



Marginalised people twice as likely to live in neighbourhoods most exposed to environmental harm

Description

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Flats in London, illustrating marginalised people more likely to be exposed to environmental harm

New analysis published today by the [environmental justice](#) organisation, [Friends of the Earth](#) reveals stark [inequalities](#) in exposure to [pollution](#), access to [nature](#) and other [climate](#) impacts that are affecting communities across England.

The data shows not only how millions of people are living with [overlapping environmental threats](#) on their doorstep, but how certain people are at higher risk of suffering these hazards.

According to the analysis, people of colour are more than twice as likely to live in the areas most affected by environmental harm, making up 60% of the population living in the 10% of neighbourhoods most at risk.

Meanwhile, people living on low-incomes are two and a half times more likely to experience the most acute environmental threats. Nearly half (49%) of these neighbourhoods are in parts of England where incomes are lowest.

Friends of the Earth has drawn its analysis using a new tool [launched by the Environment Agency and Natural England on 22 June](#). It tracks where environmental threats overlap to hit communities most severely.

Friends of the Earth played an instrumental role in helping to develop the Index for Multiple Environmental Deprivation (IMED). It combines six datasets, including:

- Noise and air pollution.
- Access to green spaces and quality of surrounding wildlife.
- Flood risk and exposure to extreme heat.

- Rankings for neighbourhoods across England according to the converging environmental harms felt by communities.

Environmental harm not evenly distributed

With the tool's help, Friends of the Earth can also reveal that environmental harm is not evenly distributed across England. It shows that the neighbourhoods most exposed to environmental harm tend to be clustered in regions. This means some local authorities face a far greater concentration of the worst-off neighbourhoods than others.

London stands out as a particular area of concern. Half of all neighbourhoods fall within the bottom 10% of environmentally exposed areas in England.

The West Midlands, East of England, East Midlands and South East also have high concentrations of neighbourhoods on the frontlines of environmental harm. They all have between 27% and 32% of neighbourhoods ranking among the most affected nationally.

Friends of the Earth is calling on the government, local authorities and public bodies to use the newly available tool to inform decision-making at all levels. This should include planning policy, the allocation of resources, and the design of environmental strategies.

Asad Rehman, chief executive of Friends of the Earth, said:

The launch of this new official data confirms what Friends of the Earth has long campaigned to bring to light: that the impacts of environmental harm are not dealt evenly across our society. The story it tells is one of environmental injustice, plain and simple.

Constantly breathing in dirty air and greater exposure to heatwaves inevitably takes its toll on health over time, let alone the mental health impacts of having little access to green space. And what about recovering from the financial blow of climate impacts like flooding for those barely making enough to get by?

Backed by this data, communities will be better equipped to hold their decisionmakers to account for environmental harms locally, while policymakers will have the evidence to target interventions where they're needed most.

Action on climate and nature isn't just about safeguarding our environment, it's always been about protecting people and creating healthier, fairer places for everyone to live.

Featured image via the Canary

By [The Canary](#)

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