ONE COUNTRY FUND

Snapshot Online and Social Media Analysis of the First Presidential Debate in rural IA, MI, MN, NH, PA, WI
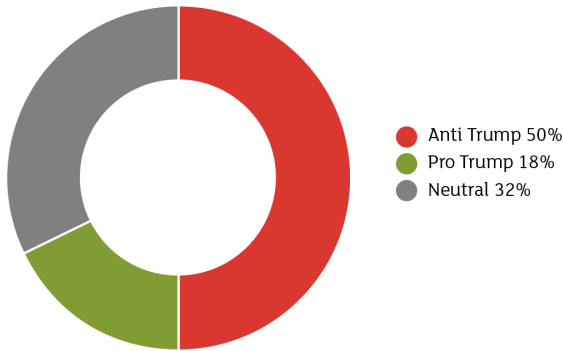
September 29 – 30

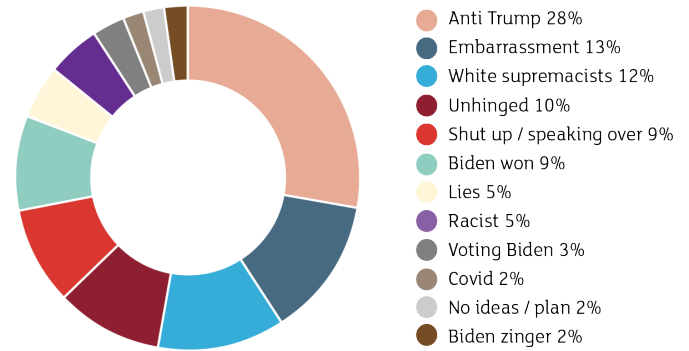# Trump Discussion

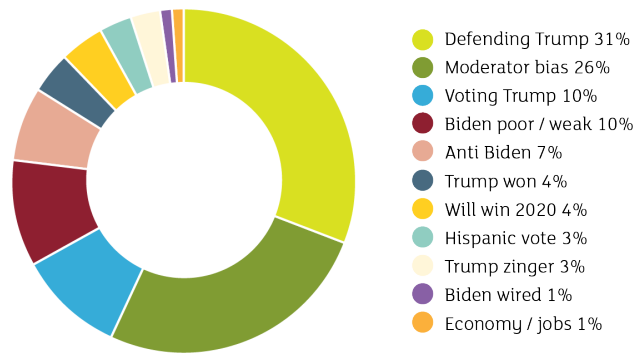**53,000 original posts**

20,000 unique authors

SENTIMENT

- Anti Trump 50%
- Pro Trump 18%
- Neutral 32%

ANTI TRUMP

- Anti Trump 28%
- Embarrassment 13%
- White supremacists 12%
- Unhinged 10%
- Shut up / speaking over 9%
- Biden won 9%
- Lies 5%
- Racist 5%
- Voting Biden 3%
- Covid 2%
- No ideas / plan 2%
- Biden zinger 2%

PRO TRUMP

- Defending Trump 31%
- Moderator bias 26%
- Voting Trump 10%
- Biden poor / weak 10%
- Anti Biden 7%
- Trump won 4%
- Will win 2020 4%
- Hispanic vote 3%
- Trump zinger 3%
- Biden wired 1%
- Economy / jobs 1%

Biden Discussion

34,000 original posts   **15,000 unique authors**

SENTIMENT

- Anti Biden 34%
- Pro Biden 32%
- Neutral 34%

ANTI BIDEN

- Anti Biden 44%
- Bias moderator 21%
- Pro Trump 7%
- Antifa support 7%
- Hate both 4%
- Ukraine 4%
- Lost debate 4%
- Covid 2%
- Bias media 2%
- Healthcare 2%
- Tax 2%
- Trump - economy 2%

PRO BIDEN

- Anti Trump 23%
- Pro Biden 22%
- Good job 15%
- Won debate 13%
- Anti Trump 6%
- Attacks on Trump 5%
- Trump - white supremacists 5%
- Trump - poor debate 4%
- Trump - tax 3%
- Trump - Covid 2%
- Trump - women 2%
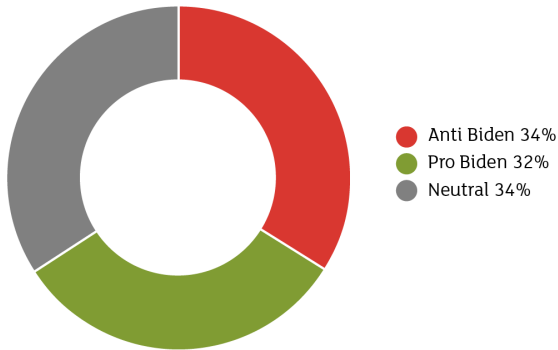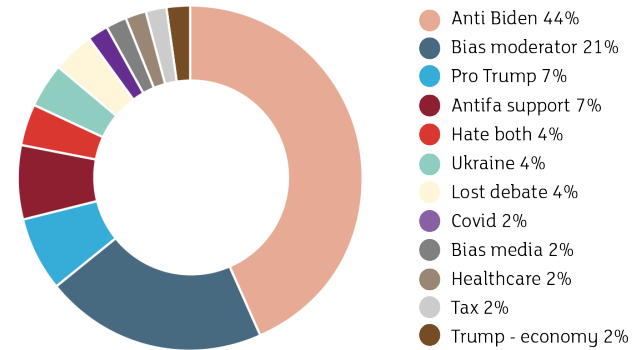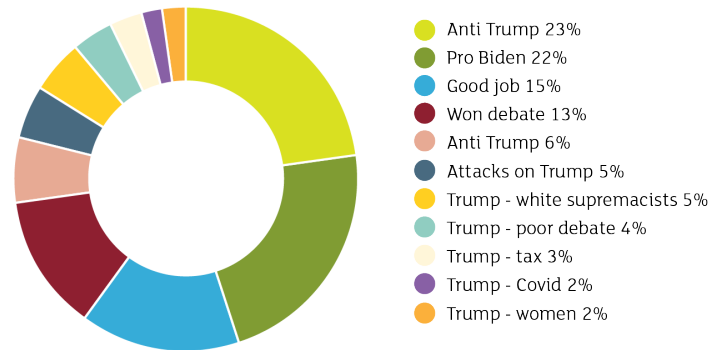
Analysis: Key Takeaways

TRUMP

Beyond his base it is hard to see how President Trump picked up any new support as a result of his first debate performance against Vice President Biden. There is speculation online about whether it was a deliberate strategy to drown out the whole debate. If it was, it failed to win favor amongst rural citizens, many of whom saw his performance as 'embarrassing,' 'babyish,' or outright 'unhinged.' His 'belligerent' and 'angry' performance was the dominant theme of the online discussion in rural states. Trump was seen to be mostly devoid of any killer lines or knockout blows. In fact, it would appear the biggest wound of the night was self-inflicted, as Trump's rallying of the Proud Boys "to stand by and stand back" and refusal to condemn white supremacists drew widespread negative reaction.

If there were any areas of advantage for Trump, they revolved around Biden's apparent 'weakness' on issues of substance such as law and order and Trump's shoring up of Hispanic support (discussed via a live debate survey being pushed by Breitbart), but in context of the overall reaction these strikes were weaker than his team would have wished. There was some blame directed at the moderator, Chris Wallace, who Trump supporters complained was biased, not allowing Trump space to answer questions or directly debating with him thus betraying his 'Democrat sympathies.' Tellingly, the MAGA accounts so prevalent in 2016 appear to have lost their ability to heavily influence the online space in defense of Trump which must be a significant concern for his campaign.

Analysis: Key Takeaways

BIDEN

By contrast, former Vice President Biden received significantly more favorable coverage than his rival. As a consequence, a small but significant proportion of this key rural electorate stated that on this performance they were going to vote for Biden. Many referred to Biden as having done a good or great job, of him winning the debate and showing experience, cogence and decency. Yet these conversations also suggest much of this was based on how Trump was perceived, which enabled Biden to look relatively calm and presidential. Trump's aggressive performance also resulted in little policy discussion taking place which meant law & order, tax, SCOTUS, and even COVID-19 were barely mentioned in relation to Biden online. Overall, Biden emerged from the contentious affair relatively unscathed.

Some rural people think the debate was an embarrassment for America. They saw two septuagenarians exchanging insults and vowed to vote for neither. Yet the majority seemed to enjoy it. They knew what they were tuning in for and weren't disappointed.

Prepared for One Country Project
by impactSocial

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Methodology

This analysis is based on collected, publicly available, online data, geo-located to rural populations in rural areas of IA, MI, MN, NH, PA and WI from 9:00pm ET on September 29 to 10:30am on September 30th, related to the first presidential debate. In total, 87,000 posts from 35,000 authors were collected across 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.