Conclusion

Gaining public support for climate change policies and encouraging environmentally responsible behavior depends on a clear understanding of how people process information and make decisions. Social science research provides an essential part of this puzzle but, as the guide makes clear, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to the challenges of communicating about climate change. Rather, each of the many barriers presents a new opportunity to improve the way we present information about climate change and the behaviors required to mitigate it.

It is our hope that readers will use the information in this guide—paired with the latest advances in climate science, engineering, economics, and environmental policy—to communicate climate change in a way that resonates with their audience. Ensuring that people feel both a personal connection with climate change and a desire to take action to mitigate its impact, without becoming overwhelmed by the scale of the problem, is key. Whereas it goes beyond the expertise of the authors of this social-science–based guide to provide specific policy recommendations and other climate change solutions, climate change policies are an essential component about which the public needs to be informed and for which political support needs to be generated. With an issue as complex as climate change, people need to know there are solutions to dealing with it, and that they can be part of those solutions.

Social science research provides compelling evidence for an optimist's view that climate change communicators can reach both policymakers and the public, informing and inspiring them to address climate change.

Following is a brief summary of the principles discussed in detail in the guide. We encourage readers to use the summary as a reference and to refer back to the guide for more in-depth information about topics that interest them.