

New Research From Psychological Science

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Read about the latest research published in *Psychological Science*:

[Show Me the Numbers: Precision as a Cue to Others' Confidence](#)

Alexandra Jerez-Fernandez, Ashley N. Angulo, and Daniel M. Oppenheimer

The authors investigated a newly identified indicator of confidence — precision. In the second of two studies, participants played a “The Price Is Right”-style game in which they had to give price ranges for three objects. Participants were provided with audience suggestions that were more or less precise before choosing members of the audience to help them with subsequent price estimations. Participants were more likely to choose audience members who gave more precise estimates, which indicates that precision is used as a confidence signal and can affect preferences for advisors.

[Heart Rate Variability Predicts Control Over Memory Retrieval](#)

Brandon L. Gillie, Michael W. Vasey, and Julian F. Thayer

Do differences in inhibitory control influence people’s ability to stop the retrieval of unwanted memories? Participants’ resting heart rates were measured before they learned a list of word pairs. They then performed a task in which they were shown one of the words and were asked to think about or to refrain from thinking about the partner word before being tested on their memory for the words. Participants with higher levels of resting heart rate variability (a measure of inhibition) were more successful at suppressing recall for words, which suggests that physiological markers of inhibitory control can be indicative of people’s ability to control memory.

[Nothing to Declare: Mandatory and Voluntary Disclosure Leads Advisors to Avoid Conflicts of Interest](#)

Sunita Sah and George Loewenstein

Past research has examined how unavoidable conflicts of interest (COI) affect advisors’ behavior, but what happens when these conflicts are avoidable? In a series of studies, participants played the role of an advisor whose recommendations were linked to a reward structure that presented a COI. Advisors could choose to accept or reject the unfair reward structure and were instructed to disclose or withhold any COI before giving their recommendations. Advisors who were required to disclose COI were more likely to reject the troublesome reward structure — thereby avoiding the conflict. This suggests that a responsibility to disclose COI may motivate people to avoid them in the first place.

[Biased Predecisional Processing of Leading and Nonleading Alternatives](#)

Simon J. Blanchard, Kurt A. Carlson, and Margaret G. Meloy

Although researchers know that people often distort incoming information, they are not sure whether this distortion involves favoring the leading alternative, disfavoring the trailing alternative, or both. Participants read narratives describing several attributes of two similar items, ranked the items on the basis of each attribute, and then gave an overall ranking based on all of the attribute information they had read. In one condition, the true identity of the items was masked until the overall ranking step. The results suggested distortion toward the leading alternative and against the trailing alternative when making choices.

[The Attentional Blink Reveals the Probabilistic Nature of Discrete Conscious Perception](#)

Christopher L. Asplund, Daryl Fougny, Samir Zughni, Justin W. Martin, and René Marois

The authors examined whether attention and awareness are allocated in a discrete or a graded fashion by having participants perform an attentional blink task. In the task, participants reported the color of two squares presented in a rapid stream of colored circles. The authors found that different lag times between the two squares affected the likelihood that participants would see the second square but did not affect the precision of their representation of the color of the second square. This suggests that attention regulates the probability of consciously perceiving stimuli and that this perception occurs in an all-or-none fashion.