

Salt Lake City Residents Want Climate Solutions and Understand Benefits

The 2017 American Climate Metrics Survey, conducted by ecoAmerica and Lake Research Partners, found that Salt Lake City (SLC) residents have multi-year increasing concern about our changing climate. They support a variety of climate solutions, such as modernizing America's electric grid, providing more public transportation, such as buses and trains, and charging large businesses a fee for the pollution they create. They believe clean water and air are personal rights for all citizens. SLC residents are motivated by a moral responsibility to protect their family and future generations from pollution and other climate impacts. And, they are increasingly seeing the benefits that climate solutions will bring to their health and the economy, at higher rates than national averages. There is room for Salt Lake City to better educate its residents about its sustainability efforts and support their strong desire for local 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.

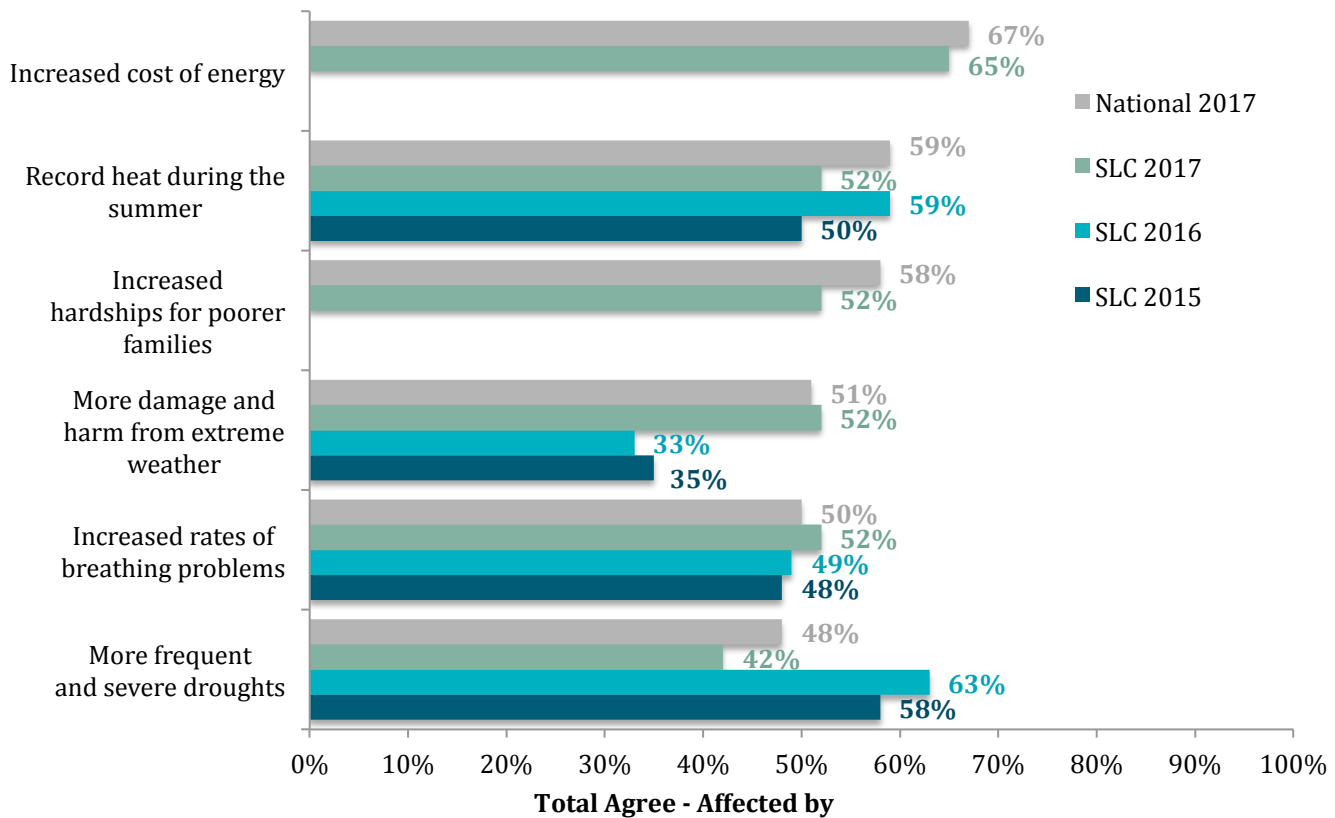
Notable climate change sentiments of Salt Lake City Residents in 2017

- 1. BELIEF AND CONCERN: Belief and concern for climate change are strong among SLC residents, at rates above national averages and increasing over the last two years. The majority have noticed more severe weather in recent years.**
 - a. 80% believe that climate change is happening (vs. 80% nationally, 80% SLC 2015)
 - b. 71% are concerned about climate change (vs. 76%, 66%)
 - c. 77% have noticed more severe weather and changing seasonal weather patterns where they live over the last several years (vs. 78%, 73%)
- 2. CAUSATION: SLC residents understand, generally, that climate change is the result of human activity, at rates higher than national averages.**
 - a. 58% attribute climate change to a combination of both human activities and natural causes (vs. 49% nationally, 60% SLC 2015)
 - b. 21% attribute climate change to human activities (vs. 27%, 21%)
 - c. 14% attribute climate change to natural causes (vs. 17%, 12%)
- 3. IMPACTS: Impacts of climate change are felt among SLC residents at slightly lower rates than national averages.** However, there have been notable annual increases in claims of being affected by extreme weather and breathing problems.

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. 52% claim to be affected by record heat waves during the summer (vs. 59% nationally, 50% SLC 2015)
- c. 52% claim to be affected by increased hardships for poorer families (vs. 58% nationally)
- d. 52% claim to be affected by more damage and harm from extreme weather, like storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes (51%, 33%)
- e. 52% claim to be personally affected by increased rates of breathing problems, such as asthma (vs. 50%, 48%)
- f. 42% claim to be affected by more frequent and severe droughts (vs. 48%, 58%)



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

4. BENEFITS: A majority of SLC residents see the benefits climate change solutions can bring to health, the economy, and jobs, at rates higher than national averages, and increasing annually. However, many also believe that solutions would increase the cost of energy.

- a. 70% say if the U.S. took steps to prevent future climate change, it would improve our health (vs. 67% nationally, 67% SLC 2015)
- b. 69% say if the U.S. took steps... it would improve the economy (vs. 64%, 57%)
- c. 55% say if the U.S. took steps... it would increase jobs (vs. 61%, 51%)

d. 55% say if the U.S. took steps... it would increase the cost of energy (vs. 54% nationally)

5. VALUES: Climate values are increasing, and are more powerful among SLC residents than nationally, particularly regarding clean water, air and clean energy. They also feel a strong moral responsibility to ensure the 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. 90% say that clean water is a critical right for all people (vs. 88% nationally, 88% SLC 2015)

b. 89% say clean air is a critical right for all people (vs. 86% nationally)

c. 89% say that we have a moral responsibility to create a safe and healthy climate for ourselves and our children (vs. 83%, 87%)

d. 88% say that communities need to prepare for floods and droughts to minimize their impact (vs. 83% nationally)

e. 84% say clean energy that does not pollute the air or water is a critical right for all people (vs. 84% nationally)

6. SOLUTIONS: An increasing majority of SLC residents favor a proposal to charge companies a fee for the pollution they create. 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. 80% favor a proposal to reduce climate change pollution by charging large companies a fee for the pollution they create (vs. 81% nationally, 73% SLC 2015)

b. 86% favor... modernizing America's electric grid (vs. 83% nationally)

c. 82% favor... expanding public transportation, like buses and trains (vs. 76%)

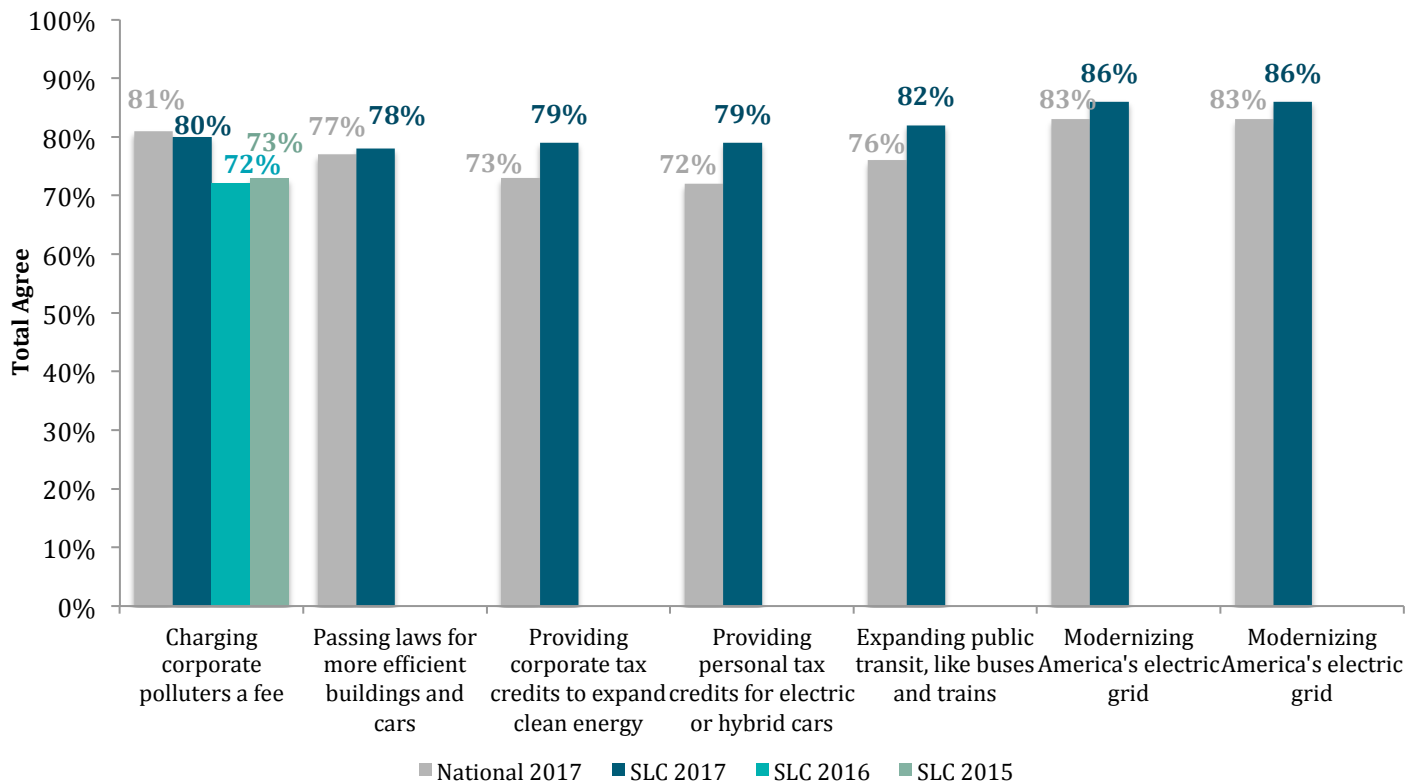
d. 79% favor... providing personal tax credits for electric or hybrid cars (vs. 72%)

e. 79% favor... providing corporate tax credits to expand clean energy (vs. 73%)

f. 78% favor... passing laws for more efficient buildings and cars (vs. 77%)

g. 38% say the money collected (from carbon fees) should be used to fund research and development of new, clean energy sources, over other engagement actions listed (vs. 39%)

h. 19% say the money collected (from carbon fees) should be used to improve education and health services, over other engagement actions listed (vs. 15%)



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

7. URGENCY: SLC residents believe we can reduce the pollution that is causing climate change, at higher rates than national averages, with significant upward shifts over the past two years. They have an urgency to act and reduce climate pollution.

- a. 82% 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; 80% and 69% SLC 2015, respectively)
- b. 78% believe that *we*, and 78% that they *personally*, **can reduce** the pollution that is causing climate change (vs. 76% and 68%; 76% and 73%, respectively)
- c. 39% believe that we could address climate change, but the costs of doing so are too high (vs. 43% nationally, 27% SLC 2015)
- d. 44% believe that we should prioritize economic growth over taking action on climate change (vs. 51% nationally)

8. ENERGY: SLC residents want the U.S. to produce less fossil fuel-based energy, and much more wind and solar energy. They believe wind and solar energy are the lowest cost sources, on par with national opinion. However, there has also been a slight increase in support for coal production since 2015.

- a. 89% say that the U.S. should produce more wind and solar energy (vs. 87% nationally, 88% SLC 2015), with 68% saying much more (vs. 66% nationally, 64% SLC 2015)
- b. 59% say the U.S. should produce less coal (vs. 54%, 62%)

- c. 51% say the U.S. should produce less oil (vs. 42%, 46%)
- d. Compared to other sources of energy (including fossil fuels), 49% believe wind and solar energy are the lowest cost for consumer (vs. 47%, 41%)

9. ENGAGEMENT: A small, but increasing number of SLC residents are aware of the city's programs to conserve energy, purchase clean energy, prepare for climate change, and educate on climate. A growing number of residents wish SLC were doing each of these.

- a. 40% say that SLC is conserving energy (vs. 32% nationally, 32% SLC 2015); 46% wish SLC would conserve (vs. 41% nationally, 28% SLC 2015)
- b. 30% say the city is purchasing renewable energy, like wind or solar energy (vs. 22%, 19%); 42% wish SLC would do this (vs. 37%, 27%)
- c. 27% say the city is taking action to prepare for the impacts of climate change (vs. 30%, 24%); 79% wish SLC would prepare (72%, 73%)
- d. 24% say the city is educating others about climate change (vs. 24%, 16%); 33% wish SLC would educate (vs. 33%, 18%)

10. ADVOCACY: SLC citizens engage in climate-friendly behaviors, at rates on par with adults nationally. There is room to inspire their interest in voting on climate change.

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

- a. 73% have discussed climate change with family and friends and 48% with colleagues (vs. 69% and 41% nationally, respectively)
- b. 67% have upgraded appliances or lighting to conserve energy at home (vs. 66% nationally, 67% SLC 2015)
- c. 32% have shifted toward public transportation, 22% toward hybrid cars, and 42% toward biking and walking as a more energy-efficient form of transportation (vs. 31%, 24% and 39% nationally, respectively)
- d. 30% have contacted or voted for a candidate based on his or her support for taking action on climate change (vs. 35% nationally)

11. SOURCES: SLC citizens receive climate information from a variety of sources, with the news and media as the most common sources, on par with national averages. They are hearing more from family and friends than in past years.

- a. 72% have heard or read about climate change from the news and media recently (vs. 65% nationally, 68% SLC 2015)
- b. 44% from family and friends (vs. 36%, 33%)
- c. 32% from federal elected officials (vs. 29%, 33%)
- d. 27% from professors and educators (vs. 24%, 24%)
- e. 18% from local community leaders (vs. 16%, 17%)

12. TRUST: Scientists and health professionals are the most trusted messengers for climate information by SLC residents, at increasing yearly rates and higher than national averages. Trust for other climate messengers have increased since 2015, but remain lower than national averages.

- a. 80% trust scientists as a source of information about climate change (vs. 70% nationally, 73% SLC 2015)
- b. 70% trust health professionals (vs. 62%, 58%)
- c. 55% trust environmental organizations (vs. 61%, 52%)
- d. 38% trust newspapers, TV news, and Internet news sites (vs. 46%, 30%)
- e. 22% trust President Trump (vs. 31% nationally); 31% trusted President Obama in 2016 (vs. 41% nationally 2016)
- f. 18% trust celebrities (vs. 25%, 11%)
- g. 17% trust Congress (vs. 25%, 13%)

13. MOTIVATIONS: SLC residents have a variety of motivations to act on climate change personally, on par with national averages, and many want their community to do more, too. The rationale to protect their family tops the list.

Note: All questions were first asked in 2017

- a. 38% want to do more personally to address climate change to protect their family (vs. 38% nationally)
- b. 33% want to do more personally... to reduce pollution (vs. 33%)
- c. 32% want to do more personally... to protect clean air (vs. 26%)
- d. 29% want to do more personally... to use more clean energy (vs. 31%)
- e. 44% want SLC to do more to address climate change to use more clean energy (vs. 41%)
- f. 35% want SLC to... prepare for extreme weather (vs. 33%)
- g. 33% want SLC to... save energy (vs. 32%)

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 the Salt Lake City media market, which includes Salt Lake City and communities in and near Salt Lake County. The samples were drawn from an online panel, and the respondents were screened to ensure that they were over the age of 18. The national sample was weighted slightly by gender, region, age, education, and race. The Salt Lake City sample was weighted slightly by gender, region, age, and race. 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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