

Evidence Brief - March, 2021

The Climate Crisis and the Housing Crisis: Considering Climate Change Repercussions for Homeless and Marginally Housed Populations

About the Project

While climate change is having profound and increasing impacts on the health and wellbeing of all, the most marginalized individuals and communities feel its effects the most acutely. This is particularly the case for the many millions of inadequately housed and homeless persons globally.

Emerging evidence has documented how climate change compromises the housing and living circumstances of impoverished peoples, creates homelessness through waves of climate migrants, and drives suffering and deteriorating health for those most exposed to weather extremes. At the outset of this project, however, knowledge syntheses in this area were lacking.

The objective of this initiative is to employ systematic literature reviews and global think tanks to (1) enhance policy, systems and service level planning for homeless populations as it relates to weather extremes and climate change, and (2) increase research activity in this area, guided by syntheses of existing work and the articulation of knowledge gaps.

Key Findings

- First and foremost, it would seem clear that climate change and associated weather extremes present significant and immediate risks for populations lacking shelter. Moreover, climate change would seem to contribute to the prevalence of homelessness through housing loss, migration, poverty, and other intersecting stressors (e.g., conflict).
- These problems are likely worsening as the climate emergency worsens and are particularly acute in low-income contexts. These trends and impacts would appear to be complicated – both in terms of the number of intersecting challenges that apply and diversity along subpopulation, geographic, and climate risk domains. There is a shortage of reliable data and analyses on these risks and how they are unfolding, which hampers prevention and crisis response planning, policy development, and risk modelling.
- There is a consensus that effective efforts to intervene should concentrate on systemic responses to inadequate housing and a lack of shelter. This would seem to be the far more leveraged and impactful approach. In most contexts, such prevention work will need to occur alongside crisis

response activities given the large and growing number of individuals displaced by weather extremes and exposed to the elements while lacking shelter.

- Inclusion and equity in crisis response will require advocacy and education in jurisdictions where homeless individuals are not considered in disaster planning and other risk mitigation efforts (e.g., green urban infrastructure). Planning and implementation should involve close collaboration with direct service providers and individuals with lived experience to develop effective means of engaging and intervening with these marginalized populations

Policy Implications

1. In the development of risk mitigation initiatives and extreme weather response planning, explicitly request and require that the needs of homeless and marginally housed populations are addressed.
2. Encourage and provide resources for the generation of better data related to the climate-homelessness connection. This will include data to inform risk prediction/modelling and qualitative and quantitative data to inform locally-relevant and sustainable responses.
3. Encourage efforts to prevent and end homelessness as being fundamental to ameliorating the human impacts of climate change.
4. When generating aid strategies for low and middle-income countries where the climate change impacts are most acute, include attention to housing in proposal requirements and accountability metrics.

Further Information

Website: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/climate-homelessness>

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MONDAY, JANUARY 11 • 2-6PM EST

2:00-2:15 Welcome, Agenda, and Land Acknowledgment
- *Sean Kidd*

Welcome and Reflection on the Intent of the Meeting
- *Be'sha Blondin*

2:15-2:30 Group Introductions – Round Robin

2:30-2:50 Two Systematic Reviews: Key points
- *Sean Kidd & Mariya Bezgrebelna*

2:50-3:20 **RAPID PERSPECTIVES**

- **Global Environmental Change, Migration, Homelessness and the Need for Public Water**
- *Marcia Hale*
- **The Nexus between Climate Change and Refugees in East Africa**
- *Solomon Njengah*
- **Responding to Extreme Weather with People Experiencing Homelessness in Australia**
- *Danielle Every (pre-recorded)*
- **Homelessness in the Context of Extreme Dryness, Wildfires, Floods and then a Pandemic in South-Eastern Australia**
- *Lynne Keevers*
- **Reflections on Climate Change Implications in Context of Northern Housing Crisis**
- *Julia Christensen*

3:20 - 3:30 Break

3:30 – 4:00 BREAK OUT: SESSION 1

Three 30-minute repeated breakout sessions. Whole group divided into 3 smaller groups – cycle through so each group spends time on each topic.

BREAK OUT SESSION TOPICS

A

Climate Change and Extreme Weather: As a cause of homelessness and exacerbating housing-related marginality and exposure.

Moderator: Sean Kidd

B

Climate Change and Extreme Weather: As having disproportionately larger impacts on homeless and marginally housed people in terms of health and social determinants of health.

Moderator: Sam Wells

C

Geographic, Political, and Cultural Considerations

Moderator: Arun Ravindran & Angela Paric

4:00 – 4:30 BREAK OUT SESSION 2

4:30 – 5:00 BREAK OUT SESSION 3

5:05-5:20 Large Group Reflection on Theme Discussions

5:20-5:30 • **Climate Change and the Human Right to Housing**

- Julietta Perucca

• **Homelessness, Housing Precarity, and Disaster Network**

- Jamie Vickery

5:30-5:45 Facilitated Conversation: How this group can connect going forward

5:45-6:00 Closing Remarks and Reflections

- Be'sha Blondin