

Daily Satellite Observations of Nitrogen Dioxide Air Pollution Inequality in New York City, New York and Newark, New Jersey: Evaluation and Application

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Abstract. Urban air pollution disproportionately harms communities of color and low-income communities in the U.S. Intraurban nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) inequalities can be observed from space using the TROPOspheric Monitoring Instrument (TROPOMI). Past research has relied on time averaged measurements, limiting our understanding of how neighborhood-level NO₂ inequalities co-vary with urban air quality and climate. Here, we use fine scale (250 m x 250 m) airborne NO₂ remote sensing to demonstrate daily TROPOMI observations resolve a major portion of census tract-scale NO₂ inequalities in the New York City–Newark urbanized area. Spatiotemporally coincident TROPOMI and airborne inequalities are well correlated ($r = 0.82$ – 0.97), with slopes of 0.82 – 1.05 for relative and 0.76 – 0.96 for absolute inequalities for different groups. We calculate daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities over May 2018–September 2021, reporting disparities of 25–38% with race, ethnicity, and/or household income. Mean daily inequalities agree with results based on TROPOMI measurements oversampled to $0.01^\circ \times 0.01^\circ$ to within associated uncertainties. Individual and mean daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities are largely insensitive to pixel size, at least when pixels are smaller than $\sim 60 \text{ km}^2$, but are sensitive to low observational coverage. We statistically analyze daily NO₂ inequalities, presenting empirical evidence of the systematic overburdening of communities of color and low-income neighborhoods

with polluting sources, regulatory ozone co-benefits, and worsened NO₂ inequalities and cumulative NO₂ and urban heat burdens with climate change.

Synopsis. Daily TROPOMI satellite observations resolve a majority of intraurban NO₂ inequalities in New York City and New Jersey; NO₂ inequalities covary with air quality and climate variables

Keywords. Urban air pollution, environmental justice, nitrogen dioxide, satellite measurements, TROPOMI

1 INTRODUCTION

New York City, New York and Newark, New Jersey are populous U.S. cities with poor air quality, where there are documented inequalities in air pollution concentrations and health impacts affecting communities of color and low-income residents.¹⁻⁷ There have been decades of community organizing and activism around environmental racism issues, including air pollution and asthma, for example, in the South Bronx, West Harlem, and Ironbound.⁸⁻¹⁰ Air quality can vary substantially between neighborhoods in the same city, and recent observational and computational advances have improved quantitative estimates of intraurban inequalities across the U.S.¹¹⁻¹⁷ However, fine-scale pollutant mapping typically relies on measurements that are short timescale snapshots or long time averages, trading temporal information for enhanced spatial detail. As a result, we have less knowledge of temporal variability in neighborhood-level inequalities and relationships between inequalities, urban air quality issues such as ozone, and climate change.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is a criteria pollutant and surface ozone (O₃) precursor. NO₂ is a chemically reactive primary pollutant, and, therefore, NO₂ concentrations are variable in space and

time, with characteristic NO₂ distance decay gradients away from sources equaling hundreds of meters to 2 km.¹⁸⁻²⁰ NO₂ is emitted as NO_x (\equiv NO + NO₂), with sources dominated by fossil fuel combustion in cities, especially traffic exhaust.²¹⁻²³ NO₂ exposure is associated with numerous adverse health effects,²⁴⁻²⁹ and roadway residential proximity has been linked to asthma-related urgent medical visits, pediatric asthma, cardiac and pulmonary mortality, and preeclampsia and preterm birth.³⁰⁻³⁵ NO₂ concentrations and NO_x sources are unequally distributed with race, ethnicity, and income in U.S. cities,^{1, 2, 4-6, 12-14, 17, 36} with urban NO₂ inequalities being large enough to cause health disparities.^{11, 24}

To date, air pollution inequality analyses focusing on primary pollutants like NO₂ have typically prioritized spatial rather than temporal information, as observations and models must resolve length scales of atmospheric dispersion to fully describe disparities. Satellite NO₂ tropospheric vertical column densities (TVCDs) have been incorporated into regression models and other measurement-model hybrid surface NO₂ products relevant for health and environmental justice applications, with spatial resolutions ranging 100 m to 0.01° (~1 km).^{11, 12, 24} The TROPospheric Monitoring Instrument (TROPOMI) currently provides the highest spatial resolution global satellite NO₂ TVCDs, with TROPOMI describing NO₂ inequalities at census tract scales directly after TVCDs are oversampled to 0.01° x 0.01°, time averaging at least multiple months of measurements.^{13, 14, 17} For reference, the average area of census tracts in New York City and Newark is 2.1 km². Oversampled TVCDs have been shown to observe NO₂ inequalities equivalently to high spatial resolution (250 m x 500 m) airborne remote sensing to within associated uncertainties, independently of patterns in the structure and heterogeneity of urban racial segregation, and similarly as measured at the surface.^{13, 17} TROPOMI has an order of magnitude improved spatial resolution than its predecessor OMI, enabling analyses of NO₂ spatial

distributions with less time averaging,^{37, 38} potentially revealing new insight into the sources and controls over intraurban NO₂ inequalities. However, with current TROPOMI nadir pixel areas of ~20 km², the need for oversampling is assumed. As a consequence of the loss in temporal resolution, distributive NO₂ inequalities are not easily situated within our broader understanding of urban air quality and climate, and vice versa.

In this manuscript, we evaluate the use of daily TROPOMI observations to describe census tract-scale NO₂ inequalities with race, ethnicity, and income in the New York City–Newark urbanized area (UA). First, we report NO₂ inequalities using airborne remote sensing capable of resolving NO₂ distance decay gradients, with pixel dimensions of 250 m x 250 m, collected during the 2018 NASA Long Island Sound Tropospheric Ozone Study (LISTOS). The airborne observations serve as a reference for evaluating tract-scale NO₂ inequalities determined using spatially and temporally coincident daily TROPOMI NO₂ TVCDs. We show that the airborne and TROPOMI inequalities are strongly correlated and the daily TROPOMI TVCDs resolve a major portion of tract-scale NO₂ inequalities. We calculate daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities from May 2018–September 2021 and analyze biases in individual and mean daily TROPOMI results as a function of measurement pixel area, which range 20 to 91 km², and UA sampling coverage. Finally, we interpret empirical relationships between daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities and overall NO₂ pollution, O₃ air quality, and climate-relevant atmospheric conditions.

2 MEASUREMENTS AND METHODS

GCAS and GeoTASO. The Geostationary Coastal and Air Pollution Events (GEO-CAPE) Airborne Simulator (GCAS)³⁹ and Geostationary Trace gas and Aerosol Sensor Optimization (GeoTASO)⁴⁰ instruments are push broom spectrometers that function as satellite analogs for

104 NASA airborne missions. GeoTASO makes hyperspectral nadir-looking measurements of
105 backscattered solar radiation in the ultraviolet (290–390 nm) and visible (415–695 nm). GCAS
106 makes similar observations at 300–490 nm (optimized for air quality) and 480–900 nm (optimized
107 for ocean color). Each of the two channels in both instruments use two-dimensional charge-
108 coupled device (CCD) array detectors, where one CCD dimension provides the spectral coverage,
109 one provides the cross-track coverage across a 45° field of view, and the movement of host aircraft
110 generates the along-track coverage. The GCAS and GeoTASO datasets used here have identical
111 NO₂ retrieval algorithms, which are similar to those of major satellite instruments, including
112 TROPOMI, and eventually TEMPO.^{41–43} Briefly, NO₂ differential slant columns are produced by
113 fitting the 425–460 nm spectral window using QDOAS and a measured reference spectrum
114 collected over a nearby area away from NO₂ sources. Differential slant columns are converted to
115 vertical column densities using an air mass factor (AMF), which is a function of viewing and solar
116 geometries, surface reflectance, and meteorological and trace-gas vertical profile shapes, among
117 other variables (see Judd et al.⁴³ and Judd et al.⁴⁴ for details). NO₂ vertical profiles are calculated
118 using bias-corrected PRATMO stratospheric NO₂ climatologies^{41, 45, 46} and hourly output from the
119 North American Model-Community Multiscale Air Quality (NAMCMAQ) model (12 km x 12
120 km) from a developmental analysis from the National Air Quality Forecasting Capability.⁴⁷ The
121 resulting GCAS and GeoTASO TVCDs have a spatial resolution of 250 m x 250 m.

122 During the Long Island Sound Tropospheric Ozone Study (LISTOS), GeoTASO flew on the
123 NASA LaRC HU-25 Falcon in June 2018 and GCAS flew onboard the NASA LaRC B200 from
124 July–September 2018. On days when elevated regional air pollution was predicted (Table S1), a
125 large raster flight pattern spanning nearly the full New York City–Newark UA (Figures 1a and
126 S1a) was mapped in the morning (9–11 am local time, LT) and afternoon (1:30–4:10 pm LT). On

other days, aircraft followed a smaller raster flight pattern (Figure S1b), sub-sampling the UA in the early morning (8:15–9:50 am LT), late morning (9:50–11:30 am LT), early afternoon (1:15–3:00 pm LT), and late afternoon (3:00–4:45 pm LT). During LISTOS, Judd et al.⁴⁴ reported GCAS and GeoTASO TVCDs agreed with coincident ground-based Pandora NO₂ column measurements to within $\pm 25\%$ with no apparent overall bias. Here, we focus on cloud-free observations from large and small NO₂ TVCD flight rasters collected on 13 days having sampled at least 60% of census tracts in the New York City-Newark UA. On average, GCAS and GeoTASO sampled $79 \pm 7\%$ of UA census tracts. Compared to the full New York City-Newark UA, Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and Asians were overrepresented by 16–25% in census tracts sampled during the large and especially small raster pattern (Table S2).

TROPOMI. The TROPospheric Ozone Monitoring Instrument (TROPOMI) is a hyperspectral spectrometer onboard the sun-synchronous Copernicus Sentinel-5 Precursor (S-5P) satellite.^{48, 49} S-5P has an equatorial crossing time of 1:30 pm LT, with observations collected over the New York–Newark UA (Figure 1b) between 1–3 pm LT once or twice daily. NO₂ is retrieved by fitting the 405–465 nm spectral band based on an updated OMI DOMINO algorithm and work from the QA4ECV project.^{50–54} NO₂ TVCDs have a documented low-bias over polluted scenes, with uncertainties driven by spatially and temporally coarse inputs to the AMF,⁵⁵ including the surface albedo (monthly $0.5^\circ \times 0.5^\circ$ OMI climatology)⁵⁶ and NO₂ profile shape (daily $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$ TM5-MP output).⁵⁷ We use Level 2 NO₂ TVCDs reprocessed on the S5P-PAL system (qa value > 0.75). From 1 May 2018 to 6 August 2019, encompassing the LISTOS period, the nadir spatial resolution of TROPOMI NO₂ TVCDs was 3.5 km x 7 km, with typical individual pixel areas of 27–63 km² (mean $\pm 1\sigma$). Subsequently, the spatial resolution improved to 3.5 km x 5.5 km at nadir,⁵⁸ giving pixel areas of 21–49 km² (mean $\pm 1\sigma$) over the New York City–Newark UA. We focus on the

individual daily TVCDs (an example is shown in Figure 1b) and observations over May 2018–September 2021 oversampled to $0.01^\circ \times 0.01^\circ$ using a physics-based algorithm (Figure 1c).⁵⁹

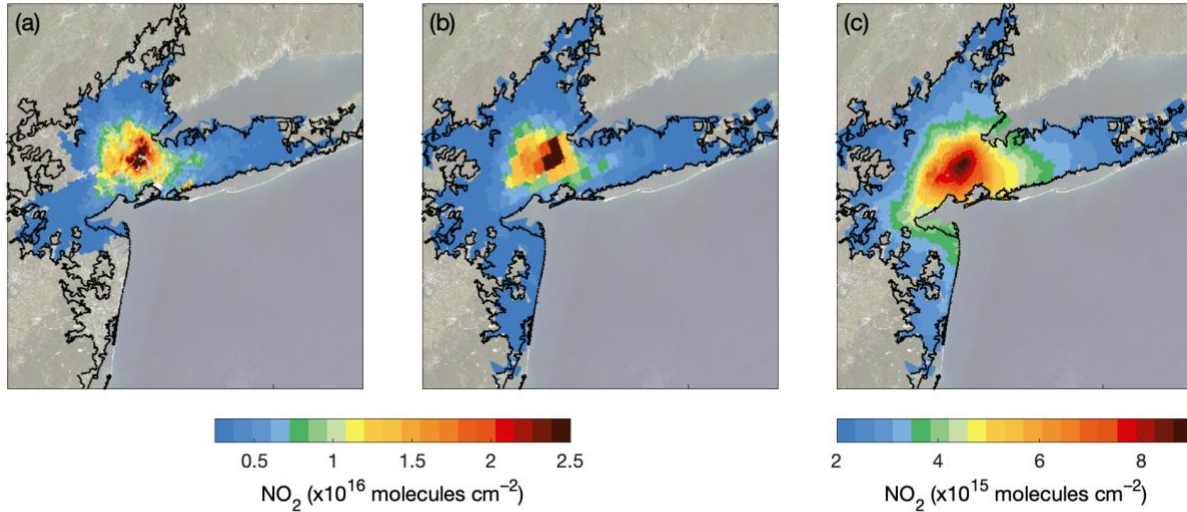


Figure 1. Example airborne NO_2 TVCDs (molecules cm^{-2}) collected on 30 June 2018 at 1–4 pm during a large raster flight pattern ($250 \text{ m} \times 250 \text{ m}$) (a), TROPOMI measurements on the same day, which have a mean pixel area of 43 km^2 (b), and TROPOMI observations oversampled to $0.01^\circ \times 0.01^\circ$ over 1 May 2018–30 September 2021 averaged to underlying census tracts. The black outline describes the New York City–Newark UA. Background map data: Landsat 8 composite January 2017–June 2020.

Census Tract NO_2 Inequalities. We average NO_2 TVCDs within 2018 census tract polygons for the New York City–Newark UA. Individual airborne and TROPOMI TVCDs are spatially continuous but discretized to $0.001^\circ \times 0.001^\circ$ at the pixel level prior to tract averaging without regridding or oversampling. NO_2 tract-averaged TVCDs are weighted by tract-scale populations of non-Hispanic/Latino Black and African Americans, non-Hispanic/Latino Asians, all races identifying as Hispanic or Latino, and non-Hispanic/Latino whites (Eq. S1). Poverty status is defined according to the U.S. Census Bureau family Ratio of Income to Poverty. Poverty thresholds vary by family size and family member age but not geographically. The U.S. Census intends for poverty thresholds to be a “statistical yardstick” rather than a complete representation of families’ needs. Below-poverty tracts are those with greater than 20% of households having an

169 income-to-poverty ratio <1 . Tracts above the poverty line are defined as those with household
170 income-to-poverty ratios of >1 . Tract-scale NO_2 TVCDs within both categories are population
171 weighted by residents at the given poverty status. We combine race-ethnicity and income metrics,
172 categorizing census tracts as low-income and non-white (LIN), i.e., people of color in low-income
173 tracts, or high-income and white (HIW). In LIN tracts, NO_2 TVCDs are weighted by the population
174 of Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, Asians, and/or American Indians and
175 Alaska Natives in the lowest income quintile tracts (household incomes $<\$49,544.50$). Because
176 American Indians and Alaska Natives comprise less than 0.2% of the New York City–Newark UA
177 population, we do not report results for this group separately. In HIW tracts, TVCDs are weighted
178 by the population of non-Hispanic/Latino whites in the highest income quintile tracts (household
179 incomes $>\$117,664$). When we compute results in New York City and Newark separately, dividing
180 the UA along state lines, lowest income quintile tracts are those with tract-averaged median
181 household incomes $<\$48,911$ and $<\$51,250$, respectively; highest income quintile tracts are those
182 with tract-averaged median household incomes $>\$112,940$ and $>\$125,367$, respectively. We
183 discuss NO_2 disparities in terms of relative and absolute inequalities computed as percent (%) and
184 absolute differences (molecules cm^{-2}) in population-weighted census tract-averaged TVCDs.
185 Race-ethnicity inequalities are in reference to population-weighted NO_2 TVCDs for non-
186 Hispanic/Latino whites and poverty status inequalities are in reference to NO_2 TVCDs in census
187 tracts above the poverty line. While there are numerous dimensions of air pollution inequity, our
188 focus is on the evaluation and application of daily satellite measurements; therefore, we limit the
189 number of demographic characteristics considered in the analysis. Census data are from the 2019
190 American Community Survey (ACS): 5-Year dataset. Fractional census tract populations for the
191 four largest race-ethnicity groups and median household incomes are mapped in Figure 2 and

census tract population densities are shown in Figure S2. The ACS is a higher time resolution alternative to the longform decennial census. The ACS accounts for variations in census tract sampling rates and differential group response rates through a complex weighting process. Sample weights prioritize accuracy over precision, with individual tract estimates being more imprecise in tracts with heterogeneous populations.^{60, 61} We manage this imprecision through aggregation by population weighting. We focus on the UA, defined as densely populated and commercial areas within cities, to describe intraurban inequalities rather than urban-suburban differences.

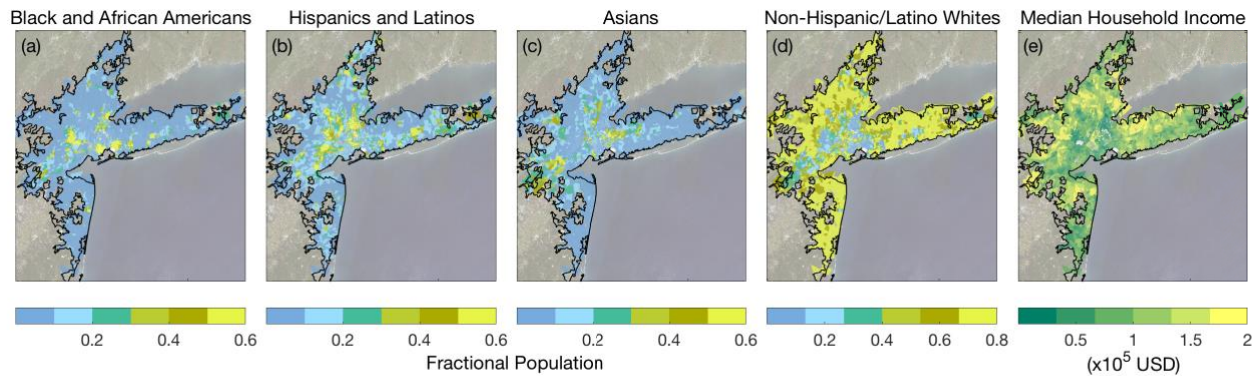


Figure 2. Fractional census tract populations for Black and African Americans (a), Hispanics and Latinos of all races (b), Asians (c), non-Hispanic/Latino whites (d), and median household incomes (e) in the New York City–Newark UA (black line). Background map data: Landsat 8 composite January 2017–June 2020.

Measurements of Surface NO_2^* , O_3 , and Meteorology. We use NO_2^* surface observations collected at 11 stations across the New York City–Newark UA (Figure S3a). These measurements are made by decomposing NO_2 to NO over a heated molybdenum catalyst, followed by the detection of NO using the chemiluminescence technique. The resulting NO_2 data have a known positive interference from higher-order nitrogen oxides and ammonia, which also decompose at non-unity efficiency in the presence of the catalyst.⁶²⁻⁶⁴ We use the term NO_2^* in acknowledgement of this interference, opting not to apply a correction factor as we are interested

in the distance dependence of the correlations between surface NO_2^* and overhead TVCDs, rather than the surface NO_2 mixing ratios themselves. We use O_3 measurements from 17 monitoring stations within the UA (Figure S3b) converted to the policy-relevant metric of the daily maximum 8-hour average (MDA8) O_3 mixing ratio. Temperature and wind speed measurements are collected at 14 stations throughout the New York City–Newark UA as part of the Automated Surface Observing System and Automated Weather Observing System (Figure S3c), accessible through the Iowa State University Iowa Environmental Mesonet download service. Because of station-level variability in the data collection interval, we average individual station meteorological measurements from 12–3 pm local time (LT) prior to computing the UA-wide mean.

NO_x Emissions Inventories: FIVE and NEI. The Fuel-based Inventory of Vehicle Emissions (FIVE) tabulates monthly on-road and off-road gasoline and diesel mobile source emissions at 4 km x 4 km U.S. wide. The FIVE is based on publicly available datasets of taxable fuel sales and road-level traffic and time-resolved weigh-in-motion traffic counts.^{22, 65, 66} We use emissions from the 2018, 2019, 2020 COVID-19, and 2020 business-as-usual (BAU) FIVE for 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. The 2020 COVID-19 inventory was developed using monthly scaling factors from U.S. Energy Information Administration fuel sales reports.²² In the 2020 BAU FIVE, fuel use is assumed unchanged from 2019.²² See McDonald et al.⁶⁵ and Harkins et al.²² for a detailed discussion of the uncertainties, which are $\pm 24\%$ for both gasoline and diesel vehicles. Annual NO_x stationary source emissions are taken from the 2017 National Emissions Inventory (NEI17), including industrial and commercial facilities, power plants, and airports. Uncertainties in power plant emissions are $\pm 25\%$ and uncertainties for industrial facilities and other stationary sources are $\pm 50\%$.^{67, 68}

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

GCAS and GeoTASO Census Tract-Level NO₂ Inequalities during LISTOS. We report population-weighted census tract-scale NO₂ inequalities measured during each of the 37 LISTOS flights within the New York City–Newark UA in Figure 3 and Table S3. Population-weighted NO₂ TVCDs for Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and Asians are $14 \pm 3\%$, $14 \pm 5\%$, and $15 \pm 4\%$ higher than for non-Hispanic/Latino whites, respectively. NO₂ TVCDs are on average $17 \pm 4\%$ greater in tracts below the poverty line compared to those above. When race-ethnicity and income metrics are combined, NO₂ TVCDs are $24 \pm 4\%$ higher in LIN than HIW census tracts. Errors are defined as 95% confidence intervals for mean inequalities, derived from bootstrapped distributions sampled with replacement 10^4 times.

NO₂ inequalities are more variable between days than by time of daytime during LISTOS. While population-weighted and/or income-sorted NO₂ TVCDs for all groups are on average 14–28% higher during morning (8–11:30 am LT) than afternoon flights (1–5 pm LT), corresponding median relative and absolute NO₂ inequalities are not significantly different for any group (Mann-Whitney test, $p < 0.050$). Mean relative and absolute inequalities are also similar during morning and afternoon flights, with exceptions of relative inequalities for Hispanics and Latinos and absolute inequalities for Asians and in LIN tracts. This suggests observations collected in the early afternoon by TROPOMI capture daytime patterns in tract-scale population-weighted NO₂ TVCD (not surface mixing ratio) differences generally, at least during LISTOS. The small number of flights limits our ability to statistically infer relationships between NO₂ disparities and environmental factors; however, we observe moderate, negative correlations between absolute inequalities and mean surface wind speeds and moderate, positive correlations with UA-mean NO₂* and NO₂ TVCDs for some groups ($p < 0.050$) (Table S4). This is consistent with slower

surface winds reducing the mixing of NO₂ pollution away from NO_x sources and higher NO₂ pollution worsening absolute inequalities.

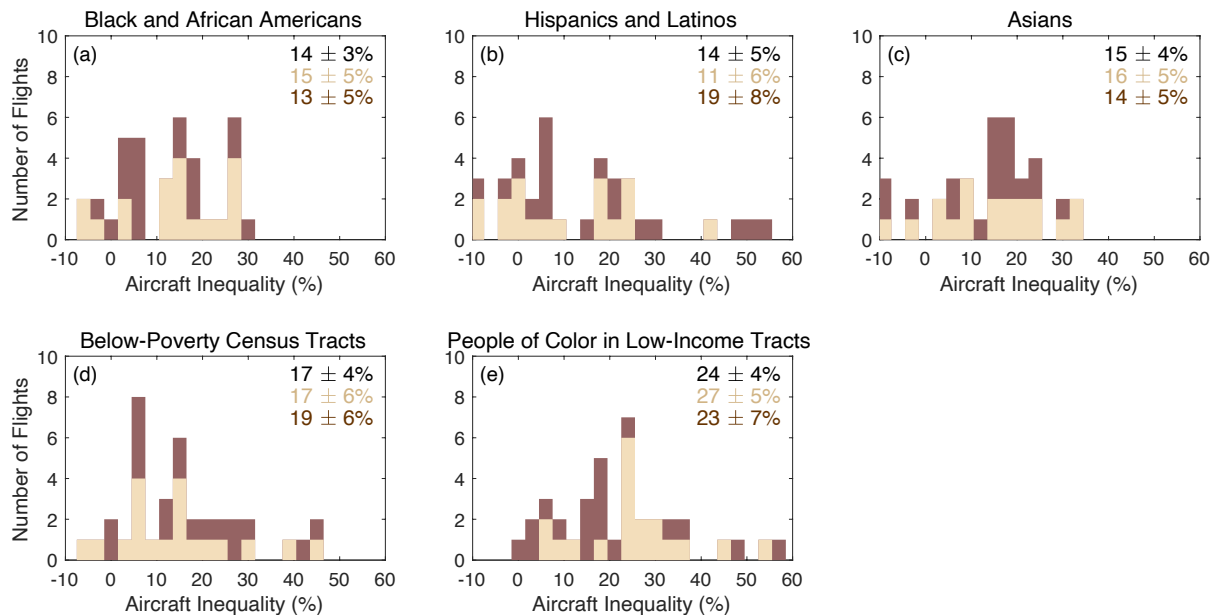


Figure 3. Airborne NO₂ inequalities for each of the 37 LISTOS flights for Black and African Americans (a), Hispanics and Latinos (b), and Asians (c) compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites, below poverty versus above poverty tracts (d), and LIN compared to HIW tracts (e). Morning (8–11:30 am LT) (tan) and afternoon (1–5 pm LT) (brown) flights are shown separately. LISTOS mean inequalities with 95% confidence intervals are reported in each panel, for all flights (black) and separately in the morning (tan) and afternoon (brown).

Evaluating Daily TROPOMI Observations. To determine the extent to which daily TROPOMI measurements resolve census tract-level disparities, we compare NO₂ inequalities for spatially and temporally coincident tract-averaged GCAS, GeoTASO, and TROPOMI observations within the New York City–Newark UA. We consider measurements to be coincidental if the minimum and maximum overfly times of airborne columns within a given census tract occur within ± 30 minutes of the TROPOMI overpass. Daily relationships between airborne and TROPOMI inequalities are fit using an unweighted bivariate linear regression model (Figure 4).⁶⁹ We infer the portion of NO₂

inequalities captured by TROPOMI from the slope of this line and assess agreement between the airborne and TROPOMI-derived results using Pearson correlation coefficients.

Daily TROPOMI observations capture most tract-scale NO₂ differences and are well correlated with inequalities measured by GCAS and GeoTASO. Correlation slopes are 0.82 ± 0.10 – 1.05 ± 0.07 for relative inequalities and 0.76 ± 0.09 – 0.96 ± 0.06 for absolute inequalities, implying TROPOMI detects at least 82% of relative and 76% of absolute inequalities, with slopes for many population groups being even higher. For the comparison, the mean pixel area of coincident TROPOMI TVCDs is $44 \pm 18 \text{ km}^2$ ($\pm 1\sigma$), which is much larger than typical atmospheric NO₂ distance decay gradients of a few hundred meters.¹⁸⁻²⁰ While some precision is lost, our results suggest measurements on the scale of these gradients, for example GCAS and GeoTASO, are not required to constrain the majority of city-wide census tract-scale NO₂ inequalities. Airborne and TROPOMI inequalities are strongly correlated, with Pearson correlation coefficients ranging 0.82–0.97 for relative and 0.88–0.96 for absolute inequalities. Slopes and Pearson correlation coefficients do not improve significantly when inequalities are weighted by the number of coincident census tracts, mean TROPOMI pixel areas, UA-mean surface wind speeds, or mean TROPOMI NO₂ TVCDs, suggesting these variables do not have a strong influence over the agreement, at least in the New York City–Newark UA during LISTOS.

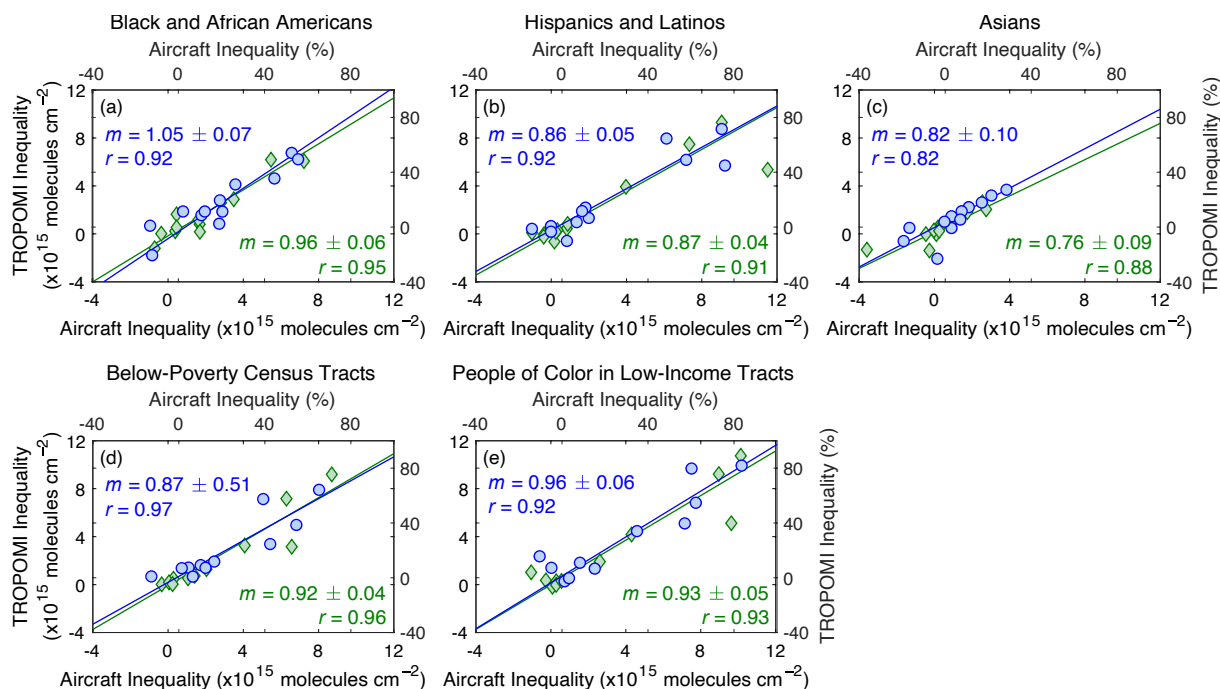


Figure 4. Daily relative (%) (blue circles) and absolute (molecules cm^{-2}) (green diamonds) inequalities measured by GCAS and GeoTASO versus TROPOMI during LISTOS for Black and African Americans (a), Hispanics and Latinos (b), and Asians (c) compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites, below-poverty versus above poverty tracts (d), and LIN compared to HIW tracts (e). Fits are derived from an unweighted bivariate linear regression model. Slopes (m) and Pearson correlation coefficients (r) for each fit are reported for both relative (blue) and absolute (green) inequalities. One data point in panel d is out of frame ($-119.5, -136.4$).

Table 1. Influence of TROPOMI pixel area and sampling coverage on both mean and individual daily relative inequalities (May 2018–September 2021), as well as comparison between mean daily and oversampled relative inequalities for Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and Asians compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites, for below poverty versus above poverty tracts, and for LIN compared to HIW tracts. The pixel area analysis only includes days with >30% UA coverage. Observations are grouped such that each category contains at least 80 observation days. Inequalities are binned by days with low (<30%), moderate (30–60%), and high (>60%) UA coverage. Daily inequalities are assessed using the coefficient of variation. Errors are 95% confidence intervals based on bootstrapped distributions sampled with replacement 10^4 times. The oversampled TROPOMI TVCDs are oversampled to $0.01^\circ \times 0.01^\circ$ prior to census tract averaging for all days, on days with >30% coverage, and on days with >60% coverage, with uncertainties as standard mean errors.

Mean of Daily Inequalities						Daily Inequalities				
Relative Inequalities (%)						Coefficient of Variation				
Pixel Area (km ²)	Black and African Americans	Hispanics and Latinos	Asians	Below Poverty Tracts	LINs	Black and African Americans	Hispanics and Latinos	Asians	Below Poverty Tracts	LINs
20–25	31 ± 2	30 ± 2	28 ± 2	28 ± 2	40 ± 3	0.44	0.52	0.43	0.45	0.40
25–30	32 ± 3	30 ± 3	28 ± 2	26 ± 3	39 ± 3	0.45	0.53	0.42	0.52	0.41
30–35	31 ± 3	29 ± 3	30 ± 2	26 ± 2	38 ± 3	0.42	0.42	0.32	0.43	0.37
35–45	31 ± 2	26 ± 3	28 ± 2	25 ± 3	38 ± 3	0.37	0.62	0.34	0.53	0.41
45–60	30 ± 3	27 ± 3	28 ± 3	25 ± 2	38 ± 4	0.54	0.60	0.51	0.53	0.53
>60	26 ± 3	25 ± 3	23 ± 2	22 ± 2	31 ± 3	0.47	0.60	0.49	0.50	0.43
UA Coverage (%)										
<30	12 ± 2	11 ± 2	10 ± 2	11 ± 4	18 ± 4	1.99	2.00	2.05	2.47	1.81
30–60	30 ± 3	29 ± 3	26 ± 3	25 ± 3	37 ± 4	0.64	0.62	0.65	0.66	0.65
>60	30 ± 1	28 ± 1	28 ± 1	26 ± 1	38 ± 1	0.40	0.53	0.36	0.45	0.36
Mean of Daily Inequalities						Oversampled Inequalities				
All days	24 ± 1	22 ± 1	21 ± 1	21 ± 1	32 ± 1	28 ± 1	27 ± 1	28 ± 1	25 ± 1	36 ± 2
>30%	30 ± 1	28 ± 1	28 ± 1	25 ± 1	38 ± 1	28 ± 1	27 ± 1	28 ± 1	25 ± 1	35 ± 2
>60%	30 ± 1	28 ± 1	28 ± 1	26 ± 1	38 ± 1	28 ± 1	26 ± 1	28 ± 1	25 ± 1	36 ± 2

We calculate daily census tract-scale NO₂ inequalities over May 2018–September 2021 and investigate the sensitivity of mean and individual daily results to UA-mean TROPOMI pixel area and UA coverage percentage (Table 1). First, UA-mean daily TROPOMI pixel areas range ~20–90 km² (Figure S4), providing an empirical test of the resolution dependence of NO₂ inequalities. We remove days from the analysis when TROPOMI observations cover less than 30% of census tracts across the New York City–Newark UA (justification below; see Table S5 for an analysis of

all days). We find relative inequalities are mostly insensitive to TROPOMI UA-mean pixel area, with significant differences in medians emerging when pixels are larger than $\sim 60 \text{ km}^2$, defined as $p < 0.050$ (Kruskal-Wallis test). Additionally, there is no clear influence of increasing UA-mean pixel area on the coefficient of variation of the individual daily inequalities. Substantial day-to-day variability limits our ability to identify an exact pixel area-sensitivity threshold, and, because observation days with UA-mean pixel areas $> 60 \text{ km}^2$ comprise less than 15% of the full dataset, their inclusion does not significantly affect our results. Relationships between inequalities and UA-mean pixel areas suggest key spatial scales for describing NO_2 inequalities are larger than those of atmospheric NO_2 dispersion gradients, which is consistent with recent work by Chambliss et al.¹⁶ and Demetillo et al.¹³, because NO_x emissions sources are ubiquitous and distributed and tracts with similar population characteristics spatially aggregate.⁷⁰

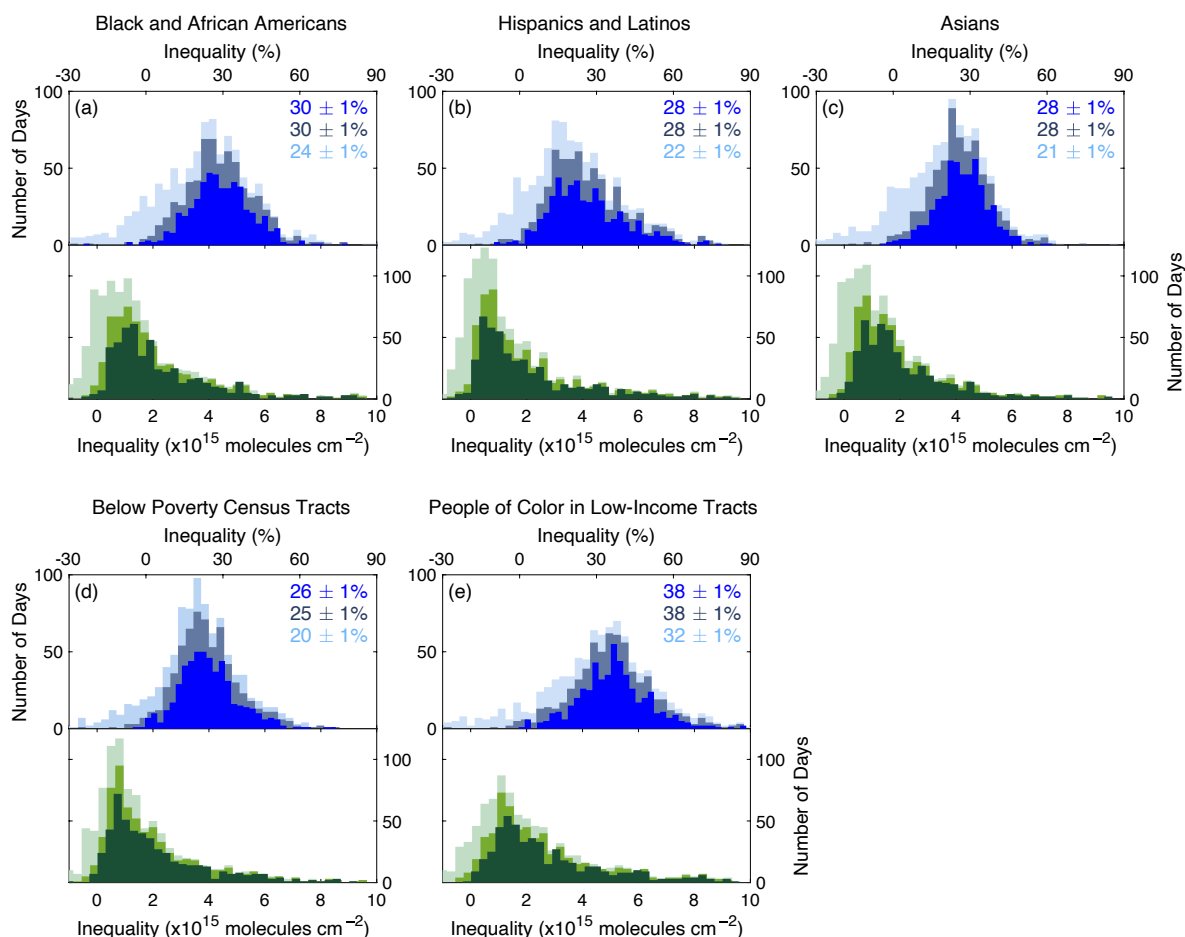
Second, we investigate the sensitivity of daily inequalities to TROPOMI observation UA coverage extent (Table 1). Reduced sampling coverage is largely caused by clouds, but snow accumulation can be important in the winter. In the New York City–Newark UA, snow cover accounted for 29% of missing pixels in winter months, with snow present on 43% of observations days in December–February and 12% of total observation days across May 2018–September 2021. Distributions of daily relative and absolute NO_2 inequalities for each group are shown in Figure 5 on all days, on days with at least 30% UA coverage, and on days with at least 60% UA coverage. Inclusion of days with sparse coverage ($< 30\%$) decreases mean relative NO_2 inequalities by 4–6 percentage points. Individual daily inequalities are more affected by missing data than means, with increasing coefficients of variation at UA coverage levels of $< 60\%$ in comparison to days with $> 90\%$ coverage. Effects of incomplete UA coverage are largely explained by insufficient sampling of key race-ethnicity, poverty, and income groups, with greater coverage capturing more

representative UA demographics and observations on lower coverage days more likely to sample population groups in the majority (Figure S5): non-Hispanic/Latino whites (44%) and tracts above the poverty line (73%). As a result, we remove days with <30% UA coverage from our discussion of mean NO₂ inequalities (323 days or 33% of the full dataset) and days with <60% coverage from our analysis of daily inequalities (457 days or 47% of the full dataset). Results are skewed toward clear sky conditions, corresponding to daytime (12–3 pm LT) mean surface NO₂* mixing ratios of 8.1 ± 4.4 ppb (days with >30% UA coverage) compared to daytime mean NO₂* of 11.9 ± 6.6 ppb (days with <30% coverage), likely biasing daily absolute NO₂ inequalities low (discussion below).

Mean daily population-weighted NO₂ TVCDs over May 2018–September 2021 are $30 \pm 1\%$, $28 \pm 1\%$, and $28 \pm 1\%$ higher for Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and Asians, respectively, compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites (Figure 5 and Table 1). NO₂ TVCDs are $25 \pm 1\%$ greater in tracts below the poverty line than above and $38 \pm 1\%$ higher in LIN compared to HIW census tracts. We report results separately in New York City and Newark, where mean daily NO₂ inequalities are 19–30% and 24–43%, respectively (Table 2). Means and 95% confidence intervals are derived from bootstrapped daily NO₂ inequality distributions resampled 10^4 times. We repeat NO₂ inequality calculations by first oversampling the same subset of days to a resolution of $0.01^\circ \times 0.01^\circ$ using a physics-based algorithm⁵⁹ prior to census tract averaging and find oversampled and mean daily results are equal to within associated uncertainties for days with at least 30% UA coverage (Table 1). Finally, our analysis is based on recently reprocessed S5P-PAL TROPOMI TVCDs, which include improvements resolving some of the low biases occurring over polluted northern midlatitude scenes and in the wintertime.⁷¹ Mean daily inequalities computed with the S5P-PAL TVCDs are 3–6 percentage points higher compared to the RPRO and OFFL operational products (Table 2), indicating TROPOMI NO₂ inequality estimates using previously

available NO₂ products are biased low, as suggested by Demetillo et al.¹⁷ in their detailed evaluation of oversampled NO₂ TVCDs and census tract-scale inequalities in Houston, Texas.

While inequalities based on spatially and temporally coincident airborne and TROPOMI TVCDs are in good agreement (Figure 4), mean daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities are significantly higher than those measured by GCAS and GeoTASO during LISTOS (Table 1). This is true both over the full May 2018–September 2021 period and on LISTOS flight days when all TROPOMI TVCDs, not just those coincident with airborne observations, are considered. Absolute inequalities are higher in the winter than summer; however, relative NO₂ inequalities exhibit little seasonal variation. While LISTOS inequalities are within the distribution of daily TROPOMI inequalities, differences in mean disparities are explained by changes in UA observational coverage and corresponding demographic composition. Mean daily TROPOMI inequalities within a typical LISTOS large (30 June 2018) and small (15 August 2018) flight raster are 3–9 and 11–20 percentage points lower than across the full New York City–Newark UA (Table 2). However, there are similarities, for example, mean inequalities for Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and Asians are comparable to within associated uncertainties, as also observed by GCAS and GeoTASO during LISTOS, and inequality distributions for Hispanics and Latinos exhibit a heavy tail using both daily TROPOMI and aircraft TVCDs.



379

380 **Figure 5.** Daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities over May 2018–September 2021 for Black and
 381 African Americans (a), Hispanics and Latinos (b), and Asians (c) compared to non-
 382 Hispanic/Latino whites, below-poverty versus above poverty tracts (d), and LIN compared to HIW
 383 tracts (e). Top panels depict relative inequalities (%) on all days (light blue), on days with at least
 384 30% UA coverage (gray blue), and on days with at least 60% UA coverage (bright blue). Bottom
 385 panels depict absolute inequalities (molecules cm^{-2}) on all days (light green), days with at least
 386 30% UA coverage (yellow green), and on days with at least 60% UA coverage (dark green). Mean
 387 relative inequalities and 95% confidence interval are included in each panel for each coverage
 388 threshold: on all days (light blue), on days with at least 30% UA coverage (gray blue), and on days
 389 with at least 60% UA coverage (bright blue).

390 **Table 2.** Mean daily TROPOMI inequalities (May 2018–September 2021) on days with >30%
 391 coverage across the New York City–Newark UA based on the S5P-PAL NO₂ product, as used
 392 throughout the analysis, on days with >30% coverage based on the RPRO and OFFL operational
 393 products, separately in New York City and Newark, and within the large (30 June) and small (15
 394 August) LISTOS flight rasters. Errors are 95% confidence intervals based on bootstrapped
 395 distributions sampled with replacement 10^4 times.

	New York City– Newark UA (S5P-PAL)	New York City– Newark UA (Operational Product)	New York City, NY	Newark, NJ	Large LISTOS Raster Flight Pattern	Small LISTOS Raster Flight Pattern
Black and African Americans	30 ± 1	26 ± 1	22 ± 1	33 ± 2	22 ± 1	10 ± 1
Hispanics and Latinos	28 ± 1	23 ± 1	19 ± 1	43 ± 2	20 ± 1	11 ± 1
Asians	28 ± 1	25 ± 1	25 ± 1	26 ± 2	19 ± 1	10 ± 1
Below Poverty Tracts	25 ± 1	22 ± 1	20 ± 1	24 ± 1	22 ± 1	14 ± 1
LINs	38 ± 1	32 ± 1	30 ± 1	43 ± 1	32 ± 1	20 ± 1

Finally, TROPOMI measures NO₂ atmospheric columns rather than surface mixing ratios. For satellite remote sensing to inform environmental justice decision-making, spatial and temporal patterns in TVCDs must reflect NO₂ distributions at the surface.^{13, 17} To investigate NO₂ column-surface relationships, we calculate Pearson correlation coefficients between daily TROPOMI TVCDs (without averaging to underlying census tracts) and mean daytime (12–3 pm LT) NO₂* mixing ratios as a function of the distance between observations.^{13, 17, 72} We find the strongest mean correlations ($r = 0.61 \pm 0.03$; error is the 95% confidence interval) between NO₂* and directly overhead TVCDs, defined as TVCDs within 1 km of a monitor based on pixel center points. Mean daily column-surface correlations subsequently weaken with increasing distance, falling to 0.56 ± 0.03 at 1–2 km, 0.49 ± 0.02 for 2–5 km, and 0.43 ± 0.02 at 5–10 km. The distance dependance of mean Pearson correlation coefficients reflects typical NO₂ distance decay gradients,^{18–20} indicating coarser resolution daily observations resolve finer-scale NO₂ gradients, at least to some extent in the average. Column-surface correlations covary with wind speeds and overall NO₂ pollution levels in physically meaningful ways. Daily r values are significantly, although weakly, negatively associated with UA-mean surface wind speeds and positively associated with UA-mean NO₂* and NO₂ TVCDs. Lastly, we find no relationship between Pearson column-surface correlation coefficients and daily UA-mean pixel area (Table S6).

Daily Variability in NO₂ Inequalities. Here, we apply the daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequality observations, describing statistical relationships with overall NO₂ and O₃ pollution and climate-

416 relevant atmospheric conditions (Table 3). We discuss the implications of each in turn. We report
417 Pearson correlation coefficients between NO₂ inequalities, surface NO₂* mixing ratios, and NO₂
418 TVCDs. We compute Spearman rank correlation coefficients (ρ) between NO₂ inequalities,
419 MDA8 O₃, surface wind speeds, and surface daytime and daily maximum temperatures, as these
420 relationships are monotonic but nonlinear. Surface NO₂* mixing ratios, wind speeds, and
421 temperatures are UA-wide means over 12–3 pm LT in correspondence to the TROPOMI overpass
422 time. We calculate r and ρ values on days with >60% TROPOMI UA coverage, separately in the
423 winter (December–February) and summer (June–August).

424 First, we find absolute NO₂ inequalities are strongly associated with UA-mean surface NO₂* and
425 NO₂ TVCDs. However, relative inequalities are mostly uncorrelated in the winter and only weakly
426 or moderately associated with NO₂ pollution in the summer. Observed differences between
427 absolute and relative inequalities are evidence that NO_x sources are systematically located in
428 communities of color and low-income neighborhoods, as variability in individual terms affecting
429 the NO₂ mass balance will have a larger effect on absolute NO₂ concentrations than on relative
430 differences city wide. Therefore, while incremental NO_x controls will decrease localized NO₂
431 burdens, any emissions above zero will drive continued disparities. Results from daily TROPOMI
432 TVCDs are supported by predictions from the FIVE and NEI. We calculate inequalities in NO_x
433 source densities equivalently to those based on observations (Methods), with point source
434 emissions summed within census tracts and total NO_x emissions (FIVE + NEI) divided by tract
435 area. Inequalities in population-weighted NO_x emission source densities are $90 \pm 6\%$ for Black
436 and African Americans, $95 \pm 5\%$ for Hispanics and Latinos, $71 \pm 6\%$ for Asians, $88 \pm 5\%$ for
437 below-poverty tracts, and $113 \pm 7\%$ for LInS.

NO₂ is a key reactant in the chemistry of O₃ production (*PO*₃); therefore, neighborhood-level NO₂ inequalities and urban O₃ are potentially coupled. In the New York City–Newark UA, there were 59 exceedances of the MDA8 70 ppb National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) over May 2018–September 2021. Briefly, *PO*₃ is a nonlinear function of NO₂. At low NO₂ levels, NO_x emissions reductions decrease *PO*₃ (chemistry is NO_x limited). At high NO₂ levels, NO_x reductions increase *PO*₃ (chemistry is NO_x suppressed), with decreases in gas-phase organic compounds being the most effective form of O₃ control, at least until NO₂ is sufficiently reduced to transition to NO_x-limited *PO*₃. Here, we find absolute NO₂ inequalities are moderately, positively associated with summertime UA-mean MDA8 O₃ (Table 3), with similar results over the May–September O₃ season (Table S7). For comparison, correlation coefficients relating UA-mean surface NO₂* and column NO₂ TVCDs with MDA8 O₃ on >60% UA coverage days are 0.43 and 0.46, respectively. This suggests there are regulatory O₃ co-benefits to reducing NO₂ inequalities and to strategies prioritizing NO_x emissions reductions in communities of color and low-income communities, consistent with recent work showing *PO*₃ in New York City and Newark trending toward NO_x-limitation.⁷³ Because O₃ is an intermediately long-lived secondary pollutant, it is more evenly distributed and not generally associated with large intraurban exposure disparities.⁷⁴ However, NO₂ concentrations are highly spatially heterogeneous, and NO₂ reductions in neighborhoods overburdened by NO_x sources could potentially worsen O₃ locally. To investigate this, we compare population-weighted census tract-scale MDA8 O₃ NAAQS exceedance frequencies on weekdays and weekends based on surface O₃ measurements (Table S8). In the New York City–Newark UA, NO₂ TVCDs were on average 27% lower on weekends compared to weekdays over May 2018–September 2021. Across U.S. cities, weekday-weekend O₃ differences are a well-established test of the NO₂ dependence of *PO*₃, as substantial NO₂ decreases occur without comparatively large

changes in other aspects of O₃ chemistry.⁷⁵ We find MDA8 O₃ NAAQS exceedances are more frequent on weekdays than weekends for all race, ethnicity, and/or income population groups (Table S8), indicating that NO_x reductions will not worsen O₃ where NO_x emissions are greatest. This said, we add caution that our results may be influenced by the locations of the O₃ monitors.

Finally, atmospheric conditions influence intraurban NO₂ distributions in ways that inform how NO₂ inequalities may scale with climate change. The Northeast U.S. is expected to experience warmer surface temperatures and more frequent stagnation days in summer and winter months, with slower surface winds from reduced mid-latitude cyclone activity and a northward shift of the summer mid-latitude jet stream.⁷⁶⁻⁸¹ We find NO₂ inequalities exhibit moderate to strong negative associations with surface wind speeds, consistent with the accumulation of NO₂ pollution near NO_x sources from reduced atmospheric mixing. This indicates that more frequent atmospheric stagnation events will exacerbate disparities. During summer months, NO₂ inequalities are weakly but significantly positively correlated with both daytime average and maximum daily temperatures. As a result, NO₂ inequalities and temperature may not scale together; however, people of color and low-income residents in New York City and Newark also bear disproportionate urban heat risks compared to non-Hispanic/Latino white and wealthy residents,⁸²⁻⁸⁴ suggesting cumulative unequal climate-driven burdens will be greater without targeted NO_x emission controls.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between daily absolute inequalities and UA-mean NO₂* mixing ratios (12–3 pm LT), NO₂ TVCDs, surface wind speeds (12–3 pm LT), surface temperatures (12–3 pm LT), daily maximum temperatures, and MDA8 O₃ mixing ratios. Relationships between daily NO₂ inequalities, surface NO₂*, and NO₂ TVCDs are Pearson correlation coefficients (r). All other relationships are Spearman rank correlation coefficients (ρ). Correlations are separately analyzed in the winter (December–February) and summer (June–August) for days with TROPOMI observations with >60% UA coverage. Only statistically significant coefficients are reported, with r and ρ significant to 1% ($p < 0.010$) unless indicated (\dagger), which means significant to 5%.

Correlations with Absolute Daily Inequalities							Correlations with Relative Daily Inequalities	
Summer								
	Surface Wind Speeds	Surface NO ₂ *	NO ₂ TVCDs	MDA8 O ₃	Surface Temperatures	Daily Maximum Temperature	Surface NO ₂ *	NO ₂ TVCDs
Black and African Americans	−0.31	0.56	0.61	0.41	0.19 [†]	0.19 [†]	0.25	0.17 [†]
Hispanics and Latinos	−0.24	0.62	0.67	0.55	0.28	0.33	0.46	0.39
Asians	−0.34	0.59	0.68	0.51	0.30	0.28	0.32	0.25
Below Poverty Tracts	−0.29	0.62	0.64	0.50	0.26	0.30	0.38	0.25
LINs	−0.32	0.63	0.66	0.50	0.23	0.27	0.40	0.24
Winter								
	Surface Wind Speeds	Surface NO ₂ *	NO ₂ TVCDs		Surface Temperatures		Surface NO ₂ *	NO ₂ TVCDs
Black and African Americans	−0.75		0.60	0.65	—		—	—
Hispanics and Latinos	−0.65		0.70	0.64	—		0.44	0.28
Asians	−0.77		0.69	0.75	—		—	—
Below Poverty Tracts	−0.71		0.63	0.54	—		—	—
LINs	−0.78		0.64	0.60	—		—	—

487

488 **Summary, Future Opportunities, and Implications.** We have demonstrated that individual daily

489 TROPOMI observations capture a major portion of census-tract scale NO₂ inequalities in the New

490 York City–Newark UA using high spatial resolution (250 m x 250 m) GCAS and GeoTASO

491 remote sensing measurements as a standard of comparison. LISTOS airborne observations resolve

492 length scales of dispersion, allowing for accurate representations of tract averaged NO₂ TVCDs.

493 We show that spatially and temporally coincident TROPOMI and aircraft measurements are

494 strongly correlated (0.82–0.97) with slopes of 0.82 ± 0.10 – 1.05 ± 0.07 and 0.76 ± 0.09 – 0.96 ± 0.06

495 for relative and absolute inequalities, respectively. Moreover, daily TROPOMI NO₂ inequalities

496 are generally insensitive to observation resolution for UA-mean pixel areas smaller than 60 km²—

497 therefore, key spatial scales for measuring NO₂ inequalities are larger than those of atmospheric

498 NO₂ gradients,¹⁶ as tracts with similar population characteristics spatially aggregate, even in New

499 York City and Newark where the structure of racial segregation is highly heterogeneous.^{13, 70} As a

500 result, fine-scale observations may not always be required to understand variability in intraurban

air pollution disparities, especially if biases can be well characterized, opening new opportunities for satellite remote sensing, as well as chemical transport modeling. We limit our conclusions to decision-making on city-wide NO₂ inequalities, as we have not attempted to resolve near-field impacts of individual polluters in communities with air pollution-related environmental justice concerns, instead focusing on accumulated NO₂ burdens from ubiquitous and overlapping urban NO_x sources. Daily TROPOMI observations cannot replace hyper-localized community-driven monitoring,⁸⁵ but spatially comprehensive and temporally resolved satellite measurements offer complimentary information on spatiotemporal trends and in unmonitored locations.

We report mean daily NO₂ inequalities of 28–30% for Black and African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and Asians and inequalities of 25% for residents of below poverty census tracts. When race-ethnicity and income metrics are combined, we find 38% greater population-weighted NO₂ TVCDs for people of color living in low-income tracts (LINs). These mean daily NO₂ inequalities equal those based on TROPOMI NO₂ TVCDs first oversampled to 0.01° x 0.01° to within associated uncertainties. Biases arise using individual observations with reduced UA coverage due to inadequate sampling of key race-ethnicity and income groups, affecting mean daily NO₂ inequalities and the precision of individual daily results (Figure S5). The dependence of city-level inequalities on sampling coverage has relevance for other measurement approaches for which it is difficult to collect observations city wide, for example, mobile monitoring. Reliance on clear sky measurements likely biases absolute NO₂ inequalities low, and relative inequalities to a smaller extent, as UA-wide mean surface NO₂* mixing ratios are 40% higher (3.8 ppb) on low (<30%) than high-coverage (>30%) days and as TROPOMI absolute inequalities are strongly, positively associated with overall NO₂ pollution, at least in the New York City–Newark UA.

Observations of daily NO₂ inequalities offer new insight into the causes and countermeasures of neighborhood-level disparities through their statistical relationships with other factors. We present empirical evidence for the systematic placement of NO_x sources in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods across the New York City–Newark UA. Specifically, absolute NO₂ inequalities are strongly correlated with overall NO₂ pollution, while relative NO₂ inequalities are not. The issue of source placement has been long identified by community organizations and residents, with TROPOMI providing space-based accountability of whether the promises of recent legislation in both states to consider cumulative burdens during permitting are kept.^{86, 87} Municipalities have several tools for addressing existing siting disparities: establishing penalties; eliminating nonconforming uses; using environmental reviews, impact analyses, and comprehensive planning; and tightening existing zoning codes in polluted neighborhoods with marginalized and vulnerable populations. Daily TROPOMI observations enable approaches to prioritize affected communities where and when NO₂ burdens are highest. We find more frequent stagnation conditions in the coming decades will exacerbate neighborhood-level NO₂ inequalities, and warming summer surface temperatures will increase cumulative disparities from overlapping NO₂ and urban heat burdens. So informed, municipalities have opportunities for targeted interventions focused on redressing harms and eliminating disparities by preventing the arrival of new sources and decreasing existing NO_x emissions in overburdened communities. In addition, because NO₂ inequalities are positively associated with high MDA8 O₃ in the New York City–Newark UA, targeted NO_x emissions reductions in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods have the potential to improve O₃ city wide.

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567 downloaded at <https://www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2017-national-emissions->
568 [inventory-nei-data](https://www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2017-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data).

569 **Supporting Information Available.** Study area maps, including example large and small LISTOS
570 rasters, UA population density, and surface monitoring station locations. Figures displaying the
571 distribution of TROPOMI pixel areas and variability in population demographics with different
572 TROPOMI coverage levels. Tables describing LISTOS flight patterns, detailed LISTOS inequality
573 results, correlations between LISTOS inequalities and various surface conditions, effect of pixel
574 area on daily TROPOMI inequalities, influence of various factors on TROPOMI column-surface
575 correlations, and relative weekday-weekend MDA8 O₃ NAAQS exceedances. The equation for
576 population weighting and relationships between daily TROPOMI inequalities and various factors
577 over O₃ season (May–September).

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