1. Title:
Polarization and Public Health: Partisan Differences in Social Distancing during the Coronavirus Pandemic

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3. Abstract
Abstract We study partisan differences in Americans’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Political leaders and media outlets on the right and left have sent divergent messages about the severity of the crisis, which could impact the extent to which Republicans and Democrats engage in social distancing and other efforts to reduce disease transmission. We develop a simple model of a pandemic response with heterogeneous agents that clarifies the causes and consequences of heterogeneous responses. We use location data from a large sample of smartphones to show that areas with more Republicans engage in less social distancing, controlling for other factors including state policies, population density, and local COVID cases and deaths. We then present new survey evidence of significant gaps between Republicans and Democrats in beliefs about personal risk and the future path of the pandemic.

4. Data description
We use the SafeGraph GPS data and an online survey of American adults.

5. JEL codes for the project
D10, I12

6. Key-words
Social distancing, partisanship, risk perception