

# Radical measures needed to change unsustainable and unhealthy behaviors for net zero 2050

October 6 2021

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Rapid and radical changes to systems that currently support unhealthy unsustainable behavior are needed to achieve net zero greenhouse gas

emissions by 2050, argue experts in *The BMJ* today.

Theresa Marteau at the University of Cambridge and colleagues say changing [behavior](#) across populations is key to achieving net zero as [technological innovation](#) will be insufficient.

They focus on behavior around diet and land travel, which contribute an estimated 26% and 12% of [global greenhouse gas emissions](#), respectively.

For the public, they explain that adopting a largely plant based diet and taking most journeys using a combination of walking, cycling, and [public transport](#) would substantially reduce [greenhouse](#) gas emissions and improve health.

They acknowledge that changing behavior at scale is difficult, but say changing the physical and economic environments that drive the behavior has the most potential to succeed.

They believe the necessary changes to diet and land travel can be achieved through policies that increase the availability and affordability of healthier and more sustainable options.

For example, promoting healthier and more sustainable foods while increasing prices of carbon intensive foods and reducing prices of foods that are less carbon intensive; creating safe and attractive cycling and walking routes; ensuring low cost public transport; and restricting availability and attractiveness of car use.

Changes need to be fair and equitable as well as effective to gain [public support](#), they say. They also need to be driven by evidence and protected from powerful commercial interests.

"Complex coordinated behavior can be mobilized by a shared, positive narrative, reflecting collective goals, alongside a clear vision, making vivid the many benefits of a net zero world," they write. "The development of such a vision—both global and regional—is a priority and requires co-creation by citizens, governments, and industries, informed by scientific expertise and protected from corporate interference."

They conclude: "With sufficient daring from the world's governments, the flexibility, creativity, and social nature of human behavior can achieve a just transition to net zero thereby protecting the health of current and future generations."

**More information:** Changing behaviour for net zero 2050, *The BMJ*, DOI: [10.1136/bmj.n2293](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2293) , [www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj.n2293](https://www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj.n2293)

Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Radical measures needed to change unsustainable and unhealthy behaviors for net zero 2050 (2021, October 6) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-10-radical-unsustainable-unhealthy-behaviors-net.html>

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