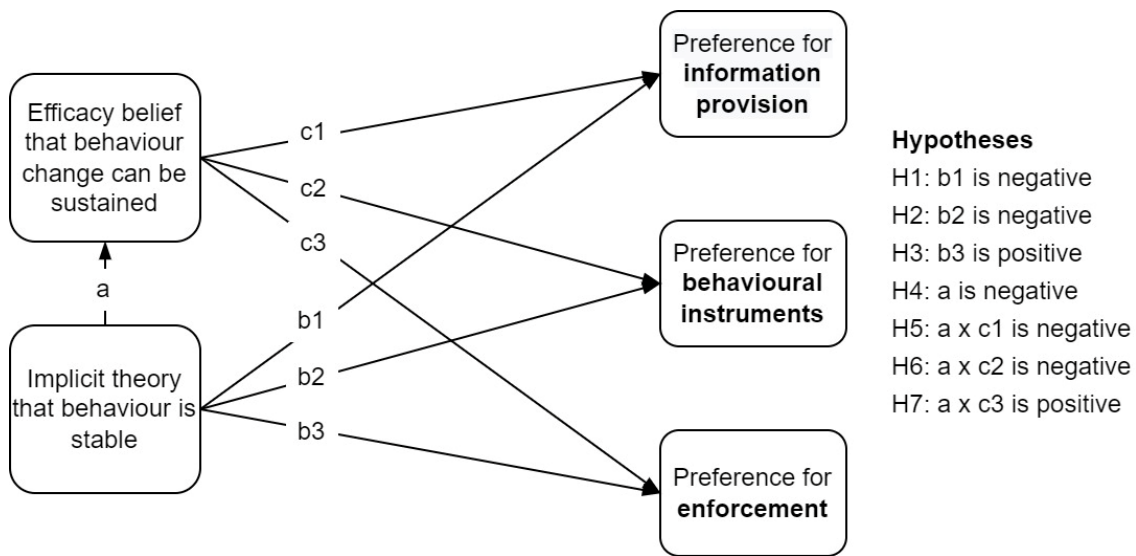We hypothesised that the relation between implicit theories about the changeableness of behaviour and instrument preferences were mediated by efficacy beliefs. Efficacy beliefs describe the amount of confidence that specific behaviours can be displayed. Accordingly, efficacy beliefs were conceptualised as context-specific expectations about the future. Decision makers viewing behaviour as more stable were assumed to express lower efficacy beliefs for continued behavioural change after initial change (H4). This is because initial behavioural change caused by a policy instrument can be interpreted as evidence for effective behavioural change or as a transient phase of behavioural change that will not last depending on decision makers' views on the changeableness of behaviour.

We further hypothesised mediation effects where low efficacy beliefs for sustained behavioural change led decision makers to prefer enforcement to coerce behavioural change (H5), and high efficacy beliefs led decision makers to prefer the less inversive instruments of information provision (H6) and behavioural instruments (H7). This is because decision makers with high efficacy beliefs are optimistic about target groups sustaining initial behavioural change and therefore softer tools merely facilitating behavioural change can be viewed sufficient. The resulting framework and the corresponding statistical hypotheses are displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Theoretical framework and hypothesized relationships

Hypotheses
H1: b1 is negative
H2: b2 is negative
H3: b3 is positive
H4: a is negative
H5: a x c1 is negative
H6: a x c2 is negative
H7: a x c3 is positive

We designed two items to measure efficacy beliefs (Table 1). For homogenous constructs, such short scales can be superior to longer scales (Loo, 2002). The Spearman-Brown coefficient has been recommended as a reliability measure for two-item measures (Eisinga et al., 2013) and was acceptable with $\varrho = .78$.

Table 1

Translated items and item statistics

Measure	Reliability
Item	*M (SD)*
Efficacy beliefs	.78
1. The population is able to comply with the measures necessary to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in the upcoming time.	3.6 (1.0)

2. The population is <u>not</u> able to comply anymore with the measures necessary 2.5 (1.1)

to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in the upcoming time. *(reverse coded)*


To test the mediation effects, we extended the model reported in the manuscript with efficacy beliefs as a latent variable measured by the two items. We followed the procedure suggested by Zhao and colleagues (2010) which requires the indirect path via the mediator to be significant to conclude a mediation effect.

Indices evaluating the goodness of fit for the model (Figure 2) were in the acceptable range supporting the framework (χ^2 = 22.276, *df* = 13, *p* = 0.051; CFI = 0.991; SRMR = 0.024; RMSEA = 0.034). However, respondents with viewing behaviour more as stable did not have lower confidence in sustained behavioural change, β = -.15 [-0.31, 0.06]. Hence, there was no support for H4. The indirect paths from implicit theories to policy tool preferences via efficacy beliefs were also insignificant for all policy instruments, providing no support for H5, H6, and H7. The results did not change when covariates were included.

Figure 2

Structural model
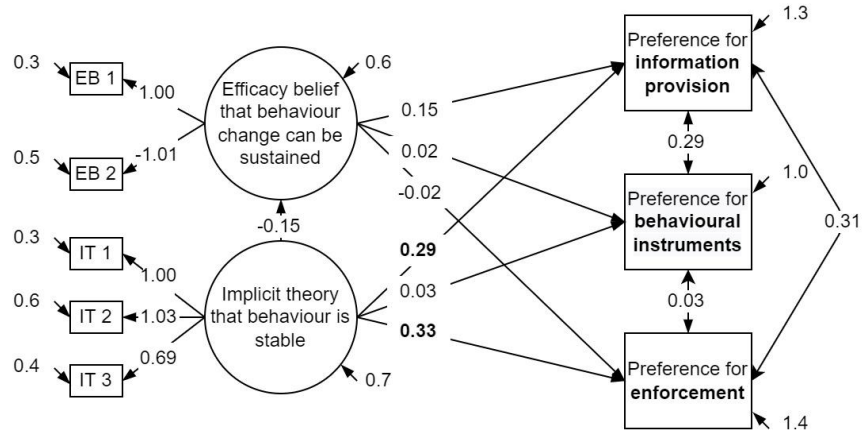
Notes: See Figure 2 in the manuscript for explanation.

The null effects related to efficacy beliefs may result from the implicit nature of implicit theories and related cognitions. Individuals are typically not aware of their implicit theories, although they can articulate them when encouraged to do so (Plaks, 2017). The decision-making sequence implied in our mediation model may therefore be overly rational and too reliant on deliberate thinking. A simpler and more implicit association may be that if behaviour is viewed as stable and hard to change, more of any type of government intervention is perceived as needed.

References

Eisinga, R., Grotenhuis, M. T., & Pelzer, B. (2013). The reliability of a two-item scale: Pearson, Cronbach, or Spearman-Brown? *International Journal of Public Health, 58*(4), 637–642. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-012-0416-3

Loo, R. (2002). A caveat on using single-item versus multiple-item scales. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 17*(1), 68–75. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940210415933

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