

Environmental Justice for immigrants in the U.S

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Studies have shown that there are environmental risks that had dispensed unequally towards low-income households, racial and ethnic minorities, and other disadvantaged groups that are exposed to environmental hazards. Our main focus is on the Hispanic community that is crossing the border of Mexico and the United States. The United States and Mexico had established a border patrol in 1924 due to the Immigration Bureau in the Department of Labor through the Labor Appropriation Act of 1924 (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2020). Through the many years since it has been put into place, it has caused immigrants to immigrate to the United States due to climate crises in their own country. For many years, climate crises have been displacing people from all over the world, only for them to meet environmental injustice in the United States. The International Office for Migration stated that one in every 35 persons worldwide is a migrant with some 175 million people migrating across borders

(Martínez, 2017). **Our focus** is on minority undocumented and documented immigrants such as Mexicans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, Salvadorians, adults and childrens coming from other parts of the world to the United States. These Immigrants have crossed the border because of personal or political persecution, escaping gang violence, looking for education, and to reunite with their family members in a new country. Thus, our mission with this project is to address the Environmental issues immigrants have to go through while on their journey and currently living in the United States.

Environmental justice addresses the connection between the environment and the impact it has on health outcomes and quality of life which tends to disproportionately impact communities of color. Global warming and climate change affect all people globally, however marginalized communities tend to experience the effects of the changing environment more severely. Refugees and asylum seekers flee their homelands to find safety in new countries but are met with hostility and aggression. The detention facilities maintained by ICE at the U.S. and Mexico border is an example of environmental injustice as it demonstrates unsafe living conditions that produce poor health outcomes as a result of neglect, abuse, and poor conditions of confinement (Saadi et al., p. 190, 2020). In addition to these, human rights violations are rampant and these conditions are maintained and enforced by systemic racism (Saadi et al., p. 190, 2020).

Some examples of these hardships are unsanitary conditions at detainment facilities, health risks, economic distress, prolonged stress, overcrowding, exposure to environmental hazards, temperature changes, food insecurities, water contamination, and much more (Bakhtsiyarava & Nawrotzki, 2017). Plenty of studies have shown that barriers such as little to no income, language barriers, social support, and little to no healthcare can drastically affect the

access to environmental services for many immigrants. All these conditions can lead to higher outcomes for immigrants to suffer from heart-related illnesses (Climate change and migration, 2017). People often have to face everyday life challenges such as not having the right food to eat, drinking polluted water, not having accessibility to nearby clinics, and much more. Immigrants are most likely to come to the US due to finding a better life for their families and themselves, escaping personal or political persecution, and or being reunited with their family members in a new country.

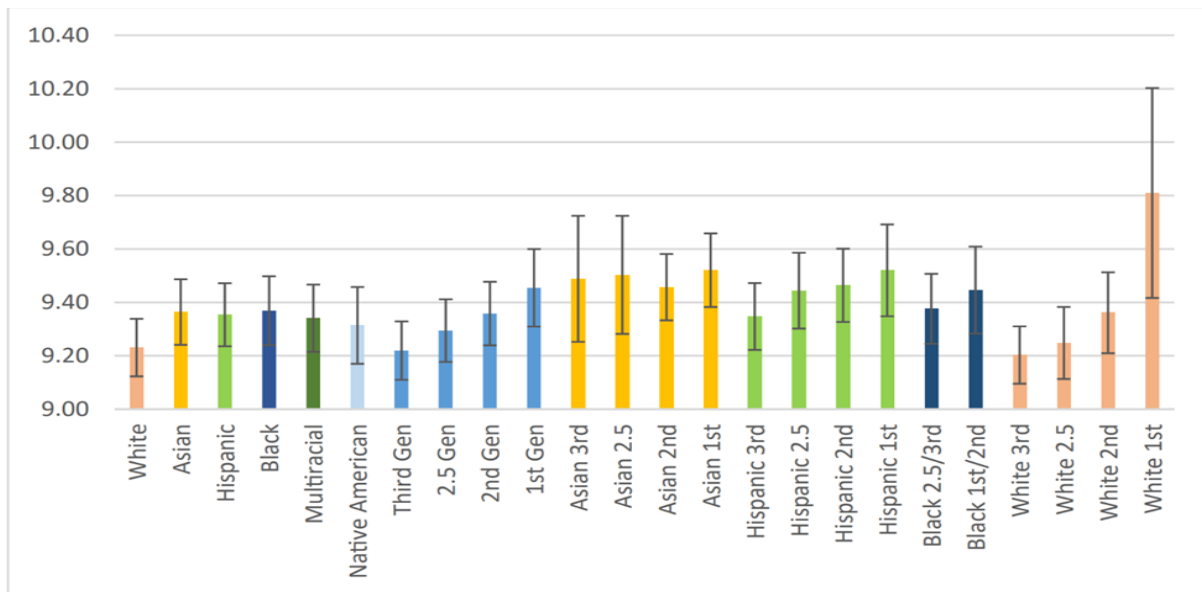


Figure 1. Estimated marginal mean PM2.5 concentrations and 95% confidence intervals for racial/ethnic and generational status groups and for the racial/ethnic status by generational status groups, when all other variables are at the mean.

Social workers, who work in federal agencies have been sent out to address and seek out the intense volume of a person's health or the environmental effects of their actions on minorities and the low-income populations, to what is the most practicable and permitted by law. When it

comes to immigration and environmental justice, social workers have already been putting into action different forms of policies or organizations to help out. Social workers can gain immigration status understanding by evaluating each family member or the family as a group. This could lead to access to public-funded resources such as immigration relief programs, job placement assistance, health insurance assistance, counseling, legal assistance, and much more. Another way to help these minority groups is through counseling and the use of ecological systems theory. The ecological system theory can assess immigrants under counseling by understanding their interactions with other individuals, their characteristics, and their environmental systems (Gonzalez & Ivers., (2017) This can help immigrants and social workers understand each other regarding their current mental, physical and emotional status. Thus, social workers can provide mental health services for adults and children that had past trauma experiences and are currently under high-stress levels.

Social workers can also help legal and illegal immigrants by using the social impact assessment (SIA) (Matsuoka & Morelli, 2022). The SIA goes over changes that people have made such as changes with their culture, living conditions, interactions, services, facilities, wellbeing, participation in political action, their air quality, level of hazards, availability of food and water (Matsuoka & Morelli, 2022).

The purpose of raising awareness is to bring attention to the hazards and health effects that affect immigrants' lives. Immigrants are facing many environmental obstacles as they cross the border and then settle down here in the United States. Bringing attention to this topic, we want people to view that it's affecting their lives and it just does not stop there. Policies and organizations should be established more in communities and even where it all starts, the border.

Group members summary :

The group was well established and on time for weekly zoom meetings. Everyone collaborated together by sectioning the posters in parts. The Co leaders and poster designers were Claudia Aguirre S and Brigitte Montes De Oca. The notetaker was Jaclyn Mascolo, the introduction was done by Tara Rostami, figure 1. And methods were done by Claudia Lennis, the goals section was done by Jaclyn Mascolo, and finally, the conclusion was done by Miriam Espinoza. Our team meets every wednesday on Zoom to review the work that we wrote on a shared google document. Each person was incharge of having two or more references to backup the information provided for the poster.

The intended audience for this poster are attendees of the Adelphi “Vital Connections” Environmental Justice Virtual Conference and those who wish to learn more about the barriers to reaching environmental justice, the impact the environment has on vulnerable populations and how to create change at the Micro, Macro and Mezzo social work level. Lastly, the efforts to disseminate the project are the usage of the ecological system theory, the social impact assessment (SIA), the health impact assessment (HIA), the Environmental Quality Act, and On site Social Workers helping through the usage of environmental resources knowledge, therapeutic support, coordination of programs, legal representation, community presentations and pushing towards Ending policies such as The Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP).

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Introduction

Environmental justice addresses the connection between the environment and the impact it has on health outcomes and quality of life which tends to disproportionately impact communities of color. One way this happens is through Global warming and climate change which affects marginalized communities such as people of color, legal and illegal immigrants more severely.

Health Risks :

Past research has shown that undocumented immigrants crossing the border from different parts of the world have high levels of stress, trauma, discrimination, dehydration, high blood pressure, strokes, exposure to heat during and after the crossing of the Mexico and US border (Junko, 2021).

- As social workers we can use The Health Impact Assessment (HIA). Which is a systematic process for identifying the potential health effects of a new proposed action. This process can identify health disparities, which are a prime indicator of the existence of a disproportionate impact to minority, tribal or low-income communities (Environmental Protection Agency, 2022).
- The California Environmental Quality Act has been advancing environmental justice and protecting vulnerable communities since 1970, by holding government officials responsible for the health and welfare of the people they represent (Kolankiewicz, 2017).

Multigenerational immigrant trajectories and children's unequal exposure to fine particulate matter in the US

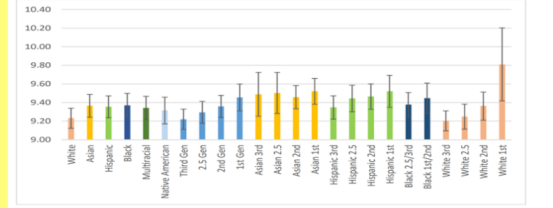


Figure 1. Estimated marginal mean PM2.5 concentrations and 95% confidence intervals for racial/ethnic and generational status groups and for the racial/ethnic status by generational status groups, when all other variables are at the mean.

Micro - Setting up social workers on site at the border to aid. Giving resources and providing therapeutic support around any hardships they may have faced during their journey.

Mezzo - Conducting water drops in the desert, supporting day laborer's, freeing asylum seekers from detention, providing legal representation to adults and children, coordinating educational programs and community presentations regarding Environmental justice.

Macro - Ending policies such as: The Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) to ends dangerous conditions for asylum seekers, which limits exemptions for physical or mental health issues.

Conclusion

Environmental Justice can be tackled by the usage of advocating and establishing policies for documented and undocumented immigrants. Such as providing health care, mental health, education, language, support groups, job resources to integrate them into society. This can contribute to their wellbeing and quality of life.

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