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The role of the climate crisis in conflict

January 23, 2026



(/pubs/journals/vio) In the November 2025 edition of *Psychology of Violence*, Andreas Miles-Novelo and Craig A. Anderson managed a special section (<https://psycnet.apa.org/PsycARTICLES/journal/vio/15/6>) highlighting cutting-edge research on how climate change is influencing violent behavior. The research covers a range of topics stemming from this core inquiry, including the relationship between heat and terrorism (Craig et al., 2025) and child maltreatment (Cuartas & Camacho, 2025), factors that generate support for radical environmental action and authoritarian responses to climate demonstrations (Hess et al., 2025), increased state-level conflicts due to resource shortages (Karamidehkordi & Naderi, 2025), and potential correlations between pollution levels and intimate partner violence (Wongchanapai et al., 2025).

This special section also highlights the growing need for more social scientists, such as psychologists, to apply their expertise and skill sets to understand how climate change is impacting individual, interpersonal, and group emotions; cognition; and behavior. For example, because rapid global warming is increasing droughts and famines, levels of violence are likely to increase, as associated with water scarcity and increased temperature (for example, see Kemmerling et al., 2022). These collected works highlight the deeply intersectional nature surrounding violence and conflict and demonstrate the need for a multifaceted, multidisciplinary, and multinational effort among social scientists to better understand how climate change is affecting human society. This research spans disciplines such as cognitive psychology, sociology, criminology, and political science.

Furthermore, this special section is one of the first to focus on research questions surrounding human psychology and climate change that push beyond research around attitudes, beliefs, and anxiety related to the climate crisis, which have, understandably, been the focus of much of the work at the intersection of climate change and human psychology. This research aims to push social scientists to expand our thinking on that intersection and to remind us that we are part of the Earth, its ecosystems, and its community of inhabitants. Understanding how global warming, caused by human industrial activity, is influencing conflict and violence helps us not only to address the problems presented by climate change but also to better understand humans' deeply intimate relationships with the environment and each other.

The implications from this work range from laying the groundwork for advocacy for more preventative material policies in anticipation of the severe consequences of climate change to encouraging further funding and collaboration across scientific, industry, and policy-related professions. The authors articulate the urgent need for more research, support, and collaboration to better understand the underlying psychological and social dynamics and what strategies and practices can best help alleviate the most harmful social consequences of a rapidly changing climate.

This article is in the Social Psychology and Social Processes (/pubs/highlights/spotlight/topic-social) topic area.

Citations

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About the editors

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Craig A. Anderson, PhD, is a distinguished professor of psychology at Iowa State University and is a premier scholar on the psychology of aggression and violence. He served as editor of *Aggressive Behavior* and as the president of the International Society for Research on Aggression. He holds a PhD in psychology from Stanford University and currently lives in Ames, Iowa. [Contact Craig A. Anderson \(mailto:caa@iastate.edu\)](mailto:caa@iastate.edu).

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