**News articles and decision-making**

[Information sheet]

Who is Organising This Study?

This research is organised by the Psychology Department of the University of Kent. The researchers are two members of staff: Aleksandra Cichocka and Ben Seyd.

What Are the Aims of the Study?

This study investigates the impact of newspaper articles on topical issues on people’s attitudes. We will ask you to read a short excerpt from a newspaper article and ask your opinions about it. We are interested in your opinions only, and we would like to stress that there are no right or wrong beliefs. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Who Can Take Part?

Over 18 years of age

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation in this study guarantees confidentiality of the information you provide in line with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. We will not ask you to write your name on the study materials. Instead we will ask you to create a unique participant identification number.

Contact for Further Information

If you require any further information or have any queries about this study please contact the researchers:

Aleksandra Cichocka                                                 Ben Seyd

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If you have any serious concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please inform the Chair of the Psychology Research Ethics Panel (via the Psychology Department Office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

[Consent]

* I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study
* I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.
* I agree to take part in the above study

[Materials]

First of all, a few questions about your attitudes and about your own life.

Please indicate how far you support or oppose each of these four different technologies.

(1) The use of pesticides on crops **(filler item)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Strongly oppose* | *Oppose* | *Support* | *Strongly support* |

(2) Nuclear power stations **(filler item)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Strongly oppose* | *Oppose* | *Support* | *Strongly support* |

(3) Mobile phone masts

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Strongly oppose* | *Oppose* | *Support* | *Strongly support* |
|  |  |  |  |

(4) Genetically modified food **(filler item)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  *Strongly oppose* | *Oppose* | *Support* | *Strongly support* |
|  |  |  |  |

Next, please indicate your response on these two aspects of your own life:

(1) Happiness with life **(filler item)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Overall, I do not feel happy with my life | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 (Neutral) | 1 | 2 | 3 | Overall, I feel happy with my life |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

(2) Control over life

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I feel I have little control over my life | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 (Neutral) | 1 | 2 | 3 | I feel I have great control over my life |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Condition 1**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. A phone-in programme on the local radio station showed that most residents opposed the mast. But at its meeting last night, the council decided to approve construction of the new mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 2**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. Faced with such disagreement, the council convened a series of open meetings across the locality to find out what residents felt. The meetings were well attended, and votes held at the end of each showed a clear majority of local people opposed to the mast. But at its meeting last night, the council decided to approve construction of the new mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 3**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. A phone-in programme on the local radio station showed that most residents opposed the mast. At its meeting last night, the council therefore decided to reject construction of the new mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 4**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. Faced with such disagreement, the council convened a series of open meetings across the locality to find out what residents felt. The meetings were well attended, and votes held at the end of each showed a clear majority of local people opposed to the mast. At its meeting last night, the council therefore decided to reject construction of the new mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 5**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. A phone-in programme on the local radio station showed that most residents opposed the mast. In order that their decision reflected the best interests of local people, the council sought advice from a panel of independent scientists. Most of the scientists indicated that the health risks of the mast were small and outweighed by the mast’s benefits. At its meeting last night, the council decided to approve construction of the new mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 6**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. Faced with such disagreement, the council convened a series of open meetings across the locality to find out what residents felt. The meetings were well attended, and votes held at the end of each showed a clear majority of local people opposed to the mast. In order that their decision reflected the best interests of local people, the council sought advice from a panel of independent scientists. Most of the scientists indicated that the health risks of the mast were small and outweighed by the mast’s benefits. At its meeting last night, the council decided to approve construction of the new mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 7**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. A phone-in programme on the local radio station showed that most residents opposed the mast. In order that their decision reflected the best interests of local people, the council sought advice from a panel of independent scientists. Most of the scientists indicated that the health risks of the mast were great and outweighed the mast’s benefits. At its meeting last night, the council therefore decided to reject construction of the mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**Condition 8**

After months of debate, the local council reached a decision on Monday night on the construction of a new mobile phone mast in the locality. The issue had proved controversial among local people. Many residents supported the new mast on the grounds it would improve the quality of telephone reception. But many others opposed the mast since they feared it would emit radiation and pose a risk to people’s health. Faced with such disagreement, the council convened a series of open meetings across the locality to find out what residents felt. The meetings were well attended, and votes held at the end of each showed a clear majority of local people opposed to the mast. In order that their decision reflected the best interests of local people, the council sought advice from a panel of independent scientists. Most of the scientists indicated that the health risks of the mast were great and outweighed the mast’s benefits. At its meeting last night, the council therefore decided to reject construction of the mobile phone mast. Local councillor Dorothy Webb said that the issue had been complex, but that she was pleased a final decision had been reached.

**[Randomized order of questions 1-4]**

Now would you please answer the following questions about what you have just read.

(1) On a scale of 1-10, how far would you say the council consulted with local people before making a decision?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The council did not consult with local people |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | The council consulted with local people |

(2) On a scale of 1-10, how far would you say the council took local people’s views into account when making a decision?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Did not take local people’s views into account at all |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Took local people’s views into account a lot |

(3) On a scale of 1-10, how far would you say the council took local people’s general interests into account when making a decision?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Did not take local people’s general interests into account at all |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Took local people’s general interests into account a lot |

(4) On a scale of 1-10, how far would you say that local people can affect decisions made by the council?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Local people cannot affect council decisions at all |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Local people can affect council decisions a lot. |

**[Randomized order of questions 5-7]**

(5) On a scale of 1-10, how far do you think that local people should accept the decision made by the council?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Local people should not accept the council’s decision |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Local people should accept the council’s decision |

(6) On a scale of 1-10, how legitimate would you say the council’s decision was?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Not at all legitimate |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Very legitimate |

(7) On a scale of 1-10 and based on what you have read about the council, how much trust in general would you have in the council?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| No trust in the council |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | A lot of trust in the council |

(8) According to the article you have just read, what was the issue the local council made the decision on?

* The use of pesticides on crops
* Nuclear power stations
* Mobile phone masts
* Genetically modified food

Finally, a few questions about yourself.

How old are you? .................................

What is your gender? Male ........... Female ...............

What is your highest educational qualification?

University degree …………………………...

Qualification gained outside school, but not at university ………………

School qualification ……………………..

No educational qualifications ……………………

[Debriefing]

Thank you very much for your participation in this research. We would like to provide some further information about the purpose of the study and what we expect to find.

In the present study we hope to gain a better understanding of the way in which people’s trust in public authorities is affected by how responsive those authorities are to people’s demands. At the beginning of the study, depending on whether you supported or opposed mobile phone masts, you were presented with a scenario that described the same debate, but whose features and outcomes varied. In particular, each scenario varied in terms of, whether the demands of the local people were listened to by the council and influenced the final decision and whether other interests were considered. The scenarios presented were artificial and prepared for the purpose of this study. In the analyses, we will examine how authorities’ responsiveness to people’s demands as well as consideration of people’s other interests will affect people’s trust in politicians and legitimacy of their authority. In the study, we also measured your feelings of control over your life. In additional analyses, we will check whether such feelings could also affect the degree of trust in politicians and perceptions of legitimacy.

 If you have any queries about this research or would like to ask any further questions, please contact the researchers using the contact details below.

If you would like to withdraw your data at any point, please contact the Psychology departmental office on 01227 823961. If you have been given a participant code you need to cite this. You do not have to give a reason for your withdrawal.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your valuable contribution to this research. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Aleksandra Cichocka

Ben Seyd

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