

## Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Louisiana 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. **Louisiana 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 450,000 Louisianans (one in 10) live within one mile of a facility storing large amounts of extremely hazardous chemicals. **Roughly half of Louisianans living within these “fenceline communities” are people of color.**
- **Children of color under 12 are almost twice as likely to live in the shadow of a hazardous chemical facility compared to white children in Louisiana.**
- **Poor black children are more than twice as likely to live near facilities as white children not in poverty.**

### Chemical dangers are real, and incidents are happening across Louisiana.

Louisiana has seen its share of deadly industrial incidents involving toxic, flammable, and explosive chemicals. In just one example, an explosion at the Williams Olefins plant in Geismar killed two workers in 2013. The facility produces several flammable and potentially explosive chemicals used to make plastics and other products.

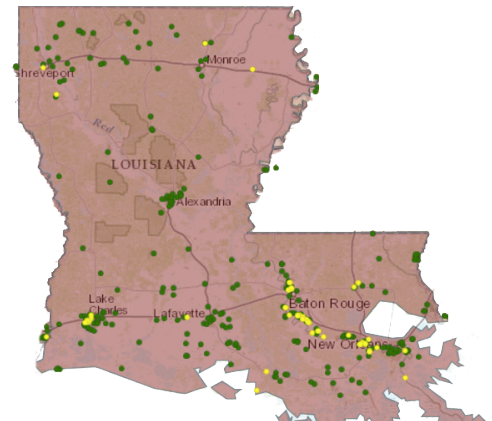
**Louisiana’s 330 high-risk facilities are dotted across the state but are heavily concentrated just outside cities like New Orleans and Baton Rouge.** This includes a stretch of the Mississippi River commonly known as "Cancer Alley" for the high rate of toxic exposures and diseases caused by chemicals. The facilities range from chemical manufacturing plants and oil refineries in cities and suburbs to rural oil and gas wells. Municipal water treatment plants are also common in the state.

These facilities use and store a variety of chemicals. 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. Oil refineries in the state also use and store significant quantities of **hydrofluoric acid**, a highly toxic chemical that threatens the health and safety of workers and could expose nearby communities to extreme danger should a leak or explosion occur.

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 Louisiana safe from chemical hazards?

Roughly half of the people living in fenceline communities are people of color. More than 13 percent of blacks live near these plants, compared to only 8.5 percent of white residents. **More than 12 percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially dangerous facilities, compared to only seven percent of white kids in this age group.** These children



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

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 under age 12 also face unequal chemical dangers; almost 13 percent live in a fenceline community, compared to 8.5 percent of non-poor children. **Poor black children fare even worse, being more than twice as likely to live near a dangerous facility as white kids who aren't in poverty.** Elderly people of color and the elderly poor are also significantly overrepresented in these fenceline communities, giving Louisiana an “F” grade for these groups.

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	12.7%	D	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	13.1%	D
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.5 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)	1.4 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	12.3%	D	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	12.8%	D
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.7 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.5 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	15.1%	D	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	14.5%	D
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	1.4 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	1.3 times less likely	A
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	14.3%	F	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	12.9%	F
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.6 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	1.3 times more likely	C
<b>People of Color Grade</b>		<b>D</b>	<b>Poverty Grade</b>		<b>D</b>
<b>Overall Grade: D</b>					

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

Louisianans 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** Louisianans 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 Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and federal OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Louisianans 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/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	White Not Hispanic	All Races
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
0-17	13.1%	9.3%	6.4%	9.7%	7.2%	9.7%
18-64	13.2%	10.3%	8.2%	12.2%	8.8%	10.3%
65+	15.0%	11.1%	6.0%	9.9%	9.2%	10.6%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>187,365</b>	<b>19,530</b>	<b>2,103</b>	<b>8,482</b>	<b>229,272</b>	<b>452,772</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.1 times less likely</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>

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

	Black	Latino	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	White Not Hispanic	All Races
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>
0-17	14.7%	11.1%	3.6%	13.7%	8.6%	12.8%
18-64	15.1%	11.4%	7.8%	16.5%	11.5%	13.3%
65+	16.7%	15.8%	4.4%	12.8%	9.7%	12.9%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>68,637</b>	<b>4,752</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>1,990</b>	<b>33,153</b>	<b>110,955</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.7 times less likely</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.3 times less likely</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.4 times less likely</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>---</b>

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

	Black	Latino	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	White Not Hispanic	All Races
<b>All Grades</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>
Pre-K - 2	16.3%	11.8%	6.8%	14.7%	10.8%	13.4%
3-7	15.8%	12.7%	5.7%	15.9%	10.3%	12.9%
8-12	14.4%	14.1%	4.8%	17.7%	10.8%	12.6%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>47,862</b>	<b>3,893</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>1,763</b>	<b>35,177</b>	<b>90,259</b>
<b>Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.9 times less likely</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>

**Find the Full Report at [ForEffectiveGov.org](http://ForEffectiveGov.org)**