

Policy and Services Responses to Effects of Climate Change on the Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: A Scoping Review

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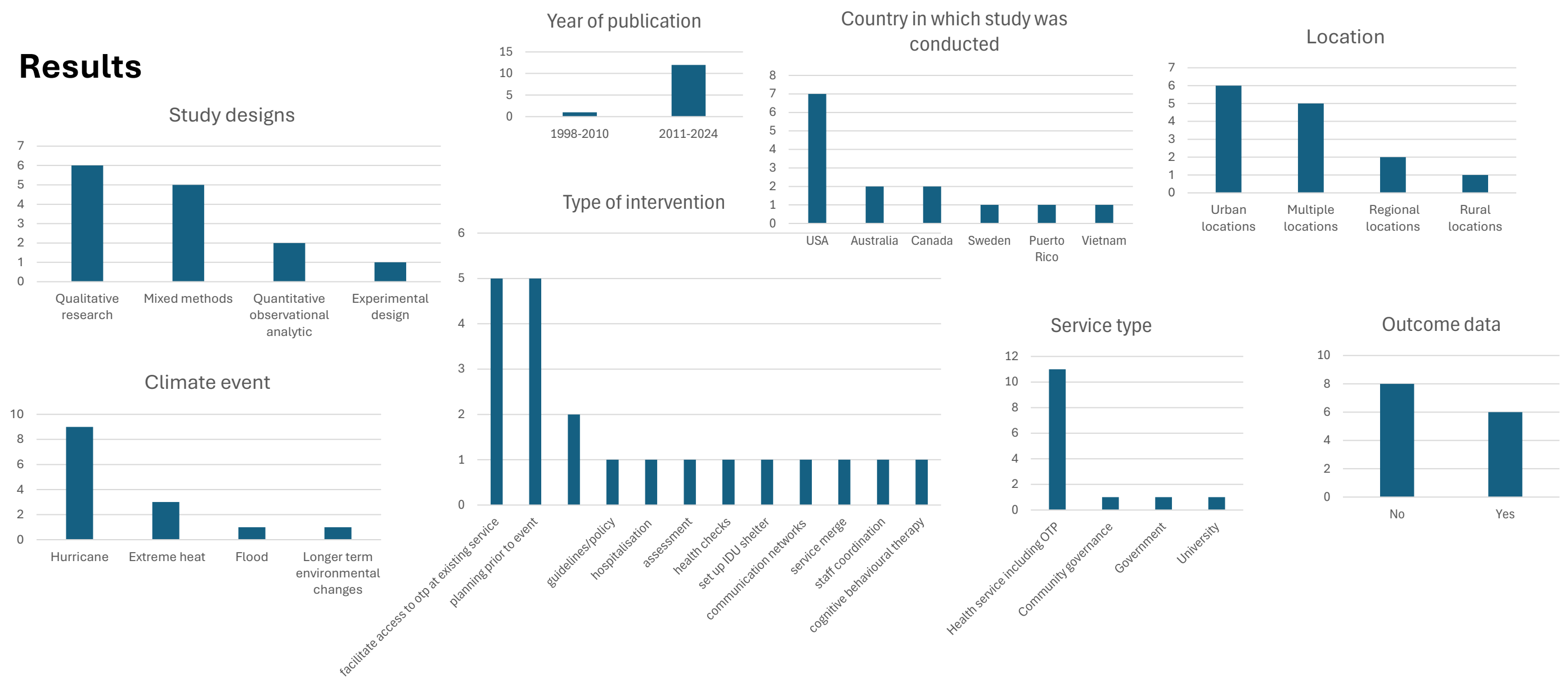
Introduction

Current and emerging impacts of climate change for people who use alcohol and other drugs (AoD) include increased AoD use, decreased, or mixed changes in AoD use, changed drug markets, reduced or disrupted service access, specific physiological vulnerabilities of some AoD users to extreme heat and compounded mental health problems (MacLean et al., under review). As effects of climate change intensify it is important to develop an evidence-base for service and policy responses.

Method

We conducted a scoping review of peer-reviewed literature identifying policy and service responses to mitigate the impacts of climate change for people who use AoD, including English language peer-reviewed literature published 1998 to July 2024. Included papers document outcomes for people impacted by climate-associated events and service responses. The review protocol was registered with Open Science Framework.

Results



Discussion and implications

14 studies were included. Only one study of an intervention supporting climate adaptation for people who use AoD entailed an experimental design. This body of research increased over the study period, albeit remaining small. Most existing studies were conducted in the United States, in response to hurricanes. Documented adaptation measures have mostly been undertaken by health services offering opioid treatment programs (OTP). Interventions most frequently implemented are facilitating access to OTP and planning prior to the event. Outcomes were reported in less than half of included studies. An increased focus is warranted on designing, implementing and evaluating interventions that seek to mitigate effects of climate change on people who use AoD.

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