

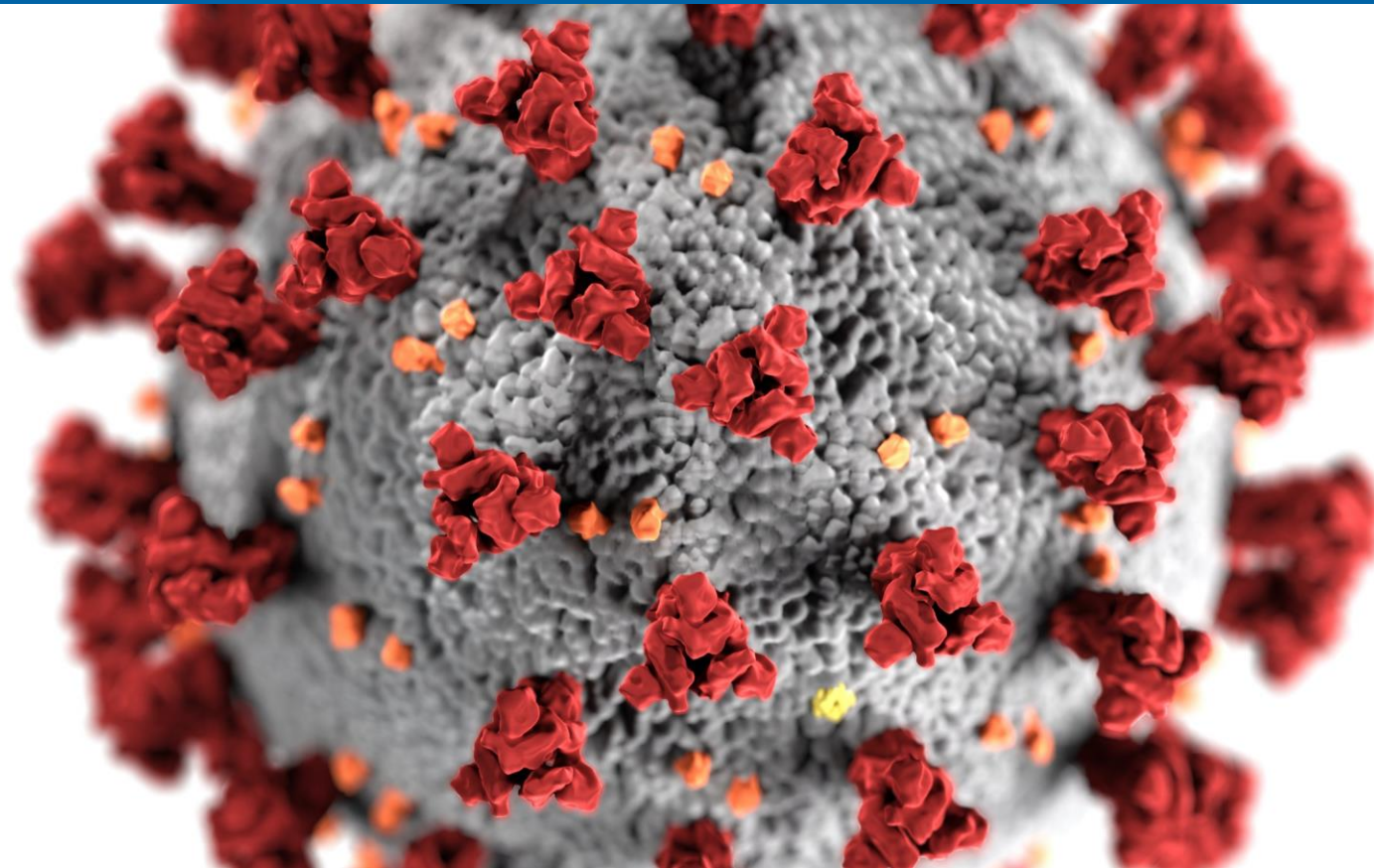


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Austrian Corona Panel Project

# Divided by the Jab: Vaccination-related Affective Polarization in Austria

Jakob-Moritz Eberl (Dept. of Communication, UNIVIE) & Markus Wagner (Dept. of Government, UNIVIE)



# Introduction

- SARS-CoV-2 **pandemic** generated **significant political divisions** and **increasing politicisation**
- With the **roll-out of vaccinations**, a **new division** became increasingly salient
  - Feeding into **novel social identities** → **vaccination identities**
  - Fuelling **broader societal polarization** → **vaccination-based affective polarization**



Source: APA / Florian Wieser

# Social Identity Theory and Affective Polarization

- Long tradition of research on group identities in **social psychology**
- Definition:
  - (1) In-group identification
  - (2) Negative out-group stereotyping
  - (3) Biased perceptions of pol. reality
- Recent application to **partisanship** and to **opinion-based groups** (e.g. Brexit)
- Some work on **vaccination-based identities** (e.g. Bor et al. 2022 for an international comparison, Henkel et al. 2022 in Austria)



Source: Pixabay

## Aims

**RQ: What are the *nature*, *origins*, and *consequences* of vaccination-based affective polarization in Austria?**

- ***Nature***: How strong are **group identities** based on **opinions about COVID-19 vaccination**?
- ***Origins***: Who is more likely to **hold/develop** such **identities**?
- ***Consequences***: How do these identities correlate with downstream **political opinions and behaviours** related to COVID-19?
- And how do COVID-19 vaccination identities compare to **vaccination status** and **support for anti-vaccination parties**?



# Data and Methods



# Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP)

- Online panel survey of Austrian voting-age population during COVID-19 pandemic (see Kittel et al, 2020)
- Quota sampling: age, gender, gender × age, region, education, and municipality size
- Waves 6 and 28 (May 2020 and Jan 2022)
- Around 1,500 respondents per wave

European Political Science (2021) 20:318–344  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-020-00294-7>

## DATASET



### The Austrian Corona Panel Project: monitoring individual and societal dynamics amidst the COVID-19 crisis

Bernhard Kittel<sup>1</sup> · Sylvia Kritzinger<sup>2</sup> · Hajo Boomgaarden<sup>3</sup> · Barbara Prainsack<sup>4</sup> · Jakob-Moritz Eberl<sup>3</sup> · Fabian Kalleitner<sup>1</sup> · Noëlle S. Lebernegg<sup>3</sup> · Julia Partheymüller<sup>5</sup> · Carolina Plescia<sup>2</sup> · David W. Schiestl<sup>1</sup> · Lukas Schlogl<sup>4</sup>

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#### Abstract

Systematic and openly accessible data are vital to the scientific understanding of the social, political, and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This article introduces the Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP), which has generated a unique, publicly available data set from late March 2020 onwards. ACPP has been designed to capture the social, political, and economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the Austrian population on a weekly basis. The thematic scope of the study covers several core dimensions related to the individual and societal impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The panel survey has a sample size of approximately 1500 respondents per wave. It contains questions that are asked every week, complemented by domain-specific modules to explore specific topics in more detail. The article presents details on the data collection process, data quality, the potential for analysis, and the modalities of data access pertaining to the first ten waves of the study.

**Keywords** Behaviour and attitudes · Coronavirus · COVID-19 · Online panel survey · Pandemic response · Survey data · Social sciences

Data Paper (Open Access):

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-020-00294-7>



## Core survey questions

- Do you consider yourself part of the **pro-vaccination group**, part of the **anti-vaccination group**, or **neither**?
  - Do you **feel very close, somewhat close, or not very close** to this group?
  - In your opinion, to what extent do the following characteristics apply to the **pro-vaccination / anti-vaccination group**?
    - Intelligent
    - Honest
    - Selfish
    - Unpatriotic
-

# Data access via the Austrian Social Science Data Archive (AUSSDA)



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Austrian Corona Panel Project

The screenshot shows the AUSSDA website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'AUSSDA AUSTRIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA ARCHIVE' and links for Search, About, User Guide, Support, Sign Up, and Log In. Below the navigation bar, there's a header section with 'COVID-19 Pandemic (AUSSDA - The Austrian Social Science Data Archive)' and a breadcrumb trail 'AUSSDA > COVID-19 Pandemic >'. The main title is 'Austrian Corona Panel Project (SUF edition)' with a 'Version 4.0' tag. Below the title, there's a 'Cite Dataset' button and a 'Learn about Data Citation Standards' link. The 'Access Dataset' button is also present. The 'Dataset Metrics' section shows '2,816 Downloads'. The 'Description' section states: 'Full edition for scientific use. The corona crisis has fundamentally changed the everyday life in Austria as well as in many other countries. However, people are affected in very different ways. Against this background, the Corona Panel Study aims to provide an overview of various health, economic and social aspects of the corona crisis.' The 'Subject' is 'Social Sciences'. The 'Keyword' is 'Economic activity, Conditions of employment, Income, Public health, Interpersonal relations, Emotional states, Trust in government, State control, Mass media use, COVID-19'. The 'Notes' section lists four versions: Version 4 (published on 2021-10-08) includes wave 1 to wave 24; Version 3 (published on 2021-04-29) includes wave 1 to wave 20; Version 2 (published on 2020-12-23) includes wave 1 to wave 15; and Version 1 (published on 2020-07-18) includes wave 1 to wave 10.

<https://doi.org/10.11587/28KQNS>

The screenshot shows the AUSSDA website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'AUSSDA AUSTRIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA ARCHIVE' and links for Search, About, User Guide, Support, Sign Up, and Log In. Below the navigation bar, there's a header section with 'COVID-19 Pandemic (AUSSDA - The Austrian Social Science Data Archive)' and a breadcrumb trail 'AUSSDA > COVID-19 Pandemic >'. The main title is 'Austrian Corona Panel Project (OA edition)' with a 'Version 4.0' tag. Below the title, there's a 'Cite Dataset' button and a 'Learn about Data Citation Standards' link. The 'Access Dataset' button is also present. The 'Dataset Metrics' section shows '1,959 Downloads'. The 'Description' section states: 'Reduced edition for public use. Full edition available for scientific use. The corona crisis has fundamentally changed the everyday life in Austria as well as in many other countries. However, people are affected in very different ways. Against this background, the Corona Panel Study aims to provide an overview of various health, economic and social aspects of the corona crisis.' The 'Subject' is 'Social Sciences'. The 'Keyword' is 'Economic activity, Conditions of employment, Income, Public health, Interpersonal relations, Emotional states, Trust in government, State control, COVID-19, Mass media use'. The 'Notes' section lists four versions: Version 4 (published on 2021-10-12) includes wave 1 to wave 24; Version 3 (published on 2021-06-24) includes wave 1 to wave 20; Version 2 (published on 2021-04-08) includes wave 1 to wave 15; and Version 1 (published on 2020-09-04) includes wave 1 to wave 10.

<https://doi.org/10.11587/P5YJ00>





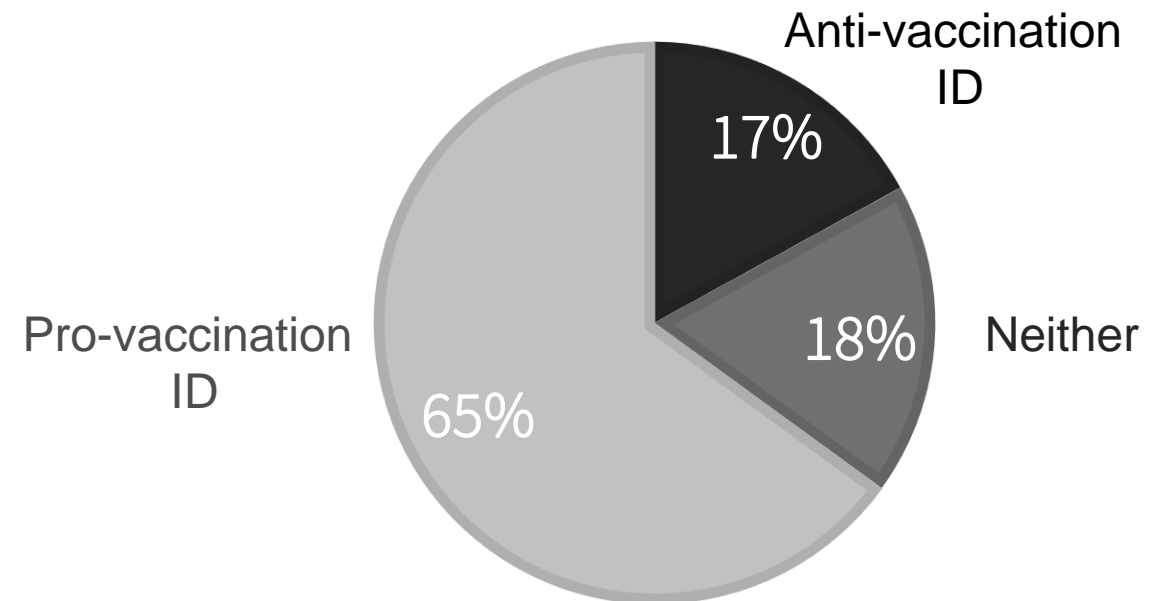
# Results

## On the nature of vaccination-based affective polarization... (1)

- In-group attachment is **widespread**:

82% of respondents identify with one of the two groups (pro-vaccination or anti-vaccination)

### DISTRIBUTION OF VACCINATION IDENTITIES



## On the nature of vaccination-based affective polarization... (2)



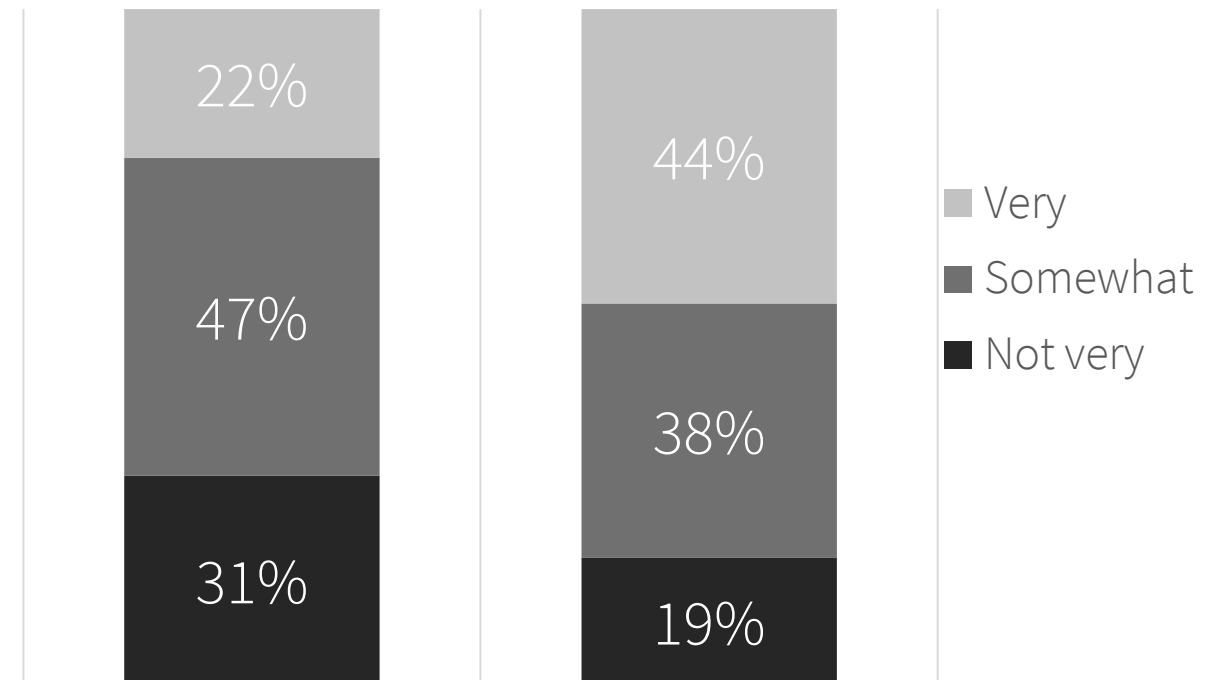
- In-group attachment is **rather strong**:

On average 78% feel “Somewhat” or “Very” close to one of the two groups

### STRENGTH OF IN-GROUP ATTACHMENT

Anti-vaccination ID

Pro-vaccination ID

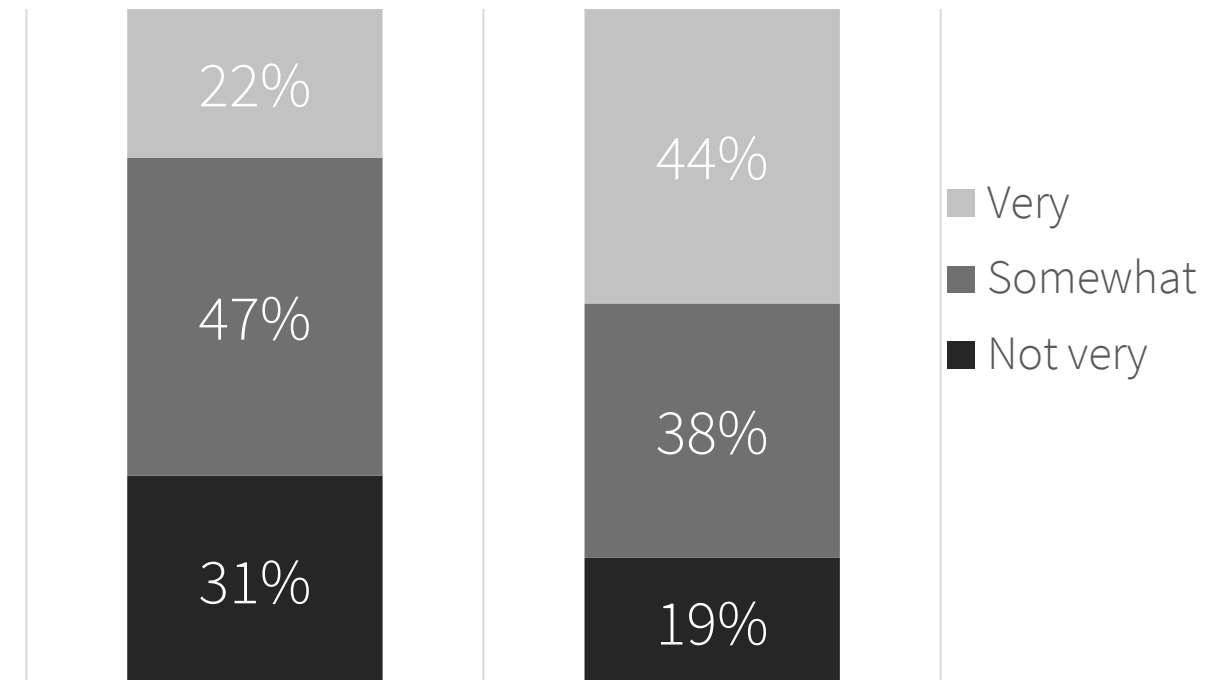


## On the nature of vaccination-based affective polarization... (2)

- In-group attachment is **rather strong**:  
On average 78% feel “Somewhat” or “Very” close to one of the two groups
- Attachment to vaccination groups is **larger and stronger** than the attachment to **partisan groups** (see AUTNES 2017)

### STRENGTH OF IN-GROUP ATTACHMENT

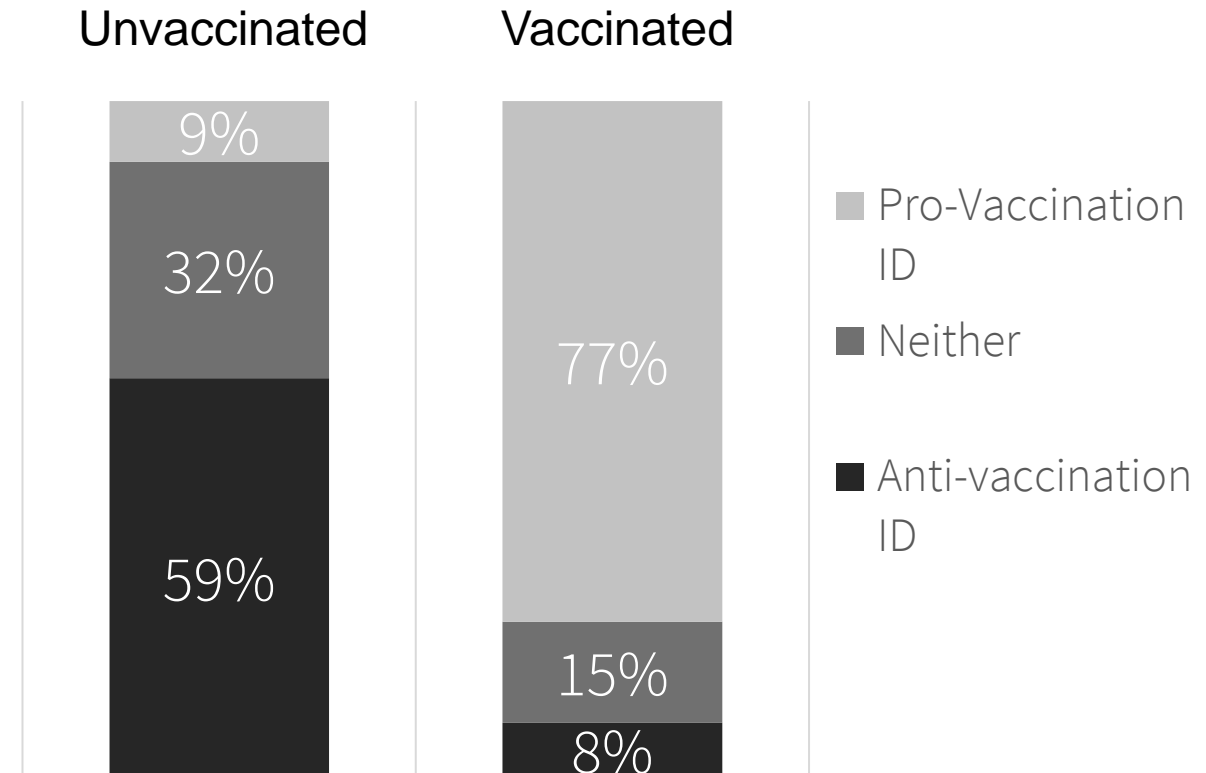
Anti-vaccination ID    Pro-vaccination ID



## On the nature of vaccination-based affective polarization... (3)

- Vaccination identities **correlate but are not the same as vaccination status.**

### VACCINATION ID & VACCINATION STATUS



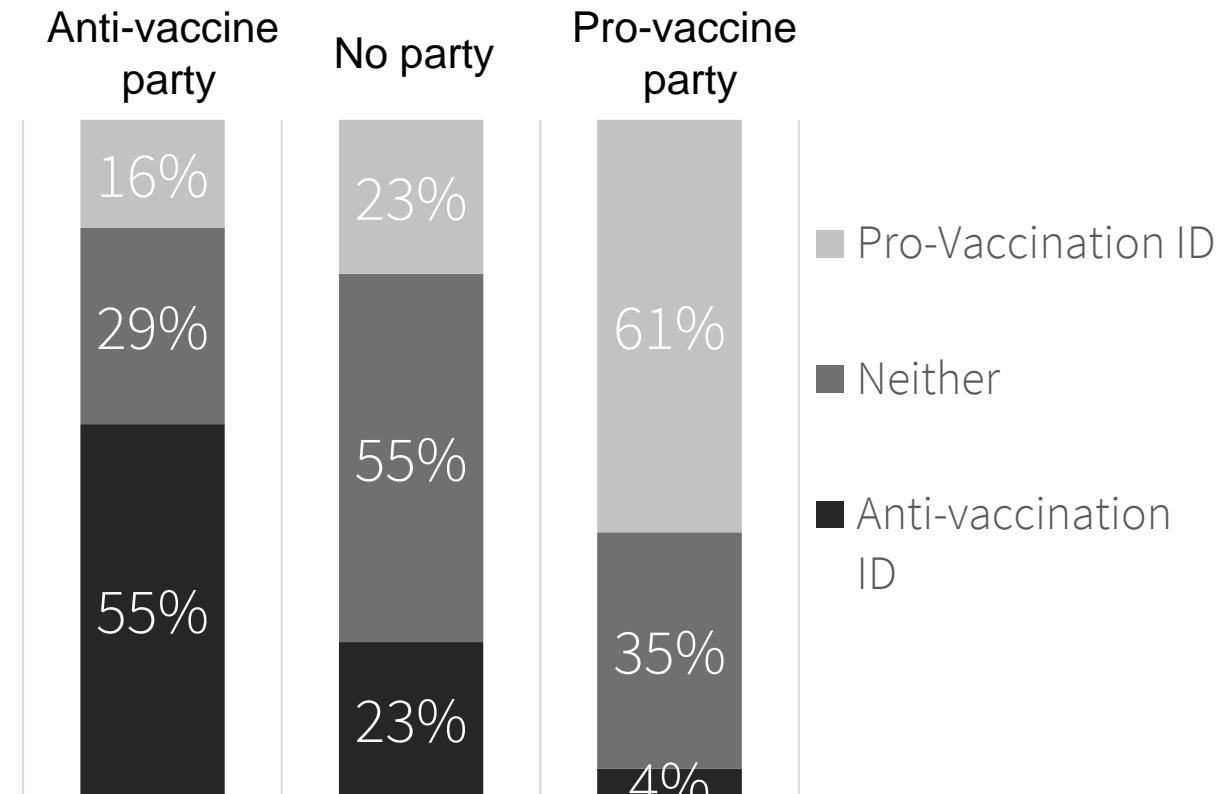


# On the nature of vaccination-based affective polarization... (4)



- Vaccination identities **correlate but are not the same as partisan support.**

## VACCINATION ID & PARTISANSHIP

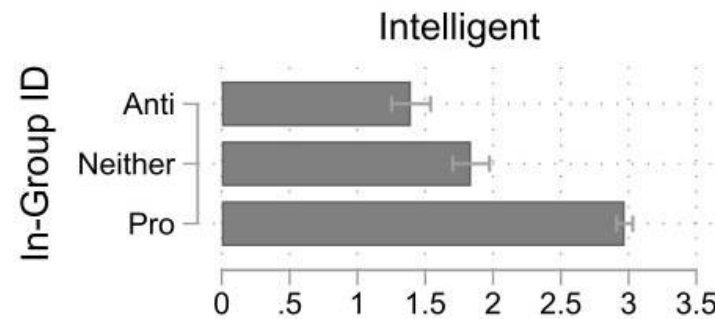


## On the nature of vaccination-based affective polarization... (5)

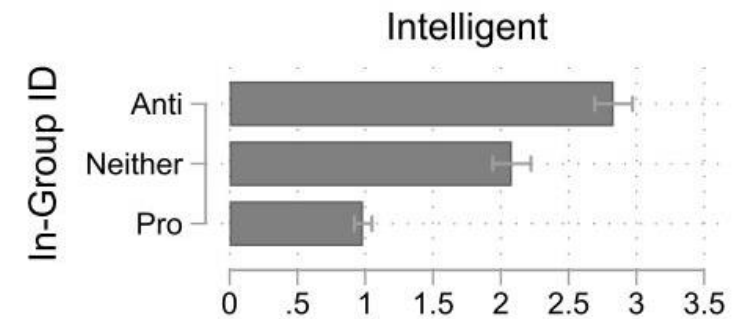
- For both vaccination groups:  
**in-group evaluated more positively than out-group**
- Stereotyping **stronger within the pro-vaccination group**

### STEROTYPES TOWARDS...

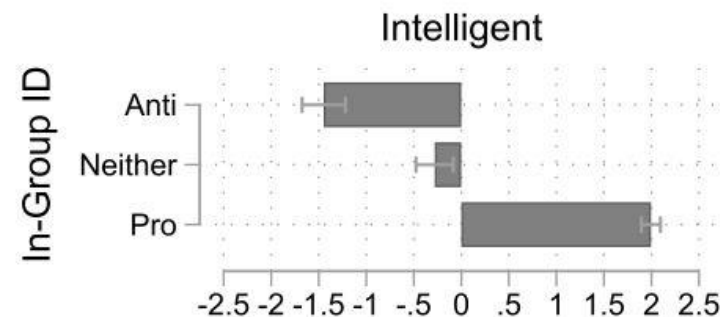
Pro-vaccination group



Anti-vaccination group



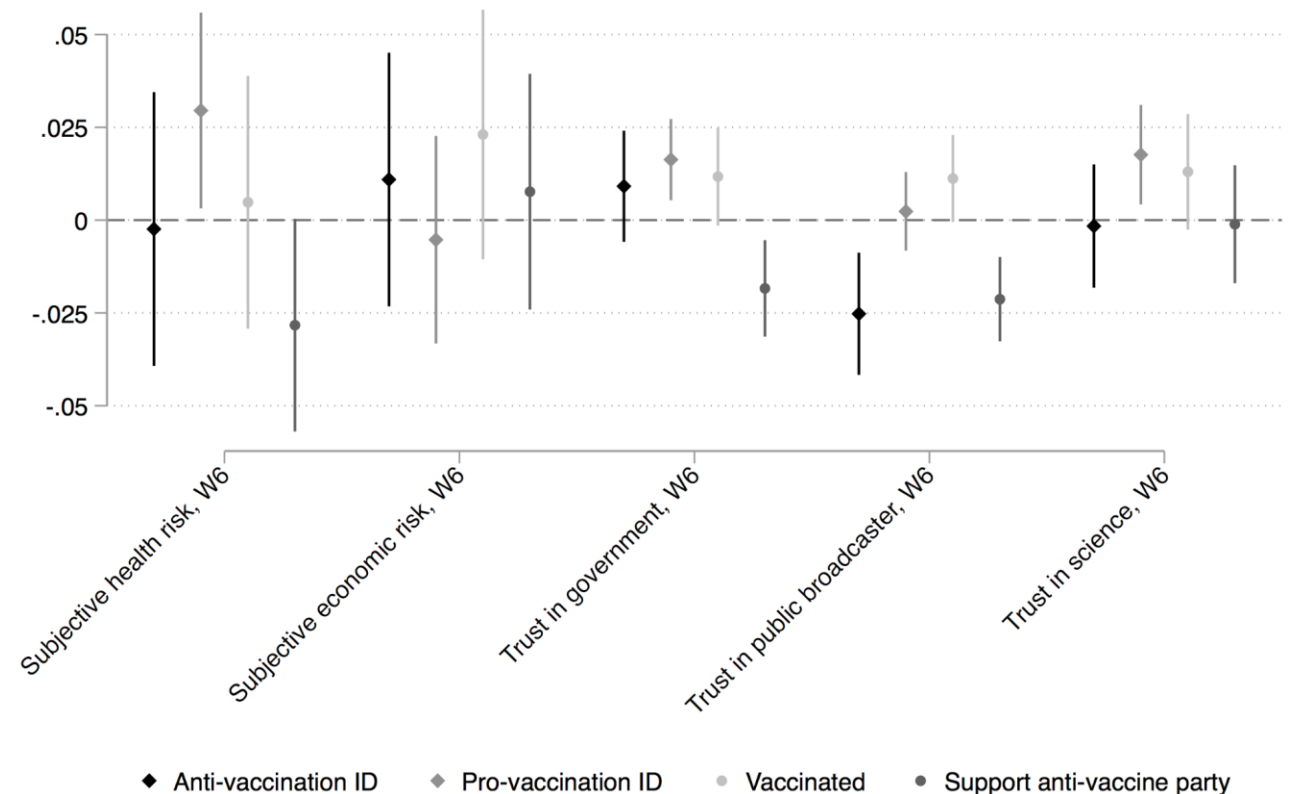
### Stereotype differences



# On the origins of vaccination-based affective polarization... (1)

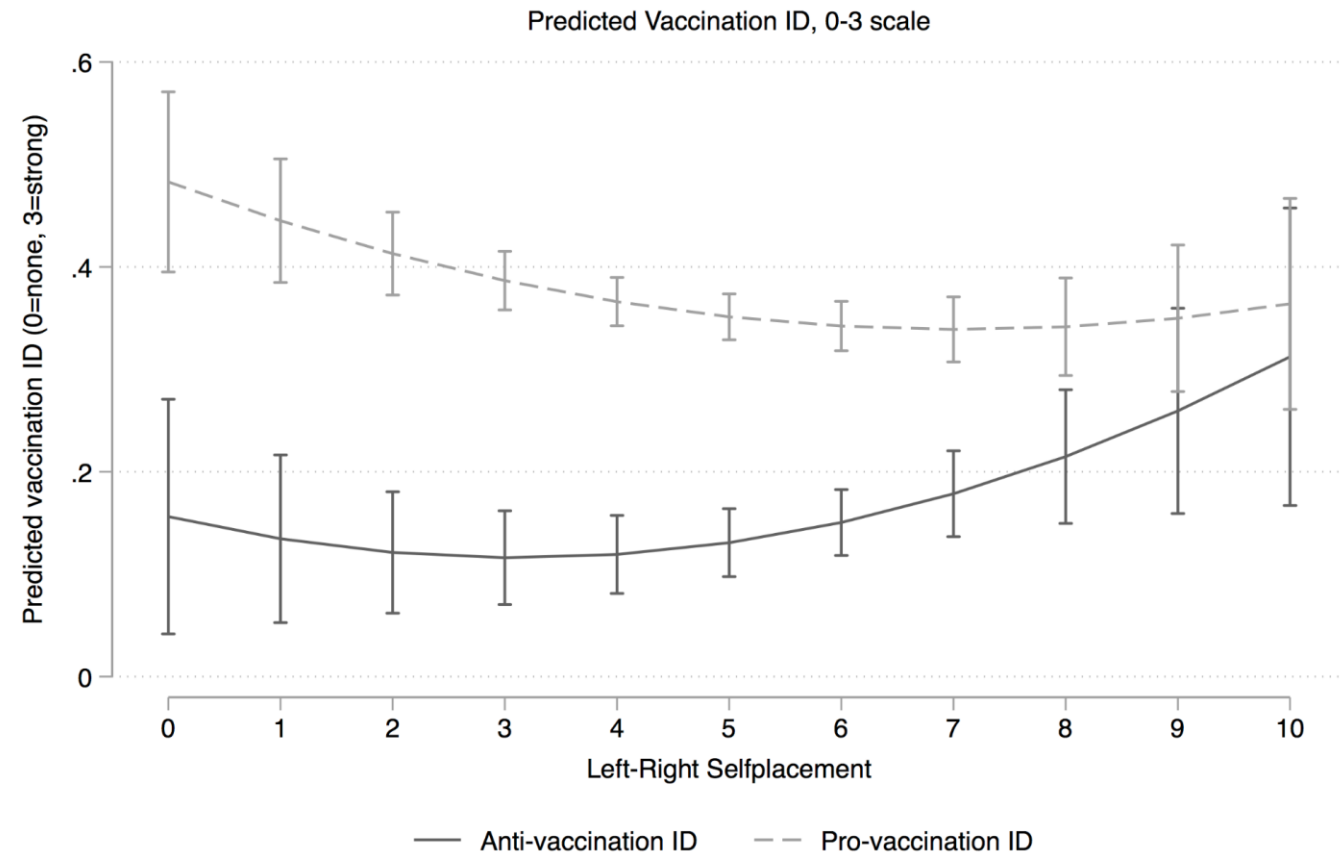


- **Subjective health/economic risks** not strongly associated with developing a vaccination ID
- **Trust in institutions** better predictors
- Effect **patterns more similar to predicting partisanship** rather than vaccination status



## On the origins of vaccination-based affective polarization... (2)

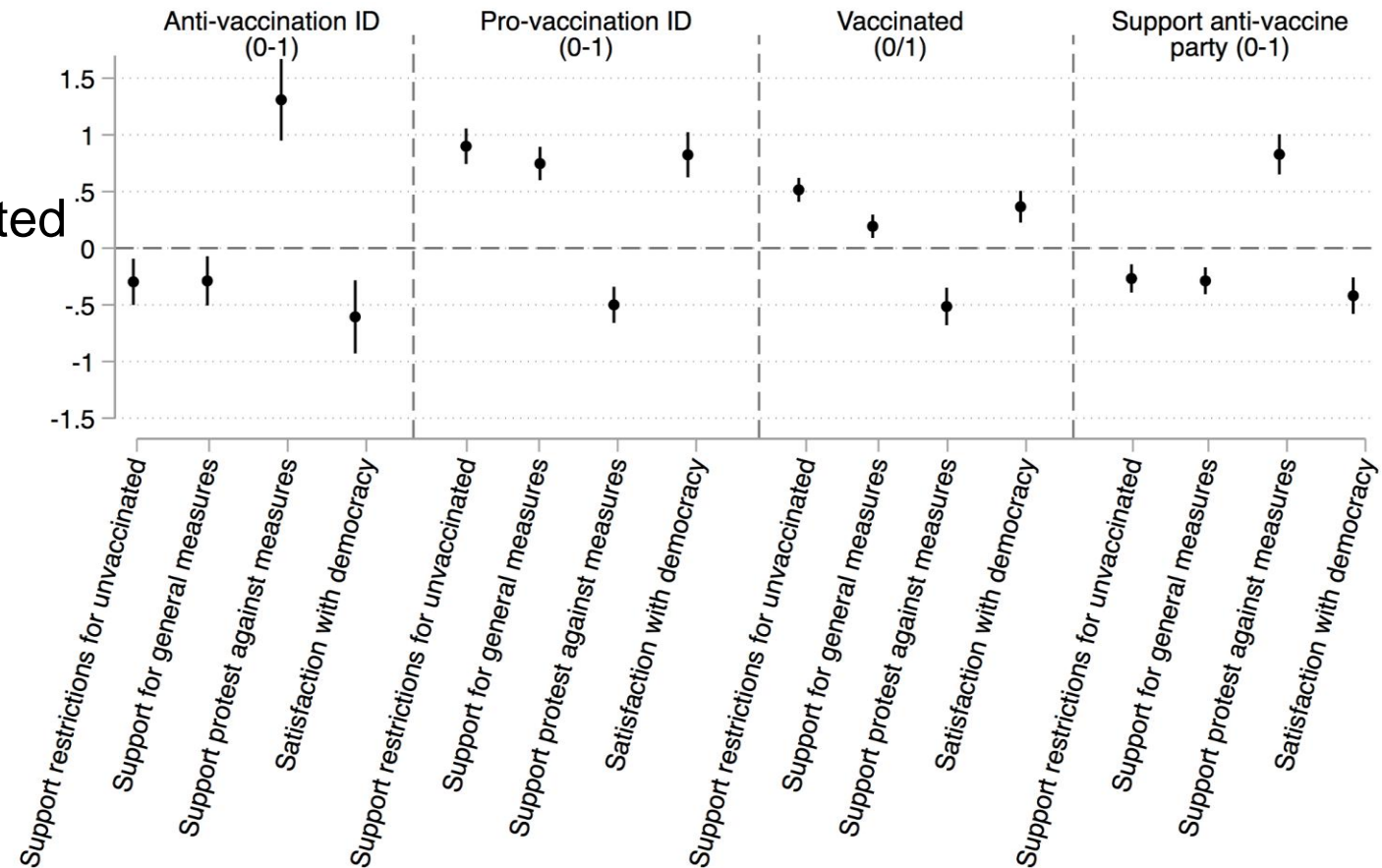
- **Left-leaning** more likely to develop **pro-vaccination ID** (vs anti-vacc ID)
- **Right-leaning** more likely to develop **anti-vaccination ID** (vs pro-vacc ID)



# On the consequences of vaccination-based affective polarization... (1)

Vaccination identities **add to our ability to account for pandemic attitudes:**

- Support for restrictions against unvaccinated
- Support for general mitigation measures
- Support protest against measures
- Satisfaction with democracy

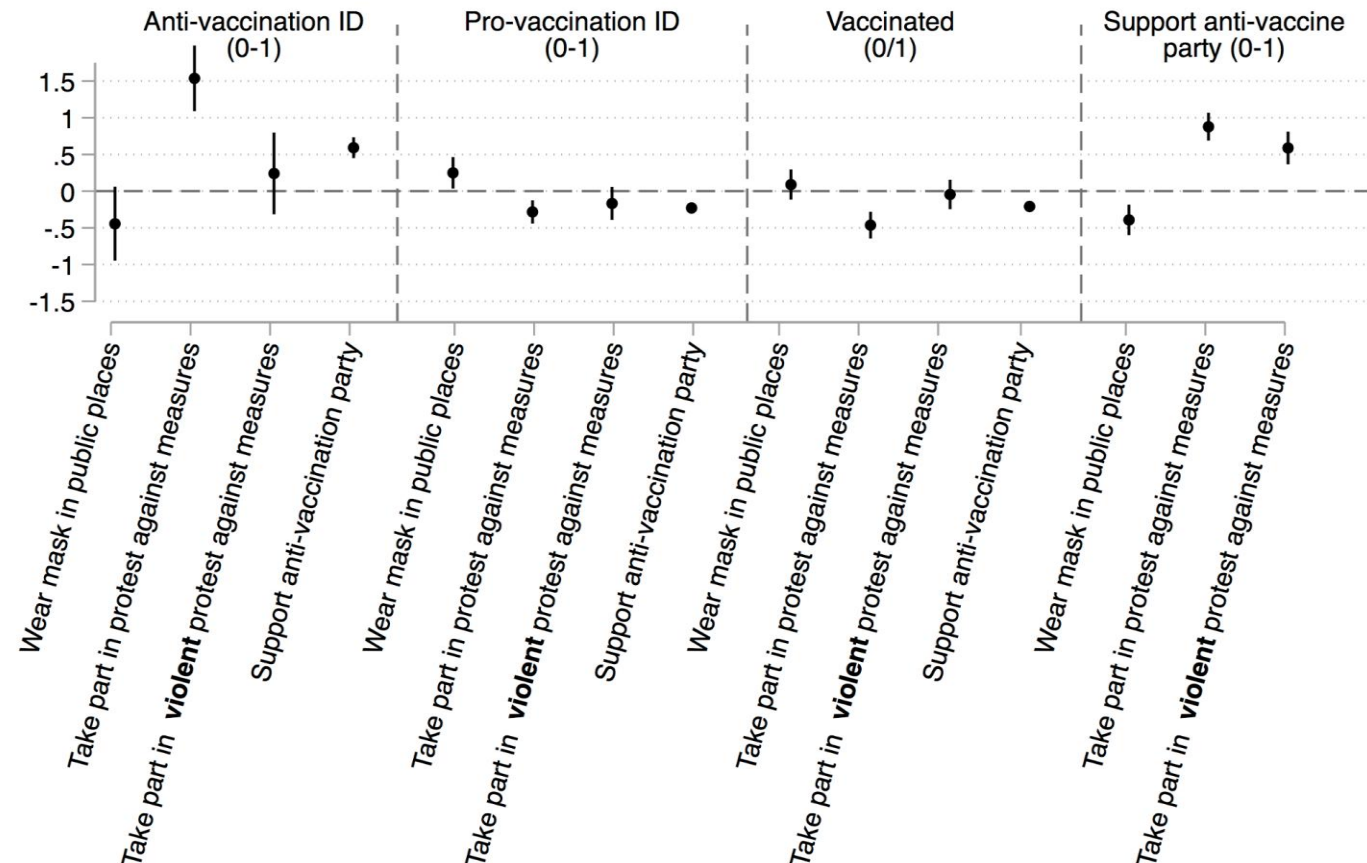




## On the consequences of vaccination-based affective polarization... (2)

Vaccination identities **add to our ability to account for pandemic behaviours:**

- Wear mask in public places
- Take part in protest against measures
- Support of anti-vaccination party





# Conclusion and Outlook

## Take-Home Message

- Affective polarization based on vaccination exists and is strong
- Vaccination IDs modestly correlate with vaccination status and partisanship
- Origins are political: factors more similar to partisanship than vaccination status
- Stronger link to key political consequences than vaccination status and partisanship



Source: Pixabay

## What now?

Polarization makes public **deliberation** concerning complex topics such as pandemic management **difficult**

- **Rebuild trust** in (political) institutions?
- **De-emphasize vaccination** in public discourse?
- **Strengthen** scientific **education**?
- **Organize mediation** between groups?

**BUT** reducing polarization/stereotyping is **not an unambiguous goal** as vaccination ID may be (at least sometimes) a **reasonable and understandable heuristic**



Source: Getty Images/iStockphoto/Andrey Popov



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# Thank you for your attention!

For more Information about the ACPP also visit:

<https://viecer.univie.ac.at/coronapanel/>

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