



Report summary

**Social and economic vulnerability to
climate change**

2025



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Title of the report: Scoping Review: Examining the Vulnerability of Canadians to Climate Change and the Role of the Social Protection System in Supporting a Socially Just Response

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Why this study

Climate change is making the weather warmer and at times more extreme. It can cause both fast and slow changes. As a result, Canadians may face challenges.

The Government of Canada is acting to help Canadians. It published the “National Adaptation Strategy.” This document is about what to do to address these challenges.

This study helps scope what we know on climate change’s impacts. It focuses on the economy and society. The study also examines who is at greatest risk, and potential solutions.

What we did

We reviewed 111 papers on:

- social and economic impacts of climate change
- who is at greatest risk, and
- social policy responses

We identified themes and summarized the findings in a report.

What we found

The social and economic impacts of climate change are many. They are likely to create more poverty and inequality.

Climate change affects people directly. It can make their health worse, damage their property, and force them to move. Even small disaster costs can lead to tough choices like taking on debt.

Climate change also affects the systems we rely on to meet our needs. Climate change impacts the economy. It could reduce jobs, make life less affordable, and create more poverty. People could face challenges in meeting their housing, food, water, and energy needs.



People differ in what makes them vulnerable to climate change. They may be more vulnerable because of where they live, their physiology, or because they have less resources to adapt. For example, people may live where floods are more likely. Seniors or small children may get sicker from extreme heat. When hit by disasters or extreme weather, some people may not have the resources to cope with the damages.

Those most at risk are: children, seniors, persons with disabilities, racialized groups, Indigenous peoples, and those in poverty.

There are gaps in what we know. More research is needed on the social and economic impacts of climate change and on vulnerability to climate change. For example, little is known about how many people move due to climate.

The findings show that social policy has a role to play. Social policy can contribute to resilience through climate responsive social protection. It can also support a fair net-zero transition.

What it means

These results show that climate change is a risk for poverty and inequality in Canada. They also point to a need for more research on this topic.

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