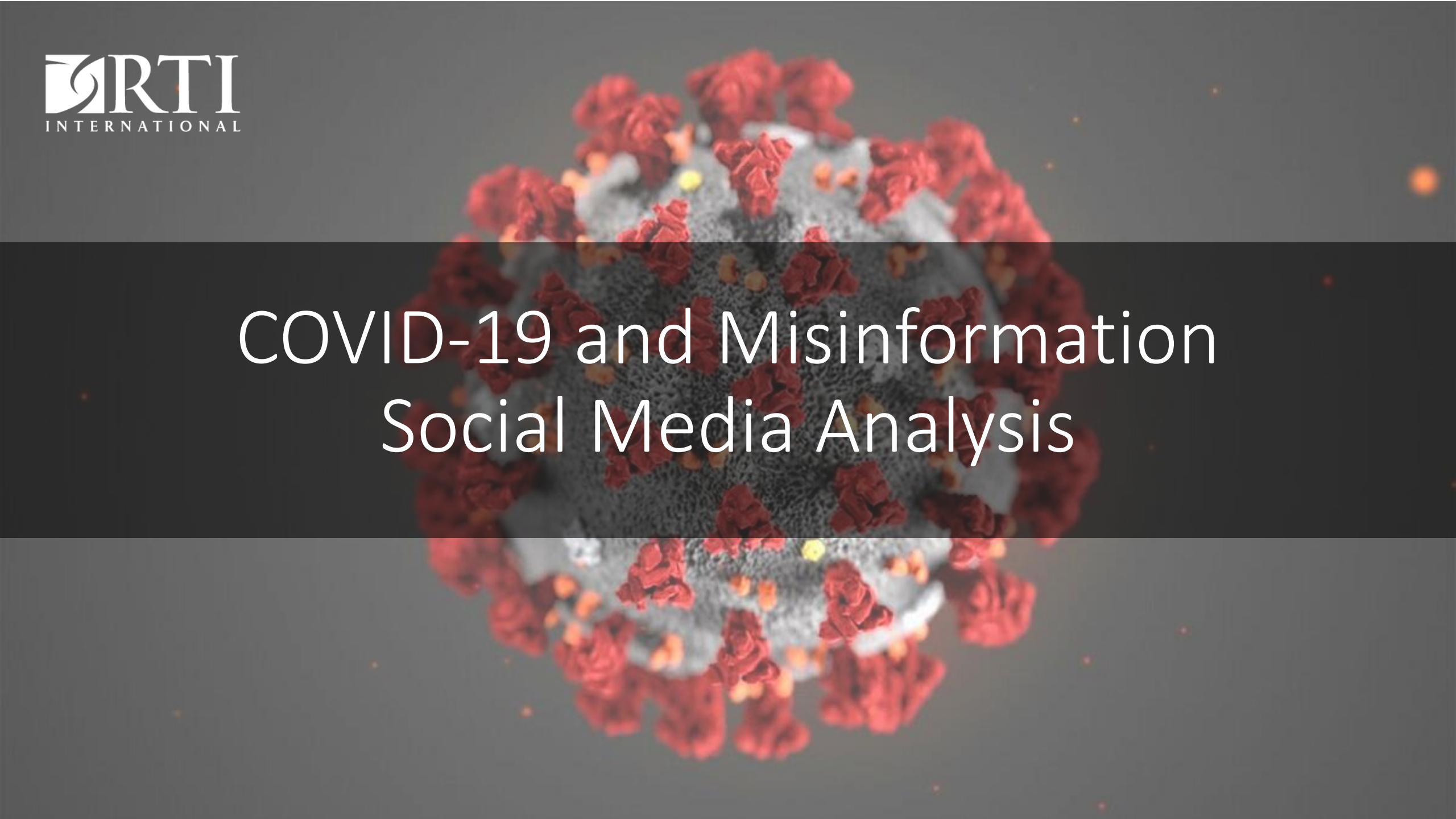
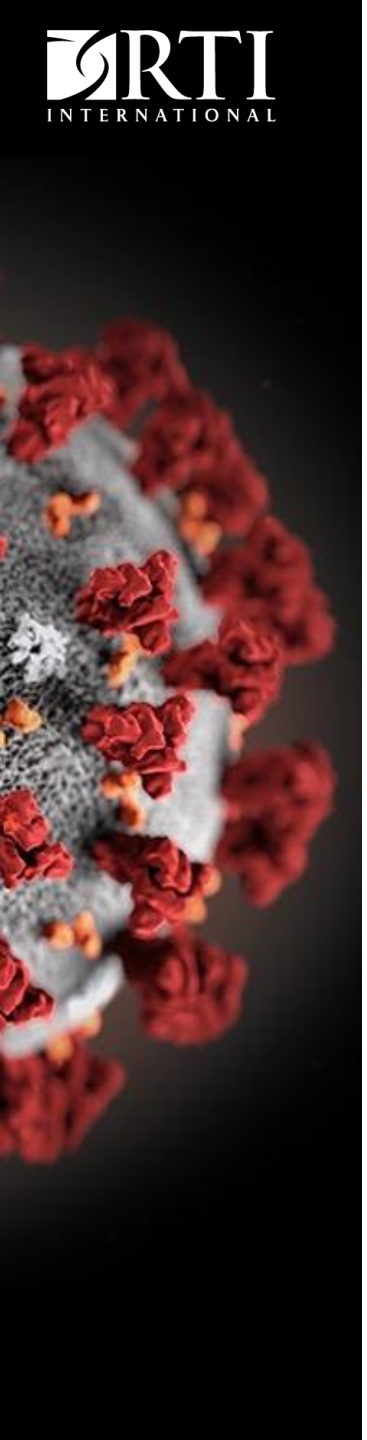
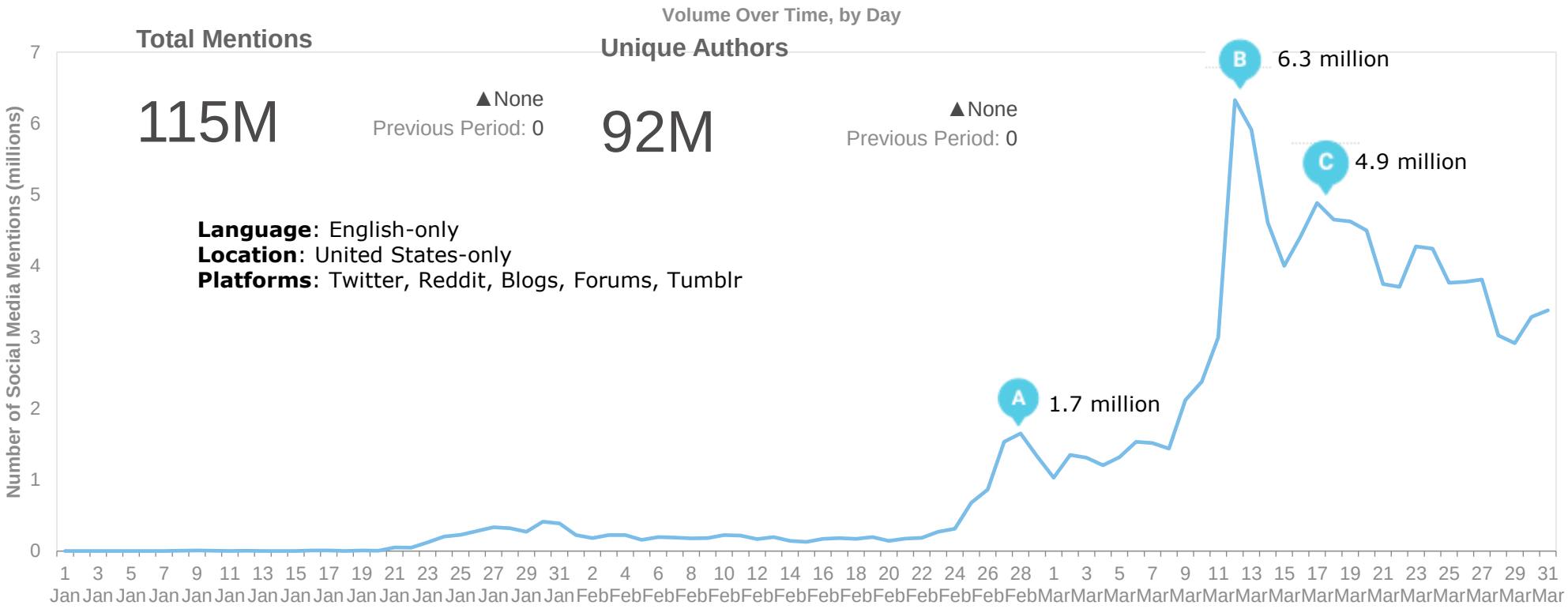


COVID-19 and Misinformation Social Media Analysis



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

COVID-19 Social Media Post Volume



(A) February 28

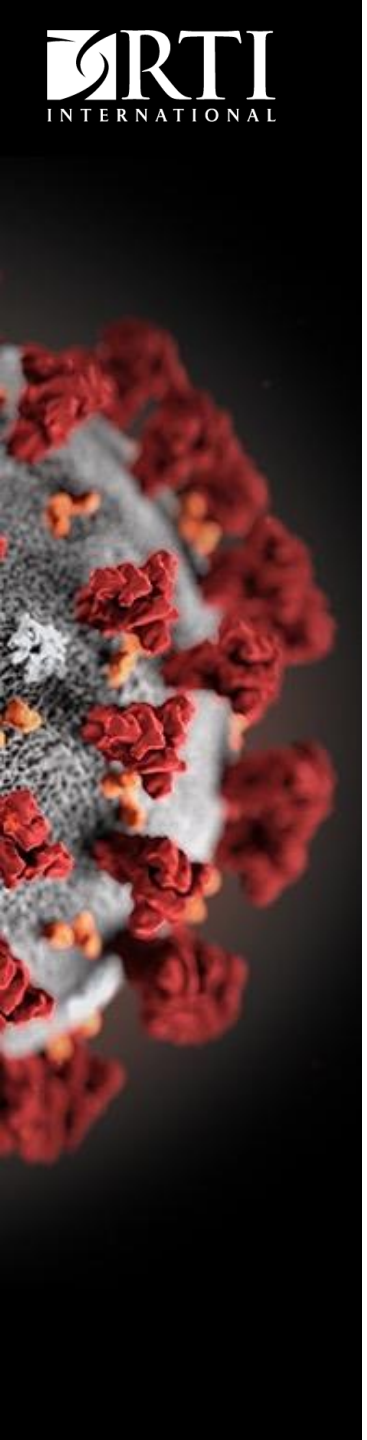
- The day after Vice President Pence announced appointments to the coronavirus task force

(B) March 12

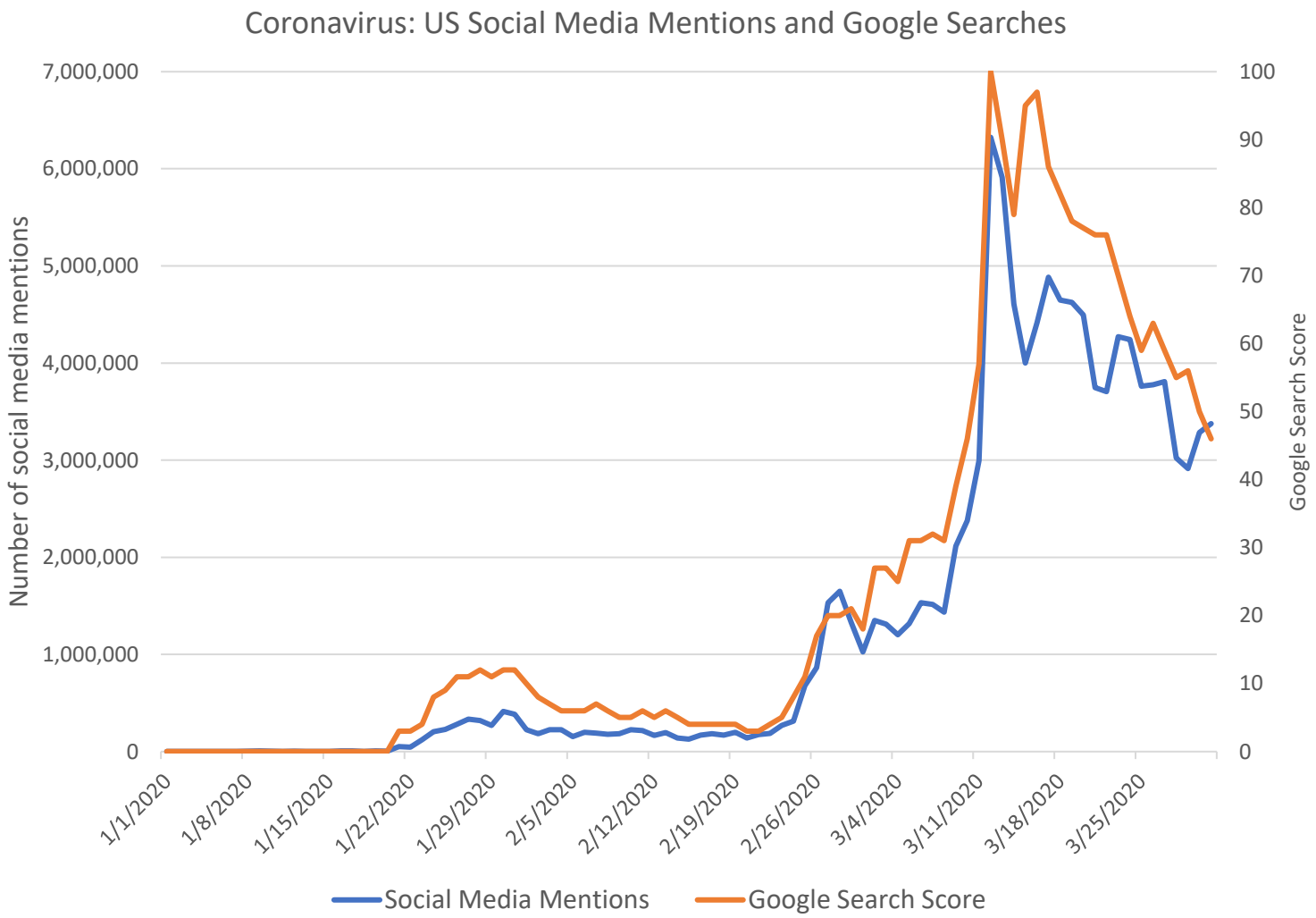
- The day after World Health Organization announces COVID-19 has reached pandemic status

(C) March 17

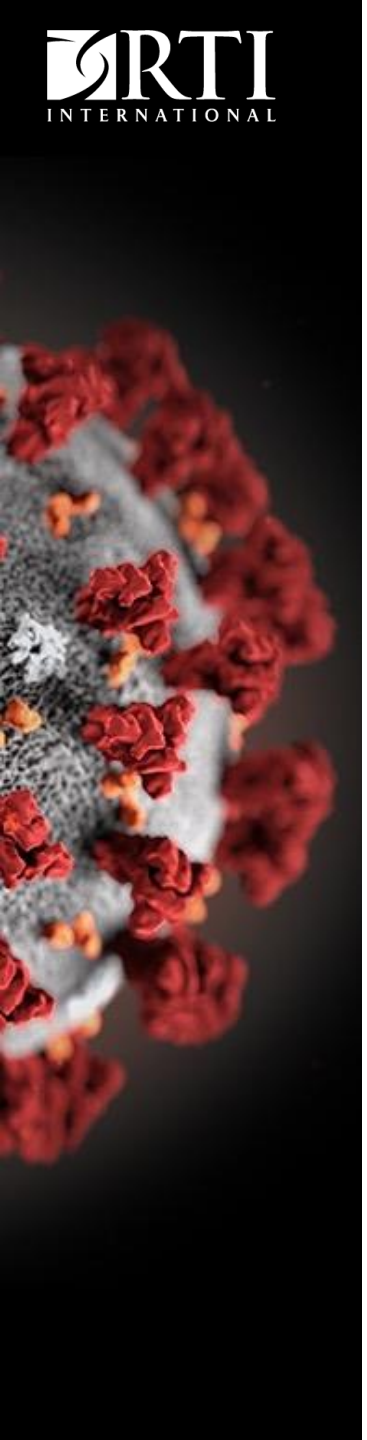
- California issues state-wide stay at home order; US Navy ship to deploy to NY; widespread closings and cancelations begin



Social Media Mentions and Online Search Behavior



- 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

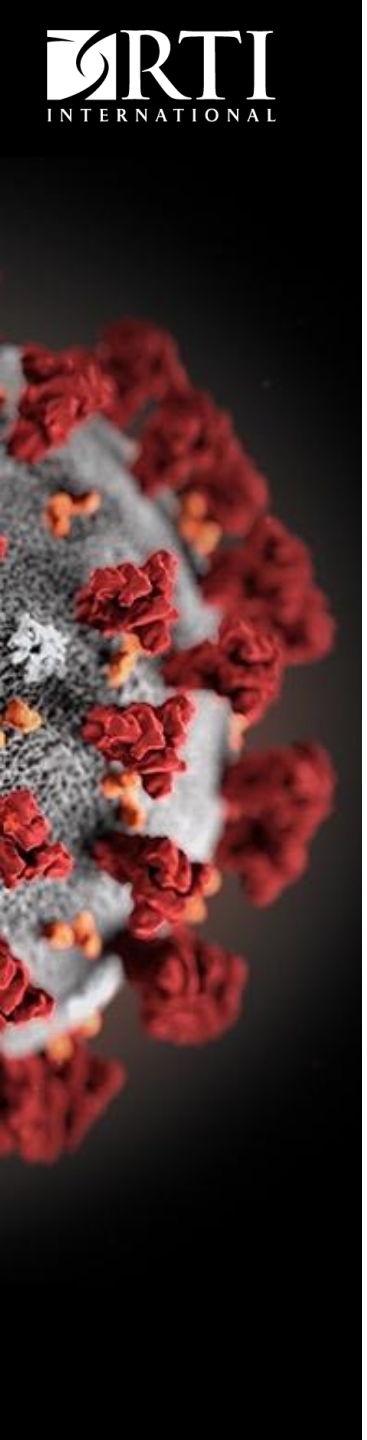


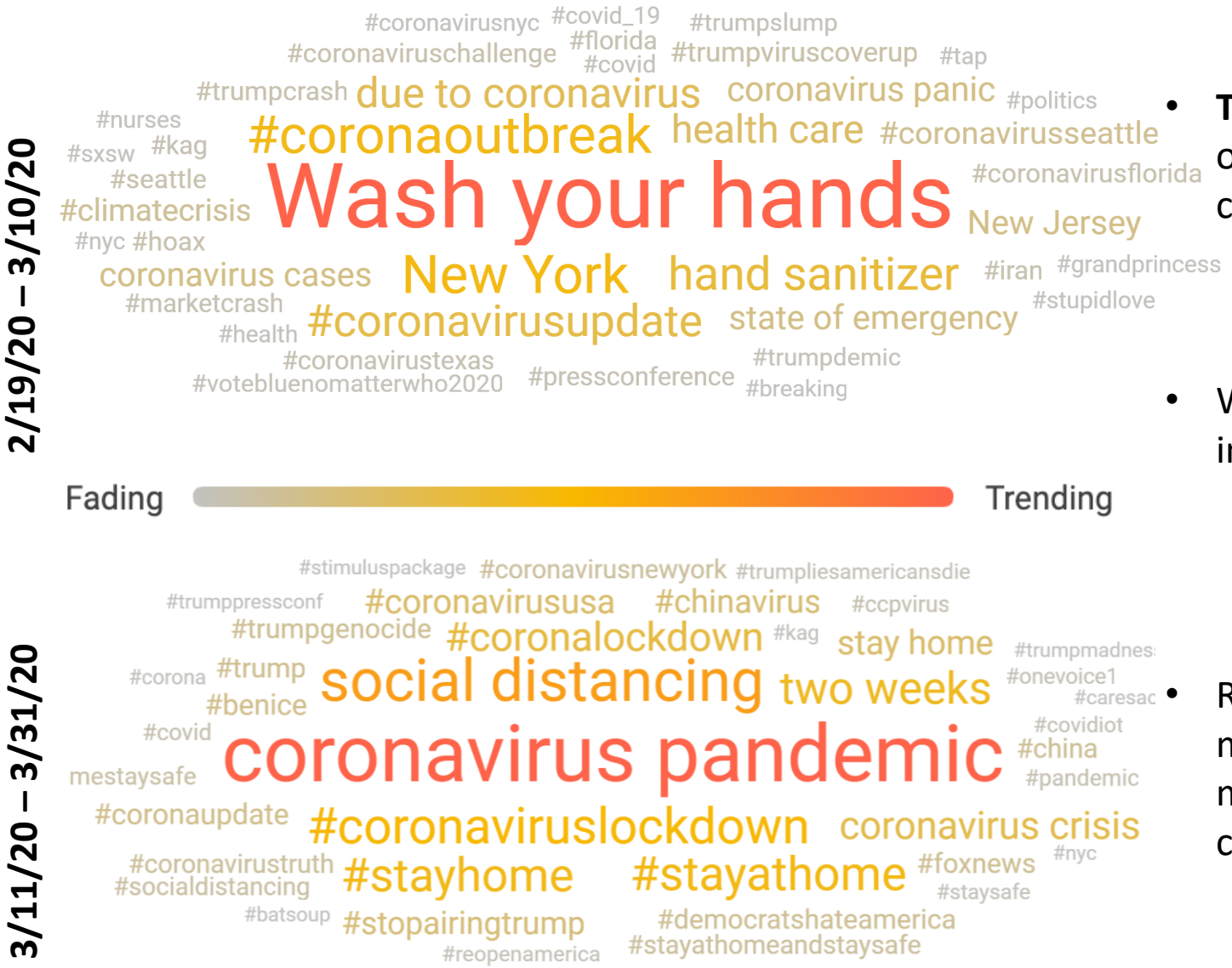
Wide Range of Topics Discussed

2/19/20 – 3/31/20

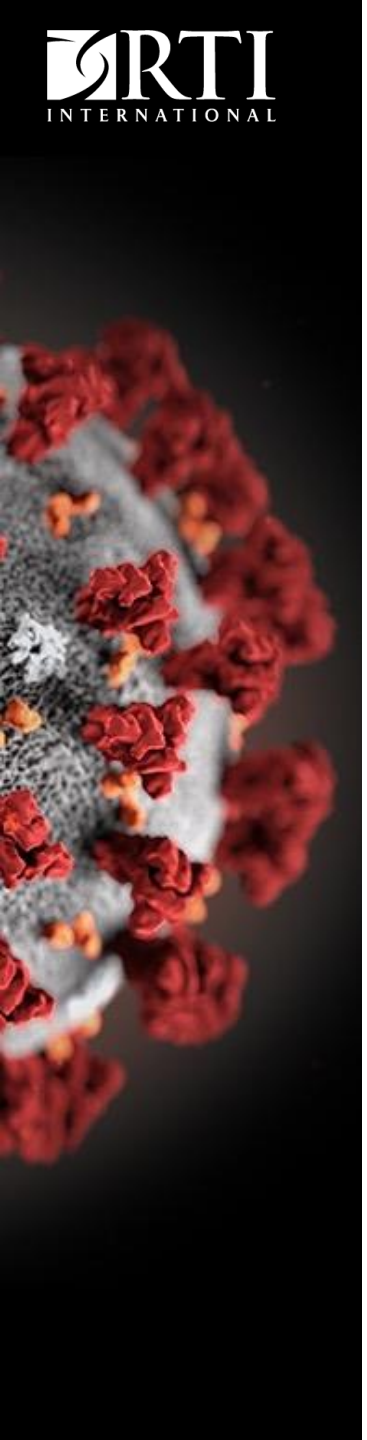
- A 6-week period from mid February through the end of March captured major events in the development and spread of the virus in the U.S.
- Trending topics were wide ranging, and included discussion around:
  - The pandemic status and spread of the disease
  - The impact on specific geographic locations (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





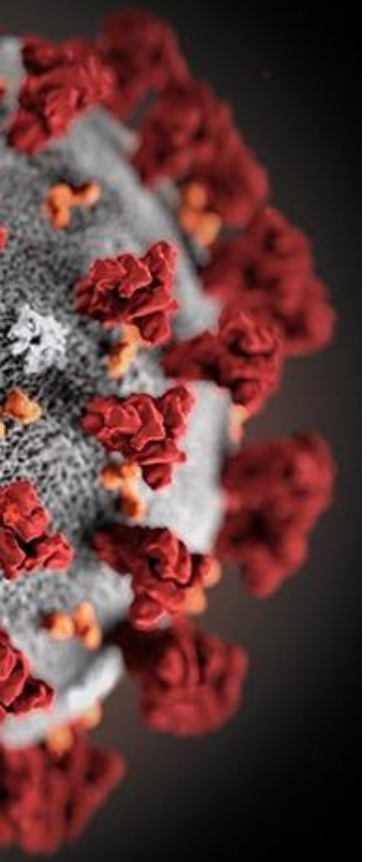
- **Toward** discussions around social, organizational, and governmental control measures
  - *social distancing*
  - Quarantine
  - "Stay at home" measures
- With these measures, people will increasingly rely on social media
  - Get and share information
  - Work
  - Make/maintain social connections
- 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).

COVID-19 Misinformation Examples & Response



MYTH

TheRealIIIGates
@TheRealIIIGate1

They are prepping for Martial Law in Michigan.
#CoronaVirusUpdate #COVID19

3:35 PM · Mar 19, 2020 · Twitter for Android

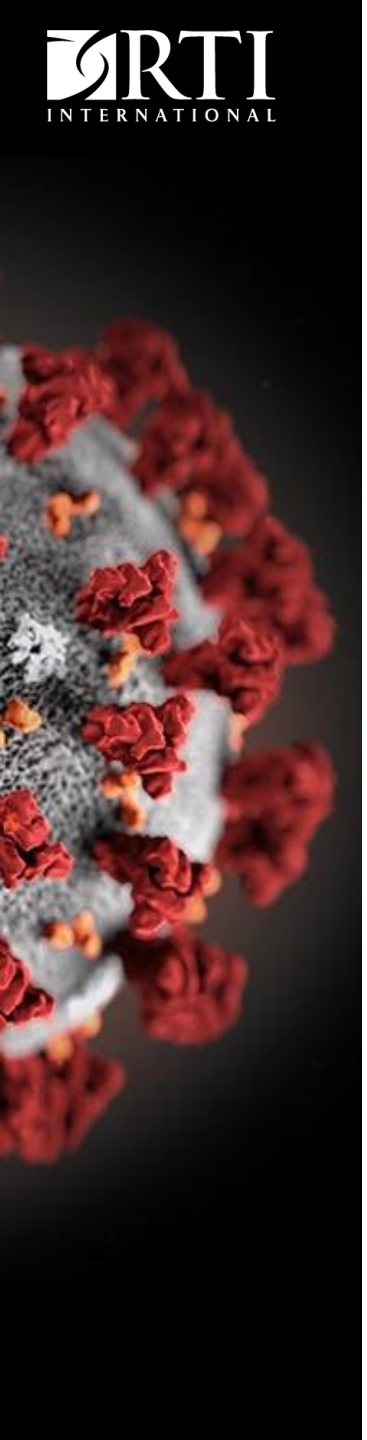
RESPONSE

Detroit Free Press
@freep

Michigan State Police: 'This isn't martial law'

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

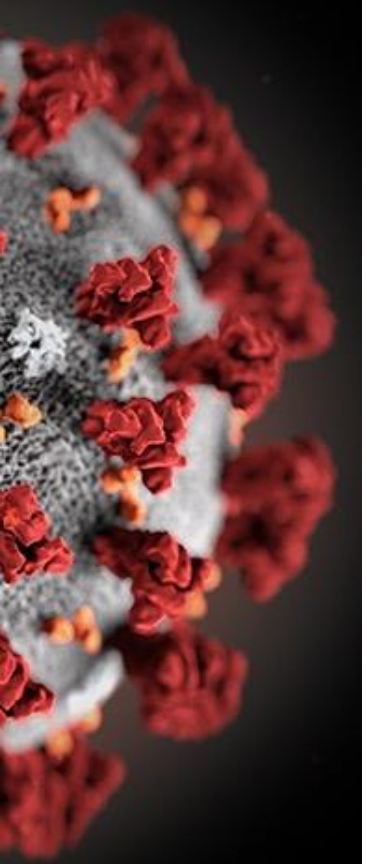
Q: Could #ibuprofen worsen disease for people with #COVID19?

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

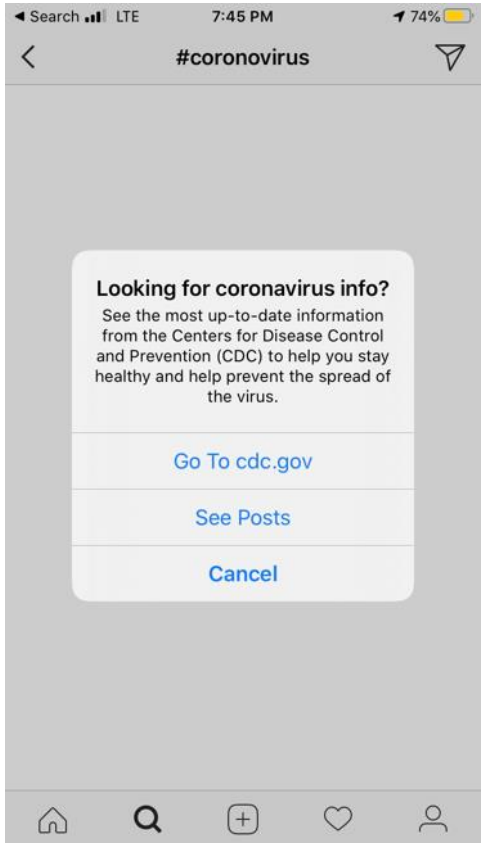
♡ 8,338 6:46 PM - Mar 18, 2020

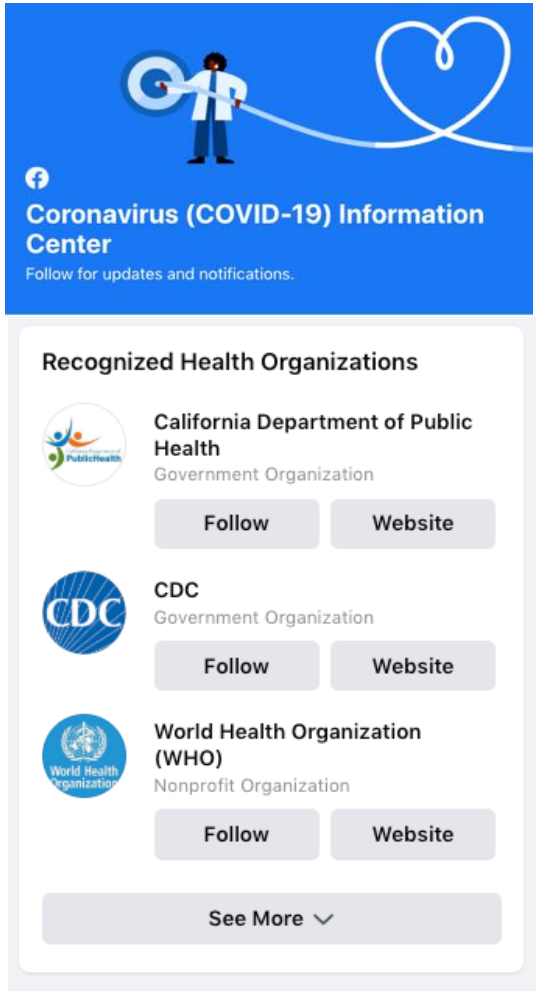
7,842 people are talking about this

COVID-19 Misinformation: Social Media Platform Response

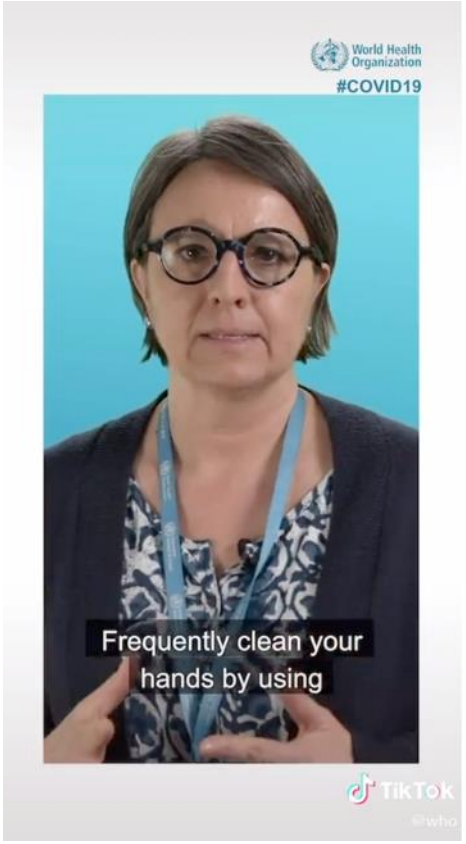


Instagram





TikTok



World Health Organization (WHO)
@who

We are joining @tiktok to provide you with reliable and timely public health advice! Our first post: How to protect yourself from #coronavirus ?

original sound - who

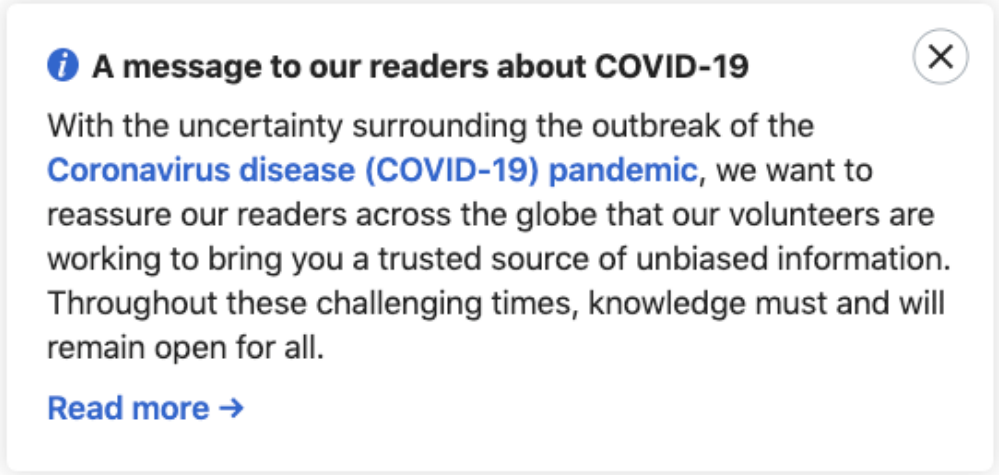
457.2K likes · 2486 comments

Get the app to see comments and join the conversation!

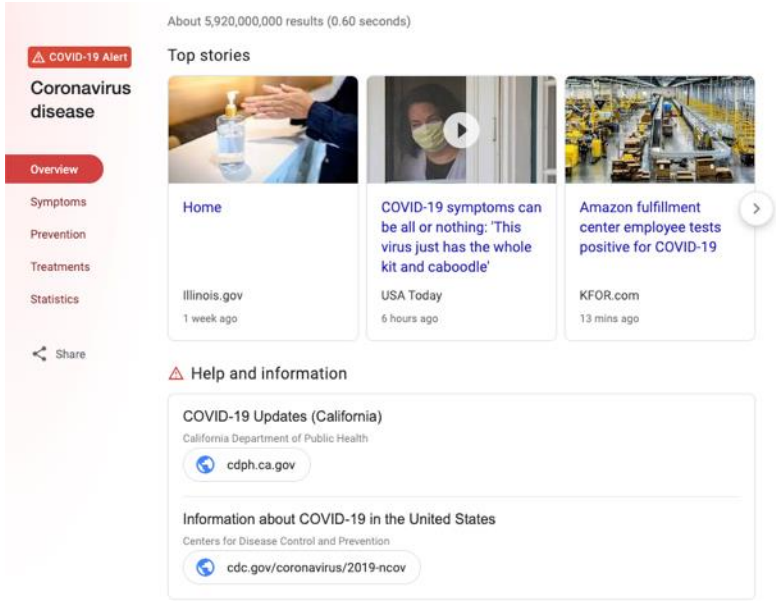
https://www.tiktok.com/@who/video/67 COPY

COVID-19 Digital Media Response

Wikipedia Statement on COVID-19

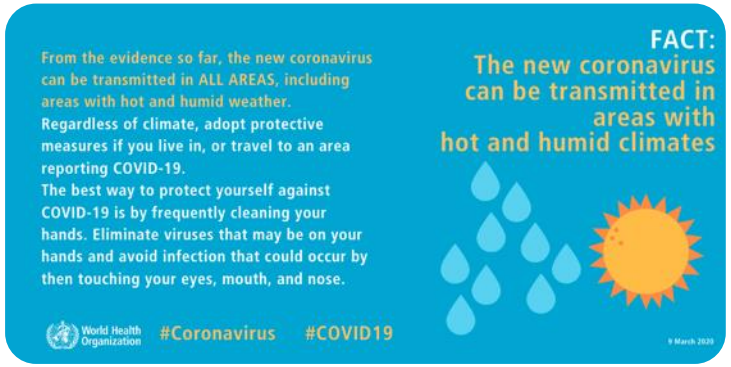


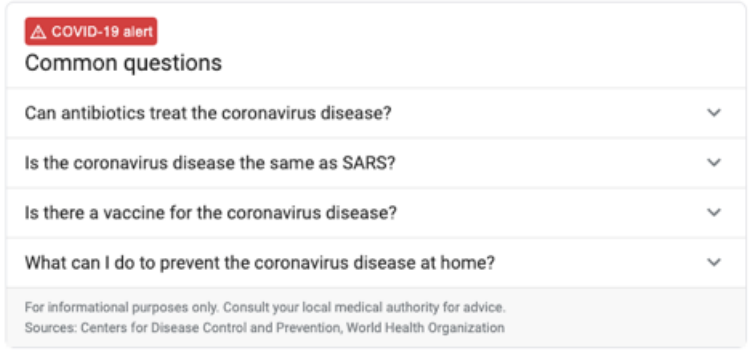
COVID-19 Pop-Up on Google Search

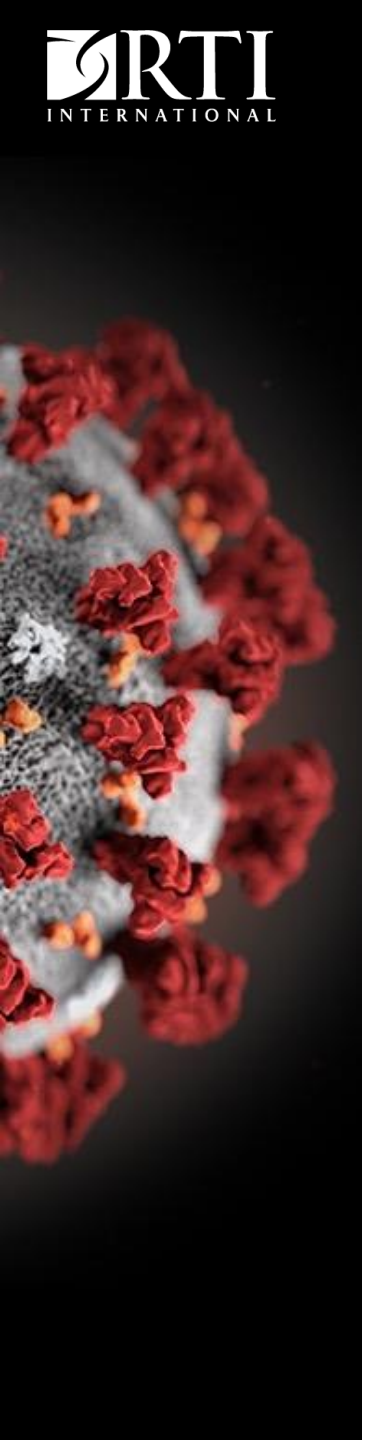


World Health Organization Myth/ Fact Infographics

World Health Organization







COVID-19 & Vaping: 2/25-3/23

myesha thee stallion
@myeshachou

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

421K 6:23 PM - Mar 11, 2020

73.5K people are talking about this

Lee Willett
@alarmingdonkey

@JeromeAdamsMD you are #Delusional if you believe that vaping contributes to covid19. 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

5:21 PM - Mar 24, 2020

See Lee Willett's other Tweets