

Why we care and what we can do

Climate change has a tremendous impact on the health, livelihoods, and overall well-being of U.S. Latinos. As the Latino population in the United States becomes more politically active, it is important for politicians and policymakers to understand and reflect these values.

Evidence of Latino engagement on climate issues:

- Hispanics are more likely than whites to both attribute global warming to human activity *and* to support action to protect the environment.ⁱ
- Latino support for environmental and health protections is high, including with young Latino voters, 75% of whom believe it is very important for the new President and Congress to aggressively combat climate change.ⁱⁱ
- 85% of Latinos believe it is very important to reduce smog and air pollution.ⁱⁱⁱ

Why do Latinos care about climate change?

- **Latinos in the United States feel the effects of climate change more acutely than the general population.** Latinos are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of where we live and work. More than half (55%) of Latino-Americans live in three states that are already experiencing serious effects related to climate change: historic drought in California, record-breaking heat in Texas, and increased sea level rise and flooding in Florida.^{iv,v,vi} Furthermore, Latinos are more likely to work in the industries that are deeply affected by the effects of climate change such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction.
- **Climate change is real and failing to mitigate and prepare for its effects comes at serious financial cost.** Hurricanes, forest fires, heatwaves, and droughts – we are feeling the effects of climate change and the ever-growing body of scientific literature makes it impossible to deny. The Economist Intelligence Unit says the costs of climate change could reach over \$4 trillion dollars by 2100.^{vii} Inaction is costing our government and society money and resources that could go toward improving the education, health, and prosperity of Latinos and all Americans.

Effects of climate change on our communities and families

- **Health impact:** Nearly 1 in 2 Latinos in the U.S. live in counties that frequently violate standards for ground-level ozone,^{viii} a key component of smog that exacerbates asthma and other respiratory illnesses.^{ix} Combined with reduced access to and awareness of relevant healthcare resources, this has a major health impact on Latino populations in the United States. Furthermore, Latinos are more likely to hold jobs in occupations that expose workers to environmental health risks, from air pollutants to chemical exposure.
- **Information and service gaps for Latinos:** Latino populations in the United States are vulnerable to environmental threats and often do not have equal access to resources and protective measures. For example, reporters and advocates found that Latinos in Flint, Michigan were alerted to the water crisis long after other residents and faced prolonged exposure to the effects of the lead-contaminated water. Information did not reach residents because of the lack of Spanish-language resources and apprehension to access government services, particularly for undocumented Latinos.^x
- **Economic impact:** Many Latinos depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods. Extreme weather hampers farm productivity and can mean lost jobs and incomes for many Latinos farmers and farmworkers in the United States. For example, UC Davis estimated that approximately 10,000 farmworker jobs were lost in California during the 2015 drought.^{xi} Lower farm productivity also translates to higher food prices, impacting Latinos and all Americans across the nation, particularly lower-income populations.

Green opportunities for Latinos in the United States

Despite the tremendous risks climate change presents, if action is taken now, there are opportunities to create more prosperous futures for all Americans, including Latinos. These include:

- **Green economy:** The green economy provides significant opportunities for Latinos, with higher wages, lower health impacts for workers and the surrounding communities, and an ever-increasing number of job opportunities. A National Council of La Raza report indicates that these jobs are particularly attractive to Latinos – a national poll found that 87% of Latinos surveyed said they would prefer to work in a clean energy industry than at a fossil fuel company or an oil refinery, assuming equal wages and benefits.^{xii}
- **Healthier communities:** Health is wealth. Working toward making mitigating the impacts of climate change and improving overall environmental conditions will also improve the overall health and quality of life of Latino families and children. Healthier children are better able to become productive, engaged, and independent members of society.
- **Stronger American economy:** A 2015 EPA study found that the U.S. government can save \$200 billion dollars by the year 2100 through the combined effects of the mitigation of the environmental and economic effects of extreme storms, wildfires, infrastructure damage, and other factors.^{xiii}
- **Improved national defense:** Secretary of Defense Mattis and many other security experts count climate change as a national security threat.^{xiv} Taking climate change head on now and mitigating its effects makes our country more secure and better able to keep our population protected.

Taking action: What can Latino leaders do?

- **Support efforts to reduce climate pollution and deploy clean energy:** Momentum continues towards clean energy and a lower carbon future, and Latino leaders can help drive these efforts forward by working with state and local leaders to advance and implement policies that move us forward on clean energy.
- **Defend clean air progress:** Federal climate and air protections are under threat, including proposals to severely curtail EPA's budget and actions that would repeal or weaken hard-fought pollution protections, like the Clean Power Plan. All communities, and especially Latinos, have much to lose in these battles and must raise their voices to defend our progress on clean air, and remind our leaders of the significant work remaining.
- **Fight for strong methane waste rules:** Every year hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of methane, the main component of natural gas, is lost from our nation's public lands. This is not only wasteful; it's bad for the climate and comes with smog-forming and toxic pollution. Last fall the Bureau of Land Management finalized rules that will reduce this waste and protect our health, but Congress is now trying to use an obscure law to dismantle these protections, and we need Latino communities and all Americans to stand up for these important standards.
- **Expand skills training for the green economy:** The burgeoning green economy has the potential to create thousands of new jobs for all Americans, but especially for Latinos. In order to take full advantage of these job opportunities, Latino leaders can support or bring forward new legislation and policies for job skills training to ensure our workforce is prepared to take on these new roles. Furthermore, leaders can provide incentives for green businesses that create new jobs and provide skills training for their employees.

ⁱ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/02/27/hispanics-more-likely-than-whites-to-say-global-warming-is-caused-by-humans>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2016/12/14/latino-voters-policy-makers-to-combat-global-warming/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://earthjustice.org/features/poll-latino-opinion>

^{iv} <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/ii-ranking-latino-populations-in-the-states>

^v <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report>

^{vi} <http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/blog/2014/10/03/sea-level-rise-in-miami>

^{vii} https://www.eiuperspectives.economist.com/sites/default/files/The%20cost%20of%20inaction_o.pdf

^{viii} <http://www.nhmand.org/index.php/nhma-media/nhma-in-the-news/233-northjerseycom-news-report-hispanics-disproportionately-impacted-by-air-pollution>

^{ix} <https://www.epa.gov/ozone-pollution/ozone-basics#effects>

^x <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/flint-water-crisis/2016/02/04/flint-immigrants-struggle-get-help-info-water/79530754>

^{xi} <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-10-26/california-s-drought-hitting-indigenous-latino-workers-hard>

^{xii} <http://publications.nclr.org/handle/123456789/1125>

^{xiii} <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/23/us/politics/effects-of-climate-change-could-cost-billions-epa-report-says.html>

^{xiv} https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/National_Security_Implications_of_Changing_Climate_Final_051915.pdf