

Environmental Justice in Water Quality

Faith Wimberley, Environmental Justice Planner

Agenda

- add

Why environmental justice?



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of The Seattle Times website. On the left is the logo with a hamburger menu icon. In the center is the word "Data". On the right are links for "Log In", "Subscribe", and a search icon. Below this is a horizontal menu with categories: LOCAL, BIZ, NATION, SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT, LIFE, HOMES, OPINION, THE TICKET, JOBS, EXPLORE, and a dropdown for "All Sections". A second row of sub-categories includes Politics, Law & Justice, Watchdog, Mental Health, Project Homeless, Education, Traffic Lab, Eastside, Climate Lab, and Obituaries. A prominent orange banner features a "TRAFFIC" tag and the headline "Truck fire blocks most of NB I-405 lanes in Renton" with a right-pointing arrow. Below the banner, there are breadcrumb links: "Data | Health | Life | Local News". The main article title is "Life expectancy in WA counties varies by as much as 11 years". At the bottom left of the article area, it says "March 21, 2024 at 6:00 am | Updated March 21, 2024 at 6:16 am". At the bottom right are social media icons for Facebook, email, and Twitter.

The Seattle Times **Data** Log In | Subscribe | 🔍

LOCAL BIZ NATION SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE HOMES OPINION | THE TICKET JOBS EXPLORE ▼ All Sections

Politics Law & Justice Watchdog Mental Health Project Homeless Education Traffic Lab Eastside Climate Lab Obituaries

TRAFFIC Truck fire blocks most of NB I-405 lanes in Renton >

Data | Health | Life | Local News

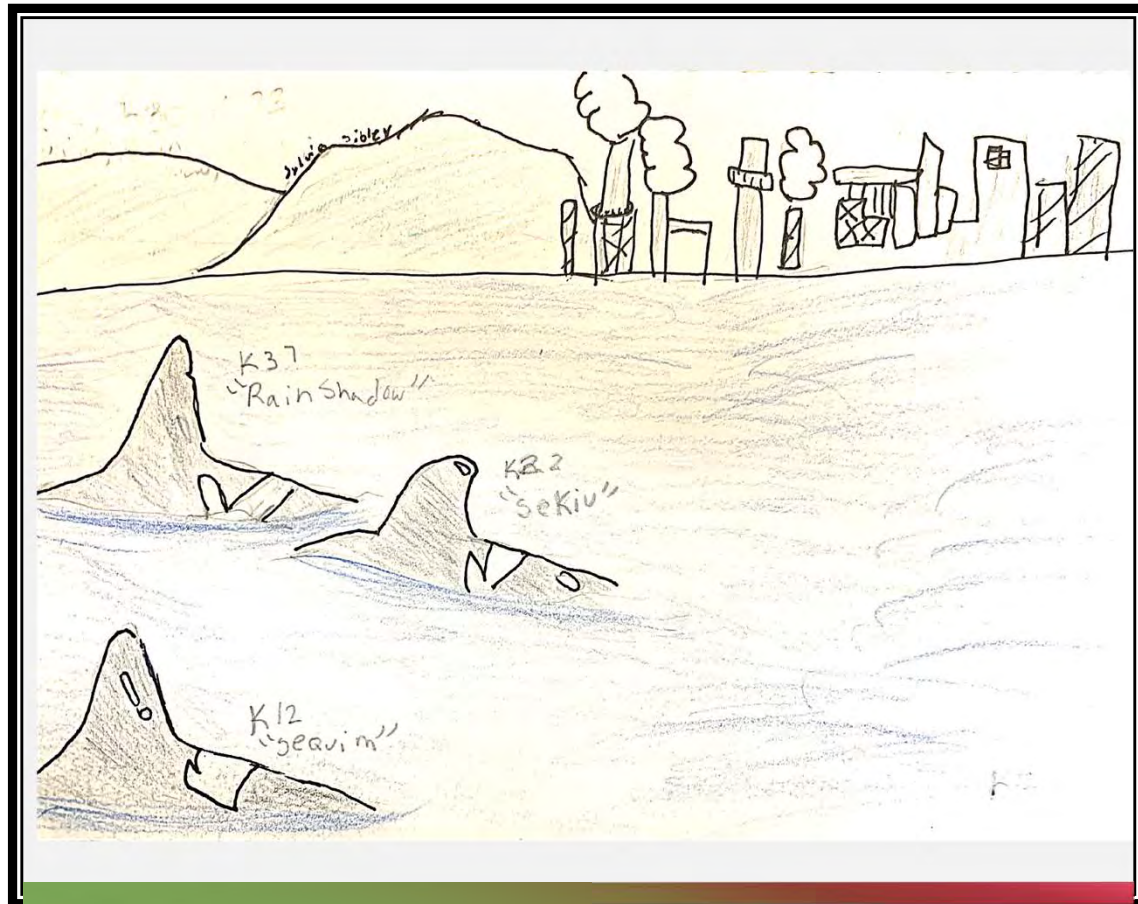
Life expectancy in WA counties varies by as much as 11 years

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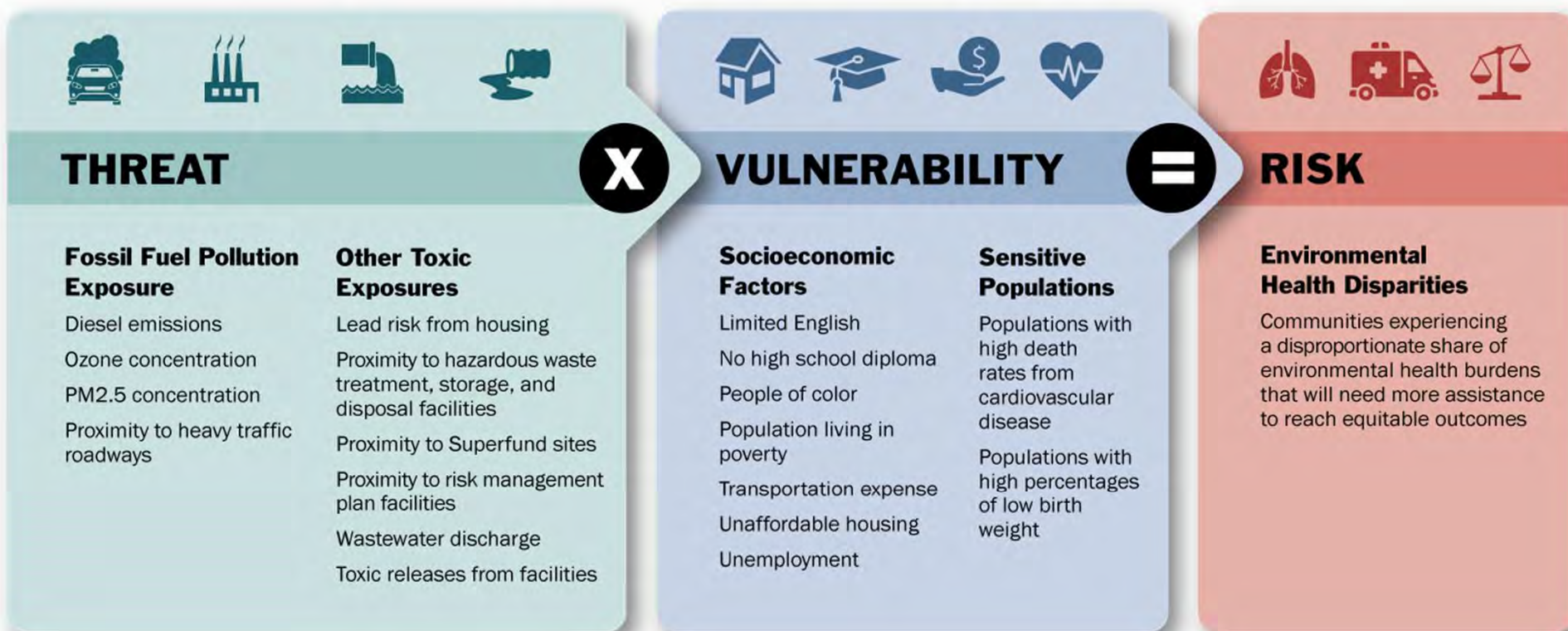
Environmental exposures predict health outcomes

- Deaths are increasingly caused by diseases that linked to environmental conditions
- Pollution is the leading cause of global deaths
- People of color are disproportionately harmed by environmental conditions



Washington Environmental Health Disparities

Threat x Vulnerability = Risk



Injustices in public policy and administration

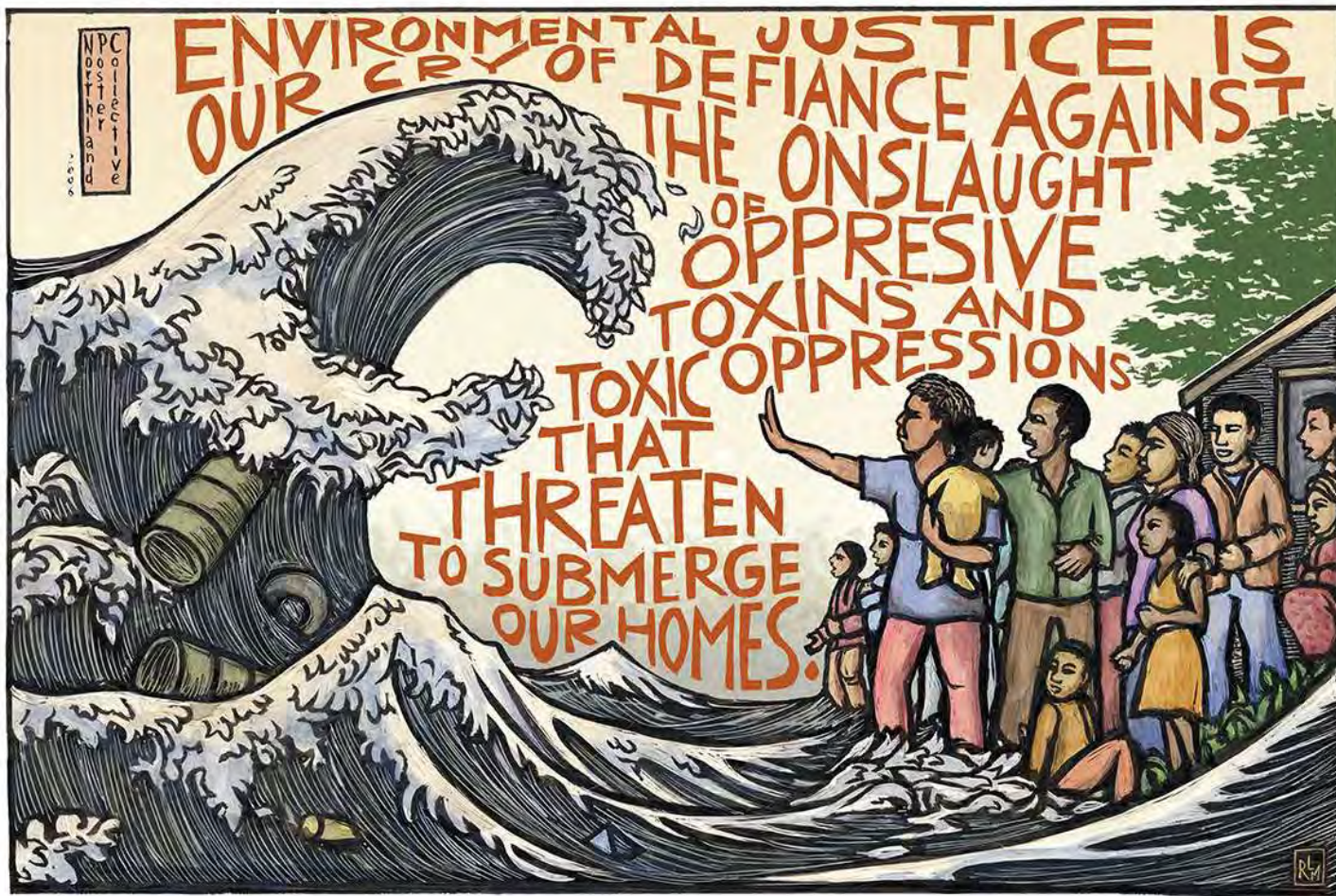
- Red lining
- Segregation
 - Ongoing underrepresentation in policy processes
- Land dispossession
 - Limited mortgage lending
 - Property rights and succession
- Permitting
 - Locations of facilities
 - SEPA review
 - Inspection rates
 - Penalties
- Reporting and enforcement of environmental concerns and crimes

Aging infrastructure and environmental risks





Environmental justice



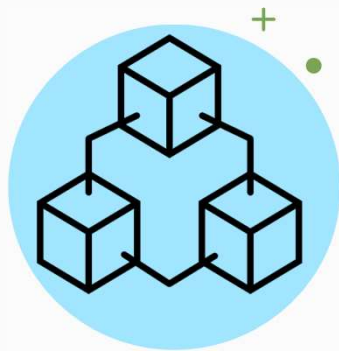
Research, policy, and racism

When evaluating how to improve our society, racist research has historically posed the question, “what is wrong with these people?”

Instead, we want to ask, "what is wrong with these policies, that they are producing these results?"

Policy change has been the key to antiracist change.

- Ibram X. Kendi



Components of justice


Recognition: Affirming the inherent value of everyone involved




Procedure: Decisions and management are inclusive, participatory, trusted, and transparent

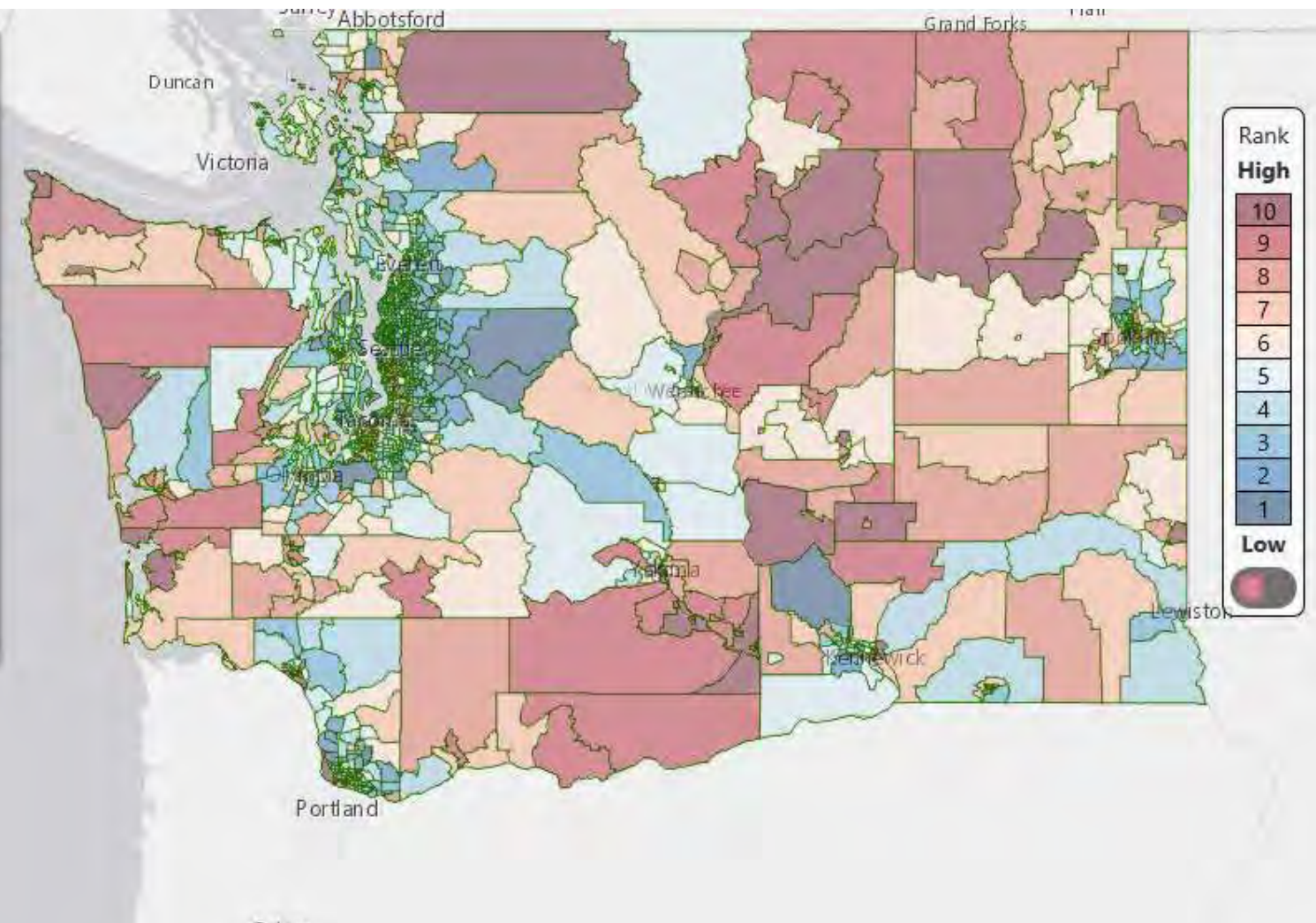
Distribution: Harms and benefits are spread fairly across space, time, and groups







-  Environmental Health Disparities
-  Diesel Pollution and Disproportionate Impact
-  Social Vulnerability to Hazards
-  Lead Exposure Risk
-  Health Disparities
-  Planning for Health



WASHINGTON TRACKING NETWORK (WTN)

Infrastructure and environmental justice



Infrastructure and environmental justice



Healthy Environment for All Act



What is the HEAL Act?



- The Healthy Environment for All Act passed in Washington State in 2021.
- It instructs agencies to consider, plan for, and address environmental justice issues in a wide scope of agency activities.
- This means addressing environmental and health issues in WA through an equity and justice lens:
 - Prioritizing overburdened communities, vulnerable populations, and Tribes who disproportionately bear the largest environmental burdens.
 - Preventing and addressing root causes.

Agencies Required to Implement HEAL

Ecology

Transportation

Commerce

Puget Sound Partnership

Health

Natural Resources

Agriculture

Broader Collaboration

Environmental Justice Council

Community Groups

Tribal Consultation

Agencies Opting In

Attorney General's Office

Joined in a "Listen & Learn" Capacity

Recreation and Conservation Office

Fish and Wildlife

State Board of Health

The Pollution Liability Insurance Agency

County Road Administration

Major HEAL Obligations



Adopt community engagement & tribal consultation plans



Incorporate EJ into agency strategic plans



Incorporate EJ into budget & funding decisions



Conduct EJ assessments of Significant Agency Actions



Develop EJ metrics for tracking & reporting



Environmental
Justice
Assessments of
Significant Agency
Actions

1. New rulemaking
2. Agency request legislation
3. New grant or loan program
4. A new capital project, grant, or loan (at least \$12 million)

**Ecology will consider additional activities for 2025+*

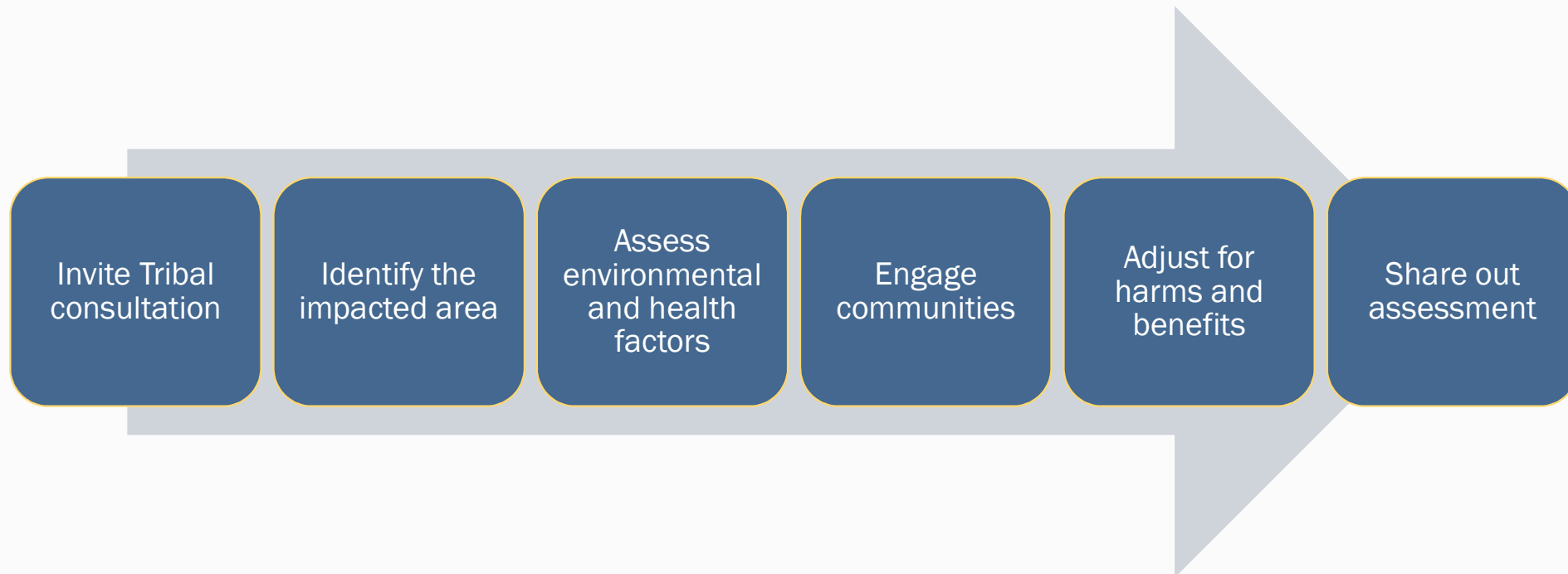


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Environmental Justice Assessments



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Develop EJ metrics for tracking & reporting on C-D



Incorporate EJ
into budget &
funding decisions

1. Directing 40% of grants and expenditures that create environmental benefits to overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.
2. Create opportunities for overburdened communities to meaningfully inform expenditure decisions.
3. Articulate environmental justice goals and performance metrics related to budget equity for the agency, that are enacted within programs.
4. Consider developing innovative approaches, such as:
 - (i) Community grants to monitor pollution
 - (ii) Grants focused on building capacity, providing training for community involvement
 - (iii) Making technical assistance available for beneficiaries who are new to receiving funding
 - (iv) Education and work readiness programs

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Take aways!

- ✓ Some people continue to be disproportionately impacted by policies and public practices that inequitably protect and benefit others.
- ✓ While the HEAL Act was a historic victory, no single tool or law perfectly addresses environmental and health disparities.
- ✓ Implementing HEAL and making progress towards Pro-Equity Anti-Racism is our shared work and opportunity.
- ✓ Ecology's Water Quality program will implement HEAL Act obligations and continue to pursue anti-racist practices that create equity in our funding and regulatory decision.

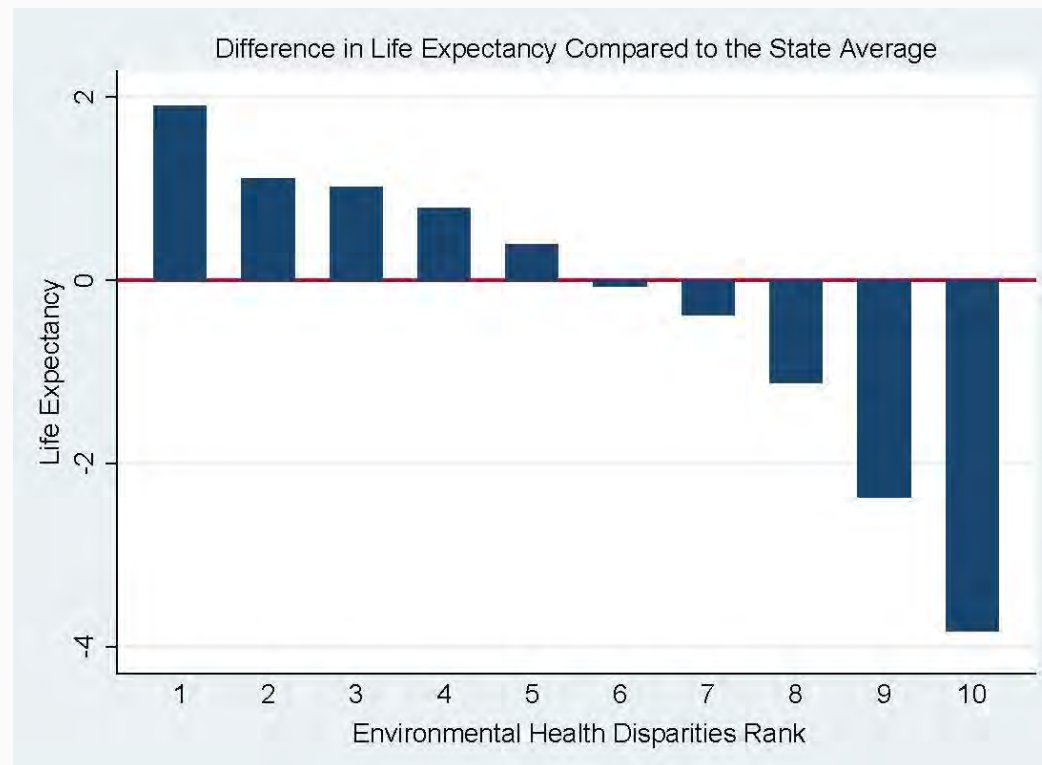


Discussion Q&A

Don't be a stranger:
faith.wimberley@ecy.wa.gov

- Immigration laws
- Public participation structures
 - Barriers to funding and technical assistance
 - Underrepresentation in elections and agencies
- Monitoring, permitting, and enforcement discrepancies
- Zoning decisions
- Cap and trade policies

Life expectancy impacts from environment





Develop EJ
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reporting

- Annual report to EJ Council on progress measures
- Annual presentation to EJ Council summarizing report
- Dashboard with annual update (by September 2024)

What is environmental justice?



Components of justice

Recognition: Affirming the inherent value of everyone involved

Procedure: Decisions and management are inclusive, participatory, trusted, and transparent

Distribution: Harms and benefits are spread fairly across space, time, and groups



INEQUALITY



EQUALITY



EQUITY



JUSTICE

What is environmental justice?

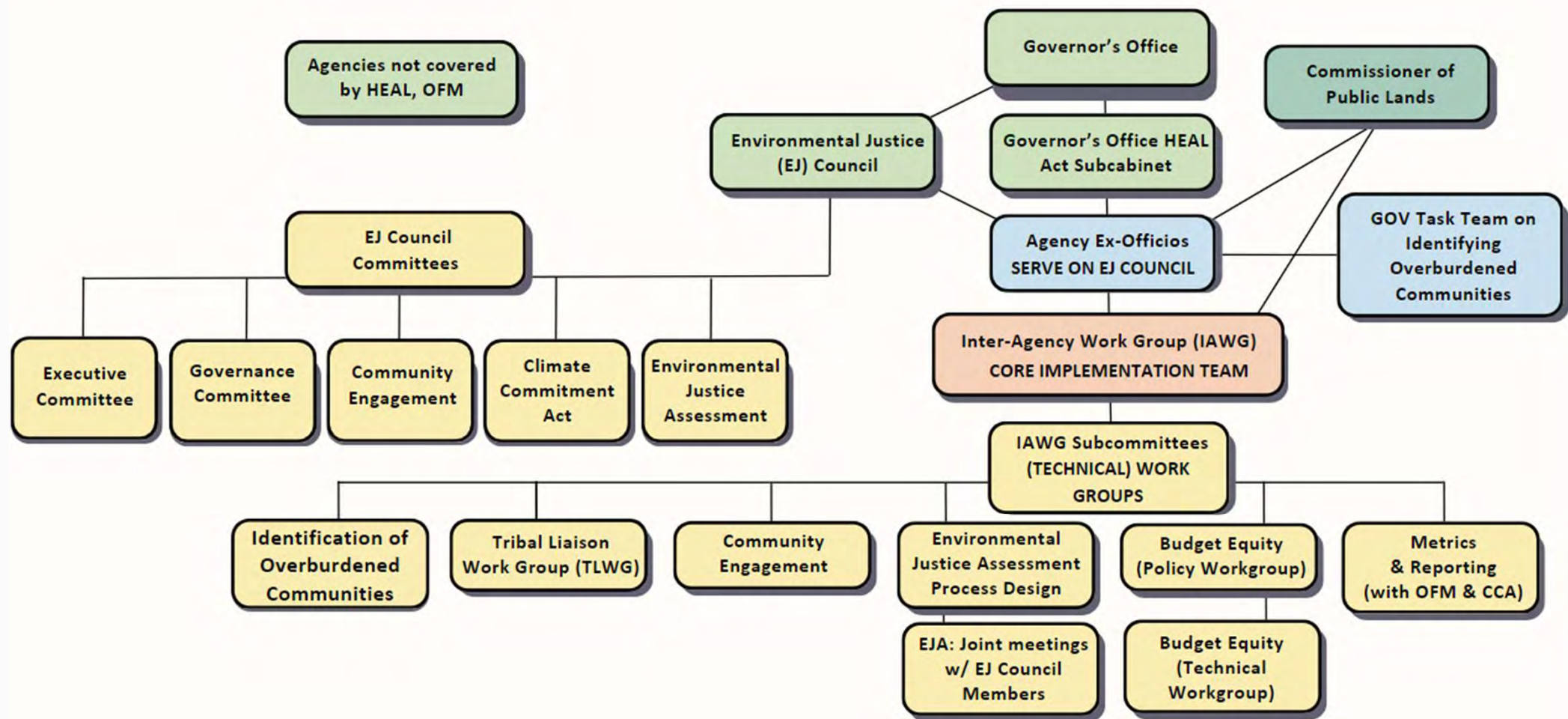
Environmental Justice (EJ) began as a social movement to address environmental and health disparities.

Nearly all social institutions were and continue to be implicated.

Now a robust field of work, with still questionable outcomes.



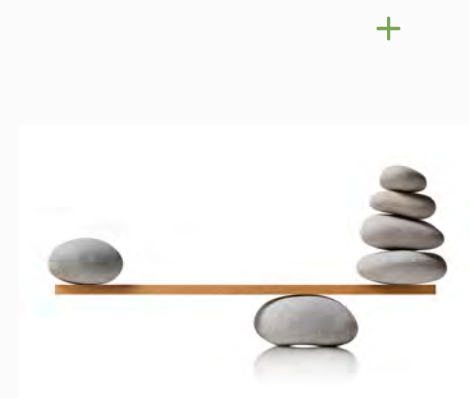
[Image to the left of protestors in Warren County, NC]



DEFINITIONS

Vulnerable populations includes, but is not limited to:

- Racial or ethnic minorities
- Low-income populations
- Populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms; and
- Populations of workers experiencing harms



Overburdened communities means a geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts

Racism is the exercise of power against a racial group defined as inferior by individuals and institutions with the intentional or unintentional support of the entire culture.

Institutional Racism

Policies, practices, and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally

Environmental Justice

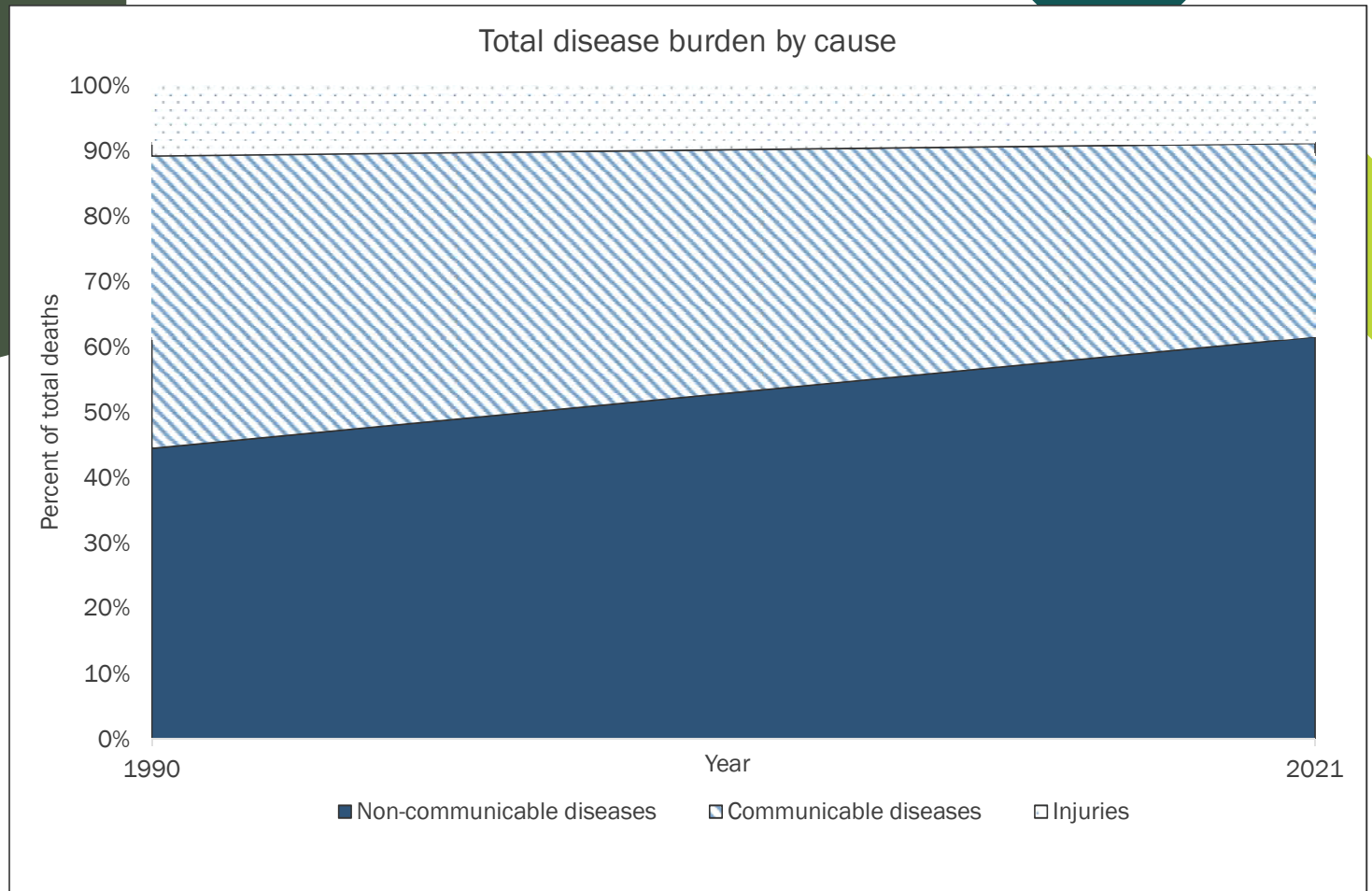
The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies

Environmental justice and agriculture

- Assisting vulnerable populations
- Protecting source waters
- Changing property rights
- Access to technical, managerial, and financial capacity

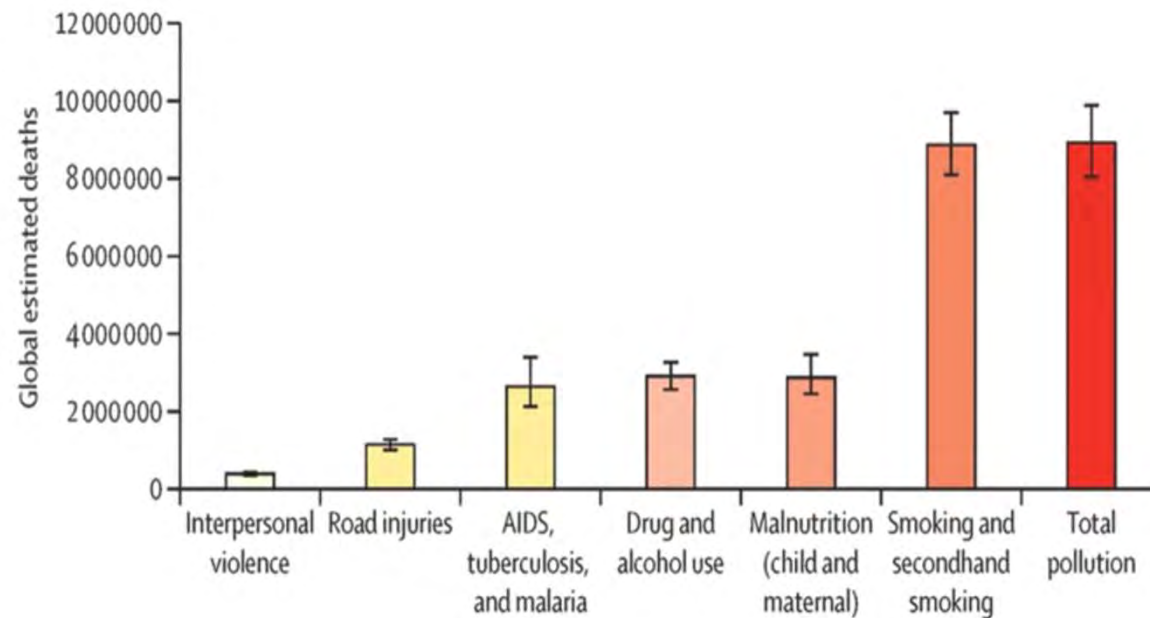


Shifting disease burden



Pollution is a major risk factor

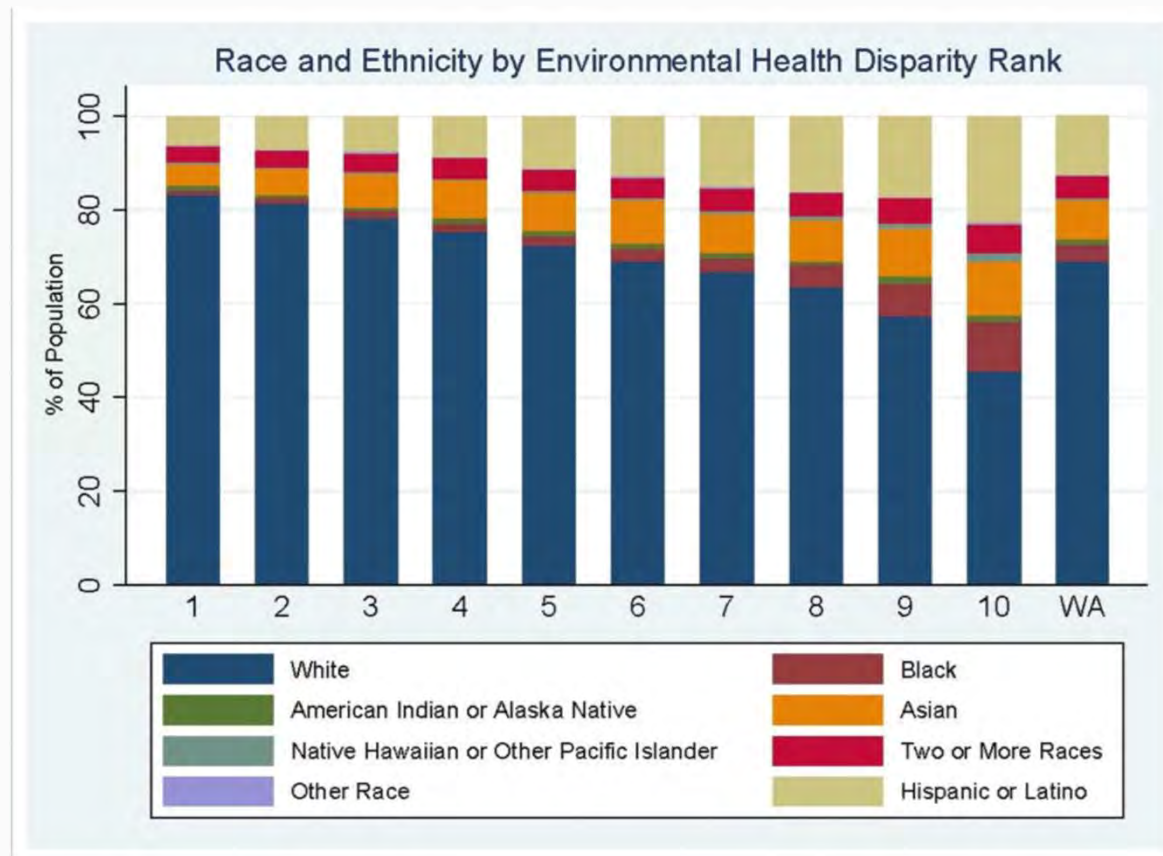
Global estimated deaths by major risk factor or cause





Environmental racism

Race and ethnicity are associated with environmental risks



Washington State environmental justice situations



Need to find good case studies, maybe these?



Infrastructure and environmental justice





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For budget equity, the dashboard will include:

- Where grants, loans, contracts, and direct expenditures have been spent. Displayed on a map with a map layer identifying overburdened communities
- Will highlight what percent, for every individual program, went to overburdened communities, vulnerable populations, and Tribes
- Will give people an opportunity to see what activities are happening in their neighborhood, by whom

What's Missing?



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