



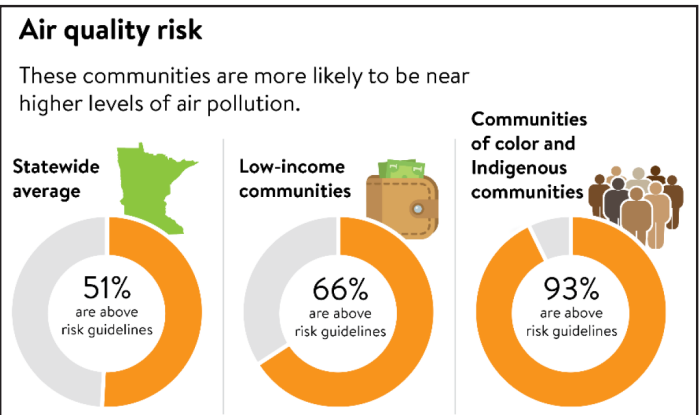
# CLIMATE JUSTICE & PUBLIC HEALTH IN MN: Equitable Solutions to the Climate Crisis

We are all vulnerable to the effects of climate change, but low-income and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) have greater vulnerability. In Minnesota this means that extreme heat, storms, drought, and air pollution have the most severe impacts on the physical and mental health as well as the economic, food, and housing security of low-income and BIPOC communities.

## SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN MINNESOTA

Minnesota is consistently ranked as one of the most livable states but also has some of the largest achievement and economic gaps by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status in the nation. These gaps are evident in unemployment, income, wealth, arrest and incarceration rates, homeownership, educational achievement, housing quality, healthy food access, and exposure to pollution.

These socioeconomic disparities create health disparities. Compared with White Minnesotans, Minnesotans of Color experience a shorter lifespan; higher rates of infant and maternal mortality; and higher incidence of heart disease, cancer, asthma, diabetes and other diseases. Black and American Indian infants are twice as likely to die before their first birthday as White infants.



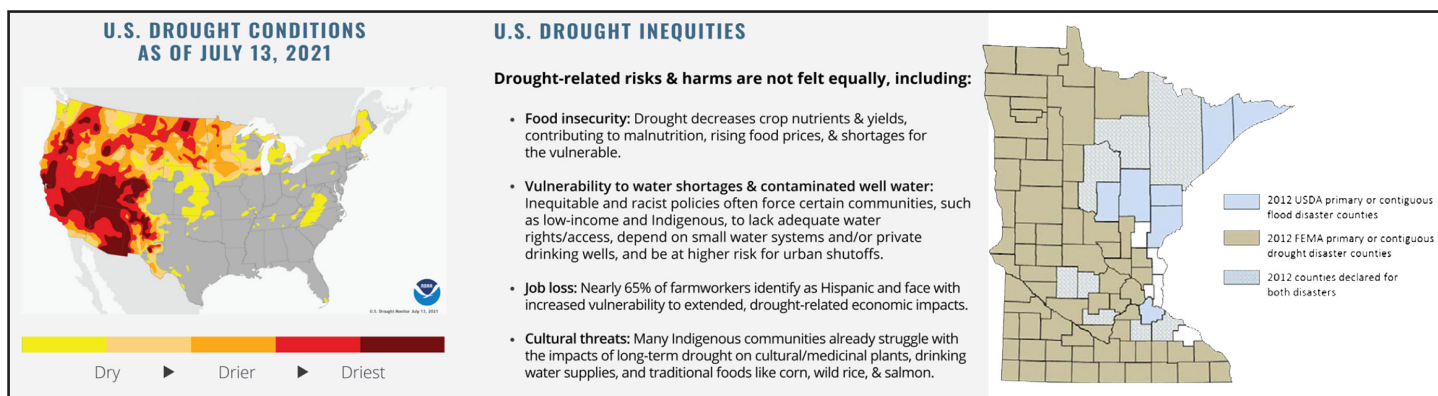
*BIPOC and low-income residents of MN proximity to higher air pollution levels; MPCA*

## Disproportionate Climate Impacts

Climate change is a public health crisis that requires urgent global and local action. Effects of climate change such as extreme heat, severe storms and flooding, wildfires, drought, vector-borne diseases, and air pollution are increasingly impacting physical and mental health. Systemic racism, multigenerational trauma, and underlying socioeconomic conditions place Minnesota's BIPOC and low-income communities at highest risk, with fewer resources to adapt to and recover from climate events.

- Warmer temperatures increase air pollution, which adds to the burden on communities already exposed to higher and even unsafe levels of outdoor air pollution.
- People living in dense urban areas that lack tree cover and in homes without air conditioning are at increased risk for heat stress, heat stroke and even death, as well as exacerbation of underlying health conditions.

- Adverse effects on mental health due to climate change build on existing stressors from intergenerational trauma from racism, violence and poverty.
- Climate change is expected to disrupt components of food production, access and pricing, which disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities that have limited access to grocery stores and Indigenous people whose access to wild and cultivated traditional foods is critical to local economies and culture. Intense rain events, drought, and adverse effects from warmer temperatures also affect the financial viability of the farming economy and the health and mental health of Minnesota farmers.
- Disproportionate exposure to industrial pollution creates health risks from routine chemical emissions, as well as from extreme weather events that could release toxic substances into water, air, or soil, causing both acute and cumulative health impacts.



Health impacts of drought in the U.S.; *The Lancet Countdown* | MN flooding & drought declared disaster areas; MN Dept. of Health

## Climate Justice Policy Proposals for Minnesota

To address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income and BIPOC communities, Minnesota should:

- Prioritize policies that address underlying racial and social inequities in education, wealth, employment, housing, healthy food access, policing, and health status.
- Decarbonize all sectors of the economy by 2050 in an equitable way by investing in cost-saving energy efficiency programs and opportunities for affordable solar power in environmental justice (EJ) communities.
- In partnership with EJ communities, create specific, long-term projects to remediate existing environmental damage and invest in climate resilient infrastructure, technology and green jobs to support clean air, water, soil, and healthy housing.
- Build accessible and healthy transit systems that include vehicle electrification, increased mass transit routes, and safe walking and biking routes.
- Transition to sustainable agriculture and sustainable, healthy food systems, prioritizing EJ communities.



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