

## PhD Studentship funded by the Leverhulme Trust

***"Understanding how (mis-)beliefs about others shape pro-climate behaviours and policy preferences in intergroup contexts"***

Start Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2026

Application Deadline: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Interview date: TBA (mid-late March)

**Royal Holloway, University of London** is delighted to announce a call for applicants for a fully funded PhD studentship from September 2026, funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

This project is led by Dr. Hirotaka Imada, and the successful applicant will be supervised by Dr. Hirotaka Imada and Prof. Ryan McKay. The successful applicant will join Dr. Hirotaka Imada's lab at Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham campus.

### Project Overview

The world stands at a critical climate tipping point. Yet, a profound psychological barrier hinders climate actions: individuals consistently underestimate others' contributions and commitment to addressing climate change. Past work has repeatedly documented this phenomenon, known as pluralistic ignorance, showing, for instance, that while 50.4% of Australians believe that climate change is happening and caused by human activities, the average Australian expected only 33.7% of other Australians to believe this. What individuals think others believe robustly predicts pro-climate attitudes and behaviours, and, therefore, pluralistic ignorance undermines motivations for pro-climate behaviours. This project aims to systematically and comprehensively investigate the role of such beliefs and identify effective interventions to correct misperceptions and encourage pro-climate actions. More specifically, the project aims to understand how beliefs about what others, ingroup members and outgroup members, value, believe, and do regarding climate change shapes one's own pro-climate behaviours and policy preferences.

### Details of Award

The award will fund a full-time studentship for 4 years (48 months), and the successful candidate must submit their thesis within their funded period.

The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees and full maintenance for home students. 2025/26 rates for stipend are £22,780 per annum, which includes £2,000 London Allowance.

## Eligibility

- This studentship is open to **Home applicants**.
- To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:
  - be a UK national (meeting residency requirements), OR
  - have settled status, OR
  - have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), OR
  - have indefinite leave to remain or entre.
- Applicants should have or expect to receive a relevant Masters-level qualification by the time of taking up the appointment.
- Applicants with experience and knowledge in the following areas are particularly encouraged to apply:
  - Experience of undertaking research related to environmental psychology
  - Experience in advanced statistical analyses such as linear mixed effects models (multi-level models)
  - Experience of using R to organise data and perform statistical analyses
  - Ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing

## How to Apply

Please include in your application:

- Your CV
- A research proposal (maximum 1,000 words excluding references) outlining a potential study or series of studies that could be conducted within the scope of this PhD project. Your proposal should specifically address how beliefs about ingroup and outgroup members influence pro-climate behaviours and suggest a potential intervention strategy to correct misperceptions. *While proposals may focus on a single salient ingroup-outgroup distinction, applicants are encouraged to consider approaches that acknowledge multiple and intersecting group memberships (e.g., political, regional, class-based, or generational identities) in the UK context.* To ensure your proposal aligns with the project, please engage with at least one of the following papers:

Andre, P., Boneva, T., Chopra, F., & Falk, A. (2024). Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action. *Nature Climate Change*, 14(3), 253–259.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-024-01925-3>

Ballew, M. T., Rosenthal, S. A., Goldberg, M. H., Gustafson, A., Kotcher, J. E., Maibach, E. W., & Leiserowitz, A. (2020). Beliefs about others' global warming beliefs: The role of party affiliation and opinion deviance. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 70, 101466.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101466>

Geiger, S. J., Köhler, J. K., Delabrida, Z. N. C., Garduño-Realivazquez, K. A., Haugestad, C. A. P., Imada, H., Iyer, A., Maharja, C., Mann, D. C., Marczak, M., Melville, O., Nijssen, S. R. R., Powdthavee, N., Praptiwi, R. A., Ranade, G., Rosa, C. D., Vitale, V., Winkowska, M., Zhang, L., & White, M. P. (2025). What We Think Others Think and Do About Climate Change: A Multicountry Test of Pluralistic Ignorance and Public-Consensus Messaging. *Psychological Science*, 36(6), 421–442. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976251335585>

Sparkman, G., Geiger, N., & Weber, E. U. (2022). Americans experience a false social reality by underestimating popular climate policy support by nearly half. *Nature Communications*, 13(1), 4779. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-32412-y>

Please send your application documents (in PDF) to Dr. Hirotaka Imada ([Hirotaka.Imada@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Hirotaka.Imada@rhul.ac.uk)) by the deadline of 27<sup>th</sup> February.

*All prospective students are strongly advised to first make informal contact with Dr. Hirotaka Imada ([Hirotaka.Imada@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Hirotaka.Imada@rhul.ac.uk)).*

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#### **Further Information**

For informal queries about the studentship and the project, please contact Dr. Hirotaka Imada ([Hirotaka.Imada@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Hirotaka.Imada@rhul.ac.uk)).