

Turking in the time of COVID

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Research Question

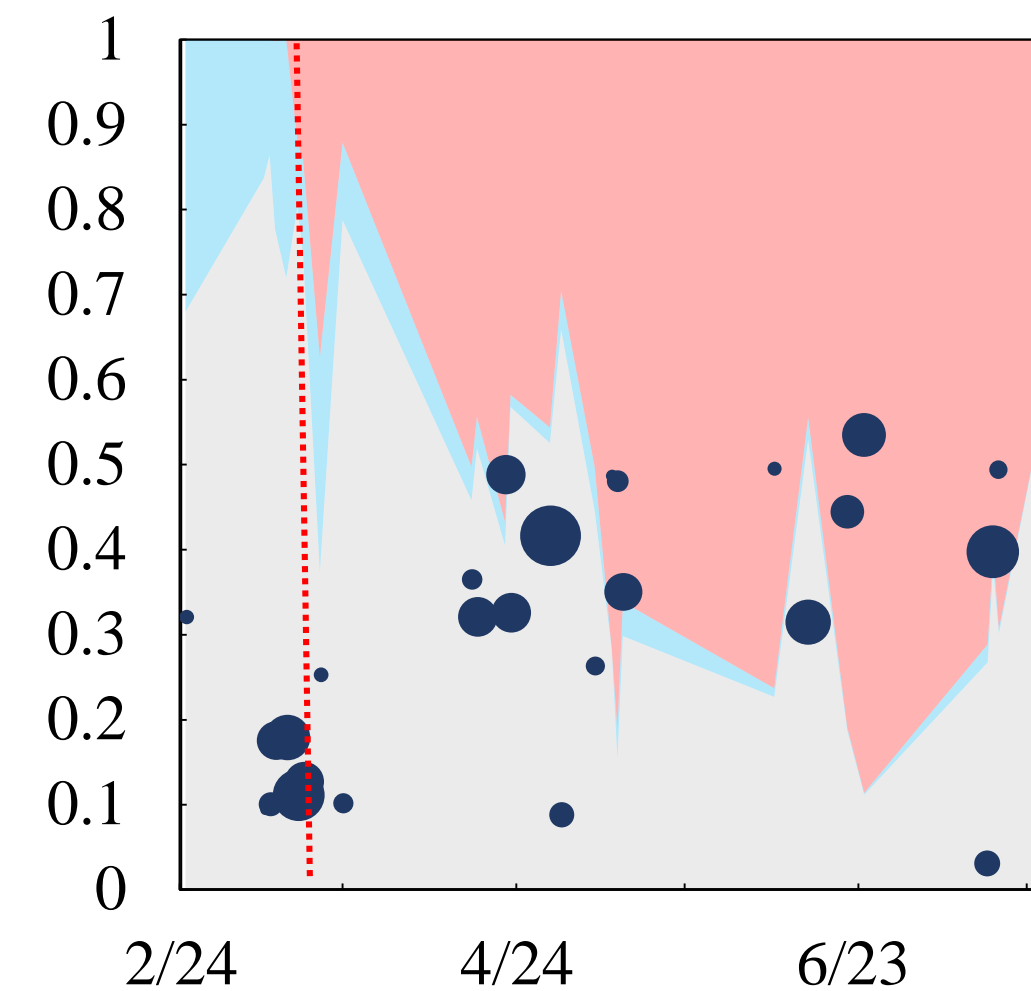
- Has the pandemic **changed** the pool of subjects participating in online social science experiments?

Method

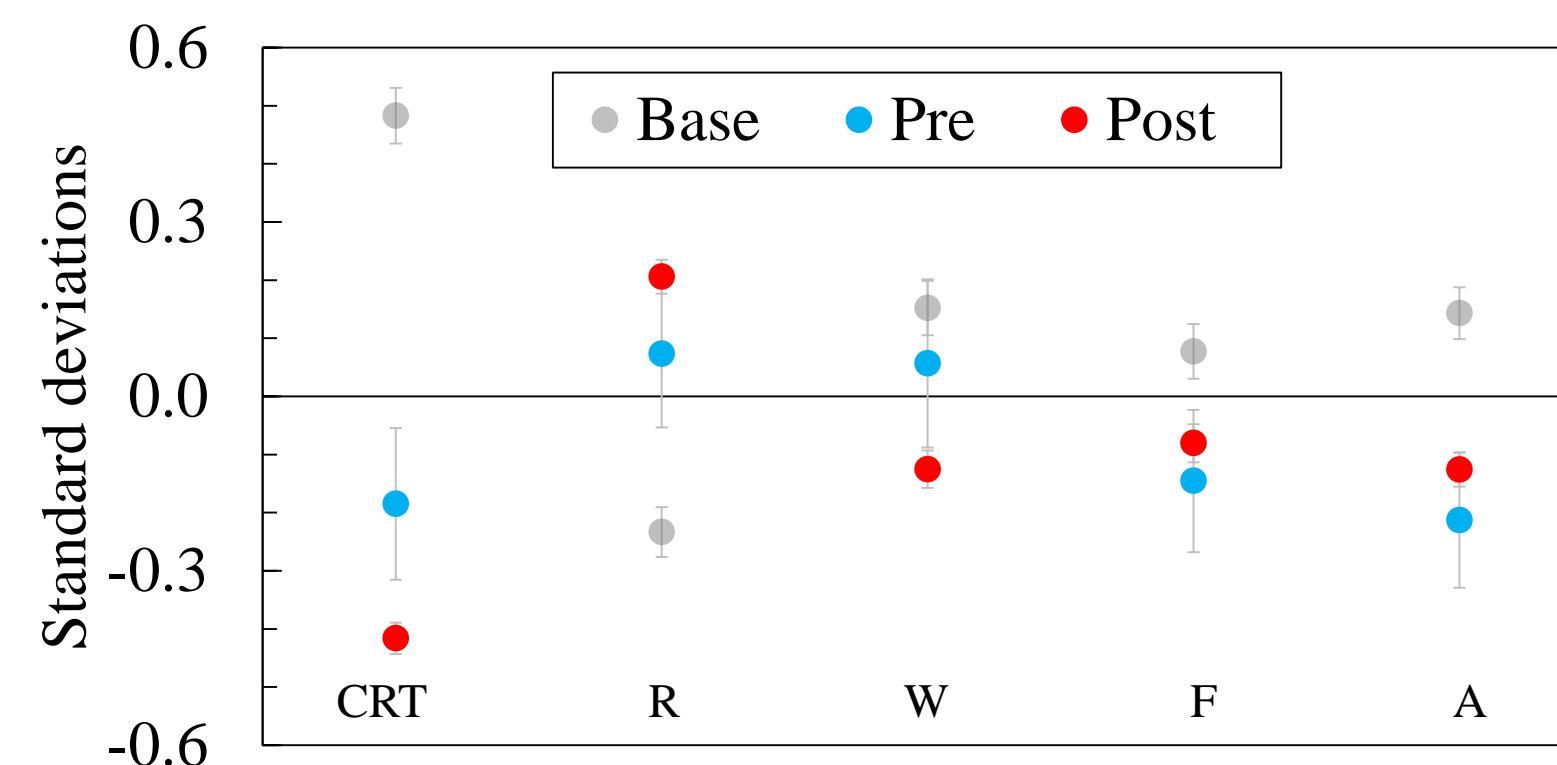
- We identify all workers taking part in our MTurk studies in 2020
- Based on the number of tasks taken, their date, and the criteria used for initial recruitment, we classify participants into:
 - baseline**: first recruited with a 95% reputation & +100 studies
 - pre-quarantine**: first recruited with no restrictions, 2/24-3/15
 - post-quarantine**: first recruited with no restrictions, after 3/15 (national quarantine)
- We select the 23 studies conducted since 2/24 with relevant demographic data, unrestricted recruitment, and at least 100 participants (n=15,925)
- We look at: age, gender, ethnicity, preferred political party, and analytic cognitive style (via CRT)

Results

- We find a **surge of brand-new participants** since the quarantine was announced



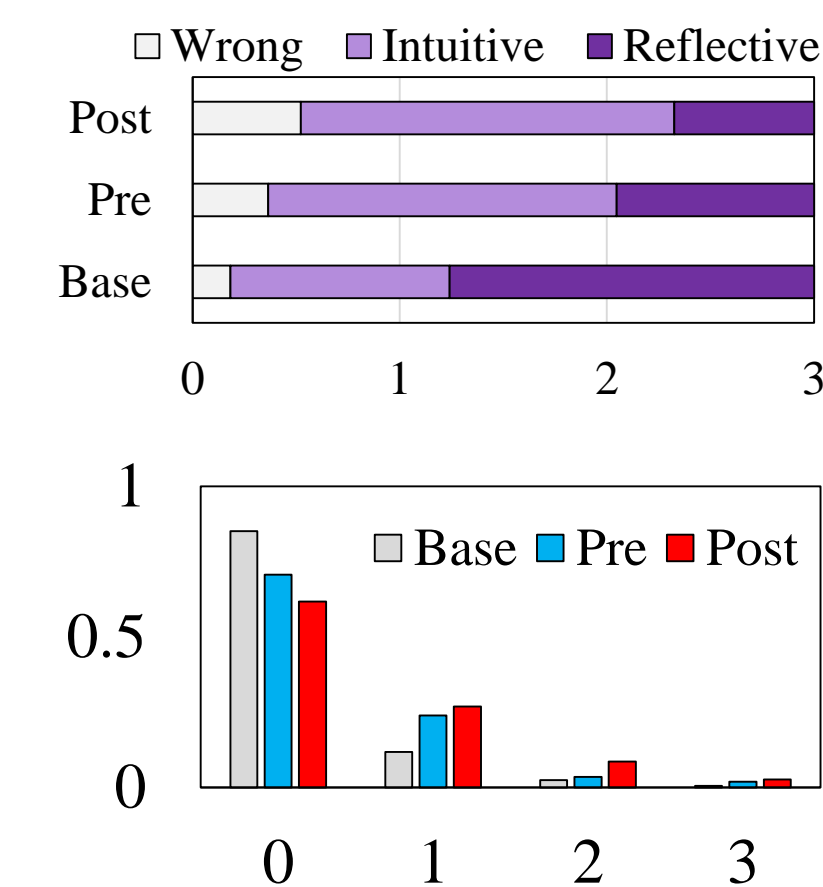
- Are post-quarantine workers different?** During quarantine, post-quarantine workers are more likely to be of non-white ethnicity and to perform more poorly on the CRT relative to baseline and pre-quarantine samples



- Are pre- and post-quarantine workers different?** We find no meaningful differences for the unrestricted ones. Yet, returning baseline workers are younger, less reflective, and less likely to be white

Results cont'd

- Is the apparent increase in diversity the result of random responding by new workers?** We look at bot-like responses, device used and time taken for the task, consistency, and attentiveness



- We find post-quarantine workers give unexpected answers more often, but that the number of unexpected answers by new workers is rarely greater than 1

Discussion

- Quarantine has made MTurk more representative in numerous respects
- At the same time, there is some potential trade-off between representativeness and overall data quality

(Main) References

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