

Inequities in the effects of the environmental crisis

A **clean, healthy and sustainable environment** is essential for human rights because it is necessary for life, health and wellbeing.

Climate change, pollution and extreme weather continue to threaten human well-being, with marginalized communities bearing the greatest burden.



Canada is warming **nearly twice as fast** as the global average. In 2023, B.C. set multiple temperature records, including the highest-ever recorded temperature above the 45th parallel (49.6 C in Lytton, which burned to the ground the next day).

Extreme weather is intensifying:



2023 saw B.C.'s most destructive wildfire season, burning **2.84 million hectares** and displacing thousands.



In 2021, a record-setting heat dome caused **600+ heat-related deaths**.



Severe flooding in the Fraser Valley became the most costly natural disaster in B.C.'s history in 2021.



Indigenous laws recognize the duty to protect the land for future generations, yet **land defenders are often criminalized** for upholding these responsibilities.

B.C. is not on track to meet its climate targets. Despite pledges to cut emissions, B.C. continues to approve fossil fuel projects that will **significantly worsen pollution**.



Impact on marginalized groups

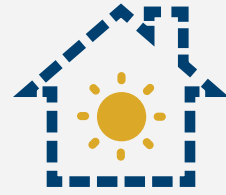
The 2021 heat dome disproportionately affected:



people over 70, those living in poverty and individuals with chronic health conditions



renters, who sometimes faced threats or eviction for using air conditioning



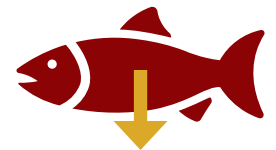
unhoused people, who struggled to find safe shelter from extreme heat



During the 2021 Fraser Valley floods, many temporary foreign workers were left stranded without shelter, food or medication.

Some workers were exploited by recruiters charging fees for access to jobs not affected by flooding while others had their employment duties illegally changed

Climate change disrupts Indigenous ways of life. Rising temperatures and biodiversity loss impact food sources, traditional medicine and cultural practices. For example, extreme heat threatens salmon populations, which are vital for some Indigenous communities. Despite these challenges, Indigenous communities are leading climate solutions.



About BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in the province. Learn more about our Office at bchumanrights.ca

10 key systems impacting human rights in B.C.

This fact sheet is based on the Commissioner's 2024 report, *Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.*, which highlights significant inequities and injustices affecting B.C. residents across 10 key systems. These include inequities in housing, the social safety net, health care, education, employment, child welfare, criminal justice, public spaces and the family sphere, as well as in the effects of the environmental crisis. Exploring these systems is an important way to determine the state of human rights in British Columbia.



baseline.bchumanrights.ca/in-focus