

# EJ 2020 Glossary

*Note: This glossary was created for the EJ 2020 Action Agenda (EJ 2020), which was the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2016 – 2020 strategic plan for advancing environmental justice. Some of these definitions may be out of date. To learn more about environmental justice at EPA, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.*

**Disproportionate Effects** - Term used in Executive Order 12898 to describe situations of concern where there exists significantly higher and more adverse health and environmental effects on minority populations, low-income populations or indigenous peoples.

**Environmental Justice (EJ)** - The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, income, and educational levels with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of protective environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

**Fair Treatment** - The principle that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences from industrial, municipal and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies. In implementing its programs, EPA has expanded the concept of fair treatment to include not only consideration of how burdens are distributed across all populations, but the distribution of benefits as well.

**Indian Country** - As defined at 18 U.S.C. § 1151, (a) all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and, including rights-of-way running through the reservation; (b) all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state; and (c) all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same.

**Indigenous Peoples** - The term “*indigenous peoples*” includes state-recognized tribes; indigenous and tribal community-based organizations; individual members of federally recognized tribes, including those living on a different reservation or living outside Indian country; individual members of state-recognized tribes; Native Hawaiians; Native Pacific Islanders; and individual Native Americans.

**Low-Income** - A reference to populations characterized by limited economic resources. The US Office of Management and Budget has designated the Census Bureau's annual poverty measure as the official metric for program planning and analysis, although other definitions exist.

**Meaningful Involvement** - Potentially affected community residents have an appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their

environment and/or health; the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; the concerns of all participants involved will be considered in the decision-making process; the decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

**Minority Populations** - According to the U.S. Census Bureau, population of people who are not single-race white and not Hispanic. Populations of individuals who are members of the following population groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; or Hispanic.

**Overburdened Community** - Minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in the United States that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks. This disproportionality can be as a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, lack of opportunity for public participation, or other factors. Increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative or lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or places. The term describes situations where multiple factors, including both environmental and socio-economic stressors, may act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities.

**Tribes** - When used in this document, "tribes" refers to federally recognized tribes. *Federally recognized tribes include* any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1944, 25 U.S.C.479a.