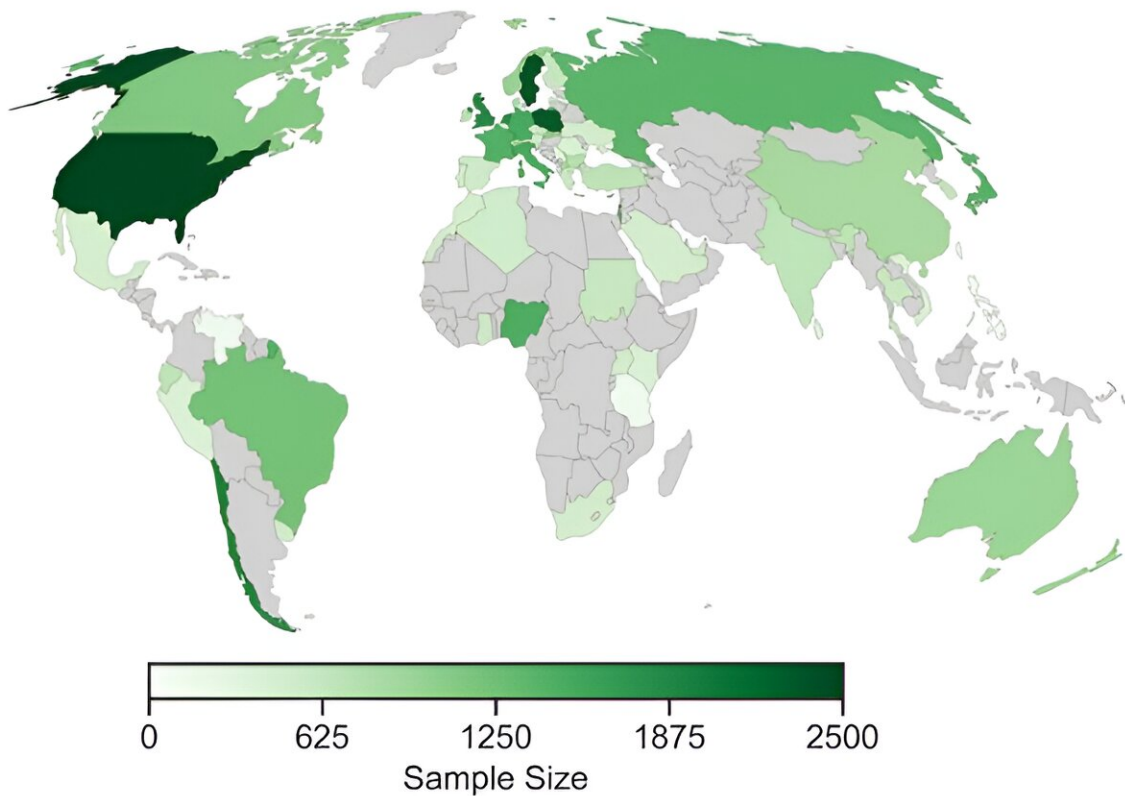


Dutch people adapt their climate beliefs more easily than their behavior, find researchers

March 5 2024, by Sabine Waasdorp



Overview map of participating countries and their participants. Credit: Climate Intervention Webapp

Climate interventions do not lead to more climate action among Dutch, but they do raise awareness about climate change. That can be derived

from the Climate Intervention Webapp, a database that has mapped the most effective strategies for promoting climate beliefs and actions for more than 60 countries.

The dataset underlying the [Climate Intervention Webapp](#) can be safely called a mega-study. An international team of nearly 250 researchers, with Madalina Vlasceanu and Kimberly Doell of New York University in the lead, [surveyed](#) 59,440 respondents from 63 countries about what they thought about certain views, policies and actions on [climate change](#).

The team also examined when respondents themselves were willing to contribute to climate change awareness and action. The result is an online database that shows which climate interventions are most effective in each country.

Jaroslav Kantorowicz, assistant professor at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs and the Leiden researcher involved in the project, collected the data for Poland. "We surveyed more than 2,000 respondents with a Polish team. In doing so, we were one of the biggest contributing team to the project. We found that this population was especially sensitive to the "system justification intervention," an intervention that emphasized the ways in which climate change threatened respondents' personal lives. The intervention made Poles want to take [climate action](#) themselves."

Effectiveness in the Netherlands

In addition to Poland, the Netherlands was also part of the study. A total of about 2,000 Dutch respondents were surveyed, reflecting the entire Dutch population in terms of gender and age. What emerged? The most effective climate intervention in terms of changing Dutch people's climate beliefs is the so-called "dynamic social norm," or the message that other Dutch people and people around the world have started

adapting in response to climate change.

Kantorowicz says, "The information that more and more people around them are concerned about climate change and are taking environmentally friendly actions caused respondents to also become more concerned and self-conscious. The social norm changed, causing them to adapt their climate beliefs."

However, the extent to which the Dutch were willing to change their actual behavior was disappointing, according to Kantorowicz. "Actually, none of the climate interventions proved really effective. In fact, some climate interventions even reduced people's willingness to make an effort for the environment. So there is still a big battle to be fought there, in the Netherlands but also in many other countries surveyed in this study that showed similar ineffectiveness of climate interventions."

There is no such thing as a universally effective climate intervention

A total of 11 different climate interventions were tested in the mega-study, with different types of messages. For example, one climate intervention used negative rhetoric—"climate change is a very serious threat to humanity's survival"—and another highlighted past successful actions against climate change.

Also, in one climate intervention, respondents were urged to reflect on their own climate actions in a letter to someone living in the year 2055. One thing is clear: no climate intervention is universally effective in changing climate beliefs and making people willing to actively fight climate change themselves.

Kantorowicz says, "Where you live, age, gender and other

sociodemographic characteristics have a lot of influence on the effectiveness of a climate [intervention](#), this study shows. It is important that policymakers take this into account."

Provided by Leiden University

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