



Climate Change and the Los Angeles' Homelessness Response System



Though the impacts of climate change can be seen nationwide, California has endured some of the country's most acute weather extremes, including drought, prolonged heat stress, floods, and wildfires. At the same time, the State is battling a severe and ongoing housing crisis that affects thousands of individuals and families, resulting in the largest population of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the U.S.¹

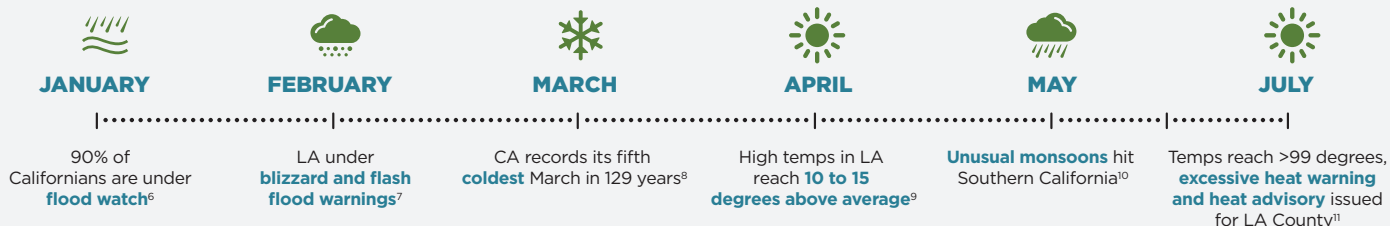
California's environmental crises—fueled and accelerated by climate change— are hindering Los Angeles' fight against homelessness. These weather extremes cause capacity destruction and service disruption, and they strain financial and staff resources, ultimately further deteriorating the health of those experiencing homelessness.

Understanding how climate change and extreme weather events impact the homelessness response system enables administrators and practitioners to better model service delivery capacity implications, adapt services to meet population needs, more effectively target and time activities, and strengthen the overall resilience of the homelessness response system. Together, these insights can drive cost-effective strategies that protect the community's goal of ending homelessness.

Unsheltered Populations are Especially Vulnerable to Climate Impacts

2022 was the fifth hottest on record for California and, with the recurrence of the El Niño pattern, scientists predict that 2023 will be even hotter. Alongside this trend, extreme weather-related deaths among unsheltered populations—which currently stands at 70 percent of those experiencing homelessness—are rising.² Temporary and insufficient living structures such as tents exacerbate the effects of intense weather events like extreme heat and extreme cold. One participant of an environmental justice and homelessness study reported experiencing temperatures in the low to mid 90s in their tent while the outside temperature reached just the mid-70s.³ In California, many unsheltered communities struggle with asthma, which is exacerbated by extreme heatwaves and increased wildfire events.⁴ Recent flooding events have forced many to evacuate encampments near riverbanks or risk being swept away by raging waters.⁵

IN 2023 ALONE, CALIFORNIA HAS ENDURED A VARIETY OF UNPRECEDENTED EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS EACH EXACERBATING VULNERABILITIES OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS



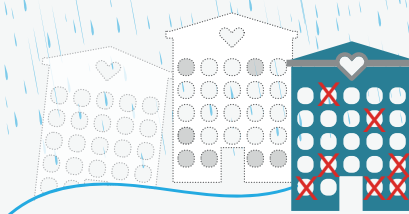
Climate Change Impacts on the Homelessness Response System

Climate change has a number of cascading and compounding detrimental effects on the fight to end homelessness. Damage and destruction of low-income housing stock by extreme weather events increases the number of people experiencing housing instability, some of whom slide into homelessness. As the homeless service system responds to the emergency needs of individuals experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, physical damage to facilities and infrastructure resulting from extreme weather events reduces the system's capacity and disrupts service provision. Beyond affecting access to—and the need for—shelter, heat extremes and floods cause detrimental health conditions including cardiac stress, asthma from wildfire air pollution, third degree burns, diarrheal disease, and aggravate existing health conditions for homeless populations exposed to the elements.

CLIMATE CHANGE EXACERBATES HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS CRISES THROUGH CASCADING AND COMPOUNDING EFFECTS:



Reducing low-income housing stock through damage and destruction, increasing inflow of people into homelessness



Reducing capacity and disrupting homeless service delivery



Increasing risk of mortality and exacerbating underlying health conditions

Strengthening the Homelessness Response System with Climate Insight

Abt combines decades of expertise in climate risk and resilience with unparalleled experience working with homelessness response systems in communities across the country. Our approach helps communities understand and predict extreme weather-related risks, and adapt processes and provision of services to minimize disruption—ultimately strengthening communities' ability to address both the homelessness and climate crises.

ABT'S CLIMATE AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES



UNDERSTAND how extreme weather (flood, heat stress, wildfire smoke) impacts the homelessness response system and people experiencing homelessness

- Homelessness response system-mapping with climate shock vulnerabilities
- Geospatial analytics of interim housing and permanent supportive housing overlaid with extreme weather risk
- Data gathering instruments for homeless services providers and system leaders on extreme weather impacts to delivery of services, housing availability and costs
- Data collection instrument for people experiencing homelessness on extreme weather impacts to health, relationships, pets and possessions



PREDICT risk to proactively minimize disruption and better time and target activities

- Identification of high climate vulnerability CoCs
- CoC capacity modelling to predict changes in capacity and related implications in different extreme weather events
- Based on climate and homelessness response system mapping, identify housing and services that are most at risk of disruption in different extreme weather scenarios



ADAPT processes and provision of essential services and rehousing strategies

- Climate-smart housing and support service strategies that respond to the needs of people experiencing unsheltered and sheltered homelessness
- Extreme weather preparedness and planning across the homeless response system
- Ensuring weather resilience across the interim housing and permanent support housing portfolio
- Equipping homeless service providers with the tools, resources, and training to respond to extreme weather crises

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- <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>
- <https://homelessdeathscout.org/>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2514848619892433>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-08/storm-california-bannon-island-unsheltered-homeless-confront-climate-change>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-05/storm-socal>
- [90% of Californians are under flood watches - CBS Sacramento \(cbsnews.com\)](https://www.cbsacramento.com/news/90-percent-of-californians-are-under-flood-watches-cbs-sacramento)
- [California winter weather: Parts of metro Los Angeles are still under a historic blizzard warning as heavy snow and rain pummel region | CNN](https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/08/california-winter-weather/index.html)
- [California endured the fifth-coldest March since 1895, data show - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-05/storm-socal)
- [California heat wave forecast to bring year's hottest weather - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-05/storm-socal)
- [Unusual' monsoon weather brings chance of thunderstorms to Southern California - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-05/storm-socal)
- <https://www.foxla.com/news/excessive-heat-warning-extended-socal-heat-wave-july-2-2023>



Abt Associates is a global consulting and research firm that has combined data and bold thinking to improve the quality of people's lives since 1965. For nearly 60 years, we have partnered with clients and communities to advance equity and innovation—from creating scalable digital solutions and combatting infectious diseases, to mitigating climate change and evaluating programs for measurable social impact. Our global workforce crosses geographies, methods, and disciplines to deliver tailored solutions in health, environmental and social policy, technology, and international development.



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