

Community highlights

Written by The Conversation USA

The Conversation receives a lot of comments each day and you can't read everything. That's why we occasionally end the week with a selection of community highlights: comments we enjoyed or thought interesting. Read on for four comments or discussions I thought worth highlighting.

[High fat and sugar diets stop us from feeling full](#)

Lorna Jarrett had a question about the effects of fat and sugar, which the article's author, Heather Francis, answered.

[Lorna Jarrett](#) :

Hi Heather,

Fascinating article, but I'm wondering if you intend to tease out the effects of fat and sugar. One of the ironies of the "low fat" trend that started in the second half of the last century was an increase in sugar consumption. And many "low fat" processed foods (e.g. yoghurt and salad dressing) contain a lot of sugar, where their full-fat versions contain little or none.

I'm also curious to know if the "saturated fats" referred to include trans fats derived from hydrogenated vegetable oils. My understanding is that these are relatively harmful.

[Heather Francis](#) :

Thank you for your comment. You and some other readers correctly identified that one of the limits of our study was that we didn't distinguish between fat and sugar. Studies like this one

tend to be done on humans or rats, and each approach presents certain challenges. We wanted to see whether the relationship that was observed in animal studies could also be observed in humans. But unlike the animal studies that can prove a causal relationship, we felt that subjecting a human cohort to a high fat diet or sugar diet presented certain safety and ethical concerns and so chose to avoid it. Instead, we looked at people who habitually consume a Western diet, but as you can imagine, it's very difficult to find people who eat only high sugar or only high fat, rather they tend to have a diet high in both. Now that we've shown the relationship exists, this could stimulate research where diet factors like fat and sugar are manipulated to see what the effects are on hippocampal dependent memory function and on sensitivity to satiety signals. If you are interested, we have a more detailed discussion in the journal article regarding the limitations of our research, how we attempted to control for some of the things you mentioned, and some suggestions for further research in the field (unfortunately it's difficult to fit all of that detail into a brief online article).

[Explainer: the largest language spoken exclusively in Australia – Kriol](#)

[Julie James Bailey](#) asked about the distinction between Aboriginal English and Kriol:

You don't mention Aboriginal English which I understand is now recognised as a distinct language. Are Kriol and Aboriginal English one and the same?

To which [Greg Dickson](#), the article's author, responded:

Hi Julie, thanks for the comment/question. I didn't touch on Aboriginal English, no. The distinction between Aboriginal English and Kriol goes back to how to distinguish a language and a dialect and this is always a bit blurry. The most basic way to tell a language from a dialect is the notion of 'mutual intelligibility'. If you can understand someone reasonably well, they must be speaking the same language as you. If you can't understand someone, it's probably a different language. In that way, I would typically regard Aboriginal English as a dialect of English - and an entirely legitimate, rule-governed one - because people who speak Standard English can probably generally understand Aboriginal English. But Standard English speakers probably wouldn't follow a Kriol conversation (just too many differences in sentence structure, sound changes, meaning changes, different words used), so that's why many regard Kriol as a distinct

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language. Of course, there are massive grey areas to this but hopefully this works as a useful way to make the distinction.

[dani fried](#) had a question about useage rates of Auslan compared to Kriol: Thanks for this article. I wonder though whether Auslan isn't used as frequently as Kriol? It too is a language used only in Australia (though very closely related to both British and New Zealand Sign Languages) and its breadth of use is also difficult to ascertain but almost certainly much higher than that disclosed in censuses (firstly because the census uses the word 'spoken', and Auslan isn't 'spoken', and secondly because so many Deaf people, especially young Deaf people, live with Hearing people who cannot sign, so even though their first or only language is Auslan, they have very limited use of language at home.)

[Greg Dickson](#) :

Yes, good point. I agree that there's a possibility that Auslan may actually have more speakers than Kriol. But the Census questions make it so tricky to know for sure. At least with Kriol, we can make a reasonable estimate of numbers of speakers because we know the locations where Kriol dominates as a lingua franca and we can simply add population numbers together. Linguists usually estimate 20-30,000 for the total number of Kriol speakers. If Auslan has less, it wouldn't be by much. And yes, then there's the question of whether Auslan is mutually comprehensible to sign languages used outside of Australia. I just don't know enough about that I'm afraid.

Of course, it's not a competition anyway. Every language is equally important, regardless of how many people speak it and what sort of 'official' status it has. At least, that's what linguists believe, and is a reason why I was attracted to studying linguistics in the first place.

[Buy, rent, or do both: the perversion of negative gearing](#)

[Christoph Schnelle](#) shared his opposing view on negative gearing:

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I am struggling to see what is wrong with negative gearing from this article.

If people have an incentive to buy multiple properties then that means more properties are being built - this elevated level of current construction activity is precisely what is keeping us suffering from the mining bust. Yes, property prices also go up in the short term but this creates incentives to build more housing.

The article also mentions but I am not sure if it includes that fact that you have to pay capital gains tax on investment properties which for me changes the equation. I also find that depreciation calculations often don't include that rental properties need to have their kitchen and bathrooms renovated every so often, which is expensive. Tenants also may be harder on the property and then just being a landlord can at times be very stressful as the wrong tenant can cause a lot of damage.

I find few people using the buy, rent, rent scenario - mostly young people with a strong drive to own property who are quite skint and may move house in the near future. Owning your own home is just too attractive for anybody who is a little more certain where they will live.

The RBA put out some research which shows, depending on long term interest rate expectations, renting or buying is the financially better choice. At the moment, including all factors, buying is the better choice because interest rates are unusually low and expected to remain so.

[Why wooing women is the way forward for trade unions](#)

Finally, [Anne Karma](#) shared her experiences with unions and women's involvement with them:

I spoke to female lawyers in the Clerical Union twenty years ago and they told me that all the men who ran it were only interested in becoming MP or Senators and had no interest in fighting for workers rights.

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Women were a big part of starting and manning unions in the early days if you read the history. They got shifted to the sidelines just as they have when they have joined armies to fight for justice all around the world.

The unions use the excuse that female members will not go out on strike but that to me is a red herring to excuse what they are doing. When the union corruption is found in the lowest paid industry you can guess that it is likely to be the tip of an iceberg where women are concerned.

They have not even attempted to get professional women involved. I have been pro union all my life but I gave up when I saw they just ignore us for self interest. The same thing happens at the Branch level when all the leadership roles are held by men and we are told to do all the actual work. Today's women will just withdraw so all is left is the older woman who was there at the beginning aged in their 70.

We attempted to start a womans' only group last year and the men insisted on attending. When I mentioned it to men who are on the committee they clearly became anxious and gave us no support from Head office. The way women were spoken to at meetings shocked me.

I saw a number of women come along and then leave due to the lack of inclusion and respect. I think the blue collar worker is threatened by women better educated, in working in higher level jobs than them. I think the current Union system has to die and become renewed if it is to continue,

My recent experience is in a regional city in Queensland but the discussion with the female lawyers was in Sydney. When women attempted to change things to increase numbers their membership details just disappeared from the system. It is a closed system and runs similar to the Liberals and is doomed in my opinion.

Women talk so it does the union movement a lot of damage. Once lost they never come back. . Destroy the Joint has over 750,000 in membership so women are clearly interested in what is going on and want change. The unions do not use technology so women can include it in their busy lives and that gives you some idea of how the movement is living in the 1950.

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Read a comment you thought interesting? Let me know during the week. You can leave a comment below or send me an [email](#).

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