

Stefanie Stantcheva

Nathaniel Ropes Professor of Political Economy,
Harvard University
Founder and director of the Social Economics Lab

One of the world's leading economists studying how people understand—and respond to—economic policy



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Biography

Stefanie Stantcheva is one of the world's leading economists studying how people understand—and respond to—economic policy. She is the Nathaniel Ropes Professor of Political Economy at Harvard University and the founder and director of Harvard's Social Economics Lab, where she pioneers large-scale surveys and experiments to uncover how beliefs, emotions, and perceptions shape public attitudes toward taxation, inequality, trade, immigration, climate change, and social mobility.

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Topics

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Taxes
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Awarded the 2025 John Bates Clark Medal, one of the most prestigious honors in economics, Professor Stantcheva is widely recognized for transforming how economists and policymakers understand public opinion and policy design. Her research bridges rigorous economic analysis with behavioral and psychological insights, offering practical guidance on how governments can craft policies that are both effective and publicly sustainable.

A central focus of her work examines taxation and fiscal policy—how taxes affect innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and long-run economic growth, as well as how tax systems influence perceptions of fairness and redistribution. Her research has reshaped thinking on innovation policy, including the design of R&D incentives, and on education finance, particularly how student loan structures can expand access and opportunity.

Professor Stantcheva's work also addresses some of the most pressing issues facing societies today: political polarization and zero-sum thinking, inflation psychology, immigration perceptions versus economic realities, racial inequality, and the future of work in an era of technological change and artificial intelligence. Her research offers rare empirical insight into how emotions, narratives, and lived experience influence economic beliefs—and how those beliefs, in turn, shape democratic outcomes.

A frequent advisor to policymakers, she served on the French Council of Economic Advisers from 2018 to 2024 and is currently a co-editor of the Quarterly Journal of Economics. Her work has been supported by fellowships from the Sloan, Guggenheim, and Carnegie foundations, and she is a sought-after voice at global forums, universities, and leadership gatherings, including Davos.

Professor Stantcheva earned her Ph.D. in Economics from MIT and previously served as a Junior Fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows. She speaks English, French, German, and Bulgarian fluently, and Spanish conversationally. She holds both U.S. and EU citizenship.

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