

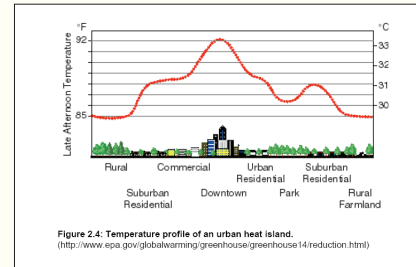
# The Climate Gap

## There is a Climate Gap in the United States.

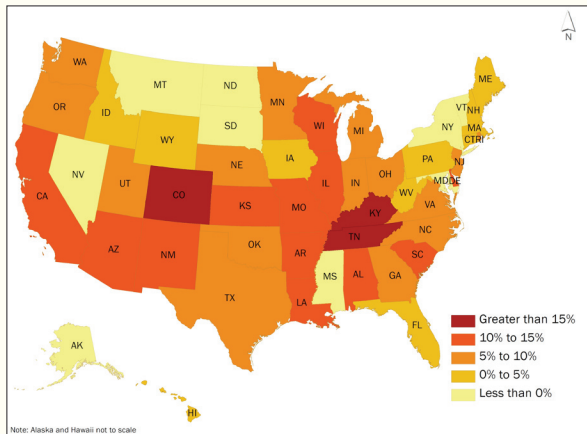
Climate change will cause minorities and the poor in the United States to...

**Suffer more during extreme weather events.** Hurricane Katrina revealed how extreme weather events cause particularly devastating damage to minorities and the poor. Another example is in Los Angeles, where African Americans are twice as likely to die from a heat wave as other residents.

Minorities and the poor are more likely to live in urban centers with less tree cover to reduce heat and more concrete and pavement to trap it. They also have less access to air conditioning, and are less likely to own cars to escape extreme weather events.



Graph shows temperature differences between neighborhoods.



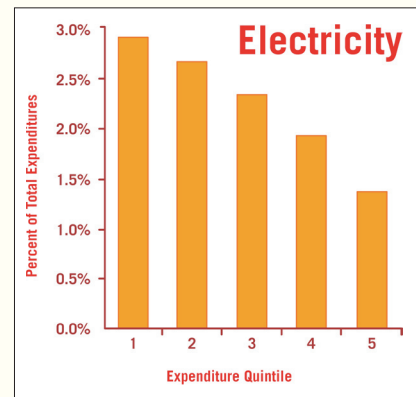
Map shows rates of disparity between minority share of the population and their share of the health risk from air pollution.

Too often, those who oppose taking action on climate change point to higher prices that may result from climate solutions. However, doing nothing won't help: climate change will lead to higher prices for energy, food and water.

**Have fewer or shifting job opportunities.** The majority of jobs in sectors that will be significantly affected by climate change, such as agriculture and tourism, are held by low-income people of color. Workers in these industries would be the first to lose their jobs in the event of an economic downturn due to climatic troubles.

**Breathe dirtier air.** A recent study titled, "Justice in the Air" found that minorities and the poor in the U.S. already breathe dirtier air than other Americans. Climate change will cause the air we breathe to get even dirtier, exacerbating the disparities in the health impacts of air pollution.

**Pay even more for basic necessities.** Low-income Americans already spend a greater portion of their income on basic necessities.



Graph reveals the difference between the percentage of income the poor (quintile one) and the wealthy (quintile five) pay for electricity.

## We Can Solve Climate Change & Close the Climate Gap

Protecting the most vulnerable ensures that we better protect everyone. Lessons from Hurricane Katrina show us that if we had properly maintained the levees to protect the Lower Ninth Ward, the devastating flooding of New Orleans could have been avoided. Similarly, by choosing policies that close the Climate Gap, reducing the very real dangers facing low-income neighborhoods and people of color, we will ensure that climate policy will be effective for the entire nation.

By solving climate change and closing the Climate Gap we can cool the planet and create economic and health opportunities for everyone. Here's how:



### **Identify**

Climate Gap neighborhoods that are most at-risk.



### **Invest**

A portion of auction or fee revenues to offset the higher costs of basic necessities, and promote community preparedness to cope with and recover from extreme weather events.



### **Focus**

Greenhouse gas reductions from emission sources that also emit toxic pollution in Climate Gap neighborhoods. Specifically, energy efficiency measures lead to less consumption of fossil fuels, reducing both greenhouse gases and toxic pollutants. This is an efficient strategy to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent preventing climate change and saving lives today.



### **Target**

Job training resources to Climate Gap neighborhoods, which are likely to suffer the highest rates of job loss or transition due to climate change and efforts to prevent climate change.

## **Ways to Close the Climate Gap in California**

The Global Warming Solutions Act includes language related to closing the Climate Gap. One important element — identifying vulnerable neighborhoods — has been mandated and Air Resources Board staff has been directed to finalize the methodology for such identification prior to the rule-making for a cap and trade program. Environmental justice advocates have opposed a cap and trade strategy in favor of a carbon fee. However, either market-based strategy runs the risk of exacerbating the climate gap unless we:



- 1. Protect Climate Gap neighborhoods environmentally:** Market systems, such as carbon fee or trading programs, do not take into account co-pollutants; reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are valued or priced equally wherever they occur. However, prioritizing certain emission sources and neighborhoods can add a public health bonus of reducing criteria pollutants and toxic air contaminants in neighborhoods with poor air quality. For GHG emitters located in climate gap neighborhoods, California should consider limiting trading or fee options that would allow emitters to postpone or avoid GHG reductions; the State could also consider incentives (such as rebates on fees) to encourage GHG reductions in places where the health effects of the associated co-pollutant reduction are especially significant.

- 2. Protect Climate Gap neighborhoods socially:** Research shows that certain communities are less able to cope with or adapt to the extreme weather events that may occur from climate change. The State should prioritize adaptation resources by first supporting scientific research to determine where vulnerability is highest and then using that work to improve adaptive capacity, such as providing resources for weatherization, cooling centers, greening projects, protection against flooding and sea level rise, as well as support for community-based efforts to educate local populations on climate change and its risks.



- 3. Protect Climate Gap neighborhoods economically:** Long-term funding is needed in Climate Gap neighborhoods to cushion residents from cost increases due to increased energy prices and demand, and shifting economic opportunities related to climate change. Carbon fees or auctions will generate revenue, and it is critical that a portion of this money is placed in a special fund to support programs for closing the climate gap, including neighborhood-based training for new green employment. And if a cap and trade is the primary vehicle to reduce GHGs, it is imperative that all or nearly all of the permits be auctioned to generate the revenue stream needed to close the climate gap.

To see the full Climate Gap report and other materials, go to <http://college.usc.edu/geography/ESPE/perepub.html>