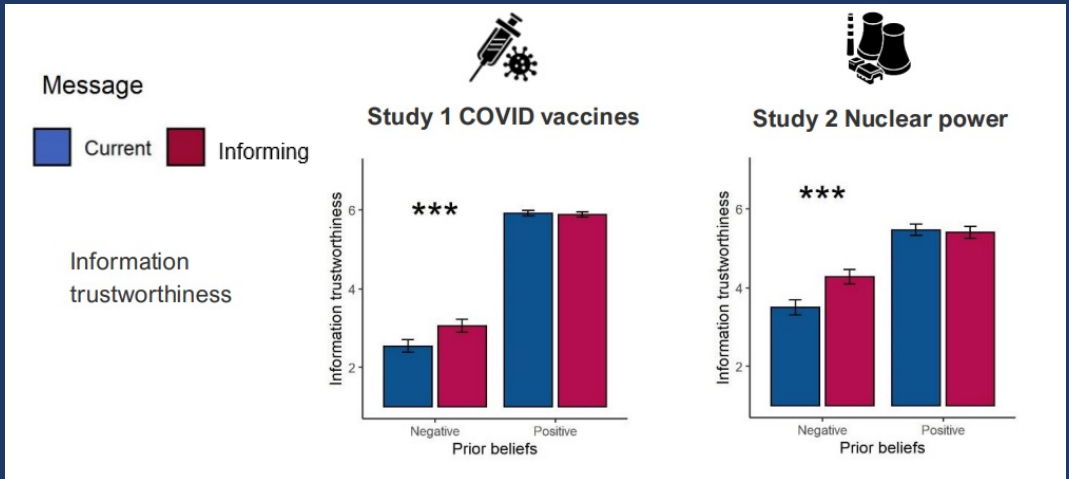


We believe that evidence should be communicated to decision-makers in such a way as to be both **useful** and **trustworthy**: so that the decision-maker can make up their own mind, **informed** by the evidence, **not persuaded** by the communicator.

To achieve this, we suggested that the evidence should be presented in a balanced way (not cherry-picked, or spun to make a point – but not aiming for false balance either); that uncertainties and limitations of the evidence and its quality should be made clear; and that misperceptions and misunderstandings should be pre-empted and explained.

What effect would this approach really have on audiences if used in policy-level communication? We tested traditional, persuasive communications against the same information adapted to be balanced.



Balanced, informative communications were considered more trustworthy, particularly among those with more skeptical views.



If you want to try this approach with your communications, we hope you'll find this checklist helpful.



Can we communicate evidence to support those making policy-level decisions in the same way that we communicate evidence to those making individual decisions?

We think that a lot of evidence communication lessons can be applied to communicating policy-level evidence, but they are complicated by four main factors:

- The impacts of a policy on different subgroups can be very different, and a policy-maker must be able to weigh up winners and losers and so see the different subgroups at a glance, and the outcomes of interest might be very far-ranging, as the policy-maker has to take into account more than just the impacts that they personally think relevant
- The outcomes of interest (if quantified) are likely to be measured on very different scales (e.g. financial, health, environmental, educational), making them difficult to weigh against each other
- Policies may have impacts that play out over multiple generations, and the changing outcomes over long time periods are hard to communicate
- Due to the long timescales and the complexity of relationships between policies and outcomes, there are often very large uncertainties involved

Nevertheless, groups such as the UK's What Works centres have worked on designing summary tables and graphics to communicate policy impacts. We did a study to find out what outcomes were particularly important to users and policy-makers, and how they interpreted the current graphics.

We found that users particularly wanted to see policy effectiveness and quality of evidence information, and policymakers also wanted to know the financial costs and negative consequences.

