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Mental Health Conditions Due to Climate Change

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Abstract

The relationship between climate change and mental health problems has become a new public health crisis supported by scientific organizations globally. The World Health Organization assesses it as a systemic pressure on the human psyche. The objective was to pinpoint some mental illnesses linked to climate change in adults. The methodology used was a literature review and the inductive-deductive method. The result was that climate change not only affects mental health; the reality is that many diseases caused by vectors that induce illnesses and, in turn, health problems throughout society are also appearing.

Keywords

adults;
mental health conditions;
resilience;
temperature changes;

Introduction

Today, climate change is a real problem; temperatures continue to rise, and with them, various natural phenomena that significantly affect the adult population. These problems affect not only society but also the economy, education, and mental health, undermining people's well-being and quality of life. It is a topic of interest addressed by several authors and managed by organizations.

In work carried out by Tarazona Meza et al. (2024), it was demonstrated in community-level work that in many societies, they do not have the skills and competencies to cope with the emotional stress caused by extreme natural phenomena. In this context, they showed moderate behavior, aware of the risks, achieving conscious management of the stress caused by it.

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One of the most severe problems caused by climate change is high temperatures. In urban areas, where streets and roads have dark pavements, solar radiation is transformed into thermal radiation that affects people, causing suffocation and stress (Correa Cantaloube et al., 2003). Coastal cities in Ecuador face these problems (Portalanza et al., 2025), causing negative impacts on tourist destinations (Yoon & Ribas, 2025) and stress among citizens.

Heat stress in an urban context acts as a powerful amplifier of psychosocial risks, directly and indirectly affecting the mental stability of the adult population. Studies conducted in the United Arab Emirates in 2024 (Al Hurini et al., 2024) demonstrated adverse effects on physical, mental, and social health. Physiologically, prolonged exposure to extreme ambient temperatures causes neurochemical changes and severe disruption of sleep cycles (Fitzgerald et al., 2013), which significantly increases cortisol levels and leads to symptoms related to generalized anxiety, irritability, and chronic emotional exhaustion (Tejera et al., 2026a).

Studies have shown that heat stress worsens when homes lack climate habitability or have damaged basic cooling infrastructure, leading to spontaneous symptoms and hopelessness as their immediate well-being deteriorates (Izurieta-Guevara et al., 2025).

Due to the problems caused by climate change, it has been found that traumatic experiences due to extreme weather conditions increase the risk of suffering from affective and anxiety disorders, especially post-traumatic stress disorder. In this context, heat significantly increases morbidity and mortality associated with mental illnesses, as well as the frequency of psychiatric emergencies (*Climate crisis and mental health*, 2025).

Global health is changing due to conditions caused by climate change. This is happening now and could worsen in the 21st century if timely measures are not taken to mitigate these negative effects. Many diseases are caused by the proliferation of vectors, such as mosquitoes and ticks, that transmit viruses and parasites. Diseases such as Dengue, Zika, and Chikungunya (Beltrán-Silva et al., 2018) are currently affecting parts of the Caribbean, the United States, and southern Europe.

Other diseases, such as malaria and Lyme, affect different parts of Europe, according to the authors. Pérez et al. (2026), the Approaches to planetary health must integrate not only human health, but also animal and, fundamentally, environmental health; all must be monitored and controlled to strengthen epidemiological surveillance and adapt health systems to this new scenario that the social environment is experiencing.

Waterborne diseases such as cholera and acute gastroenteritis also occur and multiply rapidly in warm waters. (*Understanding cholera*, 2025) Floods cause sudden outbreaks of diarrheal diseases. According to Carazo Gallego et al. (2025), one of the leading causes of infant mortality in developing countries. All the research allows us to summarize in Table 1 some of the diseases caused by current climate variables.

Table 1
Diseases caused by climate variables

Climate Variable	Main Associated Pathologies	High-Risk Population
Heat Waves	Heat stroke, heart attacks, and kidney failure.	Elderly people, pregnant women, and workers.
Floods / Extreme rainfall	Cholera, dengue fever, leptospirosis, diarrhea.	Communities without drinking water.
Prolonged droughts	Malnutrition and mental health problems.	Farmers, small children.
Fires / Pollution	Asthma attacks, COPD, and eye problems.	Patients with pulmonary pathologies.

Fountain:(*Climate change*, 2023)

The effects of climate change on the mind are as real and serious as its effects on the body (Tejera et al., 2026). Psychiatry and clinical psychology already identify the climate crisis as a major social determinant of mental health (Al Hurini et al., 2024). Psychological changes caused by climate change fall into two main categories: direct effects (caused by disasters or extreme heat) and indirect/chronic effects (emotional distress due to environmental degradation) (Thoma et al., 2021; Walinski et al., 2023). Figure 1 shows some psychological conditions caused by climate change.

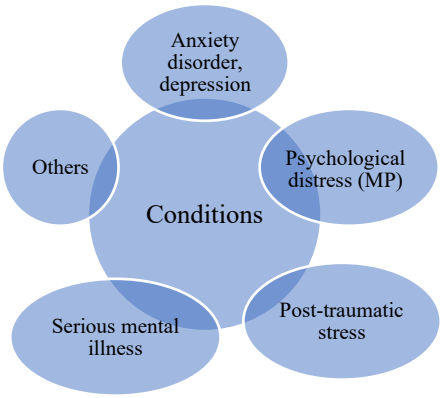

Figure 1. Psychological conditions caused by climate change
Source: (Walinski et al., 2023)

Today, it is not possible to make a general estimate of the effect size. The available evidence suggests that traumatic experiences caused by extreme weather conditions increase the risk of mood and anxiety disorders, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder.

These psychological conditions can appear in response to any phenomenon caused by changes, primarily temperature changes, anywhere on the planet, whether rural or urban. Society must seek solutions that reduce CO2 emissions.$_2$ to the atmosphere, and mitigate the effects of global warming, and thereby reduce environmental impacts

Conclusions

Some mental illnesses linked to climate change in people of different ages were highlighted; it is necessary for societies in every corner of the planet to reflect and seek solutions that will allow the climate to improve and, with it, the mental illnesses that are currently present throughout the planet.

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