

Motivation

School choice programs are publicly-funded state programs that provide alternative educational options outside of the public schools in which students are zoned. Scholars have found states with Republican controlled legislatures are more likely to support school choice policies. But these studies only examine a limited sample of policies, states, and years.

In this research project, I study support for school choice programs by focusing on party control of state legislatures, using a more expansive dataset. I also control for other explanatory variables that can influence school choice, including party of governor, public party preference, and income.

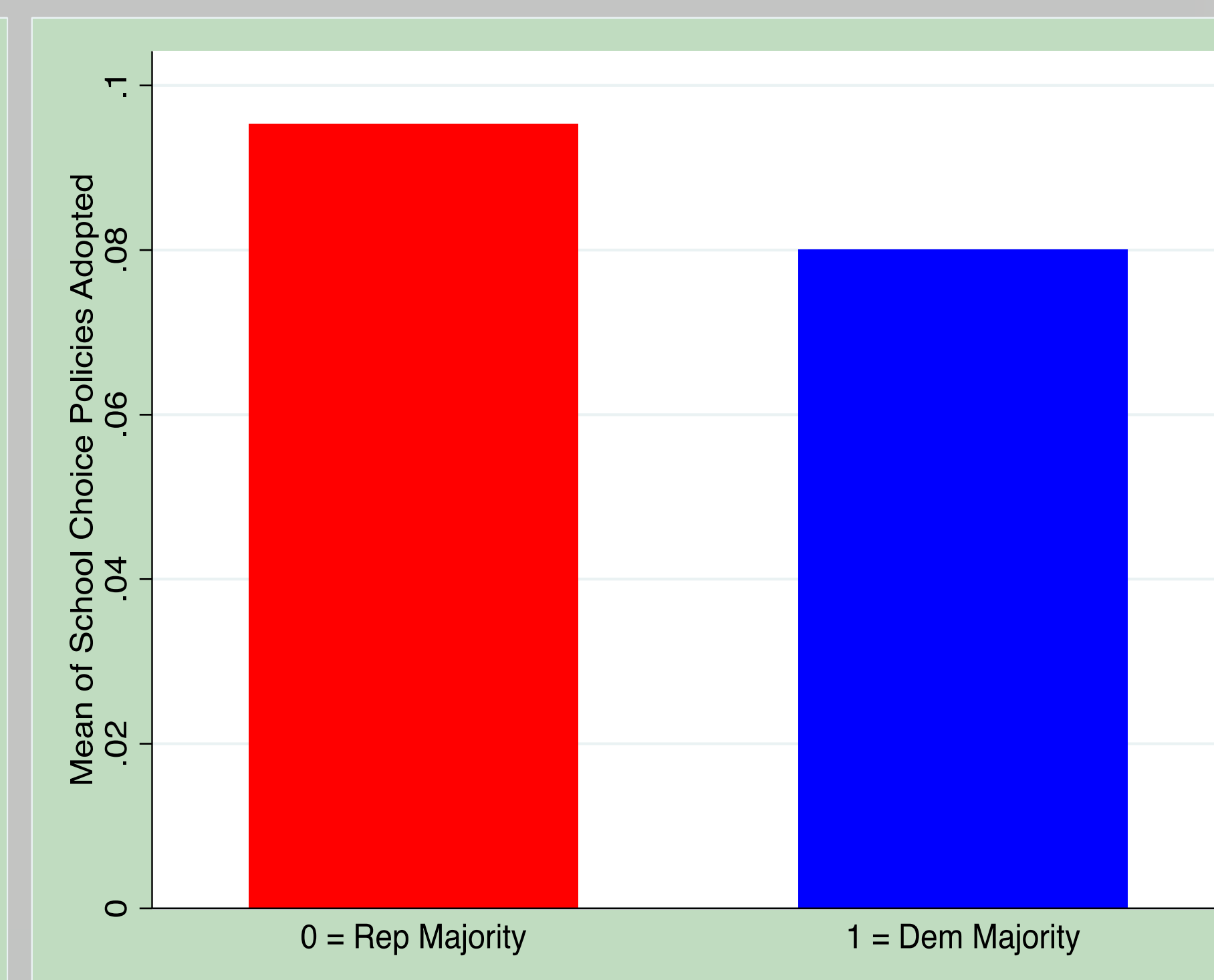
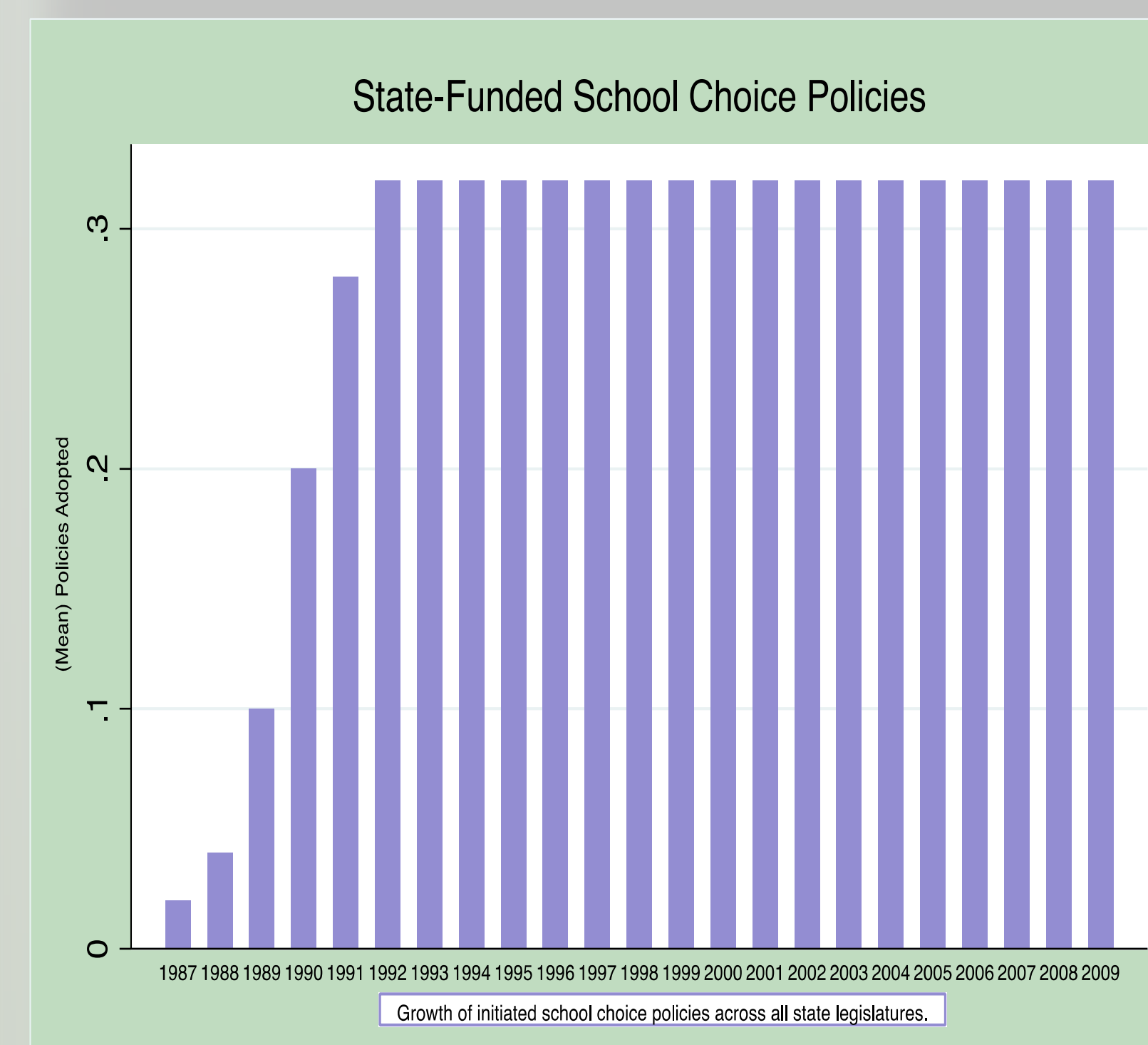
Hypothesis

States where legislatures are controlled by Republicans will have a greater number of school choice policies than states with Democratic-controlled legislatures.

Research Question

How does party control over state legislatures impact the adoption of school choice policies?

Data and Methods



Data: Correlates of State Policy Project Dataset, for all 50 states + Washington, D.C. between 1936 and 2011.

Method: Bivariate and multivariate regression analysis

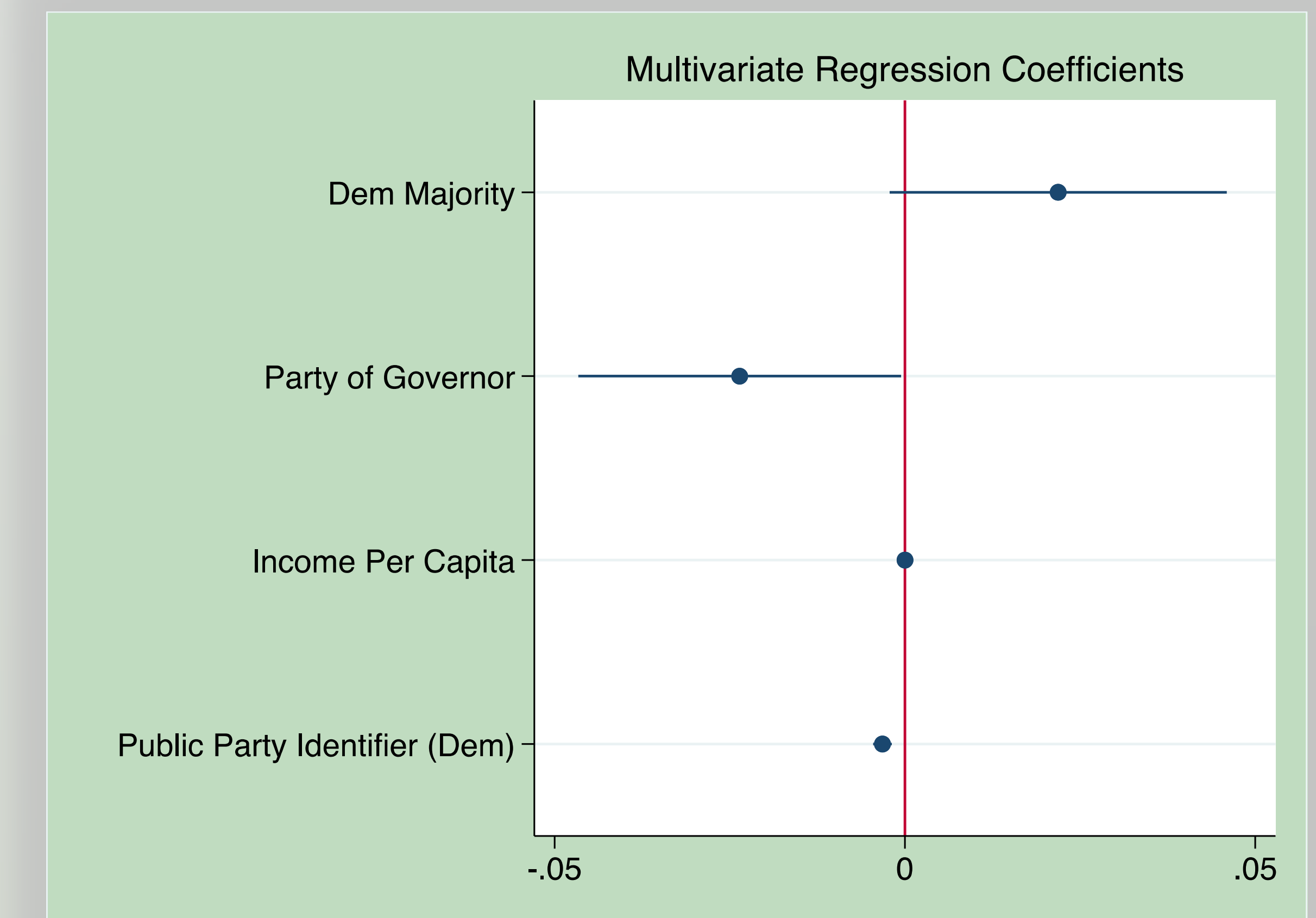
School Choice (DV): 1 = state adopted program; 0 = no adoption

Dem Majority (IDV): 1 = Democrats control legislature; 0 = Republican control

Control Variables: Personal income, Democratic state population, Democratic governor

Source of all data: [Correlates of State Policy Project Version 2.5](#)

Results and Analysis



Findings:

After controlling for party preference of governor, public party preference, and income, I concluded:

- As democratic legislative control increases, states are more likely to pass school choice policies.
- As party of governor becomes more Republican, states are more likely to adopt school choice policies.
- Income does not have a statistically significant impact on school choice policies.
- As percentage of democratic identifiers decreases, school choice policies are less likely to be adopted.

Discussion

- Significant variables to state-adopted school choice policies include Democratic governors and populations with more public Democratic identifiers.
- Research could further examine these control variables and see if they hold in more recent years and ask why they may be more important for school choice programs than state legislative control.