



AMERICAN CLIMATE VALUES 2014 SUPPLEMENT

Health and Climate Highlights

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ecoAmerica
start with people

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Climate for Health is a national initiative led by a diverse network of health leaders from across the health sector representing key health care, public health, clinical and medical institutions and associations. Committed to advancing climate solutions to protect the health and well-being of Americans, our leaders offer support, inspiration, and resources to new leaders ready to make their own commitment and build support for climate solutions. By joining Climate for Health, you can commit to implementing climate solutions within your own organization, and work together to prepare, empower, and inspire patients, staff, communities, other health leaders, and the nation on climate change solutions. We'll provide you with a wealth of resources to guide you on the path to a positive future. **For more information on or to join Climate for Health, visit <http://www.ClimateforHealth.org> or contact Jennifer Tabola at Jennifer@ecoAmerica.org.**



MomentUs is a strategic organizing initiative designed to build a critical mass of institutional leadership, public support, political will, and collective action for climate solutions in the United States. MomentUs is working to develop and support a network of trusted leaders and institutions who will lead by example and engage their stakeholders to do the same, leading to a shift in society that will put America on an irrefutable path to a clean energy, ultimately leading toward a more sustainable and just future.

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American Climate Values 2014 Research Methodology

The American Climate Values Survey 2014 was co-created by ecoAmerica and Strategic Business Insights (SBI). GfK Knowledge Networks fielded the survey. The survey employs SBI's proprietary VALS methodology to identify psychological motivations that drive attitudes and behaviors in order to guide organizations in identifying, understanding and connecting with people.

Sample Population: The target population consists of non-institutionalized adults aged 18 and over residing in the United States.

Survey Completion and Sample Sizes: The sample included 2,946 individuals. Of those, 1,027 completed the survey, netting a 61.4% completion rate.

Greetings,

As climate change accelerates¹, it carries with it growing impacts on Americans' physical and mental health. Consequently, health professionals and leaders are being called upon to interpret impacts and respond to the changing needs of their patients, communities, and medical facilities. Climate change has been noted as "the greatest public health challenge of the 21st century,"² Health professionals possess tremendous unrealized opportunity to lead by example, and to engage the public around the need to prepare and protect themselves and to recognize that support for climate solutions is key to ensuring healthier lives for all Americans.

Repeatedly ranked as the most trusted of professions,³ health professionals are uniquely positioned to play a tremendously influential role in advancing climate change solutions. Eighty-two percent of Americans report having had contact with a health professional in the past year,⁴ and health persistently ranks among America's top national concerns.⁵

This report, sourced from the American Climate Values survey *needs citation/year?* administered to aims to support health leadership by providing insights for engaging colleagues, patients, and their communities on climate solutions. The report includes an analysis of climate change and health concerns expressed by the American public and shares findings that help illuminate a variety public opinions related to climate change and health,, including:

- public perceptions of health-related climate impacts and health-based motivations for taking action on climate change.
- findings about how healthcare professionals think and feel about climate change
- implications and recommendations for motivating and engaging Americans on climate change through a health lens based on these findings..

We hope that this report is valuable to health leaders, practitioners, and organizations, as well as their colleagues across other sectors, as they step forward to engage the American public on addressing what is surely the defining issue of our time.



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¹ J.M. Melillo, T.C. Richmond, and G.W. Yohe. Eds., (2014). Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment. U.S. Global Change Research Program, 841 pp. DOI:10.7930/J0Z31WJ2.

² The Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission (2009). Managing the health effects of climate change. The Lancet Commissions 373. May 16. 1693-1733.

³ Gallup. (2014, December 18). Americans rate nurses highest on honesty, ethical standards [Graphs]. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/180260/americans-rate-nurses-highest-honesty-ethical-standards.aspx>

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2012, Table 35. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_260.pdf

⁵ Pew Research Center. (2015, January 15). Public's Policy Priorities Reflect Changing Conditions at Home and Abroad. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2015/01/15/publics-policy-priorities-reflect-changing-conditions-at-home-and-abroad/>

I. CONSENSUS FINDINGS

The following section describes key findings related to climate and health that generated majority (at least 50%) agreement from Americans surveyed.

- 1. The majority of Americans are being affected by the health impacts of climate change.** At least one-half of Americans are personally affected by or have one degree of separation from the health impacts of climate change, including longer and more severe allergy seasons (62%), heat waves (56%), damage and personal harm from extreme weather (51%), and breathing problems (49%). As a whole, Americans' responses to questions of whether health impacts are "affecting you, or someone you know" were slightly less partisan than other climate questions. Older adults, however, showed slightly different responses: Americans aged 55+ were somewhat more likely to have experienced breathing problems (+4%) or identified climate change as the cause of them (+7%).
- 2. Clean air, clean water, and access to natural spaces are a priority for most Americans.** More than 75% of Americans view clean air, clean water, unpolluted, toxin-free neighborhoods, and access to parks and natural spaces as personal rights that should be available to all people. The highest support comes for clean drinking water (84%), followed by clean air (83%), a safe neighborhood free from toxic chemicals and pollutants (79%), and access to natural spaces like parks and forests (75%).
- 3. Americans are amped up on air quality.** 75% of Americans think that doing something about climate change will improve the quality of the air we breathe. At least 70% of Americans from all demographic groups (age, political affiliation, educational attainment, income level, and gender) share this sentiment, with the exception of political independents (58%), strong Republicans (57%), and Americans aged 25-34 (65%).
- 4. Americans think climate change will help lift up low-income communities.** 76% of Americans believe that a good reason for doing something now about climate change is because it will help poor people (vs. harm them).

II. AMERICANS' ATTITUDES ON CLIMATE & HEALTH

This section presents key findings about how Americans think and feel about climate change and health.

- 1. Connections between climate and health are still emerging.** Americans are more likely to make connections between climate change and extreme weather than they are to make connections between climate change and health. While approximately 6 in 10 Americans say that climate change is causing extreme weather (like record heat waves and increased flooding), only 5 in 10 Americans say that climate change is causing longer and more severe allergy seasons (49%) and increased rates of breathing problems (46%). At the same time, 62% of Americans say they're being affected by longer and more severe allergy seasons.
- 2. Politics, education, and income play a significant role in shaping Americans' understanding of health and climate links.** While Americans as a whole are not making strong connections between climate change and health, some demographic groups—including Democrats, Americans with more education, and higher income Americans—show stronger concern and understanding of the issue. Like almost all issues related to climate change, politics play an outsized role in shaping how Americans view climate change and health. Democrats are overwhelmingly more likely than Republicans to say that climate change is causing health impacts, that these health impacts are affecting them personally, that they are worried about them, and that they support solutions. Similar, less pronounced patterns emerge for Americans with more vs. less education, and to some extent, more vs. less income.

3. Medical professionals can be trusted messengers. Nearly half of Americans (48%) say they trust healthcare professionals like their personal doctor for guidance on climate solutions. Half of Americans (53%) also say they trust first emergency responders, like firefighters and EMTs. Americans trust healthcare professionals significantly more than the President of the United States (38%) and their neighbors (28%), which suggests that medical and healthcare professionals could serve as strong messengers to talk about climate change. This trust is relatively constant across demographics with the exception of a few groups:

- Independents, who are far less likely than the general public to trust health professionals (25% vs. 48%)
- Americans who make \$10,000 or less, who are less likely than the general public to trust health professionals (38% vs. 48%)
- 25-34 year olds, who are also less likely than the general public to trust health professionals (40% vs. 48%)

In addition, 62% of people are either already talking with or willing to talk with their doctor about preparing or protecting against increases in allergies or harm from climate change impacts. Independents are more willing to talk with their doctors now (33%), while about half of Republicans are either already talking to their doctor, or willing to talk with their doctor now or in the next 12 months.

4. Americans are focused on their families and neighborhoods. Almost two thirds of Americans (66%) say they worry about the effect of environmental pollution on their family's health. This concern varies slightly across demographic groups (Americans who vote Democratic, Americans who are between the ages of 55 and 64, and Americans who have completed graduate school show slightly higher levels of concern, whereas Republicans and younger adults show slightly lower levels of concern). In addition, 79% of Americans say that having a safe neighborhood free from toxic chemicals and pollutants is a personal right that should be available to all people. At least 70% of Americans across all demographic groups share this belief.

5. Allergies vs. asthma. Allergies and asthma are two health impacts commonly cited in communication about the links between climate change and health. Yet this research indicates that these impacts are perceived differently. 62% of Americans say they are being affected by longer and more severe allergy seasons, compared with just 49% of Americans who say the same about increased rates of breathing problems like asthma. In addition, changes in allergy seasons are being felt more evenly across different demographic groups than changes in asthma. (Young people, as well as wealthier people are less likely to say they are being affected by changes in asthma). As such, focusing on changes in allergy seasons and the cascading effects that this can have on people's lives could be a productive way to engage Americans on climate. Communicators should keep in mind, however, that just half of Americans say that longer and more severe allergy seasons are caused by climate change. As such, communicators may need to work to help Americans understand this link.

6. Initiatives to prepare medical facilities for extreme weather garner strong support. Two thirds of Americans (67%) say they would support initiatives in their local communities to plan for the loss of medical services in the event of damage from extreme weather. In addition, 60% of Americans say they would support initiatives to improve emergency response, such as increasing the size of the fire department. While this support is relatively constant across demographic groups, Americans with household incomes of between \$40,000 and \$80,000 show particularly strong support (67%), as do moderate ("not strong") Democrats (71%). In contrast, Americans making less than \$10,000 show weaker support (53%), as do strong Republicans (45%) and moderate ("not strong") Republicans (53%).

In addition, 60% of Americans say they would support initiatives to prepare healthcare providers and the public to deal with the effects of climate change, although this support is strongly influenced by political affiliation, with Democrats showing stronger support and Republicans and political independents showing weaker support.

7. The food and climate connection. A whopping 82% of Americans say they are being affected by the rising cost of food. This sentiment is relatively constant across demographic groups. In addition, a majority of Americans (62%) say that doing something about climate change could improve the quality of the food we eat, which suggests that many Americans already understand the link between climate solutions and changes in agricultural systems and processes.

8. Different racial and ethnic groups have different attitudes about climate change and health. Asian Americans, African Americans, White Americans, and Hispanic/Latino Americans report different attitudes and beliefs about climate change and health. To learn more about how each group thinks and feels about climate change and health, refer to pages 13, 19, 25, and 32 of the "American Climate Values 2014: Insights by Racial and Ethnic Groups" report.

III. HEALTH PROFESSIONALS' ATTITUDES ON CLIMATE

The American Climate Values survey asked participants to answer a number of demographic questions, including a question about whether or not they work in the healthcare industry. This section compares the attitudes and behaviors of those who work in the healthcare industry to those who do not. This survey included 167 Americans who are healthcare professionals and 1,537 Americans who work in other professions.

1. Healthcare professionals are more likely to engage in climate-friendly behaviors. Overall, healthcare professionals are significantly more likely than the general public to engage in climate-friendly behaviors. For example, 87% of healthcare professionals turn up the thermostat during the summer to save energy "sometimes" or "always," compared with 70% of the general public. In addition, 46% of healthcare professionals use public transportation sometimes or always, compared with 32% of the general public. Healthcare professionals are also more likely to bike: one third of healthcare professionals bike sometimes or always, compared with just 22 percent of the general public.

2. Healthcare professionals say taking action now will be cheaper than waiting until later. Healthcare professionals are more likely than those who don't work in healthcare to say that solving climate change now will cost less money than if we wait until later. 73% of healthcare professionals "agree" or "strongly agree" with this statement, compared with 61% of the general public.

3. Healthcare professionals are less likely to attribute extreme weather to climate change. As a whole, healthcare professionals are less likely than those not employed in healthcare to think that extreme weather is caused by climate change. For example, just 47% of healthcare professionals say record heat waves are probably or definitely caused by climate change, compared with 61% of the general public. And while just 51% of healthcare professionals say that more frequent and severe droughts are caused by climate change, 60% of the general public says the same.

4. Healthcare professionals show strong support for community preparedness measures. Healthcare professionals show strong support for community-level preparedness measures. For example, 78% of healthcare professionals say they would support a community-wide energy savings program, compared with 71% of the general public. Additionally, 77% of healthcare professionals say they would support an annual disaster preparedness training program, compared with 71% of the general public.

TABLE 1: Americans' Attitudes on Climate and Health

Table 1 illustrates how Americans think and feel about climate and health. Values for item 1-6 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who either "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement. Values for items 13-16 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who said that would "definitely support" or "somewhat support" each initiative. Values for items 19-29 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who say the issue is "probably affecting me (or someone I know) personally" or "definitely affecting me (or someone I know) personally."

		GENDER			POLITICAL AFFILIATION						
		Avg.	M	F	Strong R	Not Strong R	Lean R	Indep Undec	Lean D	Not Strong D	Strong D
FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES, WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR BELIEFS?											
1	I worry about the effect of environmental pollution on my family's health.	66	64	69	45	61	60	63	78	75	72
PLEASE INDICATE HOW MUCH YOU DISAGREE OR AGREE WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS											
2	Clean air										
	a Least important of the many issues we face	5	6	4	11	2	6	3	3	3	4
	b Should have a price and be bought or sold	5	6	4	4	4	6	3	3	9	2
	c Personal right should be available to all people	83	82	85	76	85	80	79	88	84	87
	d Other	7	6	8	8	9	8	14	6	3	6
3	Clean drinking water										
	a Least important of the many issues we face	3	4	3	10	-1	5	3	2	-1	-1
	b Should have a price and be bought or sold	7	8	6	7	10	8	4	5	9	5
	c Personal right should be available to all people	84	83	86	80	82	81	81	87	88	87
	d Other	5	5	5	2	8	6	12	5	3	6
4	A safe neighborhood free from toxic chemicals and pollutants										
	a Least important of the many issues we face	6	5	6	14	4	6	3	4	4	4
	b Should have a price and be bought or sold	8	10	6	6	12	11	8	6	9	5
	c Personal right should be available to all people	79	79	79	71	76	74	78	82	83	84
	d Other	8	6	9	9	8	10	11	9	3	7
5	Access to natural spaces like parks and forests										
	a Least important of the many issues we face	8	7	9	16	11	10	15	5	6	4
	b Should have a price and be bought or sold	11	14	7	14	11	10	5	8	18	6
	c Personal right should be available to all people	75	72	78	67	71	72	67	80	72	83
	d Other	6	6	7	3	7	8	13	7	5	7
6	Safety from the harmful causes of climate change										
	a Least important of the many issues we face	13	15	11	37	11	19	18	5	6	5
	b Should have a price and be bought or sold	9	12	6	8	11	8	3	8	15	7
	c Personal right should be available to all people	64	61	67	43	59	55	61	74	70	76
	d Other	14	11	16	13	20	18	18	13	10	12

TABLE 1: Americans' Attitudes on Climate and Health (continued)

		GENDER			POLITICAL AFFILIATION						
		Avg.	M	F	Strong R	Not Strong R	Lean R	Indep Undec	Lean D	Not Strong D	Strong D
PLEASE INDICATE WHETHER YOU PERSONALLY BELIEVE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING IS CAUSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE OR NOT.											
7	Record heat waves during summer	60	60	59	40	50	45	46	71	66	77
8	Longer and more severe allergy seasons	49	46	52	32	40	39	31	54	56	67
9	Increased rates of breathing problems	46	44	47	29	38	38	27	52	50	63
TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE FOLLOWING ISSUES PERSONALLY AFFECTING YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW?											
10	Record heat waves during summer	56	54	58	38	50	46	53	64	66	66
11	Longer and more severe allergy seasons	62	61	65	49	49	61	51	66	68	77
12	Increased rates of breathing problems, such as asthma	49	46	52	33	39	42	44	56	58	59
13	More damage and personal harm from extreme weather	51	48	53	32	42	44	39	61	54	64
14	Rising cost of food	82	81	83	77	79	83	83	85	83	85
15	Increased flooding	41	38	45	24	38	35	29	52	49	48
16	Increasing number of insects/pests	58	60	58	47	44	59	64	62	61	71
17	More frequent and severe droughts	54	52	55	37	47	50	43	59	56	68
18	Higher energy bills	77	75	80	71	68	79	76	80	80	82
19	More frequent power outages	46	42	49	39	33	40	41	47	52	59
20	More frequent and severe wildfires	40	39	41	31	26	36	27	44	46	52
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE OR GROUPS OF PEOPLE WOULD YOU TRUST FOR GUIDANCE ON SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE? HEALTH PROFESSIONALS LIKE MY PERSONAL DOCTOR											
21	Not trust	15	16	13	12	17	16	33	18	9	12
22	Trust	48	50	46	51	45	42	25	48	55	51
23	Trust, but not on the topic of climate change	17	16	18	19	18	19	16	17	16	16
24	Does not apply	7	6	7	5	5	8	15	4	7	8
25	I'm not sure	14	12	16	12	15	16	12	13	14	13
WOULD YOU DISAGREE OR AGREE THAT DOING SOMETHING NOW ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE COULD...											
26	Improve the quality of the air we breathe and clean the skies	75	74	77	57	75	71	58	82	83	82
27	Improve the quality of the food we eat	65	65	66	43	67	55	45	72	75	78
28	Protect the world's poorest people from environmental harm	58	58	57	33	58	48	36	70	65	71
29	Help prevent new diseases connected to climate change	58	59	59	33	49	50	46	71	67	73
30	Reduce the risk of heat strokes and asthma	57	55	59	39	51	46	47	66	69	67
31	Harm poor people more than it helps them	24	27	21	31	25	23	17	21	31	17
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU SUPPORT IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?											
32	Improve emergency response, such as increase the size of the fire department	60	61	59	45	53	59	56	66	71	64
33	Prepare healthcare providers and the public to deal with the effects of climate change	59	58	61	41	53	49	38	69	66	77
34	Plan for the loss of medical services in the event of damage from extreme weather	67	68	67	58	60	71	51	70	73	73

TABLE 2: Health Professionals' Attitudes on Climate

Table 2 illustrates how Americans think and feel about climate and health. Values for Item 1 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement. Values for items 13-16 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who said that would "definitely support" or "somewhat support" each initiative. Values for items 19-29 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who say the issue is "probably affecting me (or someone I know) personally" or "definitely affecting me (or someone I know) personally."

		Healthcare Professionals	General Public	Average
	Solving climate change now will cost less money than if we wait until later.	73	61	62
SOLVING CLIMATE CHANGE NOW WILL COST LESS MONEY THAN IF WE WAIT UNTIL LATER.				
1	Rising cost of food	53	54	54
2	Record heat waves during summer	47	61	60
3	Increased flooding	50	58	57
4	Increasing number of insects/pests	39	48	47
5	More damage from extreme weather	51	60	60
6	More frequent and severe droughts	51	60	59
7	Higher energy bills	45	52	51
8	Longer and more severe allergy seasons	42	50	49
9	Increased rates of breathing problems	41	46	46
10	More frequent power outages	34	39	39
11	More frequent and severe wildfires	47	54	53
PLEASE INDICATE HOW OFTEN YOU DO THE BEHAVIORS BELOW				
12	Turning up the temperature on my thermostat during summer to save energy	87	70	72
13	Turning off lights in rooms that are unoccupied	94	97	96
14	Biking, instead of using a car	33	22	23
15	Using public transportation	46	32	33
16	How often: Eating vegetarian	54	39	40
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU SUPPORT IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?				
17	A community-wide energy savings program	78	71	72
18	Update building codes to increase energy efficiency	75	69	70
19	Annual disaster preparedness training program	77	69	69
20	Requiring my local utility company to use more energy from renewable sources	73	68	68
21	Plan for the loss of medical services in the event of damage from extreme weather	73	67	68
22	Improve emergency response, such as increase the size of the fire department	60	60	60
23	Create alternatives to driving	74	62	63
24	Provide more education to citizens about climate change	60	65	64
25	Prepare healthcare providers and the public to deal with the effects of climate change	63	59	60

IV. IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings presented throughout the previous sections offer a number of insights into how climate change and climate solutions can be effectively communicated from a health perspective. Below are a series of further recommendations for engaging Americans on climate and health.

- 1. Elevate and empower health professionals' leadership on climate change.** Caring for our health means caring about climate change and climate pollution. Health professionals can lead the way in helping Americans to understand these links, especially if they are given education, tools, and a platform to connect with and inspire their peers.
- 2. Keep the health focus close to home, family, neighborhood, and personal impacts.** For many Americans, the most important health concerns tend to be closer to the immediate things that people care about. Broader public health issues that affect the nation or other countries are often tertiary, unless they also affect people's local neighborhoods and communities. Instead, focus on protecting and preserving personal and family health.
- 3. Connect the dots between climate impacts and health.** People want answers, not questions. Because many health impacts from climate take time to show up as symptoms, direct links between cause and effect can be difficult for people to make. Where there are links, help people make the connections between their health and what to do about it. Family and friends—both near and far away—may also be affected, and people will want to know how their lives are affected too. Use terms that generate broad support, like “clean air,” “clean water,” and “safe neighborhoods.”
- 4. Climate solutions bring co-benefits for health.** Responding to climate change provides opportunities to improve health across many facets of people's lives. Strengthening medical services and emergency responsiveness have clear co-benefits with broader public support. Reducing the pollution that causes climate change can directly improve health.
- 5. Food and water are common ground.** One thing that everyone can relate to is food. Food binds together families, communities, and cultures. Water, too, is a powerful concept that can activate Americans and spur them towards action. The impact of climate change on food and water quality and availability is an open opportunity for dialogue and engagement about how climate change affects the lives of Americans. Policies and initiatives that offer Americans the chance to save money on food while curbing climate change may be especially effective given the fact that a large number of Americans say they are noticing rising food prices.
- 6. Health practitioners can build bridges between people, research-based best practices, lifestyles, and a healthy climate.** Healthcare practitioners connect with people from all walks of life on a daily basis, from direct interactions with patients to town halls, health fairs, and educational events. They are trained to put their knowledge into action, and sharing research-based best practices is a core component of their work. As trusted messengers, healthcare professionals can be a bridge between health impacts and the skills that others need to take action that will prevent climate change and protect people's long-term health.
- 7. Preparedness can be an entry point.** Emphasizing the need to prepare hospitals and medical facilities to withstand the effects of extreme weather might be an effective entry point to help Americans understand the links between climate and health. Public support for initiatives like this is high. 67% of Americans say they would support an initiative to plan for the loss of medical services in the event of damage from extreme weather, including 58% of strong Republicans. And 59% of Americans, including 41% of strong Republicans, say they would support an initiative to prepare healthcare providers and the public to deal with the effects of climate change.



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ecoAmerica grows the base of popular support for climate solutions in America with research-driven marketing, partnerships, and national programs that connect with Americans' core values to bring about and support change in personal and civic choices and behaviors.

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