

# **Beliefs, Risk and Time Preferences and COVID-19 Preventive Behavior: Evidence from France**

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## **Abstract:**

We analyze how preferences with respect to time and risk as well as trust in others, political opinion and religiosity correlate with COVID-19-related protective behavior in France. We leverage individual-level data from the corona survey of the Survey of Health Aging and Retirement in Europe linked with a paper questionnaire survey about preferences conducted in France just before the coronavirus outbreak. Our results suggest that patience and risk aversion are strong predictors of individuals' protective behavior. More patient individuals are more likely to not visit their family members anymore, wear a mask and keep their distance from others when outside, wash their hands more regularly and cover their cough. Risk aversion increases the likelihood of not meeting more than 5 other people and not meeting with family members anymore. Concerning trust, we find that a higher level of trust in others reduces compliance with the recommendations about meeting with 5 or more people and family gatherings. We interpret this result as a sign that individuals with trust in others perceive a lower risk of being infected by friends and family members. Finally, we find that although the association is not always statistically significant, individuals who identify themselves as positioned on the extreme right or left of the political spectrum are less likely to comply. This latter result is particularly interesting in the French context, where the government identifies itself as centrist and more extreme political groups are its main opponents. The government should therefore consider individuals' heterogeneity in preferences and beliefs when implementing a strategy to encourage people to comply with its COVID-19 protective recommendations.