

Exploring Perception on Climate Change Through the American Climate Metrics Survey: 2016-2019

Executive Summary

Project Background

Climate change is the most important challenge and threat facing humanityⁱ. It impacts human health through air quality, extreme heat, drought, wildfires, extreme storms, floods, and vector-borne illnesses. We partnered with ecoAmerica to build leadership capacity on climate solutions and institutionalize climate action as a health imperative, engaging leadership, members, and stakeholders within the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) community. As part of this partnership, we collected data on climate change awareness, attitudes, and behaviors from NEHA members and from the public through the American Climate Metric Survey (ACMS)



which explores perceptions of climate change and its impacts. Our article, [“Exploring Perception on Climate Change Through the American Climate Metrics Survey: 2016-2019”](#), examines select trends in the ACMS results over four years and provides recommendations on how we can support the environmental public health workforce to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation activities in their communities.

Findings

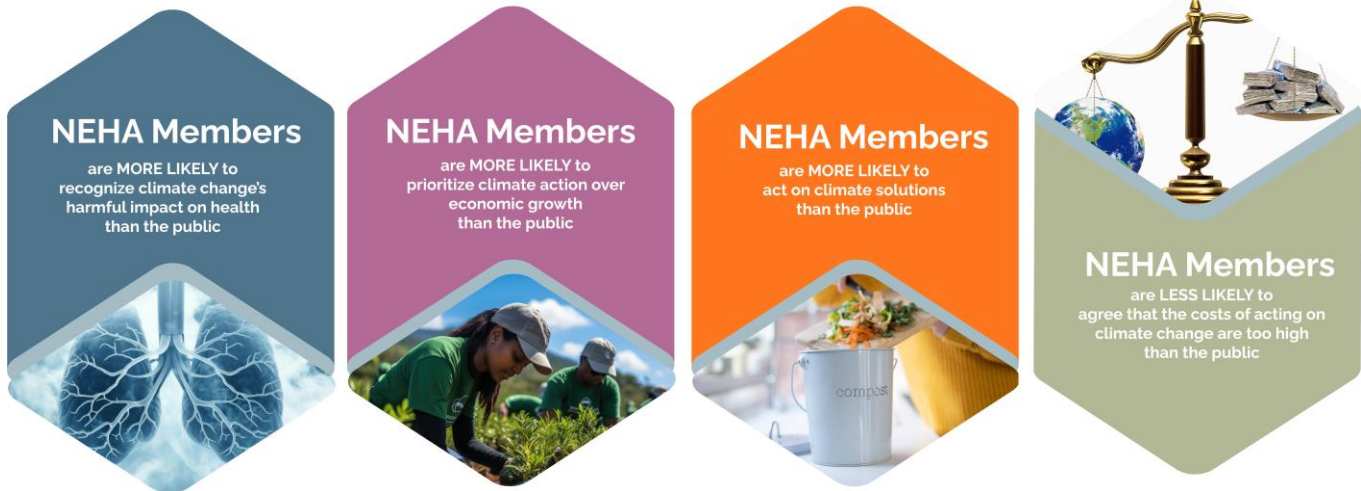
While both NEHA members and the public had similar climate change concerns, NEHA members were significantly more likely than the public to:

- recognize climate change’s harmful impact on health,
- prioritize climate action over economic growth, and
- act on climate solutions.

NEHA members were less likely to agree that the costs of acting on climate change are too high. Identifying climate change as a major threat to health and well-being has significant potential to motivate individuals to take measures to reduce their health risks from expected impacts.ⁱⁱ Additionally, public perception of climate



change and the public's willingness to act drives the development and adoption of innovative solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation.ⁱⁱⁱ



Recommendations

- NEHA's Climate and Health Adaptation and Mitigation Program (CHAMP):** We should provide support and actively encourage environmental public health professionals to implement adaptation and mitigation solutions for climate change through [CHAMP](#).
- Climate Solutions:** We should encourage the workforce to facilitate cross-sectoral engagement between community members, health care professionals, climate-related policymakers and regulators, climate change coalitions, and industry to gain insight and support as part of the effort to mobilize implementation of climate solutions in their communities.
- Sharing Best Practices:** We should highlight jurisdictions that have successfully implemented climate solutions,



*BRACE Framework - CDC's Building Resilience Against Climate Effects Framework



by presenting their strategies in webinars and developing case studies. This will help other jurisdictions understand practical steps they can take to initiate similar efforts.

- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** We should continue to support ACMS efforts to maintain understanding of the dynamic needs of environmental public health professionals, with the inclusion of questions on how NEHA members are integrating climate justice into routine environmental public health services.
- **Support Environmental Public Health Workforce:** We should continue to support environmental public health programs to be able to develop and share leading practices on targeted mitigation and adaptation initiatives to communities and people most vulnerable to climate change impacts.
- **Build Environmental Public Health Workforce Capability and Capacity:** We should continue to build the capacity of the environmental public health workforce by providing climate related resources, trainings, workshops, and continuing education to expand their skill sets and capabilities so they can be leaders in their jurisdiction's local climate and health conversation. This can be accomplished through continued partnerships and collaborations, such as our engagement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Environmental Health and our work with ecoAmerica.
- **Supplement Resources:** We should continue to counter the limited funding provided for local environmental public health programs to address climate change issues, by targeting and developing resources that the workforce can use to work with their community to understand climate health threats and take action to implement climate solutions.

About Us

The National Environmental Health Association is the leading organization supporting environmental health professionals in the US and the world. We represent nearly 7,000 governmental, private, academic, and uniformed services sector environmental health professionals in the U.S., its territories, and internationally. For 87 years, we have provided training, education, advocacy, and resources for our members and partners and have a proven track record of advancing environmental health science and practice. We are the profession's strongest advocate for excellence in the practice of environmental health as we deliver on our mission to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce.

ⁱ Watts, N., Adger, W.N., Agnolucci, P., Blackstock, J., Byass, P., ... & Costello, A. (2015). Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health. *The Lancet*, 386(10006):1861-914. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60854-6.

ⁱⁱ Zanocco, C., Boudet, H., Nilson, R., Satein, H., Whitley, H., & Flora, J. (2018). Place, proximity, and perceived harm: extreme weather events and views about climate change. *Climatic Change*, 149(3), 349-365.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marlon, J.R., Wang, X., Berquist, P., Howe, P.D., Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., ... & Rosenthal, S. (2022). Environmental Research Letters, 17 124046

