



National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé

# CLIMATE CHANGE, HEALTH EQUITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSES: A CURATED LIST

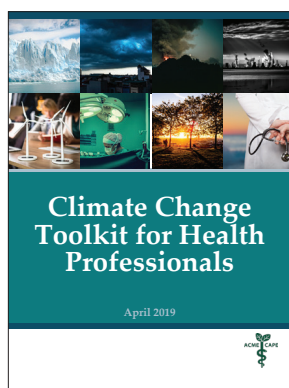
Climate change is an urgent public health and health equity issue.<sup>1-4</sup> The health of the planet, including the climate, shapes everyone's opportunity for health.<sup>5,6</sup> However, climate change does not affect everyone equally. Communities who already experience health inequities due to structural factors such as colonization, racism and inequitable income distribution are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, including harms to health.<sup>4</sup> Thus, climate change has the potential to worsen existing health inequities.<sup>7,8</sup>

Recognizing that addressing climate change is an emerging area of Canadian public health practice, the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH) has selected the following key resources for public health practitioners and researchers to understand the relationship between climate change and health equity and centre equity within their responses.

This curated list highlights 16 relevant resources and points to other key documents; it is not intended to be comprehensive. Resources are organized under three categories: **climate change and public health, climate change and health equity and opportunities for equity-focused public health action.**

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The resources below provide background knowledge on climate change and outline the impact of a changing climate on human health.



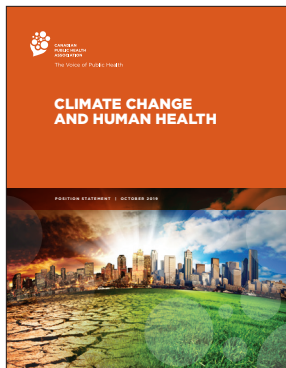
### [Climate change toolkit for health professionals](#)

*Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. [2019].*

This toolkit, comprising eight modules, is designed for health professionals and students to engage in

various types of action to address climate change, including education, advocacy, mitigation and adaptation planning.<sup>9</sup>

Module 1, titled *Climate change: Science, drivers & commitments* (and the accompanying [fact sheet](#)), provides a particularly useful primer for understanding the causes of a changing climate, the related science and evidence and the commitments countries have made in response. Public health practitioners will also be interested in module 3, which reviews the health impacts of climate change across Canada, as well as module 5, which identifies climate change solutions with immediate health benefits.

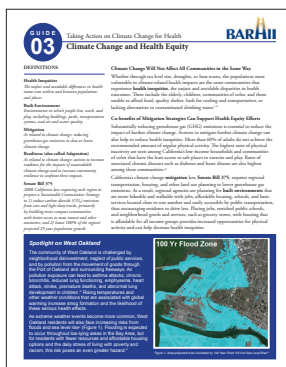


### [Climate change and human health](#)

Canadian Public Health Association. [2019].

This position statement summarizes why climate change is a health emergency and provides a brief review of the anticipated health

impacts across Canada.<sup>2</sup> Of the many recommendations, several specifically include a health equity focus. Canadian public health professionals and organizations, for example, are asked to use an equity lens when reporting on climate health impacts; report on how climate change is affecting the health of Indigenous Peoples; integrate health equity impact assessments into policy processes; and conduct research on the physical, mental and health equity implications of a changing climate.



### [Climate change quick guides](#)

Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative. [No date].

This series of five short guides are a useful starting place for public health staff education about climate change and equity.<sup>10</sup> The

first guide outlines climate change, describes it as a public health issue and lists related health impacts. The second and third guides explore the relationship between public health and health equity, as well as how addressing climate change benefits both health and health equity. The final two guides outline what public health professionals can do to address climate change — for example, educating intersectoral partners and policymakers about the links between housing, health and climate-related vulnerability.

### [RESOURCES FROM THE NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH \(NCCEH\)](#)

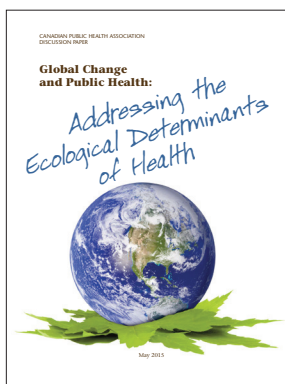
The [NCCEH website](#) contains several resources on climate change and health, including project pages on [wildfire smoke](#)<sup>11</sup> and [extreme heat](#).<sup>12</sup> These pages feature links to past webinars and presentations, evidence reviews, guidance documents and a popular short video, *Extreme heat can be a killer*.<sup>13</sup> The Professional Development section of the NCCEH website links to papers written by the recipients of the Ron de Burger student award. *Strategies to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat events among homeless populations in BC's lower mainland: A review of evidence-based approaches and recommendations*<sup>14</sup> is a paper by Edrene Dol Cabantog and is particularly relevant to the topic of climate change and health equity.

### [FOR MORE ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE](#)

- The Lancet countdown on health and climate change: [Policy brief for Canada](#). *Lancet Countdown, CMA, CPHA*. [2019].<sup>15</sup>
- COP24 Special report: Health and climate change. *World Health Organization*. [2018].<sup>16</sup>
- [Climate change and health: It's time for nurses to act](#). A discussion paper. *Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions*. [2019].<sup>17</sup>
- Collaborative [Call-to-action on climate change and health](#) from organizations that represent doctors, nurses, medical officers of health and public health professionals across Canada. *Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment*. [2019].<sup>18</sup>

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH EQUITY

The following resources explore the many points of connection between climate change and health equity, from situating climate change as a disrupter of planetary health to examining how poverty and inequity compromise sustainable development goals. These resources also support public health practitioners to explore the concept of unequal vulnerability and question how First Nations child health has been approached in climate change scholarship.



### Global change and public health: Addressing the ecological determinants of health

Canadian Public Health Association. [2015].

This discussion paper situates climate change alongside other key areas

of global environmental change such as ecotoxicity and the acidification of oceans.<sup>6</sup> The authors aim to inform and influence the public health community to address inequities through action on the ecological determinants of health. At a base level, these determinants include oxygen, water and food. They also include ecosystems and other systems that support civilizations through shelter, energy and a climate that can support human life. The authors position intergenerational equity as a critical goal and discuss the need to design climate change responses grounded in the public health values of social justice and sustainability.



### Sustainable development, poverty eradication and reducing inequalities

Roy J, Tschakert P, Waisman H, et al. [2018].

This fifth chapter<sup>19</sup> of the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report<sup>20</sup>

emphasizes that eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities are fundamental to combatting climate change and achieving the United Nations sustainable development goals.<sup>21</sup> Section 5.2 offers a global perspective on what 1.5°C of warming means for poverty, equality and equity. Section 5.5. explores related pathways for limiting warming to 1.5°C. Finally, section 5.5.3.1 discusses the role equity, fairness and justice may play in these pathways.



## Climate change and social inequality

Islam SN, Winkel J. [2017].

This paper outlines how the discussion on climate change and social inequality has evolved over time, making the distinction between climate justice, inequalities

across countries and inequalities within countries.<sup>7</sup> The authors outline the pathways through which initial inequality is worsened by the effects of climate change. They propose a conceptual framework for the links between climate change and inequality and examine how social inequality impacts exposure to climate hazards, susceptibility to damage and the ability to cope and recover.



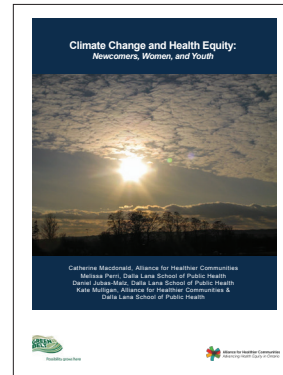
## The Lancet countdown on health and climate change: Policy brief for the United States of America

Salas RN, Knappenberger P, Hess J. [2019].

This policy brief was written with a special focus on health equity and climate change, describing, for example,

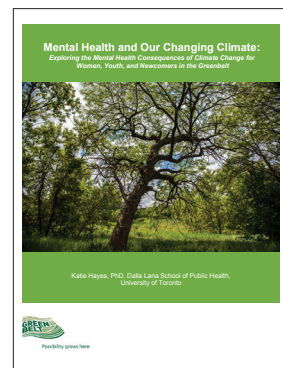
the disproportionate burden of air pollution experienced by Indigenous, Black and Latinx communities.<sup>4</sup> Public health practitioners will find the graphic in Figure 1 (Unequal health vulnerability in a heat wave) particularly useful. The authors illustrate four person-specific case examples, assessing each individual's vulnerability and naming related adaptation actions. In this graphic, race is depicted as a risk factor for exposure to extreme heat and air pollution.

## RESOURCES FROM THE GREENBELT FOUNDATION AND THE ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES



## Climate change and health equity: Newcomers, women, and youth

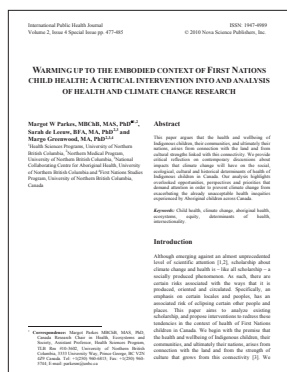
Macdonald C, Perri M, Jubas-Malz D, Mulligan, K. [no date].



## Mental health and our changing climate: Exploring the mental health consequences of climate change for women, youth, and newcomers in the greenbelt

Hayes K. [no date].

These evidence summaries will help inform public health practitioners as they orient interventions towards vulnerable populations.<sup>22,23</sup> Together, they describe the impacts of a changing climate, including mental health consequences, on newcomers, women and youth. Both reports consider intersecting determinants of health and building on assets within groups. Other initiatives are described and will be of interest to public health staff planning adaptation activities and considering potential partnerships, community engagement and ways to build community resilience.



## Resources from the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH)

The NCCIH website has several resources on environmental health that explore, among other topics, prioritizing Indigenous knowledge(s) in knowledge exchange and decision-

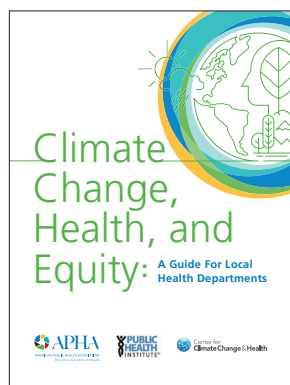
## OTHER RESOURCES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH EQUITY

- Cities, climate change, and health equity. Wellesley Institute. [2018].<sup>27</sup>
- Bridging climate, health, and equity: A growing imperative. White-Newsome J, Meadows P, Kabel C. [2018].<sup>28</sup>
- Why we need climate, health, and equity in all policies National Academy of Medicine Perspectives. [2014].<sup>29</sup>

making<sup>24</sup> and how the built environment influences the health of First Nations reserve communities.<sup>25</sup> A 2010 article by Margot Parkes, NCCIH Academic Lead Margo Greenwood and Sarah de Leeuw, *Warming up to the embodied context of First Nations child health: A critical intervention into and analysis of health and climate change research*,<sup>26</sup> analyzes and questions previous conceptualizations of First Nations child health in climate change research. The authors consider three important emerging trends in research and climate change scholarship: (1) conceptualizing Indigenous child health holistically; (2) connecting health, ecosystems and equity; and (3) taking an intersectional lens. In their conclusion, the authors argue that explicitly naming ecosystems and equity as interrelated determinants of health should complement current approaches, where Indigenous communities are identified, among others, as vulnerable populations.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUITY-FOCUSED PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

Responding to the climate crisis is an emerging area of public health practice.<sup>30-32</sup> The following resources will support public health practitioners to centre equity into their climate-related action plans. Opportunities for equity-focused public health action include engaging with Indigenous and racialized communities as sources of expertise, valued partners and drivers of climate action; applying a racial equity lens to community engagement, mitigation and adaptation-planning; building social cohesion within communities; and more.

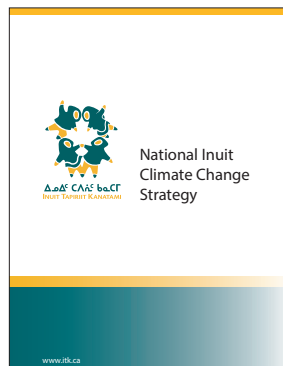


### Climate change, health and equity: A guide for local public health departments

Rudolph L, Harrison C, Buckley L, North S. [2018].

This guide,<sup>3</sup> developed for local public health organizations by the Center for Climate Change and

Health, can help public health staff achieve two goals: (1) to increase understanding of the inextricable links between climate change and health equity and (2) to support integration of climate change and health equity into local public health practice. This resource provides a useful outline of the relevant science and defines terms related to planetary health, climate change and health equity. Guidance is also provided on integrating health equity into assessment and surveillance efforts, as well as engaging in intersectoral collaboration, community engagement and climate and health communications. Existing tools, frameworks and resources are included throughout, as well as case examples from United States public health departments.



### National Inuit climate change strategy

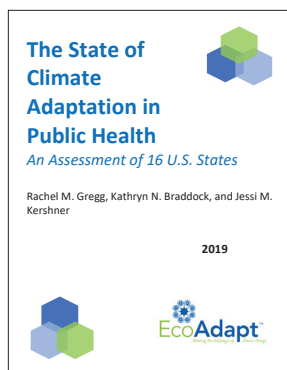
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. [2019].

This strategy situates climate change as a current health equity crisis across Inuit Nunangat, the 51 communities located across the Inuvialuit Settlement

Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Québec) and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador).<sup>35</sup> Offered in four languages, the report contains useful knowledge for Canadian public health professionals, particularly those working with Inuit communities and participating in policy processes. The authors emphasize the importance of self-determination, with both research and climate responses being driven by Inuit needs. The strategy integrates case examples of promising Inuit-led initiatives, identifies five priority climate actions, proposes a framework for collaborating with Inuit communities on climate related work and includes a strategy implementation guide.

### FURTHER GUIDANCE ON VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS

- Ontario climate change and health toolkit, including guidance on conducting a health vulnerability and adaptation assessment. *Government of Ontario*. [2016].<sup>33</sup>
- Protecting health from climate change: Vulnerability and adaptation assessment. *World Health Organization*. [2013].<sup>34</sup>



### [The State of climate adaptation in public health: An assessment of 16 U.S. states](#)

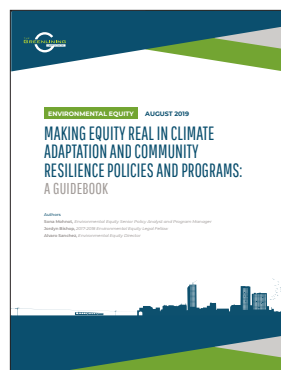
*EcoAdapt*. [2019].

This report assesses how 16 United States public health departments are understanding and

responding to public health threats related to climate change.<sup>36</sup> The results of this scan offer useful insights for adaptation-planning and implementation in other local public health settings. An introductory section discusses health inequities, including how the structural determinants shape the distribution of wealth, power and resources and are an essential part of the discussion on climate change and public health. Several case studies in this report mention equity considerations, including those from Michigan, Missouri, Ohio and Oregon. Canadian public health staff will also benefit from resources, tools and case studies shared on the [Climate Adaptation Knowledge Exchange \(CAKE\)](#) site,<sup>37</sup> which was developed as part of this project.

#### [FOR MORE ON CLIMATE ACTION IN CANADA](#)

- [Perspectives on climate change action in Canada: A collaborative report from auditors general](#) *Office of the Auditor General of Canada*. [2018].<sup>38</sup>
- [Canada's changing climate report: Advancing our knowledge for action](#). *Government of Canada*. [2019].<sup>39</sup>
- [Health equity, population health, and climate change adaptation in Ontario, Canada](#). *Buse C*. [2015].<sup>8</sup>
- [Cities adapt to extreme heat: Celebrating local leadership](#). *Health Canada*. [2016].<sup>40</sup>



### [Making equity real in climate adaptation and community resilience policies and programs: A guidebook](#)

*Mohnot S, Bishop J, Sanchez A*. [2019].

This guide from California's Greenlining Institute

is intended to help operationalize social equity when planning, implementing and analyzing policies and programs.<sup>41</sup> Canadian public health practitioners can apply the recommendations in this guide to their own program-planning and community engagement processes. They can also use this guide to assess how social equity is being integrated into other climate-related policies and plans, as well as to refer to relevant case examples of social equity being embedded into policies and programs. This guide was released alongside [Mapping resilience: A blueprint for thriving in the face of climate disasters](#)<sup>42</sup> from the Asia Pacific Environmental Network. This companion resource outlines existing indicators, tools and analytical frameworks related to climate change, vulnerability and resilience.

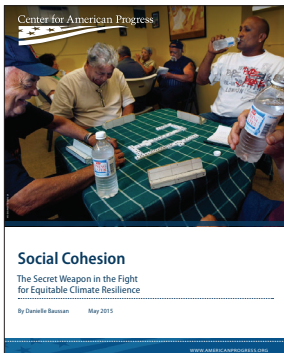


### [Guide to equitable, community-driven climate preparedness planning](#)

*Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [2017].*

This guide contains relevant guidance and resource links for Canadian public health professionals as

they approach engaging with communities and responding to climate change health impacts including extreme heat, flooding and poor air quality.<sup>43</sup> It proposes a framework that places equity at the centre of planning and names the first step in a planning process as building community and local government readiness. Table 8 (*Equitable adaptation considerations and strategies*) summarizes climate hazards, typical adaptation strategies, equity considerations and concrete suggestions for building resilience. Racial equity is emphasized throughout the guide and a separate racial equity evaluation tool is available for download.



### [Social cohesion: The secret weapon in the fight for equitable climate resilience](#)

*Center for American Progress. [2015].*

This report could be used by Canadian public health professionals to learn more about the import role of

social cohesion in building climate resilience before, during and after extreme weather events.<sup>44</sup> The analysis focuses on building climate resilience among low-income communities who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate

change. It also references case examples of social cohesion during past extreme weather events. The recommendations made to support social cohesion and climate resilience will resonate for those in public health as they relate to action on the social determinants of health. Examples include calling for better and more affordable housing and robust urban infrastructure, assessing and reporting on vulnerable areas by creating a social and climate vulnerability index, building trust, fostering leadership and engaging with communities. The resource also recommends offering incentives to organizations and networks that have the ability to increase social cohesion as a complement to emergency preparedness programming.

### [RESOURCES FROM THE NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE FOR DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH](#)

[No date, accessed 2019]

The NCCDH website links to several other resources that would support public health to integrate health equity into climate change related action. These include:

- a past webinar on [climate change, public health and health equity](#);<sup>45</sup>
- a [case story on advocating against environmental racism in Nova Scotia](#);<sup>46</sup>
- curated readings lists on [anti-racism](#),<sup>47</sup> [intersectoral action](#),<sup>48</sup> the [built environment](#)<sup>49</sup> and [advocacy](#);<sup>50</sup>
- a discussion piece on [intersectionality](#);<sup>51</sup> and
- a 2013 [guide to community engagement frameworks for action on the social determinants of health and health equity](#).<sup>52</sup>

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The NCCDH is hosted by St. Francis Xavier University. We are located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Please cite this resource as: National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2019). *Climate Change, Health Equity and Public Health Responses: A Curated List*. Antigonish, NS: NCCDH, St. Francis Xavier University.

ISBN: 978-1-989241-17-2

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada through funding for the NCCDH. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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