

## Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Kentucky Are Living Near Chemical Dangers

The Center for Effective Government graded states based on the dangers faced by people of color and residents with incomes below the poverty line living within one mile of dangerous facilities, compared to white and non-poor people in these areas. **Kentucky scored poorly with a “D” grade.**

Nationally, 7.5 percent of the population lives within one mile of a hazardous facility.

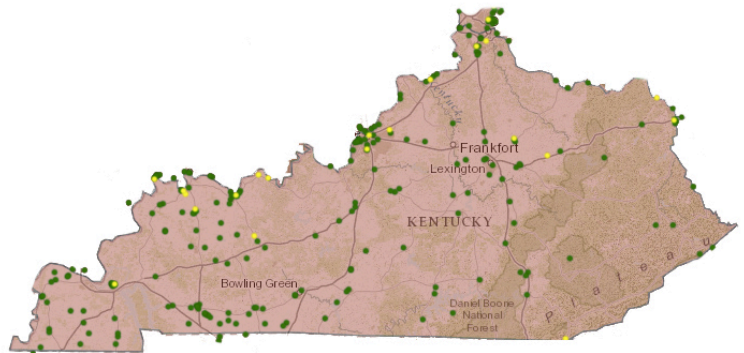
### Key Findings

- More than 290,000 Kentuckians (one in 14) live within one mile of a facility storing large amounts of extremely hazardous chemicals. These “fenceline communities” face potential chemical leaks and explosions on a daily basis.
- **Children of color under age 12 are more than twice as likely to live in the shadow of a hazardous chemical facility compared to white children in Kentucky.**
- **Poor black children are over three times more likely to live near facilities than white children not in poverty.**

### Chemical dangers are real, and Kentucky has experienced recent industrial incidents.

In recent years, a number of significant incidents have occurred in Kentucky. In April 2013, an incident at the Agri-Gro Farm Center in Hartford released nearly 8,000 pounds of toxic anhydrous ammonia. While no one was hurt, the incident could have exposed workers and the surrounding community to toxic fumes. The plant is less than one-and-a-half miles from Wayland Alexander Elementary School, with a student body of more than 700.

**Kentucky’s 199 high-risk facilities are dotted across the state.** They include everything from food distribution and processing plants, chemical manufacturing facilities, and water treatment plants in cities and suburbs to rural fertilizer distribution facilities.



[Click here to open an interactive map of your neighborhood.](#)

These facilities use and store a variety of chemicals, including **anhydrous ammonia**, which is sold as a fertilizer and is also used in commercial refrigeration. Water treatment plants and other industrial facilities store **chlorine gas**, a deadly substance that can be used as a chemical weapon. A leak from one of these plants could sicken and kill surrounding neighbors before they have time to evacuate.

But the plants themselves aren't the only risk. **Companies ship these dangerous chemicals** to the facilities, often by train or by truck, and accidents in transit can also lead to fatal releases.

### Are people of color and low-income residents of Kentucky safe from chemical hazards?

Over 12 percent of Latinos and 15 percent of blacks live in fenceline communities, compared to fewer than six percent of white residents. **Nearly 14 percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially dangerous facilities, compared to fewer than six percent of white kids in this age group, making them more than twice as likely to live in these areas.** The stark inequality between people of color and young children of color living in these fenceline areas compared to whites resulted in an “F” grade for these categories. Close to 15 percent of children of color attend public

schools close to a risky industrial facility, while fewer than 10 percent of white students do. These children face acute dangers and daily exposures to toxic chemicals that put them at a distinct disadvantage because young children are much more susceptible to chemical hazards than adults.

Poor children also face unequal chemical dangers; for example, **poor black children are more than three times more likely to live near a dangerous facility than white children who aren't poor.** Living in the shadow of an industrial facility increases stress on poor communities as they worry about the potential for a catastrophic disaster and daily exposures to toxic emissions. Living near these facilities can also decrease home values, meaning many poor families can't afford to move to safer neighborhoods if they want to do so.

### Inequities in Likelihood of Living in a Fenceline Community

| Racial Inequities   |                       |          | Income (Poverty) Inequities  |                       |          |
|---|-----------------------|----------|--|-----------------------|----------|
|   | Score                 | Grade    |  | Score                 | Grade    |
| Percentage of People of Color Who Live in Fenceline   | 13.7%                 | D        | Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline  | 7.9%                  | C        |
| Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)                             | 2.3 times more likely | F        | Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)  | 1.2 times more likely | B        |
| Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline                                      | 13.6%                 | D        | Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline   | 8.6%                  | C        |
| Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12) | 2.4 times more likely | F        | Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)                   | 1.3 times more likely | B        |
| Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline                              | 14.7%                 | D        | Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline  | 10.7%                 | C        |
| Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)  | 1.5 times more likely | D        | Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch) | 1.1 times less likely | B        |
| Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline  | 13.1%                 | D        | Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline  | 6.4%                  | C        |
| Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)                    | 2.3 times more likely | D        | Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)                         | Just as likely        | A        |
| <b>People of Color Grade</b>  |                       | <b>F</b> | <b>Poverty Grade</b>   |                       | <b>C</b> |
| <b>Overall Grade: D</b>   |                       |          |  |                       |          |

### What you can do to protect your community from dangerous chemicals.

Kentuckians like you can help. You can organize people in your community and educate others about these dangers. You can learn about your local zoning process (if your state gives local governments zoning authority) and whether it protects community members from nearby industrial plants that use hazardous chemicals – and share what you learn with your friends and neighbors. You can attend public meetings and planning hearings and urge decision makers to think carefully about the sites chosen for new industrial facilities, and you can write, call, and meet with other state, county, and city officials to send the message that **all** Kentuckians deserve to be protected from chemical dangers.

You can also demand that the federal government require facilities to switch to safer chemicals and alternatives whenever feasible and urge the Kentucky Department of Environmental Protection and the state-level OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Kentuckians can push local governments to require buffer zones around new and expanded chemical facilities to ensure homes and schools are not built nearby.

**Table 1: Percentage of Population Who Live in Fenceline Communities, by Age and Race**

|   | Black         | Latino        | American Indian/<br>Alaskan Native | Asian/Pacific<br>Islander/<br>Native Hawaiian | White Not<br>Hispanic | All Races      |
|---|---------------|---------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>All Ages</b>                                       | <b>15.4%</b>  | <b>12.5%</b>  | <b>9.8%</b>                        | <b>12.7%</b>                                  | <b>5.8%</b>           | <b>6.9%</b>    |
| 0-17  | 15.9%         | 12.0%         | 12.3%                              | 14.0%   | 5.5%                  | 7.0%           |
| 18-64   | 15.3%         | 13.0%         | 9.5%                               | 12.3%   | 6.0%                  | 7.0%           |
| 65+   | 15.0%         | 10.4%         | 6.5%                               | 10.1%   | 5.8%                  | 6.3%           |
| <b>Total # in fenceline</b>                           | <b>49,229</b> | <b>16,454</b> | <b>813</b>                         | <b>6,604</b>                                  | <b>213,654</b>        | <b>292,608</b> |
| Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites | 2.6           | 2.1           | 1.7                                | 2.2   | ---                   | ---            |

**Table 2: Percentage of Poor Population Who Live in Fenceline Communities, by Age and Race**

|   | Black         | Latino       | American Indian/<br>Alaskan Native | Asian/Pacific<br>Islander/<br>Native Hawaiian | White Not<br>Hispanic | All Races     |
|---|---------------|--------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------|
| <b>All Ages</b>   | <b>17.4%</b>  | <b>13.2%</b> | <b>12.8%</b>                       | <b>22.2%</b>                                  | <b>5.7%</b>           | <b>7.9%</b>   |
| 0-17  | 18.8%         | 13.1%        | 14.6%                              | 31.8%   | 5.5%                  | 8.6%          |
| 18-64   | 16.6%         | 13.3%        | 12.7%                              | 19.1%   | 5.9%                  | 7.7%          |
| 65+   | 15.6%         | 17.2%        | 4.6%                               | 16.2%   | 5.4%                  | 6.4%          |
| <b>Total # in fenceline</b>   | <b>17,964</b> | <b>5,581</b> | <b>323</b>                         | <b>1,625</b>                                  | <b>35,427</b>         | <b>62,876</b> |
| Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty        | 3.0           | 2.3          | 2.2                                | 3.9   | ---                   | ---           |
| Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty | 1.2           | 1.1          | 1.5                                | 2.0   | Just as likely        | 1.2           |
| Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty    | 3.0           | 2.3          | 2.2                                | 3.8   | Just as likely        | ---           |

**Table 3: Percentage of Children Who Attend Public School in Fenceline Communities, by Grade and Race**

|  | Black         | Latino       | American Indian/<br>Alaskan Native | Asian/Pacific<br>Islander/<br>Native Hawaiian | White Not<br>Hispanic | All Races     |
|--|---------------|--------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------|
| <b>All Grades</b>  | <b>15.6%</b>  | <b>13.9%</b> | <b>9.5%</b>                        | <b>12.3%</b>                                  | <b>9.6%</b>           | <b>10.6%</b>  |
| Pre-K - 2  | 18.3%         | 14.4%        | 9.0%                               | 9.4%  | 7.4%                  | 9.3%          |
| 3-7  | 16.1%         | 14.8%        | 8.1%                               | 9.5%  | 8.9%                  | 10.1%         |
| 8-12   | 13.2%         | 11.9%        | 11.2%                              | 18.3%   | 11.7%                 | 12.1%         |
| <b>Total # in fenceline</b>  | <b>11,467</b> | <b>4,574</b> | <b>86</b>                          | <b>1,267</b>                                  | <b>52,642</b>         | <b>72,437</b> |
| Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white children | 1.6           | 1.5          | Just as likely                     | 1.3   | ---                   | ---           |

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