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Political persuasion: How it affects attitudes to vaccination

310 views Jul 3, 2019

Dr Katie Attwell, University of Western Australia, describes how political views shape opinions on vaccine mandates. Researchers asked 1,000 people their views on mandatory vaccination and their beliefs about vaccine safety and effectiveness. Then they looked at political affiliation to determine whether this can predict attitudes to vaccination. 'What we found that only 4% didn't think vaccination was safe, effective and necessary,' she said. 'We found 9% disagreed with Australia's 'No Jab, No Pay' policy and we found a high level of support for mandatory vaccination.' A survey shows that 85% agree with the federal government's policy of "No Jab, No Pay", with just 9% opposing it. The study, published in the prestigious international journal Politics, shows that Australians have quite different attitudes towards compulsory vaccination to Americans and the British. While vaccination is popular in all three countries, previous research has shown that opposition to making it compulsory in the US and UK is about 30%. Not only do Australians overwhelmingly support compulsory vaccination, that support is strong across voters of all parties. There is more than 80% agreement with No Jab No Pay among voters of all major parties, including the Greens and One Nation. The authors say this is important because it shows that in Australia, mandatory vaccination works—it isn't just good policy, it's good politics.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1...>

0:00

[Music]

0:11

so there's not a great deal of work out

0:14

there in the world with regard to what

0:16

political communities in different

0:18

countries think about vaccinations and

0:21

mandatory vaccinations so what we do

0:24

know is that in the u.s. there is a

0:28

difference in people supporting

0:30

vaccination and mandatory vaccinations

0:32

where they're seeing the difference in

0:34

the kind of libertarian right not

0:36

surprisingly they would prefer parents

0:38

to be able to make their own decisions

0:39

about vaccinations rather than having

0:41

the state tell them what to do in 2013 a

0:45

poll done in the UK showed that only 55

0:49

percent of people there were actually in

0:52

favor of making the MMR vaccine

0:53

compulsory MMR being quite a good I

0:56

think proxy vaccine to think about  
0:58  
mandates in general because obviously  
1:00  
it's had a troubled history due to a  
1:03  
friend mr. Wakefield so yeah but it's  
1:07  
not surprising that there will be such  
1:09  
low numbers wanting it to be mandatory  
1:11  
on the basis that they don't have this  
1:13  
history and indeed there we saw in the  
1:17  
conservative side of politics stronger  
1:20  
support for making the vaccine mandatory  
1:23  
perhaps on the basis of kind of the  
1:25  
conservative side of politics perceiving  
1:28  
that one follows Authority so you know  
1:30  
medical authority says you know this is  
1:32  
safe so therefore do it so we're seeing  
1:34  
the sort of the conservative side rather  
1:36  
than the kind of libertarian side  
1:37  
playing out there there's been no  
1:40  
research prior to our project in  
1:43  
Australia there was plenty of research  
1:45  
but not plenty but some research looking  
1:47  
at you know parents and the general  
1:49  
community's attitudes towards  
1:51  
vaccinations but not looking at the  
1:54  
attitudes towards mandatory vaccination  
1:56  
and putting the two together so what we  
1:59  
did in our study we we were able to  
2:02  
access the values project at the  
2:04  
University of Western Australia which  
2:06

has a huge panel of people that we were  
2:08  
able to access so we had over a thousand  
2:10  
respondents to our study and we asked  
2:13  
them two questions we started not by  
2:15  
asking them about their views on  
2:17  
vaccination but actually going straight  
2:18  
to the mandatory policy because we  
2:20  
didn't want to prime them so we asked  
2:23  
them we renamed the  
2:24  
we'll see one of the things that we  
2:25  
found a little frustrating when we're  
2:26  
trying to do our literature review and  
2:28  
compare what other countries were doing  
2:30  
was there were all these different words  
2:32  
compulsory required and it's like what  
2:34  
do these things even mean  
2:36  
so in our study we wanted to name the  
2:38  
policy so that we could both get a sense  
2:40  
of okay they're kind of thinking about  
2:43  
what I would refer to as mandatory  
2:44  
vaccinations but we're also asking about  
2:46  
the specific policy in Australia so we  
2:48  
named it and we said what it did which  
2:50  
is that it removed some financial  
2:52  
entitlements from parents and then we  
2:53  
asked them whether they agreed with it  
2:56  
or not we had a five-point Likert scale  
2:57  
the second thing that we did was to ask  
3:00  
the people in the panel whether they  
3:02

thought vaccination was safe effective  
3:03  
and necessary we only this was a very  
3:06  
quick quick and dirty poll if you like  
3:08  
so we only had the opportunity to ask a  
3:10  
couple of questions asking about safety  
3:12  
effectiveness and necessity was a very  
3:14  
good proxy for basically thinking do you  
3:17  
think that's you know is vaccination  
3:19  
good is it a good thing those points  
3:21  
have been used separately in other  
3:23  
research in Australia so we asked the  
3:26  
two things in that order what we found  
3:28  
amongst our over 1,000 respondents to  
3:31  
our our survey questions was that only  
3:34  
4% of respondents didn't think that  
3:37  
vaccination was safe effective and  
3:39  
necessary and this pretty much aligns  
3:41  
with what we would regard to be the you  
3:43  
know the sort of latent levels of  
3:45  
vaccine hesitancy or vaccine refusal  
3:48  
that have been measured in previous  
3:50  
years before the no job no pay policy  
3:53  
came in we sort of one estimate had sort  
3:55  
of said that about 3.3 percent of  
3:58  
Australian children were not vaccinated  
3:59  
due to parental choice as opposed to  
4:02  
lack of access so that's that correlates  
4:04  
quite well with that and then we found  
4:07  
that 9 percent of respondents didn't  
4:11

approve of the no job no pay policy so  
4:13  
there was a difference between thinking  
4:15  
as a small difference between thinking  
4:17  
that mandatory vaccination or thinking  
4:19  
that vaccination was a good idea and  
4:21  
then thinking it should be mandatory of  
4:22  
around 5 percent but you know what what  
4:26  
what our study did find was a very high  
4:28  
level of support for vaccination which  
4:31  
which was great but a high level of  
4:33  
support for mandatory vaccination as  
4:35  
well  
4:35  
it was highest amongst voters for the  
4:39  
coalition which is the centre-right  
4:40  
coalition in Australia probably not  
4:43  
surprising because they were the party  
4:44  
that introduced the policy in 2016 also  
4:48  
high levels of support for Labour Party  
4:50  
voters and again that's sort of it the  
4:54  
policy has had bipartisan support we saw  
4:58  
we don't have a huge populist presence  
5:01  
in Australia although at certain  
5:03  
elections it does the populist One  
5:05  
Nation Party does get you know a  
5:07  
significant vote and their leader  
5:11  
Pauline Hanson has come out against  
5:15  
vaccines in the past and has referred to  
5:16  
no job no pay as a dictatorship even  
5:19  
amongst her supporters we found high  
5:21

levels of support for the policy  
5:24  
although we also found that there were  
5:26  
the sort of 8% of her supporters  
5:29  
disagreed with it so it's kind of strong  
5:31  
in both ways if that makes sense  
5:33  
we also found we were very interested to  
5:36  
look at greens voters because in  
5:37  
Australia we we had the hypothesis that  
5:39  
unlike the sort of center-right sorry  
5:41  
unlike the libertarian right in America  
5:43  
being a place that we would see some  
5:45  
vaccine refusal that we thought we would  
5:48  
see that amongst greens voters  
5:50  
opposition to both policy the policy and  
5:53  
to vaccination we found amongst greens  
5:56  
voters that there was the lowest level  
5:58  
of support for both vaccination and for  
6:01  
mandatory vaccination but the numbers  
6:04  
were so small in terms of people in the  
6:06  
panel who identified as greens voters  
6:07  
because they are a minor party in  
6:09  
Australia our you know our sample was  
6:12  
not big enough for us to make meaningful  
6:14  
inferences from this but one of the  
6:16  
things that we thought was that because  
6:18  
greens voters are you know that they're  
6:20  
they're a Left Party not just in terms  
6:22  
of Environment and Natural living but  
6:24  
also in terms of social justice so there  
6:26

may be on that side of politics er a  
6:28  
lack of desire to punish people for not  
6:31  
you know complying with government  
6:33  
requirements around vaccinations and the  
6:36  
removal of financial entitlements could  
6:38  
be seen as that so what our study has  
6:41  
shown I believe is the importance of  
6:43  
looking at the relationship between  
6:45  
voting patterns and political beliefs  
6:48  
and beliefs about vaccinations and  
6:50  
beliefs about mandatory vaccinations in  
6:52  
a specific country context so you know  
6:55  
one might think that the US Britain and  
6:58  
Australia I'm not you know remarkably  
7:00  
different countries in terms of our  
7:03  
values in terms of our lifestyles in  
7:05  
terms of our political beliefs although  
7:07  
perhaps us as the outlier there but  
7:10  
certainly our studies showed that that  
7:13  
you know vaccination has not had a role  
7:15  
in being partisan political but there is  
7:19  
a strong level of support for the no job  
7:22  
no pay policy and in this paper we you  
7:25  
know we've deliberately not sort of  
7:26  
taken a line about whether we think the  
7:28  
policy is a good idea about whether we  
7:30  
think it's likely to be effective we  
7:31  
simply wanted to look at well what what  
7:33  
do Australians think about this and in  
7:36

particular it does this have the the  
7:39  
likelihood of becoming something that  
7:41  
you know that is no longer bipartisan  
7:44  
that is favored by one side of politics  
7:46  
or the other because that of course can  
7:48  
then lead to it being attached to views  
7:51  
on other things such as climate change  
7:53  
or indeed as we we had thought perhaps  
7:55  
on the left being attached to kind of  
7:57  
alternative lifestyles and environmental  
8:00  
values and we've seen hints that that  
8:02  
may be the case but as I mentioned the  
8:04  
numbers are really too small for us to  
8:06  
draw those meaningful inferences