# Online Supplement

for

# An Investigation of Big Life Decisions

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## Online Supplement 1: Literature Review Supplement

In Table A1, I provide a comprehensive summary of past literature that has placed life events into a taxonomy.

Table A1

Categorization of Life Events Used in Past Studies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Study** | **Sample** | **Task** | **Categories^** |
| Baum and Stewart (1990) | 185 Americans with an average age of 50 years (range: 17-96 years) | Participants asked to describe their most  meaningful life events | Developed 7 main categories:   1. Work (including career and education-related events) 2. Love and marriage 3. Births of children 4. Independent pursuits (e.g., military service, travel experiences) 5. Accidents, illnesses, and death 6. Separations and divorces 7. Major purchases |
| De Vries and Watt (1996) | 30 Canadian twenty-, forty-, and seventy-year-olds | Using the Rappaport time line method, participants asked to place marks on a line anchored by “Birth” and “Death” representing significant life events in their past and future | Developed 10 main categories:   1. Birth/Death (e.g., birth of child) 2. School (e.g., starting school) 3. Relationships – Romance (e.g., getting married) 4. Career (e.g., starting a new job) 5. Moving (e.g., relocating to a new city) 6. Illness/Injury (e.g., disease) 7. Relationships – Family (e.g., divorce of parents) 8. Relationships – Friendship (e.g., beginning a friendship) 9. Personal Growth (e.g., therapeutic activity) 10. Other (e.g., war) |
| Elnick, Margrett, Fitzgerald and Labouvie-Vief (1999) | 220 older Americans with an average age of 59 years (range: 40-87 years) | Participants asked to fill in a timeline with their most significant life events and then describe the three most significant events in detail | Developed 6 main categories:   1. Family/relationships 2. Education/work 3. Residence 4. Social activities 5. Health 6. Miscellaneous (e.g., military service) |
| Rönka, Oravala, and Pulkkinen (2003) | 283 Finnish thirty-six-year-olds | Participants asked to describe at least three significant life-events | Developed 12 main categories (and 30 subcategories):   1. Family (e.g., marriage) 2. Education (e.g., graduating) 3. Work (e.g., job loss) 4. Social transitions (e.g., move to another community, military service) 5. Loss (e.g., death of a close other) 6. Standard of living (e.g., getting a new apartment) 7. Lifestyle (e.g., new hobbies, crimes) 8. Interpersonal relationships 9. Quest for identity (e.g., psychological crisis, religious commitment) 10. Health (illness of a close other) 11. World (e.g., wars) 12. Other (e.g., unique experiences with significant others) |
| Newby-Clark and Ross (2003) | 30 Canadian college students | Participants asked to recall up to 10 important events from their past and imagine up to 10 important events in their future | Developed 8 main categories:   1. School related (e.g., finishing high school) 2. Interpersonal – positive (e.g., meeting romantic partner) 3. Trips/excursions (e.g., travelling overseas) 4. Moving (e.g., relocate to a new country) 5. Gain employment (e.g., start a new job) 6. Deaths/illness/injury (e.g., parent’s death) 7. Births (e.g., birth of sibling) 8. Interpersonal – negative (e.g., parents’ divorce) |
| Schroots and Assink (2005) | 98 Dutch twenty-, forty-, and sixty-year-olds | Using the life-line interview method, participants asked to draw a line representing life course from birth to present age and then to death, and then describe key life events | Developed 9 main categories (and 40 subcategories):   1. Relations (e.g., marriage) 2. School (e.g., going to college) 3. Health (e.g., disease) 4. Work (e.g., promotion) 5. Growth (e.g., self-development) 6. Death (e.g., death of parents) 7. Home (e.g., relocation) 8. Birth (e.g., children) 9. Other (e.g., war) |
| Glück and Bluck (2007) | 710 older Austrians aged between 50 and 90 years | Using the life story questionnaire, participants were asked to list up to 15 events that were most important in their life | Responses evaluated in light of 35 life script categories (Berntsen & Rubin, 2004) of which the most common were:   1. Marriage 2. Having children 3. Parent’s death 4. First job 5. Other’s death 6. Begin school 7. College (e.g., graduation) 8. Fall in love 9. Leave home 10. Retirement |
| Thomsen and Berntsen (2008) | 59 older Danes with a mean age of 78 years (range: 71-88 years) | Participants asked to describe events most central to their life story | Responses evaluated in light of 35 life script categories (Berntsen & Rubin, 2004) and 5 newly developed non-scripted life events of which the most common were:   1. WWII related memories 2. Marriage 3. Negative/traumatic events 4. Right job/settle on career 5. Having children 6. Partner’s death 7. Other’s death 8. Long trip 9. Confirmation 10. Higher education/college |
| Berntsen and Bohn (2010) | 122 Dutch college students with an average age of 27 years (range: 21-47 years) | Participants asked to recall five important past life events and imagine five important future life events | Responses evaluated in light of 35 life script categories (Berntsen & Rubin, 2004) and 17 memory content categories (Schlagman, Schulz, & Kvavilashvili, 2006) of which the 10 most common were:   1. College 2. Having children 3. Going on a long trip 4. Objects or places 5. Getting married 6. Falling in love 7. Finding the “right” job 8. Parent’s death 9. Major achievement 10. Stressful events |
| Bohn (2010) | 96 Danish undergraduate students with an average age of 25 years (range: 20-38 years) and 72 older Danes with an average age of 69 years (range: 59-88 years) | Participants asked to recall the seven  most important events from their lives | Responses evaluated in light of 35 life script categories (Berntsen & Rubin, 2004) and 17 newly developed non-scripted life events of which the most common were:   1. Children 2. Marriage 3. Secondary education (college) 4. Parent’s death 5. World War II 6. Partner’s death 7. Moving 8. Retirement 9. Second child 10. Own divorce 11. Begin school |
| Enz and Talarico (2016) | 44 American university faculty and staff with an average age of 48 years (range: 30-64 years) | Participants asked to recall a turning point event in their life | Developed 14 main categories:   1. Marriage 2. Job change 3. Having a child 4. Death of a loved one 5. Academic change 6. Relocation 7. Making a decision 8. Meeting significant other 9. Divorce 10. Buying a house 11. Child going to school 12. Travelling abroad 13. Vacation 14. Other |

^ Where possible, categories are arranged from most to least commonly mentioned by the study participants, averaging across past and imagined future events where the study asked for both.

## Online Supplement 2: Study 1

The first aim of Study 1 was to develop an understanding of what a “big” life decision is. The second aim was to develop a taxonomy of big life decisions. Although life event taxonomies exist, these include many categories where the individual did not make a decision and exclude many categories where the individual chose *not* to act. The third aim was to learn how good people are at predicting when big life decisions happen.

### Methods

#### Participants

The participants who completed the study were recruited using Prolific ([www.prolific.co](http://www.prolific.co)). Participants were required to be living in the United States or United Kingdom. To gain insight into a broad range of experiences, I used quota sampling to recruit participants aged either 25, 35, 45, 55, 65, or 75 years with an even gender spilt within each age group. No other demographic variables were considered in sample recruitment. The ten-year age differential was helpful to compare the decision recollections of older age groups with the decision realities of younger age groups as well as compare the decision predictions of younger age groups with the decision realities of older age groups. I received complete responses from 62 participants (after one participant was removed for nonsense responses) with five or six participants in each age/gender subgroup. Full demographic information is presented in Table A2.

Table A2

Sample Demographics in Study 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | Category | Percentage |
| Gender | Female | 50.0% |
| Male | 50.0% |
| Other | 0.0% |
| Age Group | 20-29 years | 17.7% |
| 30-39 years | 17.7% |
| 40-49 years | 16.1% |
| 50-59 years | 16.1% |
| 60-69 years | 16.1% |
| 70-79 years | 16.1% |
| Country | United Kingdom | 72.6% |
| United States of America | 27.4% |
| Location (UK)1 | England | 86.7% |
| Scotland | 8.9% |
| Wales | 0.0% |
| Northern Ireland | 4.4% |
| Location (USA)2 | Northeast - New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT) | 0% |
| Northeast - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA) | 29.4% |
| Midwest - East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI) | 0.0% |
| Midwest - West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) | 11.8% |
| South - South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV) | 29.4% |
| South - East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN) | 5.8% |
| West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX) | 0.0% |
| Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY) | 0.0% |
| West - Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA) | 11.7% |
| Race3 | White | 90.3% |
| Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin | 3.2% |
| Black or African American | 4.8% |
| Asian | 3.2% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian | 1.6% |
| Marital Status | Single (never married) | 27.4% |
| Married, or in a domestic partnership | 54.8% |
| Separated | 1.6% |
| Divorced | 11.3% |
| Widowed | 4.8% |
| Education | Less than a high school diploma | 3.2% |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 16.1% |
| Trade or vocational degree | 8.1% |
| Some college/university | 16.1% |
| Associates degree | 3.2% |
| Bachelor's degree | 38.7% |
| Master’s degree | 11.3% |
| Professional degree | 3.2% |
| Doctorate | 3.2% |
| Employment Status | Employed full time | 38.7% |
| Employed part time | 12.9% |
| Unemployed and currently looking for work | 6.5% |
| Unemployed and not currently looking for work | 1.6% |
| Retired | 25.8% |
| Student | 1.6% |
| Homemaker | 11.3% |
| Self-employed | 1.6% |
| Unable to work | 38.7% |
| Household Income | Less than $20,000 | 11.3% |
| $20,000 - $29,999 | 27.4% |
| $30,000 - $39,999 | 12.9% |
| $40,000 - $49,999 | 11.3% |
| $50,000 - $69,999 | 22.6% |
| $70,000 - $99,999 | 6.5% |
| $100,000 or more | 8.1% |
| Political Party Affiliation3 | Democrat | 54.5% |
| Republican | 13.6% |
| Independent | 18.2% |
| Other | 13.6% |

1 This question was only asked of those from the United Kingdom.

2 This question was only asked of those from the United States of America.

3 Participants were able to select more than one response to this question so the total equals more than 100%.

#### Procedure and Materials

After agreeing to participate in the study, participants were asked screening questions related to gender, age, and location. Participants who were eligible to take part in the survey then completed further demographic questionnaire items. These demographic items measured specific location in the USA or UK, marital status, level of education, employment status, household income, political orientation, English language proficiency, and the importance of religion (*How important is God in your life?; not at all important – very important).*

In the next section of the survey, participants were asked to provide a definition of a "big" life decision. The open textbox was prepopulated with the words “A big life decision is…”. On the next page, participants were asked to describe in open textboxes three elements or features of a decision that caused it to rise above all others to become a “big” life decision.

In the next section of the survey, participants were asked to think back over their life and describe the three “biggest” decisions they had made in their life so far. For each decision, participants were asked to state, via open textboxes, the alternatives, which option was chosen, whether the decision was, in retrospect, a good or a bad one, and their age at the time.

In the final section of the survey, participants were asked to state how many of their life’s ten big decisions they thought they had already made. On the next page, they were asked how many of their life’s ten biggest decisions they had made in the past 10 years and expected to make in the next 10 years. This final set of questions was exploratory and the results are not discussed. The study took a median of 9 minutes to complete. A copy of the survey is provided in Online Supplement 3.

### Results and Discussion

#### What is a Big Life Decision?

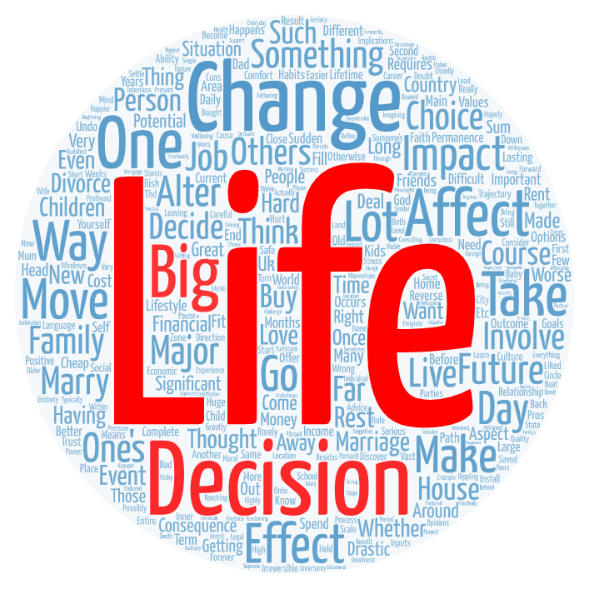
I carefully read through all provided definitions of a big life decision and its elements. A summary of these responses is presented as a wordcloud in Figure A1. Based on the analysis, the following definition was developed:

*A big decision is one in which you explicitly made a choice between two or more options knowing that the outcome would have significant and often long-term consequences for how you or others live.*

I and two research assistants also produced independent lists of the core elements of a big decision. Six elements were mentioned by all three coders and twelve elements were mentioned by at least two coders. The latter list was reduced after discussion by combining some elements. Ten key elements of a big life decision emerged (see Table 1 in main text).

Figure A1

Wordcloud summarizing the text that was entered to the questions asking participant to define a “big” life decision and explicate its key elements.



Notes: The wordcloud was generated at WordArt.com. Prior to generating, the text “A big life decision is…” were removed. The words “Big”, “Life”, and “Decision” have been highlighted in red for artistic effect.

#### What are the Most Common Big Life Decisions?

I carefully read through all the provided big life decisions and combined similar decisions into categories. All decisions were eventually classified into one of 9 decision categories and one of 58 decision types[[1]](#footnote-1) (see Table 2 in main text).

## Online Supplement 3: Study 1 - Stimuli

### Consent

Welcome to this survey about the biggest decisions in your life.

Most people complete this survey in about 8 minutes.

Before beginning the study, please read the Participant Information Sheet.

If you agree to participate in this study, then you must give consent by clicking on the button below. The consent form reads as follows: *[Removed to maintain anonymity]*

### Qualification Questions

Please answer these questions honestly to confirm that you are eligible to complete this study.

What is your gender?

* Female
* Male
* Other *[Open text box]*

How old are you (in years)?

* 18
* 19
* …
* …
* …
* 99
* 100

Where do you live?

* United States of America
* United Kingdom
* Somewhere else

### Demographics

In this section, we would like to ask some questions about you. With these questions, we are primarily concerned with collecting demographic information at the group level to compare with national averages and determine how representative our group's responses are.

*[Asked only to those living in the USA]* Which part of the USA do you live in?

* Northeast - New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
* Northeast - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)
* Midwest - East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)
* Midwest - West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)
* South - South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV)
* South - East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)
* South - West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)
* West - Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY)
* West - Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

*[Asked only to those living in the UK]* Which part of the United Kingdom do you live in?

* England
* Wales
* Scotland
* Northern Ireland

Which categories best describe you?

* White
* Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
* Black or African American
* Asian
* American Indian or Alaska Native
* Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

What is your marital status?

* Single (never married)
* Married, or in a domestic partnership
* Widowed
* Divorced
* Separated

Which of the following best describes your level of education? (If you’re currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)

* Less than a high school diploma
* High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
* Trade or vocational degree
* Some college/university, no degree
* Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
* Bachelor’s degree (e.g. BA, BS)
* Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
* Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
* Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

* Employed full time (38 or more hours per week)
* Employed part time (up to 38 hours per week)
* Unemployed and currently looking for work
* Unemployed and not currently looking for work
* Retired
* Student
* Homemaker
* Self-employed
* Unable to work

Which of the following includes your household income (in $USD before tax)?

* Less than $20,000
* $20,000 - $29,999
* $30,000 - $39,999
* $40,000 - $49,999
* $50,000 - $69,999
* $70,000 - $99,999
* $100,000 or more

Which of the following best describes your political orientation on: *[Answered on a 7-point scale from 1 = “Extremely liberal” to 7 = “Extremely conservative”]*

* Economic issues
* Social issues

Which of the following best describes your political affiliation?

* Democrat
* Republican
* Independent
* Other *[Open text box]*

Which of the following describes your English language proficiency?

* Basic communication skills / Working knowledge
* Good command / Good working knowledge
* Very good command
* Excellent command / Highly proficient in spoken and written English
* Near native / Fluent
* Native speaker

How important is God in your life?

* Not at all important
* Slightly important
* Moderately important
* Very important
* Extremely important

### Big Life Decision Definition and Characteristics

This survey is about the "biggest" decisions you have made in your life.

Please describe your definition of a "big" life decision. With this question, we are not interested in your personal big life decisions; rather, a definition that might appear in a Dictionary. *[Open text box]*

With this next set of questions, we are interested in learning about the elements or features of a decision that make it rise above all others to become a "big" life decision.

Please describe the three most important elements you can think of.

* First element of a decision that would make it a "big" life decision *[Open text box]*
* Second element of a decision that would make it a "big" life decision *[Open text box]*
* Third element of a decision that would make it a "big" life decision *[Open text box]*

### Past Decisions

In this section, we would like you to think back over your life and describe what have been the three "biggest" decisions you have made in your life so far.

Many people who have previously completed this study have commented that it was a valuable use of their time because it provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their life. We hope you end up feeling this way, too.

Of course, some of the big decisions you have made in your life may be associated with strong emotions. As a reminder, you are free to stop completing this survey at any time without consequence.

If at any time you are feeling distressed, then please consider reaching out to the following services (we will show this information again later in the survey):

* National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (USA)
* Supportline (UK)

Recalled past big decision 1:

* What was the decision? Please also state the alternative options you were choosing between. *[Open text box]*
* What option did you choose in the end? *[Open text box]*
* In retrospect, do you think you made a good or bad decision? *[Open text box]*
* How old (in years) were you when you made this decision? *[Open text box]*

Recalled past big decision 2:

* What was the decision? Please also state the alternative options you were choosing between. *[Open text box]*
* What option did you choose in the end? *[Open text box]*
* In retrospect, do you think you made a good or bad decision? *[Open text box]*
* How old (in years) were you when you made this decision? *[Open text box]*

Recalled past big decision 3:

* What was the decision? Please also state the alternative options you were choosing between. *[Open text box]*
* What option did you choose in the end? *[Open text box]*
* In retrospect, do you think you made a good or bad decision? *[Open text box]*
* How old (in years) were you when you made this decision? *[Open text box]*

### Number of Big Decisions So Far

How many of your life's ten big decisions do you think you have *already made* (and how many are yet to occur)?

* I have made 0 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 10 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 1 of my life's ten biggest decision so far (and 9 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 2 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 8 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 3 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 7 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 4 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 6 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 5 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 5 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 6 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 4 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 7 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 3 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 8 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 2 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 9 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 1 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 10 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 0 more will be made in my future)

How many of your life’s ten biggest decisions have you made in the ***last* 10 years**?

* 0
* 1
* 2
* 3
* 4
* 5
* 6
* 7
* 8
* 9
* 10

How many of your life’s ten biggest decisions will you make in the ***next* 10 years**?

* 0
* 1
* 2
* 3
* 4
* 5
* 6
* 7
* 8
* 9
* 10

### Conclusion

Thank you for sharing some of your biggest life decisions.

We understand that it may have been very emotional recalling past decisions. If you are feeling distressed, please consider reaching out to the following services:

* National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (USA)
* Supportline (UK)

If you have any reactions, comments, suggestions, hated some things, loved some things, or have spotted any problems with the study, then please provide them below. **This question is optional** but we really do value your feedback. *[Open text box]*

If you would like to learn more about this project and see some of the results, then you are welcome to visit our website at *[Removed to maintain anonymity]*.

## Online Supplement 4: Study 2

Study 2 used the approach of asking people for their perceptions of big life decisions among the population in general. The first aim of Study 2 was to learn people’s expectations about the frequency of different types of big life decisions. The second aim was to learn people’s judgments about how relatively big each type of decision is. Additionally, I sought judgments regarding how each type of decision varied in terms of the different elements that comprise a big decision. The third aim was to learn people’s expectations about when big life decisions were most likely to happen.

### Methods

#### Participants

The participants who completed the study were recruited using Prolific. Participants were required to be living in the United States. To gain insight into a broad range of experiences, I used quota sampling to recruit participants aged either 24, 34, 44, 54, 64, or 74 years with an even gender spilt with each age group. Given the small number of panel members aged in their seventies, I allowed those aged between 73 and 75 – excluding those from Study 1 – to complete the study. No other demographic variables were considered in sample recruitment. I received complete responses from 120 participants with exactly twenty participants in each age/gender subgroup. Full demographic information is presented in Table A4.

Table A4

Sample Demographics in Study 2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | Category | Percentage |
| Gender | Female | 50.0% |
| Male | 50.0% |
| Other | 0.0% |
| Age Group | 20-29 years | 16.7% |
| 30-39 years | 16.7% |
| 40-49 years | 16.7% |
| 50-59 years | 16.7% |
| 60-69 years | 16.7% |
| 70-79 years | 16.7% |
| Country | United Kingdom | 0.8% |
| United States of America | 99.2% |
| Race^ | White | 81.2% |
| Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin | 3.3% |
| Black or African American | 6.7% |
| Asian | 10.8% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian | 0.8% |
| Location | Northeast - New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT) | 5.0% |
| Northeast - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA) | 10.0% |
| Midwest - East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI) | 11.7% |
| Midwest - West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) | 7.5% |
| South - South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV) | 25.0% |
| South - East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN) | 6.7% |
| West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX) | 10.8% |
| Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY) | 6.7% |
| West - Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA) | 16.7% |
| Race1 | White | 81.2% |
| Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin | 3.3% |
| Black or African American | 6.7% |
| Asian | 10.8% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian | 0.8% |
| Marital Status | Single (never married) | 34.2% |
| Married, or in a domestic partnership | 49.2% |
| Separated | 4.2% |
| Divorced | 11.7% |
| Widowed | 0.8% |
| Education | Less than a high school diploma | 8.3% |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 2.5% |
| Trade or vocational degree | 24.2% |
| Some college/university | 5.0% |
| Associates degree | 40.8% |
| Bachelor's degree | 15.0% |
| Master’s degree | 1.7% |
| Professional degree | 2.5% |
| Doctorate | 8.3% |
| Employment Status | Employed full time | 33.3% |
| Employed part time | 12.5% |
| Unemployed and currently looking for work | 10.0% |
| Unemployed and not currently looking for work | 1.7% |
| Retired | 18.3% |
| Student | 2.5% |
| Homemaker | 2.5% |
| Self-employed | 17.5% |
| Unable to work | 1.7% |
| Household Income | Less than $20,000 | 9.2% |
| $20,000 - $29,999 | 16.7% |
| $30,000 - $39,999 | 15.8% |
| $40,000 - $49,999 | 5.8% |
| $50,000 - $69,999 | 17.5% |
| $70,000 - $99,999 | 20.8% |
| $100,000 or more | 14.2% |
| Political Party Affiliation | Democrat | 51.7% |
| Republican | 22.5% |
| Independent | 22.5% |
| Other | 3.3% |

1 Participants were able to select more than one response to this question so the total equals more than 100%.

#### Procedure and Materials

After agreeing to participate in the study, participants were asked screening questions related to gender, age, and location. Participants who were eligible to take part in the survey then completed further demographic questionnaire items as described in Study 1.

In the next section of the survey, participants were provided with my definition of a big life decision and the list of 58 decisions from Study 1. On the next page, participants were presented with the list of big decision elements from Study 1 and were told that they would be asked to evaluate a subset of the decisions on each of the ten elements.

In the next section of the survey, participants were sequentially presented with 20 (out of the possible 49 [i.e., excluding the “other” categories]) randomly selected decision types. I presented only a subset to keep the length of the study below 30 minutes and thus minimize participant fatigue. Using this approach, each decision type was evaluated in terms of the decision elements by an average of 49 participants. Note that some of the more ambiguous decision types were edited for clarification based on the most common participant examples from Study 1. For example, the decision type “buy something” was presented as “buy something (e.g., a car, boat, furniture, solar panels; EXCLUDES buying a home)” and the decision type “change physical appearance” was presented as “change physical appearance (e.g., shave off beard/hair, get a tattoo, breast implants, laser eye surgery, dentures, etc.)”.

Next, for each presented decision, I asked five questions. First, participants were asked to think about the extent to which each element applied to the decision “for the average person”. Responses were collected on a 7-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Second, participants were asked to estimate the age that an average person makes the decision for the first time. Responses were collected using a text box restricted to values between 1 and 99. Third, participants were asked, relative to other big life decisions, how big the decision was. Responses were collected on a 7-point scale ranging from “strongly below average” to “strongly above average”. Fourth, participants were asked to estimate the percentage of adults in the country who would include the decision in their list of ten biggest life decisions. Responses were collected on a continuous scale ranging between 0% and 100%. Fifth, participants were asked if they had ever themselves made the decision. Responses were collected as either “No” or “Yes”. This final question was exploratory and the results are not discussed. The study took a median of 27 minutes to complete. A copy of the survey is provided in Online Supplement 5.

### Results and Discussion

#### What are the Most Common Big Life Decisions?

I calculated the average estimated percentage of adults in the country that would mention each decision as part of their list of ten biggest life decisions. With respect to decision categories, those expected to be mentioned *most* often were education, relationship, and family whereas those expected to be mentioned *least* often were self-destruction and self-development (fourth column of Table A5). With respect to decision types, those expected to be mentioned *most* often were to get married, buy a home, have a child, start a new job, and get divorced whereas those expected to be mentioned *least* often were to self-harm, begin a non-romantic relationship, commit crime, leave the military, and pursue a philosophy or ideology (fifth column of Table A6).

Table A5

Average Estimated Age, Relative Bigness, Estimated Population Incidence, and Self-reported Incidence of Different Decision Categories in Study 2

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Estimated Age of First Incidence | Relative Bigness | Expected Population Incidence Rate (%) | Self-Reported Incidence (%) |
|
| Career | 33.37AB | 5.55A | 43.73AB | 39.00D |
| Education | 18.87E | 5.09BC | 45.95A | 80.79A |
| Family | 31.86B | 5.44AB | 44.59A | 47.11D |
| Finances | 34.76A | 4.54D | 39.93BC | 63.45BC |
| Relationships | 23.01CD | 4.71CD | 45.76A | 67.26B |
| Relocation | 25.77C | 4.82CD | 43.72AB | 50.26CD |
| Self-Destruction | 19.07E | 5.73A | 27.35D | 17.36E |
| Self-Development | 22.80D | 4.46D | 34.89C | 62.13BC |

*Note*. Values in the same column not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD following a mixed-effects model taking into account multiple responses from each participant (*p* < .05). For each mixed model, the dependent variable was one of the participant’s responses (i.e., estimated age of first incidence, or relatively bigness, or expected population incidence rate, or self-reported incidence rate), the independent variable was decision category, and Participant ID was a random effect allowing for random intercepts.

Table A6

Average Estimated Age, Relative Importance, Estimated Population Incidence, and Self-incidence of Different Decision Types in Study 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Type | Estimated Age of First Incidence | Relative Bigness | Expected Population Incidence Rate (%) | Self-Report Incidence (%) |
|
| Career | Start a new job/position | 24.15JKLMNOP | 5.08EFGHIJK | 58.33BC | 85.42AB |
| Quit a job/position | 25.9FGHIJKL | 5.06EFGHIJK | 50.56BCDEFGHI | 76.00ABCDEF |
| Start a new business | 29.92FG | 6.04ABCD | 42.06CDEFGHIJKLMNO | 40.82GHIJKLM |
| Close down a business | 44.06C | 5.92ABCDE | 34.61HIJKLMNOP | 24.49IJKLM |
| Join the military | 19.41OPQRST | 5.80ABCDEF | 39.20FGHIJKLMNOP | 15.69KLM |
| Leave the military | 28.13FGHIJ | 5.28CDEFGHIJ | 26.17NOP | 8.51M |
| Retire | 63.60A | 5.68ABCDEFG | 55.26BCD | 21.28JKLM |
| Education | Pursue a degree | 18.57PQRST | 5.06DEFGHIJK | 49.63BCDEF | 77.55ABCDE |
| Choose a major/specialization | 20.16MNOPQRST | 5.16EFGHIJK | 45.78BCDEFGHIJKLM | 81.63ABCD |
| Choose where to study | 17.94QRST | 5.06EFGHIJK | 42.70CDEFGHIJKLMNO | 83.02ABC |
| Family | Have/adopt a child | 29.70FGHI | 6.52AB | 59.42BC | 26.00IJKLM |
| End a life | 30.33F | 6.51A | 43.35BCDEFGHIJK | 27.45IJKLM |
| Make a decision for your child | 29.18FGHI | 4.72HIJKLM | 48.90BCDEFGHIJKL | 46.00FGHIJKL |
| Caring for family member | 46.35BC | 5.71ABCDEF | 43.63BCDEFGHIJK | 41.67GHIJKLM |
| Having a family member move in | 37.14D | 5.1DEFGHIJK | 39.92DEFGHIJKLMNO | 40.82GHIJKLM |
| Get pet | 20.42LMNOPQRST | 4.2KLMNOPQ | 35.30HIJKLMNOP | 88.00AB |
| Put pet down | 30.54F | 5.27CDEFGHIJ | 41.35CDEFGHIJKLMNO | 60.42BCDEFGH |
| Finances | Buy home | 29.13FGHI | 6.19ABC | 63.19AB | 60.42BCDEFGH |
| Sell home | 36.84D | 5.94ABCDE | 56.39BCDE | 34.69GHIJKLM |
| Buy something | 22.69JKLMNOPQ | 3.76MNOPQRS | 33.78EFGHIJKLMNO | 95.92A |
| Sell something | 25.73FGHIJK | 3.25RST | 34.21KLMNOP | 76.92ABCDE |
| Create a plan/budget | 24.88IJKLMNO | 3.41PQRST | 27.76MNOP | 87.76AB |
| Take social security | 58.65A | 4.55IJKLMN | 37.76EFGHIJKLMNO | 38.78GHIJKLM |
| Buy investment | 30.25FGH | 4.50IJKLMN | 32.04JKLMNOP | 68.75ABCDEFG |
| Make a will | 49.92B | 4.84FGHIJKL | 35.12FGHIJKLMNO | 44.00FGHIJKL |
| Relationships | Begin non-romantic relationship | 15.27ST | 2.82T | 27.29OP | 83.67ABCD |
| End non-romantic relationship | 19.54NOPQRST | 3.63NOPQRST | 31.52IJKLMNOP | 75.00ABCDEF |
| Begin romantic relationship | 18.94OPQRST | 4.46IJKLMN | 52.23BCDEFG | 87.50AB |
| End romantic relationship | 20.31LMNOPQRST | 4.63HIJKLM | 45.79BCDEFGHIJK | 84.62AB |
| Get married | 26.17FGHIJK | 6.33AB | 73.65A | 65.38ABCDEFG |
| Get divorced | 36.34DE | 6.19ABC | 54.43BCD | 25.53IJKLM |
| Engage in sexual activity | 17.12RST | 4.22KLMNOPQ | 45.69CDEFGHIJKLMN | 87.76AB |
| Disclose secret information | 30.73EF | 5.35CDEFGHI | 33.96HIJKLMNOP | 26.53IJKLM |
| Relocation | Move to new place in same city | 23.46JKLMNOPQ | 4.00LMNOPQR | 49.94BCDEFGH | 78.26ABCDE |
| Move to new city | 24.58HIJKLMN | 4.71GHIJKLM | 45.9BCDEFGHIJKLM | 60.42BCDEFGH |
| Move to new state | 24.47GHIJKLM | 4.43IJKLMNO | 47.77BCDEFGHIJ | 53.19DEFGHIJ |
| Move to new country | 30.44FG | 6.1ABC | 31.48HIJKLMNOP | 10.42LM |
| Self-Destruction | Commit crime | 18.75OPQRST | 5.69BCDEFGH | 29.15NOP | 20.83JKLM |
| Self-harm | 17.84QRST | 5.76ABCDEF | 19.09P | 22.22IJKLM |
| Begin an addiction | 20.45LMNOPQRS | 5.75ABCDEF | 32.96LMNOP | 9.80M |
| Self-Development | Accept/change sexuality | 21.61KLMNOPQRS | 6.24ABC | 33.20IJKLMNOP | 12.24LM |
| Quit an addiction | 29.28FGHI | 5.98ABCD | 37.5DEFGHIJKLMNO | 30.00HIJKLM |
| Travel/holiday | 21.88KLMNOPQR | 3.48QRST | 32.21NOP | 84.62ABC |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 22.98KLMNOPQ | 5.00EFGHIJKL | 41.58DEFGHIJKLMNO | 58.33BCDEFGH |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 24.48HIJKLMNO | 4.35IJKLMNOP | 25.98NOP | 47.83EFGHIJK |
| Change physical appearance | 22.14KLMNOPQR | 4.22KLMNOPQ | 41.43DEFGHIJKLMNO | 53.06CDEFGHI |
| Get treatment/medicine | 27.98FGHIJ | 4.46JKLMNOP | 38.16FGHIJKLMNOP | 84.00ABCD |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 14.85T | 3.00ST | 30.91MNOP | 93.62AB |
| Learn new skill | 19.66MNOPQRST | 3.44OPQRST | 32.56GHIJKLMNOP | 94.00A |

*Note*. Values in the same column not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD following a mixed-effects model taking into account multiple responses from each participant (*p* < .05). For each mixed model, the dependent variable was one of the participant’s responses (i.e., estimated age of first incidence, or relatively bigness, or expected population incidence rate, or self-reported incidence rate), the independent variable was decision type, and Participant ID was a random effect allowing for random intercepts.

#### What are the Most Important Big Life Decisions?

To better understand the importance of different big decisions, I used two approaches. For the first approach, I calculated the average rated “bigness” of each big life decision relative to other big decisions. With respect to decision categories, participants estimated the *most* important were self-destruction, career, and family whereas the *least* important were self-development and finances (third column of Table A5). With respect to decision types, participants estimated that the *most* important were to end a life, have a child, get married, accept or change sexuality, and get divorced whereas the *least* important were to begin a non-romantic relationship, engage in a hobby or sport, sell something, travel or holiday, and create a plan or budget (fourth column of Table A6).

For the second approach, I looked at the degree to which each of the decision elements (Table 1 of the main text) was considered pertinent to each big decision. Specifically, I averaged responses to all ten elements to form a bottom-up proxy for decision importance. With respect to decision categories, scoring *highest* were self-destruction, family, and career whereas scoring *lowest* were self-development and finances (final column of Table A7). With respect to decision types, scoring *highest* were to have a child, end a life, get married, move to a new country, and get divorced whereas scoring *lowest* were to engage in a hobby or sport, sell something, travel or holiday, begin a non-romantic relationship, and create a plan or budget (final column of Table A8). In general, the ordering of the most important big life decisions was similar regardless of which approach was used (i.e., relative bigness scores or average decision element scores; *r* = .63, *p* < .0001).

Table A7

Average Agreement that Decision Category is Associated with Different Decision Elements in Study 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Element | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rare | Uncertainty | Contemplation | Morality | Costly | Precludes | Multiple Areas | Multiple People | Long-lasting | Irreversibility | Average |
| Career | 3.27B | 5.87A | 6.13A | 4.79B | 4.87BC | 4.84A | 6.17AB | 5.74B | 6.09B | 5.25B | **5.30A** |
| Education | 2.64D | 5.59A | 5.93AB | 4.83B | 6.01A | 4.79A | 5.91BC | 4.82C | 5.97BC | 3.97CD | **5.05B** |
| Family | 3.12BC | 5.05B | 6.01A | 5.58A | 5.14B | 4.88A | 5.94B | 5.92AB | 5.92BC | 5.55B | **5.31A** |
| Finances | 2.81D | 4.82B | 5.59BC | 4.00C | 4.81BC | 4.26B | 5.21D | 4.92C | 5.47DE | 4.46C | **4.64C** |
| Relationships | 2.72D | 5.83A | 5.46C | 5.72A | 3.95D | 4.30B | 5.66C | 5.69B | 5.71CD | 5.12B | **5.02B** |
| Relocation | 3.5B | 6.01A | 6.02A | 4.17C | 5.90A | 4.80A | 6.05AB | 5.71B | 5.83BC | 4.21C | **5.22AB** |
| Self-Destruction | 4.38A | 5.97A | 4.38E | 5.46A | 3.72D | 5.05A | 6.45A | 6.16A | 6.49A | 6.42A | **5.45A** |
| Self-Development | 2.90CD | 5.03B | 5.15D | 4.94B | 4.68C | 4.00B | 5.31D | 4.76C | 5.26E | 3.76D | **4.58C** |

*Note*. Values in the same column not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD following a mixed-effects model taking into account multiple responses from each participant (*p* < .05). For each mixed model, the dependent variable was one of the decision elements (i.e., rare, uncertainty, etc.), the independent variable was decision category, and Participant ID was a random effect allowing for random intercepts.

Table A8

Average Agreement that Decision Type Has Different Elements in Study 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Type | Element | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rare | Uncertainty | Contemplation | Morality | Costly | Precludes | Multiple Areas | Multiple People | Long-lasting | Irreversibility | **Average** | |
| Career | Start a new job/position | 2.13 | 5.83 | 5.96 | 4.90 | 4.79 | 4.83 | 6.02 | 5.54 | 6.04 | 3.69 | **4.97** | |
| Quit a job/position | 2.82 | 6.08 | 5.86 | 5.08 | 4.02 | 4.68 | 5.90 | 5.54 | 5.58 | 6.08 | **5.16** | |
| Start a new business | 4.14 | 6.45 | 6.61 | 4.57 | 6.67 | 4.59 | 6.29 | 6.02 | 6.43 | 4.33 | **5.61** | |
| Close down a business | 3.90 | 5.69 | 6.47 | 4.29 | 5.04 | 5.33 | 6.27 | 6.37 | 6.35 | 6.27 | **5.60** | |
| Join the military | 3.96 | 5.96 | 6.14 | 5.45 | 4.37 | 5.31 | 6.29 | 5.67 | 6.24 | 6.16 | **5.55** | |
| Leave the military | 3.26 | 5.91 | 6.09 | 5.06 | 4.09 | 4.64 | 6.06 | 5.53 | 6.04 | 5.49 | **5.22** | |
| Retire | 2.64 | 5.11 | 5.74 | 4.17 | 5.11 | 4.49 | 6.36 | 5.51 | 5.96 | 4.62 | **4.97** | |
| Education | Pursue a degree | 2.27 | 5.49 | 5.94 | 4.65 | 6.47 | 4.37 | 6.08 | 4.98 | 6.14 | 4.18 | **5.06** | |
| Choose a major/specialization | 3.02 | 5.76 | 6.18 | 5.24 | 5.86 | 5.12 | 5.90 | 4.55 | 5.98 | 3.57 | **5.12** | |
| Choose where to study | 2.62 | 5.53 | 5.70 | 4.62 | 5.72 | 4.87 | 5.75 | 4.92 | 5.81 | 4.13 | **4.97** | |
| Finances | Have/adopt a child | 3.38 | 6.18 | 6.30 | 5.68 | 6.50 | 5.38 | 6.54 | 6.52 | 6.64 | 6.60 | **5.97** | |
| End a life | 4.76 | 4.20 | 6.78 | 6.65 | 4.22 | 5.92 | 6.29 | 6.39 | 6.55 | 6.82 | **5.86** | |
| Make a decision for your child | 1.82 | 5.58 | 5.76 | 5.40 | 5.24 | 4.26 | 5.44 | 5.42 | 5.56 | 3.96 | **4.84** | |
| Caring for family member | 3.10 | 5.77 | 5.69 | 6.04 | 5.88 | 5.06 | 6.38 | 6.15 | 6.13 | 5.27 | **5.55** | |
| Having a family member move in | 3.49 | 5.98 | 5.98 | 5.63 | 5.24 | 4.65 | 6.29 | 6.39 | 5.76 | 4.92 | **5.43** | |
| Get pet | 2.12 | 5.08 | 5.36 | 4.04 | 5.20 | 3.66 | 5.40 | 5.10 | 5.46 | 4.60 | **4.60** | |
| Put pet down | 3.17 | 2.56 | 6.21 | 5.63 | 3.69 | 5.25 | 5.23 | 5.46 | 5.31 | 6.65 | **4.91** | |
| Finances | Buy home | 3.10 | 5.75 | 6.56 | 4.54 | 6.71 | 5.21 | 6.50 | 5.98 | 6.48 | 5.17 | **5.60** | |
| Sell home | 3.55 | 6.12 | 6.61 | 3.53 | 5.49 | 4.80 | 6.08 | 5.98 | 6.22 | 5.76 | **5.41** | |
| Buy something | 2.14 | 4.39 | 5.00 | 3.51 | 5.51 | 4.20 | 4.71 | 4.27 | 4.73 | 4.16 | **4.26** | |
| Sell something | 2.23 | 3.96 | 4.62 | 3.29 | 3.33 | 3.58 | 3.87 | 3.85 | 4.12 | 5.00 | **3.78** | |
| Create a plan/budget | 2.45 | 4.49 | 5.12 | 4.08 | 3.96 | 3.71 | 5.10 | 4.37 | 5.08 | 2.45 | **4.08** | |
| Take social security | 2.63 | 4.04 | 4.90 | 3.20 | 3.39 | 3.86 | 5.43 | 4.45 | 5.67 | 4.84 | **4.24** | |
| Buy investment | 2.98 | 6.04 | 5.71 | 4.17 | 5.96 | 4.06 | 4.92 | 4.23 | 5.35 | 3.98 | **4.74** | |
| Make a will | 3.44 | 3.88 | 6.26 | 5.70 | 4.28 | 4.72 | 5.18 | 6.28 | 6.18 | 4.32 | **5.02** | |
| Relationships | Begin non-romantic relationship | 2.39 | 5.47 | 3.71 | 5.16 | 3.04 | 3.22 | 4.82 | 5.00 | 4.65 | 2.88 | **4.03** | |
| End non-romantic relationship | 2.54 | 5.48 | 5.44 | 5.48 | 2.83 | 3.92 | 4.94 | 5.46 | 5.08 | 5.17 | **4.63** | |
| Begin romantic relationship | 2.15 | 6.10 | 5.42 | 5.60 | 4.42 | 4.48 | 5.92 | 5.48 | 6.00 | 3.71 | **4.93** | |
| End romantic relationship | 2.13 | 5.31 | 5.90 | 5.35 | 3.38 | 4.23 | 5.75 | 5.58 | 5.77 | 5.40 | **4.88** | |
| Get married | 2.90 | 6.31 | 6.48 | 6.33 | 6.08 | 5.58 | 6.52 | 6.48 | 6.60 | 5.19 | **5.85** | |
| Get divorced | 3.21 | 6.13 | 6.45 | 5.77 | 5.96 | 5.26 | 6.55 | 6.40 | 6.34 | 5.91 | **5.80** | |
| Engage in sexual activity | 1.82 | 5.53 | 4.12 | 5.88 | 2.61 | 3.35 | 5.02 | 5.22 | 5.02 | 6.10 | **4.47** | |
| Disclose secret information | 4.61 | 6.35 | 6.14 | 6.20 | 3.22 | 4.31 | 5.73 | 5.86 | 6.20 | 6.55 | **5.52** | |
| Relocation | Move to new place in same city | 2.57 | 5.09 | 5.28 | 3.78 | 5.20 | 4.24 | 5.46 | 5.17 | 5.09 | 3.46 | **4.53** | |
| Move to new city | 2.79 | 5.96 | 5.92 | 4.00 | 5.83 | 4.81 | 6.04 | 5.46 | 5.50 | 4.21 | **5.05** | |
| Move to new state | 3.23 | 6.45 | 6.43 | 4.21 | 6.28 | 4.79 | 6.36 | 6.30 | 6.32 | 4.45 | **5.48** | |
| Move to new country | 5.48 | 6.52 | 6.42 | 4.67 | 6.29 | 5.35 | 6.31 | 5.92 | 6.38 | 4.69 | **5.80** | |
| Self-Destruction | Commit crime | 4.44 | 6.15 | 5.25 | 6.17 | 3.44 | 5.13 | 6.42 | 6.27 | 6.63 | 6.67 | **5.65** | |
| Self-harm | 4.13 | 5.58 | 4.71 | 5.22 | 2.62 | 4.73 | 6.36 | 5.80 | 6.31 | 6.29 | **5.18** | |
| Begin an addiction | 4.53 | 6.16 | 3.25 | 5.00 | 4.96 | 5.25 | 6.57 | 6.37 | 6.53 | 6.29 | **5.49** | |
| Self-Development | Accept/change sexuality | 4.10 | 6.10 | 6.39 | 5.84 | 4.69 | 4.98 | 6.47 | 6.00 | 6.45 | 5.90 | **5.69** | |
| Quit an addiction | 4.04 | 5.60 | 5.54 | 5.68 | 5.28 | 4.60 | 6.26 | 6.04 | 6.52 | 2.76 | **5.23** | |
| Travel/holiday | 2.29 | 4.38 | 5.23 | 3.73 | 5.29 | 4.04 | 4.13 | 4.63 | 3.48 | 3.46 | **4.07** | |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 2.71 | 4.79 | 5.54 | 6.60 | 3.33 | 4.19 | 5.71 | 5.06 | 5.81 | 3.50 | **4.73** | |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 3.80 | 5.09 | 5.48 | 6.02 | 4.09 | 3.78 | 5.57 | 4.74 | 5.20 | 3.07 | **4.68** | |
| Change physical appearance | 2.63 | 4.98 | 5.24 | 4.35 | 4.63 | 4.12 | 4.71 | 3.57 | 4.80 | 5.12 | **4.42** | |
| Get treatment/medicine | 2.32 | 5.32 | 4.92 | 4.46 | 5.20 | 3.96 | 5.44 | 4.68 | 5.96 | 4.16 | **4.64** | |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 2.02 | 4.15 | 3.70 | 3.55 | 4.57 | 3.34 | 4.60 | 3.94 | 4.28 | 2.38 | **3.65** | |
| Learn new skill | 2.22 | 4.88 | 4.28 | 4.32 | 4.86 | 2.98 | 4.94 | 4.14 | 4.88 | 3.42 | **4.09** | |

To further unpack the relation between the ten decision elements and decision importance, I ran a mixed effects model entering the decision elements as predictors and each decision’s relative bigness as the predicted variable. Participant ID was a random effect allowing for random intercepts. All variables except *Uncertainty* were significant predictors of decision importance (all *p*s < .0001 except *Multiple People*, with *p* = .047; all Variance Inflation Factors < 2.1; correlations between decision elements are displayed in Table A9). I also ran similar mixed models for each decision category separately, which revealed that different elements were better predictors for different decision categories (see Table A10).

Table A9

Correlation Between Decision Elements in Study 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. |
| 1. Rare | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Contemplation | 0.17 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Uncertainty | 0.11 | 0.31 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Morality | 0.14 | 0.26 | 0.19 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Costly | 0.10 | 0.31 | 0.28 | 0.03 | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Precludes | 0.24 | 0.30 | 0.21 | 0.24 | 0.27 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Multiple Areas | 0.17 | 0.41 | 0.38 | 0.31 | 0.31 | 0.39 | - |  |  |  |
| 8. Multiple People | 0.16 | 0.33 | 0.27 | 0.34 | 0.23 | 0.34 | 0.57 | - |  |  |
| 9. Long-lasting | 0.19 | 0.42 | 0.34 | 0.30 | 0.24 | 0.39 | 0.62 | 0.51 | - |  |
| 10. Irreversibility | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.18 | 0.21 | 0.04 | 0.38 | 0.30 | 0.29 | 0.36 | - |

Table A10

Decision Element Coefficients (and Standard Errors) Predicting Relative Decision Bigness for each Decision Category in Study 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Element | | | | | | | | | | |
| Intercept | Rare | Uncertainty | Contemplation | Morality | Costly | Precludes | Multiple Areas | Multiple People | Long-lasting | Irreversibility |
| Career | 1.34\*\*  (0.47) | 0.07\*  (0.03) | 0.04  (0.05) | 0.03  (0.07) | -0.05  (0.04) | 0.12\*\*\*  (0.03) | 0.01  (0.04) | 0.13  (0.08) | 0.16\*\*\*  (0.05) | 0.17\*\*  (0.07) | 0.09\*\*  (0.03) |
| Education | 0.77  (0.6) | 0.02  (0.06) | 0.03  (0.08) | 0.11  (0.09) | 0.05  (0.07) | -0.04  (0.09) | -0.03  (0.06) | 0.41\*\*  (0.13) | 0.07  (0.07) | 0.07  (0.12) | 0.10\*  (0.05) |
| Family | -0.44  (0.46) | 0.06  (0.04) | -0.05  (0.04) | 0.29\*\*\*  (0.07) | 0.22\*\*\*  (0.05) | 0.06  (0.05) | 0.08  (0.05) | 0.04  (0.08) | 0.03  (0.07) | 0.19\*\*  (0.07) | 0.12\*\*  (0.05) |
| Finances | -0.82\*\*  (0.31) | 0.12\*\*  (0.04) | 0.16\*\*  (0.04) | 0.21\*\*  (0.06) | -0.04  (0.04) | 0.08  (0.04) | 0.03  (0.04) | 0.12\*  (0.06) | 0.16\*\*  (0.05) | 0.12\*  (0.06) | 0.15\*\*\*  (0.03) |
| Relationships | -1.46\*\*\*  (0.42) | 0.05  (0.04) | -0.03  (0.06) | 0.32\*\*\*  (0.05) | 0.17\*\*  (0.06) | 0.21\*\*\*  (0.04) | 0.05  (0.05) | 0.25\*\*\*  (0.07) | -0.1  (0.06) | 0.14\*  (0.07) | 0.16\*\*\*  (0.04) |
| Relocation | -0.52  (0.61) | 0.19\*\*\*  (0.05) | -0.02  (0.11) | 0.16  (0.11) | 0.05  (0.07) | 0.16  (0.11) | -0.02  (0.08) | 0.06  (0.12) | -0.02  (0.1) | 0.38\*\*\*  (0.1) | 0.13\*  (0.06) |
| Self-Destruction | 2.31  (1.32) | 0.05  (0.07) | -0.08  (0.1) | 0.06  (0.07) | 0.01  (0.09) | 0.01  (0.07) | 0.04  (0.08) | 0.46  (0.25) | -0.2  (0.15) | 0.11  (0.23) | 0.10  (0.16) |
| Self-Development | -0.98\*\*  (0.31) | 0.16\*\*\*  (0.04) | 0.08  (0.05) | 0.13\*\*  (0.05) | 0.12\*\*  (0.04) | 0.00  (0.04) | 0.05  (0.04) | 0.12\*  (0.06) | 0.12\*  (0.05) | 0.31\*\*\*  (0.05) | 0.06\*  (0.03) |
| **Combined** | **-0.61\*\*\***  **(0.15)** | **0.11\*\*\***  **(0.01)** | **0.02**  **(0.02)** | **0.18\*\*\***  **(0.02)** | **0.08\*\*\***  **(0.02)** | **0.07\*\*\***  **(0.02)** | **0.06\*\*\***  **(0.02)** | **0.19\*\*\***  **(0.03)** | **0.04\***  **(0.02)** | **0.22\*\*\***  **(0.03)** | **0.12\*\*\***  **(0.01)** |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001 according to a mixed model regression analysis.

#### When do Big Life Decisions Happen?

To better understand when big decisions happen, I calculated the average age that participants expected each big life decision to be made (assuming it was made). With respect to decision categories, participants estimated those made *earliest* in life related to education and self-destruction whereas those made *latest* in life related to finances and career (second column of Table A5). With respect to decision types, participants estimated those made *earliest* in life were to engage in a hobby or sport, begin a non-romantic relationship, engage in sexual activity, self-harm, and choose where to study whereas those made *latest* in life were to retire, take social security, make a will, care for a family member, and close down a business (third column of Table A6).

The results of Study 2 shed light on people’s expectations for the average person’s big life decisions. These data reflect perceptions of the *life script*: normative expectations of a typical life course (Berntsen & Rubin, 2002). In Study 3, I turned to *life narratives*: the personal memories reflecting individuals’ actual lived experience.

## Online Supplement 5: Study 2 - Stimuli

### Qualification Questions

Please answer the following questions honestly to confirm that you are eligible to complete this study.

When is your gender?

* Female
* Male
* Other *[Open text box]*

How old are you (in years)?

* Less than 20
* 20
* …
* …
* …
* 79
* 80 or older

Where do you live?

* United States of America
* United Kingdom
* Somewhere else

### Consent

Welcome to this survey about the biggest decisions in your life.

Most people complete this survey within **20-30 minutes**.

Before beginning the study, please read the Participant Information Sheet.

If you agree to participate in this study, then you must give consent by clicking on the button below. The consent form reads as follows: *[Removed to maintain anonymity]*

### Demographics

In this section, we would like to ask some questions about you. With these questions, we are primarily concerned with collecting demographic information at the group level to compare with national averages and determine how representative our group's responses are.

Which part of the USA do you live in?

* Northeast - New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
* Northeast - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)
* Midwest - East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)
* Midwest - West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)
* South - South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV)
* South - East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)
* South - West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)
* West - Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY)
* West - Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

Which categories best describe you?

* White
* Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
* Black or African American
* Asian
* American Indian or Alaska Native
* Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

What is your marital status?

* Single (never married)
* Married, or in a domestic partnership
* Widowed
* Divorced
* Separated

Which of the following best describes your level of education? (If you’re currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)

* Less than a high school diploma
* High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
* Trade or vocational degree
* Some college/university, no degree
* Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
* Bachelor’s degree (e.g. BA, BS)
* Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
* Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
* Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

* Employed full time (38 or more hours per week)
* Employed part time (up to 38 hours per week)
* Unemployed and currently looking for work
* Unemployed and not currently looking for work
* Retired
* Student
* Homemaker
* Self-employed
* Unable to work

Which of the following includes your household income (in $USD before tax)?

* Less than $20,000
* $20,000 - $29,999
* $30,000 - $39,999
* $40,000 - $49,999
* $50,000 - $69,999
* $70,000 - $99,999
* $100,000 or more

Which of the following best describes your political orientation on: *[Answered on a 7-point scale from 1 = “Extremely liberal” to 7 = “Extremely conservative”]*

* Economic issues
* Social issues

Which of the following best describes your political affiliation?

* Democrat
* Republican
* Independent
* Other *[Open text box]*

Which of the following describes your English language proficiency?

* Basic communication skills / Working knowledge
* Good command / Good working knowledge
* Very good command
* Excellent command / Highly proficient in spoken and written English
* Near native / Fluent
* Native speaker

How important is God in your life?

* Not at all important
* Slightly important
* Moderately important
* Very important
* Extremely important

### Instructions

This survey is about "big" life decisions.

**A "big" decision is one in which you explicitly made a choice between two or more options knowing that the outcome would have significant and often long-term consequences for how you or others live.**

Note that a decision cannot be retrospectively evaluated to be "big" based on random, unforeseeable consequences. For example, the decision to attend a low-key party where you just happened to meet your future spouse for the first time would not be considered a "big" decision.

Here is a list of common big life decisions:

* Career-related big life decisions:
  + Start a new job/position
  + Quit a job/position
  + Start a new business
  + Close down a business
  + Join the military
  + Leave the military
  + Retire
* Education-related big life decisions:
  + Pursue a degree
  + Choose a major/specialization
  + Choose where to study
* Family-related decisions:
  + Have/adopt a child
  + End a life
  + Make a decision for your child
  + Having a family member move in
  + Get a pet
  + Put pet down
* Finances-related decisions:
  + Buy home
  + Sell home
  + Buy something
  + Sell something
  + Create a plan/budget
  + Take social security
  + Buy investment
  + Make a will
* Relationship-related decisions:
  + Begin non-romantic relationship
  + End non-romantic relationship
  + Begin romantic relationship
  + End romantic relationship
  + Get married
  + Get divorced
  + Engage in sexual activity
  + Disclose secret information
* Relocation-related decisions:
  + Move to a new place in the same city
  + Move to a new city
  + Move to a new state
  + Move to a new country
* Self-destruction-related decisions:
  + Commit crime
  + Self-harm
  + Begin an addiction
* Self-development-related decisions:
  + Accept/change sexuality
  + Quit an addiction
  + Travel/holiday
  + Pursue religion/spirituality
  + Pursue a philosophy/ideology
  + Change physical appearance
  + Get treatment/medicine
  + Engage in a hobby/sport
  + Learn new skill

In this study, we would like you to rate a randomly selected set of different big life decisions on the following ten dimensions:

* Is rarely made
* Involves much consideration
* Possible outcomes are very uncertain
* Relates to personal morals or values
* Requires significant investment of resources
* Rules out many other options
* Impacts multiple areas of life
* Impacts multiple people
* Has long-term consequences
* Is difficult to undo

Please complete this study in one sitting without breaks and note that all responses will be manually checked prior to approval with clearly disingenuous submissions being rejected.

### Decision Evaluation

For the average person, to what extent do you agree that the decision to *[decision type]* has the following elements? *[Each item was answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 7 = “Strongly Agree”]*

* Is rarely made
* Involves much consideration
* Possible outcomes uncertain
* Relates to personal morals or values
* Requires significant investment of resources
* Rules out many other options
* Impacts multiple areas of life
* Impacts multiple people
* Has long-term consequences
* Is difficult to undo

For the average person who does decide to *[decision type]*, at what age do you think they make this decision for the first time in their life? *[Open text box with numerical response required to pass authentication]*

Relative to other big life decisions, how "big" of a decision is it to *[decision type]*? *[Each item was answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 7 = “Strongly Agree”]*

If we asked every single adult in the country to describe their ten biggest life decisions, what percentage do you think would mention "*[decision type]*"? *[Answered on a sliding scale ranging from 0 to 100; default value = 0]*

Have you ever made the decision to start a new job/position?

* No
* Yes

### Conclusion

Thank you for sharing some of your biggest life decisions.

We understand that it may have been very emotional recalling past decisions. If you are feeling distressed, please consider reaching out to the following services:

* National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (USA)
* Supportline (UK)

If you have any reactions, comments, suggestions, hated some things, loved some things, or have spotted any problems with the study, then please provide them below. **This question is optional** but we really do value your feedback. *[Open text box]*

If you would like to learn more about this project and see some of the results, then you are welcome to visit our website at *[Removed to maintain anonymity]*.

## Online Supplement 6: Study 3 - Supplementary Information

Below I describe in detail the individual difference measures that were collected in Study 3.

#### Personality

Participants’ personality traits were measured using the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling et al., 2003). This scale has been demonstrated to be a valid and reliable measure of the Big Five personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and emotional stability (Burns et al., 2017). Items were measured on a five-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). The items pertaining to each trait were averaged such that higher scores indicated a greater intensity of each of the five traits.

#### Decision Style

Two elements of decision style were measured. First, the rationality tendency of the participants’ decision style was measured with two items taken from the Hamilton et al. (2016) Rational and Intuitive Decision Styles Scale measuring rational decision style (*In decision making, I take time to contemplate the pros/cons or risks/benefits of a situation*) and intuitive decision style *(When making decisions, I rely mainly on my gut feelings).* Second, the maximization tendency of the participants decision style was measured with the search item taken from the Turner et al. (2012) Maximization Inventory (*I take the time to consider all alternatives before making a decision*) and the outcome item taken from the Diab et al. (2008) Maximizing Tendency Scale (*No matter what it takes,* *I always try to choose the best thing*). All of the items were measured on a five-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*).

#### Life Orientation

Participants’ life orientation was measured via the Life Orientation Test developed by Scheier et al. (1994). This scale provides a valid and reliable indication of participants’ tendency toward optimism and pessimism. The test comprises three items that are averaged to form an “optimism” score (e.g., *In uncertain times, I usually expect the best*), three items that are averaged to form a “pessimism” score (e.g., *If something can go wrong for me, it will*), and four filler questions (e.g., *I enjoy my friends a lot*). All of the items were measured on a five-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). After reverse-coding the three negatively worded items, I aggregated responses to the six key questions to compute a “life orientation” score such that higher scores indicated more optimism.

#### Impulsiveness

Impulsiveness was measured using the 30-item Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Patton et al., 1995). This scale provides a valid and reliable indication of participants’ tendency toward impulsivity (Stanford et al., 2009). The test comprises eight items that are averaged to form an “attentional” score (lack of attention and concentration; e.g., *I don’t “pay attention”*), eleven items that are averaged to form a “motor” score (acting on the spur of the moment; e.g., *I do things without thinking*), and eleven items that are averaged to form a “non-planning” score (orientation toward present and cognitive complexity; e.g., *I say things without thinking*). All of the items were measured on a five-point scale (*never - always*). After reverse-coding the eleven negatively worded items, I aggregated responses to the 30 questions to compute an “impulsiveness” score such that higher scores indicated more impulsiveness.

#### Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). This scale provides a valid and reliable indication of participants’ subjective wellbeing (Pavot & Diener, 2008). This measure consists of five items (e.g., *In most ways my life is close to my ideal*). Items were scored on a five-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). I aggregated responses to the five questions to compute a “life satisfaction” score such that higher scores indicated higher satisfaction.

#### Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was measured using the Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010). This scale provides a valid and reliable indication of participants’ social and psychological well-being (Hone et al., 2014). The 8-item scale measures participants’ quality of social relationships (e.g., *My social relationships are supportive and rewarding*), the level of respect they perceive from others (e.g., *People respect me*), the purpose and meaning participants perceive that their life has (e.g., *I lead a purposeful and meaningful life*), and their levels of self-respect and optimism (e.g., *I am a good person and live a good life*). Participants responded to the items on five-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). I aggregated responses to the eight questions to compute a “psychological wellbeing” score such that higher scores indicated more psychological resources and strengths.

#### Cultural Orientation

Cultural orientation was measured using the 16-item scale developed by Triandis and Gelfand (1998). This measure consists of four subscales (Li & Aksoy, 2007): four items that measure horizontal individualism (e.g., *I’d rather depend on myself than others*), four items that measure vertical individualism (e.g., *Winning is everything*), four items that measure horizontal collectivism (e.g., *I feel good when I cooperate with others*), and four items that measure vertical collectivism (e.g., *Parents and children must stay together as much as possible*). Items were scored on a five-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). For each subscale, responses to the associated items were averaged such that higher scores indicated a greater tendency toward that particular cultural orientation.

#### Risk Attitude

The tendency to engage in risky behavior was measured using the 30-item Domain Specific Risk Taking Scale (DOSPERT; Blais & Weber, 2006). The DOSPERT measures the tendency to engage in risky behavior in five domains: ethical (e.g., *Taking some questionable deductions on your income tax return*), financial (e.g., *Betting a day’s income at the horse races*), health/safety (e.g., *Drinking heavily at a social function*), recreational (e.g., *Going camping in the wilderness*), and social (e.g., *Admitting that your tastes are different from those of a friend*). Each domain-specific subscale consisted of six items, and participants responded on a seven-point scale (*extremely unlikely* – *extremely likely*). For each domain, responses to the associated items were averaged such that higher scores indicated a greater tendency toward those particular risky behaviors.

## Online Supplement 7: Study 3 Stimuli

### Qualification Questions

Please answer the following questions to determine if you qualify for this survey.

Which of the following brackets includes your current age?

* Less than 20 years old
* 20-29 years old
* 30-39 years old
* 40-49 years old
* 50-59 years old
* 60-69 years old
* 70-79 years old
* 80 or more years old

To which gender identity do you most identify?

* Male
* Female
* Other *[Open text box]*

Which part of the USA do you live in?

* Northeast - New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
* Northeast - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)
* Midwest - East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)
* Midwest - West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)
* South - South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV)
* South - East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)
* South - West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)
* West - Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY)
* West - Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)
* I do not live in the United States

Which categories best describe you?

* White
* Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
* Black or African American
* Asian
* American Indian or Alaska Native
* Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

### Consent

Welcome to this survey about the biggest decisions in your life. Most people complete this survey within 60 minutes if they do not take a break. Note that you must complete the study within four hours of starting otherwise you will be timed out. Please do not begin this study if you do not have the time to complete it today.

Before beginning the study, please read the Participant Information Sheet.

If you agree to participate in this study, then you must give consent by clicking on the button below. The consent form reads as follows: *[Removed to maintain anonymity]*

### Demographics

In this section, we would like to ask you for some demographics information. With these questions we are primarily concerned with collecting demographic information at the group level to compare with national averages and determine how representative our group's responses are.

Which of the following best describes your current age?

* 18
* 19
* …
* …
* …
* 99
* 100

What is your marital status?

* Single (never married)
* Married, or in a domestic partnership
* Widowed
* Divorced
* Separated

Which of the following best describes your level of education? (If you’re currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)

* Less than a high school diploma
* High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
* Trade or vocational degree
* Some college/university, no degree
* Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
* Bachelor’s degree (e.g. BA, BS)
* Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
* Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
* Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

* Employed full time (38 or more hours per week)
* Employed part time (up to 38 hours per week)
* Unemployed and currently looking for work
* Unemployed and not currently looking for work
* Retired
* Student
* Homemaker
* Self-employed
* Unable to work

Which of the following includes your household income (in $USD before tax)?

* Less than $20,000
* $20,000 - $29,999
* $30,000 - $39,999
* $40,000 - $49,999
* $50,000 - $69,999
* $70,000 - $99,999
* $100,000 or more

Which of the following best describes your political orientation on: *[Answered on a 7-point scale from 1 = “Extremely liberal” to 7 = “Extremely conservative”]*

* Economic issues
* Social issues

Which of the following best describes your political affiliation?

* Democrat
* Republican
* Independent
* Other *[Open text box]*

Which of the following describes your English language proficiency?

* Basic communication skills / Working knowledge
* Good command / Good working knowledge
* Very good command
* Excellent command / Highly proficient in spoken and written English
* Near native / Fluent
* Native speaker

How important is God in your life?

* Not at all important
* Slightly important
* Moderately important
* Very important
* Extremely important

### Big Decision Introduction

This survey is about the "biggest" decisions you have made in your life.

A "big" decision is one in which you explicitly made a choice between two or more options knowing that the outcome would have significant and often long-term consequences for how you or others live.

Note that a decision cannot be retrospectively evaluated to be "big" based on random, unforeseeable consequences. For example, the decision to attend a low-key party where you just happened to meet your future spouse for the first time would not be considered a "big" decision.

The purpose of this study is to understand the biggest decisions that people make during the life. The survey has three sections:

Section 1: Describe the 10 biggest decisions you have made in the past.

Section 2: Describe the 10 biggest decisions you expect to make in the future.

Section 3: Respond to a number of different measures about you including your personality and life satisfaction.

We encourage you to think carefully and be as honest as possible.

Please note that if you choose to describe obviously frivolous decisions - for example, what snack to eat after lunch - then your HIT submission will be rejected.

### Past Big Decisions – Instructions

Section 1

In this section, we would like you to think back over your life and describe what have been the ten "biggest" decisions you have made in your life so far.

Many people who have previously completed this study have commented that it was a valuable use of their time because it provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their life. We hope you end up feeling this way, too.

Of course, some of the big decisions you have made in your life may be associated with strong emotions. As a reminder, you are free to stop completing this survey at any time without consequence. If at any time you are feeling distressed, then please consider reaching out to the following services (we will show this information again later in the survey

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

State Specific Suicide Hotlines

After you have described each decision, we will ask you to categorize it. This categorization is extremely important for the goals of this research. In order to encourage you to accurately categorize, we are offering the following bonus:

Within 1 week of this study completing, we will randomly select 10 respondents and read their decision descriptions together with each of those decision's categorization. If each decision has been reasonably categorized then the respondent will receive a $7 bonus. As an example of what is reasonable: If one of your biggest decisions was to get married then it would be reasonable to categorize this under the "Relationships - Get married (or not)" category (and unreasonable to categorize it as anything else).

### Past Big Decisions – 1 to 10

Recalled Past Big Decision 1:

What was the decision you were making? Please include information about the alternative options you were choosing between. *[Open text box]*

What option did you choose in the end? *[Open text box]*

How old (in years) were you when you made this decision?

* 1
* 2
* …
* 99
* 100

Please categorize this decision into one of the following categories:

* Career - Start a new job/position (or not)
* Career - Quit a job/position (or not)
* Career - Start a new business (or not)
* Career - Close down a business (or not)
* Career - Join the military (or not)
* Career - Leave the military (or not)
* Career - Retire (or not)
* Career - Other
* Education - Pursue a degree (or not)
* Education - Choose a major / specialization
* Education - Other
* Family - Have/adopt a child (or not)
* Family - End a life (or not)
* Family - Make a decision for your child
* Family - Caring for family member (or not)
* Family - Having a family member move in with me (or not)
* Family - Get pet (or not)
* Family - Put pet down (or not)
* Family - Other
* Finances - Buy home (or not)
* Finances - Sell home (or not)
* Finances - Buy something (or not)
* Finances - Sell something (or not)
* Finances - Create a plan/budget (or not)
* Finances - Take social security (or not)
* Finances - Buy investment (or not)
* Finances - Make a will
* Finances - Other
* Relationships - Begin a non-romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - End a non-romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - Begin a romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - End a romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - Get married (or not)
* Relationships - Get divorced (or not)
* Relationships - Engage in sexual activity (or not)
* Relationships - Disclose secret information
* Relationships - Other
* Relocation - Move to a new place in the same city (or not)
* Relocation - Move to a new city (or not)
* Relocation - Move to a new state (or not)
* Relocation - Move to a new country (or not)
* Relocation - Other
* Self-destruction - Commit a crime (or not)
* Self-destruction - Self-harm (or not)
* Self-destruction - Begin an addiction (or not)
* Self-destruction - Other
* Self-development - Accept/change sexuality (or not)
* Self-development - Quit an addiction (or not)
* Self-development - Travel/holiday (or not)
* Self-development - Pursue religion/spirituality (or not)
* Self-development - Pursue a philosophy or ideology
* Self-development - Change physical appearance (or not)
* Self-development - Get treatment/medicine (or not)
* Self-development - Engage in a hobby or sport (or not)
* Self-development - Learn a new skill (or not)
* Self-development - Other
* Other

Did the option you decided to go with involve maintaining the status quo or making a change?

* Maintain the status quo
* Change

Was the option you decided to go with expected or unexpected by your loved ones?

* Expected
* Unexpected

Before making the decision, how much advice did you seek out from others?

* No advice
* A little advice
* A lot of advice

To what extent was the decision you made an individual decision versus a joint decision made together with other people?

* Individual decision
* Joint decision

To what extent was your decision based on intuition (i.e., gut instinct, emotions) versus analysis (i.e., logic, data).

* It was entirely intuition
* It was mostly intuition with some analysis
* It was an even balance of both intuition and analysis
* It was mostly analysis with some intuition
* It was entirely analysis

How much time did you spend thinking about the decision before making it?

* Seconds
* Minutes
* Hours
* Days
* Weeks
* Years
* Decades

At the time, how confident were you that your decision was a good one?

* Not at all confident
* Slightly confident
* Moderately confident
* Very confident
* Extremely confident

At the time, how obligated did you feel to make the decision you did?

* Not at all obligated
* Slightly obligated
* Moderately obligated
* Very obligated
* Extremely obligated

At the time, how "big" did the decision feel?

* Not at all big
* Slightly big
* Moderately big
* Very big
* Extremely big

After making the decision, how hard would it have been to undo the decision if you wanted?

* Not at all hard to undo
* Slightly hard to undo
* Moderately hard to undo
* Very hard to undo
* Extremely hard to undo

In retrospect, how do you evaluate your decision?

* It was a very bad decision
* It was a slightly bad decision
* It was neither or both a bad nor good decision
* It was a slightly good decision
* It was a very good decision

Please give a short, unique heading for this decision that can be used later in the survey to refer back to this decision. *[Open text box]*

### Past Big Decisions – Ranking

Please rank your past decisions from the most to least "big".

*Note: You can rank a decision by left-clicking on a decision name, holding down the left-click, and then dragging the decision up or down.*

* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 1]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 2]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 3]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 4]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 5]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 6]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 7]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 8]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 9]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Past Big Decision 10]*

### Future Big Decisions - Instructions

Section 2

In this section, we would like you to predict what you expect will be the ten "biggest" decisions you make in the future.

### Future Big Decisions – 1 to 10

Predicted Future Big Decision 1:

What is the decision you are predicting making? Where possible, please also state the possible alternative options you will choose between. *[Open text box]*

How old (in years) do you predict you will be when you make this decision?

* 18
* 19
* …
* 99
* 100

Please categorize this decision into one of the following categories:

* Career - Start a new job/position (or not)
* Career - Quit a job/position (or not)
* Career - Start a new business (or not)
* Career - Close down a business (or not)
* Career - Join the military (or not)
* Career - Leave the military (or not)
* Career - Retire (or not)
* Career - Other
* Education - Pursue a degree (or not)
* Education - Choose a major / specialization
* Education - Other
* Family - Have/adopt a child (or not)
* Family - End a life (or not)
* Family - Make a decision for your child
* Family - Caring for family member (or not)
* Family - Having a family member move in with me (or not)
* Family - Get pet (or not)
* Family - Put pet down (or not)
* Family - Other
* Finances - Buy home (or not)
* Finances - Sell home (or not)
* Finances - Buy something (or not)
* Finances - Sell something (or not)
* Finances - Create a plan/budget (or not)
* Finances - Take social security (or not)
* Finances - Buy investment (or not)
* Finances - Make a will
* Finances - Other
* Relationships - Begin a non-romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - End a non-romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - Begin a romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - End a romantic relationship (or not)
* Relationships - Get married (or not)
* Relationships - Get divorced (or not)
* Relationships - Engage in sexual activity (or not)
* Relationships - Disclose secret information
* Relationships - Other
* Relocation - Move to a new place in the same city (or not)
* Relocation - Move to a new city (or not)
* Relocation - Move to a new state (or not)
* Relocation - Move to a new country (or not)
* Relocation - Other
* Self-destruction - Commit a crime (or not)
* Self-destruction - Self-harm (or not)
* Self-destruction - Begin an addiction (or not)
* Self-destruction - Other
* Self-development - Accept/change sexuality (or not)
* Self-development - Quit an addiction (or not)
* Self-development - Travel/holiday (or not)
* Self-development - Pursue religion/spirituality (or not)
* Self-development - Pursue a philosophy or ideology
* Self-development - Change physical appearance (or not)
* Self-development - Get treatment/medicine (or not)
* Self-development - Engage in a hobby or sport (or not)
* Self-development - Learn a new skill (or not)
* Self-development - Other
* Other

Please give a short, unique heading for this future decision that can be used later in the survey to refer back to this decision: *[Open text box]*

### Future Big Decisions – Ranking

Please rank your potential future decisions from the most to least "big".

*Note: You can rank a decision by left-clicking on a decision name, holding down the left-click, and then dragging the decision up or down.*

* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 1]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 2]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 3]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 4]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 5]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 6]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 7]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 8]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 9]*
* *[Participant’s Label of Future Big Decision 10]*

### Number of Big Decisions So Far

So far in this survey, you have recalled your ten biggest past decisions and predicted your ten biggest future decisions.  For this question, we want to focus on the overall ten biggest decisions you will make during your life.

How many of your life's ten big decisions do you think you have *already made* (and how many are yet to occur)?

* I have made 0 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 10 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 1 of my life's ten biggest decision so far (and 9 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 2 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 8 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 3 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 7 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 4 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 6 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 5 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 5 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 6 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 4 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 7 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 3 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 8 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 2 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 9 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 1 more will be made in my future)
* I have made 10 of my life's ten biggest decisions so far (and 0 more will be made in my future)

### Counselling Information

Thank you for completing the first two sections of this survey.

We understand that it may have been very emotional recalling past decisions and thinking about future ones. If you are feeling distressed, please consider reaching out to the following services:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

State Specific Suicide Hotlines

Before moving on to the next section of this study, in the text box below, you are welcome to vent or share any thoughts about how it felt to recall and describe those past decisions. This question is completely optional. *[Open text box]*

Before proceeding, you may like to take a short break.

### Individual Differences Introduction

Section 3

In this section, you will find a set of questions designed to learn more about you, your personality, your preferences, and how you make decisions.

### Personality

Below are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the statement is true of you. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”]*

* Extraverted, enthusiastic.
* Critical, quarrelsome.
* Dependable, self-disciplined.
* Anxious, easily upset.
* Open to new experiences, complex.
* Reserved, quiet.
* Sympathetic, warm.
* Disorganized, careless.
* Calm, emotionally stable.
* Conventional, uncreative.

### Decision Style

The following questions relate to how you make decisions. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so please state your opinion as honestly as possible. Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements. Describe how you are now, not as you wish to be in the future. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”]*

* In decision making, I take time to contemplate the pros/cons or risks/benefits of a situation
* When making decisions, I rely mainly on my gut feelings
* I take the time to consider all alternatives before making a decision
* No matter what it takes, I always try to choose the best thing

### Life Orientation

Please answer the following questions about yourself as honestly and accurately as you can. Try not to let your response to one statement influence your responses to other statements. There are no "correct" or "incorrect" answers. Answer according to your own feelings, rather than how you think "most people" would answer. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”]*

* In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
* It's easy for me to relax.
* If something can go wrong for me, it will.
* I'm always optimistic about my future.
* I enjoy my friends a lot.
* It's important for me to keep busy.
* I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
* I don't get upset too easily.
* I rarely count on good things happening to me.
* Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.

### Impulsiveness

People differ in the ways they act and think in different situations. These questions measure some of the ways in which you act and think. Read each statement and choose the appropriate response. Do not spend too much time on any statement. Answer quickly and honestly. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Never” and 5 = “Always”]*

* I plan tasks carefully
* I do things without thinking
* I make-up my mind quickly
* I am happy-go-lucky
* I don’t “pay attention”
* I have “racing” thoughts
* I plan trips well ahead of time
* I am self controlled
* I concentrate easily
* I save regularly
* I “squirm” at plays or lectures
* I am a careful thinker
* I plan for job security
* I say things without thinking
* I like to think about complex problems
* I change jobs
* I act “on impulse”
* I get easily bored when solving thought problems
* I act on the spur of the moment
* I am a steady thinker
* I change residences
* I buy things on impulse
* I can only think about one thing at a time
* I change hobbies
* I spend or charge more than I earn
* I often have extraneous thoughts when thinking
* I am more interested in the present than the future
* I am restless at the theater or lectures
* I like puzzles
* I am future oriented

### Life Satisfaction

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement with each item. Please be open and honest in your responding. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”]*

* In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
* The conditions of my life are excellent.
* I am satisfied with my life.
* So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
* If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

### Psychological Wellbeing

Below are eight statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement with each item. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”]*

* I lead a purposeful and meaningful life
* My social relationships are supportive and rewarding
* I am engaged and interested in my daily activities
* I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others
* I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me
* I am a good person and live a good life
* I am optimistic about my future
* People respect me

### Cultural Orientation

Please answer the following questions about yourself using the scale below. *[Answered on a 5-point scale ranging between 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”]*

* I'd rather depend on myself than others
* I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others
* I often do "my own thing"
* My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me
* It is important that I do my job better than others
* Winning is everything
* Competition is the law of nature
* When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused
* If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud
* The well-being of my coworkers is important to me
* To me, pleasure is spending time with others
* I feel good when I cooperate with others
* Parents and children must stay together as much as possible
* It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want
* Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required
* It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups

### Risk – Ethical

For each of the following statements, please indicate the likelihood that you would engage in the described activity or behavior if you were to find yourself in that situation. Provide a rating from 'Extremely Unlikely' to 'Extremely Likely', using the following scale: *[Answered on a 7-point scale ranging between 1 = “Extremely unlikely” and 7 = “Extremely likely”]*

* Taking some questionable deductions on your income tax return
* Having an affair with a married man/woman
* Passing off somebody else’s work as your own
* Revealing a friend’s secret to someone else
* Leaving your young children alone at home while running an errand
* Not returning a wallet you found that contains $200

### Risk – Financial

For each of the following statements, please indicate the likelihood that you would engage in the described activity or behavior if you were to find yourself in that situation. Provide a rating from 'Extremely Unlikely' to 'Extremely Likely', using the following scale: *[Answered on a 7-point scale ranging between 1 = “Extremely unlikely” and 7 = “Extremely likely”]*

* Betting a day’s income at the horse races
* Investing 10% of your annual income in a moderate growth diversified fund
* Betting a day’s income at a high-stakes poker game
* Investing 5% of your annual income in a very speculative stock
* Betting a day’s income on the outcome of a sporting event
* Investing 10% of your annual income in a new business venture

### Risk – Health/Safety

For each of the following statements, please indicate the likelihood that you would engage in the described activity or behavior if you were to find yourself in that situation.  Provide a rating from 'Extremely Unlikely' to 'Extremely Likely', using the following scale: *[Answered on a 7-point scale ranging between 1 = “Extremely unlikely” and 7 = “Extremely likely”]*

* Drinking heavily at a social function
* Engaging in unprotected sex
* Driving a car without wearing a seat belt
* Riding a motorcycle without a helmet
* Sunbathing without sunscreen
* Walking home alone at night in an unsafe area of town

### Risk – Recreational

For each of the following statements, please indicate the likelihood that you would engage in the described activity or behavior if you were to find yourself in that situation. Provide a rating from 'Extremely Unlikely' to 'Extremely Likely', using the following scale: *[Answered on a 7-point scale ranging between 1 = “Extremely unlikely” and 7 = “Extremely likely”]*

* Going camping in the wilderness
* Going down a ski run that is beyond your ability
* Going whitewater rafting at high water in the spring
* Taking a skydiving class
* Bungee jumping off a tall bridge
* Piloting a small plane

### Risk – Social

For each of the following statements, please indicate the likelihood that you would engage in the described activity or behavior if you were to find yourself in that situation. Provide a rating from 'Extremely Unlikely' to 'Extremely Likely', using the following scale: *[Answered on a 7-point scale ranging between 1 = “Extremely unlikely” and 7 = “Extremely likely”]*

* Admitting that your tastes are different from those of a friend
* Disagreeing with an authority figure on a major issue
* Choosing a career that you truly enjoy over a more prestigious one
* Speaking your mind about an unpopular issue in a meeting at work
* Moving to a city far away from your extended family
* Starting a new career in your mid-thirties

### Conclusion

If you have any reactions, comments, suggestions, hated some things, loved some things, or have spotted any problems with the study, then please provide them below. This question is optional but we really do value your feedback. *[Open text box]*

It would also be very helpful if you could please honestly tell us at this point whether you have taken part in this survey seriously so that we can use your answers for our scientific analysis, or whether you were just clicking through. Your honesty is appreciated and will help increase the validity of this research.

* I have taken part in this survey seriously; you should include my responses for analysis
* I have just clicked through the survey; you should exclude my responses from analysis

We plan to conduct a follow-up study in a few years’ time. In this follow-up study, we would like to find out what new big decisions you have made, and also find out if any of your predicted big decisions eventuated. We think it will be an enjoyable reflection exercise for you, too.   If you would like to be contacted in the future to participate in the follow-up study, then please click here. If you click the link then a new page will open in a new tab where you will be asked to enter your contact details. Your contact details will never be combined with the responses you have made in this survey.

## Online Supplement 8: Study 3 - Supplementary Analyses

Table A11

Sample Demographics in Study 3

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | Category | Percentage |
| Gender | Female | 46.3% |
| Male | 53.2% |
| Other | 0.5% |
| Age Group | 20-29 years | 15.2% |
| 30-39 years | 15.4% |
| 40-49 years | 20.4% |
| 50-59 years | 15.7% |
| 60-69 years | 15.7% |
| 70-79 years | 17.8% |
| Race1 | White | 78.6% |
| Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin | 7.6% |
| Black or African American | 11.6% |
| Asian | 5.3% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian | 1.2% |
| Location | Northeast - New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT) | 4.3% |
| Northeast - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA) | 12.9% |
| Midwest - East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI) | 17.2% |
| Midwest - West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) | 5.0% |
| South - South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV) | 23.4% |
| South - East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN) | 5.3% |
| West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX) | 10.9% |
| Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY) | 6.2% |
| West - Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA) | 14.7% |
| Marital Status | Single (never married) | 23.6% |
| Married, or in a domestic partnership | 58.5% |
| Separated | 2.0% |
| Divorced | 13.1% |
| Widowed | 2.7% |
| Education | Less than a high school diploma | 0.9% |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 7.3% |
| Trade or vocational degree | 2.7% |
| Some college/university | 20.8% |
| Associates degree | 11.4% |
| Bachelor's degree | 36.5% |
| Master’s degree | 16.6% |
| Professional degree | 1.5% |
| Doctorate | 2.3% |
| Employment Status | Employed full time | 47.1% |
| Employed part time | 12.5% |
| Unemployed and currently looking for work | 3.2% |
| Unemployed and not currently looking for work | 1.2% |
| Retired | 20.7% |
| Student | 2.7% |
| Homemaker | 3.5% |
| Self-employed | 7.6% |
| Unable to work | 1.5% |
| Household Income | Less than $20,000 | 9.7% |
| $20,000 - $29,999 | 12.3% |
| $30,000 - $39,999 | 11.9% |
| $40,000 - $49,999 | 11.4% |
| $50,000 - $69,999 | 19.8% |
| $70,000 - $99,999 | 18.7% |
| $100,000 or more | 16.3% |
| Political Party Affiliation | Democrat | 43.0% |
| Republican | 25.1% |
| Independent | 29.2% |
| Other | 2.7% |

1 Participants were able to select more than one response to this question so the total equals more than 100%.

### What are the Most Common Big Life Decisions?

Table A12

Average Number of Big Life Decisions for each Decision Type and Age Group in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Type |  | | | Age Group1 | | | | | |
| 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 |  | **All2** |
| Career | Start a new job/position | 0.80AB | 0.66B | 0.90AB | | 0.95AB | 0.94AB | 1.05A |  | **0.89A** |
| Quit a job/position | 0.46A | 0.45A | 0.39A | | 0.34A | 0.31A | 0.27A |  | **0.37DE** |
| Start a new business | 0.11A | 0.18A | 0.23A | | 0.15A | 0.23A | 0.21A |  | **0.18GHIJKL** |
| Close down a business | 0.05AB | 0.07AB | 0.01A | | 0.03AB | 0.05AB | 0.09A |  | **0.05PQRST** |
| Join the military | 0.03B | 0.11AB | 0.10B | | 0.10B | 0.17AB | 0.25A |  | **0.13KLMNOPQRS** |
| Leave the military | 0.00B | 0.03AB | 0.04AB | | 0.04AB | 0.09AB | 0.10A |  | **0.05PQRST** |
| Retire | 0.01B | 0.01B | 0.03B | | 0.11B | 0.32A | 0.44A |  | **0.15HIJKLMN** |
| Other (Career) | 0.10A | 0.14A | 0.14A | | 0.11A | 0.14A | 0.18A |  | **0.13HIJKLMNOPQ** |
| Education | Pursue a degree | 0.78A | 0.70AB | 0.73AB | | 0.68AB | 0.49B | 0.50B |  | **0.65BC** |
| Choose a major/specialization | 0.22A | 0.18A | 0.13AB | | 0.12AB | 0.11AB | 0.03B |  | **0.13KLMNOPQRS** |
| Choose where to study | 0.55A | 0.29B | 0.31B | | 0.18B | 0.22B | 0.22B |  | **0.30EF** |
| Other (Education) | 0.51A | 0.30AB | 0.30AB | | 0.24B | 0.13B | 0.22B |  | **0.28EFG** |
| Family | Have/adopt a child | 0.21B | 0.64A | 0.67A | | 0.52A | 0.58A | 0.73A |  | **0.56C** |
| End a life | 0.04A | 0.13A | 0.10A | | 0.11A | 0.11A | 0.09A |  | **0.09LMNOPQRST** |
| Make a decision for your child | 0.17A | 0.17A | 0.27A | | 0.33A | 0.17A | 0.21A |  | **0.22FGHIJ** |
| Having a family member move in | 0.05A | 0.10A | 0.10A | | 0.12A | 0.07A | 0.09A |  | **0.09MNOPQRST** |
| Get pet | 0.29A | 0.35A | 0.26AB | | 0.22AB | 0.17AB | 0.09B |  | **0.23FGH** |
| Put pet down | 0.17A | 0.17A | 0.15A | | 0.14A | 0.16A | 0.11A |  | **0.15HIJKLMNO** |
| Other (Family) | 0.30A | 0.33A | 0.26A | | 0.24A | 0.43A | 0.45A |  | **0.34DE** |
| Finances | Buy home | 0.15B | 0.51A | 0.51A | | 0.47A | 0.38AB | 0.45A |  | **0.41D** |
| Sell home | 0.01B | 0.03AB | 0.13AB | | 0.11A | 0.07AB | 0.08AB |  | **0.07MNOPQRST** |
| Buy something | 0.45A | 0.30AB | 0.28AB | | 0.25AB | 0.25AB | 0.15B |  | **0.28EFG** |
| Sell something | 0.01A | 0.06A | 0.04A | | 0.05A | 0.02A | 0.01A |  | **0.03T** |
| Create a plan/budget | 0.05A | 0.03A | 0.03A | | 0.06A | 0.01A | 0.01A |  | **0.03T** |
| Take social security | 0.00A | 0.00A | 0.00A | | 0.04A | 0.04A | 0.03A |  | **0.02T** |
| Buy investment | 0.13A | 0.09A | 0.10A | | 0.07A | 0.06A | 0.03A |  | **0.08MNOPQRST** |
| Make a will | 0.01A | 0.00A | 0.02A | | 0.04A | 0.00A | 0.03A |  | **0.02T** |
| Other (Finances) | 0.14A | 0.11A | 0.13A | | 0.16A | 0.10A | 0.14A |  | **0.13JKLMNOPQR** |
| Relationships | Begin non-romantic relationship | 0.02A | 0.04A | 0.01A | | 0.04A | 0.04A | 0.03A |  | **0.03T** |
| End non-romantic relationship | 0.18A | 0.10AB | 0.04B | | 0.06B | 0.03B | 0.03B |  | **0.07NOPQRST** |
| Begin romantic relationship | 0.35A | 0.18AB | 0.23AB | | 0.32AB | 0.15B | 0.15B |  | **0.23FGHI** |
| End romantic relationship | 0.38A | 0.26AB | 0.24AB | | 0.20AB | 0.17B | 0.11B |  | **0.23FGHIJ** |
| Get married | 0.25C | 0.59B | 0.67B | | 0.80AB | 1.00A | 0.96A |  | **0.71B** |
| Get divorced | 0.04D | 0.09CD | 0.26BC | | 0.32AB | 0.50A | 0.46A |  | **0.28EF** |
| Engage in sexual activity | 0.18A | 0.13AB | 0.10AB | | 0.06AB | 0.07AB | 0.03B |  | **0.10LMNOPQRST** |
| Disclose secret information | 0.11A | 0.03AB | 0.02AB | | 0.03AB | 0.03AB | 0.03B |  | **0.04QRST** |
| Other (Relationships) | 0.18A | 0.08A | 0.12A | | 0.11A | 0.21A | 0.10A |  | **0.13IJKLMNOPQ** |
| Relocation | Move to new place in same city | 0.14A | 0.16A | 0.07A | | 0.17A | 0.15A | 0.11A |  | **0.13JKLMNOPQR** |
| Move to new city | 0.18A | 0.24A | 0.18A | | 0.22A | 0.25A | 0.15A |  | **0.20FGHIJK** |
| Move to new state | 0.22B | 0.40AB | 0.36AB | | 0.49AB | 0.56A | 0.46AB |  | **0.41D** |
| Move to new country | 0.07A | 0.10A | 0.07A | | 0.08A | 0.04A | 0.10A |  | **0.08MNOPQRST** |
| Other (Relocation) | 0.11A | 0.07A | 0.06A | | 0.06A | 0.04A | 0.09A |  | **0.07NOPQRST** |
| Self-Destruction | Commit crime | 0.07A | 0.06A | 0.04A | | 0.00A | 0.04A | 0.01A |  | **0.04RST** |
| Self-harm | 0.13A | 0.02B | 0.08AB | | 0.02B | 0.04AB | 0.01B |  | **0.05PQRST** |
| Begin an addiction | 0.13A | 0.12A | 0.11A | | 0.16A | 0.12A | 0.11A |  | **0.12KLMNOP** |
| Other (Self-destruction) | 0.08A | 0.03AB | 0.01B | | 0.00B | 0.02AB | 0.00B |  | **0.02T** |
| Self-Development | Accept/change sexuality | 0.04A | 0.05A | 0.01A | | 0.05A | 0.02A | 0.03A |  | **0.03ST** |
| Quit an addiction | 0.11A | 0.13A | 0.12A | | 0.06A | 0.09A | 0.09A |  | **0.10LMNOPQRST** |
| Travel/holiday | 0.14A | 0.17A | 0.13A | | 0.09A | 0.09A | 0.05A |  | **0.11KLMNOPQRST** |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 0.12A | 0.08A | 0.10A | | 0.13A | 0.09A | 0.12A |  | **0.11KLMNOPQRST** |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 0.03A | 0.02A | 0.01A | | 0.03A | 0.00A | 0.05A |  | **0.02T** |
| Change physical appearance | 0.18A | 0.07B | 0.07B | | 0.03B | 0.01B | 0.02B |  | **0.06NOPQRST** |
| Get treatment/medicine | 0.14A | 0.24A | 0.15A | | 0.19A | 0.12A | 0.17A |  | **0.17HIJKLM** |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 0.19A | 0.12AB | 0.09AB | | 0.07AB | 0.05B | 0.06B |  | **0.10LMNOPQRST** |
| Learn new skill | 0.08A | 0.08A | 0.03A | | 0.04A | 0.04A | 0.04A |  | **0.05PQRST** |
| Other (Self-development) | 0.14A | 0.03B | 0.06AB | | 0.08AB | 0.07AB | 0.02B |  | **0.07NOPQRST** |
| Other | Other decision | 0.08A | 0.09A | 0.05A | | 0.02A | 0.07A | 0.04A |  | **0.06OPQRST** |

1 Values in the same row not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

2 Values in the same column not connected by the same number are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

Table A13

Pearson Correlations Between Decision Category Counts in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 1. Career | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Education | -0.05 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Family | -0.26\*\*\* | -0.35\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Finances | -0.19\*\*\* | -0.24\*\*\* | 0.02 | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Relationships | -0.21\*\*\* | -0.16\*\*\* | -0.20\*\*\* | -0.22\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Relocation | -0.21\*\*\* | -0.03 | -0.18\*\*\* | -0.22\*\*\* | -0.03 | - |  |  |  |
| 7. Self-Destruction | -0.17\*\*\* | -0.01 | -0.06 | -0.10\* | 0.01 | -0.04 | - |  |  |
| 8. Self-Development | -0.18\*\*\* | -0.09\* | -0.19\*\*\* | -0.10\* | -0.18\*\*\* | -0.08\* | 0.00 | - |  |
| 9. Other | -0.07 | -0.03 | -0.04 | -0.02 | -0.03 | -0.08 | 0.07 | 0.03 | - |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001.

### What are the Most Important Big Life Decisions?

Table A14

Average Rank of Big Life Decisions for each Decision Type and Age Group in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Type | N |  | | | Age Group1 | | | | | |
| 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 |  | **All2** |
| Career | Start a new job/position | 586 | 5.51B | 5.99AB | 6.08AB | | 6.68A | 6.24AB | 6.16AB |  | **6.14CILM** |
| Quit a job/position | 242 | 5.89AB | 6.00AB | 5.92AB | | 6.74A | 6.22AB | 4.94B |  | **5.96CDIJLM** |
| Start a new business | 123 | 5.09A | 5.89A | 6.65A | | 5.87A | 5.83A | 5.79A |  | **5.98CDEIJLM** |
| Close down a business | 32 | 6.00A | 6.86A | 6.00A | | 5.67A | 5.80A | 6.64A |  | **6.34ABCDEFGHIJLMO** |
| Join the military | 84 | 8.00A | 4.00A | 4.92A | | 3.50A | 5.78A | 4.79A |  | **4.88DEGHKNO** |
| Leave the military | 34 |  | 5.33A | 5.50A | | 3.25A | 5.00A | 5.92A |  | **5.24CDEGHIJKLMNOP** |
| Retire | 102 | 5.00A | 7.00A | 5.75A | | 4.27A | 5.09A | 6.52A |  | **5.77CDEGIJLMO** |
| Other (Career) | 89 | 6.10A | 6.50A | 6.53A | | 6.27A | 6.43A | 4.76A |  | **6.01CDEFIJLM** |
| Education | Pursue a degree | 425 | 3.91B | 5.56A | 5.93A | | 5.16A | 5.60A | 5.78A |  | **5.31DEGHO** |
| Choose a major/specialization | 84 | 3.32B | 5.56AB | 6.00A | | 5.75AB | 5.27AB | 4.75AB |  | **5.01DEGHJKLMNO** |
| Choose where to study | 194 | 4.65B | 6.17AB | 6.36A | | 6.11AB | 5.87AB | 6.81A |  | **5.82CDEIJLM** |
| Other (Education) | 185 | 5.24A | 6.30A | 6.18A | | 6.52A | 7.54A | 6.15A |  | **6.08CDIJLM** |
| Family | Have/adopt a child | 375 | 3.14A | 3.48A | 3.34A | | 3.39A | 3.65A | 3.86A |  | **3.53PQ** |
| End a life | 62 | 1.00B | 2.85AB | 1.46B | | 2.09B | 2.64AB | 4.90A |  | **2.60Q** |
| Make a decision for your child | 147 | 4.76A | 3.71A | 5.53A | | 4.06A | 4.94A | 5.32A |  | **4.78EGHKNO** |
| Caring for family member | 131 | 4.69A | 4.22A | 4.17A | | 4.18A | 4.50A | 4.50A |  | **4.36HKNP** |
| Having a family member move in | 58 | 2.60B | 6.80A | 6.36AB | | 6.25AB | 4.71AB | 6.00AB |  | **5.83CDEFGHIJLMO** |
| Get pet | 151 | 7.93A | 8.40A | 7.77A | | 8.00A | 7.94A | 7.36A |  | **7.97A** |
| Put pet down | 97 | 6.35A | 7.00A | 6.65A | | 5.79A | 7.06A | 6.23A |  | **6.55BCFIJL** |
| Other (Family) | 220 | 5.77A | 5.15A | 5.17A | | 4.68A | 5.25A | 5.40A |  | **5.26DEGHJO** |
| Finances | Buy home | 275 | 5.47A | 4.77A | 5.43A | | 5.83A | 6.18A | 6.08A |  | **5.61CDEIJLMO** |
| Sell home | 48 | 10.00A | 6.67A | 6.35A | | 6.00A | 5.00A | 5.78A |  | **6.06BCDEFGHIJLMO** |
| Buy something | 183 | 7.71A | 8.10A | 7.92A | | 7.46A | 8.31A | 8.56A |  | **7.95A** |
| Sell something | 20 | 7.00A | 7.67A | 7.60A | | 8.60A | 8.50A | 10.00A |  | **8.05 ABCF** |
| Create a plan/budget | 20 | 6.00A | 7.67A | 8.50A | | 6.50A | 9.00A | 8.00A |  | **7.15ABCDEFIJLM** |
| Take social security | 11 |  |  |  | | 8.75A | 6.00A | 8.00A |  | **7.55ABCDEFGHIJLMO** |
| Buy investment | 52 | 8.08A | 7.00A | 6.71A | | 8.14A | 5.50A | 7.00A |  | **7.17ABCF** |
| Make a will | 12 | 10.00A |  | 8.33A | | 4.75A |  | 9.75A |  | **7.75ABCDEFIJLM** |
| Other (Finances) | 85 | 5.93A | 6.73A | 6.94A | | 6.75A | 7.90A | 7.31A |  | **6.89ABCF** |
| Relationships | Begin non-romantic relationship | 19 | 3.50A | 5.50A | 5.00A | | 6.75A | 6.75A | 8.00A |  | **6.32DEGHJKLMNO** |
| End non-romantic relationship | 46 | 6.17A | 6.00A | 7.67A | | 8.50A | 6.00A | 8.33A |  | **6.76ABCDFIJL** |
| Begin romantic relationship | 149 | 5.63A | 5.33A | 5.45A | | 4.94A | 4.20A | 5.41A |  | **5.23ABCDEFGHIJKLMO** |
| End romantic relationship | 147 | 5.66A | 5.58A | 5.66A | | 6.19A | 5.47A | 4.85A |  | **5.63CDEGHIJLMO** |
| Get married | 472 | 2.52AB | 2.67B | 2.89AB | | 3.79AB | 3.80A | 3.61AB |  | **3.37PQ** |
| Get divorced | 186 | 4.00A | 2.89A | 4.20A | | 4.33A | 4.73A | 5.00A |  | **4.53GHKN** |
| Engage in sexual activity | 62 | 6.28A | 5.15A | 4.57A | | 6.67A | 5.71A | 7.50A |  | **5.71CDEGHIJLMO** |
| Disclose secret information | 27 | 6.64A | 3.33A | 5.33A | | 7.00A | 5.67A | 2.50A |  | **5.44BCDEFGHIJKLMNOP** |
| Other (Relationships) | 87 | 5.72A | 6.38A | 6.00A | | 6.27A | 5.68A | 5.58A |  | **5.87CDEGIJLMO** |
| Relocation | Move to new place in same city | 85 | 7.07A | 6.25A | 5.50A | | 7.00A | 7.80A | 6.62A |  | **6.78ABCFI** |
| Move to new city | 132 | 6.33A | 5.21A | 5.29A | | 6.13A | 5.88A | 7.06A |  | **5.91CDEIJLM** |
| Move to new state | 272 | 4.86A | 5.33A | 5.65A | | 5.36A | 5.97A | 6.56A |  | **5.73CDEIJLM** |
| Move to new country | 50 | 3.29A | 5.50A | 3.00A | | 4.25A | 3.25A | 4.17A |  | **4.04HKNOPQ** |
| Other (Relocation) | 46 | 5.73A | 6.14A | 6.50A | | 5.67A | 6.75A | 6.20A |  | **6.11BCDEFGHIJLMO** |
| Self-Destruction | Commit crime | 24 | 6.43A | 6.50A | 7.00A | |  | 4.25A | 1.00A |  | **6.00ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO** |
| Self-harm | 33 | 2.62A | 2.50A | 3.55A | | 4.50A | 4.50A | 1.00A |  | **3.21NPQ** |
| Begin an addiction | 32 | 5.70A | 6.29A | 5.86A | | 8.50A | 3.33A | 4.00A |  | **5.94ABCDEFGHIJKLMO** |
| Other (Self-destruction) | 14 | 5.38A | 6.33A | 1.00A | |  | 8.50A |  |  | **5.71ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ** |
| Self-Development | Accept/change sexuality | 22 | 5.75A | 3.60A | 5.00A | | 4.20A | 3.00A | 2.25A |  | **3.95EGHKMNOPQ** |
| Quit an addiction | 65 | 6.36A | 5.77A | 3.81A | | 4.50A | 4.33A | 5.50A |  | **5.03DEGHIJKLMNO** |
| Travel/holiday | 72 | 7.50A | 8.35A | 7.71A | | 6.67A | 9.33A | 6.17A |  | **7.76AB** |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 70 | 3.67A | 2.38A | 4.50A | | 4.23A | 4.00A | 3.21A |  | **3.74KNPQ** |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 16 | 5.33A | 5.50A | 2.50A | | 4.33A |  | 4.67A |  | **4.56CDEGHIJKLMNOPQ** |
| Change physical appearance | 40 | 6.89A | 7.43A | 5.44A | | 6.33A | 7.00A | 7.00A |  | **6.63ABCDEFIJLM** |
| Get treatment/medicine | 110 | 5.36A | 4.92A | 4.75A | | 6.10A | 5.00A | 5.30A |  | **5.24DEGHJKLMNO** |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 62 | 7.47AB | 7.92AB | 9.08A | | 7.57AB | 4.60B | 8.29AB |  | **7.74ABF** |
| Learn new skill | 33 | 5.88A | 8.50A | 7.75A | | 6.75A | 4.75A | 6.40A |  | **6.79ABCDEFIJLM** |
| Other (Self-development) | 42 | 7.07A | 7.67A | 5.88A | | 5.13A | 7.14A | 2.50A |  | **6.31ABCDEFGIJLM** |
| Other | Other decision | 38 | 7.38A | 4.22A | 7.00A | | 2.50A | 6.71A | 6.80A |  | **6.11ABCDEFGHIJLMO** |

1 Values in the same row not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

2 Values in the same column not connected by the same number are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

Table A15

Pearson Correlations Between Decision Factors, Decision Evaluation, and Decision Rank in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1. Decision Age | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Bigness | 0.03\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Change | 0.06\*\*\* | 0.13\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Unexpectedness | 0.02 | 0.03\* | 0.21\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Advice | 0.03\* | 0.15\*\*\* | 0.01 | -0.15\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Responsibility | 0.12\*\*\* | 0.11\*\*\* | 0.01 | -0.13\*\*\* | 0.24\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Strategy | 0.10\*\*\* | 0.04\*\* | 0.01 | -0.12\*\*\* | 0.30\*\*\* | 0.11\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Time | 0.07\*\*\* | 0.15\*\*\* | 0.07\*\*\* | -0.04\*\* | 0.29\*\*\* | 0.13\*\*\* | 0.22\*\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Confidence | 0.01 | 0.08\*\*\* | 0.01 | -0.16\*\*\* | 0.01 | 0.04\*\* | 0.12\*\*\* | 0.03\* | - |  |  |  |
| 10. Obligation | 0.03\* | 0.20\*\*\* | -0.06\*\*\* | -0.15\*\*\* | 0.09\*\*\* | 0.13\*\*\* | 0.12\*\*\* | -0.05\*\* | 0.08\*\*\* | - |  |  |
| 11. Reversibility | 0.00 | 0.30\*\*\* | 0.04\*\* | -0.01 | 0.06\*\*\* | 0.16\*\*\* | 0.00 | -0.01 | -0.03\* | 0.20\*\*\* | - |  |
| 12. Evaluation | 0.08\*\*\* | 0.13\*\*\* | 0.10\*\*\* | -0.07\*\*\* | 0.10\*\*\* | 0.04\*\* | 0.17\*\*\* | 0.12\*\*\* | 0.37\*\*\* | -0.01 | -0.04\*\* | - |
| 13. Rank | 0.10\*\*\* | -0.30\*\*\* | -0.04\*\* | 0.03\* | -0.04\*\* | -0.04\*\* | 0.08\*\*\* | -0.06\*\*\* | -0.03\*\* | -0.07\*\*\* | -0.17\*\*\* | -0.06\*\*\* |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001 according to a Pearson correlation analysis.

Table A16

Pearson Correlations between Decision Factors and Decision Rank for each Decision Category in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Factor | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Decision Age | Bigness | Change | Unexpectedness | Advice | Responsibility | Strategy | Time | Confidence | Obligation | Reversibility | Evaluation |
| Career | 0.09\*\*\* | -0.20\*\*\* | -0.01 | 0.00 | -0.07\* | -0.02 | 0.00 | -0.08\*\* | -0.01 | 0.01 | -0.12\*\*\* | -0.06\* |
| Education | 0.09\*\* | -0.22\*\*\* | 0.00 | 0.07\* | -0.08\* | -0.07\* | 0.01 | 0.03 | -0.01 | -0.14\*\*\* | -0.17\*\*\* | -0.04 |
| Family | 0.12\*\*\* | -0.32\*\*\* | -0.03 | 0.07\* | -0.08\*\* | -0.06\* | 0.05 | -0.08\*\* | -0.02 | -0.11\*\*\* | -0.22\*\*\* | -0.05 |
| Finances | 0.05 | -0.34\*\*\* | -0.12\*\* | 0.04 | -0.09\* | -0.18\*\*\* | -0.03 | -0.15\*\*\* | -0.06 | -0.06 | -0.17\*\*\* | -0.07\* |
| Relationships | 0.07\* | -0.31\*\*\* | -0.04 | 0.08\*\* | -0.08\*\* | -0.09\*\* | 0.00 | -0.09\*\* | -0.11\*\*\* | -0.08\*\* | -0.17\*\*\* | -0.11\*\*\* |
| Relocation | 0.08 | -0.27\*\*\* | -0.06 | -0.06 | -0.14\*\*\* | 0.06 | -0.06 | -0.11\* | -0.01 | 0.07 | -0.04 | -0.04 |
| Self-Destruction | -0.31\*\* | -0.32\*\*\* | -0.02 | 0.09 | -0.13 | 0.27\*\* | 0.04 | -0.06 | 0.15 | 0.04 | -0.20\* | -0.18 |
| Self-Development | 0.08 | -0.35\*\*\* | -0.12\*\* | -0.02 | -0.08 | 0.14\*\* | 0.00 | -0.11\*\* | -0.13\*\* | -0.10\* | -0.09\* | -0.20\*\*\* |
| Other | 0.02 | -0.37\* | -0.21 | 0.17 | -0.21 | -0.14 | 0.02 | -0.16 | -0.04 | -0.08 | -0.19 | -0.21 |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001.

Table A17

Pearson Correlations between Decision Factors and Decision Rank for each Decision Type in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Decision Age | Bigness | Change | Unexpectedness | Advice | Responsibility | Strategy | Time | Confidence | Obligation | Reversibility | Evaluation |
| Start a new job/position | 0.15\*\*\* | -0.16\*\*\* | 0.01 | 0.02 | -0.05 | -0.03 | -0.06 | -0.06 | -0.02 | 0.08 | -0.10\* | -0.08 |
| Quit a job/position | -0.07 | -0.31\*\*\* | -0.03 | 0.06 | -0.06 | -0.04 | 0.00 | -0.16\* | -0.12 | -0.05 | 0.00 | -0.16\* |
| Start a new business | 0.15 | -0.19\* | 0.01 | 0.04 | -0.12 | -0.08 | 0.01 | 0.07 | 0.00 | -0.06 | -0.14 | -0.08 |
| Close down a business | 0.08 | -0.16 | 0.11 | -0.30 | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.23 | -0.01 | 0.02 | -0.05 | 0.15 | 0.02 |
| Join the military | 0.08 | -0.28\*\* | -0.20 | -0.19 | -0.19 | -0.05 | 0.00 | -0.17 | 0.14 | -0.08 | -0.15 | -0.01 |
| Leave the military | -0.10 | 0.23 | 0.08 | -0.17 | -0.09 | -0.01 | 0.09 | 0.15 | 0.01 | 0.10 | 0.03 | 0.23 |
| Retire | 0.25\* | -0.06 | -0.12 | 0.01 | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.18 | -0.10 | 0.17 | 0.05 | -0.23\* | 0.07 |
| Other (Career) | 0.06 | -0.39\*\*\* | 0.02 | -0.10 | -0.15 | -0.08 | 0.11 | 0.02 | -0.05 | -0.13 | -0.29\*\* | 0.00 |
| Pursue a degree | 0.16\*\*\* | -0.27\*\*\* | 0.02 | 0.05 | -0.09 | -0.03 | 0.04 | 0.05 | -0.02 | -0.14\*\* | -0.18\*\*\* | -0.06 |
| Choose a major/specialization | 0.06 | -0.28\*\* | -0.11 | -0.08 | 0.08 | -0.10 | 0.09 | 0.19 | 0.01 | -0.15 | -0.19 | -0.07 |
| Choose where to study | 0.02 | -0.27\*\*\* | 0.02 | 0.14 | -0.08 | -0.17\* | -0.13 | 0.02 | -0.04 | -0.22\*\* | -0.25\*\*\* | -0.09 |
| Other (Education) | 0.06 | -0.04 | 0.00 | 0.05 | -0.05 | -0.01 | 0.10 | 0.05 | 0.07 | -0.09 | -0.09 | 0.10 |
| Have/adopt a child | 0.09 | -0.17\*\*\* | -0.11\* | 0.06 | -0.06 | 0.00 | 0.07 | 0.04 | 0.00 | -0.05 | -0.15\*\* | -0.05 |
| End a life | 0.10 | -0.09 | 0.00 | 0.20 | -0.07 | -0.08 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.16 | -0.24 | 0.10 | 0.09 |
| Make a decision for your child | 0.31\*\*\* | -0.32\*\*\* | 0.07 | 0.11 | -0.02 | 0.17\* | 0.06 | 0.17\* | -0.03 | -0.26\*\* | -0.39\*\*\* | -0.08 |
| Caring for family member | -0.10 | -0.05 | -0.02 | 0.09 | -0.05 | -0.01 | 0.09 | -0.04 | 0.05 | -0.05 | -0.07 | 0.15 |
| Having a family member move in | 0.13 | -0.25 | -0.17 | -0.01 | -0.22 | -0.25 | 0.01 | -0.38\*\* | 0.13 | -0.12 | -0.18 | -0.05 |
| Get pet | -0.08 | -0.13 | -0.07 | 0.04 | -0.07 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.06 | 0.10 | 0.00 | -0.09 | 0.04 |
| Put pet down | -0.07 | -0.29\*\* | 0.00 | 0.16 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.19 | -0.09 | 0.03 | -0.06 | 0.09 | -0.06 |
| Other (Family) | 0.11 | -0.19\*\* | -0.02 | -0.12 | -0.01 | 0.15\* | 0.06 | 0.06 | -0.01 | 0.04 | -0.15\* | -0.07 |
| Buy home | 0.04 | -0.21\*\*\* | -0.12 | 0.04 | 0.02 | -0.01 | -0.01 | -0.05 | -0.09 | -0.1 | -0.04 | -0.08 |
| Sell home | -0.27 | -0.37\*\* | -0.10 | 0.04 | -0.11 | -0.06 | 0.15 | 0.06 | 0.13 | -0.01 | -0.01 | 0.16 |
| Buy something | 0.07 | -0.28\*\*\* | -0.06 | -0.07 | -0.06 | -0.12 | -0.09 | -0.14 | -0.07 | -0.06 | -0.12 | -0.08 |
| Sell something | 0.34 | 0.43 | 0.36 | 0.04 | -0.12 | -0.08 | 0.58\*\* | 0.02 | 0.08 | 0.50\* | 0.15 | -0.38 |
| Create a plan/budget | 0.40 | -0.25 | 0.12 | 0.21 | 0.09 | -0.15 | -0.26 | 0.44 | -0.24 | -0.18 | -0.10 | -0.04 |
| Take social security | -0.26 | -0.39 | ^ | -0.05 | 0.00 | -0.27 | 0.02 | -0.15 | 0.25 | 0.12 | -0.22 | 0.38 |
| Buy investment | -0.08 | -0.46\*\*\* | -0.08 | 0.14 | 0.08 | -0.03 | -0.12 | 0.03 | -0.38\*\* | -0.21 | -0.42\*\* | -0.12 |
| Make a will | 0.02 | -0.34 | -0.23 | 0.18 | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.35 | -0.06 | 0.02 | 0.19 | -0.81\*\* | -0.32 |
| Other (Finances) | 0.08 | -0.40\*\*\* | -0.13 | 0.03 | -0.13 | -0.08 | -0.02 | -0.10 | 0.03 | -0.07 | -0.23\* | -0.06 |
| Begin non-romantic relationship | -0.23 | -0.50\* | -0.28 | -0.28 | -0.23 | 0.06 | 0.06 | -0.51\* | 0.17 | 0.33 | -0.42 | 0.09 |
| End non-romantic relationship | 0.41\*\* | -0.40\*\* | -0.11 | 0.08 | 0.10 | -0.07 | 0.03 | -0.21 | 0.28 | -0.13 | -0.23 | 0.05 |
| Begin romantic relationship | 0.06 | -0.21\*\* | -0.04 | -0.10 | 0.02 | -0.01 | 0.00 | -0.03 | 0.01 | -0.08 | -0.16\* | -0.15 |
| End romantic relationship | -0.09 | -0.27\*\* | 0.08 | -0.10 | -0.15 | 0.14 | 0.12 | -0.02 | 0.03 | -0.13 | -0.07 | 0.02 |
| Get married | 0.15\*\* | -0.22\*\*\* | -0.02 | 0.11\* | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | -0.01 | -0.16\*\*\* | -0.02 | -0.15\*\* | -0.33\*\*\* |
| Get divorced | 0.01 | -0.18\* | 0.12 | -0.06 | -0.08 | 0.09 | 0.04 | -0.1 | 0.01 | -0.06 | 0.13 | 0.02 |
| Engage in sexual activity | 0.10 | -0.10 | -0.19 | -0.20 | 0.04 | 0.21 | -0.09 | -0.04 | -0.08 | 0.17 | 0.02 | 0.00 |
| Disclose secret information | 0.07 | -0.41\* | -0.36 | -0.16 | -0.22 | -0.3 | -0.04 | 0.11 | 0.14 | -0.03 | -0.24 | -0.31 |
| Other (Relationships) | 0.17 | -0.32\*\* | -0.22\* | 0.03 | -0.15 | -0.06 | 0.10 | 0.19 | -0.10 | -0.36\*\*\* | -0.20 | 0.03 |
| Move to new place in same city | 0.17 | -0.14 | -0.12 | 0.02 | -0.12 | 0.06 | -0.06 | -0.04 | -0.06 | -0.13 | 0.01 | -0.18 |
| Move to new city | 0.08 | -0.36\*\*\* | -0.08 | -0.05 | -0.07 | 0.13 | -0.02 | 0.00 | -0.02 | 0.05 | -0.05 | 0.03 |
| Move to new state | 0.03 | -0.23\*\*\* | -0.09 | -0.09 | -0.16\*\* | -0.01 | -0.09 | -0.16\*\* | 0.04 | 0.19\*\* | -0.04 | -0.06 |
| Move to new country | 0.08 | -0.42\*\* | -0.16 | -0.08 | -0.15 | -0.15 | -0.06 | -0.20 | 0.01 | -0.11 | -0.14 | -0.03 |
| Other (Relocation) | 0.05 | -0.11 | 0.17 | 0.12 | -0.06 | 0.24 | -0.10 | 0.10 | 0.00 | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.02 |
| Commit crime | -0.43\* | -0.31 | 0.00 | -0.35 | 0.26 | 0.29 | -0.11 | -0.12 | 0.24 | -0.36 | -0.66\*\*\* | 0.05 |
| Self-harm | 0.08 | -0.48\*\* | 0.21 | 0.21 | -0.03 | -0.02 | 0.05 | 0.14 | 0.12 | 0.300 | 0.12 | -0.21 |
| Begin an addiction | -0.48\*\* | 0.03 | -0.23 | 0.04 | -0.24 | 0.30 | 0.04 | 0.28 | 0.20 | 0.38\* | -0.25 | 0.22 |
| Other (Self-destruction) | -0.51 | -0.33 | -0.06 | 0.13 | -0.32 | 0.49 | 0.44 | -0.35 | -0.29 | -0.25 | 0.34 | -0.46 |
| Accept/change sexuality | 0.40 | -0.51\* | -0.25 | -0.27 | 0.01 | 0.34 | -0.06 | -0.34 | -0.27 | -0.15 | -0.34 | -0.11 |
| Quit an addiction | -0.14 | -0.34\*\* | -0.12 | 0.16 | -0.23 | 0.00 | -0.08 | -0.24 | 0.01 | -0.19 | -0.10 | -0.04 |
| Travel/holiday | 0.28\* | -0.32\*\* | -0.09 | -0.05 | -0.08 | 0.13 | 0.07 | -0.07 | -0.14 | -0.03 | -0.26\* | -0.03 |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 0.12 | -0.41\*\*\* | -0.17 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.30\* | 0.02 | 0.04 | -0.06 | -0.17 | -0.12 | -0.30\* |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 0.24 | -0.32 | -0.35 | 0.05 | -0.20 | 0.11 | -0.15 | 0.38 | -0.18 | -0.27 | -0.28 | -0.39 |
| Change physical appearance | -0.04 | -0.03 | -0.21 | -0.31 | -0.03 | 0.08 | 0.10 | -0.10 | 0.07 | 0.04 | -0.08 | 0.04 |
| Get treatment/medicine | 0.15 | -0.08 | -0.11 | 0.04 | -0.07 | 0.10 | 0.04 | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.08 | -0.20\* |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 0.20 | -0.36\*\* | -0.11 | 0.06 | 0.05 | -0.03 | 0.10 | 0.16 | -0.23 | -0.03 | -0.06 | -0.15 |
| Learn new skill | 0.01 | -0.22 | 0.13 | -0.13 | -0.15 | -0.22 | 0.06 | -0.07 | -0.02 | 0.09 | 0.14 | -0.17 |
| Other (Self-development) | -0.02 | -0.27 | -0.14 | -0.21 | -0.17 | -0.04 | -0.03 | -0.33\* | -0.24 | 0.08 | 0.09 | -0.49\*\*\* |
| Other decision | 0.02 | -0.37\* | -0.21 | 0.17 | -0.21 | -0.14 | 0.02 | -0.16 | -0.04 | -0.08 | -0.19 | -0.21 |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001.

^ Insufficient data to perform analysis.

Table A18

Correlation between Decision Rank and Clusters for each Decision Factor in Study 3

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Factor | Cluster | Cluster Correlation with Decision Rank |
| Decision Age | 1 | 0.12\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | 0.01 |
|  | 3 | -0.04 |
|  | 4 | 0.34 |
|  | 5 | -0.51 |
| Bigness | 1 | -0.27\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | -0.37\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.18\*\*\* |
|  | 4 | 0.43 |
|  | 5 | -0.33 |
| Change | 1 | -0.09\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | -0.20\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | 0.01 |
|  | 4 | 0.36 |
|  | 5 | -0.06 |
| Unexpectedness | 1 | -0.01 |
|  | 2 | -0.04 |
|  | 3 | -0.003 |
|  | 4 | 0.04 |
|  | 5 | 0.13 |
| Advice | 1 | -0.04\*\* |
|  | 2 | -0.20\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.04 |
|  | 4 | -0.12 |
|  | 5 | -0.32 |
| Responsibility | 1 | 0.03 |
|  | 2 | -0.11\* |
|  | 3 | 0.03 |
|  | 4 | -0.08 |
|  | 5 | 0.49 |
| Strategy | 1 | -0.001 |
|  | 2 | -0.01 |
|  | 3 | 0.07\*\* |
|  | 4 | 0.58 |
|  | 5 | 0.44 |
| Time | 1 | 0.01 |
|  | 2 | -0.21\* |
|  | 3 | 0.002 |
|  | 4 | 0.02 |
|  | 5 | -0.35 |
| Confidence | 1 | -0.08\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | 0.07\* |
|  | 3 | 0.10\*\*\* |
|  | 4 | 0.08 |
|  | 5 | -0.29 |
| Obligation | 1 | -0.07\* |
|  | 2 | -0.04 |
|  | 3 | -0.01 |
|  | 4 | 0.5 |
|  | 5 | -0.25 |
| Reversibility | 1 | -0.16\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | -0.21\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.07 |
|  | 4 | 0.15 |
|  | 5 | 0.33 |
| Evaluation | 1 | -0.12\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | -0.08 |
|  | 3 | 0.06 |
|  | 4 | -0.38 |
|  | 5 | -0.46 |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001 according to one sample *t*-test comparing value to 0 (excluding Clusters 4 and 5 due to insufficient number of decision types in cluster).

### How are Big Life Decisions Retrospectively Evaluated?

Table A19

Average Evaluation of Big Life Decisions for each Age Group and Decision Category in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Type | *N* | Age Group1 | | | | | | | |
| 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 |  | **All2** |
| Career | Start a new job/position | 586 | 4.44 | 4.18 | 4.31 | 4.16 | 4.35 | 4.49 |  | **4.33ABE** |
| Quit a job/position | 242 | 3.89 | 4.11 | 4.21 | 3.71 | 3.94 | 4.44 |  | **4.05BCE** |
| Start a new business | 123 | 4.09 | 4.11 | 4.10 | 4.13 | 4.13 | 4.50 |  | **4.19ABCE** |
| Close down a business | 32 | 3.00 | 4.43 | 4.00 | 4.67 | 4.40 | 4.55 |  | **4.25ABCDE** |
| Join the military | 84 | 3.33 | 4.45 | 3.85 | 3.50 | 4.72 | 4.83 |  | **4.39ABE** |
| Leave the military | 34 |  | 4.00 | 3.67 | 3.00 | 4.44 | 4.50 |  | **4.12ABCDE** |
| Retire | 102 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 4.55 | 4.64 | 4.48 |  | **4.54ABE** |
| Other (Career) | 89 | 4.70 | 3.71 | 4.16 | 4.27 | 3.86 | 4.71 |  | **4.25ABCE** |
| Education | Pursue a degree | 425 | 4.24 | 4.04 | 3.79 | 3.91 | 4.30 | 4.64 |  | **4.11BCE** |
| Choose a major/specialization | 84 | 3.95 | 4.28 | 4.41 | 4.00 | 4.27 | 4.75 |  | **4.20ABCE** |
| Choose where to study | 194 | 3.95 | 3.93 | 3.93 | 3.84 | 4.39 | 4.46 |  | **4.05BCE** |
| Other (Education) | 185 | 4.06 | 3.60 | 4.00 | 3.92 | 4.46 | 3.77 |  | **3.94BCDE** |
| Family | Have/adopt a child | 375 | 4.48 | 4.51 | 4.77 | 4.39 | 4.67 | 4.61 |  | **4.60A** |
| End a life | 62 | 5.00 | 4.08 | 3.92 | 3.91 | 3.64 | 4.00 |  | **3.98ABCDE** |
| Make a decision for your child | 147 | 4.76 | 4.71 | 4.19 | 4.47 | 2.89 | 4.40 |  | **4.26ABE** |
| Caring for family member | 131 | 3.88 | 4.22 | 4.22 | 3.86 | 4.23 | 4.33 |  | **4.12ABCE** |
| Having a family member move in | 58 | 3.80 | 4.50 | 3.86 | 3.08 | 3.71 | 3.00 |  | **3.64CDEFG** |
| Get pet | 151 | 4.28 | 4.26 | 4.29 | 4.61 | 4.00 | 4.82 |  | **4.33ABE** |
| Put pet down | 97 | 4.12 | 4.24 | 4.20 | 3.71 | 4.31 | 4.77 |  | **4.22ABCE** |
| Other (Family) | 220 | 4.20 | 4.33 | 3.57 | 3.96 | 3.73 | 4.26 |  | **4.01BCE** |
| Finances | Buy home | 275 | 4.27 | 4.08 | 4.09 | 4.29 | 4.62 | 4.49 |  | **4.28ABE** |
| Sell home | 48 | 4.00 | 4.33 | 4.29 | 3.73 | 4.14 | 3.78 |  | **4.04ABCDE** |
| Buy something | 183 | 4.00 | 4.30 | 3.82 | 4.31 | 4.42 | 4.50 |  | **4.16ABCE** |
| Sell something | 20 | 5.00 | 3.50 | 4.40 | 3.80 | 5.00 | 2.00 |  | **3.95ABCDEFG** |
| Create a plan/budget | 20 | 3.60 | 5.00 | 4.50 | 4.67 | 1.00 | 3.00 |  | **4.15ABCDEFG** |
| Take social security | 11 |  |  |  | 5.00 | 4.50 | 5.00 |  | **4.82ABCDE** |
| Buy investment | 52 | 3.77 | 4.56 | 3.93 | 4.00 | 3.67 | 3.67 |  | **3.96ABCDEFG** |
| Make a will | 12 | 3.00 |  | 4.67 | 5.00 |  | 5.00 |  | **4.75ABCDE** |
| Other (Finances) | 85 | 4.36 | 4.18 | 4.50 | 3.75 | 3.30 | 4.31 |  | **4.12ABCDE** |
| Relationships | Begin non-romantic relationship | 19 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 3.00 |  | **3.32BCDEFGH** |
| End non-romantic relationship | 46 | 4.28 | 4.60 | 4.83 | 4.33 | 4.33 | 4.33 |  | **4.43ABCE** |
| Begin romantic relationship | 149 | 3.83 | 3.78 | 3.87 | 3.97 | 3.47 | 3.88 |  | **3.83BCDE** |
| End romantic relationship | 147 | 4.47 | 4.04 | 4.41 | 4.43 | 4.59 | 3.77 |  | **4.33ABE** |
| Get married | 472 | 4.32 | 4.33 | 4.09 | 3.52 | 3.33 | 3.63 |  | **3.76CDG** |
| Get divorced | 186 | 4.50 | 4.33 | 4.09 | 4.45 | 4.29 | 4.44 |  | **4.33AB** |
| Engage in sexual activity | 62 | 3.33 | 3.54 | 3.64 | 2.33 | 1.71 | 3.50 |  | **3.18DFGH** |
| Disclose secret information | 27 | 3.09 | 3.67 | 4.67 | 4.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 |  | **3.56BCDEFG** |
| Other (Relationships) | 87 | 4.28 | 3.75 | 3.81 | 3.18 | 4.18 | 3.92 |  | **3.93ABCDE** |
| Relocation | Move to new place in same city | 85 | 4.07 | 4.38 | 4.50 | 4.35 | 4.60 | 3.92 |  | **4.31ABCE** |
| Move to new city | 132 | 4.17 | 4.08 | 4.13 | 3.96 | 3.88 | 4.47 |  | **4.09ABCE** |
| Move to new state | 272 | 3.77 | 4.05 | 3.94 | 4.06 | 3.84 | 4.24 |  | **4.00BCE** |
| Move to new country | 50 | 4.43 | 4.50 | 4.56 | 4.13 | 5.00 | 3.83 |  | **4.32ABCE** |
| Other (Relocation) | 46 | 4.55 | 4.00 | 3.63 | 3.33 | 3.00 | 4.00 |  | **3.89ABCDE** |
| Self-Destruction | Commit crime | 24 | 2.86 | 3.17 | 1.67 |  | 1.75 | 4.00 |  | **2.50FH** |
| Self-harm | 33 | 4.46 | 2.00 | 3.27 | 5.00 | 1.50 | 5.00 |  | **3.61ABCDEFG** |
| Begin an addiction | 32 | 2.10 | 3.00 | 2.00 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 1.00 |  | **2.06H** |
| Other (Self-destruction) | 14 | 2.25 | 3.67 | 3.00 |  | 1.00 |  |  | **2.43FGH** |
| Self-Development | Accept/change sexuality | 22 | 4.25 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 |  | **4.64ABCE** |
| Quit an addiction | 65 | 4.91 | 4.62 | 4.75 | 4.33 | 5.00 | 5.00 |  | **4.78A** |
| Travel/holiday | 72 | 4.64 | 4.29 | 4.88 | 4.78 | 4.22 | 4.17 |  | **4.54ABE** |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 70 | 4.42 | 4.50 | 4.64 | 5.00 | 4.89 | 4.86 |  | **4.73AB** |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 16 | 4.67 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 |  | 4.83 |  | **4.88ABCE** |
| Change physical appearance | 40 | 4.39 | 4.14 | 4.78 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 3.50 |  | **4.45ABCE** |
| Get treatment/medicine | 110 | 4.43 | 4.08 | 4.85 | 4.60 | 4.08 | 4.10 |  | **4.36ABE** |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 62 | 3.84 | 4.25 | 3.75 | 4.86 | 4.60 | 4.29 |  | **4.13ABCE** |
| Learn new skill | 33 | 4.75 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 4.75 | 4.50 | 4.20 |  | **4.48ABCE** |
| Other (Self-development) | 42 | 4.21 | 4.67 | 4.50 | 5.00 | 3.86 | 5.00 |  | **4.43ABCE** |
| Other decision | 38 | 4.25 | 3.78 | 4.71 | 3.00 | 4.14 | 4.20 |  | **4.13ABCDE** |

1 Values in the same row not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

2 Values in the same column not connected by the same number are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

Table A20

Pearson Correlations between Decision Factors and Decision Evaluation for each Decision Category in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Factor | | | | | | | | | | |
| Decision Age | Bigness | Change | Unexpectedness | Advice | Responsibility | Strategy | Time | Confidence | Obligation | Reversibility |
| Career | 0.06\* | 0.17\*\*\* | 0.11\*\*\* | -0.03 | 0.04 | 0.05 | 0.13\*\*\* | 0.02 | 0.32\*\*\* | 0.01 | -0.02 |
| Education | 0.07\* | 0.18\*\*\* | 0.11\*\* | -0.01 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.20\*\*\* | 0.07 | 0.34\*\*\* | 0.04 | -0.12\*\*\* |
| Family | -0.01 | 0.13\*\*\* | 0.05 | -0.07\* | 0.04 | 0.10\*\*\* | 0.07\*\* | 0.10\*\*\* | 0.42\*\*\* | -0.01 | 0.01 |
| Finances | 0.03 | 0.15\*\*\* | 0.12\*\* | -0.12\*\* | 0.14\*\*\* | 0.01 | 0.27\*\*\* | 0.15\*\*\* | 0.38\*\*\* | 0.02 | -0.07 |
| Relationships | 0.12\*\*\* | 0.07\* | 0.13\*\*\* | -0.12\*\*\* | 0.13\*\*\* | -0.02 | 0.17\*\*\* | 0.15\*\*\* | 0.36\*\*\* | -0.08\*\* | 0.03 |
| Relocation | 0.10\* | 0.06 | 0.11\*\* | -0.07 | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.17\*\*\* | 0.14\*\*\* | 0.36\*\*\* | -0.08\* | -0.04 |
| Self-Destruction | 0.09 | 0.37\*\*\* | -0.08 | -0.55\*\*\* | 0.21\* | -0.04 | 0.21\* | 0.34\*\*\* | 0.37\*\*\* | 0.15 | -0.17 |
| Self-Development | 0.02 | 0.22\*\*\* | 0.19\*\*\* | 0.05 | 0.09\* | 0.00 | 0.11\* | 0.11\* | 0.36\*\*\* | 0.06 | -0.06 |
| Other | 0.21 | 0.27 | 0.08 | -0.28 | 0.09 | 0.34\* | 0.39\* | 0.07 | 0.68\*\*\* | 0.18 | 0.00 |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001.

Table A21

Pearson Correlations between Decision Factors and Decision Evaluation for each Decision Type in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision  Type | Decision Factor | | | | | | | | | | |
| Decision Age | Bigness | Change | Unexpectedness | Advice | Responsibility | Strategy | Time | Confidence | Obligation | Reversibility |
| Start a new job/position | -0.02 | 0.12\*\* | 0.14\*\*\* | 0.06 | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.06 | -0.05 | 0.31\*\*\* | -0.07 | -0.04 |
| Quit a job/position | 0.05 | 0.22\*\*\* | 0.16\* | -0.11 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.31\*\*\* | 0.05 | 0.00 |
| Start a new business | 0.22\* | 0.09 | 0.07 | 0.05 | 0.07 | -0.01 | 0.17 | 0.03 | 0.18\* | -0.10 | -0.15 |
| Close down a business | 0.42\* | 0.71\*\*\* | -0.14 | 0.12 | -0.11 | 0.00 | 0.33 | 0.43\* | 0.33 | 0.40\* | 0.31 |
| Join the military | -0.13 | 0.26\* | 0.16 | 0.07 | -0.08 | -0.17 | 0.22\* | -0.12 | 0.26\* | 0.12 | 0.22\* |
| Leave the military | 0.29 | 0.30 | -0.11 | -0.19 | 0.32 | 0.40\* | 0.29 | 0.11 | 0.35\* | 0.17 | -0.18 |
| Retire | 0.10 | 0.16 | 0.01 | -0.25\* | -0.07 | 0.05 | 0.21\* | -0.02 | 0.35\*\*\* | -0.01 | 0.15 |
| Other (Career) | 0.00 | 0.17 | 0.05 | -0.12 | 0.28\*\* | 0.12 | 0.24\* | 0.25\* | 0.41\*\*\* | 0.15 | -0.06 |
| Pursue a degree | 0.08 | 0.20\*\*\* | 0.14\*\* | -0.04 | 0.11\* | 0.06 | 0.24\*\*\* | 0.07 | 0.36\*\*\* | 0.05 | -0.13\*\* |
| Choose a major/specialization | -0.05 | 0.24\* | 0.10 | 0.05 | -0.09 | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0.33\*\* | -0.04 | 0.04 |
| Choose where to study | -0.03 | 0.20\*\* | 0.14 | 0.03 | -0.07 | -0.06 | 0.10 | 0.01 | 0.34\*\*\* | 0.00 | -0.17\* |
| Other (Education) | 0.11 | 0.12 | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.01 | -0.01 | 0.27\*\*\* | 0.05 | 0.30\*\*\* | 0.09 | -0.14 |
| Have/adopt a child | -0.04 | 0.23\*\*\* | 0.06 | -0.06 | 0.00 | 0.07 | 0.00 | 0.07 | 0.47\*\*\* | -0.07 | 0.06 |
| End a life | 0.18 | 0.11 | 0.15 | -0.43\*\*\* | 0.12 | 0.07 | 0.09 | -0.09 | 0.18 | 0.14 | -0.04 |
| Make a decision for your child | -0.13 | -0.06 | 0.04 | 0.07 | 0.07 | -0.02 | 0.19\* | -0.03 | 0.43\*\*\* | -0.02 | -0.13 |
| Caring for family member | 0.05 | 0.09 | -0.03 | -0.01 | 0.06 | 0.23\*\* | 0.08 | 0.03 | 0.45\*\*\* | 0.07 | -0.10 |
| Having a family member move in | -0.20 | 0.21 | -0.16 | -0.24 | -0.02 | -0.05 | 0.32\* | 0.28\* | 0.53\*\*\* | -0.10 | -0.07 |
| Get pet | 0.02 | 0.17\* | 0.08 | -0.10 | 0.05 | -0.05 | 0.06 | 0.10 | 0.38\*\*\* | 0.07 | -0.02 |
| Put pet down | 0.24\* | -0.06 | 0.16 | -0.16 | 0.12 | 0.12 | 0.17 | 0.16 | 0.59\*\*\* | 0.00 | -0.13 |
| Other (Family) | 0.10 | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0.05 | 0.09 | 0.04 | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.34\*\*\* | 0.13\* | 0.01 |
| Buy home | -0.01 | 0.13\* | 0.29\*\*\* | -0.08 | 0.11 | 0.03 | 0.27\*\*\* | 0.09 | 0.24\*\*\* | 0.02 | -0.06 |
| Sell home | 0.12 | -0.08 | -0.02 | 0.00 | 0.16 | -0.05 | 0.33\* | 0.05 | 0.58\*\*\* | -0.19 | -0.07 |
| Buy something | 0.14 | 0.17\* | 0.07 | -0.12 | 0.17\* | -0.04 | 0.32\*\*\* | 0.17\* | 0.40\*\*\* | 0.00 | -0.08 |
| Sell something | -0.25 | -0.54\* | -0.31 | -0.38 | 0.00 | 0.02 | -0.40 | 0.08 | 0.22 | -0.47\* | -0.46\* |
| Create a plan/budget | -0.02 | -0.06 | 0.29 | 0.41 | -0.10 | -0.17 | 0.48\* | -0.26 | 0.55\* | 0.33 | -0.09 |
| Take social security | -0.28 | 0.03 | ^ | 0.43 | -0.21 | 0.43 | 0.09 | -0.11 | 0.39 | 0.49 | 0.39 |
| Buy investment | -0.14 | 0.27 | -0.13 | -0.29\* | 0.16 | -0.14 | 0.43\*\* | 0.13 | 0.33\* | 0.25 | -0.09 |
| Make a will | 0.57 | 0.75\*\* | -0.13 | -0.30 | 0.31 | 0.07 | -0.15 | 0.31 | 0.83\*\*\* | 0.17 | 0.31 |
| Other (Finances) | -0.10 | 0.28\*\* | 0.03 | -0.14 | 0.22\* | 0.07 | 0.22\* | 0.32\*\* | 0.51\*\*\* | 0.03 | -0.03 |
| Begin non-romantic relationship | -0.10 | -0.21 | -0.05 | 0.36 | -0.29 | 0.28 | -0.21 | -0.08 | 0.68\*\* | -0.16 | 0.10 |
| End non-romantic relationship | -0.13 | 0.10 | 0.35\* | 0.06 | -0.17 | 0.06 | 0.17 | 0.00 | 0.23 | -0.21 | 0.14 |
| Begin romantic relationship | 0.08 | 0.01 | 0.02 | -0.10 | 0.12 | 0.07 | 0.02 | 0.17\* | 0.35\*\*\* | -0.15 | -0.16\* |
| End romantic relationship | -0.09 | -0.07 | 0.26\*\* | -0.03 | 0.10 | -0.05 | 0.15 | 0.15 | 0.31\*\*\* | -0.08 | 0.00 |
| Get married | 0.16\*\*\* | 0.19\*\*\* | 0.06 | -0.19\*\*\* | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.10\* | 0.40\*\*\* | -0.11\* | 0.12\*\* |
| Get divorced | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.30\*\*\* | -0.12 | 0.21\*\* | -0.03 | 0.23\*\* | 0.12 | 0.33\*\*\* | 0.01 | 0.03 |
| Engage in sexual activity | 0.17 | 0.16 | -0.15 | -0.24 | 0.11 | -0.13 | 0.54\*\*\* | 0.15 | 0.45\*\*\* | 0.11 | -0.03 |
| Disclose secret information | 0.17 | 0.32 | 0.26 | 0.02 | 0.00 | -0.14 | 0.31 | 0.10 | 0.27 | 0.24 | 0.14 |
| Other (Relationships) | 0.19 | -0.18 | 0.23\* | -0.19 | 0.08 | 0.12 | 0.13 | 0.09 | 0.54\*\*\* | -0.23\* | 0.01 |
| Move to new place in same city | 0.06 | 0.14 | -0.01 | 0.02 | -0.03 | 0.04 | 0.11 | 0.09 | 0.22\* | -0.09 | 0.08 |
| Move to new city | 0.12 | -0.02 | 0.30\*\*\* | -0.11 | 0.05 | -0.11 | 0.23\*\* | 0.10 | 0.46\*\*\* | -0.16 | -0.10 |
| Move to new state | 0.18\*\* | 0.12 | 0.16\*\* | -0.02 | 0.09 | 0.03 | 0.19\*\* | 0.20\*\*\* | 0.36\*\*\* | -0.06 | 0.00 |
| Move to new country | -0.10 | -0.01 | -0.07 | -0.06 | -0.04 | -0.05 | 0.00 | -0.08 | 0.33\* | -0.03 | -0.07 |
| Other (Relocation) | -0.08 | 0.10 | -0.16 | -0.32\* | 0.26 | 0.39\*\* | 0.16 | 0.23 | 0.23 | 0.00 | -0.15 |
| Commit crime | 0.02 | 0.27 | -0.09 | -0.50\* | -0.18 | -0.26 | -0.07 | -0.21 | 0.44\* | -0.01 | -0.03 |
| Self-harm | -0.06 | 0.09 | -0.26 | -0.52\*\* | 0.32 | 0.22 | 0.29 | 0.33 | 0.23 | 0.16 | -0.31 |
| Begin an addiction | 0.03 | 0.33 | -0.02 | -0.61\*\*\* | 0.27 | 0.11 | 0.60\*\*\* | 0.43\* | 0.50\*\* | 0.34 | -0.24 |
| Other (Self-destruction) | 0.17 | 0.43 | 0.07 | -0.38 | 0.23 | -0.16 | -0.10 | 0.64\* | 0.82\*\*\* | -0.05 | -0.28 |
| Accept/change sexuality | -0.04 | -0.07 | 0.15 | 0.29 | 0.05 | -0.43\* | -0.27 | -0.10 | 0.42 | -0.14 | 0.28 |
| Quit an addiction | 0.16 | 0.40\*\* | 0.40\*\*\* | 0.1 | -0.03 | -0.22 | 0.24 | 0.13 | 0.33\*\* | 0.29\* | -0.34\*\* |
| Travel/holiday | -0.04 | 0.26\* | 0.24\* | 0.01 | 0.10 | 0.03 | 0.21 | 0.42\*\*\* | 0.13 | -0.08 | 0.00 |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 0.02 | 0.05 | -0.15 | -0.03 | 0.08 | -0.16 | -0.05 | 0.05 | 0.44\*\*\* | 0.17 | -0.08 |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 0.21 | 0.30 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.10 | 0.14 | 0.00 | -0.12 | 0.00 | 0.36 | 0.34 |
| Change physical appearance | 0.05 | -0.17 | -0.08 | -0.19 | 0.16 | 0.11 | 0.44\*\* | 0.04 | 0.44\*\* | 0.31 | -0.40\* |
| Get treatment/medicine | -0.02 | 0.19\* | 0.24\* | -0.04 | 0.12 | 0.08 | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0.24\* | -0.12 | 0.02 |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.05 | 0.32\* | 0.2 | 0.25 | 0.10 | -0.05 | 0.45\*\*\* | -0.10 | 0.04 |
| Learn new skill | -0.08 | 0.25 | 0.27 | 0.22 | -0.01 | -0.24 | -0.03 | -0.12 | 0.52\*\* | -0.12 | -0.21 |
| Other (Self-development) | -0.09 | 0.35\* | 0.35\* | -0.15 | 0.16 | 0.01 | 0.20 | 0.27 | 0.46\*\* | 0.42\*\* | 0.05 |
| Other decision | 0.21 | 0.27 | 0.08 | -0.28 | 0.09 | 0.34\* | 0.39\* | 0.07 | 0.68\*\*\* | 0.18 | 0.00 |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001.

^ Insufficient data to perform analysis.

Table A22

Correlation between Decision Evaluation and Clusters for each Decision Factor in Study 3

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Factor | Cluster | Cluster Correlation with Decision Evaluation |
| Decision Age | 1 | -0.01 |
|  | 2 | 0.10\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.25 |
|  | 4 | -0.19 |
|  | 5 | 0.39 |
|  | 6 | 0.01 |
| Bigness | 1 | 0.16\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | 0.09\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.54 |
|  | 4 | -0.09 |
|  | 5 | 0.63 |
|  | 6 | 0.20\*\*\* |
| Change | 1 | 0.14\*\* |
|  | 2 | 0.13\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.31 |
|  | 4 | -0.03 |
|  | 5 | -0.07 |
|  | 6 | -0.05 |
| Unexpectedness | 1 | 0.05 |
|  | 2 | -0.07\* |
|  | 3 | -0.38 |
|  | 4 | 0.40 |
|  | 5 | -0.18 |
|  | 6 | -0.27\*\*\* |
| Advice | 1 | -0.03 |
|  | 2 | 0.10\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.002 |
|  | 4 | -0.25 |
|  | 5 | 0.14 |
|  | 6 | 0.19\*\*\* |
| Responsibility | 1 | -0.09\* |
|  | 2 | 0.04 |
|  | 3 | 0.02 |
|  | 4 | 0.36 |
|  | 5 | -0.03 |
|  | 6 | 0.12\* |
| Strategy | 1 | 0.09\* |
|  | 2 | 0.16\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | -0.40 |
|  | 4 | -0.06 |
|  | 5 | 0.03 |
|  | 6 | 0.34\*\*\* |
| Time | 1 | -0.03 |
|  | 2 | 0.09\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | 0.08 |
|  | 4 | -0.10 |
|  | 5 | 0.46 |
|  | 6 | 0.22\*\*\* |
| Confidence | 1 | 0.35\*\*\* |
|  | 2 | 0.36\*\*\* |
|  | 3 | 0.22 |
|  | 4 | 0.53 |
|  | 5 | 0.66 |
|  | 6 | 0.43\*\*\* |
| Obligation | 1 | 0.04 |
|  | 2 | -0.03 |
|  | 3 | -0.47 |
|  | 4 | 0.16 |
|  | 5 | 0.17 |
|  | 6 | 0.17\*\* |
| Reversibility | 1 | 0.01 |
|  | 2 | -0.03 |
|  | 3 | -0.46 |
|  | 4 | 0.24 |
|  | 5 | 0.11 |
|  | 6 | -0.13\*\* |

*Note*. \* denotes *p* < .05, \*\* denotes *p* < .01, and \*\*\* denotes *p* < .0001 according to one sample *t*-test comparing value to 0 (excluding Clusters 3, 4, and 5 due to insufficient number of decision types in cluster).

### Which Individual Difference Variables Relate to Decision Evaluation?

Correlations between individual difference variables and decision evaluation are presented in Table A23. As can be seen:

* Regarding personality, correlations revealed that decisions were more positively evaluated when the decision-maker was higher in contentiousness, neuroticism, and extraversion as well as lower in openness and agreeableness.
* Regarding life orientation, correlations revealed that decisions were more positively evaluated when the decision-maker was higher in optimism life orientation as well as lower in pessimism life orientation.
* Regarding impulsiveness, correlations revealed that decisions were more positively evaluated when the decision-maker was higher in impulsiveness, especially non-planning impulsiveness, as well as lower in motor impulsiveness.
* Regarding wellbeing, correlations revealed that decisions were more positively evaluated when the decision-maker was higher in life satisfaction and life flourishing (i.e., psychological wellbeing).
* Regarding cultural orientation, correlations revealed that decisions were more positively evaluated when the decision-maker was higher in horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism.

Table A23

Pearson Correlations Between Individual Difference Measures and Decision Evaluation in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 1. Extraversion | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Agreeableness | -0.08 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Contentiousness | 0.01 | -0.33 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Openness | -0.09 | 0.35 | -0.47 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Neuroticism | 0.29 | -0.17 | 0.04 | -0.17 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Maximization (Search) | 0.01 | -0.19 | 0.32 | -0.21 | 0.13 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Maximization (Outcomes) | 0.06 | -0.23 | 0.32 | -0.16 | 0.16 | 0.33 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Rational | -0.08 | -0.14 | 0.30 | -0.19 | 0.16 | 0.65 | 0.36 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Intuitive | 0.15 | 0.02 | -0.09 | 0.10 | 0.01 | -0.18 | 0.00 | -0.20 | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10. Life Orientation | 0.29 | -0.27 | 0.34 | -0.51 | 0.22 | 0.23 | 0.22 | 0.19 | -0.03 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 11. Life Orientation (Optimism) | 0.31 | -0.26 | 0.32 | -0.49 | 0.21 | 0.25 | 0.26 | 0.21 | 0.07 | 0.90 | - |  |  |  |
| 12. Life Orientation (Pessimism) | -0.22 | 0.24 | -0.30 | 0.44 | -0.18 | -0.18 | -0.14 | -0.14 | 0.12 | -0.93 | -0.67 | - |  |  |
| 13. Impulsiveness | 0.13 | 0.18 | -0.16 | 0.16 | 0.00 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.25 | -0.04 | 0.11 | 0.17 | - |  |
| 14. Impulsiveness (Attentional) | -0.03 | 0.24 | -0.29 | 0.30 | -0.08 | 0.00 | -0.03 | 0.01 | 0.13 | -0.22 | -0.13 | 0.26 | 0.77 | - |
| 15. Impulsiveness (Motor) | 0.21 | 0.21 | -0.35 | 0.22 | -0.04 | -0.24 | -0.12 | -0.25 | 0.38 | -0.11 | 0.03 | 0.22 | 0.77 | 0.45 |
| 16. Impulsiveness (Non-planning) | 0.03 | -0.08 | 0.36 | -0.21 | 0.12 | 0.42 | 0.26 | 0.39 | -0.07 | 0.26 | 0.32 | -0.17 | 0.54 | 0.24 |
| 17. Life Satisfaction | 0.23 | -0.17 | 0.27 | -0.32 | 0.08 | 0.18 | 0.20 | 0.12 | 0.02 | 0.61 | 0.61 | -0.51 | 0.16 | -0.03 |
| 18. Life Flourishing | 0.32 | -0.39 | 0.40 | -0.42 | 0.27 | 0.30 | 0.39 | 0.27 | 0.04 | 0.66 | 0.66 | -0.55 | 0.10 | -0.14 |
| 19. Horizontal Individualism | -0.04 | -0.01 | 0.08 | -0.09 | 0.22 | 0.18 | 0.20 | 0.19 | 0.08 | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.01 | -0.01 |
| 20. Vertical Individualism | 0.04 | 0.22 | -0.04 | 0.04 | -0.08 | -0.01 | 0.05 | -0.01 | 0.15 | -0.13 | 0.00 | 0.22 | 0.31 | 0.23 |
| 21. Horizontal Collectivism | 0.26 | -0.40 | 0.24 | -0.22 | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.30 | 0.21 | 0.07 | 0.39 | 0.41 | -0.31 | 0.13 | -0.05 |
| 22. Vertical Collectivism | 0.09 | -0.28 | 0.24 | -0.17 | 0.00 | 0.21 | 0.25 | 0.19 | 0.09 | 0.17 | 0.24 | -0.08 | 0.09 | -0.05 |
| 23. Risk (Ethical Domain) | 0.04 | 0.38 | -0.33 | 0.19 | -0.10 | -0.20 | -0.23 | -0.19 | 0.15 | -0.22 | -0.13 | 0.26 | 0.33 | 0.26 |
| 24. Risk (Financial Domain) | 0.06 | 0.27 | -0.17 | 0.01 | 0.01 | -0.10 | -0.11 | -0.07 | 0.08 | -0.06 | 0.02 | 0.12 | 0.34 | 0.22 |
| 25. Risk (Health Domain) | 0.03 | 0.33 | -0.29 | 0.19 | -0.05 | -0.22 | -0.17 | -0.18 | 0.13 | -0.21 | -0.14 | 0.24 | 0.26 | 0.24 |
| 26. Risk (Recreational Domain) | 0.12 | 0.19 | -0.11 | 0.00 | 0.12 | -0.06 | -0.06 | -0.06 | 0.04 | -0.05 | 0.02 | 0.11 | 0.32 | 0.18 |
| 27. Risk (Social Domain) | 0.11 | 0.06 | -0.03 | -0.02 | 0.28 | 0.10 | 0.09 | 0.15 | -0.06 | 0.08 | 0.06 | -0.08 | 0.10 | 0.07 |
| 28. Evaluation | 0.04 | -0.09 | 0.13 | -0.12 | 0.05 | 0.11 | 0.08 | 0.09 | -0.03 | 0.18 | 0.17 | -0.16 | 0.03 | 0.01 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 1. Extraversion |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Agreeableness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Contentiousness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Openness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Neuroticism |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Maximization (Search) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Maximization (Outcomes) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Rational |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Intuitive |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10. Life Orientation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11. Life Orientation (Optimism) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12. Life Orientation (Pessimism) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13. Impulsiveness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14. Impulsiveness (Attentional) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15. Impulsiveness (Motor) | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16. Impulsiveness (Non-planning) | 0.01 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17. Life Satisfaction | 0.02 | 0.38 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18. Life Flourishing | -0.05 | 0.42 | 0.63 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19. Horizontal Individualism | -0.03 | 0.08 | -0.10 | 0.07 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20. Vertical Individualism | 0.26 | 0.15 | 0.01 | -0.06 | 0.05 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21. Horizontal Collectivism | -0.01 | 0.32 | 0.37 | 0.59 | 0.01 | -0.03 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22. Vertical Collectivism | -0.04 | 0.28 | 0.26 | 0.37 | 0.03 | 0.19 | 0.51 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23. Risk (Ethical Domain) | 0.42 | -0.06 | -0.05 | -0.24 | -0.06 | 0.31 | -0.21 | -0.19 | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24. Risk (Financial Domain) | 0.33 | 0.12 | 0.03 | -0.03 | -0.05 | 0.35 | -0.05 | -0.09 | 0.48 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 25. Risk (Health Domain) | 0.38 | -0.14 | -0.12 | -0.23 | 0.00 | 0.23 | -0.19 | -0.19 | 0.55 | 0.37 | - |  |  |  |
| 26. Risk (Recreational Domain) | 0.33 | 0.12 | 0.04 | -0.03 | 0.00 | 0.29 | -0.01 | -0.02 | 0.35 | 0.41 | 0.45 | - |  |  |
| 27. Risk (Social Domain) | 0.06 | 0.09 | -0.04 | 0.13 | 0.21 | 0.00 | 0.02 | -0.16 | 0.06 | 0.19 | 0.24 | 0.29 | - |  |
| 28. Evaluation | -0.06 | 0.15 | 0.27 | 0.20 | -0.02 | 0.00 | 0.14 | 0.10 | -0.08 | 0.00 | -0.09 | -0.01 | 0.00 | - |

### When do Big Life Decisions Happen?

Table A24

Average Age at Time of Big Life Decision for each Decision Type and Age Group in Study 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision Category | Decision Type | *N* | Age Group1 | | | | | | | |
| 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 |  | **All2** |
| Career | Start a new job/position | 586 | 22.26B | 25.66B | 32.08A | 34.90A | 33.13A | 32.63A |  | **30.77IMNOQR** |
| Quit a job/position | 242 | 22.54D | 28.33C | 32.13BC | 34.14AB | 38.91A | 36.63AB |  | **31.38MNOQR** |
| Start a new business | 123 | 21.55B | 26.72B | 34.16A | 37.33A | 39.92A | 40.17A |  | **34.63DEFGHIJKLQ** |
| Close down a business | 32 | 22.60C | 31.29C | 40.00ABC | 49.00AB | 44.80B | 58.3B |  | **43.28BCD** |
| Join the military | 84 | 21.33A | 19.73A | 20.62A | 20.20A | 19.06A | 20.72A |  | **20.18TU** |
| Leave the military | 34 |  | 25.00A | 23.17A | 24.25A | 28.67A | 26.50A |  | **26.09MNOPQRSTUV** |
| Retire | 102 | 21.00C | 36.00C | 39.00C | 54.18B | 59.36AB | 62.75A |  | **59.13A** |
| Other (Career) | 89 | 22.50B | 26.50AB | 31.21AB | 35.55AB | 30.21AB | 37.62A |  | **31.38GHIJLMNOPQR** |
| Education | Pursue a degree | 425 | 19.83C | 22.39BC | 25.30AB | 25.63AB | 27.20A | 24.90AB |  | **24.03STU** |
| Choose a major/specialization | 84 | 18.27A | 18.22A | 18.29A | 21.25A | 18.55A | 17.50A |  | **18.69U** |
| Choose where to study | 194 | 19.53B | 18.79B | 22.14AB | 24.26A | 21.00AB | 20.19AB |  | **20.71TU** |
| Other (Education) | 185 | 16.78B | 19.43AB | 20.80AB | 23.36A | 20.31AB | 24.15A |  | **20.25U** |
| Family | Have/adopt a child | 375 | 23.33B | 28.02AB | 29.29A | 29.39A | 29.60A | 26.81AB |  | **28.24NOP** |
| End a life | 62 | 21.00B | 25.77B | 31.85B | 32.27B | 35.64AB | 51.00A |  | **33.71DEFGHIJKLMNQR** |
| Make a decision for your child | 147 | 23.88B | 30.41AB | 34.81A | 35.85A | 37.89A | 39.20A |  | **34.40DEFGHIJKLQ** |
| Caring for family member | 131 | 23.81B | 27.83B | 33.52B | 43.32A | 46.68A | 44.83A |  | **37.93CDEFK** |
| Having a family member move in | 58 | 21.00C | 28.30C | 35.36BC | 41.25AB | 47.86AB | 51.90A |  | **38.48CDEFGJK** |
| Get pet | 151 | 20.31D | 27.51C | 35.69B | 39.09B | 40.06B | 53.00A |  | **33.14FGHIJKLMQR** |
| Put pet down | 97 | 20.53E | 30.00D | 38.60C | 42.79BC | 50.19B | 60.23A |  | **39.34CDE** |
| Other (Family) | 220 | 18.43C | 24.85BC | 29.00AB | 33.32AB | 37.68A | 37.38A |  | **31.18HIMNOQR** |
| Finances | Buy home | 275 | 23.67D | 28.65CD | 32.07BC | 38.21AB | 35.00A | 39.58A |  | **33.90EFGHIJKLQ** |
| Sell home | 48 | 21.00B | 33.67B | 37.18B | 40.18B | 58.43A | 51.44A |  | **43.08BC** |
| Buy something | 183 | 21.87D | 28.60CD | 31.66C | 41.27B | 50.27A | 51.61A |  | **34.72DEFGHJKL** |
| Sell something | 20 | 21.00C | 30.17C | 34.40BC | 48.20AB | 54.50A | 68.00A |  | **39.60CDEFGHIJKL** |
| Create a plan/budget | 20 | 20.60B | 28.00AB | 35.25AB | 45.00A | 37.00AB | 61.00A |  | **34.80CDEFGHIJKLMNOPQR** |
| Take social security | 11 |  |  |  | 49.75B | 63.00A | 62.67A |  | **58.09AB** |
| Buy investment | 52 | 20.46C | 28.67BC | 33.07B | 39.14AB | 48.33A | 40.67AB |  | **32.17EFGHIJKLMNOPQR** |
| Make a will | 12 | 23.00A |  | 36.00A | 50.25A |  | 60.25A |  | **47.75ABCD** |
| Other (Finances) | 85 | 21.29 | 31.18 | 32.11 | 42.81 | 40.70 | 59.19 |  | **38.33CDEFGK** |
| Relationships | Begin non-romantic relationship | 19 | 26.00 | 20.00 | 24.00 | 28.75 | 40.25 | 20.00 |  | **26.95GHIJKLMNOPQRSTUV** |
| End non-romantic relationship | 46 | 19.78 | 27.80 | 28.50 | 43.50 | 36.67 | 54.67 |  | **29.13HILMNOPQRSV** |
| Begin romantic relationship | 149 | 21.20 | 26.00 | 29.68 | 34.06 | 33.40 | 29.71 |  | **28.59MNOPRV** |
| End romantic relationship | 147 | 20.16 | 23.65 | 27.28 | 31.33 | 32.00 | 36.46 |  | **26.73NOPSV** |
| Get married | 472 | 20.92 | 27.00 | 28.16 | 30.76 | 28.14 | 27.54 |  | **27.93NOP** |
| Get divorced | 186 | 24.75 | 27.78 | 33.20 | 36.48 | 35.53 | 40.13 |  | **35.99CDEFGJKL** |
| Engage in sexual activity | 62 | 19.50 | 22.54 | 26.14 | 31.17 | 20.00 | 45.25 |  | **24.48PSTUV** |
| Disclose secret information | 27 | 17.91 | 21.33 | 22.67 | 39.67 | 39.00 | 35.00 |  | **26.11HIMNOPQRSTUV** |
| Other (Relationships) | 87 | 21.39 | 26.25 | 26.00 | 29.82 | 40.50 | 39.58 |  | **31.09HIJLMNOPQR** |
| Relocation | Move to new place in same city | 85 | 21.57 | 24.63 | 26.10 | 34.29 | 34.93 | 44.00 |  | **31.01HIJLMNOPQR** |
| Move to new city | 132 | 22.06 | 26.25 | 30.29 | 36.57 | 34.23 | 37.82 |  | **31.27HIJLMNOPQR** |
| Move to new state | 272 | 20.09 | 26.23 | 29.88 | 36.00 | 35.40 | 40.11 |  | **32.88GHIJLMQ** |
| Move to new country | 50 | 14.57 | 27.10 | 25.11 | 34.38 | 35.75 | 31.75 |  | **27.96HIMNOPQRSTV** |
| Other (Relocation) | 46 | 20.18 | 23.29 | 24.88 | 36.33 | 39.25 | 37.70 |  | **29.04HILMNOPQRSV** |
| Self-Destruction | Commit crime | 24 | 17.29 | 23.17 | 22.33 |  | 37.25 | 19.00 |  | **23.42MNOPRSTUV** |
| Self-harm | 33 | 17.46 | 26.50 | 28.82 | 44.00 | 35.50 | 28.00 |  | **25.91MNOPQRSTUV** |
| Begin an addiction | 32 | 19.30 | 24.14 | 22.29 | 16.50 | 22.33 | 19.00 |  | **20.94STUV** |
| Other (Self-destruction) | 14 | 18.00 | 17.33 | 37.00 |  | 21.50 |  |  | **19.71OPSTUV** |
| Self-Development | Accept/change sexuality | 22 | 20.25 | 22.80 | 29.50 | 21.20 | 24.50 | 27.50 |  | **23.59MNOPRSTUV** |
| Quit an addiction | 65 | 22.00 | 24.54 | 36.25 | 33.17 | 38.22 | 45.40 |  | **32.89EFGHIJKLMNOQR** |
| Travel/holiday | 72 | 22.93 | 28.12 | 33.59 | 36.56 | 52.44 | 31.67 |  | **32.79EFGHIJKLMNOQR** |
| Pursue religion/spirituality | 70 | 20.17 | 23.25 | 25.93 | 34.08 | 23.56 | 23.00 |  | **25.26OPSTUV** |
| Pursue a philosophy/ideology | 16 | 17.33 | 23.50 | 18.00 | 44.00 |  | 32.33 |  | **28.81EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUV** |
| Change physical appearance | 40 | 21.39 | 26.71 | 32.56 | 48.33 | 43.00 | 55.00 |  | **29.08HIJLMNOPQRSV** |
| Get treatment/medicine | 110 | 20.86 | 25.58 | 34.40 | 46.55 | 48.50 | 57.75 |  | **38.75CDEF** |
| Engage in a hobby/sport | 62 | 15.79 | 21.92 | 26.17 | 37.14 | 27.40 | 39.29 |  | **24.98OPSTUV** |
| Learn new skill | 33 | 19.38 | 23.88 | 30.25 | 15.75 | 40.00 | 22.20 |  | **24.27NOPRSTUV** |
| Other (Self-development) | 42 | 19.93 | 21.67 | 36.13 | 40.38 | 38.57 | 44.00 |  | **31.29EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSV** |
| Other | Other decision | 38 | 21.25 | 25.11 | 26.57 | 21.50 | 41.57 | 54.00 |  | **31.21EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSV** |

1 Values in the same row not connected by the same letter are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

2 Values in the same column not connected by the same number are significantly different by Tukey HSD.

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1. I also conducted two earlier pilot studies to help develop the full list of decision categories and types. The first pilot study asked 21 participants recruited from MTurk to describe 10 past and 10 possible future big decisions in as much as detail as possible using only open text boxes. Based on this data, an initial list of 9 decision categories and 53 decision sub-categories was produced. The second pilot study asked 126 participants recruited from the university participant pool to describe 10 past and 10 possible future big decisions and then categorize them using the 53 sub-categories from the first pilot study. The analysis focused on decisions frequently categorized as “Other” to identify missing decision types. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)