

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

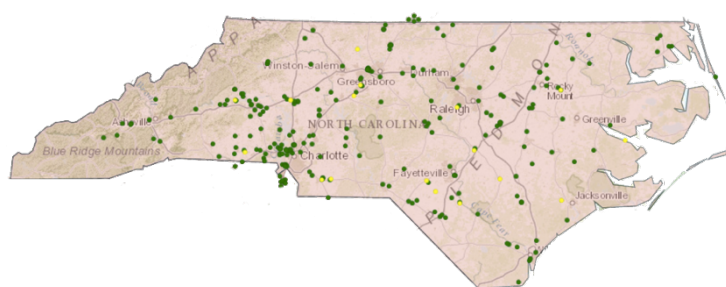
The Center for Effective Government graded states based on the dangers faced by people of color and residents with incomes below the poverty line living within one mile of dangerous facilities, compared to white and non-poor people in these areas. **North Carolina scored a “C” grade.**

### Key Findings

- More than 400,000 North Carolinians (4.3 percent) live within one mile of a facility storing large amounts of extremely hazardous chemicals. **Nearly half of North Carolina residents living within these “fenceline communities” are people of color.**
- **Children of color under age 12 are almost twice as likely to live in the shadow of a hazardous chemical facility compared to white children.**
- **Poor black children are more than twice as likely to live near facilities than white children not in poverty.**

### Chemical dangers are real, and several recent incidents have occurred in North Carolina.

North Carolina has seen several recent industrial incidents involving toxic, flammable, and explosive chemicals. In June 2014, an ammonia leak at a Smithfield Foods meat packing plant south of Fayetteville forced 2,000 workers to evacuate the facility. Eight people were injured. The plant had been cited for an earlier ammonia leak in 2012 that injured five workers. The company paid more than \$96,000 in fines for that violation.



**North Carolina's 246 high-risk facilities are dotted across the state but are largely concentrated near**

**Charlotte.** They include everything from chemical and plastics manufacturing plants and food production facilities in cities and suburbs to rural water treatment plants and chemical 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 North Carolina safe from chemical hazards?

Nearly half of the people living in fenceline communities are people of color. **Roughly six percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially dangerous facilities, compared to three percent of white kids, making them almost twice as likely to live in these areas.** Five percent of children of color attend public schools close to a risky industrial facility, the same percentage as white students, giving North Carolina one of the best scores on this measure of

equality. Nevertheless, all of 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 face unequal chemical dangers in North Carolina; for example, **poor black children are more than twice as likely to live near a dangerous facility as 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	Score	Grade	Income (Poverty) Inequities	Score	Grade
Percentage of People of Color Who Live in Fenceline	5.8%	B	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	5.4%	B
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)	1.4 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	5.8%	B	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	5.7%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.8 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.4 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	5%	A	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	5.3%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	Just as likely	B	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	1.1 times more likely	B
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	5.7%	B	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	4.6%	B
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.7 times more likely	C	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>C</b>	<b>Poverty Grade</b>		<b>C</b>
<b>Overall Grade: C</b>					

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

North Carolinians 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** North Carolinians 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 North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality and the state-level OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And North Carolinians 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>6.4%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
0-17	6.7%	5.4%	4.1%	4.1%	3.3%	4.4%
18-64	6.4%	5.5%	3.7%	4.3%	3.5%	4.3%
65+	6.1%	5.1%	3.3%	3.9%	3.4%	3.8%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>127,371</b>	<b>44,156</b>	<b>4,098</b>	<b>9,343</b>	<b>209,148</b>	<b>400,424</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	1.9	1.6	1.1	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>7.2%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
0-17	7.5%	6.3%	5.2%	3.4%	3.7%	5.8%
18-64	7.1%	6.2%	4.9%	3.8%	4.0%	5.3%
65+	6.1%	6.3%	2.6%	2.9%	3.8%	4.6%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>39,269</b>	<b>17,157</b>	<b>1,612</b>	<b>1,108</b>	<b>28,351</b>	<b>89,492</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	1.8	1.6	1.2	1.1	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.2 times less likely	1.2	1.4
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	2.1	1.9	1.4	1.1	1.2	---

**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>5.2%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
Pre-K - 2	6.6%	5.2%	3.0%	4.8%	3.8%	4.8%
3-7	6.2%	5.4%	2.6%	4.6%	4.4%	5.0%
8-12	3.3%	5.2%	2.1%	3.8%	5.9%	5.0%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>20,299</b>	<b>11,260</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>37,852</b>	<b>74,184</b>
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	1.1	1.1	1.9 times less likely	1.1 times less likely	---	---

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