

# Climate Change and Women's Health



Climate change poses unique risks to women's health and economic well-being, including consequences for their reproductive health. Supporting pre- and post-partum women's health while bolstering reproductive freedom will help women withstand the economic consequences of climate change.

## The Risks

Studies show exposure to heat, particulate matter, wildfires, and floods contribute to miscarriages, preterm birth, low birth weights, and other poor pregnancy and birthing outcomes. These factors may also increase maternal mortality in the United States - already at a staggering 33/100K births for women overall and 70/100K births for Black non-Hispanic women. Proper nutrition is vital during pregnancy and breastfeeding, yet women are also disproportionately likely to face consequences of unstable food production & distribution exacerbated by climate change.

## The Costs

Climate risks to women's reproductive health and food security will have ramifications for their already fragile economic security.

Because of wage gaps and caregiving responsibilities, women often have less savings for emergencies than men.

These gaps also make it harder for women to cover the estimated \$15B higher out-of-pocket health care costs compared to employed men.

Women are more likely to have medical debt. Nearly 1/3 of women with debt under age 30 say bills from pregnancy/birth are part of that debt.

## Post-Dobbs

Following the Supreme Court's assault on reproductive freedom in the *Dobbs* decision, women in many states are also facing significant barriers to vital health care. State-level bans on abortion make it harder for women to access any basic reproductive care, which is increasingly dangerous as climate change risks worsen maternal health. This is especially a challenge for women in rural areas, who already spend a significant amount of time traveling to receive care.

## Key Policies

Further investments are needed to improve women's health outcomes that are critical for their economic security. Policies should build on President Biden's Executive Order expanding and improving research on women's health and the success of the Medicaid expansion for new mothers and enhanced ACA subsidies in President Biden's American Rescue Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act.

Congress should codify access to reproductive health by passing the Women's Health Protection Act and other Democratic efforts to bolster maternal health.

Congress should hold Medicaid and CHIP accountable to higher standards of care through provisions in the Quality Care for Moms and Babies Act of 2018.

Investing in ways to diversify the maternal care workforce to better reflect the population and expand data collection on maternal mortality can help support these populations.

Congress should increase funding for nutrition assistance programs like SNAP and WIC and help farmers protect food supply chains.