Estimating Perceptions of the Relative COVID Risk of Different Social-Distancing Behaviors from Respondents Pairwise Assessments

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How do people compare bundles of social-distancing behaviors? During the COVID pandemic, we showed 676 online respondents in the US, UK, and Israel 30 pairs of brief videos of acquaintances meeting. We asked them to indicate which in each pair depicted greater risk of COVID infection. Their choices imply that on average respondents considered talking 14 minutes longer to be as risky as standing 1 foot closer, being indoors as standing 3 feet closer, and removing a properly worn mask by either party as standing 4–5 feet closer. We explore subpopulations and perceived nonlinear and interacted effects of combined behaviors.

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