

# COVID-19 and Online Platforms



The online fight against the outbreak.

A look at what tech companies are doing to help flatten the curve.



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*During the COVID-19 pandemic, the tech industry is finding different ways to navigate the outbreak. At a time when most of us are confined to our homes, tech companies are creating or adapting their technologies to help contain the spread of COVID-19 and at the same time ensure that we stay connected. Downgrading streaming quality on platforms, freeing bandwidth for the healthcare sector or fighting misinformation and disinformation are some practical examples.*

*Working alongside public health authorities, these companies have proven that the fight against this pandemic is also done online.*

### **Amazon Web Services**

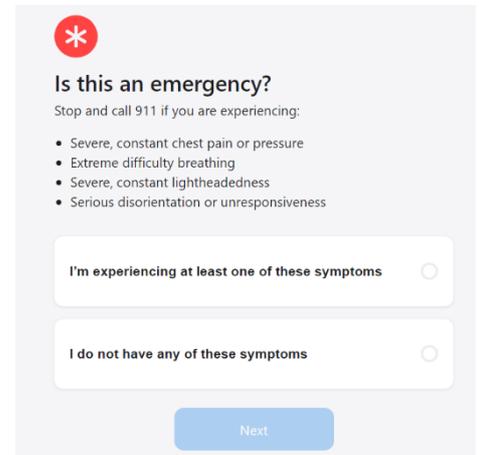
In response to COVID-19, Amazon Web Services (AWS) is working to support customers with their research, remote work and learning, and other solutions to address their needs and the effects this is having on communities and businesses.

- **Education, Remote working and Learning, and Teaching**  
E.g. AWS is providing tools to support [remote learning and teaching](#).
- **Healthcare and Lifesciences**  
E.g. [AWS is collaborating with healthcare](#) providers, public health organizations, government agencies, and life science businesses around the globe to support their efforts to cope with the ripple effect of COVID-19.
- **High Performance Computing (HPC) on AWS for COVID-19 Research and Development**  
E.g. As part of the [COVID-19 HPC Consortium](#), AWS is offering research institutions and companies technical support and AWS Promotional Credit for the use of AWS services to advance research on diagnosis, treatment, and vaccine studies to accelerate our collective understanding of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).
- **Data Related to COVID-19 available for Research and Development**  
E.g. [AWS Data Exchange](#) makes it easy to find, subscribe to, and use third-party data in the cloud.
- **AWS Diagnostic Development Initiative**  
E.g. AWS launched the [AWS Diagnostic Development Initiative](#) – a program to support customers who are working to bring better, more accurate, diagnostics solutions to market faster and promote better collaboration across organizations that are working on similar problems.
- **World Health Organization (WHO)**  
E.g. [AWS is supplying WHO](#) with advanced cloud technologies and supporting it with technical expertise.

In order to fight misinformation, Amazon added a banner to the top of certain search results with a link to the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [According to media sources](#), Amazon also removed some books with untrustworthy content regarding COVID-19 from their website.

## Apple

Apple joined forces with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the White House and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help citizens get support during this outbreak by providing guidance. In the USA, they launched a [screening tool](#) to help people to assess their symptoms in order to reserve care for those who really need it.



The screenshot shows a mobile app interface for a COVID-19 screening tool. At the top left is a red asterisk icon. The main heading is "Is this an emergency?". Below it, the text says "Stop and call 911 if you are experiencing:". A bulleted list of symptoms follows: "Severe, constant chest pain or pressure", "Extreme difficulty breathing", "Severe, constant lightheadedness", and "Serious disorientation or unresponsiveness". There are two radio button options: "I'm experiencing at least one of these symptoms" and "I do not have any of these symptoms". A blue "Next" button is at the bottom.

© Apple

In a recent [press release](#), Apple and Google announced a joint effort to help government and health agencies flatten the curve by enabling the use of Bluetooth for tracing technology.

Check out Google efforts to fight COVID-19 on page 2/3.

## Facebook

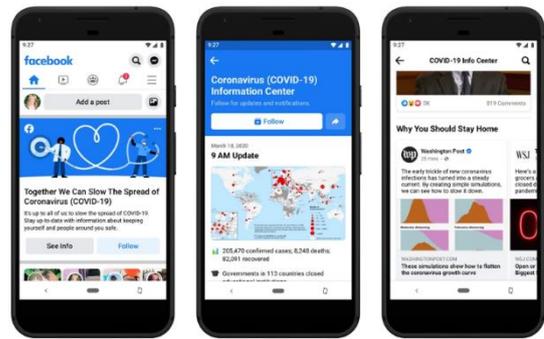
Facebook is helping with the fight against COVID-19 by:

- **Ensuring everyone has access to accurate information and helpful resources**  
E.g. Directing people to their local Ministry of Health. For example, in the US they direct people to information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Tackling exploitative tactics in ads**  
E.g. They forbid ads from companies that are using COVID-19 to create panic or imply that their products will cure people from the pandemic.
- **Removing harmful content**  
E.g. Removing misinformation content.
- **Supporting health and economic relief efforts**  
E.g. Donating \$25 million to support healthcare workers on the front line.
- **Empowering Partners with Data Tools**  
E.g. They are collaborating with leading researchers at Harvard University's School of Public Health and National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan "by sharing aggregated and anonymised mobility data and high-resolution population density maps to help inform their forecasting models".

- **Making it easier for people to request or offer help in their communities**

Facebook announced its Community Help, a feature to let neighbours request and offer help (volunteering, deliver groceries, make donations) during this pandemic.

You can access Community Help via the [COVID-19 Information Centre](#) on Facebook or by visiting [facebook.com/covidsupport](https://facebook.com/covidsupport).



© Facebook

Facebook announced that they are starting to roll this out in the US, the UK, France, Australia, and Canada in the next days.

More information can be found [here](#).

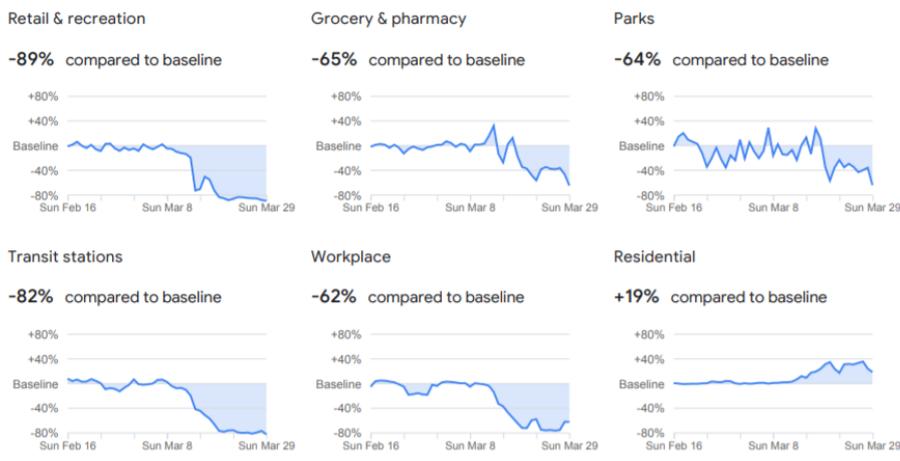
**Google**

Google is also helping public health officials. Besides having an [information & resources page](#) (with safety and prevention tips, response efforts etc.) and promoting [official information and websites on their search engine](#), they are especially helping global communities by providing aggregated and anonymised data & useful insights to help track the success of lockdown measures on restricting movement.

These Community Mobility Reports show chart movement trends over time in 131 countries, highlighting different categories such as pharmacies, groceries, etc.

See below the example of the mobility changes observed in the city of Brussels, Belgium.

**Brussels**



© Google

More information can be found [here](#).

The company will also donate to the UN Foundation's [COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund](#) for the World Health Organisation.

## **Microsoft**

Microsoft is helping to fight the virus by protecting the communities in which they operate and providing technological tips and resources to customers so that they can work better remotely.

One very important thing Microsoft is doing is helping healthcare organisations know how to detect, be more protected against or even prevent ransomware campaigns. Now more than ever, the critical services need protection from attacks that can enter their systems and cause downtime or expose sensitive information.

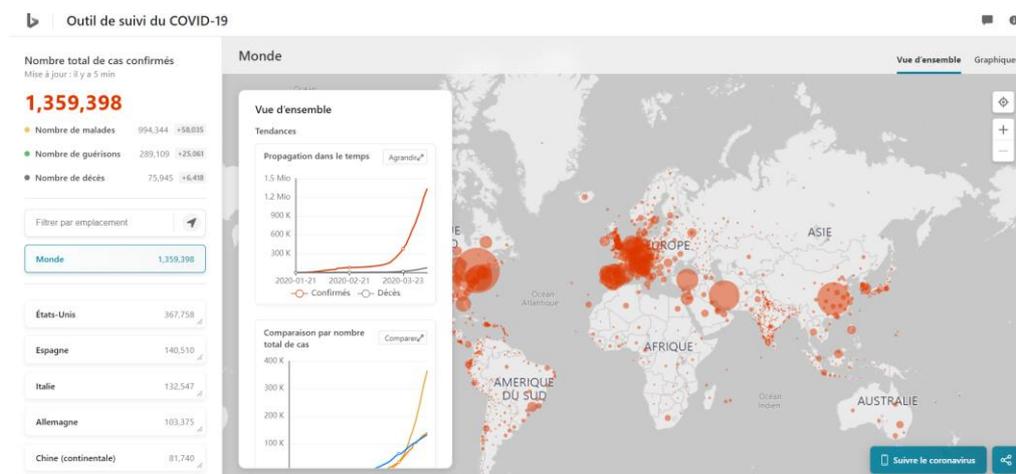
More information on Microsoft's response can be found [here](#).

More information on how Microsoft works with healthcare organisations to protect ransomware [here](#).

In response to a crisis that continues to evolve, Microsoft presents the [Crisis Communications App](#), an app that can be used by organisations to coordinate their own information-sharing and team collaboration.

The company also made software trials and services available for free (Microsoft, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security and Azure). More information can be found [here](#).

The Bing team at Microsoft has launched a COVID-19 tracker that gives people access to information about the outbreak per country. The data provided comes from reliable sources like the World Health Organisation (WHO), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or European Centre for the Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).



The tracker can be found [here](#).

© Microsoft

## **Netflix**

Teleworking and streaming are very important during these times. However, to secure Internet access to all, it's important to limit quality to SD to beat bandwidth stress. This is what companies like Netflix or YouTube have done with most of their content.

The company has also created a relief fund to help members of the creative community who are now unemployed.

More information can be found [here](#).

## **Nextdoor**

Nextdoor is an app to help neighbours support each other.

During the spread of COVID-19, many organisations are using Nextdoor to share information about what to do or even where to go for help. The app ensures that the right local information reaches the communities.

Organisations and public agencies using this platform are:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US
- Red Cross in Italy
- State and regional health departments in the US
- The UK's National Health Service
- France's Ministry of Health

The company launch two new features - Help Maps and Groups - so neighbours can combat COVID-19 together.

More information can be found [here](#).

## **Pinterest**

© Pinterest



After the increase in searches for topics like planning what to cook or lesson plans for kids, Pinterest decided to launch the "Today tab" to help people to find ways to get inspiration while practising social distancing. The platform features expert information from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

More information can be found [here](#).

Pinterest, in collaboration with other renown entities and researchers, also created the [How We Feel app](#) to grasp crowd-sourced self-reporting of symptoms as a way to help the fight against COVID-19.

More information on this app can be found [here](#).

## **Reddit**

The platform has a team of medical experts following the progression of the virus. You can read about this on the dedicated page: "Our team of experts are here to break down what we know and how you can stay safe."

More information can be found [here](#).

## **Snapchat**

The Snapchat Team is working with their community of volunteer Map Editors and governments around the globe:

- **Launched creative tools to share best practices with their community**  
E.g. Global filter with advice on how to stay safe.
- **Ensuring everyone has access to accurate information and helpful resources**  
E.g. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publish regular updates for Snapchatters on the [Discover platform](#).
- **Preventing harmful content**  
E.g. Their guidelines prohibit partners and users to deliberately spread false information that causes harm, thus helping to limit the spread of disinformation.
- **Providing mental health support**  
E.g. [Here For You](#) feature provides search for certain topics like anxiety, depression etc.

More information can be found [here](#).

Aside from the filter, Snap has also introduced different Bitmojis to keep citizens aware of best practices during self-isolation.



## Spotify



As information is constantly changing, Spotify launched a COVID-19 hub to give users relevant information about the virus. They are also making a space for governments, NGOs for health and public service announcements (PSAs) to get in touch with listeners in real-time.

Besides that, they have contributed financially to the CDC Foundation Emergency Response Fund and the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for WHO.

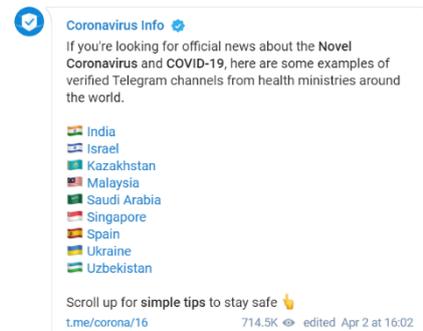
More information can be found [here](#).

## Telegram

Telegram created a special channel called 'Corona Info'. This channel provides top results for all coronavirus-related keywords in Search.

The messenger platform now contains a list of reliable sources by country. The concerned authorities can see the feedback and queries.

More information can be found [here](#).



© Telegram

The company also launched a streamlined verification process to counter-disinformation.

More information can be found [here](#).

To raise awareness and maintain digital hygiene, users can also use Telegram's Photo Editor and add mask stickers to their pictures.



© Telegram

## Tinder

Tinder is also helping their community to stay connected and safe during this difficult period.

They are adhering to guidance from experts by monitoring closely the updates from the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#).

"Distant, But Digitally Together"

[Tinder U experience](#) – It allows students that are distance learning to stay connected with their classmates and match with other people from their campus.

[Passport](#) – They are making this feature free to everyone until April 30<sup>th</sup>.

With this feature people can virtually transport themselves out of the lockdowns and find friends or people in their hometown, college town or even across other parts of the world that are doing the same.

More information can be found [here](#).

## **Twitter**

Like other platforms Twitter is helping citizens to find reliable information about the virus. How?

- **Preventing platform manipulation**

E.g. Ensuring that trends, search, etc. are protected from malicious behaviours.

- **Extending search prompt**

E.g. The platform launched a new dedicated search prompt to ensure that only credible information is relayed.

Their official #coronavirus partnerships are now in place in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Indonesia,

Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vietnam, and Yemen.

- **Direct engagement**

E.g. Their Global Public Policy is seeking ways to integrate their platform with organisations that are fighting the virus (experts, NGOs, governments).



More information can be found [here](#).

## Uber

Uber is helping the fight against COVID-19 by:

### - Supporting public health authorities

E.g. They are providing safety information regarding deliveries in the Uber Eats app, in line with guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

### - Supporting healthcare workers and vulnerable populations

E.g. Uber Health is helping provide transportation for front-line health care

workers, both to and from patients' homes, as well as between healthcare facilities.

### - Drivers & delivery people

E.g. They have started to distribute [disinfectant sprays](#) to clean cars.



© Uber

## New Service – [Uber Medics](#)

In France, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Belgium, the Netherlands, and India, they have launched this service to support frontline workers.

More information can be found [here](#).

## Verily

Access to reliable screening is very important during this pandemic in order to help the containment efforts. With this idea in mind, Verily – a sister company of Google - has launched its COVID-19 [screener and testing programme](#) based on guidelines from public health officials. The tool is a collaboration with the California Governor's office, federal, state and local public authorities and it is currently working in California (Bay Area locations).

More information can be found [here](#).



### This screening is for you, if you:

- Do not need immediate medical attention

This program is intended to expand access to COVID-19 risk screening and testing. It is not intended for people experiencing **severe** symptoms such as severe cough, severe shortness of breath, severe fever, or other concerning symptoms who may need more immediate medical care. [Please visit the CDC website](#) for information on what to do if you are sick.

- Are 18 years old or older

- Are located within range of a testing site

San Jose (Santa Clara county), Lake Elsinore (Riverside county), San Mateo (San Mateo county), and Sacramento (Sacramento county)

I acknowledge

© Verily

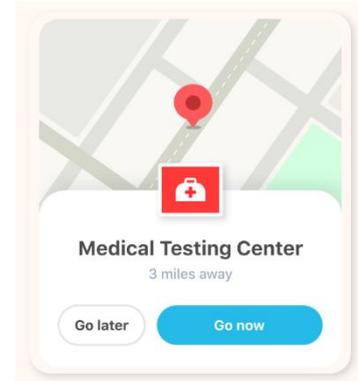
## **Waze**

The Waze Crisis Response Team is working with their community of volunteer Map Editors and governments around the globe to:

- Add quarantine-related road closures
- Map pins for the locations of medical testing centres
- Map pins for the locations of emergency food distribution centres
- Add in-app reminders with local restrictions

More information can be found [here](#).

To help law enforcement authorities to enforce the confinement measures, in some countries they removed the possibility to show the location of police forces on the app (e.g. [France](#)).



© Waze

## **WhatsApp**

Since February, WhatsApp is trying to assist governments in their efforts to provide reliable information to the public and help fight misinformation.

The platform is working with the Singapore Government, the Ministry of Health of Israel, the South Africa Department of Health, KOMINFO Indonesia and most recently with the World Health Organisation.



© WhatsApp

The World Health Organisation has developed a free 'health alert' function on [WhatsApp](#).

The goal is to dispel myths and give users relevant information (e.g. travel advice, how to stay protected etc.).

The messaging services will be available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

WhatsApp has also announced a \$1 million grant to the International Fact Checking Network to support accurate information.

More information can be found [here](#).

To help fight misinformation, the company has also put [new limits on the forwarding of viral messages](#).

*Document updated on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020.*

*If you want to update the information that is presented in this document related to your company or if you would like to include an online platform that is also helping public health authorities in the fight against this pandemic, please get in touch with Marta Azevedo Silva at [mas@eena.org](mailto:mas@eena.org).*