

Climate change and ageing: key messages

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Age International recognises the increasing urgency of the **climate crisis** for older people globally, their families and communities. Climate change and its impacts interact with ageism.

Below are the areas where efforts should be focused – by us and others – to ensure older people’s **rights** are recognised and their **knowledge** and **experience** harnessed in climate action.

Climate change and global ageing

By 2030, when governments are supposed to meet Paris Agreement targets on global warming, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or over. By 2050, when the current ‘millennial’ generation are in or on the cusp of older age - and when all scenarios point to significant global heating - the world’s population of people aged 60 years and older will have doubled to 2.1 billion, one fifth of the total population.

Crisis upon crisis

Older people globally are confronted with multiple challenges, relating to health, long-term care, income and living costs, and conflict. Climate change compounds and contributes to other crises and older people are less likely to have the resources and support to face the impacts of these and to recover.

Climate change, humanitarian emergencies and displacement

Human-induced climate change is directly linked to the increase in humanitarian crises, from which older people are among the most

at risk. Standard humanitarian responses are failing older people and this undermines core humanitarian principles. The climate crisis is changing the nature of emergencies and leading to increasingly intense, frequent and complex humanitarian situations.

Age-inclusive climate action

Many older people care deeply about climate change and a range of surveys show this demographic wants to contribute to the response to climate change and to limiting the damage for future generations; Intergenerational and international solidarity is needed to address climate change effectively.

Climate change, ageism, gender and rights

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Age and disability and climate change

Persons with disabilities face specific challenges in climate related disasters and are beginning to be recognised as a group at risk within some of the COP discussions – although there is much more work to be done. 46 per cent of people aged over 60 globally have a disability. Older people with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination, but their specific risks are rarely discussed.

Climate change, decent work, income and food security

The climate crisis, like all crises, disrupts the functioning of society, including the economy older people participate in, and the availability of food, and support systems that older people rely upon. This disruption can have particular consequences for people who face existing barriers to secure income and decent work, including older people.

Climate change and global health

As well as being more likely to be poor and to have lower social status, older people are physiologically more susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Countries with the weakest health systems – usually low and middle income countries – and which already struggle

to meet the needs of ageing populations, will be least able to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Climate change and care

Climate change increases the need for all types of care while also potentially disrupting care and support networks and systems. Care and care jobs have been recognised as an important part of transitioning to green economies – but older women’s significant roles in unpaid and low paid care work, as well as care for nature, is not always recognised. Affordable, accessible and quality care and support is a vital element of preparing for ageing populations globally. Climate change may also undermine the sustainability of the care and support systems that many people need as they age.

Leadership, gender and age

Women are particularly marginalised in climate leadership, meaning their experiences and expertise are not represented. Research shows that more ambitious climate policies are adopted where there are more women in leadership positions. Older women bring valuable learning and experience to efforts to address climate change, but gender and age discrimination can prevent their inclusion.

author: Kate Horstead
email: kate.horstead@ageinternational.org.uk