

## *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*

A hotel was trying to decide how to encourage guests to reuse their towels.

They showed the first group of guests a message emphasising the importance of protecting the environment.

They showed a second group a message stating that 75% of their guests had already participated in this programme and that they should join their fellow guests by helping them protect the environment.

41% of the guests of the second group reuse their towels.



### QUESTION

*What percentage of the guests in the first group reuse their towels?*

- Only 10% more as the second group.
- About 75% more as the second group.
- The percentage was the same for both groups.
- About 50% more than the second group.



### ANSWER

b. About 75% more than in the second group.



### EXPLANATION

Why did the hotel guests reuse their towels more when they saw the message focused on what other people were doing? We often find ourselves unsure of how to act in a particular situation. Consequently, when we learn what other people do in this situation, we are more likely to act accordingly. In addition, if a norm is based on the behaviour of people similar to us (friends, people in our reference group, or simply people like us), we are even more likely to follow them. This kind of herd mentality has been shown to influence voting, public littering, energy savings, and many other behaviours.



## Over-sharing

Participants read one of two online dating profiles.

The person in question on one of the dating profiles, described himself as often engaging in unflattering behaviours (such as hiding a messy divorce from dating partners).

The person on the other dating profile indicated that he preferred not to answer the question.



### QUESTION

*Which person did the participants prefer?*

- The person who admitted to the unflattering behaviour – people always prefer certainty in dates.
- The person who admitted to the unflattering behaviour – people value reliability.
- The person who preferred not to answer – people prefer more mysterious dates.
- The person who preferred not to answer – the ambiguous response was interpreted in an overly optimistic way.



### ANSWER

- b. The person who admitted to the unflattering behaviour – people value reliability.



### EXPLANATION

When we date, apply for jobs, and even make friends, we constantly decide what we want to share about ourselves. This study showed that “under-disclosure” (or not disclosing enough) can be more damaging than admitting reprehensible behaviour. In follow-up experiments, researchers discovered that this preference for “revealers” over “hidiers” was not due to an aversion to uncertainty in dates so much as to valuing reliability and honesty.



## *Late to collecting the children*

According to research conducted on a child-care facility, it was discovered that on an average week, approximately 8 parents failed to collect their children on time.

They placed a sign outside the child-care centre stating that late parents would incur a small fine.



### QUESTION

*How did the fine affect the number of late parents?*

- a. It doubled late collections.
- b. It ended late collections completely.
- c. It increased late collections by half.
- d. It decreased late collections by half.



### BONUS QUESTION

*After 12 weeks, the child-care removed the fine. How did this affect late collections?*

- a. It dropped back to eight times per week.
- b. It was the same as when the penalty was in effect.
- c. It increased late collections even more.



### ANSWER

a. It doubled late collections.



### ANSWER TO THE BONUS QUESTION

c. It increased late collections even more.



### EXPLANATION

Before the fine was introduced, the social norms meant that parents felt bad when they kept the teachers waiting. Once the penalty was introduced, market norms kicked in, and the parents no longer felt bad - after all, they were paying for the teacher's time.



## Norm violators

How do we perceive those who violate norms? In this study, two participants arrived at a laboratory to participate in a three-person study.

The researcher informed the participants that the study would begin once the third participant arrived. Interestingly, this third participant was a colleague of the researcher. During every session, this individual would arrive 90 seconds after the others, toss their bag on the table close to the other participants, and casually rest their feet on the table.

Then, participants answered questions about how they perceived the norm violator.



### QUESTION

*Compared to the ratings of the other participants, people rated the norm violator as...*

- More powerful.
- More handsome.
- More competent.
- More independent.



### ANSWER

- a. More powerful.



### EXPLANATION

Unfortunately, those who disregard the rules often seem to gain more power than those who follow them.

According to research, norm violations can become a dangerous cycle. The offenders may feel empowered by breaking the rules and feel more free to continue misbehaving.

This abuse of power is especially troubling in cases of violence, fraud, and sexual harassment, where the perpetrators may feel more powerful and in control as they commit more crimes.





## Second opinions

We often rely on expert advice – accountants, doctors, financial advisors, motor mechanics, etc. As time passes, we develop a longer and longer relationship with these expert advisors.



### QUESTION



*What changes regarding the quality of their advice?*

- The expert's advice gets BETTER and MORE expensive.
- The expert's advice gets BETTER but LESS expensive.
- The expert's advice gets WORSE but MORE expensive.
- The expert's advice gets WORSE but LESS expensive.



### BONUS QUESTION

*One remedy against biased advice is getting a second opinion. When are people more likely to value the second opinion?*

- When we think that other people value a second opinion.
- Only when the second opinion comes from known experts.
- Only when the advisor providing the second opinion does not have a conflict of interest.

## Social norms



### ANSWER

- c. The expert's advice gets WORSE but MORE expensive.



### ANSWER TO THE BONUS QUESTION

- a. When we think that other people value a second opinion.



### EXPLANATION

We highly value long-term relationships, but sadly, long-term relationships with an advisor do not necessarily guarantee better outcomes.

As the length of the relationship increases, trust increases, and advisors can take advantage of this increased trust by proposing solutions that are financially better for them and worse for their clients. Furthermore, as the length of the relationship increases, we trust the advisor more, and we are less likely to seek a second opinion – which is one of the few ways to combat conflict of interest.

The sad conclusion is that, as the relationship lengthens, we wind up paying more for worse advice.



## *Insincere flattery*

Participants played a guessing game with a computer.

The “flattery” group was told that the feedback they would receive at the end of the game would have nothing to do with their performance.

The “sincere praise” group was told that the feedback they would receive would be based on their performance in the game.



### QUESTION

*On a scale of 1 to 10, the sincere praise group said they enjoyed the game (the average enjoyment was 6,8). What was the average enjoyment rating of the flattery group?*

- a. 2,4
- b. 4,9
- c. 6,8
- d. 9,3



### ANSWER

c. 6,8



### EXPLANATION

Not only did both groups enjoy the game equally, but both groups also rated their performance extremely positively.

In contrast, participants who received no compliments rated their performance and the game less favourably.

Compliments are powerful, even when we know they are bogus and have nothing to do with our real performance.

These results show that we love compliments and can influence how we evaluate ourselves and our experiences – even when the compliments come from a computer and even when we know that the compliments are insincere.



## Cooperating with strangers

Two players may or may not cooperate together. If both players cooperate, both receive a moderate payoff, say \$10.

If one cooperates but the other does not (which is called defecting), the cooperator receives nothing, and the defector receives a larger payment, say \$15.

If both choose to defect, both receive a substantially smaller payoff, say \$5.



### QUESTION

*What did researchers learn about cooperation?*

- Our instinct is to cooperate, so players will always cooperate.
- Our instinct is not to trust strangers, so players will never cooperate.
- When people play the game multiple times, they start by cooperating, but over time they defect more and more.
- When people play the game multiple times, they cooperate by establishing a reputation over multiple trials.



### ANSWER

- d. When people play the game multiple times, they cooperate by establishing a reputation over multiple trials.



### EXPLANATION

Playing the “prisoner’s dilemma” game multiple times provides more realistic results than a single game, as we often interact with the same people repeatedly.

The results from a study show that when playing against strangers, there is no chance of establishing a relationship. Hence, both players revert to the strategy of defecting instead of cooperating.

However, interacting with the same person encourages the two players to build a relationship and a reputation, which helps them increase goodwill and cooperation.



## Walk-station woes

Employees at a large corporation received walk-stations and slow treadmills attached to standing desks.

They also received emails about how long five of their colleagues exercised weekly.

Each email had information on someone who exercised more than they did and exercised less.



### QUESTION

*How did receiving these emails change participants' exercise habits after six months?*

- Slightly increased exercise: people exercised a little bit more over time.
- Significantly increased exercise: people started behaving like high exercisers.
- Slightly decreased exercise: people exercised a little bit less over time.
- Decreased exercise: people started behaving like the low exercisers.



### ANSWER

- d. Decreased exercise: people started behaving like the low exercisers.



### EXPLANATION

Low exercisers negatively influenced participants and tended to conform to the weakest link in the group.

One might expect that learning about others' habits would be encouraging, but learning about infrequent exercisers can lead us to justify our lack of exercise.





## Scared straight

To deter youth from committing crimes, some states have adopted programmes that expose juveniles to stories of convicted criminals' lives to scare them.

In this approach, the convicted criminals tell the juveniles about abuse and other harms they have experienced in prison.

Other states use a related approach without any scare tactics. In this approach, convicted criminals share only their life stories without emphasising the horror of prison.



### QUESTION

*How effective are the two methods in deterring juveniles from crime?*

- Both methods similarly reduce criminal behaviour among juveniles.
- Both methods similarly increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour.
- Scare approaches sometimes increased criminal behaviour, while the non-scare approaches made no difference.
- Non-scare approaches decreased criminal behaviour, while the scare approaches made no difference.



### ANSWER

- d. Non-scare approaches decreased criminal behaviour, while the scare approaches made no difference.



### EXPLANATION

In general, “Scared Straight” programmes are found to be ineffective, and sometimes they even backfire.

The logic behind “Scared Straight” programmes is that people will consider the possible consequences of their behaviour, and act better in the future.

The problem is that we have no evidence for such future thinking, which means we are unaffected by it.



## *Finishing last*

Experimenters informed participants that the current minimum wage is \$7.25.

They asked them whether they believed the minimum wage should be increased, decreased, or remained unchanged.



### QUESTION

*80% of participants thought it should be increased - but who was the **LEAST** likely to support an increase in the minimum wage?*

- People who earn \$7.25 or less per hour.
- People who earn \$7.26 - \$8.25 per hour.
- People who earn \$10.26 - \$11.25 per hour.
- People who earn \$11.26 - \$20 per hour.



### ANSWER

b. People who earn \$7.26 - \$8.25 per hour.



### EXPLANATION

The people with the second-lowest wages were the least likely to support a policy to increase the minimum wage. Why?

Researchers call this tendency “last-place aversion”. We hate to lose, and when we are in second-to-last place, we don’t want to be relegated to the last place.

We are more likely to be happy, even when we are struggling, as long as we know that our situation could be worse and that we are doing a little better than others.

Last-place aversion appears in other areas of life as well. For example, people standing at the end of a queue are the least likely to give up their place.



## Gratitude

Individuals with a neuromuscular disease wrote down five things they were grateful for every day over three weeks.

They reported their mental and physical well-being at the end of each day.



### **?** QUESTION

*How did this gratitude practice impact the participants' well-being?*

- Their mental and physical states improved equally.
- Although they indicated no improvement in their mental well-being, they reported decreased symptoms.
- Their well-being remained relatively unchanged.
- Although their symptoms remained unchanged, their sleep patterns and mental well-being improved.



### ANSWER

- d. Although their symptoms remained unchanged, their sleep patterns and mental well-being improved.



### EXPLANATION

Gratitude has real, measurable effects on overall well-being.

Although far from a cure-all, taking a little time each day to remember the positive things in life is an easy way to improve your state of mind and sleep pattern.



## Grief and rituals

In a study on rituals, participants were asked to estimate how much grief they would experience if they entered a lottery for \$200 but lost.

Some participants reported how they expected to feel after their loss, while the other participants first completed a ritual and only then answered the questions.

The ritual involved drawing one's feelings, sprinkling salt on a piece of paper, tearing up the piece of paper and counting to 10 five times.



### QUESTION

*Which group of participants reported the lowest feeling of grief?*

- Participants who performed the actions associated with a ritual, but only when they believed in the power of rituals.
- Participants who did not do the ritual since the ritual was meaningless.
- Participants who carried out the actions associated with the ritual, regardless of whether they believed in the power of rituals.
- All participants who believed rituals were effective, whether or not they actually performed the ritual.



### ANSWER

- c. Participants who carried out the actions associated with the ritual, regardless of whether they believed in the power of rituals.



### EXPLANATION

This study found that different types of rituals can alleviate grief – and not just from financial losses. Rituals can help with everything from losing a loved one to losing a lottery.

Interestingly, it didn't matter if the participants believed the ritual would work: simply performing a series of actions in a mindful and meaningful way helped people feel better. Calling the action a “ritual” was more effective than simply asking participants to carry out these actions in silence.

The study suggests that rituals are effective because they help people focus and regain a sense of control.





## And the winner is...

Participants watched videos of athletes from the 1992 Olympics right after they won an Olympic medal.

The participants examined the athletes' facial expressions without knowing which medal they received, and then they rated their happiness on a 10-point scale, with 10 equivalent to "ecstasy". The results showed that participants rated bronze medallists with an average happiness of 7,1.



### QUESTION

*How do you think participants rated the emotions of silver medallists on this same happiness scale?*

- a. 8,7
- b. 7,9
- c. 6,3
- d. 4,8



### ANSWER

d. 4,8



### EXPLANATION

Often our happiness is not about where we are and what we have achieved, but the difference between where we are and where we could have been.

In NBC interviews with the athletes, silver medalists focused on how close they were to receiving a gold medal, emphasising their disappointment. But bronze winners were very diligent because they compared their achievement to fourth place and those who did not get any medals.

Counterfactual thinking, the tendency to focus on alternative outcomes, can make us feel relatively unhappy even when we are doing very well objectively.



## Ritual and chocolate

Two groups were given identical bars of chocolate.

One group performed a set of invented rituals: carefully unwrapping the chocolate, breaking it carefully, and thinking intensely about the chocolate before eating it.

The other group was simply asked to eat the chocolate without particular instructions.



### QUESTION

*How did the ritual influence how participants felt about the chocolate?*

- Participants were annoyed with the ritual, and as a result, they liked the chocolate **LESS**.
- Participants liked the chocolate **MORE** after the ritual, but were unwilling to pay **MORE**.
- Participants liked the chocolate **MORE** after the ritual and were willing to pay **MORE**.
- Participants liked the chocolate **LESS** after the ritual, but were willing to pay **MORE**.



### ANSWER

- c. Participants liked the chocolate **MORE** after the ritual and were willing to pay **MORE**.



### EXPLANATION

Performing a ritual, even an invented one, can improve the enjoyment of consumption.

This improvement is because the ritual creates greater involvement and intrinsic interest in consumed food. This is why a birthday cake tastes so much better than the same cake on a different day.

Importantly, this ritual effect was also observed with foods much less tempting than chocolate cake, such as carrots.

A more general conclusion is that rituals could be used to make all kinds of activities (for example, exercising, taking medicine, washing hands) seem more attractive and worthwhile.



## *Perceptions of racism in the United States*

A national survey of white and black Americans asked participants to indicate how much they felt discrimination exists in the US and how it has changed from the 1950s to the 2000s.



### QUESTION

*What were their views about discrimination in more recent times?*

- White respondents felt that, in recent decades, discrimination against white Americans exceeded discrimination against black Americans.
- Black respondents felt that widespread discrimination for both groups was higher.
- Both groups had fairly similar views of recent discrimination and said it had decreased.
- Both groups had fairly similar views of recent discrimination, and both said it had remained relatively stable over the last few decades.



### ANSWER

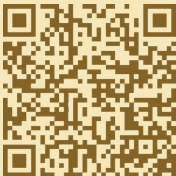
- a. White respondents felt that, in recent decades, discrimination against white Americans exceeded discrimination against black Americans.



### EXPLANATION

The researchers support the theory that white Americans view racial discrimination as a zero-sum game, where gains for one race must necessarily lead to losses for another.

Thus, not only did the white respondents view black Americans as making greater progress toward equality, but they also believed that this progress was at the expense of white Americans. It is important to remember that the Black respondents do not view discrimination as a zero-sum game, nor do they believe that the progress of one race necessarily comes at the expense of another.



## Attitude adjustment

Israelis who oppose the peace process with the Palestinians were exposed to very extreme advertisements against the peace process.

For example, one advertisement argued that “we need the conflict to have the strongest army in the world”.

The exposure to these extreme advertisements took place just before the elections in Israel.



### QUESTION

*How did this intervention affect the opinions and actions of these right-leaning participants toward peace with the Palestinians?*

- They maintained their beliefs that the Palestinians would never want peace.
- They strengthened their beliefs that a peaceful conflict resolution would never be found.
- They expressed more conciliatory attitudes regarding the conflict, but did not change their vote in the subsequent elections.
- They expressed more conciliatory attitudes towards the conflict and changed their vote in the subsequent election by voting for a party working for peace.



### ANSWER

- d. They expressed more conciliatory attitudes towards the conflict and changed their vote in the subsequent election by voting for a party working for peace.



### EXPLANATION

Logically, one would expect that hearing our own views expressed in more radically one-sided ways would only reinforce our beliefs.

However, these findings suggest that exaggerated political advertisements that are clearly imbalanced in their perspective might alter people's beliefs toward more moderate political beliefs (even up to a year later).

Hearing one-sided views pushes us to find counterarguments that help us reassess our own views' one-sidedness.





## *Do-it-yourself work*

In an experiment designed to test the effect of effort on love, some participants were given different products (origami, IKEA boxes, and Lego creation), while other participants were asked to fold the origami, build the IKEA boxes and build the Lego sets.



### **QUESTION**



*How did the participants value these products when they were the ones building them?*

- The increased work led to a decreased valuation of the products.
- The increased work led to an increased valuation of the products.
- The increased work led to no difference in the valuation of the products.
- The increased work led to an increased valuation of the products, but only when the products were beautifully crafted.



### **BONUS QUESTION**

*When people were given a chance to buy a ready-made box versus one they had to build, what difference would you expect in their willingness to pay?*

- No difference.
- People who built a box were willing to pay 63% more than non-builders.



### ANSWER

- b. The increased work led to an increased valuation of the products.



### ANSWER TO THE BONUS QUESTION

- b. People who built a box were willing to pay 63% more than non-builders.



### EXPLANATION

The IKEA effect occurs when people prefer items that they put work into. From a purely economic perspective, an object you or another person built should be equal in value.

From a behavioural perspective, however, people like what they build because it deepens their appreciation of those items and instils feelings of competence. These results suggest that, in general, we might want to be more active and try to create more ourselves.



## Taxi and targets

Researchers tracked the work habits of New York City taxi drivers. When the sun is shining, people walk more and take taxis less often, so taxi drivers make less money per hour.

On the other hand, when it is raining, people take more taxis, and taxi drivers make more money per hour.



### QUESTION

*When do you think taxi drivers decided to work more and fewer hours?*

- Taxi drivers worked fewer hours on rainy days and more on sunny days.
- Some taxi drivers decided not to work on sunny days and take the days off.
- Taxi drivers worked more hours on rainy days and less on sunny days.
- Taxi drivers worked the same number of hours each day, regardless of the weather.



### ANSWER

- a. Taxi drivers worked fewer hours on rainy days and more on sunny days.



### EXPLANATION

When people work in jobs where the hourly wage varies daily, the rational prediction is that they should work more hours on days that pay a lot per hour and work fewer hours on days they wouldn't earn as much.

This theory predicts that taxi drivers should work more hours on rainy days and less on sunny days (or maybe even take this day off).

Instead, these taxi drivers do the opposite; they seem to have set a daily target for their earnings (perhaps because they must pay to lease the taxi each day).

Generally, these results show that we often think about decisions one day at a time instead of thinking about them in a broader context.



## Voting locations

Can something as minor as a voting location sway people's votes?

Researchers found that voters were more likely to support education spending when their polling station was in a school.

When the researchers ran a laboratory experiment to explore the same topic, they added images of schools to see how that would affect people's opinions on taxes aimed at improving education.



### QUESTION

*How did the images of schools change people's perspectives?*

- The images of schools did not affect support for the tax.
- The images of schools increased support for the tax by 10%.
- The images of schools decreased support for the tax by 50%.
- The images of schools increased support for the tax by 80%.



### ANSWER

- b. The images of schools increased support for the tax by 10%.



### EXPLANATION

Even something as small as where we are voting or what kinds of images are on our minds at that time can substantially impact how we vote.

These effects persisted when the researchers checked for political views, demographics, and how close people lived to schools.

After considering all these variables, voting at a school still increased support for education policies.



## *Orderly and disorderly environments*

Participants spent more time in either cluttered office spaces or clean office spaces.

When they left the space, they could donate to charity and choose an apple or a chocolate bar.



### QUESTION

*How did a clean environment affect the participant's charitable giving and healthy eating?*

- They donated more to charity, and they chose the healthier snack.
- They chose the healthier snack, but did not donate more to charity.
- They donated consumed food to choose healthier snacks.
- They made the same decisions as participants in the cluttered environment.



### ANSWER

- a. They donated more to charity, and they chose the healthier snack.



### EXPLANATION

These experiments expanded on previous research regarding the relationship between physical settings and behaviour.

The result suggests that more orderly environments are associated with morality, tradition, and conservatism, while disorder encourages deviation from the norm and creativity.

The contrast between charity, health, and creativity suggests a nuanced perspective on physical spaces – not necessarily that order is always good and disorder is always wrong, but that each environment fosters a different mindset.





## Opting In versus Opting Out

In some countries, the enrolment form for organ donations reads: “Check the box below if you are willing to become an organ donor”, while in other countries, it reads: “Check the box below if you are not willing to become an organ donor.”



### QUESTION

*What is the difference between the percentage of people participating in these programmes in the first (opt-in) and the second (opt-out) approach?*

- People enrolled in the organ donation programme are about 60-80% more often in countries with opt-out forms.
- People enrolled in the organ donation programme are about 60-80% more often in countries with opt-in forms.
- People enrolled in the organ donation programme are about 20-40% more often in countries with opt-out forms.
- People enrolled in the organ donation programme are about 20-40% more often in countries with opt-in forms.



### ANSWER

- a. People enrolled in the organ donation programme are about 60-80% more often in countries with opt-out forms.



### EXPLANATION

We generally think that we make decisions deliberately. They are carefully considering these choices and acting based on their preferences. We feel we are in the driver's seat of our decision-making. But it turns out that some decisions are difficult and complex, and we are willing to do a lot to avoid making those difficult decisions. When we avoid difficult decisions, we resort to the default solution, to the path of least resistance. And by doing so, we allow the people designing the form to decide for us.

When you start looking at the world through the lens of default, you can recognise them everywhere – from pensions to mortgages to what we eat. In all these cases, default decisions play a significant yet largely unrecognised role in our decisions.



## Career goals

Law students were asked to state their personal career goals. Then, they were asked to either state their goal publicly or to keep it private.



### QUESTION

*What was the effect of stating their intentions publicly?*

- They felt closer to their goal and were more likely to follow through.
- They felt closer to their goal and were less likely to follow through.
- They felt farther from their goal and were more likely to follow through.
- They felt farther from their goal and were less likely to follow through.



### ANSWER

- b. They felt closer to their goal and were less likely to follow through.



### EXPLANATION

Associating goal intentions with a person's identity can be a powerful motivator. But once the goal is announced and declared part of our identity, it can decrease our motivation.

Once we declare a goal, we can feel a false sense of achievement. We are less likely to follow through because we mistakenly feel that we have achieved that goal and are now ready for the next one.

