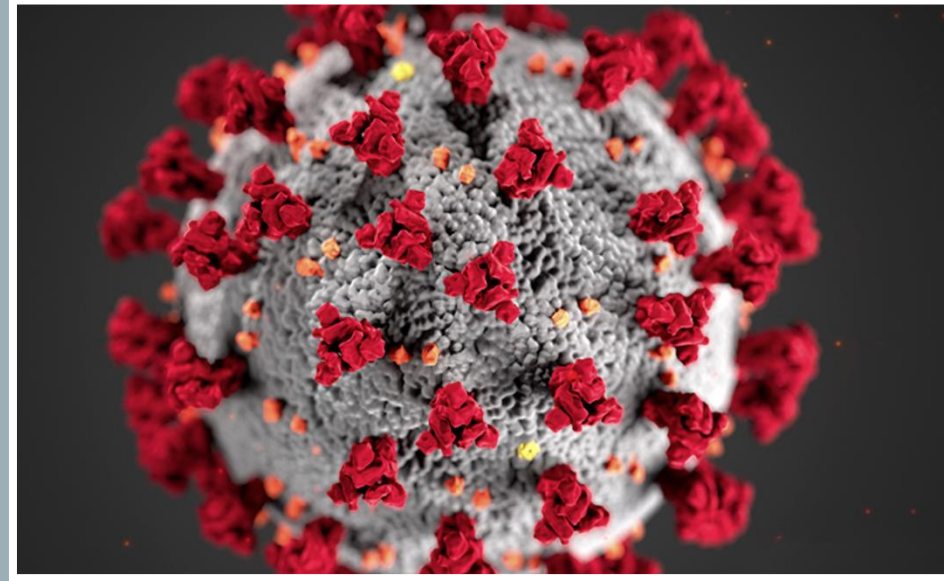
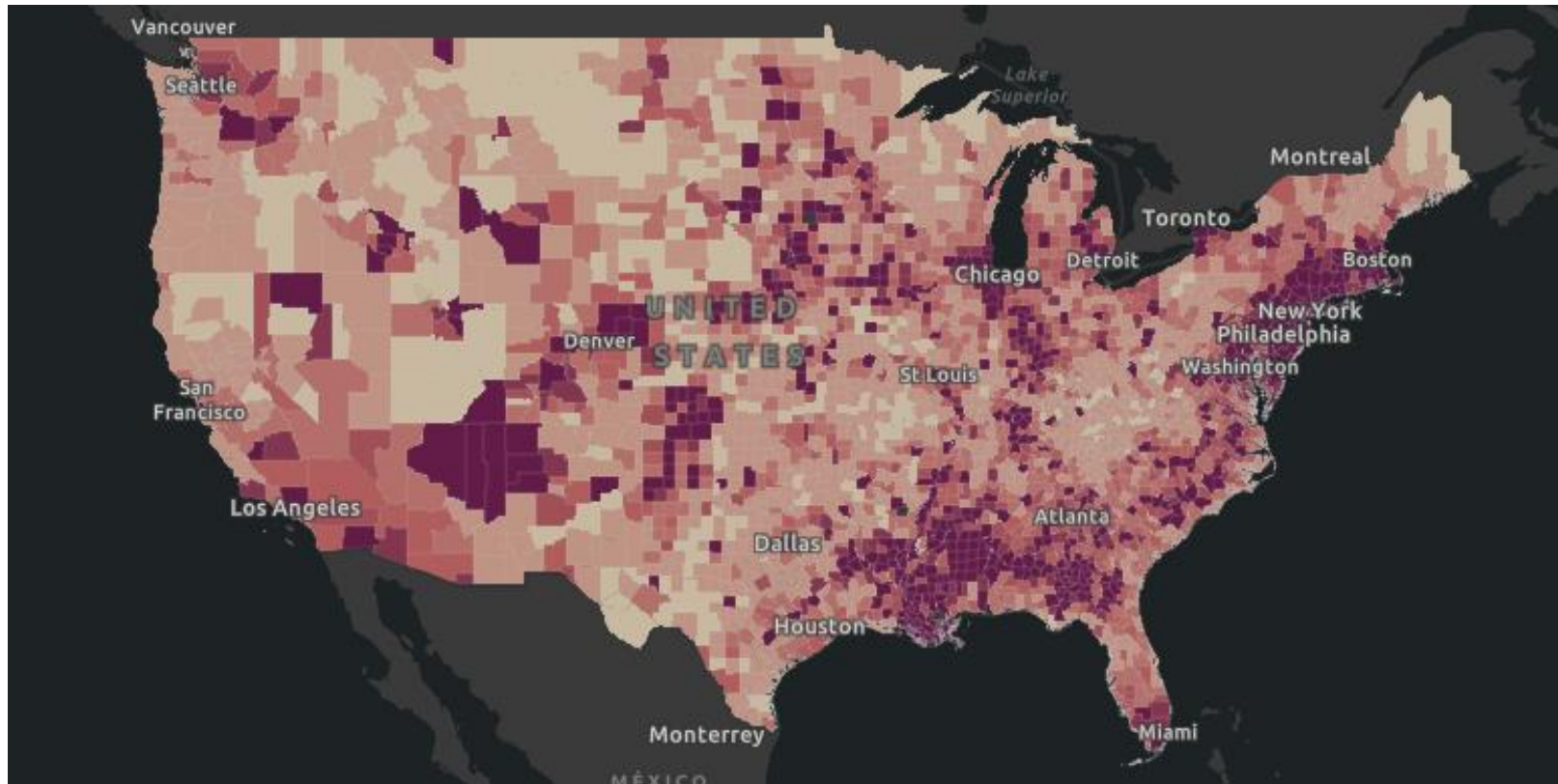




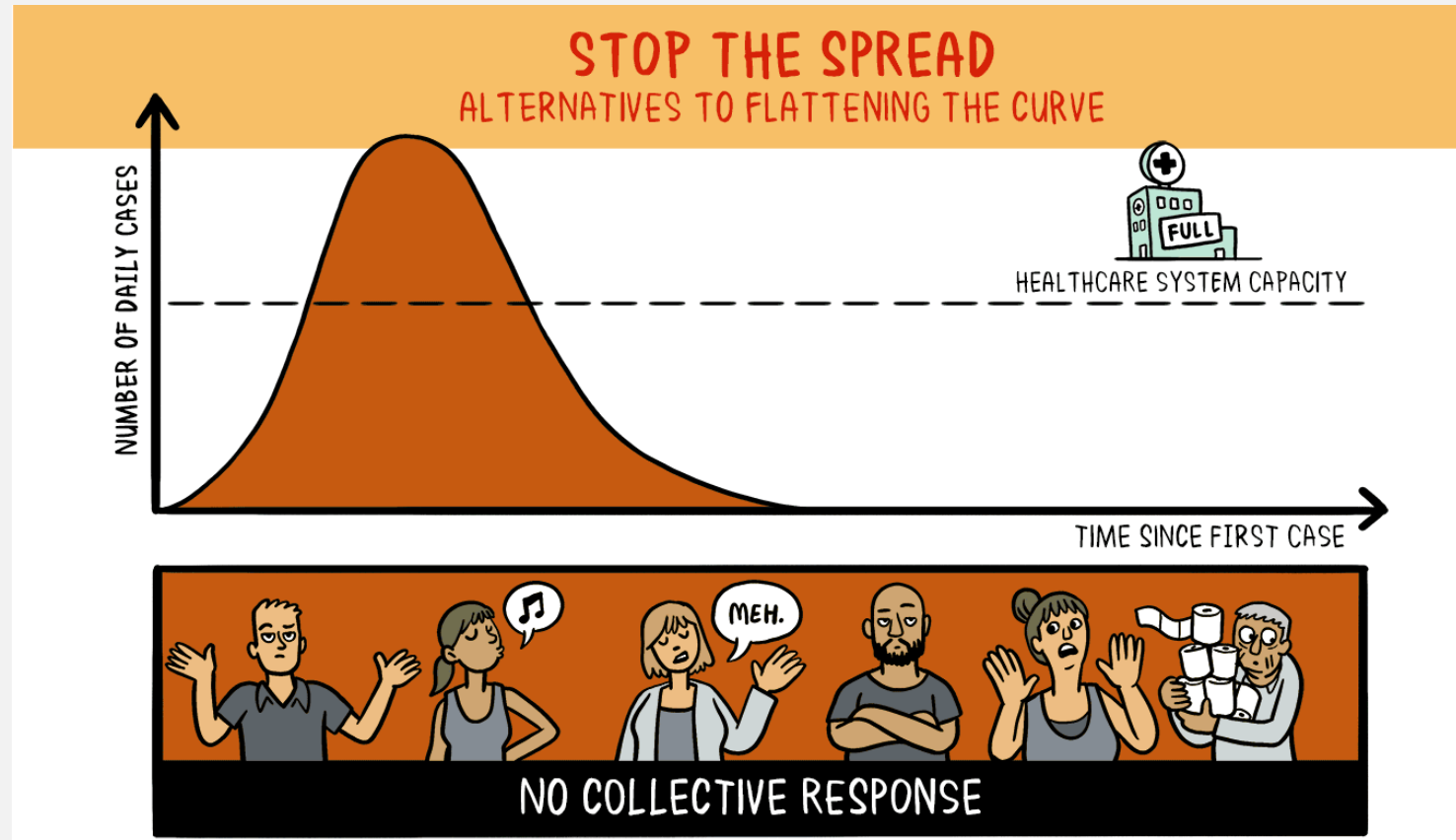
PARTISAN POLARIZATION AND COVID-19

Jamie Druckman
Department of Political Science
Northwestern University

COVID-19 IS A MASSIVE GLOBAL AND NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS

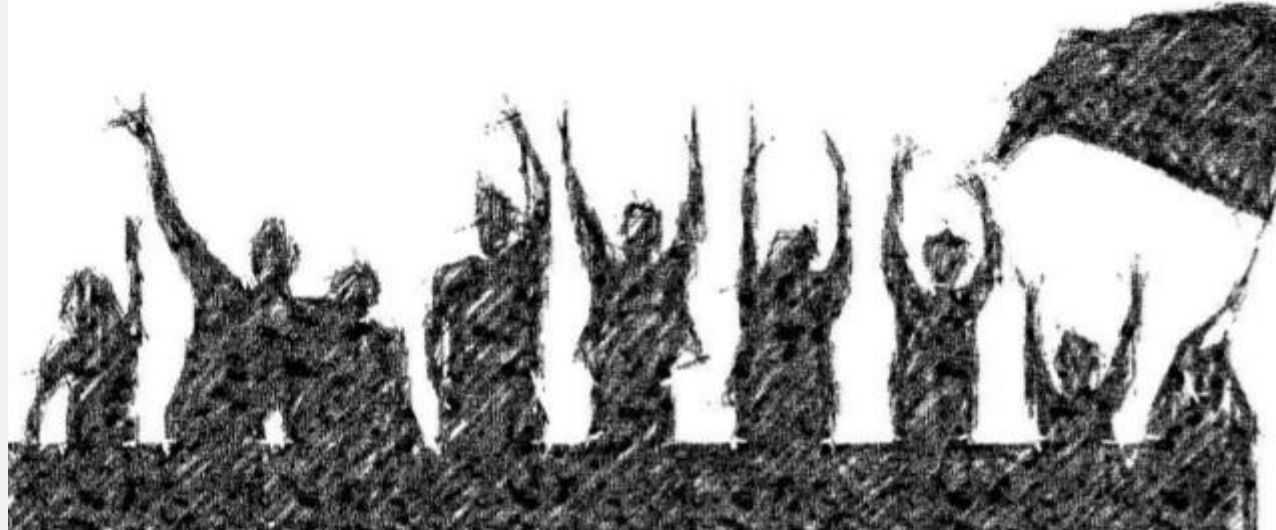


THE CHALLENGE



COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

Collective action is a
collaborative effort that takes
place in groups and **diverges from**
the social norms of the situation.



SOURCES OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

- **Government** → laws, regulations to close the economy, enforce social distancing guidelines, etc.
- **Organizations** → pivot to provide collective goods, collaborate, set examples.
- **Individuals** → adhere to new social norms, cooperate, follow new laws/regulations.

CHALLENGE FOR INDIVIDUALS

- **Social Identity** → the part of the self that is defined by one's group memberships.
- Desire to distinguish one's self from those not in the group.
- **When individuals attempt to define differences** → distinct reactions to laws/rules/norms → can undermine collective action.

COVID-19 AND SUPERORDINATE GOALS

- **Superordinate identity** → superordinate goals (e.g., shared by groups), outcome interdependence, and some shared identity can lead to positive/cooperative outcomes (Brewer 2000).
- **Hope at start of COVID-19** → “highlights a common identity with individuals all facing the same risk, [and] could also foster a sense of shared fate” (Van Bavel et al. 2020: 464).
- **Did that happen in the US? If not, what is the basis of the division?**

EXAMPLES OF SOURCES OF DIVISION

- Race and Ethnicity
- Geography/State
- Income/Class
- Party
- Others could be gender, age, religion, etc.

DATA

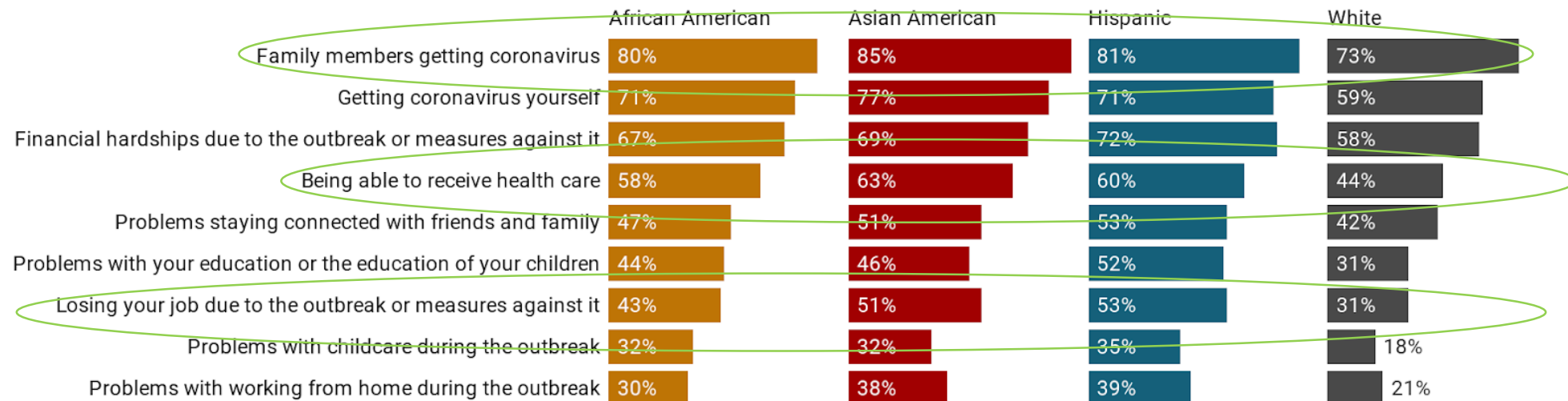
- “The State of the Nation: A 50-State COVID-19 Survey” → over-time state sample data collection collaboration between Harvard, Northeastern, Rutgers, Northwestern.
(<https://covidstates.org/>)
- Unique Data on Partisan Polarization.

RACE/ETHNICITY AND WORRY

All concerns about COVID-19 are higher among non-White Americans

How concerned, if at all, do you currently feel about the following?

[Percent respondents who say they are "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned"]

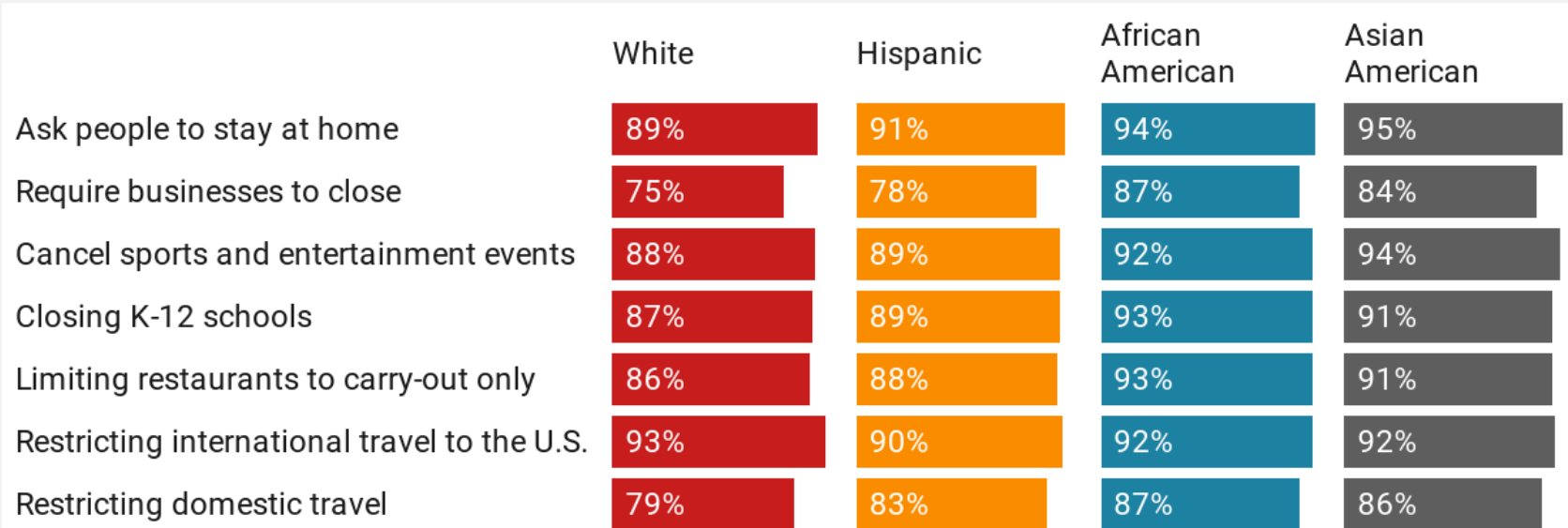


National sample, N = 18,132, Time period: 5/16/2020-5/31/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

• Created with Datawrapper

RACE/ETHNICITY AND POLICIES



National sample, N = 20,333, Time period: 5/2/2020-5/15/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

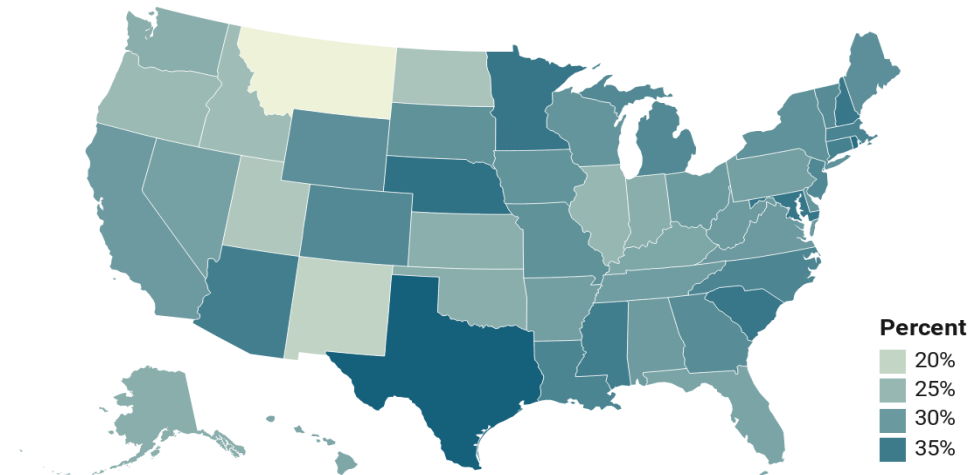
• Created with Datawrapper

- General support across racial/ethnic groups for these policies, with slightly less support among White respondents compared to Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans.

GEOGRAPHY AND POLICIES

Many Americans will wait as long as possible before going to a restaurant even after states reopen for business

How soon after your state government lifts stay-at-home restrictions and permits businesses to open would you go to a dine-in restaurant?
[Percent respondents who say they would try to avoid these businesses as long as possible]



National sample, N = 18,132, Time period: 5/16/2020-5/31/2020

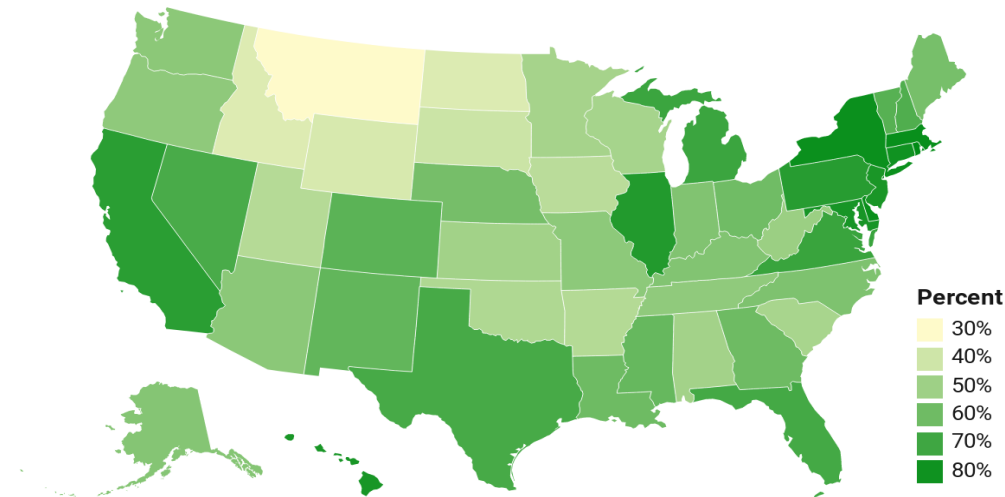
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

Most ready to resume → Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and North Dakota;
Least ready → Texas, Rhode Island, Nebraska, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and South Carolina.

GEOGRAPHY AND BEHAVIORS

Wearing a face mask across the United States

In the last week, how closely did you personally follow the health recommendations listed below?
- Wearing a face mask when outside of your home
[Percent respondents who answered "Very closely"]



National sample, N = 18,132, Time period: 5/16/2020-5/31/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

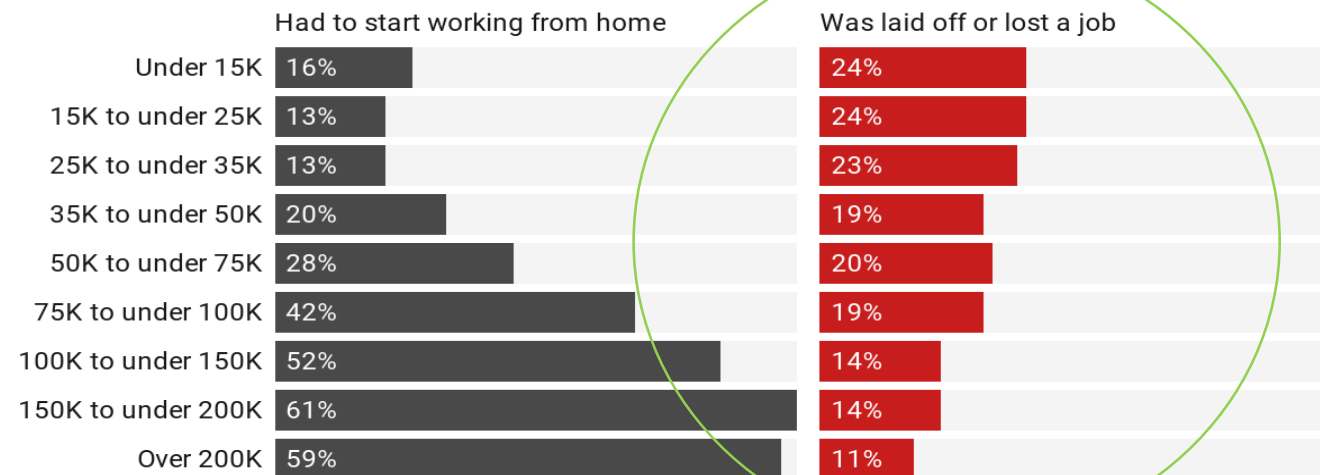
Highest → Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Delaware, and New York.

Lowest → Montana, Idaho, North Dakota, and Wyoming (also lowest COVID-19 numbers)

INCOME/CLASS AND WORK

Americans with higher income more likely to start working from home during the pandemic

Have you or someone in your household experienced any of the following as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?



National sample, N = 20,333, Time period: 5/2/2020-5/15/2020

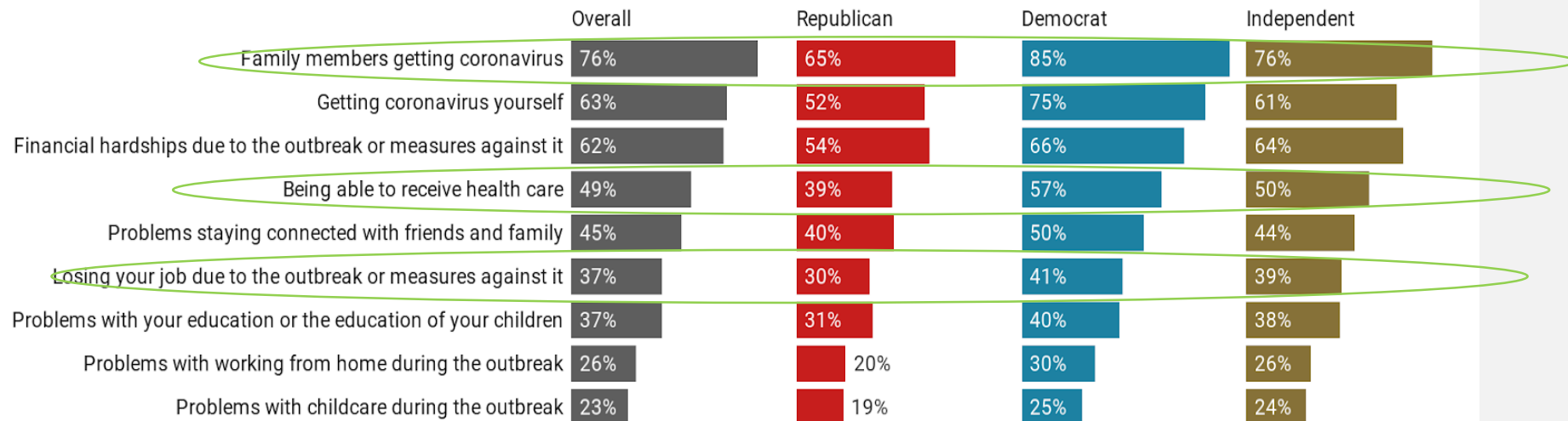
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

• Created with Datawrapper

PARTY AND WORRY

Partisan differences in concerns over COVID-19

How concerned, if at all, do you currently feel about the following?
[Percent respondents who said they were "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned"]



National sample, N = 18,132, Time period: 5/16/2020-5/31/2020

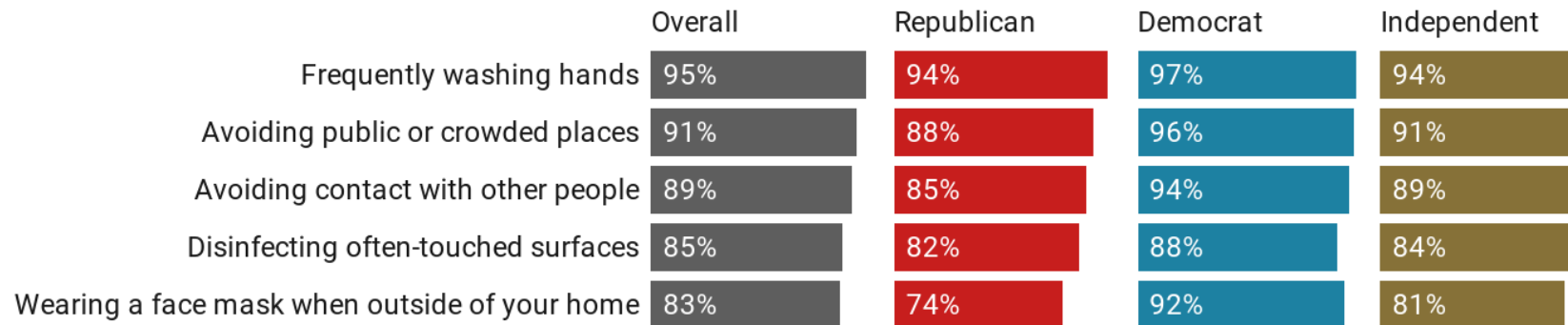
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

• Created with Datawrapper

PARTY AND BEHAVIORS

Partisanship and adherence to health guidelines

In the last week, how closely did you personally follow the health recommendations listed below?
[Percent respondents who said "somewhat closely" or "very closely"]



National sample, N = 18,132, Time period: 5/16/2020-5/31/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

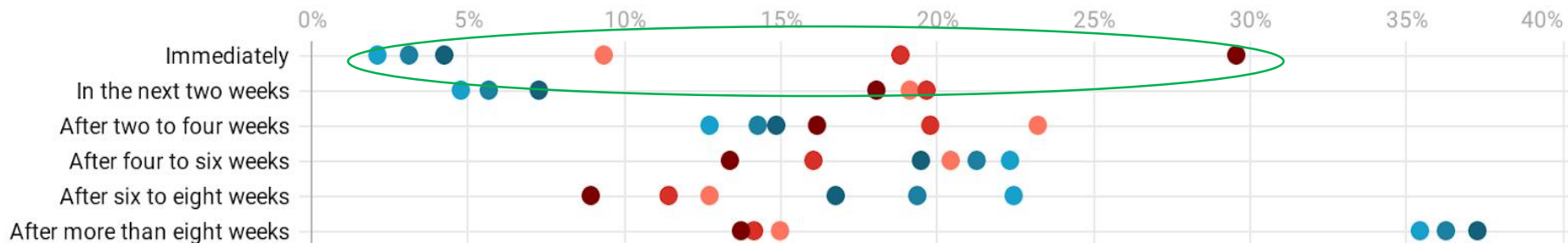
• Created with Datawrapper

PARTY POLICY DIFFERENCES OVER TIME

Partisan differences in respondent attitudes towards reopening the U.S. economy

When should the country reopen the economy and resume business activity?

● Republican - Late April ● Republican - Early May ● Republican - Late May ● Democrat - Late April ● Democrat - Early May ● Democrat - Late May



National sample, N1 = 19,505 (4/16/2020-4/30/2020), N2 = 20,333 (5/2/2020-5/15/2020)

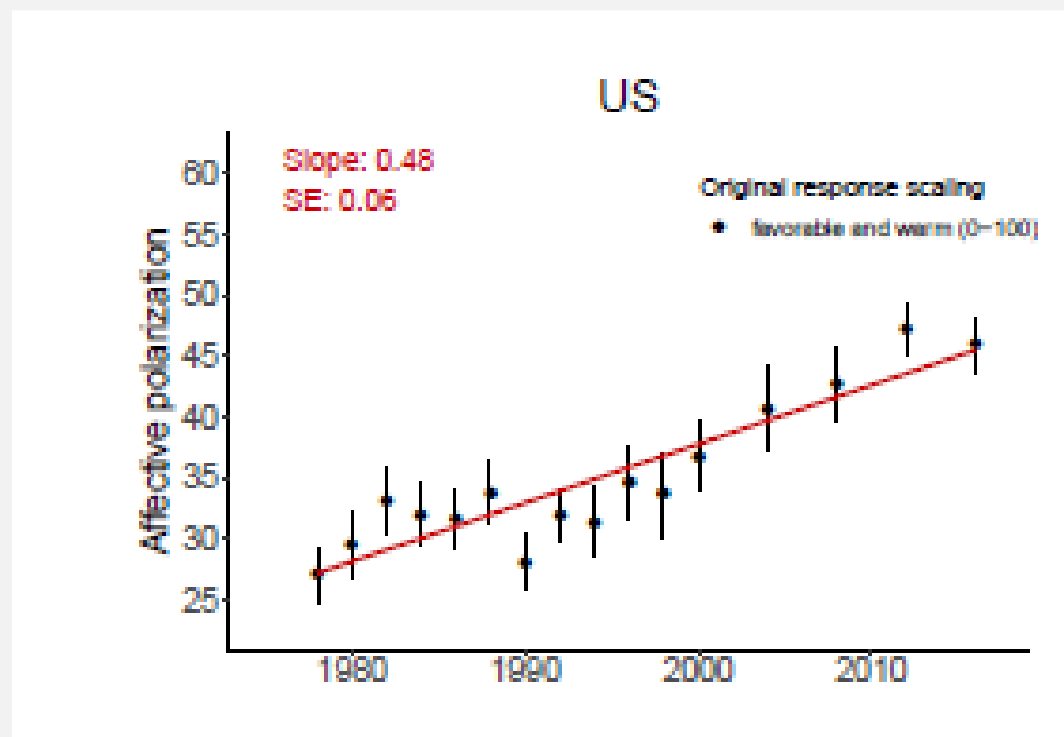
Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

• Created with Datawrapper

DOES AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION DRIVE PARTISAN GAPS?

- **Affective polarization**: tendency of ordinary partisans to dislike and distrust those from the other party.
- Measures →
 - feeling thermometer toward out-party (i.e., a scale where 0 indicates very cold feelings and 100 indicates very warm feelings),
 - trust,
 - trait ratings (i.e., patriotic, open-minded, etc.),
 - social distance (comfort in having a friend or neighbor from the other party).

AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION



AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION

- The more partisans dislike the other side, the more they seek to distinguish themselves from the other side.
- Partisans who dislike the other side more, do the opposite of what other side suggests.
- **Problems →**
 - not a substantive basis of policy views.
 - bridging such divides requires lessening perceptions of the other side or altering perceptions of what “your side” does.

AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION

- **Unique data** → measured affective polarization 9 months BEFORE COVID-19 in a large nationally representative sample.
- **Does severity/threat matter?**
 - When threat is higher, motivations change and the goal is no longer to assert identity, but rather to practice safe behaviors.

MEASURES

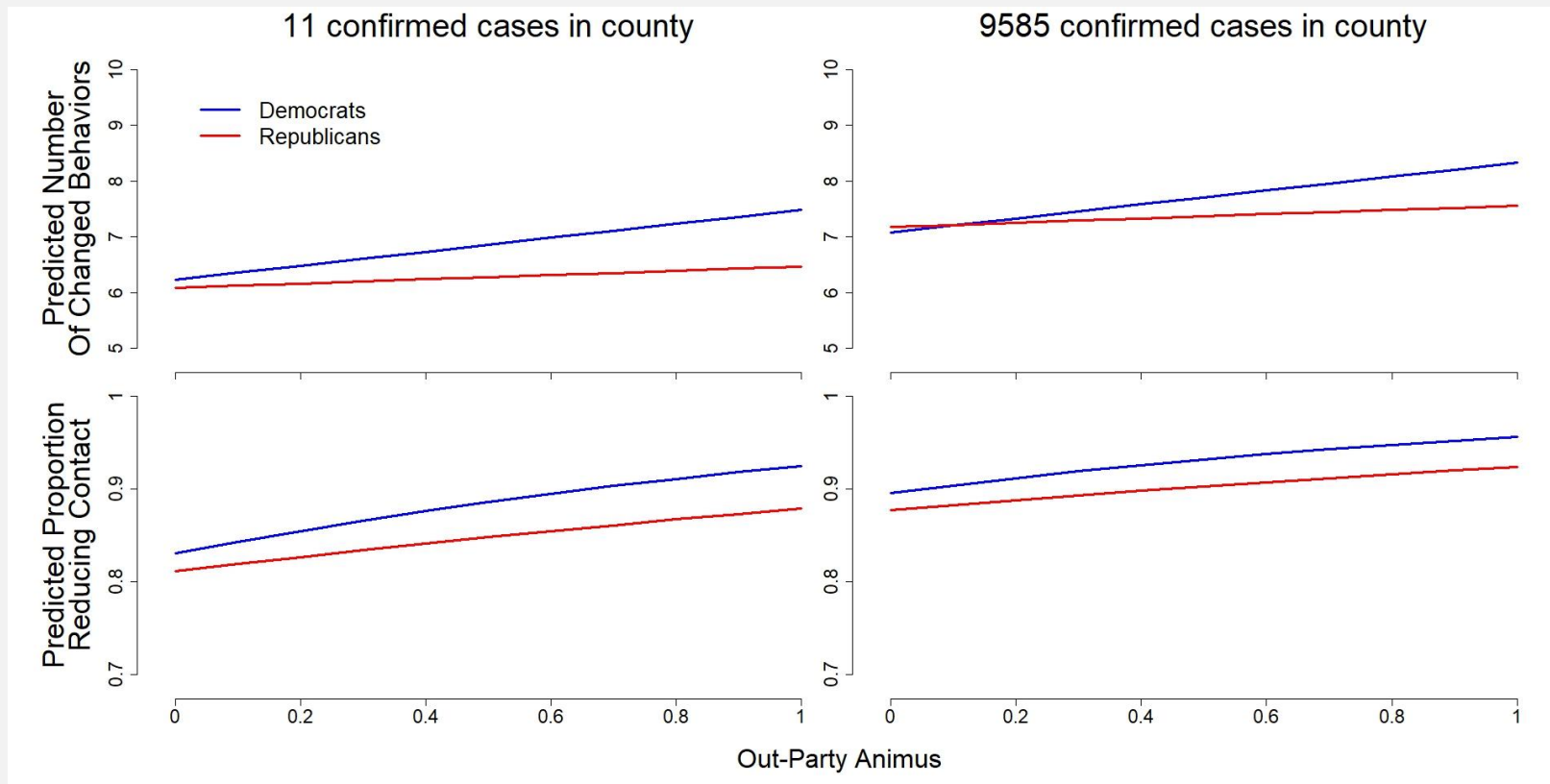
Behavioral modifications

- Taking part in several of 14 possible behaviors to protect against COVID
- Reduce Contact

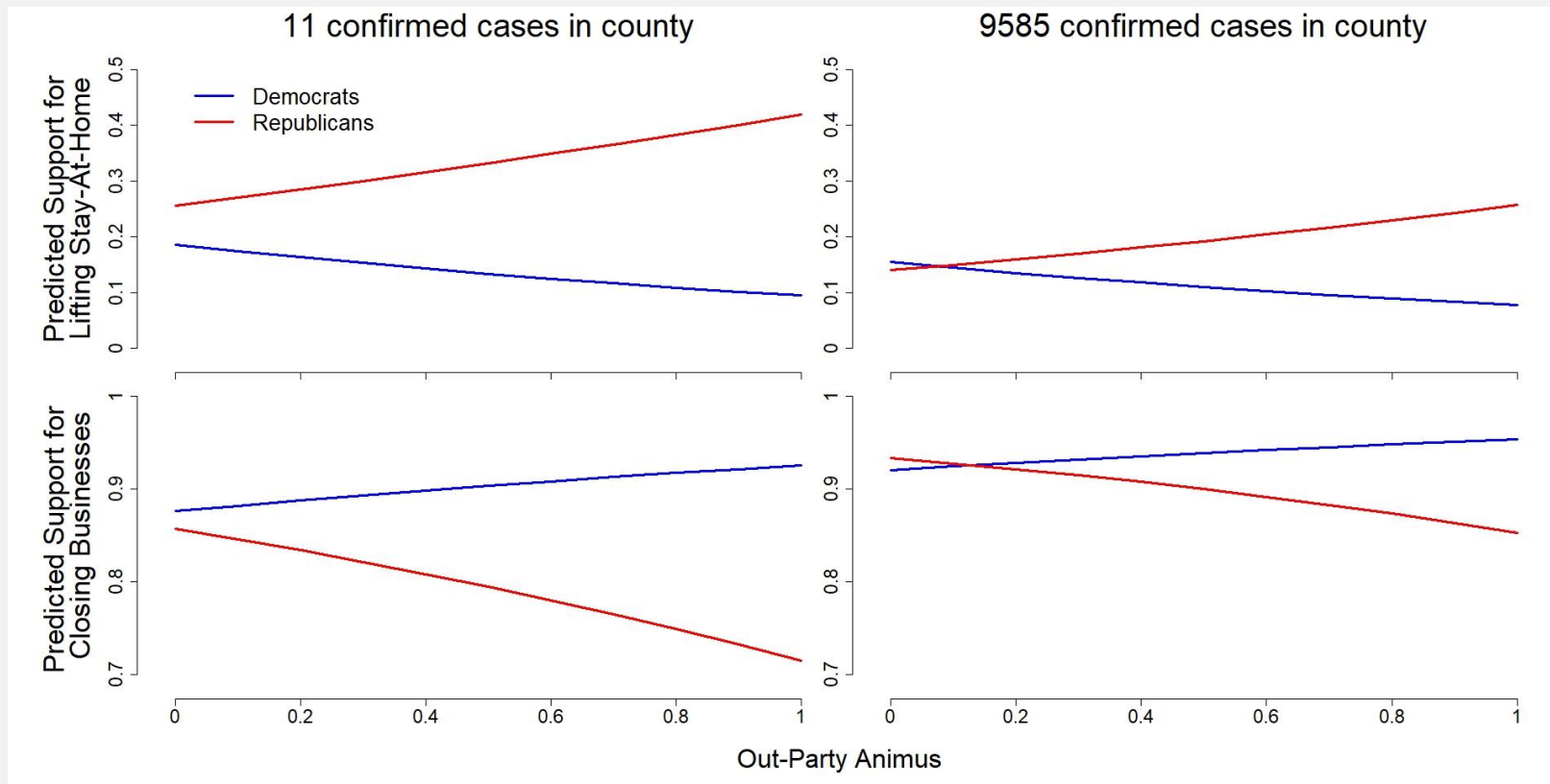
Support for policies

- Lift Stay at Home Orders
- Close Businesses

POLARIZATION AFFECTS BEHAVIORS



POLARIZATION AFFECTS POLICY SUPPORT (BUT LESS SO WHEN MANY CASES)



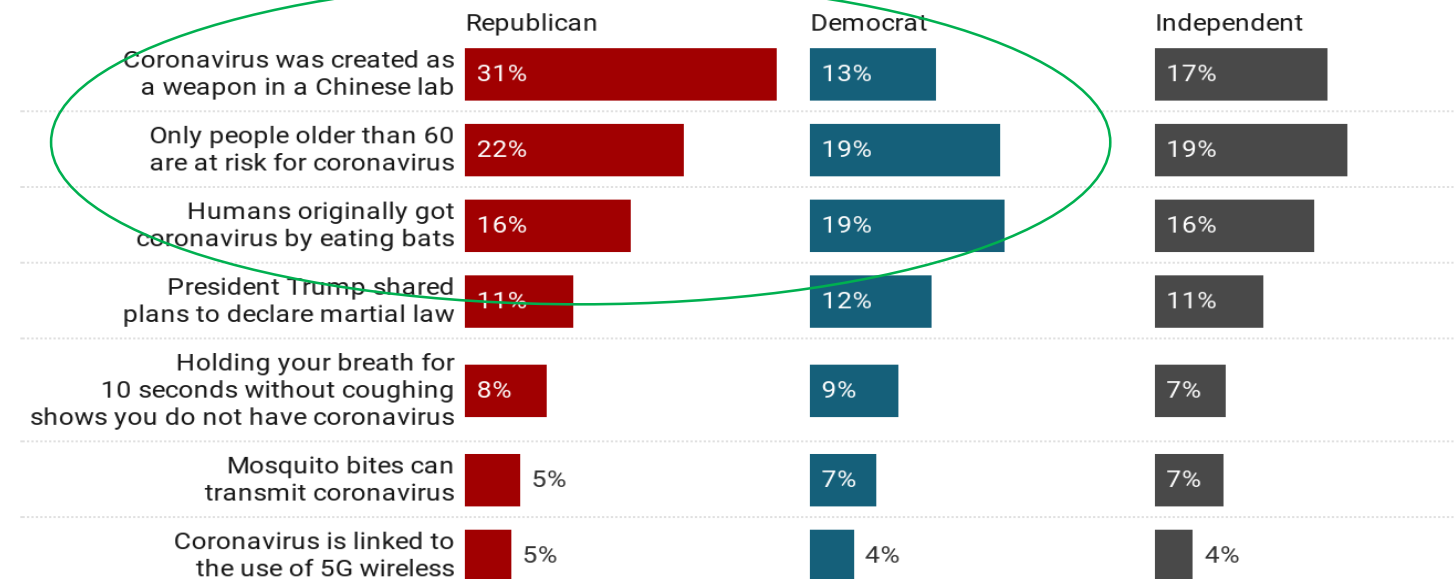
POLARIZED POLITICS

- Affective Polarization drives COVID behaviors and policy views.
- Less so in the case of policy views when cases are high.
- Does partisanship also affect misinformation?

PARTISANSHIP AND MISINFORMATION

COVID-19 misinformation by party

Below are some statements about the current health crisis.
To the best of your knowledge, are those statements accurate or inaccurate?
[Statements are presented to respondents in random order]



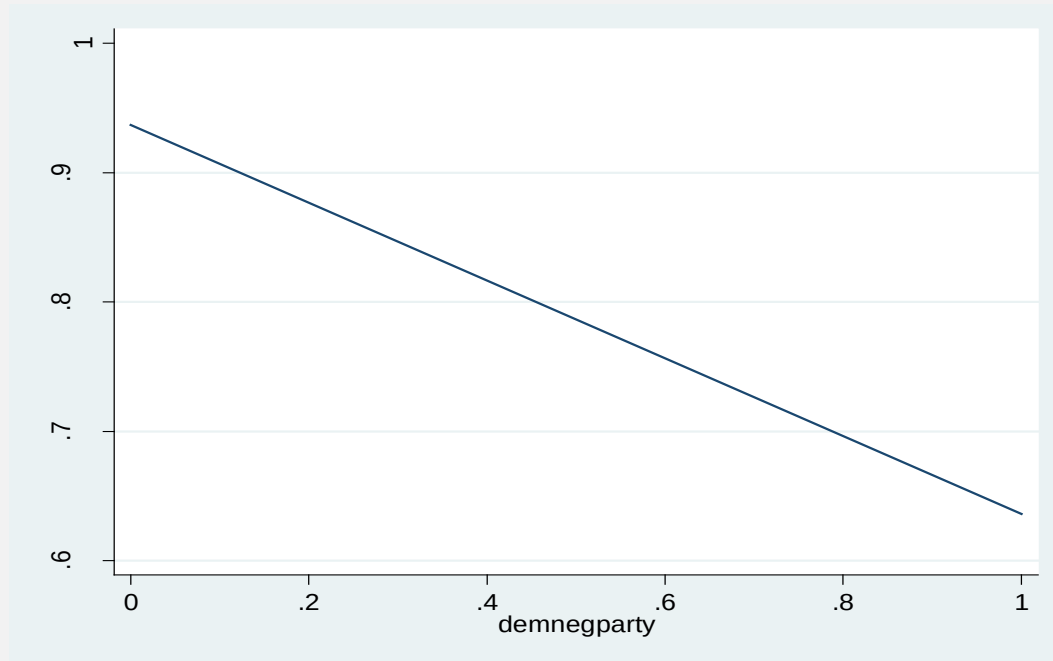
National sample, N = 18,132, Time period: 5/16/2020-5/31/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

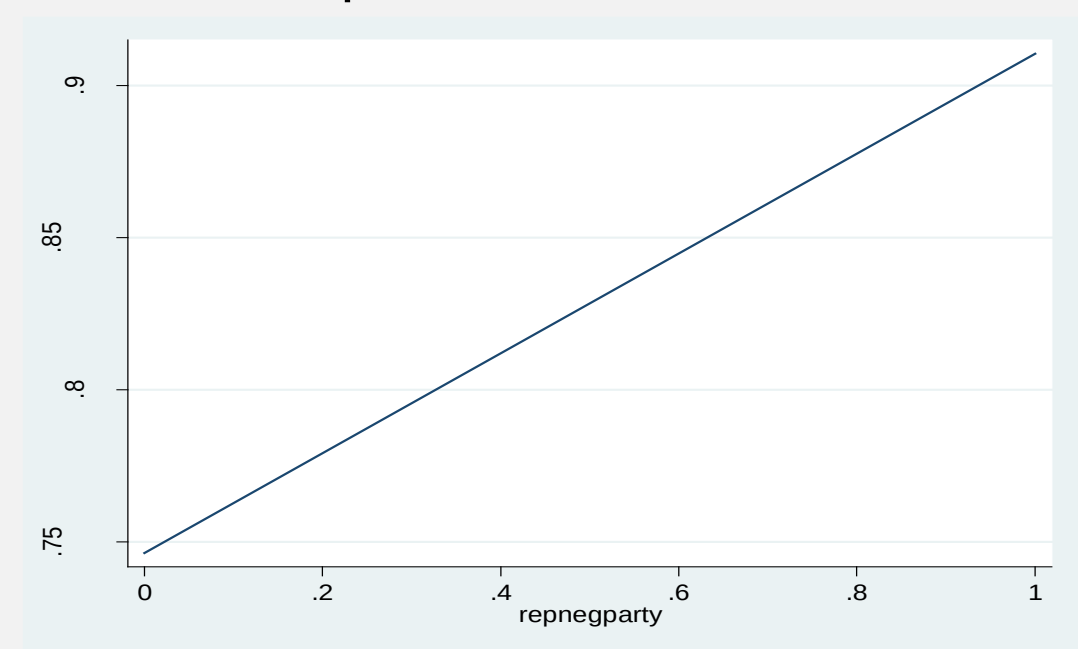
• Created with Datawrapper

AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION AND MISINFORMATION

Democrats



Republicans



OTHER EFFECTS ON MISINFORMATION

- **Increases Misinformation** → **Minority Groups** (Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American), Religiosity, **Poor Mental Health**, Exposure to Fox, Trump news conference
- **Decreases Misinformation** → Education, Age, Social Media Exposure

CONCLUSIONS

- **Group differences** → Potential disequilibrium → too many precautions prevent economic recovery but too few precautions prevent arresting the pandemic.
- Group differences based on race/ethnicity, geography, income, and partisanship.

SOLUTIONS?

- Correct misperceptions of the other side (affectively polarized view out-partisans as “behaving worse than they do”).
- Seek any sources of bi-partisan support, elite role modeling.
- Emphasize super-ordinate identities.
- For misinformation →
 - Education.
 - Encourage crowdsourcing corrections on social media,.
 - Inoculation efforts (anticipate misinformation and debunk it).
 - Targeted messages to minority communities.
 - Mental health support.

MORE ON SCIENCE COMMUNICATION TOMORROW

- NASEM Standing Committee on Advancing Science Communication Research and Practice.
- June 11, 1:30-4:00, “Building Capacity for Science Communication: Partnership Awards Grantee Meeting.”
- June 12, 10:00-12:15, “The Role of Science Communication in Addressing Disproportionate Effects of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Populations”
- See: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/standing-committee-on-advancing-science-communication-research-and-practice>