

Market Matters: The Effect of Big-City News on Rural America During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Eunji Kim^a, Michael E. Shepherd^a, and Joshua D. Clinton^a

^aDepartment of Political Science, Vanderbilt University

This manuscript was compiled on June 15, 2020

Can ‘urban-centric’ local television news coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic affect the behavior of rural residents with lived experiences so different from their “local” news coverage? Leveraging quasi-random geographic variation in media markets for 771 matched rural counties, we show that rural residents are more likely to practice social distancing if they live in a media market that is more impacted by COVID-19. Individual-level survey responses from residents of these counties confirm county-level behavioral differences and help attribute the differences we identify to differences in local television news coverage—self-reported differences only exist among respondents who prefer watching local news and there are no differences in media usage or consumption across media markets. Although important for showing the ability of local television news to affect behavior despite urban-rural differences, the media-related effects we identify are at most half the size of the differences related to partisan differences.

media effects | natural experiment | rural America | COVID-19

The ability of the news media to provide information to the mass public is critical (1), especially during events like the COVID-19 pandemic when our understanding of the disease, its spread, and government responses are changing rapidly. The importance of accessing up-to-date information about one’s own community is critical precisely because the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic varies tremendously across localities in the United States. Although many have turned to their local television news media as their primary source of COVID-19 related information in response (2), the local television news is not always local for some viewers. For many of the rural residents in a media market, their daily experiences and concerns may be vastly different from the stories covered by their local television news.

This discrepancy is important because the early outbreaks of COVID-19 have mostly occurred in large cities. How rural people respond to urban-focused COVID-19 news coverage has critical, but uncertain, implications for better understanding the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic and how the urban-rural divide may continue to impact American politics and mass political behavior. On the one hand, stories focusing on the public health consequences affecting nearby cities may make rural residents more willing to engage in social distancing behaviors to prevent outbreaks in their own communities. Alternatively, exposure to ‘urban-centric’ pandemic coverage may cause rural Americans to be more likely to dismiss the virus because of differences between their rural community and the harder-hit urban communities portrayed in local media. Indeed, as Kathy Cramer persuasively argues in *The Politics of Resentment*, perceptions that their communities are significantly different from urban areas in ways that are unfairly overlooked by politicians and the media lie at the core of the American rural consciousness and resentment (3). If so, the

willingness of rural residents to dismiss the concerns being raised by an “urban-centered” news may undermine public health when collective responses are required.

Attempts to identify media effects have long been plagued by issues of endogeneity, measurement error, and self-selection (4). Comparing viewers and non-viewers leads to misleading effects because of how different viewers are from non-viewers—including in how willing they are to seek out news in the current high-choice media environment (5, 6). Experiments allow researchers to better control for variation in media exposure*, but it is impossible to know whether the estimated effects generalize or persist beyond the experimental condition. As a result, recent studies rely on ambitious field experiments and quasi-experiments to identify effects (8–13)—an approach we follow.

To identify the effect of ‘urban-centric’ local television news on rural residents, we leverage geographic variation in media market coverage to compare otherwise similar rural respondents living in media markets with varying levels of COVID-19 severity. These comparisons are possible because the United States is partitioned into 210 geographically defined Designated Market Areas (DMA) that are generally centered in an urban area† by Nielsen Media Research (14). Issues of signal quality aside, every resident in a media market (DMA) is theoretically able to receive the same set of broadcast channels.

We focus on local television news because it is the primary

* See (7) for recent innovation.

† A DMA refers to a set of counties that form an exclusive geographic area “in which the home market television stations hold a dominance of total hours viewed.”

Significance Statement

Despite the continued decline of local journalism, the COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of the importance of local news for keeping the public informed about their community. But because of how media markets are defined geographically, “local” television news is not equally local. For some rural residents, their local television news often focuses on urban communities with issues that are quite different from their own. We show that rural residents are more likely to engage in social distancing behavior than otherwise similar rural residents if their local news is produced in a city that is more impacted by COVID-19. Despite the urban-rural differences, coverage of the pandemic’s impact in the more urban counties is able to slightly, but significantly, impact the willingness of rural residents to engage in social distancing.

E. K., M. S. and J.C. designed research, performed research, analyzed data, and wrote the paper.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

² To whom correspondence may be addressed. E-mail: eunji.kim@vanderbilt.edu

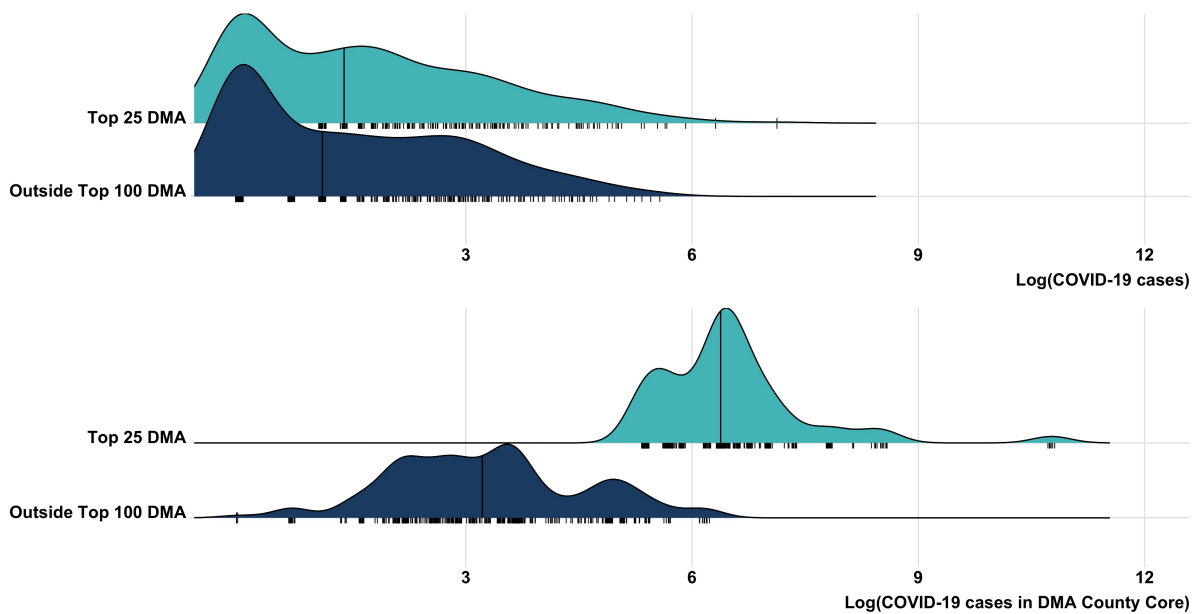


Fig. 1. The top panel compares the distribution of the log number of COVID-19 cases in rural counties located in one of the 25 largest DMAs and the distribution in matched rural counties located in a media market outside the top 100 largest media markets. The bottom panel graphs the distribution occurring in the respective media market core county for these 771 rural counties. Horizontal lines denote the median number of cases. Because using a logged measure results in missing cases for counties with no confirmed cases of COVID-19, we recode these cases to be the minimum value in the sample with positive cases to avoid creating missing values. Appendix B reports a similar relationship using the logged number of cases per capita.

source of local news – nearly 60% of our sample report watching local television news (compared to only 19% who report reading local newspapers)[‡] and viewership of local television news has only increased as a result of the pandemic. As a recent industry study concludes: “the COVID-19 pandemic is fueling a resurgence in viewership of local news and linear television in the United States.”[§] That said, we know that local television news coverage varies from local newspaper coverage (15–18), so we are careful to interpret our findings in terms of local television news rather than local news more generally.

Most important for the purpose of identifying media effects is the fact that television media market boundaries create a natural quasi-experiment where otherwise similar (and even neighboring) rural counties are assigned to radically different media market centers and local news media. For example, residents of Sullivan County, NY—a county located in the Catskill mountains to the Northwest of New York City—receive their “local” news from stations with headquarters in New York City, but residents of neighboring Delaware County receive their local news from Binghamton, NY. Largely by chance, depending on where they live, otherwise similar rural residents receive their local news from stations located in cities experiencing substantially different versions of the COVID-19 outbreak. Because local television news outlets are known to prioritize the concerns of core cities in a media market (19), variation in the impact of COVID-19 pandemic across urban creates variation in local news coverage of the public health consequences of COVID-19.

This difference matters. Using data on the percentage of county residents staying home according in 771 otherwise sim-

ilar rural counties and a survey of nearly 9,000 white rural residents of those counties, we show that rural residents engage in more social distancing if they happen to live in a media market whose local television news is produced in a city that is more impacted by COVID-19 than otherwise similar rural residents who receive their local news from less-impacted cities. Our ability to eliminate confounding explanations—e.g., the increase in social distancing only occurs among otherwise similar individuals who report watching the local news—suggests that the differences we identify are attributable to differences in local television news coverage.

Concerns about the erosion of democratic accountability often arise when *local* news focuses largely on the concerns of distant communities—especially in a fragmented media environment that is increasingly dominated by national concerns (20). Local journalism is often thought important for the public interest because of its ability to inform individuals about local issues than can counterbalance the negative effects of partisan events covered by the national news coverage. Whether the local media is able to perform such role is unclear and the case we examine is a hard one for media effects—focusing on whether urban-centric television news can change the behavior of rural Americans despite substantial community (and partisan) differences in the subject and the audience and also the nature of local television news. The positive effects we find are reassuring from a public health perspective, but the relative magnitudes of the effects are notably smaller than important countervailing factors such as Republican partisanship and gender—suggesting that there are important limits to the effect that local television news can have on changing behavior.

[‡] See Appendix K for more details.

[§] <https://www.tvtechnology.com/news/local-news-linear-tv-see-resurgence-during-covid-19-says-survey>

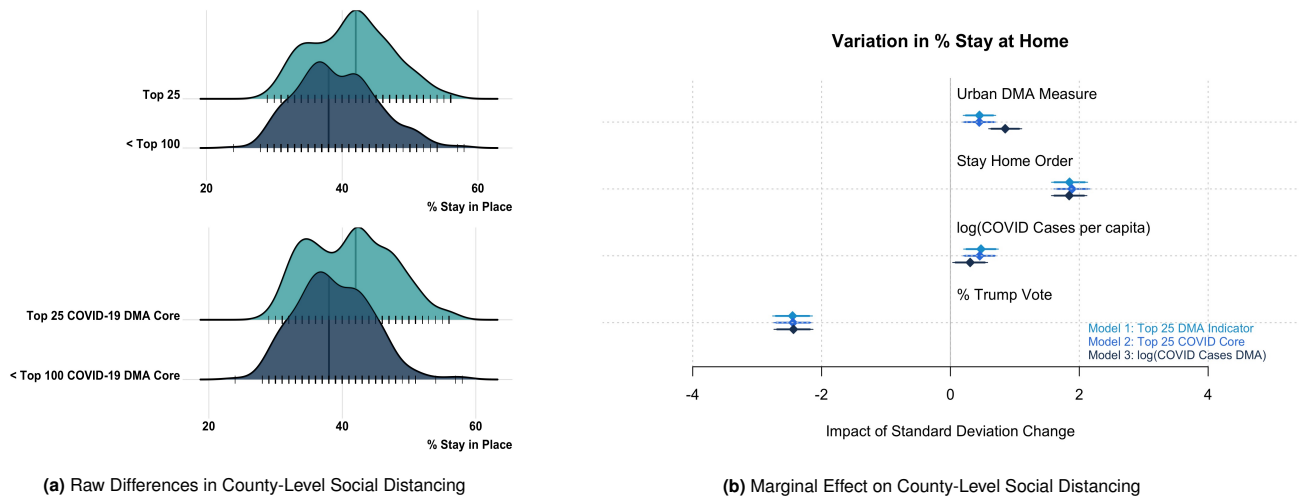


Fig. 2. Panel (a) shows the difference in the distribution of county-level social distancing using two different measures of urban media market type. Panel (b) shows predicted change in % Stay at home from a one-standard deviation change in each variable from three models using three different measures of urban media market type. Positive values indicate increased social distancing.

Data and Research Design

To identify the effect of differences in local television news coverage of COVID-19 we compare otherwise similar residents of rural counties—defined by the U.S. Census as having less than 400 people per square mile—who differ in whether their local television news is from one of the top 25 largest media markets or from outside the top 100 media markets. To do so, we use county demographics to match every rural county located in a top 25 media market to its most similar county located in a outside-the-top-100 media market.

To characterize the difference in media markets and rural counties in terms of the incidence of COVID-19, Figure 1 graphs the distribution of confirmed COVID-19 cases as of April 1, 2020 in the 771 rural counties we examine (top) relative to the largest county of the associated media market for these rural counties (bottom) using a log scale to correct for outliers[¶]. As the figure makes clear, the distribution of the incidence of COVID-19 in our 771 matched rural counties is nearly identical regardless of whether the county is in a populous media market or not. In contrast, there are far more confirmed COVID-19 cases in the counties containing the local television news stations in the larger media markets. Moreover, the incidence of COVID-19 cases in media markets outside the top 100 DMAs are far more similar to our sample of rural counties than is the distribution of COVID-19 cases in the larger media markets. Because local news coverage is typically driven by issues affecting the most populous county of the media market, our identification strategy leverages the differences in Figure 1 to determine if the differential impact of COVID-19 in the larger media market increases the social distancing behavior of residents of rural counties with similar numbers of COVID-19 cases.

[¶]We follow the process outlined in (21). Appendix B reports the similarity of the 771 matched counties using the 2014 5-year average of the 2010 U.S. Census.

^{||}We choose April 1, 2020 because our survey of rural residents asking about their social distancing behavior “last week” was launched on April 6. We also chose this date because both April 1, 2019 and April 1, 2020 are weekdays and comparing the percentage of residents who are staying at home year-over-year is therefore a more meaningful comparison. Appendix X presents the relationship using a per capita measure to show a similar relationship but we focus on the number of cases for expositional purposes because the logged per capita distributions are all negative.

Identifying the consequences of the differences displayed in Figure 1 on social distancing behavior requires addressing ecological inference concerns and eliminating confounding explanations for behavioral differences that may co-vary with media market size. To do so, we survey 9,081 white respondents with internet access from the 771 matched rural counties between April 6 and 14 using *Lucid.io*.^{**} We collect information on media usage, COVID-19 concerns, and self-reported social distancing behaviors (if any). As expected given the county-level sample balancing we employ, rural respondents are nearly identical in terms of demographics and other potentially confounding factors regardless of whether they reside in a top media market or not (Appendix B). Respondents also do not differ in their media usage or attitudes towards the news media in general, among those who prefer local news, or among those that report that they do not watch the local news (Appendix D).

Although there are no statistically distinguishable differences in terms of who prefers to watch local television news across media markets, rural residents in top 25 media markets are less approving, on average, of local news coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to their counterparts in media markets outside the top 100 (Appendix E). This difference is reassuring given the discrepancy in COVID-19 incidence graphed in Figure 1—we would expect the dramatic difference in COVID-19 cases to create a mismatch between local television news coverage and local rural experiences to increase the disapproval of local news coverage for rural residents living in a media market whose core county is more impacted by COVID-19. We interpret the increased dissatisfaction as revealing that rural residents are more dissatisfied with their local television news coverage when the incidence of COVID-19 is much more prevalent in the core media market county than it is in their own rural county of residence. Whether this increased dissatisfaction results in an inability of local television news to impact the behavior of rural residents is the

^{**}We ultimately recruited respondents from 705 of the 771 matched counties. We focus on white respondents to maximize our statistical power and avoid differences due to race and ethnicity, but the rural counties we analyze are roughly 85-90% white on average. See Appendix L for the wording of the the survey questions we analyze.

question to which we now turn.

Differences in County-Level Social Distancing

To determine whether the urban-centric local news coverage of COVID-19 in larger media markets affects the social distancing behavior of rural residents we rely on the county-level percentage of cellular devices staying at home reported by *Cuebiq.com* for the week of April 1, 2020.^{††}

To begin, panel (a) of Figure 2 compares how the percentage of residents staying home in our matched rural counties vary depending on whether they are located in one of the most populous media markets (top) or in one of the most COVID-19 impacted media markets (bottom). Regardless of the measure used, the distribution of raw data reveals that a higher percentage of residents are staying home in rural counties located in top media markets.

To probe whether this relationship persists after controlling for the many ways in which the counties may vary, panel (b) presents the results of predicting the percentage staying home in a county on April 1, 2020 as a function of whether the county is located in an “urban” media market, the logged number of COVID-19 cases in the county per capita, whether the county was under a “stay at home” order, population density, median income, percentage of county residents that are white, percentage of residents with a high school education or less and the two-party vote share for President Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

To ensure our results are robust, we measure the treatment using three different measures: an indicator for whether the rural county was in one of the 25 most populous media markets, an indicator for whether the rural county is in one of the most Top 25 COVID-19 impacted media markets, and a continuous measure based on the logged number of COVID-19 cases in the most populous county in the media market.^{†‡}

The effects graphed in Figure 2 reveal more social distancing in rural counties located in top 25 media markets relative to the social distancing that is observed in otherwise similar rural counties in “outside the top 100” media markets. This is true regardless of the measure we use to measure how the severity of the pandemic might impact local television news coverage. In addition, we also reassuringly find more social distancing effects in counties under stay at home orders and with larger numbers of confirmed cases of COVID-19. Reflecting the importance of elite partisan cues even during the pandemic, the more a county supported President Trump in the 2016 presidential election, the less likely its residents were to engage in social distancing all else equal.^{§§} Even so, rural residents of a county in a top 25 media market were 1 percentage point more likely to stay at home than rural residents in similar counties located in media markets outside the top 100—an effect that is roughly half the size of a stay at home order.

Differences in Individual-Level Social Distancing

The county-level results of Figure 2 are suggestive, but incomplete because they rely on aggregate relationships. To

validate our interpretation, we use a survey of rural residents of these matched counties to rule out confounding differences in media usage and show that similar differences emerge at the individual-level even after controlling for individual-level differences in demographics, political orientations, and media usage. Our survey also allows us to better examine our proposed mechanism because we are able to conform that the differences in self-reported social distancing behavior only occurs among those who report watching their local television news.

Table 1 presents the results of using least-squares regression to predict whether white rural residents are more likely to report engaging in social distancing if they live in an urban media market and they also watch their “local” television news.^{¶¶} Specifications (1) through (4) predict whether the respondent chooses “I stay at home and only go out to get food or medicine” when asked “Which of the following are you doing because of the coronavirus outbreak?” and specifications (5) to (8) report the results for predicting whether a respondent reports “I wear a mask when I go outside.” For each response, we present the estimated effect of residing in a top 25 media market or top 25 most COVID-19 impacted media market (*Top 25 DMA* and *Top 25 COVID Core*) for those who report that they do not consume local news (specifications (1),(2),(5),(6)) and those who do (specifications (3),(4),(7),(8)).^{***} If local television news is responsible for increased social distancing, we should only detect differences between media markets among local news watchers.

The results in Table 1 are consistent with the county-level social distancing results summarized in Figure 2. First, the positive and statistically significant effect for *Top 25 DMA* and *Top 25 COVID Core* observed in specifications (3),(4),(7),(8) reveals that white rural residents who happen to receive their local television news from a top 25 media market are more likely to stay at home, and more likely to wear a mask outside than their counterparts in a media markets outside the top 100 among those who watch their local television news.

Second, we only observe differences among those who report watching local television news – we observe no difference in social distancing behavior (specifications (1),(2),(5),(6)). This is precisely the pattern we would predict if the differences in social distancing we detect in the county-level analysis are due to differences in local television news coverage of COVID-19. If other factors were responsible for the county-level differences reported in Figure 2 we would expect to find behavioral differences among those who live in the same communities but who do not consume local television news. Instead, only those who prefer watching local news engage in more social distancing behavior.^{†††}

It is also reassuring that the magnitude of the effects we identify in our individual level analysis are roughly similar to the magnitude we detect in our county-level analysis using different data and different specifications. Our county-level

^{††} Appendix C shows the results are robust to using the yearly change in the percentage staying at home.

^{†‡} Our results are robust to using a per capita measure (Appendix G), but we use the raw count because news programs typically reported the number of cases rather than the population-adjusted number of cases. If the effects are due to media coverage as we claim, social distancing should therefore vary according to the number of cases as that was the number being widely publicized.

^{§§} This finding mimics results reported by (22, 23).

^{¶¶} Table S19 in Appendix F replicates the results using logistic regressions to confirm that the results are statistically distinguishable from zero. Appendix H reveals that there is also a relationship with increased concerns about catching COVID-19 among local television news watchers in larger media markets.

^{***} Appendix G replicates the results using treatments defined using: the number of COVID-19 cases, the number of COVID-19 cases per capita, the number of COVID-19-related deaths, and the number of COVID-19 deaths per capita. Similar results obtain regardless of the measure used to distinguish media markets.

^{†††} Also important for our interpretation is the fact that who chooses to watch local television news does not vary by media market (Appendix K).

Table 1. The Effects of Residing in Urban DMA in Self-Reported COVID-19 Social Distancing Behaviors

	Pr(Stay Home)				Pr(Wear Mask Outside)			
	No Local		Local		No Local		Local	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Top 25 DMA	-0.02 (0.02)		0.03** (0.01)		0.03 (0.02)		0.03* (0.01)	
Top 25 Covid Core		-0.02 (0.02)		0.04** (0.01)		0.02 (0.02)		0.04** (0.01)
Stay at Home Order	0.000 (0.02)	-0.000 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.03+ (0.02)	0.03+ (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
log(COVID county cases per capita)	0.003 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)	0.01 (0.005)	0.01 (0.005)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Democrat	0.19** (0.02)	0.19** (0.02)	0.07** (0.01)	0.07** (0.01)	0.11** (0.03)	0.11** (0.03)	0.08** (0.02)	0.08** (0.02)
Republican	0.09** (0.02)	0.09** (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.03+ (0.02)	-0.03+ (0.02)
Age	0.003** (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.003** (0.000)	0.003** (0.000)	0.004** (0.001)	0.004** (0.001)	0.004** (0.000)	0.004** (0.000)
Weekly Church Attend	0.000 (0.02)	0.000 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.07** (0.02)	0.07** (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Child at Home	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Parent in Elderly Home	-0.13** (0.03)	-0.13** (0.03)	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.06* (0.02)	-0.004 (0.04)	-0.005 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
HS Educ. or Less	-0.09** (0.02)	-0.09** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.07** (0.02)	-0.07** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)
College Educ. or More	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Male	-0.11** (0.02)	-0.11** (0.02)	-0.09** (0.01)	-0.09** (0.01)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)
Unemployed	0.04* (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.04** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
Constant	0.56** (0.07)	0.57** (0.07)	0.67** (0.05)	0.65** (0.05)	0.20* (0.08)	0.20* (0.08)	0.44** (0.06)	0.42** (0.06)
Observations	3,007	3,007	6,014	6,014	3,007	3,007	6,014	6,014
R ²	0.09	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. + p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

analyses reported in Figure 2 revealed an effect size of roughly 1 percent. Specifications (2) and (4) in Table 1 reveal an individual-level effect size of either 0.03 or 0.04 (with a standard error of 0.01). Because only 60% of our sample report consuming local television news, this means that the implied county-wide difference in social distancing is between 1.8 percent (0.03×0.6) and 2.4 (0.04×0.6) percent plus or minus 1.18 percent ($0.01 \times 1.96 \times 0.6$) for each. Thus, the implied county level effects of our individual-level analyses are reassuringly consistent with the effect sizes we estimate in our county-level analyses.

Several other political and demographic factors also affect self-reported social distancing. Male respondents are significantly less likely to stay at home or wear a mask outside. Those with a high school education or less are also less likely to engage in social distancing behaviors, and college educated local news watchers are more likely to do so. The elderly are also reassuringly more likely to engage in social distancing. Partisanship obviously also clearly matters; Democrats are much more likely to engage in social distancing than either independents or Republicans.^{†††}

The media effects we find are important, but it is impor-

^{†††} The fact that the partisan and demographic differences we detect are larger among those who prefer not to watch local news is suggestive of selection effects and the importance of accounting for local news consumption—Democrats who prefer national news (or no news at all) are more likely to engage in social distancing than Democrats who prefer local news likely reflects differences in the type of Democrats.

tant to highlight that the effects we are able to attribute to differences in local news coverage are smaller than partisan and gender differences. Rural white residents in a top 25 media market who prefer local news (specification (3)) are more likely to report staying home except for when obtaining food and medicine by 3 percentage points, but this difference is substantially smaller than the 7 percentage-points difference between Democrats and independents or the 8 percentage-point difference between men and women. Living in a Top 25 COVID-19-impacted media market also makes local news watchers 4 percentage points more likely to report wearing mask outside (specification (8)), but Democrats are 8 percentage points more likely than independents to wear a mask. Even in the presence of a pandemic, partisanship and other demographic-related have a considerable affect on individual behavior – although there is also evidence that local television news coverage can help change individual behavior.

Discussion

As result of the geographically varying public health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans have turned to their local television news for information about their local community (24). The resulting surge in local television news viewership is unique, especially given the ongoing decline in local journalism and the increasingly segmented media environment. However, “local” news is not always local

and whether individuals are able to receive local television news that focuses on the issues relevant to their community can vary because of how media markets are geographically defined in the United States. The local news for some rural residents may focus on the lives and experiences of urban communities far different from their own—perhaps especially during a pandemic that has impacted urban areas much harder than rural areas to date.

These differences can lead rural individuals to feel ignored by political and media elites (3) and this can undermine the effectiveness of local television news during a crisis. In fact, rural Americans report large levels of dissatisfaction with their local news coverage.^{§§§} Despite the potential for rural resentment of urban news media to prevent it from affecting the behavior of rural residents because of rural and urban differences, we show that local television news can still play an important role in affecting viewers' behaviors.

From a public health perspective, the effects of the urban-centric news we identify are normatively positive, but also limited. Our results show that rural individuals who may have otherwise been predisposed to be less likely to engage in social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak are more likely to do so than similar rural individuals because they happen to receive their local television news from one of more impacted cities. This is true even though they are also more disapproving of their local news coverage of the pandemic.

However, the effects of local television news we identify are limited—even during a pandemic when local news is arguably most important. In addition to being able to avoid local news coverage by choice, our results show that the effects of exposure are unable to fully compensate for partisan differences even among those who consume local television news. The ability of local news media to bridge the urban-rural behavioral gap is reassuring, but also limited.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. We thank the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Vanderbilt University for the financial support required to conduct the original survey we conduct. We are grateful for the editor and two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions significantly improved our manuscript.

1. S Waldman, *The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age*. (Federal Communications Commission), (2011).
2. M Jacob, Covid-19 accelerates local news trends, for bad and good (<https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/posts/2020/04/22/local-news-pandemic/index.html>) (2020) Accessed: 2020-05-07.
3. KJ Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. (University of Chicago Press), (2016).
4. LM Bartels, Messages received: The political impact of media exposure. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* **87**, 267–285 (1993).
5. K Arceneaux, M Johnson, *Changing Minds or Changing Channels?: Partisan News in an Age of Choice*. (University of Chicago Press), (2013).
6. M Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. (Cambridge University Press), (2007).
7. D Knox, T Yamamoto, MA Baum, AJ Berinsky, Design, identification, and sensitivity analysis for patient preference trials. *J. Am. Stat. Assoc.* **114**, 1532–1546 (2019).
8. G King, B Schneer, A White, How the news media activate public expression and influence national agendas. *Science* **358**, 776–780 (2017).
9. JW Kim, E Kim, Identifying the effect of political rumor diffusion using variations in survey timing. *Q. J. Polit. Sci.* **14**, 293–311 (2019).
10. JD Clinton, T Enamorado, The national news media's effect on congress: How fox news affected elites in congress. *The J. Polit.* **76**, 928–943 (2014).
11. GJ Martin, J McCrain, Local news and national politics. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* **113**, 372–384 (2019).
12. E Peterson, Paper cuts: how reporting resources affect political news coverage. (2019).
13. JM Snyder Jr, D Strömberg, Press coverage and political accountability. *J. Polit. Econ.* **118**, 355–408 (2010).

14. Nielsen, 2019 nielsen total audience report (<https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/Q1-2019-Nielsen-Total-Audience-Report-FINAL.pdf>) (2019).
15. RD Arnold, *Congress, the press, and political accountability*. (Princeton University Press), (2013).
16. J Dunaway, Markets, ownership, and the quality of campaign news coverage. *The J. Polit.* **70**, 1193–1202 (2008).
17. Pew Research Center, Local news in a digital age (2015).
18. D Vinson, *Local media coverage of Congress and its members: Through local eyes*. (Hamp-ton Press (NJ)), (2003).
19. J Filla, M Johnson, Local news outlets and political participation. *Urban Aff. Rev.* **45**, 679–692 (2010).
20. DJ Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. (University of Chicago Press), (2018).
21. ME Shepherd, M Trussler, Look up at that mansion on the hill: Does mass media activate the politics of resentment? *Working Paper* (2020).
22. H Allcott, et al., Polarization and public health: Partisan differences in social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic. *NBER Working Paper w26946* (2020).
23. G Grossman, S Kim, J Rexer, H Thirumurthy, Political partisanship influences behavioral responses to governors' recommendations for covid-19 prevention in the united states. *SSRN Working Paper 3578695* (2020).
24. Comscore, Comscore figures reveal surging levels of coronavirus tv coverage driven by diverse audience (<https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press-Releases/2020/4/Surging-levels-of-Coronavirus-local-TV-coverage>) (2020) Accessed: 2020-05-07.

^{§§§} Consider this quote from a rural Wisconsinite in Cramer's *The Politics of Resentment* (3). "This big building burned in some area. It's all over the news. [But if] some farmer loses his barn...it barely gets three seconds" (63).