

# Governments are trying to nudge us into better behavior. Is it working?

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## The Washington Post:

All over the world, public and private organizations are showing keen interest in “nudges” — interventions and policies that rely on behavioral science to steer people in a particular direction but preserve their freedom of choice. A warning is a nudge; so is a reminder (for example, that a bill is coming due). Automatic enrollment in retirement plans, or in green energy, also count as nudges, so long as people are allowed opt out.

In contexts that range from savings to education to public health, nudges appear to be having a big impact. That impact has led to the rapidly increasing use of behavioral insights within governments, including the formation of “nudge units” in the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and the White House. These units, staffed with behavioral scientists, are tasked with finding ways to apply nudges to solve old and new societal problems.

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In a new paper, published this month in *Psychological Science*, we put nudging to the empirical test by comparing the cost effectiveness of a wide range of policy tools. We were surprised by our findings: In multiple areas, nudges have a much bigger impact, per dollar spent, than more traditional approaches, such as subsidies, taxes and education.

Read the whole story: [\*The Washington Post\*](#)