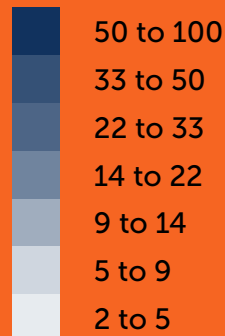


This map shows how plants producing harmful air pollution are placed near communities that are disproportionately home to people of color in Connecticut.

Percent People of Color



Plants Emitting Criteria Air Pollutants

Point Source

Air Pollution and Health: Climate Change is Deepening Environmental Injustices

The greenhouse gases that are driving climate change aren't just bad for the health of the climate: They're bad for the health of people. And the wildfires, droughts, and hotter days that are fueled by climate change make our air even healthier.

We are seeing more dangerous air days hundreds of miles downwind of wildfires, worsening pollen and allergies, and more ground level ozone—a key component of smog—as a result of these changes. Climate change and its impacts are [exacerbating asthma, lung, and heart disease](#), [contributing to premature birth](#), and [harming brain development in babies and children](#), among other health harms. All of these lead to more emergency room visits, lost work days, and missed school. They also make people more vulnerable to growing future impacts of climate change.



But the burden of air pollution isn't even. The communities suffering the most from poor air quality and exposure to pollution are most likely to be home to people of color and people with low incomes. These communities experience a greater burden in three ways:

- Sources of pollution and greenhouse gases—factories, power plants and highways, for example—are placed closest to their homes and communities.
- As a result of disinvestment and past policies like redlining and ongoing policies like [exclusionary zoning](#), these neighborhoods have the fewest financial resources to adapt and respond to climate change.
- The needs and priorities of these communities are under-represented in local, state, and regional governing bodies [as a result of gerrymandering and other voter suppression measures](#).

Creating Opportunities for Healthier Lives, Achieving Health Equity, and Slowing Climate Change

Careful crafting of policies and programs to respond to climate change—like transitioning to clean, renewable energy sources like solar or wind, investing in electric school buses, and building green infrastructure like parks and green space—can be powerful levers to improve air quality in communities, starting in those that have experienced a history of environmental injustices from the placement of industry, power and highways, and disinvestments.

Across the Country, People of Color and People with Low Incomes Are Exposed to Unhealthier Air from a Wide Range of Sources

Fine particulate matter air pollution, known as PM 2.5, is responsible for between 85,000 and 200,000 deaths per year in the United States. And in the U.S. today, the quality of the air we breathe is strongly connected to our race or ethnicity. According to the American Lung Association, people of color in the U.S. are 1.5 times more likely to live in an area with poor air quality than white people.

[This pattern is even clearer](#) when we look more deeply into where air pollution is coming from. People of color are exposed to more sources of PM 2.5 from construction, industry, homes, and vehicles than white people, and Black people are also exposed to significantly more air pollution from power plants than white people and other people of color.

Additionally, a [study of 13.2 million Medicare recipients nationwide](#) showed that low income consistently increased the risk of early death from PM 2.5.

