

# METHANE POLLUTION: HARMING LATINO HEALTH



## Reducing methane emissions is urgent.

Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) is a potent greenhouse gas that is causing about 25 percent of the global warming we are experiencing today. Methane is 87 times more potent than carbon dioxide within the first 20 years after it is released. Adding methane to the atmosphere increases the speed of global warming. That's why it is critical to stop methane emissions now, in the short term.

**What is methane?** Methane is an odorless gas that occurs naturally and as a result of human activities. Some sources of methane include enteric fermentation (cow burps), leaks or intentional venting from oil and gas facilities, and landfills.

## Methane harms our health and safety.

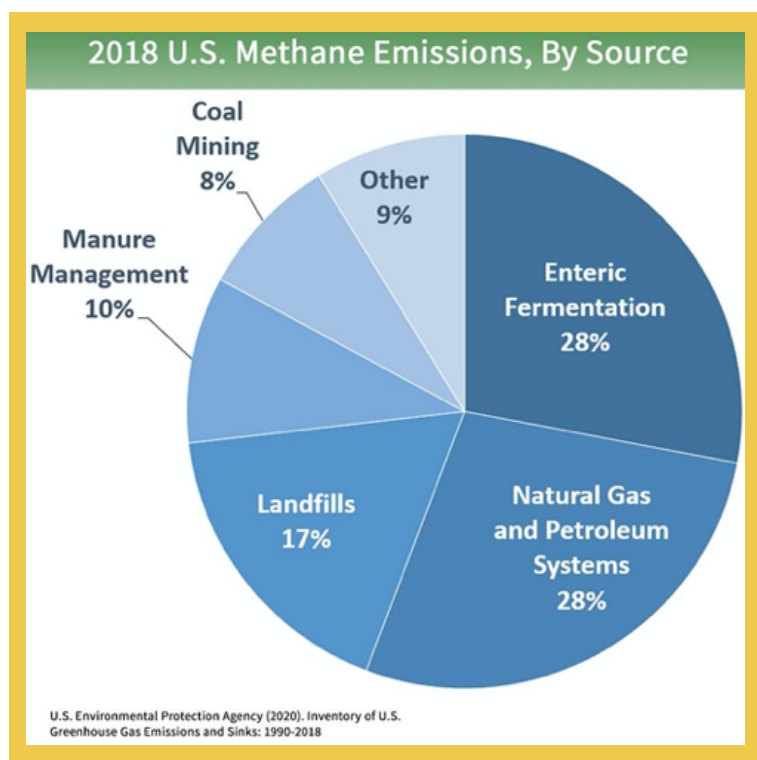
There are three ways that methane creates health and safety risks for people:

1. Global warming makes communities, particularly Latino and communities of color, more vulnerable to natural disasters, disease, and heat stroke.
2. Methane reacts in the atmosphere to produce volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and ground-level ozone, which are harmful to human health.
3. Additional warming from methane creates conditions that speed ozone formation.

## Methane increases air pollution.

Ozone, or "smog," is formed when VOCs and nitrous oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) react in sunlight. Methane is a VOC, but it also reacts in the atmosphere to create other VOCs that are very likely to produce ozone. Ozone exacerbates breathing difficulties caused by respiratory conditions such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, or even coronavirus symptoms.

Research shows that Latinos are 51% more likely to live in a county that violates ground level ozone standards. These geographic factors, due to environmental racism, contribute to asthma having a disproportionate impact on Latino families. Preventing methane and ozone pollution is critical for Latinos, because Latino children are twice as likely to die of asthma than white children.



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## Climate change poses a threat to Latino communities.

An overwhelming majority of Latinos (78%) say they have personally experienced the effects of climate change. The majority of Latinos in the U.S. live in four states and territories that have already been devastated by natural disasters that were made more extreme because of climate change: from wildfires in California, to hurricanes in Texas and Puerto Rico, and flooding in Florida.



An infrared camera shows an unlit, "venting" flare at an oil and gas production site spewing methane and other pollutants into the air. (Photo credit: Sharon Wilson, Earthworks)

## Latinos are exposed to methane emissions from oil and gas production.

As of 2015, 1.81 million Latino individuals lived within a half mile of an oil and gas facility. Oil and gas production sites release methane – the primary ingredient in natural gas – and air pollutants that are known to have harmful health impacts including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, hydrogen sulfide, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, VOCs and NOx. Some of these pollutants are linked to endocrine disruption, cancer, heart attacks, and chronic illnesses.

### You can help prevent methane pollution by:

- Using less energy and supporting policies that reduce demand for fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.
- Supporting policies that require companies to reduce methane emissions.
- Compost your food scraps and support city-wide composting programs to reduce landfill methane emissions.
- Reducing meat and dairy consumption.
- Using your voice to advocate for state and federal policies that support sustainable, clean energy.