CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING NATION

Danielle Arigoni
Smart Growth Network | Dec 5, 2023
Nonprofit with 35+ years working on affordable housing preservation and sustainability

National leader in climate-resilient solutions through:

- Multifamily housing retrofits and development (4000 units in mid-Atlantic)
- Solar deployment
- Financing
- Policy advocacy
- Resident services

Learn more at nationalhousingtrust.org
Growing Climate Risks

Growing Share of Older Adults
GROWING CLIMATE RISKS

More billion-dollar disasters every year

- 2023: 25 as of Nov
- 2022: 18 events
- Since 1980: ave of 8 events per year

Source: https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/
more people >65 than <18 for first time ever, and increasingly diverse
POOR UNDERSTANDING OF OLDER ADULTS

1 in 6 live in poverty
96% live independently
30% live alone
20% don’t drive
1 in 9 live with dementia
20% need help with ADL
40% have ambulatory limitations
80% have 2+ chronic med issues
Growing Climate Risks

Growing Share of Older Adults

Engineers
Data analysts
Climatologists
Emergency managers

Planners, New Urbanists, SG Advocates

Gerontologists
Demographers
Health care
Aging advocates

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING NATION (D. ARIGONI)
"Experiencing Climate Change" chapter: Older adults +
- Food systems
- Utility costs
- Health impacts

Adaptation chapter: little/no discussion of age

"Adaptation planning can more effectively reduce climate risk when it identifies not only disparities in how people are affected by climate change but also the underlying causes of climate vulnerability."
OLDER ADULTS BEAR THE BRUNT

**Louisiana:** Hurricane Katrina (2005), 70% of people who died were over 65

**California:** Camp Fire (2018) 85% were over 60

**North Carolina:** Hurricane Florence (2018) 2/3 were over 60

**Oregon** (2021): heat waves median age of people who died was 67

**Texas:** Winter Storm Uri (2021) 2/3 were over 60

**Florida:** Hurricane Ian (2022) 2/3 were over 60

**Hawai‘i:** Lahaina wildfires (2023) 73% were over 60

Over 20 years: no change
Half of Katrina victims were 75 or older

As New Orleans residents keep an eye on the movement of a storm named Gustav, there's a new report on the deaths from Hurricane Katrina, which hit the gulf coast three years ago Friday.

As New Orleans residents warily track another threatening storm, a new report presents the clearest picture yet of deaths from Katrina.
Nearly Half of Tar Heels Killed by Hurricane Florence Were 70 or Older

Hurricane Florence was especially lethal for older North Carolinians who made up two-thirds of the people who died during and because of the storm.

by Thomas Goldsmith

Amid new hurricane season, Maria still taking a toll on Puerto Rico’s elderly

Jul 11, 2018 6:25 PM EDT

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING NATION (D. ARIGONI)
Must Reads: Poor, elderly and too frail to escape: Paradise fire killed the most vulnerable residents


CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING NATION (D. ARIGONI)
Vulnerable and Trapped: A Look at Those Lost in Hurricane Ian

By Eliza Fawcett, Mitch Smith, Ava Sasani, Frances Robles and Eden Weingart
Oct. 21, 2022

NAPLES, Fla. — Rose Marie Santangelo had lived through hurricanes in her decades living near the water in Florida, but the possibilities of Hurricane Ian had never crossed her mind. She thought she was prepared for Hurricane Irma the previous fall. She had been wrong.

But like so many other Floridians, Ms. Santangelo and her family underestimated this storm.

“She really thought that it wouldn’t hit here,” her niece, said. “And then when it did take a turn, it was going to be bad.”

Ian caused more deaths in Florida — at least 58 — drowned, as Ian’s size, relatively slow movement and massive storm surge multiplied its threat.

But the storm’s impact, while broadly felt, was not even.

Most of the victims were older adults. Two-thirds of them were 60 or older, and 30 were past their 80th birthdays.

The people who died were concentrated in exposed coastal areas and on barrier islands. Though deaths were reported in 21 counties, nearly half came from Lee County, in southwest Florida.

And a large number of victims — at least 58 — drowned, as Ian’s size, relatively slow movement and massive storm surge multiplied its threat.

Many of first victims identified in Hawaii fires are over the age of 70

While full list probably represent broader cross section of ages, deaths underscore risk for elderly people in fast-moving blazes

The Guardian
August 18, 2023

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING NATION (D. ARIGONI)
1. Acknowledge that climate change impacts older adults differently – and not just during disasters

2. Recognize that individual and institutional preparedness is not enough

3. Lean into solutions that build community resilience for all ages.
TAKEAWAY #1: CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS OLDER ADULTS DIFFERENTLY
FOR OLDER ADULTS, DISASTERS MEAN:

• **Financial impacts** from loss or damage to property

• **Health impacts** from interrupted care, persistent damage to homes, and/or evacuation
FOR OLDER ADULTS, OUR ‘NEW NORMAL’ MEANS:

- **Health impacts** more intense for those with pre-existing health conditions, and those who live alone

12,000 deaths caused by heat-related illness each year

80% of are people over 60
FOR OLDER ADULTS, OUR ‘NEW NORMAL’ MEANS:

- Financial impacts from cost of insurance and utilities

45% of households age 75-plus were housing cost burdened in 2019, paying 30% or more of income for housing.
17% of low-income older adults went without basic necessities to pay for utilities

$842/yr to $5431 is the expected annual flood insurance premium in Louisiana following update of FEMA maps.
Light analysis shows where Puerto Rico hurricane damage was especially deadly

By Arelis R. Hernández, Andrew Ba Tran and Dylan Moriarty
November 28, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. EST

- Access to fresh food, clean water
- Power for in-home medical equipment
- Power for building systems (elevators, HVAC)
TAKEAWAY #2: INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS IS NOT ENOUGH
OF PEOPLE OVER 65 LIVE IN POVERTY

ONE IN NINE

PEOPLE OVER 65 LIVE WITH ALZHEIMER’S
96% of people over 65 live outside congregate settings.

20% of people 55-64 are childless compared to 11% of >75.
15 PEOPLE DIED
IN A WAREHOUSE AFTER BEING EVACUATED FROM A NURSING HOME, FOLLOWING AN APPROVED PLAN

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING NATION (D. ARIGONI)
TAKEAWAY #3: BUILD COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
Climate-responsive infrastructure investments
Expanded housing options
Multiple transportation alternatives
Improved communication during disasters
Improved policies and practices by utilities
Explicit consideration of climate in healthcare
Aging is considered by emergency managers
Climate seen as the work of aging advocates
CASE STUDIES IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR AN AGING COMMUNITY (OR STATE)

Portland, OR and Multnomah County, Oregon

State of New York

New Orleans, Louisiana
THANK YOU

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