COVID-19 and Misinformation
Social Media Analysis
COVID-19 on Social Media, Blogs & Forums | United States

COVID-19 Social Media Post Volume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 28</td>
<td>The day after Vice President Pence announced appointments to the coronavirus task force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>The day after World Health Organization announces COVID-19 has reached pandemic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>California issues state-wide stay at home order; US Navy ship to deploy to NY; widespread closings and cancelations begin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph Details:**
- **Number of Social Media Mentions (millions):** 115M
- **Unique Authors:** 92M
- **Language:** English-only
- **Location:** United States-only
- **Platforms:** Twitter, Reddit, Blogs, Forums, Tumblr

**Graph Highlights:**
- **A** February 28: 1.7 million Mentions
- **B** March 12: 6.3 million Mentions
- **C** March 17: 4.9 million Mentions

Previous Periods:
- Mentions: 0
- Unique Authors: 0
Trends in online search behavior generally mirrored mentions of the virus on social media.

Google searches peaked on March 12. After a brief dip, they rebounded and then gradually declined along with social media discourse.
Wide Range of Topics Discussed

2/19/20 – 3/31/20

- A 6-week period from mid February through the end of March captured major events in the development and spread of the virus in the U.S.
- Trending topics were wide ranging, and included discussion around:
  - The pandemic status and spread of the disease
  - The impact on specific geographic locations (China, America, Italy)
  - The impact on individual health and the healthcare system
  - Prevention and mitigation strategies
  - Testing and healthcare resources
Dynamic Shift in COVID-19 Topics

- Toward discussions around social, organizational, and governmental control measures
  - social distancing
  - Quarantine
  - “Stay at home” measures
- With these measures, people will increasingly rely on social media
  - Get and share information
  - Work
  - Make/maintain social connections
- Role of social and other digital media companies (and others) in managing misinformation is crucial
Misinformation, Disinformation, and Confusion

• The World Health Organization specifically joined TikTok to launch a TikTok information series that provides credible information about the virus.

• As news develops and discussion topics shift, trends indicate that misinformation will follow. For example:
  • Misinformation around *social distancing* and *shelter in place* rules are likely to increase given current trends.

• In addition to *misinformation* (incorrect information), and *disinformation* (intentionally incorrect information), *confusion* is also evident. For example:
  • Social distancing rules, specific policies in new/developing “shelter in place” or “stay at home”
  • Treatment guidelines (e.g., malaria drugs, ibuprofen vs. paracetamol/acetaminophen).
MYTH: They are prepping for Martial Law in Michigan.
#CoronaVirusUpdate #COVID19

RESPONSE: Michigan State Police: 'This isn’t martial law'
Road and freeways will be open. There will be no checkpoints, and Michigan State Police troopers won’t be asking for your papers.
© freep.com
COVID-19 Misinformation Examples & Response

**UNPROVEN**

ASHLEY WAGNER  
@ashleyswagnerxo

Hi friends. Don’t take any Advil or ibuprofen in the meantime. Tylenol only supposedly any ibuprofen will kick start symptoms or make them worse if you have any already. Stay safe inside your home.

2,434 2:22 PM - Mar 20, 2020

1,180 people are talking about this

**RESPONSE**

World Health Organization (WHO)  
@WHO

Q: Could #ibuprofen worsen disease for people with #COVID19?

A: Based on currently available information, WHO does not recommend against the use of ibuprofen.

At present, based on currently available information, WHO does not recommend against the use of ibuprofen. We are also consulting with physicians treating COVID-19 patients and are not aware of reports of any negative effects of ibuprofen, beyond the usual known side effects that limit its use in certain populations. WHO is not aware of published clinical or population-based data on this topic.

8,338 6:46 PM - Mar 18, 2020

7,842 people are talking about this
COVID-19 Misinformation: Social Media Platform Response
COVID-19 Digital Media Response

Wikipedia Statement on COVID-19

<i>A message to our readers about COVID-19</i>

With the uncertainty surrounding the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we want to reassure our readers across the globe that our volunteers are working to bring you a trusted source of unbiased information. Throughout these challenging times, knowledge must and will remain open for all.

Read more →

COVID-19 Pop-Up on Google Search

World Health Organization Myth/Fact Infographics

From the evidence so far, the new coronavirus can be transmitted in ALL AREAS, including areas with hot and humid weather. Regardless of climate, adopt protective measures if you live in, or travel to an area reporting COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by frequently cleaning your hands. Eliminate viruses that may be on your hands, and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

FACT: The new coronavirus can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates.

COVID-19 Update (California)

California Department of Public Health: uchsl.ca.gov

Information about COVID-19 in the United States

cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

- "corona virus barely affects young people" — it's a respiratory disease and half of y'all's lungs are ruined from vaping but go off

- @LeeWillett
  @lalarmingdonkey

  you are Delusional if you believe that vaping contributes to COVID-19. You should stick to your wheelhouse and stop trying to scare everyone back to smoking. I notice you seem to have no problem with combustible cigs and only attack vaping. Why? #VapingSavesLives

- See Lee Willett's other Tweets