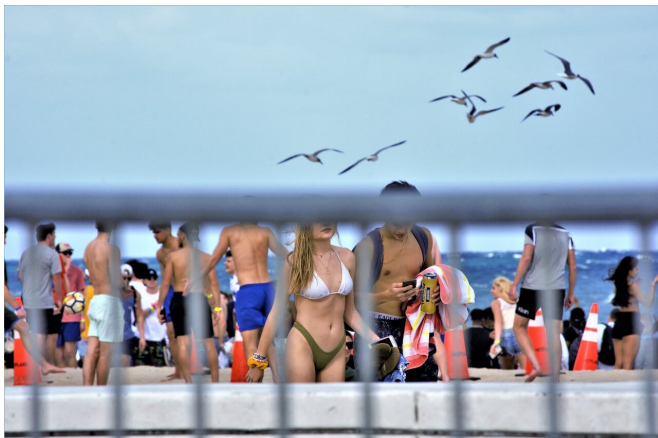


Florida COVID-19 infection rate for young people among highest in 2020

16 April 2021, by Paul Owers



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Florida ranked among the states with the highest COVID-19 infection rates for younger residents in 2020, putting the state's large elderly population at an increased risk for the coronavirus, according to a study from a researcher at Florida Atlantic University.

Florida counties with younger populations experienced higher COVID-19 infection rates among residents under 25 years old, with a 4.3 percent infection rate last year that was 33 percent higher than national averages, said Patrick Bernet, Ph.D., an associate professor of health administration in FAU's College of Business.

In addition, the study, published in the *Journal of Public Health Management & Practice*, revealed that the younger counties had higher infection, emergency room and hospitalization rates among residents over age 64, while older counties experienced reduced infection rates for all ages and decreased over age 64 emergency room and hospitalization rates.

Bernet also found that former U.S. President

Donald Trump's vote share in Florida was associated with higher infection rates for all and higher over age 64 [emergency room](#), hospitalization and mortality rates. The Sunshine State supported the Republican presidential candidate in both 2016 and 2020, so politically associated health behaviors are relevant for this study, he added.

Bernet believes audience- and age-specific messaging can help reduce the pandemic's toll.

"There has been no concerted effort to communicate just how dangerous each single infection is—no matter the person's age, race, income or gender," he said. "It takes just 60 links in the [infection](#) chain for the disease to find its way to patients it can kill—who are disproportionately older or Black so either you're the unlucky No. 60 or you're a mule who brought the disease one step closer."

As of December 2020, Florida's 67 counties recorded 1.3 million COVID-19 infections and 21,000 associated deaths. The study arranged the state's 2020 COVID-19 cases into age-specific county rates and supplemented that data with socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, as well as 2020 presidential voting results.

Officials can use the results of this research to drive decisions about public health resource allocation and vaccine distribution, ultimately reducing "COVID-19 infections and deaths for all, minimizing the economic and human costs of the pandemic," the study states.

More information: Patrick Bernet. Association of Age-Specific 2020 Florida COVID-19 Rates With Population Age Distribution and Presidential Preference, *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* (2021). [DOI: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000001361](https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000001361)

Provided by Florida Atlantic University

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