

YouGov MENA Denialism/Conspiracy Theory Study
Brendan Nyhan (Dartmouth College) and Thomas Zeitzoff (American University)

Consent

On behalf of academic researchers in the United States at Dartmouth College and American University in Washington, DC, we are conducting a survey of public opinion among people in the Middle East and North Africa on various issues of general interest. We ask for your attention for a few minutes and we thank you for your attention and your responses. **Your participation is voluntary and you may decline the interview or withdraw at any time. No information that identifies you will be collected or retained by the researchers. However, any online interaction carries some risk of being accessed. Do you consent to participate in the interview?**

-Yes

-No

Warmup questions

In general, how are you feeling today?

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor bad
- Fairly bad
- Very bad

In general, how is your family doing today?

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor bad
- Fairly bad
- Very bad

Control, trust, and intergroup feelings

The next series of sentences describes the way some people feel about how much control they have over their lives. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

- I can solve the problems I have.
- I sometimes feel I am being pushed around.
- I have little control over what happens to me.
- I can do just about anything I really set my mind to.
- I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.
- What happens to me in the future depends mostly on me.
- There is little I can do to change important things in my life.

Response options:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Generally speaking, how often can you trust other people?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Some of the time
- Never

Please indicate if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of each of the countries listed below.[randomize order]

- United States
- Iran
- Russia
- China
- Turkey
- Brazil
- Israel
- India
- United Kingdom
 - Very favorable
 - Somewhat favorable
 - Somewhat unfavorable
 - Very unfavorable

How favorable or unfavorable is your opinion of the following groups? [randomize order]

- Jews
- Muslims
- Christians
- Americans

-Chinese

-[Egyptians/Saudis]

-Brazilians

- Very favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Somewhat unfavorable
- Very unfavorable

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Listen to each statement and indicate how you feel right now, at this moment. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately	Very much
I feel calm*				
I feel tense				
I feel upset				
I feel relaxed*				
I feel content*				
I feel worried				

[verify with YouGov that “feel worried,” etc. translates correctly – we want how they feel in the moment, *not* how they are as a person overall/in general]

*Reverse coded

Political knowledge [randomize response options]

Current politics:

1. Which country is Bashar al-Assad the leader of?

- Syria
- Iraq
- Iran
- Jordan

2. Who is the Supreme Leader of Iran?

- Hassan Rouhani
- Saddam Hussein
- Sayyid Ali Khamenei
- Hamid Karzai

3. Who is the prime minister of the United Kingdom?

- David Cameron
- Tony Blair
- Barack Obama
- Angela Merkel

Historical knowledge:

1. Which country first used the atomic bomb?

- Japan
- Germany
- Soviet Union
- United States of America

2. Which country tore down a wall and reunified itself after the end of the Cold War?

- Germany
- Cuba
- Poland
- South Africa

3. Which leader helped India achieve independence from Britain in 1947?

- Mahatma Gandhi
- Benazir Bhutto
- Manmohan Singh
- Narendra Modi

Control manipulation

Randomly assign to one of the following three treatments ($p=1/3$)

1. Placebo treatment [Record open-ended response]

Can you please list what you had for breakfast for the last three to five days?

Now we'd like you to describe in more detail what you had for breakfast this morning. Please tell me about your breakfast in as much detail as possible, including what you did to prepare it and how you felt when you ate it.

[large open text box]

2. High control condition [Record open-ended response]

Can you please list three to five significant experiences you've had where you felt like you were in complete control over yourself and the situation?

Now we'd like you to describe in more detail the one situation in which you felt the most control. This could be something you are presently experiencing or something from the past. Please tell me about the incident in which you felt complete control in as much detail as possible, including what happened and how you felt when it happened.

[large open text box]

3. Low control condition [Record open-ended response]

Can you please list three to five significant experiences you've had where you felt like you had little to no control over yourself and the situation?

Now we'd like you to describe in more detail the one situation in which you felt the least control. This could be something you are presently experiencing or something from the past. Please tell me about the incident in which you felt little or no control in as much detail as possible, including what happened and how you felt when it happened.

[large open text box]

Manipulation check

Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real control over what happens to them. In general, how much control do you feel you have over what happens in your life?

- No control
- Very little control
- Some control
- Quite a bit of control
- A great deal of control
- Total control

Conspiracy theory belief

Now we'd like to ask you about some different topics.

Please indicate whether you believe the following statements are accurate or not accurate. [randomize order; need YouGov guidance on most neutral/accepted name for ISIS]

- The United States is secretly trying to help the Islamic State (ISIS) take power in Syria and Iraq.
- Abu Bakr Al-Bagdadi, the leader of the Islamic State (ISIS), is an Israeli intelligence agent.
- Millions of Jews died in the Holocaust in Europe during World War II.**
- The number of Jews who died in the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.
- The United States is trying to destroy the Islamic State (ISIS).**
- Jewish leaders are secretly conspiring to achieve world domination.
- Arabs carried out the attacks against the United States (the World Trade Center and the Pentagon) on September 11, 2001.**
- Jews carried out the September 11, 2001 attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States.
 - Very accurate
 - Somewhat accurate
 - Not very accurate
 - Not at all accurate

**Reverse coded

Other political outcomes

In your opinion, which of the following is the most important problem facing [Saudi Arabia/Egypt] today? [randomize order]

- Economic situation
- Corruption
- Domestic security situation
- Syrian civil war
- Yemeni civil war
- Radical jihadi groups
- The Arab-Israeli conflict

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- In a democracy, the economy runs badly
- Democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling
- Democracies are not good at maintaining order
- Democracy is a Western form of government which is not compatible with Islam
 - Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Respect for human rights in [Egypt/Saudi Arabia] is important, but promoting security and stability is more important

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Even though I don't agree with everything they do, I can understand why someone would go to fight for the Islamic State.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Politics/religion questions

What religion are you?

- Muslim
- Christian [Omit in KSA]
- Other _____

In your opinion, how much influence should religious leaders have in political matters?

- A large influence
- Some influence
- Not too much influence
- No influence at all

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Boys and girls should have equal access to education
 - Women should be barred from holding jobs outside the home
 - A university education is more important for a boy than a girl
 - Women and men should have equal legal rights
-
- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree

Which comes closer to describing your view?

- Western music, movies, and television have hurt morality in our country
- Western music, movies and television have NOT hurt morality in our country

Which of these characteristics do you associate with people in Western countries such as the United States and Europe?

- Selfish
- Respectful of women
- Tolerant
- Honest
- Generous
- Violent
- Greedy
- Immoral
- Arrogant

[randomize order]

- Yes, associate
- No, do not associate
- Don't know

Thank you for answering these questions. Before you complete the survey, please take a moment to read the following debriefing message.

The purpose of this study was to examine the causes of people's historical and factual beliefs.

During this survey, participants were asked a series of questions about their political and religious beliefs. Before answering the questions about their historical and factual beliefs, some participants completed a writing exercise asking them about times when they felt high or low levels of control over their lives.

Should you have any questions about this study, please contact Prof. Brendan Nyhan at brendan.j.nyhan@dartmouth.edu.