

COVID-19 has dominated public discourse, crowding out other issues such as climate change, and reshaping our views of the future.

In Experiments 1 & 2 (representative US sample; total $N = 1363$), we investigated if framing climate change in relation to COVID-19 affects people's climate-change concerns and mitigation support. Framing climate change as an issue that should take a "back seat" to economic recovery reduced mitigation support (and to some degree concern). This effect was only partially offset by a combined inoculation/refutation (IR) intervention. Framing the COVID-19 response as a "trial run" for climate action had no effect. This highlights the impact of economy-centric framing and the need for countermeasures.

COVID-19 and Climate Change – Present Discourse and Future Pathways

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Portraying climate change as a concern that needs to take a "back seat" while focus lies on economic recovery from COVID-19 decreases mitigation support.

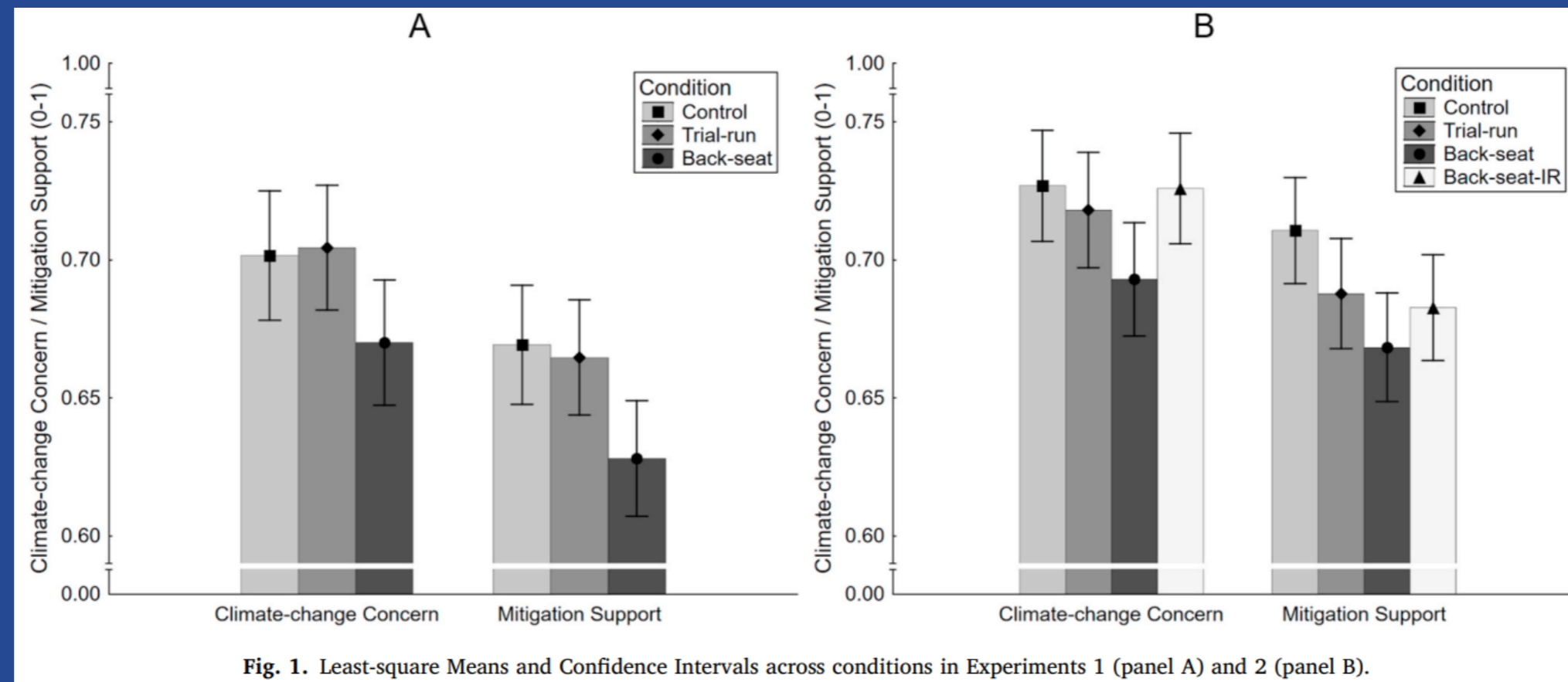
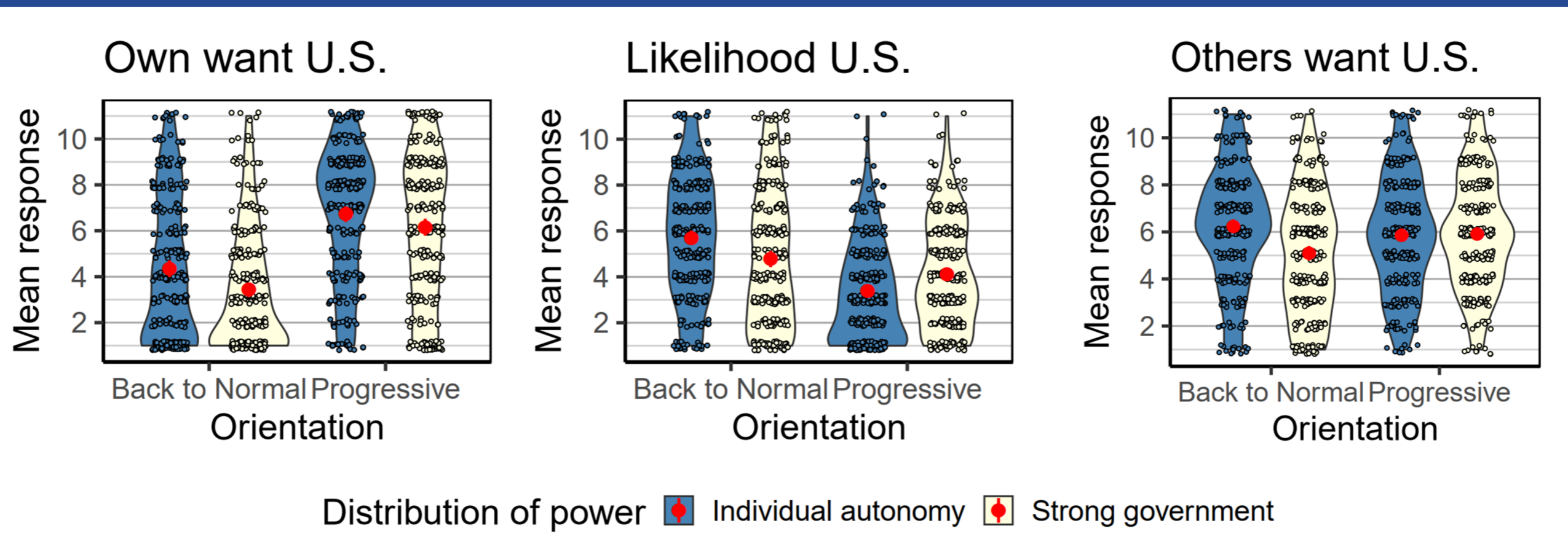


Fig. 1. Least-square Means and Confidence Intervals across conditions in Experiments 1 (panel A) and 2 (panel B).

People prefer a progressive future to a return to normal, but think it is unlikely to eventuate; people underestimate how much others want a progressive future and overestimate how much others want to get "back to normal".



Two further vignette studies (representative US & UK samples; only US data shown; total $N = 1,400$) showed that people prefer a progressive future that seeks to address global problems such as inequality and climate change over a conservative "back to normal" recovery pathway that foregrounds economic factors. (A second factor of distribution of power was less influential.) However, people consider a return to normal more likely, and falsely believe that others want progressive scenarios less, and a return to normal more, than they actually do. Such pluralistic ignorance arises when public discourse is not reflecting people's actual opinions. Publicizing public opinion is thus crucial to facilitate a future with broad support.

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