

## **What Is EPA's Definition of a Disadvantaged Community? + EJScreen, CEJST, and Other Resources to Help Identify Disadvantaged Communities**

### **EPA Definition of a Disadvantaged Community:**

A **disadvantaged community** is defined as a community that meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. A geographically defined community designated as disadvantaged on the EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities Layer
2. A Farmworker Community
3. A Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community (DUC)

\* sometimes, a community may fit into more than one disadvantaged category

The definition includes all of the following:

- Any census tract that is identified as disadvantaged in the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool ([CEJST](#))
- Any census block group that is at or above the 90th percentile for any of EJScreen's Supplemental Indexes when compared to the nation or state
- Any geographic area within Tribal lands, as included in EJScreen
  - Alaska Native Allotments
  - Alaska Native Villages
  - American Indian Reservations
  - American Indian Off-reservation Trust Lands
  - Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas

A Farmworker Community is made up of individuals with:

- No fixed work address,
- Who travel from their permanent residence to work in agriculture on a temporary or seasonal basis, and
- May relocate several times throughout the year.

A Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community (DUC) is:

- Census Designated Places that lack fixed, legally determined geographic boundaries
- Includes all areas defined as Colonias by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Colonias that are not defined by HUD but are identifiable on the "Colonias" layer in EJScreen are also considered DUCs

To determine whether a community is disadvantaged, agencies consider appropriate data and screening tools based on a combination of variables that may include, but are not limited to:

- Low income, high and/or persistent poverty
- High housing cost burden and substandard housing
- High transportation cost burden and/or low transportation access
- Disproportionate environmental stressor burden and high cumulative impacts
- Limited water and sanitation access and affordability
- Disproportionate impacts from climate change
- High energy cost burden and low energy access

## **Tools to Help Identify Disadvantaged/Environmental Justice Communities:**

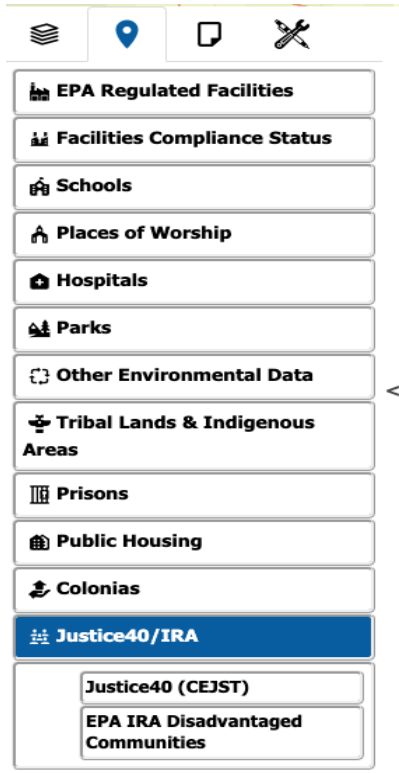
### 1. [EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#)

EPA Resources:

- [Learn to Use EJScreen](#)
- [EJScreen User Guide](#)
- [EJScreen Office Hours and Trainings](#)

Launch the [EJScreen Tool](#)

- Contains IRA Disadvantaged Community Layer, as well as Justice40 (CEJST) layer, and can be used to create Project Area Maps
  - Can be found in the Places Tab, under the Justice40/IRA heading (see image below)



2. [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#): Used to identify disadvantaged communities that should benefit from J40 programs

- CEJST datasets include, but are not limited to:
  - Census tract information and demographics
  - Low income and poverty
  - Projected flood risk
  - PM2.5 levels
  - Rates of asthma, diabetes, and heart disease
  - Historic underinvestment
  - Lack of green space
  - Lead paint
  - Proximity to hazardous waste facilities, Superfund sites, and Risk Management Plan facilities
- How to interpret CEJST
  - Data is presented by census tracts, which are small geographic units that typically have a population of 1,200 to 1,800 people
  - Disadvantaged communities are located in tracts that experience burdens
  - CEJST ranks most burdens using percentiles
    - Percentiles show how a tract's burden compares to other tracts
  - Thresholds are cutoffs used to determine if a tract is a disadvantaged community

- Some burdens use percentages, or a simple yes/no
- Communities are considered disadvantaged if:
  - They are in census tracts that meet the thresholds for at least one of the tool's burden categories, OR
  - They are on land within the boundaries of Federally-Recognized Tribes
- Low-Income Threshold
  - For all burden categories except "workforce development," census tracts must be at or above the 65th percentile for low-income
- Exception
  - A census tract that is completely surrounded by disadvantaged communities AND is at or above the 50th percentile for low-income is identified as a disadvantaged community
- Burden Categories: all have their unique definitions and percentage thresholds – this information is laid out on their [Methodology Page](#)
  - Burden Categories include:
    - Climate Change
    - Energy
    - Health
    - Housing
    - Legacy Pollution
    - Transportation
    - Water and Wastewater
    - Workforce Development
  - If a community meets the burden requirements for any burden category, they are considered a disadvantaged community for all
- How to use the CEJST TOOL:
  - Plug in zip code or name of city/neighborhood
  - Select a Census Tract
    - The first thing you see is the census tract is identified as a DAC
      - More than one burden threshold was satisfied
      - You can also see race and ethnicity data in the demographic dropdown
      - You can also see age information in the demographic dropdown
        - This could be helpful information to leverage in a funding application
        - More vulnerable populations
    - Scroll down to see all 8 burden categories
      - Burden categories will be highlighted in blue if the census tract meets the requirements
  - Burden Categories
    - There will be a definition and the percentile threshold
    - Can also use a variable for a Yes/No answer
    - Will include income information

- How to use CEJST information in a funding application:
  - Reference CEJST data to describe the environmental and socioeconomic burdens affecting your community
  - Review the climate, environmental, health, and socioeconomic indicators under each burden category
  - Mention **all** the burdens your community faces
    - “Based on the CEJST tool, our community has multiple environmental and socioeconomic burdens, including...”
  - Cite research studies to explain how the burdens that CEJST has identified in your community impact the health and livelihoods of your community members
    - E.g., Children, elderly populations, and individuals with preexisting conditions like asthma are especially susceptible to health risks from elevated levels of particulate matter and other poor air quality indicators.
    - “More than XX% of our community’s population is either under the age of 10 or over the age of 65... Our community also has incredibly high rates of asthma, which further places our more vulnerable community members at risk of hospitalization for severe asthma attacks during peak traffic hours, hot summer days, and operating hours of nearby fossil-fuel-fired plants.”
  - Include screenshots or data exported from CEJST
    - Use it to tell a story

### 3. Other Agency-Specific and General Resources

- [Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool \(RAPT\)](#) - FEMA ([homepage](#))
- [Grant Equity Threshold Tool \(GETT\)](#) - FEMA
- [Energy Justice Mapping Tool](#) - Department of Energy
- [U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index](#) - Environmental Defense Funds and Texas A&M
- [U.S. National Climate Assessment](#)