Covering Health
Making Climate Change Personal

A Harvard C-CHANGE Training
About Us

Gina McCarthy
Director
Former U.S. EPA Administrator

Ari Bernstein, MD, MPH
Co-Director
Pediatrician at Boston Children’s Hospital
Our Work

The Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health increases public awareness of the health impacts of climate change and uses science to make it personal, actionable, and urgent.

The Center leverages Harvard’s cutting-edge research to inform policies, technologies, and products that reduce air pollution and other causes of climate change.

By making climate change personal, highlighting solutions, and emphasizing the important role we all play in driving change, Harvard C-CHANGE puts health outcomes at the center of climate actions.
Overview

- Climate & Health Science
- Latest Communications Research
- The Year Ahead - Editorial Planning
- Story Ideas from National to Local
- Resources
- Q&A
What is Climate Change?

Source: King County, WA
Why Care?
Why is it Hard to Communicate?

• Problems described in distant future, not present
• Disproportionate coverage of deniers when scientists and the public agrees it is caused by human activity
• Fewer reporters cover the “climate beat”
• Newsrooms still lack diversity, which reduces the variety of coverage and content
• Focus on politics
• Scary climate scenarios get attention, but cause apathy
• Americans are overwhelmed by negative information—it causes them to disengage.
• Efforts to belittle and undermine potential solutions
Public Opinion is Shifting

- Nearly 70% of voters are “worried” about climate change and 71% want the federal government to do more -new Climate Nexus poll conducted by Yale & George Mason.

- A majority of Americans (54%) consider climate change a critical threat, the first time since the question was introduced in 2008 - According to newly released polling from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs
Why Health?

- Research shows using health framing for climate issues resonates broadly across demographics in the U.S.
- A 2018 Rutgers study showed readers are more likely to click on articles on climate using a health frame than other frames, such as environmental, economic and morality.
- A recent study by ecoAmerica and Yale Climate Communications concludes that:
  - Health is a major motivator for American climate action;
  - Over half of Americans report experiencing health impacts from climate change;
  - Americans believe that creating a safe and healthy climate is a moral imperative; and
  - Two in three Americans understand that climate solutions benefit their health.
Why Solutions?

• The greatest public health opportunity of the 21st century.
• Every step to fight air pollution will lead to cleaner air, soil and water and create major health benefits:
  • Less asthma, heart disease, and lung cancer;
  • More places to play and be active;
  • Improved mental health;
  • More resilient communities;
  • Better nutrition; and
  • Lower healthcare costs.
“Climate change is perhaps the №1 issue on which the media has the opportunity to shift the narrative from the problems to what needs to — and can — be done about them.” – Solutions Journalism Network

- ecoAmerica research shows message resonance improves greatly when people hear how they can personally benefit from solutions.
- Make a low-cost, stable supply argument connect those solutions with better health, stronger pocketbooks, and a better future for themselves, their family, and their community.
- Americans are overwhelmed by negative information on climate change. It causes them to disengage.
- Use one or two obvious local examples.
- Only list one or two health impacts. Too many causes people to detach from or dislike the message.
- Move more quickly to solutions.
Why Community?

- **People don't need to 'believe' in climate change to act on it**
- A community frame can encourage people who “don’t believe in climate change” to work toward solutions.
- People don’t need to understand the enormous scale of climate to craft solutions and carry them through.
- They can be inspired to participate in projects to help the community adapt to climate change when they believe these projects would help strengthen and advance their community.
Why Focus on Visuals?

7 Principles of Visual Climate Change Communication

1. Show Local Climate Impacts
2. Show 'Real' People
3. Show Emotionally Powerful Impacts
4. Tell New Stories
5. Be Careful with Protest Imagery
6. Show Climate Causes at Scale
7. Understand Your Audience
Editorial Planning

- **Sep-Nov** – Hurricane Season
- **Sep 16-23** - Covering Climate Now, 60+ news outlets will run one week of focused climate coverage
- **Sep 20 & 27** – Climate Strikes and weekly Fridays For Future
- **Sep 23-27** – UN international [Climate Action Summit](#)/NYC Climate Week
- **Sep 25** - IPCC report
- **Oct** - Children’s Health Month
- **Nov** - Lancet Report on climate and health
- **Dec 2-13** – COP25, Santiago, Chile
- **Dec-March** - **50th Anniversary of the Clean Air Act**
- **April 22** - 50th Anniversary of Earth Day
- **May** - Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
- **July/August** - Heatwaves
Story Ideas

• **Major Storms**
  • Finding local angles if there are wildfires, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes
  • Mold and asthma, exposure to toxics, mental health issues
  • Strains on healthcare delivery & supply chain issues
  • Costs to Medicaid

• **Health impacts to vulnerable populations**
  • Pregnancy, children, minorities, elderly
  • Tracking emergency room visits

• **Children and Climate Change**
  • Youth Activists
  • Climate Strikes

• **Mental health and climate change**
  • PTSD from exposure to extreme weather
  • Eco-anxiety
  • Stress from job transitions

• **Climate refugees**
  • Immediate and long-term health impacts
  • Access to care after displacement
  • Health insurance issues

• **Schools**
  • Medical/Nursing school trainings
  • Student curriculums
  • Food waste programs
  • Bus idling restrictions
Continued

• **Community/City focus**
  - health and air quality effects
  - track health impacts of local climate policies

• **Food & Nutrition**
  - Impacts and opportunities for rural communities
  - Changing our food supply system
  - Agriculture’s contribution to GHGs and regenerative ag
  - Crop and Nutrient deficiencies

• **Water-borne diseases**
  - Diarrheal diseases—which are particularly dangerous for infants and young children and the elderly
  - Heavy rainfalls may promote disease outbreaks
  - Harmful algal blooms

• **Vector-borne diseases**
  - Changes in who may be exposed to disease-carrying insects like ticks and mosquitoes.
Solution Ideas

- Changes in polling and acceptance
- Market-based solutions
- Transitions to clean energy and startups
- Research by local universities
- Efforts to address traffic/transportation issues
- New Construction – healthy buildings
- Youth activist profiles
- Actions individuals can take
- Educational programs
- Local jobs training programs
- City adaptation efforts
- Urban design to reduce risks for disease outbreaks, e.g. Green space, Green buildings
- Actions by local doctor and nurses groups and health systems
Key Reports

**National Climate Assessment** This congressionally mandated report gives great examples of the climate-driven changes we see already and what it could mean for health in 10 regions in the country.

**Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change** Annual report summarizing the health impacts of climate change to Americans, especially heat stress issues, and highlights the importance of adaptation and training for health workers.

**WHO: COP24 Special Report on Health and Climate Change** Toolkit and report showing savings on health costs will far outweigh the cost of tackling global warming.

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** This special report paints a picture of what it would be like to live in a world that is 1.5°C warmer.
Climate & Health Resources

**Harvard C-CHANGE** fact sheets, research, and faculty sources

**Journalist’s Resources** Guide for reporting on mental health and climate change

**GCAS Health & Climate Resource Guide**: Developed for the Global Climate Action Summit, this guide provides key resources including articles, consensus documents, fact sheets, toolkits, and helpful infographics.

**U.S. Call to Action on Health** signed by 74+ health care organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Nursing.

**Medical Consortium on Climate Change** A coalition of local medical societies representing over half the physicians in America, also 29 aligned health and science-based associations affiliate members.

**NRDC Fact Sheets**: Climate Change and state health impacts (IL, WA on the way)

**APHA Guide** for local public health departments

**American Academy of Pediatrics** Report on Climate Change and Children’s Health

**Health Care Without Harm** reducing the environmental footprint of health care organizations
Local Resources

**Climate Matters** Information on climate change by media market

**Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge** Since June 2017, mayors from more than 230 cities representing more than 70 million Americans have said *We Are Still In.*

**CDP**, tracking city climate action plans

**Fulfilling America’s Pledge**, launched at the 2018 Global Climate Action Summit, is the most comprehensive assessment to date of how leaders are driving the United States toward a low-carbon future.

**Rocky Mountain Institute** working with cities on climate plans

**C2ES Map** Map of U.S. State Climate Action Plans

**Georgetown Climate Center** Map of community-level plans

**Air Now** Air Quality monitoring on the local level
Communications Resources

**Covering Climate Now initiative** Columbia Journalism Review

**Reporting on Climate Change from a Solutions Lens** Solutions Journalism Network

**Global Warming’s Six Americas** Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

**Climate Visuals Photo Database**

**Center for Climate Change Communication** George Mason University

**SciLine, Journalist Resource** How and when to find a scientist expert
Contact Us

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
401 Park Drive, 4th Fl. West, Suite 415
Boston, MA 02215

@HarvardCCHANGE

cchange-media@hsph.harvard.edu