“Improved Decision Making with One-Shot Training Interventions”

From failures of intelligence analysis to misguided beliefs about vaccinations, biased judgment and decision making creates problems in public and private life. Early failures to improve decision making through training led to its abandonment, and the current focus on debiasing through nudges and incentives. I report laboratory, field, and longitudinal experiments that find one-shot debiasing training interventions are effective. Participants (N = 1,076) received a single 30- to 90-minute training intervention that addressed three of six biases critical to intelligence analysis (i.e., anchoring, bias blind spot, confirmation bias, correspondence bias, representativeness, and social projection). Interventions ranged from instructional videos to serious games. Longitudinal experiments found medium to large immediate debiasing effects (games $d \geq 1.68$; videos $d \geq .69$) that persisted at least 2 months later (games $d \geq 1.11$; videos $d \geq .66$). In a field study where participants didn’t know their biases were measured, training reduced confirmatory hypothesis testing by 29% in a complex case. Debiasing effects of training transferred across problems in different contexts and formats. The results provide exciting new evidence that training can improve decision making.