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 tracts[1] 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#

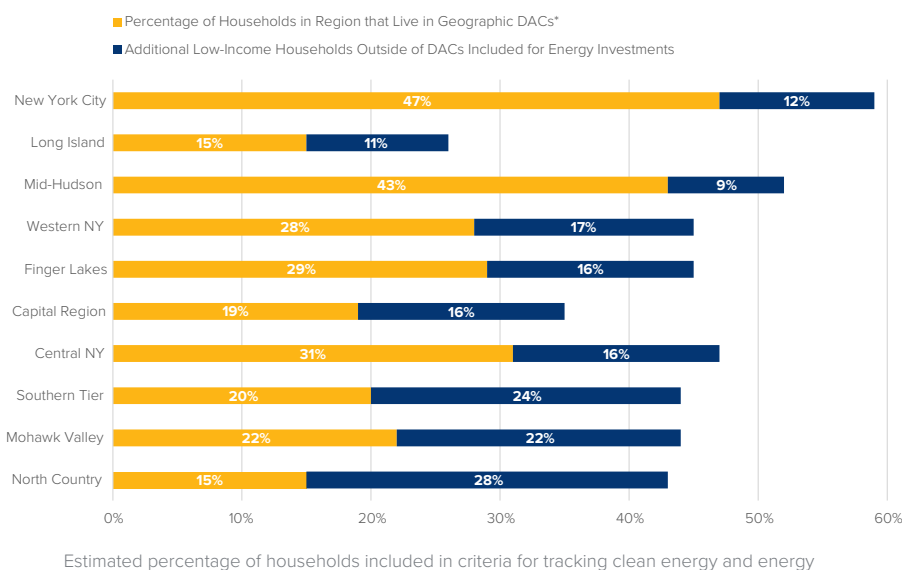**NEW YORK STATE | Department of Environmental Conservation | NYSERDA**

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

Legend:
- Percentage of Households in Region that Live in Geographic DACs*
- Additional Low-Income Households Outside of DACs Included for Energy Investments

Region	Geographic DACs*	Additional Low-Income
New York City	47%	12%
Long Island	15%	11%
Mid-Hudson	43%	9%
Western NY	28%	17%
Finger Lakes	29%	16%
Capital Region	19%	16%
Central NY	31%	16%
Southern Tier	20%	24%
Mohawk Valley	22%	22%
North Country	15%	28%

Estimated percentage of households included in criteria for tracking clean energy and energy

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

NEW YORK STATE | **Department of Environmental Conservation** | **NYSERDA**

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