

# Scientific information, prior beliefs and support to universal basic income<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

To what extent does scientific information shape attention and support for universal basic income? Related literature depicts two very different set of predictions. The field on welfare preferences portrays individuals as rational calculators, while motivated reasoning scholarship rather presents public opinion as being emotionally-driven, striving to confirm beliefs. I reconcile these two strands of work by proposing that while individuals seek out to confirm their beliefs most of the time, they may sometimes face larger incentives to update these and reach accurate conclusions. Such incentives are likely to be present if individuals are directly affected by an issue or/and care strongly about it. I employ comparative online experimental data to test this argument. Findings show that scientific information does not increase attention or shape to policy proposals, and neither does belief-congruent information. Rather, prior beliefs *per se*, have a direct impact on attention and support. This is the case even when they face significant incentives to update their beliefs, in order to translate their interests to relevant policy preferences. The findings presented in this paper have far reaching implications to the study of preferences, motivated reasoning and the politics of UBI.

## INTRODUCTION

Citizens are constantly confronted with information regarding policies, and while they must make choices about which policies to support according to their values or interests, we still know little about how individuals process this information and these dynamics shape their attention and support to policy proposals. This is of paramount importance in the current context of information overload, mis-information and fake news where different political actors bias information to their interests (Kuklinski *et al.*, 2000; Amarasingam, 2011; Schaffner and Roche, 2017; Martens *et al.*, 2018; Peters *et al.*, 2018; O'Connor and Weatherall, 2019). There is burgeoning literature on motivated, and especially, partisan motivated reasoning (a non-exhaustive list includes: Lebo and

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Cassino, 2007; Bolsen, Druckman and Cook, 2013; Leeper and Slothuus, 2014; Robison, 2020), but in comparative terms, we know far less about how public opinion processes scientific information (an exception includes: Sides, 2015). Substantively, this paper also contributes to the field of UBI support where the individual-level determinants of policy support have been vastly covered (Parolin and Siöland, 2019; Vlandas, 2019, 2020; Roosma and van Oorschot, 2020), but we know relatively less about how the informational dynamics and debates of this policy are affecting the levels of support. This paper advances this knowledge by tackling two main questions: to what extent does scientific evidence shape attention and support for political proposals, like a UBI? Under which conditions will individuals reduce their dependence on priors, prioritise reaching accurate conclusions and update their preferences based on objective information? In particular, does being directly affected by an issue or caring strongly about it reduce such reliance on priors? I examine these questions in the context of the timely and salient welfare reform debate, and in particular the effects of universal basic income on unemployment rates.

Research on information processing has shown mixed evidence on the effects of scientific information on public opinion. The literature on motivated reasoning posits that individuals do not handle information neutrally, but this process is usually biased by their motivations. Generally, individuals are motivated to confirm their beliefs, which leads them to discount information that contradicts these, select that which is belief-congruent, and evaluate it more strongly too. However, in the context of welfare policy attention and support, this belief and emotionally-driven depiction of individuals radically contrasts with the rational, self-interested and calculating individual that knows what's best for his/her interests, that is portrayed in the literature on political economy preferences (e.g., Meltzer and Richard, 1981). These two contending views on individuals may be

reconciled if we allow individuals to vary their information-processing strategies according to their situation. In this vein, some work already predicts that if motivation and ability is high, dependence on prior beliefs is reduced (Van Knippenberg and Daamen, 1996).

In this line, I hypothesise that most individuals will process information to confirm their beliefs, yet, this reliance on prior beliefs may be disrupted if individuals are directly affected by an issue or care strongly about it. I contend that under these circumstances, the incentives to reach accurate conclusions and update preferences accordingly, will outperform the benefits from avoiding cognitive dissonance and confirm their beliefs.

To test these claims, I rely on a survey experiment administered in March 2019, in Finland and Spain. The design consists of a 2x2 vignette experiment which manipulates the presence and absence of empirical information about the effect of a new policy proposal -in this case, universal basic income- on a valence issue like (un)employment rate, manipulating policy effects as positive or negative outcomes -i.e., increasing or decreasing employment rate respectively. While the main contribution of this paper is empirical, by applying motivated reasoning literature to UBI, this paper also contributes theoretically too, by incorporating insights from preferences literature and providing a new rationale of the conditions under which individuals may disrupt their reliance on prior beliefs.

In line with some previous work, I find that scientific evidence does not make a difference to information selection and policy support, but neither does being exposed to information which is congruent with prior beliefs (motivated reasoning hypothesis). However, I find that prior beliefs on their own do have an effect on self-selection to information and policy support. If an individual believes a policy to be effective, then he/she will have a higher probability of paying attention and supporting a UBI policy, regardless of whether he/she

received belief-congruent information or scientific evidence, which is consistent with the motivated reasoning literature. Contrary to expectations, this reliance on prior beliefs does not change if an individual is directly affected by an issue or considers it important.

These findings have substantial implications to the study of public opinion, information-processing, and preferences. First, I provide novel evidence of the influence of prior beliefs and selective information-processing on preferences. These findings provide evidence that the congruency of information with prior beliefs does not shape information-processing, but rather, prior beliefs per se do predict self-selection to information and policy support. Second, the fact that I find that science does not matter even in contexts where it is on the best interest of individuals to prioritise this information, pictures a pessimistic landscape with regards to the ability of public opinion to be responsive to objective information and accurately translate this into preferences. Third, the finding that even individuals who should have larger incentives to process accurate information –for instance, if an issue directly affects them- do not disrupt their reliance on prior beliefs, calls into question the rationality implicit in theories of preferences, especially those which point at material self-interest as a key driver of support. Rather, these findings suggest that even if material self-interest drives preferences, these calculations follow from subjective and biased perceptions rather than objective indicators of which policies benefit individuals.

Beyond the preferences literature, this contribution also speaks to the politics of UBI. Results suggest that generally speaking, public opinion is impermeable to scientific information and the debates revolving around UBI. Findings seem to indicate that the coalition of support behind UBI in Spain is weaker than the ‘opposer’ coalition or the supportive coalition in Finland for three reasons. First, individuals who believe this policy to be effective are much more likely of accessing all types of information –even contrary-

even if this does not lead to an immediate change of support. Second, individuals who care about an issue or are directly affected by it, reduce their support under negative information –regardless of scientific evidence- but do not increase it under positive information. These trends show that there are more instances of compromising the political support of UBI than of increasing it.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. I begin by providing an overview of the theories on motivated reasoning, with special attention on research on the impact of scientific evidence, and I also draw on the field of welfare preferences, to develop my argument about the conditions under which individuals may be more responsive to scientific information and reduce their dependence on previous beliefs. Next, I turn to the empirical section, outlining the methodological approach, experimental design and case selection. The following section presents the results, and I close the paper by providing some concluding remarks.

## **THEORIES OF INFORMATION-PROCESSING AND MOTIVATED REASONING**

The study of how humans process scientific or factual-based information has generated an intense theoretical and empirical discussion since its inception (Reinard, 1988; Duchon, Dunegan and Barton, 1989), yet the evidence so far is mixed (Baesler and Burgoon, 1994; Kopfman *et al.*, 1998; Gaines *et al.*, 2007; Nisbet and Mooney, 2007; Liu and Ditto, 2013; Zebregs *et al.*, 2014; Sides, 2015). On the one hand, some work shows that empirical evidence does not have an effect on individual attitudes and beliefs, with narratives being more effective (Taylor and Thompson, 1982; Reinard, 1988; Kazoleas, 1993). On the other hand, another set of studies shows that scientific or factual evidence is more effective for comprehension, attitudinal and behavioural change (see for example:

Sides, 2015), through enhancing credibility and a sense of causal relevance<sup>3</sup> (Kopfman *et al.*, 1998; Tal and Wansink, 2014). In line with this approach, the scientific literacy model of opinion formation argues that knowledge and evidence help accurate assessments of risks and benefits (Kahan *et al.*, 2008; Druckman and Bolsen, 2011).

Finally, a third set of studies move beyond considering the type of information, and broaden the scope to consider the impact of moderating factors in information-processing. The most prominent of such theories is motivated reasoning, which contends that individual information-processing is motivated by the desire of reaching one of two potential goals: confirming previous beliefs, understood as confirmatory-based motivated reasoning, or reaching accurate conclusions, usually labelled accuracy motivated reasoning (although other terms have been used to describe similar processes as outlined by Leeper and Slothuus, 2014). Confirmatory-based motivated reasoning, also known as directional motivation, is a strategic mechanism of information-processing, through which one reaches a desired outcome, which usually serves to justify or confirm one's beliefs and ideas. On the other hand, under accuracy motivated reasoning, the individual prioritises reaching correct and precise conclusions rather than affirming one's priors (Hart *et al.*, 2009). Overall, individuals strive to fulfil one of the two such goals when processing new information (Leeper and Slothuus, 2014).

The conventional view in existing research however, is that individuals tend to rely generally on confirmatory-based motivated reasoning because it is less costly cognitively speaking, and avoids cognitive dissonance, which describes a psychological stress or tension derived from holding ideas that contradict each other (Festinger, 1957; Akerlof and Dickens, 1984; Hart *et al.*, 2009). To bypass cognitive tensions, individuals must

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<sup>3</sup> Here, empirical information is not only understood as a statement saying that the information is factual-based but rather, it is a form of presenting evidence also through statistics, figures or causal facts (Gastel, 1983; Tufte, 2001; Dahlstrom, 2010; Tal and Wansink, 2014).

discount information that contradicts their beliefs or accommodate their beliefs system to new information (Aronson, 1979). Because the latter is more demanding, individuals rely most of the time on confirmatory-based motivated reasoning.

Individuals pursue different information selection and evaluation mechanisms to hold on to their prior beliefs, both during the selection and evaluation stages of information-processing. In terms of information-seeking behaviour, individuals will pick up, self-select or pay attention to information which is in line with their prior beliefs (Kahan *et al.*, 2008; Druckman and Bolsen, 2011) and discount information which is not aligned with these ideas (Gaines *et al.*, 2007; Lodge and Taber, 2007; Taber, Cann and Kucsova, 2009; Liu and Ditto, 2013). Regarding information-evaluation, individuals who engage in confirmatory motivated reasoning will evaluate information which is congruent with their beliefs more strongly, or dedicate efforts to downplay and criticise information which runs counter to their predispositions (Lord, Ross and Lepper, 1979; Kunda, 1990; Kruglanski and Webster, 1996).

In this sense, I hypothesise that individuals will not self-select more to information backed by scientific evidence, and neither will they support more strongly policies backed by such information. The proposition in this paper is that self-selection to information is moderated by previous beliefs: belief-congruent information should have a positive effect on self-selection to information. However, when it comes to support we should observe that support levels remain constant across different informational inputs. Motivated reasoning theories posit that individuals evaluate information differently depending on whether this is congruent with their prior beliefs. Hence, individuals should evaluate information differently depending on whether this fits in with their prior ideas, but this information should not change support levels. An alternative story is also plausible, as suggested by the literature on counterarguments and backlash, which shows that

individuals who are shown information running contrary to their prior beliefs actually reinforce these (Zaller, 1992; Lodge and Taber, 2007; Kahan *et al.*, 2008), which could lead to the prediction that information running counter to prior beliefs may increase support. Nevertheless, this is likely to be the case in more politically or emotionally charged topics than the one explored here.

H1. Empirical evidence will not have an effect on attention or support.

H1a. Information will have a conditional effect on self-selection: belief-congruent information will have a positive effect on self-selection to more information, and belief-incongruent information will have a negative effect.

H1b. Information will not have an impact on support.

### **Under which conditions will prioritise reaching accurate conclusions?**

In contrast to the emotionally-driven and belief-confirming individual presented in theories of motivated reasoning, the literature on welfare preferences tends to depict a rational, calculating individual driven by material self-interest (i.e., the Meltzer and Richard, 1981 argument explored in much work, a non-exhaustive list includes: Alesina and Rodrik, 1994; Durante, Putterman and van der Weele Joël, 2014). Even accounts which acknowledge the role of values and deservingness considerations, implicitly assume some sort of rational calculation about how different policies should benefit different sets of individuals. In essence, the depiction of biased individuals in motivated reasoning deeply contrasts that of the rational view of public opinion.

Altogether, the core argument in this contribution is that these two theoretical predictions may be reconciled by accounting for the conditions under which individuals may be driven by their belief systems and identify those under which they'd rather prioritise



attaining accurate conclusions rather than confirming their beliefs. In this sense, previous work shows that motivation and ability are essential to reduce reliance on prior beliefs and take up new information even when these inputs contradict one's priors (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Chen and Chaiken, 1999). Some individuals may face higher motivations and incentives to reduce their dependence on prior beliefs. In this paper I explore two conditions where this is likely to be the case. The first of such conditions is being directly affected by an issue. Given that individuals have little to win from accuracy-based information processing in general terms –given the accrued cognitive costs that this option entails-, public opinion is generally expected to rely on their priors to process information. However, individuals affected by an issue are likely to be directly affected by the policy solution too, so the accrued costs of questioning their beliefs are by far outweighed with the potential benefits derived from reaching correct and unbiased conclusions and being able to accurately translate their interests into relevant policy preferences<sup>4</sup>.

Research on public opinion has also shown that issue saliency also leads to higher motivation and reduces dependence on prior beliefs (Krosnick, 1988, 1990; Holbrook *et al.*, 2005). Most of this work looks at issue saliency at the macro-level, but there are strong reasons to believe that issue importance at the individual level will also affect how individuals process information. Issue saliency in this context is defined as the individual-level subjective perception of the importance, relevance and gravity of a particular topic (Boninger, Krosnick and Berent, 1995; Lecheler, De Vreese and Slothuus, 2009).

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<sup>4</sup> This proposition contrasts to attribute theory which contends precisely the opposite. According to this theoretical framework, when an issue directly affects an individual (sometimes referred as an obtrusive issue), information has a lower impact or no impact at all (Zucker, 1978), precisely because he/she counts with first-hand information which may render new or external information less credible (Lavine, Johnston and Steenbergen, 2012; Leeper, 2014; Leeper and Slothuus, 2014). I contend that while this make work for issue perceptions, it is less credible in the context of policy solutions which have not yet been implemented.

In this framework, individuals who are directly affected by an issue or consider it an important matter, are not expected to seek to confirm their priors but rather reach accurate conclusions. This means that scientific evidence -the most objective and reliable type of evidence- should generate higher attention rates across these individuals, and moderate whether information has an impact on support, increasing support if the policy solution in question achieves positive outcomes, and decreasing if it achieves negative outcomes.

As such, the second hypothesis and the empirical expectations are the following:

H2: Individuals who are directly affected and/or care strongly about an issue will:

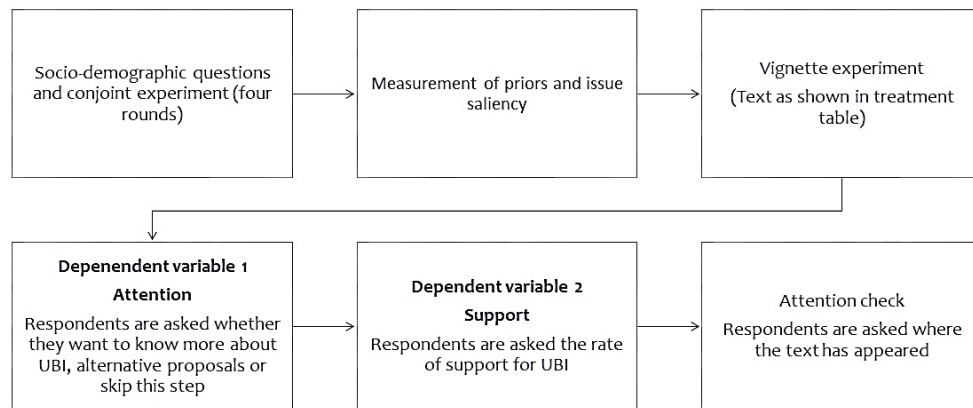
H2a. Increase attention to UBI when provided with scientific evidence.

H2b. Increase support for UBI if the information provided is positive and accompanied by empirical evidence; decrease support for UBI when information is negative and accompanied by empirical evidence.

## **METHODS**

To test these claims, I rely on data from a survey that was fielded by a commercial polling agency (Netquest) to a representative convenience sample of an online panel of respondents in Finland and Spain, during the month of March 2019. Respondents were drawn through quotas on gender, age, and geographical region (the quota criteria used in the survey distribution are shown in appendix tables A1 and A2). Although the original sample was of 1000 respondents in each context (2000 in total), to ensure quality of responses I eliminated observations who did not complete the whole survey. This delivers a total of 857 observations in Finland, and 882 observations in Spain. The survey was administered online using Qualtrics software and had an approximate duration of 15 minutes. The structure of the survey is the following: individuals were asked a series of

socio-demographic questions, then they faced four conjoint rounds<sup>5</sup>, and then they were asked questions about prior beliefs (see description below), and then they finally accessed the vignette experiment.



*Figure 1. Survey flow.*

## Experimental design

Experimental tools are particularly relevant for the topic under study given the risks of using observational data, in relation to selection bias and endogeneity bias in information processing of citizens. For this purpose, randomising information treatments allows us to attain a high level of internal validity of the effect of information on self-selection to information and support, and how prior beliefs moderate this process.

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<sup>5</sup> The conjoint experiment was designed to measure the impact of cash transfer design on policy support. The dimensions and attributes included only contained the technical specificities of the design, hence, there are no strong a priori reasons to believe that the conjoint would have biased or primed the treatment effects.

The experimental design consists of a 2x2 vignette experiment in which I combine two treatments: (1) absence/presence of empirical evidence, and (2) type of policy outcome produced by basic income on employment rate<sup>6</sup>. All the treatments begin with the announcement of a text which has appeared in a media outlet, and the definition of basic income. The exact wording is the following: “You will now read a statement which has appeared in a media article: Basic income is a universal, unconditional and individual income that the entire population would receive periodically, regardless of their abilities, their socio-economic or employment status.” I included a definition of basic income to ensure that all respondents departed from the same conceptual basis. The control group only received this text and was directly asked to decide whether they wanted to know more about the topic, and give a specific rate of support for this policy idea. The treatment groups received an extra piece of text where evidence was either present or absent, and the policy outcome took a positive or negative value, which delivers a total of four treatment conditions, outlined in the table below.

To construct the treatment, I draw from existing evidence and reports about the effects of basic income trials on employment rates. Given that evidence is mixed so far, with some results indicating that the employment rate increased and others indicating that it remained stabled or decreased<sup>7</sup>, I argue that respondents were not deceived.

Before moving on to the dependent variables, I briefly outline how these treatment conditions manipulate the concept of interest. I argue that empirical evidence is

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<sup>6</sup> The appendix offers a detailed discussion of the particularities of this topic, and and appropriateness to study this question, with the discusión section offering details on how the nature of the topic may affect result. Still, I argue that UBI is a very relevant matter to study in relation to employment, and the issue of employment is also an adequate topic given it represents a valence issue which is adequate for various reasons as outlined in appendix A3.

<sup>7</sup> Finland is the classical exemple of an experiment where employment rates remained unchanged (during the first year); or that employment increased (during the second year) (see Torry, 2020 for an overview). As an exemple of an experiment which decreased rates of employment is Evelyn Forget’s re-examination of the Manitoba experiment (Forget, 2011, 2013).

manipulated in two main ways: one, through mentioning the specific methods through which the data or information has been gathered - experiments, which are a key scientific method- but also by adding data. One may argue that this is not a scientific report, but most of the time, individuals do not receive scientific evidence through the original reports or official sources that generate this research, but rather, through mainstream or social media, which is the main source of information for individuals. Hence, I argue that the fact that the scientific information is provided through a media outlet does not question its reliability or credibility as a scientific information piece given that the media also report on scientific advancements, and it is the common source of information for most individuals. Specifying such a neutral source also enables to control for potential source effects that could interfere with treatment effects.

### **Dependent variables: self-selection to information and support**

In the study I measured two dependent variables: self-selection to more information and support. To measure self-selection I ask respondents whether they would like to know more about UBI, and give them three possible options: (1) learning more about UBI, (2) learning more about related proposals and finally, (3) skipping this step. The answers are re-coded as 1 if the individual want to know more about UBI, and 0 otherwise. The second dependent variable, support rate for UBI, is measured through a question which reads as follows: “Please indicate on a scale from 1 to 10 how likely would you be of voting in favor of the introduction of a universal basic income (UBI) policy?”. This variable was operationalised as a numeric scale.

### **Measurement of priors, issue importance and the effect of an issue on the individual**

In this paper I conceptualise prior beliefs about UBI’s effect on employment as whether an individual percieves universal cash transfers or selective ones to be more effective for

unemployment and poverty traps. I do this through a 9-point bipolar rating question, which has universal cash transfers and selective ones to each extreme. A screenshot of the question can be seen in the figure below. This variable is operationalised as a numeric scale from 1 to 9 for the main regression analysis. However, to deliver a more straightforward visual interpretation of results through the predicted probability plots, the analysis relies on a re-codification of this variable. Individuals who placed themselves between 1-4 points were re-coded as individuals with selective or targeted priors; those individuals who placed themselves in the middle of the rating scale (5) were re-coded as prior-neutral; and those who placed themselves on 6 to 9 as universal. See appendices A4 and A5 for a distribution of prior beliefs.

Please indicate which statement you agree with the most by positioning yourself in this scale.

Means-tested benefits are a more effective for redistribution, because they target benefits on those who need it the most



Universal benefits are a more effective for redistribution because they do not attach stigma or generate benefit dependency

*Figure 2. Screenshot of the prior beliefs question.*

To measure the individual-level importance attached to the issue of employment, I employ an item ranking survey question, containing 8 different topic items, in which individuals are asked to sort out different policy issues in a ranking of more to less important. The question wording employed for the measurement of the MIP shown to respondents is the following: “In your view, which is the most important problem for Spain/Finland at the moment? Please order the following issues, placing the most important ones at the top, to the least important ones at the bottom”. The list of problems included were: corruption, gender inequality, drugs, unemployment, pensions, poverty,

environmental problems, other problems associated to employment, social issues: housing, health or education (as one) and finally, I included other as a category here respondents could introduce any other problems –note that none of these answers were related to employment. To provide a random order of issues, I arranged these alphabetically. I re-coded this variable as 1 if an individual had placed the issue of unemployment in the first to third most important problem, and 0 otherwise<sup>8</sup>.

To measure how obtrusive unemployment is as an issue in an individuals' life I ask about their subjective unemployment risk. The question wording was “How likely do you think it is that in the next 12 months you will lose your current employment?” The options ranged from Very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely and very unlikely- I re-coded the former two as ‘high risk’ individuals and the latter as low risk.

## **Analysis**

For the main analysis of the attention dependent variable, I employ general linear models (logit) where the dependent variable is binary (self-selecting into more information about UBI takes the value of 1, and 0 otherwise, the latter including respondents who skip this step or self-select into information about alternative proposals). I perform different models in a step-wise fashion, including only treatment, adding prior beliefs, and then adding socio-demographic controls. I also include models with socio-demographic controls without prior beliefs, to observe how the inclusion/exclusion of prior beliefs affects the significance and magnitude of other socio-demographic variables. Finally, I include models with treatment and prior beliefs interaction terms. I perform the same analysis with an OLS regression strategy (available in the appendix) and show that,

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<sup>8</sup> Note that while choosing the third position is an ad hoc measure of importance, the analysis was also carried out using unemployment in the first position, and first or second position, but the results are the same.

although the magnitude size varies, the significance and direction of all variables is the same.

For the analysis of the support rate I perform OLS regressions where the dependent variable is numeric. I employ the same variety of models as with the attention rate dependent variable. Finally, to explore the hypothesis of accuracy motivated reasoning for individuals for whom an issue is important or directly affects them, I undertake two strategies. First I rely on regression models with triple interaction terms between prior beliefs, issue condition –a dummy of whether an issue is important to these individuals or directly affects them- and treatment conditions. These results are available in the main analysis section. Secondly, I perform regression analysis with two subsets of data, one with respondents for who the issue is important or directly affects them and other with those from whom it is not. This subsetting has also been employed by previous work (e.g., Guess and Coppock, 2020). I present these results in the appendix, and as I show here, the findings across both strategies are generally consistent.

### **Attention check**

I introduce an attention check after respondents receive the treatment and respond to the dependent variable questions. The attention check consists of asking respondents where the text they had previously read appeared, giving them the options to choose between three outlets. The quality of this answer is indicative of how attentive or focused the individuals were in reading the text, which is later included as a control variable. I do not remove the incorrect respondent observations, given that I want the results to be as representative as possible and these apparently incorrect observations are also part of the variance in attention intensity that the population shows. I perform all the regression analysis with these attentional checks to test whether the individuals who pay more or



less attention differ in their information-selection and policy support dynamics. The regression results including the attention checks are included in the appendix.

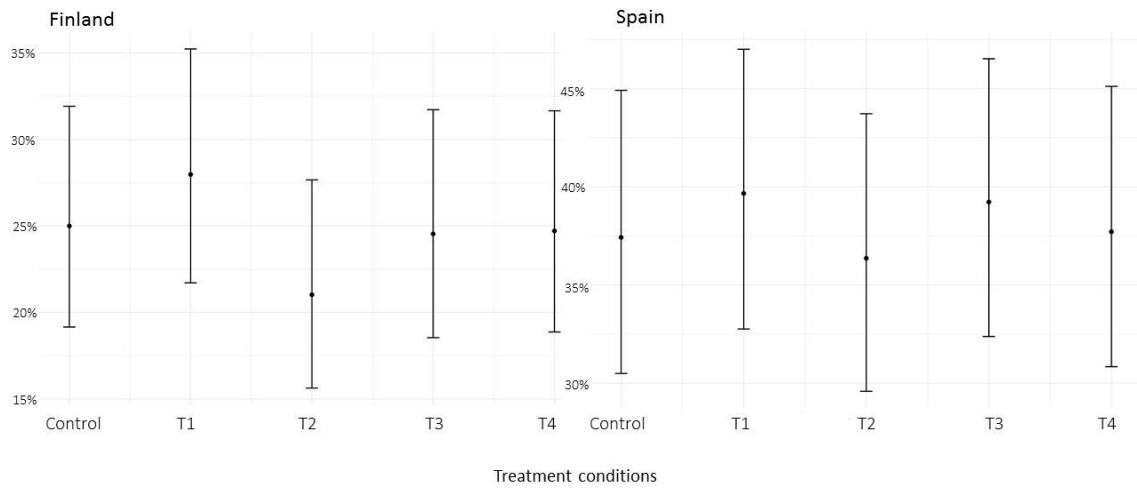
## RESULTS

### Descriptive results

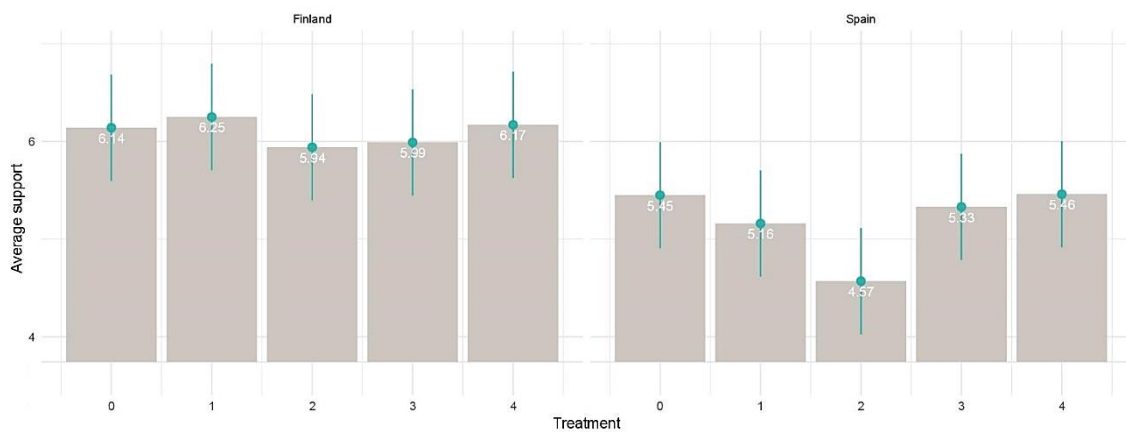
Before examining the hypothesis, I explore results descriptively, looking at the distribution of the two dependent variables (see table 1 below). Attention levels are generally higher in Spain, but support levels seem higher in Finland overall. Treatment effects, however, are similar across contexts (see figure 3 below). First, there are no significant differences in the mean levels of attention and support across treatment suggesting that treatment has no effects. Second, I find that the highest attention rate is achieved by T1 in both contexts, while the lowest is for T2. This is not the case for the support rates dependent variable, where the highest level of attention in Finland is attained in T1, while in Spain this is for T4. In any case, these differences are not statistically significant. This is shown by the predicted portability plots too.

Treatment	Finland				Spain			
	Attention		Support		Attention		Support	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
0	0,25	0,43	6,14	2,48	0,37	0,49	5,45	2,5
1	0,28	0,45	6,25	2,37	0,4	0,49	5,16	2,66
2	0,21	0,41	5,94	2,76	0,36	0,48	4,57	2,54
3	0,25	0,43	5,99	2,8	0,39	0,49	5,33	2,39
4	0,25	0,43	6,17	2,54	0,38	0,49	5,46	2,62

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the treatment effects across Finland and Spain.*



*Figure 3. Predicted probability plots of the attention rate dependent variable. The predicted values are computed from an OLS regression including treatment conditions and socio-demographic controls.*



*Figure 4. Mean level of support across treatments in Finland and Spain.*

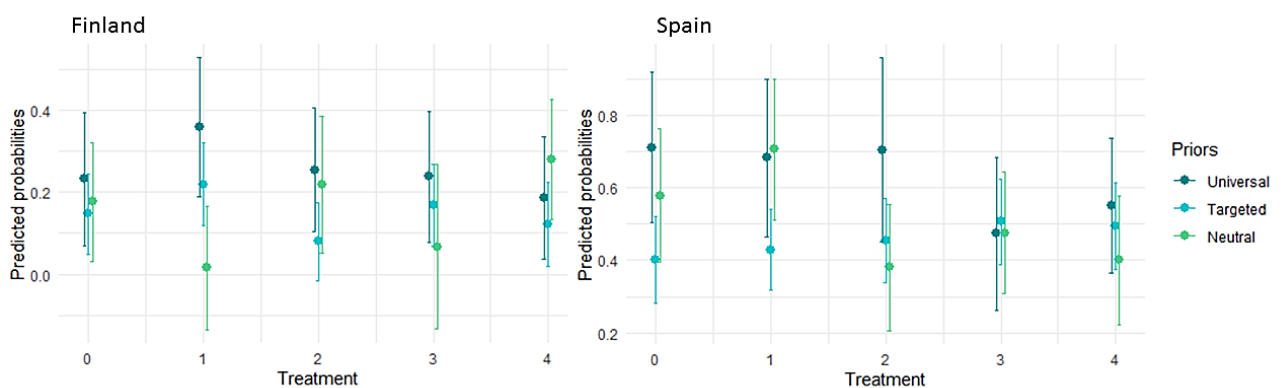
### **Motivated reasoning**

In line with our hypothesis, results show that empirical evidence does not have an effect on attention and support. Contrary to the expectations, belief-congruent information is irrelevant to attention or support, but prior beliefs *per se*, do have an impact on both attention and support. In the following paragraphs I examine this in detail for both dependent variables.

## Attention

Results show supportive evidence of our hypothesis, given that treatments with evidence do not have a statistically significant effect on the probability of paying attention in comparison to treatments without this type of information. However, as Figure 4 below shows, the second part of the hypothesis regarding the role of prior beliefs should be rejected both in Finland and in Spain.

Contrary to expectations, results across contexts suggest that individuals do not self-select more to information when information is in line with their prior beliefs. Nevertheless, an important difference emerges across contexts: results in Spain suggest that priors have a direct effect on attention, while this is not the case in Finland. In Spain, all regression models show that priors are positively correlated with attention to UBI. The higher the prior (i.e., more universal), the higher the probability of self-selecting into more information for UBI. In the case of Finland, we find evidence of this in limited instances (models with priors and controls only) and the effect is much smaller than in Spain –the coefficients in Spain range from 0.14 to 0.19, while in Finland this drops to 0.08.



*Figure 5. Predicted probability plots of the attention rate across prior beliefs. The predicted values are computed from an OLS regression including treatment conditions, prior beliefs and socio-demographic controls. The predicted values of the regression models containing only treatment conditions and priors, and an interaction term between treatment conditions and priors can be found in appendices A8 to A11.*

I next turn to explore the relative impact of other variables on attention to UBI. Results in both Finland and Spain show that being left-wing increases the probability of paying attention to UBI significantly, although the size of the coefficient almost doubles in the case of Finland (0.53-0.58, while in Spain these range from 0.32-0.38). Crucially however, the effect of ideology remains even when getting priors out of the equation, and the effect of both variables becomes higher when the two are included in the models (i.e., see model 5). Additionally, I find that in Finland, being both employed and unemployed –where the reference category is other, i.e., retired or student- has a positive effect on attention, being even larger for those employed.

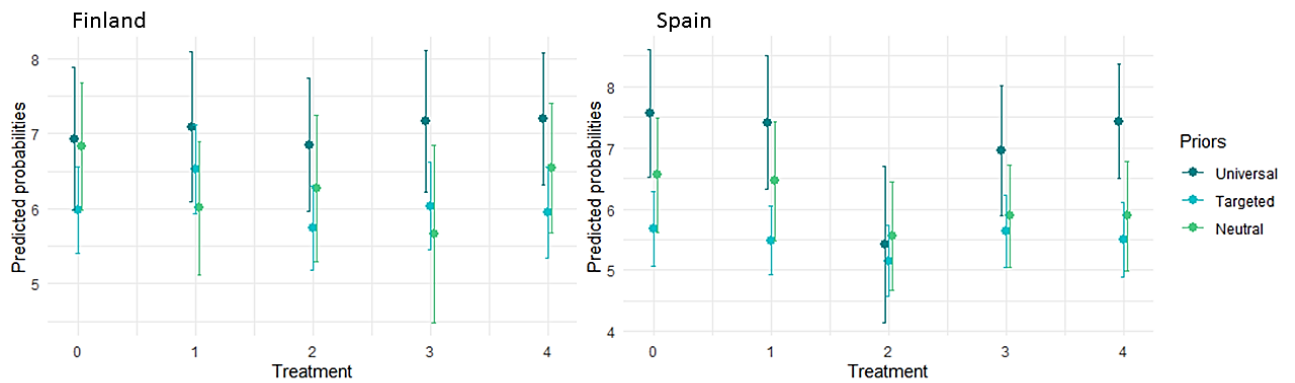
To sum up, I find consistent evidence across contexts which suggests that empirical evidence does not have an impact on attention, and that individuals will not self-select more into information that is congruent with their beliefs. However, I find that in Spain, individuals with universal priors consistently show a larger probability of accessing information about UBI. Before moving on to analysing support, I explore potential reasons why Universalists in Spain consistently show higher attention rates to UBI.

There are two possible stories of why we may be observing these trends. One, it could be the case that perceptions of efficiency drive attention only to the *perceived* effective policy proposals. Hence, we would observe that universalists do not pay more attention to other policy proposals. Another plausible account of this trend is that individuals with universal priors are different in some unobservable way (given that they do not differ in observable characteristics) and have higher interest and openness to learn not only about UBI but about any policy, in which case, we would observe that they also show a higher probability for wanting to know more about alternative proposals. To test which is the case,

I compute different regression models predicting attention to alternative proposals, as show in the appendix section A12. Results show that the probability of self-selecting into more information about alternative proposals is not different across individuals with different priors. This indicates that perceptions of policy efficiency drive attention to UBI. Of course, this is not to say that perceptions have a direct and causal impact over attention to UBI. It may be the case that these individuals have particular unobservable predispositions (not observed in this study), for instance openness to contrary or counter-status quo views, that may have derived into having these priors, and/or be more open and willing to learn more about the policies they perceive as effective. I perform the same tests in Finland, as shown in the appendix A13, but I find no statistically significant differences.

## **Support**

According to our second hypothesis, support should be driven by prior beliefs, and information should not have a significant effect. Results give credit to the fact that priors drive support. Regression results in Finland show no significant treatment effects and no conditional effect of treatment across priors on support. Findings do indicate however that priors have an effect on UBI support, and those with universalist perceptions always have a higher probability of supporting UBI. Results in Spain also suggest that individuals who have universal beliefs are always more likely of supporting UBI, even though I also find that treatment has an effect. All models –except the models with interactions show that treatment 2, which is negative information without evidence- show that this condition lowers support, and has a larger effect than that of priors –i.e., ranging from -0.81 to -0.90, while priors have an effect of 0.26 to 0.41. In the interaction models this treatment effect disappears and the effect of prior beliefs actually increases. However, no interaction between treatment and priors is statistically significant.



*Figure 6. Predicted probability plots of the support dependent variable across prior beliefs. The predicted values are computed from an OLS regression including treatment conditions, prior beliefs and socio-demographic controls. The predicted values of the regression models containing only treatment conditions and priors, and an interaction term between treatment conditions and priors can be found in the appendix A14 and A15.*

I now turn to explore the relative impact of other socio-demographic variables on support for UBI. In line with previous work on the predictors of UBI, I find that being low-income, unemployed and left-wing are predictors of UBI support, albeit with some differences across contexts. A common finding across contexts is that being left-wing is positively and significantly associated to UBI support, and that, even when controlling for these socio-demographic variables the effects of prior beliefs is maintained, but the effect of the former is larger than that of the latter. For instance, in Finland, being left-wing has a coefficient of 0.77 to 0.88, while priors are much lower ranging from 0.16 to 0.17. In Spain, being left-wing ranges from 1.28 to 1.38, while priors range between 0.26 to 0.41. Two differences emerge across context. In Finland, being unemployed predicts support for UBI and the effect of unemployment is very similar to that of being left-wing (it ranges between 0.71 to 0.79). The findings of the effect of unemployment do not replicate in Spain, where actually results convey that low income is associated to higher support for UBI. In the Spanish context however, the effect of income is half of that of

ideology, where the coefficients range from 0.68-0.69, suggesting ideology is a key variable predicting support.

***Under which conditions will individuals prioritise reaching accurate conclusions?***

In the theoretical section, I hypothesised that individuals for whom the issue was important or were directly affected by it (i.e., in high unemployment risk), should be motivated to prioritise reaching accurate conclusions rather than confirming their prior beliefs. Empirically this should translate to higher attention rates when presented with information containing scientific cues, and a change in support levels when presented with this type of evidence (decreasing support if the outcome is negative, and increasing support if the outcome is positive). Results suggest this is far from being the case, albeit with important contextual variation.

Attention models in Finland reveal that individuals under high risk do not pay more attention to UBI when information contains evidence, and neither do they show important differences in support rate when the information is accompanied by evidence. Results in this context suggest the hypothesis on accuracy-based motivated reasoning should be rejected. In a similar vein, results in Spain concerning the dependent variable of attention suggest that this hypothesis should be rejected. In terms of support, however, I find evidence that the impact of information is conditional on how directly an issue affects an individual. Regression model in table 3 and the predicted probability plots of figures 6 and 7 show that, under high risk, individuals with universal priors will significantly reduce their support for a UBI, especially if presented with scientific evidence. This does not provide evidence to argue that individuals who are directly affected by an issue

change their support levels when faced with scientific evidence given that I do not find this trend across individuals with the opposite priors, or universalist respondents treated with ‘positive’ information. Nevertheless, results do suggest that particular individuals (in this case, universalists) process information differently under particular circumstances. The following paragraphs provide reasons of why this may be the case.

First, considering that individuals with universal priors have views that run counter the status quo welfare rationale it is reasonable that these are also the individuals who change support levels more easily than individuals whose views are similar to the status quo (i.e., that believe that targeted schemes are more effective). Second, the fact that universalists mainly change their support levels under negative information (but not positive) with evidence also suggests a risk-aversion change in support levels, which is reasonable given that they are under high risk. A conspicuous finding in this sense, is that individuals with targeted priors under high risk show higher support for UBI than universalists. However, as the predicted probability plots show (especially in figure 6), this is a result of universalists dropping significantly their support rate for UBI under T1. Individuals with targeted priors actually do not show significant differences in their support for UBI in the control group or T1.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention (1)	Support (2)
Treatment 1:Priors:Low risk	-0.07 (0.08)	0.51(0.41)
Treatment 2:Priors:Low risk	0.01(0.09)	0.42(0.47)
Treatment 3:Priors:Low risk	-0.03(0.10)	-0.75(0.55)
Treatment 4:Priors:Low risk	0.04(0.09)	0.84(0.52)
Observations	384	384



R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.11
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.01	0.05
Residual Std. Error (df = 358)	0.45	2.48
F Statistic (df = 25; 358)	0.84	1.84***

Note: \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 2. OLS regression results for Finnish respondents predicting attention and support rate, including a triple interaction term between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and risk. The results of the full model can be found in the appendix A16 and A17.

	Dependent variable:	
	Attention (1)	Support (2)
Treatment1:Priors: Low risk	0.09 (0.11)	1.49** (0.56)
Treatment2:Priors: Low risk	-0.13 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.51)
Treatment3:Priors: Low risk	0.09 (0.12)	0.44 (0.57)
Treatment4:Priors: Low risk	-0.03 (0.09)	0.17 (0.44)
Observations	441	441
R <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.24
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.19
Residual Std. Error (df = 415)	0.48	2.34
F Statistic (df = 25; 415)	2.01***	5.12***

Note: \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 3. OLS regression results for Spanish respondents predicting attention and support rate, including a triple interaction term between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and risk. The results of the full model can be found in the appendix A18 and A19.

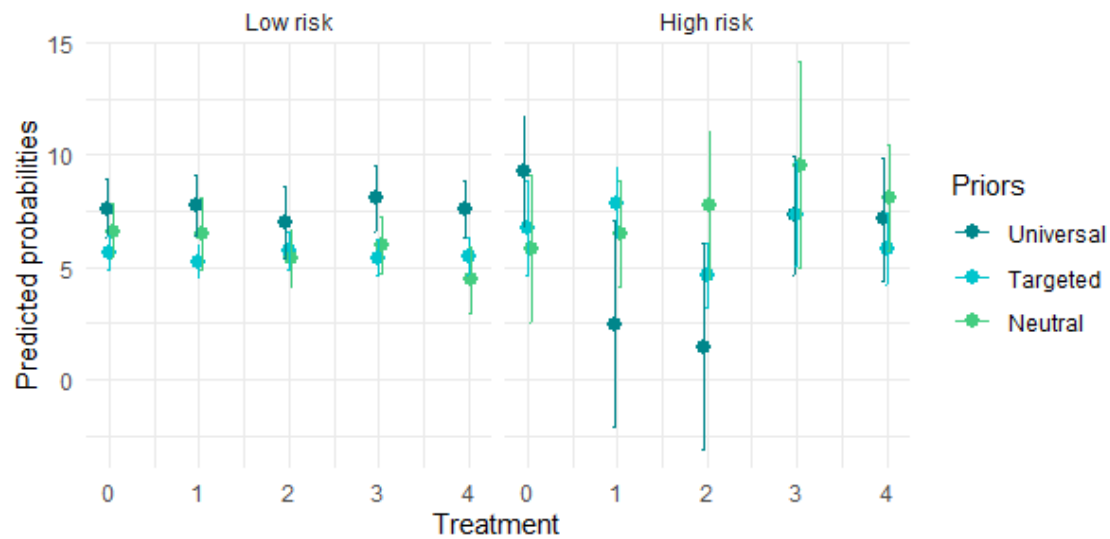


Figure 7. Predicted probability plots for the support rate dependent variable in Spain, across individuals with different issue status. The predicted values are estimated from an OLS regression including a triple interaction terms between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and issue status. Note that prior beliefs are re-coded into three categories, as outlined in the methods section.

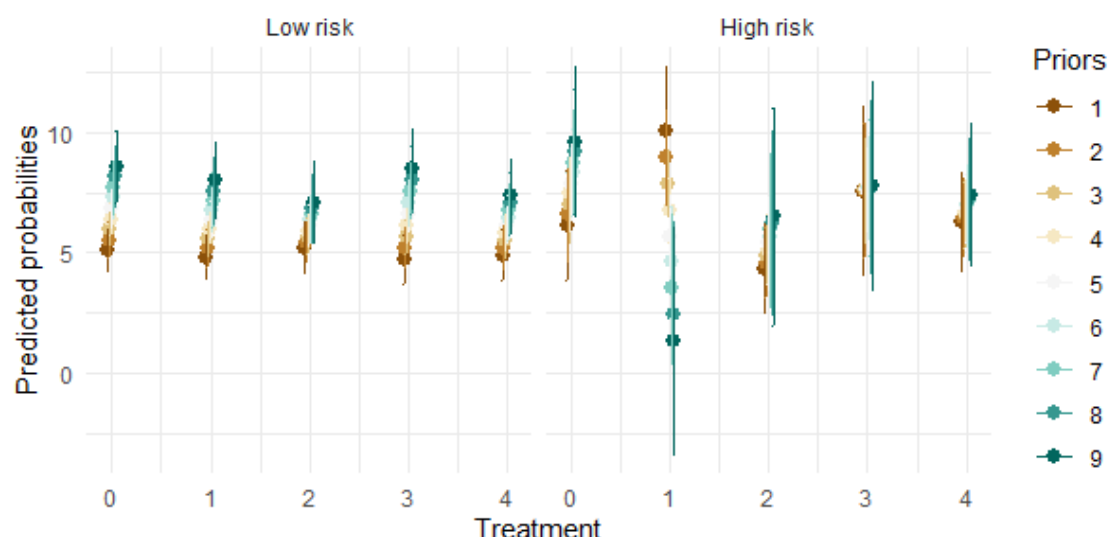


Figure 8. Predicted probability plots for the support rate dependent variable in Spain, across individuals with different issue status. The predicted values are estimated from an OLS regression including a triple interaction terms between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and issue status (regression in table 3).

Next, I turn to examine whether the importance attributed to an issue changes support (issue saliency). There is no consistent evidence that individual for whom an issue is important are more responsive to scientific information. In Finland, in fact, there are no significant differences in information-processing dynamics, while in Spain there are some nuances. As clearly conveyed in the predicted probability plots in figures 8 and 9, there are important differences on the levels of support given to UBI between the control and treatment 1, depending on issue importance. The support gap to UBI increases

between individuals with different priors in T1, while this gap closes in T1 when individuals care strongly about the issue of unemployment. This suggests that issue importance is a key moderator in driving support for UBI. Once more, the fact that these alterations in support levels occur for individuals who have universal priors and under negative information, shows the same trends as in the risk analysis. First that universalists seem more responsive to information, and second, they show risk-averse behaviour.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention (1)	Support (2)
Treatment 1:Priors:MIP	0.09 (0.05)	0.46 (0.32)
Treatment 2:Priors:MIP	0.08 (0.05)	0.10 (0.31)
Treatment 3:Priors:MIP	0.09 (0.05)	0.59 (0.32)
Treatment 4:Priors:MIP	0.08 (0.05)	0.40 (0.30)
Observations	780	780
R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.08
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.05
Residual Std. Error (df = 754)	0.43	2.52
F Statistic (df = 25; 754)	1.74**	2.76***
<i>Note:</i>	* ** *** p<0.001	

*Table 4. OLS regression results for Finnish respondents predicting attention and support rate, including a triple interaction term between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and issue importance. The results of the full model can be found in the appendixA20 and A21.*

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention (1)	Support (2)
Treatment 1:Priors:MIP	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.81** (0.30)
Treatment 2:Priors:MIP	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.31)
Treatment 3:Priors:MIP	0.03 (0.06)	-0.21 (0.28)
Treatment 4:Priors:MIP	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.64* (0.27)
Observations	771	771
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.17
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.14

Residual Std. Error (df = 745)	0.48	2.41
F Statistic (df = 25; 745)	1.78**	6.09***

Note: \* p < 0.05 \*\* p < 0.01 \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table 5. OLS regression results for Spanish respondents predicting attention and support rate, including a triple interaction term between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and issue importance. The results of the full model can be found in the appendix A22 and A23.

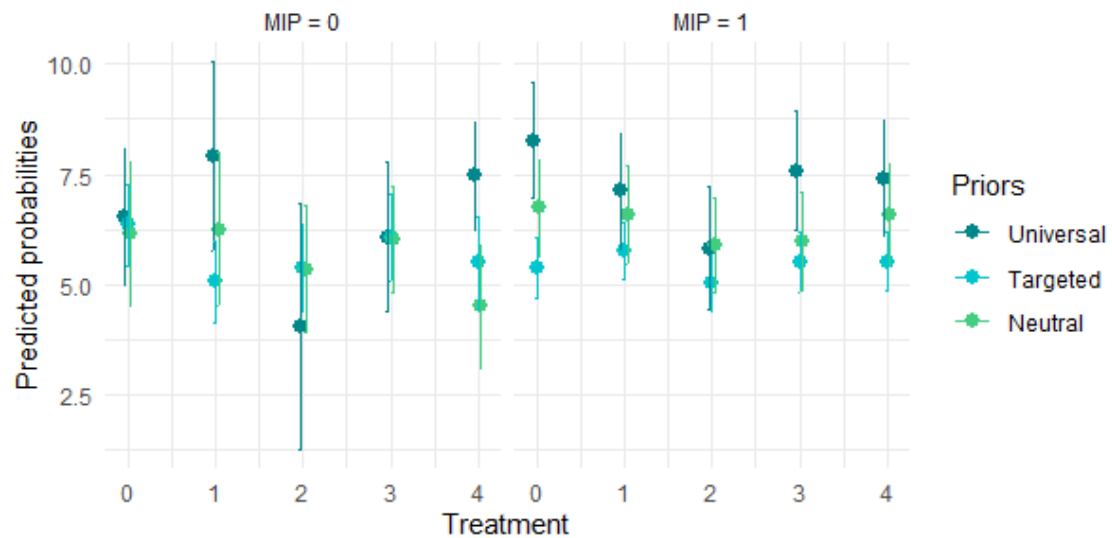
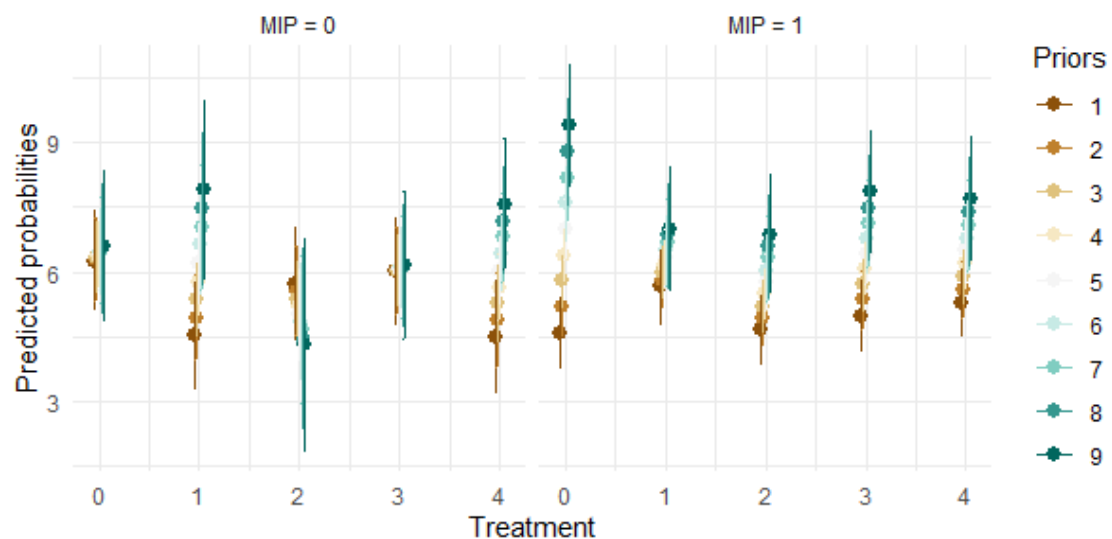


Figure 9. Predicted probability plots for the support rate dependent variable in Spain, across individuals with different issue status. The predicted values are estimated from an OLS regression including a triple interaction terms between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and issue importance. Note that prior beliefs are re-coded into three categories, as outlined in the methods section.



*Figure 10. Predicted probability plots for the support rate dependent variable in Spain, across individuals with different issue status. The predicted values are estimated from an OLS regression including a triple interaction terms between treatment conditions, prior beliefs and issue importance (regression in table 5).*

## **CONCLUSION**

Does scientific evidence shape attention and support dynamics to policy proposals?

Existing research is inconclusive about the impact of scientific information on public opinion. Analysing this topic in the field of welfare state preferences requires drawing from two sets of literatures –motivated reasoning and political economy of preferences– which depict a very different reality of individuals, with biased, belief-driven individuals on the one hand, and rational, calculating, interest-maximising individuals on the other. In this paper, I reconcile these two accounts by arguing that while most of the time individuals will be guided by beliefs, under certain conditions they may strive to form more objective conclusions, so that they can accurately translate their interests into preferences.

The core proposition of this contribution follows existing work on motivated reasoning: that individuals will prioritise information that is in line with their prior beliefs, and empirical evidence should not have an impact in this process. I theorise however, that under particular circumstances, individuals will face higher incentives to achieve accurate conclusions, because the benefits derived from re-adjusting their beliefs and being able to express interest-sensitive preferences will outweigh the cognitive costs of questioning their ideas and experiencing cognitive dissonance.

Results give little credit to these expectations, but they consistently show the importance of prior beliefs. First, I do not find evidence that individuals self-select more to belief congruent information. Nevertheless, prior beliefs do have an impact on self-selection to

information and support to policy proposals. Secondly, I find that circumstances change little about how information is processed. Neither being directly affected by an issue or caring strongly about it alter information processing dynamics. An exception to this however, is being under high risk in Spain. Here, even individuals who believe this policy is efficient will reduce their support levels significantly if they receive negative information accompanied by evidence. Crucially, they will not reduce support when information is positive and supported by evidence.

The findings presented here have a broad range of implications to the study of public opinion, motivated reasoning and politics of welfare. First, results suggest that the role of empirical evidence is limited in securing policy attention and support, in line with previous work (i.e., Druckman and Bolsen, 2011). While the findings here are not novel to the literature on motivated reasoning, it does contrast with political economy accounts of rational and calculating individuals. A key implication derived from this, is that even if individuals perform calculus about which policies benefit them the most, this seems to be a far less objective and unbiased process than previously thought. This finding also connects to the literature on how misperceptions shapes preferences, and shows that even under correct and objective information these misperceptions may not always be revised.

Results also speak to the field of motivated reasoning, and more precisely, the factors that exacerbate or mitigate bias in information processing (Bolsen, Druckman and Cook, 2013; Parker-Stephen, 2013). I find no evidence that the process of information-selection reinforces biases in opinions (Jerit and Barabas, 2012; Leeper and Slothuus, 2014), given that individuals do not self-select more to information which is in line with their ideas, and neither do they discount information which does not fit in with their prior beliefs. These findings run counter studies on motivated scepticism and motivated reasoning (Gaines *et al.*, 2007; Lodge and Taber, 2007; Taber, Cann and Kucsova, 2009). Even if

these findings are derived from a specific case study as is the effect of UBI on employment, these results offer a pathway for future work to explore how interest or other potential factors derived from particular perceptions may moderate how individuals process information.

What can we make of these findings that run counter to the established literature? Information selection is not about how congruent information is with ideas, but rather about ideas in and of themselves: individuals who perceive a policy to be effective or in other words, an idea to be desirable have a larger probability of self-selecting to more information, regardless of the information shown. This suggests that if there is bias in information processing it is rather likely to come from *re-interpretation* of information or its evaluation, rather than selection. Given that results show no significant differences in support across information treatments, it may be the case that individuals are evaluating information differently depending on whether it fits with their priors or not.

These findings also have important implications for the politics of welfare reform and UBI. Currently, many states are relying on pilot projects and experiments to discern the consequences of the potential introduction of a UBI. This study shows that the prospects of scientific evidence leading to support updating are low. Individuals who are already convinced about this policy's effectiveness are more likely to access all types of information about the policy, more so than individuals who do not perceive it as effective. In the long-run these trends may lead to an asymmetry between the supporter and oppose coalition of UBI. If supporters of a UBI are more predisposed to access any information on UBI this may increase the chances of reconsidering their support on the long-run, while scepticism amongst the opposition coalition to UBI could be 'sticky' given the lower likelihood of accessing other types of information and updating their beliefs accordingly.

Normatively speaking, the impermeability of individuals to scientific evidence offers a pessimistic landscape on public opinion's ability to update their preferences accurately and be responsive to objective information. On the contrary, this makes individuals vulnerable to the framing and manipulation of less reliable information. Future research could examine why public opinion is sceptical about science and study under which conditions this lack of responsiveness may be altered.

As discussed, this paper has contributed to two main sets of literature and advanced current knowledge in various fronts. Moreover, it has done so through an internal and externally strong design. Internally, the manipulation of information makes a robust case for the causal effect of information on support. Externally, we build on an existing discussion and data of a relevant and salient policy alternative. Our sample of respondents is also highly representative of the overall population, and a comparative perspective offers variation of how context may influence findings.

Nevertheless, the findings here presented do come with their limitations. First, the use of two specific policy and issues –UBI and unemployment-, while providing a rich and relevant case study, naturally raises the question of whether these findings would travel to other topics, which calls for future research to explore. Moreover, this topic is closely related to the question of when and how to intervene in society, which is an ideological – even moral- question, so how far do values play a role here? In essence, the potential of generalising results across topics may be specific to the topic under study. Second, one must acknowledge that opinions take time to change, and these findings speak to the immediate effects of small informational inputs, which although highly relevant, may not be conclusive about broader informational dynamics. Thirdly, readers are advised to take these findings with caution given that these are sensitive to both how perceptions are



measured, but also to the fact that these are measured rather than manipulated. Although this is a common praxis in much research, it entails the problem of unobserved heterogeneity. That is, individuals with different perceptions may vary in other unobservable characteristics which in turn, may drive both perceptions and information-processing dynamics or only the latter. Relatedly, one cannot discard the issue of endogeneity or reverse causality between support for UBI and believing that universal cash transfers are more effective. It may be the case that support for a UBI is driving the perception that this is best for redistributive purposes. Rather than a weakness, these findings call for future research to explore the origins of these perceptions, and to explore whether these findings replicate when these perceptions are manipulated rather than measured.

In this sense, and despite the limitations, this contribution has also opened up several pathways for future research to explore. Showing that prior beliefs have such an important effect even in a case where the policy has not yet been implemented, naturally gives rise to the question of how prior beliefs are formed and how individuals with competing beliefs differ. Future work should look at this in detail. Other prospective research areas to examine are how issue and policy characteristics interact to produce different information-processing patterns. A necessary pathway to explore is that concerning the impact of scientific evidence, and why it is that public opinion is not as responsive to this type of information.

Overall, while the limitations and need for future research must be acknowledged, this contribution has shed an important light on preference and information processing dynamics. In doing so, it has bridged two literature scholarships: the political economy work on preferences and information-processing theories. This contribution shows the

richness of carrying out inter-disciplinary research and connecting different sets of literatures.

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## APPENDIX

1. **A1. Respondent quotas for Finnish respondents. The table includes the actual number of respondents obtained for each category and the original target number**

	Categories	Number	Target number	Target percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male (1)	498	489	49%
	Female (2)	511	511	51%
<b>Age</b>	18–29(2)	192	192	19%
	30–39(3)	157	157	16%
	40–49(4)	181	181	18%
	50–59(5)	193	192	19%
	60–69(6)	146	146	15%
	70–84(7) (70+)	131	131	13%
<b>Region</b>	Itä – Östra län	111	110	11%
	Etelä – Södra län	417	416	42%
	Länsi – Västra län	354	354	35%
	Oulun – Lapin – Uleåborgs län	118	120	12%

2. **A2. Respondent quotas for Spanish respondents. The table includes the actual number of respondents obtained for each category and the original target number**

	Categories	Number of respondents	Target number	Target percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male (1)	499	500	50%
	Female (2)	501	500	50%
<b>Age</b>	18–24(2)	199	119	12%
	25–34(3)	153	152	15%
	35–44(4)	220	223	22%
	45–54(5)	205	204	20%
	55–64(6)	172	172	17%
	65–74(7)	131	130	13%
<b>Region</b>	Andalucía	182	182	18%
	Aragón	28	28	3%
	Principado de Asturias	22	22	2%
	Illes Balears	24	24	2%
	Canarias	45	45	5%
	Cantabria	13	13	1%
	Castilla y León	52	52	5%
	Castilla-La Mancha	44	44	4%

Catalunya	163	163	16%
Comunitat Valenciana	106	106	11%
Extremadura	23	23	2%
Galicia	58	58	6%
Madrid	140	140	14%
Murcia	32	32	3%
Navarra	14	14	1%
País Vasco	47	47	5%
La Rioja	7	7	1%

### 3. A3. Discussion of the case study selection: UBI and employment.

I examine the impact of information and prior beliefs on support for new policy proposals using universal basic income and its relation to the issue of unemployment. In this section I describe the case study and outline its relevance with regards to the study of information-processing. Universal basic income is defined as a cash transfer made to every individual, periodically and unconditionally, regardless of socioeconomic or working status. Up to date, it has not been fully implemented in any context, but the development of the debate has been such that UBI has moved from being a utopian idea defended on the grounds of freedom (Van Parijs, 1995, 2004), to becoming a seriously considered policy alternative to reform the welfare state, with pilot projects running worldwide to study the potential effects of a universal basic income (Standing, 2017; Van Parijs, 2017).

As a welfare state reform instrument, UBI is defended as a welfare simplification tool, where many existing programs and transfers may be re-arranged into this cash benefit. Nevertheless, depending upon the nature of its implementation mechanisms UBI can serve to fulfil two main overarching goals: welfare enhancement or retrenchment (Caputo, 2008), and hence why this idea gathers supporters all over the ideological spectrum. Those who defend it on the grounds of welfare retrenchment see this benefit

as a means of simplifying all of the existing welfare services, in-kind goods and benefits, into one unique cash transfer. On the other hand, those who see UBI as a welfare enhancement tool defend it as a partially-complementary<sup>9</sup> transfer to the existing welfare provision. Here, its advocates defend it not only as the introduction of another cash transfer, but emphasise the efficiencies of its design to overcome a series of problems related to existing schemes (i.e., stigmatisation of welfare recipients: Calnitsky, 2016; Eyal, 2010; or non take-up problem: Van Oorschot, 1991). Crucially, most of the mainstream debate on basic income revolves around the issue of (un)employment.

First, it has been defended as a permanent tool to tackle the issue of structural unemployment and lack of labour market demand derived from increasing digitalisation and the automation of work, both in routine and non-routine employment (Frey & Osborne, 2017; Colombino, 2015; Cottey, 2014; Steinvorth, 2014). Traditional unemployment subsidies are said not to be sufficient to provide to the increasing mass of workers that will be made redundant as a consequence of this development. UBI is also seen as an effective means to sustain the population in the event of needing re-training to re-adapt to the new labour market demands. Third, by design UBI is equipped to solve unemployment traps, which define the labour market participation disincentives of individuals who are receiving unemployment subsidies (Gilroy, Heimann and Schopf, 2013). These disincentives emerge from the fact that taking up a job is per se more costly both in material and time terms, and oftentimes the employment remuneration is not enough to compensate the cost of taking a job. Only in material terms, taking up a

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<sup>9</sup> Here I use the term partially-complementary because there are different proposals to introduce a UBI from a welfare enhancing perspective, and to what extent it would replace existing cash transfer schemes, which also vary across contexts, as different areas have different cash transfer programs. Generally speaking a UBI would likely replace most low-income support and minimum incomes, but it is likely that it would only mean a partial replacement of pensions and would not mean a replacement of benefits such as disability (N.B.: always from a welfare enhancing perspective).



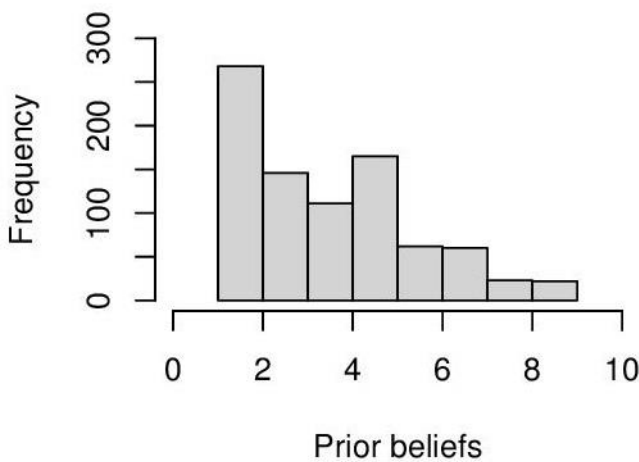
job accrues living costs due to transport, food, care-services for children or dependent family members, amongst others. Because a UBI would not be lost in taking up a job, the incentives to do so under this scenario increase because this means extra income, personal and professional fulfilment, etc. Finally, a potential advantage of a UBI versus unemployment subsidies, is that a UBI does not carry a negative social stigma associated to subsidies.

Of course, this is only one side of the argument, and detractors of UBI as a solution to unemployment have also put forward a collection of reasons of why such policy is ineffective to tackle the issue of unemployment. These include the resource leakage of giving to those who do not require this benefit and disincentives to work (individual motivation to work is not enough). However, the purpose of this section was not to give an overview of the basic income debate in terms of employment, but rather to show in which ways these two issues are connected in mainstream debates about welfare reform. Studying support for UBI and unemployment is particularly appropriate for this matter and timely for various reasons. UBI is a very salient policy proposal being discussed globally. An important part of the discussion relates to its empirical effects for which pilot projects have been designed in various contexts. Both in Finland and Spain, there have been pilot projects with the objective of trying out aspects of a universal basic income and its impact on labour market activation. Crucially, it is being discussed in relation to its capacity to solve unemployment issues, without reducing the incentives to find employment. Employment is not only particularly relevant to study in relation to UBI due to this matter, but it is equally suitable as it is a valence issue, meaning that there is consensus on its desirability and outcomes (Stokes, 1985, 1992). There is no moral or ideological divergence of whether I need more or less of it, so the debate is about the means of achieving this, rather than the desired outcome. This is particularly

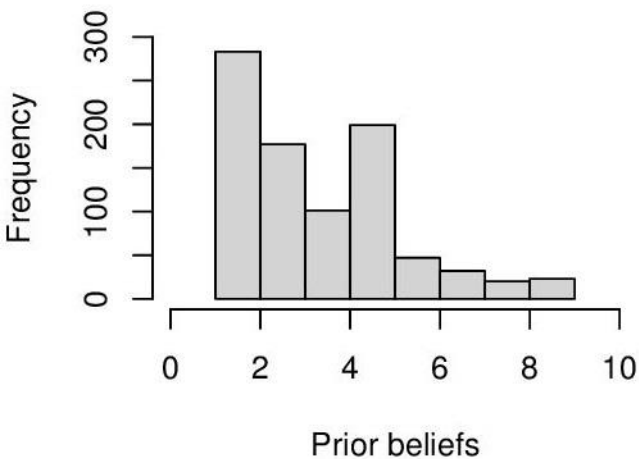
convenient because I can keep constant the desirability policy outcomes.

Unemployment is also an important matter in and of its own to study public opinion, almost always being a key issue on the table in modern states. As country case studies I use Finland and Spain, which are particularly relevant scenarios as both count with pilot projects which have sought to analyse the potential impact of a UBI on employment.

**4. A4. Distribution of prior beliefs (Finland)**



**5. A5. Distribution of prior beliefs (Spain)**



**6. A6. Treatment distribution across socio-demographics characteristics (Finland)**

Variable		Control	T1	T2	T3	T4
Gender	Female	102	77	106	80	79
		0,12	0,09	0,12	0,09	0,09
	Male	74	91	70	83	95
		0,09	0,11	0,08	0,10	0,11
Risk	High	16	21	19	8	14
		0,02	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,02
	Low	67	64	60	63	69
		0,08	0,07	0,07	0,07	0,08
Priors	Neutral	38	36	31	20	40
		0,04	0,04	0,04	0,02	0,05
	Targeted	107	103	109	108	98
		0,12	0,12	0,13	0,13	0,11
	Universal	31	29	36	35	36
		0,04	0,03	0,04	0,04	0,04
Mip	0	49	57	58	61	60
		0,06	0,07	0,07	0,07	0,07
	1	120	102	112	92	106
		0,14	0,12	0,13	0,11	0,12
Income	Low (0-3000€)	97	95	99	87	101
		0,11	0,11	0,12	0,10	0,12
	Medium (3.001€ - 6.000€)	66	54	63	52	54
		0,08	0,06	0,07	0,06	0,06
	High (more than 6000€)	7	14	5	10	13
		0,01	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02
Employment status	Employed	87	89	81	73	86
		0,10	0,10	0,09	0,09	0,10
	Unemployed	36	32	34	30	33
		0,04	0,04	0,04	0,04	0,04
	Other (students and pensionist)	52	45	56	57	52
		0,06	0,05	0,07	0,07	0,06
Education	University degree	63	67	56	66	57
		0,07	0,08	0,07	0,08	0,07
	No university degree	113	101	120	97	117
		0,13	0,12	0,14	0,11	0,14

## 7. A7. Treatment distribution across socio-demographics characteristics (Spain)

Variable		Control	T1	T2	T3	T4
Gender	Female	86	77	90	97	94
		0,10	0,09	0,10	0,11	0,11

	Male	85	102	86	84	81
		0,10	0,12	0,10	0,10	0,09
Risk	High	13	16	15	10	17
		0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,02
	Low	95	90	83	83	72
		0,11	0,10	0,09	0,09	0,08
Priors	Neutral	39	30	40	48	42
		0,04	0,03	0,05	0,05	0,05
	Targeted	105	128	119	109	100
		0,12	0,15	0,13	0,12	0,11
	Universal	27	21	17	24	33
		0,03	0,02	0,02	0,03	0,04
Mip	0	57	50	48	58	59
		0,06	0,06	0,05	0,07	0,07
	1	112	120	122	116	111
		0,13	0,14	0,14	0,13	0,13
Income	Low (0-3000€)	36	27	36	35	45
		0,04	0,03	0,04	0,04	0,05
	Medium (3.001€ - 6.000€)	83	103	85	102	88
		0,09	0,12	0,10	0,12	0,10
	High (more than 6000€)	33	35	37	25	28
		0,04	0,04	0,04	0,03	0,03
Employment status	Employed	113	115	104	100	97
		0,13	0,13	0,12	0,11	0,11
	Unemployed	18	17	29	30	25
		0,02	0,02	0,03	0,03	0,03
	Other (students and pensionist)	39	46	43	50	50
		0,04	0,05	0,05	0,06	0,06
Education	University degree	95	97	100	88	81
		0,11	0,11	0,11	0,10	0,09
	No university degree	76	82	76	93	94
		0,09	0,09	0,09	0,11	0,11

## 8. A8. GLM regressions predicting attention rate in Finland

<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
Attention rate						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	-1.10** (0.17)	-1.43** (0.23)	-1.92** (0.46)	-1.56** (0.42)	-1.16** (0.39)	-1.72** (0.56)
Treatment 1	0.15 (0.24)	0.17 (0.25)	0.14 (0.25)	0.13 (0.25)	0.01 (0.52)	0.13 (0.54)

Treatment 2	-0.22 (0.25)	-0.22 (0.25)	-0.24 (0.27)	-0.24 (0.27)	-0.67 (0.56)	-0.81 (0.58)
Treatment 3	-0.02 (0.25)	-0.03 (0.25)	0.08 (0.26)	0.09 (0.26)	-0.34 (0.55)	-0.05 (0.57)
Treatment 4	-0.02 (0.25)	-0.02 (0.25)	-0.06 (0.26)	-0.06 (0.26)	-0.46 (0.55)	-0.47 (0.57)
Priors		0.08* (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)		0.02 (0.09)	0.03 (0.09)
Income: Low			-0.13 (0.34)	-0.20 (0.34)		-0.12 (0.35)
Income: Medium			-0.23 (0.35)	-0.29 (0.35)		-0.23 (0.35)
Employed			0.56** (0.20)	0.59** (0.20)		0.56** (0.20)
Unemployed			0.45 (0.25)	0.48 (0.25)		0.44 (0.25)
Ideology: Left			0.57** (0.20)	0.53** (0.20)		0.58** (0.20)
Ideology: Right			0.23 (0.21)	0.21 (0.21)		0.24 (0.21)
Gender: Men			0.18 (0.17)	0.17 (0.17)		0.17 (0.17)
Treatment 1:Priors					0.04 (0.12)	0.001 (0.12)
Treatment 2:Priors					0.11 (0.12)	0.14 (0.13)
Treatment 3:Priors					0.08 (0.12)	0.03 (0.13)
Treatment 4:Priors					0.11 (0.12)	0.10 (0.12)
Observations	857	857	803	803	857	803
Log Likelihood	-477.18	-474.76	-440.71	-442.68	-474.13	-439.68
Akaike Inf. Crit.	964.36	961.52	907.41	909.36	968.26	913.37
<i>Note:</i>			*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001			

## 9. A9. OLS regressions predicting attention rate in Finland

<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Attention rate					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	0.25** (0.03)	0.19** (0.04)	0.11 (0.09)	0.18* (0.08)	0.24** (0.07)	0.15 (0.10)
Treatment 1	0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.001 (0.10)	0.03 (0.10)
Treatment 2	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.12 (0.10)
Treatment 3	-0.005 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.06 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.11)
Treatment 4	-0.003 (0.05)	-0.004 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.10)
Priors		0.02* (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)		0.003 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Income: Low			-0.03 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.07)		-0.03 (0.07)
Income: Medium			-0.05 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)		-0.05 (0.07)
Employed			0.10** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)		0.10** (0.04)
Unemployed			0.08 (0.05)	0.08 (0.04)		0.08 (0.05)
Ideology: Left			0.11** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)		0.11** (0.04)
Ideology: Right			0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)		0.04 (0.04)
Gender: Men			0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)		0.03 (0.03)
Treatment 1:Priors					0.01 (0.02)	-0.0002 (0.02)
Treatment 2:Priors					0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Treatment 3:Priors					0.01	0.01

					(0.02)	(0.02)
Treatment					0.02	0.02
4:Priors					(0.02)	(0.02)
Observations	857	857	803	803	857	803
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.03
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.002	0.002	0.02	0.01	-0.001	0.01
Residual Std. Error	0.43 (df = 852)	0.43 (df = 851)	0.43 (df = 790)	0.43 (df = 791)	0.43 (df = 847)	0.43 (df = 786)
F Statistic	0.56 (df = 4; 852)	1.43 (df = 5; 851)	2.03** (df = 12; 790)	1.84** (df = 11; 791)	0.91 (df = 9; 847)	1.62* (df = 16; 786)
<i>Note:</i>					* p<0.05** p<0.01*** p<0.001	

#### 10. A10. GLM regressions predicting attention rate in Spain

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Attention rate					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	-0.51** (0.16)	-1.04** (0.21)	-1.20** (0.33)	-0.68* (0.30)	-1.19** (0.34)	-1.40** (0.44)
Treatment 1	0.09 (0.22)	0.12 (0.22)	0.09 (0.23)	0.08 (0.23)	-0.44 (0.50)	-0.40 (0.52)
Treatment 2	-0.05 (0.22)	-0.01 (0.22)	-0.10 (0.24)	-0.13 (0.24)	0.18 (0.47)	0.15 (0.49)
Treatment 3	0.08 (0.22)	0.07 (0.22)	-0.01 (0.24)	0.01 (0.24)	0.68 (0.47)	0.65 (0.49)
Treatment 4	0.01 (0.22)	-0.004 (0.22)	-0.06 (0.24)	-0.02 (0.24)	0.41 (0.47)	0.44 (0.49)
Priors		0.14** (0.04)	0.14** (0.04)		0.18* (0.08)	0.19* (0.08)
Income: Low			0.07 (0.24)	0.06 (0.24)		0.07 (0.24)
Income: Medium			0.04 (0.20)	0.03 (0.19)		0.05 (0.20)
Employed			0.15 (0.17)	0.15 (0.17)		0.13 (0.18)
Unemployed			0.16 (0.26)	0.14 (0.25)		0.10 (0.26)

Ideology: Left	0.37*	0.32*	0.38*			
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)			
Ideology: Right	-0.31	-0.30	-0.34			
	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.24)			
Gender: Men	0.02	0.02	-0.01			
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)			
Treatment 1:Priors		0.16	0.14			
		(0.12)	(0.12)			
Treatment 2:Priors		-0.05	-0.07			
		(0.11)	(0.12)			
Treatment 3:Priors		-0.16	-0.18			
		(0.11)	(0.11)			
Treatment 4:Priors		-0.11	-0.13			
		(0.11)	(0.11)			
Observations	882	882	792	792	882	792
Log Likelihood	-585.84	-577.89	-517.97	-525.05	-573.67	-514.01
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,181.68	1,167.77	1,061.95	1,074.10	1,167.35	1,062.02
<i>Note:</i>				*p<0.05	**p<0.01	***p<0.001

### 11. A11. OLS regressions predicting attention rate in Spain

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Attention rate					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	0.37** (0.04)	0.25** (0.05)	0.21** (0.08)	0.34** (0.07)	0.22** (0.07)	0.17 (0.10)
Treatment 1	0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.11)
Treatment 2	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.002 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)
Treatment 3	0.02 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.003 (0.06)	0.002 (0.06)	0.16 (0.11)	0.15 (0.11)
Treatment 4	0.003 (0.05)	-0.001 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.09 (0.11)	0.10 (0.11)
Priors		0.03** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)		0.04* (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)
Income: Low			0.02	0.01		0.02



			(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)
Income:			0.01	0.01		0.01
Medium			(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.05)
Employed			0.03	0.03		0.03
			(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)
Unemployed			0.04	0.03		0.02
			(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)
Ideology: Left			0.09*	0.08*		0.09*
			(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)
Ideology: Right			-0.07	-0.07		-0.07
			(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.05)
Gender: Men			0.005	0.01		-0.002
			(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)
Treatment 1:Priors					0.03	0.03
					(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment 2:Priors					-0.01	-0.02
					(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment 3:Priors					-0.04	-0.04
					(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment 4:Priors					-0.02	-0.03
					(0.02)	(0.03)
Observations	882	882	792	792	882	792
R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.04
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.004	0.01	0.02	-0.0001	0.02	0.02
Residual Std. Error	0.49 (df = 877)	0.48 (df = 876)	0.48 (df = 779)	0.49 (df = 780)	0.48 (df = 872)	0.48 (df = 775)
F Statistic	0.14 (df = 4; 877)	3.34*** (df = 5; 876)	2.11** (df = 12; 779)	0.99 (df = 11; 780)	2.80*** (df = 9; 872)	2.08*** (df = 16; 775)

Note:

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

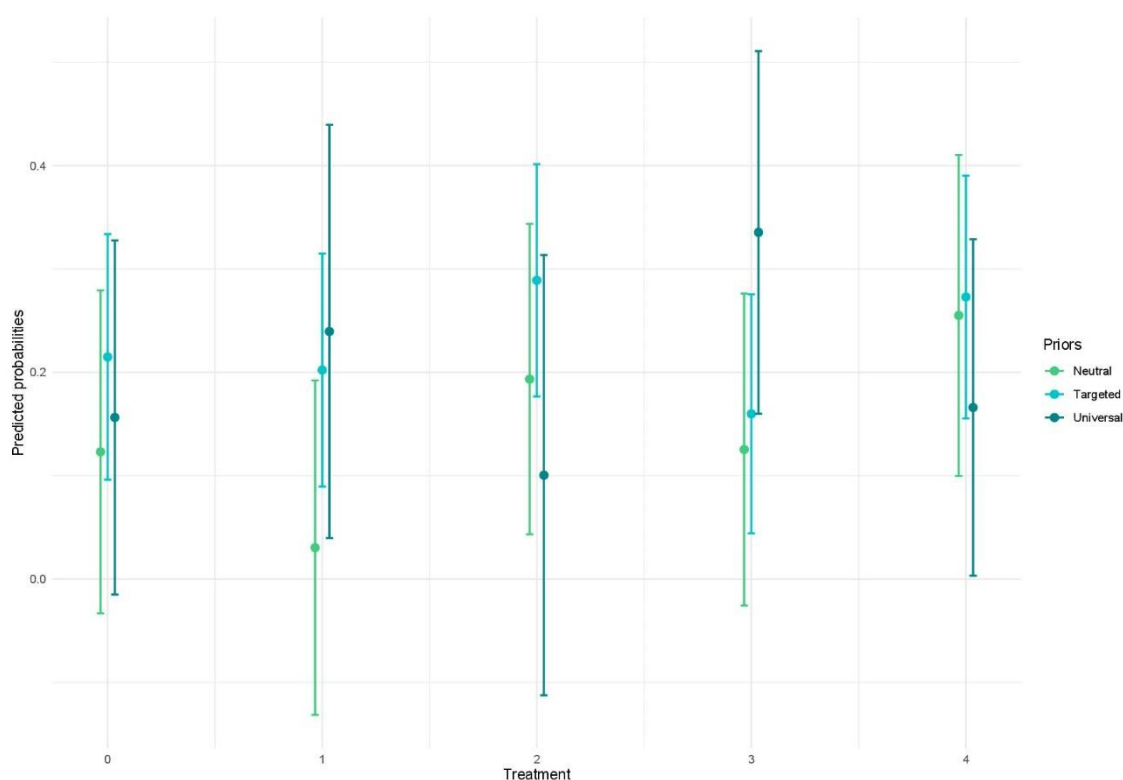
## 12. A12. OLS regressions predicting attention to alternative proposals (Spain)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention towards alternative proposals	
	(1)	(2)
Constant	-1.15*** (0.42)	-1.23** (0.56)
Treatment 1	-0.08 (0.32)	0.04 (0.65)
Treatment 2	0.41 (0.30)	0.77 (0.60)
Treatment 3	-0.05 (0.32)	-0.84 (0.66)
Treatment 4	0.44 (0.30)	0.90 (0.59)
Priors	-0.10* (0.05)	-0.08 (0.11)
Income: Low	-0.09 (0.31)	-0.07 (0.31)
Income: Medium	0.09 (0.25)	0.11 (0.25)
Employed	-0.26 (0.22)	-0.25 (0.22)
Unemployed	-0.22 (0.32)	-0.23 (0.33)
Ideology: Left	-0.14 (0.20)	-0.15 (0.21)
Ideology: Right	-0.38 (0.30)	-0.39 (0.30)
Gender: Men	0.11 (0.19)	0.10 (0.20)
Treatment 1:Priors		-0.03 (0.17)
Treatment 2: Priors		-0.11 (0.16)
Treatment 3: Priors		0.21 (0.15)
Treatment 4: Priors		-0.13 (0.15)
Observations	792	792
Log Likelihood	-360.84	-357.66
Akaike Inf. Crit.	747.68	749.33

*Note:*

\* \*\* \*\*\*  
p p p<0.001

### 13. A13. Predicted probability plots of attention to alternative proposals



Note: 1. The model includes socio-demographic controls and interaction terms between treatment conditions and prior beliefs. Prior beliefs in this model as recoded as three categories as outlined in the methods section.

### 14. A14. OLS regression predicting support rate in Finland

Dependent variable:							
	Support rate						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Constant	6.14** (0.20)	5.51** (0.25)	4.44** (0.50)	4.44** (0.50)	5.24** (0.47)	5.60** (0.43)	4.36** (0.61)
Treatment 1	0.11 (0.28)	0.14 (0.28)	0.15 (0.28)	0.15 (0.28)	0.11 (0.28)	0.53 (0.59)	0.89 (0.59)
Treatment 2	-0.19 (0.28)	-0.17 (0.27)	-0.22 (0.28)	-0.22 (0.28)	-0.24 (0.28)	-0.35 (0.59)	-0.11 (0.58)
Treatment 3	-0.14 (0.28)	-0.15 (0.28)	-0.16 (0.29)	-0.16 (0.29)	-0.15 (0.29)	-0.49 (0.60)	-0.46 (0.61)
Treatment 4	0.04 (0.28)	0.03 (0.28)	-0.01 (0.28)	-0.01 (0.28)	0.0002 (0.28)	-0.28 (0.60)	-0.39 (0.59)
Priors		0.16**	0.17**	0.17**		0.14	0.18

		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.10)	(0.10)
Income: Low		0.74	0.74	0.57		0.77	
		(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.39)		(0.39)	
Income: Medium		0.32	0.32	0.20		0.35	
		(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)		(0.40)	
Employed		0.40	0.40	0.48*		0.41	
		(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)		(0.21)	
Unemployed		0.71**	0.71**	0.79**		0.72**	
		(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)		(0.26)	
Ideology: Left		0.85**	0.85**	0.77**		0.88**	
		(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)		(0.22)	
Ideology: Right		-0.10	-0.10	-0.14		-0.08	
		(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)		(0.22)	
Gender: Men		-0.06	-0.06	-0.07		-0.08	
		(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)		(0.18)	
Treatment 1:Priors					-0.10	-0.20	
					(0.14)	(0.14)	
Treatment 2:Priors					0.05	-0.03	
					(0.14)	(0.13)	
Treatment 3:Priors					0.09	0.08	
					(0.14)	(0.14)	
Treatment 4:Priors					0.08	0.10	
					(0.14)	(0.13)	
Observations	857	857	803	803	803	857	803
R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.02	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.02	0.07
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.003	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.05
Residual Std. Error	2.59 (df = 852)	2.57 (df = 851)	2.51 (df = 790)	2.51 (df = 790)	2.54 (df = 791)	2.58 (df = 847)	2.51 (df = 786)
F Statistic	0.41 (df = 4; 852)	3.21*** (df = 5; 851)	4.70*** (df = 12; 790)	4.70*** (df = 12; 790)	3.62*** (df = 11; 791)	2.08** (df = 9; 847)	3.91*** (df = 16; 786)
<i>Note:</i>					*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001		

### 15. A15. OLS regression predicting support rate in Spain

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Support rate						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Constant	5.45** (0.19)	4.50** (0.25)	3.52** (0.38)	3.52** (0.38)	4.57** (0.35)	4.17** (0.39)	2.99** (0.50)
Treatment 1	-0.29 (0.27)	-0.24 (0.27)	-0.24 (0.27)	-0.24 (0.27)	-0.26 (0.28)	0.12 (0.56)	0.37 (0.57)
Treatment 2	-0.88** (0.27)	-0.81** (0.27)	-0.85** (0.28)	-0.85** (0.28)	-0.90** (0.28)	-0.23 (0.55)	0.02 (0.56)
Treatment 3	-0.12 (0.27)	-0.13 (0.27)	-0.33 (0.28)	-0.33 (0.28)	-0.29 (0.28)	0.47 (0.56)	0.33 (0.56)
Treatment 4	0.01 (0.27)	-0.02 (0.27)	-0.21 (0.28)	-0.21 (0.28)	-0.15 (0.28)	0.16 (0.55)	0.16 (0.56)
Priors		0.26** (0.04)	0.28** (0.04)	0.28** (0.04)		0.35** (0.09)	0.41** (0.09)
Income: Low			0.69* (0.28)	0.69* (0.28)	0.68* (0.28)		0.69* (0.28)
Income: Medium			0.38 (0.23)	0.38 (0.23)	0.37 (0.23)		0.41 (0.23)
Employed			-0.04 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.21)		-0.03 (0.20)
Unemployed			0.51 (0.30)	0.51 (0.30)	0.47 (0.30)		0.52 (0.30)
Ideology: Left			1.36** (0.19)	1.36** (0.19)	1.28** (0.19)		1.38** (0.19)
Ideology: Right			-0.32 (0.26)	-0.32 (0.26)	-0.31 (0.27)		-0.30 (0.26)
Gender: Men			0.04 (0.18)	0.04 (0.18)	0.04 (0.18)		0.05 (0.18)
Treatment 1:Priors						-0.10 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.14)
Treatment 2:Priors						-0.16 (0.13)	-0.24 (0.14)

Treatment 3:Priors						-0.16 (0.13)	-0.18 (0.13)
Treatment 4:Priors						-0.05 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.13)
Observations	882	882	792	792	792	882	792
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.06	0.14	0.14	0.10	0.06	0.15
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.05	0.13	0.13	0.08	0.05	0.13
Residual Std. Error	2.54 (df = 877)	2.49 (df = 876)	2.42 (df = 779)	2.42 (df = 779)	2.48 (df = 780)	2.50 (df = 872)	2.42 (df = 775)
F Statistic	3.68*** (df = 4; 877)	10.39*** (df = 5; 876)	10.84*** (df = 12; 779)	10.84*** (df = 12; 779)	7.59*** (df = 11; 780)	6.02*** (df = 9; 872)	8.36*** (df = 16; 775)
<i>Note:</i>					*p<0.05 **p0.01 ***p<0.001		

**16. A16. OLS regressions predicting attention and support across respondent subsets, high and low unemployment risk (Finland)**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Attention		Support rate	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	0.31 (0.48)	0.28 (0.17)	5.12* (2.24)	5.34** (0.96)
Treatment 1	0.003 (0.34)	0.04 (0.19)	3.24* (1.58)	0.08 (1.04)
Treatment 2	-0.03 (0.38)	-0.22 (0.18)	0.53 (1.77)	-1.11 (1.01)
Treatment 3	0.07 (0.55)	0.07 (0.19)	-3.27 (2.58)	1.56 (1.07)
Treatment 4	0.26 (0.39)	-0.21 (0.18)	3.54 (1.83)	-1.10 (1.03)
Priors	0.001 (0.06)	0.02 (0.03)	0.34 (0.27)	0.18 (0.16)
Income: Low	-0.17	-0.004	-0.04	0.36

	(0.39)	(0.10)	(1.82)	(0.56)
Income: Medium	-0.13	-0.09	-0.24	0.24
	(0.39)	(0.10)	(1.80)	(0.54)
Ideology: Left	0.06	0.07	0.31	1.14**
	(0.14)	(0.07)	(0.64)	(0.39)
Ideology: Right	0.18	0.01	1.28	0.03
	(0.16)	(0.06)	(0.76)	(0.35)
Education: University degree	-0.01	0.06	-0.29	-0.64*
	(0.14)	(0.05)	(0.66)	(0.31)
Gender: Men	0.06	0.05	-0.76	-0.12
	(0.13)	(0.05)	(0.58)	(0.30)
Treatment 1:Priors	0.03	-0.04	-0.57	-0.08
	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.34)	(0.23)
Treatment 2:Priors	-0.01	0.02	-0.19	0.16
	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.41)	(0.22)
Treatment 3:Priors	0.03	-0.03	0.52	-0.40
	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.47)	(0.23)
Treatment 4:Priors	-0.04	0.01	-0.61	0.18
	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.45)	(0.21)
Observations	76	308	76	308
R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.05	0.25	0.09
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.12	0.002	0.06	0.05
Residual Std. Error	0.50 (df = 60)	0.45 (df = 292)	2.30 (df = 60)	2.51 (df = 292)
F Statistic	0.45 (df = 15; 60)	1.04 (df = 15; 292)	1.31 (df = 15; 60)	2.03** (df = 15; 292)
<i>Note:</i>			* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001	

**17. A17. OLS regressions predicting attention and support including a triple interaction term between treatment, priors and issue status (Finland)**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention	Support rate
	(1)	(2)
Constant	0.21 (0.25)	4.56** (1.34)
Treatment 1	0.02	3.41*

	(0.29)	(1.59)
Treatment 2	-0.12	0.50
	(0.33)	(1.81)
Treatment 3	0.25	-2.21
	(0.49)	(2.68)
Treatment 4	0.24	3.43
	(0.35)	(1.93)
Priors	0.002	0.37
	(0.05)	(0.27)
Low risk	0.07	0.82
	(0.26)	(1.41)
Income: Low	-0.02	0.35
	(0.10)	(0.52)
Income: Medium	-0.09	0.20
	(0.09)	(0.51)
Ideology: Left	0.06	0.91**
	(0.06)	(0.33)
Ideology: Right	0.04	0.21
	(0.06)	(0.31)
Education: University degree	0.04	-0.63*
	(0.05)	(0.28)
Gender: Men	0.05	-0.22
	(0.05)	(0.27)
Treatment 1:Priors	0.03	-0.60
	(0.06)	(0.35)
Treatment 2:Priors	0.01	-0.26
	(0.08)	(0.42)
Treatment 3:Priors	0.003	0.34
	(0.09)	(0.49)
Treatment 4:Priors	-0.02	-0.67
	(0.09)	(0.47)
Treatment 1:Low risk	0.02	-3.24
	(0.35)	(1.90)
Treatment 2:Low risk	-0.10	-1.59
	(0.38)	(2.07)
Treatment 3:Low risk	-0.18	3.79
	(0.53)	(2.88)
Treatment 4:Low risk	-0.45	-4.44*



	(0.40)	(2.19)
Priors:Low risk	0.02	-0.19
	(0.06)	(0.31)
Treatment 1:Priors:Low risk	-0.07	0.51
	(0.08)	(0.41)
Treatment 2:Priors:Low risk	0.01	0.42
	(0.09)	(0.47)
Treatment 3:Priors:Low risk	-0.03	-0.75
	(0.10)	(0.55)
Treatment 4:Priors:Low risk	0.04	0.84
	(0.09)	(0.52)
Observations	384	384
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.11
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.01	0.05
Residual Std. Error (df = 358)	0.45	2.48
F Statistic (df = 25; 358)	0.84	1.84***
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001		

**18. A18. OLS regressions predicting attention and support across respondent subsets, high and low unemployment risk (Spain)**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Attention		Support rate	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	0.16 (0.33)	0.25* (0.12)	3.85** (1.35)	2.44** (0.59)
Treatment 1	-0.19 (0.50)	-0.14 (0.15)	4.65* (2.06)	-0.33 (0.74)
Treatment 2	-0.56 (0.43)	0.01 (0.16)	-2.76 (1.75)	0.33 (0.78)
Treatment 3	0.14 (0.60)	0.12 (0.16)	1.61 (2.47)	-0.43 (0.78)
Treatment 4	-0.10 (0.43)	-0.02 (0.16)	0.18 (1.77)	-0.05 (0.78)
Priors	0.01 (0.06)	0.06* (0.02)	0.40 (0.26)	0.44** (0.12)
Income: Low	0.22 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.23 (0.82)	0.56 (0.43)
Income: Medium	0.03 (0.19)	0.01 (0.06)	-1.30 (0.76)	0.77** (0.29)
Ideology: Left	0.25 (0.15)	0.09 (0.05)	1.12 (0.61)	1.67** (0.27)
Ideology: Right	0.47 (0.24)	-0.08 (0.07)	2.26* (0.98)	-0.48 (0.37)
Education: no university degree	-0.06 (0.16)	-0.17** (0.05)	1.63* (0.66)	0.14 (0.26)
Gender: Men	0.11 (0.14)	0.02 (0.05)	0.61 (0.59)	-0.02 (0.25)
Treatment 1:Priors	0.04 (0.12)	0.04 (0.04)	-1.19* (0.50)	-0.03 (0.19)

Treatment 2:Priors	0.19 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.15 (0.45)	-0.20 (0.19)
Treatment 3:Priors	-0.08 (0.12)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.25 (0.50)	0.03 (0.19)
Treatment 4:Priors	0.04 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.24 (0.38)	-0.13 (0.18)
Observations	64	377	64	377
R <sup>2</sup>	0.24	0.10	0.52	0.22
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.004	0.07	0.37	0.18
Residual Std. Error	0.50 (df = 48)	0.47 (df = 361)	2.07 (df = 48)	2.32 (df = 361)
F Statistic	0.98 (df = 15; 48)	2.78*** (df = 15; 361)	3.49*** (df = 15; 48)	6.69*** (df = 15; 361)

Note:

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

### 19. A19. OLS regressions predicting attention and support including a triple interaction term between treatment, priors and issue status (Spain)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention (1)	Support rate (2)
Constant	0.31 (0.28)	3.51* (1.39)
Treatment 1	0.15 (0.45)	5.43* (2.22)
Treatment 2	-0.23 (0.38)	-1.67 (1.85)
Treatment 3	0.36 (0.54)	1.81 (2.63)
Treatment 4	0.09 (0.38)	0.45 (1.87)
Priors	0.04 (0.06)	0.44 (0.28)
Low risk	-0.10 (0.30)	-1.05 (1.47)
Income: Low	0.03 (0.08)	0.62 (0.39)
Income: Medium	0.01 (0.06)	0.55* (0.27)
Ideology: Left	0.11* (0.05)	1.59** (0.25)
Ideology: Right	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.25 (0.35)
Education: no university degree	-0.16** (0.05)	0.33 (0.24)
Gender: Men	0.03 (0.05)	0.07 (0.23)
Treatment 1:Priors	-0.05 (0.11)	-1.53** (0.52)
Treatment 2:Priors	0.11 (0.10)	-0.16 (0.47)
Treatment 3:Priors	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.41 (0.54)
Treatment 4:Priors	0.01 (0.08)	-0.30 (0.40)
Treatment 1:Low risk	-0.27 (0.48)	-5.71* (2.35)
Treatment 2:Low risk	0.24 (0.41)	2.01 (2.02)
Treatment 3:Low risk	-0.24 (0.56)	-2.23 (2.75)
Treatment 4:Low risk	-0.12 (0.41)	-0.52 (2.03)
Priors:Low risk	0.02 (0.06)	0.0003 (0.31)

Treatment 1:Priors:Low risk	0.09 (0.11)	1.49** (0.56)
Treatment 2:Priors:Low risk	-0.13 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.51)
Treatment 3:Priors:Low risk	0.09 (0.12)	0.44 (0.57)
Treatment 4:Priors:Low risk	-0.03 (0.09)	0.17 (0.44)

Observations	441	441
R <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.24
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.19
Residual Std. Error (df = 415)	0.48	2.34
F Statistic (df = 25; 415)	2.01***	5.12***

*Note:* \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

## 20. A20. OLS regressions predicting attention and support across respondent subsets, high and low issue saliency (Finland)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Attention		Support rate	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	0.18 (0.13)	0.01 (0.21)	4.39*** (0.77)	5.46*** (1.19)
Treatment 1	-0.02 (0.12)	0.25 (0.20)	0.65 (0.71)	2.09* (1.15)
Treatment 2	-0.14 (0.12)	0.12 (0.19)	-0.31 (0.73)	1.00 (1.10)
Treatment 3	-0.10 (0.13)	0.29 (0.20)	-0.80 (0.76)	1.29 (1.14)
Treatment 4	-0.14 (0.13)	0.15 (0.19)	-0.76 (0.75)	0.98 (1.08)
Priors	-0.01 (0.02)	0.10*** (0.04)	0.13 (0.12)	0.48** (0.20)
Income: Low	0.04 (0.08)	-0.22 (0.14)	1.43*** (0.49)	-1.25 (0.77)
Income: Medium	-0.005 (0.08)	-0.21 (0.14)	1.01** (0.48)	-1.81** (0.79)
Ideology: Left	0.05 (0.05)	0.23*** (0.06)	0.82*** (0.29)	1.12*** (0.37)
Ideology: Right	-0.003 (0.05)	0.11* (0.07)	-0.22 (0.27)	0.27 (0.38)

Education: University degree	0.11*** (0.04)	0.10* (0.06)	-0.34 (0.24)	-0.37 (0.33)
Gender: Men	0.05 (0.04)	0.04 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.24)	0.11 (0.32)
Treatment 1:Priors	0.02 (0.03)	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.09 (0.17)	-0.52* (0.27)
Treatment 2:Priors	0.03 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.17)	-0.18 (0.26)
Treatment 3:Priors	0.03 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.05)	0.20 (0.17)	-0.37 (0.26)
Treatment 4:Priors	0.04 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.20 (0.17)	-0.25 (0.25)
Observations	512	268	512	268
R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.12	0.09	0.11
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.07	0.06	0.06
Residual Std. Error	0.43 (df = 496)	0.44 (df = 252)	2.53 (df = 496)	2.47 (df = 252)
F Statistic	1.03 (df = 15; 496)	2.29*** (df = 15; 252)	3.14*** (df = 15; 496)	2.05** (df = 15; 252)
<i>Note:</i>			* ** *** p<0.01	

**21. A21. OLS regressions predicting attention and support including a triple interaction term between treatment, priors and issue saliency (Finland)**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention	Support rate
	(1)	(2)
Constant	-0.10 (0.17)	3.73*** (1.00)
Treatment 1	0.22 (0.20)	2.27* (1.17)
Treatment 2	0.08 (0.19)	0.89 (1.11)
Treatment 3	0.26 (0.20)	1.43 (1.14)
Treatment 4	0.12 (0.19)	0.85 (1.09)

Priors	0.09** (0.04)	0.46** (0.21)
Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.30* (0.18)	1.28 (1.02)
Income: Low	-0.02 (0.07)	0.77* (0.41)
Income: Medium	-0.04 (0.07)	0.32 (0.41)
Ideology: Left	0.12*** (0.04)	0.89*** (0.23)
Ideology: Right	0.03 (0.04)	-0.13 (0.22)
Education: University degree	0.11*** (0.03)	-0.35* (0.20)
Gender: Men	0.05 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.19)
Treatment 1:Priors	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.54** (0.27)
Treatment 2:Priors	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.13 (0.26)
Treatment 3:Priors	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.39 (0.27)
Treatment 4:Priors	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.20 (0.25)
Treatment 1:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.24 (0.23)	-1.67 (1.36)
Treatment 2:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.22 (0.23)	-1.23 (1.33)
Treatment 3:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.36 (0.23)	-2.24 (1.36)
Treatment 4:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.26 (0.23)	-1.65 (1.33)
Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.35 (0.24)
Treatment 1:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.09* (0.05)	0.46 (0.32)
Treatment 2:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.08 (0.05)	0.10 (0.31)

Treatment 3:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.09* (0.05)	0.59* (0.32)
Treatment 4:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.08 (0.05)	0.40 (0.30)
Observations	780	780
R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.08
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.05
Residual Std. Error (df = 754)	0.43	2.52
F Statistic (df = 25; 754)	1.74**	2.76***
<i>Note:</i> * ** *** p < 0.01		

## 22. A22. OLS regressions predicting attention and support across respondent subsets, high and low issue saliency (Spain)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Attention		Support rate	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	0.18 (0.12)	0.25 (0.16)	2.12*** (0.58)	4.45*** (0.79)
Treatment 1	-0.03 (0.14)	-0.14 (0.21)	1.53** (0.70)	-1.95* (1.01)
Treatment 2	0.08 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.22)	0.38 (0.66)	-0.15 (1.07)
Treatment 3	0.14 (0.14)	0.25 (0.21)	0.63 (0.69)	0.01 (1.02)
Treatment 4	0.16 (0.13)	0.04 (0.21)	0.97 (0.67)	-2.18** (1.02)
Priors	0.06** (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	0.60*** (0.12)	0.08 (0.16)
Income: Low	0.10 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.10)	1.02*** (0.34)	0.36 (0.50)
Income: Medium	0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.09)	0.39 (0.28)	0.36 (0.43)
Ideology: Left	0.07 (0.05)	0.09 (0.07)	1.43*** (0.23)	1.42*** (0.33)
Ideology: Right	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.49 (0.32)	0.37 (0.50)
Education: no university degree	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.27 (0.22)	0.33 (0.32)
Gender: Men	-0.002 (0.04)	-0.0000 (0.07)	0.09 (0.22)	-0.31 (0.32)
Treatment 1:Priors	0.01 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)	-0.44** (0.17)	0.31 (0.24)
Treatment 2:Priors	-0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.32* (0.17)	-0.28 (0.27)
Treatment 3:Priors	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.24 (0.17)	-0.07 (0.23)
Treatment 4:Priors	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.29* (0.17)	0.35 (0.22)
Observations	527	244	527	244
R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.08	0.18	0.17
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.02	0.15	0.11
Residual Std. Error	0.48 (df = 511)	0.49 (df = 228)	2.43 (df = 511)	2.38 (df = 228)

F Statistic	1.85** (df = 15; 511)	1.31 (df = 15; 228)	7.38*** (df = 15; 511)	3.07*** (df = 15; 228)
<i>Note:</i>				* ** *** p<0.01

**23. A23. OLS regressions predicting attention and support including a triple interaction term between treatment, priors and issue saliency (Spain)**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Attention (1)	Support rate (2)
Constant	0.28* (0.14)	4.41*** (0.72)
Treatment 1	-0.17 (0.20)	-2.11** (1.02)
Treatment 2	-0.10 (0.22)	-0.29 (1.08)
Treatment 3	0.21 (0.20)	-0.21 (1.02)
Treatment 4	0.01 (0.20)	-2.09** (1.02)
Priors	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.16)
Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.11 (0.17)	-2.21*** (0.84)
Income: Low	0.05 (0.06)	0.81*** (0.28)
Income: Medium	0.04 (0.05)	0.40* (0.23)
Ideology: Left	0.08** (0.04)	1.44*** (0.19)
Ideology: Right	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.24 (0.27)
Education: no university degree	-0.07** (0.04)	0.28 (0.18)
Gender: Men	-0.002 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.18)
Treatment 1:Priors	0.09* (0.05)	0.38 (0.24)
Treatment 2:Priors	0.03 (0.05)	-0.22 (0.26)
Treatment 3:Priors	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.23)
Treatment 4:Priors	-0.01 (0.04)	0.34 (0.22)
Treatment 1:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.13 (0.25)	3.61*** (1.23)
Treatment 2:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.18 (0.25)	0.67 (1.26)
Treatment 3:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.07 (0.25)	0.85 (1.23)
Treatment 4:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.15 (0.25)	3.09** (1.22)
Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.03 (0.04)	0.55*** (0.20)
Treatment 1:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.81*** (0.30)
Treatment 2:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.31)
Treatment 3:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	0.03 (0.06)	-0.21 (0.28)
Treatment 4:Priors:Issue saliency (mip = 1)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.64** (0.27)
Observations	771	771
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.17
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.14

Residual Std. Error (df = 745)	0.48	2.41
F Statistic (df = 25; 745)	1.78**	6.09***
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<i>Note:</i>	* p	** p *** p<0.01