

# Motivated Errors

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## **Abstract:**

In three sets of experiments involving over 3300 individuals, we show that agents motivated to be selfish or to hold egoistic beliefs make systematic errors that appear to be driven by cognitive limitations. We further show that that these errors are eliminated (or dramatically reduced) when self-serving motives are removed. Put differently, we find that individuals make “motivated errors” — they act as if they are cognitively limited, but only when it is self-serving to do so.