

The mysterious origin of the COVID-19 pandemic, like so many aspects of the response to it, has created deep divides along party lines in the United States. Today, the Republican minority staff of a bipartisan Senate committee set up to probe the origin of SARS-CoV-2 issued an “interim report” arguing for the narrative that the virus entered humans because of a lab-related incident and not a natural jump from animals to humans. Many virologists and evolutionary biologists who have studied the origins of outbreaks dismiss the lab-leak hypothesis, but other scientists have complained that the possibility was too readily downplayed, and it has become increasingly popular among conservative media outlets and some Republican politicians.

“Based on the analysis of the publicly available information, it appears reasonable to conclude that the COVID-19 pandemic was, more likely than not, the result of a research-related incident,” the minority staff concludes in its 35-page report. That conclusion stands in sharp contrast to those of other panels, including from the World Health Organization and U.S. intelligence agencies, which have deemed a zoonotic jump more likely or remained neutral given the lack of direct evidence on the origin of the virus.

Continued research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the origin of the virus.