

**FACTSHEET**

# Climate Change is Hurting Public Housing, and Residents Say a Green New Deal Is the Solution

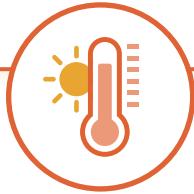
IZIAH THOMPSON, OKSANA MIRONOVA, AND SAMUEL STEIN

New York faces a dual threat from climate and housing crises, with public housing at the center of both. US public housing developments were often built near polluted sites<sup>1</sup>. These primarily low-income communities of color are subject to high concentrations of lead, mold, and other harmful pollutants, as detailed in the July 2024 CSS report, “the Other Housing Crisis”<sup>2</sup>. After decades of neglect, environmental injustice and racism are central to the story of public housing,

yet, without these income-targeted homes with eviction protections, many would face homelessness or displacement. To better understand the scope of these challenges, we used our inaugural statewide survey to assess the environmental issues facing public housing households. We also asked New Yorkers whether they believe a Green New Deal for Public Housing, along with the creation of a new state development authority, is the solution to these urgent problems.

## The Impact of Environmental Racism and Injustice

We asked public housing residents about the environmental issues that they face in their homes<sup>3</sup>:



Compared to 64% of all low-income households in NY:

**82%**

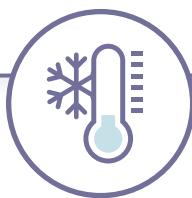
said that their homes were uncomfortably hot in the summer. A third (33%) said the discomfort lasted from 1-4 weeks, and a third experienced unbearable heat throughout the entire summer. More than 95% of all RAD-converted households had this issue.



Compared to 20% of all low-income households in NY:

**46%**

reported serious air quality issues in their homes--a problem faced by his 71% of residents in RAD-converted households.



Compared to 57% of all low-income households in NY:

**46%**

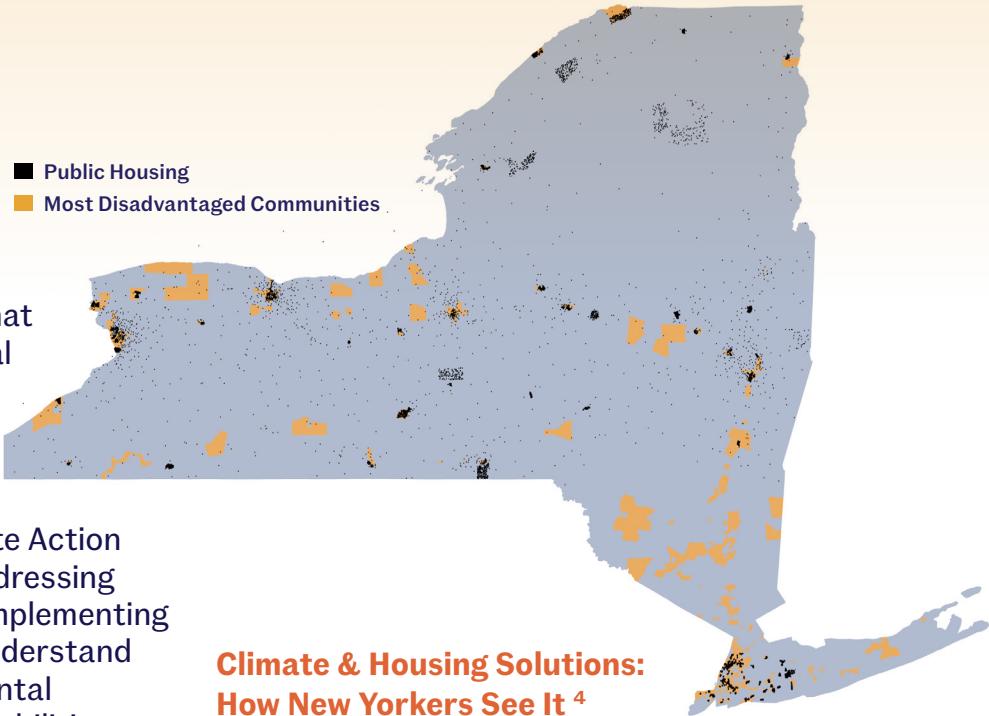
reported facing uncomfortably cold temperatures in their homes during winter, with 40% struggling to stay warm for most or all of the winter months. (This was true for almost two-thirds of RAD-converted households.)

New York State has recognized that climate change and environmental problems are experienced unequally across the state.

The 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) created a Climate Action Council that created goals for addressing the climate crisis and a plan for implementing it at the state level. In order to understand how the experience of environmental burdens or climate change vulnerabilities are distributed—and which communities should be targeted with resources—the Climate Council created a map of disadvantaged communities. A minimum of 35% of the resulting projects are mandated to go towards these communities. Specifically, disadvantaged communities are:

- closer to pollution exposures, like diesel truck traffic and particulate matter that are linked to cancer
- have high rates of asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) emergency visits
- at high risk from extreme heat projections
- flood prone
- far from healthcare facilities
- in close proximity to industrial sites
- have high concentrations of vulnerable communities like seniors and those facing poverty.

Much of the state's criteria speaks to the same issues we found in our survey. When mapping the most disadvantaged communities using the state's criteria,



### Climate & Housing Solutions: How New Yorkers See It<sup>4</sup>

	SUPPORT	DON'T SUPPORT	UNSURE
<b>Support for Electric Homes</b>			
PUBLIC HOUSING	64%	21%	15%
NY STATE	46%	31%	23%
<b>Support for a Social Housing Development Authority</b>			
PUBLIC HOUSING	74%	22%	4%
NY STATE	79%	12%	9%
<b>Support for the Green New Deal for Public Housing</b>			
PUBLIC HOUSING	76%	3%	21%
NY STATE	84%	9%	7%

they align perfectly with the location of public housing communities. Under New York's own criteria, public housing should receive a significant amount of climate change mitigation funding.

Public housing residents in New York are not only feeling the effects of climate change, but also see the solution as the creation of new green public homes and green retrofits to existing buildings.

According to our 2024 survey, an overwhelming majority of public housing residents—and those living in other housing—across the state support:

- **Electrification of home energy and appliances.**
- **Construction of new social housing,** including public housing, affordable co-ops, and more by New York State. New York State bill **S8494/A9088** introduced by State Senator Cordell Cleare and Emily Galleher addresses this by establishing a **New York State Green Social Housing Development Authority.**
- **An upgrade to public housing to make it more energy efficient.** This could be accomplished through legislation such as the Green New Deal for Public Housing proposals, the first of which was introduced by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Rep. Delia Ramirez (IL-03) in the US Congress. The New York legislature has its own Green New Deal for Public housing in **Assembly bill A2076** introduced by member Linda Rosenthal.

The federal government, New York State, New York City, and other municipalities continue to invest in efforts to mitigate climate change and protect against its impacts. However, these efforts will fail unless resources are filtered through an environmental justice lens to reach those most affected. Expanding the number of healthy homes available to vulnerable populations and rehabilitating public housing with a focus on energy efficiency, reduced emissions, and climate resilience are climate justice initiatives that do not require complicated maps or indices. By addressing the needs of public housing residents and building new social housing, New York can transform the multifamily housing sector and create housing stability for generations. Our survey results make it clear that New Yorkers overwhelmingly agree on these solutions.

## Endnotes

1. Caputo, Angela, Lerner, Sharon, "House poor, pollution rich", AMReports, January 2021, <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2021/01/13/public-housing-near-polluted-superfund-sites>
2. Thompson, Iziah, Mironova, Oksana, Stein, Samuel, Portis, Lomnie, "The Other Housing Crisis", the Community Service Society of New York, July 2024, <https://www.cssny.org/publications/entry/the-other-housing-crisis-poor-housing-conditions-NYCHA-low-income>
3. This section compares responses from all households in NY State, public housing residents, and those in RAD-Converted households. The Rental Assistance Demonstration or RAD allows public housing agencies to leverage public and private debt and equity in order to reinvest in the public housing stock. In RAD, units move to a Section 8 platform with a long-term contract that, by law, must be renewed in perpetuity. A Use Agreement is also recorded under RAD, further enforcing HUD's long-term interest. This ensures that the units remain permanently affordable to low-income households, and residents benefit from a right of return, a prohibition against re-screening, and robust notification and relocation rights. Learn more about RAD from CSS's November 2024 report, "What Happened to Public Housing in New York?": <https://www.cssny.org/publications/entry/public-housing-new-york-nov-2023>
4. Results for the table were drawn from the following questions in CSS's Summer and Fall 2024 survey:
  - In the past, New York State has supported the construction of new social housing, including public housing, affordable co-ops, and more. Do you think the state should build more of this kind of housing?
  - Recently, a bill was introduced to congress to upgrade public housing across the country and make it more energy efficient. Would you support such a program?
  - For a majority of homes in New York, hot water, heating, and cooking are currently powered by gas. Would you prefer if your home used electricity for heating, cooling, hot water, and cooking instead?

## Methodology

For more than 20 years, the Community Service Society of New York (CSS) has gathered insights from New York City residents through our annual “Unheard Third” survey, which polled New Yorkers of all backgrounds but emphasized low-income earners. This year, we expanded our scope with our new Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, polling residents across all of New York State—urban, suburban, and rural communities alike. We asked questions about housing, employment, public benefits, financial access, health care, and more.

The 2024 CSS Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security sampled 4,789 New York State adult residents reached through a combination of online panels, cell phones, landlines, text messages, digital targeting, and in-person intercepts from August 16 through October 17, 2024. The survey was designed by CSS in collaboration with Seven Letter Insight and conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, and Russian. We oversampled low-income residents; public housing residents; and residents of New York City, Long Island, Buffalo, Albany, Yonkers, and Syracuse. The margin of error for the entire survey is +/- 1.42 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. For those making under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level statewide, the margin of error is +/- 2.53 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. The margin of error for respondents in New York City and for those outside of it is +/- 1.96 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval.

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For more information, contact  
Iziah Thompson at [ithompson@cssny.org](mailto:ithompson@cssny.org).



633 THIRD AVE, 10TH FL,  
NEW YORK, NY 10017  
PH 212.254.8900  
[www.cssny.org](http://www.cssny.org)