Reduction of COVID-19 deaths? Masks, lockdowns and social distancing may play a part but the only thing we know for sure is that vaccines worked

The facts are these:

- Until vaccines became available, there was little difference in COVID death rates between blue states and red states.
- After vaccines became available, there were clear differences, with red states having higher death rates, almost certainly as a result of lower vaccine uptake among Republicans.

In other words, the vaccines made a real and obvious dent in COVID, whereas the effect of other NPIs — such as school and business closures, masks, and social distancing — is much less clear.

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Maybe you think this is the result of some sort of ecological fallacy, but a recent analysis of individual-level data suggests that it isn't. A team from Yale published a study tracking excess deaths among registered voters in Florida and Ohio.

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The authors simply cross-checked voter registration records against death records to look up whether people registered as Republicans were dying more often than people registered as Democrats. There's no fancy math here; they're basically just counting. And what they found is that there were no real differences *until* vaccines became available. Once vaccines were available, Republicans began having considerably higher excess death rates:

A | Excess death rate
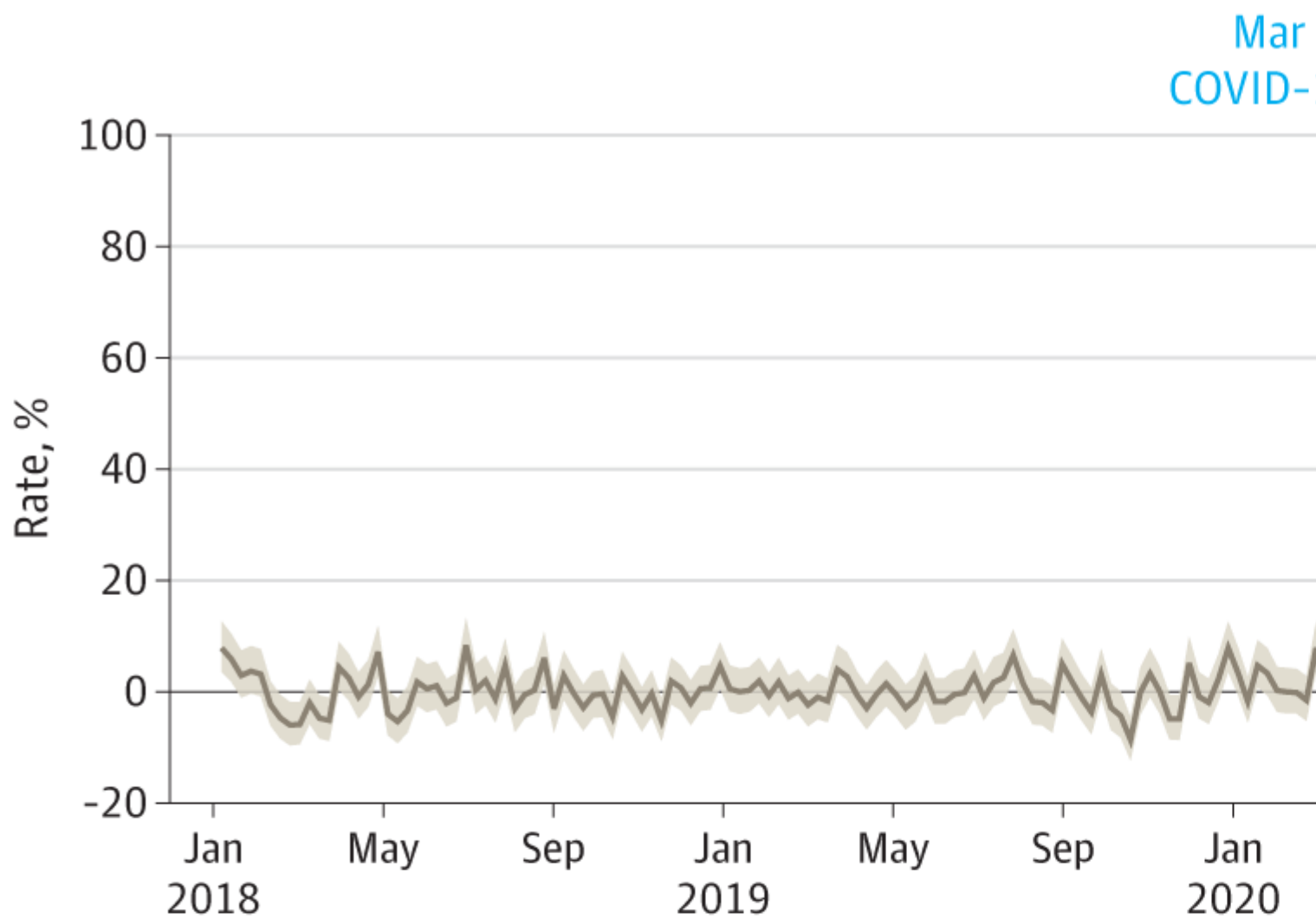
B | Excess death rates by registered party

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