

Bridging research and policy

This month, *Nature Climate Change* formally introduces a new content type, Policy Brief. We hope it will help to bridge the gap between researchers and policy professionals.

Combating the increasing threat from climate change requires strong and effective collaboration between researchers and policy professionals. It is essential that policy decisions, which directly impact society and wellbeing, are based on solid scientific evidence. Meanwhile, climate researchers may wish to engage with the policy community and to increase the practical impact of their research. *Nature Climate Change* has published many papers that have been used to support policy decisions: from research on global flood losses¹ to explorations of food-demand-mitigation options² and individual support for carbon taxes³.

Beyond conducting high-quality research, influencing policy requires the production of scientific findings that are relevant, readable and accessible. A trusting and transparent relationship between researchers and policy professionals is essential for enduring real-world impacts⁴, yet communication between researchers and policy professionals remains challenging. On the one hand, many researchers lack the appropriate resources to promote their findings. On the other hand, policy professionals may find it difficult to engage with the research outputs. Research papers published in academic journals usually target fellow academics and follow a general scientific writing style. Although this guarantees the reliability and validity of the research, it inevitably creates a barrier for time-poor policy professionals trying to rapidly identify the relevant information. For example, discussions of policy implications are often found at the end of an academic paper, meaning that policy professionals need to go through all of the technical details before they reach the information that is important to them. Furthermore, not all research papers have direct policy implications, yet there is no efficient approach that allows policy professionals to readily access the pieces relevant to their work without digging through piles of literature.

To increase the accessibility of policy-relevant work published in our journal, this month *Nature Climate Change*



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launches a new format: **Policy Briefs**. The same format was first launched in our sister journal, *Nature Energy*, in 2019 (ref. ⁵). Policy Briefs provide a short summary of selected research papers (Articles, Analyses and Brief Communications) published in the journal. This new format aims to help researchers to succinctly deliver their message and to provide policy professionals with the most policy-relevant work in an accessible format. Non-specialist readers should also be able to readily understand the key policy messages and main findings.

Policy Briefs will be 1.5-page pieces with a highly structured template, including a text box with a bullet-point list of ‘Messages for Policy’; a summary of the problem, findings and study design; and a section with suggestions for further reading. This structure allows policy professionals to quickly figure out whether the research is relevant to their work, and the take-away messages. There are several clear distinctions between Policy Briefs and our other article types. First, we only publish Policy Briefs linked to research papers that we have published. Second, Policy Briefs are written by the authors of the source paper. In other words, we do not accept submissions of uncommissioned Policy Briefs. Lastly, all information included in the Policy Brief must be present in the original paper to ensure it underwent peer review.

In our November issue, ahead of COP 26, we published four Policy Briefs based on research papers published from July 2020 onwards. These examples cover topics including state-driven carbon policy⁶, public support⁷, deforestation monitoring⁸

and trade policy⁹. COP26 was an ideal opportunity to highlight some of our most policy-relevant work. This month, alongside this Editorial, we have a **Policy Brief** from Budolfson et al. on their **Article** showing that the revenue recycling of carbon taxes could help to reduce inequality and poverty. Moving forward, we will publish Policy Briefs at the same time as the source paper, as this format could help the original paper to have a greater impact at the time of publication.

Climate policy with a solid scientific foundation is now more important than ever. We encourage you to share the new format with others, especially policy professionals. To ensure the widest reach and to remove barriers to access, these new pieces will initially be open access for one year after they are published online. We hope that Policy Briefs will empower policymakers with the information they need to design and implement more effective policies. We are very interested in your feedback on the new format, and we would particularly like to hear from policy professionals, as we want the format to be fit for purpose. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments. Eventually, we hope that Policy Briefs will be a bridge for increased exchange between academics and policy communities. □

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