

An Unfair Share: Climate Change Hits Some Harder Than Others

As temperatures rise, everyone in Washington is affected by more frequent and more intense hazards like flood, wildfire, drought, and extreme heat. A unique collaboration among researchers and community organizations has resulted in a new report, An Unfair Share. **As it turns out, we're not all affected the same.**

In fact, the threat to any one group often has less to do with the pace or magnitude of a changing climate, and more to do with characteristics such as race/ethnicity, wealth, neighborhood, and occupation.

We need continued research in this area, but this much is clear: In understanding and adapting to climate change, **we must understand and address the needs of those hit hardest by it.**



The bottom line: People of color, indigenous peoples, and people with lower incomes frequently face greater risks from climate change.

These communities can be more exposed to hazards like fire, flood, drought, or extreme heat because of where they live or work.

How well a family or community bounces back from climate events can be affected by poverty, language barriers, and access to healthcare and insurance.

Climate risks are higher depending on WHERE YOU LIVE.



COASTS OR RIVERS

Those who live close to coasts or rivers can suffer more from frequent and more severe flooding. This includes low-income communities in the Yakima Valley and near the I-5 corridor south of Seattle. Many indigenous communities are particularly exposed.



WILDLANDS

People living near the wildland-urban interface are at increased risk for property damage or adverse health outcomes from wildfires. Many regions threatened by wildfires are low-income, including those on the eastern slopes of the Cascades.



CITIES

In cities, concrete holds in heat from rising air temperatures, magnifying extreme heat. Vehicles and industry exacerbate the effects of poor air quality. Meanwhile, pavement makes flooding worse by limiting where the water can go.

Climate risks are also higher depending on WHERE YOU WORK.



AGRICULTURE

Many people of color make their living in agriculture, which exposes them to numerous climate hazards. Nearly 80 percent of outdoor farm workers experience heat-related illness, which can result in increased accidents, traumatic injuries, or death.



FISHERIES

Livelihoods in fisheries are important for many communities, including many indigenous communities. Warmer temperatures are contributing to declining fish populations and diseases, as well as conditions that can close shellfish harvest areas. In addition to fishermen, declining fisheries also impact processors, packagers, and transporters.



CONSTRUCTION

Construction employs tens of thousands of workers of color in Washington state. Construction workers are also vulnerable to heat-related illness. Heat stress leads to accidents through fatigue, impaired mental capability, and misuse of safety equipment.

Climate change affects us all—but not all equally. In adapting to climate change, we must understand and address the needs of those hit hardest by it.

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