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Public trust in advisory mini-publics: the impact of recommendations and institutional design features

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ABSTRACT

Deliberative mini-publics are among the most studied forms of citizen participation with an active global developer network. Mini-publics have shaped legislation and provided useful information for voters in many countries, but our knowledge on the public perceptions of these mechanisms remains ambiguous. The public generally trusts mini-publics, but often on different grounds than democratic theory expects. We ran a population-based survey experiment ($n = 2992$) in Finland to examine how information regarding the design features of an advisory mini-public – organizer, composition and competence – and its policy recommendations affect the wider public's trust in the mini-public. Our experiment is based on a real mini-public, Citizens' Jury on Climate Actions organized in 2021, with a mandate from the Ministry of the Environment. We find that reading about mini-public recommendations and their justifications increases overall trust in the mini-public. However, the design features of the mini-public process had no effect on these general trust judgements.

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Introduction

Deliberative mini-publics such as Citizens' Juries, Citizens' Assemblies and Deliberative Polls have become widely used and studied forms of citizen participation during the last few decades (OECD 2020). They engage a randomly selected group of lay citizens in hearing experts, discussing in a respectful environment, and forming collective opinions to support decision-makers in politics and governance (Setälä and Smith 2018). Mini-publics have been used in different policy areas, and they have had policy impact on constitutional reforms and climate law making, for example (Duvic-Paoli 2022; Farrell, Suiter, and Harris 2019). A growing body of empirical research also shows that deliberative mini-publics can increase legitimacy beliefs and foster knowledge and reflection among the citizenry (Germann, Marien, and Muradova 2024; Suiter et al. 2020). Depending on their function in democratic decision-making, mini-publics can

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function as trusted sources of information that facilitate considered opinion-formation among citizens (e.g. Gastil et al. 2023), and they can provide information and policy advice to institutions of representative decision-making (Boswell, Dean, and Smith 2023). Understanding how the broader public perceives mini-publics is crucial for understanding their roles as part of democratic systems. There is an emerging literature on how the broader citizenry perceives mini-publics (e.g. van der Does and Jacquet 2023), but there are still relatively few studies differentiating which features of a mini-public actually help build trust in them (e.g. Már and Gastil 2023; Pow 2023).

In this paper, we examine how information regarding the design features of an advisory mini-public and its policy recommendation affect public trust, in the mini-public. In this respect, this study contributes to the body of research using different types of vignette or conjoint designs (e.g. Goldberg 2021; Jacobs and Kaufmann 2021; Már and Gastil 2023; Werner and Muradova 2022) to examine effects of design features, such as the number of participants and recruitment methods, on public perceptions of mini-publics. Our experiment is based on an actual mini-public, a Citizens' Jury, organized in Spring 2021, where randomly selected Finnish citizens deliberated on climate policy. Commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment, the purpose of the Citizens' Jury was to influence the preparation of the national Medium-Term Climate Change Policy Plan in a situation where the government had set an ambitious goal of achieving carbon-neutral Finland by 2035.

In our population-based factorial survey experiment, we manipulated the information provided on the following design features: the organizer of the mini-public, participant selection mechanism, and the quality of information and interaction with experts. In addition, we manipulated the information regarding the output of the mini-public. We expected that information about the design features and the outcome increases trust in the mini-public, especially among those critical of the government's ambitious climate policies. We find that while information about certain procedural design features – organizing body and competence of the mini-public – did not increase trust in the mini-public among the wider public, exposure to the recommendations and arguments by the mini-public did increase trust. Information about the participant recruitment method did, however, increase some aspects of trust. In addition, and in line with our expectations, information about certain procedural features increased trust in the mini-public among those critical of ambitious climate policies.

Theory and hypotheses: public trust in mini-publics

Trust in mini-publics: theoretical and empirical approaches

Like other democratic innovations, deliberative mini-publics have been regarded as possible cures for the problems of democracy (Grönlund, Bächtiger, and Setälä 2014; Smith 2009). Mini-publics have been designed to enhance good-quality deliberative processes by allowing the inclusion of various societal viewpoints and processes of mutual justification across these viewpoints (e.g. Setälä and Smith 2018). Mini-publics have been expected to help make more informed and considered policy decisions, resolve political deadlocks, mitigate polarization and facilitate learning and reflection among the wider public. Yet, there is a scholarly disagreement among whether most deliberative mini-publics actually live up to these expectations. In practice, most mini-publics are initiated

by governmental agencies to provide advice for policymakers on certain topical policy issues. While advisory use of mini-publics is widespread, they have been criticized for being too weak in shaping public policy because they leave the opportunity for policymakers to select or 'cherry-pick' those proposals that match with their political agenda (Smith 2009, 93).

There are also different normative views on the role of mini-publics in policymaking and the relationship between mini-publics and the wider public. Some theorists have been critical of the potential use of mini-publics as 'shortcuts' of informed and reflected public opinion. Lafont (2015) famously argues that policymakers or citizens should not 'blindly defer' their judgments to mini-publics. This would be harmful from the perspective of deliberative democracy, which requires wider public engagement in deliberative processes. As a response, other deliberative democrats have proposed that mini-publics should have a critical role in democratic systems in order to enhance their role in 'deliberation-making' (e.g. Curato and Böker, 2016). In a similar vein, there have also been calls for the use of mini-publics as 'trusted proxies' (MacKenzie and Warren 2012; Warren and Gastil 2015), namely trusted sources of information that can improve the epistemic quality of public decision-making by enhancing learning and reflection among policymakers and the public at large.

The possibility of using mini-publics as trusted sources of information for the wider public is demonstrated by a growing body of empirical literature. Studies have proven that the use of mini-publics as sources of information can affect knowledge and civic attitudes among the public at large. A study by Boulianne (2018) shows that awareness of mini-publics may enhance external efficacy among the public at large, and a study by Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil (2020) suggests that learning about mini-publics' statements can increase internal efficacy. Evidence from the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) processes shows that reading a CIR statement enhances perspective-taking and factual learning among the public at large (Gastil et al. 2018; Setälä et al. 2020) and can counteract the effects of motivated reasoning (Már and Gastil 2020). Interestingly, there is evidence that these effects on opinions and knowledge are rather independent of the perceived legitimacy of the mini-public itself (Már and Gastil 2023).

Theoretical and empirical studies explain why the wider public might perceive mini-publics as trustworthy and as legitimate. Previous studies suggest that citizens make judgments of the trustworthiness of different public political actors and institutions based on different normative expectations (Warren and Gastil 2015). Information on procedures, especially representativeness, and the outcomes can be regarded as necessary for making 'warranted trust' judgements regarding mini-publics (MacKenzie and Warren 2012). Mini-publics are trusted as impartial and non-partisan sources of information (Setälä et al. 2021); and that they are more trusted than partisan actors and as trusted as other impartial bodies such as courts (Warren and Gastil 2015). The perceptions of mini-publics may vary across the population, however. A study in the US context finds that the perceived legitimacy of mini-publics cannot be taken for granted among Republican voters (Már and Gastil 2023, 1). Based on data from Western Europe, Pilet et al. (2024) conclude that especially politically dissatisfied citizens support deliberative mini-publics. While these studies show the conditioning effect of individual level and contextual factors, the crucial question is whether and how the design features of the deliberative process itself affect public perceptions regarding legitimacy and trustworthiness.

Antecedents of public trust: information on design features and outputs

In this paper, we are particularly interested in whether government-initiated advisory deliberative mini-publics are trusted by those citizens who do not participate in the deliberative participatory process. More specifically, we analyse how trust in such mini-publics depends on communication regarding the design features and the output of such mini-publics.

The design features of mini-publics can be expected to enhance public trust based on perceptions of procedural fairness and impartiality. Mini-publics can be regarded as non-partisan bodies consisting of randomly selected citizens who hear balanced information and engage in moderated deliberation. However, there is some evidence that information about design features does not necessarily increase perceived legitimacy or trust, or that the effects may be unexpected in some respects. Pilet et al. (2024) found that information about the representativeness of the mini-public does not increase outcome acceptance universally, but some subgroups based on participatory attitudes and education are affected by such information. In their recent study, Már and Gastil (2023) find that information about the design features of the CIR does not increase perceived legitimacy of mini-publics. On the contrary, information about a mini-public hearing pro and contra advocates on the topic decreased perceived legitimacy in their study.

While public actors and institutions can be trusted on procedural grounds, i.e. based on perceptions of fairness and impartiality, public trust may also be more instrumental in character. In this case, trust in public actors and institutions is based on perceived congruence between policy goals or shared partisan identifications (Warren and Gastil 2015). This aspect is especially relevant in the case of government-initiated mini-publics. Governments may use mini-publics to ensure the quality and the fairness of decisions or to resolve a contested policy issue causing partisan deadlock. However, policy-makers may be motivated by more strategic reasons such as gaining support for and legitimizing a particular policy agenda (e.g. Setälä 2017) – or, more generally speaking, increasing governmentality (Kübler et al. 2020).

Although most advisory mini-publics are initiated and sponsored by public authorities, the practical implementation is typically left for other, independent actors such as non-profit organizations or research institutes. This type of cooperation is a common practice that is expected to ensure the impartiality and the integrity of the deliberative process as well as the public perception of such (e.g. Setälä and Smith 2018). In the particular case of this study, the Citizens' Jury was initiated and commissioned by Ministry of Environment and organized by university researchers. Because university researchers may be perceived as non-partisan and impartial actors, having researchers involved as organizers should increase public trust in a mini-public compared to a mere government ministry that can be seen as a partisan body. Furthermore, in Finland, public trust in science is at a very high level by international comparison (Science Barometer 2024). In 2024, 80% of Finns expressed trust in universities, which were among the top three most trusted institutions together with the defence forces and the police (ibid.). Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: A mini-public is trusted more when the public is aware that university researchers are involved in organizing it, compared to a mere governmental ministry as an organizer.

In addition to the sponsors and organizers of mini-publics, there are other factors that can affect public trust in mini-publics. Participants of deliberative mini-publics are invited and selected through processes of random sampling and stratification (e.g. Setälä and Smith 2018). The participant recruitment method is thus fundamentally different from more traditional ways of inviting citizens to participate, such as open invitation to town hall meetings. The use of stratification in conjunction with random sampling has been regarded as particularly important in the case of small-scale mini-publics such as Citizens' Juries. Despite the specific measures used in the participant recruitment, mini-publics are too small to be regarded as descriptively representative of the wider public (e.g. Germann 2025; Spada and Peixoto 2025). Rather, they can be expected to ensure the representation of different relevant societal viewpoints (e.g. Brown 2006) and to evoke a sense of procedural fairness because of equal chances of being invited (MacKenzie and Warren 2012).

Cutler et al. (2008, 178–180) show that trust in the BC Citizens' Assembly (CA) on electoral reform was associated with respondents' perception that 'people like me' are represented in the mini-public. This was especially the case among those respondents who had populist attitudes. Similarly, a study based on survey data from Northern Ireland shows that the perception that 'people like me' are represented in mini-publics increases positive attitudes towards mini-publics, trust in them, and the acceptability of their outcomes (Pow, Dijk, and Marien 2020). However, a recent study by Jacobs and Kaufmann (2021) shows that, in comparison to self-selection, random sampling used in mini-publics does not necessarily increase the perceived legitimacy among those who do not participate. Similarly, description of random sampling did not affect perceived legitimacy in CIR type mini-publics (Már and Gastil 2023).

In the case of our study, participants of a Citizens' Jury were recruited from a random sample and stratified based on gender, age, place of living, and education in order to provide a representation of different segments of the society. Although earlier evidence on public trust in mini-publics is ambiguous, we build our hypothesis on normative assumptions as well as studies showing that like-me perceptions and descriptive representation increases perceived legitimacy (e.g. Arnesen and Peters 2017). We also assume that without detailed description of the participant selection process, most citizens think of self-selection as the default method, because it is more common in traditional open hearings and other consultations. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: A mini-public is trusted more when the public is aware that participants are selected through random sampling, compared to unknown selection criteria.

The trustworthiness of a mini-public has also been suggested to depend on its perceived competence, i.e. whether it has acquired the necessary expertise on the issue at hand (MacKenzie and Warren 2012). The study by Cutler et al. (2008) examines whether public trust in mini-publics depends on the perception that the participants become experts on the topic discussed in the mini-public. The study finds that such a perception of expertise explains proneness to follow the CA's endorsement among respondents with non-populist attitudes. Overall, public trust in experts is higher than trust in partisan actors such as politicians (Grönlund and Setälä 2012). In mini-publics, participants have opportunities to learn about the issue and engage with experts, which should increase trust in the process and the judgments by mini-publics. Giving a description of the

learning phase for citizens can be expected to increase trust in a mini-public. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: A mini-public is trusted more when the public is aware that it has a learning and expert hearing phase, compared to unclear competence.

Moreover, we are interested in the effects of the recommendations of the mini-public. Mini-publics may have different types of outputs. Some of them provide reports on opinion shifts, others produce written policy recommendations, and others still summarize arguments in support and against different policy options (e.g. Setälä and Smith 2018). In the case of our study, the Citizens' Jury produced a written statement considering the fairness and efficiency of measures proposed by the government to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, we are particularly interested in how a written justification affects the public judgments of the trustworthiness of a Citizens' Jury.

It is important to analyse the effects of deliberative outcomes separately from the effects of deliberative procedures because they are not necessarily alike. Perceived procedural fairness has been shown to sometimes strengthen the acceptance of unfavourable outcomes (e.g. Christensen, Karjalainen, and Nurminen 2015; Tyler 2006). In practice, however, the wider public may receive more information about the procedural features of deliberative mini-public than their outcomes. This could be the case if, for example, the process is led by a high-profile political figure (Boswell, Dean, and Smith 2023), or if the mini-public recommendations are lengthy and thus uninteresting for mainstream media.

Studies in deliberative democracy emphasize the quality of public justification, which is regarded as crucial for the legitimacy of policies (e.g. Chambers 2003). This view seems to be at odds with studies in political psychology highlighting the constraints of individual capacity for processing information and arguments (e.g. Leeper and Slothuus 2014). For example, empirical studies suggest that arguments and information contradicting prior opinions can backlash, i.e. activate a negative response in people who do not agree with the outcome (Christensen, Himmelroos, and Setälä 2020; Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Yet, the way in which the information is presented can affect the evaluation of the information. For example, it has been found that backlash effects can be avoided by presenting information in neutral terms (Guess and Coppock 2020). Because mini-publics are non-partisan institutions representing various societal viewpoints, their statements can be expected to be balanced and respond to concerns of different segments of the society. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: A mini-public is trusted more when the public is aware of its recommendations and justifications, compared to mere procedural information about the mini-public.

Finally, there is a concern that citizens' policy attitudes may affect their perceptions of a government-initiated mini-public. Earlier studies suggest that partisan identification and congruence of policy preferences may influence people's judgments on the trustworthiness of public institutions (e.g. Setälä et al. 2021). The wider public may associate a government-initiated mini-public with the political agenda of its initiators and sponsors. In this case, instead of being perceived as an impartial body that can be trusted regardless of policy preferences, trust in a mini-public becomes in Warren and Gastil's (2015) terms 'selective', i.e. dependent on the congruence between citizens' policy preferences and

those of the government, or perhaps affective identifications with the parties in the government. Earlier studies have found that trust in mini-publics may be selective as well (e.g. Pilet et al., 2024), meaning that the non-participating citizens make their trust judgments based on whether the mini-public outcomes are in line with their personal opinions.

In the case of our study, the Citizens' Jury dealt with the issue of climate policies and was commissioned by the Ministry of Environment. The ministry, as such, is a non-partisan body tasked to prepare and implement legislation and regulation in the areas of environmental and climate governance. However, in Spring 2021, when the Jury was organized, the ministry was led by a representative of the Green Party. The party was a member of a Left-Green coalition government that pushes for ambitious climate policies, more precisely Finland's carbon neutrality by the year 2035. In this respect, it seems reasonable to assume that the organization of the Jury by a governmental agency such as the Ministry of Environment is likely to be associated with a policy agenda pushing for stricter climate policies.

While such partisan association may increase trust in the mini-public process among those who are supportive of ambitious climate policies, it may cause distrust and backlash among those who oppose them. Descriptions of the design features of mini-publics, namely non-partisan organizer, the inclusion of different segments of the society, interaction with experts, as well as the policy justifications given by a mini-public, may be helpful in terms of dispelling some of that distrust (Suiter, Saude, and McNally 2025). Indeed, one of the key motivations for governments for using mini-publics on climate issues has been to enhance the legitimacy of controversial policy measures that affect citizens' everyday lives (Giraudet et al. 2021).

As stated in hypotheses 1-4, the information on design features of mini-publics can be expected to affect respondents' trust judgments. However, we can expect these effects to be stronger among those who, initially, are less supportive of strict climate policies. Based on this, we formulate the following exploratory (not pre-registered) hypothesis (See Appendix 7):

H5: The effects described in hypotheses H1-4 are stronger among those who are critical of ambitious climate policies.

Experimental design

Case: A citizens' jury on climate actions in Finland

The survey experiment is linked to a real mini-public, the Citizens' Jury on Climate Actions, organized in Finland in April 2021. The Jury was commissioned by the Ministry of Environment to provide input to the new Medium-Term Climate Change Policy Plan. The Medium-Term Climate Policy Plan is a policy document that defines the targets and the policy measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions in sectors that are not included in carbon trading. The plan deals with consumption sectors such as traffic, housing, and food that directly influence the everyday lives of citizens.

In Spring 2021, the Ministry of Environment commissioned a group of researchers at the University of Turku to organize the Citizens' Jury. Deliberative mini-publics have been used relatively rarely in Finnish politics, and in fact, only two national-level mini-publics have been organized by governmental authorities before this one. The task of the Citizens'

Jury was to provide comments on the fairness and efficiency of 14 policy measures pertaining to traffic, housing and food which were proposed to be included in the Medium-Term Climate Policy Plan. The participants of the Jury were selected through a combination of random selection and stratification based on gender, age, place of living, and education.

Eventually, 33 citizens participated in the three-day jury process, which was organized online due to the pandemic. As tasked, the Citizens' Jury came up with a written statement that included some general remarks on climate policy and comments on the fairness and efficiency of each of the proposed policy measures. The jury members also came up with a few new and alternative proposals that were included in the statement (Kulha et al. 2022). The statement provided input in the drafting of the Medium-Term Climate Policy Plan, and several of its arguments were eventually also incorporated in the final document.

Factorial survey

In the survey experiment, respondents were presented a factorial survey in which they were asked to form judgments related to the Citizens' Jury on the Climate Actions. Vignette and scenario experiments have become more common among deliberative democracy scholars during the last few years (Werner and Muradova 2022). However, they often rely on fictive cases that have no real-life implications, increasing the risk that respondents express random attitudes when they are asked about mini-publics or other participatory processes (Bengtsson 2012). In this respect, our experimental design is more about testing the effects of different ways of priming information about an actual jury process rather than those of hypothetical vignettes. Since we did not want to give any misleading or false information, we manipulated realistic descriptions of the process provided to respondents.

Because the jury statement was a lengthy document including general remarks and jury's views on altogether 14 policy proposals, it was not possible to use the whole statement in a survey experiment. Moreover, the task of the jury was to comment on proposals made by the working group at the Ministry of Environment, and the Jury expressed rather critical viewpoints of some of the proposals. To avoid confusion among the respondents of the experiment, we chose a proposal regarding the prices of climate-friendly food, which the jury found acceptable and justifiable.

The survey experiment began with a general description of the policy issue and context that all respondents saw. Thereafter, the experimental treatments varied the description of the design features of the citizens' jury. The original texts in each treatment are described here in Table 1. We also present a summary of the experimental design and the operationalizations of the experimental dimensions in the Appendix (A1).

The respondents were randomly assigned into 16 sub-groups, one for each combination of treatments and control. The levels of each attribute were randomized. After reading the text in each treatment, respondents were asked to answer questions related to the Jury itself, Finnish climate policy, and attitudes towards democracy in general. In factorial survey experiments, adequate sample size depends on the size of the experimental population and the number of vignettes presented per respondent (Auspurg and Hinz 2015). Our experiment consists of $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 16$ different descriptions of the citizens' jury, and each respondent is presented with one description, meaning that respondents are randomly assigned into 16 decks.

Table 1. Summary of the experimental design.

The Medium-Term Climate Policy Plan (KAISU) describes the development of Finland's greenhouse gas emissions and defines the measures through which Finland can reach its target of carbon-neutrality by the year 2035.	
<i>Ministry of Environment ...</i>	<i>University researchers commissioned by the Ministry of Environment ...</i>
<i>... organized a Citizens' Jury in April in order to gauge citizens' views on the fairness and efficiency of the measures taken in the Climate Plan to cut emissions. The jury consisted of 33 citizens.</i>	<i>... 33 citizens representing the whole population as well as possible in terms of the place of living, age, gender, and level of education.</i>
<i>The members of the Citizens' Jury familiarized themselves with balanced information in advance and posed questions to seven experts in the field.</i>	[empty]
<i>The Jury convened online on three days, 22. and 24.–25. April 2021. The task of the Jury was to comment on the proposals by the Ministry of Environment for climate actions in the areas of traffic, housing, and food consumption. The Jury engaged in facilitated deliberations in small groups and between all jury members. The Jury wrote a common statement that will be used in the preparation of the Medium-Term Climate Policy Plan.</i>	
<i>In what follows is one example of measures of cutting emissions proposed by the ministry and the comments by the Jury regarding this measure: Lower prices for climate-friendly food 'The production of domestic plant protein and climate-friendly food should be supported; in addition, the consumption of ecologically sustainable meat such as fish, game, and reindeer should be encouraged. Measures should be limited to positive incentives such as compensations and lower taxation. In order to treat consumers equally, the prices of any food products should not be artificially raised.'</i>	[empty]
Survey	

The respondents were part of an online survey research panel administered by the Finnish Research Infrastructure for Public Opinion FIRIPO.¹ The Ethics Committee for Human Sciences at the University of Turku was consulted in terms of the study design, and a formal ethics review process was deemed unnecessary by the Committee. Research process followed the ethical principles of research with human participants by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2019). The survey was sent to 4227 respondents, and the study was preregistered in OSF registries prior to accessing the data.² Deviations from the pre-registration are accounted for in the appendix (A7).

Assuming that the response rate is 50 per cent at minimum, we expected to have at least 124 respondents per deck³, or a total of 1984 responses in the 16 decks, which would result in ample power for the experimental study. A power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al. 2007) indicated that a sample of this size would be able to detect small to medium effects ($d = 0.12$) with 95% power using ANOVA with main effects and interactions with alpha at 0.05. The data was collected during two weeks in June 2021, and we received a total of 2992 responses and between 175–177 responses for each of the 16 decks. The survey was conducted in Finnish and Swedish, the national languages in Finland. After the experiment, all respondents received a debriefing message that described the purpose of the experiment and provided more information about the jury process, including links to the project website.

The compositions of the 16 treatment groups as well as one control group are reported in the Appendix (A2). The groups are very similar in terms of socio-demographics as well as pre-test attitude concerning the price of climate friendly food. There are some

differences in terms of gender balance in the 17 groups, but the analysis of variance (ANOVA) confirms that even these differences in the mean scores of gender are not statistically significant ($p = 0.080$), and the same applies to other observed background variables.

Outcome variables

Hypotheses 1–4 were tested with an index consisting of six variables measuring respondents' trust towards mini-publics. The index was created on theoretical grounds, focusing on questions that directly measure legitimacy perceptions on the mini-public procedure and outcomes. These measures include trust in mini-publics as instruments of climate policy-making, perceived diversity of opinions in the mini-public, perceived quality of recommendations, anticipated impact on fairness of climate policy, anticipated policy impact and perceptions of mini-publics as trustworthy sources of information. The hypotheses in this study cover only the first set of hypotheses listed in the preregistration report at OSF, as the other hypotheses are tested in separate publications.

The wordings (translated from Finnish and Swedish) of the original outcome variables were:

'In my view, Citizens' Juries are a trustworthy method in planning Finnish climate policy,' 'I believe that a Citizens' Jury can represent diverse viewpoints,' 'I believe that a Citizens' Jury can produce good quality recommendations for policy-making,' 'I believe that a Citizens' Jury will increase fairness of climate policy' and 'I believe that a Citizens' Jury statement will influence political decisions' (Response scale 0-10, where 0 = Completely disagree and 10 = Completely agree). The sixth variable was *'To what extent do you or do you not trust the following groups or organizations as a source of information about climate change: A Citizens' Jury'* (Response scale 0-10, where 0 = Do not trust at all, and 10 = Trust completely).

Reliability analysis of the six outcome variables shows high covariance (Cronbach's alpha 0.927).⁴ On these grounds we computed an index measuring the overall trust in the Citizens' Jury and recoded the variable to vary from 0 to 10.

Although trust indexes are valid and useful measures for empirical research on deliberative mini-publics (Geisler 2023), trust in political institutions is known to be a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Braithwaite and Levi 1998). Previous experimental studies on mini-publics (e.g. Már and Gastil 2023) have emphasized the need to distinguish and operationalize trust towards mini-public competence on one hand, and benevolence and ability to make fair recommendations on the other hand. Furthermore, it is also theoretically justified to distinguish trust in mini-publics as a source of information (MacKenzie and Warren 2012) from trust in the mini-public as an institution. To detect potential differences in the effects of our treatments between different types of trust, we also analysed main effects of the six unique trust measures separately.

Climate policy attitude as a moderating variable

Since Finland at the time of the experiment had a center-left government that was emphasizing the importance of climate policies and the experiment explicitly mention a government ministry that respondents who are more critical of climate policies might be less inclined to trust, we also examine whether prior climate policy attitudes would

affect the trust towards a mini-public discussing the topic. The respondents' climate policy attitudes were measured before the experiment as a part of an 8-item survey battery measuring attitudes to a variety of topical policy issues. One of the items from this battery asking whether Finland should combat climate change more actively is used to gauge the effect of prior attitudes regarding climate change. The item was phrased in the following manner: 'Finland should mitigate climate change much more actively than it is doing today,' and the responses were collected with alternatives ranging from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree' on a five-point Likert scale. For the purposes of this study, the item was recoded into a dichotomous variable, where 1 equals a desire for Finland to combat climate change more actively and 0 includes attitudes sceptical of such measures and don't know responses.

Results

We begin the analysis by presenting the mean scores of our outcome variable (trust index) for all cells in the experimental design. [Table 2](#) shows that there are no differences in the mean scores that really stand out. Based on these mean scores it, nevertheless, appears that respondents presented with an excerpt of the Jury's statement or information about the university as an organizer are more likely to perceive citizens' Jury as more trustworthy.

Main effects: trust index

To analyse the data we primarily use factorial analysis of variance (factorial ANOVA) techniques. In this paper we focus on the main effects in the analysis, as our hypotheses (1-4) only relate to them. We examine how trust in the mini-public is affected by the four factors first using the trust index with a four-way ANOVA ([Table 3](#)). The results from the ANOVA confirm the impression that the citizen statement affects the respondents' trust in the Citizens' Jury [$F(3, 2146) = 17.11, p < 0.000$]. In other words, we find robust support for the hypothesis (H4), suggesting a mini-public is trusted more when information about mini-public's recommendations and arguments are provided. The effect size (eta squared = 0.533) indicates that over half of the variance in the trust score is attributable to reading about mini-public recommendations, reflecting a very large effect.

However, as [Table 3](#) reporting the main effects of the treatments shows, the other treatments do not reach the commonly used thresholds of statistical significance, thereby suggesting that procedural details are unlikely to affect overall trust in the

Table 2. Trust in the citizens' jury organizer.

(n = 2002)			Ministry with university		Ministry alone	
			Selection criteria known		Selection criteria known	
Competence			Yes	No	Yes	No
Jury statement	Yes	Yes	5.6	5.7	5.4	5.4
		No	5.6	5.4	5.9	5.5
	No	Yes	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.0
		No	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.1

Table 3. Trust in Citizens' Jury (index), main effects of treatments (N = 2146)

	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Model	1.73	0.039
1. Organizer	1.43	0.231
2. Participant selection	0.58	0.445
3. Competence	0.57	0.450
4. Jury statement	13.51	0.000
	Partial SS	MS
Residual	7839.9	3.91
Total	7941.6	3.93

Entries are F-values from four-way ANOVA analyses, *p*-value below 0.05 in bold

Citizens' Jury. This also means that our hypotheses regarding the organizer of a mini-public (H1), the representativeness of the mini-public (H2), or whether the participants receive background information (H3) were not supported.

While our hypotheses focus on the main effects from the experiment, we also explored how interactions between the different treatments may have affected trust towards the Citizens' Jury (see Appendix A3 for full model). Moreover, we used a pre-treatment attention check to evaluate the robustness of the results (Aronow, Baron, and Pinson 2019). As only three percent of the respondents failed the attention check and dropping them from the analysis did not have a significant impact on the results (see Appendix A4), we decided to include all respondents assigned to the different treatments in our analyses.

Main effects: separate trust measures

Next, we examined the six separate trust measures with a four-way ANOVA and report the results of these analyses in Table 4 as well as in Appendix A4. In general, these analyses did not change the big picture and they support our hypothesis (H4) that reading actual recommendations of the mini-public increases trust in the mini-public. Exposure to mini-public recommendations had a statistically significant effect on all six decomposed trust measures, and this treatment explained from 25 percent up to 64 per cent of the variation in the different dimensions of trust (eta squared varied between 0.247 and 0.637). However, what we did find was that a description of the participant selection criteria of the Citizens' Jury had a statistically significant effect on two trust measures. More precisely, as Table 4 indicates, information on the fact that the Citizens' Jury represented the whole population as well as possible in terms of the place of living, age, gender, and level of education increased respondents' trust in discursive representativeness of the Citizens' Jury [$F(3, 2559) = 4.02, p < 0.05$]. The effect size (eta squared = 0.211) indicates that 20 per cent of the variance in the perceived representativeness score is attributable to reading about participants selection method, reflecting a large effect. Furthermore, same information about participant selection increased respondents' trust in the Citizens Jury in terms of political impact [$F(3, 2472) = 8.83, p < 0.01$]. This effect is again very large, as reading about participant selection method explains 37 per cent of the variation in trust in political impact (eta squared = 0.371). These results thus give partial support to our hypothesis (H2) regarding representativeness of the Citizens' Jury.

Table 4. Main effects of treatments on separate trust measures.

	Trust-worthy method (n = 2532)	Represent diverse views (n = 2559)	Quality recomm- endations (n = 2514)	Increase fairness (n = 2460)	Influence political decisions (n = 2472)	Informa-tion source (n = 2438)
	F (p)	F (p)	F (p)	F (p)	F (p)	F (p)
Model	2.60 (0.001)	1.87 (0.022)	2.42 (0.002)	1.16 (0.293)	1.49 (0.101)	0.77 (0.715)
Organizer	1.81 (0.179)	1.62 (0.203)	0.41 (0.521)	0.71 (0.400)	2.61 (0.107)	0.24 (0.621)
Participant selection	0.24 (0.622)	4.02 (0.045)	0.96 (0.327)	0.02 (0.889)	8.83 (0.003)	0.03 (0.861)
Competence	2.14 (0.144)	0.59 (0.442)	0.69 (0.406)	1.13 (0.288)	0.73 (0.393)	0.93 (0.335)
Jury statement	26.27 (0.000)	7.41 (0.007)	23.80 (0.000)	7.58 (0.006)	4.92 (0.027)	7.29 (0.007)
Residual	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)
Total	13787.4	12854.2	11911.6	13754.5	11619.3	11674.6
	14001.4	12854.3	12084.5	13852.8	11674.6	11674.6

Note: Entries are F-values from four-way ANOVA analyses and level of significance, *p*-value below 0.05 in bold.

In other words, only reading the Citizens' Jury recommendations did affect trust in the Citizens' Jury as a method, trust in the quality of its recommendations, trust in that it improves fairness of climate policy, and trust as a source of information. None of the procedural aspects of the Citizens' Jury played a role in four of the six decomposed trust measures. To sum up, our hypotheses related to the effect of organizers of the Citizens' Jury (H1) and information about the learning phase of the Citizens' Jury (H3) were not supported by the data. The full model can be found in the appendix (A5).

Sub-Group results

There are several studies suggesting that prior policy attitudes have an effect on how citizens perceive democratic innovations and their outcomes (e.g. Christensen, Himmelroos, and Setälä 2020; van der Does and Kantorowicz 2021). Hence, in addition to the experimental design used to examine how different design choices affect public trust in a mini-public, we also wanted to examine how prior attitudes towards Finnish climate change policies, measured before the experiment, interact with the four experimental treatments.

To examine hypothesis 5 we rely on regression models analysing the interaction effects between the treatments and attitude towards climate action on our main dependent variable, the trust index. This analysis does not provide us with any significant interaction effects (see Appendix A6). However, considering the overall very strong effect of the citizens' statement on the trust index, it is still possible that there are differences in how the statement affects in different sub-groups. As Figure 1 shows, the statement has a significant effect on trust among the group that is against climate action. Having the opportunity to read the statement thus increased trust in a mini-public among respondents who were sceptical towards ambitious climate policy.

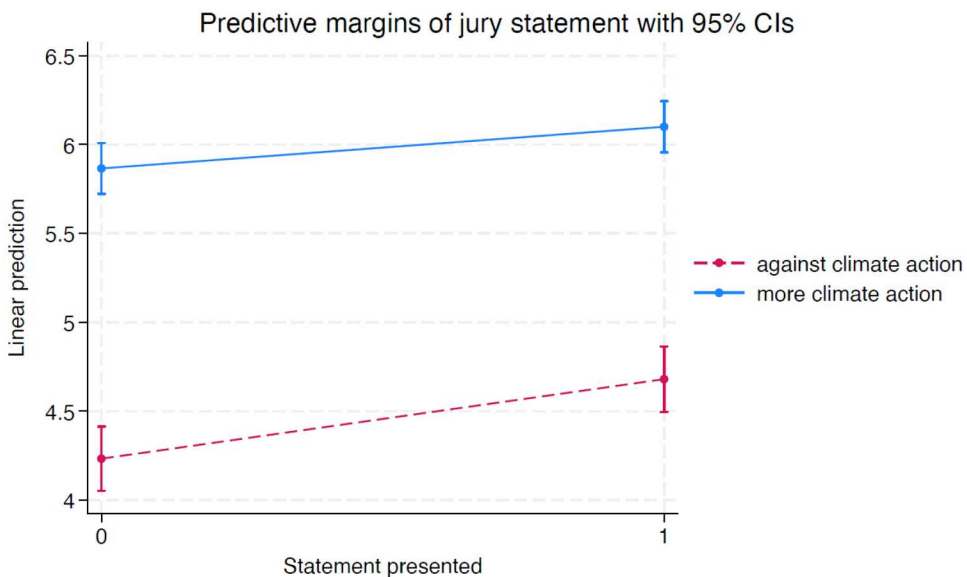


Figure 1. The interaction effect of climate attitude and jury statement on trust in Citizens' Jury.

Discussion

The results from the experiment are fairly clear. The information regarding the institutional design features of the Citizens' Jury made little difference for public trust. The organizer of the Citizens' Jury, representativeness and inclusiveness of the jury composition, or the jury competence had no direct impact on the evaluations of the trustworthiness of the mini-public, measured with a trust index. However, having an opportunity to read a justification for the outcome by the Citizens' Jury, i.e. an excerpt of the Citizens' statement containing arguments for a policy measure, increased trust in the jury. In other words, we do not find support for our hypotheses 1-3, whereas the hypothesis 4 gains robust support.

In the Finnish context, there have been relatively few mini-publics so far, and most of them have been organized at the local level. Therefore, the whole concept of a Citizens' Jury may be so unfamiliar to citizens that they do not know what to expect regarding institutional design. Simply the fact that ordinary citizens can have an advisory role in the national policymaking process may be difficult to conceive, and therefore the details of how exactly citizens are involved is of lesser importance. In this respect, the public perceptions of mini-publics may not be so different from other, and perhaps better known, practices of government-initiated participatory processes such as public hearings. Future research should be conducted to understand mechanisms of trust in mini-publics in comparison with other participatory processes, effects of more repeated exposure to mini-publics, as well as those of different ways of presenting information about these processes (e.g. visualizations).

Our results are also in line with other studies showing that the key design features of mini-publics do not necessarily help generate public trust towards mini-publics (e.g. Már and Gastil 2023). In particular, in line with Jacobs and Kaufmann (2021), the description of the recruitment method did not have an expected impact. While Jacobs and Kaufman compared random selection with self-selection, our study, based on an actual Citizens' Jury, examined the effects of the recruitment method used in small-scale mini-publics, i.e. a combination of random sampling and stratification. Future experimental studies should disentangle the effects of participant selection methods (random sampling, stratification targeted recruitment etc.) from the actual success of recruitment (i.e. composition of the final jury and proportions of different sociodemographic groups). Such studies would help understand whether the perception of mini-publics as a 'microcosm' of the whole population affects public perceptions of and trust in these processes. As a recent study by Germann (2025) already shows, that the lack of representativeness may undermine the perceived legitimacy of mini-publics. Future experimental studies should also make certain that respondents understand the nuances of different mini-publics and their composition. In our study, we can only show that the participants were attentive to the texts presented, but we did not include manipulation checks for each of the treatments.

The design features of mini-publics are not irrelevant for public perceptions also because they affect the outcome of the deliberative process. Our findings confirm that trust in mini-publics is selective in the sense that mini-publics' recommendations and arguments have a strong impact on public trust. However, our findings are not entirely comparable to previous studies that show the importance of outcome favourability of

explaining public perceptions of political processes (e.g. Persson, Esaiasson, and Gilljam 2012; Werner 2020), including democratic innovations (e.g. van der Does and Kantorowicz 2021). Rather, our study seems to suggest that citizens' judgments may at least partly be explained by a concern of avoiding an unfavourable outcome. In other words, outcome favourability does not merely reflect a desire to win but also a concern with losing. Such a concern can seemingly be mitigated with a statement acknowledging fairness judgments and that the outcome need not be a zero-sum game. In our case, the excerpt from the statement explicitly referred to equality and compensations, and supported lowering the prices of climate-friendly food, and therefore it cannot be connected to a particular outcome favouring one group over another. Rather, the statement included different points of view and emphasized the importance of considering groups (e.g. the poor) that might be disproportionately affected by transitions to carbon neutrality. By taking into account diverging views and interests and appealing to widely shared values, statements by mini-publics can resonate among various segments of the society (Leino, Jäske, and Setälä 2025).

The interpretation of our results becomes even more nuanced if we take into account the attitude towards climate policies that the respondents reported before being assigned to an experimental group (hypothesis 5). Having an opportunity to read an excerpt of the Citizens' Jury statement increased trust in the mini-public especially among those who were critical of the government's ambitious climate policies. As such, the jury statement may have given comfort to those concerned that they may be unfavourably affected.

Finally, it must also be acknowledged that even when survey experiments are designed as realistic as possible, there are issues with the generalizability and external validity of their results (Werner and Muradova 2022). An extracted part of the Citizens' Jury statement in an online survey is not fully equivalent to a situation where a citizen might come across the statement in his or her everyday life, through media for example.

Concluding remarks

The main results of our study are as follows: (1) The opportunity to familiarize with an excerpt of a mini-public's recommendations and arguments increased overall trust in the mini-public. (2) In addition to the opportunity to read a part of the statement, random selection as a procedural design feature increased trust in the representativeness of the Citizens' Jury as well as its policy impact. (3) Among those who are critical of ambitious climate policies, being informed about the recommendations increased overall trust in the mini-public. The main takeaway from our study therefore is that reading actual recommendations and argumentation of the mini-public has more influence on the overall trust in the mini-public than information about its procedural features.

Regardless of the extensive scholarly interest in the design features of mini-publics, such as random sampling and stratification, our study suggests that their impact on public perceptions and trustworthiness of mini-publics remains modest. This result may still be partly driven by the novelty of these kinds of instruments – or participatory processes in general – in the context of governmental policymaking in Finland.

Governments which initiate and commission mini-publics often expect them, not just to provide input in policymaking, but also to enhance public perceptions of and trust in

governmental policymaking. Our results suggest that especially balanced arguments by mini-publics can increase public trust in government-initiated mini-publics. While information about design features does not seem to have similar impacts, procedural aspects matter because they are crucial for achieving the kinds of outcomes that resonate among different segments of the society. In addition, information about particular design features may increase trust among those who are initially sceptical about the government's policy goals.

Notes

1. For more information, visit <https://www.friipo.fi/research/>
2. <https://osf.io/6qxym>
3. The calculation is based on 17 instead of 16 groups as we also recruited a group of respondents that only received the questionnaire without any knowledge of the citizen jury.
4. To summarize the data on the various trust measures, we also conducted a principal component analysis. Results of an unrotated PCA indicate that all six variables load strongly on one factor (eigenvalue 4.41) where factor loadings range from 0.70 to 0.92.

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Appendix

A1. Summary of experimental design

	Dimension	Level	Experiment text
1	Organizer	A	Only the Ministry of the Environment
		B	Ministry of the Environment + University researchers
2	Participant selection	A	The Jury consisted of 33 citizens
		B	The Jury consisted of 33 citizens selected through random selection and stratification to ensure as diverse a composition as possible
3	Competence	A	The Citizens' Jury received a balanced background information package and asked questions from seven experts of the topic area.
		B	No description of information and expert hearings
4	Jury statement	A	Excerpt of citizens' jury statement (measure + comments)
		B	No description of the statement

A2. Group composition

Education was measured using a 9-point scale where 1 was the lowest level of education and 8 the highest, and option 9 stood for 'no education'. Prior to ANOVA analyses, education variable was recoded into 8-point scale where 'no education' responses were combined with the lowest education level 1. Gender was measured with three categories (1 = female, 2 = male, 3 = other), and in ANOVA we looked at the share of female respondents only. Pre-test attitude towards the price of climate friendly food was measured with a statement 'What do you think about the following statements concerning salient political questions? The prices of climate friendly food should be lowered.' The original response scale was 1 = fully agree – 4 = fully disagree and 5 = don't know. Prior to comparison of means, the coding was inversed and the 'don't know' answers were recoded into the middle of the scale, with value 3.

Deck	N	Age in years, mean (SE)	Education, mean 1-8 (SE)	Gender, % female	Pre-test attitude, mean 1-5 (SE)
1A2A3A4A	175	56.7	5.4	32%	3.5
1B2A3A4A	175	57.5	5.5	50%	3.5
1A2B3A4A	176	57.1	5.6	50%	3.6
1A2A3B4A	177	57.2	5.5	51%	3.6
1A2A3A4B	175	58.4	5.6	44%	3.5
1A2A3B4B	175	56.8	5.4	49%	3.6
1A2B3B4A	175	56.7	5.6	48%	3.6
1B2B3A4A	176	59.3	5.6	53%	3.7
1B2A3B4A	176	57.8	5.4	45%	3.7
1A2B3A4B	176	57.7	5.5	45%	3.6
1B2A3A4B	176	56.9	5.4	41%	3.5
1A2B3B4B	175	56.7	5.6	47%	3.6
1B2A3B4B	176	56.1	5.8	47%	3.7
1B2B3A4B	176	57.5	5.7	45%	3.7
1B2B3B4A	176	57.7	5.3	47%	3.6
1B2B3B4B	177	56.5	5.6	46%	3.7
Total	2988				
57.4 (0.29)					
5.5 (0.03)					
46%					
3.6 (0.02)					
Sig.		0.962	0.452	0.080	0.905

A3: trust in citizens' jury (index), main and interaction effects of all four treatments, four-way ANOVA analyses

	Trust index(n = 2146)	
	F	p
Model	1.73	0.039
Organizer	1.43	0.231
Participant selection	0.58	0.445
Competence	0.57	0.450
Jury statement	13.51	0.000
Organizer*Participant selection	0.63	0.426
Organizer*Competence	0.59	0.442
Organizer*Jury statement	0.08	0.773
Participant selection*Competence	2.87	0.091
Participant selection*Jury statement	0.28	0.596
Competence*Jury statement	0.00	0.955
Organizer*Participant selection*Competence	0.07	0.795
Organizer*Participant selection* Jury statement	2.89	0.089
Organizer*Competence* Jury statement	1.49	0.222
Participant selection*Competence*Jury statement	0.70	0.403
Organizer*Participant selection*Competence* Jury statement	0.01	0.924
	Partial SS	MS
Residual	7839.9	3.91
Total	7941.6	3.93

Note: Entries are F-values from four-way ANOVA analyses, *p*-value below 0.05 in bold

A4. Pre-treatment attention check

All groups of respondents were asked, which of the following facts was told in the introductory text before the experimental treatment: 'Finland is aiming for carbon neutrality in 2035'; 'Finland is aiming for carbon neutrality in 2060'. Only about 3.5 percent of the respondents gave a wrong

answer, and excluding these respondents from the analysis had no significant impact on the outcomes. See results below.

	Trust index	
	F	p
Model	1.75	0.037
Organizer	0.31	0.579
Participant selection	1.35	0.245
Competence	0.03	0.856
Jury statement	13.24	0.000
Organizer*Participant selection	0.86	0.354
Organizer*Competence	0.44	0.509
Organizer*Jury statement	0.12	0.731
Participant selection*Competence	2.78	0.096
Participant selection*Jury statement	0.17	0.678
Competence*Jury statement	0.00	0.945
Organizer*Participant selection*Competence	0.03	0.856
Organizer*Participant selection* Jury statement	3.48	0.062
Organizer*Competence* Jury statement	1.92	0.166
Participant selection*Competence*Jury statement	0.69	0.407
Organizer*Participant selection*Competence* Jury statement	0.03	0.854
	Partial SS	MS
Residual	7509.6	3.87
Total	7611.4	3.90

Note: Entries are F-values from three-way ANOVA analyses and level of significance

A5. Analysis of separate trust items, full model with interactions between treatments

	Trust-worthy method (n = 2532) F (p)	Represent diverse views (n = 2559) F (p)	Quality recomm- endations (n = 2514) F (p)	Increase fairness (n = 2460) F (p)	Influence political decisions (n = 2472) F (p)	Informa- tion source (n = 2438) F (p)
Model	2.60 (0.001)	1.87 (0.022)	2.42 (0.002)	1.16 (0.293)	1.49 (0.101)	0.77 (0.715)
Organizer	1.81 (0.179)	1.62 (0.203)	0.41 (0.521)	0.71 (0.400)	2.61 (0.107)	0.24 (0.621)
Participant selection	0.24 (0.622)	4.02 (0.045)	0.96 (0.327)	0.02 (0.889)	8.83 (0.003)	0.03 (0.861)
Competence	2.14 (0.144)	0.59 (0.0442)	0.69 (0.406)	1.13 (0.288)	0.73 (0.393)	0.93 (0.335)
Jury statement	26.27 (0.000)	7.41 (0.007)	23.80 (0.000)	7.58 (0.006)	4.92 (0.027)	7.29 (0.007)
Organizer*Participant selection	0.80 (0.37 0)	0.04 (0.838)	4.70 (0.030)	0.15 (0.700)	0.20 (0.659)	0.01 (0.940)
Organizer*Competence	0.02 (0.884)	0.15 (0.696)	0.37 (0.543)	0.01 (0.923)	0.00 (0.980)	1.09 (0.297)
Organizer*Jury statement	0.32 (0.574)	0.06 (0.813)	0.15 (0.700)	1.41 (0.234)	0.18 (0.669)	0.30 (0.582)
Participant selection*Competence	3.16 (0.076)	2.91 (0.088)	0.70 (0.404)	0.96 (0.328)	0.41 (0.522)	0.05 (0.817)
Participant selection*Jury statement	0.68 (0.410)	2.35 (0.126)	1.29 (0.256)	0.27 (0.602)	0.23 (0.632)	0.29 (0.587)
Competence*Jury statement	0.01 (0.911)	0.01 (0.928)	0.00 (0.981)	0.01 (0.934)	0.73 (0.394)	0.05 (0.829)
Organizer*Participant selection*Competence	0.03 (0.853)	0.01 (0.903)	0.08 (0.779)	0.00 (0.978)	0.45 (0.501)	0.47 (0.491)
Organizer*Participant selection* Jury statement	1.61 (0.204)	5.79 (0.016)	1.22 (0.270)	2.49 (0.115)	0.07 (0.786)	0.24 (0.625)
Organizer*Competence* Jury statement	1.03 (0.311)	2.63 (0.105)	1.96 (0.162)	2.23 (0.136)	1.61 (0.204)	0.01 (0.911)

(Continued)

Continued.

	Trust-worthy method (n = 2532) <i>F (p)</i>	Represent diverse views (n = 2559) <i>F (p)</i>	Quality recomm- endations (n = 2514) <i>F (p)</i>	Increase fairness (n = 2460) <i>F (p)</i>	Influence political decisions (n = 2472) <i>F (p)</i>	Informa- tion source (n = 2438) <i>F (p)</i>
Participant selection* Competence*Jury statement	0.41 (0.521)	0.12 (0.726)	0.03 (0.853)	0.00 (0.945)	0.78 (0.376)	0.47 (0.492)
Organizer*Part. Selection *Competence* Jury statement	0.76 (0.385)	0.31 (0.578)	0.02 (0.895)	0.28 (0.597)	0.45 (0.503)	0.00 (0.981)
	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)	Partial SS (MS)
Residual	13787.4	12854.2	11911.6	13754.5		11619.3
Total	14001.4	12854.3	12084.5	13852.8		11674.6

Note: Entries are F-values from four-way ANOVA analyses, *p*-value below 0.05 in bold.

A6. Moderation analysis: interactions between treatments and climate action attitude, regression analysis (N = 2525)

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>std.err.</i>
Organizer	0.28*	0.13
More climate action	1.84***	0.19
Organizer*More climate action	-0.29	0.17
Participant selection	0.01	0.13
Participant selection*More climate action	0.11	0.17
Competence	0.05	0.13
Competence* More climate action	-0.24	0.17
Jury statement	0.45***	0.13
Jury statement* More climate action	-0.21	0.17
Adj R-squared	0.15	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

A7. Deviations from preregistration of hypotheses, data collection and analyses

We here follow the recommendations of Lakens (2024) when describing deviations from the preregistration. This entails that we describe the deviations and evaluate the consequences of the deviation for the severity of the test and validity of the inferences.

Exclusion: Anyone who completed the survey in less than 30 s were automatically excluded as a respondent by the organization (FIRIPO) that administers the online panel we used. This practice is, however, not mentioned in our pre-registration of the experiment.

Sample size: Our aim was a minimum of 1984 respondents. In the end, 2992 respondents filled in the survey. We performed the analysis as originally planned but had higher power to detect the effects of interest. This deviation increased the severity of the test slightly.

Analyses: The hypotheses 1–4 have been formulated slightly differently in the manuscript compared to the pre-registration. The intended meaning should not have changed, but we felt the need to clarify a few elements. The most significant deviation compared to the pre-registration is that we have included a 5th hypothesis regarding our expectations related to the respondents' prior attitudes on climate policies.

Reporting of results: When reporting the results we had declared that we would look for main effects associated with each of the four factors using ANOVA, as well as, interaction effects associated with relationship between the four factors using marginal means. Interaction effects can be found in the ANOVA, but as we only are interested in the main effects and have no theory or hypotheses around the interactions in this study we only focus on the main effects in our analysis.