

# Vaccine Scepticism Grows in Line with Populism | The Guardian

By Sarah Boseley

February 26, 2019

Scepticism about the use of vaccines for children has risen across Europe in line with votes for populists, according to a study, which proposes that public health officials should track populist parties in opinion polls as a proxy signal for vaccine hesitancy.

Big surges in the number of measles cases and deaths map to countries where populist parties have become prominent – in particular, Greece, Italy and France.

The [paper, in the European Journal of Public Health](#), says there is an underlying link between anti-establishment politics and vaccine hesitancy.

“It seems likely that scientific populism is driven by similar feelings to political populism – ie profound distrust of elites and experts by disenfranchised and marginalised parts of the population,” writes the author, Jonathan Kennedy from Queen Mary University of London.

As there is a lack of monitoring surveys of attitudes toward vaccines, the researchers argue the performance of populist parties could instead be used to alert public health bodies to rising levels of scepticism.

“Support for populist parties could be used as a proxy for vaccine hesitancy, at least in the western European context, with an increase in support being a signal for public health actors to be vigilant,” the paper says.

[...]