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Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity – Lessons Learned in Addressing Inequities in Heat-Related Climate Change Impacts

A Hybrid Workshop Series from the
Environmental Health Matters Initiative

Audrey Thévenon
Senior Program Officer, NASEM



NASEM Staff Team

Core team

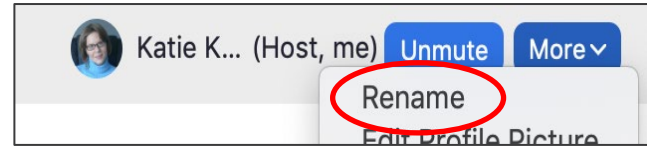
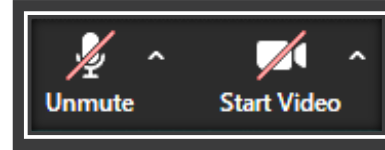
- **Casey Gibson**, Associate Program Officer
- **Darlene Gros**, Senior Program Assistant
- **Sabina Vadnais**, Research Associate
- **Audrey Thévenon**, Senior Program Officer

Hybrid event lifesavers!

- **Jessica De Moy**, Research Associate
- **Layla Garyk**, Program Assistant
- **Nam Vu**, Program Assistant
- **Thomas Holland**, Web Specialist

Some Meeting Logistics

- We are using a regular Zoom meeting, not Zoom webinar. You are muted on entrance.
- Please **update your Zoom name** in the participant list by clicking on “more” next to your name.
- We’ll use the **Slido platform** for gathering questions during the plenary sessions.
- In breakout room we will use the **Zoom chat** space to gather your questions and comments. **Use both wisely.**



If you need assistance, send a **direct Zoom chat or email to Darlene Gros** (DGros@nas.edu) **or any of the NASEM staff**. We will be available to help troubleshoot.

Workshop Material and Recording

For the workshop agenda, speaker biographies, and other background material, visit the workshop web page ([see Zoom chat](#))

- **[Closed captioning](#)** is available throughout the workshop (and in Room 1 during the breakout sessions).
 - This meeting is being **[recorded](#)**. The recording and speaker presentations will be archived on the workshop web page for free, public access.
- **[We welcome everyone to join as active participants in this workshop!](#)**

Overview of the Environmental Health Matters Initiative



The background of the slide is a photograph of a highly ornate, vaulted ceiling. It features intricate mosaics in gold, blue, and brown, along with circular frescoes depicting various figures and scenes. The architecture is classical, with a series of arches visible. The text is overlaid on a dark blue rectangular area on the left side of the image.

EHMI VISION

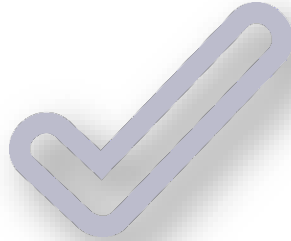
The Environmental Health Matters Initiative seeks to improve the **health of all people equitably** by promoting **evidence-based** assessment, prevention, adaptation, and strategic mitigation of **complex and interconnected environmental stressors** that affect human health and disease over lifetimes.

The EHMI Provides...



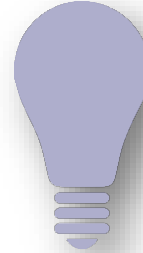
CONNECTION

The unique ability to convene stakeholders from different backgrounds, sectors, institutions, and scientific disciplines.



CREDIBILITY

A long organizational history of working in the environmental health field.



STEWARDSHIP

Leadership from an experienced program and advisory committees with experts from government, business, and academia.



NEUTRALITY

A neutral, nonpartisan space where stakeholders can share insights.

Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity

A Workshop Series



Goals of the Workshop Series

As climate change worsens air pollution, expands urban heat islands, and intensifies extreme weather events, communities least able to respond often bear the largest health burden. Targeted resources, time, and efforts that prioritize disproportionately impacted communities are needed to mitigate and adapt to the health effects of climate change.

This workshop series aims to explore the current state of knowledge about climate-related health disparities and the specific actions co-produced with change-makers and leaders at all levels of decisions to improve climate-related health outcomes for all.

Workshop #1 – October 2021

Proceedings of a Workshop

JANUARY 2022

IN BRIEF

Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief

As the effects of climate change become more widespread and significant, communities least able to respond are bearing the largest burden. In the United States, communities disadvantaged by a legacy of racial segregation and environmental injustice struggle with disparate health outcomes, are vulnerable to the effects of climate change (e.g., severe flooding in low-lying areas and extreme heat in urban neighborhoods), and lack sufficient resources to recover from and rebuild for resilience against future events.

On October 12 and 14, 2021, the 2-day virtual workshop “Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity—A New Vision” brought together environmental health experts, resilience practitioners, climate scientists, and people with lived experience to discuss the disproportionate impact of climate change on communities experiencing health disparities and environmental injustice. During the workshop, the first in a four-part series, 41 speakers shared their perspectives on the topic and suggested specific actions that decision-makers can take to address the intersecting crises of climate change and health inequity (summarized in Table 1).

The workshop was organized by an ad hoc planning committee of the Environmental Health Matters Initiative (EHMI), a program that spans all major units of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to facilitate multidisciplinary exchange around complex environmental health challenges. Jonathan Samen (Colorado School of Public Health) opened the event with an overview of the EHMI, which was established to address “wicked” problems—problems that are complex, multidisciplinary, of global relevance, and impacted by multiple intersecting factors.

Workshop planning committee chair Jeanne Herb (Baylor University) summarized the background and aims of the workshop. Although the effects of climate change span the United States, certain communities and populations bear the largest burden. In these communities, climate change exacerbates the underlying inequities that drive existing health disparities. She noted that members of these communities not only contribute least to the causes of climate change but also have little influence on policy development and decision making; this imbalance further aggravates climate injustice. Moreover, the increasing frequency of extreme weather-related events underscores the urgent need to address the intersection of climate change and health inequity. “Every day, every week, we see the devastating impact that climate change is having on the health and well-being of disproportionately affected populations,” Herb said. Therefore, one goal of this workshop was to inform action now, particularly with regard to upcoming federal and state policy opportunities, and with a focus on adaptation, preparedness, and resilience. Notwithstanding the need to “turbocharge our transition off of fossil fuels,” as expressed by Barab Gottlieb (Physicians for Social Responsibility), climate mitigation and pollution mitigation were not the primary focus of the workshop.

This Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief provides the rapporteur’s high-level summary of the workshop discussion. Additional details can be found in materials online.¹ This proceedings highlights potential opportunities for action, but these should not be viewed as consensus conclusions or recommendations of the National Academies.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Climate scientists, advocates, government officials, and representatives of disproportionately affected communities shared their firsthand knowledge to illustrate the human dimensions of the climate crisis in communities throughout the United States.

¹ See <https://www.nationalacademies.org/cor/work/environmental-health-matters-initiative> (accessed November 12, 2021).

² See <https://www.nationalacademies.org/event/10-12-2021/communities-climate-change-and-health-equity-a-new-vision> (accessed November 12, 2021).

The first workshop brought together environmental health experts, resilience practitioners, climate scientists, and people with lived experience to **discuss the disproportionate impact of climate change on communities experiencing health disparities and environmental injustice**

- 41 speakers shared their perspectives on the topic and suggested specific actions that decision-makers can take to address the intersecting crises of climate change and health inequity

Workshop #2 – May 2022

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Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief

Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity—State-Level Implementation

Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is exacerbating unjust health disparities and disproportionate environmental burdens experienced in communities across the United States. Because of historic and ongoing discriminatory policies and practices, certain populations—namely people of color, Indigenous people, and low-income communities—disproportionately suffer from the adverse impacts of extreme weather and other disasters that are exacerbated by climate change.¹

Given that much of the authority for addressing issues at the intersection of climate change, health inequity, and environmental justice rests at the state level, the two-day virtual workshop *Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity—State-Level Implementation* was held on May 24 and 26, 2022. It brought together representatives from state and federal agencies, universities, community-based organizations, state and national advocacy organizations, foundations, and private sector organizations to examine community-driven and state-level actions that could help improve climate-related health outcomes in disproportionately impacted

communities. For additional details on potential actions suggested by workshop participants, see the table at <https://www.nap.edu/resource/26493/ActionItemsTable>. The workshop was organized by an ad hoc planning committee of the Environmental Health Matters Initiative, a program spanning all major units of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine that facilitates multisector, multidisciplinary exchange around complex environmental health challenges. The event, the second in a series, built on the October 2021 workshop *Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity—A New Vision*, which provided an overview of how changing climate conditions exacerbate health inequities in communities across the United States.²

Workshop planning committee chair Jeanne Herb (Rutgers University) opened the event by summarizing the key themes of the first workshop, which can be seen in more detail in *Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity: Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief*.³

¹See <https://www.nationalacademies.org/press/10-11-2021/national-academies-climate-change-and-health-equity-a-new-vision-workshop-1> (accessed July 11, 2022).

²National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. *Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity: Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26435>.

³National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. *Equitable and Resilient Infrastructure Investments*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26633>.

Building on the first workshop discussion, the second workshop focused on **state-level implementation**.

The workshop brought together representatives from state and federal agencies, universities, community-based organizations, state and national advocacy organizations, foundations, and private sector organizations to examine **identified actions that could help improve climate-related health outcomes in disproportionately impacted communities**.

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**A Hybrid Workshop Series from the
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Workshop Series Planning Committee

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Cecilia Sorensen
Columbia University,

Alison “Ali” Frazzini
Chief Sustainability Office for Los Angeles
County



Goals of the Workshop

This workshop will focus on the Lessons Learned in Addressing Inequities in Heat-Related Climate Change Impacts. During this interactive hybrid workshop, the participants will identify key elements of "effective actions" to prevent and mitigate inequitable health risks from one of climate change's most pervasive, critical aspects—extreme heat.

This multiday hybrid workshop will convene people with lived experience, environmental health, economic, and racial justice experts, climate scientists, energy specialists, and individuals who work on sustainable planning and disaster relief. Together they will explore a diverse set of real-world challenges affecting different communities and the innovative actions being pursued to prevent, adapt to or mitigate the health consequences of extreme heat

Agenda at a Glance – Day 1

Session 1

Current state of knowledge and gathering gaps in knowledge around extreme heat, health, communities, and policy.

Session 2

Shared stories from participants who have aligned communities' needs while navigating policies

Session 3

Interactive breakout rooms to identify barriers to implementation in developing solutions to extreme heat

Session 4

Inspirational talk: Identifying problems through different lenses in order to finding innovative solutions.