

# People must be 'heart' of climate action, researchers say

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Tackling the climate crisis can only be achieved by "placing people at the heart of climate action," researchers say. The research team, led by the University of Exeter, warn against relying solely on breakthroughs in

climate science and technology. Instead, they say social science can help engage people and societies, and ensure a green transition that is both effective and promotes other goals such as well-being, equity and fairness.

The paper is the first to be published by the new Advancing Capacity for Climate and Environment Social Science (ACCESS) program.

"To meet our climate goals, we need both profound societal change and continued technical improvements," said ACCESS team leader Professor Patrick Devine-Wright, from the University of Exeter.

"This dual approach can improve people's quality of life, reduce emissions and ensure thriving economies and ecosystems."

"If people are at the heart of climate action, then understanding and tackling [climate change](#) cannot be done by engineers or natural scientists alone."

"All disciplines need to work together—not least a range of social sciences including political science, sociology, geography and psychology—to find solutions in ways that achieve wider societal goals."

Professor Devine-Wright, of Exeter's Department of Geography and the Global Systems Institute, was a Lead Author on the recent report from Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group III.

This was part of the IPCC's sixth assessment cycle and—for the first time—the latest report included a dedicated chapter on demand and social aspects of mitigation, and a cross-chapter analysis on equity and sustainable development.

Professor Devine-Wright said this progress should now continue, with

the aim of developing more visible, responsive and interdisciplinary [social science](#) that engages with people and is valued in its diversity by decision-makers from government, industry, civil society and law.

The paper concludes that "given that all climate solutions will involve people in one way or another, the social sciences have a vital role to play."

The paper was published in the journal *PLOS Climate*.

**More information:** Patrick Devine-Wright et al, Placing people at the heart of climate action, *PLOS Climate* (2022). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pclm.0000035](#)

Provided by University of Exeter

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