INDIGO Peer Learning Session
What's in a performance number?

14 December 2023

Welcome!

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Our agenda

- Welcome and housekeeping rules
- Recap of the SOC23 Big Picture session
- Academic Perspective on behavioural public performance
- A practitioner's example of the use of real-time data
- Q&A
- Closing remarks

The session is being recorded. Please post questions throughout the chat.

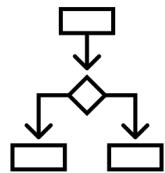# Recap of the SOC23 Big Picture session: Putting the puzzle together
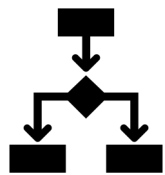
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Performance data:

a) outcome achievements

b) outcome payments

Outcome achievements

The Skill Mill started delivering services in August 2020 and will finish in September 2024. Data was last updated in September 2023. **These are interim results.**

Outcome achievements

Outcome metrics

- Metric 1: Young person registers for the Skill Mill programme by signing the registration form.

- Metric 2: Service User has completed at least four weeks on the programme with regular attendance of at least 75% as evidenced by daily attendance register.

- Metric 3: Service User has completed the Skill Mill programme with regular attendance of at least 75%, or completes 5 months of the programme, but departs for purposes of entry into a job position.

- Metric 4: Confirmation from AQA that Level 2 award has been achieved.

- Metric 5: Letter from employer confirming full or part time employment for Service User; or Confirmation from HMT that Service User has registered as employed; or Evidence of enrolment into a NVQ Level 2 or above training course.

- Metric 6: Confirmation from Police or another local agency with access to the Police National Computer that Service User has not been reconvicted during this period; or confirmation from the YOT (Youth Offending Team).

Outcome payments

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The Skill Mill's payment plans

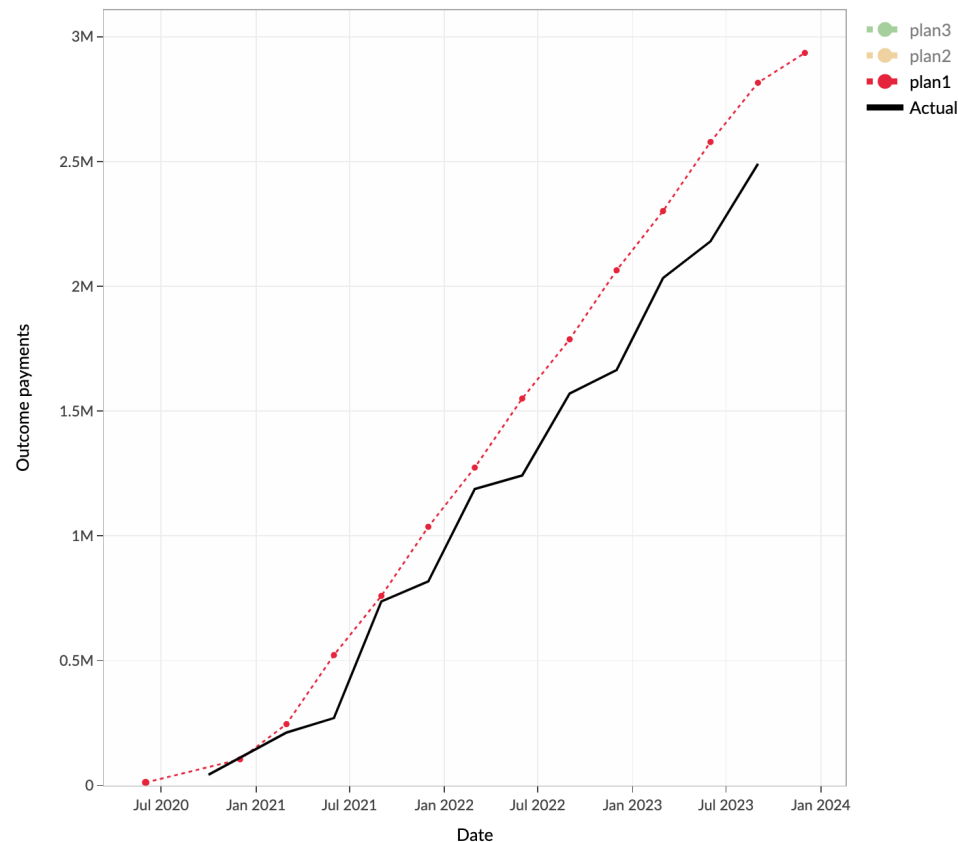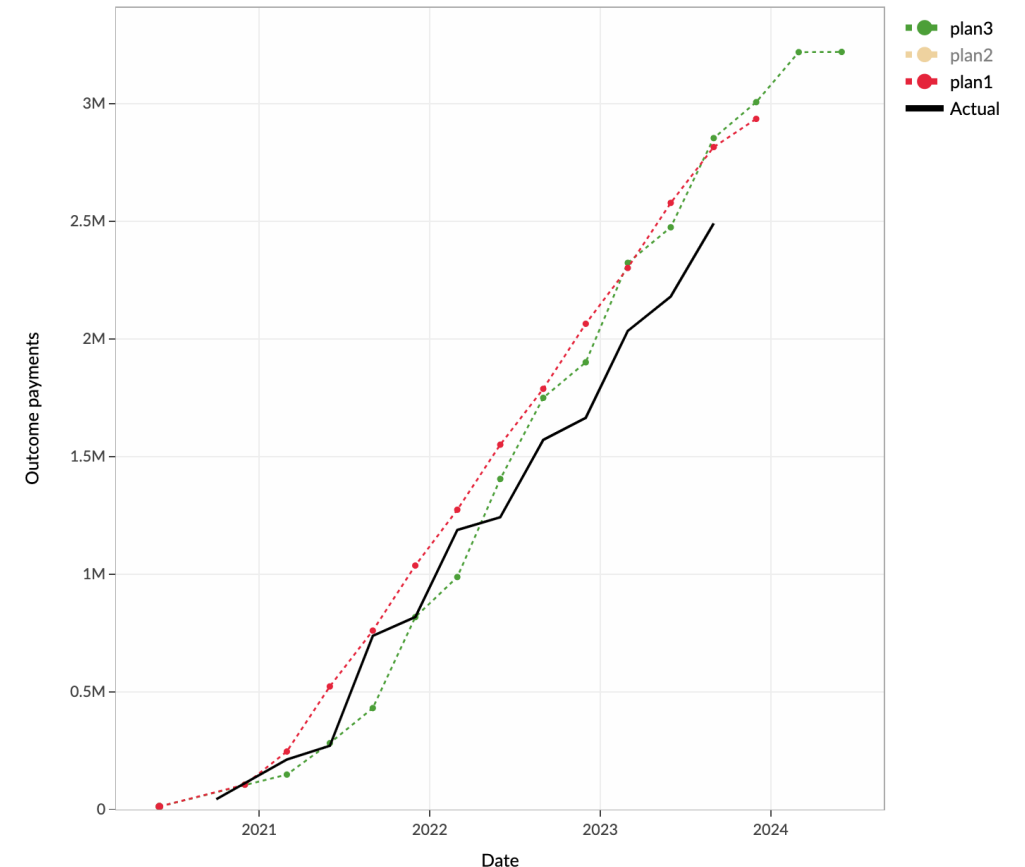The Skill Mill's actual payments
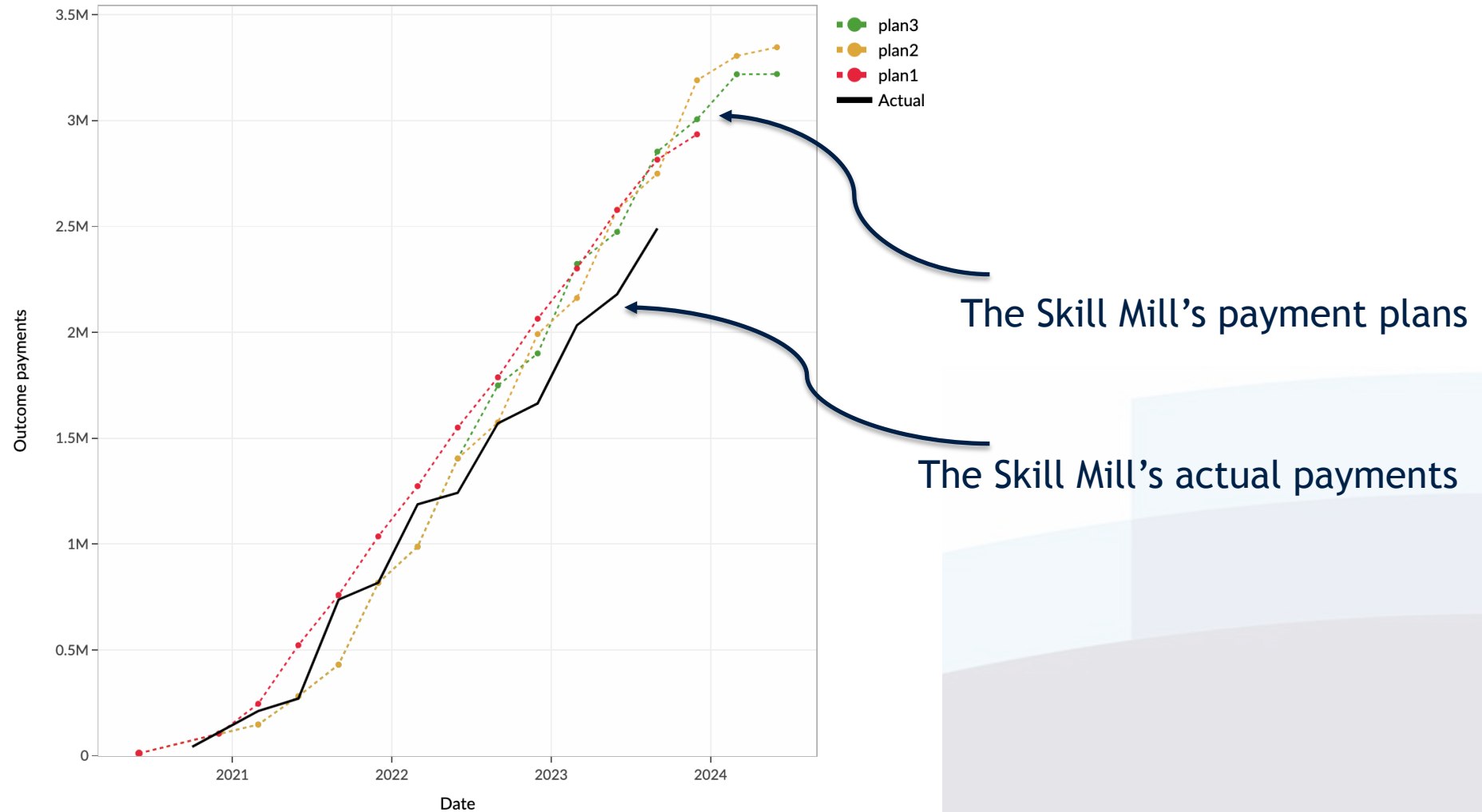
Outcome payments

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Skill Mill's first payment plan against actual payments

Skill Mill's final payment plan against actual payments

Impact Bond Dataset

INDIGO-POJ-0195

The Skill Mill

This project is also known as Skill Mill Young Offenders

Aligned SDGs

General overview
Location
Involved organisations
Outcome metrics
Results
Other resources
Spreadsheet of data

General overview

Stage of development: Implementation
Policy sector: Criminal justice
Date outcomes contract signed: Jun 2020
Start date of service provision: Aug 2020
Anticipated completion date: Sep 2024
Capital raised (minimum): GBP 1m (USD 1.32m)
Max potential outcome payment: GBP 3.24m
Service users: 252 individuals

Intervention

Skill Mill service centres around provision of employment; the young ex-offenders are offered 9 to 5 paid employment four days a week and encouraged to acquire a Level 2 qualification. In addition, participants are supported through mentoring given by both the supervisor on a day to day basis and more in-depth support from a dedicated guidance counsellor.

Target population

High risk ex-offenders aged 16-18

Location

Country
- United Kingdom

Service delivery locations
- Birmingham
- Croydon
- Durham
- Leeds
- Nottingham
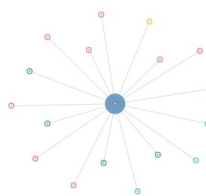- Rochdale
- Surrey
- West Sussex

Involved organisations

Configuration of contracting parties:
- Managed structure: SPV managed by intermediary

Commissioners/outcome payers (9)   +
Service Providers (1)   +
Investors (4)   +
Intermediary organisations (3)   +

Project · Provider · Commissioner · Intermediary · Investor
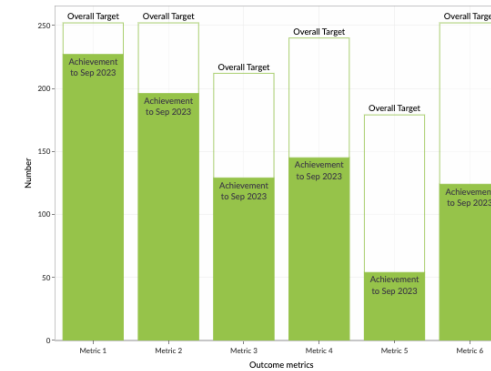
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Results

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Outcome achievements

How to interpret this graph

The service provider's comment on this graph:

'Skill Mill's historic success in reducing reoffending has been reflected in the SIB programme and in the data set. Of 123 young people on closed cohorts for whom verified data on no re-offending over 12 months is available, only 14 have reoffended. This figure is slightly higher than the overall data for the Skill Mill as a whole, but at an 11% reconviction rate, it is a massive success and staggering in comparison with established Youth Justice figures - of around 70% for those with numerous previous convictions (Skill Mill's target group).

The SIB has experienced a much more difficult process regarding the Job/further training outcome, which has been missed by most sites. To date, only 43 out of the overall target of 179 (24%) have gone into Employment, Training or Full Time Education. It is disappointing that, this is the case, because the past record of Skill Mill for young people moving on to employment or training has been impressive. Given that the programme timing coincided with COVID there would seem to be clear reasons for the shortfall and that the difficulty of meeting the target was mainly associated with lockdown and generally reduced economic activity. Other providers with an employment and training focus have similarly struggled due to COVID-19 interruptions. There is good news in that Cohort 5 has improved substantially on the performance of the earlier cohorts suggesting movement in the right direction. Skill Mill front-line staff would be quick to point to achievements of the young people and distance travelled towards employability in ways that are significant for their life chances but not measured within SIB outcomes.

134 out of 240 young people (56%) have achieved the external Level 2 qualification target. This outcome is regarded as difficult to achieve with the Skill Mill's cohort given that, as a supervisor explained, 'as soon as you get a pen and paper out young people switch off'. The Skill Mill has tried to ensure that the learning process is integral to the Skill Mill experience and not something that is bolted onto delivery and supervisors go out of their way to ensure that as many young people as possible come away with the qualification and that this is a lead into other more vocational qualifications - such as the CSCS card for the construction industry.'

What is in (performance) numbers? How do we use them? Insights from Behavioural Public Performance

Professor Oliver James

Politics, University of Exeter

https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/politics/staff/james/
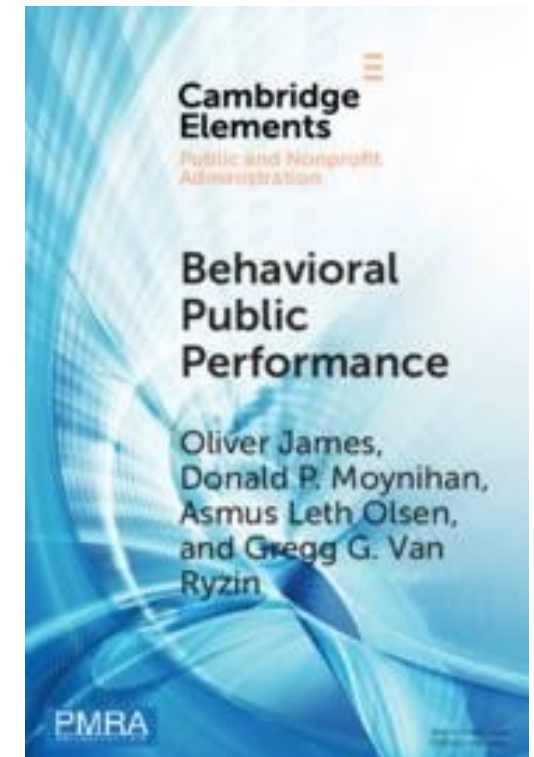
Numerical performance information about public services and public policy outcomes

- Useful evidence about public services (eg police, fire, education..) or policy outcomes (eg air quality, deprivation)

- Information about: inputs (eg. budget level, staffing), outputs, throughputs, efficiency, equity, and outcomes

- Different users: politicians, mangers, citizens or public service users

- Numbers be incorporated in text reports, comparisons (especially comparisons over time and with relevant others -including league tables)

- BUT: How are the numbers searched for, processed, and understood by different user groups?

- How does the information affect their perceptions, attitudes, intentions and actions?
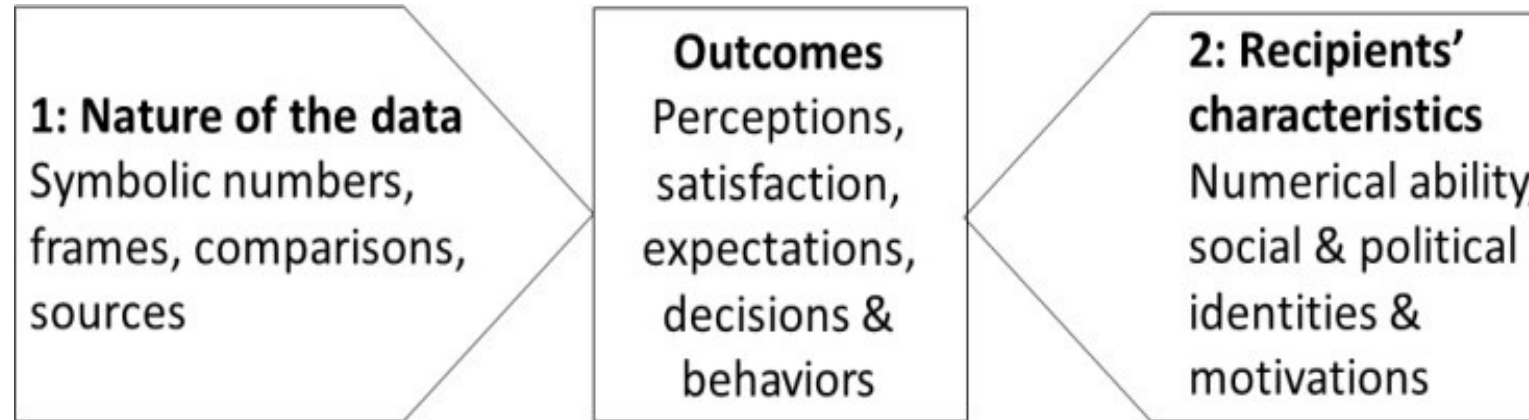
# Behavioural insights about performance information

- Not simply 'rational' reception and use, behavioural/psychologically informed research shows:
  - perception of numbers influenced by context, many cognitive limits
    - numeracy: only around one in four working-aged adults are functionally numerate –GCSE Maths or above; about half adults have primary level maths skills
    - time costs/lack of interest
  - biases and misunderstandings
    - left digit bias -eg 4.99 compared to 5, negativity biases, difficulty in using numbers to inform evaluative judgements
  - motivated reasoning about numbers
    - ignoring numerical evidence not consistent with existing beliefs or evidence threatening recipients' values or identities
- Public services and policy outcomes are often politically contested -this promotes motivated reasoning

The behavioral public performance approach:

| 1: Nature of the data
Symbolic numbers, frames, comparisons, sources | Outcomes
Perceptions, satisfaction, expectations, decisions & behaviors | 2: Recipients' characteristics
Numerical ability, social & political identities & motivations |

3: Context General attitudes towards government (eg anti-public sector bias), government institutions (eg for public accountability, the degree of autonomy for public managers)
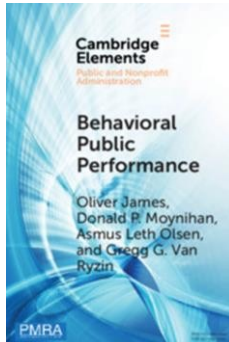
Source: James, O., Olsen, A. L., Moynihan, D. P., & Van Ryzin, G. G. (2020). Behavioral public performance: How people make sense of government metrics. Cambridge University Press.

Partisan motivated reasoning and citizens' rating of evidence quality: The US Affordable Care Act
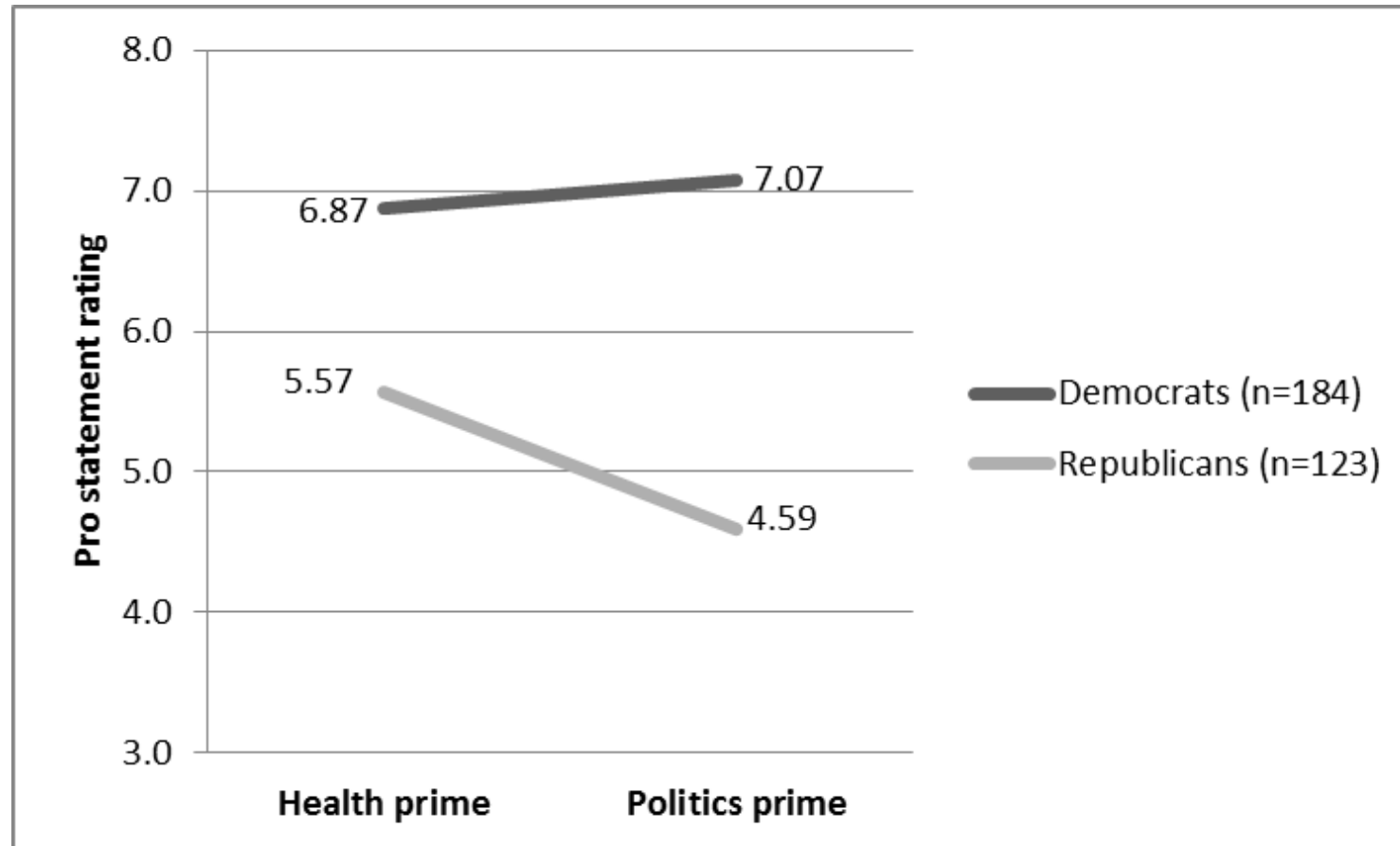
Source: James, O., & Van Ryzin, G. G. (2017). Motivated reasoning about public performance: An experimental study of how citizens judge the affordable care act. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 27(1), 197-209.

Suggestions from behavioural research about performance data

1. Present information graphically
2. Embed numbers in narratives
3. Prime users for shared values, accuracy, and accountability
4. Use credible sources, highlight source credibility
5. Celebrate success, proactively manage poor performance
6. Protect against positivity bias and groupthink
7. Regulate to prevent the gaming of frames
8. Compare to motivate
9. Provide autonomy, link it to performance
10. Build learning forums
11. Separate discussion on performance from broader biases about government

Also consider:
-Nature of the data, recipients' characteristics, context
-Performance data about outcomes is only one part of policy evaluation (i.e. working out a policy or organisation's effects on outcomes). Often difficult to estimate such effects…

A practitioner's example of the use of real-time data!

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AUDIENCE Q&A

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