

## The Impact of Political Polarization on the COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in the United States: A Qualitative Study

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**Abstract :** This study explored the role of political polarization in an individual's decision of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. A total of 15 participants participated in individual interviews and focus group discussions about the relationships among domestic political polarization, vaccine hesitancy, and behavioral responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Political affiliation affected an individual's decision on the COVID-19 vaccination, such that people who identified as Liberals and Democrats were more accepting of the vaccine. On the other hand, the level of influence declined over time (2020-2022) when the general conception of COVID-19 immunization shifted from political to personal. Results provided qualitative support to the previously identified positive relationship between divided political opinions and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and highlighted the decreasing trend in the power of political polarization in vaccination and the existence of other factors.

**Keywords :** COVID-19, vaccine hesitancy, political polarization, partisanship, ideology

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