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## Environmental Justice

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# Learn About Environmental Justice



*President Clinton signing the EJ Executive Order in 1994.*

**Environmental justice (EJ)** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

**Fair treatment** means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.

**Meaningful involvement** means:

- People have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health;
- The public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision;
- Community concerns will be considered in the decision making process; and
- Decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

### **Want to learn more about the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice**

<<https://epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-policy-op#oej>>?

- Factsheet on the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice  
<<https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/factsheet-epas-office-environmental-justice>>
- Learn about Identifying Communities with Environmental Justice (EJ) Concerns  
EXIT <<https://youtu.be/rq5qqbbvfxw>>

Read the accomplishment reports to learn more about the progress that the EPA has made in advancing environmental justice principles? Click here to read annual progress reports on the Agency's most recent EJ accomplishments.

<<https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/annual-environmental-justice-progress-reports>>

“Whether by conscious design or institutional neglect, communities of color in urban ghettos, in rural 'poverty pockets,' or on economically impoverished Native-American reservations face some of the worst environmental devastation in the nation.”

- Overview
- Executive Order 12898
- Interagency Working Group
- Laws and Statutes
- Integrating EJ at EPA

## **EPA and Environmental Justice**

EPA's goal is to provide an environment where all people enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to maintain a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

EPA's environmental justice mandate extends to all of the Agency's work, including:

- setting standards
- permitting facilities
- awarding grants
- issuing licenses
- regulations
- reviewing proposed actions by the federal agencies

EPA works with all stakeholders to constructively and collaboratively address environmental and public health issues and concerns. The Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) coordinates the Agency's efforts to integrate environmental justice into all policies, programs, and activities. OEJ's mission is to facilitate Agency efforts to protect environment and public health in minority, low-income, tribal and other vulnerable communities by integrating environmental justice in all programs, policies and activities.

## **Executive Order 12898**

Executive Order 12898 <<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/1994.html#12898>> directed federal agencies to develop environmental justice strategies to help federal agencies address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs on minority and low-income populations.

The Presidential Memorandum <<https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/presidential-memorandum-heads-all-departments-and-agencies-executive-order>> accompanying the order underscores certain provisions of existing law that can help ensure that all communities and persons across the nation live in a safe and healthy environment.

## **Federal Interagency Working Group**

The executive order established an Interagency Working Group [on Environmental Justice \(EJ IWG\)](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg) chaired by the EPA Administrator and comprised of the heads of 11 departments or agencies and several White House offices. The EJ IWG now includes 17 agencies and meets on a monthly basis to continue collaborative efforts.

## **Laws and Statutes**

The statutes that EPA implements provide the Agency with authority to consider and address environmental justice concerns. These laws encompass the breadth of the Agency's activities including:

- Setting standards
- Permitting facilities
- Making grants
- Issuing licenses or regulations
- Reviewing proposed actions of other federal agencies

These laws often require the Agency to consider a variety of factors that generally include one or more of the following:

- Public health
- Cumulative impacts
- Social costs
- Welfare impacts

Moreover, some statutory provisions, such as under the Toxics Substances Control Act, explicitly direct the Agency to target low-income populations for assistance. Other statutes direct the Agency to consider vulnerable populations in setting standards. In all cases, the way in which the Agency chooses to implement and enforce its authority can have substantial effects on the achievement of environmental justice for all communities.

## **Integrating EJ at EPA**

Since OEJ was created, there have been significant efforts across EPA to integrate environmental justice into the Agency's day-to-day operations. Read more about how EPA's EJ 2020 Action Agenda <<https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/ej-2020-action-agenda-epas-environmental-justice-strategy>> will help EPA advance environmental justice through its programs, policies and activities, and support our cross-agency strategy on making a visible difference in environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed communities.

Every regional and headquarter office has an environmental justice coordinator who serves as a focal point within that organization. This network of individuals provides outreach and educational opportunities to external, as well as internal, individuals and organizations. To find out more about Agency efforts to address environmental justice, contact an EJ coordinator <<https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/forms/contact-us-about-environmental-justice#local>> based on your location or area of interest.

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[Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Home <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice)

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## **Learn About Environmental Justice**

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[EJ 2020 Action Agenda <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/ej-2020-action-agenda-epas-environmental-justice-strategy>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/ej-2020-action-agenda-epas-environmental-justice-strategy)

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## [National Environmental Justice Advisory Council](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-advisory-council)

<<https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-advisory-council>>

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[Grants and Resources <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-grants-and-resources>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-grants-and-resources)

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[EJ in Your Community <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-your-community>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-your-community)

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[Federal Interagency Working Group on EJ <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg)

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## [EJ and National Environmental Policy Act](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-and-national-environmental-policy-act)

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[EJ and Title VI <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/title-vi-and-environmental-justice>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/title-vi-and-environmental-justice)

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[EJ for Tribes and Indigenous Peoples <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-tribes-and-indigenous-peoples>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-tribes-and-indigenous-peoples)

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[Equitable Development and EJ <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/equitable-development-and-environmental-justice>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/equitable-development-and-environmental-justice)

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[Community Voices on EJ <https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/community-voices-environmental-justice>](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice/community-voices-environmental-justice)

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