



# EJSCREEN Public Q&A

Questions	Answers
<p><b>What is EJSCREEN?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJSCREEN is an environmental justice screening and mapping tool that provides a nationally consistent dataset and methodology for calculating “EJ indexes,” to highlight geographic areas that may warrant further consideration, analysis, or outreach.</li> <li>• The tool offers a variety of powerful data and mapping capabilities that enable users to access environmental and demographic information, at high geographic resolution, across the entire country; displayed in color-coded maps and standard data reports.</li> <li>• These maps and reports show how a selected location compares to the rest of the nation, EPA region or state based on the data used by EJSCREEN. The tool combines environmental and demographic indicators to create EJ indexes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is EPA creating a nationally consistent EJ screening tool?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet our public commitment under Plan EJ 2014.</li> <li>• To help all EPA staff and managers meet the Administrator’s charge to consider environmental justice principles in all of EPA’s work.</li> <li>• To provide updated, higher resolution data, and more environmental indicators, in EJ screening.</li> <li>• To reduce redundant or duplicative efforts and to be more efficient in using agency resources.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does EPA use EJSCREEN?</b></p>	<p>EJSCREEN is used by EPA to highlight places that may be candidates for further review, analysis or outreach. EPA program offices and regions have employed EJ screening tools in a wide variety of circumstances. A few examples of what EJSCREEN supports across the agency include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informing outreach and engagement practices;</li> <li>• Implementing aspects of permitting, enforcement, compliance, Superfund removal actions, and voluntary programs;</li> <li>• Developing retrospective reports of EPA work;</li> <li>• Enhancing geographically based initiatives.</li> </ul> <p>EJSCREEN is <u>not</u> used by EPA for any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a means to identify or label an area as an “EJ community”;</li> <li>• To quantify specific risk values for a particular census block group; or</li> <li>• As a basis for agency decision-making or making a determination regarding the existence or absence of EJ concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are EPA’s expectations for how and when stakeholders and partners use EJSCREEN?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA is releasing EJSCREEN to the public in part to be more transparent about how the agency considers environmental justice in its work.</li> <li>• There is no mandate or guidance expressed or implied that state governments or other entities should use the tool or its underlying data.</li> </ul>

<p><b>What are EPA’s expectations for how and when stakeholders and partners use EJSCREEN? (Continued)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local permitting, enforcement, and other officials may decide whether EJSCREEN’s outputs are relevant in understanding environmental burdens and vulnerabilities in their localities.</li> <li>• To the extent possible, EPA will work with partners and stakeholders that are interested in using EJSCREEN, and encourage states to provide feedback to the agency in regards to their needs and concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Can EJSCREEN be used as the basis for an official EPA decision?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. EJSCREEN is intended to provide screening-level information only. EJSCREEN is not intended or designed to provide definitive determinations about the presence or absence of EJ concerns in any given location.</li> <li>• This is true in part because EJSCREEN, like any screening tool, has some significant limitations.</li> <li>• For example, because of the need to provide national consistency, EJSCREEN considers a limited number of environmental indicators, and therefore excludes some local, state, regional, and national data sets that may be important to understanding the EJ characteristics of a given location.</li> <li>• All such data should be considered when it is applicable and available.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is an EJ Index?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An EJ Index is a way of combining an environmental indicator (e.g., lead paint) and demographic information (e.g., % low-income, % minority) for a block group or user-defined area of study.</li> <li>• A separate EJ Index is provided for each environmental indicator in EJSCREEN.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What were the criteria for including the environmental indicators?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environmental indicators included are those for which we have national data at a sufficient geographic resolution.</li> <li>• Other types of information, either not available at the block group level (e.g., radon), or not available nationwide (e.g., local health data) could be overlaid on top of EJSCREEN maps by adding the relevant geospatial data layers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Does the tool account for cumulative or synergistic impacts?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJSCREEN is a multimedia screening tool and instead offers a multitude of data for an initial broad ‘snapshot’ of a selected area.</li> <li>• The tool does not add together different environmental exposures and it would not be scientifically appropriate to do so.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why do you only consider proximity to a facility and not emissions or risk from that facility?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJSCREEN does include some risk estimates, for example, the National Air Toxics Assessment cancer risk, but these are aggregated risks from many sources that do not represent risk estimates for individual facilities.</li> <li>• EJSCREEN also includes some environmental indicators highlighting potential exposure (e.g., ambient concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>)).</li> <li>• EJSCREEN uses distance weighted proximity as a proxy for the potential impact of specific types of facilities.</li> <li>• Site-specific risk estimates would require much more data and analysis, beyond what could be reasonably be included in a national screening tool.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Why do only certain types of sites have a proximity measure?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of the proximity measures is to include facilities that are important and not covered in another environmental indicator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Risk Management Plan (RMP) sites are included because of the potential severe effects of an accidental release of a highly hazardous substance into the air.</li> <li>○ Treatment Storage and Disposal Facilities are included because they were the focus of much early EJ research and community action.</li> <li>○ EPA National Priorities List (NPL)/ Superfund sites are included because of the concerns associated with being in close proximity to an NPL site.</li> <li>○ Major direct water dischargers are included because they are the largest point sources that discharge directly to water bodies.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Why aren't Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) sites included?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around 60% of TRI facilities emit hazardous air pollutants and would therefore, in most cases, be included in EJSCREEN's National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) environmental indicators.</li> <li>• In addition, there is some further overlap between TRI and RMP facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does EJSCREEN measure "low-income" and "minority"?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-income is defined the number or percent of a block group's population in households where the household income is less than or equal to twice the federal poverty level.</li> <li>• Minority is defined as all but Non-Hispanic White Alone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is the NATA<sup>1</sup> data at the census tract level?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA recommends that the census tract data be used to determine geographic patterns of risks within counties rather than to pinpoint specific risk values for each census block group. If risk information was provided only at the county level, the results would be less informative because they would show one risk number to represent each county. Information on the potential variability of risk within each county would be lost.</li> <li>• EPA developed NATA as a tool to inform both national and more localized efforts to collect air toxics information and characterize emissions (e.g., to prioritize pollutants and geographic areas of interest for more refined data collection such as monitoring). Our analysis has shown that the patterns (i.e., relatively higher and lower levels of risk within a county) represent actual fluctuations in overall average population risks within the county. Less evidence indicates that the assessment pinpoints the exact locations where higher risk exists, or that the assessment captures the highest risks in a county.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why are cancer risks from diesel PM not included in EJ Screen results?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Diesel PM indicator in EJSCREEN measures concentrations, not cancer risk. Cancer risks from diesel PM are not in EJSCREEN because data are not sufficient to develop a quantitative estimate of carcinogenic potency for this pollutant.</li> <li>• However, EPA has concluded that diesel exhaust is among the substances that the national-scale assessment suggests pose the greatest relative risk. First, several human epidemiology studies link increased lung cancer with diesel PM. Furthermore, exposures in</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> 2005 NATA home page: <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/nata2005/index.html>

	<p>several of these epidemiology studies are in the same range as ambient exposures throughout the United States.</p>
<p><b>Can I add my own data into EJSCREEN? Can I add my own boundaries / locations?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can add any layer that is available through an online service (i.e. EPA’s GeoPlatform or ArcGIS).</li> <li>• EJSCREEN will just display the added layer, not provide statistics about people near those features automatically.</li> <li>• For example, if you add a data layer that maps impaired water bodies, EJSCREEN will enable you to view this layer in addition to other EJSCREEN data. However, it will not provide quantitative information about the layer you added.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What other limitations does EJSCREEN have?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJSCREEN is a screening tool for pre-decision use only. It can help identify areas that may warrant additional consideration, analysis, or outreach.</li> <li>• Important caveats and uncertainties apply to this screening-level information, so it is essential to understand the limitations on appropriate interpretations and applications of these factors. Please see EJSCREEN documentation for discussion of these issues before using reports.</li> <li>• This screening tool does not provide data on every environmental impact and demographic indicator that may be relevant to a particular location. EJSCREEN outputs should be supplemented with additional information and local knowledge before taking any action to address potential EJ concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional supplementary data is available in EJSCREEN outside of the 12 environmental variables?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside of the twelve environmental indicators, EJSCREEN provides additional environmental data layers, layers for delineating boundaries, and other data on locations of EPA grant recipients</li> <li>• The tool also provides printed reports from selected areas with a wide variety of data from the 2010 and 2000 Census and 2012 American Communities Survey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How is this different than EJ View?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJSCREEN will supplant EJVIEW when made public. EJVIEW also has limitations that EJSCREEN does not - EJSCREEN has newer data, higher resolution, EJ indexes that combine environmental and demographic indicators, percentiles to put the numbers in perspective, and more environmental layers, such as traffic.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Can I download or obtain the underlying data files?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, shortly after the tool is made public, EPA will release the underlying data and code for EJSCREEN.</li> </ul>

For more information, please reach out to the following points of contact for your region or National Program Office (*click on names for e-mail address to appear*):

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