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Elections and Covid-19

On December 19, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO), received a report of ‘viral pneumonia’ breaking out in Wuhan China. Within a month, China published and revealed an out break of the novel Coronavirus. Within months, the entire world shut down. Borders closed, traveling was restricted, businesses shut down, and a lot of uncertainty hung in the atmosphere. The world tried to control the spread, but the human-to-human transmission spread throughout Asia and then onto the rest of the world like wildfire. At first the virus was classified as endemic, but as hundreds of countries succumbed to the rapid spread, a world-wide pandemic arose halting regular life and changing the future of the world. (WHO)

The understanding of the coronavirus continues to constantly evolve. As an enveloped RNA virus, the COVID-19 strand of coronaviruses is a subgenus of the severe acute respiratory syndrome virus, along with several other bat coronaviruses. In less than a year, 55 million confirmed cases have been reported globally. Cases and deaths continue to rise daily as the virus continues to spread. Only a portion of acute infections are reported, so the entirety of the spread and effect of the SARS-COV-2 has been underestimated and incomplete. Although most individuals that become infected with COVID-19 fully recover, many individuals do not recover, and the lasting effects are still being discovered daily while research and development continue to search for answers to the lasting effects and entire burden of the virus. (McIntosh)

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic overshadow more than just the physical health of the world population. Countries and states began calling for cancellations of schools, encouraging working remotely, and limiting social gathering and quarantining from friends, family, and other loved ones. Many individuals became isolated and succumbed to feelings of loneliness and mental illness. Unemployment rates in just the United States alone, rose higher in three months due to COVID-19 than it rose in two years of the Great Depression. In February 2020 unemployment rate was at an all time low in the post-World War II era at 3.8 %. By May 2020, the unemployment rate shot up to 13.0%, the second highest unemployment rate only to the rate that was calculated in April 2020 at 14.4%. The unemployment rate may have unofficially risen to 16% in May 2020, but it is not recorded due to measurement challenges that have arisen amid the COVID-19 pandemic. (pewresearch.org)

Along with the record-breaking unemployment rates, COVID-19 has brought devastation to the younger generations of America. In recent models, suicide rates around the world have ranged anywhere from 1% to 145% (BMJ). With children and teens not being able to socialize by going to school and seeing friends and family, the mental health of the population has deteriorated. Not only the younger generation has been affected, but due to the economic recession and the pandemic, the mental health of the population has declined. In a poll conducted in July 2020, 53% of adults in the United States reported that their mental health had been negatively affected due to stress caused by the coronavirus. In March of 2020, the reported amount was only 32% when the pandemic began in the United States. Along with the mental health problems, 36% of adults reported difficulty sleeping and 32% reported a difficulty of eating. Alcohol consumption and substance use rose 12% and those with chronic conditions had stress levels rise 12% due to worry and other stress issues. (Panchal).

While the stress and worry arose among the American people, pressure rose among local authorities and government officials on how to regulate and try to control the spread of the coronavirus. In an attempt to spread out the curve of those infected with the virus, many states and cities began to shut down and order state-mandated lock downs, shutting down school and local businesses. On January 22, Donald Trump Jr, the 45th president of the United States declared, “We have it totally under control. It is one person coming in from China. It is going to be just fine.” From the day that President Trump said that the coronavirus was under control to December 8, 2020, there had been 14, 823,129 reported cases in the United States. By that same date there had been 282,785 deaths due to COVID-19 in the United States (CDC). With 2020 being an election year, President Trump faced exponential challenges as the spread of the coronavirus was not under control. Many Americans blamed President Trump for the many deaths and cases and the lack of control over the virus. Even with the uncontrollable spread, and the number of deaths, with the hospitals overrun with patients struggling to breath and needing ventilators, President Trump continued to tell the country to “Relax”. (Doggett)

It is impossible to say that COVID-19 did not directly impact the 2020 election. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the direct correlation between the pandemic and the decision of American voters, there are many things that may have impacted voters. When President Trump lost the election to President-Elect Joe Biden, President Trump declared that the election was corrupt, and that voter fraud occurred across the entire nation. With the increase of mail in voting, due to social distancing guidelines, many Americans mailed in their votes instead of going to the polls in person. President Trump claimed that in specific swing states, there was a lot of voter fraud and that there were many fake ballots. After many lawsuits and recounts, and lack of concrete evidence, the position still stands that Joe Biden will be the 46th president of the United States of America.

Throughout 2020, Republicans and Democrats held extremely different views about the COVID-19 pandemic and President Trump’s response to it. According to a study done by the National Public Radio, 41% of voters ranked the coronavirus pandemic as the most important issue facing the country. The Associated Press declared that 73% of those 41% of voters voted for Joe Biden. After the pandemic, the next top issue was the economy and jobs at 28%. Of those 28% of voters, 81% of those, voted for President Trump. Shana Gadarian, an associate professor of political science at Syracuse University who surveyed voters throughout the campaign said, “What we’ve seen is over time that the biggest determinant of people’s worries about COVID-19 and their attitudes about COVID-19 is not where they live or the COVID-19 deaths in their area, but it is their partisanship” (NPR).

COVID-19 made a drastic impact on the future of the American people. While vaccines continue to be developed, hope for a control of the virus kindle a little bit of hope in the American people. President-Elect Joe Biden has implemented a plan to help the American people to prevent more infected cases and deaths among the American people. President Trump did everything he could to help the economy grow and help the American people amid the world-wide pandemic. Going into 2021, President-Elect Joe Biden has a lot of pressure weighing down on him to fulfill promises made and bring back safety to the American people. The coronavirus has yet to be eradicated and still poses a threat to the entire world. Little is still known about the effects of the virus and the long-term challenges that have arisen from the virus will continue to affect the entire world in the near future.

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