

Title: Variable coding appendix for “Hide and seek: The connection between false beliefs and perceptions of government transparency”

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Note: The material contained herein is supplementary to the article named in the title and published in the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review.

Appendix D: Variable coding

Table D1. Classification of the open-ended responses to the following question: Can you briefly explain what you think the government is hiding about the coronavirus epidemic?

Category	Sub-categories	Description of what should be included
(1) Manipulation of the public (15% of answers)	Conspiracy/hidden agenda	Answers that refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• population reduction,• controlling the population,• the Great Reset,• 5G,• Bill Gates,• Plandemic,• a hoax,• COVID-19 being a bioweapon,• a secret agenda,• corporations and big pharma,• making money with COVID-19,• hiding a cure,• the origin of the virus,• the virus is man-made or was created in a lab,• the reasons behind this pandemic,• Canada was aware of it/covers up for China, etc.
	Severity overestimated	Answers that indicate that the pandemic is less severe than what governments let us think. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “inflating the numbers,”• “false positives,”• “accuracy of the tests,”• “real cases,”• “they are counting flu cases/deaths,”• “people die of other causes,”• “dying of the virus versus with the virus,” etc. We also include people questioning the numbers without further details (e.g., answers saying that governments are hiding the “real” numbers/statistics).
(2) General mistrust (16% of answers)	Explicit mistrust	Answers indicating that the government is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• not to be trusted,• never fully honest,• not transparent,• not (always) telling the truth,• usually hiding information,• not telling everything, etc.

	<p>Unable to explain negative perceptions of transparency</p>	<p>R who answered that the likelihood that governments are hiding information is 5/10 or more and were not able to explain their negative perceptions of transparency. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I don’t know,” • “It’s an intuition,” • “no comment,” and unintelligible answers.
<p>(3) Handling of the pandemic (23% of answers)</p>	<p>Decision-making and implementation</p>	<p>Answers that refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • government motivations (economic, political, health), • the reasoning behind decisions (or questioning the decisions or why/how some decisions were made), • the role of scientific evidence, proactivity, delays in reaction, • (problems with) implementation of sanitary restrictions, • vaccines implementation (vaccine acquisition, timeline, details), etc.
	<p>Communications</p>	<p>Answers that refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the lack of clarity in government communication, • inconsistent/contradictory/changing messages, • governments not answering questions, etc.
	<p>Request for more details/data</p>	<p>Answers that refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the desire to have more information or more specific data about outbreaks, cases, or deaths (by location, ethnicity, age, etc.), • modeling and forecasting, • data about the effectiveness of sanitary restrictions, • the effects of the virus on your body, etc.
	<p>Costs of the pandemic</p>	<p>Answers that relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the economic and health costs of the pandemic, including the costs for small businesses, • the public debt, • the effects of lockdown on mental health, • lack/exhaustion of frontline/healthcare workers, etc.
	<p>Severity underestimated</p>	<p>Answers that refer to the idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that numbers (cases, deaths) are higher than reported, • that only a fraction of infected people are being tested, • that the pandemic is worse than what they are saying,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that we will have to live with the virus for a long time, etc.
(4) Positive perceptions of transparency (46% of answers)	Nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R who answered that the likelihood that the government are hiding information is 3/10 or less (they did not have to answer the open-ended question), R who answered that the likelihood that governments are hiding information is 4/10 and didn't know what governments are hiding, Answers including expressions like "nothing," "not much," "I don't think that the government is hiding information," "I am not sure they are hiding information," etc.
	Justifying governments' lack of transparency	<p>Answers including explanations like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "to avoid panic," "providing too much information might reduce clarity/compliance (e.g., uncertainty in scientific findings)," "the government does not have all the information," "the public does not need to know everything," "national security," "privacy," and other negative consequences of giving all the information.

Table D2. Example of responses falling into each coding category to the following open-ended question:
Can you briefly explain what you think the government is hiding about the coronavirus epidemic?

Category	Example of responses
Manipulation of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because they've been hiding that this virus was made on purpose The covid virus is false, the virus is SARS that has been perfected after its first test run many years ago. Today's SARS has been effecting certain blood types of race for population reasons. World population increasing rapidly, plus an increase of average human life expectancy. Our global food supply is in great jeopardy within 30 years The intentional propagation of fear and intentions to abide by the Great Reset agenda
General mistrust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't want to tell us the truth Our federal government is not transparent and has never been honest. Can't be trusted

Handling of the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiding the political and economic motivations for the actions or lack thereof regarding implementation of sanitary measures. • They hid that we needed to wear masks at the start of the outbreak because there were not enough masks to go around for healthcare workers, then later when supply stabilized, said we all need to wear masks. • The case numbers may be higher since they don't test as many people.
Positive perceptions of transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think there is portion that can be expected to be kept from the public in the interest of stemming panic. However, I believe the directions given are in place with our best interests intended. • They must balance information and protect privacy. • I don't think they are hiding much

Table D3. Question wording and variable construction.

Variable	Question(s)	Coding
False beliefs	<p>In your opinion, how likely is it that the following statements are true? Use the following 0 to 10 scale where 0 means "not likely at all" and 10 means "extremely likely."</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The government is exaggerating the risks of the coronavirus to be able to restrict people's rights and freedoms. 2. The virus was created by China to increase its power in the world. 3. The virus has been created by large corporations because some of them can directly profit from it. 4. The prolonged use of masks can lead to CO₂ intoxication or oxygen deficiency. 5. Hydroxychloroquine is an effective treatment against COVID-19. 6. Coronavirus figures are inflated because a significant number of people tested positive are not infected with the virus. 	Additive index calculated as the average perceived truthfulness of the false statements. Rescaled on a 0-1 scale.
Hides information	In your opinion, what is the likelihood that governments are hiding information from the public about the coronavirus epidemic? To express your opinion, please use the following scale, where 0 means "not at all likely" and 10 means "extremely likely."	0-10 scale. Recoded on a 0-1 scale for most analyses.
Open-ended	Can you briefly explain what you think the government is hiding about the coronavirus epidemic?	See table A1.
Lacks transparency	Thinking about the measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus IN YOUR PROVINCE, do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completely disagree 2. Somewhat disagree 3. Somewhat agree

	disagree with the following statements? The government lacks transparency on what drives its decisions	4. Completely agree Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Vote federal	If federal elections were held next Sunday and voting would be safe, which party would you be most likely to vote for in your electoral district?	Coded as 1 if the respondent intends to vote for the governing party (Liberal Party of Canada) and 0 otherwise.
Vote provincial	If provincial elections were held next Sunday and voting would be safe, which party would you be most likely to vote for in your electoral district?	Coded as 1 if the respondent intends to vote for the governing party and 0 otherwise.
Trust federal	What is your level of trust in the following institutions? The government of Canada	1. No trust at all 2. Not much trust 3. Some trust 4. Complete trust Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Trust provincial	What is your level of trust in the following institutions? Your provincial government	Same as above.
Handling federal	Generally speaking, are you satisfied with how the federal government in Ottawa is handling coronavirus?	1. Completely dissatisfied 2. Somewhat dissatisfied 3. Somewhat satisfied 4. Completely satisfied Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Handling provincial	Generally speaking, are you satisfied with how your provincial government is handling coronavirus?	Same as above.
Satisfaction with democracy	Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Canada?	1. Very dissatisfied 2. Somewhat dissatisfied 3. Somewhat satisfied 4. Very satisfied Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Trust scientists	What is your level of trust in the following institutions? Scientists	Same as trust federal.
Federal PID	Generally speaking, is there a political party that you feel close to in <u>federal</u> politics? Which party do you feel closest to?	Coded 1 if identifying with the Liberal Party of Canada and 0 otherwise.
Provincial PID	Generally speaking, is there a political party that you feel close to in <u>provincial</u> politics? Which party do you feel closest to?	Coded 1 if identifying with the provincial governing party and 0 otherwise.
Left-right ideology	In politics, we often talk about the concepts of left and right. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is left and 10 is right, where would you place yourself politically?	Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Social media news	In a typical week, how often do you get information about the coronavirus from the following sources? Social	1. Never 2. One or two days a week

consumption	media	3. Three or four days a week 4. Five or six days a week 5. Everyday Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
TV news consumption	In a typical week, how often do you get information about the coronavirus from the following sources? Television	Same as above.
Print news consumption	In a typical week, how often do you get information about the coronavirus from the following sources? Prints	Same as above.
Age	How old are you?	1. Between 18 and 24 2. Between 25 and 34 3. Between 35 and 44 4. Between 45 and 54 5. Between 55 and 64 6. Between 65 and 74 7. 75 or older Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Gender	Please indicate your sex: Note: As indicated by Statistics Canada, transgender, transsexual, and intersex Canadians should indicate the sex (male or female) with which they most associate themselves.	0 = Male, 1 = Female
Education	What is the highest level of education that you have completed (diploma obtained)?	1. Elementary 2. High school: general or vocational training 3. College: general pre-university programs or technical programs 4. University Recorded on a 0-1 scale.
Region	In which province or territory do you live?	Quebec (Quebec) Ontario (Ontario) Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) British Columbia (British Columbia) Atlantic (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince-Edward-Island, Newfoundland and Labrador)