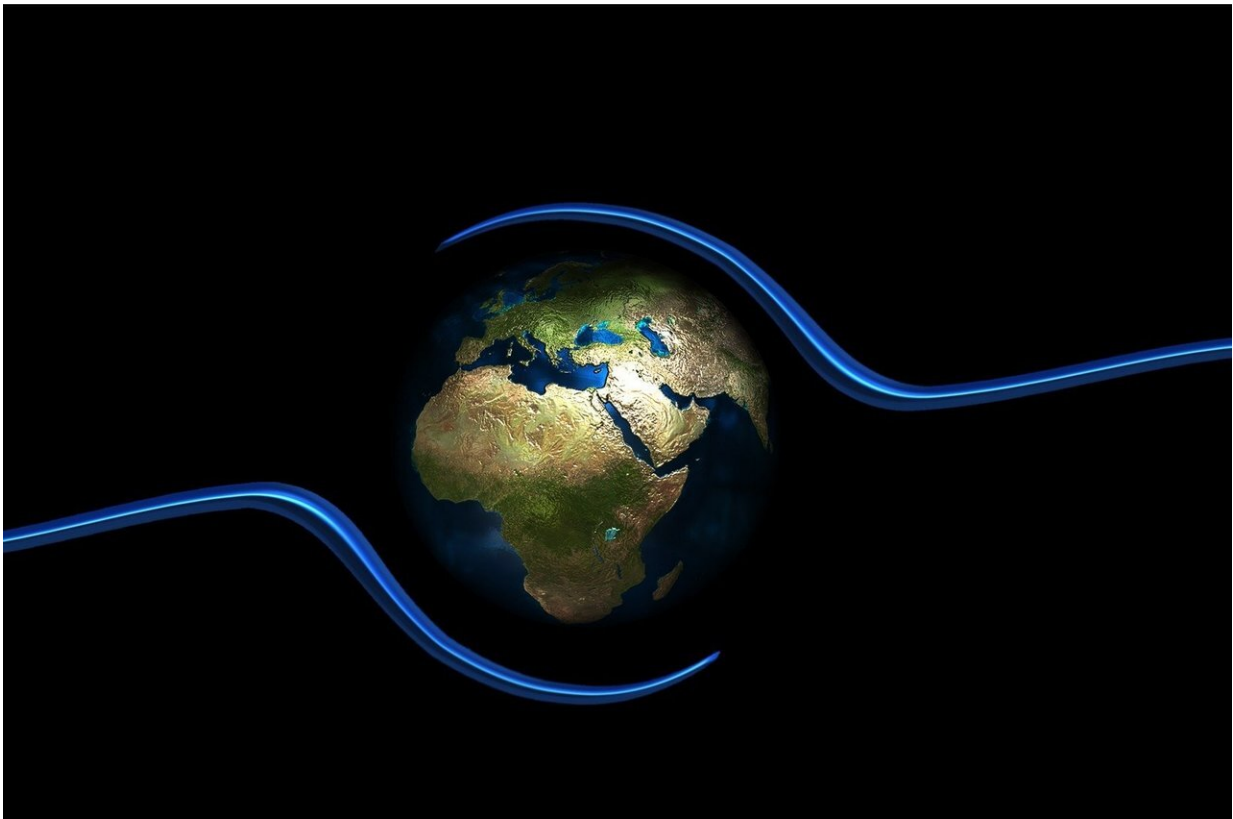


# Naming and shaming can be effective to get countries to act on climate, study shows

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Enforcement is one of the biggest challenges to international cooperation on mitigating climate change in the [Paris Agreement](#). The agreement has no formal enforcement mechanism; instead, it is designed to be

transparent so countries that fail to meet their obligations will be named and thus shamed into changing behavior.

A new study from the University of California San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy shows that this naming-and-shaming mechanism can be an effective incentive for many [countries](#) to uphold their pledges to reduce emissions.

The study, "Naming and Shaming as a Strategy for Enforcing the Paris Agreement: The Role of Political Institutions and Public Concern," appearing in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, assesses the naming and shaming built into the 2015 Paris Agreement through its Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF). The ETF requires nations to publicly report their goals and progress toward meeting those goals. The study suggests that the ETF is most effective at motivating countries with the strongest commitments to slowing [climate](#) change.

"The architects of the Paris Agreement knew that powerful enforcement mechanisms, like trade sanctions, wouldn't be feasible," said study co-author David Victor, professor of industrial innovation at UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy and co-director of the Deep Decarbonization Initiative.

"Most analysts assumed the agreement would fail to be effective without strong enforcement and are skeptical of naming and shaming. Our research suggests that pessimism is wrong. Naming and shaming is built into the system and our study shows that the [policy experts](#) who are most knowledgeable about Paris see this mechanism working well—at least for some countries."

Naming and shaming doesn't work everywhere, the study shows; however, it is particularly important for countries that are already highly

motivated to act. Even those countries need a spotlight on their behavior, lest they slip and fail to comply with the obligations they set for themselves under the Paris Agreement.

In Europe—where countries have the [most ambitious and credible climate pledges](#)—the surge in energy prices and interruptions in Russian gas supply created incentives to retain higher-emission energy technologies, such as coal. International visibility and political pressures within those countries plausibly help explain why European policymakers have kept emissions in alignment with their previously committed climate goals.

In the U.S., naming and shaming is likely to be effective as well, but not to the same degree as in Europe, the study shows.

"This raises some concern about the ability to maintain the momentum generated by the Inflation Reduction Act under less favorable conditions, such as rising interest rates," said Emily Carlton, study co-author and UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy alum.

## **Study taps expert opinions of top climate negotiators from around the world**

The findings in the new *PNAS* study are derived from responses from a sample of registrants of the Conference of Parties (COP), consisting of more than 800 diplomatic and scientific experts who, for decades, have participated in climate policy debates. This expert group is critical to understanding how political institutions shape climate policy because they are the people "in the room" when key policy decisions are made. They are in a unique position to evaluate what is most likely to motivate their countries to act on climate.

They were asked questions such as: is the ETF in the agreement effective? Do they support the use of the ETF, and is it a legitimate way to enforce the Paris Agreement?

Overall, 77% of the sample agreed with using naming and shaming—that is, using the ETF for comparing countries' mitigation efforts. The results further indicate that 57% of all respondents expect naming and shaming to substantially affect the climate policy performance of their home country—where they know the policy environment best.

While survey respondents' country of origin was kept anonymous to elicit the most candid responses possible, the respondents that think naming and shaming is most effective are more likely to be from democracies with high-quality political institutions. In addition, these individuals come from countries with strong internal concern about [climate change](#) and ambitious and credible international climate commitments, such as countries in Europe.

The study finds naming and shaming is likely least effective for countries that lack strong democratic institutions, such as some large emitters like China.

While the inability for naming and shaming to work effectively within the countries least motivated for climate action creates tension, the study does provide a hopeful narrative for enforcing cooperation on climate, according to the authors.

"It is a really good thing that naming and shaming can keep the most climate-motivated countries on track because decarbonizing is hard and changes in circumstances and energy markets can make it even harder," said Carlton. "Countries in Europe are some of the biggest emitters and as we saw recently, policymakers could have easily switched back to coal after the Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but they did not."

## Who should be the 'namers and shamers' and who is most effective at it?

The survey respondents were also asked which institutions should be responsible for naming and shaming. The results overwhelmingly indicated the preference for namers and shamers to be scientists, as well as neutral international organizations such as the United Nations (U.N.) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). However, past studies have found that both diplomatic and science organizations like the U.N. and IPCC are actually ineffective at naming and shaming.

"It is not something that these organizations do," Carlton said. "They are positioned to try to get countries to cooperate and it's just not a function of theirs to put countries on blast in a judgmental way. That is something you see done more effectively from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media."

While naming and shaming is a mechanism that makes cooperation work, the authors believe that other strategies such as trade sanctions may be useful as well. They explore this topic in a forthcoming study.

Co-authors of the *PNAS* paper include Astrid Dannenberg of University of Kassel and the University of Gothenburg and Marcel Lumkowsky of the University of Kassel.

**More information:** Dannenberg, Astrid, Naming and shaming as a strategy for enforcing the Paris Agreement: The role of political institutions and public concern, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2023). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2305075120](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2305075120).  
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