

Do people consider the social impact of their behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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- ▶ If people neglect externalities, need for regulation
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As countries lift their restrictions: whether people internalize externalities is key for policy-making

Research question

- ▶ Many people consider others: they have “social preferences” (Fehr and Schmidt 1999; Andreoni and Miller 2002; Charness and Rabin 2002)
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- ▶ Many people consider others: they have “social preferences” (Fehr and Schmidt 1999; Andreoni and Miller 2002; Charness and Rabin 2002)
- ▶ We do not know: whether social preferences matter for health behaviors
- ▶ Do people internalize (part of) the externalities that their behavior has during the COVID-19 pandemic?

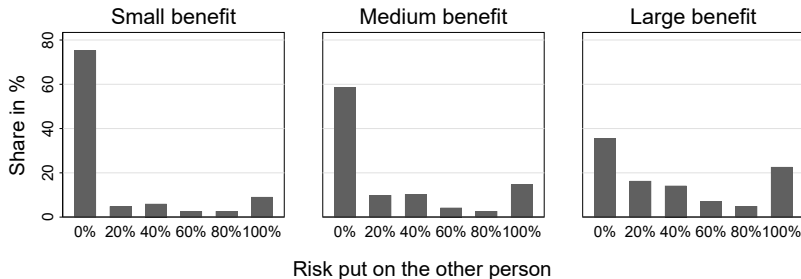
Design

Two surveys in Sweden last April

1. Health behavior survey of $\sim 1,600$ people
 - ▶ Behaviors in response to COVID-19
2. Social preference survey of $\sim 1,000$ people
 - ▶ Willingness to expose others to risk for own benefit

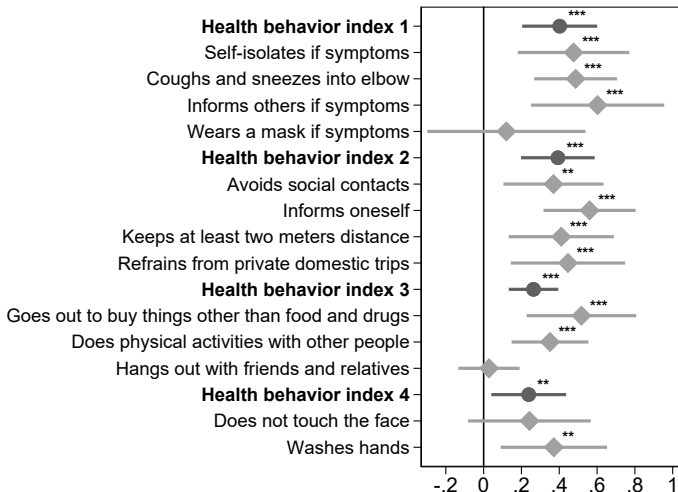
Results

Aversion to putting risk on others



- ▶ Small benefit: 5 SEK for each 20% risk
- ▶ Medium benefit: 20 SEK for each 20% risk
- ▶ Large benefit: 100 SEK for each 20% risk

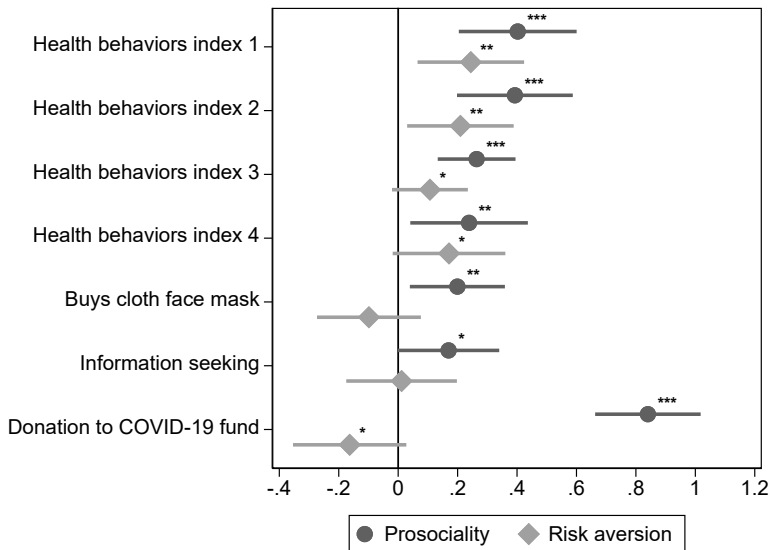
More prosocial, better behavior



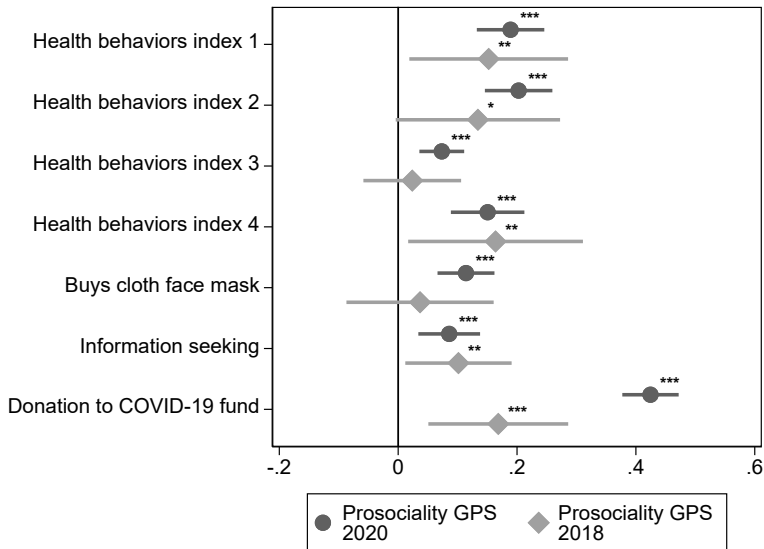
Considering other factors

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Comparison with risk



Alternative measures of prosociality



Conclusion

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- ▶ Models of disease spread assume selfish agents
 - ▶ May be enriched by incorporating prosocial motives

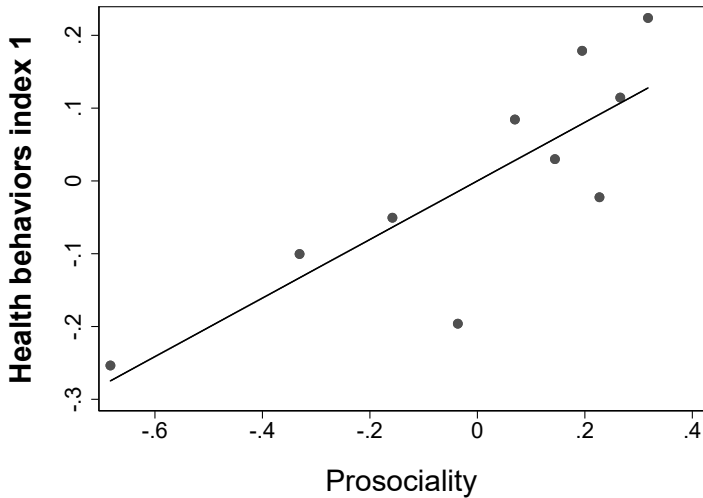
Conclusion

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- ▶ This translates into health domain: robust correlation between prosociality and health behaviors
- ▶ Indicates that people internalize (to some degree) the externalities of their behavior
- ▶ Models of disease spread assume selfish agents
 - ▶ May be enriched by incorporating prosocial motives
- ▶ There exists substantial heterogeneity in prosociality across regions (Falk et al. 2018; WGI, 2018)
 - ▶ Governments can adapt the way in which they lift restrictions with the degree of prosociality in the population

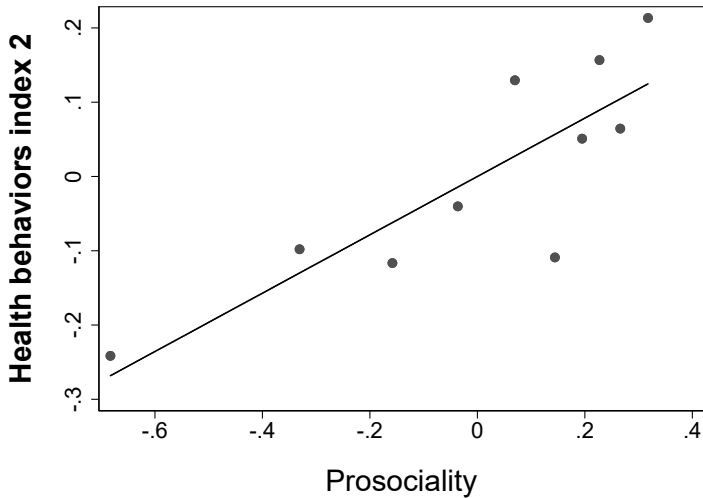
Thank you!

	Mean rating protects me	Mean rating protects others
Health behaviors index 1		
self-isolate if symptoms	4.76 (4.08)	8.97 (1.53)
cough and sneeze into elbow	4.24 (3.73)	7.66 (2.02)
inform others if symptoms	3.95 (3.77)	7.24 (2.76)
wearing a mask if symptoms	4.27 (3.3)	7.01 (2.65)
Health behaviors index 2		
avoid social contacts	8.32 (1.73)	8.29 (1.83)
inform how spread can be prevented	7.71 (2.24)	7.79 (2.23)
keep at least two meters distance	7.53 (2.2)	7.75 (1.91)
refrain from private domestic trips	7.2 (2.58)	7.42 (2.56)
Health behaviors index 3		
leave the house to buy non-essentials	7.31 (2.41)	7.45 (2.43)
go out for physical activities with others	7.14 (2.77)	7.26 (2.79)
hang out in person with others	7.02 (2.43)	7.16 (2.41)
Health behaviors index 4		
not touch the face	6.88 (2.33)	4.84 (2.89)
wash hands	8.08 (1.93)	7.08 (2.62)

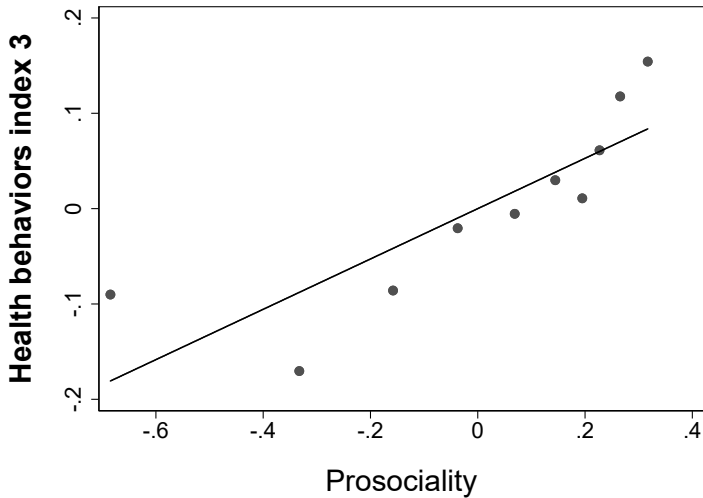
More prosocial, more careful



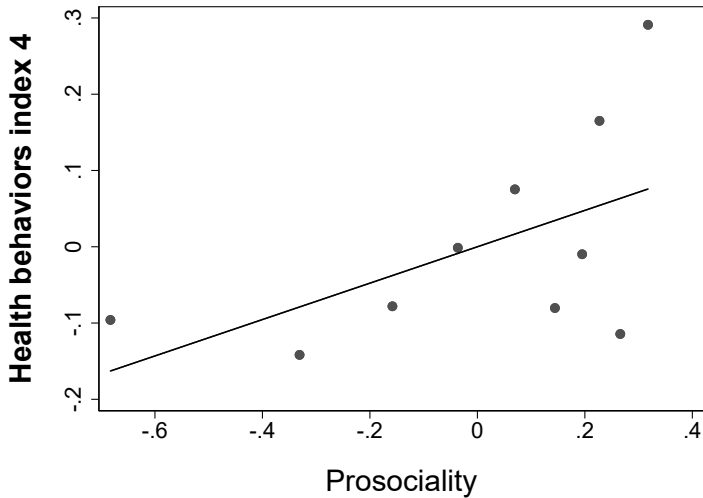
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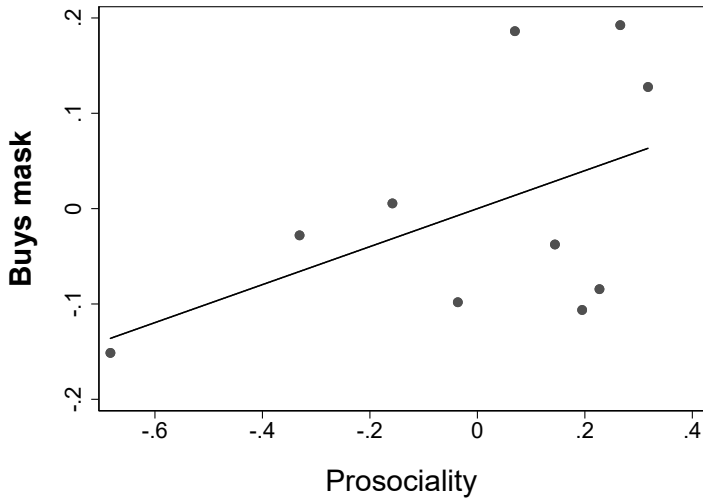
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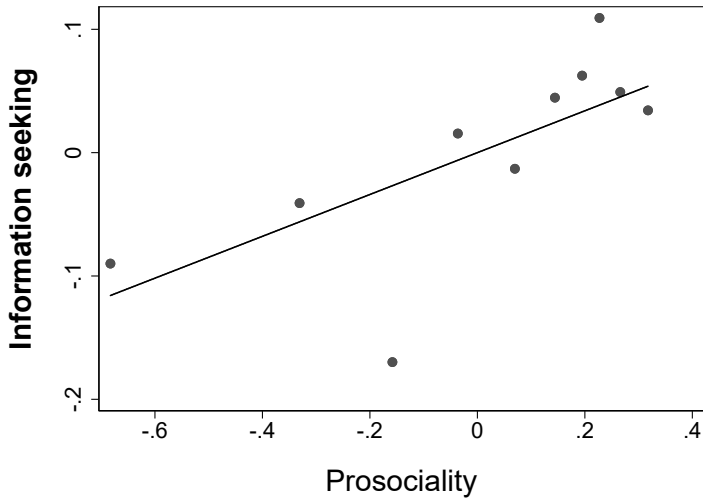
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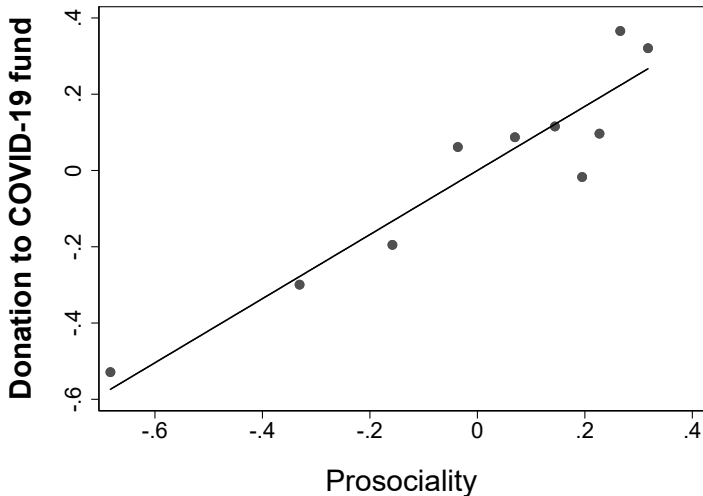
More prosocial, buys cloth mask



More prosocial, clicks more



More prosocial, donates more



More prosocial, better behavior

