

# Lifestyle changes to keep the world from warming up

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Scientists widely agree that we must limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid catastrophic climate impacts. Environmental scientist Laura Scherer investigates how we should change lifestyles to achieve

this temperature goal. Her research is part of the 4.8-million-euro Horizon 2020 project EU 1.5° Lifestyles.

"So far, even the most ambitious climate commitments by countries are far from enough," says Scherer. "Efforts mainly focus on the production side, with the energy transition as a prime example. However, the consumption side is often overlooked." This is where the new H2020 project comes into play. It focuses on the behavior of consumers: how should we change our lifestyles to contribute to a sustainable future?

## **A lifestyle change should be effective and feasible**

"Eating less meat and switching from a car to cycling or [public transport](#) are excellent examples to reduce your climate impact," says Scherer.

"Other examples include avoiding [food waste](#), avoiding air travel, living in a smaller house or buying energy-efficient household appliances."

Suitable new lifestyles should be sufficiently low in climate impact, but at the same time feasible and socially acceptable, Scherer explains.

"What is feasible and socially acceptable depends on the person and circumstances. In a flat country like the Netherlands, with a good public transport network and rather small cities equipped with [bike lanes](#), it is easier to avoid using a car than in a country like the United States."

## **Looking from different perspectives and consulting citizens**

Therefore, Scherer and her colleagues will investigate the potential [lifestyle](#) changes from different perspectives: social, economic, political and environmental. Furthermore, they will also conduct citizen thinking labs to examine consumer preferences.

Scherer: "With those preferences in mind, we will defy the best lifestyle changes to meet the 1.5° target. Besides, our results can guide policymakers, NGOs, and consumers and we hope that it helps in mainstreaming 1.5°C lifestyles."

## **Climate and health: a win-win situation**

The Leiden researchers will also look at the implications of such lifestyles on health. Adopting climate-friendly lifestyles seems to be a win-win situation, Scherer predicts. "For now, I rather see synergies. For example, eating less meat than typical in Western diets is good for both the climate and our health. Likewise, going by bike instead of by car is good from both perspectives."

## **Giving the good example**

Scherer herself is always open to change. "A [lifestyle change](#) that I already made is adopting a vegan diet. Much easier and rewarding than expected!" She also solely uses the bike or public transport. Laughing: "However, I've never owned a car, so that wasn't really a lifestyle change. I will consider further changes if I find other effective ways to be more sustainable. I hope that we can also inspire others to change their lifestyles through this project."

The [H2020 project EU 1.5° Lifestyles](#) aims to foster the mainstreaming of the 1.5° lifestyles, to facilitate transformations suggested by the 1.5° target addressing [climate](#) change. The project receives 4.8 million euros from the European Union and will last for 4 years, starting in May 2021. From this budget, the CML will receive about 500.000 euros which will be used, among others, to hire a new PhD candidate who will start in August.

Provided by Leiden University

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