Trading Liberties: Estimating COVID-19 Policy Preferences from Conjoint Data

Author: Felix Hartmann et al
Replication Author: Chenxi Li

March 31, 2024

Trinity College Dublin
College Green, Dublin 2

Lic8@tcd.ie

Research Background

Research Question

The research questions of this paper are:

- In which conditions citizens support restricting freedoms?
- How such restrictions affect trust in political institutions?

Research Review

What we already known are:

- citizens are willing to trade individual liberties for security in light of an external threat (Davis & Silver 2004)
- Regarding COVID-19, citizens with higher health related insecurity are more willing to sacrifice civil liberties (Stantcheva et al. 2020)

Research Conclusions

And what we can conclude are:

- There is a greater acceptance of more strict policies when severity increases.
- Vaccinated citizens will strongly support stringent policies in extreme conditions.
- Also, Vaccinated citizens will differentiate between vaccinated and unvaccinated fellow citizens and are most likely to support restrictions for unvaccinated people only.

Variables Introduction

Dependent Variable

In this paper, we have 4 different regression models, which refers to 4 different dependent variables Y.

- Y_{choice}: A binary variable measuring which policy the interviewers prefer. And in this case, the author points out 2 policies to choose (0/1).
- Y_{rating}: The rating to these two proposals (0-10).
- Y_{trust}: Their trust to the federal government (0-10).
- $Y_{probability}$: The probability of acccepting vaccinated for non-vaccinated interviewers.

Independent Variables

1. Pandemic Severity
    - Moderate worsening (7-day-incidence 150, intensive care bed occupancy 80%)
    - Sharp worsening (... 300, ... 90%)
    - Dramatic worsening (... 800, ... 100%)
2. Policy Stringency
    - Least restrictions (masks)
    - Moderate restrictions (plus limitations on social events)
    - Most restrictions (plus broader limitations on movements)
3. Policy Universality
    - Most exemptions (restrictions do not apply to vaccinated, recovered, or tested citizens)
    - Some exemptions (... vaccinated or recovered citizens)
    - Fewest exemptions (... all citizens)

Regression Formula

So we can get our regression formula:

$$
\begin{aligned}
Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 \\
+ \beta_3 Z_1 Z_2 + \beta_4 Z_1 Z_3 + \beta_5 Z_2 Z_3 \\
+ \beta_6 Z_1 Z_2 Z_3 + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}
\end{aligned}
$$

Here, the author made a mistake which wrote β_3 twice.

Where Z_1 represents severity, Z_2 represents stringency, and Z_3 represents universality (Hartmann et al. 2024).

Research Approach

Code - Prepare the Variables

Let's see the code in `R`. These code is used to prepare for the independent variable including interactions.

```r
df_long_all <-
  bind_rows(dplyr::filter(df_long) |> mutate(group = "All"),
    dplyr::filter(df_long, vaccinated == 0) |> mutate(group = "Unvaccinated"),
    dplyr::filter(df_long, vaccinated == 1) |> mutate(group = "Vaccinated"))
custom.coef.map = list(
  "severity" = "Pandemic severity",
  "stringency" = "Policy stringency",
  "universality" = "Policy universality",
  "severity:stringency" = "Severity * Stringency",
  "severity:universality" = "Severity * Universality",
  "universality:stringency" = "Stringency * Universality",
  "severity:stringency:universality" = "Triple interaction")
```

Code - Fit the Model

Let's see the code in R. These code is used to fit the regression model, and we can see details through this block:

```
lapply(function(g)
  list(rating = lm_robust(rating ~ severity * universality * stringency,
      fixed_effects = ~ ID,
        data = df_long_all, subset = group == g, se_type = "stata"),
      choice = lm_robust(choice ~ severity * universality * stringency,
          fixed_effects = ~ ID,
        data = df_long_all, subset = group == g, se_type = "stata"),
      trust = lm_robust(trust ~ severity * universality * stringency,
          fixed_effects = ~ ID,
        data = df_long_all, subset = group == g, se_type = "stata")))
```

Code - Fit the Model

Also, the author calculate the probability of acccepting vaccinated.

```
fig_1_models$Unvaccinated$vaccination <-
  lm_robust(vaccine_probability ~ severity * universality * stringency,
        fixed_effects = ~ ID,
              data = df_long_all, subset = group == "Unvaccinated",
                    se_type = "stata")
```

Code - Check the Model

Now, let's check one of the model. For example, if we want to check when Y is rating in unvaccinated group, then we can write:

```
summary(fig_1_models[["Unvaccinated"]][["rating"]])
```

And then we will see the outputs from `R`:

Code - Check the Model

Table 1: Coefficient and Significant of Y = Rating Regression

	Estimate	Std. Error	$\Pr(>\|t\|)$
severity	0.002545	0.005734	6.572e-01
universality	-0.021862	0.005951	2.417e-04
stringency	-0.091130	0.005649	4.293e-57
severity:universality	-0.004736	0.007526	5.292e-01
severity:stringency	0.026078	0.006853	1.435e-04
universality:stringency	0.001157	0.007251	8.733e-01
severity:universality:stringency	0.004653	0.008978	6.043e-01

Regression Model

So in the upon case, we can write our regression formula:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{rating} &= 0.00Z_1 - 0.02Z_2 - 0.09Z_3 \\ &\quad + 0.00Z_1Z_2 + 0.02Z_1Z_3 + 0.00Z_2Z_3 \\ &\quad + 0.00Z_1Z_2Z_3 \end{aligned}$$

Where Z_1 represents severity, Z_2 represents stringency, and Z_3 represents universality.

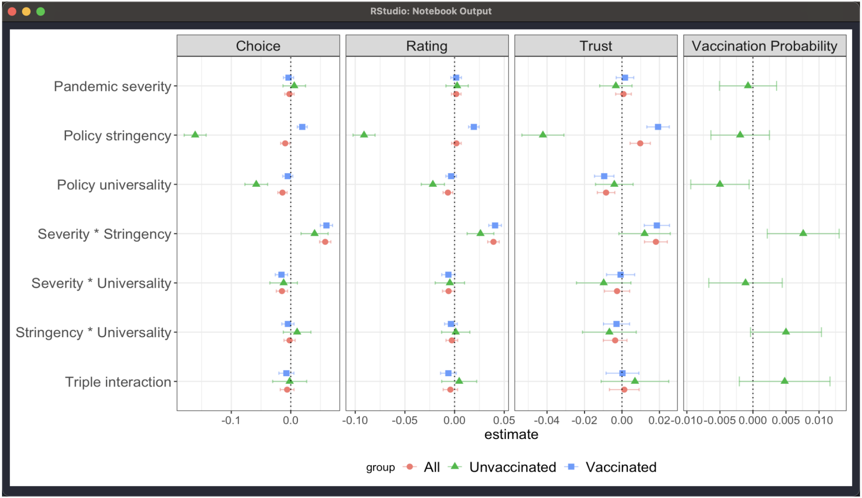
Results Visualisation

Coefficient Visualisation

```r
fig_main <- fig_1_data %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = estimate, y = term, color = group, shape=group)) +
  geom_point(size = 2.5, position =position_dodge(width=0.5)) +
  geom_errorbarh(aes(y = term, xmin =conf.low, xmax = conf.high),
                 size =0.5, alpha = 0.5, height = 0.2,
                      position =position_dodge(width=0.5)) +
  facet_grid(~ outcome , scales = "free") + theme_bw() +
  scale_y_discrete(limits =rev)+
  theme(axis.title.y=element_blank()) +
  theme(axis.title.x=element_text(size = 14)) +
  theme(axis.text.y =element_text(size = 14)) +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(size = 11)) +
  theme(strip.text.x = element_text(size = 14))+
  theme(legend.text=element_text(size=14))+
  geom_vline(xintercept = 0, linetype ="dotted", color = "black") +
      theme(legend.position="bottom")
pdf("fig_1.pdf", width = 12, height = 5)
```

Coefficient Visualisation

Follow the author's code, we can make this visualisation:



Key Conclusions

- Severity*Stringency: Citizens strongly prefer more severe policies when conditions are bad. Also we can say, there is a clear evidence that citizens are more supportive of more stringent policies as conditions worsen.
- Greater stringency is associated with greater willingness to vaccinate.
- Severity*Universality: Citizens are still less supportive of universal restrictions (with fewest exemptions) when conditions are bad.
- There is no evidence for interactions between the stringency and universality of conditions or for three-way interactions.

References

Davis, D. W. & Silver, B. D. (2004), ‘Civil liberties vs. security: Public opinion in the context of the terrorist attacks on america’, *American journal of political science* **48**(1), 28–46.

Hartmann, F., Humphreys, M., Geissler, F., Klüver, H. & Giesecke, J. (2024), ‘Trading liberties: Estimating covid-19 policy preferences from conjoint data’, *Political Analysis* **32**(2), 285–293.

Stantcheva, S., Alsan, M., Braghieri, L., Eichmeyer, S., Kim, M. J. & Yang, D. (2020), Civil liberties in times of crisis, Technical report, CEPR Discussion Papers.