

Appendix

Eight-item Likert scale for measuring self-reported selective exposure (adopted from: Tsfati, 2016)

Please indicate how much the following statements apply or do not apply to you. (1 = “does not apply at all” to 5 = “absolutely applies”)

- (1) I try to avoid exposure to media outlets expressing irritating opinions.
- (2) I try to expose myself only to media outlets and news messages that are in line with my own attitudes.
- (3) I try to mainly use media that overlaps with my own views.
- (4) I never use particular media sources on the basis of their political orientation.
- (5) If I need to select between two op-ed pieces, I will choose the one that is closer to my opinions.
- (6) As far as particular political issues are concerned, I prefer to use media sources that represent positions similar to my own.
- (7) I do not read any articles that argue against my convictions.
- (8) I stop reading an article if it takes a position I do not share.

Description of the quasi-experimental design

Before we provide more details on the procedures of our main study in more depth, we need to describe the steps we conducted beforehand to develop and validate our stimuli and further materials used in our survey-experiment. We strive for a maximum of external and internal validity in our experimental condition. This aim was achieved by extensive pilot testing the stimulus material that was ultimately used in the main survey experiment. We developed stimuli on eleven separate topics, tapping into very different political fields from economic, social and legal domains. In particular, we used news articles' snippets touching upon free trade, adoption rights to same-sex couples, climate change, international military interventions, stricter privacy laws, penalty reform, enforcing border patrols, stricter migration policies, enforcing austerity measures, private pension reforms, abortion, gun laws, social security, and mandatory vaccination. These stimuli were small article snippets ranging from 45 to 60 words with a headline (5 to 10 words) and a short introduction (40 to 50 words) into the article as well as a label for each topic such as privacy laws or free trade (see Figure 4). These news article snippets were translated into six different languages (Danish, English, German, French, Italian, Polish) by professional translators. To ensure that the length of the snippet does not influence article selection, articles from the same language group ranged on a maximum of 5 words in total length to keep them equal across topics. To enhance external validity, the news article snippets were furthermore cross-evaluated by journalists in the individual countries to mimic the journalistic styles within the specific countries. As participants were to select the news article snippets from the news overview and afterwards read the corresponding article, we further developed full-length articles for each of the eight news article snippets that ranged between 350 to 370 words (see Figure 5).

News article snippets were then thoroughly evaluated in a pilot test in all five countries (N = 600) with samples representative in terms of sex, age, and education for the individual national population. In the pilot test, we randomized the news article snippets, so each participant received ten snippets from five different topics, with both the pro and contra article for each topic.

Following Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2009) we then tested whether for each news article snippet, whether participants perceived the short introductory texts as similarly interesting while also perceiving them to advocate different political positions on the issue. To test this, we subtracted the values for perceived interest of the pro article from the contra article for each topic and conducted a one sample T-test separately for each country (results: Table 2

& 3). The same procedure was used for the perceived position of the article news snippets. We selected the topics free trade, privacy laws, penalty reform, and migration policies as those topics were comparable in terms of interest (the score does not show a significant difference from zero) and position (the score does show a significant difference from zero) of the article snippets across all five countries and six languages.

We conducted our study in two waves. The first part of the study was used to let participants indicate their positions on eight individual political topics (four of which later served as topics for our quasi-experiment). Participants evaluated eight statements on various political topics on whether they agree or disagree on the position advocated on a 100-point sliding-scale. This measure was later used to evaluate a person's stance on the individual issue and whether he/she later engaged with articles representing similar or dissimilar views, by splitting the measure at the midpoint and excluding participants who did not show a leaning to either side (n=63).

In the second wave, participants were told they were testing a news online magazine that focuses on current political issues in the individual's country. Participants were invited to browse the news overview and to select as many topics as they wish to read. For each participant, we randomized the order of the eight news article snippets. Participants were free to leave the news overview at any point. The news overview ended automatically after five minutes. The articles participants selected were unobtrusively tracked. Additionally, we also tracked the reading time of each article. In a next step, we compared the selection of articles by each participant with his prior indicated attitudes (indicated in Wave 1 of the survey). This allowed us to build two scores, one for the number of attitude-consistent and one for attitude-inconsistent articles chosen. We subtracted the score for attitude-inconsistent articles from the score for attitude-consistent articles selected, this way positive numbers indicated more attitude-consistent exposure while negative scores revealed a stronger tendency towards cross-cutting exposure. Finally, we weighted the score by dividing it by the total number of articles a participant chose overall.

Table 2. Results from one-sample T-test comparing levels of interest between pro and contra article

		T	df	95% C.I.		N	M	SD
				Lower	Upper			
CH	Free Trade	.961	98	-.156	.442	99	.143	1.041
	Adoption Rights	1.268	96	-.112	.495	97	.192	1.035
	Climate Politics	1.345	97	-.134	.676	98	.271	1.395
	Military Interventions	-.880	98	-.469	.184	99	-.143	1.137
	Privacy Laws	.136	97	-.288	.329	98	.021	1.062
	Penalty Reform	-.943	94	-.488	.177	95	-.156	1.107
	Border Patrol	1.055	98	-.203	.652	99	.225	1.490
	Migration Policies	-1.138	94	-.554	.154	95	-.200	1.179
	Austerity	-1.135	98	-.453	.126	99	-.163	1.007
	Private Pensions	-.260	96	-.372	.287	97	-.043	1.122
	Abortion	-1.542	99	-.599	.079	100	-.260	1.192
	Gun Laws	-1.220	97	-.497	.122	98	-.188	1.065
	Social Security	1.300	96	-.117	.542	97	.213	1.122
	Mandatory Vaccination	.488	97	-.260	.427	98	.083	1.182
IT	Free Trade	1.614	48	-.065	.596	49	.265	1.151
	Adoption Rights	-.925	48	-.713	.264	49	-.225	1.699
	Climate Politics	4.410**	47	.544	1.456	48	1.000	1.571
	Military Interventions	-1.423	47	-.553	.095	48	-.229	1.115
	Privacy Laws	1.030	47	-.119	.369	48	.125	.841
	Penalty Reform	1.864	50	-.033	.896	51	.431	1.652
	Border Patrol	3.069*	48	.211	1.013	49	.612	1.397
	Migration Policies	.204	46	-.377	.462	47	.043	1.429
	Austerity	-2.046*	46	-.844	-.007	47	-.426	1.426

	Private Pensions	-1.086	46	-.547	.164	47	-.192	1.209
	Abortion	-.808	45	-.683	.292	46	-.196	1.641
	Gun Laws	.616	46	-.241	.454	47	.106	1.184
	Social Security	-1.890	44	-.643	.021	45	-.311	1.104
	Mandatory Vaccination	.683	46	-.207	.420	47	.106	1.068
	Free Trade	.141	47	-.276	.317	48	.021	1.021
	Adoption Rights	-1.372	45	-.644	.122	46	-.261	1.290
	Climate Politics	1.091	45	-.147	.495	46	.174	1.081
	Military Interventions	.000	44	-.264	.264	45	.000	.879
	Privacy Laws	1.443	46	-.109	.662	47	.277	1.314
	Penalty Reform	.961	43	-.125	.352	44	.114	.784
PL	Border Patrol	1.882	48	-.022	.675	49	.327	1.214
	Migration Policies	.953	50	-.195	.548	51	.177	1.322
	Austerity	-.252	47	-.375	.292	48	-.042	1.148
	Private Pensions	.167	46	-.235	.277	47	.021	.872
	Abortion	.216	42	-.389	.482	43	.047	1.413
	Gun Laws	-.866	48	-.475	.189	49	-.143	1.155
	Social Security	1.532	48	-.070	.519	49	.225	1.026
	Mandatory Vaccination	.772	50	-.189	.424	51	.118	1.089
	Free Trade	-1.566	42	-.586	.074	43	-.256	1.071
	Adoption Rights	2.192*	42	.030	.715	43	.372	1.113
Climate Politics	2.676**	39	.134	.966	40	.550	1.300	
US	Military Interventions	-1.451	41	-.627	.103	42	-.262	1.170
	Privacy Laws	1.962	46	-.008	.604	47	.298	1.041
	Penalty Reform	1.045	43	-.148	.466	44	.159	1.010
	Border Patrol	-3.607**	44	-.935	-.265	45	-.600	1.116

	Migration Policies	-1.503	45	-.560	.081	46	-.239	1.079
	Austerity	-.339	40	-.339	.242	41	-.049	.921
	Private Pensions	-1.000	40	-.368	.125	41	-.122	.781
	Abortion	-2.517*	46	-.881	-.098	47	-.489	1.333
	Gun Laws	.401	44	-.269	.402	45	.067	1.116
	Social Security	-.221	44	-.449	.360	45	-.044	1.348
	Mandatory Vaccination	-2.183*	46	-.613	-.025	47	-.319	1.002
	Free Trade	.387	46	-.268	.396	47	.064	1.131
	Adoption Rights	.573	44	-.280	.502	45	.111	1.301
	Climate Politics	2.657**	48	.154	1.112	49	.633	1.667
	Military Interventions	.000	41	-.300	.300	42	.000	.963
	Privacy Laws	1.336	43	-.127	.627	44	.250	1.241
	Penalty Reform	-1.320	44	-.674	.141	45	-.267	1.355
	Border Patrol	.651	48	-.256	.501	49	.122	1.317
DK	Migration Policies	.311	41	-.392	.535	42	.071	1.488
	Austerity	-.746	40	-.543	.250	41	-.146	1.256
	Private Pensions	-1.108	43	-.705	.205	44	-.250	1.496
	Abortion	-.438	47	-.466	.299	48	-.083	1.318
	Gun Laws	.961	44	-.244	.688	45	.222	1.551
	Social Security	-.738	44	-.580	.269	45	-.156	1.414
	Mandatory Vaccination	.302	45	-.370	.501	46	.065	1.467

Table 3. Results from one-sample T-test comparing perceived issue position between pro and contra article

		T	df	95% C.I.		N	M	SD
				Lower	Upper			
CH	Free Trade	8.619***	47	1.677	2.698	49	.143	1.041
	Adoption Rights	5.293***	46	1.028	2.291	47	.192	1.035
	Climate Politics	7.756***	48	1.633	2.776	48	.271	1.395
	Military Interventions	8.918***	47	1.872	2.962	49	-.143	1.137
	Privacy Laws	5.076***	47	.981	2.269	48	.021	1.062
	Penalty Reform	7.414***	42	1.659	2.899	45	-.156	1.107
	Border Patrol	10.175***	49	2.167	3.233	49	.225	1.490
	Migration Policies	6.689***	44	1.413	2.632	45	-.200	1.179
	Austerity	-3.410**	45	-1.591	-.409	49	-.163	1.007
	Private Pensions	1.879	42	-.035	.965	47	-.043	1.122
	Abortion	8.147***	51	1.609	2.661	50	-.260	1.192
	Gun Laws	5.494***	47	1.096	2.362	48	-.188	1.065
	Social Security	5.520***	47	.940	2.018	47	.213	1.122
	Mandatory Vaccination	5.470***	45	1.140	2.469	48	.083	1.182
	IT	Free Trade	6.147***	46	1.188	2.344	47	1.766
Adoption Rights		4.719**	49	.781	1.939	50	1.360	2.038
Climate Politics		7.027***	47	1.413	2.546	48	1.979	1.951
Military Interventions		4.424**	45	.770	2.056	46	1.413	2.166
Privacy Laws		4.043**	48	.564	1.681	49	1.122	1.943
Penalty Reform		3.657**	49	.577	1.983	50	1.280	2.475
Border Patrol		6.330***	50	1.218	2.351	51	1.784	2.013
Migration Policies		3.152**	43	.417	1.901	44	1.159	2.439

	Austerity	-2.954*	44	-1.346	-.254	45	-.800	1.817
	Private Pensions	2.856*	43	.267	1.551	44	.909	2.111
	Abortion	2.689*	45	.202	1.407	46	.804	2.029
	Gun Laws	1.838	45	-.056	1.230	46	.587	2.166
	Social Security	4.999**	40	.741	1.747	41	1.244	1.593
	Mandatory Vaccination	4.626***	45	.798	2.028	46	1.413	2.072
	Free Trade	3.884**	49	.492	1.548	50	1.020	1.857
	Adoption Rights	3.394**	42	.538	2.114	43	1.326	2.561
	Climate Politics	5.612***	45	.934	1.979	46	1.457	1.760
	Military Interventions	2.951*	43	.302	1.607	44	.955	2.145
	Privacy Laws	2.123*	39	.034	1.416	40	.725	2.160
	Penalty Reform	5.586***	40	1.074	2.292	41	1.683	1.929
PL	Border Patrol	9.239***	46	1.747	2.721	47	2.234	1.658
	Migration Policies	4.292**	46	.701	1.938	47	1.319	2.107
	Austerity	.470	42	-.383	.615	43	.116	1.621
	Private Pensions	2.275*	47	.063	1.021	48	.542	1.650
	Abortion	2.623*	40	.213	1.641	41	.927	2.263
	Gun Laws	5.330***	44	.885	1.960	45	1.422	1.790
	Social Security	4.504**	46	.659	1.724	47	1.192	1.813
	Mandatory Vaccination	5.127***	51	.948	2.168	52	1.558	2.191
	Free Trade	4.306**	43	.652	1.802	44	1.227	1.891
	Adoption Rights	3.995**	41	.601	1.828	42	1.214	1.970
	Climate Politics	4.622***	44	.765	1.947	45	1.356	1.967
US	Military Interventions	5.156***	42	.991	2.265	43	1.628	2.070
	Privacy Laws	2.445*	47	.122	1.253	48	.688	1.948
	Penalty Reform	3.272**	44	.452	1.903	45	1.178	2.415

	Border Patrol	6.846***	45	1.350	2.476	46	1.913	1.895
	Migration Policies	2.776*	45	.256	1.613	46	.935	2.284
	Austerity	-2.648*	32	-1.394	-.182	33	-.788	1.709
	Private Pensions	1.532	42	-.126	.916	43	.395	1.692
	Abortion	5.404***	41	.925	2.028	42	1.476	1.770
	Gun Laws	3.833**	45	.619	1.990	46	1.304	2.308
	Social Security	2.680*	47	.161	1.131	48	.646	1.669
	Mandatory Vaccination	4.191***	41	.654	1.870	42	1.262	1.951
	Free Trade	5.506***	42	.987	2.129	43	1.558	1.856
	Adoption Rights	6.399***	43	1.292	2.481	44	1.886	1.956
	Climate Politics	9.372***	47	1.996	3.087	48	2.542	1.879
	Military Interventions	5.923***	37	1.177	2.402	38	1.790	1.862
	Privacy Laws	4.020**	41	.569	1.717	42	1.143	1.842
	Penalty Reform	6.148***	43	1.298	2.566	44	1.932	2.084
DK	Border Patrol	7.693***	50	1.463	2.497	51	1.980	1.838
	Migration Policies	2.252*	41	.084	1.535	42	.810	2.329
	Austerity	-3.085**	38	-1.316	-.273	39	-.795	1.609
	Private Pensions	1.432	41	-.196	1.148	42	.476	2.155
	Abortion	4.876***	46	.825	1.984	47	1.404	1.974
	Gun Laws	2.875*	43	.278	1.586	44	.932	2.150
	Social Security	2.424*	40	.126	1.387	41	.756	1.997
	Mandatory Vaccination	5.456***	43	1.032	2.241	44	1.636	1.989

Figure 4. News site overview

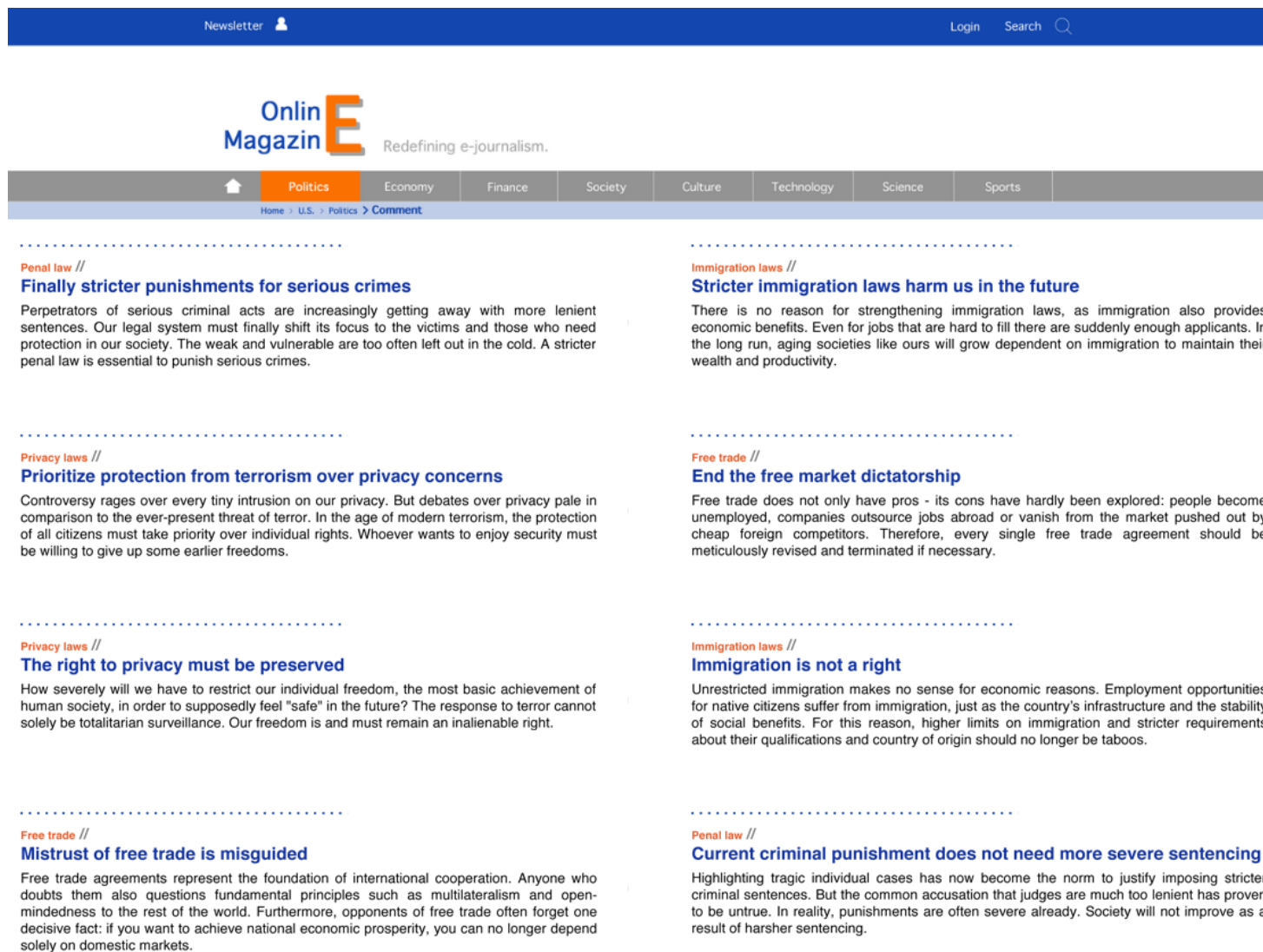


Figure 5. Example full article

Newsletter
Login Search

Redefining e-journalism.

Home > U.S. > Politics > Comment

USA

pm from Washington

July 16, 2018

Penal law //

Current criminal punishment does not need more severe sentencing

Highlighting tragic individual cases has now become the norm to justify imposing stricter criminal sentences. But the common accusation that judges are much too lenient has proven to be untrue. In reality, punishments are often severe already. Society will not improve as a result of harsher sentencing.

Source: [www.washingtonpost.com](#)

Under the term "cushy justice," legal authorities have long been badgered from the side of criminal law populists - because the penalties uphold the law. But those who are willing to deal in facts instead of in inflammatory news, will quickly realize that over- leniency in sentencing is not the current reality. The opposite is true.

In reality, judges are now issuing significantly longer sentences for comparable offenses than they did just a few years ago. The justice system has also become much more restrictive on the issue of custody in recent years. And the people's tenaciously demanded zero-tolerance policy has led to far fewer criminals seeing early parole. This, in spite of the fact that re-socialization as quickly as possible after serving a sentence is not only in the interest of effective criminal prevention, but also relieves dangerously overcrowded prisons.

Nobody seems to be interested in these realities in the fight for harsher sentences. Instead, many would rather bemoan the perceived trivialization of violent crime by the justice system. This position arises from arguing with anecdotal evidence, not once backed by facts or data. Obviously, individual cases do not make a trend.

Source: [www.washingtonpost.com](#)

Even more worrying, is the trend in prominent crimes where a factual examination of the evidence and a judgment based on the applicable law is deemed to be superfluous. Long before charges are filed, the media has already given a thumbs up or down to both the offender and the victims. Online opinion is quick to pronounce judgment, and claim with unflinching self-assurance that the law has spoken in the name of the people, without ever opening a case file. The notion of law is all good and well, as long as it doesn't get in the way of the populist mind eager for quick retribution. It is time to get down to business and get back to the facts: Our penal law in its existing form is perfectly adequate.

Table 4. Sociodemographic compared by country

	Female (%)	Age (Mean, SD)	Secondary education (%)
US	48.8	47.0 (12.0)	47.6
IT	52.1	45.8 (13.1)	42.9
PL	53.7	43.3 (12.8)	49.3
CH	50.4	47.3 (14.1)	65.3
DK	49.9	55.3 (12.5)	45.4

Table 5. Normalized means of three selective exposure indicators

	US		IT		PL		CH		DK		Overall	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-reported SE	.548	.175	.547	.201	.559	.225	.454	.193	.431	.200	.510	.206
Perceived SE	.730	.189	.688	.184	.738	.167	.727	.166	.726	.147	.721	.173
Actual SE	.568	.264	.539	.264	.528	.264	.571	.251	.561	.269	.553	.263

NOTE: All three selective exposure measures were rescaled on a scale ranging from 0 to 1 to make them comparable.

References

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- Tsfati, Y. (2016). A New Measure for the Tendency to Select Ideologically Congruent Political Information: Scale Development and Validation. *International Journal of Communication, 10*, 26.