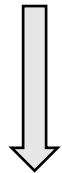


Climate Change and Mental Health

Affecting the Underserved

Who is the most vulnerable?

- People of color
- Women
- Children
- Elderly
- Migrants
- Refugees
- People of a lower-socioeconomic status



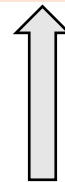
Direct Mental Effects of Climate Change Due to Climate-Related Disasters

- PTSD
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Substance Abuse
- Suicidal Ideation

Climate change is increasingly becoming hard to disregard. Its impact is widespread and has manifested in more obvious ways such as: extreme weather, a warming planet, and changes to our landscape. Social work and environmental justice go hand in hand. Climate change will impact vulnerable populations in more adverse ways because they have less resources and capital compared to their more fortunate counterparts (NASW, 2020). It is our obligation as social workers to educate our clients on environmental issues that directly impact them. Historically, vulnerable communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change. "Disasters, by definition, occur due to a combination of hazard and vulnerability. Hazard refers to the input from environment (Kelman et al., 2016)." Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans 2005, is a perfect example of how marginalized communities experience greater impact from climate change (BBC, 2021). What may not be so evident is both the short-and long-term effects of how it is impacting our mental health, particularly our most vulnerable populations (Caban-Aleman, 2021). These populations consist mainly of people of color, women, the elderly, children, and those with a low socio-economic status. There is a correlation between climate change and poor mental health, largely through two main pathways: direct and indirect. Direct impacts involve psychological trauma due to climate-related disasters such as floods, storms, wildfires, and heatwaves. Indirect impacts involve mental health problems associated with broader climate change-related events such as gradual temperature increase and displacement (Sharpe & Davison, 2021). Climate change exacerbates the barriers the underserved face regularly, further leaving them with a disparaging lack of economic and social resources (Caban-Aleman, 2021). These hardships result in declining physical and mental health, often presenting in the form of mental disorders such as depression, PTSD, anxiety, and what studies are coining, "ecoanxiety" (Cianconi et al., 2020). One of the ways to help with closing the gap to those that are underserved is by taking a systems-approach and looking for solutions on a Macro level that put policies into place that acknowledge the effects our changing climate has on mental health (Rajah, 2021). Some human impacts are more visible. The social work profession is at the forefront of addressing climate change and its effect on our mental health (Laurio, 2020).

Indirect Impacts Due to Broader Climate Change- Related Events, Such as:

- Gradual Temperature Change
- Poor Air Quality
- Mold, due to flooding
- Loss of housing
- Loss of Life
- Loss of Income
- Separation from Family and Community



What Can Help?

- Policy change
- Integrated healthcare
- Education on the validity of climate change
- Education on Mental health and how it's related to climate change through research

