# Counterfactual World-Views for Forecasting Collaborative Submissions

The following steps describe the process used to code participant counterfactuals submissions in terms of:

1. **Presence** **of Counterfactuals** - Indicates whether the participant included any counterfactuals, opted not to provide any, or explicitly stated that no counterfactuals could have altered present circumstances.
2. **COVID-19 -** Whether they considered COVID-19 and/or the response to COVID-19 as a counterfactual.
3. **Blame** - Whether their counterfactual indicates that a specific entity or individual (ex. Trump, China, U.S. government) bears the most responsibility / could have impacted the outcome

**What do we mean by counterfactual?**

Counterfactuals relate to events that did not happen (Ex. Bernie Sanders winning the Democrat nomination, or the U.S. or implementing social distancing in February). The line of thinking implies “if X had happened instead of Y, our present situation might be different”.

* Ex. If we had implemented social distancing sooner, life satisfaction would be higher.

For our purposes, participants do not need to state what the alternative outcome could have been. Simply indicating the counterfactual event is sufficient.

* Ex. Implementing social distancing sooner.

**Note**: Participants were explicitly asked to provide counterfactuals that could have occurred between **December 2019 and April 2020**. Any counterfactuals that take place outside of this date range should be Flagged and should not count for any category.

* Ex. The 2020 American Presidential election takes place in November 2020, after the timeframe participants were provided. Any mention of its outcome would therefore be excluded.

## **Presence of Counterfactuals**

Presence of Counterfactuals is coded on a 0-2 scale, and indicates whether the participant did not include any counterfactuals, explicitly stated that no counterfactuals were relevant, or included one or more counterfactuals.

1. **No Counterfactual** – The participant indicates that no counterfactuals were considered.
   1. Ex. “No counterfactual.”
2. **Fatalistic Response** – The participant explicitly indicates that no counterfactual could have altered current circumstances.
   1. Ex. “None. Nothing could change this.”
3. **Counterfactual Provided** – The participant’s response includes one or more counterfactuals.

Please follow these steps to code Presence of Counterfactuals:

1. Read the **counterfact** and **othercounter** columns for each participant to filter between counterfactual, fatalistic, and NA submissions.
2. Any row that includes the mention of an event can be coded as a 2. The content of the event **does not matter** for this category.
   1. Ex. “Trump handling the pandemic (and recession) much better than he is at present.”
3. If a row instead **explicitly** mentions that no counterfactuals could have altered current events, code it as a 1.
   1. Ex. “None. Nothing could change this”
4. If no mention of counterfactuals is provided, mark the column as a 0.
   1. Ex. “No counterfactual.”

Only code a row for COVID-19 and Blame if it was coded as a 2 (Counterfactual provided) for Presence of Counterfactuals.

Any row that was coded as a 0 (No Counterfactual) or a 1 (Fatalistic Response) for Presence of Counterfactual can immediately be coded as a 0 for both COVID-19 and Blame.

## **COVID-19**

COVID-19 is coded on a 0-2 scale, and indicates whether the participants mention COVID-19/the pandemic or the response to the pandemic in their counterfactuals.

1. **No mention** – the participant does not mention COVID-19 in their response.
2. **COVID-19 mentioned** – the participant mentions COVID-19 in some form in their counterfactual.
   1. Ex. “If new evidence had occurred that the virus originated in a non-Asian country, there would not have been an uptick in explicit Asian-American Bias.”
   2. The counterfactual event was that COVID-19 had never happened.
3. **Response to COVID-19 mentioned** – the participant mentions the response to COVID in their counterfactual.
   1. This can include - but is not limited to - whether governments had acted sooner, mentions of social distancing, or other responses that focus on how individuals, governments, and/or countries have responded to the pandemic.
   2. Ex. “Earlier implementation of test and trace programs in the US that would have prevented widespread, long-lasting shutdowns leading to economic upset, increased cases/death, and social isolation.”

Please follow these steps to code for COVID-19:

1. Read the **counterfact** and **othercounter** columns for each participant to determine whether they mention COVID-19 or the pandemic in their response.
2. Any row that includes that mentions COVID-19 can be coded as a 1.
3. Any row that mentions the response to COVID-19 can instead be coded as a 2.
4. Any row that **does not** include a mention of COVID-19 can be coded as a 0.

## **Blame**

Blame is coded on a 0-3 scale, indicating whether the participant response places responsibility for the counterfactual on a specific entity or individual.

1. **No mention –** the participant’s response does not indicate that any particular entity is responsible
2. **Individual** – the participant’s response places responsibility on a specific individual
   1. Ex. Donald Trump
3. **Group –** the participant’s response places responsibility on an organization or governmental body.
   1. Ex. WHO, Congress.
4. **Geopolitical** - the participant’s response places responsibility on a country.
   1. Ex. U.S., China

Please follow these steps to code for Onus:

1. Read the **counterfact** and **othercounter** columns for each participant to determine whether their response implies that an individual or entity could have changed the outcome of the counterfactual they mentioned.
2. Simply mentioning an entity is not sufficient. The comments must provide some indication that the entity is responsible for the outcome.
3. Any row that places responsibility on an individual can be coded as a 1.
   1. Ex. “If we had a President in office who provided a more compassionate, uplifting, and uniting message of Leadership during societal challenges.”
4. Any row that places responsibility on a group can be coded as a 2.
   1. Ex. “A key counterfactual event that could have occurred between December 2019 and April 2020 would have been for the WHO and CDC to have announced as early as January 2020 that cloth masks shown be worn in public places.”
   2. Ex. “If the U.S. officials were able to manage the pandemic well and if they were able to improve the healthcare system before a pandemic broke out, things might be different.”
5. Any row that places responsibility on a country can be coded as a 3.
   1. Ex. “If U.S and all other countries around the world has been better prepared in terms of resources in dealing with such a crisis.”
   2. Ex. “china communicating spread of the virus timelier and with more transparency.”
6. Any row that **does not** include a mention of an entity can be coded as a 0 for Onus.