Climate Change Resiliency

SUMMARY: The climate change debate is shifting away from large-scale national and international solutions toward practical, smaller-scale actions aligned with particular geographies or industries. Businesses and organizations are exploring ways to mitigate their environmental impact and build their resilience against risks such as business disruption and loss of public support.

Forecasts

- In the next five to 10 years, the climate change conversation will increasingly shift away from big global agreements toward practical actions at the state, provincial, and local levels. A variety of solutions will be tried, and constituencies will form around preferred, sometimes competing, approaches.
- Millennials and post-millennials will become important actors in both the political and cultural arenas surrounding climate issues, bringing new perspectives, skepticism about conventional wisdom, and a heightened sense of urgency.
- More industries and fields (e.g., tourism, construction) will be drawn deeper into climate issues, as has already been seen in the expansion from the energy industry to agriculture, transportation, e-commerce. Ultimately, few industries will be exempted from accountability for their climate impacts.
- Momentum will grow to include socioeconomic issues. Debate will shift into new arenas, including state and local budget decisions over whether and how to spend for mitigation and adaptation and protection of lower-income groups.

Key Uncertainties

Evolution of public opinion around climate change in the United States and elsewhere

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What kinds of climate change solutions emerge as frontrunners

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Whether and how national governments support mitigation and adaptation strategies

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How the entry of new generations affects the debate

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Climate-driven impacts, including unforeseen effects

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Degree of mistrust in science

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Supporting Trends

- **Climate policy goes state and local.** Climate change policy in the United States is increasingly led by state and municipal governments.
- **U.S. fears over climate change growing.** The share of Americans who believe that climate change will pose a serious threat to themselves or to their way of life within their lifetimes nearly doubled between 1997 and 2018—from 25 percent to 45 percent.
- **New approaches to risk assessment.** Multidisciplinary approaches to risk assessment, integrating environmental issues, public health, and economic development, are gaining traction in the UN and beyond.
- **Youth activism.** Millennials and post-millennials are forming new activist movements around contentious issues, especially gun control (in the United States) and climate change (globally).
- **Socioeconomic issues and climate change.** Concern is rising over the effects of climate change on economic growth, inequality, terrorism, and migration.
- **Partisanship more bitter.** The partisan divide among U.S. voters is sharper and more bitter than in decades.

Related Drivers of Change

- Shifting Terrain for Advocacy
- The Splintered Society
- American Inequality

Notable Data Points

RISING SEAS, FALLING VALUES

Between 2005 and 2017, fears of sea level rise seem to have **erased $15.8 billions of property value in the 17 states** that make up America's eastern seaboard.

Source: "Rising Seas Erode $15.8 Billion in Home Value from Maine to Mississippi," press release, First Street Foundation, February 27, 2019.

PUBLIC AMBIVALENCE TOWARD CLIMATE SCIENCE

Only 39% of U.S. adults trust scientists "a lot" to give full and accurate information about climate change.

Source: "Mixed Messages about Public Trust in Science," Pew Research Center, December 8, 2017.

A DIVIDED PUBLIC

54% of adults 18-29 are very concerned about climate change, compared to 41% overall.

Sharp partisan divides exist on climate change concern (61% Democrats compared to 15% Republicans).

Source: https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/11/28/cvs-health-aetna/2137076002/

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Strategic Insights

- Socioeconomic and security aspects of climate change (economic development, inequality, terrorism, migration, etc.) are gaining attention and could become new issues for associations, affecting the decisions of association members and of associations themselves.
- As the climate conversation becomes more decentralized and practical, organizations—especially companies, but also associations—will be called upon to justify their policies and practices. Such calls may be politicized and conflicting, as well as at odds with other organizational activities and needs.
- Some association employees and members may become deeply engaged in climate activism and could seek to draw their association directly into positions and actions where the self-interest and implications are not as evident as they are for other association priorities.
- Climate change policy fragmentation will mean that some associations will face geographic divisions as members and chapters encounter different local conditions and take different stances as a result. These divisions will create potential policy tensions in national and international bodies.

Timing

- **Stage:** Growth, varying by geography and culture
- **Speed:** Accelerating, driven by increased attention to climate change

Potential Alternative Futures

- **Disaster breeds unity.** Unforeseen natural disasters that appear to be climate-driven override political differences, uniting diverse publics to take urgent and broad action.
- **Overwhelmed.** Climate impacts rapidly become severe. The costs of these impacts skyrocket, crowding out other priorities.
- **Mitigation works.** An innovative geoengineering strategy shows promise for reducing carbon in the atmosphere. Although emissions still need to be curtailed, the worse effects seem to be averted.

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Take Action

- **Draw connections between the environment, your mission, and members.** Members in some industries may have given little thought to how their actions might help or hinder the environment. They might struggle to get beyond abstract political and scientific issues to see how they do contribute to the larger ecosystem. Once you know what makes a difference, teach these practices, encourage them as a marketplace differentiator, and encourage adherence through credentialing and ethics codes.
- **Take a risk analysis approach.** Will extreme weather events disrupt your business or conference locations? What are your business continuity plans? If many members experience a climate-related disaster, are you suspending dues or offering services to help them get back in business? Are there potential threats to employee health and safety under extreme weather conditions? There's no downside to understanding risk and putting your Plan B in place.
- **Start with small, concrete actions.** Select centralized conference site locations where members can travel efficiently. Expand your range of virtual learning and networking experiences. Reduce conference waste (print, food, and swag) and sustainably source food and other products and materials. Embrace telecommuting and subsidize employees using public transportation. When you move, choose a LEED-certified building.
- **Spur solutions with innovation grants.** Help members and constituents experiment with new ideas and solutions that create climate change resiliency. Small grants can build grassroots engagement and position your industry as a champion for finding better ways to work in harmony with the environment.

Keyword Search

To continue researching this change driver, use these search terms:
climate change, carbon emissions, state climate policies, C40, climate activism, socioeconomic and climate change, Sunrise Movement, Green New Deal, Protect Our Winters

Who Will Be Affected

All businesses and organizations increasingly will be expected to do their share to help avoid climate change. Associations representing industries and businesses perceived to have significant environmental impact already have major initiatives underway to organize member response. Global and national associations and businesses operating across regions must respond to variations in political urgency, regulatory regimes, and best practices.

About ASAE ForesightWorks

ASAE ForesightWorks is a deliberate, evidence-based research program and emerging line of products to provide association professionals with a continual stream of intelligence about the changes facing the association industry, including:

- regularly updated action briefs;
- tools for applying insights from the research in your association;
- guidance in performing environmental scans; and
- opportunities to engage with peers around the research.

Ultimately, the program's mission is to empower association leaders to create a culture of foresight.

Check **asaecenter.org/ForesightWorks** and follow **@ASAEfdn** on Twitter for updates on new findings and events.

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