



Exploring Gaps and Sharing Findings: The 2016 NCCEH Environmental Health Needs Assessment

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Introduction

In 2015-2017, NCCEH conducted a multi-phase needs assessment to collect the needs of environmental health (EH) stakeholders across Canada. The Northern region was defined as territories and parts of provinces north of the 50th parallel. The Atlantic phase included all the Atlantic provinces, and the pan-Canadian survey included EH stakeholders across the country. Findings from this project will help NCCEH with priority setting for future work.

Data Collection



The main key informants were **Medical Health Officers (MHOs)** who were identified through internal networks and internet searches. All MHOs were requested to suggest additional key informants at the levels of **director, manager, or a senior public health inspector** on their EH teams.

The online survey remained open for three months, and was promoted via NCCEH monthly eNews, social networks, website, and NCCEH advisory board members.

Interview Guide and Survey

An interview guide was developed and used in the 60-minute telephone interviews. The guide and the survey included several major EH theme areas. Respondents were asked to provide current or emerging EH issues felt to be pertinent to their regions.

Additional questions included:

- Sources where they obtain EH information
- EH peer networks
- Barriers or challenges impacting work activities
- Suggestions for ways in which the NCCEH could support their EH needs

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted on data extracted from interviews (n=29) and surveys (n=110). EH issues provided by participants were ranked based on the frequency of mentions in each phase of the project.

Informing NCCEH Priorities

For our purposes, the EH issues that were highly ranked in all three phases of the needs assessment were determined to have greatest importance for EH practice across the country.

Based on the collated results, several broad EH areas were identified as priorities for EH practitioners.

Results

EH Issues	Northern	Atlantic	Pan-Canadian
Mould			
• Impacts on indoor air quality	✓	✓	✓
• Ventilation, moisture			
Food safety			
• Preparation, proper storage, and sale of cultural, ethnic, and novel foods (e.g. insects, foraged foods such as mushrooms)	✓	✓	✓
• Appropriate cooking and handling of country and traditional foods			
Radon			
• In indoor settings such as homes and schools	✓	✓	✓
• Public education and awareness			
• Proper testing			
Climate change			
• Emerging diseases, pathogen and vector distribution, pests			
• Related health impacts	✓	✓	✓
• The role of PH regarding adaptation and mitigation			
• Potential impacts on northern communities: key indicators, confounding factors, possible actions			
Food security			
• Availability of and access to healthy foods in low-income areas	✓		✓
Wildfires			
• Emergency response	✓	✓	
• Impacts on air quality			

Limitations

- Representative sample in geographic location and across professional ranks
- Interviewer variance
- Respondent bias
- Issues are a snapshot in time

Acknowledgements

The presenter would like to thank Dr. Moliehi Khaketla, Amelia Douglas, Dr. Angela Eykelbosh, and Dr. Helen Ward for their assistance in this project. Production of this poster was made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada.