



Race, Pollution, and Climate

Across the U.S., Black and Indigenous communities and other communities of color are inequitably exposed to pollution and other environmental hazards – a phenomenon known as environmental racism, or the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color.¹ From the fact that chemical plants are more likely to be built near communities of color, to the fact that minority communities shoulder more polluting traffic, **environmental injustice is built into communities across the country** – and addressing this requires intentional policy.²

Air Pollution & Fossil Fuels

- Communities of color and other disadvantaged communities are **disproportionately exposed to more pollution from fossil fuels**.^{3, 4}
- Nearly 70% of Black Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant, putting them at greater risk of toxic pollution.⁵
 - Increased exposure to air pollution leads to increased asthma rates. Black Americans have the highest asthma rates in the country.⁶

Contaminated Waste

- **Race is the biggest indicator in the U.S. of whether someone lives near toxic waste**, and an estimated 70% of the country's contaminated waste sites are located near low-income housing.^{7, 8} Of the 9 million people living near commercial hazardous waste sites, 5.1 million are people of color.⁹

Redlining's Role

- **Racist policies of the past continue to affect communities of color today.** Redlining was a common practice used by banks and insurers until the late 1960s to concentrate minority homeowners within certain neighborhoods. On average, areas that were redlined are 5 degrees hotter, and some cities' redlined neighborhoods are 20 degrees hotter, due to lack of trees, disinvestment, and other factors.¹⁰
- People living in redlined neighborhoods also tend to have more energy inefficient homes, leading to a higher share of income spent on energy bills – compounding inequality.

What Can You Do?

- The best way to learn about environmental injustice in your community – and solutions championed by people impacted – is to get in touch with a local environmental justice group. **We can help you connect if need be!**

Citations

1. <https://greenaction.org/what-is-environmental-justice/>

2. www.jayinslee.com/issues/climate-justice

3. <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Fossil-Fuel-Racism.pdf>

4. www.insideclimateneeds.org/news/01032018/air-pollution-data-african-american-race-health-epa-research

5. <https://naacp.org/resources/coal-blooded-action-toolkit>

6. www.aafa.org/burden-of-asthma-on-minorities/

7. www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/08/climate-changed-racism-environment-south

8. www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/the-trump-administration-finds-that-environmental-racism-is-real/554315/

9. www.scientificamerican.com/article/past-racist-redlining-practices-increased-climate-burden-on-minority-neighborhoods/

10. <https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2022/04/new-energy-burden-calculator-highlights-unaffordable-burden-for-home-energ>