

Climate Change will Impact Minorities More Greatly After COVID-19

Climate change is rapidly showing the detrimental effects it can have on the world. In general, these effects are felt more drastically by minority communities in the United States. Many members of these communities, such as those in [Mossville, Louisiana](#), reported having health issues associated with the effects of the toxins released by nearby polluting facilities. With this in mind, it is important to consider how these minority communities will continue to be affected by climate change after the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to large decreases in pollution across the world. Unfortunately, with a quick glimpse at history, it is likely that these communities may be hit even harder by the effects of climate change, due to environmental issues being put on the back burner in favor of economic relief and build-up in the aftermath of the nationwide lockdowns.

Across the globe, pollution levels are falling as a result of COVID-19. Some of the largest cities in the world have reported levels between [nine and 60 percent lower than average](#). However, as much as we would like to view the decreases in pollution in the recent months as a step in the right direction in the fight against climate change, there is a high chance that it may actually be a step backward. Previous worldwide and national crises, such as the oil crisis in the 70s and the Great Recession in 2008, showed slight dips in pollution similar to those seen during the coronavirus pandemic, but the world saw pollution levels rebound after those crises passed, according to Tony Barboza's [article in the L.A. Times](#). The worry now is that the same resurgence will occur after governments lift the lockdown orders and production begins again. Furthermore, there is evidence that the focus after COVID-19 will be rebuilding the economy, and any progress made by large companies to reduce their carbon footprints will be out the window.

If pollution regulations are put on hold, it will prove to have negative effects on the near future, and, no doubt, these effects will be even more significant for those living within close proximity to polluting factories, many of whom happen to be people of color. In fact, the likelihood of an African American living within a one-mile radius of a polluting factory in Louisiana is about fifty percent higher than that of whites, according to [Revathi I. Hines](#). Understanding this, it is clear that these communities will be stuck fighting a more difficult fight than other communities because of where they are located. Residents of Mossville, Louisiana live very close to a factory that produces a great amount of dioxin, a dangerous chemical that is a known carcinogen. Some of the citizens of Mossville, a predominantly African American town, have three times the average amount of dioxin in their bloodstreams. This is very likely the result of the facility being placed so close to their community, a possible demonstration of environmental racism.

Environmental racism is not only seen in communities that are physically close to polluting facilities, it is also apparent in the workers of these facilities. In their study and published findings, [Racial disparities in pollution exposure and employment at US industrial facilities](#), Michael Ash and James K. Boyce found that in some of the top polluting facilities in the U.S., African American workers held about 10.8% of jobs, yet were faced with 17.4% risk of toxin exposure, an almost 7% disparity. This disparity was very similar for Hispanic workers, at 5.2%. With minority workers having such a high exposure risk, it is evident that with the decrease in pollution and toxin regulation that may lie ahead, these workers and people who live in close proximity to polluting facilities will face diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and more. According to [Vesselin Popovski and Kieran G. Mundy](#), communities that are marginalized are even more vulnerable to climate change and its effects, and with a possible surge in pollution and lack of worry about climate change, these groups may be looking at greater long term detriments and health issues.

The argument may be made that these [short-term “solutions”](#) for climate change and pollution are enough to put climate change in the back of everyone’s mind, but according to [Victoria Crawford](#), we have to continue to be proactive in fighting climate change to make an impact. Short three- to four-month reductions in industrial production are nowhere near enough to undo the decades of damage we as a population have done to the earth. Circling back to Tony Barboza’s [article](#), we have seen minor dips in pollution only to see the levels rise again, so there is no clear evidence to indicate that short-term fixes will do the environment any good in the long run. Unfortunately, we humans have dug ourselves a deep hole and have to suffer the consequences of fixing our mistakes. Without a solution, we will continue to see racial minorities suffer more greatly than other communities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic starts to wind down, we will begin to see a rush for economic relief, but will there be a rush to save the environment? If there is not, we will be putting the lives of many members of minority communities at risk. Those who live near polluting facilities will be disproportionately affected by our bad decisions, and the coronavirus will have only added to the chance of climate change worsening. In order to [prevent this from happening](#), we have to ensure that regulations remain in place, plans to reduce emissions are still being drawn up, and climate experts are still being heard. Without that, we risk creating an even more toxic environment for everyone, but especially those who belong to minority communities.