



Summary

- Time is a valuable resource and people have a desire to use it wisely. “Is this a waste of time?” is commonly asked, yet less research is devoted to studying how individuals make these evaluations and the psychological processes that occur during these judgments.
- We begin with a qualitative study asking people what they consider time-wasting, followed by two experiments linking time evaluations to goals.
- This research aims to help people make better decisions about using their time, alleviating time scarcity and improving well-being.

What do people consider a “waste of time?”



“Why do you consider it a waste of time?”

“Time consuming activities that cannot grant you any lessons or success”

“Any activity that doesn’t benefit myself or is something I enjoy”

“Anything that isn’t productive is a waste of time”

“Things that won’t benefit me or others in the future or now”

Study 1

What factors do people use to evaluate their quality of time use?

Method

Participants (n = 357) were asked about 20 everyday activities in one of two orders:

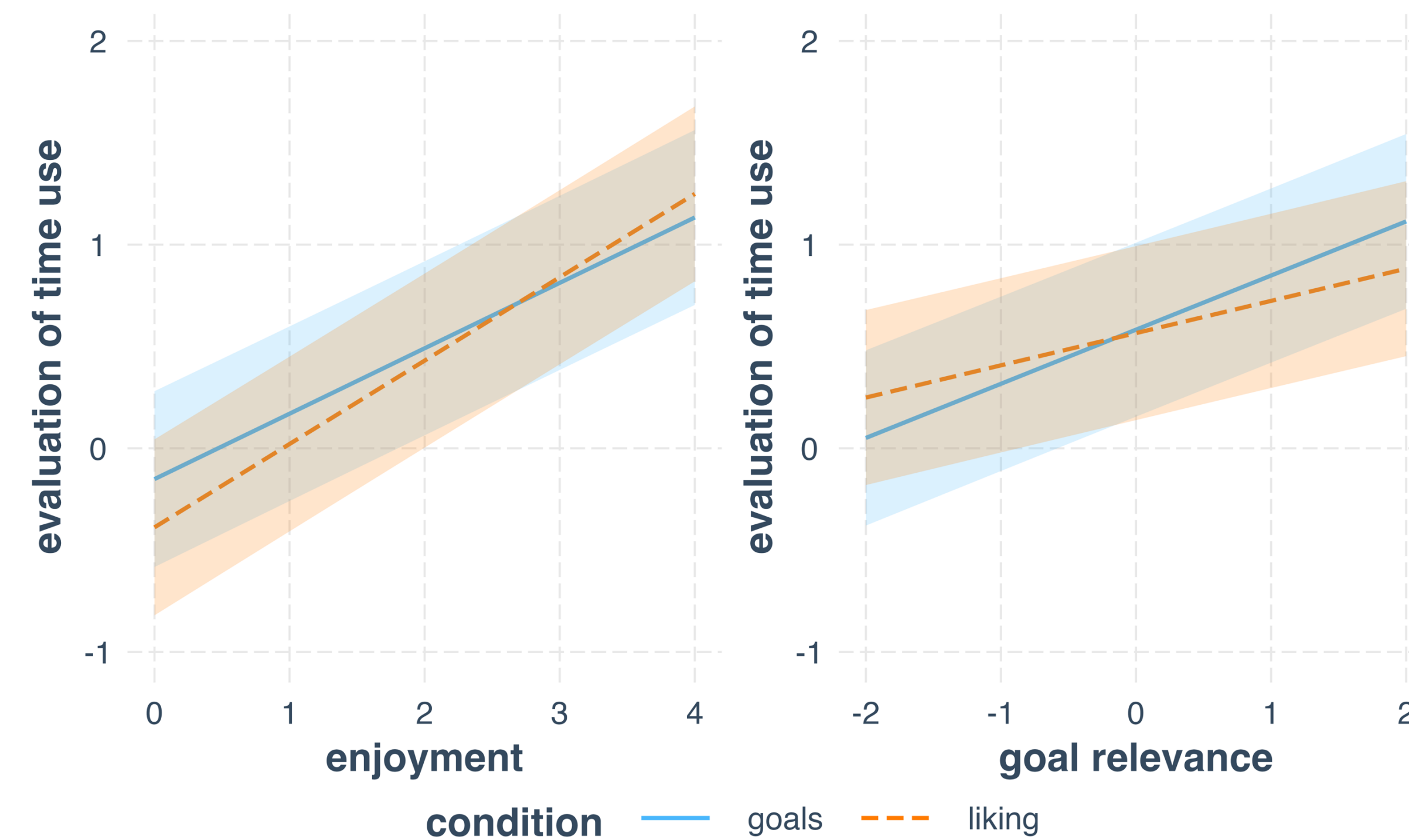
Liking condition:

1. How much do you **like** X?
2. Do you think it’s a good/bad use of time?
3. How **relevant** is X to your goals?

Goal relevance condition:

1. How **relevant** is X to your goals?
2. Do you think it’s a good/bad use of time?
3. How much do you **like** X?

Results



People use how much they **like** an activity and how **goal relevant** it is to determine if it is a good or bad use of time

Study 2

Does shifting goal focus change how people think about time use?

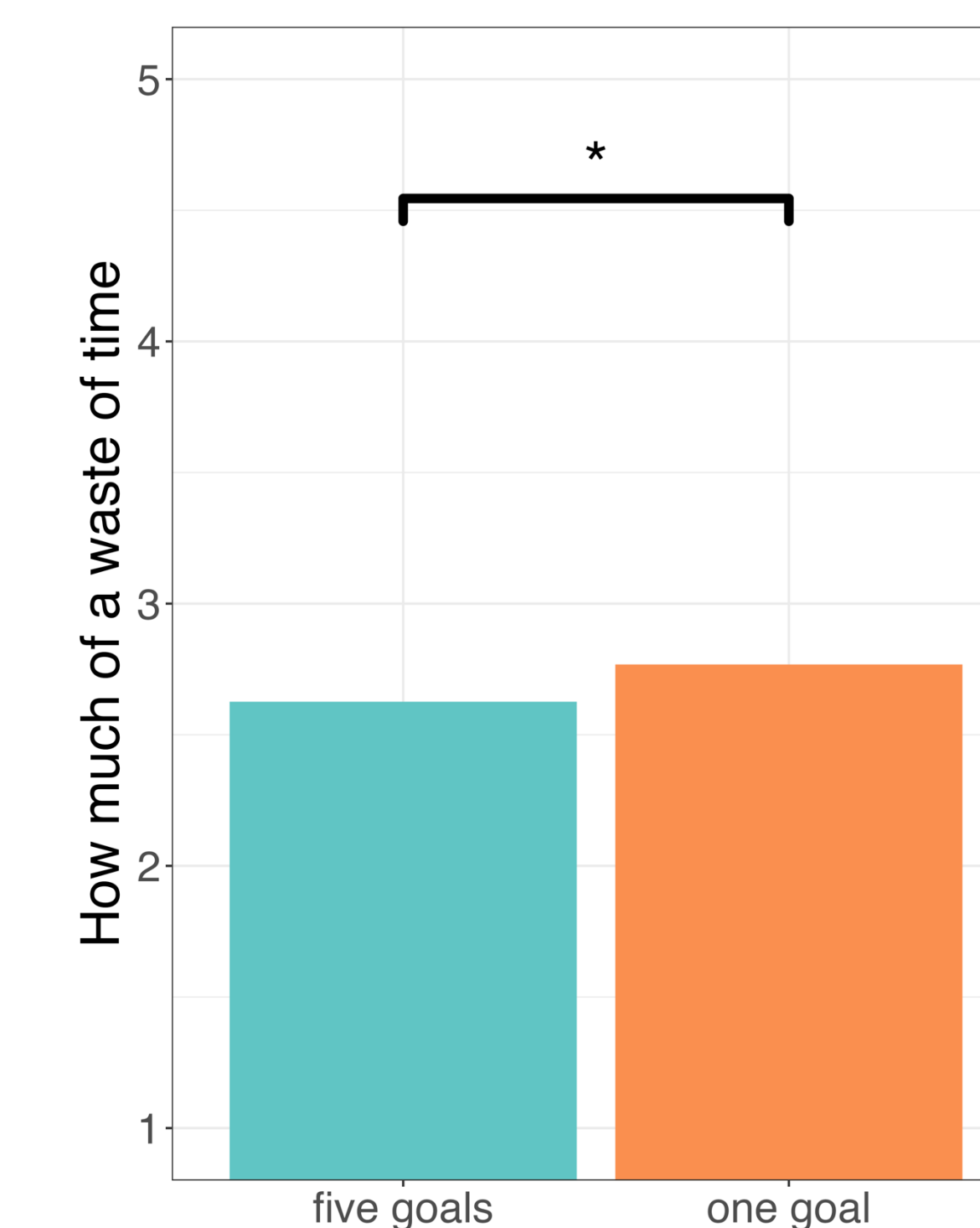
Method

Participants (n = 227) were randomly assigned to

- Think about **FIVE** goals they had
- Think about **ONE** important goal

They were then given a list of 20 activities and asked how much each felt like a waste of time

Results



Thinking about **one important goal** makes people think activities are **more of a waste of time**

Discussion

- People nominate a wide range of everyday activities as a waste of time, most frequently passive leisure activities
- Making enjoyment or goal relevance more salient increases its use in evaluating time
- Focusing on one large goal makes activities seem more of a waste of time
- Next, we will study how to change perceptions of waste and productivity