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How Climate Change Impacts Humans, Animals, and the Environment

Climate change is one of today's most urgent global issues, yet many people still misunderstand its severity and consequences. While some Americans hold the belief that climate change is not a major problem or that its effects are exaggerated, scientific evidence has shown for decades that the crisis is very real and already causing significant harm. It affects the planet, its ecosystems, and human health in ways that are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore, Clime change impacts humans, animals, and the environment in different and highly specific ways, and because of this, no single universal solution can fully address the problem. Instead, solutions must target the needs of each group individually. Humans face issues related to health, safety, and environmental justice, as communitites around the world struggle with air pollution, extreme weather, and unequal exposure to environmental hazards. Animals face habitat disruption, food shortages, migration challenges, and a growing risk of extinction. Meanwhile, ecosystems experience long term damage such as coral bleaching, deforestation, ocean acidification, and the collapse of natural habitats that support life on Earth. Understanding these different impacts is essential for developing effective strategies to address climate change in a meaningful and scientifically grounded way. When we recognize how climate change affects each part of the planet differently, we can create stronger, more targeted solutions that protect both present and future generations.

A common misconception in the United States is that climate change is exaggerated or not happening quickly enough to worry about. However, scientific literature shows the opposite. In Climate Change and the People's Health, Sharon Friel states, "In this book I am concerned primarily with climate change and its effects," explaining its consequences are widespread and deeply linked to human well-being. While many people may not care deeply about the topic, experts have been issuing warnings for decades. In another source, One Planet, One Health, the author says, "In mid-2017 scientists from around the globe signed for the second time a 'warning to humanity.' The first notice was signed in 1992 by 1500 scientists, demonstrating, for over 30 years, that climate change is a persistent danger scientist warned about, rather than a new phenomenon. Climate change is not simply a modern trend, but it is a long-standing global crisis demanding immediate attention.

Many Americans mistakenly believe that climate change affects only certain regions or types of people. However, a report from the NRDC explains that "even though everyone is or will be affected by climate change, those living in the world's poorest countries, which have contributed least to the problem, are the most climate vulnerable." This highlights an important truth about climate change: it affects everyone, but not equally. Those with the least resources and least responsible for emissions suffer the most severe consequences. This dynamic proves that targeted human-centered interventions are necessary, especially for vulnerable populations.

Climate change impacts people physically, socially, and economically. Friel explains that climate change serves as a "threat multiplier" increasing heat related illness, respiratory problems, infectious disease, food insecurity, and water scarcity. Extreme heat waves are more common and more severe, causing dehydration, organ stress, and early death, particularly among the elderly, young children, and workers without access to climate-controlled environments.

In addition to direct health effects, climate change threatens human safety and economic stability. The NRDC describes how stronger hurricanes, floods, and wildfires displace families, destroy homes, and cause billions of dollars in damage each year. NOAA reports that climate change is “happening now” not in the distant future, and impacts communities across the United States and the world. These events interrupt transportation systems, food supply chains, energy access, and public services. Humans experience climate change through infrastructure and economic networks, so solutions must focus on strengthening healthcare, protecting workers, investing in resilient buildings, and ensuring disaster recovery.

Animals experience climate change in completely different ways than human beings. While people can use technology and policy to adapt to the ever-changing climate, animals depend solely on available habitats and stable ecosystems for survival. Gareth Jones notes that climate change disrupts “ecosystem relationships” and alters migration, reproduction, and food availability for countless species. Many animals migrate based on seasonal cues, like temperature or day length, but rising global temperatures cause them to migrate too early or too late, making it harder to find food. Additionally, animals face an increasing risk of extinction. NOAA explains that climate change alters ecosystems faster than many species can adapt, leaving them with shrinking habitats and fewer resources. Melting sea ice threatens polar bears, seals, and penguins. Coral reefs, home to a quarter of marine life, are bleaching and dying due to ocean warming and acidification. The NRDC adds that ocean acidification weakens the shells of marine species like oysters, clams, and coral, species that are essential to marine food webs and ecosystems. Animals cannot easily relocate or adapt, so they require targeted solutions such as protected habitat corridors, anti-poaching laws, wildlife conservation programs, and ecosystem restoration. These types of solutions differ significantly from those needed by humans.

The environment (air, water, land, and ecosystems) forms the foundation for all life on Earth. When climate change destabilizes, environmental degradation involves “global environmental change,” affecting oceans, forests, freshwater systems, and the atmosphere all at once. For example, melting glaciers cause rising sea levels, threatening coastlines, rising temperatures dry out forests and fuel wildfires, and extreme rainfall erodes soil and destroys crops.

NOAA further notes that ecosystems themselves are experiencing rapid change, from altered rainfall patterns to more frequent extreme storms. These environmental shifts weaken the natural systems that support both humans and animals. Environmental solutions, such as reducing carbon emissions, restoring wetlands, reforesting damaged land, and regulating industrial pollution, are essential but must complement human and animal specific strategies.

Many people try their best not to contribute to the harm of the environment, but there are still others who simply do not care or do not believe that their actions will matter. Some of these people argue that climate change is not real, or that even if it is happening, it will not affect them personally or threaten their future. They have this mindset and because of that they continue to rely heavily on things that create unnecessary waste and pollution. They use things like, constant delivery services, depend on single use products, support fast fashion companies, and choose the easiest option even though it is the most harmful to the planet. What these people don’t realize is that every one of these choices adds up. Frequent deliveries increase carbon emissions, plastic products pile up in landfills, and cheaply made clothing contributes to massive amounts of waste and pollution. People who rely on these conveniences could easily make small, meaningful changes that would benefit the Earth, such as shopping in person, buying durable, reusable items rather than disposable ones, or even learning how to make or reuse products at home. They could

choose reliable and sustainable alternatives, but instead they continue with lazy habits that bring the earth more harm than good. The difference between those who care and those who choose to ignore the issue shows how important personal responsibility is when facing a crisis as serious as climate change.

Although climate change affects human beings, animals, and the environment simultaneously, each group experiences different risks, meaning each group requires a unique type of intervention. Sharon Friel's work emphasizes that climate solutions must prioritize social equity because climate change intensifies existing inequalities. This supports the argument that human-centered solutions should be different from wildlife conservation measures or environmental restoration efforts. Human solutions must address public health, worker safety, equitable disaster response, and access to clean water and nutritious food. Animal solutions must protect biodiversity through habitat preservation, wildlife corridors, and regulation of land use. Environmental solutions must stabilize climate systems through carbon reduction, renewable energy, reforestation, and protection of oceans.

Climate change affects the world in complex and varied ways, influencing every part of life on Earth. Humans face serious threats such as health inequities, economic instability, and environmental hazards. Rising temperatures, polluted air, extreme storms, and changing food systems all place major stress on communities, especially those who are already vulnerable. At the same time, animals suffer consequences that are just as severe. Animals face extinction, widespread habitat loss, and disruptions to entire ecosystems that they depend on for survival. As temperatures rise and environments shift, animals struggle to adapt quickly enough, leaving them at risk of population decline. The environment itself undergoes large-scale transformations that impact every living thing connected to it. Forests experience drought and wildfires, oceans

warm and acidify, and natural landscapes that once remained stable for centuries now change rapidly within a single generation. The effects of climate change vary across humans, animals, and ecosystems, meaning that the solution for all also varies. Different problems require different strategies. Targeted interventions, such as improving human health systems, protecting endangered species, restoring damaged habitats, and reinforcing environmental stability, are far more effective than easy, generalized policies that don't fully address the specific needs.

Climate change is not a distant threat waiting somewhere in the future, it is a present reality happening all around us. Its effects are no longer subtle or slow, they shape daily life, reshape entire communities, and alter natural systems across the globe. From rising temperatures and unpredictable weather to disappear habitats and shifting seasons, the signs are visible everywhere. What makes this even more troubling is that many people who contribute very little to the problem are often the ones who experience its consequences most severely. Communities with fewer resources, animals that cannot adapt quickly, and ecosystems that are already fragile suffer the earliest and harshest impacts.

Climate change affects each group, humans, animals, and the environment, in different ways, it becomes crucial to understand these differences before creating solutions. Response must be fair, effective, and grounded in scientific evidence, not based on assumptions or generalized approaches that fail to meet the needs of those most affected. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by each group, we can develop targeted strategies that address health risks, protect endangered species, restore damaged ecosystems, and promote long term environmental stability. Only by acknowledging these distinct impacts can we create meaningful climate actions and solutions that truly protect the planet and everyone who depends on it, ensuring that future generations inherit a world capable of supporting healthy communities,

thriving wildlife, and resilient natural systems. When we commit to understanding these differences and acting on them, we move closer to building a sustainable future where the needs of all living things are respected and protected. Expanding our understanding of these differences also encourages more responsible decisions, making at the individual, community, and global levels. It pushes governments to adopt stronger climate policies, inspires organizations

In conclusion, climate change is a deeply interconnected crisis that affects humans, animals, and the environment in powerful and undeniable ways. Its impacts are already unfolding around us. Health risks and economic challenges to species loss and the rapid transformation of natural ecosystems are all impacts that are happening all around us. Although the consequences carry across different groups, they all share one message, action is urgently needed. Understanding these differences allows us to create solutions that are fair, effective, and grounded in science, rather than relying on broad approaches that overlook important details. Climate change is not a distant possibility but a present reality, and our awareness, responsibility, and commitment today will determine the stability and health of the planet tomorrow. By recognizing our role and choosing sustainable actions, we can help protect the world for current and future generations. . Understanding these differences allows us to create solutions that are fair, effective, and grounded in science, rather than relying on broad approaches that overlook important details. Climate change is not a distant possibility but a present reality, and our awareness, responsibility, and commitment today will determine the stability and health of the planet tomorrow. By recognizing our role and choosing sustainable actions, we can help protect the world for current and future generations. . Understanding these differences allows us to create solutions that are fair, effective, and grounded in science, rather than relying on broad

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