Introducing Policy Briefs

This month *Nature Energy* introduces Policy Briefs, a new article type to help researchers and policymakers engage over studies that have implications for policy.

Researchers are increasingly expected to demonstrate the value and impact of their research outside of academic circles. This has long been the case in the field of energy, which has a rich history of policy and societal engagement. From evaluations of government energy policies and programmes, to behavioural and economic interventions, to energy technology trials and feasibility studies and beyond, a great deal of research takes place that seeks to inform how governments — at a variety of scales — improve energy systems. Climate change and the challenge of decarbonization have only amplified the drive for such efforts.

And yet the process of information exchange between academia and government remains challenging. Academics do not typically have to hand exactly the information that policy or decision makers need when they need it; policymakers often don't need what academics have just produced right at that moment. There are also communication problems to contend with. Academic research papers are usually written to be understood, interpreted and used by other academics. They are not generally intelligible to non-specialist audiences, making them difficult to interpret and use for policy audiences, even if the research has policy implications.

In a bid to help bridge this communication divide, this month *Nature Energy* is launching a new content format: Policy Briefs. This format aims to provide policy professionals with accessible summaries of research papers published in our journal, written by the paper's authors on invitation by our editors. Policy Briefs offer short (no more than two pages) high-level takes on a research study and its findings from a policy perspective. Our intention is to provide a non-expert

and time-poor reader with an understanding of the policy context and findings of a piece of research, along with the key policy messages they should take away from it, so that they can hopefully make better use of the research featured in the journal.

This issue presents four examples of Policy Briefs, drawn from papers we published since 2018. The Policy Briefs summarize and contextualize research on a range of topics: potential impacts of [peak-load-based electricity](#) tariffs on different households; the impact of [real-time feedback](#) on energy consumption without financial incentives; the factors that contributed to [low utility solar power prices](#) in the Middle East; and the role of [financing conditions](#) in supporting renewable energy adoption. In the future, we aim to publish Policy Briefs at the same time as the source research paper, maximizing the reach of the publication.

Policy Briefs need to connect with a specific type of audience. To help us get this right, we developed their structure with assistance from the Government Office for Science (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-office-for-science>) and the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST; <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/bicameral/post/>), both in the UK. The former body provides advice to the UK government to ensure policies and decisions are informed by the best scientific evidence; the latter provides both Houses of the UK Parliament with independent, balanced and accessible analysis of public-policy issues related to science and technology. The perspectives offered by these two approaches on the use of scientific evidence were invaluable. The result is an article style that we hope

can meet the needs of policy professionals in staying abreast of new research.

There are many barriers to effective exchange between researchers and policy professionals, as Jack Miller from POST outlines in his [Comment](#). Identifying who to speak with in the first place can be difficult given the plethora of actors involved in the space, while many institutions lack the resources to support researchers who are trying to inform policy and decisions with their work. We hope that Policy Briefs can help overcome at least some of these barriers, offering authors a route to policy engagement that complements their paper, opening up research findings and making their authors visible to those working in policy circles.

We consider the Policy Briefs format to be a work in progress. This is a new venture for us with a different approach to communication than we've employed until now. We will be making them free to all in the first instance, while they are developed further. As such, we welcome your feedback on Policy Briefs over the coming months so that we can adapt and modify the template as needed. We're especially interested to hear from their intended audience: if you're a policy professional and would like to know more about these articles or have suggestions for us on how to make the most of this content type, please get in touch with us. We can be reached at natureenergy@nature.com. If you know someone who is a policy professional, please share this editorial with them. In the meantime, we hope that Policy Briefs help to create more opportunities for fruitful interaction between academic and government organizations. □

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