



# ONE COUNTRY

“COVID-19”

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

April 13 – 20, 2020

# Rural Citizens



116,000 original posts



35,000 unique authors

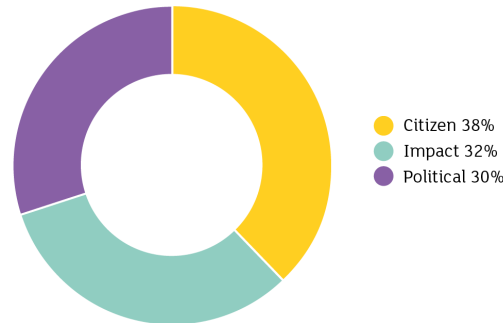
## Overview

There has been an increase in levels of confusion regarding several aspects of the coronavirus. This includes questioning the fatality rate. Some accuse authorities of double counting and thereby exaggerating the severity of the disease.

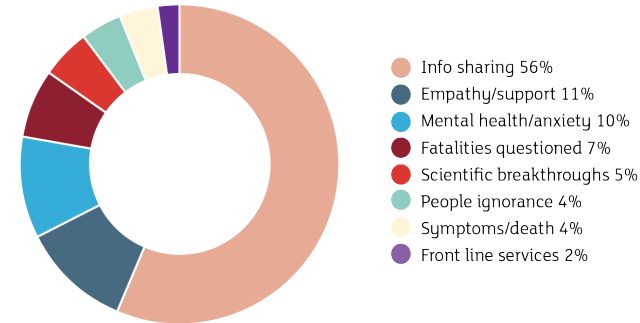
The financial impact of the shutdown is worsening with some feeling let down by the government as they fail to qualify for the stimulus. Meanwhile, others are settling into their new lifestyles and suggest they will not easily return to their previous life once a vaccine is found.

President Trump continues to face the wrath of voters who blame his administration for failing to adequately prepare for COVID-19. Elsewhere, anger is expressed at people protesting the lockdown and protesters voice their right to work and call for society to reopen.

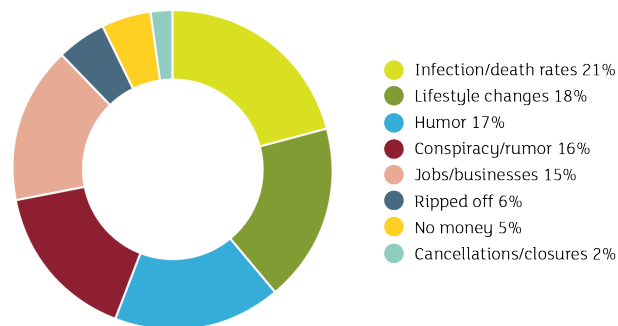
## DISCUSSION SPLIT



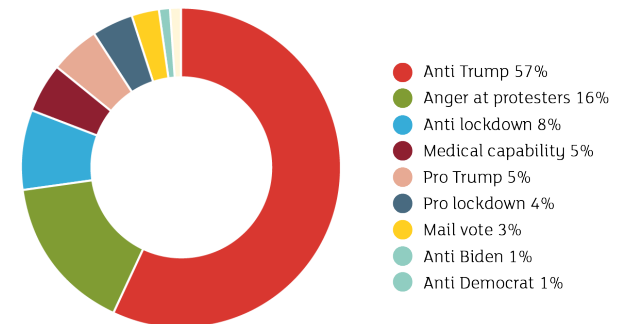
## CITIZEN DISCUSSION



## IMPACT DISCUSSION



## POLITICAL DISCUSSION



ONE COUNTRY

# Analysis: Key Takeaways

## Impact Discussion

- Not all lifestyles have been impacted negatively by coronavirus. Many have picked up new skills or returned to old ones.
- Of concern for the economy, it appears some may not return to their old lives once a vaccine is found nor be willing to venture out until they are absolutely convinced they are safe.
- Many are clearly convinced the Chinese are responsible for the virus either through eating bats or by creating COVID-19 in a lab. Additionally, there is a powerful rumor that suggests a vaccine has been found which has just received official approval from US authorities.
- More tragic posts are being made as a result of job losses and/or broken businesses. Clearly many feel let down by the government as they are not seeing direct benefits from stimulus efforts. This has led to people begging strangers for help online.



# Analysis: Key Takeaways

## Citizen Discussion

- The proportion of 'citizen' discussion among rural people jumps significantly over the period (up from 25% to 37% of the overall conversation). This is partly due to an increase in confusion over several aspects of the disease. In particular, people question what constitutes social distancing, highlighting inconsistencies in messaging. They also ask if they should wear a face mask. Some also question the theory and reasoning behind 'flattening the curve' and ask how long this will go on for. Why citizens who are part of ethnic minority groups appear to be disproportionately impacted is also hotly debated.
- There is an increase in the amount of people questioning COVID-19 related deaths. Their assertion is that people are dying of underlying health conditions who happened to have COVID-19. They therefore feel that authorities are double counting and the disease is far less deadly than portrayed.
- Plenty of people go online and cheer one another up with positive thoughts about the future. Brighter discussions also exist in the form of scientific breakthroughs where people readily share information of vaccine testing.
- Mental health problems are becoming a real issue. Citizens openly state they are thinking of ending their lives as the crisis overwhelms them. Some reach out for help but feel their cries go unheard due to the lockdown.
- Meanwhile others share their suffering, either from coronavirus symptoms or bereavement.



# Analysis: Key Takeaways

## Political Discussion

- Donald Trump faces an increase in criticism over the federal government's handling of COVID-19. With anti-Trump sentiment running at 57% of the entire political conversation, it is clear many are unconvinced at his attempts to lead the country out of crisis.
- Anger is targeted toward people protesting against the lockdown who are accused of ignorance and stupidity.
- In response – partly fuelled by disbelief over the real number of COVID-19 related deaths (see citizen discussion) and loss of earnings – others see the protests as perfectly justified. They feel strongly the lockdown has gone too far, infringes their right to work, and needs to end.
- Meanwhile others nervously question how prepared their state is to fight the disease. In particular, they ask about the level of medical expertise, the number of ICU units/respirators, testing capability, or the availability of face masks.
- While less aggressive and vocal, some rural people are happy to show their approval of the lockdown and applaud their leaders for showing courage in the face of aggression and abuse.
- Finally, a small but determined group express the need for a mail ballot at the next election and warn the GOP's reluctance to implement this reflects their desire to suppress turnout in November.



# Sample Posts

## Impact Discussion

💡 *I absolutely love sports, and have season tickets for teams, but the stay-at-home has put their importance into perspective. It will take a vaccine to put me in a stadium seat*

💡 *Well, all it took was a global pandemic to remind me that I liked writing letters to people*

💡 *Is it just a coincidence that HIV was rumored to come from eating monkey brains and CoVid19 from eating bats? I think the mother fuc\*ers created that one too!*

💡 *Sales and product teams about to start making dubious claims to capitalize on COVID-19. Gross skin-crawl shit.*

💡 *there are 5 people living in my house and 3 of us don't have jobs anymore due to covid. Usually we would switch off who gets groceries and now we can't since 3 of us aren't getting any income and 2 of us didn't get a stimulus check*

💡 *PLEASE NOTICE US! BEEN TRYING FOR DAYS!! Hate to beg like this but money is just nonexistent, my husband was on sick leave before layoff due to Covid-19... My kids had bdays, in quarantine, couldn't get them anything! Not to mention food getting so low!!*



# Sample Posts

## Citizen Discussion

💡 *Like where? fake numbers. sorry but if you die from a heart attack it's a heart attack not covid-19*

💡 *I still haven't heard an explanation for why this anti-Malarial cures corona. Opportunistic infection? Yeah right. It's because the covid-19 isn't really what's killing people, it's immunosuppression caused by multiple factors.*

💡 *We keep statistics on race and see black disproportionately represented in coronavirus deaths. I wonder if we keep BMI stats. Do black people wait longer to go to hospital? Do black people get hydroxy chloroquine?*

💡 *Hopefully this pandemic has taught people to appreciate life and those around them. When we get through this, I really hope people remember this for a very long time and appreciate all the little things. Be kind to someone today and make it a good one!*

💡 *I haven't had a conversation with my coworkers that didn't involve covid-19 in like two months. Please end my suffering*

💡 *I just literally buried my grandpa from coronavirus, he beat cancer to just be taken from us so soon. Unfortunately it just the worst time for everyone*



# Sample Posts

## Political Discussion

🗣️ *Hey GOP propagandist, I live in PA. Personally I will never vote for a Republican again. Trump owns this COVID disaster. Worst president ever. The party of thieves and crooks*

🗣️ *I respect the right to assemble. I don't respect the complete disregard for fellow citizens of our state. Absolutely stunning that people would choose to potentially expose themselves to Covid-19 in the public eye.*

🗣️ *If you have the right to block ambulances, ignore the President's and the Governor's orders, and contribute to the spread of COVID-19, then I have the right to not support your business when it opens back up..*

🗣️ *Asses for the masses the virus has curved down and don't u believe all this quarantine for the covid virus they have u fooled too dumbster dems*

🗣️ *if you die in a hospital and someone in that hospital has COVID19, your cause of death is now COVID19. And with all that, our numbers are, per Fauci "that of a bad flu season". But I guess let's shut down the economy and make vaccines mandatory #endthelockdown*

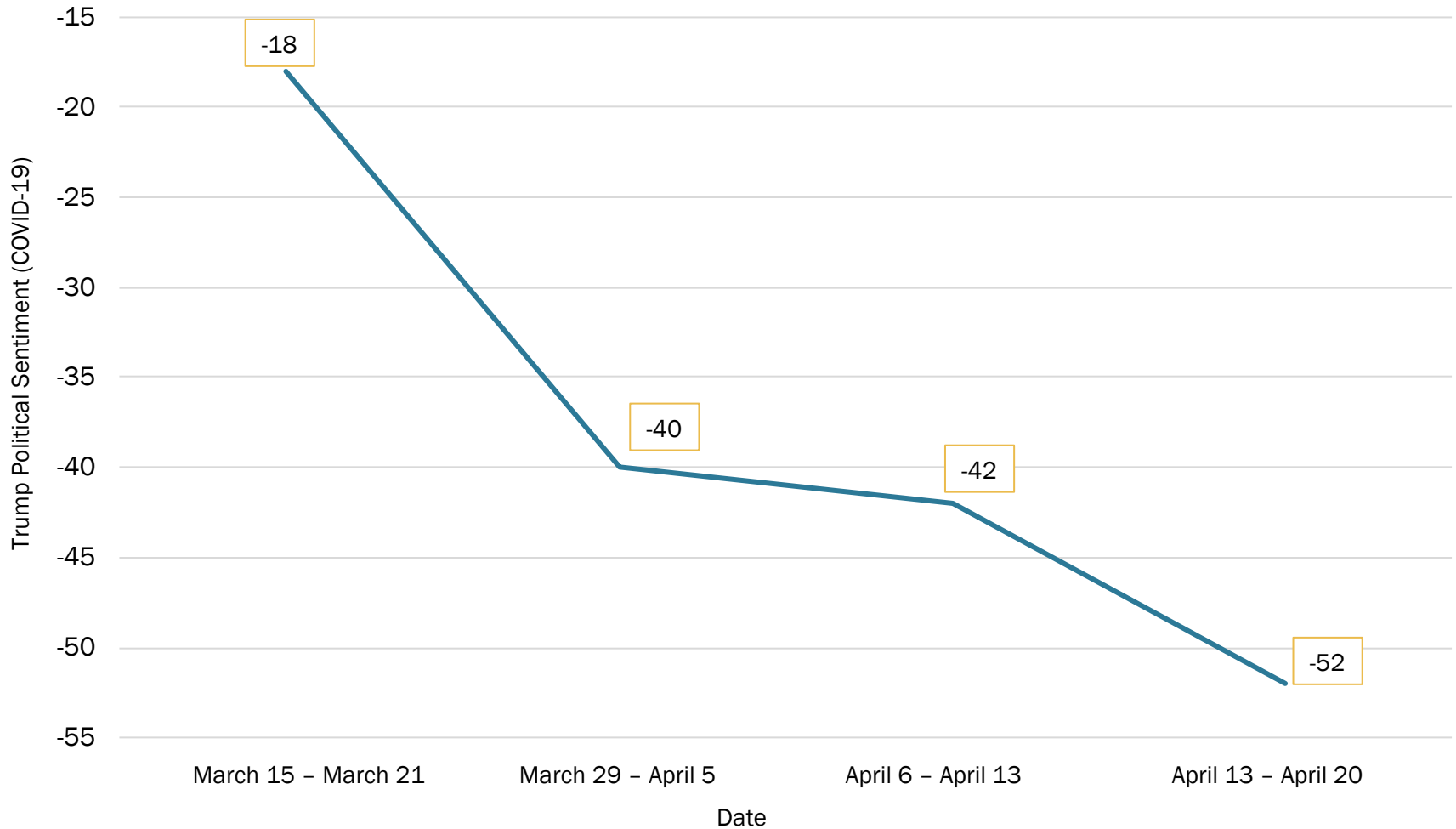
🗣️ *Someday, @GovWhitmer will be considered a heroic leader for her strong, decisive action in the face of abuse and ignorance. Freedom of speech doesn't include freedom to endanger everyone's health*

🗣️ *Politicizing a Global Pandemic is why a majority of voters do not trust mainstream media. It is yet another reason why President Trump was elected in 2016 and why he will win re-election in 2020. Simply put: the American people are tired of petty partisan game*





# Trump Net Sentiment



**Notes on the data:** The line chart above tracks net sentiment on Trump in relation to COVID-19. It will show shifts in the perception of how the president is dealing with the pandemic and how this plays out within rural social media discussions over time.



# 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 April 13-20, 2020 related to COVID-19. In total, 116,000 posts from 35,000 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.

