

Vulnerable Populations

and pollution.

Why It Matters to Everyone?

Certain groups are more vulnerable to pollution due to health, age, or economic factors. Children and the elderly are highly sensitive, while low-income and Indigenous communities face greater exposure and threats to their resources and livelihoods.

Children



- Developing respiratory and immune systems make children highly sensitive to air and water pollutants, such as lead and particulate matter.
- Impact: Increased rates of asthma, reduced lung function, and developmental delays.

Did You Know? Children breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight than adults, making them more exposed to air pollution.

- 93% of children worldwide live in areas with air pollution above safe levels.
- Rising temperatures disproportionately affect low-income families, who often lack cooling systems.
- Indigenous peoples represent 5% of the global population, yet they protect 80% of the planet's biodiversity—but their lands are at high risk from climate change.



DID YOU KNOW?

Elderly

- Older adults, especially those with pre-existing health issues, experience worsened effects from pollutants, including fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide.
- Impact: Higher susceptibility to heart disease, stroke, and respiratory conditions like COPD.
- **Did You Know?** A Harvard study found a 10–20% increase in premature death rates for elderly adults living in areas with elevated PM2.5 levels.



Low-Income Communities



- Frequently situated near highways, industrial zones, or waste sites, these communities encounter elevated pollution exposure daily.
- Impact: Elevated risks for asthma, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases, with limited access to healthcare.
- **Did You Know?** EPA research shows these communities experience 1.5 times more exposure to severe air pollution than wealthier areas.

People with Pre-existing Conditions

- Individuals with respiratory, cardiovascular, or immune issues face increased health risks, as pollutants exacerbate their symptoms.
- Impact: Increased emergency visits and complications, especially for asthmatics and those with heart disease.
- **Did You Know?** Pollution can trigger severe respiratory attacks in asthmatics and increase hospitalization rates for those with heart disease.



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