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NORTH AMERICA

NORTH AMERICA
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Good afternoon,

The United States is currently the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. Structural discrimination has led to vulnerable populations disproportionately experiencing a range of climate change-related hazards, threatening to undo decades of progress in poverty alleviation, both in the United States and worldwide. To address this issue, US state and local governments have been leveraging federal and regional resources to roll out extensive climate action plans. This opportunity to act and prevent the devastating consequences of climate change has motivated me and other researchers to generate rigorous evidence aimed at guiding governments on the best ways to invest their resources.

I serve as the scientific advisor for J-PAL North America's Evidence for Climate Action Project, which brings together an influential network of government leaders, academic researchers, and other key policy partners to launch successful researcher-practitioner partnerships and rigorously evaluate promising decarbonization programs. Research on climate change is not new, but the demand for evidence on the cost-effectiveness and distributional impacts of climate programs has grown as governments around the world make unprecedented investments of public funds in mitigation efforts. Methodological advances have more recently allowed economics researchers to diagnose specific problems and engage more directly with testing the efficacy of different decarbonization program designs. Over the last few years, I've been able to more precisely evaluate, for instance, the price sensitivity of demand for private transport in ride-hailing markets and the first and last mile challenge in public transit.

But to effectively combat climate change, we believe the economics research community has a responsibility to coordinate our efforts as we generate evidence on which decarbonization programs and policies are most effective. As part of the Evidence for Climate Action Project, I am thrilled to lead the Economics of Decarbonization Working Group, which is composed of over 25 economic researchers interested in using randomized evaluations to test the impact of decarbonization programs and policies. This group is collectively defining a research agenda to communicate priority areas for experimental research and facilitate collaboration with policymakers. See below for a synopsis of the first article in a series of papers on this agenda, which was recently published in *Nature*. As part of the project, we are also launching a Climate Action Learning Lab in 2025 to support government leaders in forming partnerships with researchers in the J-PAL network to

rigorously evaluate their decarbonization programs.

I invite researchers and policymakers at every level of government and from across the political spectrum to join our efforts. We know that evidence alone is not enough to combat climate change; it must be paired with the efforts of people who have the power to invest in making a difference. While policy priorities may shift with changing political landscapes, we believe that evidence-based approaches can unite stakeholders and advance effective solutions that best serve the needs of our communities.

Peter Christensen
Associate Professor, University of California, Santa Cruz
Scientific Advisor, J-PAL North America Evidence for Climate Action Project

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How to spend one trillion dollars: The US decarbonization conundrum

Over the past 3 years, the United States has allocated billions of dollars to decarbonization efforts. In a new *Nature* article, Peter Christensen (UC Santa Cruz) and co-authors from the J-PAL North America Economics of Decarbonization Working Group share the importance of rigorously evaluating new investments by state and local governments to learn about the efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and effects of a range of decarbonization programs. Read the article and learn more about the J-PAL North America Economics of Decarbonization Working Group's efforts to generate evidence to advance equitable, high-impact policy solutions to climate change in the United States.

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Featured Policy Publication: Building and implementing a research agenda on transportation decarbonization

The transportation sector is the fastest-growing contributor of global CO2 emissions and is considered one of the most urgent to decarbonize. J-PAL North America, with support from the King Climate Action Initiative (K-CAI), seeks to understand the current evidence and existing research gaps in advancing equitable transportation decarbonization. In a new paper, Maggie Dennis (J-PAL North America), J-PAL affiliated professor Robert Metcalfe (Columbia), and J-PAL Global alumna Andrea Cristina Ruiz investigate fleet shift, public transportation, and traffic congestion. Read the paper »
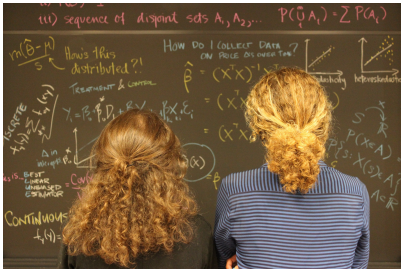

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Nurturing the Null: A new blog series

Null results—when a study does not find significant impacts on chosen outcomes—can provide valuable insights for research and policies alike. However, it can be difficult for stakeholders to identify and leverage these insights. In a new series on the J-PAL blog, we highlight randomized evaluations that yielded null results to elevate the lessons learned and inform future research. The first post provides an overview of key considerations to prepare for and utilize null results. Subsequent posts share perspectives from evaluations of community-based care management programming, case management support for housing services, and information campaigns on social safety net benefits. Read the full series »

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Announcing the 2024 LEVER Evaluation Incubator partners

The J-PAL North America LEVER Evaluation Incubator supports government agencies in designing and

implementing randomized evaluations to generate rigorous evidence on the effects of government-run programs. The recently selected 2024 Incubator partners come from all across the country, covering several programmatic areas (i.e., education, health care, and climate). This engagement will equip state and local jurisdictions to build a culture of evidence use into their departments and decision-making. Read more about the selected Incubator partners »

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE

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Quick guide to power calculations

Statistical power and sample size are key components that determine an evaluation's ability to detect a program's impact. This research resource provides guidance to researchers on identifying inputs for power calculations and walks through a process for incorporating power calculations into a study design. The resource assumes some background in statistics and is intended for researchers who are designing and assessing the feasibility of a randomized evaluation with an implementing partner.

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