

Masks, Cameras and social pressure

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Abstract

We conducted two experimental studies on the role of descriptive social norms in driving behavior, specifically in mask-wearing and camera usage in online meetings. Unlike classical norm experiments, we semi-continuously randomized the share of individuals adopting the behavior in each setting, allowing us to estimate individual tipping points. We found a quadratic relationship between the share of mask-wearers and the willingness of people to wear a mask and a linear relationship for camera usage. Despite engaging in copying-like behavior, subjects displayed a considerable level of non-compliance to the norms: e.g., 50% of the subjects did not put their mask on even when everybody had the mask on. Moreover, we show that once embedded in dynamic models, our estimates predict that individuals will end up doing very different things despite engaging in copying-like behaviour. Our findings contribute to a better understanding of how social norms influence behavior in real-world settings.