



# LifeSmarts

Learn it. Live it.

## Key Points

### A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT IS A BASIC RIGHT

Everyone deserves safe air, clean water, and healthy surroundings, regardless of where they live or their income level.

### POLLUTION HITS SOME COMMUNITIES HARDER

Factories, highways, and hazardous waste sites are often placed near low-income neighborhoods, leading to higher health risks.

### FAIRNESS AND ACTION MATTER

Environmental justice means addressing these inequalities and ensuring all communities have a voice in environmental decisions.

## Core Concepts

### WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEANS

It's the idea that no group of people should bear more environmental harm than others, and everyone should have access to a healthy environment.

### LINK BETWEEN POLLUTION AND HEALTH

Exposure to toxins, poor air quality, and contaminated water often leads to higher rates of asthma, cancer, and other illnesses in affected communities.

### HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Decades of zoning laws, housing policies, and industrial practices have placed marginalized communities closer to pollution sources.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND INEQUALITY

Stronger storms, heat waves, and rising sea levels often harm vulnerable populations most, especially those without resources to relocate or rebuild.

### COMMUNITY ADVOCACY AND SOLUTIONS

Local groups can push for cleaner industries, improved waste management, better public transportation, and green spaces to reduce harm.

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN JUSTICE ISSUES

Teens can volunteer, attend public hearings, join environmental clubs, or help spread awareness about unfair pollution burdens.

# Pollution and Power

## Additional Resources

### Environmental Justice Foundation

EJF investigates and exposes environmental and human rights abuses around the world

<https://bit.ly/45vk5ov>

### Youth on Root - Nonprofit Organization

Young people who are leading grassroots change

<https://bit.ly/4mG2PUL>

### Crash Course - Why We Need Environmental Justice

The environmental justice movement, the issues it tries to address, and how we can all be part of creating a more sustainable and just future

<https://bit.ly/4oyBHbP>

### YouTube - Environmental Justice in Communities of Color

Communities of color in Memphis, Tennessee, are seeing an increase in health problems due to an influx of industrial plants in the area

<https://bit.ly/3UmHvaN>

## Listen to the Podcast



## Explore and Explain

1. How can pollution and environmental hazards affect some communities more than others?
2. What historical or systemic factors have contributed to environmental inequality?
3. How can communities advocate for fair treatment in environmental decision-making?
4. What role does climate change play in environmental justice issues today?

*Understanding environmental justice helps you see the connection between fairness, health, and access to a safe environment for all communities.*

# Environmental Justice



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## Vocabulary

### **DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN**

When low-income or minority communities face more environmental harm than others

### **ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM**

When policies or decisions expose communities of color to more pollution or environmental risks

### **FOOD DESERT**

A place with little or no access to affordable, healthy food, often due to systemic inequalities

### **INFRASTRUCTURE INEQUALITY**

Unequal access to clean water, safe housing, or transportation, often tied to race or income

### **LEAD EXPOSURE**

A health risk from breathing or swallowing lead, often found in old paint or water pipes

### **REDLINING**

A historic practice of denying loans or investment to certain neighborhoods, often communities of color, leading to long-term harm

### **TOXIC EXPOSURE**

Contact with harmful chemicals, often without warning or protection

### **UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY**

A neighborhood left out of environmental protections or basic services due to systemic neglect

### **ZONING**

Local rules about land use that can place pollution sources near low-income homes

## **AQI**

Air Quality Index

## **HUD**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

## **DOE**

Department of Energy

## **EJSCREEN**

Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool

## **LEAD**

Lead Exposure Awareness and Detection