

# Centering Social Vulnerability in Natural Hazard Assessments

Worksheet prepared by:

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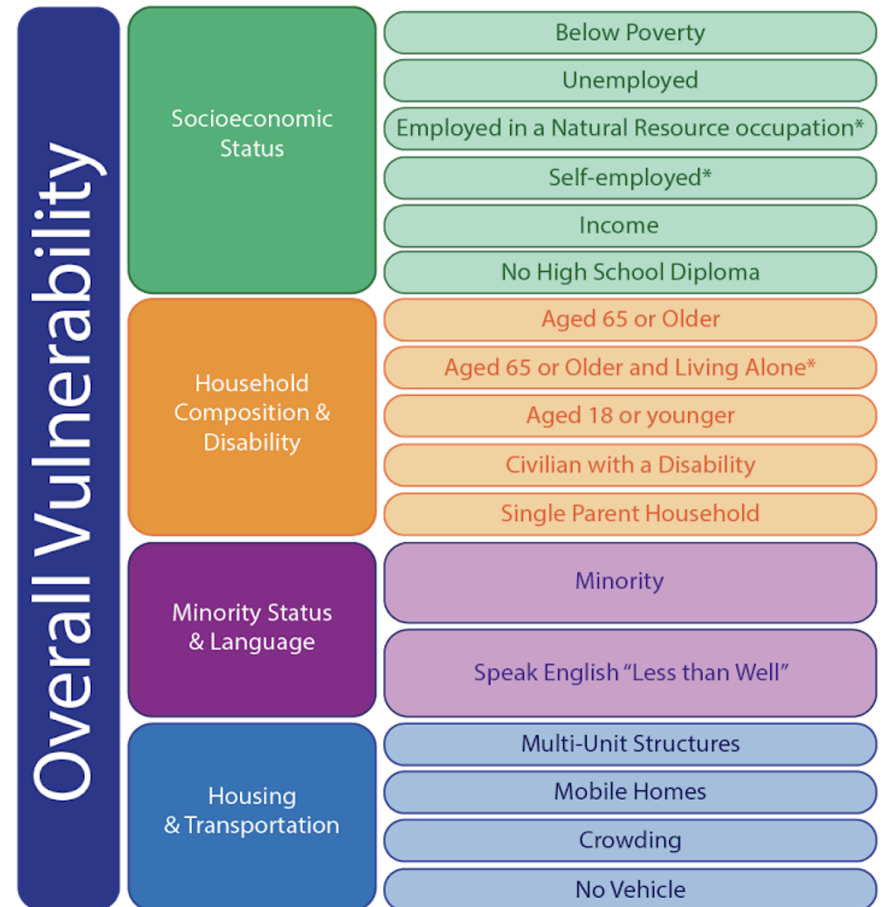
**Social Vulnerability** relates to certain conditions or circumstances that affect an individual or community's capacity to anticipate, confront, repair, and recover from the effects of a stressor or shock (including climate change impacts or disasters). (Johnson et al. 2022)

## The Maine Social Vulnerability Index

**(MSVI)** is maintained by Eileen Johnson at Bowdoin College and Jeremy Bell at The Nature Conservancy in Maine to help identify where vulnerable populations are located and what factors drive those vulnerabilities.

The MSVI is based on 17 socioeconomic and demographic indicators taken from US Census data. The MSVI is a customized version of the US Centers for Disease Control's social vulnerability index. The MSVI calculates the percentage of the population within each census block group for each indicator. The MSVI supports communities in decision making that improves the resiliency of the whole community by addressing the needs of the underserved. Note that 'vulnerability' is often the result of the societal systems in place that create inequities in climate risk to people. (Johnson et al. 2022).

## Maine Social Vulnerability Index



Source: Johnson, Bell, and Hertz 2016 (adapted from CDC/ATSDR SVI)

## Priority Populations

The Equity Subcommittee (ESC) of the Maine Climate Council (MCC) identified the following people, workers, communities, or businesses as “priority populations” for climate action, either because of their vulnerability to climate change impacts, limited resources or capacity to respond and adapt, or because of intersections between these vulnerabilities. (Maine Climate Council, Equity Subcommittee, 2023)

Individuals and Households	Individual Workers	Geographic Areas and Communities	Businesses
<p>Low-income individuals and households, older adults (age 65+), people with asthma or other health vulnerabilities, people with disabilities, people with limited access to transportation, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), people with limited English proficiency, low-income residents of rental housing (especially multifamily), mobile home residents, low-income homeowners, unhoused individuals, and families.</p>	<p>Unemployed/underemployed, limited work authorization, students, people with limited English proficiency including New Mainers, gender, people transitioning from prison or in recovery, and/or migrant workers.</p>	<p>Low-income communities, rural communities, small towns with limited staff capacity, disadvantaged communities (discussed below), climate-frontline communities, and/or Tribal and Indigenous communities.</p>	<p>Businesses in the natural resource industries like agriculture, forestry, and fishing, clean energy industry (including energy efficiency), small businesses, minority- or women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs).</p>

[https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20Climate%20Council\\_Equity%20Subcommittee%20Final%20Report\\_March%202023.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20Climate%20Council_Equity%20Subcommittee%20Final%20Report_March%202023.pdf)

Sources of Information About Social Vulnerability	
<p><i>Quantitative and/or Geospatial Data</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA EJ Screen</li> <li>• Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool</li> <li>• TNC Coastal Risk Explorer</li> <li>• CDC / ASTDR SVI Interactive Map</li> <li>• US Census Bureau</li> </ul>	<p><i>Qualitative Data</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires engaging with individuals from socially vulnerable communities and/or the social service sector representatives that serve them using methods including: Interviews; Focus Groups; Listening Sessions; Kitchen Table Conversations; Open-Ended Survey Questions; and more</li> </ul>

## Questions to Consider for Procedures, Assessment, Planning, and Implementation

Guiding questions for centering Social Vulnerability in decision-making and action.

Goal: Equity in processes and outcomes

Sourced and adapted from the [Maine Climate Council Equity Subcommittee Final Recommendations](#) (Maine Climate Council, Equity Subcommittee, 2023), [Centering Equity in Climate Resilience Planning and Action](#) (Walsh, et al., 2022), and [Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs: A Guidebook](#) (Mohnot, et al., 2019)

<b>Question</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1. When we consider the types of natural hazards that we face, who in our community is at the highest risk of being impacted?	
2. Do we have data to understand which priority populations are most affected by natural hazards in our community? If so, is that data an accurate reflection of who is most vulnerable? If not, what types of data or sources of information would help us better understand social vulnerability to natural hazards?	
3. What are the specific impacts of natural hazards that could harm socially vulnerable community members? Do these impacts change over time?	
4. How has (or, how can) social vulnerability been considered or incorporated in planning for and mitigating natural hazards?	
5. How can our hazard mitigation efforts ensure both short and long-term equitable outcomes?	
6. What built and natural infrastructure is most important to assess for natural hazards if we want to help address social vulnerability?	

## ***Helpful Resources***

[Centering Equity in Climate Resilience Planning and Action](#)

[Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs – A Guidebook](#)

[Maine SVI Indicators](#)

[Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

[EJScreen from EPA](#)

[Community-Driven Resilience Planning](#)

[Maine Climate Council Equity Subcommittee Final Recommendations](#)

[Greening In Place Toolkit](#)

[Opportunities for Equitable Adaptation in Cities](#)

[Adaptation Clearinghouse – Adaptation Equity Portal \(web resource\)](#)

[Introduction to Stakeholder Participation](#)



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