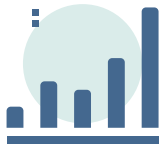


### Climate change affects everyone, but not equally

Changes in Washington's climate are already being felt across our state. As temperatures increase, rainfall patterns change, extreme weather increases and sea level rises, we can expect more hazardous events like heat waves, flooding, drought and wildfires. Climate hazards threaten all people's health, but communities already overburdened by poor environmental conditions, worse health outcomes, and fewer resources face a disproportionate risk of harm.



More high heat waves will increase risk for heat-related illnesses. People who are more exposed during heat waves, like those who work outdoors and those who cannot access or afford home cooling, bear higher risk. Risk is also greater for those sensitive to high heat, such as the elderly, the very young, and people with chronic illnesses like heart disease.



More intense winter storms, heavy rainfall events, higher storm surges and flooding can cause injuries and take lives. Factors like age, low income, limited English proficiency, caregiver dependency, or social isolation can affect people's ability to prepare for, cope with, and recover from extreme events.



Smoke from residential wood burning and wildfires can harm health when particulate pollution in the air reaches high levels. Vehicle emissions and dust are also important sources of particulate pollution. Poor air quality poses a greater threat to outdoor workers, and to sensitive populations such as children, the elderly, and those with asthma and heart disease.



Mental health effects of weather-related disasters like drought, wildfire and floods may include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Children, the elderly, people with low income, those without a home, and first responders are at greater risk. Loss of traditional lands and foods impact indigenous communities, threatening their health, food security, economies and cultural identity.

Climate change will amplify the social and environmental injustices and health inequities that some communities are already facing. Factors such as linguistic isolation, investment in neighborhoods, poverty, and lack of health insurance can lead to poor health outcomes and shorter life spans.

**WEALTHY / MOSTLY WHITE**

**+16 YEARS**

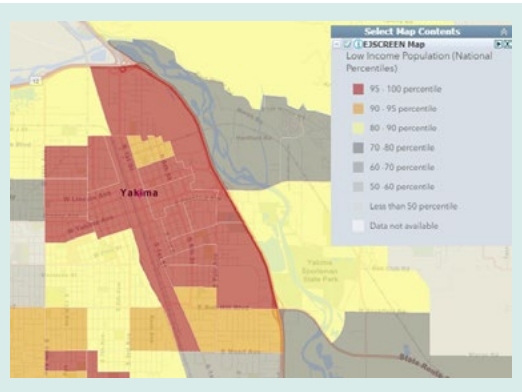
**LOW INCOME / POC**

In King County, a recent study found that people in wealthy and predominately white neighborhoods on average live 16 years longer than people of color living in low-income neighborhoods. A clear and consistent focus on environmental justice and equity throughout government agencies is essential to address these impacts.

### Accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-7585, or visit [ecology.wa.gov/accessibility](https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility). People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

For information in another language (interpreter available), please contact Millie Piazza at 360-407-6177.



## Environmental justice — a road map to understanding the impacts of climate change

In 2019, the Legislature and Governor established an Environmental Justice Task Force to incorporate environmental justice into the state’s decision making and investments. One focus of the task force is to incorporate environmental justice into agency processes. The Environmental Health Disparities map on the Washington Tracking Network ([www.doh.wa.gov/wtn](http://www.doh.wa.gov/wtn)) identifies where social, economic and environmental conditions lead to greater environmental health risks. Climate change is likely to exacerbate these disparities.

### Case study: Reducing carbon pollution, investing in Washington communities

Washington state is investing \$141 million from the 2016 Volkswagen settlement ([ecology.wa.gov/vw](http://ecology.wa.gov/vw)) to move toward a transportation system without harmful emissions. The Department of Ecology uses a Washington Tracking Network map to guide where settlement funds will be spent, with the aim of investing in communities most impacted by a combination of air pollution and socioeconomic conditions such as poverty and limited English proficiency.



### Equitable climate solutions require community engagement

People facing the greatest risks need to be included in identifying climate threats and finding solutions that matter for their community. Meaningful engagement is essential to elevating communities’ climate resilience and adaptation priorities. A greener economy powered by renewable energy, electric transport, improving the energy efficiency of buildings, and other sustainable practices will bring opportunities to Washington. The 2019 Clean Energy Transformation Act ([www.commerce.wa.gov/ceta](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/ceta)) requires electric and gas utilities in Washington to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2045. The act also requires utilities to inform their decarbonization plans by engaging communities highly impacted by health disparities and climate risks.

### Resources

An Unfair Share: Exploring Disproportionate Risks from Climate Change Facing Washington State Communities  
[frontandcentered.org/unfair-share](http://frontandcentered.org/unfair-share)

Fourth National Climate Assessment – Northwest  
[nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/24/](http://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/24/)

The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the U.S.  
[health2016.globalchange.gov](http://health2016.globalchange.gov)

Environmental Justice Task Force – see Final Report  
[healthequity.wa.gov/TheCouncilsWork/EnvironmentalJusticeTaskForceInformation](http://healthequity.wa.gov/TheCouncilsWork/EnvironmentalJusticeTaskForceInformation)

Department of Health  
[doh.wa.gov/communityandenvironment/climateandhealth](http://doh.wa.gov/communityandenvironment/climateandhealth)

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