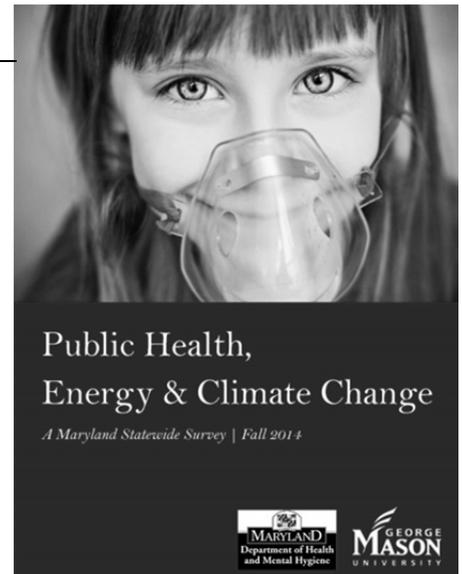


Public Health, Energy & Climate Change

Report Key Findings

Most Marylanders understand that climate change harms human health

- More than half of Marylanders (55%) say that they expect that people's health in their communities will be affected by climate change in the next several years.
- State residents say breathing and respiratory problems (72%), injuries from extreme weather (61%), and heat stroke (55%) are likely to become more common in the state due to climate change.
- Infectious disease is less likely to be cited as an increasing risk to health due to climate change. Less than half of state residents (42%) say that it will become more common even though climate change is projected to affect the spread of disease.



Doctors and public health experts are trusted sources of climate change information

- Medical authorities are among the professionals trusted the most for information on climate change. Marylanders trust doctors and public health experts on climate change only slightly less strongly than scientists at Maryland universities (63% vs. 70%).

The perceived risks to health from chemicals and pollution have grown

- More than half of Marylanders (55%) say that exposure to chemicals, including pesticides, in food and other products is a major risk to their personal health. This represents a sizeable shift—up 23 percentage points—since spring 2013.
- Polluted drinking water (52%), air pollution (47%) and second-hand smoke (41%) also showed considerable increases in public perceptions as major risks with 19, 16, and 12 percentage-point gains respectively.
- Sixty-three percent of Marylanders cite climate change as a moderate or major risk to their personal health—an increase of 11 percentage points from spring 2013.

The economy, clean water and health care access are Marylanders' top state policy priorities

- Three-quarters of Marylanders (74%) say that improving access to health care should be a high or very high priority for the state's General Assembly and governor.
- Health care access ranks just after creating jobs (89%) and reducing water pollution (81%) in Marylanders' priorities, and is at the same level as growing the middle class (74%).

Fossil fuels and nuclear power are seen as harmful to health; solar and wind are not

- Almost three-quarters of Marylanders (72%) say that coal is somewhat or very harmful to people's health. Oil (64%) and nuclear power (58%) also are energy sources that raise the most health concerns.

- Over the past year, the number of people who say that coal is “very harmful” to health increased by 10 percentage points to 41%.
- Renewable energy sources such as wind and solar continue to be viewed by majorities as non-harmful (solar, 65%; offshore wind, 57%; land-based wind, 58%). In 2014, there was an increase of five percentage points in those people who say that solar has no negative effects on health.

Communication Considerations

- **Put doctors and public health experts out front and center before Marylanders to talk about climate and health.**
Medical professionals are among the top five professions trusted the most for information on climate change. Marylanders trust doctors and public health experts only slightly less strongly than scientists at Maryland universities on the issue. Make sure that Marylanders see physicians and health experts taking a stance on climate’s health risks, and what they can do to address them.
- **Marylanders think that climate change will affect their children’s future health; remind them that it also affects their current health and that children are particularly at risk.**
State residents are less likely to identify young children as very vulnerable to climate change, and think that the people who are most likely to be harmed are future generations. Bring the conversation back to the present by emphasizing that people today are harmed by climate change’s impacts and that young children are among the most vulnerable, along with those on low incomes, people with medical conditions and the elderly.
- **Help Marylanders make the connection between climate change and increases in disease**
Infectious disease is less likely to be cited as becoming more common with climate change across all regions of the state even though climate change is projected to affect the distribution of disease vectors. Talk to Marylanders about what they can do to protect themselves from increased risk.
- **Talk about connection between fossil fuels, like coal, and air pollution**
Marylanders were more likely in 2014 than in 2013 to say that they saw coal as very harmful to people’s health. Substantial proportions of Marylanders still say they do not know what risks energy sources pose to their health, however. This provides an opportunity to discuss the connection between forms of energy production and health.
- **Make it clear that there are energy options that benefit public health**
Renewable energy sources such as wind and solar continue to be viewed as non-harmful to health. In 2014, there was an increase of five percentage points—up to 65% from 60% the previous year— in those people who say that solar has no negative effects on health. Help Marylanders make the switch to renewables through their electricity suppliers, or link them to firms that will help them generate their own renewable energy, such as with solar leasing programs.