

CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

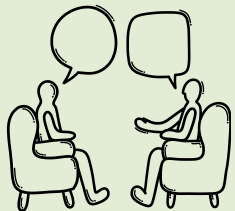
Daphne Looman, Janne Bensch, Mathieu Lebot, Thomas Dahner

METHODS

Literature review



Interview



Cost-benefit analysis



Introduction

Climate change is an escalating global crisis, intensifying natural disasters and threatening access to essential resources such as water and food. As a result, climate-induced displacement is on the rise, with future estimates ranging from 25 million to over 1 billion people (Myer, 2002; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024). However, those displaced by climate-related events do not currently meet the UN's legal definition of a refugee, and are therefore not entitled to the same rights and protections (Bosetti et al., 2018). This study examines the potential impact of increasing climate migration on the Dutch federal budget and healthcare system.

HOW WILL INCREASED CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION TO THE NETHERLANDS CHALLENGE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS, AND WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL HEALTHCARE AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR DUTCH SOCIETY?

RESULTS

H1: A definition for climate refugees is legally and politically feasible.

Our analysis finds that while it is legally feasible to extend refugee protections to climate-displaced persons, through reinterpretation of existing conventions or new international agreements, the political and practical realities remain major obstacles. Politically, international cooperation on this issue is limited by domestic concerns, geopolitical interests, and fears of opening a "Pandora's box" of new asylum claims. Practically, most climate-induced displacement is internal or regional, not international, and often entangled with economic and political factors, making it difficult to isolate climate change as the sole cause. Despite this, the absence of a legal definition for climate refugees undermines the protection of vulnerable populations, hinders accountability of high-emission countries, and creates challenges for academic research and policymaking.

H2: Increased climate migration to the Netherlands will lead to a healthcare crisis.

Climate migrants are generally younger and physically healthy, partly due to a selection effect. They tend to use less healthcare in the short term and are integrated into the Dutch insurance system. Migrants may also help address healthcare labour shortages, as they are often of working age and relatively well educated. Public health risks from infectious diseases are currently low, though long-term ageing and cultural differences may influence future care needs.

H3: Increased climate migration to the Netherlands will lead to a economic crisis.

Discount rate of 3.5%

Number of refugees	Total fiscal impact
1	-€ 25,580.04
20,000	-€ 511,600,718.42
500,000	-€ 12,790,017,960.56

"Very often migrants are, let's say, more from the reproductive ages [...] So in general, they have relatively low levels of health care demands."

THE TRUE EXPENSE IS NOT MIGRATION, IT'S BEING UNPREPARED FOR IT.

Conclusion

- Current evidence suggests that in the short term, climate migrants are unlikely to worsen the healthcare crisis and may even help relieve pressure through their contributions to the labor force. In the long term, their ageing will require attention, but this mirrors broader demographic trends and is not unique to migration.
- A thorough political discussion is needed regarding the potential costs of integrating climate refugees, especially in the event of a large-scale crisis, since unpreparedness leads to disproportionately high expenses, most notably in the form of emergency shelters, which could largely be mitigated through early and strategic planning.

Recommendations

- Establish a legal definition for climate refugees. A legal definition will make research, data and data/statistics on this topic a lot easier.
- Have an open discussion in the Netherlands on how many refugee shelters should remain open. When this happens we don't have to build so many emergency shelters all the time.