

Chicago Residents Want Climate Friendly Programs

The 2017 American Climate Metrics Survey, conducted by ecoAmerica and Lake Research Partners, found that Chicago (CH) residents are longing for their city to take action on climate solutions, including preparing for climate impacts. They are motivated by a moral responsibility to protect their family and future generations. Chicago residents are looking to scientists, health professionals, and environmental organizations with increasing levels of trust from year to year. These messengers are key in communicating the urgency of climate issues in Chicago. Currently, one in three residents are also getting climate information from family and friends. Majorities are talking about climate change with their peers and many have shifted toward biking, walking, or public transportation to reduce energy use. Notably, less than half as many residents trust President Trump on the matter than trusted President Obama in 2016. Residents support taking actions that prevent climate change, such as investing funds in clean energy and public transportation, at rates higher than national averages. Although Chicago has been slowly increasing public awareness of the city's climate programs, there is room to support residents' strong desire for climate leadership.

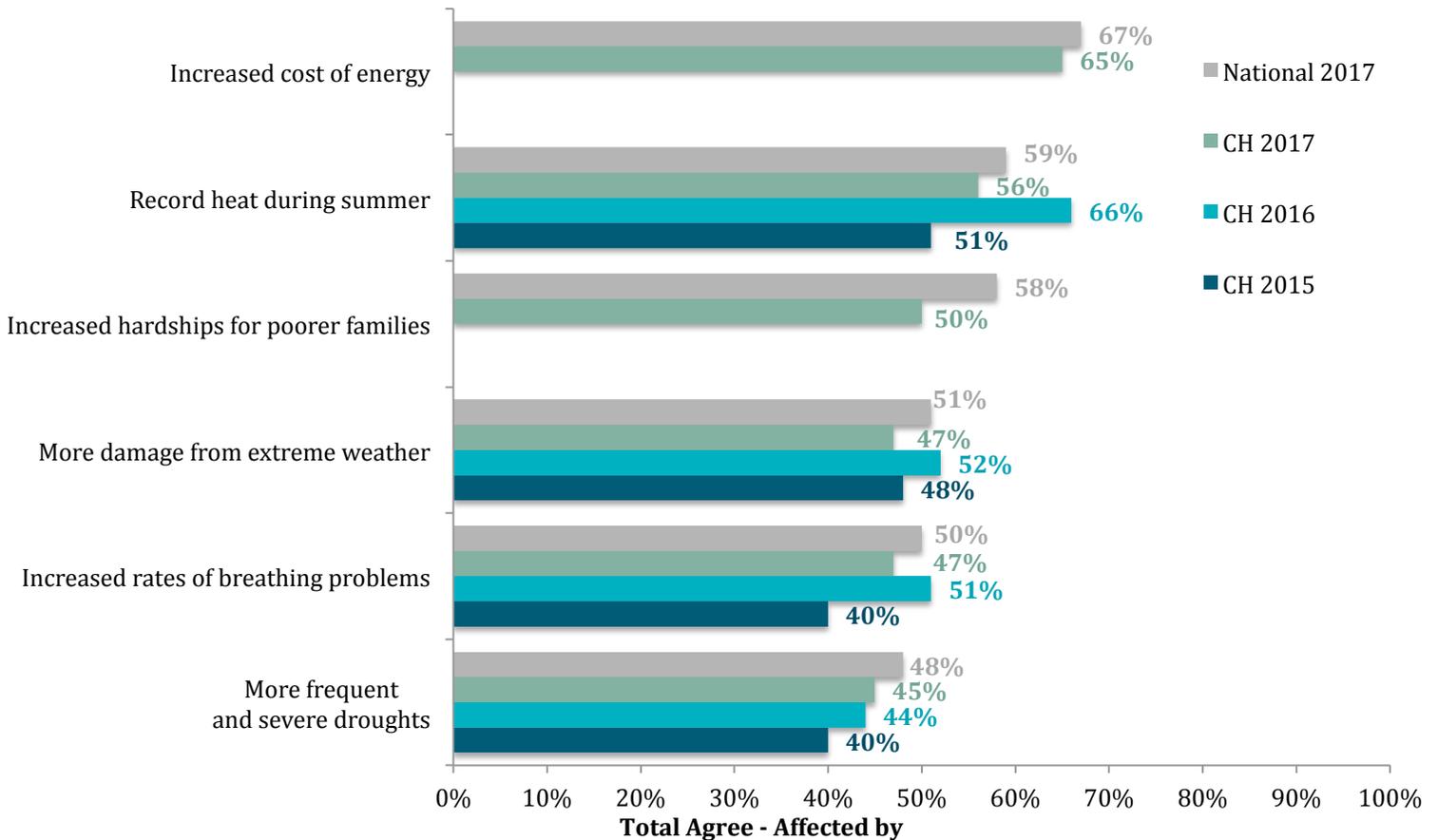
Note: This annual survey was previously conducted in September 2015 and 2016, prior to the election of President Trump, whose views on climate change have varied, and whose plans to address it have moved from uncertain to regressive. The following survey was conducted in 2017, during President Trump's first term.

Notable climate change sentiments of Chicago Residents in 2017

- 1. BELIEF AND CONCERN: More than four out of five CH residents believe climate change is happening. Their concern about climate change is increasing annually.**
 - a. 83% believe that climate change is happening (vs. 80% nationally, 84% CH 2015)
 - b. 80% are concerned about climate change (vs. 76%, 76%)
 - c. 78% have noticed more severe weather and changing seasonal weather patterns where they live over the last several years (vs. 78%, 82%)
- 2. CAUSATION: CH residents understand that climate change is the result of human activity, at rates higher than national averages.**
 - a. 54% attribute climate change to a combination of both human activities and natural causes (vs. 49% nationally, 55% CH 2015)
 - b. 30% attribute climate change to human activities (vs. 27%, 27%)
 - c. 9% attribute climate change to natural causes (vs. 17%, 11%)
- 3. IMPACTS: Pocketbook and health affects top the list of climate impacts felt by CH residents. They claim notable increases in being affected by heat waves, breathing problems, and droughts since 2015.**

Note: "Increased cost of energy" and "Increased hardships for poorer families" were first asked in 2017

- a. 65% claim to be affected by an increased cost of energy (vs. 67% nationally)
- b. 56% claim to be affected by record heat waves during the summer (vs. 59% nationally, 51% CH 2015)
- c. 50% claim to be affected by increased hardships for poorer families (vs. 58% nationally)
- d. 47% claim to be affected by more damage and harm from extreme weather, like storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes (51%, 48%)
- e. 47% claim to be personally affected by increased rates of breathing problems, such as asthma (vs. 50%, 40%)
- f. 45% claim to be affected by more frequent and severe droughts (vs. 48%, 40%)



Note: "Increased hardships for poorer families" and "Increased cost of energy" were first asked in 2017

4. BENEFITS: A growing majority of CH residents see the benefits that climate solutions can bring to their health, the economy, and jobs. However, over half believe that preventing climate change would increase the cost of energy.

- a. 71% say if the U.S. took steps to prevent future climate change, it would improve our health (vs. 67% nationally, 67% CH 2015)
- b. 69% say if the U.S. took steps... it would improve the economy (vs. 64%, 64%)
- c. 60% say if the U.S. took steps... it would increase jobs (vs. 61%, 56%)
- d. 51% say if the U.S. took steps... it would increase the cost of energy (vs. 54% nationally)

5. VALUES: Climate values are pervasive among CH residents and stronger than national rates, particularly regarding clean water, air, and clean energy. Residents agree with our moral responsibility to protect the health and safety of future generations.

Note: All questions were first asked in 2017, except “Clean water is a critical right ...” and “We have a moral responsibility ...”

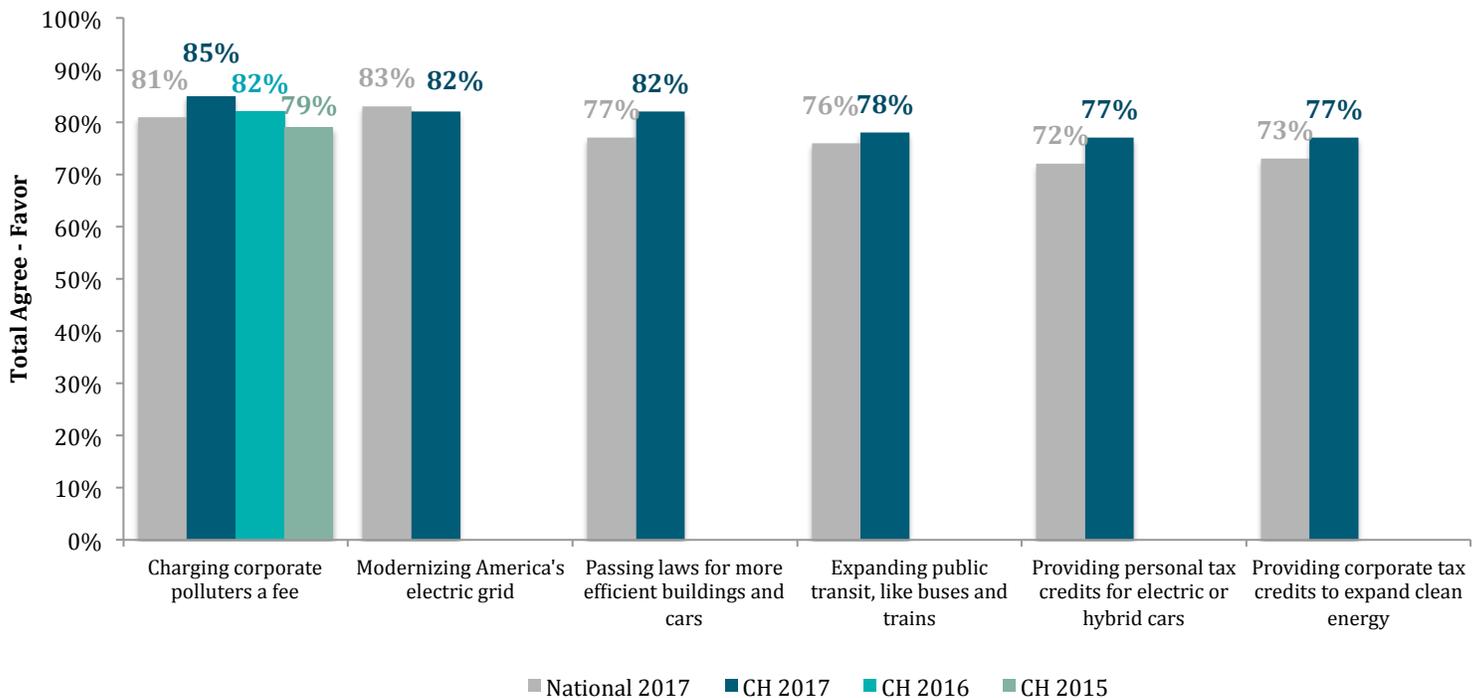
- a. 89% say that clean water is a critical right for all people (vs. 88% nationally, 90% CH 2015)
- b. 88% say clean air is a critical right for all people (vs. 86% nationally)
- c. 88% say clean energy that does not pollute the air or water is a critical right for all people (vs. 84% nationally)
- d. 86% say that we have a moral responsibility to create a safe and healthy climate for ourselves and our children (vs. 83%, 89%)
- e. 86% say that communities need to prepare for floods and droughts to minimize their impact (vs. 83% nationally)
- f. 79% say the government needs to protect all people from the impacts of extreme weather (up from 70% nationally)

6. SOLUTIONS: An increasing majority of CH residents favor a range of climate solutions. They believe in investing the money collected in clean energy, public transportation, and education and health services at slightly higher rates than national sentiments.

Note: All questions were first asked in 2017, except “Charging large companies a fee”

- a. 85% favor a proposal to reduce climate change pollution by charging large companies a fee for the pollution they create (vs. 81% nationally, 79% CH 2015)
- b. 82% favor... modernizing America’s electric grid (vs. 83% nationally)
- c. 82% favor... passing laws for more efficient buildings and cars (vs. 77%)
- d. 78% favor... expanding public transportation, like buses and trains (vs. 76%)
- e. 77% favor... providing personal tax credits for electric or hybrid cars (vs. 72%)
- f. 77% favor... providing corporate tax credits to expand clean energy (vs. 73%)
- g. 42% say the money collected (from carbon fees) should be used to fund research and development of new, clean energy sources, topping the listed options (vs. 39%)

- h. 20% say the money collected should be used to improve education and health services, the second highest ranked of the options provided (vs. 15%)



Note: All questions were first asked in 2017, except "Charging corporate polluters a fee"

7. URGENCY: CH residents feel strong agency and urgency to act towards reducing the pollution that is causing climate change, at increasing rates that are higher than national averages. They are divided about whether the U.S. should prioritize economic growth over taking action on climate.

- a. 84% believe that *we*, and 76% that they *personally*, **need to take action now** to reduce the pollution that is causing climate change (vs. 77% and 70% nationally; 84% and 74% CH 2015, respectively)
- b. 86% believe that *we*, and 77% that they *personally*, **can reduce** the pollution that is causing climate change (vs. 76% and 68%; 83% and 73%, respectively)
- c. 43% believe that we could address climate change, but the costs of doing so are too high (vs. 43% nationally, 35% CH 2015)
- d. 47% believe that we should prioritize economic growth over taking action on climate change (vs. 51% nationally)

8. ENERGY: Strong majorities of CH residents believe the U.S. should produce more clean energy, and believe wind and solar are the lowest cost for consumers. However, there has been a rebound in support for producing coal and oil.

- a. 85% say that the U.S. should produce more wind and solar energy (vs. 87% nationally, 90% CH 2015), with 63% saying much more (vs. 66%, 66%)

- b. 59% say the U.S. should produce less coal (vs. 54%, 65%)
- c. 44% say the U.S. should produce less oil (vs. 42%, 50%)
- d. Compared to less sustainable sources, 48% believe wind and solar energy are the lowest cost for consumers (vs. 47%, 48%)

9. ENGAGEMENT: A growing number of CH residents are aware of the city's climate programs, but is often below national averages. There is room to better educate and support the community's strong desire for CH climate leadership.

- a. 38% say that Chicago is conserving energy (vs. 32% nationally, 28% CH 2015); 46% wish CH would conserve (vs. 41%, 32%)
- b. 28% say the city is taking action to prepare for the impacts of climate change (vs. 30%, 17%); 78% wish CH would prepare (72%, 78%)
- c. 20% say the city is educating others about climate change (vs. 24%, 13%); 34% wish CH would educate (vs. 33%, 22%)
- d. 16% say the city is using renewable energy like wind or solar energy (vs. 22%, 12%); 41% wish CH would do this (vs. 37%, 31%)

10. ADVOCACY: CH residents engage in climate-friendly behaviors, at rates on par with adults nationally. Talking about climate change with family and friends, and upgrades to appliances and lighting tops the list of behaviors. Many have voted for a candidate based on their support for climate action, however, there is still room to grow to galvanize this momentum.

Note: All questions were first asked in 2017, except "Upgraded appliances or lighting..."

- a. 71% have discussed climate change with family and friends and 46% with colleagues (vs. 69% and 41% nationally; 64% and 37% CH 2015, respectively)
- b. 69% have upgraded appliances or lighting to conserve energy at home (vs. 66% nationally, 65% CH 2015)
- c. 39% have shifted toward public transportation, 24% toward hybrid cars, and 43% toward biking and walking as a more energy-efficient form of transportation (vs. 31%, 24% and 39% nationally, respectively)
- d. 36% have contacted or voted for a candidate based on his or her support for taking action on climate change (vs. 35% nationally)

11. SOURCES: CH residents are increasingly hearing about climate from a variety of sources. News and media were indicated as the most common sources. More than one in three residents are hearing about climate change from family and friends.

- a. 69% have heard or read about climate change from the news and media recently (vs. 65% nationally, 67% CH 2015)
- b. 36% from family and friends (vs. 36%, 27%)
- c. 29% from federal elected officials (vs. 29%, 30%)

- d. 19% from professors and educators (vs. 24%, 19%)
- e. 14% from local community leaders (vs. 16%, 12%)

12. TRUST: Scientists, health professionals and environmental organizations are the most trusted messengers for climate information, with notable annual increases and rates higher than national averages. The most significant change in trust from 2016 is a 26% decrease from trusting President Obama to President Trump.

- a. 82% trust scientists as a source of information about climate change (vs. 70% nationally, 79% CH 2015)
- b. 71% trust health professionals (vs. 62%, 60%)
- c. 68% trust environmental organizations (vs. 61%, 63%)
- d. 49% trust newspapers, TV news, and Internet news sites (vs. 46%, 36%)
- e. 23% trust President Trump (vs. 31% nationally); 49% trusted President Obama in 2016 (vs. 41% nationally 2016)
- f. 25% trust celebrities (vs. 25%, 13%)
- g. 22% trust Congress (vs. 25%, 14%)

13. MOTIVATIONS: Many CH residents are motivated to act on climate change on a personal level for a variety of reasons, but the top reason is to protect their family. Even more want their community to commit to saving energy, using clean energy, and preparing for extreme weather.

Note: All questions were first asked in 2017

- a. 37% want to do more personally to address climate change to protect their family (vs. 38% nationally)
- b. 35% want to do more personally... to use more renewable and less polluting energy (vs. 31%)
- c. 34% want to do more personally... to reduce pollution (vs. 33%)
- d. 28% want to do more personally... to protect clean water (vs. 30%)
- e. 43% want their community to do more to address climate change to save energy (vs. 32%)
- f. 41% want their community to... use more renewable energy (vs. 41%)
- g. 36% want their community to... prepare for extreme weather (vs. 33%)

Methodology

ecoAmerica and Lake Research Partners (LRP) designed and LRP administered this survey, which was conducted online September 25–27, 2017. The survey yielded a total of 802 adult responses nationally and, separately, 400 adults in Chicago. The samples were drawn from an online panel, and the respondents were screened to ensure that they were over the age of 18. Both the national and the Chicago sample were weighted slightly by gender, region, age, race and education. The margin of error for the sample is +/-3.5%. In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. For example, if 50% of respondents in a sample of 900 respondents answered “Yes” to a particular question, we can be 95% confident that the true percentage will fall within 3.3 points or from 46.7% to 53.3%.

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Suggested Citation

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For more information contact Meighen Speiser, ecoAmerica Chief Engagement Officer at meighen@ecoAmerica.org