



ONE COUNTRY

“COVID-19”

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

May 24 - 31, 2020



Rural Citizens



60,000 original posts



24,000 unique authors

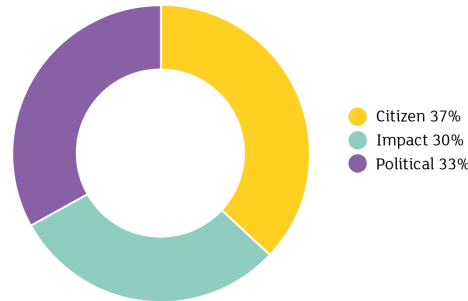
Overview

Civil unrest has impacted the COVID-19 conversation in rural America. While the overall volume is lower (-16,000), content has been influenced by current events.

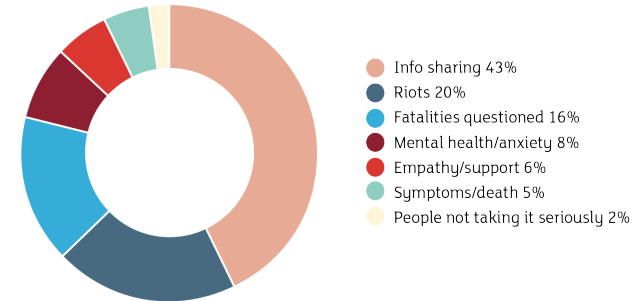
Citizens' post concerns about how protestors might spread the disease, while others express broader concern about what COVID-19 and civil unrest means for America. Distrust over fatality rates and contradictory information weaken the authority of political leaders at a time when people need them most.

Meanwhile many rural people express sadness at 100,000+ COVID-19 related deaths across America and despair at their president's combined failure over the disease and civil unrest. However, President Trump is far from alone as supporters rally to his defense.

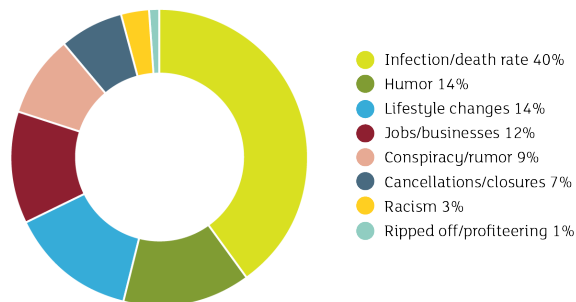
DISCUSSION SPLIT



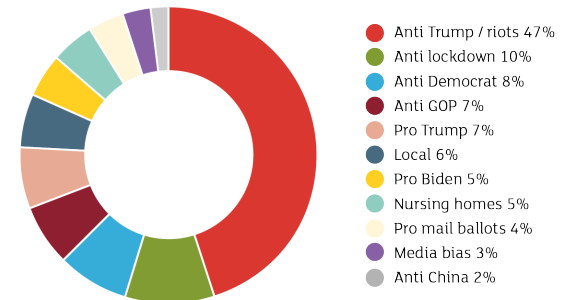
CITIZEN DISCUSSION



IMPACT DISCUSSION



POLITICAL DISCUSSION



ONE COUNTRY

Analysis: Key Takeaways

Citizen Discussion

- People remain confused due to the overload of contradictory information they receive about the seriousness of COVID-19 and how to prevent/treat the disease.
- Consequently, people are becoming increasingly distrustful of the authorities. The failure of political leaders to address the information vacuum lessens the impact of their own messaging and authority.
- This is exacerbated by the inability of leaders to send out consistent and clear messaging on fatality rates, which creates confusion and fuels conspiracy theories — adding to the divisive political atmosphere.
- A broad discussion is emerging in relation to COVID-19 and civil unrest. While some people see the protests and worry if it will cause a second wave of the disease, others express a desire to protest but are afraid of the health consequences.
- Meanwhile some Americans post political questions such as, “Why it is okay to protest at the lockdown but not against racism and police brutality?” At the same time, others despair at the current state of America.
- Mental health and anxiety issues remain as one of the major side effects of the pandemic. Last week’s posts reflect that civil unrest (and the reasons behind it) are likely to increase the suffering further.



Analysis: Key Takeaways

Impact Discussion

- Increasing complexity is developing within the conversation on death/infection rates. On the one hand, people speak of optimism as to the slowing of COVID-19 deaths in their areas and across the US as a whole, others refer to the 100,000 death milestone as a shameful day for the country. Some have also picked up on a new report, which suggests Democratic areas are three times more likely to be impacted than Republican.
- In addition - encouraged by civil unrest - there is an increase in the volume of discussion related to the disproportionate fatalities from the disease among minorities.
- People continue to talk randomly about changes to their lifestyle. This is generally light hearted in content and tone.
- The discussion in relation to jobs and businesses is mixed. While some speak of fear for their future as the lockdown drags on, others market themselves in anticipation of a return to business. Advice about safe working practices are being widely shared.
- The civil unrest serves as a further gift to conspiracy theorists - already revelling in the gift that is COVID-19 - who are happy to suggest that the protests are a government ploy to spread the disease.



Analysis: Key Takeaways

Political Discussion

- The anti-Trump conversation shows no sign of abating, especially when the death toll continues to rise. The grim milestone of 100,000 COVID-19 related deaths attracted renewed criticism of the president's handling of the disease.
- This situation was made worse due to the civil unrest sweeping America in protest in response to the death of George Floyd. Trump's aggressive reaction to the situation has exasperated Americans who despise at his leadership style and actions. For these people, his reaction to the protestors and COVID 19 are just two examples of why Trump is unfit to be president.
- And yet there are plenty of voters who are happy to defend Trump and praise what they see as decisive action on both issues.
- Meanwhile Trump supporters continue to challenge the figures on COVID-19 and order that their state should be opened up, while attacking the left for using the disease to usher in communism.
- Local and state politicians are facing less criticism over the same period as accusations of death rates in nursing homes receive less attention - likely due to increased turbulence elsewhere.



Sample Posts

Impact Discussion

- 💡 *Just a bit of good news: today the US saw the lowest number of COVID deaths since March 29th 🙌*
- 💡 *Divided by COVID-19: Democratic U.S. areas hit three times as hard as Republican ones*
- 💡 *Doing a lot of work around the house. Who knew a pandemic would motivate me to get rid of stuff and get things fixed up... hahah GARBAGE DAY! But in all seriousness donating ALOT of stuff too !*
- 💡 *Prep in full swing for our return to in-clinic ABA Therapy next week! We have lots of modifications happening to keep clients and staff safe and healthy, including an amazing new check out system.*
- 💡 *I 'm no gambler either. Like some people don't have the money to afford to gamble, I sure as hell don't have the survival odds to gamble with COVID. Teaching isn't worth my life so unless it's actually, verifiably safe to start again, I'll hold off.*
- 💡 *Perhaps the riots are a distraction from the fact the media lied about the coronavirus*



Sample Posts

Citizen Discussion

🗣️ *HELL NO @FDA! I WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M EATING! FDA Announces Temporary Flexibility Policy Regarding Certain Labeling Requirements for Foods for Humans During COVID-19*

🗣️ *I fear they are letting them die, neglected, then saying it's COVID to collect the \$\$\$.*

🗣️ *So we can protest against the best public health advice during a pandemic but not against a black man being killed on video for all to see? GTFO*

🗣️ *there is a protest against cops and the treatment of black people in this country tomorrow in Detroit. I kinda wanna get a ride to it. Is that stupid with like COVID-19 or nah? I just am so sickened by this and I wanna see these protests show up everywhere and make change*

🗣️ *Confluence of so much shit. Racism, militarization of police, inequality, unemployment, state violence, a pandemic*

🗣️ *I've spent the last 2 hours laying in bed contemplating life. Global pandemic, riot and protesting, leaders making just stupid remarks, and all I'm worried about is everyone else trying to fight their inner demons that hinder me useless on a daily basis.*



Sample Posts

Political Discussion

🗣️ *This whole Corona thing wouldn't so bad if we had a Sane President in charge, It's His Job to take care of the American People. That is how it should work. Donald J. Trump is not normal.*

🗣️ *EXACTLY... he does all these obnoxious insane things to change the HEADLINES & while these distractions may make him look bad his base loves it & the distractions still are not even close to the headlines of his incompetence in handling the Coronavirus He has blood on his hands*

🗣️ *Telling cops that they can shoot protesters. Making a crybaby bill against social media during a pandemic. Letting multiple rapists in to the government. Being openly racist on every platform. Gee he is the definition of a great president isnt he?*

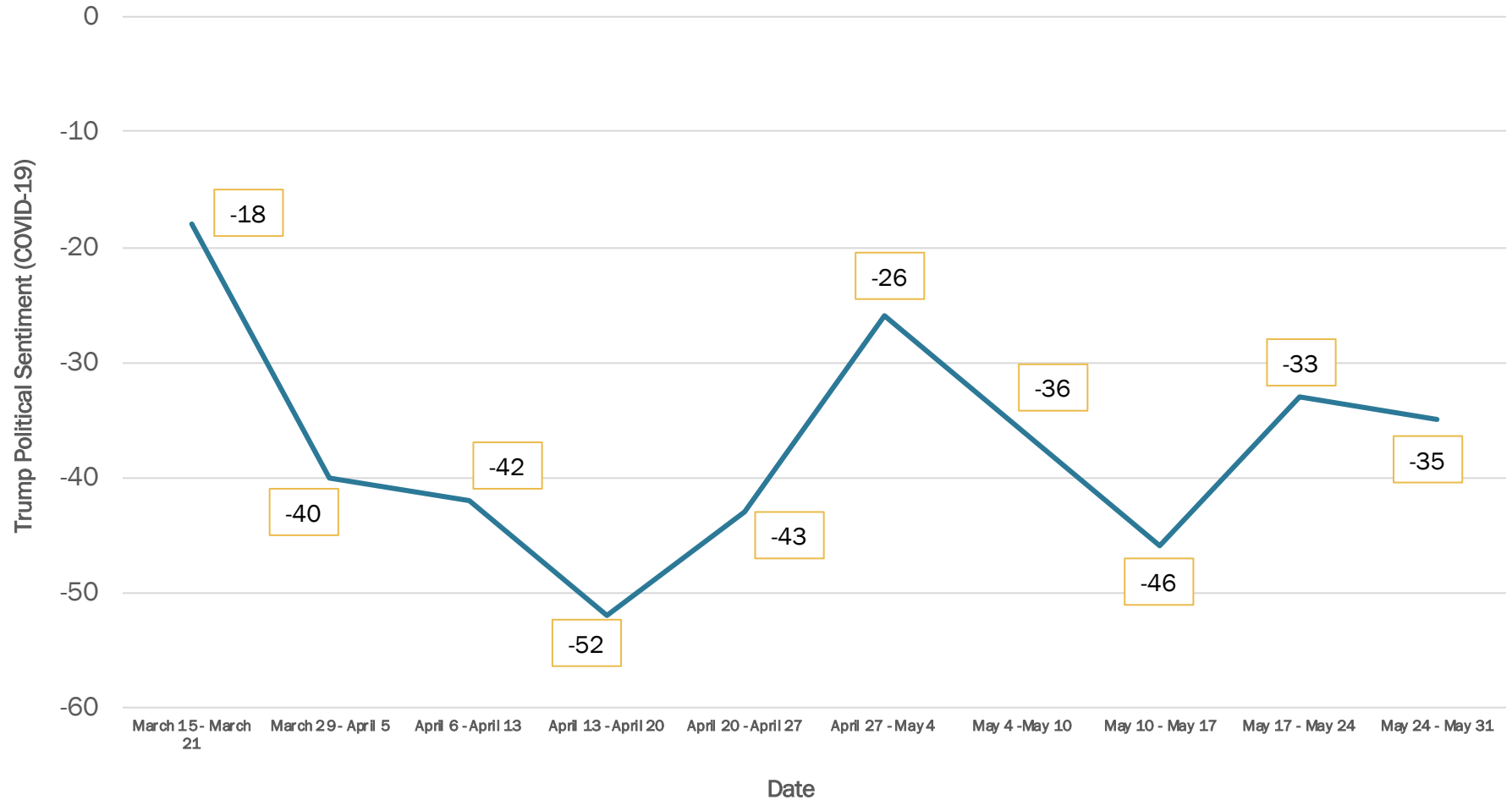
🗣️ *President Trump. 40 million unemployed, 100,000 dead in a pandemic, 2 cities burning tonight. How about some leadership.*

🗣️ *The STATES are responsible for COVID deaths and unemployment, Dem run states have murdered their elderly citizens and destroyed their economies with their tyrannical lockdowns. I'm still confused how this is the fault of POTUS? Grasping at straws.*

🗣️ *Whitmer complained that Trump wouldn't help. Trump funds field hospitals in and near Detroit. The hospitals were barely used. She send COVID patients to nursing homes. Death toll rises.*



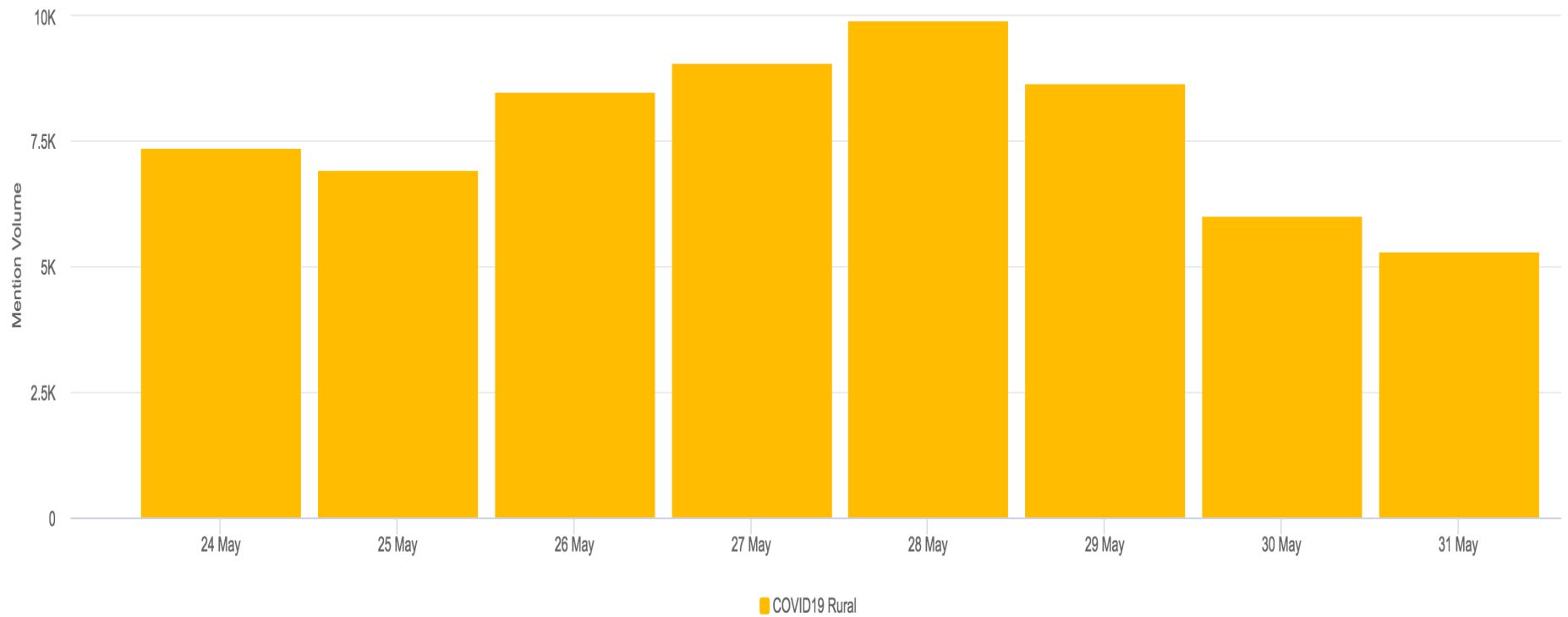
Trump Net Sentiment



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.



CORONAVIRUS RURAL CONVERSATION – DISCUSSION VOLUME (BY DAY)



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 May 24 – 31, 2020 related to COVID-19. In total, 60,000 posts from 24,000 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.

