Note:

David’s comments are in blue

Sofia’s are in black

It occurs to me that we could include this later "Omicron period" if we converted infections to either (a) hospitalizations, or (b) long COVID (using known relationships between infection and hospitalization or between infection and long COVID). The further argument for taking this final step is that one can argue that getting hospitalized or getting long COVID is pretty bad (and hence meets the noxious standard). I do worry a bit that our readers will think that merely getting infected isn't a big deal given that 70-80 percent of the US (just a guess!) has been infected at least once. If we treat infection as the dependent variable, we might run the risk of being seen as setting a very low bar for noxiousness.

Thoughts:

* Psychological distress of catching covid was very different at the beginning of the pandemic
* Worried that we are already converting infection to death

I worry about someone who, for example, just doesn't use public transportation. This person (who would presumably choose "not at all" on the public transport question) gets penalized, as I understand it, under our current procedures. Should we tweak the protocol such that people are coded as risk-takers if they EVER give a 1-3 response (on any of the items)? Is there some other approach we might take to address this problem?

I want to make sure I understand the issue you bring up. Under our current procedure, we use the following two questions about public transport:

1. Thinking about the last 7 days, how often have you worn a face mask on public transportation?
2. In the last 7 days, have you avoided taking public transport?

Someone who avoids public transport (says they ‘always’ avoided taking public transport in the last 7 days) will **not** be penalized as a risk taker regardless of their response to the mask question (e.g., even if they say ‘Not at all’ to wearing a mask in public transport, they are still **not** counted as risk-takers because we know they haven’t been in public transport altogether). However, let’s say person X has never used public transport, even before the pandemic, so they’re not really “avoiding” public transport, they simply don’t use it. Even if person X is very safe, they might respond with ‘Not at all’ to both questions and we’d risk categorizing them as risk-takers.

there are people who never use public transport, even before the pandemic, so these are people who are not “avoiding” using public transport out of precaution, they simply don’t use it. Is this the type of people you are worried about?

Part of my motivation for taking the average of the responses was to try to alleviate this issue. If we had someone

Unpacking the question, “Thinking about the last 7 days... how often have you **[avoided taking public transport]** to protect yourself or others from coronavirus? As a reminder, please exclude any measures that you have already taken for reasons other than coronavirus.”

Our goal is to use this question to figure out if someone has taken public transport the last 7 days. If we think they have, then they must indicate to have worn a mask at least some of the time. However, if they have not, then their mask-wearing behavior in the setting becomes irrelevant.

Responses ‘always’ and ‘not at all’ seem to me as the most straight-forward to interpret:

* Always
  + Person who has not taken public transport **because they are being covid-cautious**
* Not at all
  + Person who has taken public transport with the same frequency as they would regardless of covid. This could mean:
    - They haven’t taken any public transport for other reasons (e.g., they have a car)
    - They have taken public transport

The responses “Frequently”, “Sometimes”, and “Rarely” are harder to interpret. The most straightforward example:

* Person who used to take the bus every single day but reduced their bus rides because of covid concerns. They didn’t reduce bus rides fully or else they would have said “Always” so we know they spent at least some time on the bus.
  + For example, person X used to take the bus to work 5 days a week, but due to covid concerns they were able to get a ride with a friend for 4 out of the 5 days.

But the question is, do we also believe this slightly more convoluted example:

* Person who never used the bus this week but only some of the times due to covid concerns
  + For example, person X was going to take the bus on Wednesday, but the bus was delayed and person X was forced to walk. On Thursday, person X was going to ride the bus, but they got nervous about covid and decided to walk instead.

I honestly don’t feel super worried about this kind of example. In general, my sense is that:

* someone who says they ‘frequently’, ‘sometimes’, or ‘rarely’ avoided taking public transport are people who spent at least **some** time on the bus.
* someone who says they ‘always’ avoided taking public transport did not spend any time on the bus because they were worried about covid
* someone who did ‘not at all’ avoid taking public transport might have spent a lot of time on public transport or spent no time on it for reasons other than covid concerns
  + this makes it the least informative response because we don’t know what to expect for mask behavior, and we don’t know whether they are risk-takers or not