

# Older-looking presidential candidates preferred during wartime

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Voters prefer older-looking presidents in times of war, according to research published May 23 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE*.

Author Brian Spisak of VU University Amsterdam also used altered images of [Barack Obama](#) and [John McCain](#) to show that the older-looking version of each candidate was preferred in a war scenario. Spisak suggests that these results may indicate an inherent advantage for older candidates running for office during wartime.

"I highlight an evolutionarily consistent pattern of increasing age, increasing status, and the use of dominance tactics to maintain this age-based hierarchy, and I show experimentally that followers are implicitly biased to endorse these types of leaders when there is a threat of conflict," Spisak explains. "These findings are crucial for understanding how the democratic, and preferably rational, process of voting can be disrupted by our innate biases."

**More information:** Spisak BR (2012) The General Age of Leadership: Older-Looking Presidential Candidates Win Elections during War. *PLoS ONE* 7(5): e36945. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0036945](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0036945)

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