

Aim

How do people decide what they want to know?

1. We test the hypothesis that when deciding whether to seek personal information, people estimate the likely influence of information on their Action, Affect and Cognition¹.

I. **Action** – will information help me make better decisions?

II. **Affect** – will information induce positive or negative feelings?

III. **Cognition** – will information help me to comprehend reality?

We further test:

- Whether people can be characterized into “information-seeking types” based on the relative weights they put on Action, Affect & Cognition when seeking information¹. If so, are these “information-seeking types” stable over time?
- Whether this classification is related to mental health.

Method

1. **Measure of Information-Seeking** (40 Trials)

Do you want to know whether others see you as Mean, Honest...?

2. **Measure of Estimated Impact on Action** (40 Trials)

How USEFUL would it be to know whether others see you as Mean, Honest...?

3. **Measure of Estimated Impact on Affect** (40 Trials)

(i) *How would you FEEL if you knew whether others see you as Mean, Honest...?*

(ii) *How would you FEEL if you NEVER knew whether others see you as Mean...?*

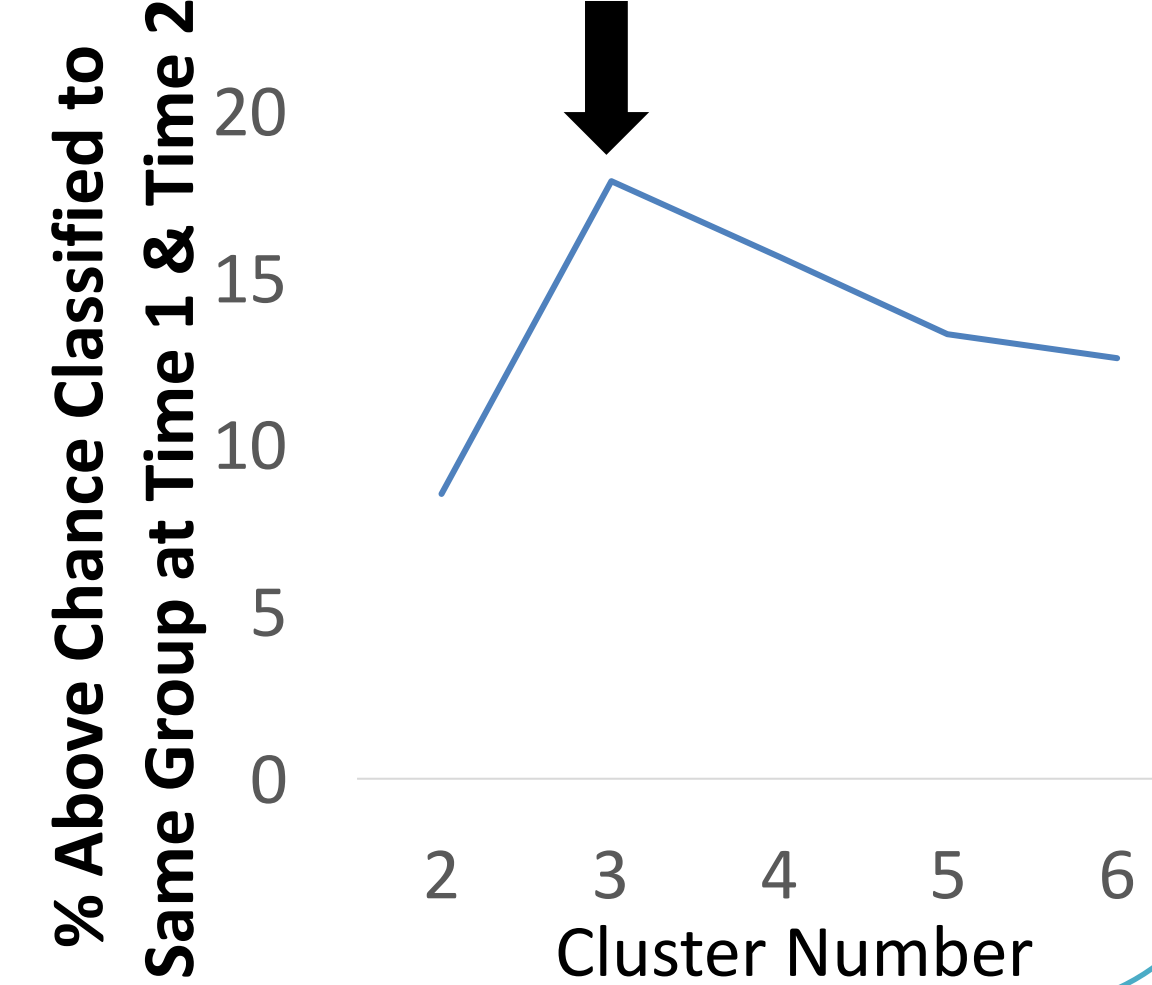
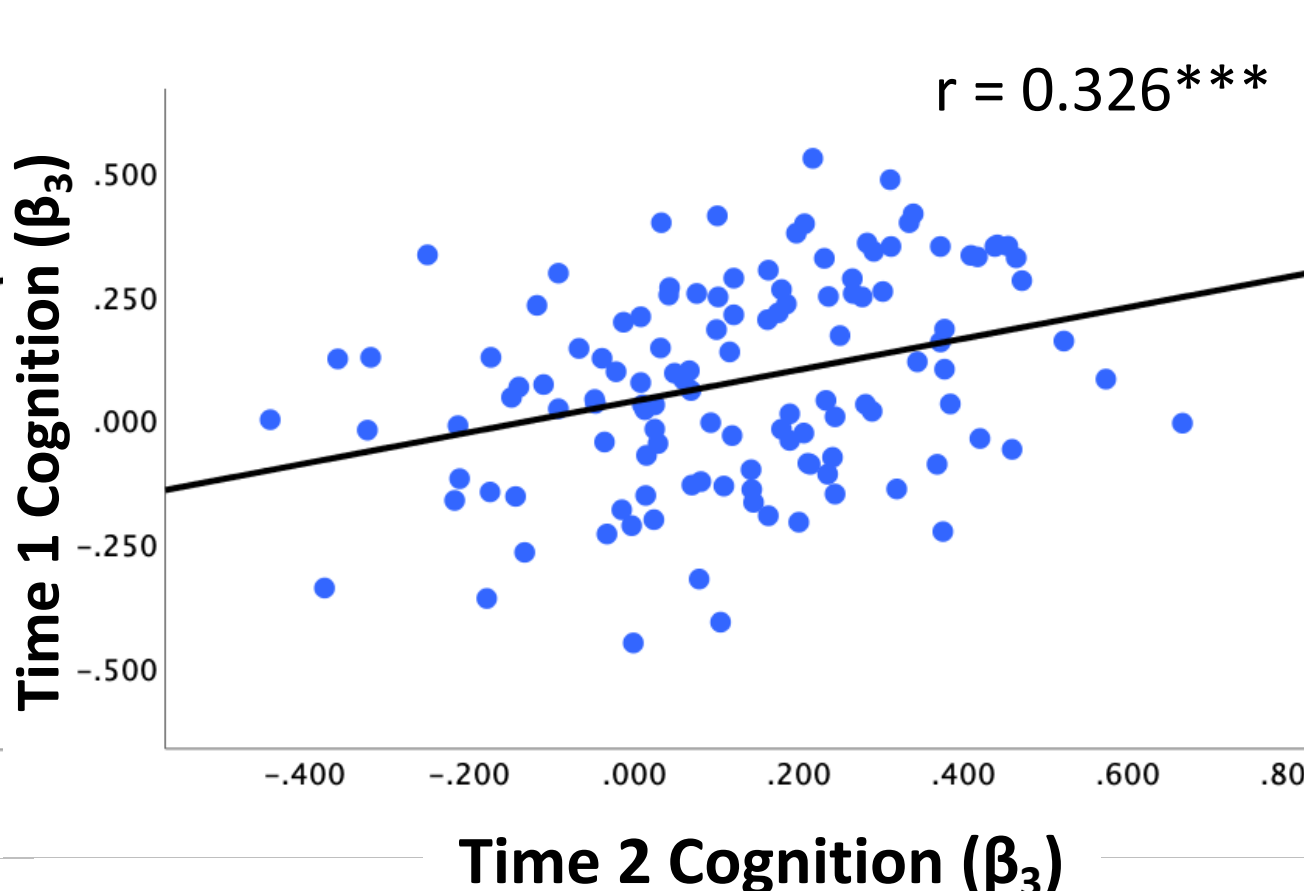
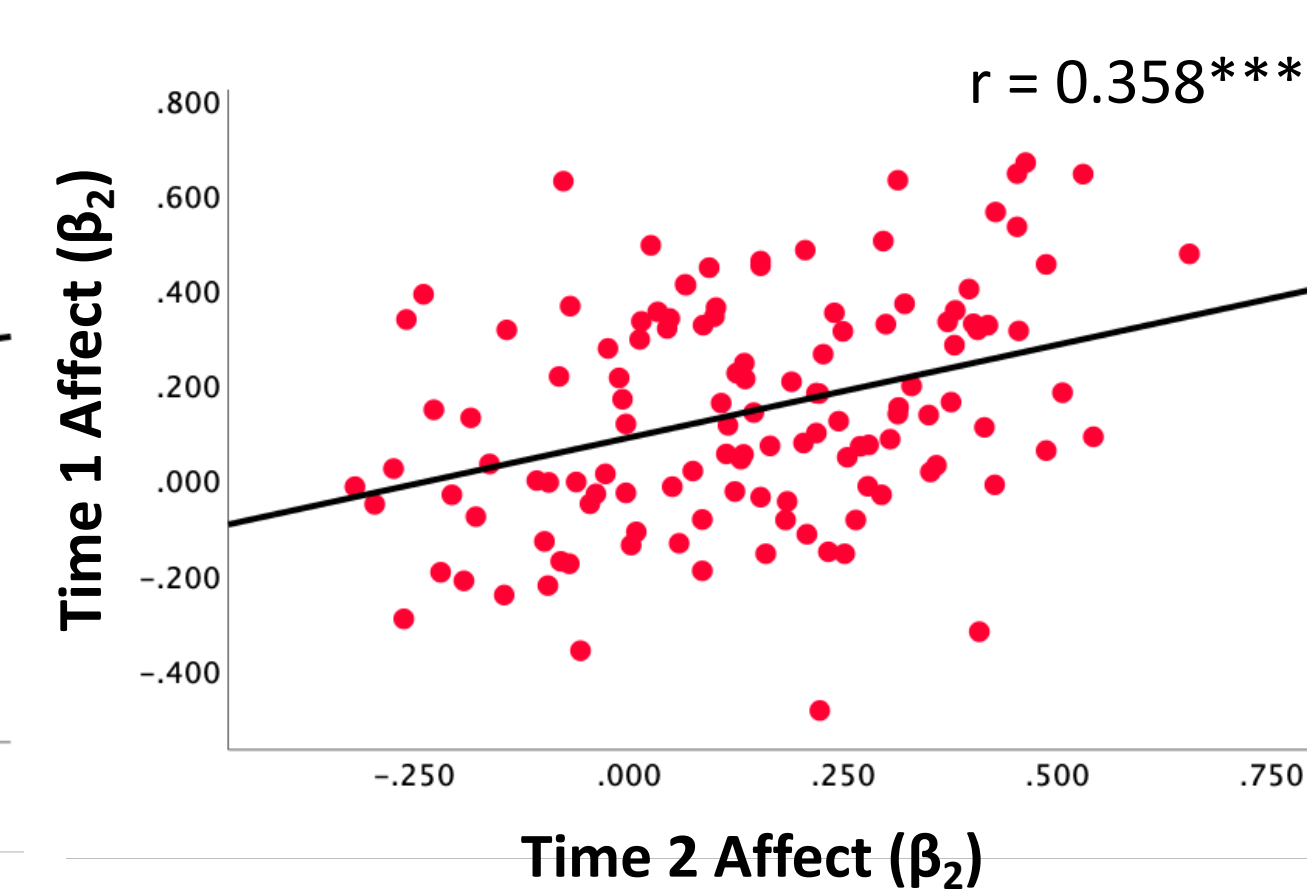
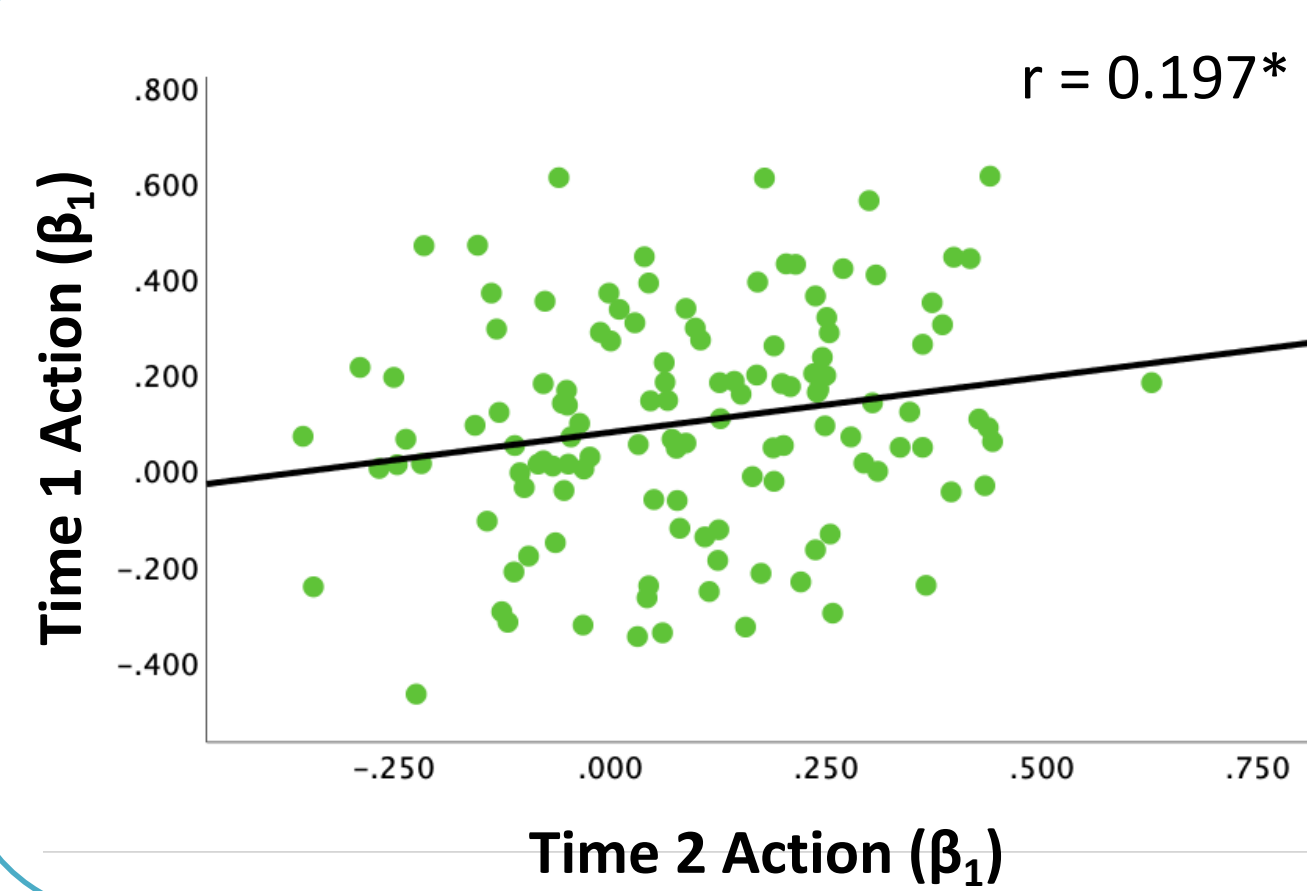
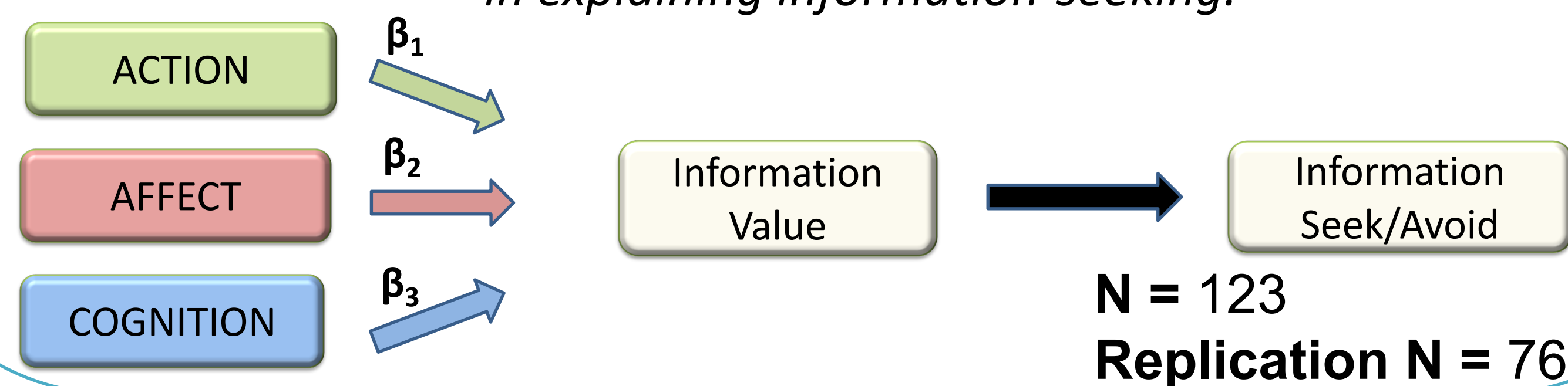
Affect = difference between the two affect questions.

4. **Measure of Estimated Impact on Cognition** (40 Trials)

How OFTEN do you think about Meanness, Honesty...?

5. **Measure of Psychopathology Symptoms**²

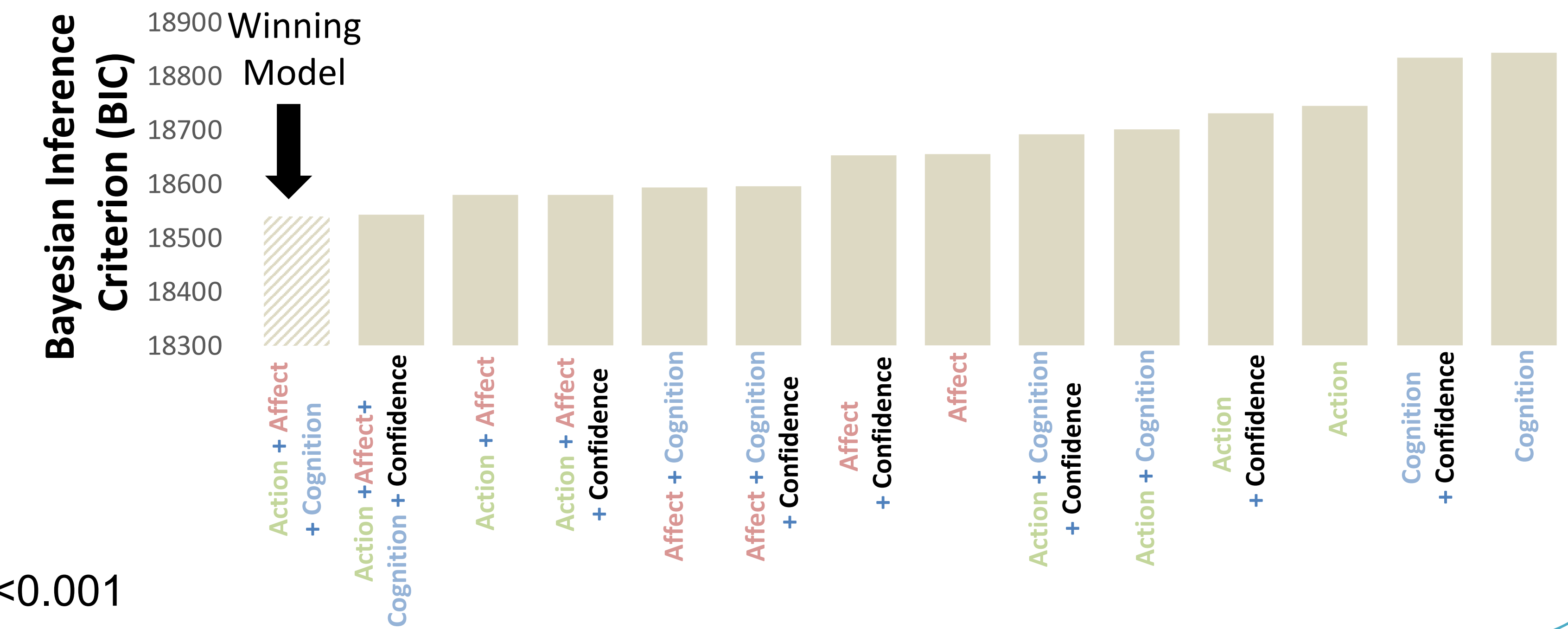
We used a linear regression to calculate weights on Action, Affect & Cognition in explaining information-seeking.



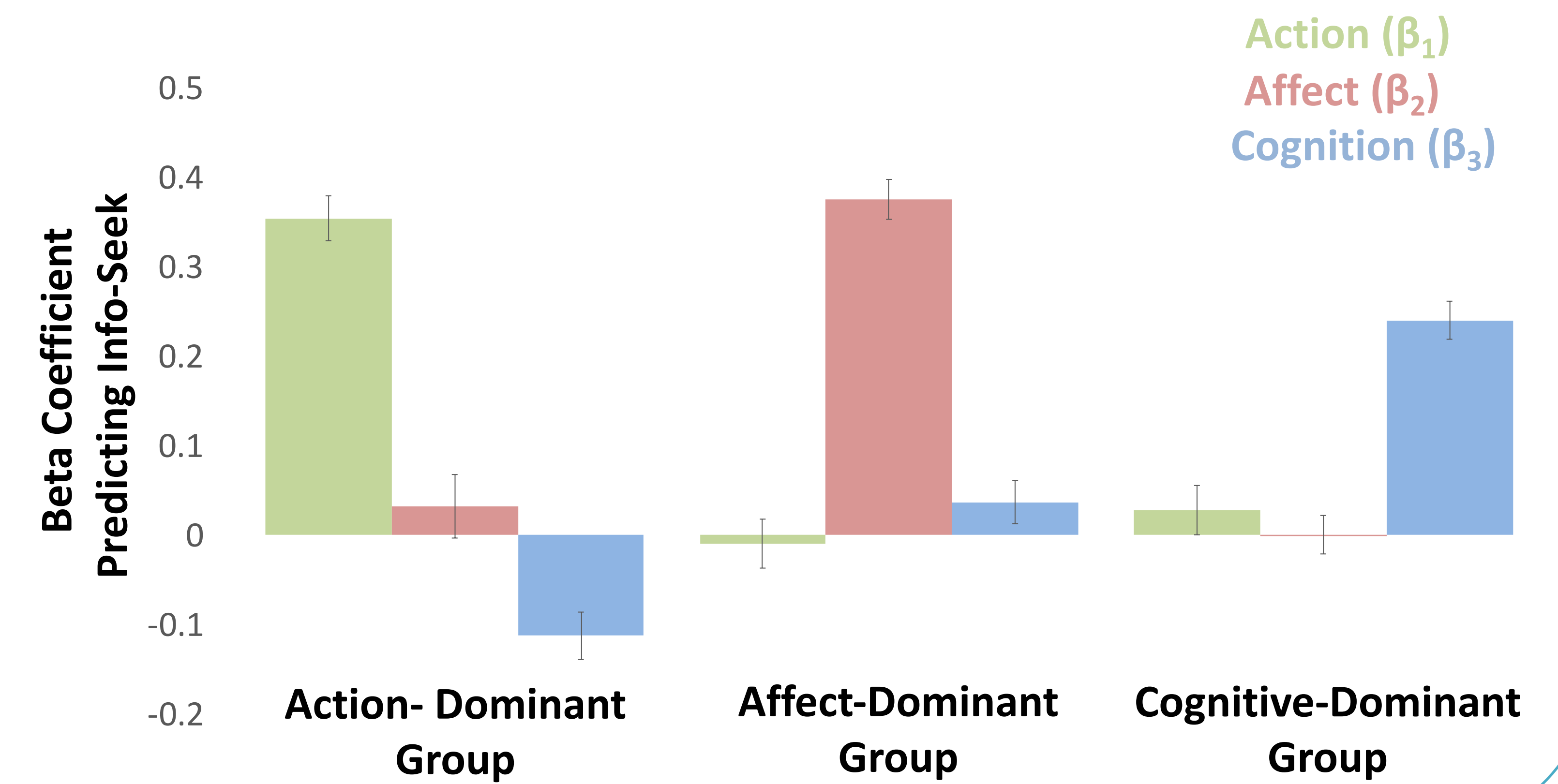
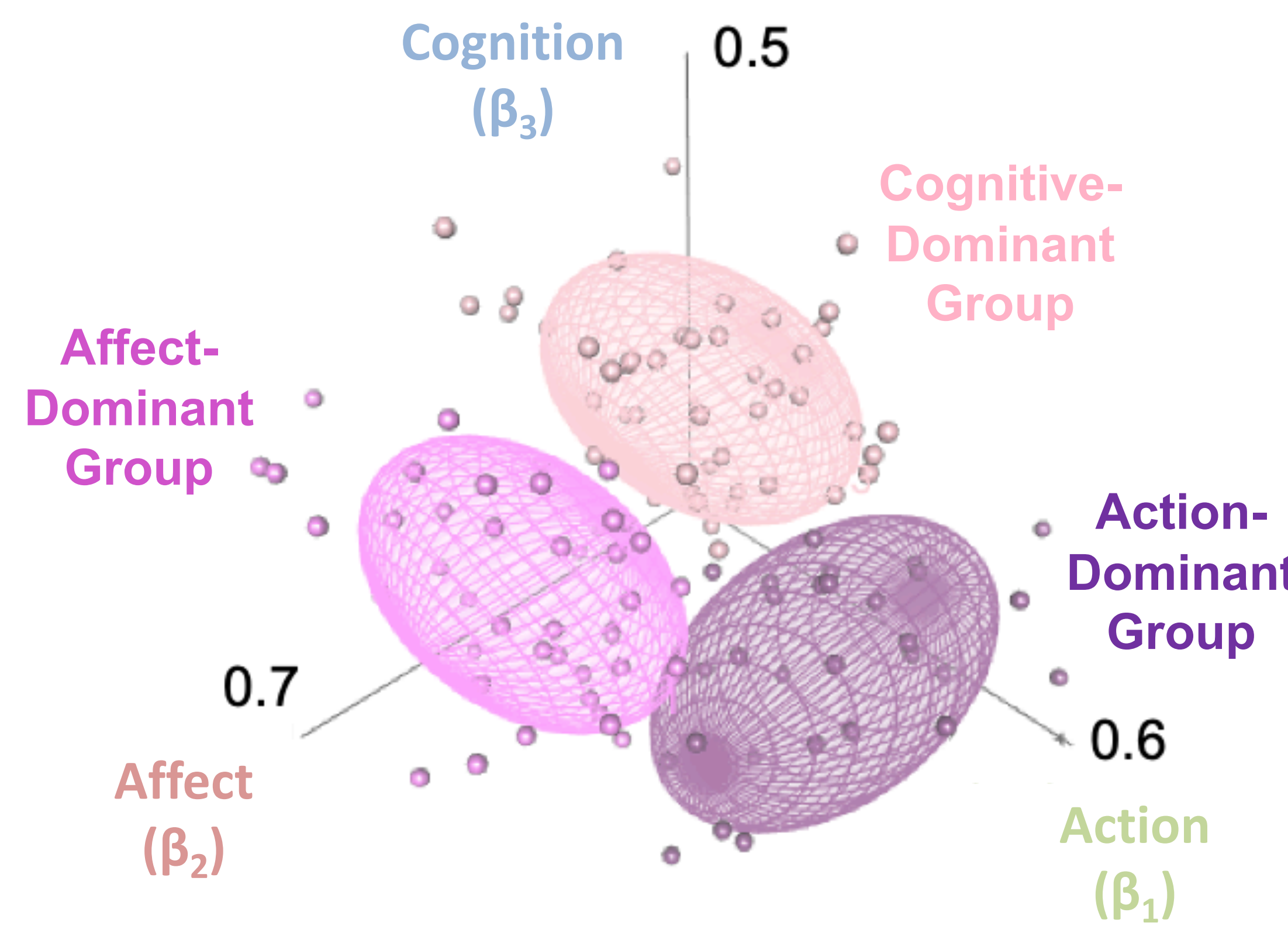
Conclusion

- Participants' expectations of how information will influence their **Action**, **Affect** and **Cognition** predicted information-seeking.
- There are 3 types of information seekers: **Action-Dominant** (predominately seek information that they believe to be useful), **Affect-Dominant** (predominately seek information that would make them feel good) & **Cognitive-Dominant** (predominately seek information about stimuli they frequently think about).
- Information-seeking types are stable over time.
- The **Cognitive-Dominant Group** report less psychopathology symptoms.

Action, Affect and Cognition drive information-seeking.

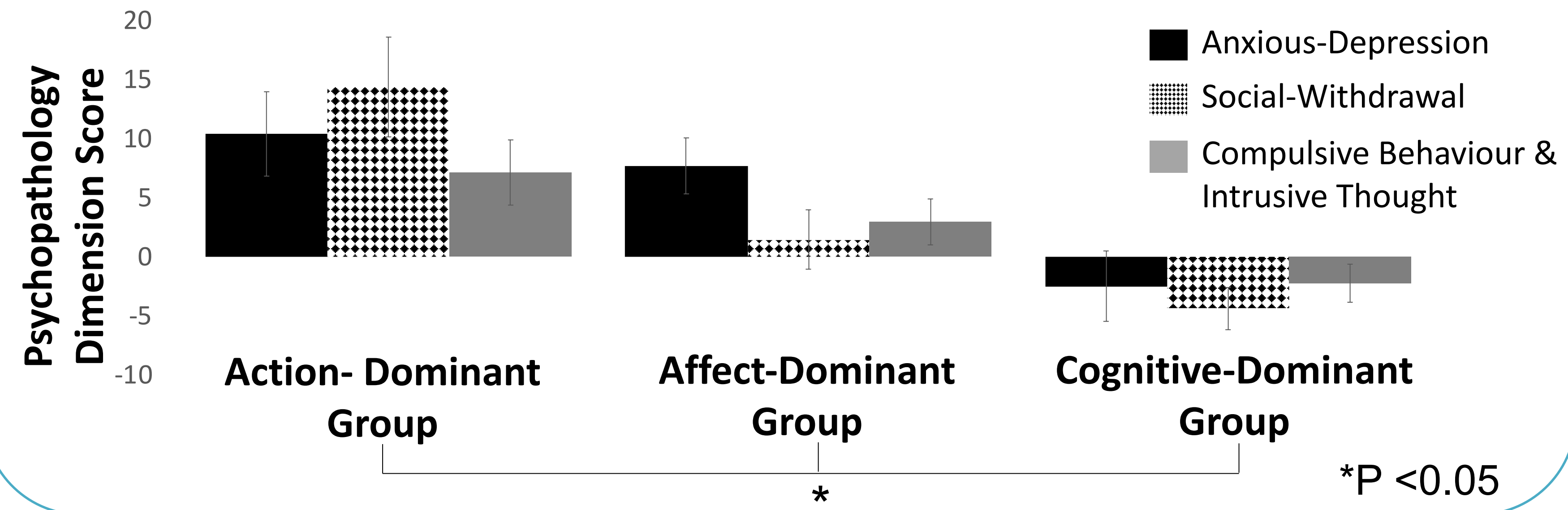


Individuals classified into 3 “Information-seeking Types” – each characterized by a dominant motive when seeking information.



Information-seeking types are stable over time.

Information-seeking patterns are related to psychopathology.



References

- Sharot, T. & Sunstein, C. R. How People Decide What They Want To Know. *Nature Human Behaviour* (2020): 1-6
- Gillan, C. M., Kosinski, M., Whelan, R., Phelps, E. A. & Daw, N. D. Characterizing a psychiatric symptom dimension related to deficits in goal directed control. *Elife* (2016)