WEET Public Sector Survey Results

Prepared April 18, 2022

This report details the results of the Wisconsin Environmental Equity Tool (WEET) online survey for public sector employees. The survey generated 300 unique responses from public employees at the state, regional, county, municipal and Tribal level. Surveys that were incomplete but did provide at least one text response are included in this report and analysis.

The following tables represent the number of responses by level of government and sector. The majority of responses came from those in the environmental and natural resources sector, followed by public health and emergency management. A majority of respondents described the population they served as statewide, followed by county, regional, and local levels. Six respondents stated the population they serve in their work is at the Tribal level. Note that the population served may be different than the level of a respondent's employer or department. For example, an employee of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that works within a single county would be categorized as "County". The survey was distributed by project staff through internal state agency communications at the Department of Administration, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Health Services, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Project staff worked with partners to distribute the survey to county and local governments, as well as Tribal Nations.

SECTOR	COUNT
ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES	219
PUBLIC HEALTH	42
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	23
AGRICULTURE	8
PLANNING	2
TRIBAL	2
CORRECTIONS	1
INSURANCE REGULATION	1
ENGINEERING	1
EDUCATION	1
MUNICIPAL SERVICES	1

POPULATION SERVED	COUNT
STATE	165
COUNTY	57
REGIONAL	44
LOCAL	27
TRIBAL	6
OTHER	2

The following pages contain information on survey responses across three categories.

Healthy Communities

- How would you describe a community that is healthy or doing well?
- Would you consider the population you serve as healthy or doing well based on that definition?

Pollution

- What comes to mind when you think of pollution?
- How does that pollution impact the population you serve?

Climate Change

- What comes to mind when you think of climate change?
- How does climate change impact the population you serve?

Project staff read through each respondent's survey and created topics within each category based on the responses provided. For five of the six questions, staff assigned a binary code for each topic (1 if that topic was mentioned, 0 if it was not mentioned). The second question in the Healthy Communities section – Would you consider the population you serve as healthy or doing well based on that definition? – was coded as Yes, Mixed, No, or Other. The tables on the following pages represent the number of times that topic was mentioned in survey responses for the given category. Topics with higher values could be considered more important or common to this sample of public sector employees. In coding responses, a single survey answer may include several topics. For example, if a respondent said they think of, "lead pipes, contamination of fish meat, and PFAS" when they think of pollution, each of those three topics are coded with a "1". Topics that were substantially similar were combined within each question. For example, "Extreme Weather Events" and "Natural Disaster" were combined. Topics with a frequency of two or less are included as footnotes below each table.

There are some important considerations and limitations in the analysis of survey responses. First, individuals from the natural resources sector are overrepresented in this survey, constituting more than two thirds of all responses. This may skew the quality of responses toward more environmental issues than would otherwise be generated by a survey with a balanced representation across sectors. Additionally, only two of 300 respondents work within Tribal Nations, and just six respondents identified Tribal Nations as the primary population they serve.

Healthy Communities

How would you describe a community that is healthy or doing well?

TOPIC	COUNT
CLEAN WATER	106
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	95
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	88
GREEN SPACE	74
GOOD SCHOOLS/EDUCATION	73
HEALTH CARE	64
SOCIAL JUSTICE	64
FOOD	59
INFRASTRUCTURE	59
HOUSING	58
EQUITABLE RESOURCE ACCESS	57
LOW CRIME	56
GENERAL HEALTH	55
STRONG ECONOMY	54
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES	50
GOVERNMENT	31
AIR QUALITY	30
MENTAL/EMOTIONAL HEALTH	30
CLEAN	28
STRONG BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	22
SOCIAL PROGRAMS	22
PUBLIC SAFETY	15
OPEN MINDED/ACCEPTING	15
DIVERSE	12
CLEAN SOIL	10
POPULATION GROWTH	9
SUSTAINABILITY	5
PROPER WASTE DISPOSAL	5
PROSPEROUS FARMS, ANIMAL POPULATIONS	4

** Additional responses included Don't Know, Art, Financial Independence, Demographics, Healing Community, Communication

Would you consider the population you serve as healthy or doing well based on that definition?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	54	19%
Mixed	55	19%
No	96	33%
Other	86	29%

Pollution

What comes to mind when you think of pollution?

TOPIC	COUNT
WATER QUALITY	233
AIR QUALITY	129
TRASH/LITTER	81
IMPACTS ON NATRUAL ENVIRONMENT	61
IMACTS ON HUMAN HEALTH	59
SOIL POLLUTION	51
EMISSIONS/AIR POLLUTANTS	50
CONTAMINANTS	50
POLLUTION/WASTE	43
INDUSTRY	34
CHEMICALS	31
ROAD SALT/ RUNOFF	30
AGRICULTURE	29
RESOURCE AND LAND USE	27
PFAS	24
OTHER POLLUTION	21
RECREATION	14
POLITICS	10
LACK OF ENFORCEMENT	5
LACK OF CARING/MISINFORMATION	4
UNNATURAL	3
EXCESS CONSUMPTION	3
PREVENTION	3
PHOSPHORUS	3

** Additional responses included Lack of Funding, Thermal Pollution, Iridescent Sludge, Unbalanced, Pollution Reduction from Remote Work

How does that pollution impact the population you serve?

TOPIC	COUNT
WATER	144
HUMAN HEALTH	98
RECREATION & NATURAL RESOURCES	66
ANIMALS/NATURE	62
ECONOMIC COSTS	57
AIR	49
POLLUTION	44
GENERAL IMPACT (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE)	44
AGRICULTURE	33
CONCENTRATED CONTAMINANTS	20
SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUITIES	17
ALGAL BLOOMS	13
UNSURE	13
NITRATES, PHOSPHORUS, NUTRIENTS	12
LITTER/WASTE	11
INFRASTRUCTURE & INDUSTRY	11
RESOURCE USE	11
WEATHER	10
LEAD	9
FOOD	7
APATHY/DISPAIR	9
RUNOFF	6
SICKNESS/DEATH	5
PFAS	5
ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS	4
CULTURAL LANDS/ RESOURCES	3

** Additional responses included Wildfire Smoke, Oral Health, Corporate Protection, Remote Work

Climate Change

What comes to mind when you think of climate change?

TOPIC	COUNT
EXTREME WEATHER, NATURAL DISASTER	107
WEATHER PATTERNS	63
BIODIVERSITY, PLANT AND ANIMAL IMPACTS	57
GLOBAL IMPACTS/CRISIS	57
FLOODING	39
PRECIPITATION CHANGES	39
HABITATS AND MIGRATION	36
DROUGHT	29
EXTREME HEAT	28
EMISSIONS/CARBON	27
CHANGING WATER LEVELS	26
HUMAN MORTALITY/MORBIDITY	26
AGRICULTURE	23
DESTABILIZED ENVIRONMENT	23
TEMPERATURE CHANGES	21
EMOTIONAL ANXIETY	18
WINTER ICE IMPACTS	16
POLLUTION	15
INFRASTRUCTURE	12
EDUCATION AND MISINFORMATION	11
FOOD SUPPLY	11
RUNOFF, EROSION AND SOILS	11
SNOWFALL	11
SURFACE WATER QUALITY	11
POLITICS	10
RESOURCE SCARCITY	10
SEASONAL CHANGES	10
PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS	9
WILDFIRES	9
COMPLEX CHALLENGE	7
INDUSTRY/FACTORIES	6
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	6
UNSURE/NOTHING	6
DISEASE	5
EXTREME COLD	5
RECREATION	5
AIR QUALITY	4
FOSSIL FUELS	4
INVASIVE SPECIES	4
QUALITY OF LIFE	4
CONSUMPTION	3

** Additional responses included Emergency Services, Oceans, Wind, Personal Choices, Inequity, Supply Chain, War

How does climate change impact the population you serve?

TOPIC	COUNT
EXTREME/UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER	75
RECREATION, TOURISM, HUNTING/FISHING	73
DESTROYS INFRASTRUCTURE/PROPERTY/LANDSCAPE	67
FLOODING	60
AGRICULTURE	46
FINANCIAL/ECONOMIC IMPACTS	44
PLANT AND ANIMAL POPULATIONS	34
EXTREME HEAT	29
MINIMAL IMPACT/UNSURE	27
HEALTH, SICKNESS, MORTALITY	26
GENERAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS	24
DROUGHT	21
WATER LEVELS	20
DRINKING WATER	19
EROSION, RUNOFF, SOILS	19
DECLINING HABITAT	17
LAKES, SURFACE WATER	17
FOOD SECURITY, TRIBAL FOODS	14
HOUSING, AC, FLOODPROOFING	13
PRECIPITATION CHANGES	13
EQUITY/VULNERABLE POPULATIONS	13
ALTERING LIFE CHOICES	12
RESOURCE USE/AVAILABILITY	12
CHANGING SEASONS	12
ALGAL BLOOMS	12
FORESTRY, PESTS	11
WATER QUALITY	9
PUBLIC SERVICES	9
WILDFIRE	8
AIR QUALITY, RESPIRATORY	8
POLLUTION	7
MIGRATION OF PEOPLE	7
POLITICAL CONFLICT	6
INVASIVE SPECIES	5
POWER OUTAGE/ELECTRIC/INTERNET	5
REFUSE/NO ANSWER	5
SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS	4
SOME GOOD IMPACTS	4
WIND	4
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	3
LACK OF INFORMATION	3

** Additional responses included Inability to Adapt, Increased Insurance Rates, Snow Load

What should be included in WEET and how do you envision using it?

In addition to the responses detailed above, public sector respondents were asked questions specifically related to the data and function of WEET. The following three questions were asked:

- What data do you think should be included in WEET?
- What data does your organization maintain that could contribute to WEET?
- How do you envision using WEET in your work?

Respondents offered a wide variety of suggested data for WEET, but concentrated on sociodemographic indicators and environmental pollution. Sociodemographic indicators include income, education, cost of living, and measures of equity. Water quality, the location of pollution sources, air quality, and groundwater pollution were specified as important environmental data to include. Respondents also provided specific sources to the suggested data, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's EJSCREEN, FEMA's National Risk Index, and data from the Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking (BRRT). Respondents also cited public health data as important to include, such as cancer rates, lead poisoning, and other incidence of disease. A complete list of recommended data will be provided to the WEET Steering Committee.

Public sector employees collect, maintain and work with a variety of data sources that WEET may be able to use. Many of the data managed by respondents is aligned with the data recommended for inclusion in WEET in the previous question. For example, when considering the specific location of pollution sites, respondents offered data on hazardous spill reporting, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permits, and more. Respondents also cited an abundance of water quality data, including water temperature, fish populations, nutrient pollution and nitrates, which were cited as among the most commonly considered pollutants in previous questions. Respondents also have data on participation in a variety of programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), insurance coverage, and other public assistance programs. Sociodemographic data, highlighted as important in the previous question, was lacking from respondents, with a greater emphasis on environmental data instead. This could be due to the oversampling of individuals from the natural resources field.

Respondents largely lacked enough information on WEET to explain how it might be used in their work. The project team coded 64 responses as Unclear or Don't Know Enough. An additional 24 respondents said they do not see themselves using the tool in their work. However, many cited specific programs or tasks that WEET would assist with, including grant writing, disaster and hazard mitigation planning, ensuring equitable distribution of program resources, program development, and prioritizing outreach and community engagement to disproportionately affected communities.