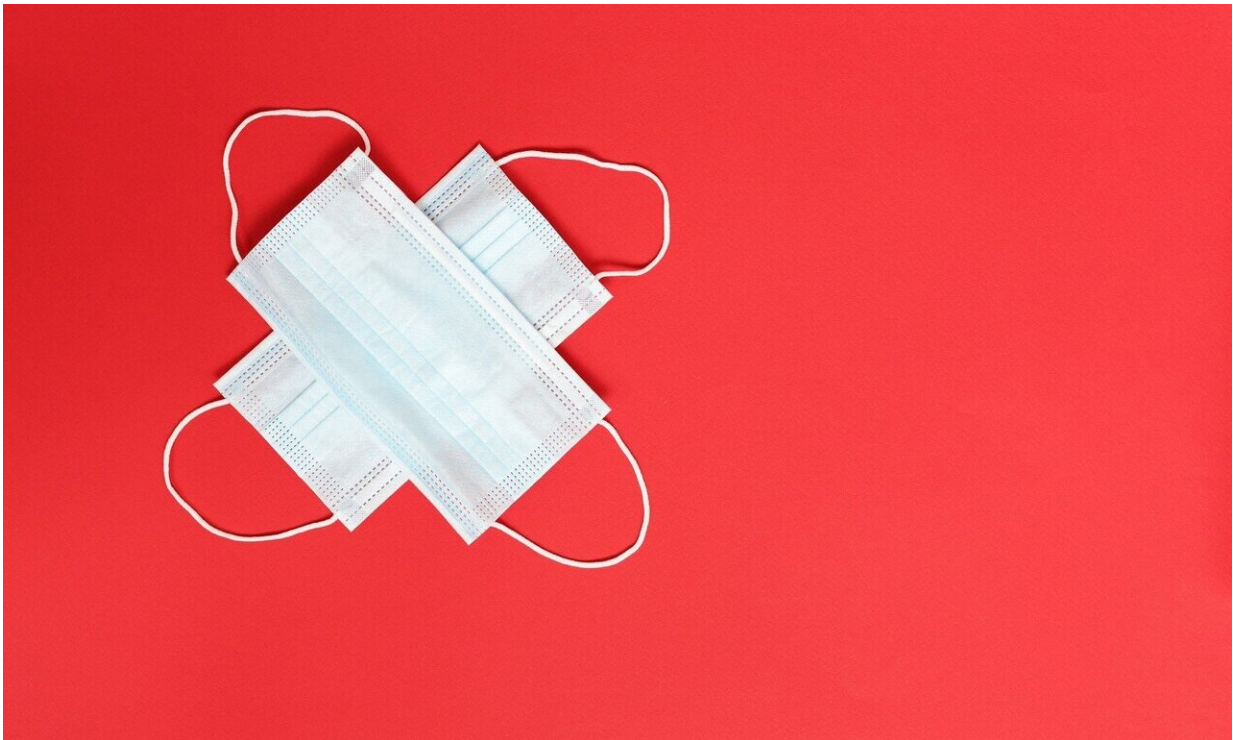


Study tracks public concerns on Twitter about COVID-19

October 29 2020



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Twitter users initially didn't feel positive about the state of the economy, prevention, treatment and recovery concerning COVID-19. That changed by the end of March 2020. In contrast, throughout the period examined from January to May 2020, the public, in general, felt negative about the way the pandemic had been handled by political leadership.

In a new study published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, a University of Illinois Chicago researcher found that the political fallout of COVID-19 was negative throughout, except for the government's response in terms of stimulus or [financial incentives](#).

Previous studies had examined what world leaders tweeted about COVID-19, or racist content in COVID-19 tweets, or [social media posts](#) from one particular country or region. This is perhaps the first study to examine COVID-19-related tweets posted worldwide to uncover public opinions, sentiments and trends over a period of time, according to the authors.

Ranganathan Chandrasekaran, professor of information and decision sciences in the UIC College of Business Administration, said his team did so by analyzing expressions of concerns, opinions and feelings about the pandemic posted in more than 13.9 million English-language COVID-19-related tweets.

The researchers found that 20.51% of tweets were about COVID-19's impact on the economy and markets, followed by spread and growth in cases (15.45%), treatment and recovery (13.14%), impact on the [health care sector](#) (11.40%), and governments' response (11.19%).

Sentiment analysis scores were found to be negative throughout the examined time period for the topics of spread and growth of cases, symptoms, racism, source of the outbreak, and the political impact of COVID-19.

However, the researchers noticed a reversal of sentiments in March from negative to positive for prevention, impact on the economy and markets, governments' response, impact on the [health care industry](#), and treatment and recovery.

"Individuals worldwide have now become optimistic about [economic recovery](#) and have adjusted to the 'new normal' way of living," Chandrasekaran said. "Activities like social distancing and personal hygiene did not find favor among the public in the initial weeks of the pandemic, but found support only later."

Chandrasekaran added that [public sentiment](#) pointed to the need for better emergency preparedness in health institutions and hospitals, such as having clear policies for dealing with ventilators and handling high-risk patients.

The study, titled "Topics, Trends, and Sentiments of Tweets About the COVID-19 Pandemic: Temporal Infoveillance Study," was co-authored by UIC graduate students Vikalp Mehta and Tejali Valkunde, and Evangelos Moustakas, Middlesex University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

More information: Ranganathan Chandrasekaran et al. Topics, Trends, and Sentiments of Tweets About the COVID-19 Pandemic: Temporal Infoveillance Study, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* (2020). [DOI: 10.2196/22624](https://doi.org/10.2196/22624)

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago

Citation: Study tracks public concerns on Twitter about COVID-19 (2020, October 29) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-10-tracks-twitter-covid-.html>

| |
|--|
| <p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p> |
|--|