

France's virus-tracking app chalks up 600,000 downloads

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France's new phone app for tracking coronavirus cases and alerting people at risk of contagion was downloaded some 600,000 times in less than 24 hours since its launch, the country's digital affairs minister said

Wednesday.

"It's a good start," Cedric O told France 2 television, while app analytics firm AppAnnie said StopCovid was leading the list of French downloads for both Apple and Google Android phones.

Virus tracing apps are seen as a vital tool for slowing the spread of COVID-19, which has killed nearly 29,000 people in France.

Governments around the world have developed apps, either on their own or enlisting help from [private companies](#) including Apple and Google, which have teamed up to provide tracing software that is compatible between their phones.

Many use bluetooth technology that allows phones to "see" if a person comes into close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus—assuming the infected person had entered the diagnostic into the app.

France refused to work with Apple and Google for its app, citing data privacy concerns.

Use of the StopCovid app is voluntary, and officials say no [personal data](#) can be revealed to fellow users.

Health experts say at least 60 percent of a population needs to use the technology for it to be effective as countries lift their lockdowns, since vast numbers of people are still at risk of infection.

Several countries have fallen short of that goal, however, including in Asian countries that were among the first to roll out tracking apps.

Cedric O said he hoped "several millions of French" people would

download the app, which is especially useful in crowded areas "such as bars and restaurants, public transport, and shops."

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