

## **Climate change and midwives**

### **A roundup of climate change articles with a midwifery focus September 2025**

#### **1. Midwives' views about the effects of climate change on maternal and child health: A qualitative study**

This qualitative study from Turkey highlights the important role of midwives in raising awareness of the impact of climate change and their responsibilities for the protection of maternal and child health.

Abstract below – expanded abstract available -

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1871519224000349>

Dağlı, E., Reyhan, F. A., & Kırca, A. S. (2024). Midwives' views about the effects of climate change on maternal and child health: A qualitative study. *Women and Birth*, 37(2),451-457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2024.02.001>.

#### **Abstract**

##### **Background**

*Midwives have important responsibilities to protect the health of mothers and children from the negative effects of climate change.*

##### **Aim**

*This research was conducted to determine how midwives perceived climate change, the effects of climate change on maternal and child health, and what midwives could do to combat these effects.*

##### **Methods**

*The research was designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. The research sample consisted of 11 midwives selected by snowball sampling, which is one of the non-random sampling methods.*

##### **Findings**

*The data obtained were collected under five main themes. The themes were determined as “(I) the causes of climate change, (II) concerns about the consequences of climate change, (III) the effects of climate change on mother-child health, (IV) measures to mitigate the effects of climate change, and (V) midwives' role in protecting mother-child health against the effects of climate change.”*

##### **Conclusion**

*Midwives are knowledgeable about climate change. They are aware of the effects of climate change on maternal and child health and they are doing some practices in this regard (breastfeeding, promoting the regulation of fertility and adequate/balanced nutrition, etc.).*

*Midwives are aware of the importance of the midwifery profession in raising awareness of the individual and society, in addressing the effects of climate change on human health and in reducing the negative effects of climate change on health, and they want to take action at the national level (with the support of the midwifery organization and the state) for the sustainability of health.*

## **2. Strengthening midwifery in response to global climate change to protect maternal and newborn health**

Women's rights to safe births attended by skilled birth attendants underpins this article. Birth rights are under threat from climate change as well as armed conflicts and population displacement. Midwives can support women and birth rights at a national and international level. Investment in midwifery and midwives is described as essential.

Abstract conclusion below. Full article is available -

[https://www.womenandbirth.org/article/S1871-5192\(23\)00297-4/fulltext](https://www.womenandbirth.org/article/S1871-5192(23)00297-4/fulltext)

O'Connell, M., Catling, C., Mintz-Woo, K., & Homer, C. (2024). Strengthening midwifery in response to global climate change to protect maternal and newborn health. *Women and Birth*, 37(1), 1 – 3.

*Our planet is at a tipping point, on the brink of irreversible losses. Investment in and strengthening the scope of midwifery is vital to ensure future provision of evidence-based care of vulnerable populations in the anticipation of public health emergencies due to natural disasters and displacement due to climate change. Midwives can make critical contributions working together as equal partners as climate change is raised on the agenda at the upcoming COP28 meeting. We believe midwives have a professional and ethical duty to engage in climate action. We advocate for strengthening midwifery as a key component to address climate change and global public health and call on our readers to consider how the SDGs may be advanced for the survival of the planet.*

## **3. Midwives: Essential guardians in the climate crisis journey**

How midwives can contribute to addressing health challenges related to climate change.

Abstract extract below. Full article is available -

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11110073/>

Ganapathy D, Tzeli M, Vivilaki V. Midwives: Essential guardians in the climate crisis journey. *Eur J Midwifery*. 2024 May 22;8. doi: 10.18332/ejm/188196. PMID: 38779537; PMCID: PMC11110073

*In the midst of a climate crisis, characterized by uncertainty and geopolitical unrest, vulnerable populations, including climate refugees and those below the poverty line, often bear the brunt of its effects. In such situations, midwives emerge as indispensable first responders, rushing aid to women and children in extreme climate events or conflict zones, thereby fulfilling Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 5.*

*Despite their critical role, midwives are frequently side-lined from health services leadership, policy-making, and stewardship. Creating an enabling environment for midwives is imperative, necessitating strategic litigation for improved salaries. The PUSH movement, spanning a decade, advocates for the rights and autonomy of women and midwives alike.*

*The work of midwives forms the bedrock of women's reproductive rights. Yet, millions of lives are lost annually in childbirth due to the undervaluation and under prioritization of midwives' skills. From providing access to contraception for 220 million women and girls to averting the needless deaths of 2.7 million women and newborns annually during pregnancy and childbirth, midwives save lives and champion women's health activism.*

#### **4. The Intersection of Midwifery and Climate Change**

This article, written by Kiconco Penenah – a Midwife in the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces, is part of a 'Global Conflicts and Crises Series' looking at how maternity care is being challenged by climate change worldwide.

Summary below. Full article is available - <https://www.all4maternity.com/the-intersection-of-midwifery-and-climate-change/>

Penenah, K. (2025). The Intersection of Midwifery and Climate Change. *The Practising Midwife*, All4Maternity, Blog Mar 26.

*Amidst the intensifying global environmental challenges, it is essential to explore the impact of climate change on maternal health and the midwifery profession.*

*Over the years, climate change has been widely recognised as the defining health burden of the 21st century, with profound implications for maternal and neonatal health. For midwives, the intersection of climate change and reproductive health presents both barriers and opportunities to drive transformative change in healthcare systems worldwide, especially caring for mothers and babies amidst crisis.<sup>1</sup>*

*Focusing on working at the frontline of climate-related crises, the resilience towards empowering communities and inspiring others in taking action to address the climate crisis by midwives has been under recognised and under supported hence a call for more emphasis on midwifery action towards climate change*

#### **5. Enhancing midwifery course curricula: validating knowledge and skills in climate change and planetary health**

Undergraduate midwifery degree programmes can provide students with the knowledge necessary for addressing the health consequences of severe weather events and climate

change. Midwifery educators can integrate planetary health competencies into curricula along with sustainable development goals (SDG).

Abstract below. Full article is available

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0266613825002918>

Catling, C., McIntyre, E., Hastie, C., & Levett-Jones, T. (2025). Enhancing midwifery course curricula: validating knowledge and skills in climate change and planetary health. *Midwifery*, 149, 104573, ISSN 0266-6138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2025.104573>.

## **Abstract**

### **Problem and Background**

*Undergraduate midwifery courses prepare students for the care of childbearing women and their infants but lack specific content and skill development related to addressing the effects of a warming climate and increasing severe weather events. A framework of Planetary Health nursing domains including: 1) The science of planetary Health and climate change, 2) Mitigation of the adverse impacts of healthcare on the environment, and 3) Adaptation to the actual and expected impacts of climate change on health care and health outcomes were identified from a previous Delphi study. These needed validation for use in undergraduate midwifery programs*

### **Aim**

*To validate previously identified nursing domains, knowledge, and skill statements and determine their appropriateness for undergraduate midwifery curricula in Australia.*

### **Methods**

*A modified Nominal Group Technique was used to ensure all seven participants, who were midwifery academics from multiple sites with an interest in Planetary Health, had the opportunity to voice their opinions and ideas in order to achieve consensus on the previously created nursing domains.*

### **Findings**

*Minimal changes to the nursing knowledge and skills statements were deemed necessary to ensure their relevance to midwifery programs.*

### **Discussion**

*Midwives promote the health of childbearing women by addressing environmental and social determinants of health. The warming climate and increasing number of severe weather events pose increased hazards for perinatal health. All midwifery graduates need the knowledge and skills to advocate for, and address environmental and social determinants of health, contribute to planetary health, bolster resilience and diminish community vulnerability to climate change. The incorporation of these Planetary Health domains into midwifery curricula will help address the current gap.*

## **Conclusion**

*This study provided content and face validity for previously developed knowledge and skills statements on planetary health, climate change and sustainability for use within undergraduate midwifery courses.*

## **6. Green Midwifery Care in Climate Change and Newborn Nutrition**

Green midwifery care and Green feeding – how climate change can affect lactation and breastfeeding, the important role of midwives in minimising the negative effects of climate change and health, and why child nutrition should be at the top of the climate change agenda.

Abstract below. Full article is available - <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/4375481>

Akkur, M., & Özdilek, R. (2025). Green Midwifery Care in Climate Change and Newborn Nutrition. *Journal of Health Sci Inst*, 10(1),71-78.

### **Abstract**

*Climate change refers to long-term changes in the earth's climate system, such as temperature increases, changes in precipitation patterns and more frequent extreme weather events, as a result of human activities following the industrial revolution. The main causes of climate change include the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and industrial processes. These activities cause greenhouse gases to accumulate in the atmosphere and cause global warming. Especially after the Industrial Revolution, the world temperature continues to rise and climate change continues to occur. Since the mid-19th century, both breastfeeding and the Earth's climate have suffered greatly from the rise of industrial capitalism. First called global warming, then climate change due to its many negative consequences, it is seen as the most important global health threat of the 21st century. Factors such as increasing temperatures, thirst, food insecurity and environmental toxins as a result of climate change also affect breast milk production and the breastfeeding process indirectly, if not directly. This situation threatens both the health of the mother and the healthy nutrition opportunities of infants. Therefore, considering the long-term effects of climate change, maternal and child nutrition should be at the top of the climate change agenda. Midwives have important roles in minimizing the negative effects of climate change on health. This review is a review of the literature on the interaction of climate change with breastfeeding and breastfeeding.*

## **7. Australian and New Zealand nursing and midwifery educators' planetary health knowledge, views, confidence and teaching practices: A descriptive survey study**

A study looking at Australian and New Zealand nursing and midwifery university educator's planetary health knowledge, views, confidence and teaching practices.

Abstract below. Full article is available - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jan.16317>

Bonnamy, J., Levett-Jones, T., Carr, B., Lokmic-Tomkins, Z., Maguire, J., Catling, C., Pich, J., Fields, L., & Brand, G. (2024). Australian and New Zealand nursing and midwifery educators' planetary health knowledge, views, confidence and teaching practices: A descriptive survey study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, doi: 10.1111/jan.16317

## **Abstract**

### **Aim**

*To explore Australian and New Zealand nursing and midwifery educators' planetary health knowledge, views, confidence and teaching practices.*

### **Design**

*A cross-sectional survey design.*

### **Methods**

*An online survey was sent to Australian and New Zealand nursing and midwifery educators across the 45 Schools of Nursing and Midwifery between July and September 2023. The online survey consisted of 29 open- and closed-ended questions about nursing and midwifery educators' planetary health knowledge, views, confidence and teaching practices.*

### **Results**

*There was a total of 127 responses to the first open-ended question. A total of 97 nursing and midwifery educators then completed the remaining questions. While educators had mostly positive views about integrating planetary health into their teaching, they lacked the knowledge and/or confidence to do so effectively.*

### **Conclusion**

*Australian and New Zealand nursing and midwifery educators acknowledge that planetary health should be included in nursing and midwifery curricula, but most reported a deficit in knowledge and/or confidence to integrate these complex concepts into their teaching. When considering planetary health, most educators focussed on climate change, which demonstrates their limited understanding of the concept of planetary health.*

### **Implications for the Profession**

*All nurses and midwives need to understand how the health of the planet and human civilization are interconnected and be prepared to address complex global health challenges now and in the future. Across the world, key healthcare organizations have called upon nursing and midwifery educators to prepare the healthcare workforce to practice in a more sustainable way, including supporting decarbonization of healthcare. However, our study has demonstrated that nursing and midwifery educators do not feel ready to respond due to a lack of required knowledge and/or confidence.*