Findings and Lessons Learned from the Assembly Bill 617

2023 Statewide Survey Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an analysis of survey data that evaluates the perceptions of key stakeholders (residents, community organizations, public agencies, industry) of the Assembly Bill 617: Community Air Protection Program implementation process. It is intended to highlight the successes, challenges and critical areas for improvement and lay the groundwork for future research and dialogue among AB 617 stakeholders. While these insights can provide valuable direction for program implementers, it is important to note that this study does not include a quantitative assessment of program outcomes.

Methods

This survey was administered through an on-line platform from March to August of 2023. Two hundred and forty-four unique respondents completed the survey, including 22 Spanish-language respondents. There were 142 Community Steering Committee (CSC) member respondents. Based on an estimated 650 CSC members across 19 sites, this represents an overall 22% response rate for the CSCs. While there were many CSCs with response rates over 50%, there were others with low response rates. This makes a definitive analysis of CSC-specific data problematic, so larger groupings (such as responses from CSCs as a whole or rural and urban clusters) are provided when appropriate.

A note on terminology: The term “effectiveness” is used in many questions to assess the role of different implementing parties. This is a qualitative measure reflecting respondents’ views on these parties’ achievements relative to their expectations in implementing the policy.

Key Findings

The survey revealed general satisfaction for many AB 617 elements as well as a pattern of mixed opinions for others, with many respondents expressing neutrality or uncertainty (“neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” or “don’t know”). This indicates that many respondents are reserving judgment on the impacts of AB 617, although an analysis of the open-ended questions offers specific pathways for program improvement. Signs of improvement of AB 617 since the first survey in 2019 are highlighted throughout this report. In addition, certain elements of dissatisfaction in the data indicate areas where the California Air Resource Board’s AB 617 Blueprint 2.0 can guide future next steps for AB 617 improvement.

Overarching Themes from Survey Respondents

1. Capacity Building and Training:
    - Respondents pointed out the need for increased training and orientation for agency staff (Air Districts, CARB, and other local and state agencies) on Environmental Justice (EJ) issues.
    - Respondents pointed out the need for enhanced CSC capacity-building efforts in air quality science and policy that can empower communities to participate more effectively throughout the decision-making process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Agency Effectiveness:
    - Respondents noted that CARB and Air Districts have improved their effectiveness in engaging with CSC members. However, there is still a need for CARB and Air Districts to develop methods to ensure meaningful community participation and power.
    - CARB and Air Districts have engaged in facilitating the involvement of outside state and local agencies in CERP implementation. There is still a perceived need to extend inter-agency collaboration beyond CARB and Air Districts to include other stakeholders for comprehensive program implementation.
3. Community Engagement
    - Respondents acknowledge improved community engagement by agencies, but there is a continual need to enhance broader outreach and education efforts to raise awareness of AB 617 goals and processes within impacted communities.
    - Respondents highlight increasing collaborative learning opportunities between AB 617 communities to support collective advocacy and shared strategies.
4. Transparency and Accountability
    - Respondents point to increasing accountability and transparency around funding allocations and rulemaking processes by CARB and Air Districts to build trust and ensure equitable resource distribution.
    - Enhanced revisions to AB 617 legislation are necessary to address structural challenges, enhance program effectiveness and sustain the program over time.

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This study is grounded in an honoring of land, labor, and knowledge. We acknowledge the historical and on-going roles of colonialism, structural racism, and exploitation of immigrant and domestic labor that have left scars on the land and on the bodies of those who work and depend on it. We also acknowledge and thank Indigenous Californians and more recent allies for their generations of stewardship of the land, water, and air. Lastly, we must acknowledge the diversity of knowledge incorporated in this study. This work didn't start with us: we have ancestors, elders, engaged scholars, and activists with unique and valuable knowledge on whose shoulders we stand. Please take a moment to acknowledge your mentors, ancestors, elders, activists, and scholars who have supported you in your learning and work for racial, social and environmental justice. (We express gratitude for Marisol Cantu for encouraging us to include this land, labor, and knowledge acknowledgement.)

DISCLAIMERS

The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not represent the official position or policy of its Advisory Committee members, or its funders. The mention of trade names, products, and organizations does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

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INTRODUCTION

Assembly Bill (AB 617) - authored by Assemblymember Cristina Garcia and passed in 2017- is a bold but controversial experiment to address disparities in air quality in some of the most overburdened communities in California. It has engaged a wide range of stakeholders, from community residents and organizations, local governments, Air Districts, the California Air Resources Board (CARB), industry, and other interested parties. To date it has been implemented in 19 communities across the state and has also involved several statewide regulatory elements. AB 617 has promoted innovative approaches to air quality monitoring and management and collaboration between multiple stakeholders but has also provoked significant conflicts over how well it is achieving its goals.



Figure 1. Communities selected for inclusion in the AB 617 Program as of 2024. Source: CARB.

This report is intended to provide an overall assessment of the implementation of AB 617 as of August 2023. It is hoped that this report will surface key successes, challenges, opportunities for improvement, and lessons learned in the implementation of AB 617. Furthermore, this report aims to raise important issues and questions that should become the basis of dialogue between the multiple stakeholders (residents, community organizations, local governments, industry, Air Districts, CARB, and other state agencies) engaged in the policy as well as further studies.

METHODS

This survey was administered from March to August of 2023. The report used an online Qualtrics statewide survey administered by the UC Davis Justice Lab to members of the Community Steering Committees (CSCs) in all 19 of the selected communities, the six Air Districts associated with these communities (Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Sacramento Air Quality Management District, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, South Coast Air Quality Management District, San Diego Air Pollution Control District, and the Imperial County Air Quality Management District), the California Air Resources Board (CARB), other relevant state agencies, the AB 617 Consultation Group, and community air grant recipients.

Two hundred and forty-four unique respondents completed the survey with twenty-two of the responses coming from Spanish-speaking stakeholders. The distribution of the respondents is shown in Appendix A. The responses were anonymous, but the AB 617 community and agency/sector affiliation was collected. To safeguard anonymity, we took out all place names from the comments and substituted a letter (e.g., “The [X] Air District).

Survey distribution was conducted through multiple approaches. The Air Districts distributed the surveys to their CSCs, district staff, and governing board members. CARB distributed the surveys through their staff, CARB Board members, and community air grant recipients. Researchers also recruited participation through CSC meeting announcements and targeted email communication through CSC co-leads. An additional element of the survey was an added incentive where residents and community organization respondents had an opportunity to enter a gift card raffle at the end of the survey.

For certain themes, there were similar questions across the three previous surveys that we conducted, for which we can compare data. These previous surveys were conducted in 2021, 2020, and 2018-2019. All four surveys covered similar topics. The two earliest surveys used distinct phrasing of their questions but the 2021 survey had significant similarities in question form.

Please note that responses below use a measure of total satisfaction that includes aggregated responses for “very satisfied” and “satisfied”: likewise, we use a measure of total dissatisfaction that includes aggregated responses for “very dissatisfied” and “dissatisfied.” The remaining responses from the total satisfaction and total dissatisfaction can be deducted from 100 to calculate responses for “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.”

There are several limitations of this survey study. This survey primarily represents a point in time assessment in 2023. However, we do have data from previous surveys to compare trends in the assessment of AB 617 implementation elements over time. It does not account for changes since August 2023.

A second limitation, in some cases, is the number of certain categories of respondents was low, thus the results must be taken with a degree of caution. While the response rates from Air District and CARB staff were quite strong, the response rate was much lower in some of the CSCs.

The breakdown of respondents by stakeholder category is as follows: 142 CSC members, 29 CARB staff, 43 Air District staff, and 30 other stakeholders. Across the 19 selected AB 617 communities, there were 142 responses out of a possible estimated 650 total responses (based on the CSC roster of members and alternates), which results in a response rate of approximately 22%. While this falls within the bounds of a legitimate response rate (between 5%-30% for electronic surveys), it is too low to serve as a representative sample of many of the individual CSCs. Yet, all but five of the CSC have response rates above 30%, indicating that it is these five that pull down the overall average.

The estimated response rates for CSCs are as follows: West Oakland (0%), South LA (14%), Southeast LA (16%), Arvin/Lamont (23%), Eastern Coachella Valley (26%), East LA/Boyle Heights/West Commerce (32%), International Border Communities (33%), South Central Fresno (34%), San Bernardino/Muscoy (36%), Stockton (38%), South Sacramento/Florin (39%), Portside EJ Neighborhoods (39%), Wilmington/Carson/West Long Beach (42%), El Centro/Heber/Calexico (43%), Shafter (56%), Richmond/North Richmond/San Pablo (68%), East Oakland (84%).

As a result of this variability, it is important to interpret the results for CSC members as only suggestive that there are issues that warrant additional reflection by AB 617 stakeholders and future study as opposed to a representative statement of perception either in any one CSC or across the CSCs.

But, while not necessarily fully representative, the feedback received contained detailed and substantive comments that provided meaningful insights. These comments, were similar to key community concerns and priorities that surfaced in the stakeholder interviews and CSC meeting observations, enabling us to identify patterns and present consistent themes from the entire set of AB 617 implementors.

We differentiated results for each of the CSC member types (resident, community organization, industry). However, we did not break out those results for every question as the low sample size is too low to extrapolate (especially for industry CSC members). This does have the effect of blending results from respondents with potentially different perspectives. Although there are large distinctions between the results across the communities, it suggests that there are important causes for these differences that should be subject of further inquiry.

Another limitation is that respondents were allowed to indicate multiple affiliations of CSCs as well as their role. While their responses were only counted once, this did result in overlap in certain categories, such as a CSC member who is also part of the community air grant recipient. As a result, we primarily focused on the results from the non-overlapping categories (Air District, CARB, and CSC members).

Finally, the report focuses on the areas in which there are the greatest differences in the responses as well as those that address some of the more contentious and higher priority issues in the AB 617 implementation process based on the authors' previous research and therefore does not cover all the questions in the survey.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Elements of the CSC Process

Before delving into the findings of the survey, definitions need to be first established to ground the understanding of both the survey questions and responses. Throughout the survey, the study intended to understand all stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of various AB 617 CSC processes and stakeholder roles. Effectiveness in this study is defined as how productive the respondent views the assessed roles that the stakeholders are playing as well as how helpful those roles are in pursuing the goals of the AB 617 legislation. For the assessment of each of the specific stakeholder roles, those questions explicitly ask for an evaluation of the "effectiveness of community organizations" or "effectiveness of facilitators" in their respective roles.

Respondents were generally satisfied regarding many elements of the CSC process, including the composition of CSC membership, quality of the CSC charters, effectiveness of residents, effectiveness of community organizations, and effectiveness of facilitators. These roles were divided into assessing how well respondents perceived their effectiveness in those roles. Most impressive was that more respondents were satisfied with the accessibility of meetings for non-English speakers than expected as compared to previous surveys.

Elements of the CSC process with lower satisfaction include: training provided to the CSC for effective membership; effectiveness of local and state governments; and effectiveness of industry.

Most stakeholders except Air Districts were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the training provided to the CSC for effective membership. Resident CSC, community organization CSC, industry CSC members, and CARB were generally dissatisfied with the effectiveness of local and state governments. CSC members were generally dissatisfied with the effectiveness of industry, resident CSC and local government. Industry CSC members were the only stakeholders who were dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with effectiveness of residents and community organizations.

Need for Increased CSC Capacity Building

Before delving into the findings of the survey, definitions need to be first established to ground the understanding of both the survey questions and responses. Throughout the survey, the study intended to understand all stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of various AB 617 CSC processes and stakeholder roles. Effectiveness in this study is defined as how productive the respondent views the assessed roles that the stakeholders are playing as well as how helpful those roles are in pursuing the goals of the AB 617 legislation. For the assessment of each of the specific stakeholder roles, those questions explicitly ask for an evaluation of the "effectiveness of community organizations" or "effectiveness of facilitators" in their respective roles.

Based on the responses and open-ended comments, there is a clear call for improved statewide training, orientation, and educational resources to be provided to CSC members as well as increased focus on CSC capacity building.

This includes increased accessibility to materials, language access, and assistance to process all technical information. There is a widespread request for better training of air district staff in environmental justice, civil rights, and cultural competency to address appropriate engagement. Only 38% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied, 29% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 26% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with such training. Of all stakeholder groups, resident CSC members had the highest level of dissatisfaction at 31%.

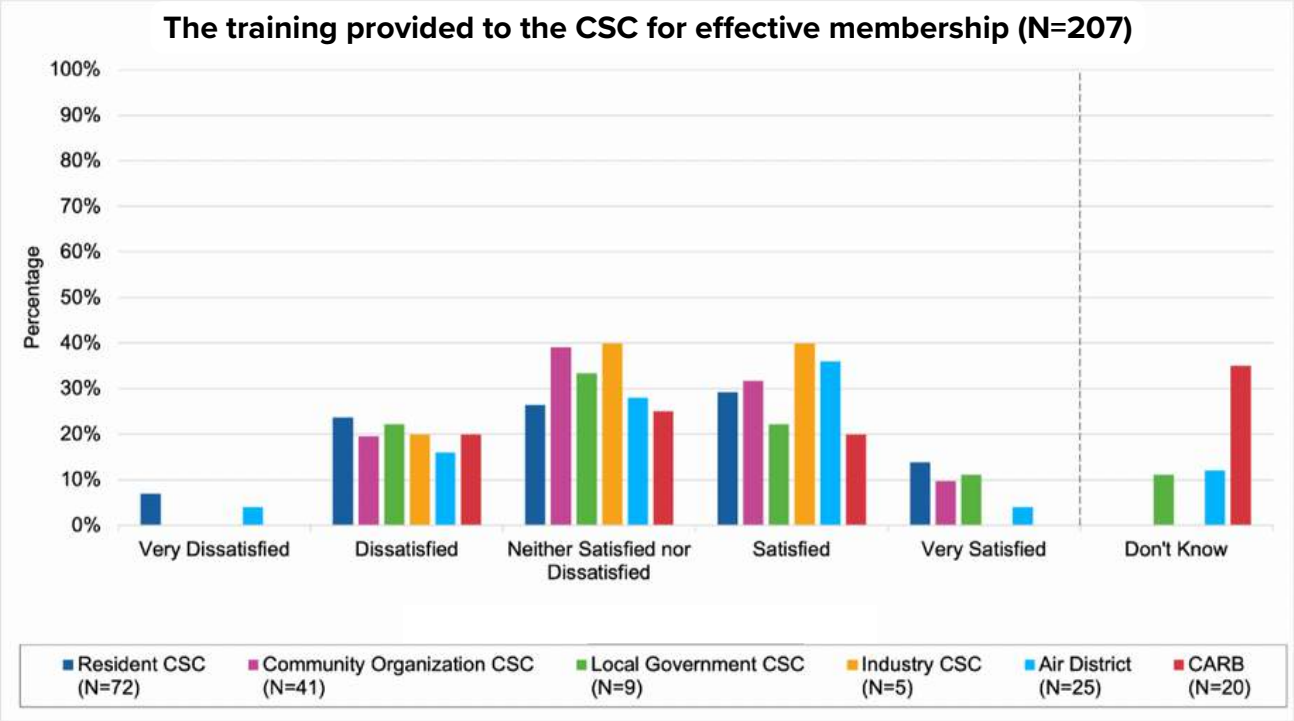


Figure 1. Communities selected for inclusion in the AB 617 Program as of 2024. Source: CARB.

Many CSC members reported needing more time and a thorough orientation before they join to have all the necessary information and clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the CSC and involved agencies. According to one CSC member:

"Giving a CSC ideas to react to is an important part of this process, both because CSC people are less knowledgeable about the technical details than Air District staff and because we really want the CERP to be a joint product. At any rate, being "community-driven" has been hard without the right data."

Another CSC member notes the challenges in both opportunities for training and training processes in place for CSC members to engage with AB 617.

"Training for CSC members has been difficult to schedule but is essential if CARB expects members to make educated decisions and provide meaningful input. I am concerned that we will come to the end of the 5-year implementation period planned for the CERP and the community will not be able to identify any changes or improvements in their quality of life, and government will be blamed once again for unkept promises and wasting money."

The training provided to the CSC for effective membership

	Total (N=207)	Resident CSC (N=73)	Community Organization CSC (N=41)	Local Government CSC (N=9)	Industry CSC (N=5)	Air District (N=25)	CARB (N=20)
Very Dissatisfied	4%	7%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Dissatisfied	22%	24%	20%	22%	20%	16%	20%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	29%	26%	39%	33%	40%	28%	25%
Satisfied	29%	29%	32%	22%	40%	36%	20%
Very Satisfied	9%	14%	10%	11%	0%	4%	0%
Don't Know	7%	0%	0%	11%	0%	12%	35%

Figure 2. Rating of training provided to the CSC for effective membership by stakeholder group table.

There is a general pattern in the lack of sufficient community outreach and communication for the CSCs. Comments call for more direct outreach to residents and non-English speaking residents to increase their participation. There is a general lack of awareness from non-CSC residents, thus there needs to be more advertising through social and local media and more advanced notice of meetings. An Air District staff member adds that both CARB and Air Districts need to improve their equitable practices to make capacity-building accessible for underrepresented and underserved groups.

"Improve accessibility of shared materials for CSC members, including providing them in multiple languages beyond English and secondary majority language (such as Spanish) and accounting for presentation materials being viewing friendly (such as accounting for color blindness). Also, increasing means of engagement with the CSC beyond phone calls and emails notices."

Many respondents observed that community engagement and leadership must always be a priority. There has been a drop off of resident CSC members in most CSCs due to slow bureaucratic process, slow achievement of outcomes, and local voices not being sufficiently responded to by agencies. It is also challenging to ensure that every CSC member can participate due to packed agendas and 2-hour meetings occurring once a month.

Some comments indicate an issue of government capacity. One CSC member adds that although there is some form of capacity-building for communities, there is a perception from the communities that there is an absence in training of government staff.

"While there is significant capacity-building of residents so that they can interact and engage with government agencies, there appears to be no formal training or capacity building for government agencies to interact in culturally-appropriate/-sensitive and respectful manners with residents of EJ communities."

While there are several training opportunities that are currently in place both at CARB and at several air districts, this quote indicates that these could be communicated more effectively to make it known to the public that they are explicitly accessible by staff.

Cross-Survey Comparative Analysis

Between 2021 and 2023, all stakeholders showed an increase in their level of satisfaction with the training provided to CSC members from 25% to 38% total satisfaction. However, an interesting note is that CSC members are more satisfied with the training than Air District and CARB staff.

	2021	2023
Total Satisfaction	25%	38%
Total Dissatisfaction	38%	25%
	(N=165) • CSC members: 32% satisfied and 46% dissatisfied • AD: 32% satisfied and 27% dissatisfied • CARB: 23% satisfied and 43% dissatisfied	(N=207) • Resident CSC member: 43% satisfied and 30% dissatisfied • Community Org CSC member: 41% satisfied and 19% dissatisfied • AD: 39% satisfied and 19% dissatisfied • CARB: 20% satisfied and 20% dissatisfied

Figure 3. Comparison of ratings on training provided to CSC members between the 2021 and 2023 surveys.

Effectiveness of Local and State Governments

Participation of local and state government agencies are instrumental in the implementation of AB 617 CERP strategies. However, there was general dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of local and state governments in the AB 617 process. In total, 39% of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The two stakeholder groups reporting high levels of dissatisfaction (dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) are resident CSC members at 48% and industry CSC members at 60%. Only local government CSC members reported 0% dissatisfaction. This shows the need for improved participation and engagement of local and state governments in AB 617.

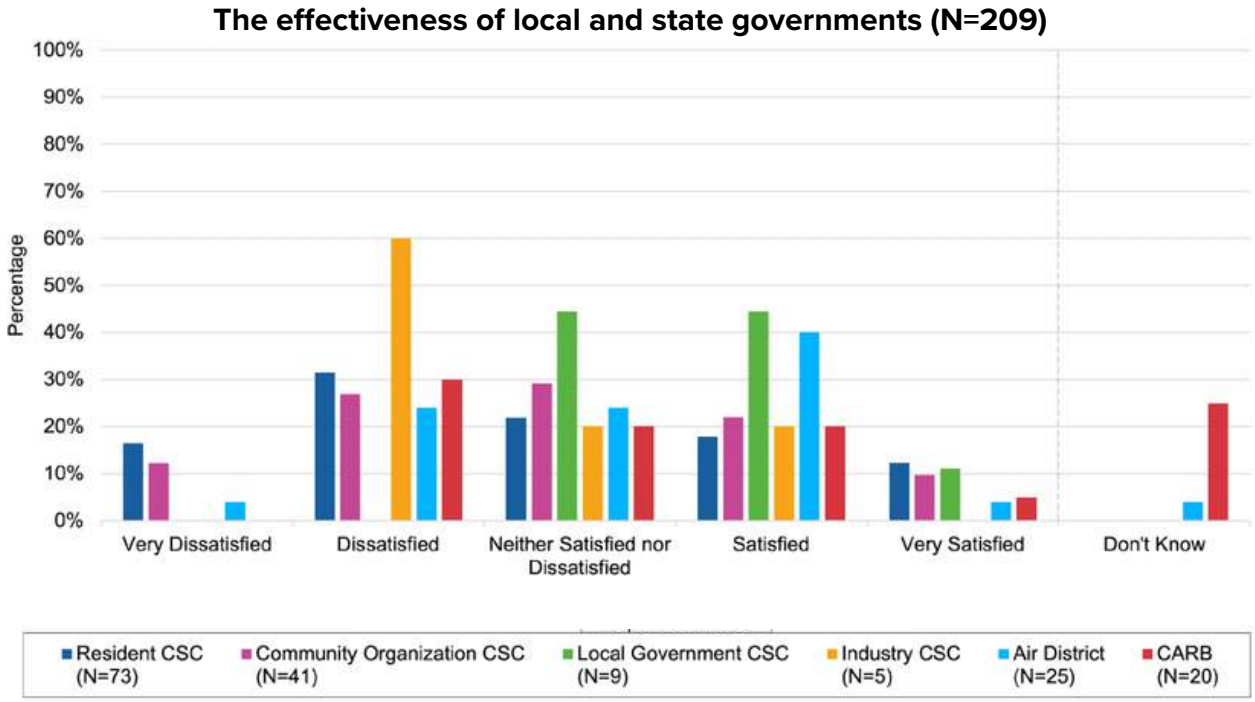


Figure 4. Rating of the effectiveness of local and state governments by stakeholder group.

A CSC member shares their view of local government participation and how it is generally a show of optics of what the agencies have been doing well as opposed to pro-active engagement:

"In my experience, local government participation in AB 617 has been minimal. I think the CSC process has ended up becoming more of a show-and-tell process and mostly discusses updates."

A CARB staff member adds that because there is no mandate or incentive for local governments to engage that there is minimal participation from those agencies.

"Local government agencies aren't incentivized to participate in CERP implementation/development, especially if there is no funding/resources available for them to do so."

The effectiveness of local and state governments							
	Total (N=209)	Resident CSC (N=73)	Community Organization CSC (N=41)	Local Government CSC (N=9)	Industry CSC (N=5)	Air District (N=25)	CARB (N=20)
Very Dissatisfied	11%	16%	12%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Dissatisfied	28%	32%	27%	0%	60%	24%	30%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	23%	22%	29%	44%	20%	24%	20%
Satisfied	25%	18%	22%	44%	20%	40%	20%
Very Satisfied	9%	12%	10%	11%	0%	4%	5%
Don't Know	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	25%

Figure 5. Rating of the effectiveness of local and state governments by stakeholder group.

Effectiveness of Industry

The participation of industry representatives is important to addressing emissions reduction and has been a point of contention across the CSCs. There is general dissatisfaction on the effectiveness of industry. 44% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with industry engagement. The two stakeholder groups reporting the highest levels of dissatisfaction were resident CSC members and community organization CSC members who were 51% and 46% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied respectively. While response rates were low, 40% of industry members (2 out of 5) reported being dissatisfied with industry effectiveness in the CSCs. Calls for improvements to industry's involvement is shared across stakeholders, but most notably by resident and community organization CSC members.

A point of ongoing contention is whether industry representatives should have voting membership in the CSCs. A CARB staff member points out this contention and the participation of industry on CSCs.

"Industry seems largely unwilling to change unless forced to do so by a rule/regulation. Their presence is helpful for the CSC to better understand their processes and current way of mitigating emissions, but I'm not sure if they should necessarily be a part of the CSC."

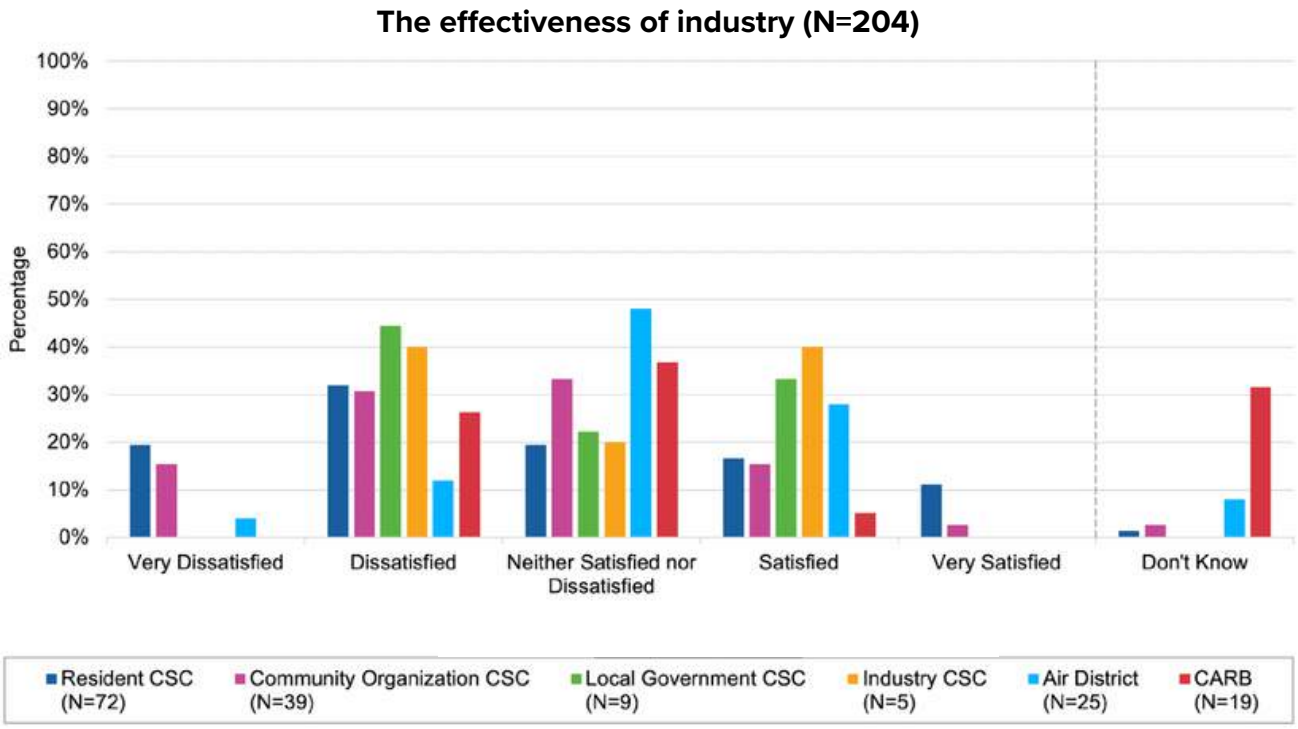


Figure 6. Rating of the effectiveness of industry by stakeholder group.

The effectiveness of industry							
	Total (N=204)	**Resident CSC (N=73)**	**Community Organization CSC (N=41)**	**Local Government CSC (N=9)**	**Industry CSC (N=5)**	**Air District (N=25)**	**CARB (N=19)**
Very Dissatisfied	14%	19%	15%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Dissatisfied	30%	32%	31%	44%	40%	12%	26%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	26%	19%	33%	22%	20%	48%	37%
Satisfied	17%	17%	15%	33%	40%	28%	5%
Very Satisfied	6%	11%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't Know	6%	1%	3%	0%	0%	8%	32%

Figure 7. Rating of the effectiveness of industry by stakeholder group table.

An industry CSC member acknowledges the lack of collaboration outside of rulemaking and shows interest in engaging through other opportunities.

"Although the APCD is present and part of the meetings, there is little collaboration with local industry other than regulatory rule making. There are other opportunities to work together that would be more impactful."

CARB's Implementation Roles

One issue that has been raised consistently over the course of AB 617 implementation since the early years has been the role of CARB and their participation in the CSC process. CARB had previously and currently been called overly-passive in their engagement and many CSC members (especially residents and community organizations) call for CARB to be more proactive. Although there have been increases in CARB's proactivity, the data show that there is still room for improvement. Respondents were generally satisfied with the overall effectiveness of CARB staff except for the topic of collaborating with other relevant entities (i.e., cities, counties, other state agencies), where most of the responses were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Overall, 55% of respondents were 55% satisfied or very satisfied with CARB's providing adequate information to inform the work of the CSC. 54% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with CARB's supporting the priorities of CSC residents and community organization members. 41% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with CARB's collaborating with other relevant entities. This inter-agency collaboration will be discussed in detail in the below "Inter-Agency Collaboration" section. 53% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with CARB's being pro-active in participating in CSC meeting. Lastly, 52% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with CARB's engaging with diverse communities. Specific suggestions called for CARB to facilitate relationships with local governments and other agencies, ensuring more accountability of the air districts and local governments, and providing more technical assistance to both local agencies and communities.

On the support for the priorities of CSC residents and community organization members, both residents and community organization CSC members were generally satisfied but had many individual constructively critical comments. The majority of comments called for CARB staff to be more proactive at CSC meetings and in engaging with CSC members in and outside of those meetings.

Common calls for CARB to improve upon in their role are facilitating relationships with local governments and agencies, providing technical assistance and support to local agencies and communities, address local government and agency issues such as land use and transportation plans that are not directly the authority of Air Districts and CARB, and ensure increased accountability of the Air Districts and local governments.

A CSC member shares recommendations for how CARB's role can be improved. *"CARB can increase transparency in decision-making processes, ensure community representation, and collaborate with local agencies for effective air quality management. Improving data collection and monitoring can also ensure that air quality improvements are measured and evaluated effectively. CARB should also provide technical assistance and support to local agencies and communities to facilitate the effective implementation of AB 617."*

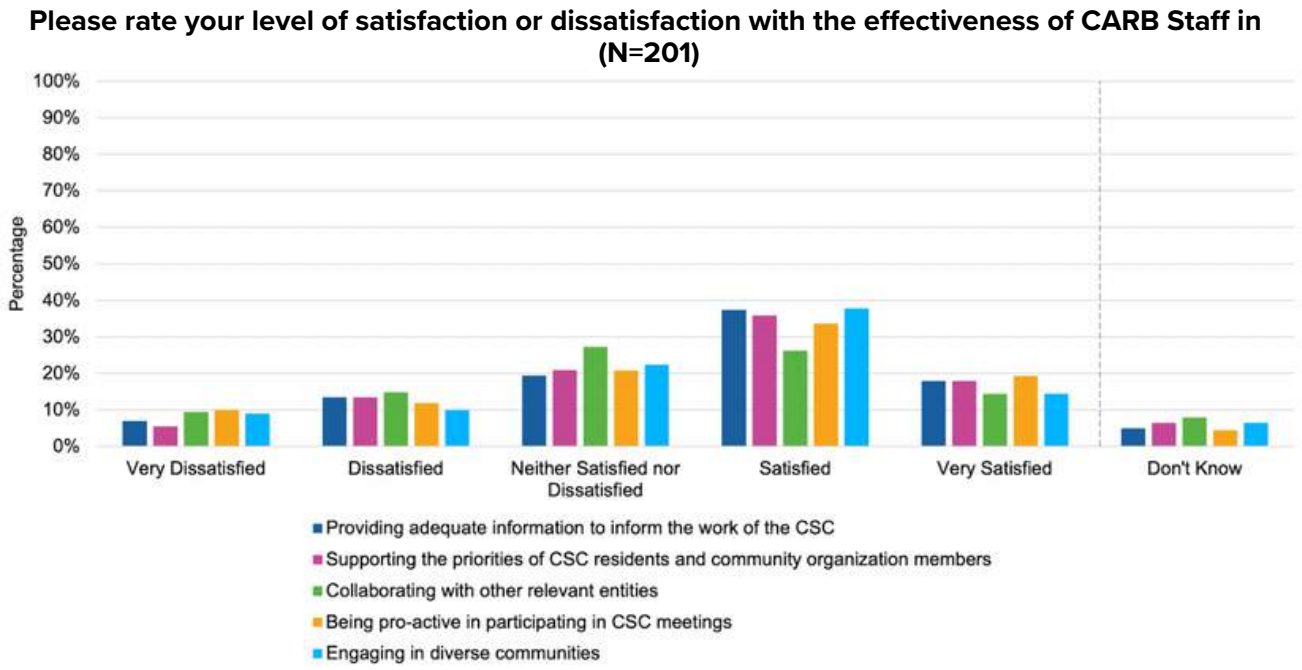


Figure 8. Rating of the effectiveness of CARB staff.

Another CSC member shares the importance of providing technical assistance and resources to communities:

"CARB should ensure that community representatives are involved in decision-making processes at both the state and local levels. CARB should also provide technical assistance and support to local agencies and communities to ensure that they have the resources and knowledge needed to effectively implement AB 617. Increase funding: CARB should increase funding for AB 617 implementation to provide additional support for monitoring, enforcement, and community outreach and engagement efforts."

Some respondents expressed concerns about funding levels for CSC participation and community projects, suggesting that CARB should increase these allocations. While CARB does not have authority to set overall funding levels (as this is determined by the Legislature), CARB has implemented measures within its discretion to increase support, such as issuing guidance to allow districts to compensate CSC participation and increasing award amounts for specific project types under Community Air Grants. These clarifications highlight the need for improved communication and clarity on funding processes as well as the overall mechanism for who has authority on funds. One air district staff member shares how CARB can provide more support for agency staff and residents.

"Conduct rulemaking workshops in AB 617 communities, more stringent requirements for mobile sources, identify more funding for AB 617 communities, streamline AB 617 processes, make it easier for community members to access AB 617 funding, work one on one with community member, local agencies, community-based organizations to apply for grant funding."

Being Proactive in Participating in CSC Meetings

A consistent criticism of CARB's role has been their participation and proactiveness in participating in CSC meetings. During the first few years of AB 617, numerous CSC members highlighted the lack of CARB's attendance and, even more so active participation at CSC meetings. CARB staff were regarded as passive and only answered questions when called upon. However, their engagement has improved over the years: as of 2023 53% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with CARB's proactiveness. There is still a fair number of respondents who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied suggesting that there is still more to be desired in terms of how CARB participates in CSC meetings. Resident CSC members showed a high level of satisfaction at 58% which is a good indicator, however, there is a fair amount of dissatisfaction from community organization CSC members who expressed 26% being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

This is shown through a quote from a community organization CSC member who shares how CARB is still passive at meetings and how they need to be engaged with the CSC more.

"I don't think of CARB as having much of a presence at our CSC, although CARB reps have made themselves available when invited if we have questions. If it is supposed to be involved in this work, it needs to do a better job of stepping up."

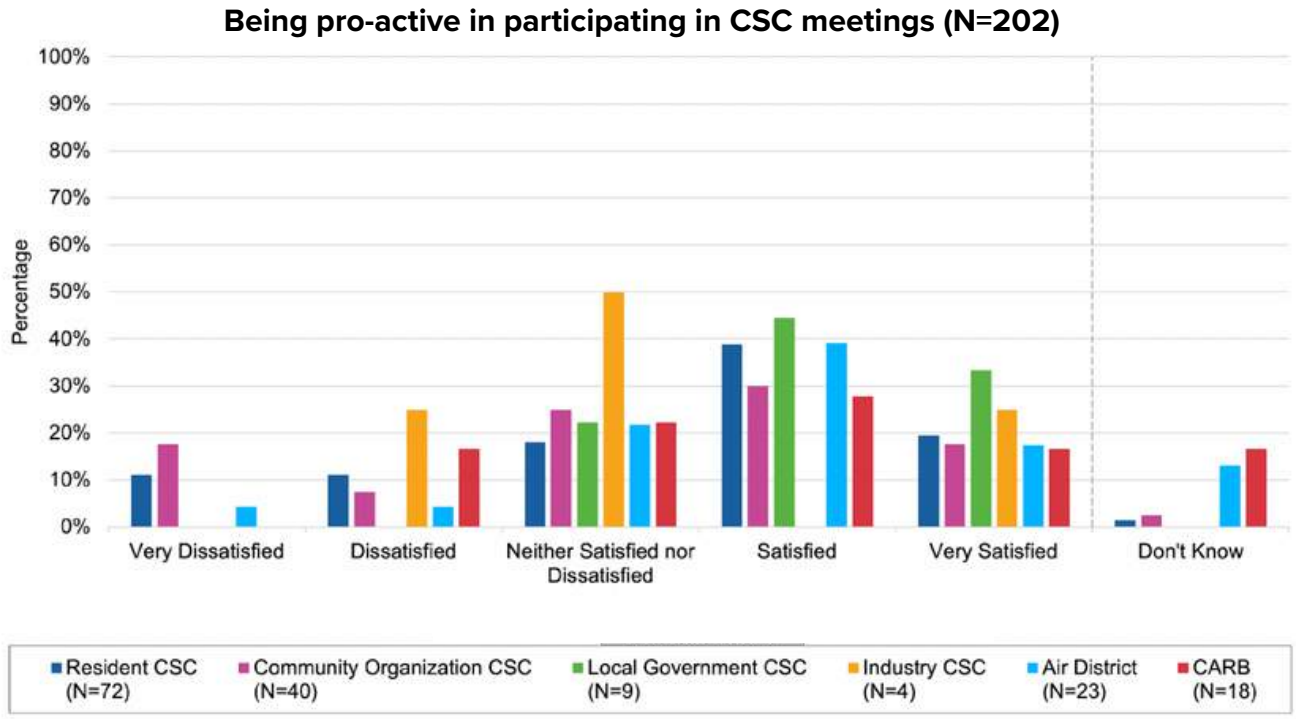


Figure 9. Rating of CARB being pro-active in participating in CSC meeting by stakeholder groups.

CARB being pro-active in participating in CSC meetings							
	Total (N=202)	Resident CSC (N=72)	Community Organization CSC (N=40)	Local Government CSC (N=9)	Industry CSC (N=4)	Air District (N=23)	CARB (N=18)
Very Dissatisfied	10%	11%	18%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Dissatisfied	12%	11%	8%	0%	25%	4%	17%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	21%	18%	25%	22%	50%	22%	22%
Satisfied	34%	39%	30%	44%	0%	39%	28%
Very Satisfied	19%	19%	18%	33%	25%	17%	17%
Don't Know	4%	1%	3%	0%	0%	13%	17%

Figure 10. Rating of CARB being pro-active in participating in CSC meeting by stakeholder group table.

Cross-Survey Comparative Analysis

There is an overall increase in satisfaction with CARB across these three elements (providing adequate info to inform the work of the CSC, collaborating with other relevant entities, and being pro-active in participating in CSC meetings) in the effectiveness of its role from 2021 to 2023. The largest increase was in providing adequate information to inform the work of the CSC, which jumped up 52%. For collaborating with other entities, all stakeholders increased satisfaction except for CARB staff itself (down from 51% to 33%). For being pro-active in CSC meetings, residents and air districts increased satisfaction whereas community organization members and CARB decreased their satisfaction.

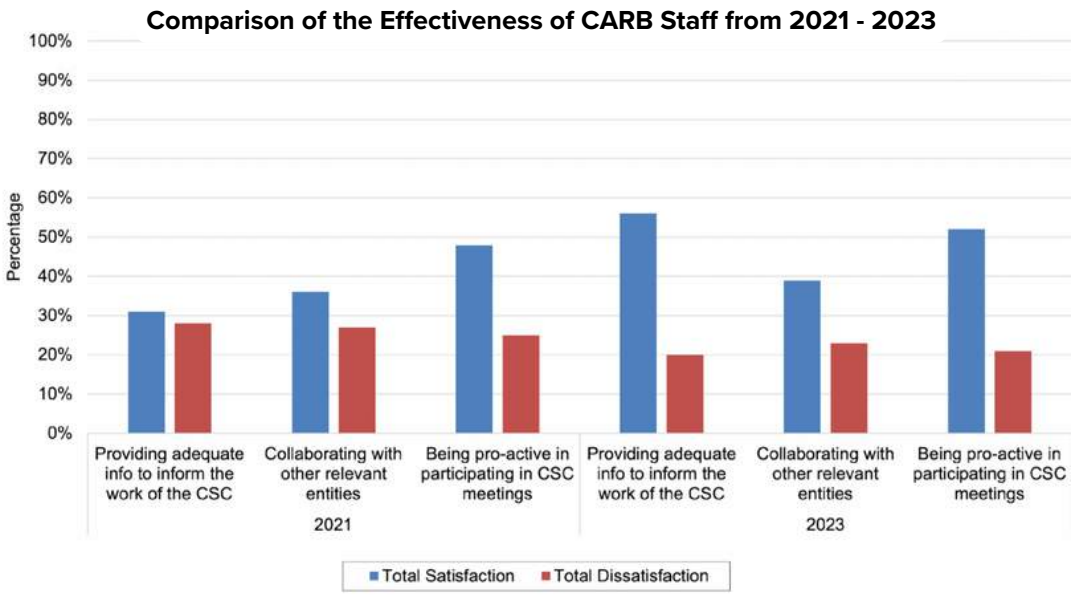


Figure 11. Comparison of ratings on the effectiveness of CARB staff from 2021 to 2023

AIR DISTRICT ROLES

As the primary implementing agency for the local development and implementation of the CAMPs and CERPs, the Air Districts play an important role in facilitating alignment of community priorities with CERP strategies. Extensive collaboration is required between the Air Districts and CSCs who are developing these CAMPs and CERPs. Stakeholders were generally satisfied with all elements of the overall effectiveness of Air District staff. Two elements where levels of dissatisfaction were highest were on Air Districts providing information (e.g. budgets, activities) to inform the work of the CSC at 22% and collaborating with other local and state governments at 23%. Collaboration with other entities will be discussed in the following "Inter-Agency Collaboration" section. The main feedback for Air District staff is to better address agency capacity on community engagement and outreach. Common comments suggested air district staff be trained in environmental justice, cultural competency, and participatory decision- making. Additionally, stakeholders called for increased transparency and accessibility to community-friendly information from staff such as on budgeting, rulemaking processes, compliance and enforcement, and air monitoring.

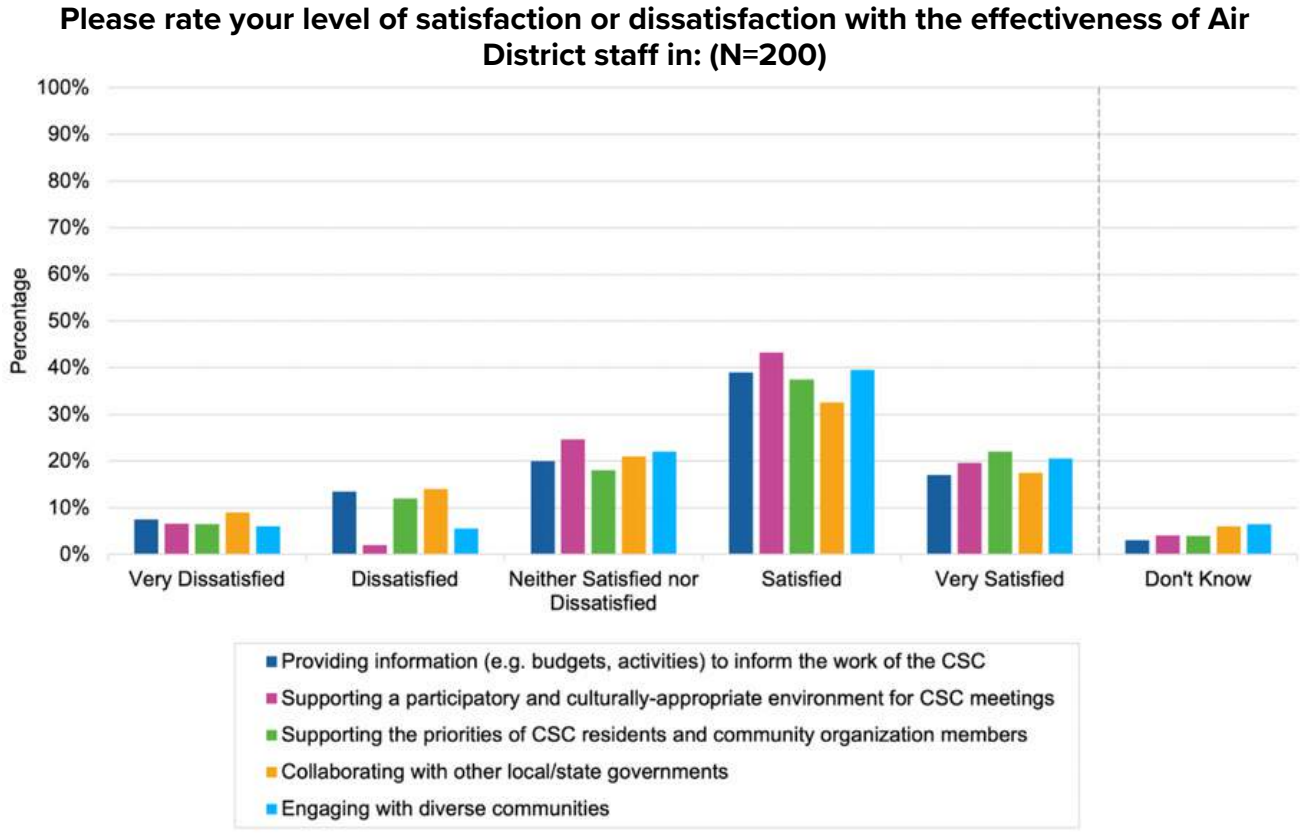


Figure 12. Rating of the effectiveness of Air District staff by stakeholder group.

One comment from a CSC member provided suggestions of how Air District staff can make CSC meetings and materials more community-friendly.

"Provide more advanced notice of meetings. Send calendar invites to CSC members. Provide an over-the-horizon view of the rule-making process so that the CSC can consider collectively which items to engage."

One comment from a CARB respondent raises an important aspect of community engagement in developing genuine relationships and incorporating community concerns into CAMP and CERP development.

"Truly listen to community concerns and develop strategies centered around those concerns. Some districts provide subtle opposition to ideas brought up by the community if it digs too deep into district operations and how they make decisions."

Finally, one comment from an Air District representative reflects on the agency's limited resource capacity and how addressing those can better support increased engagement with other entities.

"Increasing staff capacity for both air districts and other local/state government agencies to allow for increased collaboration efforts in meeting/addressing community concerns."

Providing Information to Inform the Work of the CSC

On providing training and capacity building to CSC members, there was a range of sentiment in terms of the Air District providing information to inform the work of the CSC across most stakeholders. Residents had the highest level of dissatisfaction as they expressed 24% being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. CARB staff, local government staff, and community organization CSC members had mixed levels of being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied at 32%, 44%, and 21% respectively.

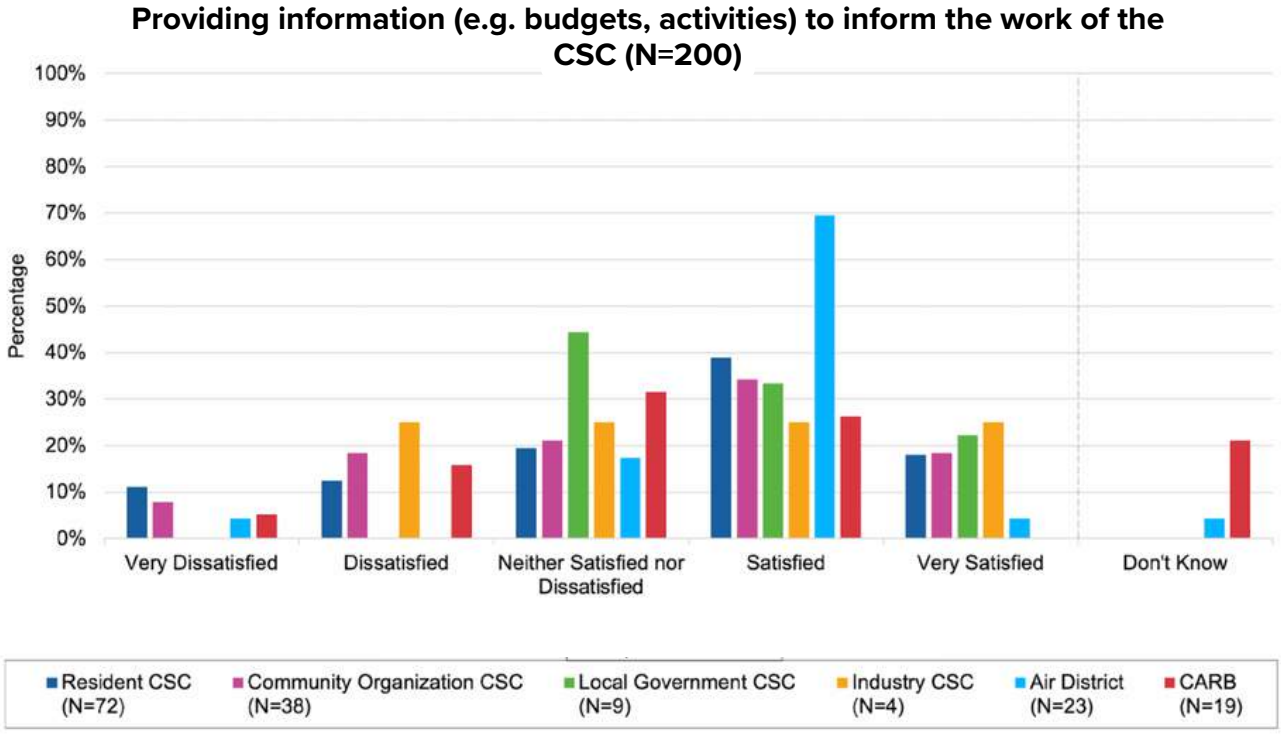


Figure 13. Rating of Air District staff providing information to inform the work of the CSC by stakeholder group.

Providing information (e.g. budgets, activities) to inform the work of the CSC							
	Total (N=200)	Resident CSC (N=72)	Community Organization CSC (N=38)	Local Government CSC (N=9)	Industry CSC (N=4)	Air District (N=23)	CARB (N=19)
Very Dissatisfied	8%	11%	8%	0%	0%	4%	5%
Dissatisfied	14%	13%	18%	0%	25%	0%	16%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	20%	19%	21%	44%	25%	17%	32%
Satisfied	39%	39%	34%	33%	25%	70%	26%
Very Satisfied	17%	18%	18%	22%	25%	4%	0%
Don't Know	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	21%

Figure 14. Rating of Air District staff providing information to inform the work of the CSC by stakeholder group table.

One comment from a CSC member speaks to advice for the air districts on information flow and participation.

"They also must do a better job at providing relevant information in an accessible and timely matter before CSC votes happen. There can also be a more unbiased presentation of particular programs or next steps so as to not skew the committee members before they have the information they need to make a decision. There must be co-design and consultation with the community on materials and activities that hasn't consistently happened over the course of the program."

Another comment from a CSC member raises an important need of transparent budget and funding information to make informed decisions on specific CERP strategy implementation.

"Clear and concise funding amounts are needed up front when the committee is developing the CERP. There seemed to be a lot of back and forth for many months when we asked for specific details on the funding. It took too long to get this information."

Cross-Survey Comparative Analysis

There was an overall increase in satisfaction across three elements of air district performance (providing information to inform the work of the CSC, collaboration with other local/state governments, and supporting a participatory and culturally appropriate environment for CSC meetings) in the effectiveness of Air Districts' role from 2021 to 2023. In particular, satisfaction with the Air Districts in the latter category rose from 40% in 2021 to 62% in 2023. Air District responses were very high in satisfaction on their own effectiveness. CARB respondents had decreases in satisfaction in 2023, which may reflect a more critical view of the Air Districts, but there were also more responses for "don't know."

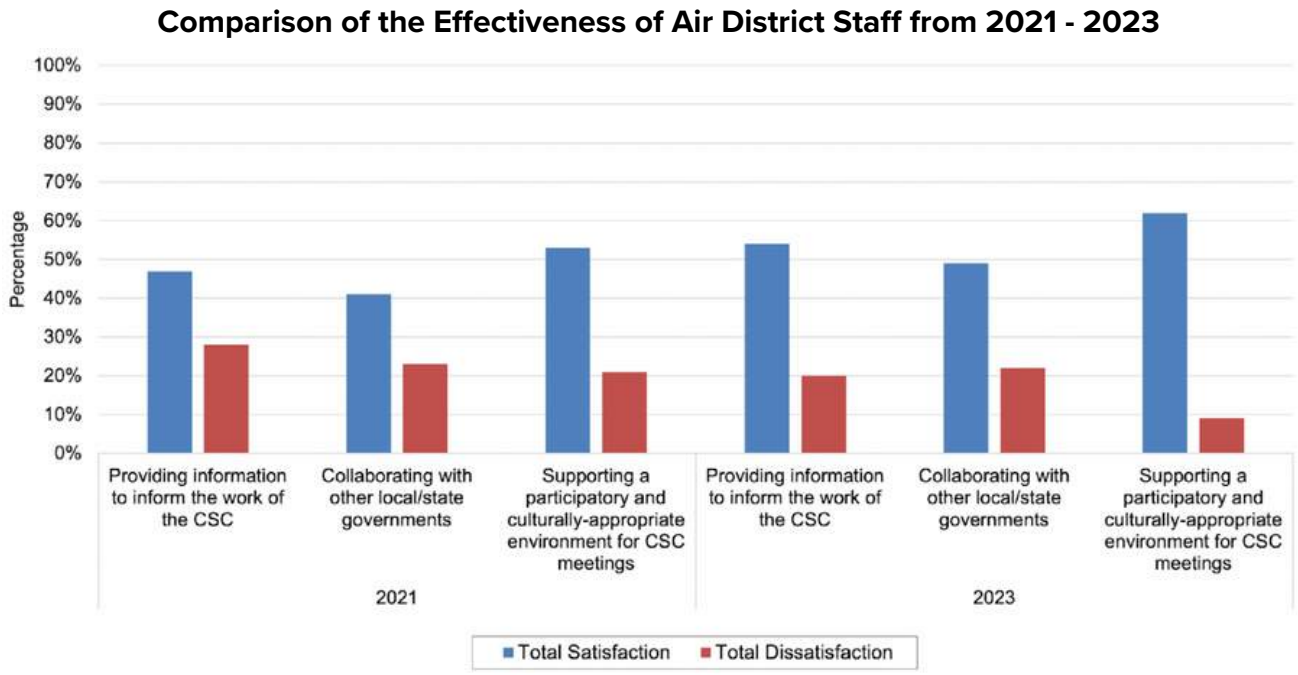


Figure 15. Comparison of ratings on the effectiveness of Air District staff from 2021 to 2023.

One comment from a CSC member speaks to advice for the air districts on information flow and participation.

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INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

One of the key elements to successful AB 617 implementation and execution of CERPs strategies is the collaboration between agencies and local governments.

CARB's Collaborating with Other Government Entities

Overall, 40% of total respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with 24% being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. On the same question regarding the effectiveness of Air District in such collaboration staff, 51% are satisfied or very satisfied with 23% being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In terms of respondent categories CARB staff, and community organization CSC members were most dissatisfied at 28%.

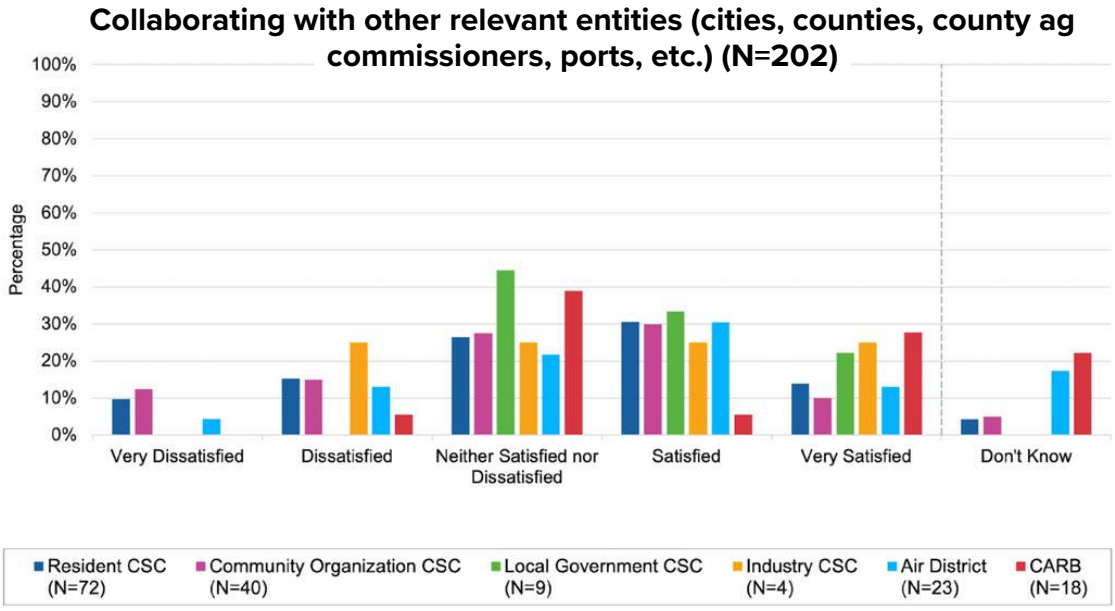


Figure 16. Ratings of CARB collaborating with other relevant entities by stakeholder group

One CSC member expresses their frustration on the jurisdiction issues that are beyond the scope of AB 617 but that directly impact the sphere such as on land use.

"Local agency and other state agency jurisdiction actions may be beyond the scope of AB 617. But it's frustrating to see such attention given to actions within the scope, while attention to issues only addressable by the local government agencies is not--even though they are much more significant--a case of straining out gnats (thru AB 617) while swallowing camels (on issues outside the scope of AB 617)."

A common focus of improved collaboration with local governments is on land use. One recommendation from an Air District representative points to a need for systemic change to address land use jurisdictions and ways to alleviate these historical environmental injustices.

"Most importantly, an increased focus on systemic change in air districts and CARB and a closer collaboration with land use jurisdictions and metropolitan planning agencies to prevent incompatible development and land uses that lead to environmental injustices."

CARB's Collaborating with other Relevant Entities							
	Total (N=202)	Resident CSC (N=72)	Community Organization CSC (N=40)	Local Government CSC (N=9)	Industry CSC (N=4)	Air District (N=23)	CARB (N=18)
Very Dissatisfied	9%	10%	13%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Dissatisfied	15%	15%	15%	0%	25%	13%	6%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	27%	26%	28%	44%	25%	22%	39%
Satisfied	26%	31%	30%	33%	25%	30%	6%
Very Satisfied	14%	14%	10%	22%	25%	13%	28%
Don't Know	8%	4%	5%	0%	0%	17%	22%

Figure 17. Ratings of CARB collaborating with other relevant entities by stakeholder group

A CSC member calls for Air Districts to be more involved in land use and supportive of the community by keeping local governments accountable.

"The Air District should be more involved in the field of land use to address a city's decision to push forward industrial projects in AB617 boundaries. The presence of the Air District to oppose projects is important to community members who need a strong ally. They also need to focus on updating regarding incoming industrial permit applications and whether that is in line with the goals of AB617."

Air Districts' Collaborating with Other Government Entities

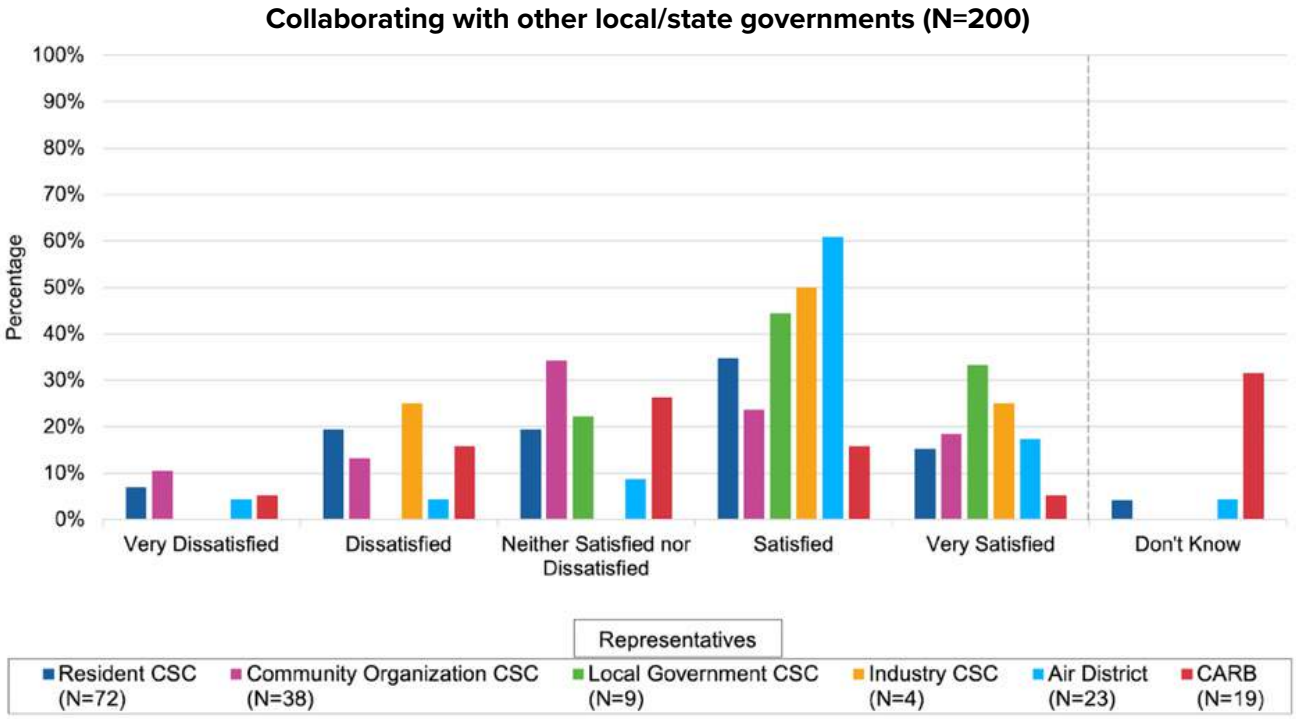


Figure 18. Ratings of Air Districts collaborating with other local/state governments by stakeholder group.

Air District Collaborating with other Local / State Governments							
	Total (N=200)	**Resident CSC (N=72)**	**Community Organization CSC (N=38)**	**Local Government CSC (N=9)**	**Industry CSC (N=4)**	**Air District (N=23)**	**CARB (N=19)**
Very Dissatisfied	9%	7%	11%	0%	0%	4%	5%
Dissatisfied	14%	19%	13%	0%	25%	4%	16%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	21%	19%	34%	22%	0%	9%	26%
Satisfied	33%	35%	24%	44%	50%	61%	16%
Very Satisfied	18%	15%	18%	33%	25%	17%	5%
Don't Know	6%	4%	0%	0%	0%	4%	32%

Figure 19. Ratings of Air Districts collaborating with other local/state governments by stakeholder group table.

ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY AIR MONITORING PLANS (CAMPS)

There was overall satisfaction across the respondents of the CAMP elements of AB 617. However, for monitoring locations, industry and community organization CSC members expressed neither satisfied nor dissatisfied at 50% and 31% respectively, with residents expressing a fair amount of dissatisfaction (dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) at 23%. On monitoring data analysis, resident and community organization CSC members were generally satisfied with 49% and 47% respectively, while industry CSC members were primarily dissatisfied at 25%.

In terms of feedback on the CAMPs, several key points recommend that Air Districts increase accessibility to air monitoring information through further community dissemination. CSC member respondents also pointed to the need for more clarity on how the CAMP data will be used to inform the CERP measures.

The quick timing of the CERP development makes it difficult to use the CAMP data due to the need for accumulation of monitoring data over time. The timeline for the CAMP and CERP does not create a realistic expectation for the CAMP to inform the CERP.
An Air District representative shares the challenge of this timing.

"The timing of the CERP process makes it difficult to impossible to use the CAMP-generated data to inform the CERP, except for monitoring stations that already exist prior to development of the CAMP."

One comment from a resident CSC member expresses the contradiction of the CAMP data integrating with CERP strategies.

"How do we have a CERP before we have monitoring data? With only two sites operating in the [X] community but by the time the CERP was approved, we had put the cart before the horse."

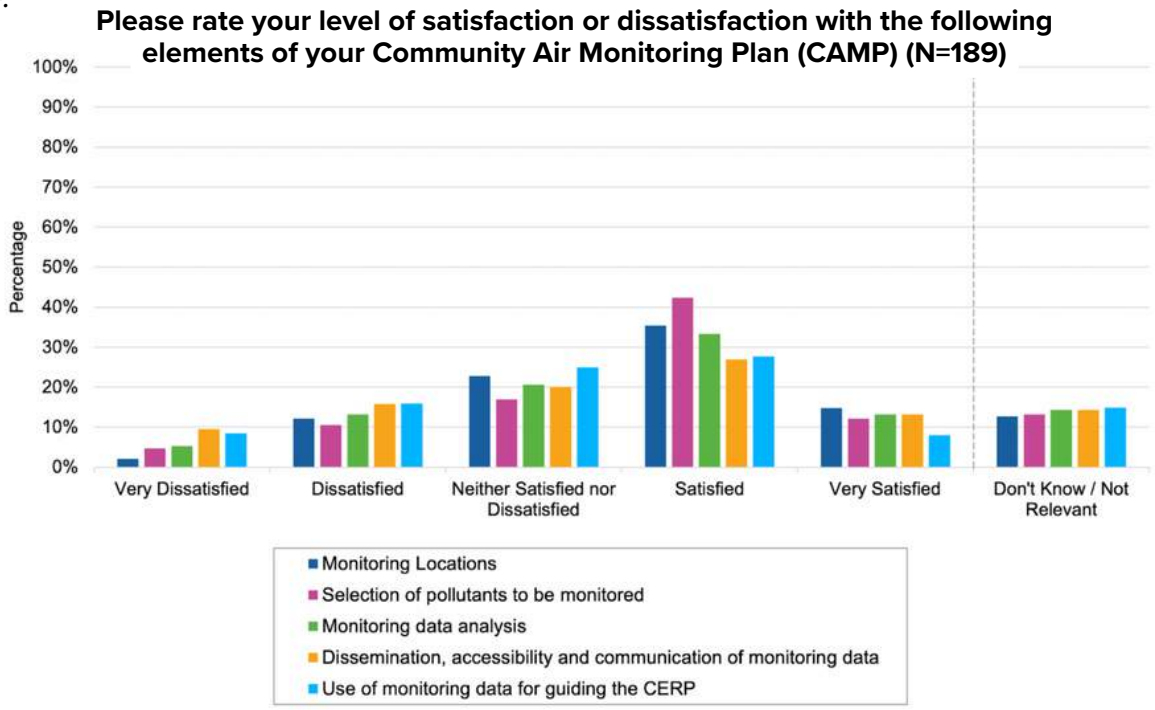


Figure 20. Ratings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction on elements of the CAMPs.

ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY EMISSIONS REDUCTION PLANS (CERPS)

There was overall satisfaction with most elements of the CERP process. For example, resident and community organization CSC members were 42% and 40% satisfied or very satisfied respectively. However, on the development of CERP strategies that go above the baseline of existing Air District strategies, residents, industry CSC, and CARB were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied at 26%, 33%, and 25% respectively. On enforceable strategies, CARB and other state agencies were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied at 29% and 33% respectively.

Many of the comments expressed a strong desire for increased enforcement by the Air District and CARB on all heavily polluting sources. One key issue was addressing limited jurisdiction of the Air Districts by fostering relationships with other agencies and requiring more technical support for local government entities to implement strategies.
One comment from a state agency representative identified that the largest hurdle is the limited jurisdiction and how difficult it is to coordinate between agencies.

"The biggest challenge to address community priorities and concerns is the limited jurisdiction that Air Districts have when it comes to many sources in the community (e.g., pesticides)."

One comment from a CSC member echoes these challenges while adding the need for enforcement over investments in incentives.

"The air district has a strong bias toward education and incentives, whereas the community has a strong desire for increased enforcement. It would be helpful to have a template for each strategy that quantified the baseline measurement, anticipated pollution reduction, timeline, responsible personnel, metrics, and actual pollution reduction achieved year-by-year."

An Air District representative proposes a more systematic approach that could potentially streamline CERP actions and their implementation.

"CERP actions should be written more simply and straightforward. The CERP should include milestones on what constitutes progress or success for each action. CARB should develop a standard template which air districts must follow when adding action to the CERP which will also hopefully ease/simplify annual reporting requirements.

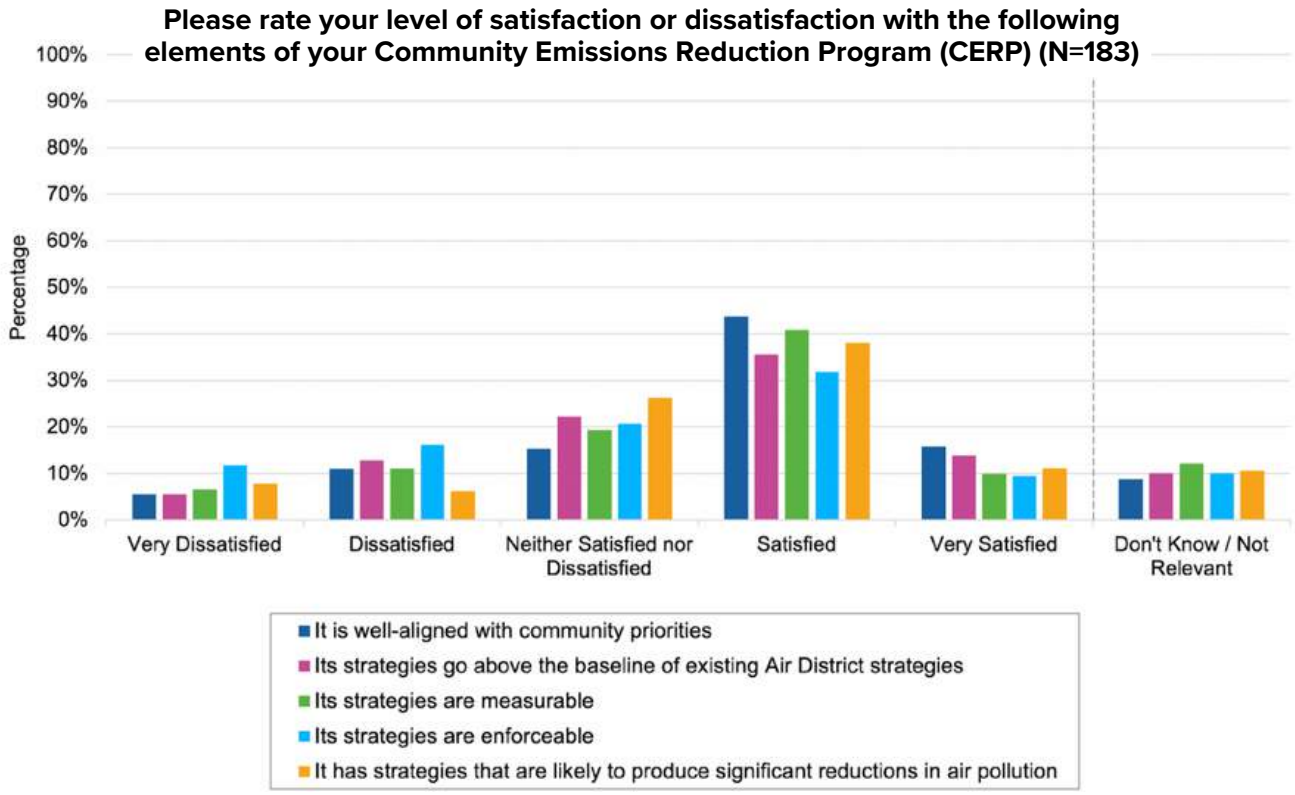


Figure 21. Ratings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction on elements of the CERPs.

ALIGNMENT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

There was overall satisfaction in AB 617 implementation aligning with the principles of environmental justice.[1] The Air Districts had the most positive view with 75% satisfied or very satisfied, Resident and community organization CSC members and CARB staff were satisfied or very satisfied with this alignment at 52%, 56%, and 50% respectively. However, most industry CSC members and other state agencies were generally neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Although there is a generally positive perception across stakeholder groups, there are some critical views. Resident and community organization CSC members had a 22% and 27% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied response respectively. Overall comments on environmental justice called for improved oversight both at the state and local levels to ensure air districts and other involved agencies follow AB 617 guidelines. Secondly, respondents called for AB 617 to better connect promoting community engagement with practiced community engagement in developing relationships between communities and agencies.

A key component of environmental justice is the focus on training and orientation of Air District, CARB, and government staff on EJ, civil rights, and community engagement. AB 617 has gone a long way in promoting community engagement, but survey data show that there is a large improvement. Respondents pointed to the intention of AB 617 to focus on EJ, but that there needs to be initiatives to actually incorporate EJ principles within organizational processes.

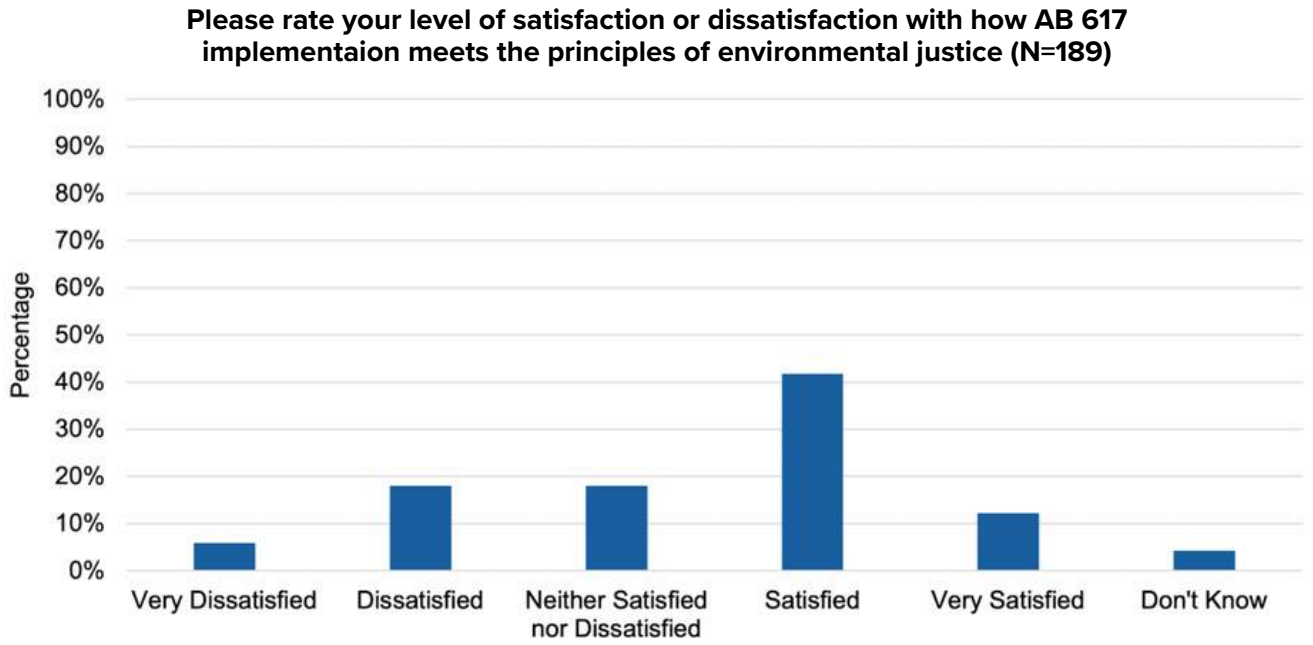


Figure 22. Rating of how AB 617 implementation meets the principles of environmental justice.

How implementation meets the principles of environmental justice								
	Total (N=189)	Resident CSC (N=69)	Community Org CSC (N=36)	Local Government CSC (N=9)	Industry CSC (N=4)	Air District (N=20)	CARB (N=18)	Other State Agency (N=6)
Very Dissatisfied	6%	6%	8%	11%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Dissatisfied	18%	16%	19%	11%	50%	0%	22%	17%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	18%	22%	11%	22%	0%	15%	22%	50%
Satisfied	42%	42%	50%	33%	25%	55%	28%	17%
Very Satisfied	12%	10%	6%	22%	25%	20%	22%	17%
Don't Know	4%	4%	6%	0%	0%	5%	6%	0%

Figure 23. Rating of how AB 617 implementation meets the principles of environmental justice by stakeholder group.

A CSC member shares the need for orienting CSC members:

"There needs to be a more explicit and structured educational component at the beginning of this process to ensure that CSC members (especially residents of impacted areas) have enough knowledge to advocate for themselves and effectively shape their CERPs in a way that will benefit the community over industry."

This respondent also called on CARB to ensure consistency of EJ alignment across the air districts.

"We are lucky to have an air district that was recently restructured to be more aligned with the needs of EJ communities. This has not been the case with other CERPs. There needs to be more state-level oversight to ensure that local air districts who are too friendly to polluters don't let this project be hijacked by industry."

Another comment from a CSC member echoes this sentiment.

"OCAP staff should have agency to make decisions and to interact with communities. OCAP is not an incentive program; it is an EJ program that has a lot of incentives. CAPP incentive guidance needs to be re-visited to be more tangible to end recipient, the community, not only districts. We don't just 'set the menu'. Some communities don't have capacity to read or understand 'the menu'; and enabling the districts only continues this disparity. we need to build the restaurant and the table, and invite the community in, and then help them to eat, and then wash the dishes after."

Finally, a CSC member points to the prioritization of public health as an important element to EJ:

"Keep the focus on public health. This is a program to improve public health in communities with serious health problems. It is by definition an important EJ program. I think the legacy of housing discrimination and other social problems are a bit of a distraction. Not because they are wrong or unworthy, but because they take focus away from regulatory process improvements and aggressive plans for reducing pollution. Other than helping people move away from these highly polluted areas, the key thing to do is to reduce the pollution and reduce the vulnerability (residential ventilation/air filters, greening, etc.)."

C C C

Compared to the first three surveys, there was a drop off in 2023 on satisfaction with how well AB 617 meets the principles of environmental justice.

	2018-2019	2020	2021	2023
Total Satisfaction	67%	66%	64%*	52%
Total Dissatisfaction	14%	19%	11%	24%

*Figure 24. Rating of how AB 617 implementation meets the principles of environmental justice across the 4 surveys. *Note: The 2021 survey reframed answers choices to not well, somewhat well, neither well nor not well, well, and very well. Total satisfaction included somewhat well, well, and very well.*

The air district and CARB staff were consistent of being satisfied throughout all the surveys. Residents and community organization members varied more over time. Residents were most satisfied in 2018-2019, then least satisfied in 2021, then most satisfied in 2023. Community organizations went from least satisfied group in 2018-2019 to most satisfied in 2020 to least satisfied in 2021 and back to most satisfied in 2023.

Industry and community organization CSC members were least satisfied stakeholders at 50% and 28% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. (However, the 50% within the industry groups must be taken with caution as there were only 4 respondents.)

LANGUAGE JUSTICE

One main critique of AB 617 throughout the years has been the lack of equitable inclusion and accessibility of the process to non-English speaking residents. However, the 2023 found that most respondents were generally satisfied with the accessibility of the CSC meetings for non-English speakers. Resident CSC members and community organization CSC members were 65% satisfied or very satisfied with low levels of dissatisfaction of under 10%.

Although there was general high satisfaction, data show that accessibility to materials and language access remain key areas of need for improvement in the CSC process. Many comments call for improvements to translating and live interpretation services, as there have been inconsistent translations, especially around technical presentations. Respondents call for improved technical assistance to help CSC members digest all the information on air quality, health exposures, and emissions. Furthermore, presentations from staff need to incorporate cultural competence training to make sure communities clearly understand the science behind exposures to emissions and health risks.

Non-English-speaking residents that have difficulty when compounded with technical information. One respondent in the Spanish language survey commented directly on this point. *“We participate with people who are not familiar with the terminology. One important thing is to explain it in a simpler and easier way to understand. You learn every day and you get ideas, that's how we move forward. Si se puede!”*

An English-speaking CSC member shares:

“I [have a] college education and even I have difficulty understanding all the information. I think people just have to want to care about their communities and educated themselves. Maybe breaking down the information in simpler terms how air pollution affects individuals lives and what we can do to improve our communities.”

An Air District representative recognizes the need for staff to address cultural competency within the agency and improve equitable practices to these communities.

“Improve accessibility of shared materials for CSC members, including providing them in multiple languages beyond English and secondary majority language (such as Spanish) and accounting for presentation materials being viewing friendly (such as accounting for color blindness). Also, increasing means of engagement with the CSC beyond phone calls and emails notices.”

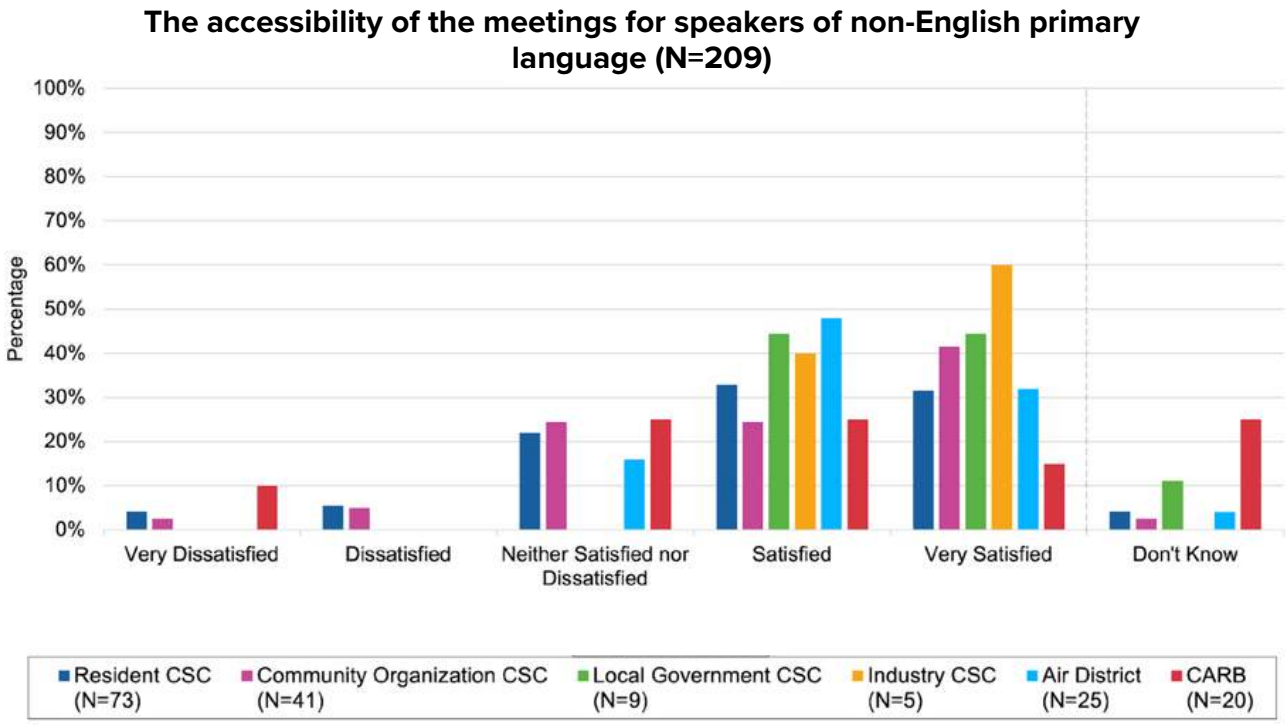


Figure 25. Rating of the accessibility of the meetings for speakers of non-English primary languages by stakeholder group.

Accessibility of the meetings for speakers of non-English primary languages							
	Total (N=209)	**Resident CSC (N=73)**	**Community Organization CSC (N=41)**	**Local Government CSC (N=9)**	**Industry CSC (N=5)**	**Air District (N=25)**	**CARB (N=20)**
Very Dissatisfied	3%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Dissatisfied	3%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	20%	22%	24%	0%	0%	16%	25%
Satisfied	32%	33%	24%	44%	40%	48%	25%
Very Satisfied	34%	32%	41%	44%	60%	32%	15%
Don't Know	8%	4%	2%	11%	0%	4%	25%

Figure 26. Rating of the accessibility of the meetings for speakers of non-English primary languages by stakeholder group table.

For the accessibility for non-English speakers, there was a 22% increase in satisfaction from 2021 to 2023. All stakeholders except for CARB staff indicated increases in satisfaction.

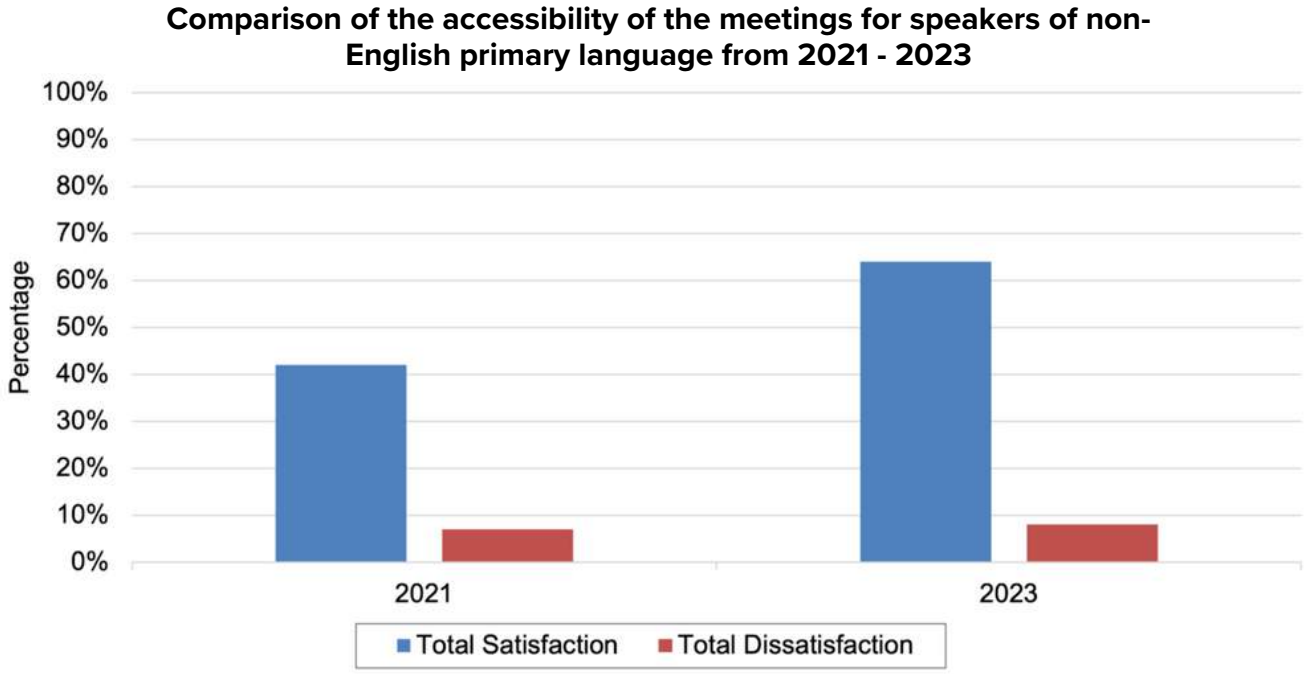


Figure 27. Comparison of the accessibility of the meetings for speakers of non-English primary languages from 2021-2023.

	2021	2023
Total Satisfaction	42%	64%
Total Dissatisfaction	7%	8%
	• CSC members: 52% satisfied and 7% dissatisfied • AD: 73% satisfied and 5% dissatisfied • CARB: 52% satisfied and 3% dissatisfied	• Resident CSC members: 63% satisfied and 8% dissatisfied • Community Org CSC members: 65% satisfied and 7% dissatisfied • AD: 80% satisfied and 0% dissatisfied • CARB: 40% satisfied and 10% dissatisfied

Figure 28. Comparison of the accessibility of the meetings for speakers of non-English primary languages from 2021-2023 table with stakeholder breakdown.

CROSS CSC COMPARISONS

Due to the low number of responses in several CSCs, we did not disaggregate results by individual CSCs. However, there were several CSCs with relatively high response rates, which were aggregated together to compare response patterns between urban and rural communities as well as between selection year cohorts. These CSCs include: Richmond/ North Richmond/San Pablo (Urban Year 1), Stockton (Urban Year 2), Shafter (Rural Year 1), East Oakland (Urban Year 3+), Wilmington/Carson/West Long Beach (Urban Year 1), Portside EJ Neighborhoods (Urban Year 1), El Centro-Heber-Calexico (Rural Year 1, and Eastern Coachella Valley (Rural Year 3+). These results should be taken with caution as they are not necessarily representative of the urban-rural and cohort year comparisons.

Urban and Rural Communities

When looking across CSCs in urban and rural communities, there was a general consistency in the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. There was not much deviation in the responses between geographic setting, however, below are certain elements where rural communities expressed more satisfaction (satisfied and very satisfied) than urban communities. Rural communities were more satisfied with AB 617 implementation elements, which is interesting as they revealed challenges in the early years of AB 617, however, this could also be due to a larger grassroots network and improved learning relationships with agencies.

Differences in Satisfaction Level		
	Urban	Rural
CSC Elements: The accessibility of the meetings for speakers of non-English primary languages	66%	80%
Effectiveness of CARB collaborating with other relevant entities (cities, counties, county ag commissioners, ports, etc.)	34%	48%
Effectiveness in Air Districts providing information to inform the work of the CSC	50%	68%
Effectiveness in Air Districts collaborating with other local/state governments	48%	68%
Principles of Environmental Justice	49%	62%

Figure 29. Differences in satisfaction levels between urban and rural communities for various elements and roles within the AB 617 process.

In contrast, below are several elements where urban communities expressed more dissatisfaction (dissatisfied and very dissatisfied).

Differences in Dissatisfaction Level		
	Urban	Rural
CSC Elements: Training provided to CSC for effective membership	43%	23%
CSC Elements: Effectiveness of local and state governments	45%	27%

Figure 30. Differences in dissatisfaction levels between urban and rural communities for various CSC elements within the AB 617 process.

Year of Selected Communities

When looking at the cohort of the selected community years, there was a general consistency in the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. There was not much deviation in the responses between cohorts, however, there were slight differences over the years. Although there are two elements on the effectiveness of CARB staff where satisfaction increased towards the later cohorts, there are numerous elements where there is an increase in dissatisfaction towards the later cohorts, which points to continuing issues that have not been resolved since early years (or conversely, that the earlier-selected communities have had more time to resolve these challenges).

Change in Dissatisfaction Level			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3+
Effectiveness of Industry	36%	50%	56%
Effectiveness of Facilitators	10%	0%	25%

Figure 31. Changes showing increases in dissatisfaction levels between various years of selected communities for effectiveness of roles within the AB 617 process.

Change in Satisfaction Level			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3+
CERP Alignment with community priorities	66%	70%	47%
CERP Measurable Strategies	56%	62%	33%
CERP Enforceable Strategies	44%	46%	31%
CERP Strategies that are likely to produce significant reductions in air pollution	58%	54%	43%
Principles of Environmental Justice	61%	38%	47%

Figure 32. Changes showing reductions in satisfaction levels between various years of selected communities for various CERP and environmental justice elements within the AB 617 process.

Change in Satisfaction Level			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3+
CARB: Being pro-active in participating in CSC meetings	50%	61%	57%
CARB: Engaging with diverse communities	46%	53%	68%

Figure 33. Changes showing increases in satisfaction levels between various years of selected communities for CARB's roles within the AB 617 process.

BLUEPRINT 2.0 ELEMENTS & PROGRAM REVISIONS

When looking at the cohort of the selected community years, there was a general consistency in the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. There was not much deviation in the responses between cohorts, however, there were slight differences over the years. Although there are two elements on the effectiveness of CARB staff where satisfaction increased towards the later cohorts, there are numerous elements where there is an increase in dissatisfaction towards the later cohorts, which points to continuing issues that have not been resolved since early years (or conversely, that the earlier-selected communities have had more time to resolve these challenges).

From the early phases of implementation of AB 617, there have been large concerns across all stakeholders on the policy guidance Blueprint 1.0 document. The Blueprint is statutorily required to be revised and updated every 5 years. All involved stakeholders pointed out the initial Blueprint elements lack of sufficient guidance on processes for CSC processes and agency relationships. The AB 617 Consultation Group convened a Writer's Group comprised of environmental justice advocate CSC members to write the People's Blueprint. The People's Blueprint went on to inform CARB's formal Blueprint 2.0, which was compiled and formally adopted in 2023.

Numerous improvements were made in Blueprint 2.0 that enhance conflict resolution mechanisms, training and orientation of CARB and Air District staff in environmental justice and civil rights, creation of local CERP (L-CERPs), and many other elements.
While the survey was completed before the release of Blueprint 2.0 and thus does not have questions on this topic, some of the open-ended comments offer some insight on the value of the plan and its potential to address many of the challenges mentioned earlier in the survey report.

One CSC member urges CARB to draw on the People's Blueprint for their Blueprint 2.0.

"Adopt the changes outlined in the People's Blueprint, to build capacity and decision-making power within the CSC in the implementation of local AB617 communities."

One comment from a CARB staff member points to the weakness in the authorizing legislation and recommends how improvements to AB 617 can be codified.

"I hate to harp on this, since as a CARB staff person it kind of feels like a cop-out to say so, but: pushing our Legislature to expand and/or revise the language of AB 617, and also pushing them to revise the Health and Safety Code statutes for the incentives portion of AB 617, can do a LOT for the program. There are so many details in need of clarification, so many little but important flexibilities missing for incentives, so much room to build out additional support for the Program, (particularly in terms of collaborating with other agencies ESPECIALLY the local ones like cities and counties) that could all be soothed with the proper revisions."

One comment from a local government representative points to a need for increased funding opportunities that either CARB or other entities could facilitate to provide more pathways for disadvantaged communities to become involved. (Note: this has been addressed in part by the L-CERP provision in Blueprint 2.0.

"I'd like small communities to be able to compete for AB 617 project funding. I think there should be a fund set up for AB617 grant projects that DACs can compete for. That way, even if a community is competing for and applying for the AB617 program but hasn't been awarded, they could still get some projects done through a CARB project funding mechanism."

Survey Respondent Suggestions For Future Improvements

Although there is a great degree of satisfaction of AB 617 implementation in its 5th year, there remains numerous opportunities for improvement as Blueprint 2.0 is being implemented and enforced. Respondents below provide the nuanced perspectives regarding the future of AB 617 and recommendations for improving the program.
One CSC member shares the need for outside training opportunities conducted with community organizations.

"Training opportunities for orgs that are doing work that can be uplifted/affirmed by AB 617 would be helpful in more efficient implementation of our environmental justice efforts. Even an introductory training to better understand AB 617 would be crucial to participation."

A Spanish-speaking CSC member adds the need to widely disseminate and educate surrounding communities and residents of the AB 617 program.

"I would like there to be greater dissemination of AB617 so that more people would be interested in the project, in addition to the community being informed about what is being done and collaborating in participating in it, as well as the joint collaboration of all the parties that constitute it. The community is essential to improve implementation."

Lastly, an Air District representative raises important structural and organizational changes that need to be made to continue to support this program and address improved implementation of CERP strategies.

"Sustainable and continuous funding mechanisms to support program implementation, a more balanced approach between funding incentive projects vs funding program implementation (currently there is significantly more resources allocated to incentive projects), expansion of community participatory approaches to other air quality programs (air quality planning, permitting, rule development, etc.), and most importantly, an increased focus on systemic change in air districts and CARB and a closer collaboration with land use jurisdictions and metropolitan planning agencies to prevent incompatible development and land uses that lead to environmental injustices.

CONCLUSIONS

The data presented throughout this report offer numerous lessons learned and policy recommendations. However, it's essential to reiterate that, due to low response rates from some CSCs, these findings should not be viewed as representative of the entire CSCs. Instead, they should be used to prompt questions for AB 617 stakeholders and involved agencies as well as provide a foundation for future research. Throughout all the questions, there was a fair number of responses indicating "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" or "don't know," which signifies that the opinions are still mixed, and the jury is still out on the impact of AB 617 implementation.

OVERARCHING THEMES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS

1. **Capacity Building and Training**:
   - Respondents pointed out the need for increased training and orientation for agency staff (Air Districts, CARB, and other local and state agencies) on Environmental Justice (EJ) issues.
   - Respondents pointed out the need for enhanced CSC capacity-building efforts in air quality science and policy that can empower communities to participate more effectively throughout the decision-making process.
2. **Agency Effectiveness**:
   - Respondents noted that CARB and Air Districts have improved their effectiveness in engaging with CSC members. However, there is still a need for CARB and Air Districts to develop methods to ensure meaningful community participation and power.
   - CARB and Air Districts have engaged in facilitating the involvement of outside state and local agencies in CERP implementation. There is still a perceived need to extend inter-agency collaboration beyond CARB and Air Districts to include other stakeholders for comprehensive program implementation.
3. **Community Engagement**:
   - Respondents acknowledge improved community engagement by agencies, but there is a continual need to enhance broader outreach and education efforts to raise awareness of AB 617 goals and processes within impacted communities.
   - Respondents highlight increasing collaborative learning opportunities between AB 617 communities to support collective advocacy and shared strategies.
4. **Transparency and Accountability**:
   - Respondents point to increasing accountability and transparency around funding allocations and rulemaking processes by CARB and Air Districts to build trust and ensuring equitable resource distribution.
   - Enhanced revisions to AB 617 legislation are necessary to address structural challenges, enhance program effectiveness and sustain the program over time.

APPENDIX A

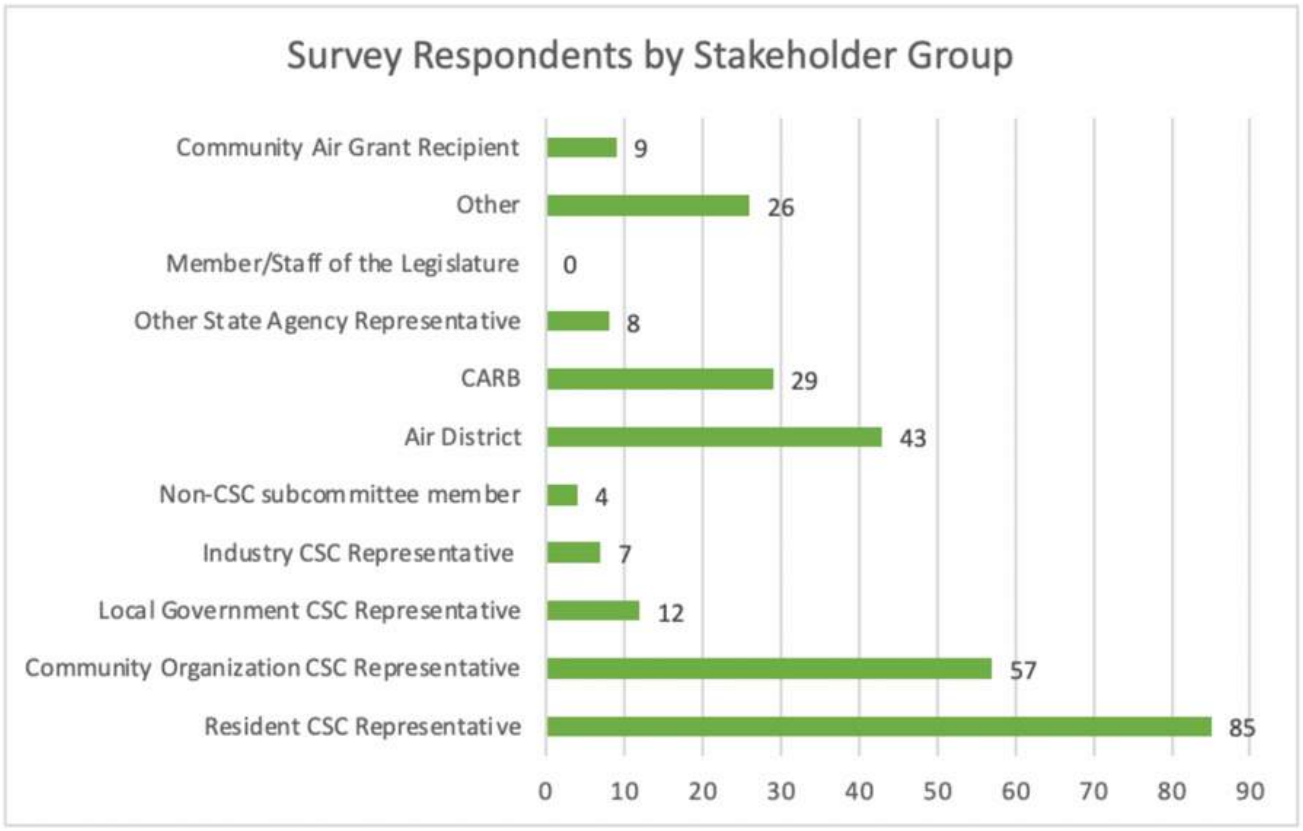


Figure i. Breakdown of survey respondents by stakeholder group.

ENDNOTES

[1]The survey used the California state definition of "[E]nvironmental justice", which means the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.