

## Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Pennsylvania 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. **Pennsylvania scored poorly with a “D” grade.**

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

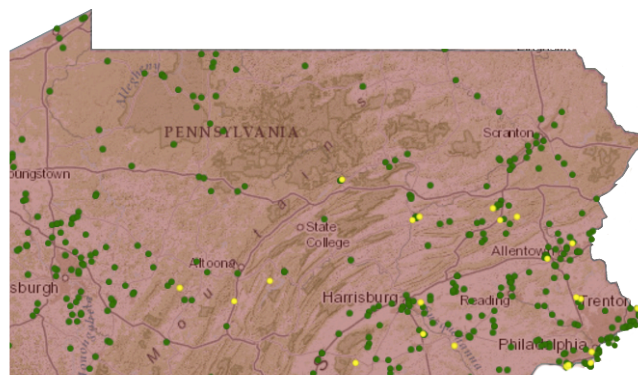
### Key Findings

- More than 1.1 million Pennsylvanians (nearly one in 10) 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 twice as likely to live in the shadow of a hazardous chemical facility compared to white children.**
- **Poor American Indian children are nearly four times more likely to live near facilities than white children not in poverty.**

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

Pennsylvania has witnessed several industrial incidents in recent years. In October 2013, the Braskem Marcus Hook Polymers plant southwest of Philadelphia released over 1,000 pounds of flammable propylene, which caused a fire and an explosion. Two workers were injured.

**Pennsylvania’s 354 high-risk facilities are scattered across the state, with the highest concentrations around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Allentown.** They include everything from chemical and plastics manufacturing, food production, and water treatment plants in cities and suburbs to rural natural gas extraction installations, largely related to fracking.



[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 Pennsylvania safe from chemical hazards?

Almost a third of the people living in fenceline communities in Pennsylvania are people of color. Twenty percent of Latinos and more than 12 percent of blacks live near these plants, compared to just over eight percent of white residents. **Nearly 16 percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially dangerous facilities, compared to eight percent of white kids in this age group, making them twice as likely to live in these areas.** 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 under age 12 also face unequal chemical dangers; more than 15 percent live in a fenceline community, compared to nine percent of non-poor children. **Poor Latino children fare even worse, being over 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	14%	D	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	13.1%	D
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.7 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)	1.5 times more likely	D
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	15.8%	F	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	15.3%	F
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	2 times more likely	D	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.7 times more likely	D
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	13.8%	D	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	13.6%	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)	1.1 times more likely	C
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	10.8%	D	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	9.9%	D
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.3 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	1.2 times more likely	B
<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.

Pennsylvanians 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** Pennsylvanians 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 Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and federal OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Pennsylvanians 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>12.2%</b>	<b>19.9%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
0-17	13.8%	20.7%	16.9%	10.8%	7.9%	10.1%
18-64	11.8%	19.6%	11.4%	9.8%	8.4%	9.4%
65+	9.6%	16.5%	12.2%	10.3%	8.4%	8.7%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>158,646</b>	<b>143,844</b>	<b>2,456</b>	<b>35,788</b>	<b>812,984</b>	<b>1,167,674</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	1.5	2.4	1.5	1.2	---	---

**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>13.5%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>
0-17	15.7%	24.6%	28.3%	13.5%	10.5%	15.2%
18-64	12.6%	22.9%	13.6%	10.1%	10.6%	12.4%
65+	8.3%	16.2%	11.0%	10.9%	9.8%	9.9%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>50,277</b>	<b>54,869</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>6,397</b>	<b>98,462</b>	<b>214,155</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	1.3	2.2	1.6	1.1	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.3	1.5
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	1.7	2.9	2.1	1.4	1.3	---

**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>10.4%</b>	<b>20.0%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
Pre-K - 2	11.3%	24.2%	10.9%	11.7%	9.4%	11.6%
3-7	11.4%	23.5%	10.5%	10.5%	8.7%	10.7%
8-12	8.8%	12.9%	12.3%	12.9%	11.4%	11.2%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>27,115</b>	<b>31,399</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>7,046</b>	<b>121,139</b>	<b>193,059</b>
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	Just as likely	2.0	1.1	1.2	---	---

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