

Facebook Messenger to offer strong encryption

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Facebook announced Friday it would roll out optional "end to end encryption" for its Messenger application, following a trend aimed at stronger security and protection against snooping.

The US technology giant said this feature would be known as "secret conversations" which can be read only by the sender and recipient.

"Providing more ways for people to safely share is an important part of making the world more open and connected," the social network's vice president David Marcus said on his Facebook page.

"Whether you're asking a doctor for medical advice, sending sensitive account information to your spouse, or even your Social Security number, it's important to have options available for sharing these kinds of very sensitive messages."

Facebook earlier this year began implementing this end-to-end encryption on its WhatsApp messaging service, and Google, Apple and others have been making similar moves.

Some [law enforcement officials](#) and lawmakers have criticized these moves, saying the strong encryption can allow criminals and other bad actors to operate in secret where traditional wiretaps don't work.

A Facebook statement said the new feature will be optional "because many people want Messenger to work when you switch between devices, such as a tablet, desktop computer or phone" and that the encrypted messages may only be read on one device.

"Secret conversations are available on a limited test basis right now, but we will be making the option more widely available this summer," the statement said.

The US government this year locked horns in a legal battle with Apple, seeking to compel the iPhone maker to help decrypt a device used by one of the attackers in the San Bernardino shooting rampage.

Authorities eventually dropped the case after finding a way to break into the iPhone without Apple's help.

Facebook said in April that Messenger has over 900 million users, close to the billion for WhatsApp.

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