

How is NATURE affecting mental health?

Nature provides critical services for human health, collectively known as ecosystem services. However, the effects of these contributions can vary, yielding both positive and negative outcomes, like green gentrification. Mental health is linked with provisioning and regulating services, ensuring liveable environments for society, and cultural services affecting identity, nature use, and social interactions. Impact of these services on mental health depends on recreation preference, demography, socio-economic class, and cultural background.

Provisioning & regulating ecosystem services

High air quality

Avoids mental distress, fatigue and other psychological challenges resulting from respiratory ailments. Air pollution also have negative impacts on terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Biodiversity

Contributes to a multisensory nature experience and can create calm and relaxing conditions. Biological diversity is crucial to obtain healthy and functional ecosystems.

Fresh and clean water

Crucial for normal brain functioning and mental health and plays a fundamental role for healthy functioning of several ecosystems.

Improved water retention

Can exacerbate the damages from heavy precipitation and create better living environments.

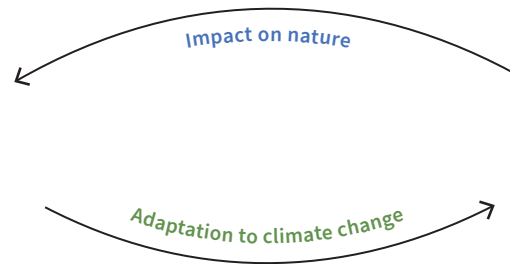
Thermal regulation & shade

Support comfortable living environments for humans and diversifies the ecosystems and climates available to biodiversity.

Cultural ecosystem services

- Restoration & relaxation
- Social cohesion
- Cultural identity
- Social identity
- Physical activity

Nature – climate change – mental health: A summary of key linkages



How is CLIMATE CHANGE affecting mental health?

The impacts of climate change are intensifying, with increasing temperatures and more severe and frequent extreme weather events. Changes and damages to our surroundings can create challenges for mental health. However, certain mitigation measures (e.g. green infrastructure and electrification) can improve environmental conditions, mitigating the impacts on mental health. The severity of the influence depends on individual and societal factors, including demographics, social and economic capital, and available healthcare infrastructure.

Changing weather condition & events

Noise pollution

Climate change can worsen noise pollution by driving urbanization and transportation, increasing noise from construction, traffic, and human activities, impacting ecosystems and mental health.

Ambient air pollution

Worsened air quality affects the climate, while climate change contributes to its degradation. This dual impact can lead to respiratory ailments and create adverse conditions for mental health.

Floods

Increasingly extreme floods can cause death, displacement and damages on public and private properties and disturb the provision of health infrastructure, clean water, and sanitation.

Heatwaves

Intensifying heatwaves can lead to increasing unhealthy living conditions and drought. In dense urban areas heat is easily absorbed and trapped, creating a heat island effect.

Drought

Increasingly severe droughts can harm farmers' mental health and disrupt labour conditions. Rising temperature impact agricultural practices, trigger wildfires, and harm ecosystems.

Potential consequences & damages

- Personal & economic loss
- Sleep disturbances
- Fatigue
- Loss of cultural identity
- Loss of labour

How is MENTAL HEALTH affected by a changing environment?

The state of our mental health is shaped by our surrounding environments. While climate change can have severe consequences for our living conditions, nature can contribute to building social and ecological resilience, creating better living environments while also adapting to and mitigating climate change.