

New Developments in Nudging and Behavior Change

Agenda

Background: From a loony to a movie star

Future:

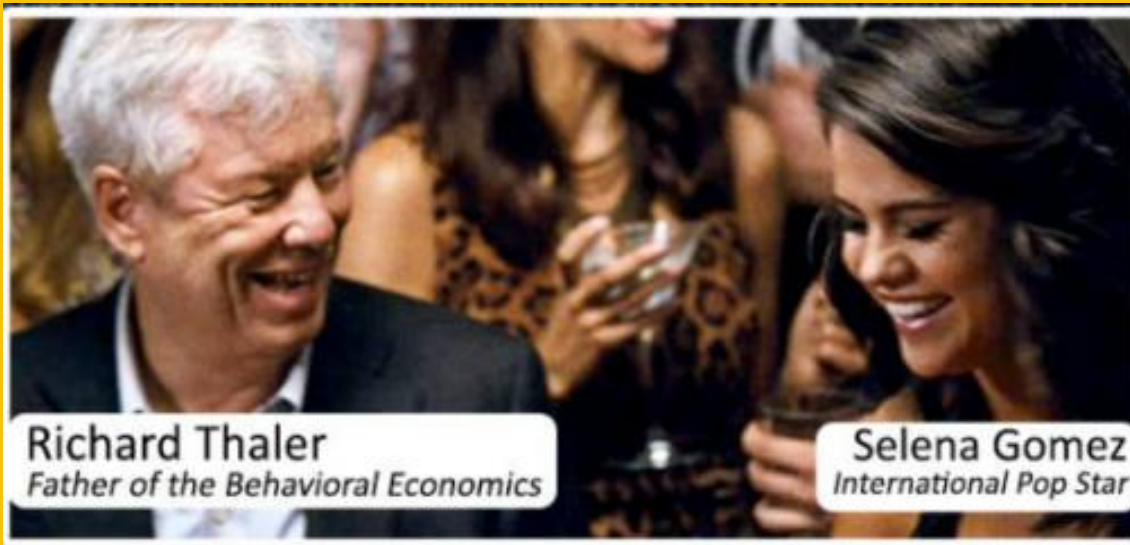
1. From single shot studies to large scale collaborations
2. From biases & nudges to debiasing & boosts
3. From replication crisis to a heterogeneity revolution



Background: From a loony to a star

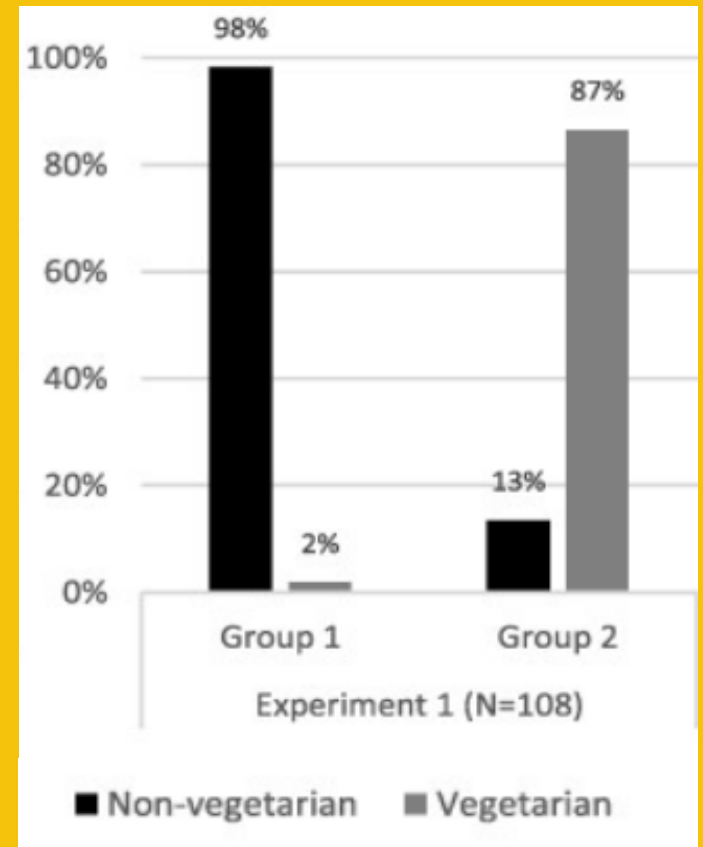
From a loony to a star

“Thaler, 69, was long dismissed as a loony by a litany of Nobel-wielding economists. Yet over the past seven years his ideas have become central to the policies of more than 50 governments around the world.”



Real world impact

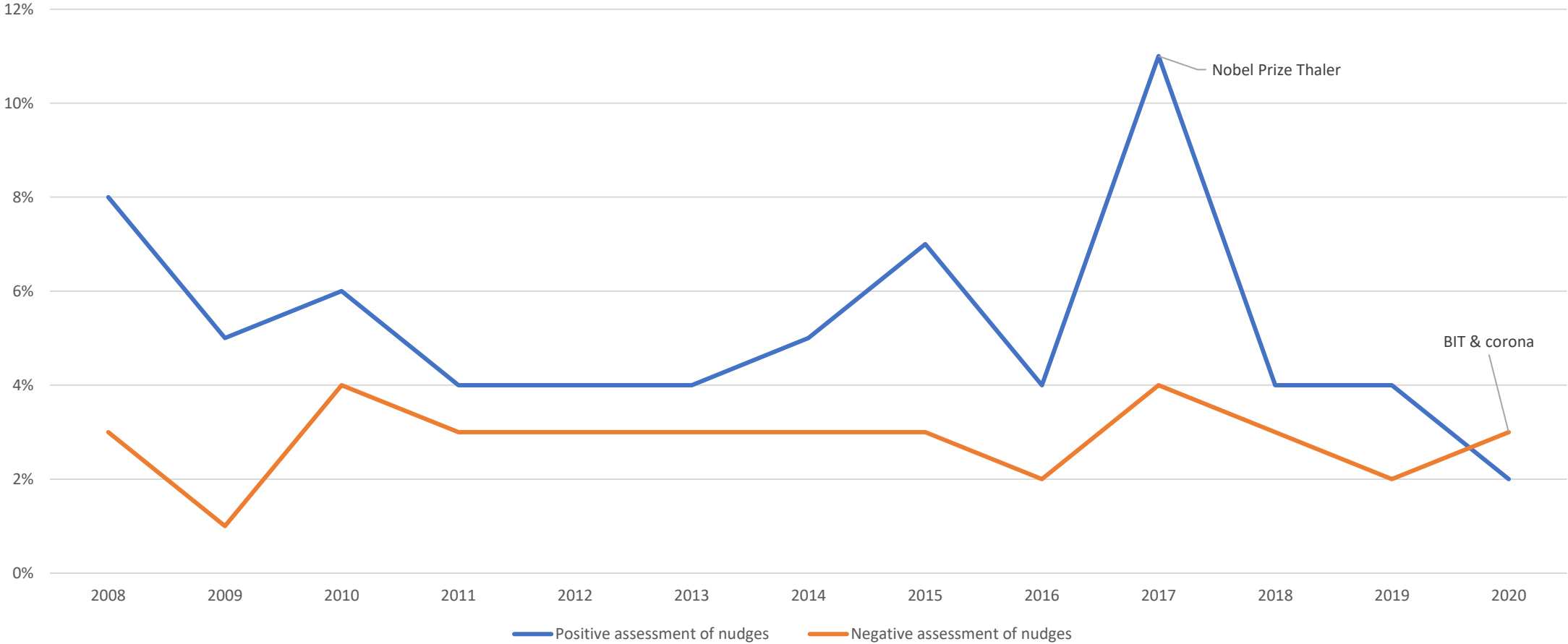
15,472,080 Americans are effortlessly setting aside money for retirement thanks to the Save More Tomorrow program.



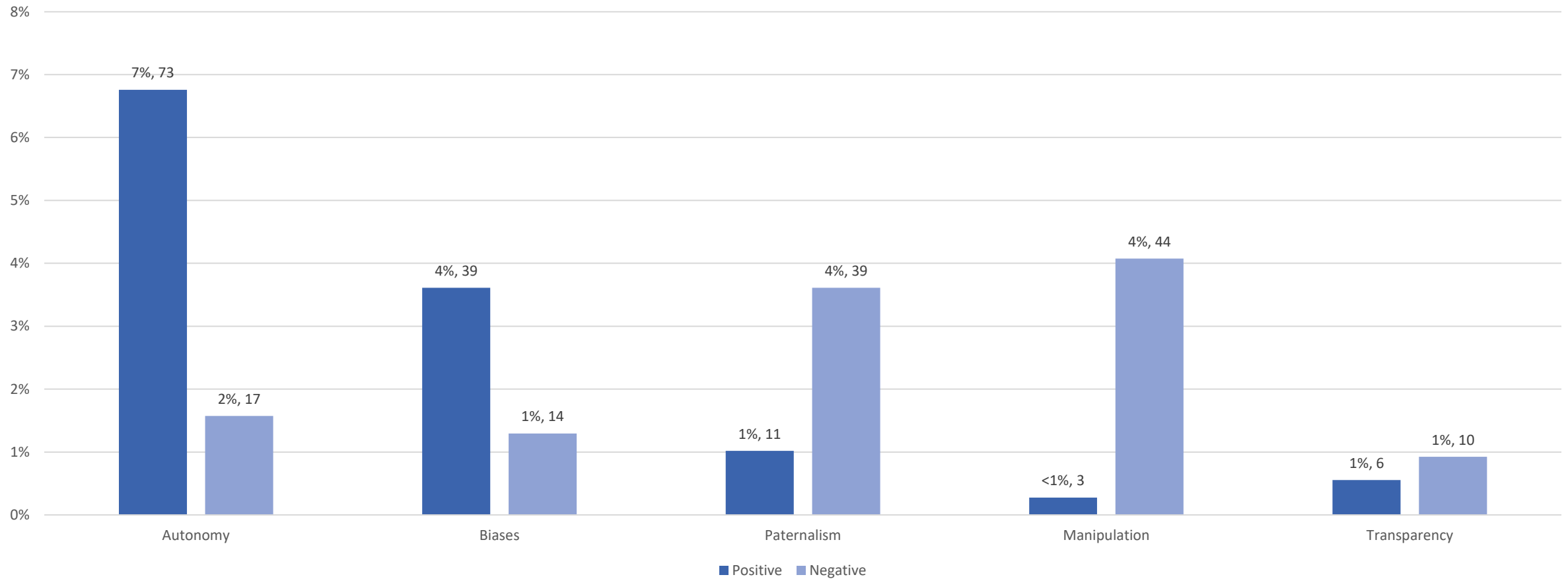
Selling my house



Assessment of nudges over time



Ethics of nudges





Future: From single shot studies to large scale collaborations

Single shot study

The effectiveness of moral messages on public health behavioral intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic

AUTHORS

Jim AC Everett, Clara Colombatto, Vladimir Chituc, William J. Brady, Molly Crockett

A comment on Everett et al. (2020): No evidence for the effectiveness of moral messages on public health behavioural intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic

AUTHORS

Farid Anvari

[A comment on Everett et al. \(2020\): No evidence for the effectiveness of moral messages on public health behavioural intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), by Farid Anvari. (Note: After we recorded the episode, the authors of the original paper updated it and then invited Farid to join them as a co-author. A great outcome!)

moral messaging COVID global study - next steps



M.J. Crockett

Large scale collaboration

nature
human behaviour

REGISTERED REPORT

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01156-y>



Moral dilemmas and trust in leaders during a global health crisis

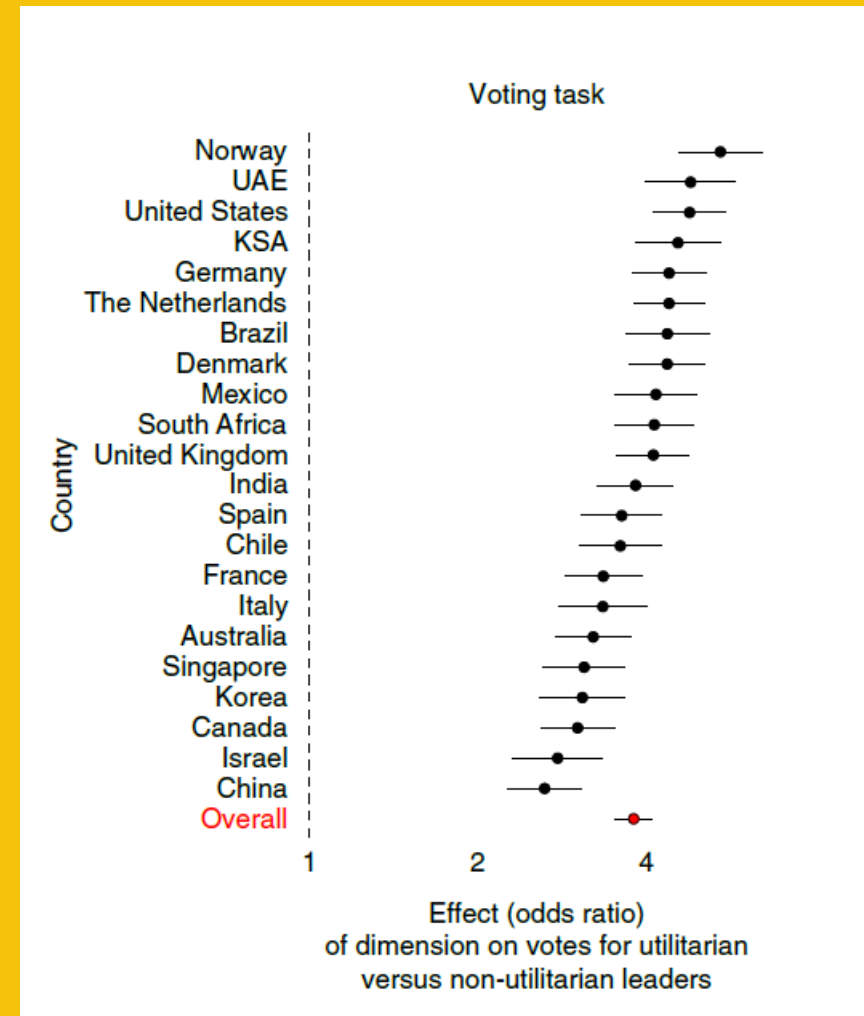
Experiments in 22 countries on six continents, $N = 17,591$ self-report and $n = 12,638$ behavioral task.



Jay Van Bavel
@jayvanbavel

This is not only an important and informative paper, it should also be the gold standard for how you respond to scientific criticism.

The authors built a diverse, international team of scholars and published a pre-registered report with a massive global sample of participants.





From biases & nudges to debiasing & boosts

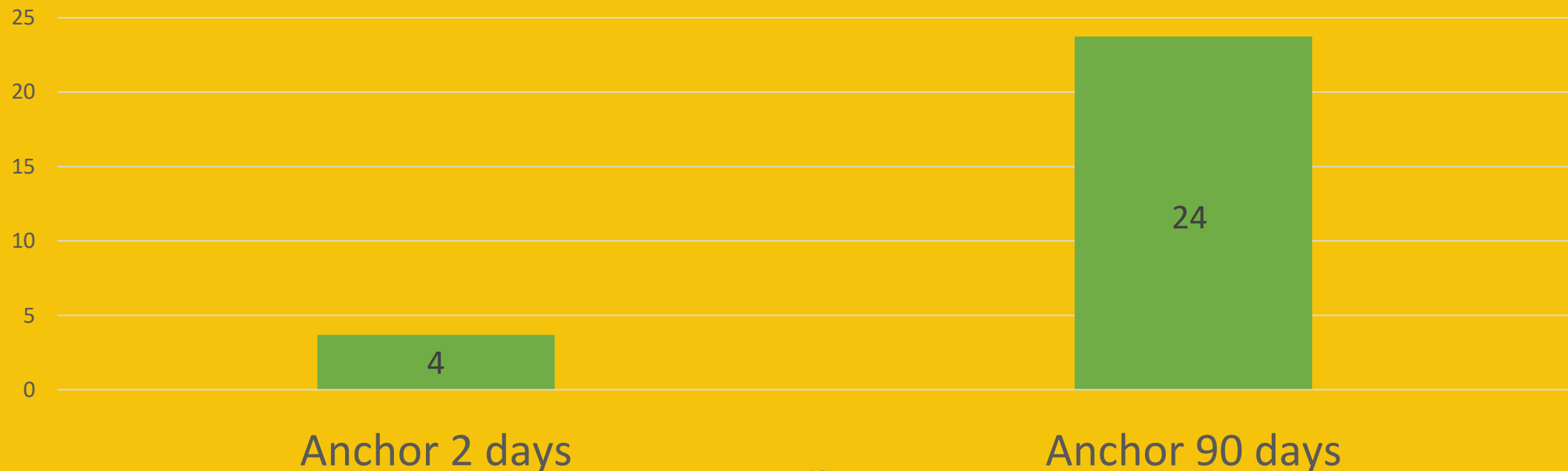
Biases

You are the senior manager of the Public Relations Office in a medium-sized municipality. You have to decide the maximum number of days by which your subordinates reply to citizens' emails. Consider whether the maximum number of days to reply must be higher or lower than two working days.

Now, indicate the maximum number of days to reply to citizens' emails below.

Anchor 2 days → 4 days

Anchor 90 days → 24 days



Debiasing

To make this decision, please first list two reasons why 2 days might be too short to respond to citizens' emails.

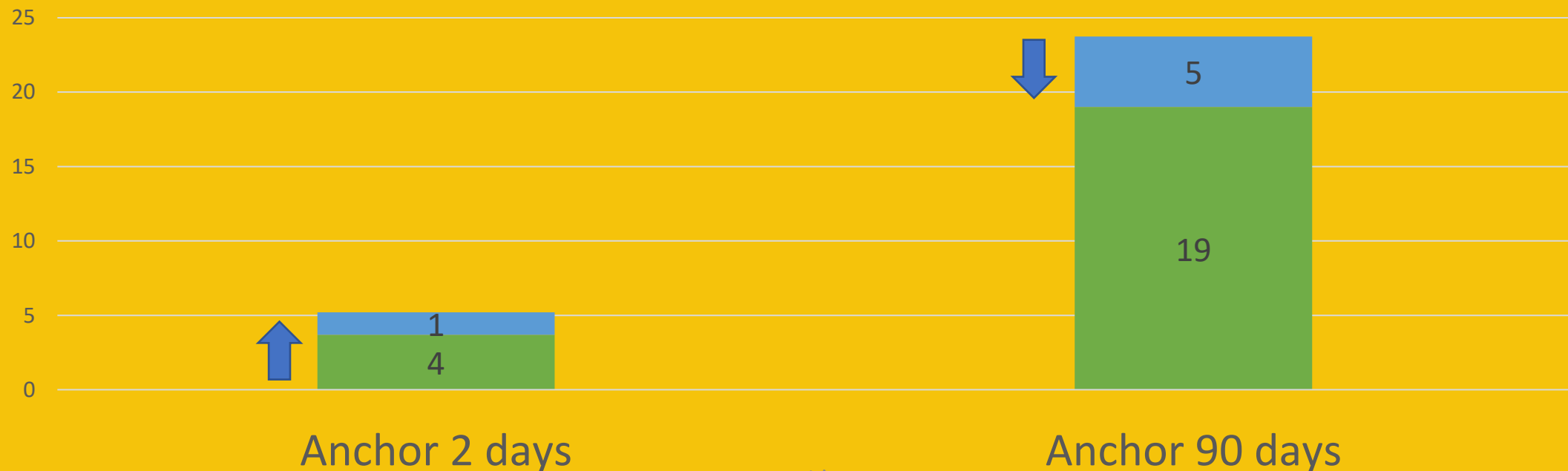
Reason 1 _____

Reason 2 _____

Now, indicate the maximum number of days to reply to citizens' emails below.

CTO low → 5 days

CTO high → 19 days



From nudges to boosts



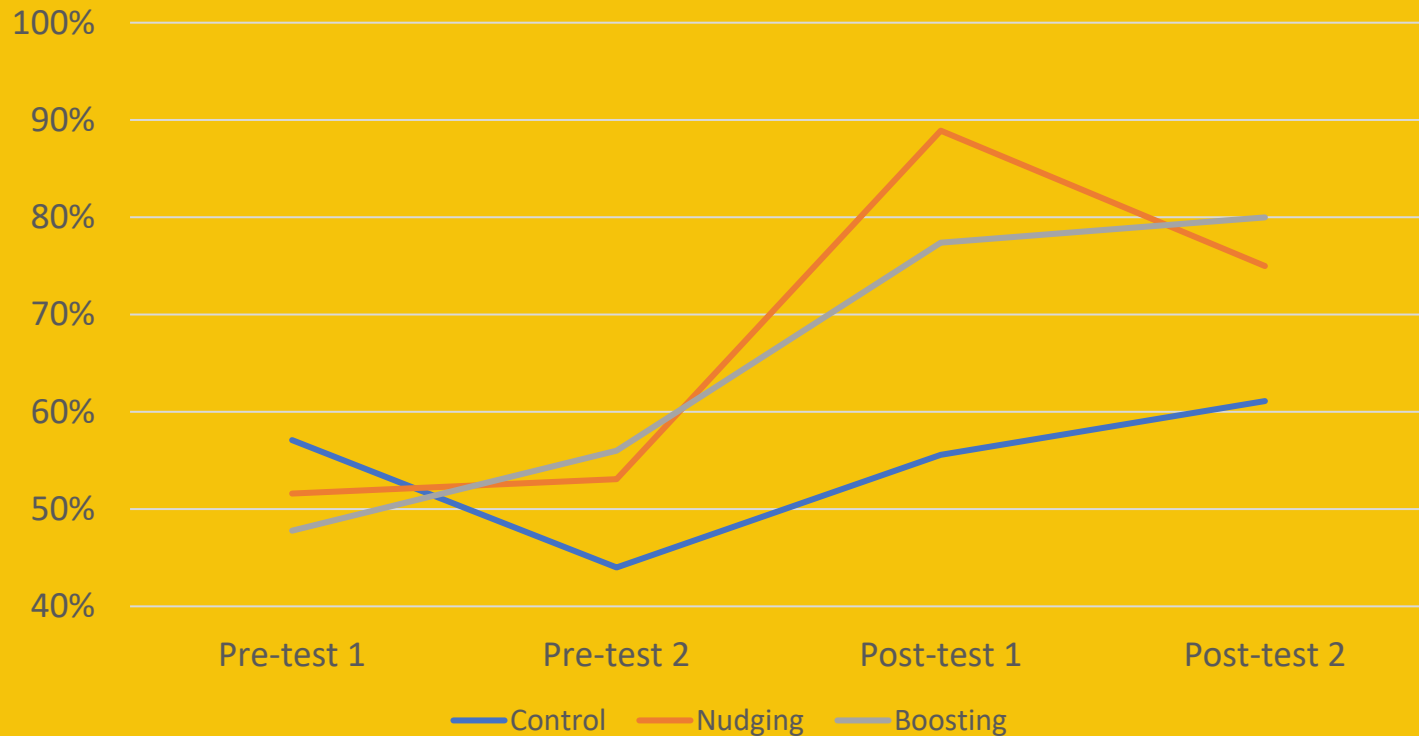
Eat food.
Not *too* much.
Mostly plants.

Michael Pollan,
In Defense of Food



From nudges to boosts

Hand hygiene hospital



Wist je dat?

1 op de 20
ziekenhuispatiënten
loopt een
ziekenhuisinfectie op.

Onderzoek laat
zien dat in twee
Amerikaanse
ziekenhuizen het
aantal gevallen
met MRSA-infecties
halveerde nadat
zorgmedewerkers
meer handhygiëne
toepasten.

Goede handhygiëne
van zorgmedewerkers
is de meest effectieve
manier om infecties
te voorkomen.

Sometimes nudges are not enough

The New York Times

More Than Nudges Are Needed to End the Pandemic

Persuading vaccine holdouts to get shots will require increasingly forceful interventions, a Nobel laureate says.

“We estimate that national vaccine mandates in three European countries also led to large gains in first-dose vaccinations (7+ mln. in France, 4+ mln. in Italy and 1+ mln. in Germany, 7 to 12 weeks after the policy announcements)”

Dutch cities want to ban fast food restaurants in fight against obesity

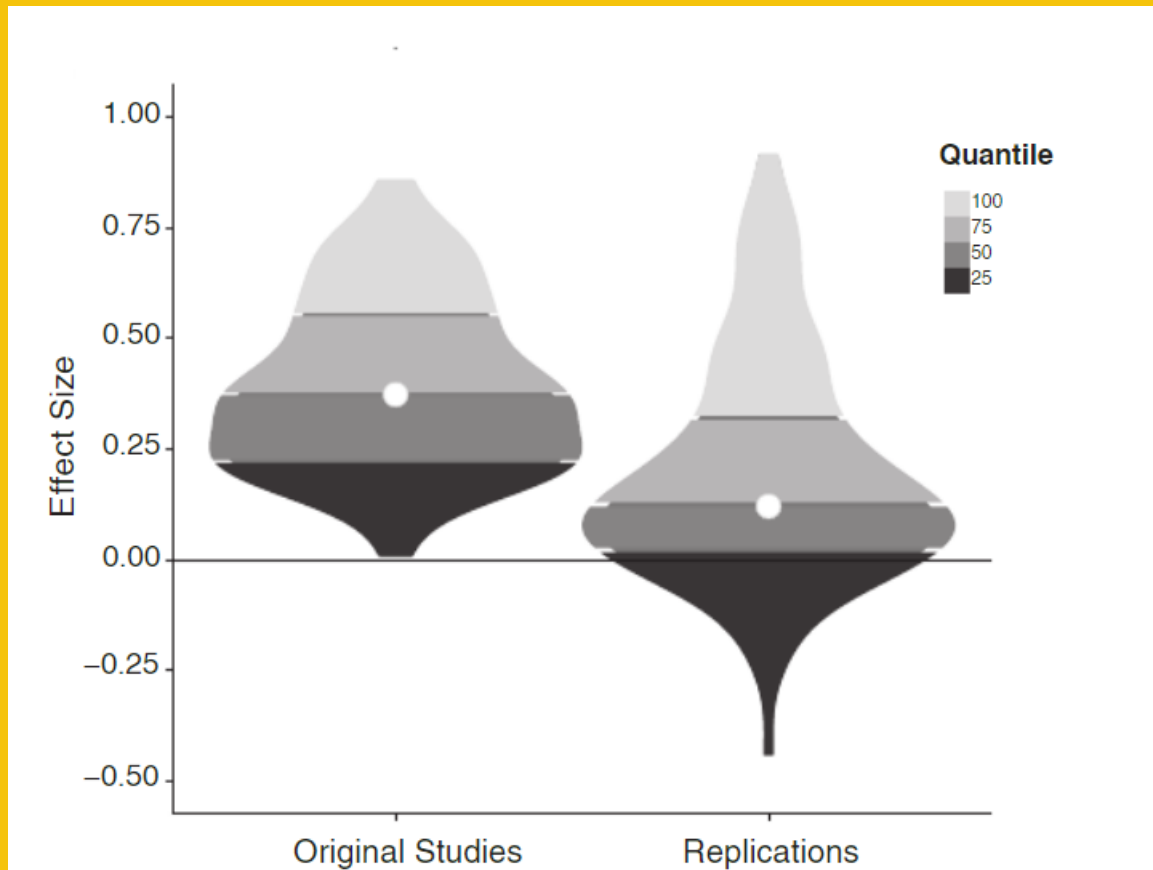
The four large Dutch cities and Ede are advocating for legal options to ban the suppliers of fast foods and other unhealthy foods in their fight against obesity. They feel they currently have too little power to act against the unhealthy options bombarding their citizens, RTL Nieuws reports.





From replication crisis to a heterogeneity revolution

Replication crisis



97% of original studies had significant effects
36% of replication studies had significant effects

Some studies replicate, some do not



RESEARCH ARTICLE | Open Access |

Designing to Debias: Measuring and Reducing Public Managers' Anchoring Bias

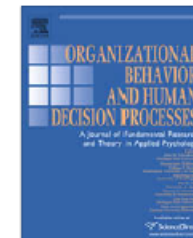


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Heterogeneity revolution: scaling



Karthik Muralidharan

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Govts around the world are trying school management reforms. In a new paper using a large-scale RCT in India (bit.ly/35WHq50) @singhabhi & I find no evidence of impact from several "best practices"

Yet, the program was scaled up to >600,000 schools (w/ no effect)! 1/

Why does this matter for policy?

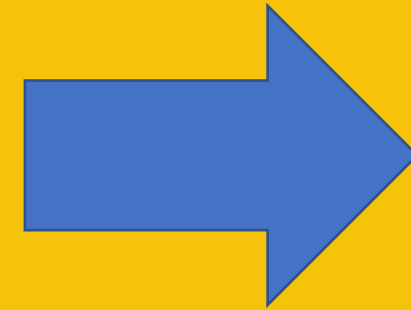
There are many policy "reforms" designed by experts & funded by donors - that look excellent on paper & are assessed on metrics such as "people reached" but w no measure of actual impact

High-quality evaluations can discipline such efforts 8/

Behavioural science is unlikely to change the world without a heterogeneity revolution

nature human behaviour

Heterogeneity revolution: AI



nature machine intelligence

Free and open source software for systematic reviewing.





Conclusions

Summary

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What will you tell someone else to remember?

Sources

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Bright minds, better future