



Climate crisis

Children set for more climate disasters than their grandparents, research shows

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People born today will suffer many times more extreme heatwaves and other climate disasters over their lifetimes than their grandparents, research has shown.

The study is the first to assess the contrasting experience of climate extremes by different age groups and starkly highlights the intergenerational injustice posed by the climate crisis.

The analysis showed that a child born in 2020 will endure an average of 30 extreme heatwaves in their lifetime, even if countries fulfil their current pledges to cut future carbon emissions. That is seven times more heatwaves than someone born in 1960.

Today's babies will also grow up to experience twice as many droughts and wildfires and three times more river floods and crop failures than someone who is 60 years old today.

However, rapidly cutting global emissions to keep global heating to 1.5C would almost halve the heatwaves today's children will experience, while keeping under 2C would reduce the number by a quarter.

A vital task of the UN's Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow in November is to deliver pledges of bigger emissions cuts from the most polluting countries and climate justice will be an important element of the negotiations. Developing countries, and the youth strike protesters who have taken to the streets around the world, point out that those who did least to cause the climate crisis are suffering the most.

"Our results highlight a severe threat to the safety of young generations and call for drastic emission reductions to safeguard their future," said Prof Wim Thiery, at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium and who led the research. He said people under 40 today were set to live "unprecedented" lives, ie suffering heatwaves, droughts, floods and crop failures that would have been virtually impossible - 0.01% chance - without global heating.

Dr Katja Frieler, at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany and part of the study team, said: "The good news is we can take much of the climate burden from our children's shoulders if we limit warming to 1.5C by phasing out fossil fuel use. This is a huge opportunity."

Leo Hickman, editor of Carbon Brief, said: "These new findings reinforce our 2019 analysis which showed that today's children will need to emit eight times less CO2 over the course of their lifetime than their grandparents, if global warming is to be kept below 1.5C. Climate change is already exacerbating many injustices, but the intergenerational injustice of climate change is particularly stark."

The research, published in the journal Science, combined extreme event projections from sophisticated computer climate models, detailed population and life expectancy data, and global temperature trajectories from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The scientists said the increases in climate impacts calculated for today's young people were likely to be underestimates, as multiple extremes within a year had to be grouped together and the greater intensity of events was not accounted for.

There was significant regional variation in the results. For example, the 53 million children born in Europe and central Asia between 2016 and 2020 will experience about four times more extreme events in their lifetimes under current emissions pledges, but the 172 million children of the same age in sub-Saharan Africa face 5.7 times more extreme events.

“This highlights a disproportionate climate change burden for young generations in the global south,” the researchers said.

Dohyeon Kim, an activist from South Korea who took part in the global climate strike on Friday, said: “Countries of the global north need to push governments to put justice and equity at the heart of climate action, both in terms of climate [aid] and setting more ambitious pledges that take into consideration historical responsibilities.”

The analysis found that only those aged under 40 years today will live to see the consequences of the choices made on emissions cuts. Those who are older will have died before the impacts of those choices become apparent in the world.

extreme, assess, stark(ly), pledge, vital, severe, drastic, unprecedented, reinforce, exacerbate, impact

What kind of climate disaster do you fear the most?

What kind of climate disaster aren't you worried about?

What are you doing to help the environment?

Do you think it is possible to phase out fossil fuel in Korea?

In order to avoid climate extremes, it is vital for Koreans to

What impact did this article have on you?

There is a stark difference between ----- and -----.

In your experience, what exacerbates problems?

Seoul Considers Lifelong Learning Centers for “Slow Learners”



Illustration by Kim Sang-min

The Kyunghyang Shinmun confirmed on September 14 that the Seoul metropolitan government has begun promoting a lifelong education center for people with borderline intelligence functioning (BIF) for the first time in Korea. Borderline intelligence functioning describes people who are not diagnosed with an intellectual disability, but who fail to meet normal intellectual functioning. Usually, they have an IQ of 71–84 and are known as slow learners.

In the past, there was no state support for people with BIF. They were excluded from various state programs for the disabled, because they were always on the border between people with and without disabilities. People with BIF face challenges, such as poor performance in schools, maladjustment, and failure to lead independent lives throughout their entire lives, but since they can't be registered as intellectually disabled, they hardly receive welfare benefits, such as support in education and employment. Domestic research on BIF is also just taking its first baby steps.

Thus, various policies on BIF are mostly attached with the modifier, “first,” when they are implemented. But in South Korea, there are more people with BIF than people registered as disabled. Of the total 9.83 million

citizens of Seoul, 1.34 million or 13.6% are estimated to have BIF. This is a bigger number than the 393,408 (4.1%) people registered as disabled in Seoul at the end of last year.

Last October, the Seoul metropolitan government enacted an ordinance to support lifelong learning for people with BIF for the first time in the nation. This means, the legal basis to support lifelong learning for people with BIF was enacted as a local ordinance for the first time only last year. Seocho-gu was also the first local district to enact a similar ordinance at the gu level last February.

Centers providing lifelong learning to people with BIF are necessary for these people need to be educated in all situations literally throughout their entire lives. Since 2019, the city had run a project to support the independence of children with BIF at child welfare facilities, a project to support the independence of slow learners among young people, and a pilot project to establish a system supporting the independence of slow learners, but they ended up as one-time events even within the metropolitan government. So there was a need to provide more structured and continuous support measures. The Seoul metropolitan government plans to design a specific plan and begin establishing the center as soon as the relevant budget is finalized in November. However, a representative of the metropolitan government said, "Since we are still reviewing the issue with the doors open to all possibilities, we are not at a stage to disclose specific plans."

Chae Yu-mi, a member of the Seoul Metropolitan Council who proposed the Seoul ordinance on lifelong learning for people with BIF told the reporter over the phone this day, "Setting up a lifelong learning center for people with BIF is just the first step for such people," and added, "At present, the city is working to open just one center in the city center, but in the long term, we need to open more centers for people with BIF and operate them in all areas in Seoul, allowing people with BIF and their families to receive services near their place of residence."

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promote, diagnose, disability, baby steps, enact, literally

Is promoting lifelong education for people with BIF a good idea?

Should the government financially support people with BIF?

Do you know someone who has BIF?

Are you surprised that 1.34 million people in Seoul have BIF?

Should lifelong learning centers be set up throughout Korea?

In your opinion, what should the government promote?