Title:
Shock Salience and Heterogeneity in Individual Behavior

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Abstract:
We study heterogeneity in attitudes and behavior after the COVID-19 crisis in the population of international students across several university campuses in North America. More specifically, we study whether the response to the shock varies by field of study, by nationality, and whether it correlates with exposure to the shock, which we define as shock salience. We design a new survey to answer several questions. The first is whether STEM students modify their behavior less than other students. The second question is whether the extent to which students modify their behavior reflects the rules implemented in their home country, rather than the one in which they reside. Last, we examine whether the extent to which students modify their behavior correlates with the degree of exposure to the COVID-19 shock. We measure exposure in two ways. First, we use the number of deaths in their parents’ region of residence; second, we ask whether they directly know of someone who was hospitalized due to the virus.

Data description:
We conduct an online survey to measure our outcomes of interest. Additionally, we use publicly available data on timing of the COVID-19 shock and number of deaths related to the pandemic by students’ regions of origin.

JEL codes: D81, D83, D91

Keywords: shock salience, Covid-19, risk exposure.