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# EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States

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## Contact Information

EPA Press Office ([press@epa.gov](mailto:press@epa.gov))

**WASHINGTON (Sept. 2, 2021)** — A new EPA analysis released today shows that the most severe harms from climate change fall disproportionately upon underserved communities who are least able to prepare for, and recover from, heat waves, poor air quality, flooding, and other impacts. EPA's analysis indicates that racial and ethnic minority communities are particularly vulnerable to the greatest impacts of climate change. *Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impact Sectors* is one of the most advanced environmental justice studies to date that looks at how projected climate change impacts may be distributed across the American public.

“The impacts of climate change that we are feeling today, from extreme heat to flooding to severe storms, are expected to get worse, and people least able to prepare and cope are disproportionately exposed,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan** “This report punctuates the urgency of equitable action on climate change. With this level of science and data, we can more effectively center EPA’s mission on achieving environmental justice for all.”

EPA’s new, peer-reviewed report shows the degree to which four socially vulnerable populations— defined based on income, educational attainment, race and ethnicity, and age—may be more exposed to the highest impacts of climate change. The report quantifies six types of impacts, including those to health from changes in air quality and extreme temperature, disruptions to weather-exposed workers, and flooding threats to property.

Key findings of the report include:

- That Black and African American individuals are projected to face higher impacts of climate change for all six impacts analyzed in this report, compared to all other demographic groups. For example, with 2°C (3.6°F) of global warming, Black and African American individuals are:
  - 34% more likely to currently live in areas with the highest projected increases in childhood asthma diagnoses. This rises to 41% under 4°C (7.2°F) of global warming.
  - 40% more likely to currently live in areas with the highest projected increases in extreme temperature related deaths. This rises to 59% under 4°C of global warming.
- That Hispanics and Latinos have high participation in weather-exposed industries, such as construction and agriculture, which are especially vulnerable to the effects of extreme temperatures. With 2°C (3.6°F) of global warming, Hispanic and Latino individuals are 43% more likely to currently live in areas with the highest projected reductions in labor hours due to extreme temperatures. With regards to transportation, Hispanic and Latino individuals are about 50% more likely to currently live in areas with the highest estimated increases in traffic delays due to increases in coastal flooding.

This significant study represents an important milestone in understanding the future impacts of climate change on different American populations, especially under resourced communities. Due to data and modeling limitations, this study is limited to the contiguous U.S. Future work will enhance both the coverage of other important areas, such as Hawaii and Alaska, and will explore additional impact sectors and measures of social vulnerability.

Today's analysis will help further efforts being taken by the Biden Administration across the Federal government to advance environmental justice and to address the disproportionate impacts that climate change is having on vulnerable communities. During his first weeks in office, President Biden issued Executive Order 14008 on *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad* [↗](#), which established the first-ever White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council [↗](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/white-house-environmental-justice-advisory-council), the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council, and the Justice40 Initiative [↗](#). Through the Justice40 Initiative, the Federal government is, for the first time in history, working to ensure [↗](#) that at least 40-percent of climate and clean energy investment benefits flow to disadvantaged communities.

Access the report: <https://www.epa.gov/cira/social-vulnerability-report> [↗](https://epa.gov/cira/social-vulnerability-report)

Information about climate change: <https://www.epa.gov/climate-change> [↗](https://epa.gov/climate-change)

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