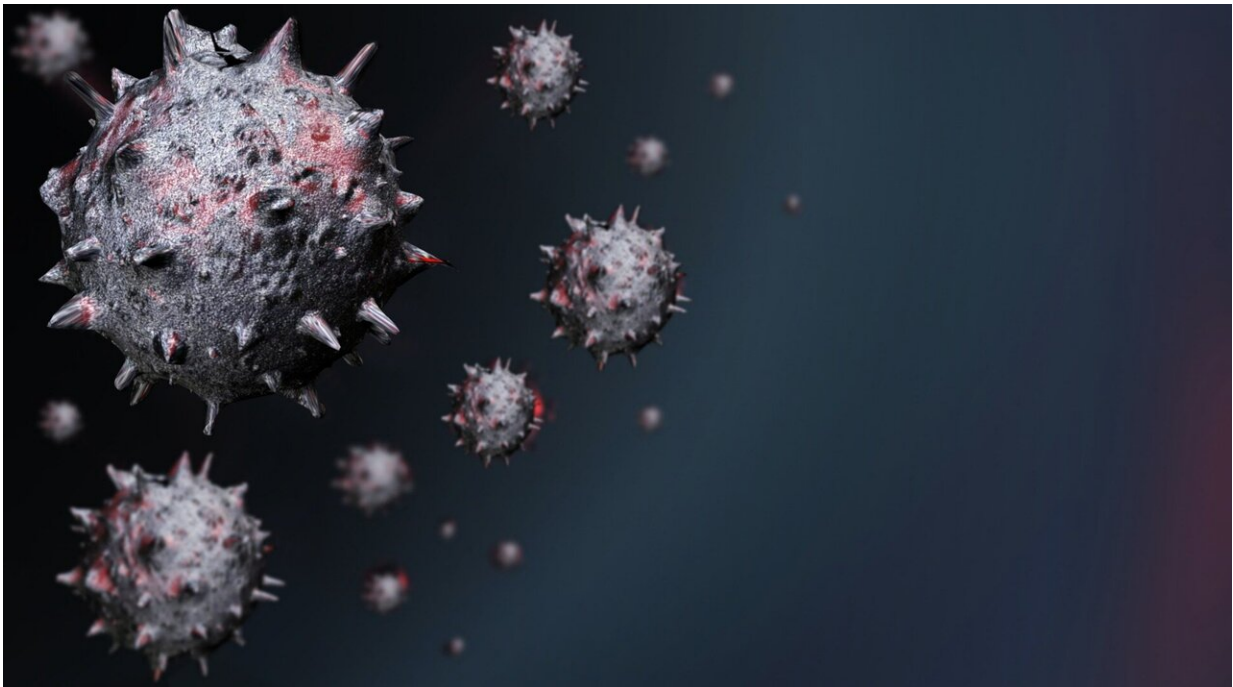


# COVID-19 fatalities linked to declining support for Trump and Republicans

November 2 2020, by Bob Yirka

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A trio of researchers from George Washington University and UCLA has found evidence suggesting that fatalities from the COVID-19 pandemic could be linked to declining support for President Trump and Republicans in general in swing states. In their paper published in the journal *Science Advances*, Christopher Warshaw, Lynn Vavreck and Ryan Baxter-King describe their study and why they believe their

findings could be signaling bad news for the president.

The campaign for president of the United States this past year has been by nearly any measure, historic in nature. Many in the U.S. have come to view it as a possible turning point in American history, with the incumbent challenging many of the ideals that have long been held as sacred in presidential politics.

Another historic impact could very well be the COVID-19 pandemic, which has infected and killed more people in the United States than in any other country. In this new effort, Warshaw, Vavreck and Baxter-King wondered if deaths from a virus might impact an election in ways similar to deaths from a war. In past elections, voters have, in some instances, held the U.S. [president](#) responsible for such deaths and instead voted for their opponent. To find out if this might be the case, the researchers obtained data collected by workers at the *New York Times*. They have been counting the number of COVID-19 cases across the country (infection and fatality numbers). The researchers also obtained data collected by workers with the Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape Project. They have been conducting surveys of voters in a host of locations around the U.S. during the current campaign looking to gage support for individual candidates and the parties that support them.

In looking at and comparing the data, the researchers were able to isolate areas of interest, which were mostly swings states or parts of them—these areas of interest are important in the presidential race because of the way U.S. presidential races work—presidents are elected by voters in the Electoral College, not citizens. Because of the winner-take-all system, in most states, a candidate that wins the popular vote in a state wins all of the electoral votes for that state. The loser gets none. Thus, a candidate can win the presidency by winning the popular vote in a lot of sparsely populated states.

The researchers found a correlation between the number of fatalities from the COVID-19 pandemic and support for President Trump. The more deaths in a given area, the more his numbers sank in that area. They found similar results for state and local Senate candidates. They note that the margin of support between the candidates is so small in many [swing states](#) (those that could be won by either candidate) that the pandemic could wind up being a deciding factor in who wins the election.

**More information:** Christopher Warshaw et al. Fatalities from COVID-19 are reducing Americans' support for Republicans at every level of federal office, *Science Advances* (2020). [DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.abd8564](#)

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