Online Supplement

The 13 Scenarios Employed

1. Date of death

Suppose you could find out the precise date of your death. Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

2. Unbiased selection

Suppose you are a member of a renowned classical orchestra that is searching for a new musician. The auditioning musicians play behind a screen. In the final round, the choice boils down to two candidates, who are asked to play again. Before making your decision, you could have the screen removed to reveal both the gender and the appearance of the applicants.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

3. Faithfulness

Suppose you are going to get married tomorrow. You happen to overhear a conversation about your future spouse. It's all about their previous relationships and how faithful they were in those relationships.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

4. God-like deity

Suppose science will soon be able to determine conclusively whether a god-like entity does or does not exist.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

5. Nazi past

Suppose a close relative of yours has recently died. He grew up during the Nazi era but never spoke about that time or his experiences. By consulting his personal papers, such as his diaries, you could find out whether he was a member of a Nazi organization.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

6. Incurable disease

Some genetic disorders are currently incurable and reduce life expectancy. Symptoms typically occur between the ages of 35 and 45. Suppose you are in your early 30s and have the opportunity to take a genetic test to find out whether you carry a genetic mutation for an incurable disease.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

7. Colleagues' bonus

Suppose you work in a harmonious and productive team. At the end of the year, each team member receives a bonus. However, some members of the team get a larger bonus than others. The reason is that the management bases the size of the bonus on how important they consider each team member's contribution to the overall outcome to be. The management offers to disclose the actual amounts paid out.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

8. The 'wrong' meat

The horsemeat scandal of 2013 affected the whole of Europe. Millions of meat products were recalled because horsemeat had been falsely declared as beef. Suppose you regularly eat beef products and could find out whether you had bought and eaten horsemeat instead of beef.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

9. Cruel truths[1]

Suppose you live under a brutal dictatorship. Your uncle is a high-ranking member of the regime. He tells you that he knows what happens to members of a persecuted ethnic minority.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

10. Genetic analysis

Genetic testing can determine an individual's risk of developing coronary heart disease, Parkinson's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, certain types of cancer, and type 2 diabetes. Suppose you had the possibility to be tested free of charge to find out your personal risk of future disease.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

11. Stasi file

Suppose you had lived in East Germany as an adult. By consulting your Stasi file, you would be able to find out whether close friends or family members worked as Stasi informants and spied on you.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

12. Entrepreneurial success

Suppose you want to open your own restaurant; something you have always dreamt of. You could find out how many newly opened restaurants on average go out of business within a year.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

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[1] In addition to challenging emotions (e.g., guilt, responsibility), this scenario also invokes a strategic dimension of deliberate ignorance, namely, that of eschewing responsibility (Hertwig & Engel, 2016).

13. Statue's authenticity

Suppose you are interested in art and have bought an expensive antique statue. Its authenticity was confirmed when you bought it. A friend of yours is a respected expert on ancient art. She offers to examine the statue to determine whether it is truly authentic or not.

Would you want to know or would you prefer not to know?

Table S1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable		Sample		Population[a]
		N	*% Total*	*% Total*
Total		2,005	100.0	
Gender				
	Male	986	49.2	49.0
	Female	1,019	50.8	51.0
Age (in years)[b]				
	14–20	95	4.7	8.1
	21–30	261	13.0	14.0
	31–40	236	11.8	13.9
	41–50	296	14.8	16.6
	51–60	339	16.9	17.6
	61–70	338	16.9	12.6
	71–80	318	15.9	11.5
	>80	122	6.1	5.6
Marital Status				
	Single	519	25.9	33.4
	Married[c]	1,028	51.3	50.2
	Widowed	233	11.6	7.9
	Divorced	214	10.7	8.6
	Missing	11	0.5	0.0
Education[d]				
	Low level	644	33.0	38.7
	Medium level	801	41.0	30.7
	High level	508	26.0	30.6
Income[e]				
	0–499	266	13.3	
	500–999	433	21.6	
	1,000-1,499	477	23.8	
	1,500–1,999	849	18.6	
	2,000-2,999	324	16.2	
	>=3,000	133	6.6	

Note. [a] Based on the population projection (based on the 2015 German Microcensus) for gender, age, and marital status and education [b] The age group 14–20 years was removed from all statistical analyses due to the combination of a relatively small sample size and high developmental heterogeneity in this group encompassing adolescence and young adulthood. [c] Including cohabitation. [d] For nonstudents only; low: e.g., left school without qualifications, left school after 9–10 years; medium: e.g., qualified to study at college/university of applied sciences; high: e.g., completed upper secondary education, graduated from college or university. [e] Personal monthly net income in EUR: for the purpose of statistical analyses, monthly income was coded in 19 intervals; intervals were represented by their lower limits.

Table S2

Intercorrelation Matrix of Percentages of 'Prefer Not to Know' Responses Across the 13

Scenarios for Any Two Age Groups

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	21–30 years (reference)						
2.	31–40 years	.98					
3.	41–50 years	.96	.97				
4.	51–60 years	.94	.96	.98			
5.	61–70 years	.91	.94	.96	.99		
6.	71–80 years	.93	.96	.97	.99	.98	
7.	81–99 years	.87	.86	.90	.93	.92	.94

Note. Pearson correlations; $N = 13$; all ps < .001, two-tailed.

Additional regression models with income and education

We conducted an additional hierarchical regression analysis to examine the extent to which age explained variance that was not accounted for by either education or income. The analysis consisted of three consecutive linear regressions starting with education and income in the first step, adding age in the second step, and the remainder of the original variables in the third step to test the robustness of our previous findings (see Table S3). The model fits indicate that age explained variance above and beyond education and income. Comparing the full model with the model reported in Table 3 in the main text, the interpretation for age and openness to experience remains unchanged. In contrast, both confidence intervals for the neuroticism parameter overlapped zero in the full model. In addition, income was found to explain unique variance, and higher income was related to lower DI scores.

Table S3

Results for Linear Regression Models With Inclusion of Independent Variables Possibly Accounting for Individuals' DI Scores

Model and Predictors	Unstandardized		Lower (B)		Upper (B)		Stand.
	B	SE	99% CI	95% CI	95% CI	99% CI	β
Model 1: Education + Income							
Constant	60.11	1.36	56.59	57.43	62.78	63.62	
Education	−1.89	0.33	−2.75	−2.54	−1.24	−1.03	−0.14
Income	−0.17	0.06	−0.32	−0.29	−0.06	−0.02	−0.07
Model 2: Age + Education + Income							
Constant	43.29	2.31	37.34	38.77	47.82	49.24	
Age	0.27	0.03	0.19	0.21	0.33	0.35	0.21
Education	−0.90	0.34	−1.78	−1.57	−0.22	−0.01	−0.06
Income	−0.27	0.06	−0.42	−0.39	−0.16	−0.12	−0.11
Model 3: Age + Education + Income + Personality + Risk							
Constant	46.53	3.65	37.12	39.37	53.69	55.94	
Age	0.27	0.03	0.19	0.21	0.33	0.35	0.21
Education	−0.66	0.35	−1.56	−1.34	0.03	0.24	−0.05
Income	−0.24	0.06	−0.40	−0.36	−0.13	−0.09	−0.10
Openness to experience	−1.63	0.46	−2.82	−2.54	−0.73	−0.44	−0.09
Neuroticism	0.72	0.45	−0.46	−0.72	1.61	1.88	0.04
Risk preference	0.10	0.23	−0.51	−0.36	0.56	0.70	0.01

Note: DI score: Percentage of answered items for each respondent. Table shows unstandardized and standardized coefficients and upper and lower limits of the 95% confidence interval (CI) and the 99% CI. Model fit results: Model 1: R^2 = .029; $F(2, 1836)$ = 27.29, p < .001. Model 2: ΔR^2 = .040; $F(1, 1835)$ = 79.81, p < .001. Model 3: ΔR^2 = .008; $F(3, 1832)$ = 5.01, p = .002

Brinley plot analysis

Our analysis in Figure S1 was inspired by the Brinley plots often used in the cognitive

aging literature (e.g., Cerella & Hale, 1994). Specifically, we first we plotted the percentage of

'prefer not to know' responses per scenario of the six older age groups against those of the

youngest age group (21–30 years; see Figure 1). We next regressed the percentages across

scenarios for each age group on those of the referential youngest age group and plotted the

resulting linear fit lines in Figure S1. With the exception of the two age groups in the middle (51–

60 years and 61–70 years), the lines lie systematically on top of each other, indicating that the

deliberate ignorance scores (DI scores)—the percentage of 'prefer not to know' responses

amongst all scenarios for which an individual provided a response—increased monotonically

with age and across the scenarios. All regression lines converge in the right upper corner of

Figure S1. This is due to the 'date of death' scenario, for which all groups show near-universal

agreement in not wanting to know. One scenario elicited almost no dispersion in the responses

across age groups (see the data points in the shaded rectangle in Figure S1). As expected, in this

'unbiased selection' scenario, respondents of all ages had a strong and consistent preference not
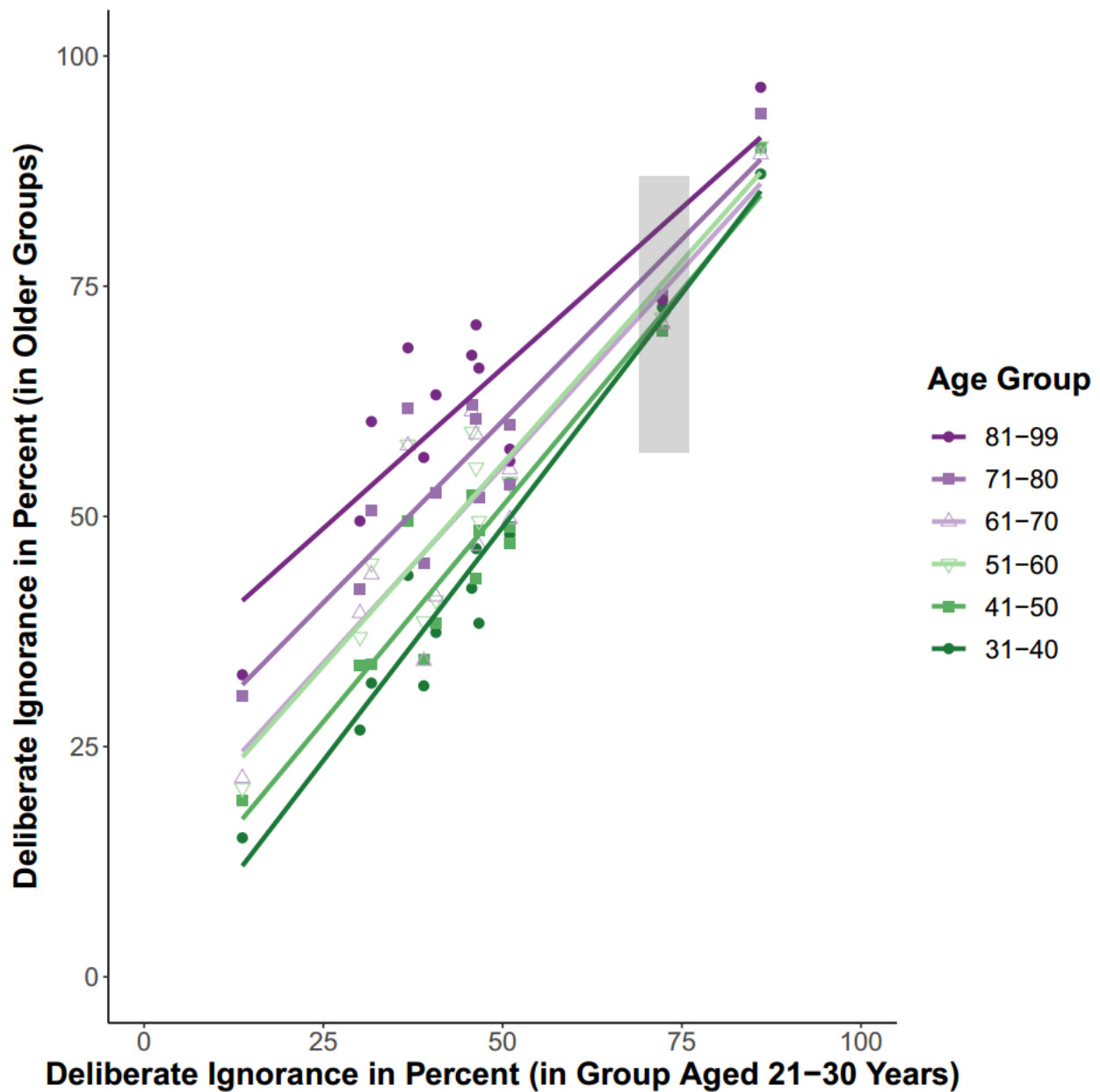
to know.

Reference

Cerella, J., & Hale, S. (1994). The rise and fall in information-processing rates over the life span.

Acta Psychologica, 86(2–3), 109–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-6918(94)90002-7

Figure S1

Average Percentage 'Prefer Not To Know' Responses Across 13 Scenarios in Six Age Groups Plotted

Against 'Prefer Not To Know' Responses in the Youngest Age Group (21–30 Years)

Note. Circles, squares, and triangles represent percentage pairs for individual scenarios; lines are fitted

linear regression lines (based on the percentages of 'prefer not to know' responses to the 13 scenarios in

the 20–30 years age group, the reference age group).