Abstract:
In a large-scale survey experiment, we examine how the Covid-19 pandemic causally affects key components of people's moral perspective. We investigate whether the crisis moves people towards solidarity, how it affects their attitudes to inequality and how it affects nationalism, using a representative sample of more than 8000 Americans. To identify how the crisis affects moral views, respondents were randomly allocated into a treatment group or a control group, where the treatment group was asked general questions about the crisis before the moral questions. Making the pandemic particularly salient for the treated respondents allows us to causally identify how the crisis changes people's moral perspective. We show that the crisis has made respondents more willing to prioritize society's problems over their own problems. At the same time, we find that the crisis has made them more tolerant of inequalities due to luck. We show that these changes in the moral landscape has the potential to move important policy attitudes.

Data description:
We conducted a pre-registered online survey experiment with a nationally representative sample of more than 8,000 Americans between March 24 and April 2.

JEL codes for the project: D63, D64, H12, I3

Key-words: Covid19; social norms; moral views; survey experiment

More on the project here: Opinion, New York Times