

Report calls for urgent action on climate change inequality

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Poor and marginalized people in Wales are most likely to be exposed to the negative effects of climate change, a report has found.

The study, by Cardiff University, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales Sophie Howe and Public Health Wales, examined the links between inequality and [climate change](#).

Despite being least responsible for the [climate](#) crisis, the report shows how those in the most deprived areas of the country are at a greater risk from extreme weather events like flooding, which could threaten their homes and their livelihoods.

Report author Dr. Sara MacBride-Stewart, Reader in Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences, said: "After COP26, we are at something of a watershed moment for action on climate change here in Wales, and indeed across the UK and the rest of the world. And, our report highlights the grave consequences for some sections of society if we do not get this right.

"So far, mitigating factors like reducing the numbers of cars on the road, while effective in reducing emissions, make life more difficult for poorer people living in remote locations who might not be able to afford or have access to greener modes of transport. Likewise, the significant financial investments required for energy saving measures in our homes and when shopping for low-carbon organic foods remain prohibitive for swathes of the Welsh population.

"We want to see this acknowledged in action on climate change so that inequalities don't widen as new measures are brought on stream. It is also vital that we recognize how climate change links to our understanding of equality so important concepts like decarbonisation become one part of a suite of ambitions in achieving sustainability and well-being for us and our planet."

The report also shows how a business as usual approach to policy development risks making inequality worse for those without the

resources to respond, cope and recover.

Policymakers must instead involve these communities when developing measure to mitigate climate change by inviting them to regional citizens' assemblies. Doing so will ensure their experiences are no longer overlooked and avoid worsening inequalities, the team says.

Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, said: "Climate change is an equality issue and this report finds that the link has so far been overlooked in Wales—we must reinvent policies to address the disadvantages to those who are most vulnerable."

Drawing on Welsh Government strategy, the report shows how an estimated 245,000 properties in Wales are at risk of flooding—a result of climate change caused by rising carbon emissions.

Sophie Howe, who is also an Honorary Research Fellow at Cardiff Business School, added: "With flooding occurring more and more often, we need a plan to ensure the financial burden doesn't fall on those least able to pay—and an agreed Wales-wide approach to ensuring public services are able to respond in the right way.

"The Well-being of Future Generations Act says that by law, the way we get to net zero has to improve well-being as a whole, for everyone. Public bodies and decision-makers must take action now to stop those affected by the devastating effects of climate change being disadvantaged for generations."

The report also examined the impact of changes to the world of work and demographic change on existing [inequality](#).

The study calls for:

- Greater diversity in education and training so the predicted growth in science, technology and green jobs will benefit those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- A focus on job redesign and training with the growth of AI and automation
- Consideration of equality for new policies on universal basic income and remote working
- Adapted systems in health and [social care](#), employment and education, and pensions
- A 'care-led recovery' which puts childcare and the care needs of older people on an equal footing with 'green jobs' in benefitting health, the environment and the economy.

Co-author Dr. Alison Parken, Lecturer in Management, Employment and Organisation at Cardiff Business School, said: "COVID-19 has had an immeasurable impact on the people of Wales affecting the health and well-being of individuals and communities and significantly impacting upon our systems of work, education and care.

"And, while many in society have experienced the fallout, the impact has not been felt equally. Our [report](#) spotlights those who have been hit hardest, offering policymakers guidance on where action is required to overcome inequalities we already knew existed long before the pandemic and which have been further compounded over the last eighteen months.

"I'm pleased to say that the Welsh Government is already taking action by taking forward a recommendation from its Gender Equality Review and this recent Future Generations Commission research on future inequalities, by looking to the future of skills, training and retraining in the transition to Net Zero. An Evidence Panel of equality and sustainability organizations, policymakers and academics is working through an equality mainstreaming and Just Transitions approach to policymaking, to examine how to ensure we avoid carrying existing labor

market inequalities into the transition to net zero jobs and skills.

"The panel is considering both in new jobs and existing job roles that will require new skills. Through this collaboration, we have an opportunity to think for the long-term about how to prevent the reproduction of structural inequalities in the next new economic era."

More information: Inequality in a Future Wales.

[www.futuregenerations.wales/re ... y-in-a-future-wales/](http://www.futuregenerations.wales/re...y-in-a-future-wales/)

Provided by Cardiff University

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