

### ENERGY CONSERVATION BEHAVIOUR

## Knowledge is not power

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Though advances in energy-efficient technologies will contribute to emission reductions, individuals will also need to adopt lower-carbon lifestyles to achieve emission reduction goals. However, simply providing information on how individuals can reduce their carbon footprint has been shown to be ineffective for promoting the necessary lifestyle changes. Milena Büchs and colleagues from the University of Leeds, University of Southampton and INDEPTH Network conducted a field experiment to determine whether personalized information has more potential.

Respondents in Southampton, UK, completed quarterly surveys over a two-year period in which they provided vehicle mileage and electricity and gas meter readings, and reported their frequency of energy conservation behaviours. Respondents who received a face-to-face intervention in which they engaged with a personal carbon footprint calculator were more aware of ways they could reduce their personal emissions compared to the control group, but this was not associated with any changes in behaviour: there were no differences in actual energy consumption or self-reported conservation behaviours between intervention and control groups. Structured interviews suggest that the intervention failed to promote significant behaviour change because participants felt that they could not reduce their home energy consumption any further, and they were not willing to make changes such as foregoing air travel or eating meat that would have a large effect on their carbon footprint but would impact their lifestyles.

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