

# Climate Justice, Gender and LGBTIQ

*As there are more than two genders, it is important to reflect on the interrelation between climate justice, gender and LGBTIQ persons. The other gender-related identities — such as transgender, genderqueer and non-binary — need to be part of the analysis when reflecting on gender justice. This briefing provides some insight into the many ways in which LGBTIQ individuals are disproportionately affected by climate change. It gives examples of good practices and suggests ways to move forward to achieve climate justice.*

LGBTIQ is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people. There are many different forms of the acronym; however, in this paper, the EU standard (LGBTIQ) will be used.

While gender equality is partially incorporated into policies to promote climate justice, there remains a notable oversight regarding LGBTIQ perspectives. Policies that are developed to be gender-responsive often operate within a binary framework, failing to adequately encompass the diverse needs of LGBTIQ individuals. This extends to data collection efforts, resulting in a significant dearth of information on the specific impacts of climate change on the LGBTIQ community. The imperative for further exploration of this issue is underscored by existing research highlighting the marginalisation of LGBTIQ individuals and the disproportionate impact of environmental issues on marginalised groups.

## Economic Inequality and Vulnerabilities in LGBTIQ Communities

Discrimination against LGBTIQ communities permeates modern history, resulting in deep social injustices and a general vulnerability that is amplified by climate change and disasters. The stigma around being LGBTIQ and the lack of institutional support pushes people toward (further) socio-economic vulnerability. Apart from often being denied job opportunities and equal pay, sexual and gender minorities are at greater risk of poverty and housing insecurity than cisgender heterosexuals. A recent survey by ILGA Europe suggests that one in five LGBTIQ individuals in the European Union experiences homelessness. This number increases to a third of trans persons and 40% of intersex individuals.

It is crucial to recognise that LGBTIQ individuals facing homelessness encounter heightened risks of violence, discrimination, and exposure to extreme weather events. Financial constraints and housing insecurity can impede their ability to procure and store necessary food supplies for disaster preparedness. Consequently, it is imperative to adopt an integrated approach that acknowledges the intersectionality of poverty, homelessness, and vulnerability to climate change.

The diversity within LGBTIQ communities further highlights the need for adopting an intersectional lens. LGBTIQ individuals of colour face a higher likelihood of experiencing poverty and homelessness compared to their white counterparts within the community. In the United States, the intersectionality of being transgender, young, and a person of colour amid the climate







crisis renders this demographic statistically the most susceptible to poverty, homelessness, and violence. Similarly, the struggles of LGBTIQ individuals experiencing poverty may have little resemblance to the struggles of their wealthier counterparts.

## LGBTIQ People and Climate Disasters

Sexual and gender minorities are often excluded from information campaigns, emergency services, and relief support. Many countries lack laws and policies that protect the right to disaster relief for LGBTIQ people, even though previous events show how discrimination against LGBTIQ individuals affects their ability to cope with environmental disasters. For example, Puerto Rican queer and trans individuals had limited access to certain medicines and hormones while also dealing with an increase in discrimination and violence after Hurricane Maria. Cases have been documented in which violence against LGBTIQ persons increased in response to natural disasters, following remarks made by religious authorities blaming LGBTIQ people for the events. Incidents of discrimination involving faith-based organisations are especially problematic since these institutions have key roles in disaster relief.

## Promoting Meaningful Participation and Preventing Discrimination

Policymakers at all levels (international, national, regional, local) and civil society leaders need to create the conditions for meaningful LGBTIQ representation and participation. As Rebecca Sutton from the organisation Lesbisk Makt (Lesbian Power) points out:

*"It is important not to put the responsibility on LGBTIQ people to create an inclusive environment but to work proactively to create an environment where people can devote themselves to the issue without having to spend their energy on dealing with microaggressions."*

Organisers and allies must be aware of and try to minimise potential risks associated with being publicly visible as an LGBTIQ person who speaks out on climate justice. Activist movements should also ensure that activists who identify as LGBTIQ have access to safe spaces and influential platforms. Increasing the representation of LGBTIQ is one step toward creating safe spaces. There are many more ways to do this, such as gender-neutral and inclusive language.

The changes needed to promote equal participation of LGBTIQ people must be part of a structural transformation in all societies towards more gender-inclusive equality, addressing the structural discrimination stemming from patriarchy, heteronormativity and other intersecting structures of discrimination and oppression. States have to assume their responsibilities and ensure the human rights of sexual and gender minority populations are met and that their climate change and adaptation policies respond to their needs as well. They must adopt laws and guidelines that prevent discrimination, especially for disaster prevention and relief institutions.

## Recommendations

- Non-discrimination policies should include measures to protect people's right to sexual orientation and gender identities at all levels, including those of states, corporations, and associations, to ensure comprehensive protection.
- Integrate intersectional gender and LGBTIQ perspectives throughout the entire spectrum of data collection, analysis, and advocacy efforts aimed at advancing climate justice, thus fostering a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by diverse communities.
- Recognise and amplify the vital role of civil society in driving climate justice awareness and holding polluting entities accountable. Strengthening these grassroots initiatives is paramount.
- Provide increased resources to numerous LGBTIQ organisations striving to broaden their outreach within the community, thereby facilitating greater inclusivity and empowerment.
- Foster a robust and inclusive culture of civic engagement that embraces all marginalised groups, as the vitality of our democracies hinges upon the active participation and representation of diverse voices in the pursuit of collective progress.



## SPOTLIGHT on Queers x Climate and Out for Sustainability

There is a lot of resilience and knowledge within different LGBTIQ communities. Many activists as well as grassroots collectives — like Queers x Climate and Out for Sustainability — gather and spread information about the environmental impacts on LGBTIQ individuals. For example, Queers x Climate is an international queer-led initiative dedicated to promoting climate activism in the LGBTIQ community and beyond. They bring together queer-led groups that are setting up or participating in climate justice marches. Recently, Out for Sustainability became the first LGBTIQ organisation to receive observer status by the UNFCCC.



Fridays for Future protest in Berlin 2021

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## Abbreviations

LGBTIQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer    UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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## About The Project

'Gender and Climate Justice: Knowledge for Empowerment' with the acronym 'COPGendered' is an EU-funded project under the Erasmus+ programme that commenced in December 2022 and will run for three years. The project is led by WIDE+ and a transnational consortium of seven leading partners, including Gender CC, WIDE Austria, GADIP, KULU Women and Development, Mundubat, and CSCD. The primary aim is to equip learners with tools, knowledge, and methodologies to understand and address the critical connections between gender inequality and the climate crisis.

This briefing paper is part of a series of papers that delve into specific themes on the nexus of gender and climate justice. This includes the following briefing papers:

- Gender and Climate Justice
- Climate Justice, Gender and Energy
- Climate Justice, Gender and Transport
- Gender and Climate-Induced Migration
- Climate Justice, Gender and Extractivism

You can read more about the COPGendered project at: <https://wideplus.org/copgendered-project/>



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