



Work Equity Research Center

## Overview

Environmental heat exposure can affect mental health outcomes, but research among workers is limited.

We reviewed primary research studies of the relationship between occupational heat exposure and mental health outcomes using an equity lens.

We identified ten studies of varying quality across industries and continents. The majority of studies (seven) reported that occupational heat exposure is associated with mental health outcomes, including occupational stress, anxiety, burnout, and mental disorders.

To guide future equity-centered research and prevention approaches, we presented a framework that incorporates work psychosocial factors, social determinants of health (SDOH), and other factors that disproportionately affected workers may experience.

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## Supporting Underserved Workers through Collaborative Research

The Work Equity Research Center (WERC) is a part of the SHARP Program. Its purpose is to work with communities to co-create research projects and develop solutions to improve work-related outcomes for historically and currently underserved workers. Learn more at:

<https://www.lni.wa.gov/WERC>

## Research Findings

# Occupational Heat Exposure and Mental Health Outcomes

Occupational Heat Exposure & Mental Health Outcomes: A Review and Framework Incorporating Social Determinants of Health to Guide Future Research

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## Key Findings

- The literature on occupational heat exposure and mental health outcomes among workers is emerging.
  - We identified ten peer-reviewed studies of varying quality from 1997–2024, across five continents, in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting; utilities; public administration and healthcare; mining, oil and gas extraction; and glass manufacturing.
  - Seven of the ten studies reported a link between occupational heat exposure and mental health outcomes, including occupational stress, anxiety, burnout and mental disorders.
  - Few studies investigated mechanisms of occupational heat exposure's effects on mental health outcomes over time, addressed social determinants of health (SDOH) or structural factors, incorporated female workers, or evaluated interventions.
- We presented a framework that:
  - Integrates occupational, environmental, work psychosocial, SDOH, structural, and other factors that may inform research on how occupational heat exposure affects mental health outcomes.
  - Informs future prevention approaches for disproportionately affected working populations, particularly those with high workplace heat exposure and a high prevalence of risk factors for adverse mental health outcomes.

## Impact

This study adds to the literature on the burden of occupational heat exposure, provides insight into mental health impacts, and offers a framework to guide future equity-centered research and interventions.

## Find the article here:

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-025-00479-6>

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