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COVID-19 vaccine politics could be linked to excess GOP deaths in Ohio, Florida: study

by [Nathaniel Weixel](#) - 07/24/23 5:04 PM ET

The politicization of COVID-19 vaccines may have led to a higher excess death rate among Republicans in Ohio and Florida during the coronavirus pandemic, a new study found.

According to the study, published Monday in JAMA Internal Medicine, registered Republicans had a higher rate of excess deaths than Democrats after COVID-19 vaccines became widely available in May 2021.

The study from Yale researchers looked at 538,159 deaths for individuals aged 25 years and older in Florida and Ohio between January 2018 and December 2021 linked to their 2017 voter registration.

Political party affiliation in Ohio was defined by whether an individual voted in a party's primary election within the preceding two years; in Florida, political party affiliation was based on party registration.

In the winter of 2021, both Democratic and Republican voters experienced sharp increases of similar magnitude in excess death rates. However, in the summer of 2021, after vaccines were available to all adults, the excess death rate among Republican voters began to increase compared to Democrats, and widened even more in the fall of 2021.

After May 1, 2021, when vaccines were available to all adults, the excess death rate gap between Republican and Democratic voters widened to 7.7 percentage points — meaning the excess death rate among Republican voters was 43 percent higher than that among Democratic voters.

The researchers found the gap in excess death rates between Republican and Democratic voters was larger in counties with lower vaccination rates and was primarily noted in voters residing in Ohio.

“Party affiliation became a substantial factor only after COVID-19 vaccines were available to all adults in the U.S.,” authors Jacob Wallace, Jason L. Schwartz and Paul Goldsmith-Pinkham wrote.

The findings come as House Republicans have scrutinized the Biden administration's COVID-19 response, and as Florida Gov. [Ron DeSantis](#) (R) uses his “freedom first” pandemic strategy as the basis for his presidential campaign.

Although the analysis was based on county-level data rather than individual, “the results suggest that well-documented differences in vaccination attitudes and reported uptake between Republican and Democratic voters may have been factors in the severity and trajectory of the pandemic,” the study concluded.

Researchers noted that political party affiliation could be a “proxy” for other factors that could influence excess mortality, such as rates of underlying medical conditions, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status or health insurance coverage.

“These risk factors may be associated with differences in excess mortality by political party, even though we only observed differences in excess mortality after vaccines were available to all adults,” the authors wrote.