

## What is Climate and Environmental Justice?

### Climate Justice

Climate change does NOT affect us all equally. Almost 80% of the world's emissions are produced by the G20 countries ([UNEP, 2019](#)). Climate Change will have a bigger impact on future generations, and on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the UK and around the world. The people who have contributed the least to climate change are likely to be hit hardest. Yet, the carbon emissions of the world's richest 1 percent are more than double the emissions of the poorest half of humanity ([Oxfam, 2020](#)).

Policy responses to climate change provide us with the opportunity to create a fairer world by addressing inequality. However, it is possible that we could tackle climate change without addressing these issues. Already, we are seeing examples of the richest people in society buying their way out of the impacts, either by travelling to second homes to escape extreme flooding or hurricanes, or by employing private services, such as private fire fighters, to defend their property ([Smiley, 2018](#)). This is one of the reasons why social justice must be at the heart of all efforts towards achieving sustainability.

### Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is defined as the 'fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies' ([Bullard, 1999](#)). BAME groups and those on low incomes have historically been disproportionately impacted by negative environmental outcomes, such as the release of toxic chemicals into the natural environment, the development of polluting industries close to communities, or the positioning of homes next to busy roads. A recent study into air pollution exposure in London found that areas with the highest numbers of non-white ethnic group residents are more likely to have the highest concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> ([Williamson & Raoult, 2019](#)).

Access to and provision of urban green space has recently been identified as an Environmental Justice issue. Socioeconomically deprived sections of society, including minority ethnic groups and those on low incomes, often have less access to urban green spaces ([Silva, et al., 2018](#)). These spaces are crucial for people's mental and physical wellbeing.

### Recommendations for further reading:

- Bullough, O. (2019). *Moneyland: Why Thieves & Crooks Now Rule the World and How to Take it Back*. London: Profile Books
- Dorling, D. (2014). *Inequality and the 1%*. Reprint, London: Verso, 2019
- Klein, N. (2014). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs the Climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster
- Pickett, K. & Wilkinson, R. (2009). *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. London: Penguin

### References:

[Bullard, R. \(1999\). Dismantling Environmental Racism in the USA, \*Local Environment\*, 4:1, 5-19, Available from: 10.1080/13549839908725577](#)

[Oxfam, \(2020\), \*Confronting Carbon Inequality: Putting climate justice at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery\*. Available from: <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621052/mb-confronting-carbon-inequality-210920-en.pdf>](#)

[Silva, C. et al. \(2018\), Environmental Justice in Accessibility to Green Infrastructure in Two European Cities, \*Land\*, 7, 134, Available from: doi:10.3390/land7040134](#)

[Smiley, L. \(2018\), 'Private firefighters and five-star hotels: how the rich sit out wildfires', \*The Guardian\*, 20.09.2018. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/20/private-firefighters-wildfire-insurance-climate-change-capitalism>](#)

[United Nations Environment Programme, \(2019\), \*Fixing the Emissions Gap\*. UNEP, Nairobi. Available from: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30797/EGR2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>](#)

[Williamson, T. & Raoult, J. \(2019\). \*Air Pollution Exposure in London: Impact of the London Environment Strategy; Second Addendum Report: Further Analysis of Ethnicity and Exposure\*. 1293-2 Available from: \[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/aether\\\_bame\\\_aq\\\_analysis\\\_final.pdf\]\(https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/aether\_bame\_aq\_analysis\_final.pdf\)](#)