



Participant Information Form

Title	Judgments of Online Opinions
Principal Investigator/Senior Supervisor	Dr. Lauren Saling
Associate Investigator(s)/Associate Supervisor(s)	Dr. Damiano Spina
Principal Research Student(s)	Fletcher Scott

What does my participation involve?

1 Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is called Judgments of Online Opinions.

This Participant Information Form tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research.

Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative or friend.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you may continue onwards to the task after reading this Participant Information sheet.

By completing the task you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Consent to take part in the research project

You may download a copy of this to keep.

2 What is the purpose of this research?

With news arriving so rapidly from countless outlets, it's increasingly difficult to know which reports to trust. We also encounter "news" from non-traditional sources, yet we still don't fully understand how these informal channels shape our beliefs.

The aim of the study is to investigate the ways in which people evaluate political opinions.

This research has been initiated by the researchers, Dr. Lauren Saling, Dr. Damiano Spina and PhD Candidate Fletcher Scott. Study results will be used by Fletcher Scott to obtain a PhD in Psychology.

This research is funded by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society.

3 What does participation in this research involve?

If you decide to take part in the research project, you will first be given a questionnaire asking about your age and currently a resident of the United States; this will determine if you are eligible to take part. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 1 minute.

If the screening questionnaire shows that you meet the requirements, then you will be able to participate in the research project. The screening questionnaire may show that you cannot participate in the research project.

If you are eligible to participate and decide to take part, you will be asked to respond to a set of news items. You will also be asked to provide non-identifying demographic information.

The expected duration of the study is approximately 10 minutes.

There are no costs associated with participating in this research project. You will be paid \$2.03US for your participation.

4 Other relevant information about the research project

Approximately 100 participants will take part in the study.

5 Do I have to take part in this research project?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information Sheet to sign and you will be given a copy to keep.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the researchers or with RMIT University.

Submitting your completed questionnaire is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw your responses any time before you have submitted the questionnaire. Once you have submitted it, your responses cannot be withdrawn because they are non-identifiable and therefore, we will not be able to tell which one is yours.

6 What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, you may appreciate contributing to knowledge. Possible benefits may include gaining new knowledge about world events and current news. The community will also benefit from your participation in the research. News consumers must constantly assess the reliability of news content and change their beliefs based on this feedback. Your data may aid in the creation of targeted interventions that help users engage with this process.

7 What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?

Psychological distress

You may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed because of your participation in the research project, please contact your GP or use the following resource

for country specific mental health support: Let's talk about mental health (<https://letstalkaboutmentalhealth.com.au/resources/>) or Checkpoint (<https://checkpointorg.com/global/>).

Privacy Concerns

This project will use an external site to create, collect and analyse data collected in a survey format. The site we are using is Qualtrics. If you agree to participate in this survey, the responses you provide will be stored on their host server. No personal information will be collected in the survey so none will be stored as data. Once we have completed our data collection and analysis, we will import the data to the RMIT server where it will be stored securely for five years. The data on the host server will then be deleted and expunged.

8 What if I withdraw from this research project?

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. However, given that your responses are anonymous, once submitted your responses cannot be withdrawn.

9 What happens when the research project ends?

Please email Fletcher Scott (s3954401@student.rmit.edu.au) or Lauren Saling (lauren.saling@rmit.edu.au) after December 2025 if you would like to receive a results summary.

How is the research project being conducted?

10 What will happen to information about me?

By continuing to the survey, you are consenting to the research team collecting and using information from you for the research project. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. No personal data will be collected, and none will be stored.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified. In the event of publication, anonymous data will be stored indefinitely in a data repository so that other researchers can verify study results if they so choose.

11 Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Dr. Lauren Saling, Dr. Damiano Spina and Fletcher Scott. The ARC Centre for Automated Decision-Making and Society.

12 Who has reviewed the research project?

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent Ethics review body. This research project has been approved by one of the RMIT University review bodies. This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2023). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

13 Further information and who to contact

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact Fletcher Scott at s3954401@student.rmit.edu.au or any of the following people:

Research contact person

Participant Information And Consent Form 9/01/2025

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Name	Damiano Spina
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14 Complaints

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

Reviewing HREC name	RMIT University
HREC Secretary	Pascal Bernard
Telephone	03 9925 1985
Email	humanethics@rmit.edu.au
Mailing address	Manager, Research Governance and Ethics RMIT University GPO Box 2476 MELBOURNE VIC 3001