

## Chapter 5.1 Disaster mental health research

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### Further reading

1. Beaglehole, B., Mulder, R.T., Frampton, C.M., Boden, J.M., Newton-Howes, G., Bell, C.J. Psychological distress and psychiatric disorder after natural disasters: systematic review and meta-analysis. *British Journal of Psychiatry*. 2018: 213: 716-722.

**Summary of this document:** This systematic review and meta-analysis present an important synthesis of evidence highlighting the increased rates of psychological distress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression following disaster exposure. In addition, the study examines the heterogeneity in methodological rigour within the field of disaster mental health assessment.

In this systematic review and meta-analysis, the authors searched for studies on mental health issues in adults after natural disasters. They included studies published between 1980 and March 2017. They identified 41 studies for systematic review and 27 studies for meta-analysis. The authors found increased rates of PTSD and depression after disasters, but anxiety and alcohol abuse were not significantly elevated. The authors conclude that disasters can increase the rate of mental health concerns.

2. Berry HL, Waite TD, Dear KB, Capon AG, Murray V. The case for systems thinking about climate change and mental health. *Nature Climate Change*. 2018: 8: 282.

**Summary of this document:** This text provides a clear and comprehensive review of literature examining the relationship between climate change and mental health in global settings. The paper advocates a systems approach for identifying pathways between psychological, social, economic and environmental factors, that will inform policy and mental health practice.

In this short article, the authors describe the epidemiologic relationship between climate change and mental health. It reviews current research on mental health and climate change, which focuses on mental health problems affecting individuals after climate-related disasters. The article provides a new systems-focused research agenda and suggested research methods, including the increased use of data analysis and geographic information systems. A systems-based approach can better align climate change research needs with existing research frameworks.

3. Bryant RA, Gibbs L, Gallagher HC, Pattison P, Lusher D, MacDougall C, et al. Longitudinal study of changing psychological outcomes following the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*. 2018: 52: 542-51.

**Summary of this document:** Beyond Bushfires is a landmark study examining the longitudinal mental health outcomes among communities with low, medium and high levels of exposure to the catastrophic Victorian Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. This paper outlines rates of psychological

disorders reported at Waves 1 and 2 of the study, highlighting the long-term nature of mental health difficulties following bushfires.

In this short article, the authors describe a five-year follow-up mental health assessment of communities affected by the 2009 Australian bushfires. The authors found that rates of fire-related and general post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive episodes, and serious mental illness had decreased, but still remained above national averages. They also found that while resilience levels increased, alcohol abuse remained high in affected communities. The authors conclude that those exposed to more severe trauma are at a higher risk of developing persistent or delayed mental health problems, and that mental health sequelae can persist for many years after disasters.

4. Newnham, E.A., Dzidic, P., Mergelsberg, E., Guragain, B., Chan, E.Y.Y., Kim, Y., Leaning, J., Kayano, R., Wright, M., Kaththiriarachchi, L., Kato, H., Osawa, T., Gibbs, L. The Asia Pacific Disaster Mental Health Network: Setting a mental health agenda for the region. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2020; 17: 6144-6153.

#### **Summary of this document**

Supported by the WHO Thematic Platform on Health EDM, the Asia Pacific Disaster Mental Health Network brings together leading experts in disaster risk reduction and mental health. It outlines an agenda for research that advances mental health policy and practice relevant to disaster-affected communities within the Asia Pacific region.

In this journal article, the authors report on the Asia Pacific Disaster Mental Health Network, which identified key priorities for regional disaster mental health. Given COVID-19 and increasing risks from climate change, the network emphasizes community engagement, capacity improvements for psychosocial services, technology integration, addressing climate change's impacts, and supporting high-risk groups. As future practices and policies are established, the authors argue that multidisciplinary approaches can foster effective interventions for communities in the Asia-Pacific.