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**A** new study by researchers from Royal Holloway, University of London in the UK claims that individuals who are prone to delusions are more likely to make rushed decisions.

A delusion is an irrational belief that something is true, even when there is concrete evidence to the contrary. Delusions are prominent in many [mental health](#) disorders, including [schizophrenia](#).

According to study author Dr. Ryan McKay, of the Department of Psychology at Royal Holloway, individuals who experience delusions "have unjustified, and sometimes bizarre, beliefs about themselves and the world."

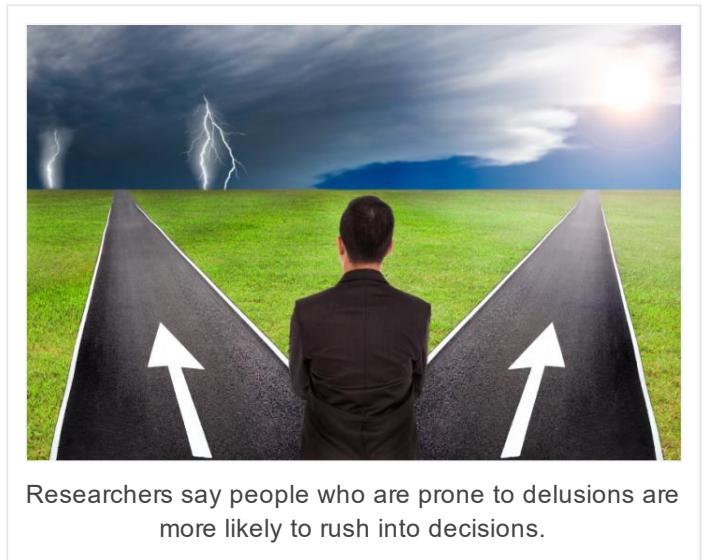
**"A tendency to gather insufficient evidence when forming beliefs, and making decisions, is thought to be a core cognitive component of delusion formation," he adds.**

In their study, recently published in the journal *Psychological Medicine*, the researchers wanted to better determine the role of delusions in decision-making.

## Delusion-prone subjects failed to gather as much information

Study participants were asked to complete a questionnaire detailing how prone they were to experiencing delusions, before taking part in a computer-based experiment that measured their ability to gather information before making a decision.

In the experiment, participants were asked to watch a screen on which they were shown a sequence of black or white fish that had been caught from one of two lakes. Based on their observations, the participants were asked to decide which lake was the source of the fish.



Rewards were given to the participants if they chose the correct lake, but they received penalties if they chose incorrectly. "The combination of rewards and costs created optimal decision points, allowing us to investigate genuine 'jumps to conclusions,'" Dr. McKay explains.

**The researchers found that the more prone to delusions participants were, the more likely they were to decide on a lake earlier than those who were less prone to delusions. In other words, delusion-prone subjects failed to gather as much information to ensure they were making the best decision.**

Commenting on these findings, Dr. McKay says:

"Our results confirm that delusion-prone people are less likely to wait for the best moment before making a decision. This indicates that they would rush to make choices in their everyday lives, relating to anything from money or jobs to family and friends, which could lead to less successful outcomes for them."

He added that past studies have only compared people who are prone to delusions with those who do not experience delusions at all.

But as a result of the "objective measure of performance" used in this study, Dr. McKay says the team found that even participants who had a slight tendency to experience delusions rushed into decisions. "Most people jump to conclusions, but delusion-prone people jump further," he adds.

## Findings have potential to help people who have delusions

Talking to *Medical News Today*, Dr. McKay said these findings could potentially help people who suffer from delusions.

**"Some therapeutic approaches involve administering tasks like this to people with delusions, and giving them feedback about their performance," he added. "Our paradigm is quite compelling, because it illustrates how 'jumping to conclusions' can have very real costs. So this would be a very salient way of teaching people about the pitfalls of reaching premature conclusions."**

In future research, Dr. McKay told us he and the team would like to determine exactly why delusion-prone people make premature decisions.

Earlier this year, *MNT* reported on a study by a researcher from the University of Adelaide in Australia, in which he claimed [delusions can be explained by faulty "reality testing"](#) - the inability of cognitive regions of the brain to correctly run a "story telling" system.

Written by [Honor Whiteman](#)

### References