

Political economist tests the impact of the journal Nature endorsing Joe Biden's presidency

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Floyd Jiuyun Zhang, a political economist at Stanford University, has conducted a study of the impact of the journal *Nature* endorsing presidential candidate Joe Biden back in 2020. In his paper published in the journal *Nature Human Behavior*, Zhang outlines the answers given by over 4,000 people to a survey designed to measure the impact of *Nature* endorsing a candidate for president.

Arthur Lupia, with the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies, has published a News & Views piece in the same journal issue outlining the results and discussing its possible impact. The editors at *Nature* have published an editorial piece in the same issue discussing Zhang's findings and reiterating their reasons for endorsing Joe Biden back in 2020.

The 2020 U.S. [presidential campaign](#) was contentious. As part of the campaign, many well-known entities chose to endorse one candidate or the other. One such endorsement came from the editors at *Nature*, who suggested that as president, Trump had caused harm to both [science research](#) and the reputation of scientists. They endorsed Joe Biden.

In this new effort, Zhang attempted to gauge the impact of the endorsement on *Nature* and its publishing network and also on science itself. He designed and sent out thousands of surveys to adults across the United States over the summer of 2021. Some of the surveys included a summary of *Nature's* endorsement of Joe Biden and a link for more information about it, while others served as a control.

The [control group](#) got a screenshot of a control message with a screenshot of *Nature* announcing a new design for its website. Also, the surveys were designed in a way that allowed for gauging opinions on topics both before and after reminding respondents that *Nature* had endorsed Joe Biden for president.

In all, Zhang received 4,260 responses. He found that the endorsement did little to sway voters one way or the other regarding support for either candidate. But the endorsement seemingly had a big impact on Trump supporters regarding their feelings about *Nature*.

Zhang found that Trump supporters found *Nature* to be less well-informed on science matters after learning of the endorsement. They also rated *Nature* as being more biased on contentious issues. He also found that the endorsement reduced Trump supporters' willingness to look to *Nature* sources for reliable information regarding the pandemic. And surprisingly, he found that support for scientists in general by Trump supporters dropped after learning of the endorsement.

More information: Floyd Jiuyun Zhang, Political endorsement by Nature and trust in scientific expertise during COVID-19, *Nature Human Behaviour* (2023). DOI: [10.1038/s41562-023-01537-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01537-5).
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Arthur Lupia, Political endorsements can affect scientific credibility, *Nature* (2023). DOI: [10.1038/d41586-023-00799-3](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-00799-3)

Should Nature endorse political candidates? Yes—when the occasion demands it, *Nature* (2023). DOI: [10.1038/d41586-023-00789-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-00789-5)

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