

Public confused by climate change messages

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Experts, charities, the media and government confuse the public by speaking "different languages" on climate change, a new study says. The research team focussed on Colombia and likened climate change communication to a "broken phone".

They said information from the government was often presented to the public in a "very technical way" and rarely included any type of call to action.

Meanwhile, academics rarely discussed the issues with people outside academia, and messages from non-profit organisations were "lost in the middle of the information agenda of traditional media".

"The article is the first effort to identify how [climate change](#) is communicated in Colombia from different sectors," said co-author Dr Dunia H. Urrego, of the University of Exeter.

"We wanted to understand what challenges and opportunities the country faces due to [climate](#) change.

"It is clear from our research that development plans and public policy decisions at national, regional and local level increasingly require clear and accurate information."

The report found that the Colombian government and media were both failing to stimulate interest in climate change and explain how it would affect people's daily lives.

Universities and non-profit organisations were failing to attract media attention for their research and communication strategies, the report added.

"The recent peace agreement in Colombia has increased international and UK interest in research in Colombia, a possibility that has hitherto been limited by the armed conflict," said Dr Urrego.

"For this reason, academic production relevant to climate change and conservation in Colombia is likely to increase in the coming years.

"This creates the perfect opportunity to outline a science communication strategy that is effective at impacting levels of society beyond academia, including the general public, the government and the communities directly affected by climate change".

The authors suggest that scientists who produce information on climate change should estimate the levels of understanding that Colombians have about the issue.

They also suggest the government and academics should try to measure how much the [information](#) they release affects people's actions. And they advise that successful communications strategies developed by non-profit organisations should be replicated by similar organisations, the [government](#) and academics.

"It is hoped that this effort will open spaces for dialogue that stimulate the reflection and importance of the topic of climate change," said first author Luisa Fernanda Lema Vélez from Fondo Acción, an NGO based in Bogotá.

More information: [DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.598](https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.598)

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