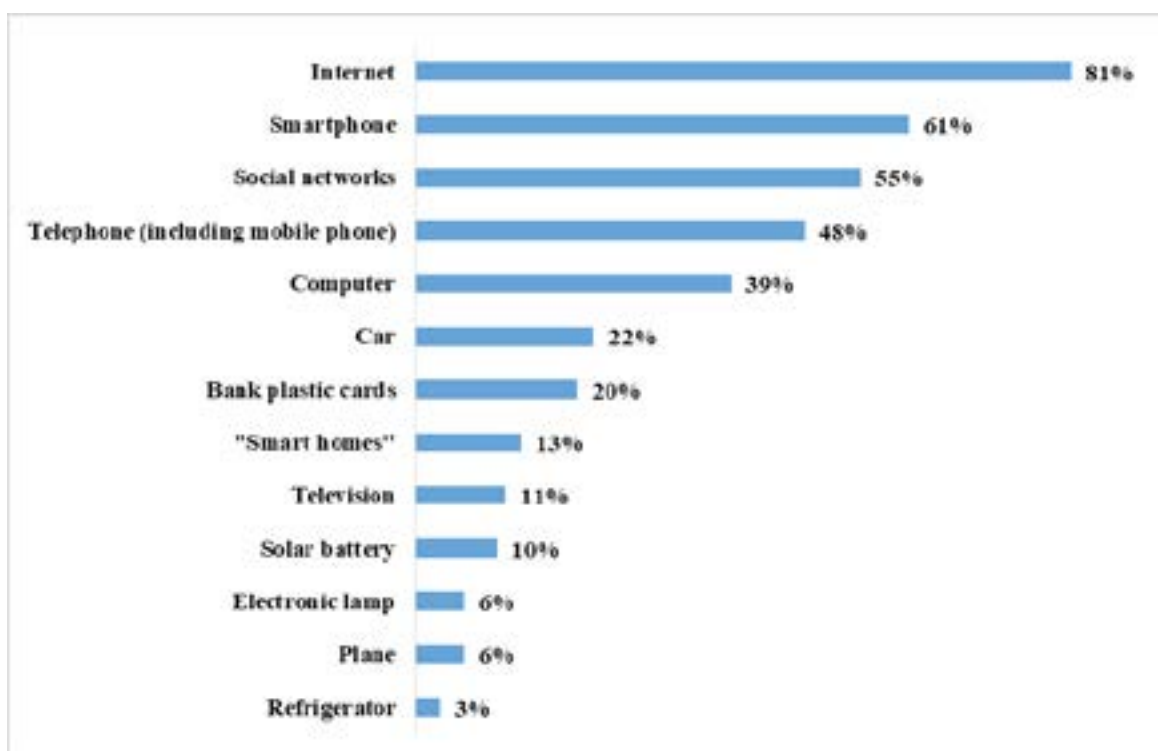
## Results and Discussion

### Characteristics of respondents

The share of women in the online survey is higher than that of men – 62% (62% vs. 38%). Among all age groups, the share of survey participants aged

30-45 years is higher (47%). At least respondents over the age of 61 (5%). Respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 accounted for 26% of the total sample. Among the survey participants by ethnicity, "Kazakhs" – 81%, "Russians" – 16% and the share of "other" ethnic groups -3%. 58% of respondents have professional and technical education. The share of people with higher education is 22%. Every sixth respondent has a secondary education (20%). According to social and professional status, 19% are employed in the private sector, 18% are employed in households, 15% are employed in public sector, 12% are unemployed, 9% are employed in private subsidiary Farms, family entrepreneurship, and 7% are individual entrepreneurs. Pensioners, students, freelancers and civil servants showed the minimum amount of the sample set.

The main tool of the XXI century, which radically changed human life, for the majority of respondents (81%) – the "internet". Every second respondent (61%) said "smartphone". Half of the respondents (55%) named social networks and mobile phones (48%). A computer (39%), a car (22%), and plastic bank cards (20%) also indicate significant changes in a person's life (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** – Distribution of answers to the question: «From what is said below, what can you call "the main tool of the XXI century", which radically changed human life?»

Every second respondent needs the Internet, communication with relatives and acquaintances (62%) and access to information, news (61%). Urban residents need the Internet to watch movies, play online games, read books, entertain (43%), pay

bills online (32%), study, self-study (21%) and work (16%). The remaining minority uses the Internet to purchase goods and services (9%), to receive public services (paperwork, inquiries) – (7%), to maintain their own blog, to talk on WhatsApp (2%) (Figure 2).

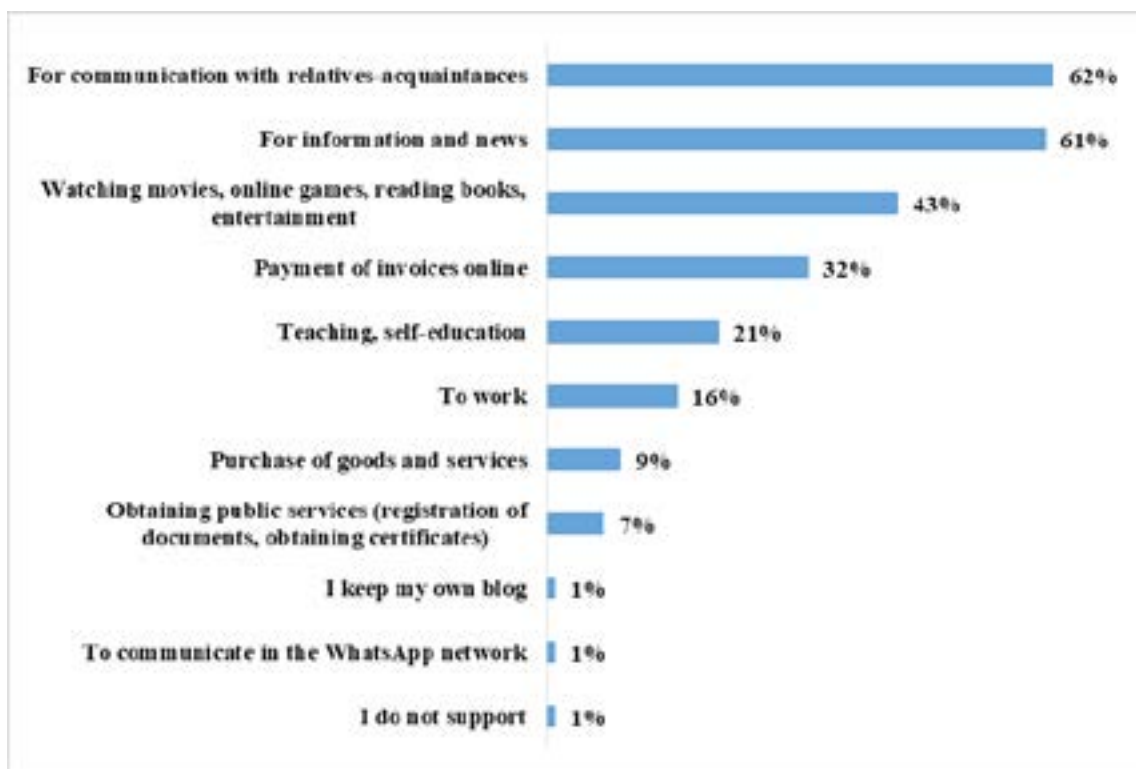


Figure 2 – Distribution of answers to the question: «In what case do you need the Internet?»

During isolation in quarantine conditions, the internet is used by 40% for 5-8 hours a day, 26% for 3-5 hours, 26% regularly, 1-3 hours – 3%, less than 1 hour – 3% of respondents. There is activity on the social network, it is important for them to be aware of the news in the country and in the world, one of the reasons is that the format of work and study is remote (Figure 3).

According to the results of the online survey, compared to 2020, the use of the following types of services by the population has significantly increased:

- Banking operations – (transfers ,payments, etc.) – 93% (2020-62%);
- Taxi Order-80% (2020-60%);

- Purchase of clothing, household appliances, electronics in stores-77% (2020-32%);

- Provision of meter readings and payment for utilities – 70% (2020-50%).

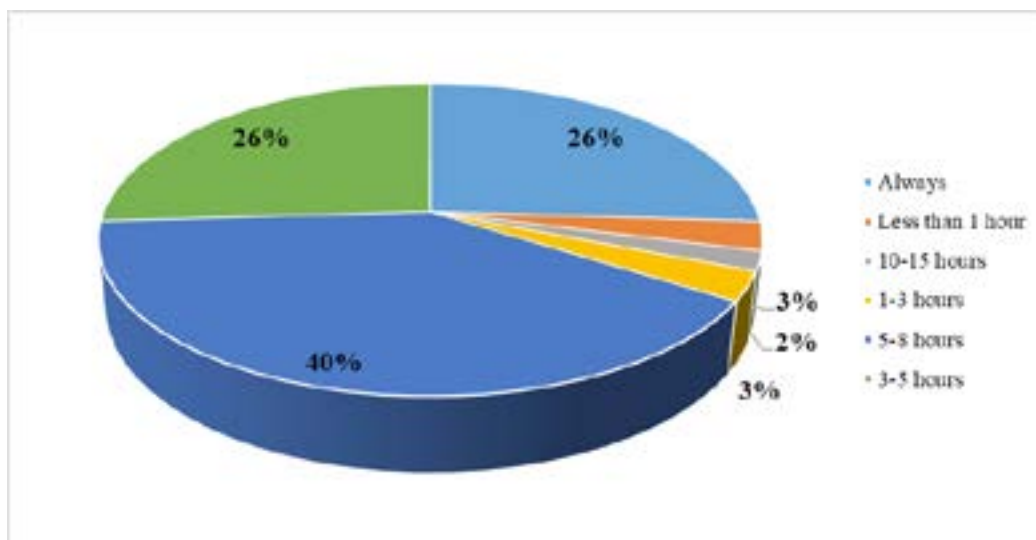
- Registration of certificates and documents from state bodies-69% (2020-29%)

Respondents who do less of some type of online service showed the following sequence:

- Submission of complaints and appeals to state bodies-59% (2020-83%);

- Appointment to a doctor in a polyclinic-49% (2020-65%);

- Search and payment of state taxes and fines – 44% (2020-60%) (Table).



**Figure 3** – Distribution of answers to the question: «How many hours a day did you use the internet during quarantine?»

**Table** – Distribution of answers to the question: «Tell me, Why do you often use the internet?»

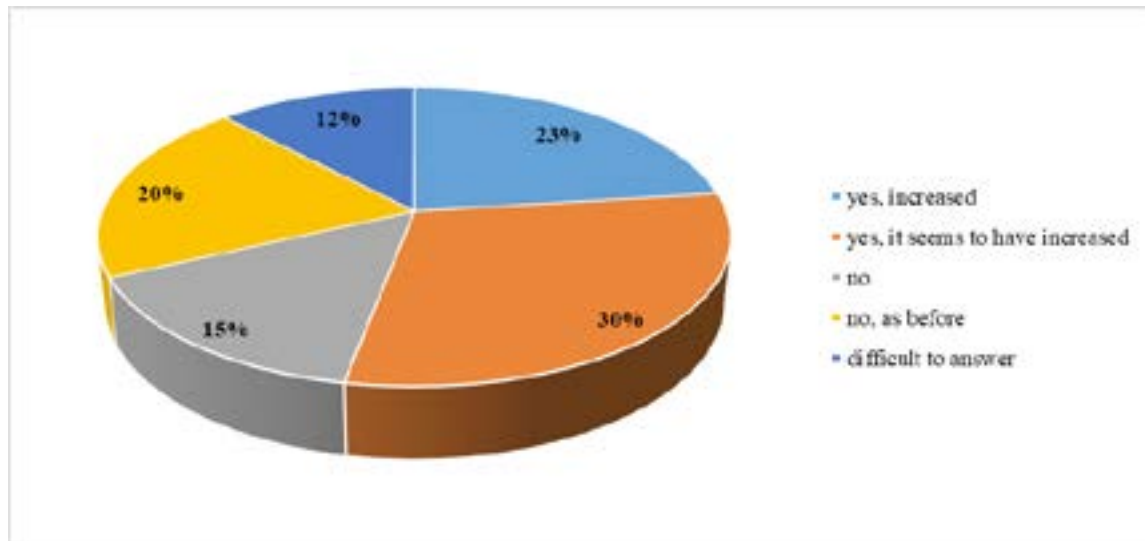
Types of services	I often do it online		I won't do it		It is difficult to answer	
	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021
Banking operations (transfers, payments, etc.)	62%	93%	22%	5%	16%	2%
Search and payment of state taxes, fines	23%	55%	60%	44%	17%	1%
Issuing meter readings and paying for utilities	50%	70%	34%	28%	16%	1%
Buy train / plane / bus tickets	26%	59%	58%	37%	16%	4%
Make an appointment with a doctor at the clinic	19%	46%	65%	49%	16%	5%
Order a taxi	60%	80%	23%	20%	17%	0%
Buy tickets to movies, theaters, concerts	26%	63%	57%	36%	17%	1%
Execution of certificates and documents from government agencies	29%	69%	54%	30%	17%	1%
Submission of complaints and appeals to government agencies	-	36%	83%	59%	17%	5%
Ordering meals in restaurants and cafes	58%	65%	25%	33%	17%	2%
Shopping for clothes, home appliances, electronics	32%	77%	51%	19%	17%	4%

In the case of quarantine, the level of online purchases of respondents increased by 53% (including “yes, increased” – 23%, “yes, as if increased” – 30%). On the contrary, 35% of respondents said the same (including: “no” – 15%, “no, as before” – 20%). 12% found it difficult to answer this question (Figure 4).

The majority (81%) confirmed that the main tool of the XXI century, which has made a significant

difference in human life, is the Internet, and every second respondent (61%) said that it took place through a «smartphone».

Today, the Internet has become an integral part of human life. In everyday life, many types of services are provided via the Internet. Every second respondent needs the Internet, communication with relatives (62%) and information, news (61%).



**Figure 4** – Distribution of answers to the question: «Tell me, in the quarantine situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, did your online purchases increase or not?»

During quarantine isolation, the Internet is used by the respondent for 5-8 hours a day – 40%, for 3-5 hours – 26%, regularly – 26%, for 1-3 hours – 3%, for less than 1 hour – 3%. There is activity of the population in the social network, one of the reasons is that the format of work and study is remote.

The results show that compared to a year ago, the level of use of digital services by the population is growing, they can easily and quickly create services through daily mobile applications. Compared to the previous year, the use of «banking operations» increased by 31%, «ordering a taxi» increased by 20%, «metering and payment for utilities» increased by 20%, and «clothing from online stores, Purchase of household appliances, electronics – increased by 45%, as well as «Registration of certificates and documents from government agencies» increased by 40% compared to last year.

However, the number of low-performing services: «filing complaints and appeals to government agencies» decreased by 24%, «doctor's appointments» – by 16%, «search and payment of state taxes, fines» – by 16%.

### Conclusion

Thus, the effect of the pandemic on the digitization of society is huge.

In times of social isolation, people have turned to online communication, which means that digital technologies are the only way out of social isolation. From the point of view of society, a colossal jump has taken place in the adoption and use of information technology. Constant presence in the network has become an absolute psychological and in many cases an objective necessity. The flow, broadcast by means of information and communication technologies, connected people in a single excited information space. It was found that information and communication technologies are able to unite people in a single system of information exchange, economic and social interaction.

Identified interrelated factors demonstrate how physical connections in society are replaced by digital, and what are the possible options for the development of digital society. Colossal opportunities for the collection and use of information about human beings by means of information and communication technologies during the pandemic were realized very limited. They were not aware of the possibility of total or selective centralized control, or self-regulation with the help of informing only the affected parties.

In conclusion, the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly contributed to the social isolation of society. But one of the ways out of that impasse is the Internet, social networks and others were digital technologies.



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