



Climate Justice Community Conversations

A Report for Allegany Franciscan Ministries



by

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Table of Contents

- Table of Tables2
- Introduction3
- Methodology4
- Key Insights5
- Results: Miami-Dade County6
 - Participant Demographics6
 - Findings.....11
- Results: Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County15
 - Participant Demographics15
 - Findings.....22
- Results: Hillsborough County and Pinellas County.....45
 - Participant Demographics45
 - Findings.....49
- Conclusion55
- References59
- Appendices60
 - Focus Group Session Tool60
 - Demographic Registration Form61
 - Environmental Justice Index Maps.....63
 - Focus Group Flyers.....67

Table of Tables

Table 1: City of Residence; Miami-Dade County	7
Table 2: ZIP Code; Miami-Dade County	7
Table 3: Age; Miami-Dade County	8
Table 4: Gender Identity; Miami-Dade County	8
Table 5: Sexual Orientation; Miami-Dade County	8
Table 6: Ethnicity; Miami-Dade County	9
Table 7: Race; Miami-Dade County	9
Table 8: Primary Language Spoken at Home; Miami-Dade County	9
Table 9: Level of Educational Attainment; Miami-Dade County	10
Table 10: Current Employment Status; Miami-Dade County	10
Table 11: Household Income; Miami-Dade County	10
Table 12: Personal & Community Values; Miami-Dade County	11
Table 13: Current Impacts; Miami-Dade County	11
Table 14: Adaptation Strategies and Barriers; Miami-Dade County	12
Table 15: Information & Community Resources; Miami-Dade County	14
Table 16: City of Residence; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	15
Table 17: ZIP Code; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	16
Table 18: Age; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	17
Table 19: Gender Identity; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	17
Table 20: Sexual Orientation; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	18
Table 21: Ethnicity; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	18
Table 22: Race; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	19
Table 23: Primary Language Spoken at Home; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	19
Table 24: Level of Educational Attainment; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	20
Table 25: Current Employment Status; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	20
Table 26: Household Income; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	21
Table 27: Personal & Community Values; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	22
Table 28: Current Impacts; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	25
Table 29: Adaptation Strategies and Barriers; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	37
Table 30: Information & Community Resources; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County	42
Table 31: City of Residence; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	45
Table 32: ZIP Code; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	45
Table 33: Age; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	46
Table 34: Gender Identity; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	46
Table 35: Sexual Orientation; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	46
Table 36: Ethnicity; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	47
Table 37: Race; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	47
Table 38: Primary Language Spoken at Home; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	47
Table 39: Level of Educational Attainment; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	48
Table 40: Current Employment Status; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	48
Table 41: Household Income; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	48
Table 42: Personal & Community Values; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	49
Table 43: Current Impacts; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	50
Table 44: Adaptation Strategies and Barriers; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	52
Table 45: Information & Community Resources; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County	53

Introduction

To centralize the perspectives of communities that experience the greatest climate-related health and social inequities, listening sessions or focus groups were held in communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Environmental Justice Index (EJI) is a place-based tool that measures the cumulative impacts of environmental burden, social vulnerability, and health vulnerability within communities. Environmental burden considers factors such as pollution, exposure to toxins, and the built environment (i.e., access to parks and sidewalks). Meanwhile, social and health vulnerability considers the impact of socioeconomic status and pre-existing health conditions on communities. The EJI tool was used to identify and prioritize areas requiring additional support to improve health and ensure health equity. The recruitment of participants for the listening sessions involved targeted outreach to specific audiences in these different areas to ensure the inclusion of people of diverse backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, and more.

Health Council of South Florida (HCSF)

The Health Council of South Florida (HCSF) held four focus group sessions with 50 total participants between May 30, 2023, and June 15, 2023, to gain first-hand qualitative perspectives on climate change and how it impacts the environment in Miami-Dade County. Based on the Environmental Justice Index data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HCSF was able to select neighborhood clusters in the Miami-Dade County that exhibited high environmental justice indices and whose residents are subjected to the adverse effects of climate change, such as flooding due to increased storms, and low canopy cover resulting from deforestation. These clusters included the following: 1) Brownsville/Coral Gables/Coconut Grove; 2) Opa-Locka/Miami Gardens/Westview; 3) South Dade/Homestead; and 4) Downtown/E. Little Havana/Liberty City/Little Haiti/Overtown. The focus groups were held in locations accessible to targeted community members. The focus was to engage Hispanic women (18 years of age or older), Black/African American residents (65 years of age or older), and Hispanic LGBTQ+ residents (18 years of age or older). Of note, the South Dade/Homestead area is a location where migrant farmworkers typically reside. Two of the sessions were conducted in English, and two were conducted in Spanish.

Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF)

The Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF) held seven focus group sessions with 81 participants between May 30, 2023, and July 6, 2023, to gain first-hand qualitative perspectives on climate change and how it impacts the environments within Martin, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie Counties. The listening sessions were held in locations accessible to targeted community members. The focus in the Lake Worth area was to engage LGBTQ+, Hispanic, and young adult populations. In Riviera Beach and Northern West Palm Beach, the emphasis was to reach Black and Hispanic populations, including individuals of mixed ages with lower socioeconomic status. The Glades area in Palm Beach County was selected as a target region for the listening sessions, as it is an area where racial minority groups are highly represented, as well as seasonal farmworkers, populations with lower socioeconomic status, and senior populations. In Martin County, the listening sessions focused on Indiantown residents, particularly Hispanic and rural residents. Lastly, Lincoln Park was selected as a focus area to reach Black and African American residents.

The Health Council of West-Central Florida (HCWCF)

The Health Council of West-Central Florida (HCWCF) held five focus group sessions with 52 participants between June 15, 2023, and July 24, 2023, to gain first-hand qualitative perspectives on climate change and how it impacts the environments within Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. The listening sessions were held virtually or in locations accessible to targeted community members. The focus in Hillsborough County was to engage LGBTQ+, HIV-positive, BIPOC adult populations, and residents of communities most likely to be impacted by climate change. In Pinellas County, disabled young adults with autism spectrum disorders and residents of a historically Black community facing challenges of redevelopment and gentrification, were the focus populations. A virtual session of Spanish-speaking

participants was recruited in both Hillsborough and Pinellas County. Anecdotal information indicated that Spanish speaking populations are more fearful of gathering in person and participating in activities given laws recently enacted in Florida that impact undocumented people, so we tried to include trusted individuals working in the community such as community health workers. Eight individuals registered, 3 from Hillsborough and 5 from Pinellas, but only one from Hillsborough attended the session.

Methodology

Health Council of South Florida (HCSF)

The Health Council of South Florida (HCSF) conducted four focus group sessions between May 30, 2023, to June 15, 2023, reaching 50 residents in Miami-Dade County. Sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes and allowed participants to share their perspectives on issues of environmental justice and climate change through questions and probes. Two sessions were held in English, and two were held in Spanish. One session which was conducted in Spanish was originally advertised to be held in English, but as most participants present for the session felt most comfortable to converse in Spanish, the language was switched, and the appropriate tools were implemented to conduct the event. All sessions were held in person and were open to participants residing in the following neighborhood clusters: Brownsville/Coral Gables/Coconut Grove; Opa-Locka/Miami Gardens/Westview; South Dade/Homestead; and Downtown/E. Little Havana/Liberty City/Little Haiti/Overtown. Participants also represented the following population groups: Hispanic women (18 years of age and older); Black or African American residents (65 years of age and older); and the Hispanic LGBTQ+ community (18 years of age and older). Participants were recruited through a combination of flyers, social media, and word-of-mouth. Sessions times varied, with one session held during regular business hours and three sessions held outside of regular business hours. Participants were asked to complete a short demographic form at the beginning of the session and were then provided with an overview of the session goals. All participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that no names would be included in the final report. As a token of appreciation for their time and participation, focus group participants received a \$25 gift card. Additionally, with many agencies downsizing during the pandemic, space and funding were issues, and to offset the time provided by the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that hosted events, the HCSF provided stipend payments of \$250 for their help with venues and recruitment.

The Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF)

The Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF) conducted seven focus group sessions between May 30, 2023, to July 6, 2023, reaching 81 Palm Beach, St. Lucie, and Martin County residents. Sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes and allowed participants to share their perspectives on issues of environmental justice and climate change through questions and probes. Sessions were held in English and in person in the following cities or towns across the three counties: Riviera Beach, Belle Glade, Indiantown, and Lincoln Park. Virtual sessions targeting Lake Worth residents was offered in English and Spanish. Participants were recruited through a combination of social media outreach, in-person engagement facilitated by community health advocates, and the involvement of dedicated community champions who have rapport and trust with members of the target communities identified. Session times varied, with three occurring outside of regular business hours. Participants were asked to complete a short demographic form at the beginning of the session and were then provided with an overview of the session goals. All participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that no names would be included in the final report. As a token of appreciation for their time and participation, focus group participants received a \$25 gift card.

The Health Council of West-Central Florida (HCWCF)

The Health Council of West-Central Florida (HCWCF) conducted five focus group sessions between June 15, 2023, to July 24, 2023, reaching 52 Hillsborough and Pinellas County residents. Sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes and allowed participants to share their perspectives on issues of environmental justice and climate change through questions and probes. Four sessions were held in English and one session held in Spanish. Two sessions were virtual, one in Spanish and another in English. Focus groups were held in the following cities or towns across the two counties: Tampa, Riverview and Largo. Participants were recruited through a combination of social media outreach, in-person engagement facilitated by community health advocates, and the involvement of dedicated community champions who have rapport and trust with members of the target communities identified. Session times and dates varied, with two occurring outside of regular business hours; one being held on Saturday and one on a Monday evening. Participants were asked to complete a short demographic form at the beginning of the session and were then provided with an overview of the session goals. All participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that no names would be included in the final report. As a token of appreciation for their time and participation, focus group participants received a \$25 gift card. Community champions were also compensated for providing space and outreach efforts.

There was a total of 52 participants in the focus groups. Demographic surveys were collected from 38 participants (73%). Not all respondents answered all the questions, and some participants did not wish to provide any demographic information. Two participants were from outside of Florida but were previous residents who were in town visiting family.

Key Insights

Many commonalities were noted among the participant responses in focus groups conducted by all three Local Health Councils (Councils) and see table below for common themes in each category. With respect to personal and community values, all three Councils reported that participants valued respect and inclusivity within their communities, in addition to health and safety. HCWCF and HCSEF additionally noted the importance of religious faith, and HCWCF noted an interest in autonomy/freedom to make individual choices.

Regarding current impacts, all three Councils reported that participants observed major changes in weather patterns (e.g., higher temperatures, more flooding, more intense storms), as well as noted more impacts of climate change on health (e.g., sinus/allergy problems, skin conditions). The more extreme heat was cited as a reason for decreased time spent outdoors engaged in exercise. There was also concern about the effects of gentrification, including driving up the price of housing and thus driving out lower-income populations. All participants indicated that they were not as prepared for climate-related emergencies as they would like to be, and that the lack of preparation was most apparent among lower-income residents.

For adaptation strategies and barriers, participants interviewed by all three Councils indicated the need for community members to have greater incentives to take concrete action against climate change, such as more funding allocated toward these efforts. The participants also noted education and dissemination of reliable information on climate change as critical components of raising more awareness and interest in the issue among community residents.

With respect to information and community resources, participants interviewed by all three Councils indicated that they obtain their information about climate change from television (e.g., documentaries or news). Many participants also noted their use of social media and Internet sources, as well as podcasts and print media. However, there is some hesitation about which sources are fully trustworthy, particularly media and online sources, thus signaling a need for greater awareness of reliable and accurate sources of data.

Personal & Community Values	Current Impacts	Adaptation Strategies & Barriers	Information & Community Resources
<p>Overall common themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect and compassion • Inclusivity and building a sense of community • Health • Safety 	<p>Overall common themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of weather changes (increased heat, more flooding, more intense storms) • More health problems • Reduction in outdoor activities due to the increased heat • Investment disparity between more and less affluent parts of area • Increased housing prices and gentrification driving out lower-income residents • Lack of preparation for climate change-related events (e.g., flooding) • Greater financial hardship and more homelessness 	<p>Overall common themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support is needed to incentivize the community to take action related to climate change • Access to information/education on climate change would encourage residents to contribute to climate change alleviation efforts • More opportunities for community connection and civic engagement may foster greater community involvement in climate change-related issues 	<p>Overall common themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common sources of information re: climate change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television • Social media • Radio/podcasts • Family/friends • Internet (including YouTube) • Participants expressed hesitation about the information presented in the media and online, thus showing a need for greater awareness of reliable sources of data on climate change

Focus Group Results: Miami-Dade County

The Health Council of South Florida (HCSF) held four focus groups Miami-Dade County. The sessions were held in-person from May 30 to June 15, 2023. Of the four sessions, two were held in English and two were held in Spanish. Participant demographics and detailed session results are provided below.

Participant Demographics

A total of 50 residents of Miami-Dade County participated in the focus groups. Most participants reported residing in Miami (58%), but a variety of zip codes throughout the county were represented, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: City of Residence; Miami-Dade County

City	Count	Percent of Participants
Miami	29	58%
Homestead	6	12%
Florida City	6	12%
Hallandale	2	4%
Hialeah	1	2%
Allapattah	1	2%
North Miami	1	2%
Cutler Bay	1	2%
Naranja/Princeton	1	2%
Not provided by participant	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Table 2: ZIP Code; Miami-Dade County

Zip Code	Count	Percent of Participants
33189	2	4%
33135	3	6%
33130	5	10%
33142	7	14%
33145	1	2%
33169	1	2%
33009	2	4%
33030	3	6%
33187	1	2%
33032	1	2%
33033	3	6%
33034	6	12%
33127	1	2%
33168	2	4%
33150	1	2%
33147	2	4%
Not provided by participant	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Table 3: Age; Miami-Dade County

Age	Count	Percent of Participants
18-24 years	7	14%
25-44 years	7	14%
45-59 years	16	32%
60-74 years	12	24%
75+ years	7	14%
Prefer not to answer	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 4: Gender Identity; Miami-Dade County

Gender Identity	Count	Percent of Participants
Female	25	50%
Male	8	16%
Transgender man/ trans man/ female-to-male	3	6%
Transgender woman/ trans woman/ male-to-female	10	20%
Genderqueer/ Gender non- conforming/ not exclusively male or female	4	8%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Not listed, please specify	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 5: Sexual Orientation; Miami-Dade County

Sexual Orientation	Count	Percent of Participants
Homosexual (gay or lesbian)	8	16%
Heterosexual (straight)	18	36%
Bisexual	5	10%
Queer, pansexual, and/or questioning	3	6%
I Don't know	1	2%
I prefer not to answer	4	8%
Not listed, please specify*	11	22%
Total	50	100%

*Did not specify

Table 6: Ethnicity; Miami-Dade County

Ethnicity	Count	Percent of Participants
Hispanic/ Latino/ or of Spanish origin	39	78%
Non-Hispanic/ Latino/ or of Spanish origin	10	20%
No response given	1	2%
Total		100%

Table 7: Race; Miami-Dade County

Race	Count	Percent of Participants
White	25	50%
Black or African American	14	28%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0%
Asian	0	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
I prefer not to answer	5	10%
Not listed, please specify	6	12%
Total	50	100%

*Did not specify

Table 8: Primary Language Spoken at Home; Miami-Dade County

Language Spoken at Home	Count	Percent of Participants
An Asian language	0	0%
English	15	30%
French	0	0%
Haitian Creole	0	0%
Native or Indigenous	0	0%
Spanish	26	52%
Spanish Creole	0	0%
I prefer not to answer	0	0%
English and Spanish*	6	12%
English, Spanish, French*	1	2%
English, Spanish, Portuguese*	1	2%
Spanish and French*	1	2%
Not listed, please specify	0	0%
Total	50	100%

*More than one primary language was marked by these participants

Table 9: Level of Educational Attainment; Miami-Dade County

Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Count	Percent of Participants
Less than a high school diploma	7	14%
High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)	15	30%
Some college	17	34%
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	3	6%
Graduate or Professional degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, JD)	1	2%
Technical school (e.g., HVAC, CNA, welding)	1	2%
I prefer not to answer	6	12%
Not listed, please specify	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 10: Current Employment Status; Miami-Dade County

Current Employment Status	Count	Percent of Participants
Full-time employed (35 or more hours per week)	11	22%
Part-time employed (less than 35 hours per week)	8	16%
Unemployed	7	14%
Self-employed	4	8%
Retired	11	22%
Unable to work	3	6%
I prefer not to answer	6	12%
Not listed, please specify	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 11: Household Income; Miami-Dade County

Household Income	Count	Percent of Participants
Less than \$10,000	16	32%
\$10,000 to \$39,000	13	26%
\$40,000 to \$69,000	6	12%
\$70,000 to \$99,000	0	0%
\$100,000 to \$199,000	0	0%

\$200,000 or more	0	0%
I prefer not to answer	15	30%
Total		100%

Findings

Table 12: Personal & Community Values; Miami-Dade County

Personal & Community Values	
Questions	Themes
<p>What are your top three values? Why?</p> <p>What do you think your community values most? Why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect is one of the most important personal values—respect towards one another, the environment, and oneself • Good health and the ability to consume healthy organic foods • Safety and the feeling of living in a comfortable, peaceful environment • A sense of community: that is, living in an area that is friendly, has good neighbors, practices inclusivity, and is accepting of people of different social backgrounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One participant described this idea as a community that “evokes one heartbeat”

Table 13: Current Impacts; Miami-Dade County

Current Impacts	
Questions	Themes
<p>What changes have you observed to your environment/surroundings over the last 5-10 years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher temperatures every year and more flooding • Increased construction and development of high-rise buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More development increases traffic on highways • More deforestation • Adverse effects of climate change on marine life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One participant who routinely goes fishing with her family noted that with all of these climate-related changes, it takes longer for them to obtain the same number of fish they used to catch in the past, and the fish are smaller
<p>What effects have these changes in the environment had on you, your family or your community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in physical ailments, such as sinus and allergy problems and skin conditions • A reduction in outdoor activities due to the increased heat, which inhibits the ability of residents to exercise and walk their dogs, for example • Higher utility bills • Higher costs of home insurance (i.e., due to more flooding)
<p>Are there people in your community who are impacted more than others by climate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who are homeless • Residents of low socioeconomic status • People who work outdoors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction workers ○ Vendors who sell their products outdoors ○ Farm workers, people who work in fields and nurseries

change? Who are they and what is the impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One participant who once worked in a field said that these workers are taken advantage of ▪ Another participant talked about her son, who works in a field and is not given water by his employer, and many outdoor workers suffer from dehydration
How prepared are you to handle these changes in the environment?	<p>Participants in all focus group sessions felt they are not prepared to face the impacts of climate change and cited several examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a flooding event, it may take up to two weeks for water levels to return to normal • Immigrant farm workers face poor working conditions (e.g., limited breaks), compounded by the excessive heat and the limited provision of water by employers • Heavy rains affect adequate provision of gasoline to different communities throughout Miami-Dade County (i.e., gasoline trucks are not able to reach their destinations due to unsafe roads) • One participant noted that their car does not have air conditioning, but that they improvise by doing certain activities at certain times • Participants who work in plant nurseries all day do not have time to educate the community on these issues; additionally, they feel exploited in their jobs and that they are making the rich richer • In addition to hurricanes, tornadoes are now more frequent, and communities are not prepared for this phenomenon
Have people moved in and out of the area in the last 5-10 years? Do you think about moving out of your community and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of whether participants have observed residents moving in or out of their communities in the last 5-10 years, most felt that more people are moving into their neighborhoods • However, they also argue that there are subpopulations, such as immigrant residents and the LGBTQ+ community, who are moving out due to the strict laws in Florida that augment discrimination against these populations • Some participants believed that more people were moving out of Miami in general due to the high cost of living

Table 14: Adaptation Strategies and Barriers; Miami-Dade County

Adaptation Strategies and Barriers	
Questions	Themes
How are you, your neighbors, and your community actively working to improve your situation and better prepare for the impacts of climate change?	<p>Current Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most participants shared that they recycle in their homes, although they expressed concern that there are many residents in their communities who do not. • One participant described how in Miami Beach, pumps are being placed to prepare for king tides

<p>In addition to efforts already underway in your community, what else would you like to do to improve your situation and mitigate the effects of climate change?</p> <p>What makes it hard to make these improvements?</p>	<p>What else would you like to do to improve your situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although specific themes were not identified across all sessions when participants were asked if there are specific activities they would like to see in their communities to address climate change, participants from Cluster 1 (South Dade/Homestead) shared that funding is needed to incentivize the community to contribute to the overall effort to alleviate the effects of climate change • Some participants expressed a need for more information/education on what they can do to prepare themselves for climate change, as well as more involvement with legislature to know about climate change policies • Many people won't act if they don't receive an incentive, so incentivizing the population would be helpful in motivating community action related to climate change • One participant noted that when the community is given useful items by the city (e.g., exercising machines), community members do not take care of them, which may be a reason why the city isn't helping anymore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indicating a need for greater community unity in caring for its resources <p>What makes it hard to make these improvements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants felt that the lack of resources (e.g., money) is the major barrier in making the necessary changes or adaptations to counteract the effects of climate change; this is compounded by greed among the wealthy who invest in their communities without regard for residents or the environment (e.g., gentrification, deforestation) • Politicians live in other neighborhoods and are not truly aware of how climate change affects residents locally • There is a disparity in the funding/resources received by the City of Miami and the County (with the City receiving more)
<p>What support or incentives would make it easier? In other words, what would help you make these changes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater funding to promote community awareness of climate change issues • Education on climate change • Voting for people who will support climate change efforts in the community
<p>What would motivate your community to make these adaptations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants also shared that education would be the major driver to motivate the community to implement well-informed sound adaptation measures to confront climate change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frame it as an issue that will affect our health and our children's health ○ Organize events and fairs that would provide info about climate change ○ Have brief educational sessions in different areas • Greater individual accountability for climate change-related actions (e.g., being fined for committing environmental infractions)

Table 15: Information & Community Resources; Miami-Dade County

Information & Community Resources	
Questions	Themes
<p>Do you seek out information on this topic (climate change/ climate justice)?</p> <p>Where do you go (i.e., specific organizations, websites, resources, or people)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most participants prefer television as an informational medium for climate change-related issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Documentaries, History Channel, Smithsonian Channel • Other participants mentioned Google (internet), radio, credible journals or books, cell phones (e.g., weather app), local events

The following are the summarized additional comments and thoughts provided by the participants in response to “Do you have any additional comments you would like to add or is there anything additional that we have not covered with the questions we have asked?”

- Participants indicated the need to start with children – educate them first to increase their awareness of climate change issues
- In general, people don’t take climate change seriously enough and need to be given more information about it

The community conversations on climate change also revealed several overarching themes not just across all sessions facilitated, but also across all questions posed. These themes are as follows:

- **Socially marginalized subgroups suffer the most from climate change issues:** Participant expressed concern that there are certain population groups, such as Black or African American, LGBTQ+, and immigrant farm workers, who are commonly discriminated against or exploited, and that this discrimination is exacerbated when they are faced with climate change issues (e.g., poor working conditions, displacement).
- **Community unity as a powerful tool:** Participants believe that the most effective way to mitigate the effects of climate change is to work together as a community or to “stand together”.
- **Observations of weather changes:** Most participants agreed that in recent years, there has been a change in weather patterns with increased heat, heavy rains, more flooding, and shorter winter seasons.
- **A need for funding:** A lack of financial resources plays a role in the community’s difficulty in addressing the effects of climate change. More funding may incentivize the community to be more active in these efforts.

Results: Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

The Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF) held seven focus groups and community listening sessions across Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County with the help of key community partners, including Healthier Glades, Evergreen First Baptist Church, Compass Community Center, BRIDGEs at Riviera Beach and Lake Worth, Incubate Neighborhood Center, Lincoln Park Advisory Committee, 10th Street Community Center, and more. The sessions were held from May 30 to July 6, 2023, both in-person and virtually. Of the seven sessions, six were held in English and one was held in Spanish. Participant demographics and detailed session results are provided below.

Participant Demographics

A total of 81 residents of Palm Beach, St. Lucie, and Martin Counties participated in the seven focus groups, though two participants did not complete a demographic form. Most participants resided in the cities of Fort Pierce in St. Lucie County (24.1%), Indiantown in Martin County (17.7%), and Lake Worth Beach in Palm Beach County (15.2%). However, various zip codes throughout the counties were represented, as seen in Table 17.

Table 16: City of Residence; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

City	Count	Percent
Palm Beach County Sessions		
Belle Glade	4	5.1%
Clewiston*	2	2.5%
Lake Park	1	1.3%
Lake Worth Beach	12	15.2%
Riviera Beach	3	3.8%
Royal Palm Beach	1	1.3%
South Bay	2	2.5%
West Palm Beach	1	1.3%
St. Lucie County Session		
Ft. Pierce	22	27.8%
Port St. Lucie	9	11.4%
Vero Beach*	1	1.3%
Blank	2	2.5%
Martin County Sessions		
Indiantown	14	17.7%
Stuart	5	6.3%
Total	79	100%

*Clewiston is located in Hendry County in Florida, which borders the Belle Glade area in Palm Beach County; Vero Beach is located in Indian River County, which borders St. Lucie County.

Various zip codes were represented across all focus group sessions. However, the zip codes with the largest percentages of residents included zip code 33430 in Palm Beach County (5.1%), zip code 34950 in St. Lucie County (11.4%), and zip code 34956 in Martin County (17.7%). A total of 9 participants did not disclose their zip code.

Table 17: ZIP Code; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

City	Count	Percent
Palm Beach County Sessions		
33403	1	1.3%
33404	2	2.5%
33407	1	1.3%
33411	1	1.3%
33416	1	1.3%
33430	4	5.1%
33440*	2	2.5%
33444	1	1.3%
33460	3	3.8%
33461	2	2.5%
33462	1	1.3%
33467	3	3.8%
33472	1	1.3%
33493	2	2.5%
Blank	1	1.3%
St. Lucie County Session		
34946	5	6.3%
34947	4	5.1%
34950	9	11.4%
34951	1	1.3%
34952	1	1.3%
34953	1	1.3%
32967*	1	1.27%
34983	1	1.3%
34986	3	3.8%
Blank	8	10.1%
Martin County Sessions		
34956	14	17.7%
34994	5	6.3%
Total	79	100.0%

*33440 is located in Hendry and Palm Beach County, which borders the Belle Glade area in Palm Beach County; 32967 Beach is located in Indian River County, which borders St. Lucie County.

Participants represented various age groups, but the age group with the largest proportion of participants was 25 to 44 years of age (41.8%), followed by participants 45 to 59 years of age (27.8%). Participants 18 to 24 years of age represented 3.8% of participants.

Table 18: Age; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Age	Count	Percent
18-24 years	3	3.8%
25-44 years	33	41.8%
45-59 years	22	27.8%
60-74 years	14	17.7%
75+ years	7	8.9%
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0%
Total	79	100.0%

Most participants identified as female (68.4%), while 29.1% identified as male. Only two participants (2.5%) identified their gender as other than female or male.

Table 19: Gender Identity; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Gender Identity	Count	Percent
Female	54	68.4%
Male	23	29.1%
Transgender man/ trans man/ female-to-male	0	0.0%
Transgender woman/ trans woman/ male-to-female	0	0.0%
Genderqueer/ Gender non- conforming/ not exclusively male or female	2	2.5%
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0%
Not Listed, please specify	0	0.0%
Total	79	100.0%

A majority of participants identified as heterosexual or straight (83.5%). Six participants (7.6%) identified their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual or straight, including two participants (2.5%) who identified as homosexual or bisexual, one participant (1.3%) who identified as queer, pansexual, and/or questioning, and one participant (1.3%) who identified with a sexual orientation not listed. Seven participants (8.9%) indicated that they preferred not to answer this question.

Table 20: Sexual Orientation; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Sexual Orientation	Count	Percent
Homosexual (gay or lesbian)	2	2.5%
Heterosexual (straight)	66	83.5%
Bisexual	2	2.5%
Queer, pansexual, and/or questioning	1	1.3%
I Don't know	0	0.0%
I prefer not to answer	7	8.9%
Not listed, please specify	1	1.3%
Total	79	100.0%

Note: Participant who selected "Not listed" did not specify their sexual orientation.

A majority of participants indicated that they identified as non-Hispanic or Latino (84.8%), while 15.2% identified as Hispanic or Latino or of Spanish origin.

Table 21: Ethnicity; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Ethnicity	Count	Percent
Hispanic/ Latino/ or of Spanish origin	12	15.2%
Non-Hispanic/ Latino/ or of Spanish origin	67	84.8%
Total	79	100.0%

Regarding race and ethnicity, the majority of participants identified as Black or African American (70.9%), followed by White (25.3%). Two participants (2.5%) identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Table 22: Race; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Race	Count	Percent
White	20	25.3%
Black or African American	56	70.9%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	2.5%
Asian	0	0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
I prefer not to answer	2	2.5%
Not listed, please specify	0	0.0%
Total	80	100%

Note: One participant identified as both “Black or African American” and “American Indian or Alaskan Native”

The majority of participants indicated that they primarily speak English at home (96.2%). To note, three (3.8%) participants who attended focus groups conducted in English indicated that they speak Spanish primarily at home.

Table 23: Primary Language Spoken at Home; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Language Spoken at Home	Count	Percent
An Asian language	0	0.0%
English	76	96.2%
French	0	0.0%
Haitian Creole	0	0.0%
Native or Indigenous	0	0.0%
Spanish*	3	3.8%
Spanish Creole	0	0.0%
I prefer not to answer	0	0.0%
Not listed, please specify	0	0.0%
Total	79	100.0%

* One Spanish-language focus group session was held in Palm Beach County, and all five participants (100%) who completed the demographic questionnaire for this session stated that they primarily speak English at home.

Participants had a mix of educational backgrounds, indicating they achieved various levels of educational attainment. Overall, 19 participants (24.1%) indicated that they had achieved a bachelor’s degree, and 18 participants (22.8%) indicated that they had completed some college, 12 participants (15.2%) highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma or equivalent, while nine participants (11.4%) completed less than a high school diploma or equivalent.

Table 24: Level of Educational Attainment; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Count	Percent
Less than a high school diploma	9	11.4%
High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)	12	15.2%
Some college	18	22.8%
Bachelor’s degree (e.g., BA, BS)	19	24.1%
Graduate or Professional degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, JD)	13	16.5%
Technical school (e.g., HVAC, CNA, welding)	5	6.3%
I prefer not to answer	3	3.8%
Not listed, please specify	0	0.0%
Total	79	100.0%

The largest share of participants reported that they work full-time (48.1%), followed by those who indicated they were retired (24.1%). Seven participants (8.9%) reported that they are unemployed, and six participants (7.6%) reported that they are unable to work.

Table 25: Current Employment Status; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Current Employment Status	Count	Percent
Full-time employed (35 or more hours per week)	38	48.1%
Part-time employed (less than 35 hours per week)	2	2.5%
Unemployed	7	8.9%
Self-employed	4	5.1%
Retired	19	24.1%
Unable to work	6	7.6%
I prefer not to answer	1	1.3%
Not listed, please specify	2	2.5%
Total	79	100.0%

Note: Participants who selected “Not listed” specified: “Part-time employed + Disabled” and “Musician at Church”

Household income varied among the participants. The largest proportion of participants indicated that their household income is between \$40,000 to \$69,000 (22.8%), followed by \$10,000 to \$39,000 (21.5%) and less than \$10,000 (17.7%). Of note, 13 participants (16.5%) preferred not to answer this question.

Table 26: Household Income; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Household Income	Count	Percent
Less than \$10,000	14	17.7%
\$10,000 to \$39,000	17	21.5%
\$40,000 to \$69,000	18	22.8%
\$70,000 to \$99,000	11	13.9%
\$100,000 to \$199,000	6	7.6%
\$200,000 or more	0	0.0%
I prefer not to answer	13	16.5%
Total	79	100.0%

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Findings

Table 27: Personal & Community Values; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Personal & Community Values	
Questions	Themes
<p>What are your top three values? Why?</p> <p>What do you think your community values most? Why?</p>	<p>Participants shared many values, highlighting concerns or aspirations for their communities and personal lives- demonstrating a desire to see improvement and well-being as a collective and as individuals. However, throughout the sessions, it is worth noting that certain participants also discussed available and unavailable services and resources in the community in response to this question. Key themes are highlighted below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Investing in Children: Across sessions, participants noted the need to invest in youth. One participant from the Glades (Palm Beach County) session highlighted the lack of activities for kids in Belle Glade, stating that investments are needed in this area, and pointed out the importance of providing opportunities for children because they are the future. Another participant from the Glades (Palm Beach County) session expressed concerns about the absence of a positive environment for kids in South Bay, emphasizing the need for more activities and recreational programs. The participants recognized the need for safe, reliable transportation options to ensure children can engage in after-school activities and programs. In East Stuart (Martin County), participants noted that youth in the area are being excluded from accessing parks and recreational areas, due to costs of joining organized recreational activities that now have control over access to these spaces.</p> <p>Improving Education: Education emerged as a top priority for several participants. Participants in the Glades and Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) sessions discussed their views on education as a means of financial security and employment opportunity, with one participant stating that education is the “key to escaping poverty and pursuing successful careers.” One participant emphasized that one would be stuck in a cycle of limited opportunities without access to education. Indiantown session (Martin County) participants discussed the lack of educational resources available to the community and the literacy challenges among members of the community. The participants explained that education gaps can lead people to get ‘lost in the shuffle’ of town/organizational politics if they are unaware of ‘the bigger picture.’ They emphasized unity and the community’s strong bonds, focusing on supporting and protecting one another due to higher illiteracy rates and vulnerability to potential exploitation by outside entities. However, Glades (Palm Beach County) session participants discussed educational resources more explicitly: participants discussed the lack of educational activities and programs for youth in South Bay, Belle Glade, and Pahokee, and compared this to other areas of Palm Beach County where IT classes, business courses, and programs outside of sports are available. Glades (Palm Beach County) participants expressed a desire for non-sports related resources and activities for youth, and one Glades (Palm Beach County) participant suggested potential climate-related actions, such as planting trees, as an opportunity for engaging youth.</p>

- **Family and Community:** Participants across sessions recognized the importance of family and community. In the Indiantown (Martin County) session, participants noted a lost sense of community and a desire to return that feeling of connectedness with their neighbors. Participants seemed to express nostalgia, noting that “people used know each other.” In East Stuart (Martin County), a participant noted connection with others as a value and that the “community values family.” This participant stressed the importance of having a “place [that we want] to come back home to.” Participants in Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) stressed the importance of community as well.
- **Helping Others and Compassion:** Participants highlighted the value of caring for vulnerable members of the community, including senior citizens on fixed incomes and people experiencing homelessness. The participants emphasized the importance of community “solidarity” in ensuring everyone is cared for. One participant in Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) highlighted the community’s focus on supporting senior citizens through church activities and outreach efforts. Participants of the Indiantown (Martin County) and Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) sessions noted similar values, expressing that the community is united in looking out for one another and stressed the importance of helping others. Participants highlighted members of the community who inspired others through their service to others.
- **Safety:** Concerns related to safety and security were mentioned as key values across sessions. Participants from the Glades (Palm Beach County) noted that the community values football and sports and prioritizes having a winning football team, but that there have been issues with fighting and conflicts at games that have deterred community members from attending these events. Participants in Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) noted the importance of safety as well.
- **Local Representation:** Additionally, Indiantown (Martin County), Glades (Palm Beach County), and Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) session participants emphasized the importance of community voice, particularly in decisions regarding construction projects and local government representation. One participant expressed that “Indiantown may be poor, but it is rich in land,” highlighting concerns that, without proper representation, developers’ wants are prioritized at the residents’ expense.
- **Respect:** Participants emphasized personal values such as respect and the need for people to learn how to be respectful of others and the community. One Glades (Palm Beach County) participant discussed how respect is a key value taught within her Karate class, which more generally teaches kids about respect, love, and kindness. Participants of the Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) session noted the importance of dignity and respect as well.
- **Honesty:** Participants in Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) and one participant in East Stuart (Martin County) valued transparency, highlighting its relevance in personal contexts, as well as in institutions and organization intending to serve the community. They emphasized the importance of honesty as a crucial aspect of transparency.

- **Faith:** Participants across sessions noted the importance of their faith. Indiantown session (Martin County) participants specifically indicated family, community, and God, as values. Many sentiments of “God comes first” were echoed.

While some participants offered justifications or explanations for their values, others simply listed their values without providing further elaboration or reasoning. Additionally, the following values were briefly highlighted by only one session.

- **Health and the Environment:** One participant identified health as a top value in the Riviera Beach session (Palm Beach County). They expressed that while others in the community may place an importance placed on “material possessions”, they believe health is what matters most. Other participants from the Riviera Beach session noted that they value community parks, as they provide safe spaces for children to play, and expressed a desire for environmental education in the area. Riviera Beach residents expressed concerns about the lack of knowledge and care for the environment and agriculture, with littering a notable issue. Additionally, the participants emphasized the interconnectedness of family, health, and the environment, stating that “health equals wealth” and highlighting the value of “clean air” as a vital resource to ensure well-being.
- **Stability and Self-Sufficiency:** Participants in Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) noted financial stability, social security, employment, and self-sufficiency as values. For example, one participant noted, “I came from the projects. I came from almost nothing.” They further explained that they learned how to rise above their situation, and that they chose “not to stay where society has labeled me as.”
- **Mental Health:** Indiantown session (Martin County) participants briefly highlighted the importance of prioritizing their mental health, stating that “sanity and peace of mind” are important.

Notably, participants from Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) noted negative community values, including ignorance, vanity, a focus on monetary gain, and disregard for community well-being. They cited examples of the city prioritizing monetary gain over affordable housing and removing agricultural and recreational spaces.

Table 28: Current Impacts; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Current Impacts	
Questions	Themes
<p>What changes have you observed to your environment/surroundings over the last 5-10 years?</p>	<p>While there were shared observations among participants related to changes in the environment, the specific changes mentioned highlight each session's participants' localized experiences and priorities. The key themes that emerged include changes to the observed climate, safety, housing availability and affordability, policy changes and food access, and community infrastructure and built environment. Some participants chose to reflect on observed changes more deeply in response to this question, explaining impacts of these changes and highlighting their significance, though climate impacts are discussed in further detail in the next question's analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Climate: Participants across counties noted the increased heat. They also mentioned the impact of storms and changes in plant growth. These observations suggest a shared concern about climate change and its impact on their environments.</p> <p>The Glades (Palm Beach County) session participants discussed observing an increase in storms, and the East Stuart (Martin County) and Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants specifically noted observing an increase in flooding in their areas. Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants discussed the “influx of storms as of late, especially outside of hurricane season,” resulting in increased street flooding. Participants in this session also expressed concerns about runoff and questioned whether the water would run into the nearby ocean. Of note, participants of East Stuart (Martin County) also noted flooding in the community in response to a later question, which is discussed further below.</p> <p>In the Glades (Palm Beach County) session, participants explained the ozone layer is thinning and described an observed increase in sugarcane burnings related to sugarcane farming, a prominent industry in the area. Participants noted the effects of sugarcane burning on air pollution. One Glades session participant explained that they needed to “readjust to the air” when they came home from college. Participants also described a perceived increase in cases of asthma and allergies. Alternatively, they noted that the community saw improvement in their environmental surroundings during the COVID-19 pandemic, because “they couldn’t do the burnings [of the cane fields].” Some participants also reflected on other positive environmental impacts, noting that “the lake looked clearer” and “the air was more crisp.”</p> <p>Glades (Palm Beach County) participants expressed observing an increase in littering and said the litter stays for “days, and months, and years.” They explained that the litter includes items such as furniture and tires and noted they observed littering in a garden that was recently set up by a community member.</p> <p>Participants also noted changes regarding animals or insects in the area. Participants of the Indiantown session noted an observed increase in iguanas in the region, an invasive species in Florida.¹ Participants also noted fewer peacocks in the area, which is classified as a domestic species</p>

¹ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Green Iguana. <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/reptiles/greeniguana/>

in Florida.² East Stuart (Martin County) participants specifically noted they've observed more mosquitos in the area.

- **Housing Availability and Affordability:** Participants across counties highlighted changes in housing availability and affordability. In Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County), participants noted the impact of urban development, population changes, housing unaffordability, gentrification, and the influx of new residents, particularly in the Silver Beach area. Participants in East Stuart (Martin County) noted an increase in the homeless population, citing increases in rent and housing costs. East Stuart participants also noted substandard housing related to the age of existing housing structures.

Riviera Beach session participants mentioned that during the COVID-19 pandemic many people from New York, who could work remotely, moved to the area, which they believed increased rent prices. They explained that this led to “natives” being “pushed out.” One Riviera Beach session participant shared their personal experience, explaining they had to move out of their small house when the rent suddenly “increased from \$850 to over \$3000 monthly.”

One Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participant expressed that the combination of low incomes and high rent stifles the community. They highlighted that seeking housing options is expensive, as there are administrative and application fees, which are non-refundable even if the application is rejected. These participants also described a lack of available affordable housing in Riviera Beach, particularly for families. Participants noted that available housing options lack space for families with children. They also expressed frustration that the government is not enforcing regulations to help control the rent and housing crisis.

- **Policy Changes and Food Access:** Participants from Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) drew attention to the evolving agricultural landscape in their community, noting an increase in processed meats and foods over time. They also expressed concern about the diminishing availability of “you-pick ‘em farms,” which had previously provided a means for the community to access locally grown fresh produce. Furthermore, participants in Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) also explained there are restrictions on household farming practices, such as raising chickens in urban areas.

In East Stuart (Martin County), participants highlighted the observed increase in availability of food assistance resources. They expressed confidence that hunger was not a prevailing issue in Martin County, with one participant stating, “You can't starve in Martin County.” Participants also acknowledged the presence of free hygiene products and clothing for those in need within the county.

In contrast, an Indiantown (Martin County) participant pointed out that Indiantown is classified as a food desert. They highlighted residents' difficulty accessing fresh vegetables, citing distance as a barrier to reaching the nearest grocery store. However, Indiantown participants also noted

² FWC. Domestic Peafowl. <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/domestic-peafowl/>

ongoing efforts to improve food access in the area, including developing a farmer's market.

Community Infrastructure and Built Environment: Participants in various sessions noted concerns due to the built environment in their communities. Participants from Indiantown (Martin County) explored the consequences of becoming incorporated as a Village and the challenges of aging infrastructure. They highlighted the absence of a Fire Department in Indiantown, with the nearest one located across the train tracks, posing potential dangers during emergencies when freight trains block the community. Participants deemed the encasement of the town by train tracks on both sides as hazardous and expressed, "you can't get in and you can't get out" when a train is crossing or if a train stalls on the tracks. Participants in the Indiantown (Martin County) session discussed the changes once the town was incorporated, including the paving of roads and the town's acquisition of the local water company. However, they highlighted ongoing issues with the aging water infrastructure, emphasizing the need for financial resources to address pipe replacement as the current pipes are "50 to 70 years old."

Meanwhile, East Stuart (Martin County) participants perceived there to be disparities in investment in community infrastructure between their area and more affluent parts of the county, advocating for efforts to enhance the community's appearance through landscaping. They also lamented the discontinuation of street sweepers in the area and voiced concerns over perceived discrimination, with one participant explaining "The city has money to do this, but they choose not to." The East Stuart participants saw this as indicative of unequal treatment compared to other regions within the city. The absence of street sweepers exacerbated participants' perceptions of the city's disinvestment in their community, leading them to express frustration over the perceived lack of attention and care from local authorities. In this context, the participants raised concerns about discrimination faced by neighborhoods already grappling with limited infrastructure investments. They observed that despite the city having sufficient funds for such improvements, they believed decision-makers were not prioritizing their community, further reinforcing their perception of being unfairly treated and marginalized.

Participants across counties also expressed concerns about the observed reduction in trees and its consequences on shade, pollution, and carbon sequestration. Indiantown (Martin County) participants specifically raised concerns about removing trees without adequate replacements and emphasized the importance of educating residents about the significance of planting trees. Indiantown and East Stuart (Martin County) residents also explained the importance of tree coverage and highlighted that housing developments are replacing trees with non-shading palm trees. One participant stated, they "tear down trees and replace them with palm trees that offer no shade and have no carbon sequestration benefits." Participants stressed the necessity of educating residents to prioritize planting "real trees."

Furthermore, Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants noted a decline in trees and an increase in high-rise buildings, particularly in areas like Silver Beach. They cited city restrictions on keeping animals in yards, which impacted the presence of gardens and backyard livestock. The lack of support from the city for off-grid living and self-sustainability was also noted. In Lake Worth (Palm Beach County), a participant mentioned they observed an influx of businesses and increased investment in infrastructure to support economic growth, with public buildings experiencing better maintenance. However, participants raised concerns about the uneven distribution of infrastructure improvements, as the investment predominantly focused on the north portion of the community, while improvements were needed in South Lake Worth.

In Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County), participants shared their experiences receiving notices on their doors from homeowners' associations or the city when their houses or yards were deemed inadequately presentable, highlighting the financial and mental challenges of meeting these demands. They also expressed concerns about the potential erasure of the "original Riviera Beach community residents." In Indiantown (Martin County), participants discussed the changing political landscape. They explained the Village Council considered revising land development rules and expressed dissent towards proposals for gated communities in the area.

East Stuart (Martin County) participants noted how the community used to be cleaner and described observing debris left in areas of construction. Similarly, one participant from Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) reflected that the lakes are becoming dirtier in Marsh Harbor with "visible trash" and increased algae growth. They expressed concerns about drinking water quality, highlighting a yellow tint, and questioned the community's awareness.

- **Other Concerns:** Participants in Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) expressed heightened fear and insecurity within the community, particularly among immigrants, due to policies enacted at the state level. Similarly, another participant shared their perspective as a teacher, stating that the governor does not adequately consider the needs of children with disabilities.

In the Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) session, residents emphasized the presence of organizations within the community that offer career development and employment education opportunities for residents. Lincoln Park participants also noted that gang violence has increased in the area. One participant explained that changes in the surrounding communities have led to gang proliferation. In contrast, some participants in Lincoln Park felt that gang violence has decreased.

What effects have these changes in the environment had on you, your family or your community?

When asked about the impact of environmental changes, participants noted many general concerns including increased financial burdens, limited availability of outdoor activities, health issues, deteriorating infrastructure, concerns related to city planning and development decisions, and housing availability and affordability. However, it is important to note that many session participants did not discuss these community concerns in connection to climate change, though some participants in Riviera Beach and Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) explicitly discussed the connections between climate change and its impacts on individuals and communities. When participants discussed the effects of environmental changes on individuals, families, and communities, some common themes and general concerns emerged:

- **Housing and Displacement:** Participants across the sessions noted the impact of the affordable and available housing shortage in their areas. Across sessions, participants shared that housing prices have increased over the past 5 to 10 years. See the section above for more on the impacts of housing crises on session participants.

In East Stuart (Martin County), participants noted the effect of gentrification in the community. One participant noted that their “greatest fear is rich people moving in and wiping out the community or shipping out residents.”

Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) participants echoed similar sentiments, noting that their community has changed in terms of race and nationality, and also commented that gentrification is taking place. Participants in this session stated that community members are being pushed out of their homes. One participant noted that “rich people” are “buying up land” in the community to develop on. Another participant noted that homeownership has decreased drastically, and efforts are needed to help community members hold on to the land.

- **Financial Hardship:** Participants in Glades and Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) mentioned that higher electricity and air conditioning usage to combat rising heat is causing electricity bills to rise. In the Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) session, participants also noted issues with high electricity costs and electrical outages during storms.

In Indiantown (Martin County), participants focused on the economic impacts, specifically mentioning job losses in the farming industry.

Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) participants expressed concerns about financial hardships faced by many residents, including the inability to afford mortgage payments or rent and an increase in residents experiencing homelessness. One participant noted that it has become more difficult to find employment, due to the digital divide and tech illiteracy.

- **Community Infrastructure and Built Environment:** Glades participants (Palm Beach County) noted the lack of investment in community infrastructure. They also explained that residential communities from the coast have been slowly encroaching westward.

Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants noted turning their community into a tourist destination is being prioritized, potentially at the expense of local residents, especially in Silver Beach.

Indiantown (Martin County) participants expressed concerns about proposed housing developments, including gated communities, and the potential removal of trees. One participant stated they would like to see more community gardens added into the community, and another participant briefly highlighted that they have noticed a decline in agriculture, particularly citrus farms, in the area. They also mentioned the need for funding to address infrastructure issues, such as updating water pipes and refurbishing buildings like the recreational center.

East Stuart (Martin County) participants also noted construction in the area that they felt was hazardous to the health and safety of residents. The participants explained that construction projects were initiated to update plumbing; however, the projects have exposed pipes without safety barriers to prevent community members, particularly youth, from injuries. Participants described perceived negligence, discrimination, and unfair treatment related to development projects in the community, stating, “We / I am being treated like fifth-class citizen.”

- **Health:** Extreme heat and its effects on health, physical and mental, were a significant point of discussion across counties. Participants expressed worries about skin burns and limitations on outdoor activities due to the high temperatures.

In Glades (Palm Beach County), participants noted that seniors generally have more health issues associated with aging and as such, are more vulnerable to the heat. One participant highlighted that when residents, especially seniors, are stuck inside ‘it gets really boring’, which can negatively impact their mental health. Participants also discussed the vulnerability of seniors who rely on fixed incomes and the difficult decisions they face in allocating their limited financial resources.

Similarly, participants in Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) expressed concerns about the potential increase in aggression, violent crime, and mental health issues associated with the heat. They emphasized the discomfort caused by the heat, leading to more time spent indoors, increased reliance on air conditioning, and reduced outdoor activities for children, which can impact mental health.

In Indiantown (Martin County), participants expressed discomfort with the increased heat and advocated for more shade in the community, particularly over basketball courts so that youth can enjoy recreational activities outdoors during the summer months.

East Stuart (Martin County) participants noted feelings of helplessness to address changes needed to improve the community and noted the mental health impacts of this helplessness. For example, one participant noted, “We want it to be better, but there are areas/things that we don’t have control over to make it better.” One participant explained she participates in meetings intended to affect change in the community, but nothing ever changes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate: Glades (Palm Beach County) session participants discussed the impacts of air pollution on the community from specific sources, such as sugarcane burnings. They also noted air quality concerns, including the foul smell that results from sugarcane burning that permeates the community, with one participating stating that “the smell is everywhere... it even comes through the A/C.”
<p>Are there people in your community who are impacted more than others by climate change? Who are they and what is the impact?</p>	<p>During the various sessions, participants shed light on the disproportionate impact of climate change within their communities, highlighting specific groups more severely affected. These groups include vulnerable populations such as seniors, children, parents, low-income families, and marginalized communities, who experience various impacts, such as health risks due to extreme heat, housing affordability challenges, and changes in local agriculture.</p> <p>The impact on the community at large was a topic of discussion in Indiantown (Martin County). Participants emphasized the interconnectedness of health with various aspects of their lives. Extreme heat was highlighted as a barrier to outdoor activities, as it makes it challenging for community members to go for walks. Participants highlighted additional barriers to going on walks, including safety concerns and lack of adequate lighting at night within the community. Indiantown participants explained they desired more indoor options to escape the heat. Participants from the Glades (Palm Beach County) echoed these concerns.</p> <p>Participants in Indiantown (Martin County) raised concerns about the lack of access to necessary infrastructure, such as an emergency room or an urgent care facility, and limited options for healthcare resources. One participant noted that the local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) does not accept all types of health insurance, causing accessibility barriers along with transportation barriers for individuals who need to travel elsewhere for care. Furthermore, participants highlighted the limited operating hours of the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) in Indiantown (Martin County), which is only open for two days a week, as a concern. As a result, many residents travel to Stuart (Martin County) or Glades (Palm Beach County) to see their primary care doctor.</p> <p>The specific groups of people impacted more than others by climate change whom session participants emphasized are detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children: Participants explained that the younger population in their communities is increasingly vulnerable and that young children are more vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat. Participants discussed the tendency of children to spend more time indoors on their technology versus engaging in outdoor activities, due to limited options for outdoor activities and barriers such as heat. Participants explained how this shift in behavior affects their physical and mental health due to restricted social interactions and physical activity. Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants also noted that young children in the community are affected by climate change, as they are more vulnerable to the exacerbation of asthma caused by increased exposure to pollen. Additionally, they discussed how the

resurfacing of illnesses like COVID-19 poses a higher risk to their health and well-being.

- **Low-Income Families:** Participants noted that low-income families face challenges in accessing quality housing. Participants spoke about how financial constraints may force them to live in cramped spaces or move in with family members to save money. Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants highlighted that a lack of adequate living spaces and privacy could negatively affect their mental health and well-being. Additionally, participants highlighted that low-income families may struggle to afford the increased costs associated with climate change, putting them at a disadvantage compared to more affluent community members. Similarly, Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants expressed that the increasing cost of living, particularly rental prices, has made it particularly difficult for people under 30 to buy homes. One Lake Worth participant mentioned the high cost of medical insurance, explaining that their husband couldn't afford insurance with a monthly cost exceeding \$250. This indicates that access to necessary healthcare coverage is a challenge for some individuals in this community. Another participant in the Lake Worth session discussed the rising prices of groceries and everyday items. Another participant specifically mentioned that the prices of groceries, such as eggs, have doubled. This suggests that the increasing cost of living is affecting the affordability of essential goods.
- **Seniors:** Participants highlighted that seniors in the community are heavily impacted by climate change. Participants noted that they face increased cost burden for various necessities and are forced to make critical decisions about what they can afford to buy or pay for due to financial constraints. Additionally, participants spoke about how limited mobility makes it challenging for seniors to navigate extreme weather conditions and access necessary resources, affecting their overall well-being. For example, one participant noted, "Seniors are on fixed incomes with limited resources. They are paying more for everything... They have to make critical decisions on what they will buy/pay because they only have so many dollars."
- **Parents of Young Children and Families:** Participants Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) highlighted that there are more stringent sick policies in childcare centers following the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created challenges for parents. Participants explained that when their children are sick, parents may face difficulties with missed school days, particularly for those who are unable to take time off from work easily. One participant emphasized that this situation is further exacerbated for parents who work from home, as they constantly find themselves surrounded by their work, sleeping, and eating spaces, potentially harming their mental health. Participants emphasized the additional struggles faced by parents with more than one child. Participants also noted that parents must keep their babies inside due to the heat. One participant noted, "Parents with more than one kid can't just leave the baby inside. It's too hot for the baby to be outside." In the Glades (Palm Beach County), participants noted that they expected to see more kids outside now that school is out of session, but it is too hot for them to play. Furthermore, participants in East Stuart (Martin County) noted

	<p>that when children do not have recreation activities available in the community to keep them busy, they are more likely to engage in troublesome behavior, creating further concerns for parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals Experiencing Homelessness: Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) and East Stuart (Martin County) participants noted that people experiencing homelessness may be more impacted by climate change by others. For example, one East Stuart participant noted that there was a lack of shelters in the area during hurricanes or cold spells in the winter. This participant added that there has been an influx in the population experiencing homelessness in the area and suggested that having only one shelter available to this population in emergency situations puts this population at risk. Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants also noted concerns for individuals experiencing homelessness. They highlighted that in the South Lake Worth community resources, such as water, are limited and there is not enough infrastructure to support all residents. Racial Minorities: Participants noted how gentrification has priced primarily Black residents out of their communities. Participants noted that ‘minorities’ typically don’t have the economic capacity to move from the area in response to extreme weather or displacement due to other reasons. See more in the section above on housing and displacement. Ethnic Minorities and Farmworkers: Participants highlighted that minorities, in general, and farmworkers, specifically, are disproportionately impacted by climate change. Participants noted that the increasing heat affects farm workers who have to work outdoors, leading to health risks and increased challenges in their livelihood as crop productivity is impacted. Furthermore, participants in the Glades (Palm Beach County) and Indiantown (Martin County) spoke about the recent legislation and resulting fears related to citizenship status. They explained this has led many families, especially minorities, to leave the community and even Florida. Additionally, Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants noted that there is a large Guatemalan community, and these residents will often commute by walking. As such, they are greatly impacted by the increasing heat. Individuals with Medical Issues: Participants also note that individuals with medical issues are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, although participants did not elaborate further.
<p>How prepared are you to handle these changes in the environment?</p>	<p>Participants in all sessions reflected a sense of unpreparedness in response to changes in the environment. While the Glades (Palm Beach County) participants focused on the lack of local businesses and amenities, the Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants emphasized the need for better support systems and community action. Indiantown (Martin County) participants highlighted specific challenges faced by the community, such as food deserts, inadequate infrastructure, and exclusion from decision-making processes. These responses indicate the need for improved resources, support systems, and community involvement to enhance preparedness for environmental changes. Participants mentioned several key factors that contributed to this sense of unpreparedness, including the following:</p>

- **Lack of Resources and Amenities:** Participants across sessions noted a lack of resources and amenities in their community makes them vulnerable to changes in their environment. Participants in the Glades (Palm Beach County) expressed concerns about the region's limited availability of businesses and shopping options. Participants highlighted the closure of Goodwill and the lack of year-round resources, such as the seasonal operation of the pool. One participant explained, "There is nothing here to come out for. You can't even go shopping. There are no businesses. Goodwill even left."

Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County), Glades (Palm Beach County), and Indiantown (Martin County) participants highlighted a lack of access to affordable healthy food options and insufficient community gardens as additional challenges. In the Indiantown session, participants discussed how Indiantown is a "food desert, and it is hard to obtain fresh vegetables," so residents must travel more than a mile to get to the grocery store. Notably, another participant emphasized that community projects are underway to directly address that through establishing a local Farmer's Market.

Additionally, Indiantown session participants noted that while public transportation is technically available in the area, it does not operate where people need it, and it is 'not conducive' to the community's needs. Participants in Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) noted that the community does not have enough assets or resources, including places to go in an emergency. One participant commented that it is a "hand-to-mouth struggle," meaning insufficient food, money, or resources are available to meet existing needs. This same participant said that community members are "constantly rotating crops," implying that residents have to decide which needs to prioritize, as insufficient resources are available to meet all existing needs.

- **Challenges with Support Systems:** Participants in Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) voiced frustration with current support systems for the community. They mentioned financial strain, difficulty accessing grant and program funds, and the paperwork burden to qualify for funding. Participants in Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) and East Stuart (Martin County) shared similar frustrations. For example, a participant in Lincoln Park stated, "[The community] wants someone from the outside to fix our problems, but we need to go out there to have our voices heard. We need to come together as a whole, as a community, to make change." In East Stuart, participants shared similar perspectives but in response to other questions, noting that the community needs to come together. Both Lincoln Park and East Stuart participants noted talented members of their communities who could work from inside the community to affect change.
- **Exclusion and Lack of Involvement:** Participants in the Indiantown (Martin County) and the Glades (Palm Beach County) felt marginalized and excluded from the political decision-making processes. They emphasized the need for resources in the area, such as access to fresh vegetables,

improved public transportation, and better consideration of the community's demographics in housing projects.

- **Safety and Infrastructure Concerns:** Safety concerns were consistently raised across the sessions, encompassing various issues such as inadequate street lighting, traffic-related issues, and environmental maintenance in specific areas. In Indiantown (Martin County), one participant shared their experience of expressing concerns about personal safety to the Sheriff's office due to the lack of street lighting, only to be advised to "turn her porch light on." Another participant from Indiantown emphasized the need to address speeding issues in the area, particularly by youth riding dirt bikes and four-wheelers, who ignore stoplights, especially at night.

The Indiantown (Martin County) participants also expressed worries regarding flooding, drainage problems, and potential risks associated with gas lines and overgrown trees. In Lake Worth (Palm Beach County), flooding concerns were highlighted, particularly during hurricanes, and participants expressed the dangers of driving in such conditions.

Have people moved in and out of the area in the last 5-10 years? Do you think about moving out of your community and why?

Overall, participants across sessions indicated that there had been a notable trend of people moving out of their respective areas in the last 5 to 10 years. In the more rural areas, Glades (Palm Beach County) and Indiantown (Martin County), participants explained that “the younger generations are leaving because there is nothing to keep them there.” One Indiantown session participant explained that she was home from college for the summer, and that, while she loves her family, she does not believe that she can live in the ‘country’ full time after having experienced what there is to offer in the ‘city.’

Participant responses revealed common themes and reasons for people moving in and out of the area. Participants also discussed reasons why they decided to leave or stay. Below is a summary based on these themes:

Reasons for Leaving:

- Limited job opportunities and lack of economic vitality.
- Scarce housing options and affordability challenges.
- Absence of social outlets and entertainment.
- Increase in gun violence, shootings, and gang activity.
- Concerns about open carry laws and safety issues.

Reasons for Staying:

- Homeownership, “As a homeowner... I would only leave if forced to.”
- Family, strong attachment to the community, and deep-rooted connections.
- Love for the community and having grown up there.
- Appreciation for the sense of community despite challenges and witnessing changes in the neighborhood over time.
- Motivation to be a positive change in the community.

Challenges and Considerations:

- Affordability barriers and difficulties in becoming a homeowner.
- Feeling shackled down by the challenges of homeownership.
- Lack of opportunities and attractions for the younger generation.
- Fear and persecution experienced by non-citizen community members.
- Departure of residents who seek better environments for their children.
- Corporate landlords or investor purchases of multifamily homes and the subsequent displacement of residents. One participant noted, “It’s like monopoly out here.”
- Lack of housing availability and high rent costs.
- Construction of schools and afterschool activities as potential improvements to provide youth with afterschool activity options such as sports.

These responses indicate that economic factors, safety concerns, social opportunities, affordability, and personal connections influence people's decisions to move in or out of the area. The desire to provide a better future for oneself or family members and the presence of deep-rooted ties to the community play significant roles in shaping individuals' thoughts on leaving or staying in their respective communities.

Table 29: Adaptation Strategies and Barriers; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Adaptation Strategies and Barriers	
Questions	Themes
<p>How are you, your neighbors, and your community actively working to improve your situation and better prepare for the impacts of climate change?</p> <p>In addition to efforts already underway in your community, what else would you like to do to improve your situation and mitigate the effects of climate change?</p> <p>What makes it hard to make these improvements?</p>	<p>When participants were asked how they are actively working to improve their situation and prepare for the impacts of climate change, responses across the different sessions varied. It is worth noting, some session participants laughed when asked this question, suggesting that limited efforts are being made to prepare for the impacts of climate change. Overall, participants highlighted the need for financial support, community engagement, and information dissemination to address challenges and make improvements related to climate change. The participants expressed a desire for government assistance, community-wide action, and a stronger sense of community connection to tackle the impacts of climate change effectively.</p> <p>Efforts that were highlighted are summarized below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Indiantown (Martin County): Participants emphasized the strong sense of community and being ‘each other’s keepers’, appreciating the diversity and small-town feel. They highlighted the importance of unity and effective communication, suggesting that the community needs to stand together. On the other hand, they expressed a need for civic participation among community members and mobilization among the community to vote to effect change. Participants also discussed the need to address misconceptions that “your vote won’t matter,” and participants shared stories of the close town elections where seats were “lost by 11 votes” that had recently passed. Participants noted the need for shared spaces like restaurants or community centers for residents to come together. Of note, Indiantown session participants noted feeling excluded or unwelcome in a restaurant in their community based on their race, as the restaurant minimized the offensive or disrespectful nature of a derogatory word used in its title. One participant noted that it feels like ‘segregation.’ Participants also expressed the need for shaded areas, especially where youth frequent, such as basketball courts.</p> <p>Glades (Palm Beach County): Participants could not think of any active efforts. They highlighted the perception that some community members think climate change is a hoax, which hampers efforts to prepare for its impacts. Additionally, participants raised concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement in responding to crime. Additionally, Glades participants mentioned challenges getting a response from the city regarding improvements to their houses and a lack of knowledge or assistance from staff when seeking help for issues, such as landscaping resources for managing overgrown areas.</p> <p>Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County): Participants emphasized the importance of knowledge and education about the environment’s impact on health to foster care and concern. They expressed a desire to return to a community where neighbors help each other and actively interact, instead of a disconnected and phone-dependent lifestyle.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Worth Beach (Palm Beach County): Participants mentioned financial limitations as a barrier to improvements and suggested the need for government loans, tax incentives, or low-interest rate loans. They emphasized the role of collective action and community-wide efforts in addressing climate change. • Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County): One participant noted they belong to an HOA that has worked to represent the community in front of local representatives, including county commissioners. The participant noted that the HOA has the ability to respond to absentee landlords who neglect their properties and that more community members must be involved in these organized groups to address community needs. Participants also noted that Habitat for Humanity is working in the community to refurbish housing, including installing new windows and helping people with home repairs. Participants of this session also raised concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement in addressing rising crime. In particular, a participant noted a long response time by law enforcement in Black communities in the area. • East Stuart (Martin County): Participants noted that they do not see efforts to improve the community. Participants stressed the need for accountability and noted situations of talk without action. One participant noted that grants are awarded to improve the area, but they never see the funds or results of the grant in the community. Participants stressed the importance of creating more activities for kids in the area. One participant noted that, in the past, the community was strong and that people would look out for one another. There used to be spaces in the community for residents to come together, such as movie nights or dances at the community center. The participant noted that those types of activities should be brought back.
<p>What support or incentives would make it easier? In other words, what would help you make these changes?</p>	<p>The participants in the focus group sessions provided a range of perspectives. The responses to the questions can be summarized based on several themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for Support and Funding: Participants across the sessions expressed a common concern about their community's lack of support and need for funding. They emphasized the importance of securing resources to address various issues and make necessary improvements. Participants in the Glades and Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) sessions expressed the need for government loans, tax incentives, low-interest rate loans, or financial support to make changes more affordable. Resources needed included hurricane-impact windows, accordion shutters, AC units, roofs, home maintenance, and solar panels. East Stuart (Martin County) participants suggested a need for government funding to be more fairly allocated for improvements to the area, with one participant noting that city officials “cater to the wealthy and not the ordinary citizen.” Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants emphasized the need to ensure available funding is accessible. See <i>Funding and Resources</i> explained below.

- **Youth Engagement and Opportunities:** Across sessions, participants mentioned the importance of engaging youth and providing meaningful opportunities. They highlighted the need for recreational facilities, job opportunities, and educational programs to keep young people off the streets and foster their development within the community.
- **Unity and Community Engagement:** Glades (Palm Beach County), Indiantown (Martin County), and East Stuart (Martin County) participants highlighted the significance of community unity and engagement. Participants discussed the importance of neighbors looking out for one another and fostering a sense of togetherness. They desired to revive the close-knit community relationships that they felt were diminishing. Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants cited a lack of community connection and interaction due to people being “constantly on their phones” and unwilling to “say hi.”
- **Barriers to Change:** Participants in all sessions identified barriers that hindered their efforts to make changes. These included limited support and funding, a lack of responsiveness from local authorities, racial prejudice and segregation, misconceptions around voting, and a prevailing “don’t know, don’t care” mentality among community members. Participants also highlighted the need to shift community conversations and foster spaces that empower people to take greater responsibility for improving their livelihoods. In particular, one participant noted a need to change the community members’ perspective and challenge themselves to ask, “What we are going to do differently ourselves?”
- **Environmental Awareness and Education:** Participants in the Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) and Indiantown (Martin County) sessions explicitly recognized the need for increased environmental awareness and education. They discussed the importance of educating the community about the impacts of climate change, promoting sustainable practices, and improving knowledge on topics such as agriculture and environmental health. Notably, participants of other sessions echoed these sentiments at the end of the session but not in response to this question.
- **Individual Efforts vs. Collective Action:** Participants emphasized the importance of individual actions to contribute to a better environment and collective actions. Participants across sessions mentioned personal efforts they can make, such as providing “hard labor on weekends” to help others or learning new practices, like proper disposal of cleaning solutions. Alternatively, Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants mentioned that peer pressure within the community can make it difficult to improve or change their habits. They emphasized the need for collective action and community-wide efforts to address climate change, such as installing energy-efficient features or planting native vegetation.

What would motivate your community to make these adaptations?

Various themes arose when asked what could motivate the community to make adaptations to prepare for climate change, although not all suggestions were explicitly tied to climate change. The following themes arose:

- **Education and Communication:** The importance of ongoing education, hands-on learning, and effective communication strategies was highlighted by participants across sessions. Participants emphasized the need for continuous learning, practical application of knowledge, and ensuring that information reaches beyond the focus group sessions to create awareness. Participants stressed the importance of increasing education in their communities so that people would be more inclined to take better care of themselves and their surroundings. One participant reflected that opportunities to engage in focus groups and listening sessions should have a greater turn-out as they can help others learn more about important topics. Additionally, one participant suggested offering educational materials in multiple languages. They explained that more residents with a background understanding of environmental changes would be better equipped to make future decisions on climate change.
- **Funding and Resources:** The need for funding and resources to support community initiatives was a recurring theme across the sessions. Participants emphasized the importance of access to funding to make necessary improvements and to address community needs effectively. Participants discussed the implications of the loss of agriculture to housing development in both Indiantown (Marty County) and the Glades (Palm Beach County). One participant noted that they saw “a projection of what Pam Beach will look like in 2027. After a while, they will no longer be able to build in Palm Beach, and [developers] will be building more out west...the challenge is to de-muck to create a foundation to build.” Additionally, participants stressed the need to help residents, particularly seniors, keep their houses up to code, stressing that “some seniors have been in their houses for years, and they do not have the income to fix up their homes.” Participants recognized that funding may be available, but there are barriers to accessing those funds, such as eligibility requirements and distribution concerns summarized in the section above. One participant expressed uncertainty about what else could be done to make adaptations and prepare, stating that “everyone is currently tight on resources, even if [residents] were to combine efforts.”
- **Advocacy, Representation, and Building Trust:** Participants discussed the need for elected officials who advocate for the community's needs and address issues, such as housing code violations and support for seniors. They emphasized the importance of building trust and changing perspectives among the community so that residents vote and elect officials prioritizing the community's best interests. A Glades (Palm Beach County) participant stated, “We have the power of the vote, but we keep electing the same officials over and over and expect things to change.” A Glades session participant noted that part of the challenge is “a lot of empty promises that have not been kept,” expressing that it has left the community skeptical. These sentiments were shared by participants in other sessions, as noted above. The participants

provided the example of a previous project that was suggested to create an inland port to provide transportation across the state that fell through.

- **Tangible Incentives and Benefits:** Participants expressed the need for tangible rewards or incentives to motivate their community to make adaptations, such as certificates of participation. One participant suggested that residents could get FPL credits or other incentives for their efforts and participation in environmentally conscious initiatives. One participant expressed, "If I put in the work, what are you giving me in return?" suggesting the need for reciprocal arrangements or incentives.
- **Skills Development and Trade Education:** Participants emphasized equipping community members with specific skills, particularly in repair and maintenance tasks, such as maintaining healthy drain and supply lines in HVAC and A/C systems. They highlighted the importance of trade education in addressing the community's needs and enabling residents to handle repairs promptly. Participants highlighted this in connection to the increased maintenance required of machines with higher usage to combat heat. One participant from the Glades (Palm Beach County) session stressed that "agricultural work is very hard" and discussed the need to "diversify the types of jobs in the community." The participants discussed the impact of mechanization on the agricultural industry, resulting in many agricultural workers' departure. They explained that the departure of seasonal farmworkers has led to a decrease in the number of people contributing to the local economy.

Table 30: Information & Community Resources; Palm Beach County, St. Lucie County, and Martin County

Information & Community Resources	
Questions	Themes
<p>Do you seek out information on this topic (climate change/ climate justice)?</p> <p>Where do you go (i.e. specific organizations, websites, resources, or people)?</p>	<p>Across sessions, participants indicated a desire to learn more about the topic of climate change. Participants stated that their knowledge and ability to reply to the questions throughout the session were limited due to a lack of familiarity or prior exposure to the topic. As such, a small minority of participants across the sessions indicated they had previously researched or sought out information on issues related to climate change, climate justice, or environmental justice. For example, one participant shared that they actively seek new information daily about changes in the environment. They expressed that they often listen to podcasts on both Apple and Spotify, read articles in the New York Times, and refer to social media for updates. Another participant expressed that they had looked up information related to Chem Trails, and another noted they had researched the impacts of climate change on mental health. However, several participants indicated they do not seek information on the topics, and, in these cases, participants were asked what organizations/ resources or people they trust for their information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Sources: Some participants mentioned trusting individuals, such as family members or a significant other, for general information on climate change and other topics. <p>Participants mentioned various sources they rely on for information, including TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, other social media platforms, community organizations including local community centers, workshops, weather channel, news outlets, radio, church, and friends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific Sources: Participants highlighted community organizations such as Community Service Center (CSC), BeWell, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as trusted sources of information. They expressed the need for more door-to-door outreach to expand the dissemination of information, as the current approach primarily reaches individuals already involved with the organizations. <p>Additionally, some participants highlighted specific social media accounts they rely on for information, such as UN climate change account on Twitter, Carlos Maceha on Facebook, and Greta Thunberg.</p>

The following themes arose related to the information-seeking behaviors of participants and their community members:

- **Increasing Awareness:** One Glades (Palm Beach County) participant noted a growing interest in climate change throughout the community. They observed more people discussing the topic due to the impact of powerful storms and increasing heat. “You hear more people talk about it. This topic is not something that some folks want us to have, but it needs to be had. You see an increase in storms, and the storms are more powerful. These storms are wiping out communities.” Participants from the Glades discussed how “some feel like it’s a hoax” and, at times within the community, because of political messaging “there is a sense of fear – if you say what you really mean or really feel, there are concerns of repercussions.”
- **Education in Schools:** Participants across sessions highlighted the importance of including education on climate change in schools, emphasizing the lack of time for parents to educate their children on the subject. They suggested that schools should be responsible for teaching students about climate change. Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) participants emphasized the need to start these conversations sooner to inspire some youth to seek out careers in the environmental field.

Notably, Glades (Palm Beach County) participants noted that, as a parent, they have to work and do not have time to educate their children on climate change. The participant noted that they read books with the children. Participants expressed that schools should teach youth about climate change, and one participant mentioned that some schools have been teaching about climate. Another Glades participant mentioned that the Pine Jog Education Center in West Palm Beach is trying to create a club in the Glades and community gardens, including one in South Bay (Palm Beach County). They explained that the county is applying for a “community greening grant.”

The following are the summarized additional comments and thoughts provided by the participants in response to “Do you have any additional comments you would like to add or is there anything additional that we have not covered with the questions we have asked?”

- **Changing Demographics:** Participants across sessions noted that many families and undocumented immigrants have left the area due to various factors, including immigration policies. The changing demographics and economic impacts were discussed in relation to community development in the sections above.
- **Accountability and Follow-up:** Participants across sessions noted that unfulfilled promises from organizations have made residents hesitant to trust non-local initiatives and unwilling to engage. Participants suggested incorporating follow-up procedures to track and assess funding utilization. They also emphasized the need for accountability in project implementation.
- **Funding and Equitable Distribution:** Glades (Palm Beach County) participants reiterated the need for support and financial assistance in the Glades area, emphasizing the importance of obtaining necessary resources. Glades participants pointed out the importance of ensuring that grants and funds are distributed fairly among all four communities in the Glades area (Belle Glade, Canal Point, Pahokee, and South Bay). The participants explained that typically, funding is allocated to the Glades area with the expectation that all communities will receive necessary resources. They expressed that, unfortunately, most times, most of the funding stays in Belle Glade, and the rest of the surrounding communities are left with minimal to no resources. The participants stated, "When looking for opportunities for grants... make sure to give something to all 4 communities individually." Funding and equitable distribution of resources was mentioned in response to earlier questions by participants in Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County), Lake Worth (Palm Beach County), and East Stuart (Martin County).
- **Self-Advocacy and Empowerment:** Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County) and Indiantown (Martin County) participants noted the value of being a self-advocate and amplifying the voices of others, emphasizing the importance of sharing knowledge and empowering individuals within communities. Participants stressed that attending events like the focus group was an opportunity for personal growth and gaining awareness on various topics. Participants emphasized the need to encourage residents to seek opportunities and stay informed.
- **Trees:** Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) participants reiterated the importance of increasing tree canopy coverage in Lake Worth, especially within the South Lake Worth area. They stressed that it would help alleviate the rising temperatures and positively impact pedestrians in the long run. The positive impact of trees was brought up in response to earlier questions in both the Indiantown (Martin County), East Stuart (Martin County), and Riviera Beach (Palm Beach County).
- **Addressing Basic Needs:** Participants from Lincoln Park (St. Lucie County) highlighted the significance of addressing fundamental needs, such as homelessness, before embarking on broader changes. They emphasized the importance of investing in children and ensuring progress in the community. A participant also noted barriers to employment and financial security, including criminal records, that lead individuals to commit crimes to make ends meet.
- **Unity, Respect for Diverse Views, and Collective Action:** Indiantown (Martin County) participants expressed the need to see individuals beyond their “surface-level characteristics” and “accept others” regardless of differences. They emphasized self-evaluation, personal growth, and fostering an inclusive society. Participants stressed the significance of actively listening and respecting diverse perspectives during conversations, promoting open-mindedness and constructive dialogue. Participants emphasized that everybody matters and encouraged collective action for the greater good. They suggested reaching a wider audience and spreading important messages to foster community.

Results: Hillsborough County and Pinellas County

The Health Council of West-Central Florida (HCWCF) conducted five focus group sessions between June 15, 2023, to July 24, 2023, reaching 52 Hillsborough and Pinellas County residents. Participant demographics and detailed session results are provided below.

Participant Demographics

The following section includes the participant responses to the focus group registration demographic questions.

Table 331: City of Residence; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

City	Count	Percent of Participants
Tampa	20	53%
Eufaula, AL	1	3%
Wimauma	1	3%
Riverview	1	3%
Thonotosassa	1	3%
Atlanta, GA	1	3%
Seminole	1	3%
Saint Petersburg	3	8%
Largo	4	11%
Clearwater	5	14%
Total	38	100%

Table 332: ZIP Code; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Zip Code	Count	Percent of Participants
33612	4	11%
33605	3	9%
33604	2	6%
33601	1	3%
33603	2	6%
33614	1	3%
33607	2	6%
33647	1	3%
33619	3	9%
33610	1	3%
30318	1	3%
33578	1	3%
33598	1	3%
33592	1	3%
33705	3	9%
33770	1	3%

33774	1	3%
33771	2	6%
33702	1	3%
33756	3	9%
33767	1	3%
33772	1	3%
Total	37	100%

Table 333: Age; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Age	Count	Percent of Participants
18-24 years	6	17%
25-44 years	5	14%
45-59 years	9	25%
60-74 years	14	38%
75+ years	3	9%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Total	37	100.0%

Table 334: Gender Identity; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Gender Identity	Count	Percent of Participants
Female	23	61%
Male	14	37%
Transgender man/ trans man/ female-to-male	1	2%
Transgender woman/ trans woman/ male-to-female	0	0%
Genderqueer/ Gender non- conforming/ not exclusively male or female	0	0%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Not Listed, please specify	0	0%
Total	38	100%

Table 335: Sexual Orientation; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Sexual Orientation	Count	Percent of Participants
Homosexual (gay or lesbian)	2	6%
Heterosexual (straight)	25	70%
Bisexual	1	3%
Queer, pansexual, and/or questioning	1	3%
I Don't know		
I prefer not to answer	5	14%

Not listed, please specify*	2	6%
Total	36	100%

*Did not specify

Table 336: Ethnicity; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Ethnicity	Count	Percent of Participants
Hispanic/ Latino/ or of Spanish origin	4	12%
Non-Hispanic/ Latino/ or of Spanish origin	30	89%
Total	34	100%

Table 337: Race; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Race	Count	Percent of Participants
White	11	29%
Black or African American	21	56%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	3%
Asian	2	6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
I prefer not to answer	2	6%
Not listed, please specify (*more than one race)	2	6%
Total	38	100%

Table 338: Primary Language Spoken at Home; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Language Spoken at Home	Count	Percent of Participants
An Asian language		
English	36	95%
French	0	0%
Haitian Creole	0	0%
Native or Indigenous	0	0%
Spanish	1	3%
Spanish Creole	0	0%
I prefer not to answer	0	0%
Not listed, please specify*	1	3%
Total	38	100%

*Did not specify

Table 339: Level of Educational Attainment; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Count	Percent of Participants
Less than a high school diploma	4	13%
High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)	7	22%
Some college	8	25%
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	7	22%
Graduate or Professional degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, JD)	2	6%
Technical school (e.g., HVAC, CNA, welding)	3	9%
I prefer not to answer	1	3%
Not listed, please specify*	1	3%
Total	33	100%

*Did not specify

Table 40: Current Employment Status; Hillsborough County and Pinellas County

Current Employment Status	Count	Percent of Participants
Full-time employed (35 or more hours per week)	5	16%
Part-time employed (less than 35 hours per week)	3	9%
Unemployed	7	22%
Self-employed	3	9%
Retired	10	31%
Unable to work	2	6%
I prefer not to answer	1	3%
Not listed, please specify*	2	6%
Total	33	100%

*Did not specify

Table 41: Household Income; Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties

Household Income	Count	Percent of Participants
Less than \$10,000	8	25%
\$10,000 to \$39,000	7	22%
\$40,000 to \$69,000	5	16%
\$70,000 to \$99,000	4	13%
\$100,000 to \$199,000	1	4%

\$200,000 or more	1	4%
I prefer not to answer	6	19%
Total	32	100%

Findings

Table 42: Personal & Community Values; Hillsborough and Pinellas County

Personal & Community Values	
Questions	Themes
<p>What are your top three values? Why?</p> <p>What do you think your community values most? Why?</p>	<p>Individual values included having autonomy/freedom to make their own choices, being healthy and safe, being kind and grateful, being honest and transparent, being ethical, giving and showing respect, religious faith, and being a responsible and active member of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It is important to have good ethics and be an active member of the community.” • “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” (about being grateful) • “I want to be accepted for who I am, so I will accept others for who they are.” • “I don’t worry too much about the future. It is in God’s hands.” <p>Community values included transparency, responsibility, respect, confidentiality, diversity, trust, relationships, sharing resources, preserving history, change and community relations/dynamics. Discussion on the changing community dynamics, such as people moving in and out, and how neighbors do not know each other personally was common. A few people who lived in older, established neighborhoods spoke of being able to depend on neighbors but expressed concern that affordability issues would soon change that dynamic. How individuals defined community also varied. For some it was geographic in nature, for others it was shared lived experiences, and one participant felt they had no community where they could turn for support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Wimauma is two different worlds, where one side of people are limited economically, educationally and health wise.” • “Where we come from-our history-is so important. We are trying to preserve it, but it is getting lost. It used to be that there were several generations right here and everyone looked out for each other. Things are changing, young people are leaving as soon as they can. We need to honor our history, put it front and center so it can point the way for the future.” • “I don’t really know my neighbors anymore; we just say hi and that’s it.” • “It’s hard to tell what we specifically value in West Tampa since it’s been taken over.” • “My community isn’t so much where I live, it’s the people who are like me (on the spectrum) because they understand and accept me. That is who I can count on.” • “I feel like I don’t belong anywhere so I don’t know what the community values.”

Table 43: Current Impacts; Hillsborough and Pinellas County

Current Impacts	
Questions	Themes
<p>What changes have you observed to your environment/surroundings over the last 5-10 years?</p>	<p>Many changes were highlighted including changes in green space (less green space due to new development), more traffic/cars on the roads, displaced animals, health issues, extreme weather, loss of trees, more diversity in the population, climate impacts – heat and wildfires and a lack of civic engagement and an overall change in community dynamics (more unkind behavior, hate speech and politics not being about service to the people). Some neighborhoods have seen a decline with more abandoned buildings and vacant lots raising concerns that gentrification is coming and people will be displaced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“They are claiming that neighborhoods will stay with the growth, but that isn’t true. Poor will stay poor.”</i> • <i>“Fewer people are doing this today compared to 10 years ago”. (Referring to community involvement in politics and change- showing up at local government hearings and meetings)</i> • <i>“It can hurt us, the elderly, even babies – air quality, when you can’t go outside.” (Referring to the impact of wildfires)</i> • <i>“Y’all remember when we had the pandemic. And how beautiful our sky was? Because there were no cars on the road.”</i> <p>Other conversations included mention of the growing airport and its impact on pollution and traffic, lots of new car wash, storage facilities and new apartment buildings, but not many small businesses that serve a neighborhood (grocery stores, laundromats, etc.) that needs access.</p>
<p>What effects have these changes in the environment had on you, your family, or your community?</p>	<p>Participants shared personal anecdotes about how changes in the environment have impacted them and/or people they know in the community. Some highlighted the heat as a barrier to enjoying time outside for activities like running, biking, or gardening, and other comments about the changes in air quality, increase in traffic and gas prices making it more difficult to get around, as well as drainage, sewage and water quality issues that persist in their communities. The cost and availability of food as well as higher utility bills were cited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Every year in the summertime, I am so worried about that particular problem I have.” (Referring to how their home floods from excess rainwater and drainage issues in the community)</i> • An anecdote shared about a family member that had feces draining into their backyard but could not find help because they could not read or write, <i>“If this happened in an affluent neighborhood, we know it would’ve gotten take care of.”</i> • <i>“This has been going on for 50 years and it’s gotten worse” (about flooding in their community)</i> • <i>“I have more trouble with my asthma. I can’t say for sure what is causing it but I think the air quality is worse.”</i> • <i>“Climate change is affecting food supply and making things cost more.”</i>

<p>Are there people in your community who are impacted more than others by climate change? Who are they and what is the impact?</p>	<p>Populations most impacted were listed as low-income individuals who may not be able to afford to prepare for climate changes (buying generators, hurricane-proof windows), disabled populations that require assistance, one participant was quoted saying <i>“Special needs individuals don’t drive so it is already hard to get around, we still have to rely on other people,”</i> other groups that are more impacted by climate change include farmworkers/workers that do labor outside, those who have mental illness and those who may struggle with addiction as it can be difficult to find and obtain resources.</p> <p>There was mention of specific populations like disabled individuals and seniors who may struggle with finding resources to prepare for the impacts of climate change due to living alone or having fewer financial benefits available to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“They are also impacted by their work due to hazardous waste disposal as it can increase their risks of cancers. People and workers need to know their risks.”</i> • <i>“Poor people. We are always more impacted by everything-even things that may seem small to someone else can have a BIG impact if you are poor.”</i> • <i>“Disability benefits are shrinking – no money to prepare.”</i> • <i>“If you rent you don’t have much control over energy efficiency.”</i>
<p>How prepared are you to handle these changes in the environment?</p>	<p>When asked about preparedness, participants mentioned making changes in mindset and attitudes, increasing awareness, preparing for storms, and relying on organizations for resources and information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Everyone should consider the long-term impacts instead of only living in the moment. While we all must work, we should also make sure we are safe in our work and work environments.”</i> • The American Red Cross Preparedness training was mentioned as a good resource, <i>“Knowledge is power.”</i> • <i>“With bills and inflation, it can be hard for people to prepare.”</i> • <i>“Poor folks can’t prepare, sometimes can’t evacuate and don’t know what is available to help them.”</i>
<p>Have people moved in and out of the area in the last 5-10 years? Do you think about moving out of your community and why?</p>	<p>Conversations throughout all the focus groups mentioned the influx of people moving into their communities. Some mentioned their own desires to move.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“This community (Wimauma), don’t have the means (economically) to move into and out of communities, they are usually focused on staying where business or work is”?</i> • <i>“There are a lot of people moving in, since they may not see it as their home they may litter and not care about the environment.”</i> • <i>“The important thing about moving in or out is finding your people, good people and a sense of community.”</i> • <i>“I’m moving away since everyone’s moving here.”</i> • <i>“This community is being redeveloped and that is good, but I’m worried that as improvements come it will no longer be affordable. You know it won’t be long before investors start buying up houses to flip and people will be homeless. Some of us may have no other choice but to move-but where do we go?”</i> • <i>“I thought I could retire here, but now I’m not so sure. I have a little house and I don’t think I can afford my insurance even now when I’m still working.”</i>

Table 44: Adaptation Strategies and Barriers; Hillsborough and Pinellas County

Adaptation Strategies and Barriers	
Questions	Themes
<p>How are you, your neighbors, and your community actively working to improve your situation and better prepare for the impacts of climate change?</p> <p>In addition to efforts already underway in your community, what else would you like to do to improve your situation and mitigate the effects of climate change?</p> <p>What makes it hard to make these improvements?</p>	<p>Many were not aware of specific actions being undertaken at this time. Some cited improvements in drainage and wastewater treatment at the local governmental level, but not much in their immediate neighborhoods.</p> <p>To address the issues of climate change, education and civic engagement were the main themes; staying informed about local disease outbreaks, preparing for storms, recycling, educating yourself about products you use and being involved in local and state government, and voting to advocate for local environmental concerns.</p> <p>Other things that can be done include adding mass transportation to get cars off the roads, incentives for homeowners, landlords and businesses to switch to solar power of a larger scale and to improve energy efficiency through insulation, new windows and doors, LED lights, teach the community to grow their own food and focus education on populations that are most vulnerable or unable to get resources, recycle, reduce plastic usage and littering, plant more trees, and avoid being wasteful with food and other products.</p> <p>Some barriers were individuals not voting or feeling like their vote matters, lack of accountability by businesses who are more focused on making a profit than being environmentally conscious. The expense of building infrastructure to make the transition away from fossil fuels for governments as well as individuals was cited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Get out and vote for people who want to work with your community.”</i> • <i>“It’s mindset, were not just wasteful food-wise, we are not mindful. We could recycle, turn off the lights.</i> • <i>When speaking about increasing education, “there is a lot of emphasis on core subjects like learning math, but we need to teach about our environment and changes that can be made at home.”</i> • <i>“We have known the effects of climate change and the environment for more than 30 years and we have not changed much or learned from this.”</i> • <i>Comments were mentioned about the need for political and civic engagement, “Your life is politics,” “We have to keep that in mind, in order to build the solution, we need to be the solution.”</i> • <i>Some barriers: “it’s like pulling teeth to get things done in Hillsborough County.” “Older generations did it. The younger generations today, they don’t show up.”</i>
<p>What support or incentives would make it easier? In other words, what would help you make these changes?</p>	<p>Some participants mentioned that fixing community issues like drainage, water systems and adding mass transportation could create jobs, <i>“we’d create a lot of jobs if we tried to focus on water, moving the water.”</i> Another suggested at-home changes that could make it easier for people to understand the impact of climate change and what they could do about it. Also incorporating education in schools about climate change could be useful for younger generations to learn about their impact and what can be done. Tax breaks or financial incentives can help some homeowners, but most programs don’t cover multi-family units or rental properties, leaving many neighborhoods behind.</p>

<p>What would motivate your community to make these adaptations?</p>	<p>Funding to address these issues as well as new opportunities to create industries were motivators spoken about in the sessions. Also, empowering younger generations to get involved in politics was a suggestion – as younger people will be the ones living with the long-term effects of climate change, <i>“Everyone needs to be involved.”</i></p> <p><i>“People don’t really understand how climate change will impact them. If its not right in front of you, you can think of it as someone else’s problem. We are so close to the gulf and when red tide comes, people think it’s a problem for the beach not for them-even though they can’t breathe. They don’t make the connection.”</i></p> <p>*Answers to this question were more focused on solutions and incentives as highlighted in the sections above.</p>
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Table 45: Information & Community Resources; Hillsborough and Pinellas County

Information & Community Resources	
Questions	Themes
<p>Do you seek out information on this topic (climate change/ climate justice)?</p> <p>Where do you go (i.e., specific organizations, websites, resources, or people)?</p>	<p>Participants reported finding their information online, through local agencies (government agencies as well as non-profits), Magazines/print news, on TV and on YouTube. Some examples: Law-enforcement agencies, County Health Departments (weather and hurricane preparedness guides), HUG (Help Us Gather), National Geographic Magazine, World Health Organization, churches, food pantries and CNN. Participants also mentioned some hesitancy about the media and information that is shared online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I like the news and doing research, it can be like a trick box though, you still must look deeper.”</i> • <i>“I see things for myself, and not putting my trust into what people or even the media says – since they are paid.”</i>

The following are the summarized additional comments and thoughts provided by the participants in response to “Do you have any additional comments you would like to add or is there anything additional that we have not covered with the questions we have asked?”

- **Health issues: there were some conversations about worsening health in general and as it relates to changes in the environment like air and water pollution.**
 - *“All of these things we talked about can cause all cancers and other problems.”*
 - *“When you are in a power outage, it can impact those with medical issues differently, with the rising temperatures how it can affect medications and individua’s who may use medical devices.”*
 - *“There was a cancer cluster in this area 20 years ago. There was some cleanup but there are still problems. Now I hear about other Black communities having the same problems. This is how racism looks in 2023.”*
- **Economics: There is more focus on capitalism/profit than focusing on the environment and community dynamics.**
 - *How it feels as if there is no community, it can feel isolating – you don’t know your neighbors, “it’s a big economic issue, everyone’s too busy trying to get a buck.”*
- **Other possible solutions/things to consider.**
 - *“We could use solar energy, but they need to perfect them. The installation and repairs can be expensive.”*

Summary of Themes

The poor suffer the most

- Low-income communities need more resources and are least likely to have those resources directed to them. There is a delicate balance between investing to preserve communities and making them targets of gentrification, effectively destroying them.

Awareness

- People are aware of changes in their environment but may not make the connection to climate.
- People who have some awareness want to know what they can do as an individual-even if it is a small thing.
- Training people in how to determine if information sources are dependable would empower them to engage in the work.
- Most people can relate to issues around single event preparedness such as hurricanes, but don't know how to prepare for the situations that may arise due to climate change.

Mobilizing action

- Education on climate change and climate justice is central to mobilizing individuals and communities to action.
- Civic engagement and advocacy training to help people understand how they can have a say at all levels of government as well as understanding what the responsibilities at each level of government are-local development regulations, state and federal agencies. If people do not have the tools to advocate, or even know where to find information on what is under consideration, they are always playing catchup.

Community Building

- Many people feel disconnected from their physical community. Community building activities such as community gardens, landscaping communal areas with native plants, etc., could help with resilience/sustainability and recovery after disasters.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings from these focus group sessions provide instrumental insight into the observations, values, and beliefs of the populations of interest with respect to climate change. In this section, conclusions are discussed for each region and overall for the state of Florida.

Regional Implications

South Florida (Miami-Dade County)

With a population of 2.7 million people, Miami-Dade County is the most populated county in Florida (Thomas & Warner, 2019) and the sixth-most populated county in the United States (Curtis & Schneider, 2011). Due to flooding concerns in low-lying coastal areas, higher-income residents are increasingly interested in properties in higher-elevation but historically lower-income areas more inland (Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), 2018); Thomas & Warner, 2019). In fact, Keenan et al. (2018) determined a correlation between higher elevation and higher appreciation of property values in Miami-Dade County; meanwhile, properties in coastal areas at lower elevation have been appreciating at a comparatively slower rate.

These findings play a role in the direction of gentrification in the county, from wealthier lower-elevation areas (e.g., Miami Beach) to lower-income, higher-elevation communities (e.g., Little Haiti; Keenan et al., 2018). This trend may effectively displace lower-income populations due to reduced availability of affordable housing over time. The displacement of these lower-income populations is problematic because they may have to relocate farther away from their places of employment and/or move to less desirable lower-elevation areas, which are more flood prone and carry with it attendant high costs of insurance, taxes, and repairs.

The data obtained from our focus groups corroborated the findings noted above. The residents in the focus groups lived in higher-elevation areas of Miami-Dade County, noting that more individuals seemed to be moving into their neighborhoods, although more people seemed to be moving out of Miami overall. It is possible that they are observing the effects of climate gentrification in real time, with wealthier groups from the coast moving inland.

Furthermore, it is well established that low-income communities, residents of color, and migrant populations suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change despite contributing minimally to these issues and having less access to features such as greenspace (Anguelovski et al., 2019). This finding was corroborated in the HCSF focus groups, as participants expressed concern that certain population groups, such as Black or African American, LGBTQ+, and immigrant farm workers, are commonly discriminated against or exploited, and that this discrimination is exacerbated when they are faced with climate change issues (e.g., poor working conditions, displacement). Thus, individuals in these communities are in especially high need of policy protections regarding climate gentrification, as lower-income residents may be driven out of their homes and only able to afford to relocate in more low-lying, flood-prone areas (de Koning & Filatova, 2020).

Southeast Florida (Palm Beach/Martin/St. Lucie County)

Similar to participants in Miami-Dade County, those in Southeast Florida noted increases in rent and housing costs in their areas. Participants across sessions noted that many families and undocumented immigrants have left the area due to various factors, including immigration policies. The changing demographics and economic impacts were discussed in relation to community development and gentrification.

One Riviera Beach participant mentioned that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people from New York moved to the area, which they believed increased rent prices and “pushing out” the “natives”. One participant stated that they had to move out of their small house when the rent suddenly “increased from \$850 to over \$3000 monthly.”

Furthermore, one Palm Beach County resident noted that the combination of low incomes and high rent stifles the community. They highlighted that seeking housing options is expensive, as there are administrative and application fees, which are non-refundable even if the application is rejected. These participants also described a lack of available affordable housing in their area, particularly for families. They also expressed frustration that the government is not enforcing regulations to help control the rent and housing crisis. Finally, participants in Southeast Florida highlighted the need for support and financial assistance in the Glades area, and in particular, that grants and funds are distributed fairly among all four communities in the area (Belle Glade, Canal Point, Pahokee, and South Bay).

Overall, the feedback provided by participants in Southeast Florida stress their interest in receiving help in the form of government regulations on rent increases and funding to help residents cope with the rising costs of living as a result of climate gentrification. Additionally, they indicated that a lack of financial resources affects the community’s ability to address the effects of climate change. Therefore, more funding (e.g., in the form of grants aiding with daily expenses such as the cost of rent, food, and/or childcare, as well as, to support the built environment of dwellings for seniors) may enable the community to be more active in climate change efforts over time.

West-Central Florida (Hillsborough/Pinellas County)

A prominent theme expressed by participants in West-Central Florida is that the poor are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, which has been substantiated by multiple studies (de Koning & Filatova, 2020; Thomas & Warner, 2019). In particular, low-income communities need more resources and are least likely to have those resources directed to them. These participants expressed a delicate balance between investing to preserve communities and making them targets of gentrification, effectively destroying them. Tedesco et al. (2022) found that the Tampa area shows potential for more accelerated climate gentrification in the future.

West-Central Florida participants also expressed an interest in greater awareness and education. They stated that most people can relate to issues around single-event preparedness, such as hurricanes, but they do not know how to prepare for the situations that may arise due to climate change. However, they are interested in what they can do as individuals. They also expressed interest in civic engagement and advocacy training to help people understand how they can have a say at all levels of government, as well as understanding what the responsibilities at each level of government are-local development regulations, state and federal agencies. This feedback indicates an interest in greater community involvement in advocating for their own interests related to climate change.

Statewide Implications

The state of Florida has been dubbed “ground zero for climate change” (Scott et al., 2020), as its sea level has risen faster than the global average over the last decade (Thomas & Warner, 2019, Valle-Levinson et al., 2017) due to the low elevation across much of the state (Curtis & Schneider, 2011). Areas in southern Florida are particularly prone to sea level rise and its accompanying flooding, which can adversely affect infrastructure (Thomas & Warner, 2019; Tompkins & DeConcini, 2014). To address possible consequences of the state’s climate crisis, the common themes across all health councils will first be recapped below:

Common themes:

- 1) **Most respondents agreed that there are detectable changes in weather patterns over time due to climate change, and that these weather changes have affected their health and lifestyles.** For example, most participants noted increased temperatures, more flooding, more storms, more deforestation due to greater development/gentrification. As a result, people's health and well-being have suffered, and several observed the physical and social landscape of their areas changing (i.e., individuals having to move out due to the rising cost of living).
- 2) **Those who are in lower-income or otherwise marginalized groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, immigrants) may suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of climate change.** For example, lower-SES populations are more likely to be driven out of their homes due to gentrification and rising cost of living due to climate change. Additionally, outdoor workers, who are often immigrants and/or low-income, are disproportionately affected by weather changes produced by climate change.
- 3) **The community is a central point of connection and the foundation for any change.** Most participants valued qualities that contribute to unity within a community, including acceptance, kindness, compassion, and respect. Many people described a desire for greater connection with their community, whether through social events, educational sessions, or civic participation. This community connection provides the foundation for greater community participation, which is critical to residents' ability to advocate for themselves in local decisions made related to climate policy and resource allocation.

Future Directions

- 1) Local organizations and government entities can build on the community's increasing awareness of climate change by hosting more local events and educational opportunities to inform the community on the issue (i.e., how it affects them personally), as well as how they can get more involved. This can also have the critical effect of eventually boosting civic engagement/voting interest in climate change issues.
 - a. Some examples of these opportunities: including environmentally focused booths at health fairs, holding educational sessions at local libraries, hosting tree-planting community events, and fostering a community culture of recycling and reusing over consumerism (e.g., passing along gently used clothing or other possessions to others in the community, rather than throwing them away or purchasing brand-new items).
 - b. Community leaders ideally should find ways to secure funding to incentivize people to play a more active role in climate change issues. For example, participants could be offered a gift card for showing up to an educational session on climate change. Over time, more substantive incentives can be provided for individuals who participate actively in climate change conversations.
- 2) For lower-income or marginalized groups who are disproportionately affected by climate change, local governments and organizations can help these community members address their more immediate daily needs (e.g., finding shelter if they are homeless) so that they can eventually be better equipped to contribute to climate change conversations.
- 3) For all community members, greater education is needed on how lower-income/marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by climate change and how gentrification affects everyone in the community by widening social inequities. This information may encourage members of the community to take more interest in climate change and unite to address it more robustly through civic participation.

- 4) Because all health councils indicated the need for greater support – whether through government funding, regulation, or involvement in local processes – some policy-related recommendations may help vulnerable populations affected by climate change. To that end, Chapple et al. (2015) proposed a number of “anti-displacement strategies” to prevent residential displacement by gentrification. These strategies include the following and are worthy of consideration by local officials in each region and across the state of Florida:
 - a. Development of affordable housing through land use policies that prioritize affordable housing and through public investments linked to affordability requirements (Chapple et al., 2015);
 - b. Preservation of affordable housing by extending subsidized units that are close to expiring (Chapple et al., 2015), as well as by constructing new affordable housing units with resilient materials and outside of high-risk areas (e.g., floodplains or fire zones; Cash et al., 2020);
 - c. Promotion of neighborhood stability by protecting tenants, often through education or the development of ordinances. Other protective mechanisms include restrictions against condo conversions and community land trusts (Chapple et al., 2015); and
 - d. Enabling businesses to stay open during challenging circumstances (e.g., construction or storms) and helping with business relocation, funding, or building improvements (Chapple et al., 2015; Trone & Shedd, 2019).

- 5) Legislative policy protecting outdoor workers (e.g. migrant farm workers, landscapers, etc..) who are often forced to work in severe environmental conditions (i.e. extreme heat/ temperature and torrential rain), with little or no designated breaks and minimal access to water or cooling stations. Decision makers can introduce legislative policies that can enforce better working conditions for workers who are most vulnerable and exposed to environmental elements. This is critically important to maintaining the labor market and minimizing economic impact on the local economy if the labor market shrinks or diminishes due to climate and environmental impacts.

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Appendices

Focus Group Session Tool

Personal & Community Values (Objective: To understand individual and community values to inform Theory of Change efforts.)

1. When we think of values, we often refer to aspects of our life that we treasure, we care about, and that are worth fighting for. What are your top three values? Why?
2. What do you think your community values most? Why? (Community refers to a group of people living in the same place or sharing a common characteristic and as such this can be viewed as the County, City, Neighborhood, or Complex you reside or include your Church, School, or Neighborhood Group)

Current impacts: (Objective: To understand current issues the community faces and understand what climate changes they may be aware of and potentially how it connects to their health)

3. What changes have you observed to your environment/surroundings over the last 5-10 years? Examples may include impacts on plants, weather patterns, agriculture, food sources, building infrastructure, utilities and more.
4. What effects have these changes in the environment had on you, your family or your community? Please be specific in your examples. Examples may include impacts on household income, impacts on your physical or mental health, and more.
5. Are there people in your community who are impacted more than others by climate change? Who are they and what is the impact?
6. How prepared are you to handle these changes in the environment?
7. Have people moved in and out of the area in the last 5-10 years? Do you think about moving out of your community and why?

Adaptation strategies & barriers (Objective: To gain insight on how people perceive climate causes and responsibility. To understand if individuals or the community are aware of activities and organizations involved in addressing climate change. To understand barriers related to climate action. To gather insight on activities and solutions they would like to see more of.)

8. How are you, your neighbors, and your community actively working to improve your situation and better prepare for the impacts of climate change?
 - a. In addition to efforts already underway in your community, what else would you like to do to improve your situation and mitigate the effects of climate change?
 - i. Probes: What makes it hard to make these improvements?
 - ii. What support or incentives would make it easier? In other words, what would help you make these changes?
9. What would motivate your community to make these adaptations?

Information and community resources: (Objective: To understand what messaging participants have heard and would like to see more of. To help inform communication strategies and dissemination of resources.)

10. Do you seek out information on this topic (climate change/ climate justice)? Where do you go (i.e. specific organizations, websites, resources, or people)?

Conclusion

11. Do you have any additional comments you would like to add or is there anything additional that we have not covered with the questions we have asked?

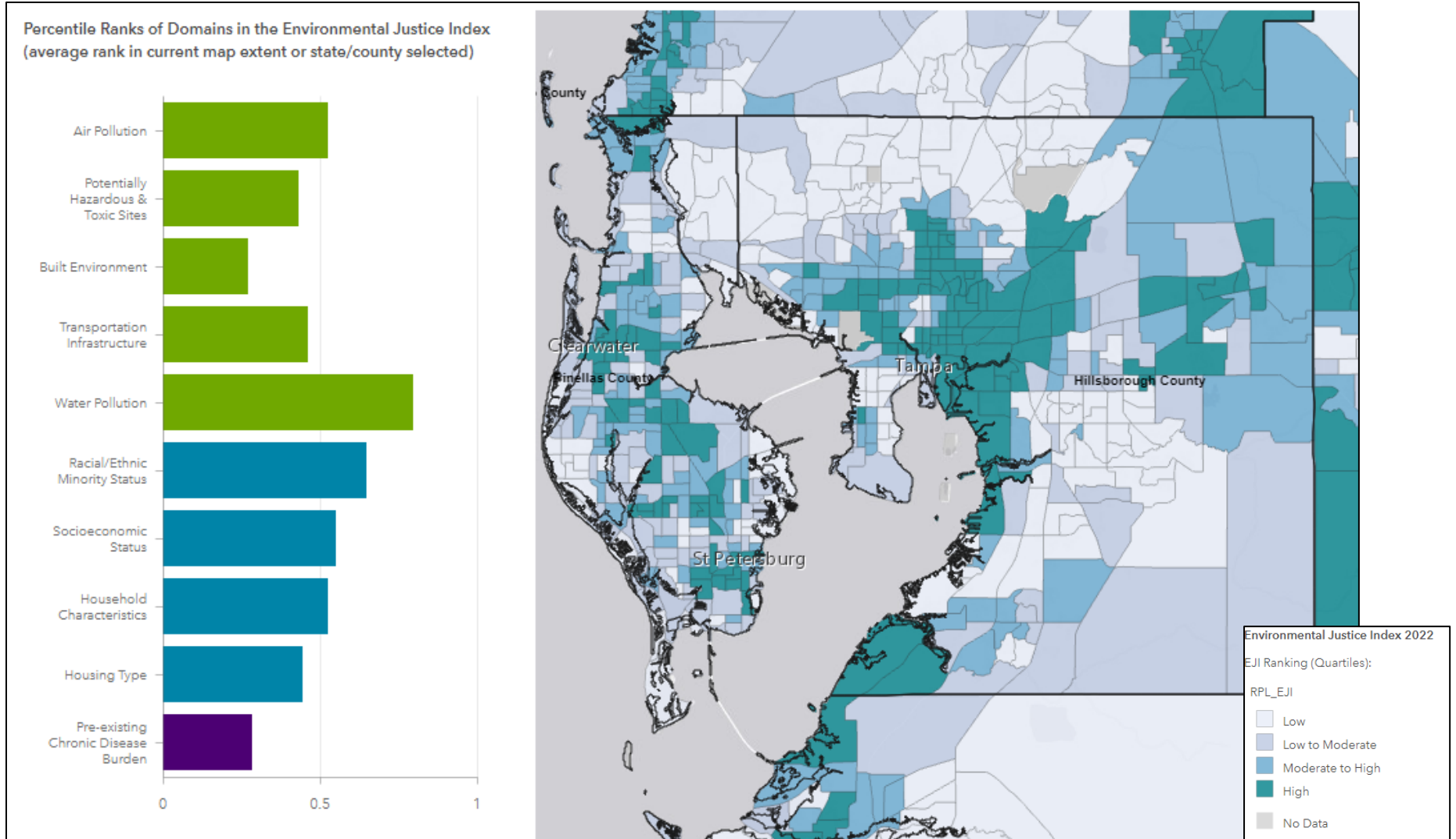
Demographic Registration Form

<p>1. What city do you live in?</p>	
<p>2. What ZIP code do you live in?</p>	
<p>3. What is your age?</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 24 years <input type="checkbox"/> 25 – 44 years <input type="checkbox"/> 45 – 59 years <input type="checkbox"/> 60 – 74 years <input type="checkbox"/> 75+ </p>
<p>4. Do you think of yourself as:</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender man/trans man/female-to-male <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender woman/trans woman/male-to-female <input type="checkbox"/> Genderqueer/gender non-conforming/not exclusively male or female <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Not listed, please specify: _____ </p>
<p>5. Do you think of yourself as:</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual (gay or lesbian) <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual (straight) <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/> Queer, pansexual, and/or questioning <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Not listed, please specify: _____ </p>
<p>6. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </p>
<p>7. How would you describe yourself? (Select all that apply)</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian and Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Not listed, please specify: _____ </p>

<p>8. Which language do you mainly speak at home?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> An Asian language <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian Creole <input type="checkbox"/> Native or Indigenous <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish Creole <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Not listed, please specify: _____
<p>9. What is the highest grade or year in school you have completed? (Check only one)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than a high school diploma <input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED) <input type="checkbox"/> Some college <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS) <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate or Professional degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, JD) <input type="checkbox"/> Technical school (e.g., HVAC, CNA, welding) <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Not listed, please specify: _____
<p>10. Which of the following best describes your employment status?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employed (35 or more hours per week) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employed (less than 35 hours per week) <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to work <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Not listed, please specify: _____
<p>11. What is the combined annual income of everyone living in your household?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$10,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 to \$39,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 to \$69,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000 to \$99,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to \$199,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$200,000 or more <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer

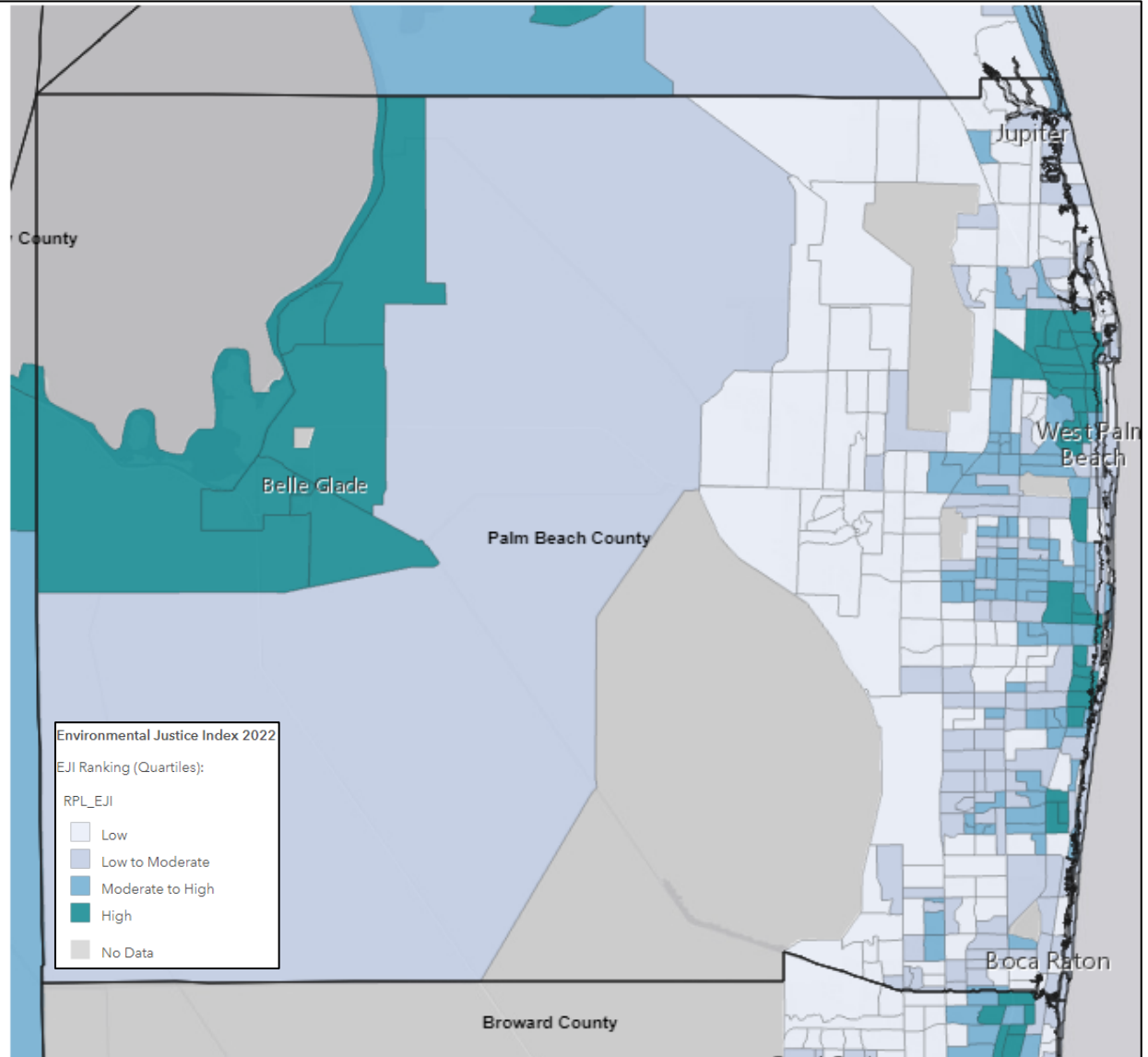
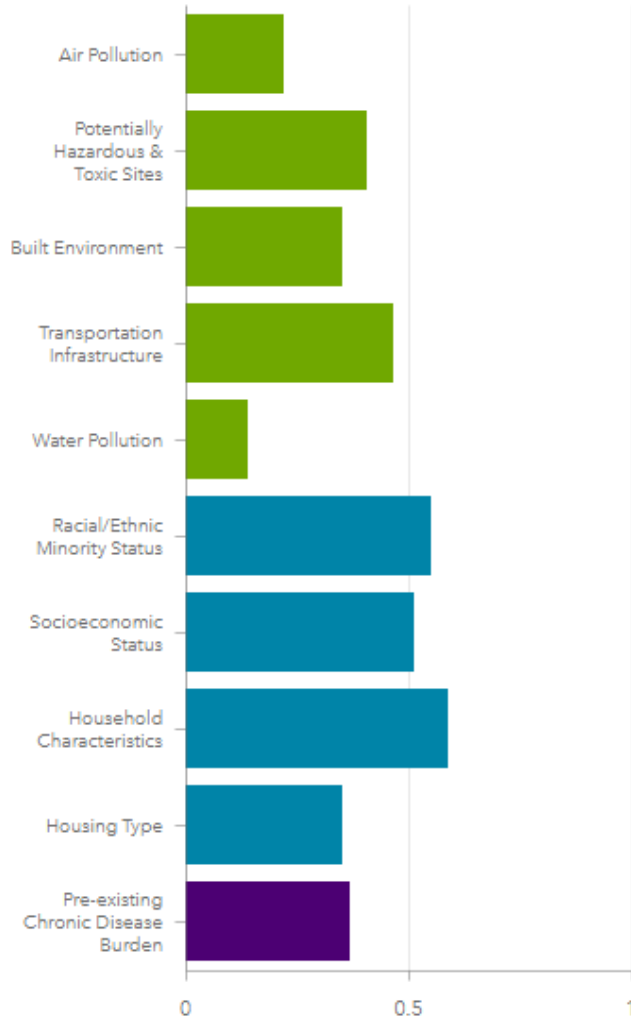
Environmental Justice Index Rank, 2022
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Hillsborough County



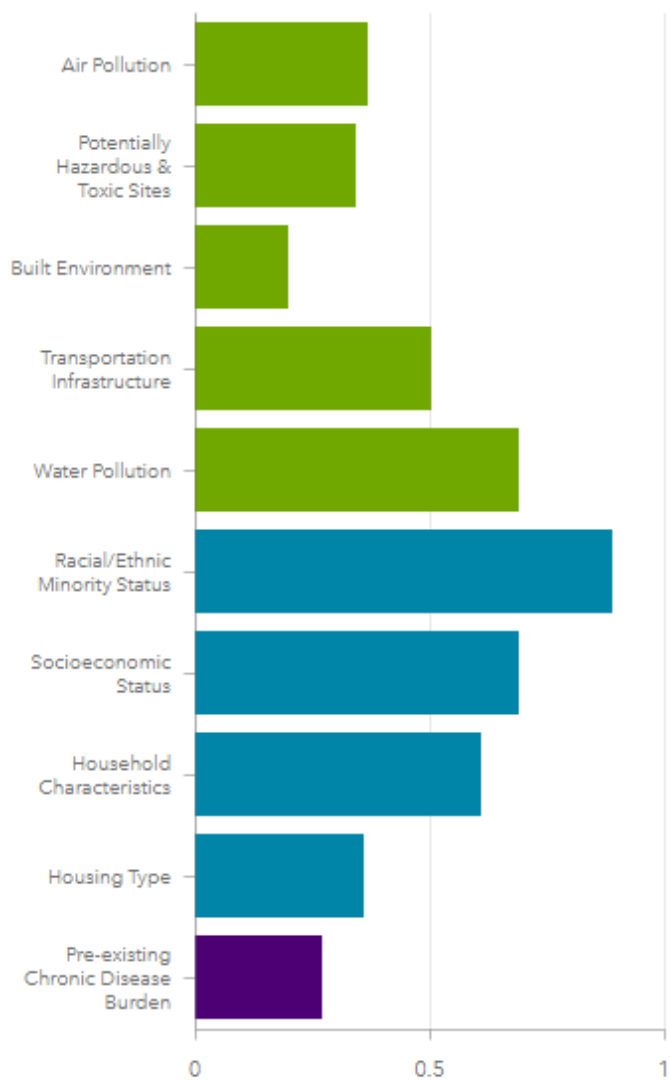
Palm Beach County

Percentile Ranks of Domains in the Environmental Justice Index (average rank in current map extent or state/county selected)



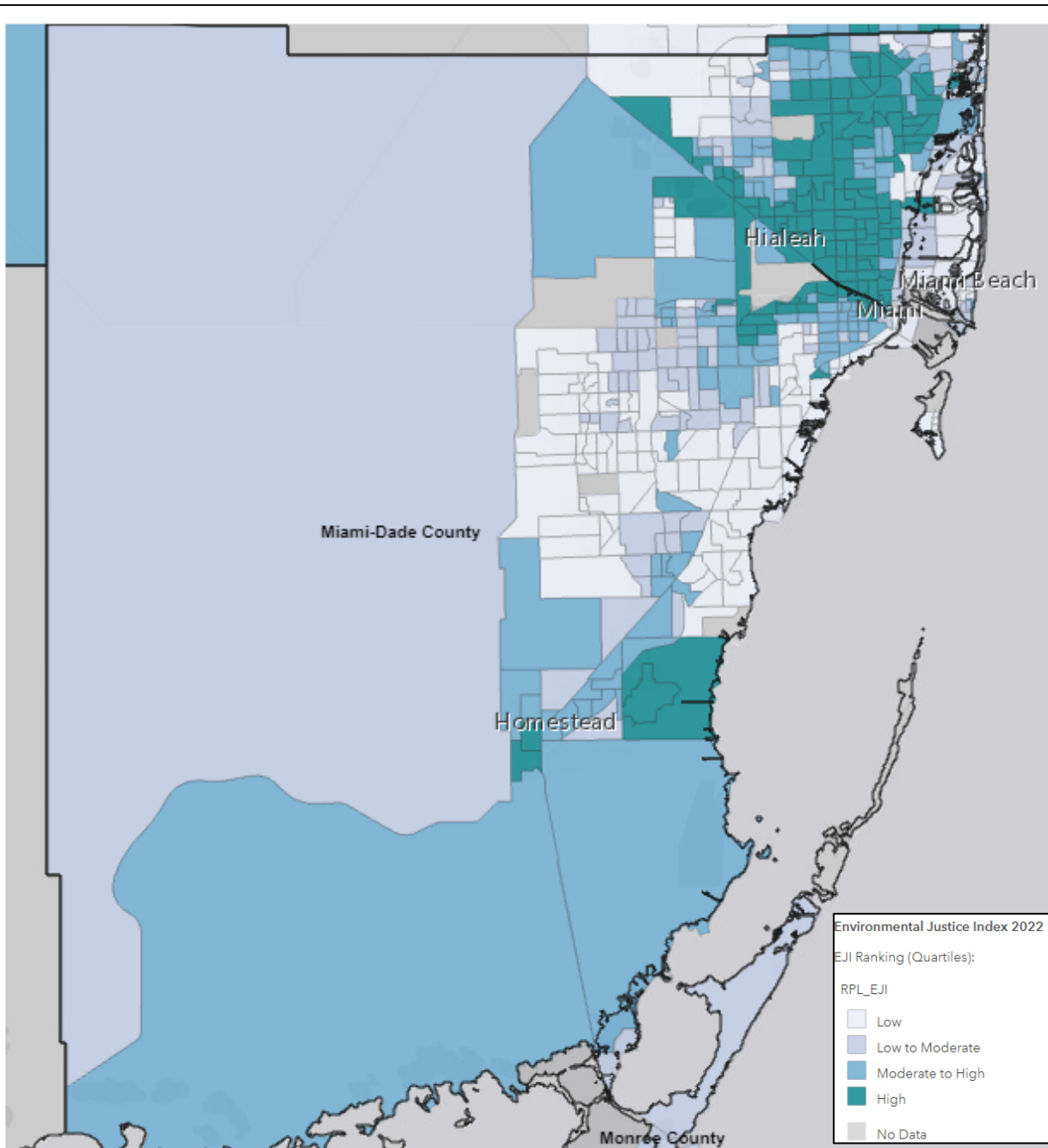
Miami-Dade County

Percentile Ranks of Domains in the Environmental Justice Index (average rank in current map extent or state/county selected)



Note: If "No Data" check extent or remove state/county filter

Last update: a few seconds ago



Interpretation of EJI

Depending on the distribution of the data in a specific geographical area, a High Environmental Justice Index (EJI) rank may consist of values between 0.7 and 0.9.

Technical Note from Environmental Justice Index Rank Explorer Tool: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

How to interpret domain rankings:

The EJI combines indicators into functional groups representing distinct aspects of environmental burden and social vulnerability. These domains represent discrete aspects of social vulnerability and environmental burden, such as socioeconomic status and air pollution, that allow users to easily interpret patterns of vulnerability and burden for communities of interest. Domain rankings can be viewed by toggling the tab under the “Quick Start” menu at the bottom left of the screen. When viewing these domain rankings, keep the following in mind:

- **The rankings shown represent the average domain rankings for all census tracts in the current view extent or for all tracts selected using the state/county selectors**
- **Domain rankings can be interpreted like the overall EJI score – a domain ranking of 0.85 signifies that 85% of tracts in the nation likely experience less severe environmental burden or social vulnerability attributable to that domain than the tract(s) of interest, and that 15% of tracts in the nation likely experience more severe environmental burden or social vulnerability attributable to that domain.**
- **Not every domain contains the same number of indicators, so not every domain contributes equally to the overall EJI score**
- **Because the EJI score represents cumulative environmental burden and social vulnerability, even moderately high rankings across all domains can lead to a high overall EJI score**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry. 2022 Environmental Justice Index. Accessed [April 5, 2023]. <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/eji/index.html>

Focus Group Flyers

Example 1: English Flyer, In-Person



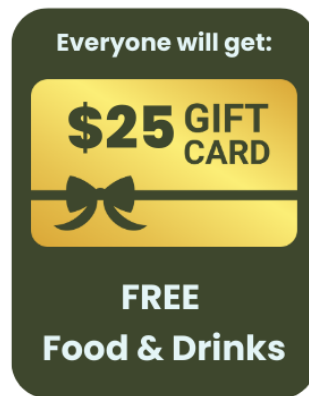
Lincoln Park residents – we want to hear from you!

Please join us to talk a bit about the environment and climate change! This is an opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas.

- What has changed in your community?
- What are you concerned about?
- How can the community prepare?
- What does the community really need to prepare?
- We want to hear from you on how things may have changed over time and how those things are impacting you.

You do not need to have any prior knowledge on climate change or environmental justice.

We want to hear from YOU!



House of God Church
1601 N 27th St
Fort Pierce, FL 34947

Thursday
June 22nd
12:00 PM



Must be 18 or older.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

RSVP is NOT required, feel free to join us day of!

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

📞 561.844 - 4220 ext. 2800 ✉️ planning@hcsef.org





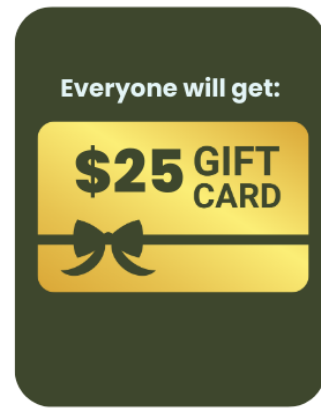
Lake Worth Residents – we want to hear from you!

Are you 18-25 or 65+? Do you identify as Black, African American, LatinX, Hispanic, Native American, or LGBTQ+? We want to hear from you!

Please join us to talk a bit about the environment and climate change! This is an opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas.

- What has changed in your community?
- What are you concerned about?
- How can the community prepare?
- What does the community really need to prepare?
- We want to hear from you on how things may have changed over time and how those things are impacting you.

You do not need to have any prior knowledge on climate change or environmental justice.

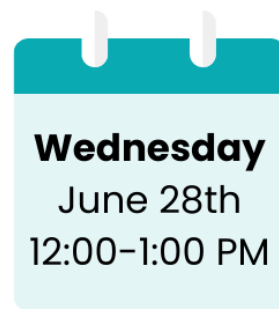
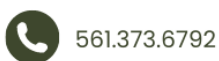


Virtual via Zoom
Registration is limited! Register using the QR code, or call or text the number below.



Must be 18 or older.

Please contact us if you have any questions.





¡Residentes de Lake Worth, queremos escucharte!

¿Tienes entre 18 y 25 años o más de 65? ¿Identificas como Negro, Afroamericano, LatinX, Nativo Americano o LGBTQ+? ¡Su aporte es importante y queremos escucharlo!

¡Únete con nosotros para hablar un poco sobre el medio ambiente y el cambio climático! Esta es una oportunidad para compartir tus pensamientos e ideas.

- ¿Qué ha cambiado en tu comunidad?
- ¿De qué estás preocupado/a?
- ¿Cómo puede prepararse la comunidad?
- ¿Qué necesita realmente la comunidad para prepararse?

Queremos escuchar cómo las cosas han cambiado en SU comunidad con el tiempo y cómo esas cosas te están afectando.

No es necesario que tengas conocimientos previos sobre el cambio climático o la justicia ambiental.

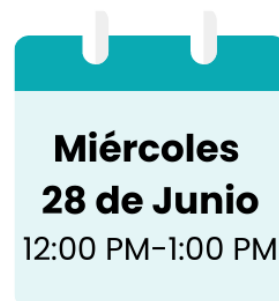


Sesión virtual por Zoom
¡El registro es limitado! Regístrate utilizando el código QR, o llama o envía un mensaje de texto al número que aparece a continuación.




Las participantes deben tener al menos 18 años de edad.

Si necesitas más información, no dudes en comunicarte con nosotros.



Example 4: English Flyer, In-person



JOIN US!

Make plans to attend.
Your opinion matters.

Where: M.U.J.E.R. Inc.,
27112 S. Dixie Highway
Naranja, FL 33032

When: Wednesday, June 7, 2023


Time: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Light Refreshments and \$25 Gift Cards to each Participants


Let's Talk About Climate & Environmental Justice!

Climate & Environmental Justice recognizes that some communities will be impacted by climate change more than others. Those impacts can include greater economic burdens, poor health, food supply and physical security.

Please join us to share your experiences and ideas for addressing these issues in your community.



Allegany Franciscan Ministries
A Member of Trinity Health



HCSF
Health Council of South Florida, Inc.

Example 5: English/Spanish Flyer, In-person



JOIN US!

Make plans to attend.

Where: Survivor's Pathway
33 SW 2nd Avenue, #901
Miami, FL 33130

Time: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

English: Tuesday, May 30, 2023
Espanol: Jueves, Junio 15, 2023

Light Refreshments and \$25 Gift Cards to each Participants

Refrescos ligeros y tarjetas de regalo de \$25 para cada participante

YOUR OPINION COUNTS....

Climate & Environmental Justice recognizes that some communities will be impacted by climate change more than others. Those impacts can include greater economic burdens, poor health, food supply and physical security.

Please join us to share your experiences and ideas for addressing these issues in your community.


Justicia Climática... ¡Hablemos de eso!
La justicia climática reconoce que algunas comunidades se verán más afectadas por el cambio climático que otras. Esos impactos pueden incluir mayores cargas económicas, mala salud, suministro de alimentos y seguridad física. Únase a nosotros para compartir sus experiencias e ideas para abordar estos problemas en su comunidad




Allegany Franciscan Ministries
A Member of Trinity Health



Example 6: English Flyer, In-person



JOIN US!



Make plans to attend.
Your opinion matters.

Date: Saturday, June 24, 2023





Time: 3:00-4:30 pm

Location: Victory AME Church
5202 S. 86th St. Tampa, FL 33619

Space is limited, please register here:
<https://tinyurl.com/Victory-Talk>

A thank you gift will be provided to participants.

Session Partners




Climate Justice...

Let's Talk About it!


Climate justice recognizes that some communities will be impacted by climate change more than others. Those impacts can include greater economic burdens, poor health, food supply and physical security.

Please join us to share your experiences and ideas for addressing these issues in your community.

Example 7: English Flyer, Virtual



JOIN US!



North Greenwood Residents-Your opinion matters!

Please join us for a Zoom focus group

Date: Monday, July 24, 2023

Time: 6:00-7:00 pm

Space is limited to 8 participants. You must be over 18 years of age, reside in North Greenwood and have internet access to participate. A \$25 gift card will be provided to participants following the event.



Please register here:
<https://tinyurl.com/mr36np3z>

Climate Justice...

Let's Talk About it!


Climate justice recognizes that some communities will be impacted by climate change more than others. Those impacts can include greater economic burdens, poor health, food supply and physical security.

Please join us to share your experiences and ideas for addressing these issues in your community.




Allegany Franciscan Ministries
A Member of Trinity Health

Example 8: Spanish Flyer, Virtual



Promotores de salud



¡Tu opinion importa!

Únase a nosotros a través de Zoom
(en español)

Viernes Junio 23, 2023


Hora: 11:30-1:00

Enlace de registro:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HPQT6G6>


Tarjeta de regalo electrónica de \$25 para los participantes.

¡El espacio es limitado, regístrese hoy!

Debe vivir o trabajar en Hillsborough o en el condado de Pinellas



Allegany Franciscan Ministries
A Member of Trinity Health



Health Council
of WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Justicia Climática...
¡Hablemos de eso!**

La justicia climática reconoce que algunas comunidades se verán más afectadas por el cambio climático que otras. Esos impactos pueden incluir mayores cargas económicas, mala salud, suministro de alimentos y seguridad física.

Únase a nosotros para compartir sus experiencias e ideas para abordar estos problemas en su comunidad.