

New York State's Draft Disadvantaged Communities Criteria

Climate change does not affect all New Yorkers equally.

It is a threat exacerbated by burdens, vulnerabilities, and stressors that differ across communities statewide. For this reason, a cornerstone of New York's nation-leading Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) to identify and consider the impact of implementing the Climate Act and other regulatory actions on underserved and vulnerable populations.

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 disadvantaged communities (DACs) who are often overlooked in climate policy initiatives and to ensure they 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 percent of census tracts in New York as DACs. Table 1 shows the percentage of census tracts identified as DACs broken out in each region. The indicators (Table 2, Table 3) include climate-related risks, such as flooding or extreme heat, health vulnerabilities like asthma and COPD, and emergency department visits, as well as several socio-economic factors including race, ethnicity, and income.

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 draft DAC

Region	% of tracts identified as draft DACs
New York City	45%
Long Island	12%
Mid-Hudson	45%
Western NY	32%
Finger Lakes	35%
Capital Region	22%
Central NY	36%
Southern Tier	18%
Mohawk Valley	19%
North Country	15%
Total	35%

Table 2. Environmental burdens and climate change risks: Draft 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 (PM2.5)
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		



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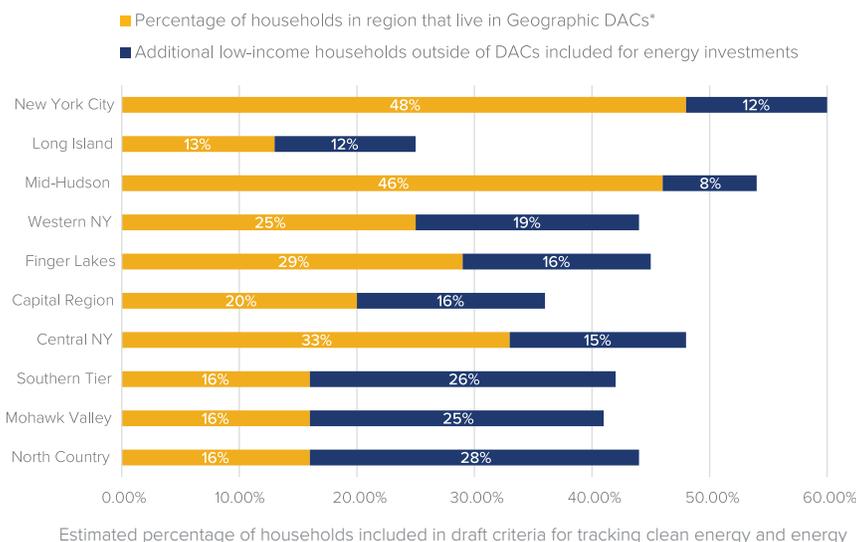
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Each census tract is scored based on relative burden, risk, vulnerability, or sensitivity. Specifically, the percentile ranks of the indicators for each census tract are combined to produce a value that measures a census tract’s relative level of “Environmental 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 in the State; or (b) their region (New York City or Rest of State) were identified as DACs.

Based on this combined score, the top 35 percent of the census tracts are considered DACs. Additionally, 19 tracts where at least 5 percent of land is a federally recognized reservation or owned by an Indian Nation are automatically included as DACs — regardless of percentile ranking on these indicators.

In addition to the geographic DAC criteria discussed above, DACs include households reporting annual total income at or below 60 percent of State Median Income, or are otherwise categorically eligible for low-income programs (i.e., Home Energy Assistance Program). These households can be located anywhere in the State and are included solely for purposes of driving New York State clean energy and energy efficiency investments. Figure 1 shows the additional low-income households outside of geographic DACs that are 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: Draft 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

Race and Ethnicity

- Percent Latino/a or Hispanic
- Percent Black or African American
- Percent Asian
- Percent Native American or Indigenous

Health Outcomes & Sensitivities

- Asthma emergency department visits
- COPD emergency department visits
- Heart attack (MI) hospitalization
- Premature deaths

Housing Mobility & Communications

- Percent renter-occupied homes
- Housing cost burden (rental costs)
- Energy poverty / cost burden
- Manufactured homes



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