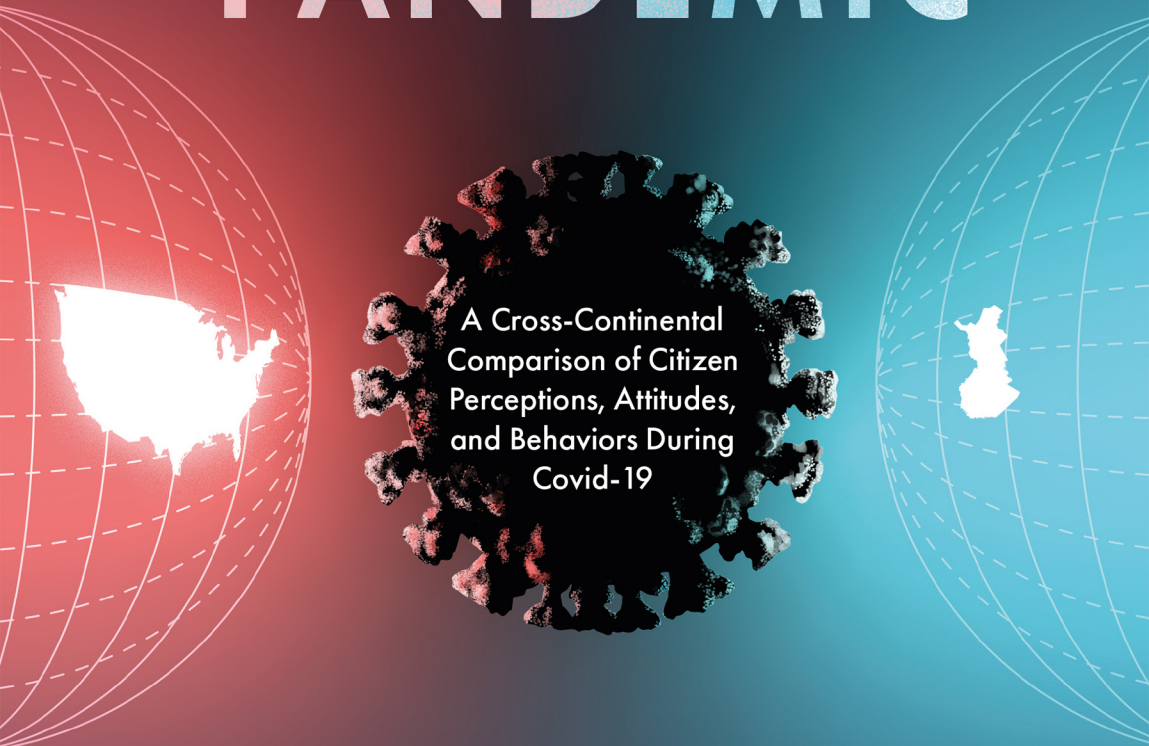


PERCEPTIONS OF A PANDEMIC



A Cross-Continental
Comparison of Citizen
Perceptions, Attitudes,
and Behaviors During
Covid-19

Edited by

JAMES HAWDON
DONNA SEDGWICK
C. COZETTE COMER
PEKKA RÄSÄNEN

Perceptions of a Pandemic

Perceptions of a Pandemic is a thorough and systematic exploration, rooted in data, of the events during the first pandemic of the social media era. This book highlights how the internet and social media have changed how a pandemic can be managed and how essential they have become in our daily lives during crises.

—**Pasi Moisio, Research Professor,
National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland**

Perceptions of a Pandemic provides a unique look at how the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded during its early months. The wide-ranging analyses offer us insights into how two cultures handled the pandemic, and the results provide guidance for how to manage health emergencies. The authors manage to say something new about the pandemic, which is hard to do at this point. *Perceptions of a Pandemic* is a must read for scholars, policy makers, and anyone who is interested in being better prepared for coping with or managing crises.

—**Matthew Costello, Associate Professor, Clemson University, USA**

This work illustrates the enduring value of cross-national comparative sociological analysis. It highlights the similarities and differences between the United States and Finland and then leverages these to examine how the structural features of each country are related to their response to a common exogenous shock: the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach makes a valuable contribution to the literature that goes beyond a single historical event to demonstrate the importance of comparative work for a wide range of topics.

—**James Witte, Professor, George Mason University, USA**

Perceptions of a Pandemic: A Cross-Continental Comparison of Citizen Perceptions, Attitudes, and Behaviors During COVID-19

EDITED BY

JAMES HAWDON

Virginia Tech, USA

DONNA SEDGWICK

Virginia Tech, USA

C. COZETTE COMER

Virginia Tech, USA

AND

PEKKA RÄSÄNEN

University of Turku, Finland



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL.

First edition 2025

Editorial matter and selection © 2025 James Hawdon, Donna Sedgwick,
C. Cozette Comer, and Pekka Räsänen.

Individual chapters © 2025 The authors.

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83608-625-3 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-624-6 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-626-0 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We dedicate this book to the over 7 million people who lost their lives to COVID-19, their families, and their loved ones.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of Figures and Tables	<i>ix</i>
About the Editors	<i>xi</i>
About the Contributors	<i>xiii</i>
Acknowledgments	<i>xv</i>

Section 1

Understanding COVID-19: Behaviors, Perceptions, and Solutions

Chapter 1 Perceptions of a Pandemic: The Impact of COVID-19 on American and Finnish Societies <i>James Hawdon, Donna Sedgwick, C. Cozette Comer and Pekka Räsänen</i>	<i>3</i>
Chapter 2 Planned Behavioral Changes to Mitigate COVID-19's Effects <i>James Hawdon</i>	<i>15</i>
Chapter 3 Which Factors Contributed to the COVID-19 Outbreak to Become a Global Pandemic? <i>Pekka Räsänen and Aki Koivula</i>	<i>29</i>
Chapter 4 Public Priorities During a Pandemic: Cross-national Comparisons <i>C. Cozette Comer</i>	<i>49</i>

Section 2

Media as a Complicating Factor

Chapter 5 Trust in Experts According to Media Consumption and Government Satisfaction in the United States and Finland <i>Aki Koivula, Eetu Marttila and Pekka Räsänen</i>	<i>65</i>
--	-----------

Chapter 6 COVID-19 and the Flames of Hate <i>James Hawdon</i>	85
---	----

Section 3
**COVID-19 and the Public: Well-being, Compliance,
and Health Outcomes**

Chapter 7 Coping, Well-being, and COVID-19 <i>Donna Sedgwick</i>	107
--	-----

Chapter 8 Compliance with Protective Health Behaviors During COVID-19: Variations Over Time and by Country <i>Donna Sedgwick</i>	125
--	-----

Chapter 9 The Pandemic's Effects in Finland and the United States: The Long-term Consequences of Early Perceptions and Behaviors <i>James Hawdon and Donna Sedgwick</i>	143
---	-----

Section 4
A Look Ahead

Chapter 10 A Look Ahead: How to Better Handle the Next Pandemic and Other Crises <i>James Hawdon, Donna Sedgwick, C. Cozette Comer and Pekka Räsänen</i>	171
--	-----

Methodological Appendix	183
-------------------------	-----

Index	199
-------	-----

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Fig. 2.1.	New COVID-19 Cases Per Million Residents.	19
Fig. 2.2.	New COVID-19 Deaths Per Million Residents.	20
Fig. 2.3.	Percent Residents Expressing Varying Levels of Concern About the Pandemic.	20
Fig. 2.4.	Percent Residents Expressing Likelihood of Engaging in Various Behaviors.	21
Fig. 2.5.	Percent Residents Reporting Plans to Change None of the Listed Behaviors and Percent Planning to Change All 11 Listed Behaviors by Country.	26
Fig. 3.1.	Citizen Perceptions of the Causes of Pandemic in Spring and Autumn 2020, Shares of Agreement (%) and Margins of Error (95% Confidence Level).	37
Fig. 3.2.	Predicted Perceptions of the Causes of Pandemic in Spring (Round 1) and Autumn (Round 2) by Political Preference. Probabilities of Agreement with Margins of Errors.	41
Fig. 4.1.	Percent of Respondents Willing to Increase National Debt to Address COVID-19.	51
Fig. 4.2.	Percent of Respondents Wanting to Reduce, Maintain, or Increase Each Spending Category by Country.	52
Fig. 5.1.	Trust in Experts' Capability to Solve COVID-19 Crisis, Satisfaction with Government Response to COVID-19 Crisis, and Daily Media Consumption Patterns in Finland and the United States in the T1 and T2 (Percentages).	75
Fig. 5.2.	Trust in Experts in Finland and the United States According to Satisfaction with Government Response to COVID-19 Crisis.	77
Fig. 5.3.	The Effect of Daily Media Consumption Patterns on Trust in Experts.	78
Fig. 6.1.	Exposure to Online Hate in Finland and the United States: 2020.	92
Fig. 6.2.	Exposure to Online Hate in Finland and the United States Among Young: 2013 and 2020.	93

x List of Figures and Tables

Fig. 6.3.	Changes in Exposure to Online Hate Between April and November 2020.	94
Fig. 7.1.	Factors That Affect Maladaptive Coping: The United States and Finland.	111
Fig. 7.2.	Factors That Affect Active/Expressive and Planning Coping: The United States and Finland.	113
Fig. 7.3.	Factors That Affect Positive Reframing Coping: The United States and Finland.	114
Fig. 7.4.	Factors That Affect Religious Coping: The United States and Finland.	115
Fig. 7.5.	Predictors of Change in Life Satisfaction in November 2020: The United States and Finland.	119
Fig. 9.1.	Percent of Respondents Who Wore a Mask in Public During COVID-19.	150

Tables

Table 3.1.	Predicted Perceptions of the Causes of Pandemic in the United States.	39
Table 3.2.	Predicted Perceptions of the Causes of Pandemic in Finland.	40
Table AI.	Predicted Perceptions of the Causes of Pandemic in the United States and Finland.	47
Table 4.1.	Factors Predicting Public Spending Priorities in Finland and the United States: Welfare Spending, Development Spending, and Security Spending.	54
Table 5.1.	Descriptive Statistics.	73
Table 5.2.	Trust in Experts According to Satisfaction with Government, Media Consumption Patterns, and Control Variables.	76
Table 6.1.	Logistic Regression of Exposure to Online Hate in Finland and the United States.	95
Table 7.1.	Summary of the Significant Predictors with Their Direction for Coping Strategies: Finland and the United States.	116
Table 8.1.	Mean Compliance and Difference with Mask Wearing in Finland and the United States, April 2020 and November 2020.	127
Table 8.2.	Factors That Affect Compliance with Mask Wearing April 2020 and November 2020.	131
Table 8.3.	Factors That Affect Vaccine Intention, November 2020.	136
Table 9.1.	Logistic Regression of Vaccination Status in the United States and Finland.	155
Table 9.2.	Regression of Collaborative Relationship with the State in the United States and Finland.	158

About the Editors

James Hawdon is a Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention at Virginia Tech. His research focuses on how communities influence crime, political participation, and responses to tragedies. His recent research has focused on online communities and how they affect political polarization, online hate, and cybercrime. With eight authored or edited books, over 120 academic journal articles and chapters, and dozens of technical reports, he has published extensively in the areas of online extremism, criminology, the sociology of policing, and the sociology of drugs.

Donna Sedgwick, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Virginia Tech. Her scholarship includes examining interorganizational relationships between public and nonprofit organizations, and she also investigates how institutional pressures and logics shape organizational and employee behaviors. She has published papers that address these issues on important topics such as early childhood education, policing, affordable housing, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. Cozette Comer is the Assistant Director of Evidence Synthesis Services at the University Libraries at Virginia Tech. She specializes in evidence synthesis review methodologies (e.g., systematic reviews and meta-analyses), comprehensive search design, formal critical appraisal of research, and large review management. She is currently a part-time PhD student in Public Administration and Public Affairs, and holds a MS in Sociology from Virginia Tech. Her primary research interests concern the role of evidence in policy and government decision-making.

Pekka Räsänen, PhD, is Professor of Economic Sociology at the University Turku, Finland. His research interests are in the sociology of consumption, social inequalities, and the use of information and communication technologies. He has published more than 70 articles in international refereed journals and over 200 other publications. His latest international monograph dealt with exposure to harmful online content among young adults (*Online Hate and Harmful Content – Cross-National Perspectives*, Routledge, 2017).

This page intentionally left blank

About the Contributors

Aki Koivula holds the title of docent in Economic Sociology and works as a Senior Researcher at the University of Turku. His research expertise lies in survey research methods, the reciprocal relationship between citizens and public institutions, and people's participation and interaction in digital environments.

Eetu Marttila is a Doctoral Researcher in Economic Sociology at the University of Turku. His research explores the effects of social media on individuals' well-being and behavior, specifically in the context of excessive use.

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the University of Turku, Economic Sociology Unit, for generously supporting our data collection efforts. We also thank Emmi Lehtinen for providing valuable help with the initial coding of the data. We also thank the University Libraries at Virginia Tech and the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention for hosting our writers' workshop. We also thank our anonymous reviewers. Finally, we thank our families for their love and continued support.