

Findings at a glance: Environmental health specialists

A majority of Americans have a positive overall view of environmental health scientists, though their opinions are more mixed when it comes to trust in them to do a good job, show concern for the community’s interest and provide fair and accurate information. The public is skeptical when it comes to issues of scientific integrity, according to a new [Pew Research Center report](#). Few are confident that environmental health specialists hold themselves accountable for mistakes or are transparent when it comes to potential conflicts of interest with industry, for instance.

Overall views

60% of Americans have a positive view of environmental health specialists.

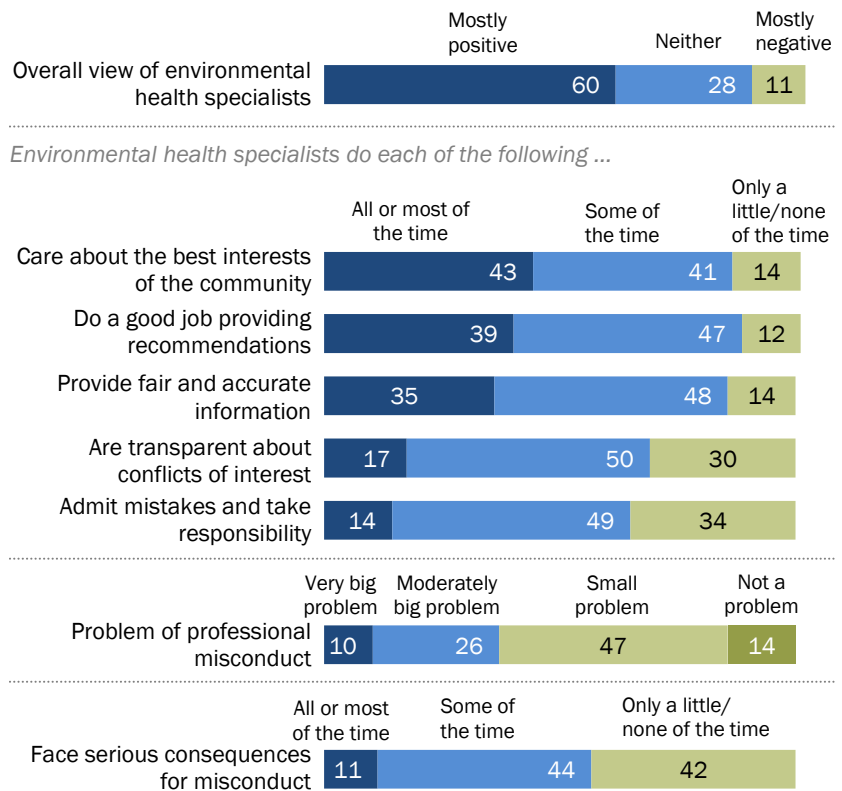
Trust and mistrust

About four-in-ten Americans say environmental health specialists care about the best interests of the people in the community they serve (43%) or do a good job providing recommendations about how to address risk to human health from the environment (39%) all or most of the time. About a third (35%) say these specialists provide fair and accurate information when making recommendations all or most of the time.

Fewer than two-in-ten say environmental health specialists are transparent about potential conflicts of interest with industry groups (17%) and admit and take responsibility for mistakes (14%) all or most of the time.

Six-in-ten Americans have a positive view of environmental health specialists

% of U.S. adults who say the following about environmental health specialists



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. “Neither” means “neither positive nor negative.”

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 7-21, 2019.

“Trust and Mistrust in Americans’ Views of Scientific Experts”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

About a third (36%) of Americans think professional misconduct is at least a moderately big problem among environmental health specialists. Just 11% think environmental health specialists usually face serious consequences when misconduct occurs.

Other notable findings

- Just 12% say they know a lot about what environmental health specialists do, and 63% say they know a little.
- People who are more familiar with environmental health specialists tend to have more positive and trusting views of them than people who lack familiarity. For example, 60% of those who know a lot about environmental health specialists think this group cares about the community's best interest all or most of the time, compared with 29% of those who know nothing about environmental health specialists.
- Democrats (including Democratic-leaning independents) are more positive and more trusting of environmental health specialists than their Republican counterparts (including leaners). Overall, 73% of Democrats and 46% of Republicans have positive views of environmental health specialists – a 27 percentage point difference. And more Democrats than Republicans have confidence in environmental health specialists to provide fair and accurate information all or most of the time (43% vs. 25%).
- The public's overall views and trust in [environmental health specialists](#) is similar to that for environmental research scientists.

About the survey

The nationally representative survey from Pew Research Center was conducted among U.S. adults ages 18 and older. About half of the survey respondents (N=2,238) were asked about dietitians; these responses have a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.7 percentage points. Before answering questions about this group, respondents were given the following brief description: “**Environmental health specialists** often advise organizations in a local community about environmental risks to human health such as air and water pollution and how to clean up polluted areas.”