"COVID-19"

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

April 20 – 27, 2020

Rural Citizens

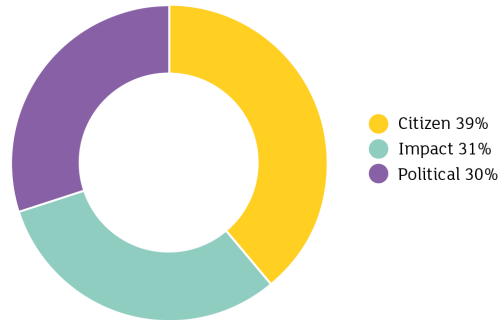**98,000 original posts**

31,000 unique authors

Overview

Over the past five weeks of tracking there has been a steady decline of coronavirus posts. This week's total volume of 98,000 posts is still very high for these rural counties, which reflects an intense level of interest in COVID-19 and its dire consequences.
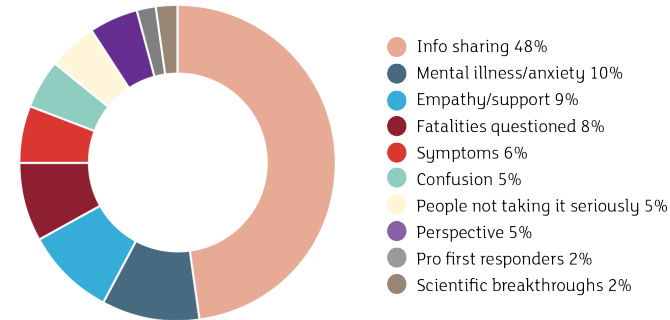
However there are now 41% fewer posts than when this analysis began. This suggests that people are slowly coming to terms with their new lives and – with increased knowledge of coronavirus and an easing of restrictions in sight – people are adjusting to their current reality and are less consumed with the issue.

Less chatter has led to a slight rebound in sentiment toward President Trump as fewer people go online to vent anger against him. In addition, his base has been coming out in support of his anti-immigration policy. However, negative reaction to his suggestion that disinfectant might be an effective treatment against COVID-19 contributed to a continued strong net negative sentiment toward the president.
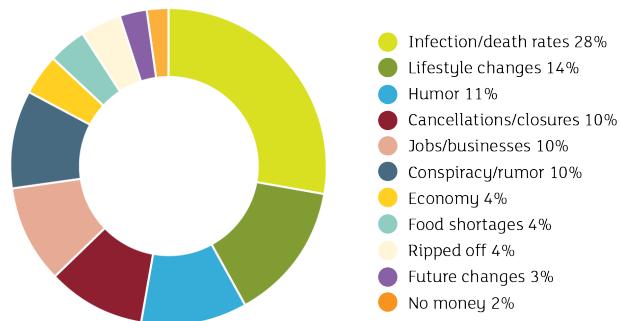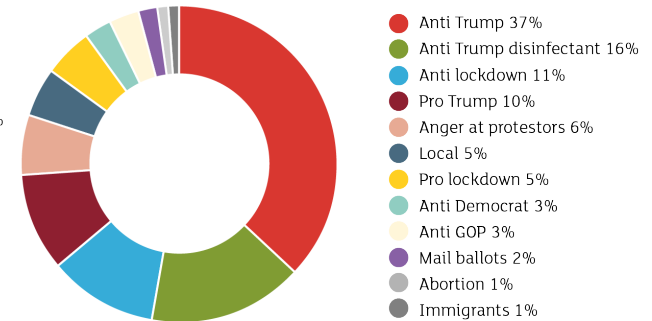
DISCUSSION SPLIT

- Citizen 39%
- Impact 31%
- Political 30%

CITIZEN DISCUSSION

- Info sharing 48%
- Mental illness/anxiety 10%
- Empathy/support 9%
- Fatalities questioned 8%
- Symptoms 6%
- Confusion 5%
- People not taking it seriously 5%
- Perspective 5%
- Pro first responders 2%
- Scientific breakthroughs 2%

IMPACT DISCUSSION

- Infection/death rates 28%
- Lifestyle changes 14%
- Humor 11%
- Cancellations/closures 10%
- Jobs/businesses 10%
- Conspiracy/rumor 10%
- Economy 4%
- Food shortages 4%
- Ripped off 4%
- Future changes 3%
- No money 2%

POLITICAL DISCUSSION

- Anti Trump 37%
- Anti Trump disinfectant 16%
- Anti lockdown 11%
- Pro Trump 10%
- Anger at protestors 6%
- Local 5%
- Pro lockdown 5%
- Anti Democrat 3%
- Anti GOP 3%
- Mail ballots 2%
- Abortion 1%
- Immigrants 1%

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Analysis: Key Takeaways

Citizen Discussion

- Info sharing has become more focused on the effectiveness of certain drugs such as Naloxone and Hydroxchroquine, with people discussing their own experience or passing on evidence they have read.

- Debate continues as to the infectiousness of the disease and how it spreads. Conflicting fatality rates and misinformation as to how deaths are recorded is creating genuine confusion.

- Mental illness and general anxiety is a constant side effect of coronavirus. While some are able to cope well and offer perspective of brighter days ahead, others seem consumed by the virus as if the walls are closing in.

- Help is at hand in the form of structured support from official organizations or kind-hearted individuals.

- A broader conversation about the future of America post coronavirus is underway as people discuss their hopes for a fairer, kinder society and the need to address climate change.

Analysis: Key Takeaways

Impact Discussion

- Fatalities and infection rates continue to have a major influence over the online discussion. People appear as interested in statistics from others states as they are in their own. Such comparisons reflect a desire to understand where their states sit in relation to the disease and what the future holds.

- Lifestyles continue to be impacted as people realize that their vacation is unlikely to take place this year. It is interesting to note that this appears to be accepted with a sense of resignation and disappointment rather than anger.

- Once again people post desperate pleas for help as they fall through the safety net.

- Finally there appears to be growing concern about food shortages. In particular, people speak of a scarcity of meat in shops due to the closure of meat factories.

Analysis: Key Takeaways

Political Discussion

- Despite falling in volume, anti-Trump chatter still dominates almost half of the political discussion. Many remain extremely angry at the president's perceived failure to lead during the coronavirus crisis, while the more partisan simply state they don't believe a word he says.

- Negative sentiment towards the president has been further fuelled by Trump's suggestion that disinfectant might help treat people with the disease - which was seen as a new low in the eyes of many.

- On a brighter note for team Trump, his 60-day ban on all immigrants seeking permanent status had the desired impact on his base, who came out in support of the announcement.

- A fight continues to take place between those in favor of the lockdown and those against. Trump supporters despair at their loss of freedom and question the COVID-19 fatality rate. In response, their intelligence and frame of mind is seriously questioned by those in favor of the lockdown.

- A small but determined group once again warns that the GOP may manipulate the crisis to supress voter turnout in November.

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Sample Posts

Impact Discussion

🗣️*Iowa has THREE of the top ten fastest spreading covid cities list.\n\nSioux City, Des Moines, and Waterloo.*

\n\nThese three cities in particular already contain enormous levels of inequality. So upset to learn this. We are so far

from the peak in Iowa

🗣️ *Looks like I may need to invest in a small pool for my little one since beaches/lakes are most likely NOT gonna be*

available this summer, and if they are..it will be hectic with the continued social distance crap

🗣️ *Displaced due to COVID 19. Needing help so I can get tent and supplies in order to have a place to lay down at*

night. Been sleeping in company van. Shelters aren't taking new residents.

🗣️ *I'm about to get kicked out of the house if I don't pay my mortgage, I'm a widow living on paycheck to paycheck*

and I have been laid off due to the coronavirus pandemic, please anybody can help me no matter how little

🗣️ *Coronavirus: Next shortage at the grocery store? Meat*

Sample Posts

Citizen Discussion

🗨 *I know a couple people who had covid. those people were very ill and made a dramatic recovery after being given hydroxychloroquine. so there's that.*

🗨 *I'm from Michigan and I'm having hard time understanding our death rate here. According to my math from this article, we are at 8.8%. This doesn't wash with new data from the antibody testing. Any idea what is going on here?*

🗨 *The idea that COVID-19 is not spread by casual contact is not born out by the evidence. One infected person infected at least two dozen at a Christian school fundraiser.*

🗨 *I love waking up in the morning and it seems like any other day just for a couple minutes, until you open your phone or hear the news and you're reminded oh yeah I'm living in the middle of a pandemic.*

🗨 *Twice a day, there are local support groups meeting virtually to help you manage stress and cope during this difficult time. Details available on xxx*

Sample Posts

Political Discussion

🗨️ *Who are you trying to convince? If you were truly hardworking, you would have done something to prepare for the pandemic in February! No one who is truly working hard has to toot their own horn you narcissist. Don't forget to inject your bleach this morning. #IMPOTUS*

🗨️ *He may be President of the United States of America, but this overgrown child is just a cesspool of misinformation. Do not listen to what he has to say about this pandemic, listen to the specialists and healthcare professionals*

🗨️ *Why are people protesting the stay at home order? COVID19-19 is real....multitudes dead...millions infected...#STAY #YOE #ASSES #AT #HOME*

🗨️ *This pandemic is practically over and even President @realDonaldTrump said today there is a very slight chance the virus will come back again unless mixed with the flu. Change the open date already. It is safe. May 1st at the latest. #EndTheShutdown #Ridiculous*
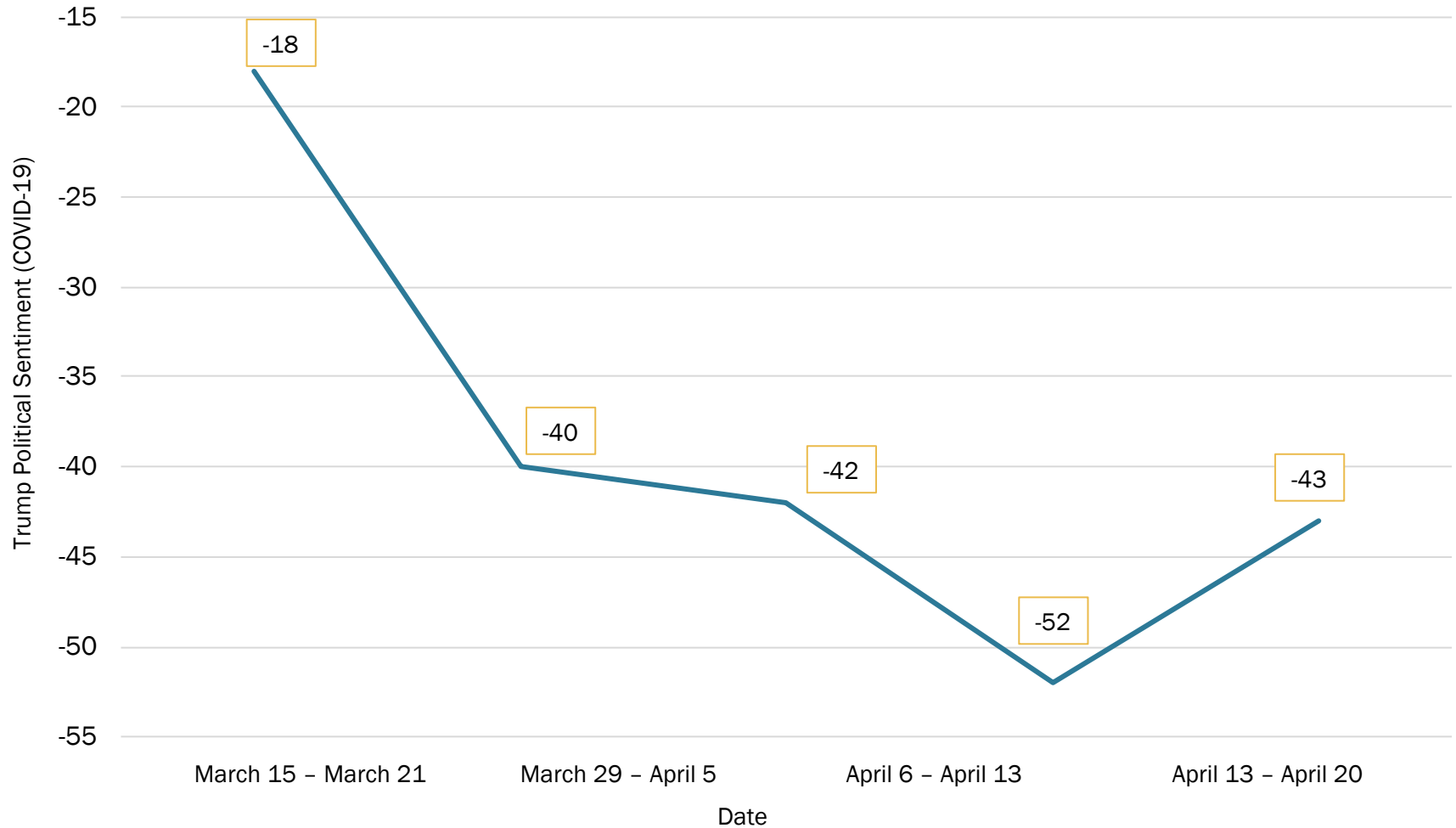
🗨️ *In the middle of a pandemic, trump halts immigration (something that shouldve been done already) to slow the spread like we were all told to do, and the democrats and neocons have a fit!*

🗨️ *Foreign workers shout not be allowed to come into AMERICA until after at least 85% of those who lost their jobs are back to work.*
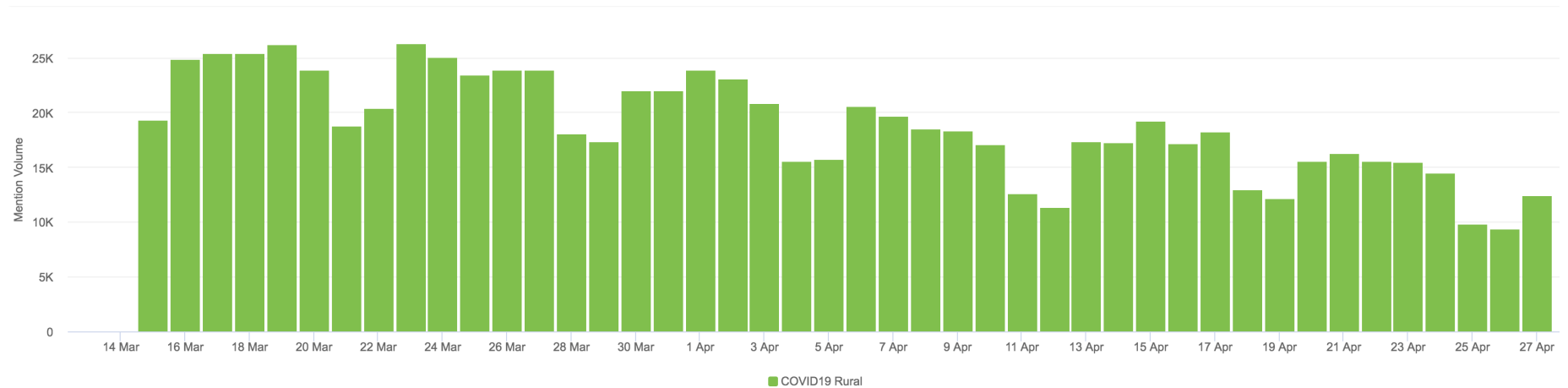
Trump Net Sentiment

Y-axis: Trump Political Sentiment (COVID-19)

X-axis: Date

Data points:
- March 15 – March 21: -18
- March 29 – April 5: -40
- April 6 – April 13: -42
- (dip): -52
- April 13 – April 20: -43

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.

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CORONAVIRUS RURAL CONVERSATION – DISCUSSION VOLUME (BY DAY)

Methodology

This analysis is based on collected, publicly available, online data, geo-located to rural populations in the six states from April 20-27, 2020 related to COVID-19. In total, 98,000 posts from 31,000 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.