

Using and adapting the Information-Choice Questionnaire method: The case of energy transition in the Netherlands

M. de Best-Waldhober,¹ M. Paukovic¹, D. Daamen², & P. Ashworth³

¹ ECN, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

² Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands

³ CSIRO, Brisbane, Australia

Introduction

In recent years, several of the authors' studies addressed the issue of uninformed and informed opinions of the general public regarding CO₂ mitigation options. The method used to collect informed preferences in these studies is called the Information-Choice Questionnaire (ICQ) (see e.g. Neijens, 1987). The aim of the ICQ is not only to provide respondents with the necessary information to reach an informed opinion, but also to help them make use of this information to form opinions about different policy options: part of its' aim is to guide respondents' information processing. Although the ICQ has mostly been used as a way to study informed opinions of representative samples of the general public, another possibility is to use this method as an on demand information tool and decision aid for the wider public. In the presentation, we will discuss both uses of the ICQ method.

Method

During 2005-2007 an ICQ was developed that was comprised of seven plausible options, with three out of seven achieving a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the Netherlands by 2030, including two energy efficiency options, two options for CO₂ capture and storage, a biomass, a wind and a nuclear energy option. However, before choosing, respondents were provided with well-balanced expert information on the most important consequences of each option. This information was compiled by various energy experts with different backgrounds, checked by other experts and then translated for lay people. Information on consequences included costs, safety, and ecological impacts. We will discuss three

studies using this ICQ: (1) administrated to a representative sample of the general Dutch population (n=971) in 2007, (2) the same ICQ, updated by experts and extended with a face to face interview (n=134) in 2010, (3) the same ICQ, but in development for online use by the general public as an information tool and decision aid.

Results and discussion

The results of the 2007 sample show overall evaluations of options consistent with choice and rejection behavior for these options. The majority of respondents choose one of the efficiency options, and added either the wind energy option or the biomass option. The nuclear energy option was chosen by more than a fifth of respondents, but it was also deemed unacceptable by a similar percentage. Further analyses attest to the usefulness of the ICQ for both predicting and informing. Regression analyses show that informed opinions are more consistent than uninformed opinions (e.g. in the ICQ evaluations of options are more consistent with evaluations of consequences of that option). The subjective measures show people appreciate the method of the ICQ, the topic, as well as the information given. This is confirmed by the results from the 2010 sample. This gives hope for the use of the ICQ as an information and decision tool online. During the presentation, we will inter alia discuss the possibilities for applying more advanced technology to increase users ease and fun.

References

Neijens, P. (1987). *The Choice Questionnaire. Design and Evaluation of an Instrument for Collecting Informed Opinions of a Population*. Amsterdam, Free University Press.