

Climate Change Mitigation and Public Health

Glossary

Active transportation: Any kind of human-powered mobility, such as biking, walking, skateboarding, or using a mobility assistance device, like a wheelchair.¹

Built Environment: The built environment includes human-made or modified landscapes, structures, and infrastructure systems that bring together people, services, and economic activities.²

Climate: Climate, in a narrow sense, is usually defined as the average weather or, more rigorously, as the statistical description in terms of the average and variability of defining factors over a period of time, ranging from months to thousands or millions of years. The classical period for averaging these variables is 30 years, as defined by the World Meteorological Organization. The relevant quantities are most often surface variables such as temperature, precipitation, and wind. Climate, in a wider sense, is the state, including a statistical description, of the climate system.^{3 4}

Climate change: Changes in average weather conditions that persist over multiple decades or longer. Climate change encompasses both increases and decreases in temperature, as well as shifts in precipitation, changes in frequency and location of severe weather events, and changes to other features of the climate system.^{5 6}

Climate change mitigation strategy : Measure to reduce the amount and rate of future climate change by reducing emissions of heat-trapping gases or removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.^{7 8}

Climate change adaptation strategy: In human systems, a measure to adjust to actual or expected climate and its effects to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects. Human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.⁹

Community: A group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.¹⁰

Community engagement: A set of activities along a spectrum of community participation and control that government institutions — such as local government agencies — use to engage

people affiliated with or self-identified by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to discuss or to inform public policy. Common examples include holding public hearings or community workshops, conducting surveys or interviews, and posting notices or flyers in newspapers or other media sources, or in common public spaces like libraries or post offices.

Equity: Just and fair inclusion in a society so that all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.¹¹

- Climate equity: The goal of recognizing and addressing the unequal burdens made worse by climate change, while ensuring that all people share the benefits of climate protection efforts.¹²
- Distributional equity: Occurs when there is an equitable distribution of resources, community burdens, and benefits.¹³
- Health equity: The attainment of the highest level of health for all people, where everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, preferred language, and other factors that affect access to care and health outcomes.^{14 15}
- Procedural equity: Occurs when public decision-making processes are transparent, accessible, fair, and inclusive.¹⁶
- Racial equity: Means that race will no longer predict opportunities, outcomes, or the distribution of resources for Black, Indigenous, and other residents of color.¹⁷
- Social equity: The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals—including individuals who belong to underserved communities and communities of color, people who belong to communities that may face discrimination, and people who live in rural areas—who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.¹⁸
- Structural equity: Occurs when government institutions and systems have the processes, practices, and policies to operationalize equity in how they function and make decisions.¹⁹

Green building: The practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life cycle, from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation, and deconstruction.²⁰

Green infrastructure: An interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions.²¹

Green space: Land partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation. It includes parks, community gardens, and cemeteries.^{22 23}

Health inequities: Unjust and avoidable differences in health associated with individual or group-specific attributes (eg, income, education, race/ethnicity) that are connected to social disadvantage and historical and contemporary injustices and that can be minimized through changes to policies, programs, and practices.^{24 25}

Health pathways: Health pathways describe the various ways a climate change mitigation strategy can influence human health, either directly or indirectly.

Health outcomes: Specific impacts on physical, mental, or social well-being that occur through a health pathway. Health outcomes can be positive or negative, indicating better or worse population health.

Justice: Impartial, fair, proper, and reasonable treatment of people by the law and by arbiters of the law.²⁶

- Environmental justice: The just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability—with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental decision-making, laws, regulations, policies, and other related activities.^{27 28}
- Health justice: All persons have the same chance to be free from hazards that jeopardize health, fully participate in society, and access opportunity.²⁹
- Racial justice: Systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.³⁰

Modal Shift: The shift from private, gasoline-powered vehicles to various forms of active transportation, such as walking and cycling and/or last mile connections to or from transit.

Resilience: The capacity of communities and their interconnected social, economic, and ecological systems to cope with, respond to, and recover from climate disruptions and adverse conditions in ways that yield overall improvements in wellbeing.³¹

Tree canopy: Tree canopy is the percentage of land surface that is covered by treetops.³²

¹ Department of Energy. Active transportation and micromobility. 2024. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://afdc.energy.gov/conserve/active-transportation>

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- ¹² EPA. Climate Change Impacts on Air Quality. Published online 2024. Accessed August 8, 2024. <https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/cli-mate-change-impacts-air-quality#>
- ¹³ [The Planner's Playbook - A Community-Centered Approach to Improving Health & Equity](#)
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