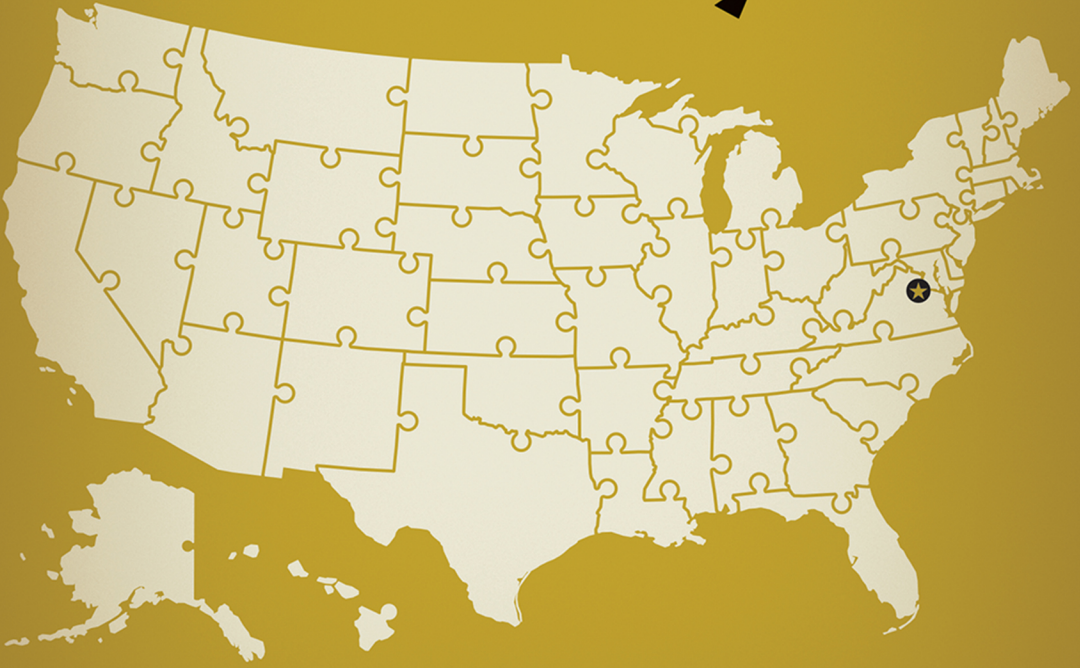Perspectives on Political and Economic Governance

American Federalism Today

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5

COVID Federalism

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Introduction

In the American version of federalism, federal, state, and local governments have overlapping responsibilities and authority. This was nowhere more apparent than in early 2020 when SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) spread from China to the United States and the rest of the world. President Trump banned travel from China by foreign nationals on January 31, 2020. Federal agencies regulated virus testing and treatments and funded the development of vaccines. However, most preventive measures, including lockdowns, were undertaken by state governments, with variations in implementation and enforcement mostly at the discretion of local governments, who controlled police, schools, and hospitals. For a while, the president used daily news conferences as a bully pulpit, but he had little actual authority over many areas of pandemic response and quickly got into fights with Democratic governors, who did have authority, over their handling of the pandemic.

The US federal system was famously described by Morton Grodzins as being like a marble cake. Federalism makes it difficult for voters to know who is in charge and whom to credit or blame for policy outcomes, though COVID-19 provided an easier case in this regard. Unlike many policy areas, where most people are not concerned and do not pay much attention, COVID policy was highly salient. In the United States alone, over one million people died from COVID-19 (Mathieu et al. 2023). Lockdowns, mask mandates, and eventually vaccinations became hotly contested issues and involved more than a single level of government. Many Americans declined to follow governmental and public health recommendations throughout (Gaskell et al. 2020).

Grodzins, of course, was writing in an era with much less partisan polarization than today. The COVID-19 pandemic was such a novel event in the

recent political history of the United States, and the response to the pandemic was so reliant on mass public adherence to behavioral guidelines, that in many ways the story of the pandemic is a story about trust. Did Americans trust the government to deal with the crisis? While Americans' trust in government tends to be relatively low, it is not homogeneously so. Factors such as demographics, political partisanship, and governmental competence have all been suggested as potential contributors to trust and distrust. We argue that even when people are presented with a novel issue that does not have previous partisan cues but does have metrics to evaluate competence, partisanship grows in importance but fails to overwhelm evaluations of competence. While what does and does not qualify as competence becomes a partisan issue, as examined through stay-at-home orders and school closures here, the impact of COVID-19 case numbers remains, especially when evaluating the federal government.

This is not the first study of how trust in government has been affected by the pandemic and the degree to which Americans trust different levels of government to respond (Suhay et al. 2022). The advantage of this study, however, is in how it leverages a common set of questions asked many times over 2020, combined with COVID-19 policy choices, to measure the impact of competence on American's trust in government with regard to COVID-19.

Our contribution to the literature is based on answering the following questions. First, how large is the effect of partisanship on trust in government during the COVID-19 pandemic? Second, to what degree, if any, does this relationship change across different levels of government? Third, to what degree, if any, did Americans' trust in government respond to the competence of government in a manner that can be distinguished from partisanship?

To answer these questions, we utilize a series of twenty-seven YouGov polls carried out from March 14, 2020, to October 17, 2020. These polls surveyed a cross section of registered American voters.

Questions included basic demographics, rating the performance of the federal, state, and local governments with regard to COVID-19, personal experiences with COVID, and more. Observational data was gathered on daily state-level COVID-19 cases and deaths by the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Research Center.

Our results show that while partisanship greatly affects how voters interpret new information, Republicans and Democrats do both interpret some signals in the same way. While it may be expected that Democrats have

less trust in the federal government to deal with COVID-19, in 2020 both Republicans and Democrats whose states had more COVID-19 cases became less confident in the federal government's ability to manage the pandemic as a result. On the state and local level, however, interpretations were more mixed. While state politics are more national than ever before, state interpretations were a little less polarized. Also, whether voters held the state government responsible for higher rates of COVID cases depended on voter copartisanship with the governor.

Discussion

The manner in which citizens interact with government is necessarily predicated on their evaluations of its competence and trustworthiness. Therefore, for political leadership to be effective, trust is required. Government officials depend on the trust of citizens in order to obtain compliance in government decision making in both the short and long term (Barber 1983; Tyler 2006). A lack of trust leaves coercion as the sole mechanism for the government to ensure adherence, which also limits the ability of the government to make credible long-term commitments. Many of the policies surrounding COVID-19, such as mask mandates or vaccines, depend on the compliance of citizens.

Citizens trust the government when they believe that the goals of government are their goals, and that the government has the competence to effectively pursue those goals (Bangerter et al. 2012). Though there exists some fuzziness about the definition of political trust and how it might differ from intrapersonal trust, it would be normatively positive if there was a relationship between government performance and trust in government. If voters judge the competence of government in a way that is independent of the actual actions of government, it lessens the power of the reelection incentive to improve government performance. For performance to have an impact on trust, citizens must monitor the performance of the president, Congress, and the economy, which there is some evidence they do (Citrin 1974). That said, long-term trends in trust in government do not necessarily reflect apparent trends in government performance (Keele 2007).

This discrepancy may be explained by the influence of partisan polarization, which has been increasing in the aggregate in the United States (McCarty et al. 2016; Iyengar et al. 2019). If perceptions of governmental goals and competence are driven solely by partisanship, the true goals and competence of government have no impact on trust. Indeed, partisan polarization appears

to be correlated with substantially decreased out-party trust (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015).

While partisanship may drive trends in trust in government, in a federal system voters may trust different levels of government differently. Indeed, American voters tend to have greater approval and trust in government the "closer" government is to them. For example, voters tend to approve of their congressman much more than Congress as a whole (Fenno 1978). This phenomenon is also observed in election administration, where voters are most confident that their own vote was counted correctly, followed by votes in their county, then votes in their state, and then votes in the country as a whole (Atkeson et al. 2015). The relation between proximity and trust may have several causes. The fewer people a government institution represents, the more representative of them it may be, as the constituency is smaller and likely more homogeneous. More local levels of government may also represent an ideal that is attractive to many voters with preferences for smaller government. There is mixed evidence on whether trust in state government, as distinct from trust in the federal government, depends on state-level performance (Hetherington and Nugent 2001; Wolak 2020), though much current research seeks to distinguish between trust in the various institutions that make up the government of the United States. With regard to COVID-19, state and local governments have an opportunity to distinguish themselves from evaluations of the federal government.

For three reasons, the COVID-19 pandemic provides an important case study on how trust in government varies across levels of government. First, it is the rare example of a truly new issue in American politics. Since COVID-19 was a new disease and neither of the two major parties had a strong previous policy position on the handling of a pandemic, voters did not have strong previous partisan cues to fall back on when evaluating the government's pandemic response. Second, the different levels of the federal system had meaningfully different responsibilities and responses to the pandemic. The federal government was largely responsible for coordinating and supplying resources such as masks and respirators, while state or local governments made decisions about quarantines, school closings, and more. This observable heterogeneity in responsibilities allows voters to potentially distinguish between the performances of different levels of government, a task that is ordinarily exceptionally difficult for voters (Sances 2017; de Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw 2020). Finally, when evaluating competence with regard to COVID-19, there are relatively clear, observable metrics, such as case numbers and deaths.

Measuring the actual competence of the government in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic is neither feasible nor the actual quantity of interest. We are interested in the perception of competence instead. As described earlier, trust in government requires voters to believe the government is in some way competent. It does not necessarily require that the government is actually competent. Whether or not voters are accurate in assessing the competence of government with regard to COVID-19 is an interesting question, but not one that this paper directly addresses. Things like cases, deaths, knowing someone who has gotten COVID, and school openings or closings may in fact be directly related to government competence, but that is not relevant for the question being studied here. They are relevant because these are the factors voters are most likely to use when constructing their evaluations of government response to COVID.

Over the course of 2020, the performance of the federal government with regard to COVID-19 was highly scrutinized. During this time period, COVID-19 was the lead story almost every single day. If ratings of the federal government's handling of COVID are determined solely by perceptions of competence, we would expect to see ratings move in response to outcomes such as deaths or cases. If ratings are determined by partisanship, we would expect to see significant divergence between partisans on both sides. COVID was not initially inherently polarized, though perceptions of Donald Trump, as leader of the executive branch, were. From the beginning, Trump's role in handling the US response to the COVID-19 pandemic was highly visible, starting with travel bans. Therefore, any partisan differences in evaluations of his role and the role of the federal government were likely to start high and remain high. Given the fairly extreme differences in evaluations of Trump in general and the controversy surrounding the COVID-19 response under Trump, any rally-round-the-flag effect Trump saw as leader during a time of crisis would be expected to be minimal.

Evaluations of state or local governments, on the other hand, are less likely to be immediately governed by partisanship. As previously discussed, state and local governments have significant high-profile responsibilities with regard to handling COVID-19. They are also generally more trusted than the federal government, and are missing the "Trump factor" with regard to partisan polarization. When given more room to distinguish themselves, state and local governments may be able to establish identities outside of the partisanship of the elected officials.

Data

Across the twenty-seven Economist/YouGov surveys, there are 44,456 registered voters. Observations are weighted to match the demographic distribution described in the American Community Survey.

Partisanship is operationalized using a three-category response. For each level of government, respondents rate their handling of the pandemic as *excellent*, *good*, *not sure*, *fair*, or *poor*. Responses are rescaled to a −2 to +2 scale with equal distance between each category.

Observational variables that are likely to affect perceptions of competence are included in the model. The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center collected daily data on county-level cases and deaths from COVID-19. That data was aggregated to the state level. Analysis on levels of disaggregated, substate, local governmental approval during COVID is a topic for future research.

The surveys are the source of data on whether respondents know anyone (including themselves) who has gotten COVID, as well as demographic information and trust in government performance during COVID-19.

Methods
Time Trends

We conduct analyses of group averages over time. Public opinion on the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic by the federal government, for instance, clearly changed over the course of 2020. That is apparent from figure 5.1.

The overall trend is that Americans' perceptions of competence decrease over the pandemic. In figure 5.1, we can see that the proportion of respondents rating the federal government's handling of the pandemic as poor explodes from April to October of 2020. On the other hand, the proportion who rate the federal government's handling of the pandemic as good, fair, or not sure decreases. Obviously, this shows a strong general dissatisfaction with the course the federal government charted over this period with regard to the pandemic. This pattern is not completely linear, however, as some hesitation in decrying the federal government's job may indicate a hesitant rally-round-the-flag effect, though that would not last. Additionally, the proportion of respondents rating the federal government as excellent with regard to COVID held more or less steady. This exception from the larger pattern could potentially indicate the presence of partisanship within evaluations as a cadre of supporters continue to back the manner in which former president Trump steered the federal government during this time.
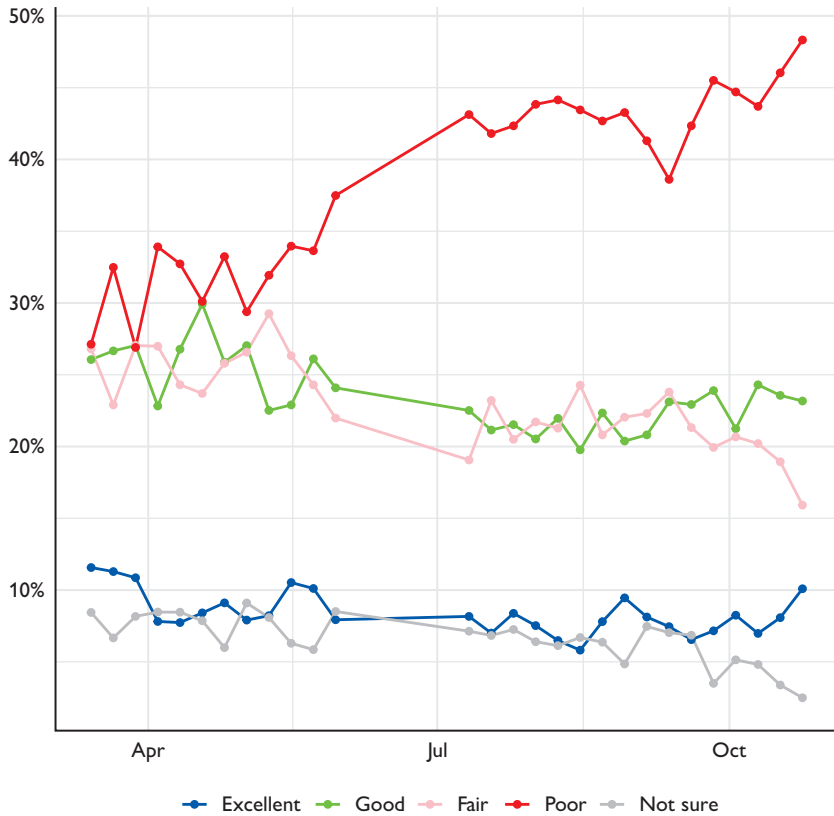
Figure 5.1 Approval of federal handling of COVID-19 over 2020

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

We replicate the same analysis in figure 5.2 while restricting our data to respondents who self-identified as Democrats in order to investigate the potential impact of partisanship on evaluations of how the federal government handled COVID-19. While *poor* started as the plurality choice, it was not the majority choice. Nearly 20 percent of Democratic respondents initially graded the federal response as good. By October, that percentage was approximately halved while the percentage rating the federal response as poor had nearly doubled, going from just above 40 percent to just under 80 percent. While Democrats are clearly more negative than the respondents as a whole initially, it is really over the course of the summer of 2020 that a difference develops.
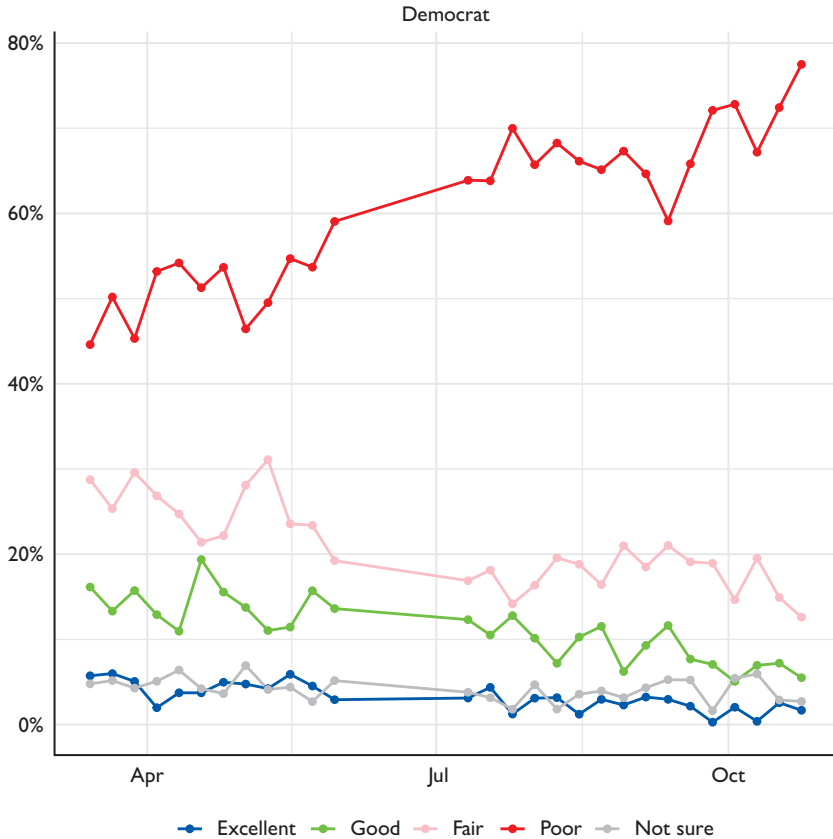
Figure 5.2 Approval of federal handling of COVID-19 among Democrats

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

Figure 5.3 shows that from April until the end of September, the percentage of Republicans rating the federal handling of COVID-19 as poor was increasing, which is the same pattern Democrats were undergoing. From mid-July onward, however, the percentage of Republicans rating it as good was increasing. If there are a substantial number of Republicans rating the federal government's handling of the pandemic positively and a substantial number rating it negatively, that may potentially indicate disagreement within the Republican Party.

In figure 5.3, we can see that the pattern among Republicans is different from that of Democrats, but not opposite. While *poor* was the most popular selection among Democrats and only grew over time, *good* (not *excellent*) was the most popular selection among Republicans. *Excellent* only overtook *fair*
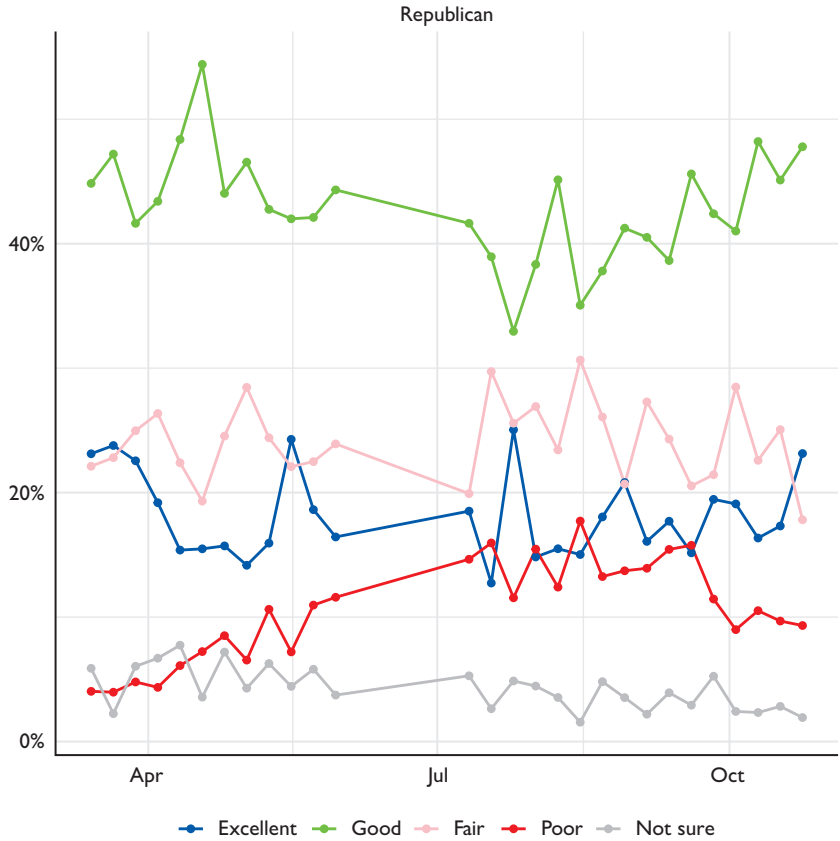
Figure 5.3 Approval of federal handling of COVID-19 among Republicans

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

in the final survey included in the data. Indeed, while *good* achieved clear net growth over the period the surveys were collected, *excellent* ended in largely the same position it began.

Finally, figure 5.4 shows how self-identified independents rated the federal government on COVID-19. In it, independents largely appear to be between Democrats and Republicans. Overall, there is a large increase in the proportion of respondents who rate the federal government's response as poor. However, as with the Republican respondents, there is movement over time in the number of respondents selecting *good* or *excellent*. The Democratic respondents, on the other hand, exhibit a simple downward slope in those two categories over time.
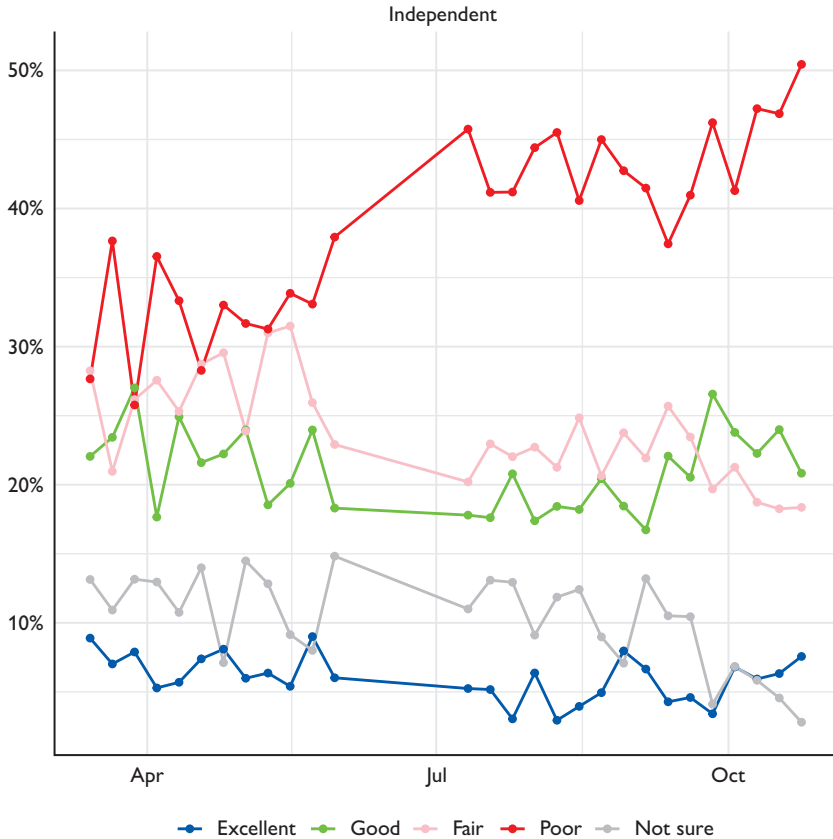
Figure 5.4 Approval of federal handling of COVID-19 among independents

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

The federal government was not the only level of government responsible for COVID-19 response in the United States during the pandemic. State governments were also responsible for a wide range of COVID-19 policy, such as issuing shelter-in-place orders or statewide education policies.

In figure 5.5, we can see how respondents rated their state's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, the time trends in this figure to some degree mirror the federal time trends shown in figure 5.1. The initial conditions, however, are near opposite. In both cases, the proportion of respondents rating handling as poor grew dramatically, the proportion rating things as good fell, and the proportion rating as excellent fell, but made a recovery. In figure 5.5, *good* starts as the most popular category, not *poor*, and *excellent*
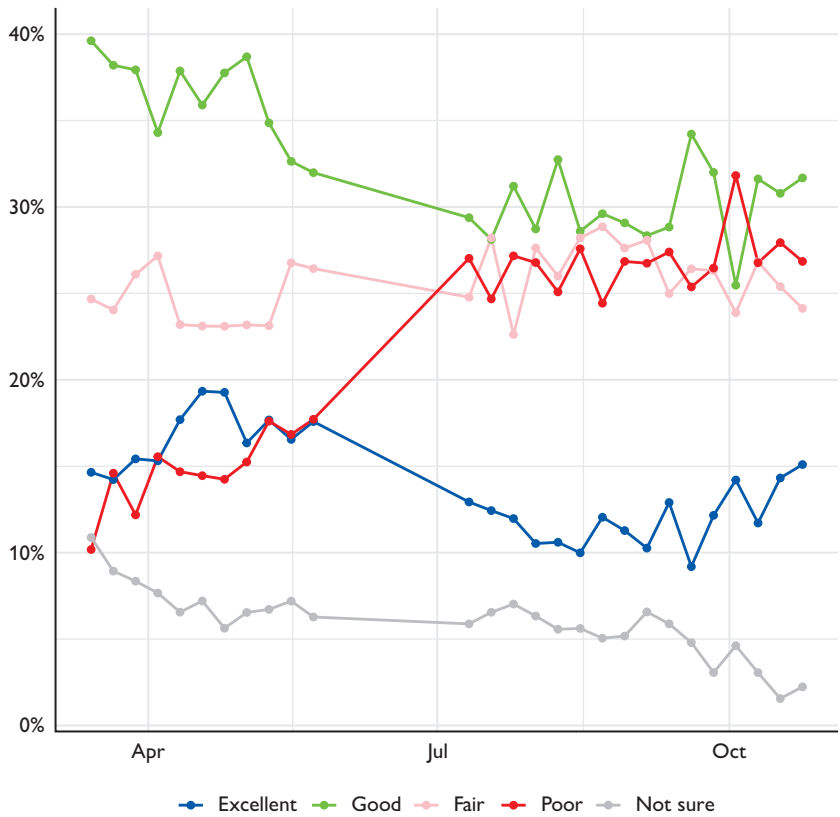
Figure 5.5 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 over 2020

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

is initially outpacing poor. Though *poor* grows substantially as a category, it does not end the period as the plurality choice; *good* is the most popular option in the final collection period. There is also minimal net movement in the *excellent* category. For state-based evaluations, and not federal ones, the *fair* category sees minimal net movement, and the degree of the fall seen by the *good* category is much larger than in federal evaluations.

As seen in figure 5.6, Democrats initially become more positive on the state's handling of COVID-19: *excellent* as a category rises to just about 30 percent of respondents, and the next highest category is *good*.

Then, however, both *good* and *excellent* fall over the rest of the period, with *poor* experiencing a corresponding increase. While noisier, this pattern is relatively comparable to the overall graph.
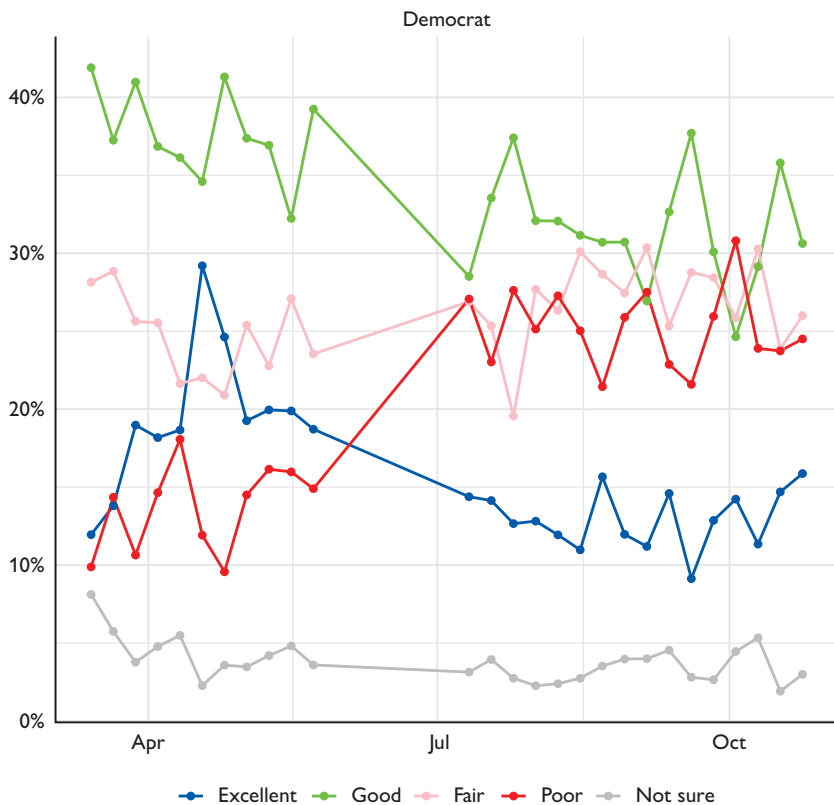
Democrat

Figure 5.6 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 among Democrats

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

In figure 5.7, Republicans display relatively comparable trends, but are overall noticeably more likely than Democrats to rate their state's performance during the COVID-19 pandemic as good. Additionally, there does not appear to be any spike in *excellent* ratings in April 2020 that would correspond to the one for Democrats in figure 5.6.

Interestingly, independents were largely the most negative group toward their state's handling of the pandemic, as seen in figure 5.8. *Poor* as a category had the same climb among independents as it did among Democrats and Republicans, albeit much steeper. In the end, among independents *poor*, *fair*, and *good* ended in a near three-way tie.

The overall pattern of approval of local handling of the COVID-19 crisis, as seen in figure 5.9, largely mirrors the ratings of state handling of the crisis,
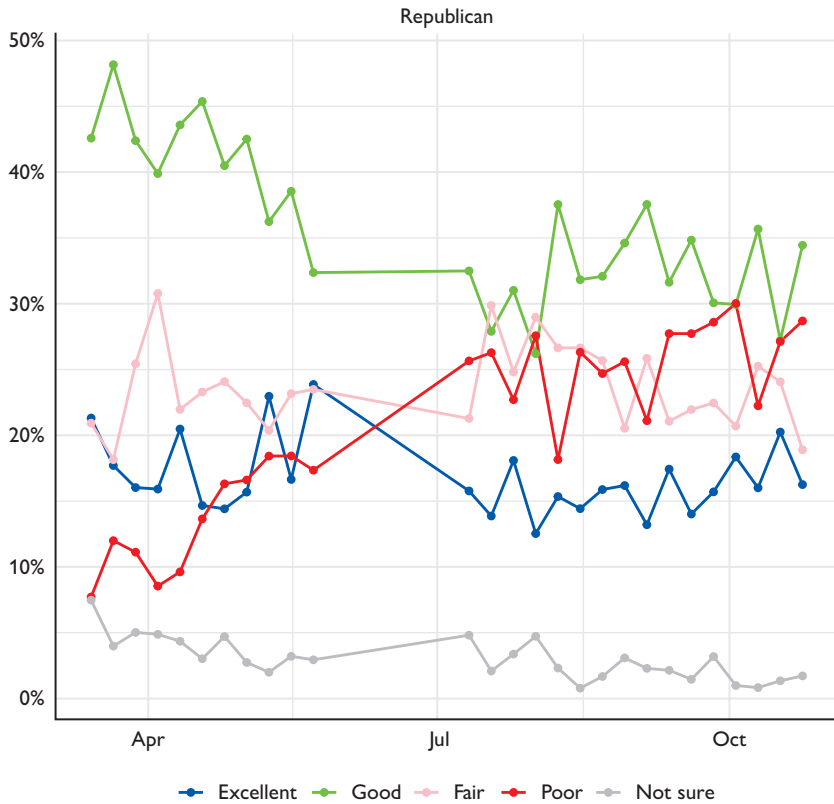
Figure 5.7 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 among Republicans

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

albeit more positive. While there is still a growth in the proportion of respondents rating the handling as poor over the course of the survey collection period, it is a markedly less steep growth and ends at a lower level. The same is true of the corresponding decrease in respondents rating things as good.

From figure 5.10 we can see that the aggregate pattern obscures some variability, as Democrats display much more movement than the overall picture does. Visually, it is apparent that Democrats are responsible for the jump in approval in the early part of 2020 shown in figure 5.9, which corresponds to the jump in approval of local governments by Democrats in the same period. This pattern is comparable to how state governments were rated, as shown in figures 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7. It is possible that this indicates that some respondents are grouping state and local governments together and in doing so are
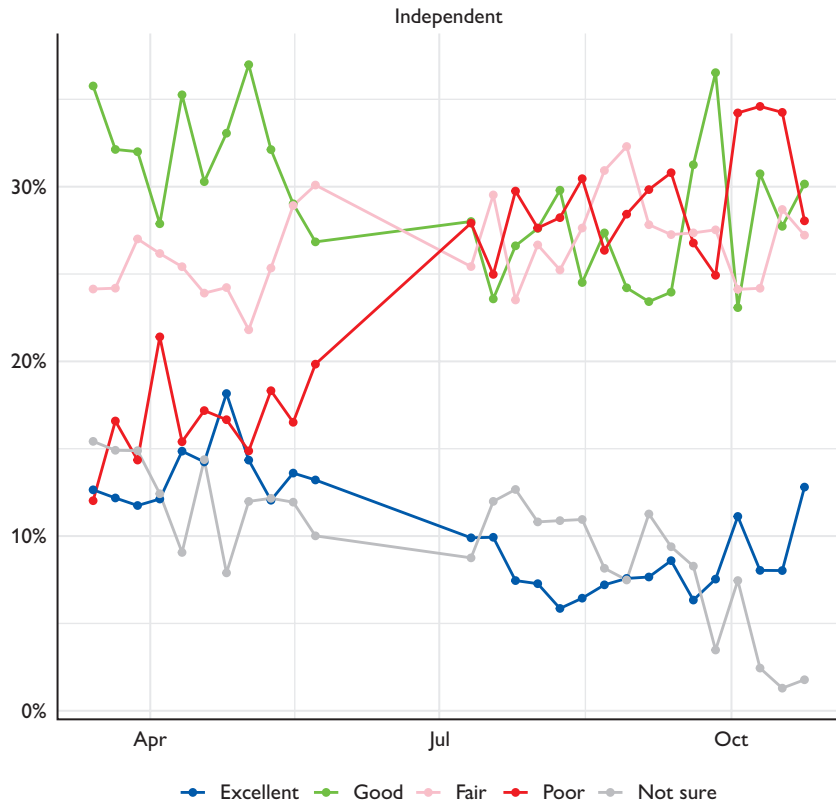
Figure 5.8 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 among independents

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

misattributing blame or credit between the two levels of government. It is also possible that the performance of state and local governments were in the aggregate quite positive for Democrats.

Figure 5.11 shows that Republicans experienced a near inverse to the positive spike in confidence reported by Democrats in the local handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Early in the period, Republicans spiked in the number of respondents rating local handling as fair or poor. That said, the general trend toward more negative ratings is comparable, as in the aggregate and Republican cases. The strength of the trend is much greater in the case of Democratic respondents.

As seen in figure 5.12, independent respondents appear as a combination of Democratic and Republican attitudes. There are offset spikes in positive
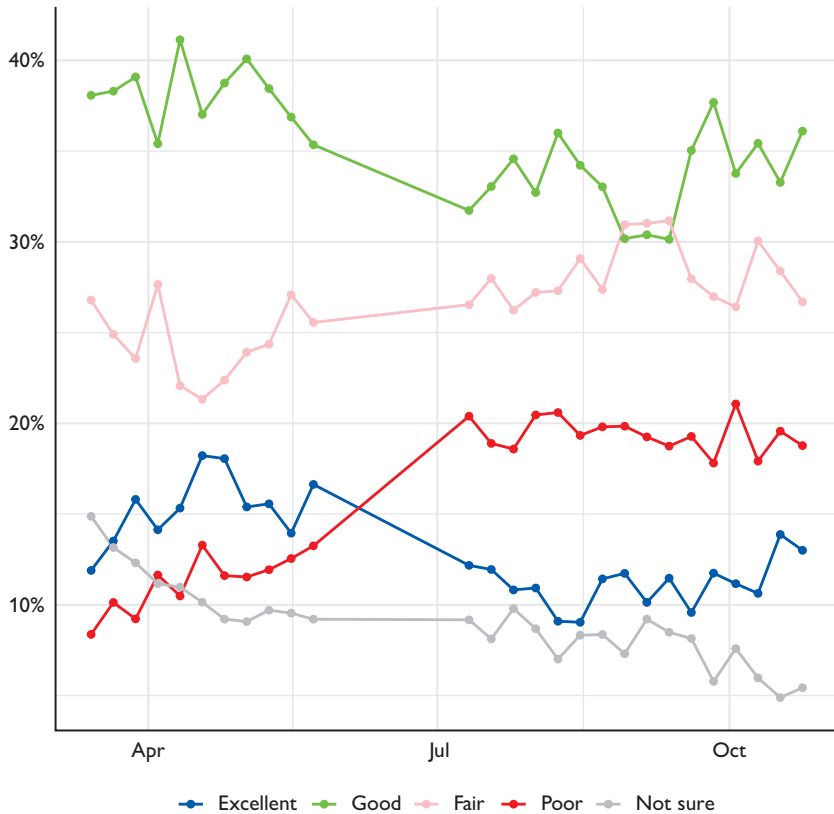
Figure 5.9 Approval of local handling of COVID-19 over 2020

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

and negative ratings at different times. The growth in poor ratings appears similar to Democratic respondents, while independents are unique in that the excellent and good ratings rise at the very end of the period.

We have presented substantial evidence that Democratic and Republican respondents have divergent views on how the different levels of government handled COVID-19. In fact, Republicans and Democrats differ most dramatically in their views on the performance of the federal government. Given that difference, and the fact that Republicans controlled the federal government in 2020 through then president Donald Trump, the data suggests that copartisanship with the party in charge is relevant to how respondents rated the handling of COVID-19. With the case of the federal government, copartisanship with the president depends only on the party of the respondent. In the case of
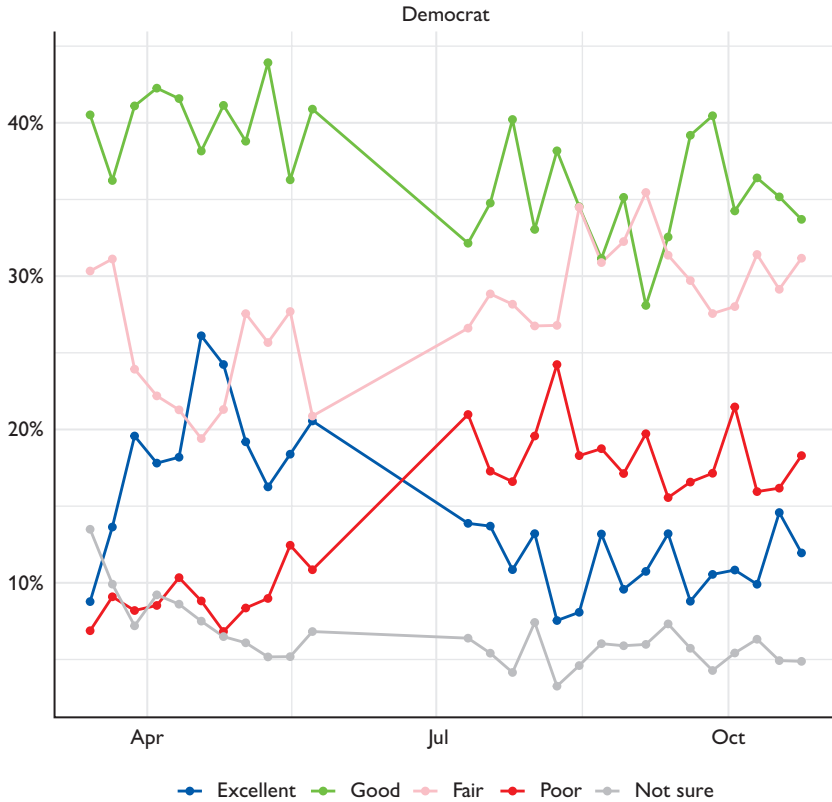
Figure 5.10 Approval of local handling of COVID-19 among Democrats

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

the state government, copartisanship depends on the party in charge of state government. We operationalize state control with a three-category variable. States may have a Democratic or Republican trifecta, in which the governorship and both state legislative houses are controlled by the same party, or they may be mixed. Measuring local control is outside the scope of the current paper. In this section of the analysis, individual ratings are collapsed from *not sure, poor, fair, good,* and *excellent* into a single number. Each of those ratings is assigned a value of −2, −1, 0, +1, and +2, respectively, which allows group means to be taken across categories.

We examine states with a Democratic trifecta in figure 5.13. Respondents are separated within the figure by partisanship and LOESS curves are fitted for each group.[1] In Democrat-controlled states, trust started in the same
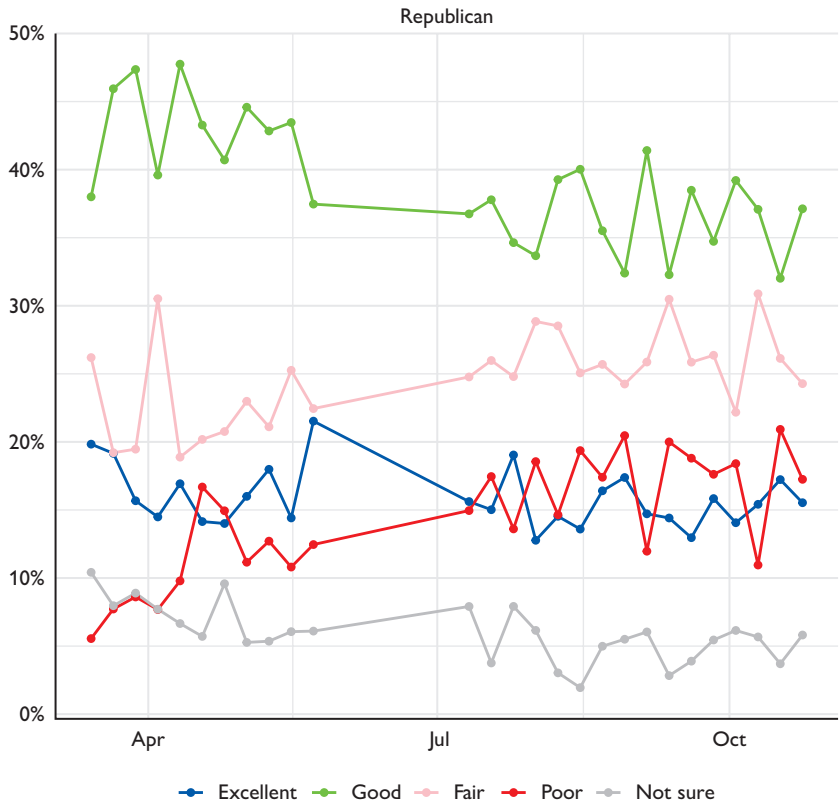
Figure 5.11 Approval of local handling of COVID-19 among Republicans

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

place among all three groups before rising among Democrats and falling among Republicans. It fell among all three groups over the summer before rising slightly among independents and rising more substantially among Democrats.

This indicates polarization in respondents, while showing that there are some common patterns as well. The manner in which Republican and Democratic respondents move from parallel trends to opposite trends by late September likely also indicates the increased presence and influence of campaign messaging on perceptions of COVID competence.

Figure 5.14 shows a nearly identical pattern for respondents from states with a Republican trifecta. The largest difference is that all groups, Democrat, Republican, and independent, are shifted downward compared
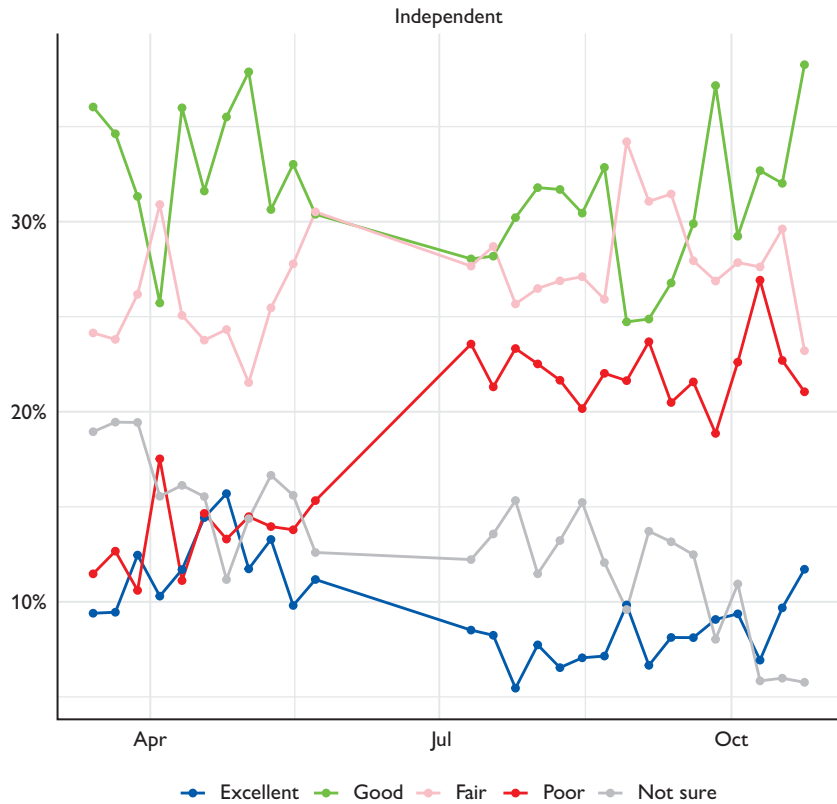
Figure 5.12 Approval of local handling of COVID-19 among independents

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

to their peers in other states. Democrats in Republican trifecta states are more negative on the aggregate than Republicans in Democratic states, and the reverse.

Figure 5.15 shows that states without a trifecta are most similar to Democrat-controlled states. Interestingly, independents are slightly more negative and Republicans are slightly less negative in such states at the end of the period. In the middle, Democrats do not rise quite as high on the positive part of the figure. It is not completely clear why this might be the case or if this is a meaningful difference. Overall, we would expect states with mixed control to be battleground-type states, in which partisan messaging around COVID-19 policy in the run-up to the 2020 general election was especially strong. There are exceptions to this pattern in the form of safe states, with
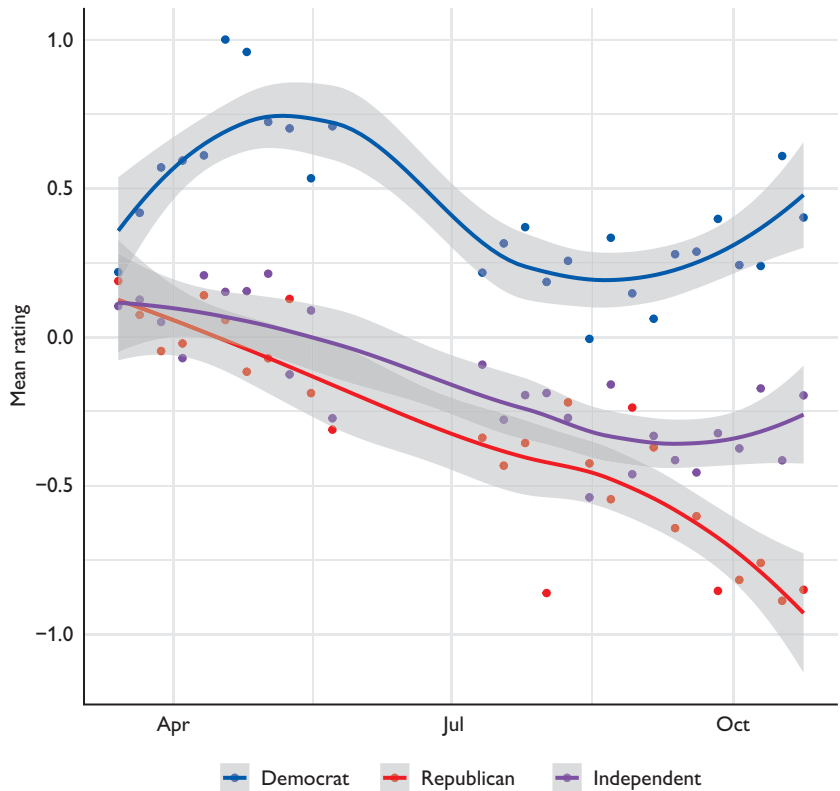
Figure 5.13 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 in Democratic states

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

a governor who doesn't match the party of the legislature: Massachusetts, Kentucky, Alaska, Maryland, New Hampshire, Louisiana, and Vermont. Regardless of the presence of partisan messaging, mixed states clearly have some openness to Democratic candidates or ideas.

These charts provide extremely strong visual evidence that partisanship has an effect on how Americans evaluated each level of government during the COVID-19 pandemic. For competence to have an effect on how Americans view their government, however, partisanship cannot be the only thing that Americans used to rate government performance with regard to COVID-19. The most logical factor voters could use to judge how well government was doing during the crisis is the spread of COVID-19 itself.
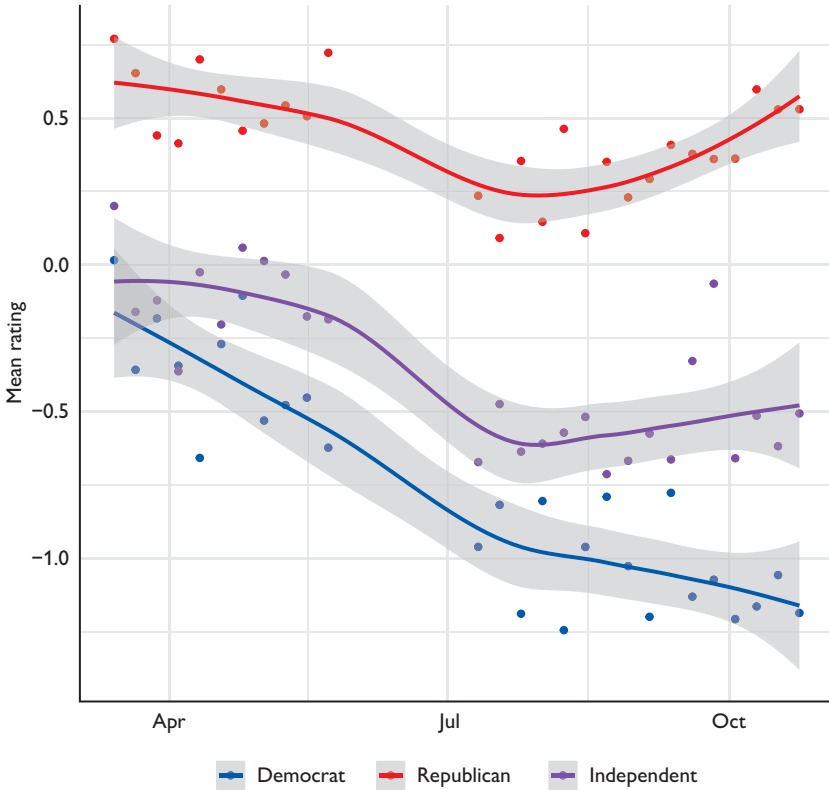
Figure 5.14 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 in Republican states
Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

To some degree, this is a fraught measure when examining actual government competence. The specific circumstances in some states would lead to higher rates of COVID-19 infection. Additionally, it was not completely clear at the time what the impact of any given policy might be, or the degree to which state government might have any meaningful impact on COVID-19 infections at all. This work is intentionally uninterested in measuring or even defining actual competence when it comes to governmental response to the COVID-19 crisis. Instead, we are interested in perceived competence. The assumption being made in this analysis is that lower levels of COVID cases is something that people would notice and would use to generate their opinions on the state of the crisis. We found that using COVID-19 cases vs. deaths made no difference, so cases are used throughout.
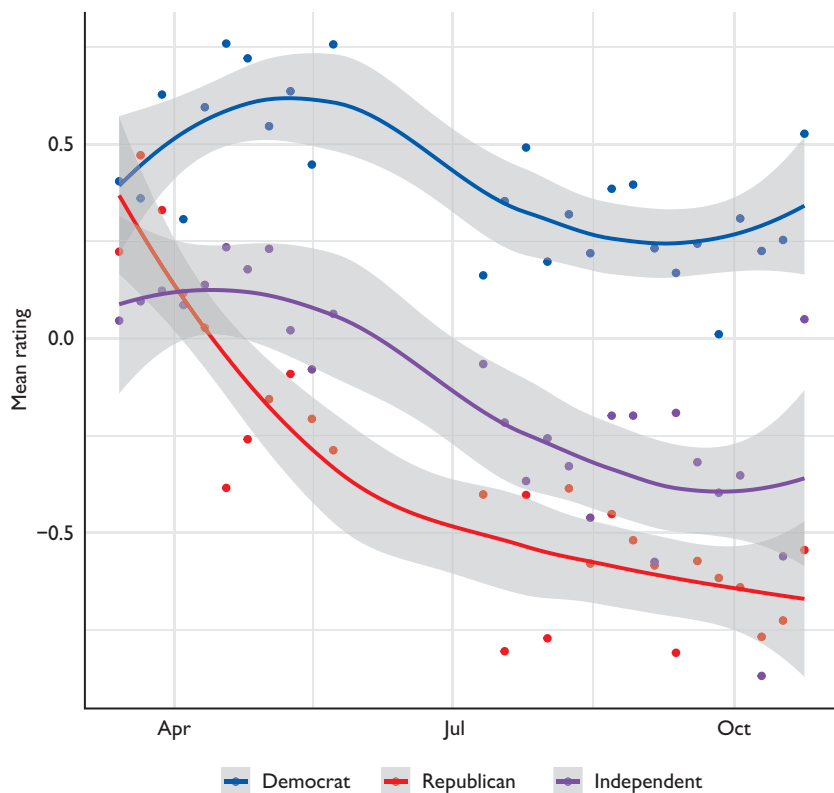
Figure 5.15 Approval of state handling of COVID-19 in mixed states

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling.

Table 5.1 shows the results of running a single predictor regression for the three outcome variables. The federal, state, and local numerical approval variables are regressed on respondent partisanship and the state case rate. As partisanship is a categorical variable, the coefficients can be interpreted as group offsets from the intercept. This is a relatively simple model, which includes the two theoretical causes of perceptions of government competence with regard to COVID-19: the rate of the disease spreading within the state and respondent partisanship. It is clear that partisanship alone does not fully explain the perceived competence of state and local governments. In the model using the federal rating as the outcome variable, the difference between the Democrat and Republican coefficients is the partisan difference and directly comparable to the copartisan governor coefficient in the other models, in which

Table 5.1 Simple regression models

	Dependent Variable		
	Federal (1)	**State (2)**	**Local (3)**
Democrat	−0.172*		
	(0.008)		
Republican	0.299*		
	(0.009)		
Copartisan Governor		0.302*	0.163*
		(0.009)	(0.009)
Cases/10k	−1.924e−4*	−3.143e−4*	−2.300e−4
	(3.177e−5)	(4.019e−5)	(4.012e−5)
Observations	41,750	24,787	24,712
R^2	0.299	0.198	0.073

Note: *p < 0.01

Source: Data from Economist/YouGov Polling and Mathieu et al. 2023.

independents are excluded. The difference between the Republican and Democrat coefficients is 0.471, significantly larger than the coefficients for the state and local models. While partisanship is clearly of great importance, other factors are also influential for trust in state and local government.

Additional Analyses

This data also lets us take a descriptive look at which states are rated the highest or lowest by respondents. Wisconsin was the state rated lowest by respondents for its COVID response. This is possibly explained by the fact that Wisconsin is an extremely competitive state along partisan lines, and had a highly publicized partisan dispute between the Democratic governor and the Republican legislature over an attempt by the governor to move the date of the Wisconsin presidential primary. Interestingly, Wisconsin Democrats and Republicans both rated the state relatively low for its management of COVID-19. We do not argue that how respondents rate the government's pandemic response is not affected by other factors. On a state level, it may also be impacted by how respondents feel about the state government in general.

Conclusions

While it is clear that partisanship plays a significant, even primary, role in how voters evaluate the competence of the federal government, it is also the case

that, at least in the case of COVID-19, actual, measurable performance plays a role. Partisans viewed the performance of the different levels of government differently overall, but they were also much more likely to approve of government performance where the relevant level of government was controlled by a copartisan.

Further work can improve on this analysis in two very clear ways. First, more sophisticated modeling could better integrate the temporal nature of the data used. In this case, although the data was collected using the same question over time, approaches that address the fact that the data was collected at different points in time may be appropriate in the future.

Second, this paper does not utilize possible measures of perceived competence other than case rate. It seems likely that some Americans had preferences with regard to government COVID-19 policy that depended on things other than spread of the virus. During this period, concerns over shelter-in-place orders, school closures, and mask mandates were held by some Americans regardless of impact on case rates. These are also directly measurable policies, while the impact of government performance on case rate is not always clear. As these varied across and occasionally within states, analysis of these differences could also help us gain leverage over the question of misattribution in federalist systems and the factors that contribute to trust and confidence across levels of government.

Note

1. A LOESS curve is a regression in which the curve at each point is fit using a localized subset of the data.

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BRANDICE CANES-WRONE: Are you thinking of putting in a policy? So I'm working on a paper with very different data, so I'd be curious. And where we find out that out-partisan approval does respond somewhat to which policies the governors enacted.

DAVID BRADY: When the governor says we're going to open schools, the Republicans like that and Democrats don't like it. So it's fairly partisan and overall it doesn't make much of a difference.

MICHAEL W. MCCONNELL: Question both to the earlier MO [money supply] analysis paper, too. I think one of the most startling facts about modern American politics has been that the ten most popular governors were all Republicans in blue states. And that doesn't seem to correlate with any of this. And it puzzles me.

BRADY: There aren't very many of them.

MCCONNELL: Well, they're all the ten most popular in the country.

BRADY: Ten over how many years? In 2020? How many are there? [Maryland governor Larry] Hogan?

CANES-WRONE: This is the out-partisan effect. I mean, but most of them, in COVID did enact something akin to blue state policy. So this is that out-partisan effect.

Douglas Rivers: Democratic governor or Republican state, it's variable. So you're going to have to—

Canes-Wrone: Yeah, in Kansas [which had a Democratic governor], they opened. There are some examples such as these that counter.

Rivers: But they do get elected because they're positive.

Canes-Wrone: Yes, I agree.

Rivers: Individually, they're not.