Together we can reach our vision: a community that has achieved climate justice so all people in the Pajaro Valley can live in harmony with the natural world.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved in this project.

Regeneración is grateful for the Community Foundation for Monterey County’s support of our partnership with the California State University of Monterey Bay.

The 2017-18 grassroots survey was developed by Regeneración in consultation with Dr. Shishir Mathur. The survey was carried out by 25 volunteers from the community.

Dr. Mathur performed initial analysis of the data, which was presented at a community event entitled Climate of Hope on May 3, 2018.

Students in the Environmental Studies Research Methods course at the California State University of Monterey Bay conducted additional analysis in Fall 2018 under the direction of Professor Victoria Derr.

Image credits:


To view survey results in a presentation format visit www.regenerationpajarovalley.org
Current Experiences of the Environment

The general experiences of the community included:

- Primarily relying on car transportation, but more than 30% of AG workers reliant on foot, bike or bus, compared to 18% of NAG workers
- More than 60% of all groups concerned about pesticides and level of pollution
- 38% of community members experiencing increased heat
- AG workers experiencing heat symptoms and unpredictable work conditions (as high as 75% for AG workers who speak an Indigenous language)

Of the 220 responses, both AG and NAG workers rely most heavily on cars for transportation (68% and 82%, respectively). More than 30% of AG workers rely on alternative transportation: walking (14%), bus (10%), and biking (6%). Indigenous language speakers were most reliant on alternative transportation, especially walking.

The way both groups experience pollution in their community was fairly consistent, with litter and pesticide exposure being the highest concern (62% or higher for each). AG workers showed a higher concern for car exhaust than NAG, and both groups had a similar level of concern about water contamination.

When asked how they were experiencing environmental changes associated with climate change, responses were consistent among groups. The two most common responses were related to increased temperatures and heat waves (around 38% for each group). One field worker said:

"Trabajo más pronto para evitar el calor." (“I start work earlier to avoid the heat.”)

A bike messenger mentioned nearing heat stroke while he rides his bike, and an environmental advocate reported:

"I saw people working in the fields during the extreme heat we had over the late summer of 2017, and they were lying in ditches. It must be so incredibly challenging to survive in the heat."

When asked to talk more about the environmental changes they noticed, 74% of AG workers said they have experienced extreme heat conditions at the workplace (e.g., extreme temperature, fainting, etc.). And 46% said they have experienced unpredictability in the length of the growing season at their workplace. Both groups identified unsafe drinking water in the home as an issue (32% NAG, and 38% AG workers).

An additional analysis of this question broken down by language spoken in the home revealed that those who spoke an Indigenous language expressed most vulnerability, with 75% of them experiencing extreme heat conditions and 50% experiencing an unpredictability in the growing season/work. This compares to 67% of bilingual speakers experiencing extreme heat conditions at work, and 17% experiencing unpredictability of work.

Current Experiences of the Environment

The general experiences of the community included:

- Primarily relying on car transportation, but more than 30% of AG workers reliant on foot, bike or bus, compared to 18% of NAG workers
- More than 60% of all groups concerned about pesticides and level of pollution
- 38% of community members experiencing increased heat
- AG workers experiencing heat symptoms and unpredictable work conditions (as high as 75% for AG workers who speak an Indigenous language)

Of the 220 responses, both AG and NAG workers rely most heavily on cars for transportation (68% and 82%, respectively). More than 30% of AG workers rely on alternative transportation: walking (14%), bus (10%), and biking (6%). Indigenous language speakers were most reliant on alternative transportation, especially walking.

The way both groups experience pollution in their community was fairly consistent, with litter and pesticide exposure being the highest concern (62% or higher for each). AG workers showed a higher concern for car exhaust than NAG, and both groups had a similar level of concern about water contamination.

When asked how they were experiencing environmental changes associated with climate change, responses were consistent among groups. The two most common responses were related to increased temperatures and heat waves (around 38% for each group). One field worker said:

"Trabajo más pronto para evitar el calor." (“I start work earlier to avoid the heat.”)

A bike messenger mentioned nearing heat stroke while he rides his bike, and an environmental advocate reported:

"I saw people working in the fields during the extreme heat we had over the late summer of 2017, and they were lying in ditches. It must be so incredibly challenging to survive in the heat."

When asked to talk more about the environmental changes they noticed, 74% of AG workers said they have experienced extreme heat conditions at the workplace (e.g., extreme temperature, fainting, etc.). And 46% said they have experienced unpredictability in the length of the growing season at their workplace. Both groups identified unsafe drinking water in the home as an issue (32% NAG, and 38% AG workers).

An additional analysis of this question broken down by language spoken in the home revealed that those who spoke an Indigenous language expressed most vulnerability, with 75% of them experiencing extreme heat conditions and 50% experiencing an unpredictability in the growing season/work. This compares to 67% of bilingual speakers experiencing extreme heat conditions at work, and 17% experiencing unpredictability of work.

New Policy Recommendations

We now highlight four recommendations for policy changes. While we have included priorities for action that were highest among the AG worker sector; they also were strongly supported by NAG workers. Our community appears aligned behind many initiatives to reduce emissions that will also provide direct benefit to individuals.

1. Incentive production and distribution of local organic foods.
2. Expand public transportation and improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, and form partnerships with employers to provide group transportation. This aligns with Vision Zero and affirms what other groups have been advocating for. Given that over 50% of Santa Cruz County emissions are from the transportation sector, this is key action for reducing climate impacts.
3. Expand programs to provide solar power to homeowners, renters, businesses, and nonprofits.
4. Promote Green Business programs and develop legislation/ordinances for businesses to pay taxes proportional to their negative environmental impact.

AG workers in our community are like the proverbial canary in a coal mine - they are on the frontlines of climate change, with their bodies exposed to harmful changes of a warming world and their precarious economic situation leaving them especially vulnerable to rapid and unexpected changes. They will directly benefit by all actions taken to reduce emissions, and provide services and opportunities that result in economic savings, improved health outcomes for themselves and their families and members. We believe farmworkers, as some of the most vulnerable members of our community, should be at the center of legislative response to the climate emergency.

* Dr. Shiloh Mathur is the Associate Dean for Research of the College of Social Sciences and a Professor in the Urban & Regional Planning Department at San Jose State University.

** Indigenous languages spoken at home include Mixtec and Zapotec, and were generally self-reported as “Latino.”

1. Vision Zero, affirmed January 2018 by Watsonville City Council, aims to “eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy and equitable mobility for all.” (City of Watsonville, 2018).
3. Numbers presented as a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest priority and 5 being the highest priority.