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## Introduction

The focus of our project is addressing the need to improve housing policy in struggling communities. By addressing this need, it brings awareness to the relationship between environment, poverty, and health disparities in the U.S.. The issues that are being addressed identify the need for adequate housing for the maintenance of health and well-being.



## Historical Aspects

- The Environmental Protection Agency was created with the purpose to protect people and the environment from significant health risks including substandard living conditions- such as mold, allergens, lead.
- Programs intended to aid those in poverty (e.g. Housing Choice Voucher) often left people in detrimental environments, influenced by a history of redlining as well.

## Research Statement

Environmental justice means ensuring adequate health and safety conditions, which are not currently being met for those in poverty environments.

## Methods

- Examined existing research and data on environmental justice, poverty
- Determined housing in relation to poverty to be most significant as a basic need and a reflection of the effects of being impoverished.



## Results

- Historically oppressed communities such as persons of color, women, and immigrant populations have been affected most
- Older appliances such as stoves were found to be harmful, in that the fumes led to disorders such as asthma in many.
- Cockroaches, prevalent in impoverished areas, are also a health threat as a harmful allergen, along with mold and dust, all of which are exacerbated by the minimal resources people in poverty have to address the issues.
- Solving these issues will require a multi faceted approach involving landlords, government agencies, and social workers.

**WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?**  
When everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.<sup>4</sup>

**WHY IT MATTERS TO HUMAN SERVICES**

We serve communities increasingly affected by environmental and climate threats.

Our deep community roots offer a way to connect and learn what is most needed.

Human service programs are ready to partner with others to address environmental issues.

**WHAT HUMAN SERVICES CAN DO**

- Better understand the communities we serve: discussions and data
- Explore with human service programs and others ways to best incorporate environmental justice into our work
- Listen and attend to community priorities and needs
- Partner with other federal, Tribal, state, local and community entities to plan, protect, respond, and adapt

**ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN THE US**

**ORIGINS:** SYSTEMIC RACISM, REDLINING, DISINVESTMENT

**IMPACTS:** EXTREME WEATHER RISK, UNSAFE WATER, HEAT ISLANDS, ENERGY HOUSING, AND FOOD INSECURITY, CLIMATE MIGRATION, POLLUTION EXPOSURE, WORSENERD MENTAL HEALTH

**42 million** American homes suffer from energy poverty, making them vulnerable to intense heat and cold.<sup>1</sup>

More than **2,000,000** Americans live without basic access to safe drinking water and sanitation.<sup>2</sup>

**11.9 million** Americans, disproportionately people of color, are exposed to unhealthy air pollution levels.<sup>3</sup>

**REFERENCES**

1. 2013 Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS) (US Energy Information Administration, 2018).
2. McClain, George, and Rashika Poo. Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States. US Water Alliance, 2019.
3. Faison, Christopher M., et al. "PM2.5 Pollution Disproportionately and Systemically Affects People of Color." Science Advances, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2021.
4. Environmental Justice, Environmental Protection Agency.

**ASPE**  
http://aspe.hhs.gov/

## Nationwide Data



## Connection to Social Work

- Advocate for policy change with the goal of assuring all people are protected from environmental burdens, so they can live, learn, work and play in healthy communities.
- Raise awareness of how poverty, housing & health disparities are linked
- Connect clients with resources to assist with immediate needs
- Prevent & address the consequences of climate change through advocacy, community organizing, research and education
- Speak out against environmental racism, like the placement of low-income or minority communities in hazardous or degraded environments.



## References



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