

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

## Introduction

Climate change has become one of the biggest dangers to humankind causing major disruptions to everyday life around the globe. The LGBTQ+ population is often overlooked when talking about this issue. To bring further awareness to this matter three key areas have been presented.

## Housing

Those who lack stable housing will feel the impact of climate change the most. The LGBTQ+ community represents a significant portion of the global homeless population, as LGBTQ+ youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness, and LGBTQ+ people make up approximately 40% of the homeless population in the United States, while only comprising 5-10% of the general population, (Goodwin, 2019). Representing a large portion of the homeless population, therefore means the LGBTQ+ will feel the impacts of climate change more than other communities.



## Discriminatory Violence

Second, members of the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to be subject to violence during or after climate related disasters. Whether it be after a flood, drought, freeze, or some other kind of disaster rooted in climate change, marginalized members of society, including women and members of the LGBTQ+ community, often face increased violence after natural disasters. (Desai & Mandal, 2021),



## Healthcare and Employment

As environmental exposure to conditions leading to chronic health conditions and mortality increase, discriminatory policies and social institutions magnify the impact on the LGBTQ+ community (Goldsmith & Bell, 2022). One in six LGBTQ+ adults avoided seeking healthcare due to fears of discrimination and a 2015 study showed one-third of transgender adults reported being verbally harassed or denied health care (Goldsmith & Bell, 2018). Discriminatory employment policies too detrimentally impact this population as members report a 9% unemployment rate versus 5% for their cisgender heterosexual counterparts (Goldsmith & Bell, 2018). That number skyrockets for transgender folks, reporting 15% unemployment and leaving one-third of this population living in poverty, versus 14% of the general population (Goldsmith & Bell, 2018). Lack of employment or reliable income impacts one's ability to access healthcare, food, shelter and other basic needs designed to buffer the effects of environmental hazards.

## Conclusion

Social workers have a well-rounded knowledge base to serve all individuals. Not only does this skill set look into the social and familial systems, but it also examines how the natural environment impacts them (Dorn, 2019). While climate change severely impacts vulnerable populations, the LGBTQ+ community is one that is continuously affected. Social workers can help address this social issue by being aware of how environmental factors contribute to presenting health concerns, encouraging clients to speak with medical professionals, help the community prepare for extreme weather, and provide resources and referrals to services (2019).

## References

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