

New York State's Disadvantaged Communities Criteria

Climate change does not affect all New Yorkers equally.

It is a threat that exacerbates existing burdens, vulnerabilities, and stressors in communities statewide. For this reason, New York's nation-leading Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) requires the identification and consideration of disadvantaged communities (DACs) in implementing the Climate Act and other State-led actions. A requirement of 35%—with a goal of 40%—of the benefits from the State's investments must be directed to DACs and State agencies need to consider impacts on DACs in decision making.

New York's [Climate Justice Working Group \(CJWG\)](#), comprised of representatives from State Agencies and Environmental Justice groups across the State, was formed to identify DACs and ensure these communities directly benefit from the State's historic transition to cleaner, greener sources of energy, reduced pollution and cleaner air, and economic opportunities.

How were disadvantaged communities identified?

The CJWG used 45 indicators to identify 35% of New York as DACs. Table 1 shows the percentage of census tracts¹ identified as DACs by each region of the State. The criteria (Table 2, Table 3) include multiple indicators that represent the environmental burdens or climate change risks within a community, or population characteristics and health vulnerabilities that can contribute to more severe adverse effects of climate change.

Regions correspond with New York State's Regional Economic Development Council regions and are sorted from most to least populous. For a list of counties within each region, see regionalcouncils.ny.gov.

Table 1. Percentage of census tracts in each region designated a DAC

| Region | % of tracts within regions identified as DACs |
|------------------------|---|
| New York City | 44% |
| Long Island | 14% |
| Mid-Hudson | 42% |
| Western NY | 34% |
| Finger Lakes | 35% |
| Capital Region | 21% |
| Central NY | 35% |
| Southern Tier | 22% |
| Mohawk Valley | 26% |
| North Country | 14% |
| Statewide Total | 35% |

Table 2. Environmental burdens and climate change risks: Indicators

| Environmental Burdens and Climate Change Risk | | |
|--|--|--|
| Land use and facilities associated with historical discrimination or disinvestment | Potential climate change risks | Potential pollution exposures |
| Proximity to remediation sites | Extreme heat projections | Vehicle traffic density diesel truck and bus traffic |
| Proximity to regulated management plan sites | Flooding in coastal and tidally influenced areas (projected) | Particulate matter (PM _{2.5}) |
| Proximity to major oil storage facilities | Flooding in inland areas (projected) | Benzene concentration |
| Proximity to power generation facilities | Low vegetative cover | Wastewater discharge |
| Proximity to active landfills | Agricultural land | |
| Proximity to municipal waste combustors | Driving time to hospitals or urgent/critical care | |
| Proximity to scrap metal processors | | |
| Industrial/manufacturing/mining land use | | |
| Housing vacancy rate | | |



¹ Census tracts are delineated per the US Census Bureau. For more information visit: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#>

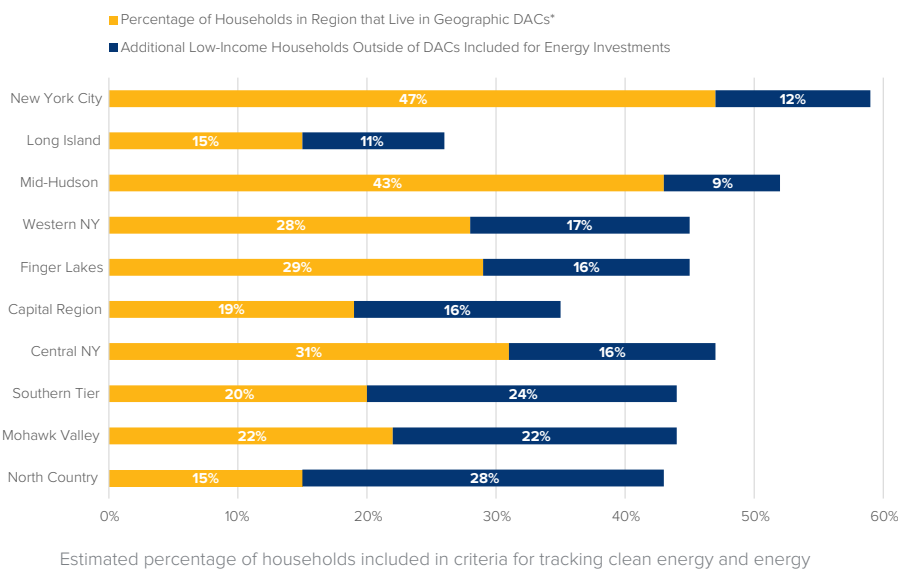
Each census tract is scored based on relative burden, risk, vulnerability, or sensitivity. Specifically, the percentile ranks of the indicators for each census tract are combined to produce a value that measures a census tract’s relative level of “Environmental Burdens and Climate Change Risks,” as well as “Population Characteristics and Health Vulnerabilities” relative to other tracts. Tracts with higher scores relative to (a) other tracts statewide; or (b) their region (New York City or Rest of State) were identified as DACs.

Based on this combined score, the top 35% of the census tracts are considered DACs. Additionally, 19 tracts that contain federally designated reservation territory or State-recognized Nation-owned land are automatically included as DACs—regardless of percentile ranking on these indicators.

How are low-income households considered part of the DAC criteria?

In addition to the geographic DAC criteria discussed above, for the purposes of the accounting of clean energy and energy efficiency investments, households with annual income at or below 60% of State Median Income or are otherwise categorically eligible for low-income programs (i.e. Home Energy Assistance Program), are included in the criteria. These households can be located anywhere in the State and are included to capture rural poverty due to the high correlation between geographic indicators and high population centers and solely for the purpose of ensuring access to the State’s energy affordability investments. Figure 1 below shows the additional low-income households outside of geographic DACs added through the low-income household criteria.

Figure 1: Increase in number of households included in DAC criteria for purposes of accounting for energy efficiency and clean energy investments, by Region



*Estimated using 200% FPL as a proxy for 60% SMI; actual counts may be slightly higher



Table 3. Population Characteristics and Health Vulnerabilities: Indicators

Population Characteristics and Health Vulnerabilities

Income

- Percent <80% area median income
- Percent <100% of federal poverty line
- Percent without bachelor’s degree
- Unemployment rate
- Percent single-parent households

Race and Ethnicity

- Percent Latino/a or Hispanic
- Percent Black or African American
- Percent Asian
- Percent Native American or Indigenous
- Limited English proficiency
- Historical redlining score

Health Outcomes & Sensitivities

- Asthma emergency department visits
- COPD emergency department visits
- Heart attack (MI) hospitalization
- Premature deaths
- Low birthweight
- Percent without health insurance
- Percent with disabilities
- Percent adults age 65+

Housing Mobility & Communications

- Percent renter-occupied homes
- Housing cost burden (rental costs)
- Energy poverty / cost burden
- Manufactured homes
- Homes built before 1960
- Percent without internet

Learn more at
climate.ny.gov