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URBAN DENSITY NOT LINKED TO HIGHER CORONAVIRUS INFECTION RATES

Study of more than 900 U.S. metropolitan counties suggests that area size matters more than population density in spreading COVID-19

A new study suggests that denser places, assumed by many to be more conducive to the spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, are not linked to higher infection rates. In fact, the study showed, dense areas were associated with lower COVID-19 death rates.

The study was published online June 18 in the [Journal of the American Planning Association](#).

For their analysis, the researchers examined SARS-CoV-2 infection rates and COVID-19 death rates in 913 metropolitan counties in the U.S. When other factors such as race and education were taken into account, the authors found that county density was not significantly associated with county infection

rate. The authors also found that denser counties, as compared to more sprawling ones, tended to have lower death rates—possibly because they were more likely to have a higher level of development, including better health care systems.

On the other hand, the authors found that higher coronavirus infection and COVID-19 mortality rates in counties are more related to the larger context of metropolitan size in which counties are located. Large metropolitan areas with a higher number of counties tightly linked together through economic, social, and commuting relationships are the most vulnerable to the pandemic outbreaks, data showed.