



ONE COUNTRY

“COVID-19”

Snapshot Online and Social Media Analysis in Rural
Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire,
Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin

March 29 – April 5, 2020

Rural Citizens



164,000 original posts



46,000 unique authors

Overview

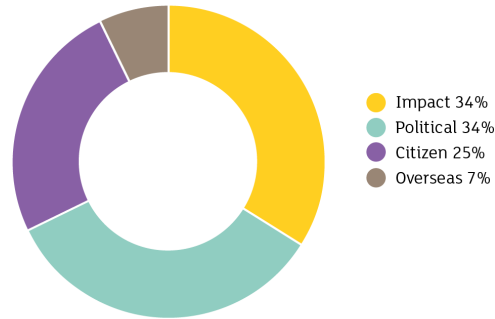
Reality is starting bite in rural America as increasing infection and death rates are shared across rural states while jobs/businesses disappear.

Peer-to-peer trust remains high, yet the overall tone is darker.

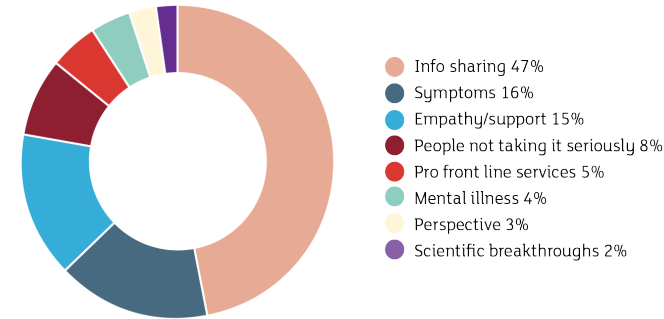
Conversations about death and financial peril are becoming the new normal. In response, effective online support networks are building up and used to send empathy and encouragement.

Hostility towards President Trump is gaining pace as fatalities rise, anxiety increases, and the Republican/Democrat blame game gets more intense.

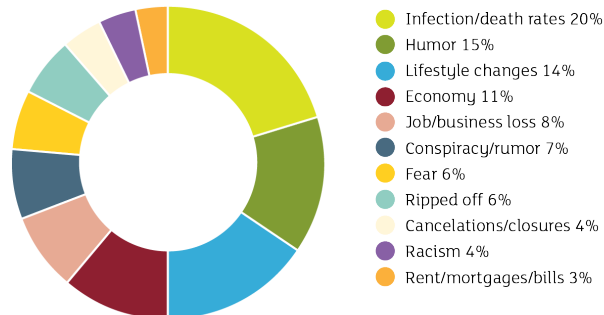
DISCUSSION SPLIT



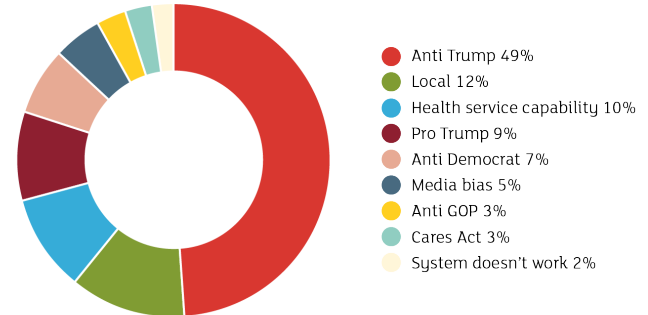
CITIZEN DISCUSSION



IMPACT DISCUSSION



POLITICAL DISCUSSION



ONE COUNTRY

Analysis: Key Takeaways

Impact Discussion

- Heavy discussion of infection and death rates in state and across the U.S. is increasing levels of fear and anxiety.
- Some question the numbers, either by suggesting that the true figure is much higher and being withheld or much lower as many of these deaths would have occurred anyway due to underlying health conditions.
- Job losses and business closures are no longer discussed in theory, as people share stories of how they have lost everything with some already appealing to others for help. It seems that many thought that their jobs were safe but hadn't appreciated how dependent their work is on other people/ industries/professions.
- Some are expressing real anger at being ripped off. It appears that certain businesses are unprepared to change their cancellation terms and provide refunds which is causing much distress.
- Online conspiracy theories and rumor persist. A particular favorite during this period is a suggestion that 5G technology is causing COVID-19.
- However, it's not all doom and gloom; plenty of folks use humor to get them through the dark days.

Citizen Discussion

- Peer-to-peer information sharing continues, yet the content and tone have changed. This is an almost entirely different conversation from the one taking place just two weeks ago, as people express an understanding of the challenge ahead.
- Accompanying this are citizens talking about how they are experiencing COVID – 19 like symptoms. Meanwhile, others share dark stories of people they know who have succumbed to the disease.
- Support is being offered and a sense of community/network has been firmly established. This serves as a lifeline to some and is also used as a general call out to fellow citizens to stick together and do their part by staying in-doors.
- People are also sharing information on scientific breakthroughs to point to a way out of the lockdown and boost morale.
- Appreciation for front line services and professionals is exceptionally high.



Analysis: Key Takeaways

Political Discussion

- The proportion of the overall conversation which is political has increased from 25 to 34%. This is driven by an upsurge in criticism of President Trump which constitutes the majority of this conversation when various topics are taken together.
- Previously, much of this discussion was based on partisanship. However, with the death toll and unemployment rate rising people are turning on Trump in increasing numbers. Many are expressing their lack of faith in the president and his ability to lead the country out of a pandemic. Others seem exasperated at Trump's apparent inability to get ahead of the situation and that he is lagging behind state governors.
- Meanwhile, Democrats react strongly to an argument being pushed by the right that Trump was prevented from dealing with the crisis in its early stages as he was distracted by the impeachment trial. The left are incensed by the suggestion and are fighting back hard. This effort is being fuelled by circulating video of Trump failing to acknowledge the seriousness of the disease as death tolls increased around the world and infection rates were creeping up in the U.S.
- This is not merely a scrap between two echo chambers. It seems that voters are becoming increasingly aware of the rumors being circulated by the right and a virtual street fight is underway.
- Intriguingly – in line with conversations elsewhere in the U.S. – financial rescue packages receive little attention.



Sample Posts

Impact Discussion

- 💡 *Praying this gets seen. My husband & I both lost our jobs 2 weeks ago bc of COVID19 & our unemployment wont kick until long after today, which is when rent is due. We just really need a bit of help with rent. Anything at all would be such an incredible for us*
- 💡 *At this point I'm gone take my chances . It's sad that you can't even sit at home during a pandemic because bills still need to be paid*
- 💡 *Major Flaw in IHME Model Used by White House; Actual Numbers are a Fraction of Expected*
- 💡 *Cheese factories nationwide are being forced to shutdown All Farmers have to dump cow milk due to the COVID-19 pandemic .they get paid by selling milk. So soon they will not get paid..*
- 💡 *Honestly drinking and Xbox makes me love covid-19*
- 💡 *If I hear one more person say 5G is causing covid 19 I am going to slap them....in a year when we get to go back to going places*



Sample Posts

Citizen Discussion

💡 *Do you know older adults living alone or in community setting separated from family? Have you checked in? If not, give them a call!*

Let's reconnect the old fashioned way during this pandemic

💡 *My friends husband just passed from Covid-19 and now she's tested positive as well. They have 2 children. So sorry for the loss of your daughters teacher.*

💡 *COVID-19 deaths might happen many miles away from your home. Social distancing will still help you. This infection is quick moving and invisible; stay home. Don't be a fool.*

💡 *How fucking difficult is it to shutdown a country for 2 weeks, the lives that would be saved is worth the problems that come with a shutdown. #COVID—19*

💡 *Dear xxxx, I wish your family well. My daughter just lost her mother-in-law to COVID-19*

💡 *Starting tonight through the COVID-19 battle, our signature white lights will be replaced by the heartbeat of America with a white and red siren in the mast for heroic emergency workers on the front line of the fight." Seriously emotional thinking about these humans*



Sample Posts

Political Discussion

🗣️ *No, Schiff. It appears your sham impeachment plan, while a pandemic was starting, put our national security at an even greater risk.*

🗣️ *The lefts new narrative to attack #Trump, any lives lost from #CoronaVirus is Trump's fault & nothing he did was sufficient*

🗣️ *Imagine if the Wuhan virus pandemic had happened when Obama was the President. He would have doubled down on our misery and given us no hope at all. He would have behaved like a dictator and panicked us all as if we lived in an Orwellian dystopia.*

🗣️ *In case you heard the rumors the impeachment hindered Trump on containing the virus...the impeachment was long done before this!*

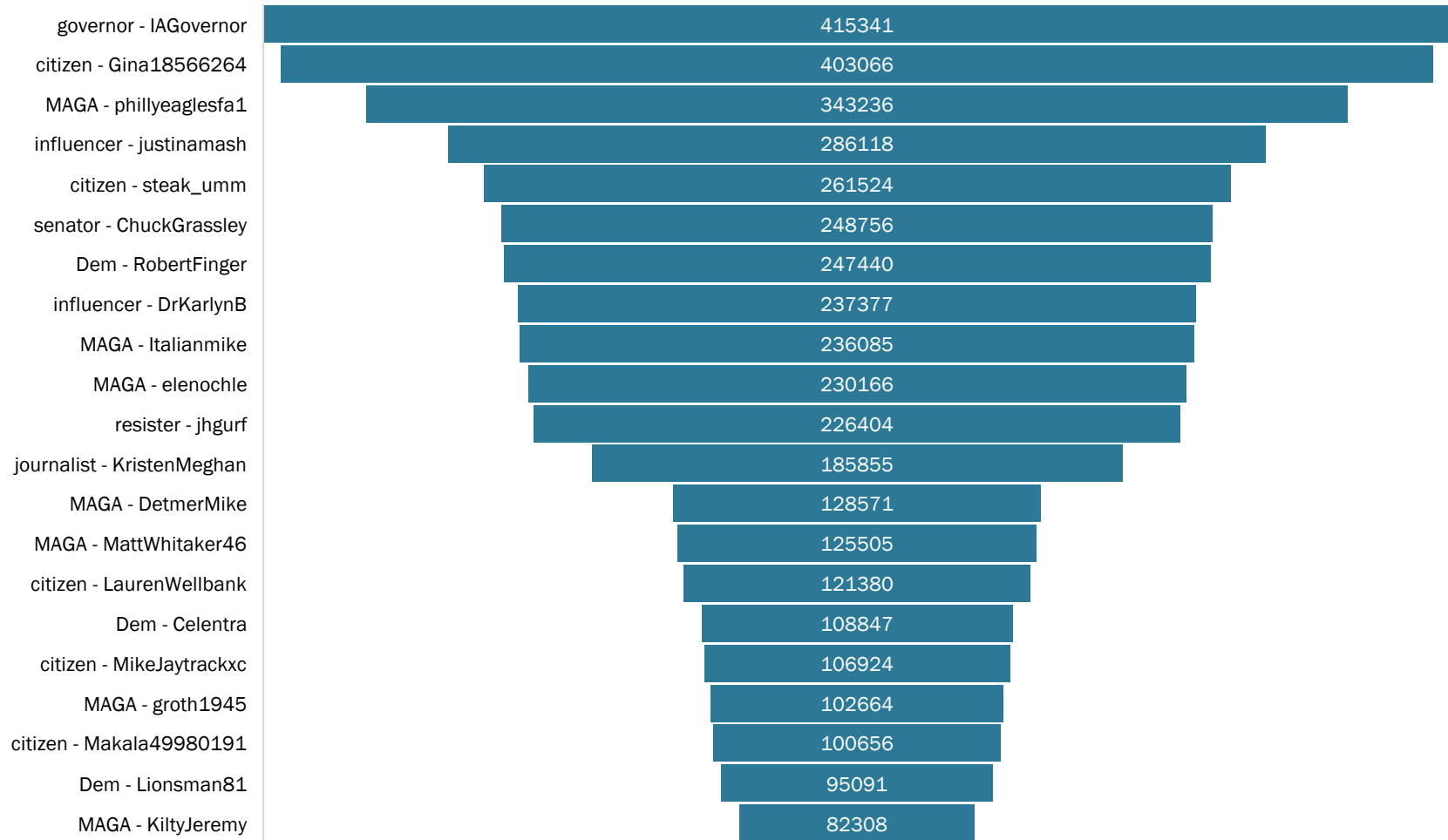
Trump sending coronavirus budget request to Congress

🗣️ *Trump delayed testing for Covid-19 by 7 weeks waiting for his miracle cure in direct opposition to his intelligence community and medical experts. Trump has completely dropped the ball in his response to this pandemic and should resign.*

🗣️ *Explain how Trump was briefed constantly about the coronavirus in January, and sent tons of supplies (that we needed!) to CHINA in the 1st week of February, and somehow it's the DEMOCRATS' fault that he dropped the ball, minimized the risk, and called our concerns a HOAX?!!*



Who is Driving the Conversation?



Notes on the data: The funnel chart above shows the most influential authors in the discussions across the six states by the reach of their posts on the topic of COVID19. The figures in the middle of the chart show the number of impressions for the author's relevant posts. An impression is counted every time a post is seen in a user's social media feed.



Prepared for One Country Project

by  **impact**Social



Methodology

This analysis is based on collected, publicly available, online data geo-located to rural populations in the six states from March 29 – April 5, 2020, related to COVID-19. In total, 164,000 posts from 46,000 authors were collected across the six states.

Randomized, representative samples of these conversations were analyzed after removing shares, retweets, repetition, media, and influencers from the dataset to focus solely on the views of local citizens. These conversations were then scored – positive, negative, or neutral.

