

# Ketchum London COVID-19 media intelligence report – Edition 7

## *Power of influence*

Welcome to the seventh edition of Ketchum London's COVID-19 media intelligence report. We hope these newsletters are proving to be useful as we navigate our way through this challenging time together. From exploring behaviour change to looking at life indoors, we have covered several topics in our bulletin. This week we take a closer look at influencer marketing with views from Ketchum Associate Directors Alex Marsh and Stephen Farrell. Social media has been a salvage for people trapped indoors but have the rules of the game changed and what do brands need to keep in mind during this changing time?



With COVID-19 restricting our movements, we have inevitably turned to social media for stimulation. With more people online than ever before, brands are presented with a unique opportunity to engage with influencers, allowing them to stay front of mind in our new world. Even the UK government has turned to trusted YouTubers to combat the global spread of misinformation on COVID-19.

With many people across the world on lockdown and self-isolating, the UK has seen social and digital media consumption numbers soar. In the first two weeks of April, social talent agency UOR Consultancy saw a 76% rise in daily accumulated likes on Instagram #ad posts. As brands pulled back on marketing, less branded content in the social media space meant influencers saw their engagement levels rise as there was much less competition.

Despite an initial pause on paid-for influencer marketing activities, social media content creators have started to resume brand partnerships. But has the zeitgeist shifted for influencer marketing; both for its creators and their content? We have witnessed a rise in popularity of 'real life' living; take the new Nike creative Play Inside, Play for the World for example that features star athletes alongside everyday people trying to stay active as we battle through a global pandemic.

Micro influencers **are arguably much more relatable** in this climate than celebrities. This group is speaking to targeted audiences at a time when more people are online seeking out content relevant to their area of expertise or interests versus broader topic appeal.

## What are the stats telling us about social and influencer marketing?

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### Social media traffic and engagement is soaring:

- The UK has seen the highest increase rate of Instagram usage in Europe at 37%; Italy saw a rise of just 5%
- Instagram Live adoption has increased by 288% in the last month
- Snapchat increased its daily active users to 229 million in the first quarter of 2020 representing a 20% year on year gain and causing share prices to surge 17%
- TikTok hit one billion downloads on the Google Play store this month with platform engagement increasing by 27%



### This is having an impact on influencer content and engagement:

- Average influencer post reach has increased by almost 20%
- Post impressions and engagement rates have increased by almost 30%
- Average click through rates from influencer content have increased by over 20%

### Platforms are having to adapt:

- Influencer marketing platform Fohr has had 18% of influencer deals cancelled and 60% paused or postponed since the start of the outbreak. The cancelled deals have been partnerships relating to travel or events. The platform is about 65% US in terms of influencers and the next largest markets are the UK, Canada and Australia
- Facebook announced on 24th March that IG Live and Facebook Live views doubled over the course of one week in March and that overall time spent on its platforms increased by 70% since COVID-19 hit the US

There is a real tension in these stats between brands spending less (or expecting to spend less) on influencer marketing versus people spending more time online. We are counselling our clients that we can and should carry on using the appropriate, relevant and authentic influencers.

Typically sensitive, useful or entertaining influencer content by brands on social media will help keep brands front of mind as we navigate the weeks and months ahead. We are living on our mobile devices more than ever, as the stats above reflect, and one positive aspect of this outbreak is that it is giving brands a unique opportunity to reach more people than what they might previously have had.

## So, what are the four strategic client takeaways for this week?

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Looking ahead, the legacy of this crisis from an influencer marketing perspective will be most felt in the following areas.

- Platform diversification -- with increased time on our hands, we've been exploring new social media platforms, as have influencers. **TikTok and Twitch will come out of this with a richer pool of influencer talent.**
- Influencer marketing has evolved so much in the last ten years, however it was not prepared for a crisis of this scale. Influencers have been left vulnerable to cancelled projects and reduced income. We expect this will **bolster the desire for longer term partnerships which provide greater security and perhaps even an influencer union** to establish better payment regulations going forward.
- Content themes - COVID-19 has realigned our priorities and some industries will be slower to recover than others, notably travel. **We can therefore expect to see more diverse content from influencers.** Those who may have typically shared travel related content will likely continue to talk about topics which they may have featured during the pandemic, for example cooking and mindfulness.
- We may see more and more brands adding virtual influencers into their marcomms plans. As they consider how to help kickstart sales after life returns to some semblance of normality after COVID-19, **some brands may consider if virtual influencers offer them a ticket to success**, because virtual brand ambassadors can work round-the-clock and be

available whenever a brand needs them. This is already happening with organisations like the WHO using virtual influencers to get COVID-19 facts across to people, especially millennials.

## How are brands using influencers?



### FOOD

[McDonald's](#) and [Domino's Pizza](#) resorted to influencer marketing to spread the word around the hygiene and healthy practices being followed by the brands. While McDonald's collaborated with only food bloggers to create videos and post images of McDonald's hygiene practices, Domino's chose to work with a larger section of influencers who reposted the brand's hygiene policy image on their Instagram pages

- [Uber Eats](#) partnered with well-known Twitch influencers to surprise or “raid” smaller streamers with Uber Eats coupons

### GOVERNMENT

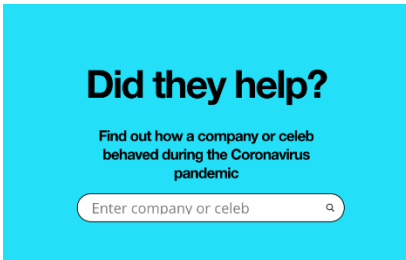
The [World Health Organization](#) has enlisted the help of a virtual influencer (Knox Frost) to help with a very real challenge: how to get accurate, vetted information about COVID-19 in front of millennials and Gen Z

### HEALTH AND FITNESS

- [Publisher Random House](#) is sponsoring influencer Emma Scott-Child's daily art classes on Instagram
- [Rexona](#) works with influencer partners on dance challenge to encourage followers to #MoveMoreatHome
- [GP Dr Punam Krishnan](#) has been offering advice to pregnant women during the pandemic. Regularly hosting live Q&A's on Instagram with guest scientists and health-advisers, people can also follow her blog that disclaims false information on COVID-19 and keeps spirits high
- [Celebrity fitness coach, Joe Wicks](#), has become a Guinness World Record holder after one of his online fitness classes was watched by nearly a million people. On March 24, the Body Coach's class was broadcast to 955,158 around the world – a record number of viewers for a workout live streamed on YouTube
- [Asics goes for influencer led UGC strategy](#) during the pandemic. Tiger Shroff posted his fitness and exercise video on Instagram and asked his followers to share their fitness plan on social media, tagging Asics and #StayFitStayStrong. The brand garnered more than 28 million views and massive UGC as part of the campaign
- In the US, [Shapermint](#) has seen more than 7 million views of its [#MakeTheCall](#) social media campaign around Mother's Day. The direct-to-consumer (DTC) marketplace for shapewear is urging social distancing, on Facebook and Instagram with the support of social influencers. As part of the push, Shapermint [created a video](#) in the style of a public service announcement that shows six real women making heartfelt video calls that express their gratitude to their mums
- [US Outdoor brand Dakine](#) launched a digital campaign called “mind surfing” spotlighting how its influencer athlete partners are keeping busy at home and getting outdoors responsibly while doing things like cooking art and yoga. Since the brand began leveraging this content via brand channels and the influencers channels, year on year, engagement has increased 6%, Instagram reach is up 1707% and website visits from social sources are up 26%
- Greta Thunberg is helping to launch [a campaign with the UN to protect children from COVID-19](#) by funding essential supplies including soap, masks and gloves

## Brands taking action

Week seven and the media is still full of examples of brands doing incredible things to either make a difference to those working hard in our frontline services as well as doing what they can to support consumers at home. Here are a few examples from across a range of industries.



### DID THEY HELP?

[Did They Help?](#) is an online database that compiles information about the actions of corporations and public figures during the coronavirus

Volunteers across the world have created this website to score corporations and public figures according to the deeds they've done during the pandemic. The crisis has heightened consumers' expectations of brand behaviour, which is set to put them under more scrutiny even after the pandemic

- 78% of people feel brands should help them in their daily lives during the pandemic
- 29% say they're 'highly annoyed' by business-as-usual marketing from companies

### ENTERTAINMENT

- Pop music is getting less popular on streaming services during the pandemic, and classic songs are rising [\[WSJ\]](#)
- [Universal Pictures](#) announces plans to release more movies digitally, by-passing cinemas
- The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said it expanded the eligibility rules for [the Oscars](#) to include films that weren't released in cinemas because of the nationwide shutdown of cinemas
- [This article from Movie News](#) has more than a million engagements about the possible return of the 'drive-thru' movie model
- Kevin Lygo, ITV's director of television, has warned that episodes of Emmerdale and Coronation Street will run out by July. He also revealed that the channel [considered hosting this summer's series of Love Island in Cornwall](#) but had concerns that 'making it in the UK would not be the same show'



- According to NewsWhip, the most popular virtual tour was [tulip lanes](#) in the Netherlands
- [Mattel](#) unveils line of collectible toys honouring heroes fighting COVID-19
- Sales of Hasbro games like Jenga, Connect 4, Monopoly and Operation surged 25% in the first quarter. [\[WSJ\]](#)

### BEAUTY

- [Charlotte Tilbury Beauty](#) has announced the launch of her new weekly social media discussion series, Charlotte's Beauty Happy Hour. The series will be streamed via Charlotte Tilbury's Instagram and YouTube channels. Charlotte's Beauty Happy Hour will present celebrities revealing their life lessons and rituals to a happier life
- [Cosmetics house Fresh](#) has sent 10,000 units of skincare products (cleansers and moisturizer creams) to isolation centres set up for homeless patients who have contracted COVID-19, as well as healthcare professionals in several New York hospitals

## FASHION

- [Missoma](#) has reworked its bestselling 18ct gold vermeil disc pendant with an engraving of clapping hands to show support for NHS staff working during coronavirus. The brand is donating 100 per cent of the proceeds from sales
- With all of their events postponed until further notice, [Origins Sound](#) are now spending their time supporting the NHS by selling merchandise. 100 per cent of the profits raised will go towards providing NHS workers with warm meals
- [Manolo Blahnik](#) introduced the Smile Initiative, a collection of Manolo's sketches to be enjoyed from home in the hope of providing inspiration and spreading positivity in this time of isolation and uncertainty - [#ManoloBlahnikSmiles](#)
- [French Connection](#) has launched a [#TreatTuesday](#) series. Every Tuesday, they are giving followers the chance to tag family members or friends that need a little love or someone they believe has gone the extra mile
- Fashion rental platform [By Rotation](#) are offering a free rental to anyone who works at the NHS for their next party, date or holiday when this is behind us
- [Bottega Veneta](#) launched a "virtual residency" that spans across Instagram, YouTube, Weibo, WeChat, Line, Kakao, Spotify, Apple Music and SoundCloud and features live performances, cooking and recipes, as well as Sunday movie night recommendations

## SPORT, FITNESS AND WELLBEING

- Adidas has made all training apps free for citizens in Singapore and had launched a campaign called the '[#HomeTeam](#)', helping people to stay active while staying at home.
- We have seen a lot of positivity from fitness influencers during lockdown, but [Buzzfeed](#) believes a crisis could be looming. Personal trainers who pre COVID-19 would make their wage through their fitness classes are losing out from the number of free workouts now offered virtually. Influencers with larger followings than personal trainers are working with their own fitness instructors to offer their followers free workouts that are putting personal trainers out of business
- Football matches could be [played behind closed doors all next season](#) under plans being considered by the sport's authorities. Senior figures believe that games in the top four divisions will be held without crowds until Christmas – but fear this could continue until May if permission for mass gatherings is tied to production of a vaccine



- With tennis cancelled until further notice from July, stars of the game including Nadal and Murray turn to the virtual world to claim the virtual Madrid Cup, more information on [BBC News](#)

## FOOD

- [Smashburger](#) started selling meal kits so people can make its burgers at home
- [Kelloggs](#) has launched [#raiseyourbowl](#), a social media campaign aimed to raise awareness of its pledge to donate food to the UK's NHS staff and key workers
- [UberEats](#) has announced the launch of three delivery-only food brands that can be run from operational hotel kitchens and restaurants that are finding they have some down time, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic
- [Aldi](#) has introduced an online voucher system to allow volunteers and carers to pay for shopping they are doing for vulnerable, self-isolating and people who can't get to the shops themselves.



## TRAVEL

- [British Airways](#) announced that it will be boosting the number of cargo flights from China to bring in more vital supplies for health workers. They will carry up to 770 tonnes of cargo for the NHS, including PPE and ventilators, alongside private freight
- [Tripadvisor](#) has launched Hotels for Health, a programme to connect NHS trusts with hotels who can supply rooms in this time of need. The new programme allows NHS trusts to flag that they need rooms, and for hotels to advise they have spare rooms available. The teams at Tripadvisor will then connect the hotels to NHS trusts in need
- [TUI](#) has distributed more than 25 tonnes of food to welfare organisations in holiday destinations around the world. This included 22 tonnes of fresh food to social and medical institutions in Spain, one of the European countries worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, 40,000 gloves, 25,000 masks and 5,000 litres of disinfectant and cleaning agents were provided to combat the spread of the virus

## TECHNOLOGY

- [ProPrivacy](#), an online resource for digital advice, has created a free tool to help alert people to Coronavirus scams. Its scam website tool allows people to insert a URL of any Coronavirus-themed site and will scan it for malware, disinformation or other insecurities and malicious activity
- Video technology is being used for remote criminal court hearings during the COVID-19 lockdown, [the government has been announced](#). A new secure system can be used for different types of cases, such as remand and sentencing hearings, but not jury trials, which are suspended
- [Google forms COVID-19 task force](#) to detect fraudulent ads. Google saw a "sharp spike" in fraudulent ads for in-demand products like facemasks during the onset of the pandemic. It has since developed a dedicated COVID-19 task force, built new detection technology and improved its existing enforcement systems to prevent such ads from appearing

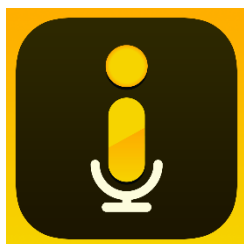
## GAMING

- Brands turn to gaming influencers as lockdown gives the sector boost, headlined on [AdNews](#). As we report on each week the gaming industry continues to peak as lockdown continues. Gaming companies are working with influential gamers, as more people tune in to digital platforms
- Stylist outlined the growth in female gaming, models and sports stars such as Gigi Hadid and Serena Williams are working with Facebook gaming for live tournaments, outlines [GQ Australia](#), each player will receive \$25,000 USD to donate to charity of choice

## **Broadcast**

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[Broadcast Revolution](#) has shared some incredible insights from video chats with a range of broadcasters. Check out these videos on Vimeo to find out more before pitching:

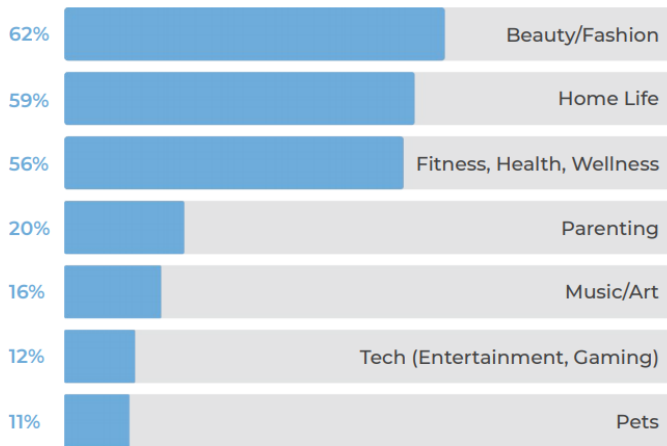


- BBC News - Richard Burgess, Editor - <https://vimeo.com/413252273>
- SKY News – Ben Munro Davies, Editor - <https://vimeo.com/401291346>
- BBC Radio 4 You & Yours, Melanie Abbott, Reporter - <https://vimeo.com/405366009>
- BBC Radio 5 live Emma Barnett Show – Darren McKenzie - <https://vimeo.com/411321554>

## Useful charts

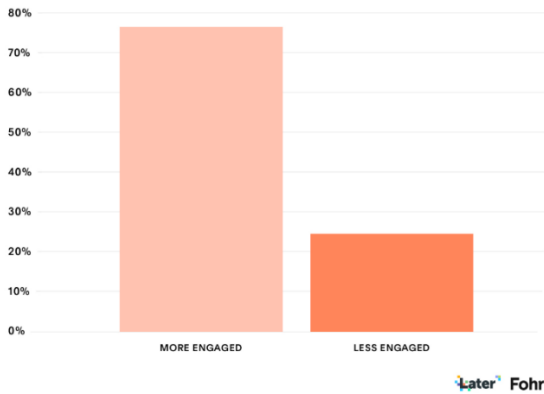
A [report compiled by Square Space](#) revealed that the growth of the home life and fitness/wellness verticals brings these content areas almost even with Fashion and Beauty, the two verticals that have long dominated influencer marketing. The upshot: as influencers diversify their content, there are new opportunities for a growing range of brands to diversify along with them and reach wider audiences.

*Influencers identified their top two content verticals.*

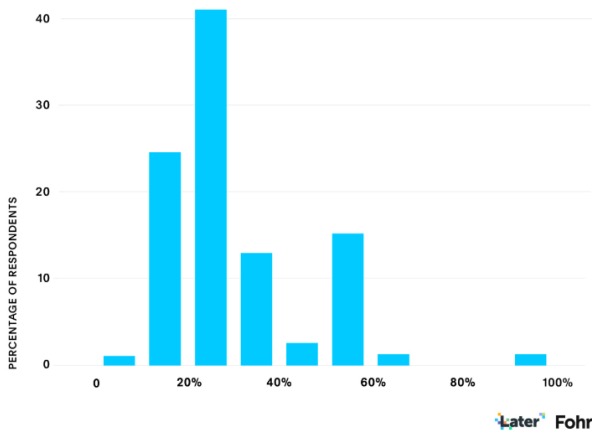


A [report compiled by Later and Fohr](#) revealed that followers are paying attention to this new era of content creation, with nearly 80% of influencers reporting higher engagement from their followers.

**COVID-19 + INFLUENCER MARKETING:  
ARE INFLUENCERS' AUDIENCES MORE OR LESS ENGAGED?**



**COVID-19 + INFLUENCER MARKETING:  
BY HOW MUCH ARE INFLUENCERS REDUCING THEIR RATES?**

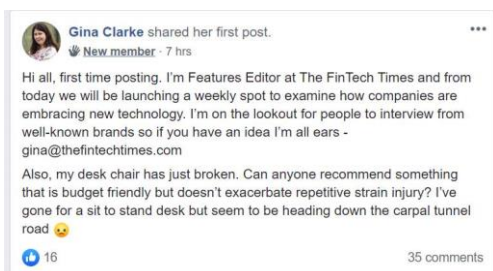


## Media insights on key verticals

### BUSINESS

#### The Times Radio

The Times Radio has this week [unveiled its line-up of presenters](#) as it prepares to launch the ad-free station this summer. Seen as a direct rival to BBC Radio 4, Times Radio will provide news, discussion and commentary with a “warm, expert” tone. Times Radio will be available on DAB, online and via smart speakers. There will be no commercial breaks, although advertisers will be able to sponsor sections of the schedule. It is hoped that listeners who enjoy the station will become Times subscribers



#### Fintech Times

A new weekly features slot has launched this week looking at how companies are embracing new technologies with the features editor on the lookout for potential interviews.

#### Financial Times

Brooke Masters is on the lookout for (*very*) top-tier commentators for its COVID-19 opinion series. As society begins to look beyond the crisis, the FT asks leading commentators and policymakers what to expect from a post COVID-19 future. Must be top tier guests only to be considered!

### TRAVEL



Insights from Simon Calder webinar (industry leading travel editor at independent and evening standard, author and presenter):

#### COVID-19: impact on consumer travel behaviour

- **Bookings:** Simon believes booking trends will change dramatically, e.g. big reductions to the timescale of when people make advanced bookings. Consumers may only want to book travel 6 weeks ahead of time once the pandemic ends, with confirmation at the time of booking as to how they can get money back. ABTA will also be keen to have a conversation on refund policies [here](#)
- **Climate change:** The world may lose interest in climate change to an extent, as there won't be so much travel taking place. He believes it will be 10-20 years before the conversation about Heathrow's extra terminal will be reignited for example
- **Nature of trips:** Consumers may go on fewer trips but spend more time in destinations. He also suggested that there will be less want for luxury, with travelling habits potentially set to become more modest
- **Attitudes to travel:** There is an increasing divergence in travel attitudes with two camps emerging. The camp keen to travel asap have a pent-up demand for travel and are keen to go away as soon as they can – they might have friends, family, partners abroad and we will likely see a huge surge in travel once restrictions are lifted. However, increasingly on Simon's online polls, he is seeing an increase in people being fearful about travel which accounts for 55-58% of respondents – the camp who are reluctant to travel in the near future
- **Business travel:** this may change significantly. Will people still go on trips away monthly or will these business trips become annual? Will there be more virtual conferences, given that this current situation has illustrated just how efficient technology can be? We should know a lot more about this by the time WTM 2020 comes around



- Brand response and impact: Customers will remember who supported them during this period and who did not. With hindsight, for some brands, transparency and honesty about the situation may have been best. We have also seen brands changing tact halfway through and ultimately customers need to be treated fairly. He summarised this with the motto: *Be fast and be fair*

### When will travel come back?

- Simon strongly believes July travel would be a likely possibility. He called travel the “industry of human happiness”. He acknowledged that the country is heading towards a severe recession, and unsurprisingly, the travel industry is trying to sort out the immediate crisis. However, he believes that the travel industry has to (like it always has) look towards the future. He nicely summarises that it needs to *‘bring people together at a time where we are all have to stay apart’*
- The travel industry is very resilient he states, but this will and is giving it a big shakeup whereby only the strongest companies will survive
- He touched upon the importance of worldwide events and how these will bring huge boosts in reinstating consumer confidence when it comes to travelling further afield

### Core Travel Insights/ Take outs

- Data Stories: Research into consumer attitudes towards future travel are garnering interest from travel trade media. One example is Skyscanner, who is currently publishing weekly insight reports, which delves into consumer search behaviour and perceptions towards international/domestic travel. ([Travolution](#): *Skyscanner sees signs of optimism for second half of 2020*)
- Sustainable Travel: Predictions on how COVID-19 will influence future travel habits continue to appear, with Earth Day contributing to an influx in articles focussed on sustainability. Overall, they explore if this is an opportunity for the travel industry to rebuild itself in a more sustainable way, or if this will halt momentum. ([Conde Nast Traveller](#): *How Travel Has Evolved in the 50 Years Since the First Earth Day*; [Travel Market Report](#): *Despite COVID-19, Earth Day Still an ‘Essential’ Milestone for Travel Industry*; [Short Term Rentalz](#): *Keeping Green: Sustainability and Covid-1*; [TTR Weekly](#): *Sustainable travel trending in India*)
- Travel Industry Recovery: There is an increase in articles appearing that discuss the ways and rate that travel will bounce back following COVID-19. In some cases, these include thoughts/predictions from industry experts, whilst others draw on the financial aid required to help the industry during this unprecedented time. ([Express Online](#): *Travel expert predicts industry's future - can you really plan for holidays now*; [TTG](#): *'Bookings To Pick Up From Autumn – Expert Predicts*; [Forbes](#) - *The United Nations Predicts Billions Of Dollars In Tourism Losses For Small Island Developing States*; [The Telegraph](#): *Quarantine threat to tourism puts the ailing travel sector on the back foot*)
- Core Established Themes: The themes of Armchair Travel, Virtual Travel, and Wanderlust continue to remain core within national and consumer media, illustrating travel journalist’s desire to continue delivering travel content. ([Forbes](#): *Fuel Your Wanderlust With A Virtual Sandals Resort Vacation*; [Stylist](#): *Travel lovers, here’s 17 romantic destination films to stream on Netflix and Amazon Prime*; [The Guardian](#) - *10 of the best road trips to take ... by audiobook*; [Forbes](#): *Ranked: The World’s 15 Best Virtual Tours To Take During Coronavirus*)

### HEALTH

- Sanofi CEO Paul Hudson is not concerned about meeting an optimistic [18-month timeline for developing an effective COVID-19 vaccine](#), he’s worried whether enough doses will be available. To make enough vaccines at scale, rather than just a few million doses, is really where the complexity will be
- Missed vaccinations could lead to other fatal outbreaks, [doctors warn](#). GPs and accident and emergency departments have witnessed falls since the outbreak for people seeking care for other conditions
- COVID-19 could trigger a spike in Measles. [Here’s why](#)

- AstraZeneca has reached an agreement with the University of Oxford [for the production and distribution of tens of millions of doses of a COVID-19 vaccine](#) if the solution currently under development proves effective. Chief executive Pascal Soriot said the aim of the partnership would be to ‘accelerate the globalisation of a vaccine’
- [Measures taken to defeat the coronavirus pandemic](#) will contribute to an 8pc fall in global greenhouse gas emissions in 2020, according to the International Energy Agency’s Global Energy Review. This would represent the largest annual decline ever recorded, amounting to a reduction of some 2.4bn tonnes of CO2
- Health care workers are [experiencing an increase in stress](#) and trauma amid the COVID-19 pandemic. 50% of healthcare workers surveyed in the UK report their mental health has deteriorated since COVID-19 began affecting the UK

## Digital

### Instagram

- This week Instagram has shared some key tips on how brands can maintain audience connection via Instagram Stories. More info [here](#)
- Instagram has published a new COVID-19 playbook for businesses, which outlines a range of ways in which brands and marketers can make best use of the platform’s various tools to help maintain connection with their audiences, and maximize performance, during the global pandemic. More info [here](#)

### Facebook

- Facebook has announced it will be hosting a Graduation 2020 event across both Facebook and Instagram, which will include appearances from Awkwafina, Jennifer Garner, Lil Nas X and Simone Biles - and a commencement address from Oprah Winfrey. More info [here](#)
- In a recent report from Flixed it showed that Facebook was the leading social platform when it came to news distribution while Reddit had increasingly made people feel worse about the pandemic. More info [here](#)
- Facebook rolled out [a new video-chat feature to rival Zoom](#), part of a suite of new offerings aimed at users kept home by the coronavirus. Messenger Rooms can accommodate up to 50 people, along with additional video options for gamers, users of Messenger Kids and people on Facebook Dating
- WhatsApp has officially launched 8-Person Group Video Chat option with encrypted chat options

### TikTok

- TikTok has added a new feature to assist people impacted by COVID-19 with a new set of donation stickers, which will enable users to raise both awareness and funds for charitable causes via their TikTok clips
- TikTok is testing a new ad format that links advertisers to its prominent influencers to let those creators display a prominent call-to-action button in their videos. The ad revenue will be split between TikTok and the influencer [\[Digiday\]](#)

### Snapchat

- Snapchat has this week published some new insights into how Snapchatters are feeling about the ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns, and the impact of the pandemic on society more broadly. More info [here](#)

### Twitter

- This week, Twitter has released new data on the evolving gaming conversation on its platform. As per Twitter there have been over 1.2 billion Tweets about video games, and now in 2020, the gaming conversation on Twitter is bigger

than ever. In fact, in the second half of March, we've seen a 71% increase in conversation volume and a 38% increase in unique authors compared to the first half of the month. More info [here](#)

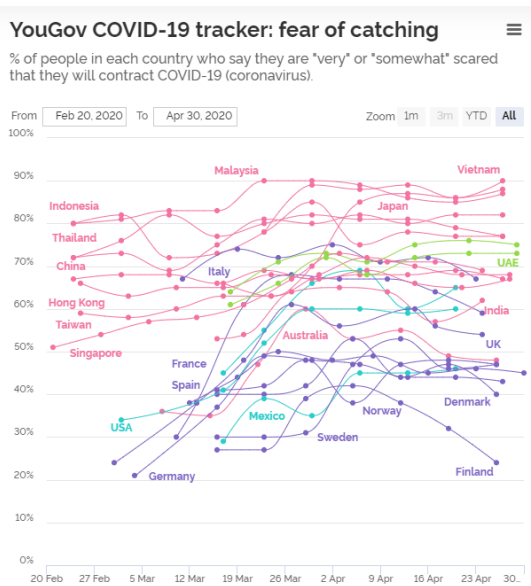
## LinkedIn

- LinkedIn is experimenting with some new link preview presentation formats, which could have implications for the visuals that you use when posting to the platform. More info [here](#)

## International Updates

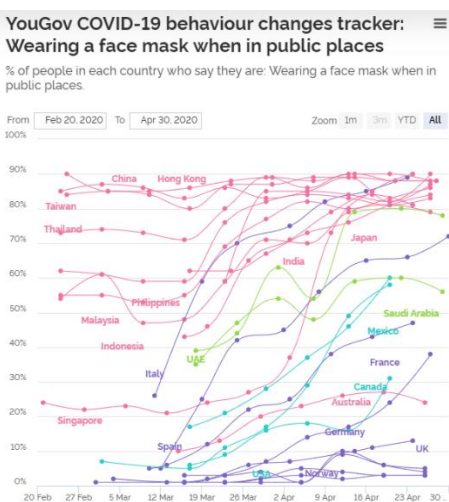
### Fear levels [Source: YouGov]

The greatest shift in fear levels in the latest survey wave has been in Sweden, where the number of people very or fairly scared of catching coronavirus fell seven points to 46%.



### Behaviour changes [Source: YouGov]

The most notable behaviour changes since last week are to do with face masks. Having experienced a rapid increase in usage last week, the proportion of Singaporeans donning a protective covering continues to rise. Having previously made the huge jump from 37% to 73% in the space of one week, that figure has since risen a further 12 points to 85%. There have also been big increases in mask usage in Canada (up 15 points to 31%) and Mexico (up 14 points to 60%).



## Stories making the news around the world [Source: Kantar]

### NORTH AMERICA

- US President Donald Trump has [claimed to have seen evidence the novel coronavirus originated in a Wuhan laboratory](#) - but has declined to give specifics. Speaking at a White House news conference, Mr Trump said China either could not stop the spread of the virus, or let it spread. He said he felt confident that the virus came from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and that US authorities were 'looking at it very, very strongly'
- Justice Secretary Robert Buckland admitted [that the government had not met its target to carry out 100,000 coronavirus tests per day by the end of April](#) but said it would be reached in the 'next few days'. Buckland insisted the government was right to set such an ambitious target. The latest figures show testing capacity reached 73,400 on Tuesday, of which 52,429 were actually used
- Another 3.8 million Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week, [according to the latest data from the US Labour Department](#). More than 30 million Americans have submitted unemployment claims in the past six weeks, or nearly 19pc of the total US labour force
- US President Donald Trump is expected to sign an [executive order aimed at keeping meat plants open](#). The planned order comes as some plants have closed after workers tested positive for coronavirus, raising concerns about a meat shortage in the country
- The United States could become the first country to [test passengers on international flights from COVID-19 hotspots](#). At a White House event yesterday, President Donald Trump said his administration was working with airlines on the plan, which could happen 'in the very near future'

### EUROPE

- In the **UK**, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said Britain is [past the peak of its COVID-19 epidemic and on the 'downward slope'](#). He promised to publish a 'comprehensive plan' to reopen the country next week, which he said would include the recommendation that people cover their faces in public; and denied that he would seek to recoup the cost of the pandemic with a return to austerity
- [Scientists have called for caution with regard to reopening schools](#) after a new study led by **German** virologist Christian Drosten found that children may be just as infectious as adults. The study suggests schools and nurseries could become hubs for coronavirus transmission if unlimited re-openings are allowed
- **Germany** is to reopen [museums, galleries, zoos and playgrounds, and allow religious services to resume](#), in measures agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders of 16 federal states. Measures on people keeping physical distance from each other will stay in place, and large-scale public gatherings will remain banned until the end of August
- **Sicily** says it will cover half of flight costs, a third of hotel expenses and offer free entry to many museums and archaeological sites to tourists wishing [to visit the island once the coronavirus lockdown is lifted](#). Although the initiative is expected to cost around €50m, tourism bosses hope to more than recoup the money through an increase in visitor numbers
- The **Russian** prime minister, Mikhail Mishustin, has said [he has been diagnosed with coronavirus and will self-isolate from the government](#). Mishustin disclosed that he was infected during a video call with Vladimir Putin, Russian state news agencies reported on Thursday evening
- The **Italian** government has decreed that any [data collected via its Covid-19 tracing app will be completely anonymous](#) and will be destroyed by the end of the year. The new decree also offers guarantees that anyone who decides not to use the app will not face limits on their movements or other rights. The app uses Bluetooth to help trace people who have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus

- [Switzerland has relaxed social distancing guidelines](#), allowing children under the age of 10 to visit and hug their grandparents. In addition, garden centres and hairdressers have been allowed to reopen, with schools and non-essential shops to follow in two weeks' time. And Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison says [the country is moving towards a 'Covid-safe' economy and society](#) as new infections slow and restrictions elapse. He warned, however, that international travel and large mass gatherings were still 'some way off'
- **French** Prime Minister Edouard Phillipe has announced that [no major sporting events will take place in France until September](#). As a result, Philippe says the 2019-20 Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 football season will end immediately. The league's governing body is scheduled to meet in May to discuss how to end the season and to resolve issues such as promotion, relegation and Champions League qualification

## ASIA

**South Korean** scientists have concluded that [coronavirus patients cannot be reinfected after recovering from the disease](#), despite hundreds of people testing positive twice. These results were caused by 'fragments' of the virus lingering in their bodies – which had no power to make them ill or infect others, the country's central clinical committee for emerging disease control said. The new findings will greatly reassure governments threatened by the prospect of a repeating cycle of infection

**Japan's** prime minister, Shinzo Abe, has warned that that the rearranged [Tokyo Olympics next year might have to be cancelled completely](#). Speaking in the Japanese parliament, Abe stressed the importance of developing vaccines and drugs to combat COVID-19 before the Games begin on 23 July next year. 'The Olympic Games must be held in a way that shows the world has won its battle against the coronavirus pandemic,' he said. 'Otherwise, it will be difficult to hold them'

## SOUTH AMERICA

**Brazil** has reported a record 7,218 confirmed new cases, [raising the total in the country to over 85,000](#). The country's opposition has united in outrage over the approach to the pandemic of President Jair Bolsonaro, who has dismissed calls for stricter action as 'hysteria'