

DAILY COVID-19 Misinformation and Scam Report**Date:** 04/10/2020

Executive Summary

As of April 10, 2020, COSMOS has 329 coronavirus/COVID-19 misinformation items in the website database, reflecting a 6.8% increase in content. Zero reports by Arkansans were received via the website within the past 24 hours. Facebook still remains the top source of misinformation about coronavirus/COVID-19. The website has reached more Arkansas cities (total 10 cities) over the past 24 hours. Continued advertisement of our website (cosmos.ualr.edu/covid-19) to other Arkansas communities is recommended via traditional (radio, press, television) and non-traditional (Internet and social media) means. Immediate action involves warning citizens about scams circulating on Facebook.

Key Insights**1. Of immediate concern -**

A) A scam "tiny home" giveaway with a post that reads: "Due to the coronavirus, we decided to give this \$100,000 tiny house to someone who shares and comments 'ME' by 8pm, Thursday! Like our page for updates!" When a user clicks on this scam, they are instructed to follow a suspect link in order to claim their prize. That link directs the user to an external website with a large "register now" button. Clicking that button directs the user to a deceptive Majerstars website. This scam is operated by a large network of Facebook pages (at least 54), and also promotes another scam offering "free groceries due to the coronavirus".

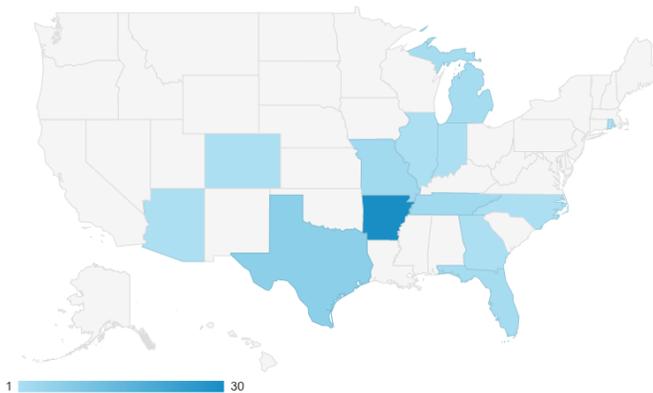
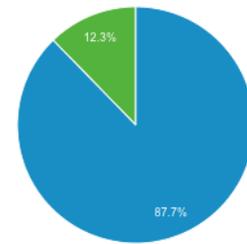
B) A scam claim is: "The Domino's pizza chain is offering coupons for two free large pizzas to social media users who fill out an online survey." Users who click on the offer are taken to an external website where they are instructed to answer survey questions in order to receive their coupons. After completing the questionnaire, however, users are then required to click a button to share the "offer" with their Facebook friends before they can retrieve their coupons. Those who comply by spamming their friends are then allowed to click a "Receive the Coupon" button, but there is no actual coupon to receive. Like innumerable other "free merchandise" offers on Facebook, this offer is another variation of a common scam.

2. Over the past 24 hours, the top sources being used to spread coronavirus/COVID-19 misinformation are:

- a. Facebook
- b. Websites
- c. TV
- d. Verbal

- Over the past 24 hours, there were 55 visitors to the website. Over 87% of the users were new visitors. All but one of the users were from within the United States (that one being from Japan).
- Sessions originated from within thirteen states of the US, and from within ten Arkansas cities. Most of Arkansas website visitors originated from Little Rock, which is in the county has the highest cases of coronavirus (Pulaski county, 225 cases as of April 10, 2020).

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



City	Users
	30 % of Total: 54.55% (55)
1. Little Rock	14 (46.67%)
2. North Little Rock	5 (16.67%)
3. Benton	2 (6.67%)
4. Conway	2 (6.67%)
5. Fayetteville	2 (6.67%)
6. Bella Vista	1 (3.33%)
7. Bentonville	1 (3.33%)
8. England	1 (3.33%)
9. Jonesboro	1 (3.33%)
10. Centerton	1 (3.33%)

Top three misinformation themes –

- Issues surrounding the use of hydroxychloroquine.
- Conspiracy theories about Bill Gates relative to coronavirus.
- Parental fears of not being able to make hospital visits to their child with coronavirus.

Recommendations - Take swift action towards the following: 1) Warn citizens about these scams circulating on Facebook: a) "tiny home" giveaway, b) "free groceries" giveaway, c) "Dominos pizza coupons"; 3) Craft messaging geared towards quelling parental fears of not being able to make hospital visits to their child with coronavirus; 4) Craft messaging geared towards quelling growing citizen misunderstanding about the use of hydroxychloroquine; and 5) Communicate to Arkansans that they should use our website¹ to report coronavirus/COVID-19 misinformation and scams.

¹ <http://cosmos.uarl.edu/covid-19>