

ENGAGING WOMEN ON CLIMATE ACTION



“Women as a constituency are a strategic, powerful, and beautiful force that is often not recognized, supported, or mobilized into action – despite clear evidence that women are key to making the societal, economic, political, and ecological changes we so desperately need.” – WECAN

Globally, women are **more impacted** by climate change than men and at the **forefront of its solutions**. While it's difficult to speak about women in general (given that population consists of 4 billion human beings worldwide), here are some specific trends for climate advocates to consider in our public engagement efforts with US women.



IN THE US, WOMEN ARE MORE ENGAGED WITH CLIMATE CHANGE THAN MEN

Women are more likely than men to **believe** that climate change is happening, worry about its effects, perceive more climate change risks, and **perceive** global warming as posing a threat within their lifetime. They are also more **concerned** with its impact on poor and vulnerable populations, hold **strong pro-climate opinions and beliefs**, and are less likely to endorse **denialist beliefs** about climate change than men.

WOMEN ARE EFFECTIVE MESSENGERS WHO ARE WELL-POSITIONED TO TAKE INDIVIDUAL, POLITICAL, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Research shows that men are more likely to respond positively to policy arguments that focus on **ethics and environmental justice** if a woman is delivering the message rather than a man.

Women are also more willing than men to change their individual behavior for environmental reasons, like purchasing choices and shifting to a **plant-based diet**.

Women represent the majority of participants at climate protests and other progressive demonstrations in the US. There has been a rise in leadership and activism spanning a variety of social and political issues, such as the 2017 Women's March, which was the largest single-day protest in US history.

YOUNG WOMEN ARE TAKING THE HELM

Research shows that climate activism in the US has undergone a demographic shift: younger activists are **more likely** to be women than men. This wave of young climate activists and leaders in climate advocacy represents a significant change for a movement.

While it's clear that women and girls are vital agents of change for this planet, they are still too often missing from key leadership spaces. Currently, the US environmental advocacy sector is still **predominantly led by white men**, and women continue to be underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles.



WOMEN OF COLOR ARE ESPECIALLY PRIMED TO ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

While there is no **gender gap** between men and women on key questions regarding personal agency (“I can act”) and urgency (“I need to act now”), women of color have higher reported levels of concern on both measures compared to White women. Similarly, women of color report significantly **higher levels of climate-friendly behavior** while White women report at similar – or lower – levels than men. This mirrors the reality that **minority communities suffer disproportionately** from a wide range of environmental hazards compared to White folks of an equivalent income.

Women of color are also **more likely** to rate health, economic, and societal issues as environmental issues. This can be attributed to their heightened vulnerability to these issues and their recognition that systemic societal inequities can exacerbate environmental risk. Messaging that makes the connection between climate and other social issues explicit will likely resonate with these audiences.

MOTHERHOOD (AND PARENTHOOD) CAN BE A MOTIVATING IDENTITY

While climate change is dissuading some women from having biological children, motherhood has also motivated women to get involved in climate change work. Many present-day activists rally around this identity to mobilize their fellow mothers and ensure a healthy environment for all children.

Research shows that **9 out of 10 mothers feel morally responsible** to create a safe and healthy climate for themselves and their children, and 83% of mothers say they are somewhat or very concerned about climate change. Many public engagement efforts have successfully centered around motherhood (such as **Mothers Out Front, Moms Clean Air Force, Chispa’s Clean Buses for Healthy Niños**, and **more**) to mobilize action-taking.

It’s important to note that concern about climate and kids is also a parental issue – research finds that **there is no difference between men and women** regarding their levels of concern about how climate change will impact their children’s futures.

PUSH FOR WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

Research shows that promoting the participation of diverse women in leadership positions will **inspire more to participate**. Around the world, **women and girls** are making huge contributions like **conducting research, cultivating solutions, creating campaign strategy, crafting policy**, charging forth in **collective action, and more**. A great example of feminist climate leadership (which is open to people of any gender) is **All We Can Save**, an anthology of writing from 60 women at the forefront of the climate movement.

LEAN INTO WOMEN-CENTERED ACTIVISM

Understanding and speaking to the interests of your audience is a communications best-practice. In order to mobilize women, drill down into the specific needs of your audience and focus your organizing and programming on those values. There are many groups now that are organizing explicitly with a focus on women’s voices and experiences which help foster a space of community and shared identity (such as **Women’s Earth Alliance, The Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal**, and more). Identifying shared values and layering that in can help increase the potency of your messaging and increase engagement.

