
ELEMENT 2

PROCESS FOR DEFINING TARGET GROUPS AND AREAS

INTRODUCTION

“Target Groups” are concentrations within the OKI region of the population groups addressed by EJ. These concentrations are located within “Target Areas.” The process for defining Target Groups goes hand-in-hand with the definition of Target Areas, and the terms Target Group and Target Area are often interchangeable.

OKI has defined Target Groups and Areas for five population groups: Minority, Low Income, and Elderly populations; People with Disabilities; and Zero-Car Households. These Target Groups and Areas are subject to special efforts in OKI’s Participation Plan, as described in Plan Elements 1 and 4. The Minority and Low Income Target Groups and Areas are also the focus of an assessment of the equity of transportation recommendations, as explained in Plan Element 3.

The focus of Plan Element 2 is OKI’s process for defining Target Groups and Areas. The process uses census data to identify where EJ population groups are most concentrated. The data and maps developed at the time of this plan’s publication are based on the most current available census data. The Target Groups and Areas will be reviewed no less than every four years, in conjunction with the update of the Plan, and the definition process may be revised at any time.

As a two-step process, the definition of Target Groups and Areas involves first identifying the general distribution of each EJ population group and then defining where each group is most concentrated. Where the concentration of an EJ population group meets or exceeds the regional average and has an EJ population of more than 250, the EJ population is considered to be part of a Target Group and Area. The definition process is based on small-area data that results in the identification of multiple, non-contiguous areas with EJ population concentrations. For each EJ population group, these dispersed concentrations are referred to collectively as a Target Group and the multiple locations of the concentrations are referred to collectively as a Target Area. The definition of Target Groups and Areas is based on guidance published by ODOT [Guidance for Best Practices for Incorporating Environmental Justice into Ohio Transportation Planning and Environmental Processes, August, 2002].

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATION GROUPS AND AREAS

Of the five population groups for which OKI defines Target Groups and Areas, only the Minority and Low Income populations are listed in the Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. The Elderly population and People with Disabilities are included in FAST Act, but they are not required to be addressed under EJ unless they are included in the finalized version of the Federal Rules. Zero-Car Households are a logical and reasonable extension of EJ, but this group is not included in the Executive Order or the Proposed Rules. OKI chooses to track all five EJ population groups.

The composition of the five EJ population groups is defined in federal documents related to EJ and in U.S. decennial censuses and the American Community Survey (ACS).

Minority is comprised of four groups as defined in final U.S. DOT Order on Environmental Justice (Federal Register April 15, 1997) which includes persons from every racial category except White Alone plus all Hispanic persons:

- (1) Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa);
- (2) Hispanic (a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race);
- (3) Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands); or
- (4) American Indian and Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition).

Low Income, as defined in final U.S. DOT Order on Environmental Justice (Federal Register April 15, 1997), refers to people in households where the median income is at or below poverty level.

Elderly, as per Federal guidelines, comprises those age 65 and older.

People with Disabilities, non-institutionalized persons aged 16-64 who have a sensory, physical, mental or self-care disability; going outside the home disability; or employment disability.

Zero-Car Households, occupied housing units for which there is no car or access to one.

TARGET DEFINITION POLICY

For each EJ population group, the Target Group and Area is the basis for conducting efforts under this Participation Plan. The Target Group lives where the EJ population group is most concentrated. This concept is also explained in ODOT's [Guidance for Best Practices for Incorporating Environmental Justice into Ohio Transportation Planning and Environmental Processes, August, 2002]:

Typically low income and minority populations are spread throughout the regional area and state but are likely to be located in concentrated locations or neighborhoods. These areas should have a significantly higher percentage of low income and minority population than the regional or statewide average. These areas can then be identified as target areas.

Target Groups and Areas are defined based on U.S. Census data. Census data is available at different levels including place, township, census tract, block group and block. Block Groups are subdivisions of a Census Tract and are the smallest geographic units for which the Census Bureau tabulates sample data needed in EJ analysis. Since Block Groups are more refined than Census Tracts, OKI will use U.S. Census data allocated to Census Block Groups for the purpose of identifying Target Groups/Areas. The Target Areas based on Block Groups will be used for individual project evaluation. For assessing participation equity (see Plan Element 3), OKI will use Traffic Analysis Zone geography. Traffic Analysis Zones are the geographic units used for modeling the performance and assessing the needs of the region's transportation system.

OKI's definition process corresponds to ODOT's guidance for identifying target populations for Low Income and Minority populations. OKI has further expanded its process to include the Elderly population, People with Disabilities, and Zero-Car households by:

- Identifying the number and the percentage of low income and minority populations in the entire OKI region, project impact region or the state;
- Calculating the average percentage of low income and minority populations of the entire region, project area or state;
- Using that percentage as a reference point to identify locations with target EJ populations of low income and minority populations.

As clarified in ODOT's [Guidance for Best Practices for Incorporating Environmental Justice into Ohio Transportation Planning and Environmental Processes, August, 2002], the average percentage is a reference point for calculating a threshold percentage for defining a Target Group and Area. In addition, OKI will apply a numeric threshold of 250 for defining a Target Group and Area. The EJ populations in census block groups where the EJ population both exceeds the regional average and there are more than 250 EJ persons (or households in the case of zero cars) will be defined as the Target Group. For example, for the Minority population, the 2011-2015 regional average is 20.18 percent which then becomes the threshold percentage. The census block groups where the Minority population is 20.18 percent or more of the block group's total population and the number of Minority persons exceeds 250 are part

of the Target Area that contains the Target Group population. It should be noted that the Census Bureau combines five years' worth of data to create a larger sample size and a more accurate estimate because of the small size of Block Groups. The data represent an average condition over the course of the sample years, which in this case are 2011 through 2015.

TARGET GROUPS AND AREAS

The EJ Advisory Committee decided that any block group containing the regional average (regional threshold) or more of a target population (target group) and whose target population exceeded 250 would be considered a target area. Tables and maps displaying details about the current Target Groups/Areas can be found in the Appendix of this document. Target Groups/Areas can be updated annually if necessary as new data becomes available from the American Community Survey. Data updates will be provided in the appendices of Plan documents.

The data has been aggregated according to the specifications and in accordance with [Guidance and Best Practices for Incorporating Environmental Justice into Ohio Transportation Planning and Environmental Processes, August, 2002]. Data have been gathered for low income, minority, elderly, people with disabilities and zero-car household groups in the OKI planning region.

As the data were analyzed, OKI staff noted that a few Block Groups had unusually high margins of error, especially for the Minority and Low-Income EJ variables. As a result, staff created additional steps in our methodology for identifying EJ Block Groups for the Minority and Low-Income variables. Once it was confirmed that a Block Group met the numeric and percentage thresholds, staff evaluated the quality of the data based on the margin of error and the corresponding data at the Census Tract level. A Block Group was eliminated from being classified as an EJ Target Area if it met the following two conditions:

1. It had a margin of error for the target population in the Block Group (for the Minority variable staff used largest minority group present) that exceeded the estimate for that target population, and;
2. The target group population in the Block Group exceeded the estimate for that target group population in the Census Tract in which the Block Group was contained.

These additional levels of analysis identified and eliminated two Block Groups from OKI's Target Area for the Minority EJ variable that staff is highly confident were misidentified by the Census data. No Low-Income Block Groups were affected.