

**The Young Women’s Movement Parliamentary Briefing:**

**Debate on Urgent Action to Tackle Climate Change**

14th May 2024

**BACKGROUND** 

The Young Women’s Movement is Scotland’s national organisation for young women’s leadership and rights. We have existed for 100 years. Our movement is focused on protecting and progressing the rights of young women and girls. Our vision is a fairer Scotland where young women and girls are meaningfully heard, valued and supported to lead collective action and enact transformational change throughout society, systems and structures.

**SUMMARY**

The Young Women’s Movement welcomes this debate on urgent action to tackle climate change in Scotland. We are increasingly concerned about the lack of progress in tackling climate change in Scotland, and the devastating impact this is having on the health and wellbeing of young women and girls. Young women and girls are passionate about protecting the planet and creating a better world for themselves and future generations. They care deeply about their communities and are disillusioned about the dropping of key climate targets by the Scottish Government in recent months. There is no doubt that the climate crisis is taking a [profound toll on the mental health](https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/news-events/news/children-young-people-fear-government-no-longer-cares-about-climate-change-says) of children and young people. Young women fear that the Government no longer cares about climate change.

At The Young Women’s Movement, we believe that young women deserve to be meaningfully heard and listened to on issues that affect the climate and the world around them. Young women deserve a future with an improved quality of life, more fairness, and better outcomes. We ask MSPs to consider their views and concerns when participating in this debate today.

**YOUNG WOMEN’S VIEWS**

In recent months we have been engaging with young women aged 16 to 35 to gather their views on tackling the climate emergency in Scotland.

Many young women expressed feeling demoralised about the state of the planet and the general lack of progress in tackling the effects of climate change and preventing severe crimes against the environment in Scotland.

One young woman noted that because political systems tend to rely on the support and funding of non-renewable industries to remain in power, any attempt to curb their influence and effectively respond to the climate emergency is ultimately futile. Another young woman noted that governments are also complicit by not enforcing the law, promising then dropping green investment pledges, facilitating corporations by subsiding fossil fuel industries, and actively guiding policy and permits around existing law and regulations. They are disillusioned and demoralised; they deserve to be listened to.

Despite growing efforts to work towards a “just transition” in Scotland, recent years have witnessed the increasing influence of corporate actors with vested interests in fossil fuels and other environmentally harmful industries. Oil refineries, the presence of oil tankers, nuclear power stations and a large plastics industry mean that there is a real and constant risk of leaks and spillage of environmentally damaging chemicals in Scotland. If we want to halt the climate crisis, The Young Women’s Movement believes we must urgently phase out the production and use of oil, coal and gas across Scotland and introduce transformational policies to tackle and mitigate climate change in line with just transition principles.

**GENDER-SENSITIVE DATA**

We know that climate change and crimes against the environment affects everyone – but not equally. The UN Women’s [vision for feminist climate justice](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/11/feminist-climate-justice-a-framework-for-action#:~:text=The%20vision%20for%20feminist%20climate,that%20is%20healthy%20and%20sustainable.) is of “a world in which everyone can enjoy the full range of human rights, free from discrimination, and flourish on a planet that is healthy and sustainable.” Research shows that climate change disproportionately affects women and girls worldwide, and that the climate crisis is not “[gender neutral](https://www.unfpa.org/publications/taking-stock-sexual-and-reproductive-and-health-and-rights-climate-commitments-global)”. This is further compounded when we add the lens of race and recognise the additional risks that face [Black, minority ethnic and Indigenous women](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/10/indigenous-women-speak-out-at-cop26-rally-femicide-is-linked-to-ecocide#:~:text=2%20years%20old-,Indigenous%20women%20speak%20out%20at%20Cop26%20rally,Femicide%20is%20linked%20to%20ecocide'&text=%E2%80%9CRemember%20my%20face%2C%E2%80%9D%20Sii,Cop26%20summit%20on%20Tuesday%20morning.) because of climate change and the devasting effects of extractive capitalism.

We still know very little about how climate change affects women and other marginalised groups in Scotland.In 2019, the Scottish Government’s National Advisory Council for Women and Girls noted that there is currently “[no available evidence showing gendered impacts of climate change in Scotland](https://www.generationequal.scot/climate-change-what-we-already-know/).” This hasn’t changed in five years – there is still no publicly available data on the gendered impacts of climate change.

For young women, girls and people of marginalised genders – whose experiences and perspectives have historically been overlooked – the collection and use of gender-sensitive, intersectional data can help address entrenched climate inequalities and inform solutions that strengthens their rights.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Young Women’s Movement believes that young women and girls deserve to be listened to for the Scottish Parliament to meaningfully tackle the climate emergency. The Scottish Government, through the Climate Justice Fund, promised to prioritise funding to those most vulnerable and at risk to climate change in developing countries – particularly women and youth – and ensure their participation is at the centre of their work. We ask that the Scottish Parliament extends this commitment to ensure young women and girls are meaningfully included in any policy that seeks to tackle climate change in Scotland going forward.

Pursuing a gender-neutral approach to tackling climate change means that young women and girls will continue to fall between the cracks in environmental legislation, policy and practice. Ignoring the unequal impacts of climate change will only make it harder to achieve a gender-equal Scotland. We ask that the Scottish Parliament commits to collecting gender-sensitive, intersectional data to make young women, girls and other marginalised groups in Scotland more visible in decision-making processes around the climate emergency.

There is too much emphasis placed on targets rather than policies to effectively tackle the climate crisis. We ask that the Scottish Parliament commits to measure and understand the extent of the problem as it currently stands and assess the impact of action to enforce existing environmental legislation going forward.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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