Do citizens even want to hear the truth? Public attitudes towards evidence- informed policy making

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Public attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making

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Chapter for *Evaluation in the Post-Truth World*

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Abstract

Evaluations-informed policy making is often glorified to be the true approach to introduce and evaluate public policies. Yet is this view also shared by the public? In this chapter, we consider the question which attitudes citizens have toward scientific evidence and how these differ across political systems and individual characteristics. We present the results of a cross-sectional survey among some 9000 citizens in six countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland and the United States) that has been conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020/2021). The survey shows that public support for evidence substantially varies across countries and individuals. Post-truth countries show strong political polarization regarding the attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making. As we discuss, these findings might have import implications for evaluators and future research on evaluation, as they prompt the need for a paradigm shift toward more public participation in evaluations.

1. Introduction

Evidence-based policy making enjoys great popularity among governments and public administrations, who use this normative leitmotif in order to improve and justify public policies (Cairney, 2016; French, 2018; Head, 2016; Parsons, 2002). According to Radaelli (1995), reliable information and expert knowledge are an essential part of policy design and implementation. One source of evidence can be provided by evaluations. By relying on scientific procedures, evaluations systematically assess the impact of policy programs and make recommendations for policy makers. For a long time, research on evaluation proclaimed the credo that truth should be spoken to power (Perkins, 1995; Wildavsky, 1989). In recent years, many evaluators apply a more pragmatic stance though (e.g. Hoppe, 1999), also faced with the often limited utilization of evaluation findings in the political arena (Eberli, 2018; Frey, 2012; Weiss, 1998). Accordingly, an increasing number of policy makers and scholars, also in the evaluation field, now consistently talk about evidence *informed* policy making as a more realistic ambition to strive for (Head, 2016). While evidence informed policy making can be conceived as taken for granted, at least in policy communities in democratic societies (see Sanderson 2009), the same democratic principles also require us to consider what citizens themselves think of the use of evidence in policy making processes.

As the case of COVID-19 has clearly shown, the involvement of experts and evidence has not been free from criticism and triggered fierce debate. Also scholars increasingly reflect about the challenging position of citizens vis a vis expert involvement in policy making (Caramani, 2017; Dommett & Pearce, 2019; Pastorella, 2016). According to Bertsou (2021), governments face a conflicting dilemma when involving experts in political decisions, which in essence boils down to the classic discussion between input and output legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999). To put it in somewhat unnuanced terms, the inclusion of experts in the policy making process can help

ensuring effective public policies. Experts will follow their convictions to propose policy solutions that are based on the best available knowledge, and as such contribute to more effective policies that will benefit society. Also Bertsou & Caramani (2020) propagated that a regime can establish legitimacy on the basis of scientific knowledge, sector-specific experience and unattached interests of its members only (output legitimacy). This approach tends to be in tension, however, when highlighting governments' need for input legitimacy. The core democratic argument involves that governments rest on the foundation of public accountability. Citizens elect a political leadership, which subsequently pursues a political direction representing a substantial part of the population. Governments' performance can be rewarded or might be questioned again in the next elections, and, in the worst case, governments can even be voted out of office. The involvement of experts is said to challenge this accountability principle, as it by nature inhibits the risk of untransparent decision-making (Heldt & Herzog, 2021). It requires citizens to trust the procedures on which scientists rely, which are hard to understand and often not explained to the public (Bundi & Pattyn, 2022). Approaching it from this angle, the involvement of experts can also provoke distrust in governments. While both types of legitimacy are not unreconcilable per se, they do reflect different priorities. To put it in the well-known adagio of Scharpf (1999): Governing effective [or] democratic?

This contribution is situated against this background and probes into the complexity of evaluation in our institutional and political systems. More in particular, this chapter asks the following question: Are there differences in public attitudes toward evidence-informed policy and can these differences be attributed to political ideologies? Despite the increasing discussions on the topic, there is thus far little empirical knowledge on how citizens perceive the role of evidence in policy making, let alone across countries. Addressing this question is pertinent, especially in the wake of the emerging post-truth phenomenon. According to Suiter (2016), many contemporary democracies witnessed this "combination of policy blunders" after having experienced a severe economic crisis and facing the consequences of our globalized

world with a new hybrid media (bubble) system combining reality TV and social media. In a setting of post-truth politics, emotions are more dominant than actual facts. Moreover, as shown in the context of COVID-19, different groups with diverse political opinions often do not possess a common sets of facts. Marshall & Drieschova (2018) argue that post-truth politics has been made possible by two distinct conditions. One the one hand, traditional media (e.g. newspapers, television and radio) have lost their monopoly to provide information and disseminated them through new platforms that could be established due to technological innovations (Cosentino, 2020). On the other hand, and as empirically confirmed by other studies (Bundi & Pattyn, 2022; Gauchat, 2015), an increasing share of citizens distrust political elites, traditional media, and expert knowledge. This also drives people to rely on alternative sources of information, other than scientific evidence.

Knowing which citizen communities are more open or more skeptical about evidence in policy making, can help us developing more targeted strategies overcoming this. The empirical corpus of this chapter revolves around the results of a cross-sectional survey conducted in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland and the United States. The survey, measuring public attitudes towards evidence-based policy-making, was launched in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021). The selected countries reflect a most different case selection (Seawright & Gerring, 2008), covering both parliamentary and non-parliamentary democracies (Siaroff, 2003) and countries with different administrative systems (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010; Turgeon & Gagnon, 2013). Most crucially, our sample also provides variance for the post-truth discourse. Political observers particularly identified an increase of post-truth politics in Australia and the United States, while the other countries in the sample restrained from this. The results put empirical flesh on the theoretical discussion about how citizens value evidence based policy making. As we will show, support for evidence strongly varies across countries and across citizen profiles. In the post-truth countries of our sample, political polarization seems especially strongly related to attitudes towards using evidence in policy making. The empirical

results bring important implications for evaluators and future research on evaluation, which merit careful consideration.

The chapter is structured as following. In the next section, we further delve into the role of citizens in policy making, which explains why we should care about public attitudes towards evidence, and evaluation in particular. Next, we present the major findings from our empirical study in the six countries surveyed. This sets the stage for a reflection about lessons for evaluation research and research on evaluation in particular. Our study can be read as a call for a more systematic research agenda on the topic.

2. Citizens and Evidence-Informed Policy-Making

Why care about citizen perceptions of evidence informed policy making? To start with, it is important to consider citizens' possible roles in the political process (Frederickson, 1991). Citizens can act as interest groups (pluralist), consumers (public choice), voters (legislative), and clients. They not only delegate their policy preferences to the political elites, as a restricted view on citizens would imply, but they can also be conceived as one of the most important stakeholders of public policy. Given their importance, the participation of citizens in the policy making process increasingly gets attention in practice, in fact long after their involvement has been advocated in literature (Fung, 2015; Kim, 2008; Michels & De Graaf, 2017; Roberts, 2015). Citizen participation has been particularly conceived as an added value for policy design, which is a development activity for and with the populations (Smith & Ingram, 2002).

In the same line of thinking, citizen participation enjoys a reinvigorated popularity in the evaluation field. Almost fifty years ago, Caputo (1973) argued that citizens should take part in the evaluation of programs by organizing citizen assessments of policies, next to experts. Also, recent publications draw attention to the role of citizens in evaluation (Boyle et al., 2008; Bundi & Pattyn, 2021; Burton, 2009; Hanberger, 2018; N. Norris, 2015; Picciotto, 2017). Inspired by

Fung (2015), it can be argued that citizen participation has much to offer for policy makers: first, and echoing the above argument about input legitimacy, it offers the promise of improved legitimacy. Citizens who are not members of the political arena can represent interests that are shared by many other citizens and which do not necessarily reflect electoral incentives (Bäckstrand, 2006). Moreover, citizens may offer local knowledge embedded in a specific cultural and often practical context which evaluators may not be aware of (Juntti et al., 2009). More importantly, citizen involvement can provide epistemological benefits: citizens may be more open to new inputs and more knowledgeable about how public policy works in particular in social communities (Fischer, 2000). Second, citizen participation can foster effective governance, especially when dealing with wicked multisectoral problems (Mukherjee et al., 2021). Citizens, unlike political actors for example, may be well positioned to assess trade-offs between ethical or material values, or they may be able to frame a policy problem in a more feasible way than experts (Fung, 2015). Citizens can provide new perspectives that can promote the validity of certain policies (Juntti, 2009). Finally, citizen participation has the potential in principle to reduce social injustices that may occur through governance mechanisms (Fung, 2015). This argument does not automatically apply to all citizens, though Binnema & Michels (2021) have shown that deliberation forums often remain with an educational bias, which results in an output that largely reflects the wishes and preferences of those attending and jeopardize the promises of citizen participation.

Thus far, empirical evidence on the actual democratic contribution of citizen participation is ambiguous and seems to depend on many contingent elements (Abels, 2007). This is particularly true for evaluations, in which citizens often serve as an important stakeholder group (Bundi & Pattyn, 2021). For instance, Kim, (2008) shows that citizen participation may have improved the realization and outcome of the evaluation using the example of a participatory evaluation in Korea. While citizen participation has not led to more transparent evaluations reports by showing input information nor did it improve the quality of the evaluation, it has

nonetheless increased the diffusion of evaluation results amongst government officials and the general public. Moreover, the participation process was followed by an increased evaluation use in professional associations.

Regardless of the actual added value of citizen participation in evaluation, one can critically ask whether these investments in participatory evaluation make sense if groups of citizens do not support the role of evidence in democracies. As mentioned, there is hardly any research on whether citizens really care about evidence. While decision makers may have strong interest to base policies on empirical evidence, it is not rational per se to expect citizens to support the use of evidence in policy making, as they often know little about the process leading to this evidence (Baghramian & Croce, 2021) or have little trust in experts (Bundi & Pattyn, 2022). Hence, what do citizens actually think about the use of scientific evidence in policy making, and can we discern particular patterns when comparing citizen groups?

3. Public Attitudes Towards Evidence-Informed Policy Making

In order to examine public attitudes toward evidence-informed policymaking, we conducted a cross-national survey in six countries – Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland, and the United States – between November 2020 and January 2021 (N=8'749). As mentioned, the countries reflect a sample of very diverse cases (Seawright & Gerring, 2008), including countries with stronger and weaker tendencies towards post-truth politics. One can expect that these different political cultures will also influence how citizens perceive the role of evidence in policy making. The survey was furthermore conducted in the peak of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in fall/winter 2020. Most governments decided to introduce different measures to limit the spread of the virus. Amongst other things, countries decided to restrict personal liberties (e.g., free movement) or shut down certain sectors (e.g., gastronomy, schools). Even if individuals – and the survey respondents – did not directly contract the virus

or knew somebody who did so, they were financially or socially affected by the public measures (Betsch et al., 2020; Clemente-Suárez et al., 2020). In doing so, since the beginning of the current global health crisis, governments' responses have hardly been more under the flagship of evidence-informed policy making. Governments were (and still are) in active exchange with scientists to cope with the health crisis (Forster & Heinzel, 2021; Stevens, 2020). This makes the COVID-19 setting a particularly interesting context in order to study public attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making. Table 1 provides an overview of the sample.

Table 1: Overview of Sample

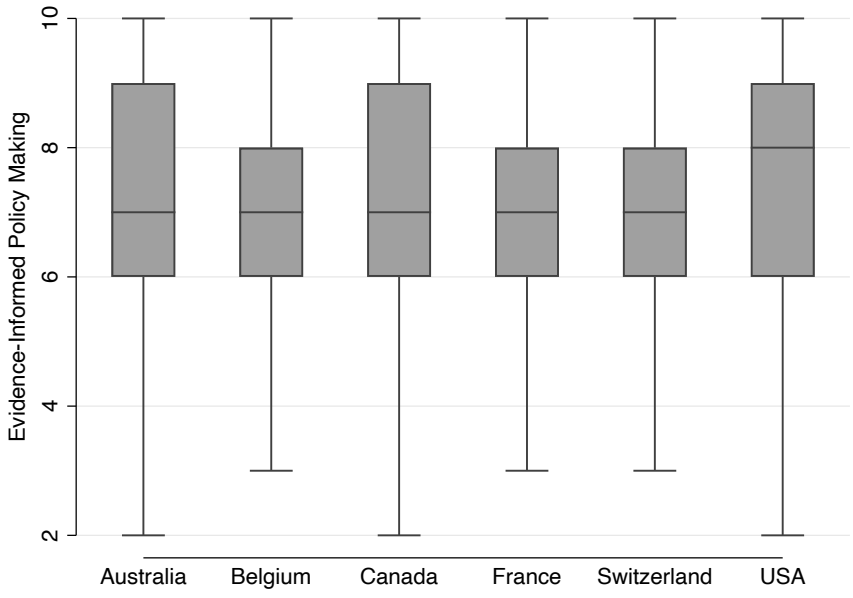
Country	N	Female (%)	Age group (mean)	University Degree (%)	COVID-19 Handling (mean)	EIPM (mean)
Australia	1'266	58%	3.54	42	7.30	7.42
Belgium	1'512	51%	3.17	49	4.46	7.23
Canada	1'220	60%	3.92	52	6.03	7.39
France	1'220	65%	2.97	53	4.22	7.02
Switzerland	2'270	46%	3.24	48	5.87	7.29
United States	1'261	55%	3.63	52	5.13	7.33
Total	8'749	55%	3.39	49	5.53	7.28

Note: The respondents were divided into six age groups: 18-24 (1) to 65+ (6); COVID-19 Affected: I have been personally affected by the pandemic in a negative way; COVID-19 handling: 0 (extremely bad) to 10 (extremely well); Evidence-informed policy making: 0 (disagree) to 10 (fully agree).

The sample contains at least 1'200 respondents per country, with Switzerland being deliberately oversampled to get sufficient citizens of its three different linguistic groups. While the sample is slightly different in terms of socio-cultural characteristics such as gender, age and education, the table also reveals that respondents from different countries have evaluated their governments COVID-19 crisis management differently. Whereas Australians perceived the crisis handling as very positive, the French, Belgian and American respondents are much more critical about their political decision makers. Swiss and Canadians are situated in between these two country groups.

In order to measure public attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making, we asked the respondents whether they fully disagree (0) or fully agree (10) with the following statement: "*I would like to see policy-makers use scientific evidence more often to make decisions on specific issues*". Even though the average attitude towards evidence-informed policy making is quite high with 7.28 and does not vary substantially across countries, Figure 1 shows that there is more variance between Australia, the United States and Canada. The respondents from Belgium, France and Switzerland are closer to each other. This suggests that external factors are likely related to citizen attitudes about evidence use in politics.

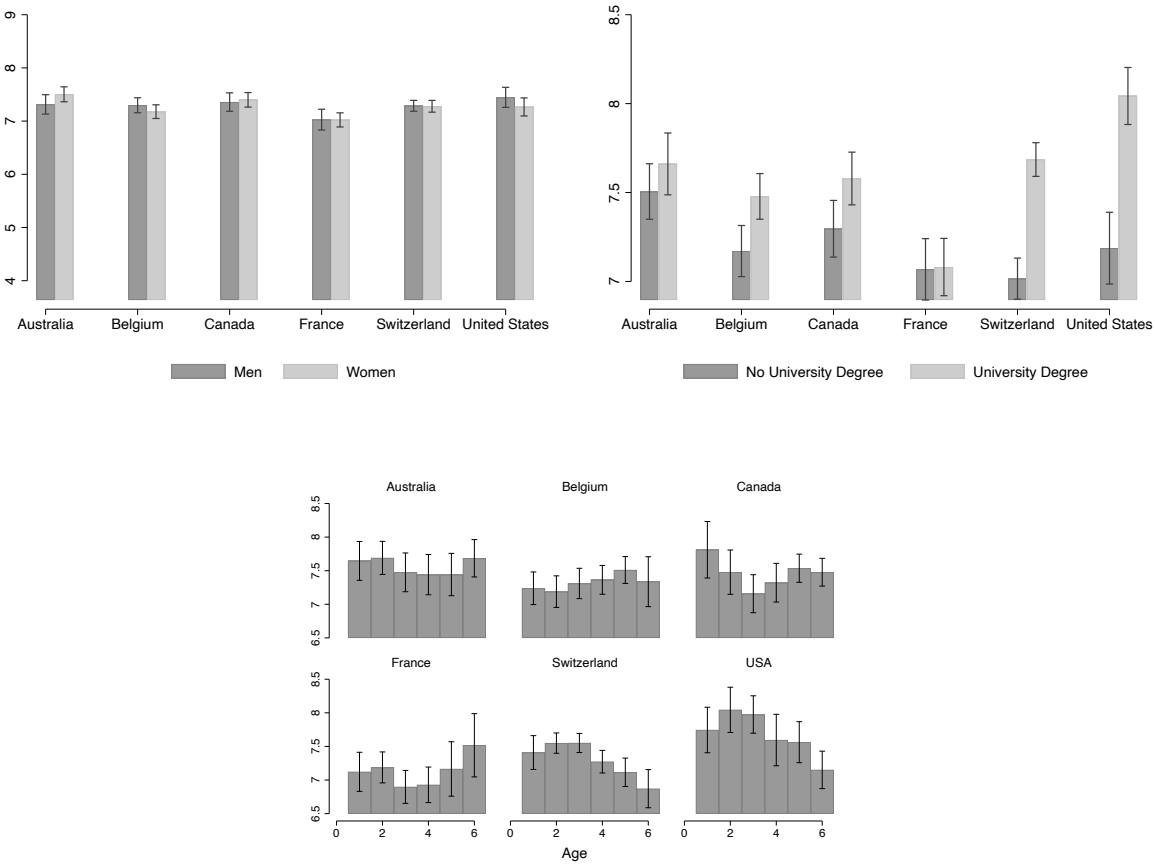
Figure 1: Levels of Attitudes towards Evidence-Informed Policy Making



Looking at socio-economic variables, we firstly see that it is very likely that respondents with a university degree are more positive towards scientific evidence, as they can be expected to be more familiar with such evidence in principle, due to their educational training. Secondly, women might have a more positive view towards scientific evidence, consistent with Bundi et al.'s (2021) finding that they more often tend to use evaluation results. Third, elder respondents should show more positive attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making. Prior studies

argued that experience level influences the use of evidence (Bober & Bartlett, 2004; Boyer & Langbein, 1991; Johnson et al., 2009; Marra, 2003). Of these variables, however, only education proves to be positively related to attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making. Gender and age do not seem to be linked (Figures 2-4).

Figure 2-4: Evidence-Informed Policy Making, Gender, Education and Age

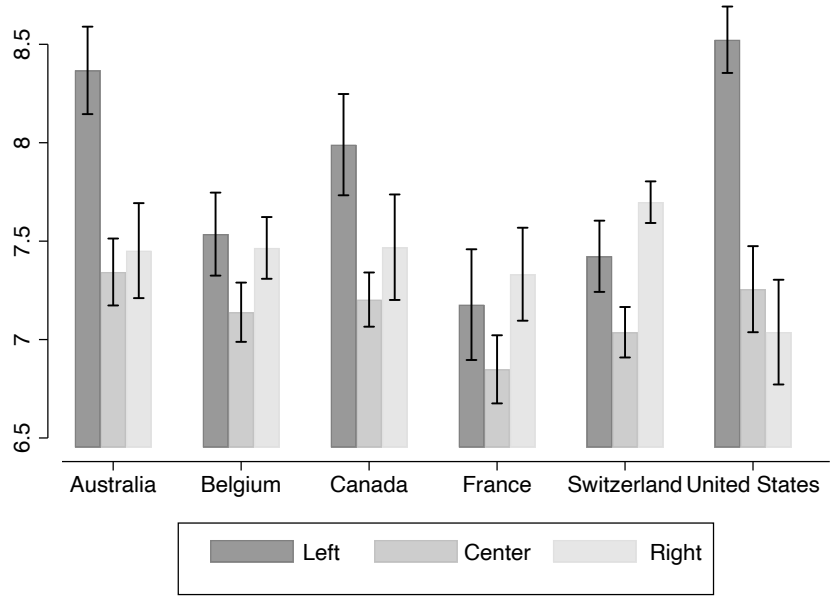


In particular in Switzerland and the United States – where fewer citizens graduate from universities – respondents with a university degree have a significant higher level of support for evidence-informed policy making. This difference is smaller in Australia, Belgium and Canada, even though university graduates from these countries are also more positive towards evidence use. There are hardly any observable differences in France. As to gender differences, women tend to be more positive in Australia, Canada and the United States. They are generally

less fond of evidence in Belgium. No such trend can be observed in France or Switzerland. Finally, the relationship between attitudes towards evidence use and age tends to vary between countries. We only observe increased values for elder respondents in France and Belgium. In Switzerland and the United States (and to some degree Canada), in contrast, we find a rather negative association between age and evidence use. There are no significant differences across age groups however, which suggests that we must focus on other factors to explain attitudes towards evaluation use.

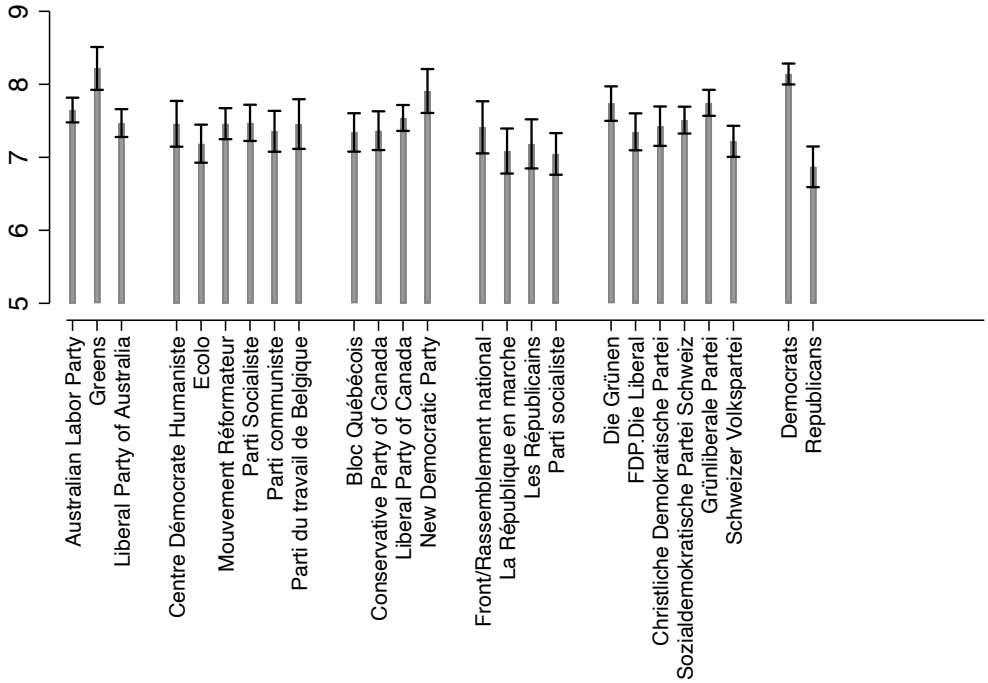
We therefore turn our attention to political ideologies, which has often been associated with post-truth politics. One should be careful in interpreting the link. Norris et al. (2020) did not find differences across partisan identification, partisan strength, or their affiliation with the losing side in the perception of fair elections for the United States. Instead, they pointed at ideological extremism – independent of party affiliation and partisan strength – as the main factor leading voters to inflate problems with the fairness of the vote count, which draws an important distinction between partisanship and ideology. While it is possible to have a strong attachment to political parties, citizens may not necessarily espouse extreme ideological beliefs that contribute to the "aforementioned paranoid style" of American elections. Despite that, previous studies indicated that citizens who ideologically lean to the political right are in general more skeptical towards scientific evidence due to their aversion about uncertainty and ineffectually that they typically associate with science (Beck et al., 1992; Gauchat, 2015). To test this assumption, we asked the respondents to place themselves on a scale from 0 (left) to 10 (right). Subsequently, we have classified the responses in three political groups: Left (0-3), center (4-6) and right (7-10). Figure 5 shows the results for attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making and left-right ideology.

Figure 5: Evidence-Informed Policy Making and Left-Right Ideology



The figure shows that there is indeed a tendency that respondents leaning towards the right political spectrum tend to be more skeptical towards evidence-informed policy making. In particular in post-truth countries (Australia and United States), there is a strong difference between left and center/right respondents. The same observations – albeit to a lesser degree – can be observed in Canada, while in the European countries the center respondents are less positive towards evidence use. Thus, and in contrast to Norris et al. (2020), we find that center leaning citizens tend to distrust scientific evidence, which is interesting to highlight.

Figure 6: Evidence-Informed Policy Making and Parties



More nuance can be added when bringing political party dynamics into the picture. Survey respondents were also asked to indicate for which party they usually vote, or which party is generally closest to them. Figure 6 illustrates the average mean for attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making for different party voters. As can be deduced from the figure, it confirms the observations made for political ideology. In our sample's post-truth countries – if we may generalize it this way – we not only have strong differences between left and right parties, but also voters for the Australian Green Party and for the democrats are among those with the most positive attitude towards evidence use. Thus, suggesting a polarization within the country. In comparison, Republicans score by far the most negative attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making. The other countries do not show significant differences across party voters, even though voters for more progressive parties (New Democratic Party in Canada; Die Grünen and Grünliberale Schweiz in Switzerland) also have a significantly more positive attitude towards evidence use. To our knowledge, this finding has not yet been shown in other research.

While adding nuance to existing scholarship, our findings should be treated with care. We signal the following limitations. First, the results are based on survey results, which do not always correspond to the real preferences due to misreporting and self-selection bias (see Bundi et al. 2018; Krawiec & Sliwowski 2022). We cannot exclude the possibility that respondents do not want to report their real preferences due to a social desirability bias. Similarly, citizens may have difficulties to form their opinion about a complex issue as the use of evidence in policy making. Second, we aggregated the responses of individuals to the country and the party level for our analysis. Even though we can observe some differences between countries and parties, extreme positions could neutralize themselves. Third, evaluations are usually carried out at the program or organizational level, which are both locally shaped. Hence, public attitudes towards evidence-informed policy making can provide some insights about the general evaluation culture in a specific country, but this information might be less relevant for single evaluation projects. It may well be the case, for instance, that citizens are open to evidence use at national level, but more restrictive about the use of evaluation findings in the context of specific policy interventions. Complementing our research with a more fine-grained analysis at local, policy field, or project level could help to unpack this in more depth.

4. Implications for evaluation research and research on evaluation

Having discussed these empirical findings, the important question remains of what they imply for evaluators, being the producers of one important type of scientific evidence, and for scholars investigating evaluation practice. The survey results clearly show that support for the use of scientific evidence in policy making should not be taken for granted, which is a key element to take into account when thinking about further institutionalizing evaluation in the public sector or developing evaluation or evaluator capacity. In particular, less educated people tend to be

more skeptical about science. Political ideology also matters, which can be relevant to consider when designing an evaluation.

Thus, we invite researchers on evaluation to more systematically engage with the topic, and sketch some avenues, related to conceptual and methodological lines of research, that may be worth investigating, but that have received little attention thus far in the evaluation literature. Investigating these becomes even more important in a setting of increased post-truth policy making, which can be expected to pose major challenges in the upcoming decades. Without citizen support for evidence use in policy making, government trust can be severely compromised and lead to increasing societal polarization (Fridman et al., 2021). The findings also prompt serious normative reflection. Even within countries, as our study showed, different communities display different attitudes about the inclusion of scientific evidence. Simply ignoring resistance against evidence and evaluation is probably not the right answer. Instead, citizens' fears are best recognized and actively taken on board, as such also to improve the relevance and effectiveness of evaluations themselves. Conceptually, we investigated citizen support for evidence informed policy making in general. We cannot rule out, of course, that citizens display various attitudes towards different evaluation types. There are different evaluation models, which involve much variation in terms of potential for citizen involvement themselves (Bundi & Pattyn, 2021). Also stakeholder-oriented models, which have been designed to bring 'citizens closer to evaluations', display much variation in this regard. For instance, the empowerment evaluation model has especially been developed to improve programs in a participatory process. Such an evaluation helps program managers, staff and beneficiaries to carry out their own evaluation together, with external evaluators acting as consultants and service providers (Fettermann 2001). In this sense, citizens can be conceived as evaluators who assess the object of evaluation themselves. In contrast, the participatory evaluation model is an approach that involves the stakeholders of the evaluated object directly in the evaluation process. They can be involved at any stage of the evaluation process, i.e., from

establishing the evaluation design, to data collection, analysis and reporting (Cousins & Earl, 1992). This may enable citizens to provide new insights as part of the target or beneficiary group. Lastly, cross-cultural evaluation approaches endeavor to be responsive to the cultural context of the evaluation. This model highlights the social relations among stakeholders in evaluation and acknowledges that program evaluators and program participants may have a different cultural background (Chouinard & Cousins, 2009). Citizens with different cultural backgrounds could serve as baseline to adjust evaluation findings.

It may be worth studying how citizens value these various models, and whether citizens who are not in favor of scientific evidence, reject all these models altogether, or nonetheless see potential for policy making based on particular models. In the same vein, and related to this, our study points out the need for more in-depth knowledge on 'why' citizens are skeptical about the use of scientific evidence. Having more insights into the specific causal mechanisms that make citizens more open towards evidence, or which make them rather reluctant can be useful in designing ways to overcome potential obstacles, to the extent possible. Of course, there may be multiple pathways to foster citizen support for evidence, which requires more research about how contextual factors may foster or jeopardize this. Without understanding how broader political and societal pressure is shaping how citizens approach evidence, it will be hard developing evaluation systems that are suited to overcoming such reluctance. Depending on a country's civic epistemology (Jasanoff, 2011) or knowledge regime (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014), citizens may have developed different preferences about what constitutes legitimate knowledge in a particular setting. In other words, additional cross-country research beyond the OECD countries included in our study would strongly benefit the evaluation field. Different communities likely developed their own language and rationalities as to how scientific evidence and evaluation is perceived (Oliver & Boaz, 2019). Assessing these competing logics more in depth can help developing strategies to bring these different rationalities together.

From a more methodological lens, the study raises the question whether evaluators are sufficiently equipped to deal with communities that are resistant towards evidence, and evaluation in particular. Many evaluations will cut across groups with stakeholders that may have different views on evidence. Evaluators may face hard times positioning themselves in such heterogenous settings. The challenge will probably be most pronounced for evaluations relying on participatory methods, which by nature depend on citizen input and where citizens' diverse opinions will be the most apparent. Ideally, the evaluation toolbox can therefore be expanded with strategies that can help evaluators facilitating and moderating between different citizen communities, or that enable evaluators to combine expert driven evaluation methods with more participatory methods capable overcoming citizen skepticism about the evaluation enterprise. Similar challenges will exist in evaluation settings that cut across different national boundaries, and potentially different post-truth cultural settings. Multiple research methods, ranging from participatory observations to experimental studies, should be used to analyze and test which evaluation instruments may work. Preferably, evaluators can bring together different examples of situations in which citizens' initial resistance towards evaluation in post-truth settings were overcome, as to draw lessons about what works in which contexts using which methods.

Interestingly, we know from other research fields that the inclusion and participation of citizens – even though they might be skeptical about science in general and evidence use – helps to improve the attitudes towards evidence (see Aarons et al. 2012). The same may apply to evaluations, although we lack robust evidence to make this claim. Nonetheless, a careful well designed participatory approach towards evaluation may be a useful strategy to consider, also in settings with citizens skeptical of evaluations. And even when more expert driven evaluation methods are used, a *citizen-friendly approach* is preferably strived for, in line with the 'res publica' that evaluations are meant to serve. It is incumbent upon evaluators to think more conceptually how this can look like. In practical terms, this could range from setting up an

evaluation communication strategy that uses simple language to setting up citizen panels that discuss evaluation results. While one should not be naïve about the results such citizen-minded approach may bring, it may help making citizens more aware of the value of using evidence in policy making, and vice versa can it help evaluators to develop a better understanding of 'what matters' for citizens in particular settings. For evaluators, developing citizen-friendly evaluation environments is a delicate undertaking, however, as they should be careful not to end up as uncritical propagandists of science in public. Even though evaluations can help assuring that the public receives the same facts, we do not promote blind trust in science or evaluations. An 'evaluating society' only merits the label, if it promotes a critical and open attitude towards science and expertise. It is part of the professional duty of evaluators to help developing such critical mindset. We could not put it better than in the words of Schwandt (2008), which are more relevant than ever:

> "*For an evaluating society to flourish, citizens and professionals have to develop a capacity to be inquisitive, systematic in their inquiry, judicious in their claims, truth seeking, analytical, intellectually humble, sympathetic to opposing points of view, self-critical, and open-minded— not simply open-minded in the sense of being tolerant of other points of view, but open-minded in the sense of recognizing the challenges to one's own way of seeing things that arise from others' ways of making distinctions of worth*."

Besides lending support to educating for 'intelligent belief in evaluation' (Schwandt, 2008), such society will only flourish if evaluators themselves actively embrace the known unknowns and unknown unknowns in evaluations, and actively communicates about these with citizens. Only under these conditions, we believe that evaluators can secure a sustainable and credible position in an evaluating society challenged by post-truth thinking.

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