

Yimeng Li, Lisa Kluen, Caroline J. Charpentier, Jeff Cockburn, Tessa Rusch, Sneha Reddy Aenugu, Reza Tadayon-Nejad, John O'Doherty, and R. Michael Alvarez

Title: Conspiracy Beliefs, Climate and Environmental Attitudes, and Sustainable Behavior

Abstract: Conspiracy theories abound, regarding important international and national events, like the origins of the COVID-19 virus or the 2020 U.S. presidential election. While people may believe in some conspiracy theories but not others, there is insufficient guidance in the literature about how to best measure general belief in conspiracy arguments. In our research, we embedded a large number of questions about different conspiracy theories in a national survey. We use the item response theory methodology to allow the data to determine how to reduce the dimensionality of the conspiracy theory space into a one-dimensional measure of conspiratorial thought. We demonstrate the utility of our measurement approach in a series of models of climate and environmental policy attitudes as well as self-reported sustainable behavior. Our results indicate that beliefs in conspiracy theories are strongly correlated with less climate- and environmental-friendly attitudes and self-reported sustainable behavior, after controlling for political ideology and other individual characteristics.

[Back to program](#)