

Researchers scramble as Twitter plans to end free data access | Nature

By Heidi Ledford

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Akin Ünver has been using Twitter data for years. He investigates some of the biggest issues in social science, including political polarization, fake news and online extremism. But earlier this month, he had to set aside time to focus on a pressing emergency: helping relief efforts in Turkey and Syria after the [devastating earthquake on 6 February](#).

Aid workers in the region have been racing to rescue people trapped by debris and to provide health care and supplies to those displaced by the tragedy. Twitter has been invaluable for collecting real-time data and generating crucial maps to direct the response, says Ünver, a computational social scientist at Özyeğin University in Istanbul.

So when he heard that Twitter was about to end its policy of providing free access to its application programming interface (API) — a pivotal set of rules that allows people to extract and process large amounts of data from the platform — he was dismayed. “Couldn’t come at a worse time,” he tweeted. “Most analysts and programmers that are building apps and functions for Turkey earthquake aid and relief, and are literally saving lives, are reliant on Twitter API.”

Source: [Researchers scramble as Twitter plans to end free data access | Nature](#)