

Paper Review:
The Illusion of Moral Decline

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The Phenomenon of Moral Decline

- People worldwide believe morality is declining.
- Surveys over 70+ years show over 80% believe morality is worsening
- Perception exists across 60+ countries

Question: Does morality actually decline or it is only an illusion?

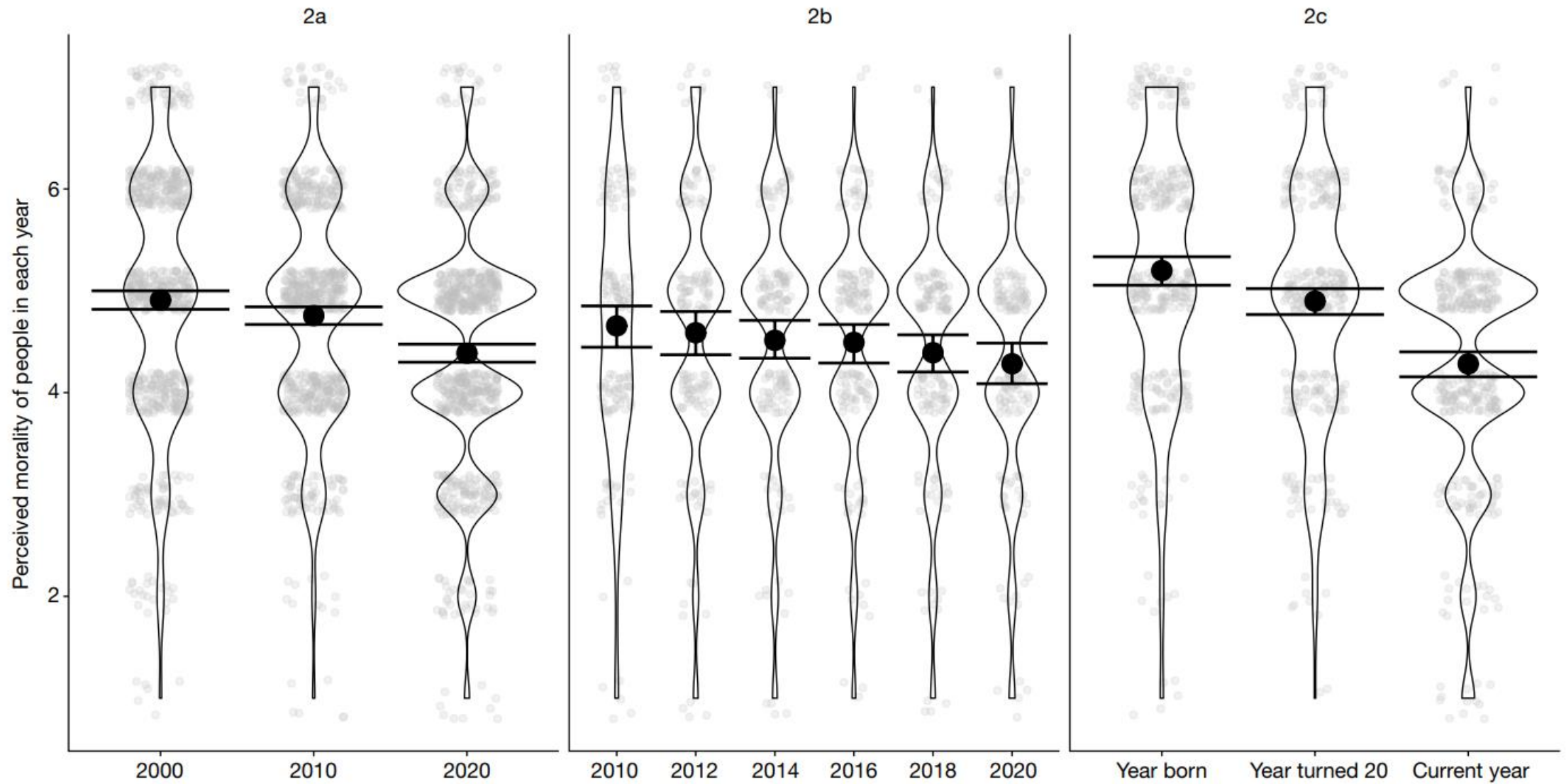
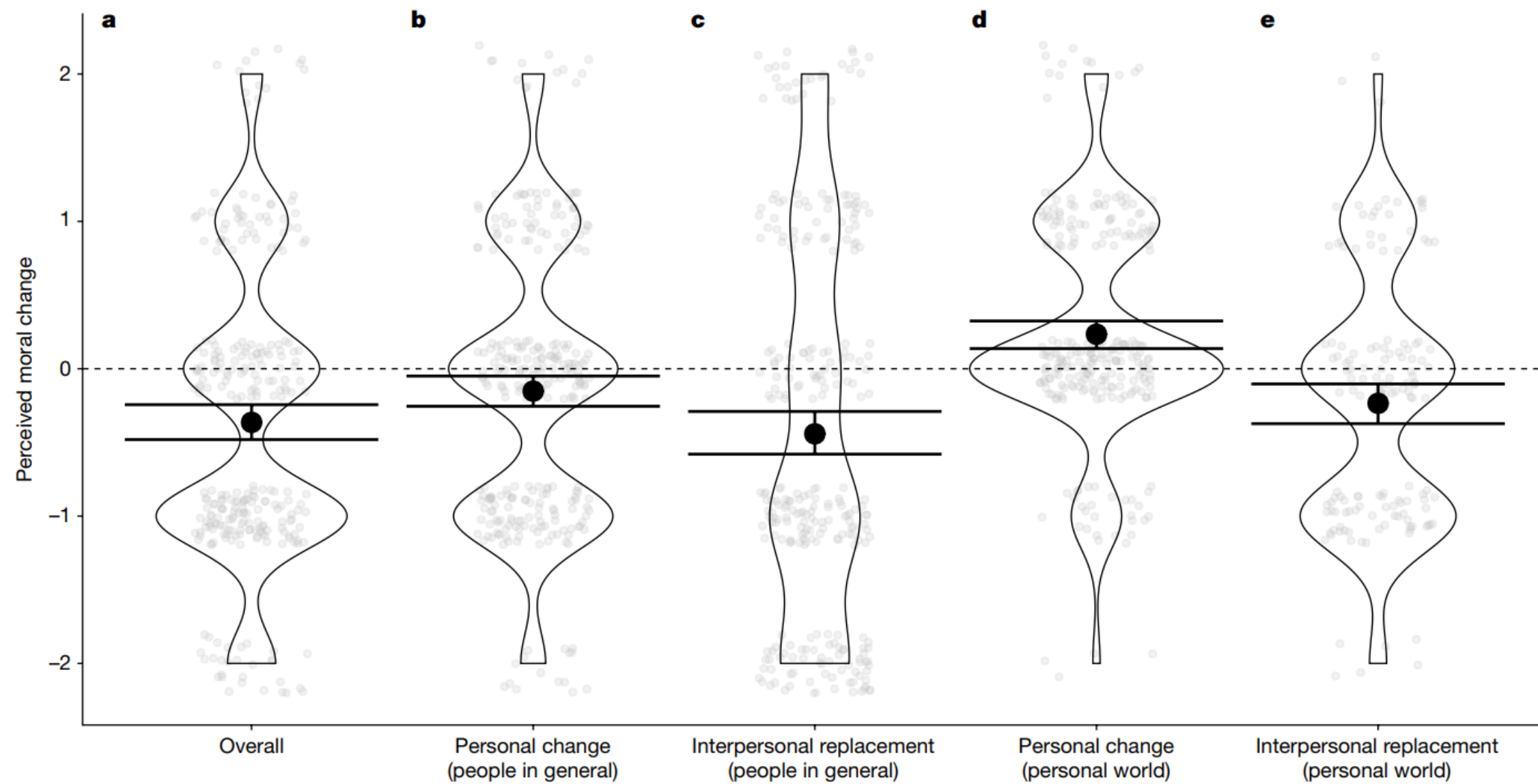


Fig. 2 | Results of studies 2a–c. The panels show the results of studies 2a (left panel), 2b (middle panel) and 2c (right panel). Opaque points represent means. Translucent points represent individual observations jittered for legibility. Error bars represent 95% CIs. Study 2a $n = 698$, study 2b $n = 148$ and study 2c $n = 347$.



The Phenomenon of Moral Decline

- Individuals seen as becoming less moral over time
- Younger generations seen as less moral than older ones

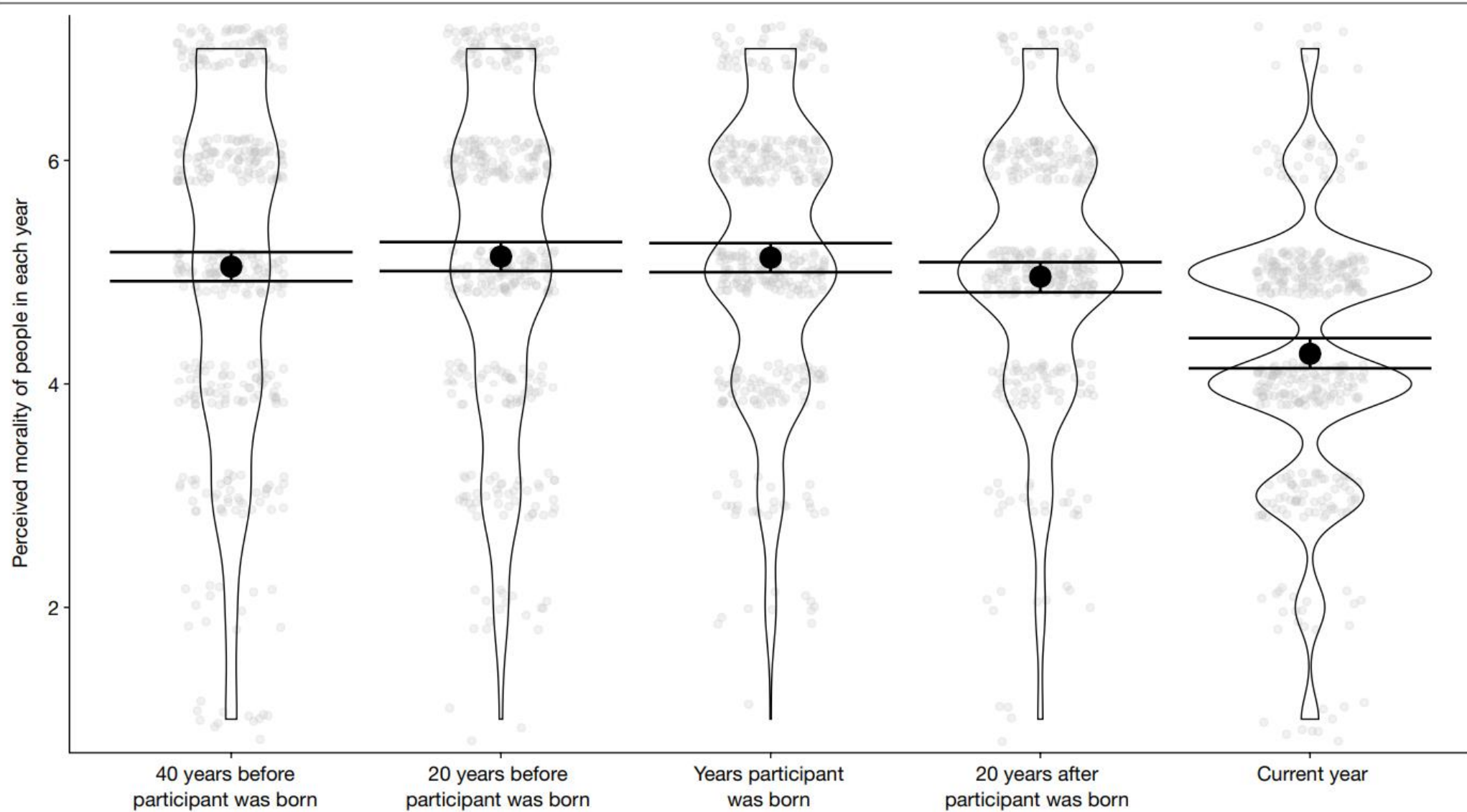


Fig. 4 | Results of Study 5b. The figure shows the perceived morality of people in various years. Opaque points represent means. Transparent points represent individual observations jittered for legibility. Error bars represent 95% CIs. $n = 387$.

Reasons?

- Analysis surveys about people's rating of current (when the survey conducted) morality.
 - The rating is stable over time. (ie. Year cannot explain more variance.)
- ⇒ The Phenomenon of Moral Decline may be an illusion!

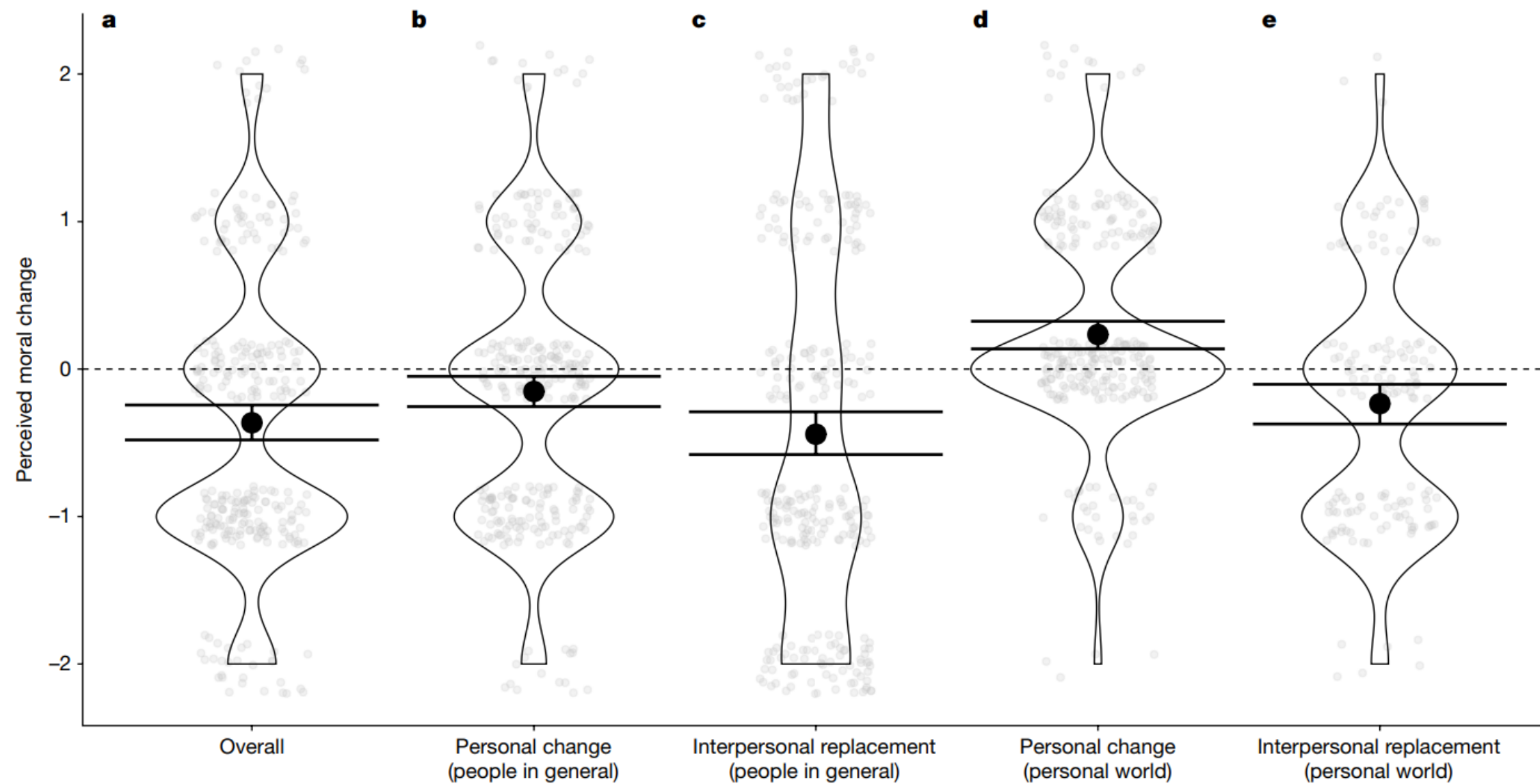
Possible Reasons

- Biased Exposure Effect

People are likely to seek and attend to negative information about others, and mass media indulge this tendency with a disproportionate focus on people behaving badly.

- Biased Memory Effect

People tend to forget negative event in the past.



Conclusions

- The Phenomenon of Moral Decline is an illusion due to
 - Biased Exposure Effect
 - Biased Memory Effect