

<b>Workpackage 5</b>	Causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors
<b>Workpackage leader</b>	Autonomous University of Barcelona – Eva Anduiza

### **Objectives**

The aim of this workpackage is to study the causal effects of different dimensions of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors. While previous workpackages provide observational data for analyzing the connections between economic crises, on the one hand, and individual and collective responses to them, on the other hand, providing evidence of covariance with strong external validity, these must be complemented with experimental evidence that provides internal validity to the causal claims made in other workpackages. In this workpackage we will assess to what extent different dimensions of the crisis have an independent causal effect on citizens' attitudes and behaviors already explored in WP4. Specific hypotheses to be tested will be developed according to the information retrieved in the previous workpackages.

The workpackage will also consider to what extent the causal effects that the hypotheses imply may be moderated by contextual and individual characteristics. The effect of crises may be stronger or weaker depending on certain individual characteristics (such as ideology, political sophistication, and personal economic circumstances), or on contextual features (such as the scope of the crisis).

### **Description of work**

The work will involve a combination of laboratory experiments and survey experiments. Mock newspaper stories and media clips will be used as treatments to manipulate the perception of a critical situation, provide more or less information, confront participants with different types of crisis, different frames and different reactions by elites. Our dependent variables will be political attitudes and behaviors such as political support, policy preferences, and participation. We will also consider the conditioning role of cognitive and emotional mediators. Manipulation checks will be introduced to assess whether potential lack of significant causal effects is due to a real absence of effect or to an inability to properly manipulate the treatment. We will not run the same experiment in survey and lab settings, but preferably will assign one or the other type depending on the hypothesis to be tested. We envisage two different experimental situations: (1) real situation experiments (based on manipulating the framing of the real situation as a crisis) and (2) vignette experiments (completely hypothetical situations). In addition, the experiments will be conducted following a comparative design. This is useful to test for the effect of real-world pre-treatments, such as the actual information and feelings citizens have prior to the experiment, the actual scope of the economic crisis, the frames used by political elites, and the characteristics of the political system. However, by contrast with previous workpackages, we only compare a country that has experienced a strong and intense economic crisis (Spain) with a country that has faced a weaker and less intense crisis (Switzerland).

#### **Task 5.1: Preparation of lab experiment design and recruitment**

This task consists in preparing the lab experiment design and recruitment for the analysis causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors. Lab experiments (both sequential and aggregative) will allow for more powerful treatments. Societal crisis conditions can hardly be realistically simulated in the laboratory, but related perceptions and emotions can. Indeed, previous experimental studies have managed to manipulate crisis concerns with visible effects on treated participants' attitudes and intended behaviors. Lab experiments will be conducted on students. As

the methodological literature stresses, this is a readily accessible population that can be recruited where the research is carried out. In addition, students have low opportunity costs, a relatively steep learning curve, and a lower tendency to confound external information with the experimental task.

#### Task 5.2: Lab experiment implementation

Lab experiment implementation will involve 8 lab experiments (4 per country), one for each main treatment (information, crisis type, severity, and elite reactions). Each experiment will be conducted on a sample of 100 subjects.

#### Task 5.3: Preparation of survey experiments questionnaires

This task consists in preparing the survey experiment questionnaires for the analysis causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors. Survey experiments will involve the elaboration of a limited set of questions (treatment, dependent variable, manipulation checks and moderators) that can then be inserted in an online omnibus at a relatively low price. Survey experiments will allow for having more heterogeneous samples (thus people with different individual characteristics that are expected to interact with treatments) and can be run across different contexts (countries more or less affected by the economic crisis) to see if effects change accordingly.

#### Task 5.4: Survey experiment implementation

Survey experiment implementation will involve 6 survey experiments conducted on a sample of 1000 subjects.

#### Task 5.5: Analysis of experimental data

The analysis of experimental data will be done by simple mean comparisons, given that randomization to treatment and control groups automatically controls for all potential alternative explanations. However some multivariate analyses will be performed to improve the estimation of effects.

#### Task 5.6: Drafting of integrated report on causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors

The report will consist of an assessment of the causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors.

### **Deliverables**

5.1: Experimental protocols for the analysis of causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors: Lab experiment protocols describing how lab experiments are designed, the criteria for recruitment of subjects, the treatments applied as well as the dependent variables, conditioning factors, and manipulation checks measured.

5.2: Survey experiments questionnaires for the analysis causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors including questions for treatments, dependent variables, manipulation checks, and conditioning factors (English version).

5.3: Integrated report on causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors summarizing the main findings of WP5, consisting of an assessment of the causal effects of crises on citizens' attitudes and behaviors.