

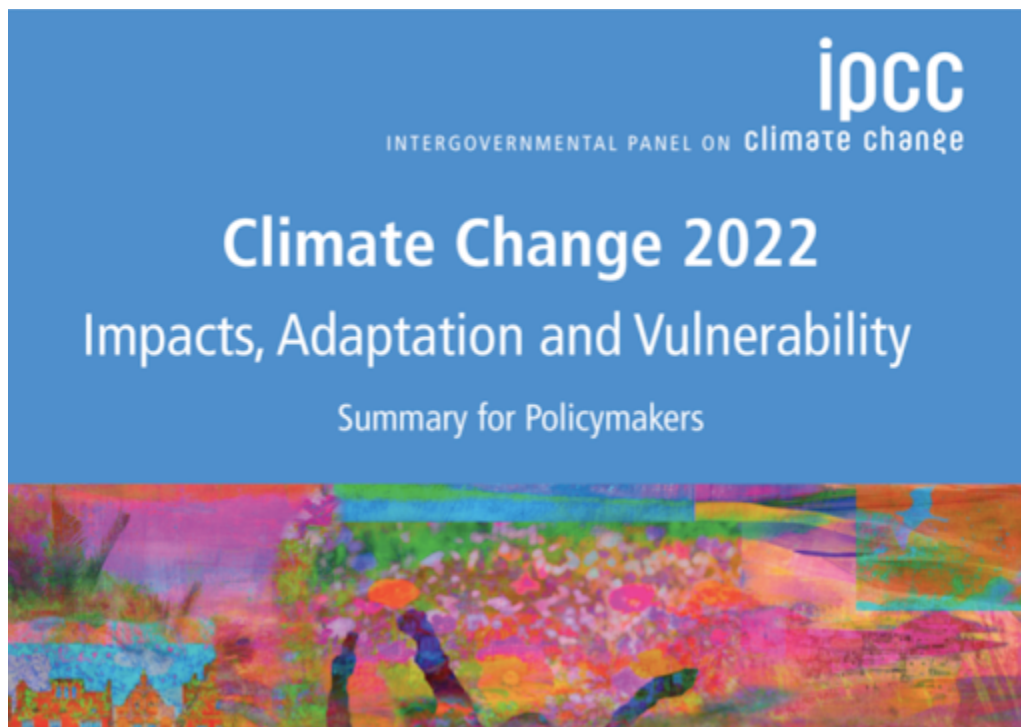


Tishman Environment
and Design Center



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IPCC WGII 6th Assessment Summary: EJ



[The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on
Climate Change's Working Group II](https://www.tishmancenter.org/blog/djvfv879rxgkmj1aagjfjq94me9j5c)

Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC WGII

AR6) was released on February 28, 2022: a 3,675-page tome that focuses on climate “Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability”. Governments around the world use this report as the authority on how climate change impacts nature and humanity.

270 researchers from 67 countries collaborated on the WGII AR6, synthesizing the latest scientific and social research to provide decision-makers with clear, actionable information. ([NOAA](#))

Many excellent explainers and analyses of the WGII AR6 have been published already - check out some of them here!

- NOAA - [The IPCC Climate Change 2022 Impacts Report: Why it matters](#)
- Yale Climate Connections - [Key takeaways from the new IPCC report](#)
- NPR Short Wave - [Silver Linings From The UN's Dire Climate Change Report](#)
- The Guardian - [What is the IPCC climate change report – and what does it say?](#)

In short, the IPCC’s new findings are dire. The previous report by Working Group I (WGI) reported that **today’s global surface temperature is 1.09°C**

above 1850-1900, dangerously close to the designated “safe” warming level of 1.5°C.

And “considering all five illustrative scenarios assessed by WGI, **there is at least a greater than 50% likelihood that global warming will reach or exceed 1.5°C in the near-term [by 2041], even for the very low greenhouse gas emissions scenario.**” (IPCC AR6 SPM 7)

The IPCC reports that climate change has had severe impacts on all areas of human life and the earth’s ecosystems, including natural disasters, biodiversity, ecosystem health, human physical/mental health and mortality, food and water insecurity, built infrastructures, economic production, the continuation of cultures, and involuntary migration.

It emphasizes that these climate hazards are not equally distributed among humanity: “Vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change differs substantially among and within regions, driven by patterns of intersecting socio-economic development, unsustainable ocean and land use, inequity, marginalization, historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism, and governance.” (SPM B.2)

The report also declares that current climate adaptation measures are inadequate and unequally distributed, as they tend to be “fragmented, small in scale, incremental, sector-specific, designed to respond to current impacts or near-term risks, and focused more on planning rather than implementation.” (C.1.2)

It’s been called “[an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership](#)”, “[a dire warning about the consequences of inaction](#)”, and depressingly, “[bleak, if familiar](#)”.

But, in our opinion, a shift in the way that the IPCC talks about the climate crisis is one of many reasons for hope. In contrast to the “[cold scientific language](#)” of past reports, the AR6 has a striking new focus on social justice. It is the first IPCC report to mention colonialism as a historical cause of the climate crisis. ([Vox](#)) And while the words “justice” and “inclusive” appeared approximately 0 times per 10,000 words in previous WGII reports, they are respectively used 7 and 9 times per 10,000 words in the WGII AR6. ([Time](#)) This direct recognition of environmental justice will hopefully give decision-makers a push to urgently develop transformative, inclusive, and just climate solutions.

Here, we've pulled out some highlights of the environmental justice issues in the AR6 Summary for Policymakers.



Unequally distributed impacts of climate change

Social inequities make certain groups much more vulnerable to climate hazards.

- “Regions and people with considerable **development constraints** have high vulnerability to climatic hazards. ... Hotspots of high human vulnerability are found particularly in **West-, Central-**

and East Africa, South Asia, Central and South America, Small Island Developing States and the Arctic. Vulnerability is higher in locations with **poverty, governance challenges and limited access to basic services and resources, violent conflict and high levels of climate-sensitive livelihoods** (e.g., smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fishing communities). ... Vulnerability at different spatial levels is exacerbated by ... marginalization linked to **gender, ethnicity, low income** or combinations thereof, especially for many **Indigenous Peoples and local communities.** Present development challenges causing high vulnerability are influenced by **historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism,** especially for many Indigenous Peoples and local communities” (B.2.4)

These hazards include:

- Food & water insecurity
 - Increasing weather and climate extreme events have exposed millions of people to acute food insecurity and

reduced water security, with the largest impacts observed in ... Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Small Islands and the Arctic ... sudden losses of food production and access to food compounded by decreased diet diversity have increased malnutrition in many communities, especially for Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers and low-income households, with children, elderly people and pregnant women particularly impacted.” (B.1.3)

- City & infrastructure stability
 - Climate and pollution hazards “are concentrated amongst the economically and socially marginalized urban residents, e.g., in informal settlements.” (B.1.5)

- “Future human vulnerability will continue to concentrate where the capacities of local, municipal and national governments, communities and the private sector are least able to provide infrastructures and basic services.”
(B.2.5)
- “Sea level rise poses an existential threat for some Small Islands and some low-lying coasts.”
(B.4.5)
- Health
 - “Climate-sensitive food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne disease risks are projected to increase ... In particular, dengue risk will increase ... in Asia, Europe, Central and South America and sub-Saharan Africa, potentially putting additional billions of people at risk by the end of the century.” (B.4.4)

- “Mental health challenges, including anxiety and stress, are expected to increase under further global warming in all assessed regions, particularly for children, adolescents, elderly, and those with underlying health conditions.” (B.4.4)
- Involuntary displacement
 - “Climate and weather extremes are increasingly driving displacement in all regions, with small island states disproportionately affected ... Through displacement and involuntary migration ... climate change has generated and perpetuated vulnerability.” (B.1.7)



Recommendations for climate change adaptation

Current adaptation measures are inadequate and can neglect or harm the most vulnerable communities.

- “Observed adaptation is unequally distributed across regions, and gaps are partially driven by widening disparities between the estimated costs of adaptation and documented finance allocated to adaptation. The largest adaptation gaps exist among lower income population groups.” (C.1.2)
- “Globally, more **financing** is directed at physical

infrastructure than natural and social infrastructure and there is limited evidence of investment in the informal settlements hosting the most vulnerable urban residents.”
(C.2.7)

- **“Maladaptation** [climate adaptation that leads to unintended negative effects] especially affects marginalised and vulnerable groups adversely (e.g., Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities, low-income households, informal settlements), reinforcing and entrenching existing inequities.”
(C.4.3)

Integrative, transformative, and long-term measures that include marginalized communities and multiple forms of knowledge in decision-making will be both the most effective and just adaptations to climate change.

- **“Integrated, multi-sectoral solutions that address social inequities and differentiate responses based on climate risk and local situation will enhance food security and nutrition”** such as agroforestry, community-based adaptation, farm and landscape diversification, urban

agriculture, and agroecological principles.” (C.2.2)

- “Cooperation, and inclusive decision making, with local communities and Indigenous Peoples, as well as recognition of inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, is integral to successful **forest adaptation** in many areas.” (C.2.3)

- “Inclusive **governance** that prioritises equity and justice in adaptation planning and implementation leads to more effective and sustainable adaptation outcomes. Vulnerabilities and climate risks are often reduced through carefully designed and implemented ... interventions that address context specific inequities such as based on gender, ethnicity, disability, age, location and income. These approaches ... focus on capacity-building, and meaningful participation of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, and their access to key resources to adapt.” (C.5.6)

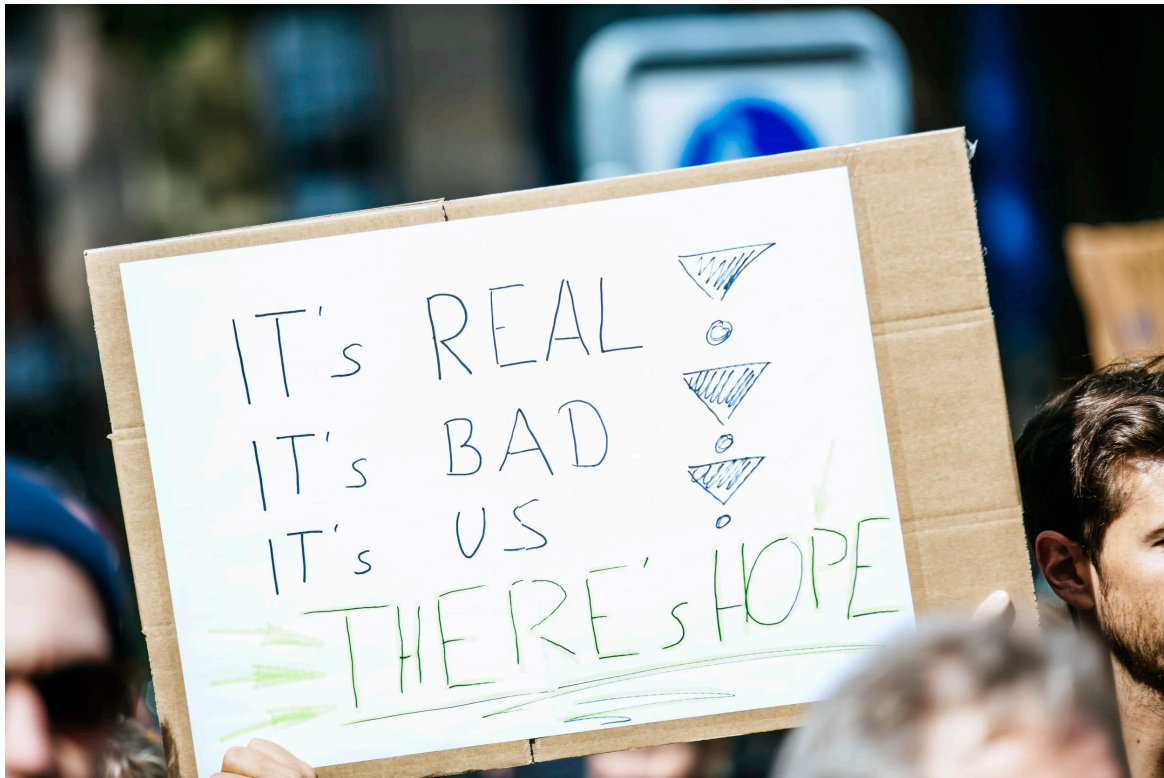
- “Integrating climate adaptation into **social protection programs**, including cash transfers and public works programmes, is highly feasible and increases resilience to climate change, especially when supported by

basic services and
infrastructure.” (C.2.9)

- “Climate resilient development is facilitated by **international cooperation** and by governments at all levels working with communities, civil society, educational bodies, scientific and other institutions, media, investors and businesses; and by developing partnerships with traditionally marginalised groups, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and ethnic minorities.” (D.2)
- “Evidence shows that climate resilient development processes link **scientific, Indigenous, local, practitioner and other forms of knowledge**, and are more effective and sustainable because they are locally appropriate and lead to more legitimate, relevant and effective actions.” (D.2.1)

In the WGII AR6, the IPCC’s warning is clearer than ever: we must immediately act to realize transformative adaptations which address the intertwined issues of environmental and social justice. As the report concludes, “Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of

opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all.” (D.5.3)



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