

Hennepin County Climate Action Plan Resident Survey Results January 2021

About the survey

This online survey for residents was conducted during the first phase of public engagement for the Hennepin County Climate Action Plan. The survey sought to learn about impacts the community has experienced from climate change and understand residents' priorities to inform the plan.

The survey was open from November 23 to December 4, 2020, and received 2,300 responses.

The survey was promoted through Hennepin County Environment and Energy's communication channels, including newsletters and social media, and through broader Hennepin County communication channels. Information about the survey was also shared with community partners who were asked to encourage their audiences to respond.

Key findings

During the first phase of public engagement, we heard that the county is generally on the right track, and the community supports us in taking bold and urgent action.

We heard the importance of taking an intersectional approach to ensure our climate action plan responds to issues of racial and environmental justice, health, workforce development and other topics.

We also heard many good ideas for how the plan can better reflect the values and priorities of the community.

The following key findings reflect commonly expressed ideas that garnered strong support.

Set ambitious goals and provide bold leadership

Most open-ended comments from the survey stressed the urgency of the issue of climate change and encouraged the county to respond by being ambitious and providing bold leadership.

Climate change is intersectional with racial disparities

Although everyone will be impacted by the climate crisis, it will not be experienced equally. Survey respondents see the connection of systemic racism and environmental injustices. The plan provides a new opportunity to develop and implement a collective vision for:

- Health and wellbeing outcomes
- Equitable transportation system
- Zero waste future
- Green economic recovery, workforce development, and job creation

Focus on systems change, not individual choice

A significant number of survey comments focused on the desire for transformational systems change through leadership and the use of policies, procedures, and incentives rather than focusing on educating residents on the actions they can take individually.

Key findings

What else would you like to tell the county about climate change?

Visual of topics identified from open-ended comments



Comments from residents

"Climate change is intersectional. Climate change burdens are racial/class discrimination burdens. It is all connected. Make space and time for those most impacted, along with experts. Talk to everyday people from all walks of life."

"The biggest opportunities for county impact are transportation and housing, and particularly their intersection. County roads are responsible for a huge amount of transportation emissions. Reallocate capacity from cars to alternatives, such as public transit and biking. Housing sprawl in the exurbs are also responsible for a huge amount of transportation and energy emissions. Promote availability of higher-density housing options closer to the core metro area."

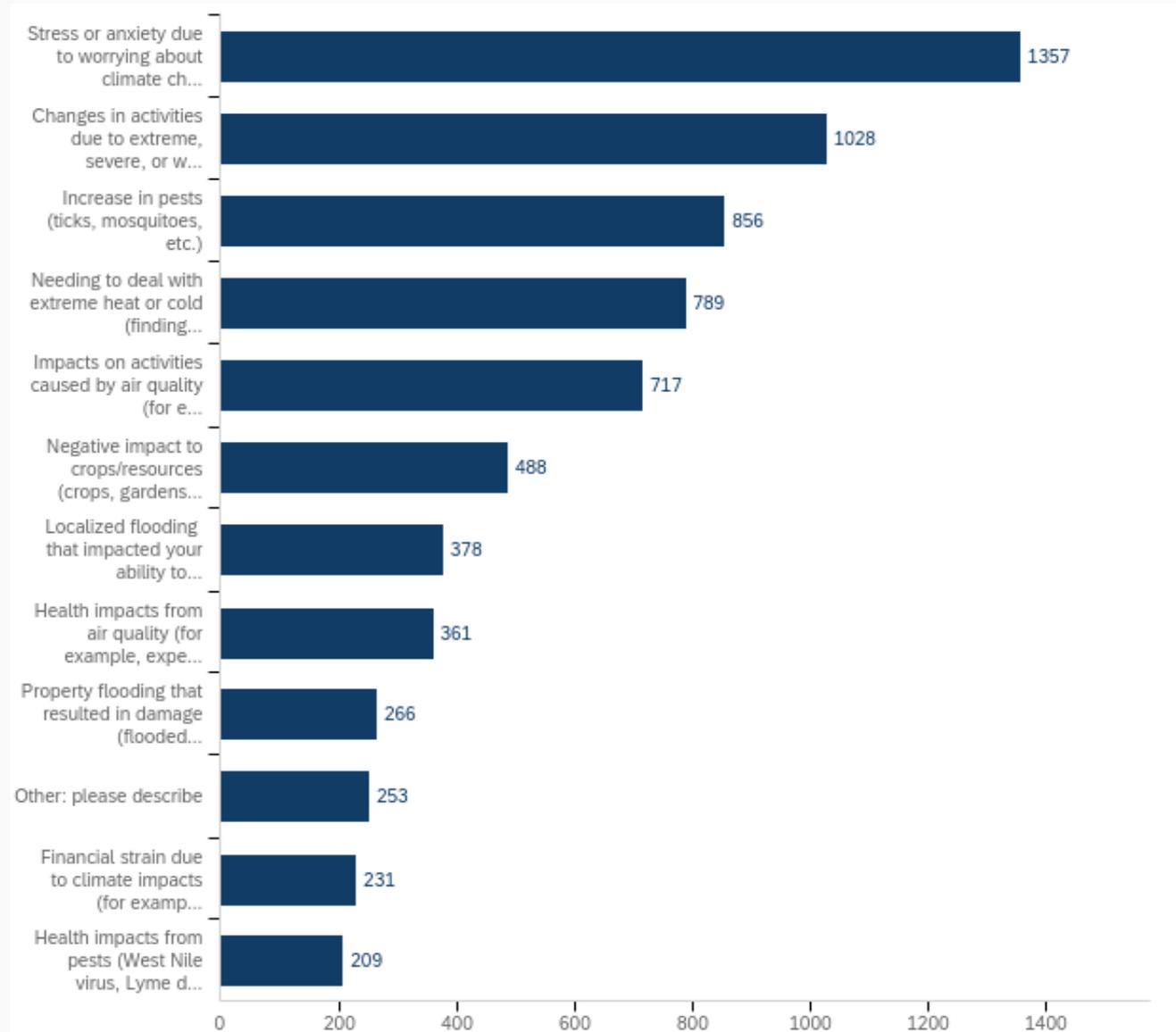
"We need to ask more of people. The assumption that we can all continue to live as we always have, consuming and disposing wantonly, driving everywhere, is a fallacy, and we need initiatives that make it easy for people to change their habits. Or expectations that require change. And the county must lead the way. Every county building should have organics recycling, 100% green energy, and other easy changes. If the county isn't showing up and making changes, no one else will."

Climate change impacts

Knowing the climate change impacts that our residents are experiencing will inform our communications to make the issues feel personal, local, and urgent. Understanding perceptions about climate change impacts also helps to assess our community's knowledge of the science and data and identify gaps in awareness.

The most common climate change impacts respondents have experienced are stress or anxiety about climate change, changes in activities due to extreme or weird weather, increase in pests such as ticks and mosquitoes, needing to deal with extreme heat or cold, and impacts on activities due to poor air quality.

Which of the below effects of climate change have you experienced over the last few years?



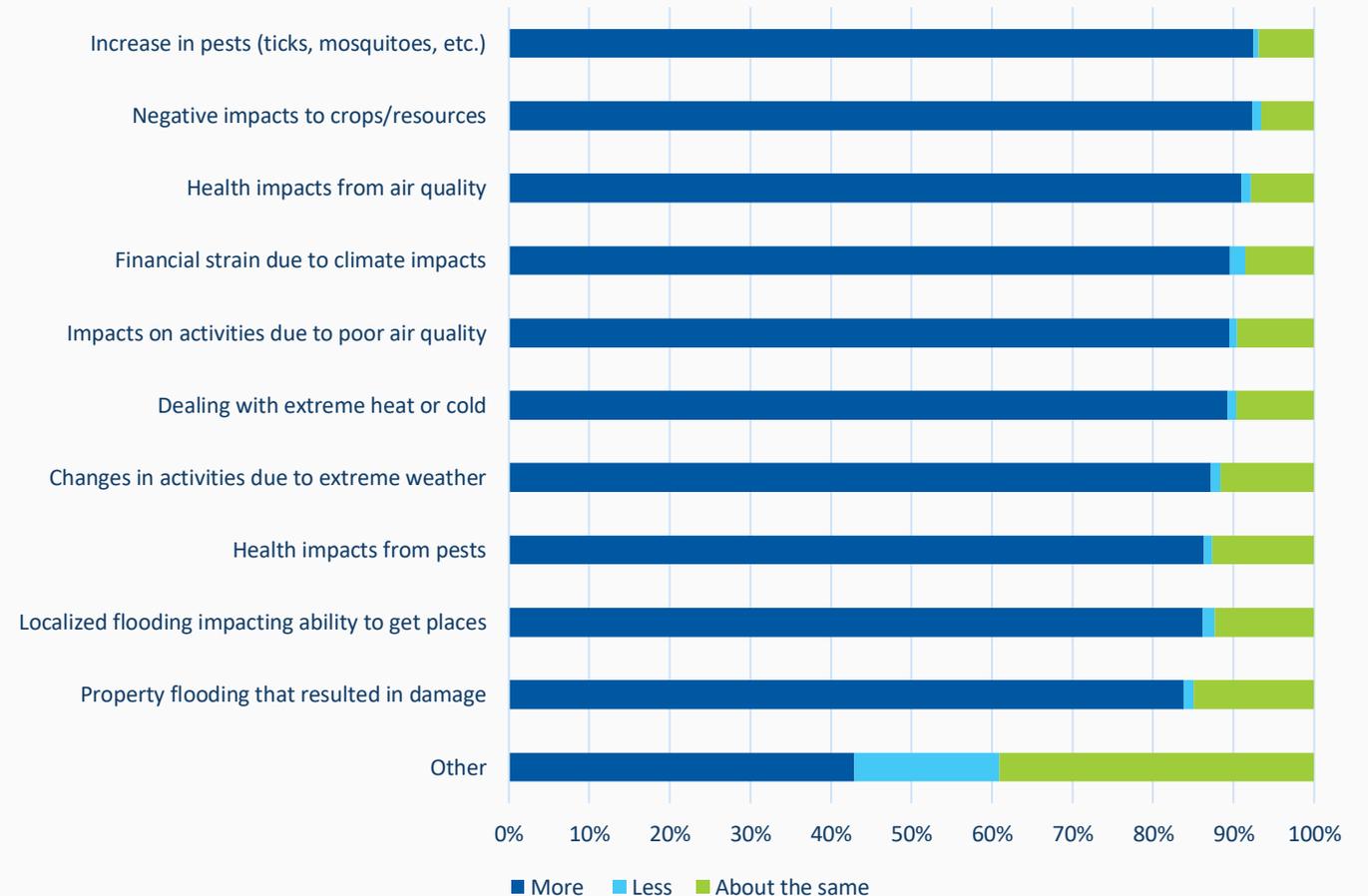
Climate change impacts

Respondents have generally noticed an increase in all of the climate change impacts.

The impacts they have most commonly noticed happening more are increases in pests such as ticks and mosquitoes, negative impacts to crops and resources, and health impacts from air quality.

Impacts they were likely to say were about the same include property flooding, localized flooding, and health impacts from pests.

Have you noticed more or less of these climate change effects?



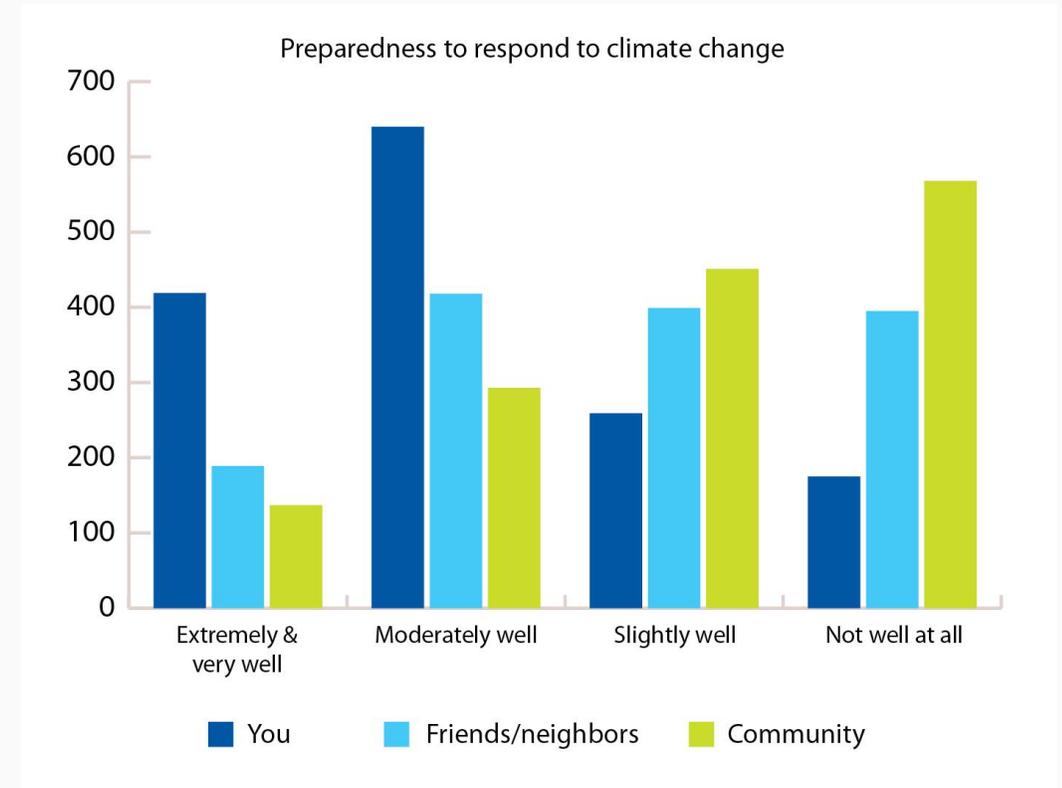
Preparedness for climate change

Knowing how well-prepared residents think they, their friends and neighbors, and their communities are to deal with and adapt to climate change will inform our communications and outreach. This helps us both identify where we need to increase preparedness and what education and outreach we need to do about preparedness.

Most respondents think they are prepared to deal with and adapt to climate change. Two-thirds of respondents describe themselves as being extremely, very, or moderately well prepared. Only 10% noted they were not well prepared, and another 10% responded they didn't know.

The perspective shifted when asked to assess how well prepared their friends and neighbors are, with only about 40% of respondents describing their friends and neighbors as being extremely, very, or moderately well prepared. Nearly 30% think their friends and neighbors are not well prepared.

Perceptions of preparedness are even lower when respondents consider their community. Nearly 40% think their community is not well prepared to respond to climate change impacts.



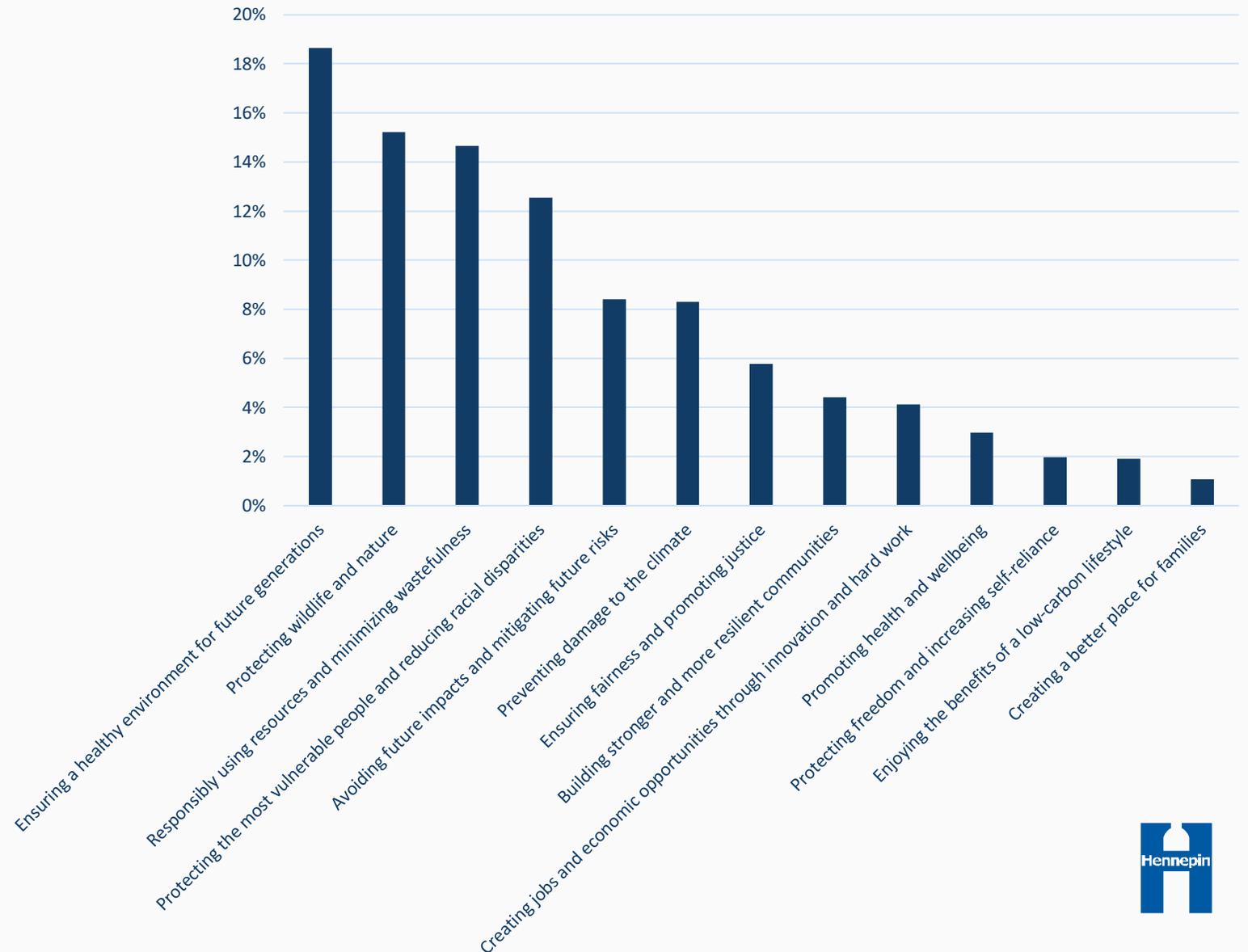
Values and priorities

The most important values for survey respondents when thinking about creating a climate-friendly future are:

- Ensuring a healthy environment for future generations
- Protecting wildlife and nature
- Responsibly using resources and minimizing wastefulness
- Protecting the most vulnerable people and reducing racial disparities

Emphasizing how solutions help protect future generations, vulnerable people, wildlife, and nature while responsibly using resources is likely to resonate with residents.

What values are most important to you as you think about creating a climate-friendly future?



Values and priorities

When asked which of the county's priorities for an impactful plan were the most important, respondents prioritized protecting and engaging people, especially vulnerable communities and reducing emissions in ways that align with core county functions and priorities.

Respondents questioned natural resources being grouped with buildings, roads, and infrastructure, expressing that natural resources were important enough to be called out separately. They also wanted to make sure the county was focusing on helping people protect themselves and their communities by supporting community-driven solutions and local action.

Priorities for an impactful plan



Protect and engage people, especially vulnerable communities



Protect our buildings, roads, infrastructure, and natural resources



Deliver services in times of disruption

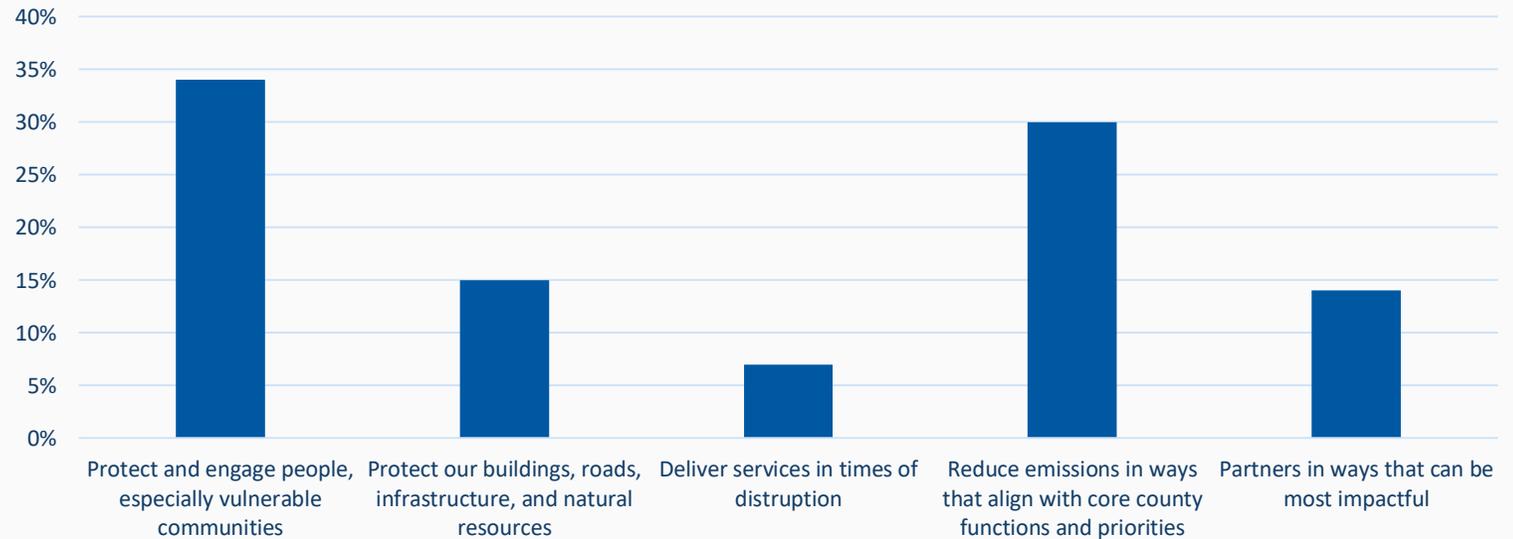


Reduce emissions in ways that align with core county functions



Partner in ways that can be most impactful

Which priorities are most important to you?



Climate actions

In responding to climate change, residents said the county's top priority should be focusing on solutions that change the systems that the county controls and using our influence as a bold leader to collaborate with local and state partners to achieve broader systemic change. The county has identified seven foundational strategies that serve as the best place for the county to start on those systemic changes.

Engaging residents to take action on climate change is also important. Individual action on climate change matters because it helps get people more engaged in the issue, reduces individual contributions to the problem, quickly scales to more impactful collective action, and puts pressure on government agencies, businesses, and institutions to make greater, systemic changes.

When being engaged in climate change, people are often presented with a long list of things that they can do, leaving them overwhelmed and wondering where best to focus their efforts.

Additionally, there is often a disconnect among the actions people think are effective at addressing climate change and the actions that are actually effective. This can leave people feeling like their small actions will have little impact on the scale of the global problem, while ignoring some surprising actions that can have a big impact.

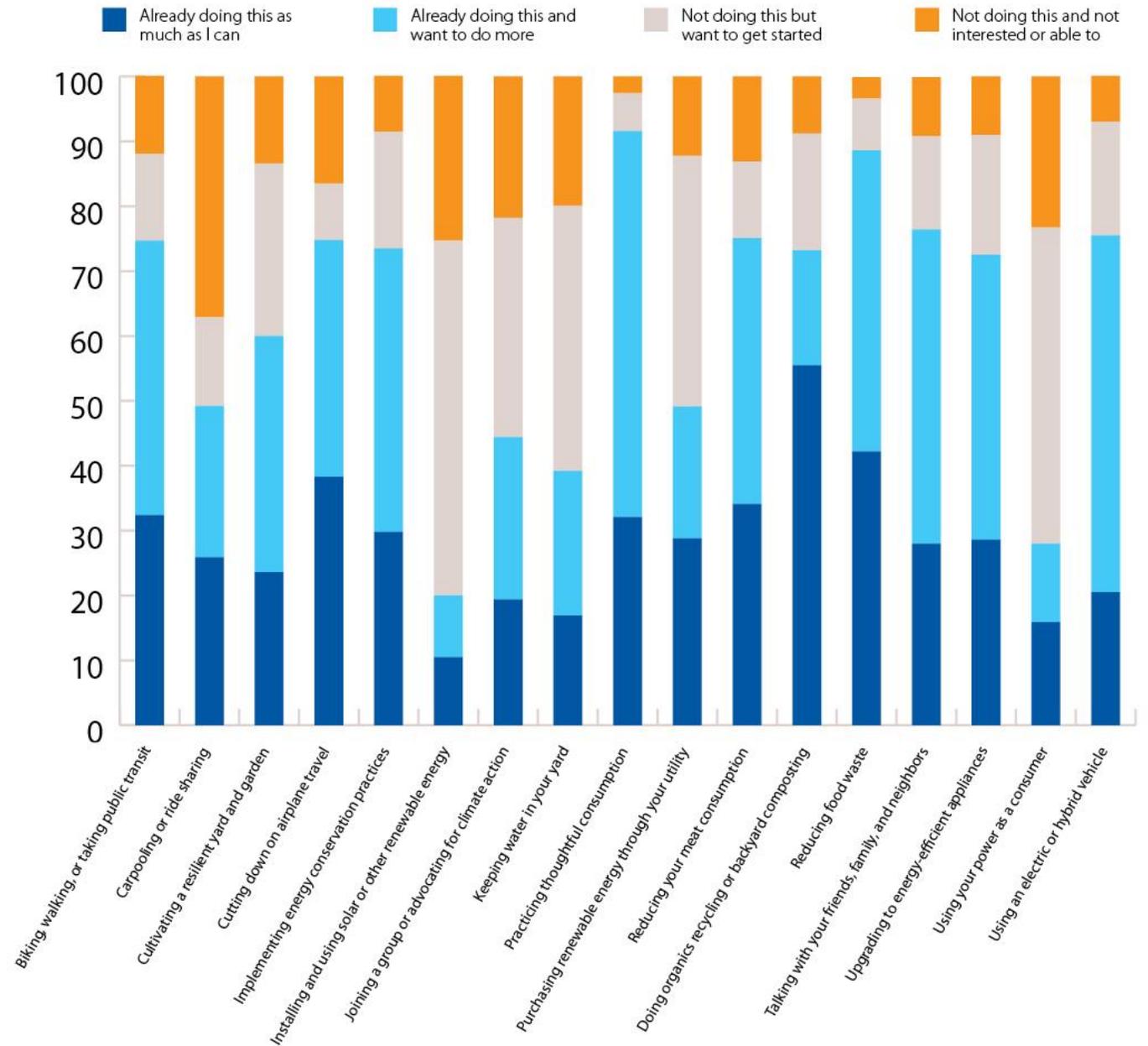
Determining the most impactful actions to focus on for outreach and communications involves factoring in an action's potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, people's willingness and readiness to take that action, and the ability of the county and partners to support people in taking that action.

Climate actions

Survey responses on climate action provide useful insights to guide what information to promote, what resources and programs to develop, and what partnerships to establish.

In the survey, residents were asked how much they were interested and/or engaged in a number of high-impact climate actions.

Resident interest and engagement in climate actions



Climate actions

Actions residents are already taking

Even among the actions that residents are already doing, there is opportunity for more engagement.

It's important to note that the survey respondents are likely more engaged in environmental issues and taking more environmental actions than the general public. So with just around half of the respondents already engaged in the most common actions, there is room to encourage more involvement.

Additionally, the responses to cutting down on airplane travel could be skewed by travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, so focusing on how to encourage people to continue these actions will be important.

Action	% already doing this as much as I can
Signing up for organics recycling or composting in your backyard	56%
Taking steps to reduce food waste	42%
Cutting down on airplane travel	38%
Reducing your meat consumption and eating a more plant-based diet	34%
Biking, walking, or taking public transit to reduce driving	32%
Practicing thoughtful consumption	32%
Implementing energy conservation practices at your home	30%
Purchasing renewable energy through your electricity provider	29%
Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances	29%
Talking with your friends, family, and neighbors about why you are concerned about climate change and what you are doing	28%
Carpooling or ride sharing	26%
Cultivating a resilient yard and garden	24%
Using your power as a consumer to support businesses that are taking steps to reduce their climate impact	20%
Joining a group or advocating for climate action in your community	19%
Keeping water in your yard with stormwater management practices	17%
Using an electric or hybrid vehicle	16%
Installing and using solar energy or other renewable energy at home	10%

Climate actions

Actions with the best opportunity for increased engagement

Residents identified actions that quickly scale up to having a larger collective impact as actions they want to be doing more – using their power as a consumer, practicing thoughtful consumption, and talking to others about climate change.

Residents likely need tools, support, and ideas for getting engaged in these actions. Residents are also interested in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and electric or hybrid vehicles, as well as lawn care practices that provide habitat and manage water runoff.

Action	% want to do more and want to get started
Using your power as a consumer to support businesses that are taking steps to reduce their climate impact	72%
Practicing thoughtful consumption	65%
Installing and using solar energy or other renewable energy at home	64%
Keeping water in your yard with stormwater management practices	63%
Cultivating a resilient yard and garden	63%
Talking with your friends, family, and neighbors about why you are concerned about climate change and what you are doing	63%
Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances	62%
Implementing energy conservation practices at your home	62%
Using an electric or hybrid vehicle	61%
Purchasing renewable energy through your electricity provider	59%
Joining a group or advocating for climate action in your community	59%
Biking, walking, or taking public transit to reduce driving	56%
Taking steps to reduce food waste	54%
Reducing your meat consumption and eating a more plant-based diet	53%
Cutting down on airplane travel	45%
Carpooling or ride sharing	37%
Signing up for organics recycling or composting in your backyard	36%

Climate actions

Actions with the highest barriers to adoption

The actions that residents said would be the hardest to adopt include carpooling or ride sharing, installing renewable energy at their home, or using an electric or hybrid vehicle.

Several of these actions are also on the list of actions to focus on for increased engagement, showing that some residents think the barriers to taking these actions are more insurmountable than others.

Although more needs to be learned about that barriers to taking action, some barriers that respondents mentioned include renting versus owning their home and the cost to implement. Focusing on understanding and reducing barriers and changing systems to make it easier, more convenient, and more accessible for residents will make it more likely that they will take action.

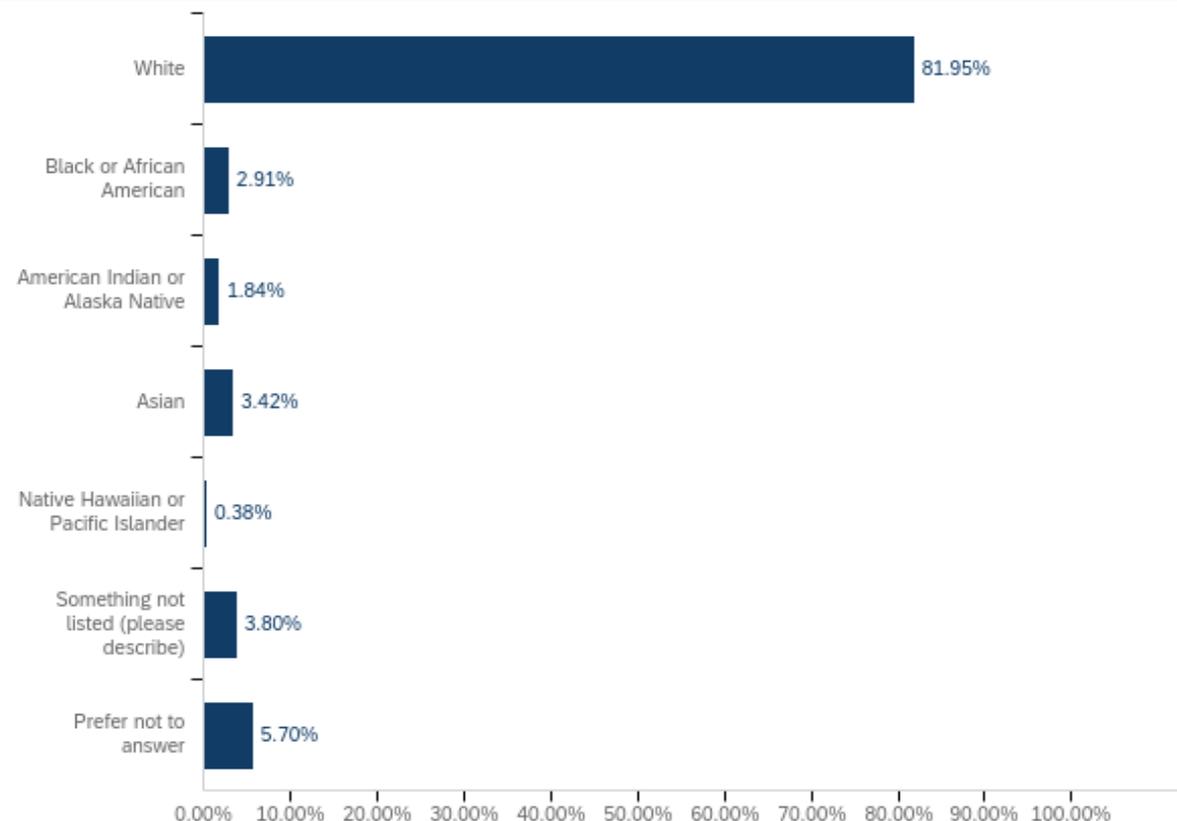
Action	% not doing and not interested or able to
Carpooling or ride sharing	37%
Installing and using solar energy or other renewable energy at home	25%
Using an electric or hybrid vehicle	23%
Joining a group or advocating for climate action in your community	22%
Keeping water in your yard with stormwater management practices	20%
Cutting down on airplane travel	17%
Cultivating a resilient yard and garden	13%
Reducing your meat consumption and eating a more plant-based diet	13%
Purchasing renewable energy through your electricity provider	12%
Biking, walking, or taking public transit to reduce driving	12%
Talking with your friends, family, and neighbors about why you are concerned about climate change and what you are doing	9%
Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances	9%
Signing up for organics recycling or composting in your backyard	9%
Implementing energy conservation practices at your home	9%
Using your power as a consumer to support businesses that are taking steps to reduce their climate impact	7%
Taking steps to reduce food waste	3%
Practicing thoughtful consumption	3%

Demographics

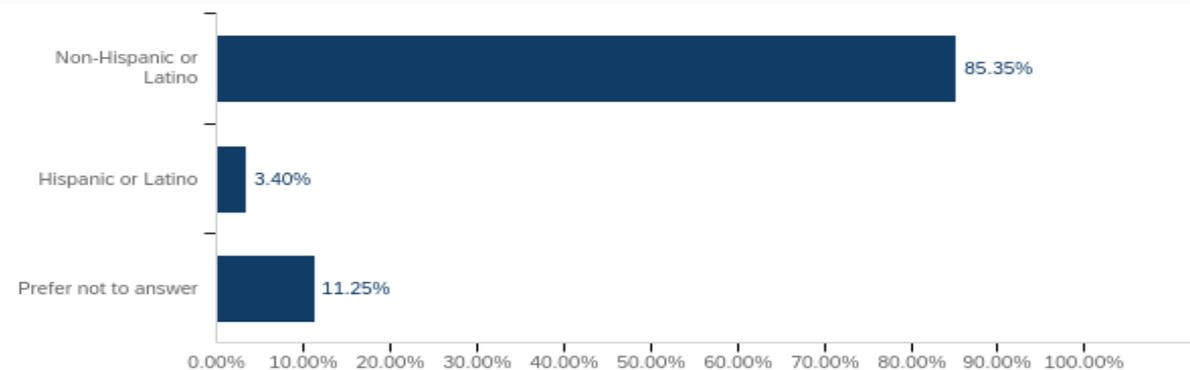
Survey respondents tended to be predominantly white and female, which is consistent with the typical demographics for the county's environmental communication channels.

Deeper engagement with more diverse audiences and vulnerable communities will require partnerships with community organizations who can help lead outreach efforts that resonate with their communities.

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be

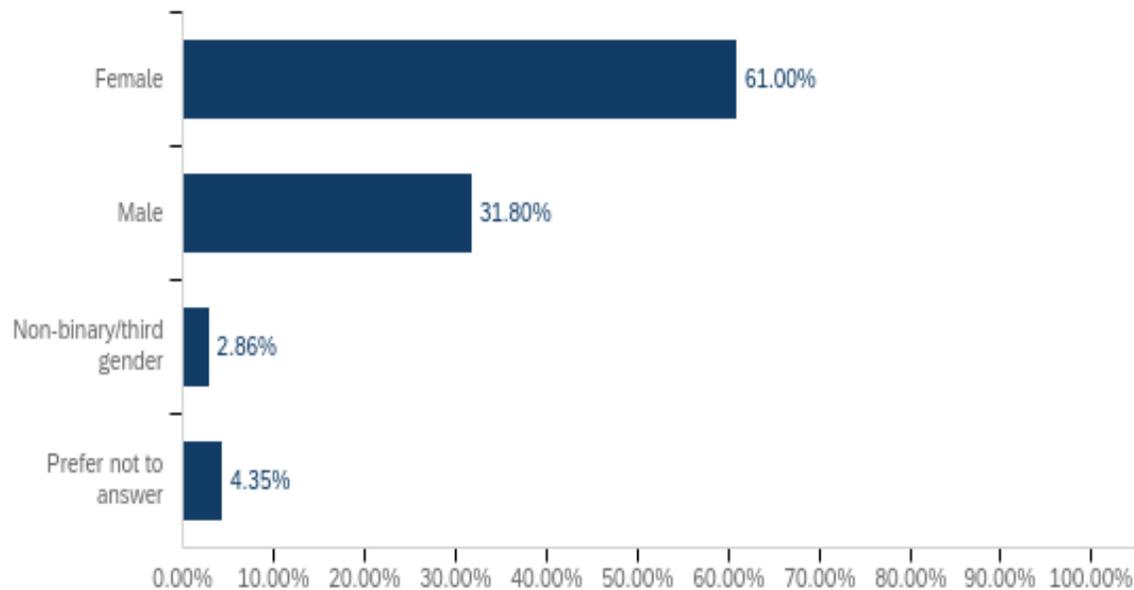


Ethnicity

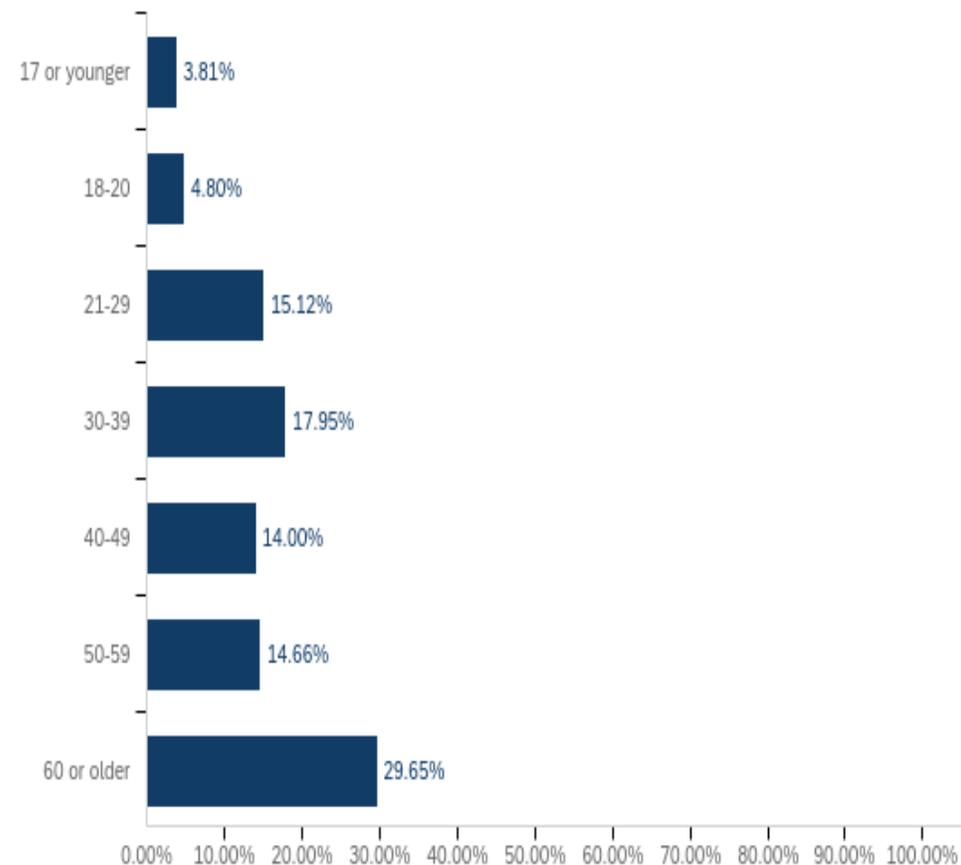


Demographics

What is your gender?



What category includes your age?



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