

## Energy Burden in Allegheny County

Energy burden is the average amount of income a household pays for energy costs. In Allegheny County, the energy burden varies considerably by household income. Households that make more than 80% of the Area Median Income experience a 2% energy burden, while those households earning less than 80% Area Median Income tend to have an energy burden of 6%.<sup>1</sup> Energy burden disparity has the potential to increase economic inequities already existent within the county. Through building LMI solar co-ops households can lower their energy burden.

## Community Data of LMI Coops

Allegheny County is classified as a comfortable place where the median income is over \$72,000 and the poverty rate is relatively low at 11.4%. The socio-economic data of the LMI neighborhoods tells a different story of life in Allegheny County:

- Upper Hill and Middle Hill neighborhoods: Classified as **disadvantaged**
- Glen Hazel and Hazelwood neighborhoods : Classified as **at risk of being disadvantaged**
- The median household income range: \$31,558-\$51,866
- Poverty rate range: 20.9%-34.6% of the population<sup>2</sup>

### Allegheny LMI Co-op 2022

- 7 Households
- Hazelwood + Glen Hazel
- Fully-funded 5kW system
- Partners: Hazelwood Initiative + City of Bridges Community Land Trust

### Allegheny LMI Co-op 2023

- 6 Households
- Upper Hill + Middle Hill
- Fully-Funded 5kW system
- Partner: Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, Low-income Energy Affordability Data Tool, accessed May 27, 2024, available at <https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool>.

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, Allegheny County, accessed May 24, 2025, [https://data.census.gov/profile/Allegheny\\_County\\_Pennsylvania?g=050XX00US42003#income-and-poverty](https://data.census.gov/profile/Allegheny_County_Pennsylvania?g=050XX00US42003#income-and-poverty), and EIG Distressed Communities Index, Allegheny County, accessed May 24, 2025, <https://eig.org/distressed-communities/?regions%5B0%5D=42003&geo=counties&lat=40.57&lon=-79.85&z=9.56>.

## Partners

Collaborating with community partners is a central feature of our 2022 and 2023 Allegheny LMI pilots. Some of the partner contributions include:

- Publicizing the co-op and Solar 101s
- Assisting participants with submitting income documents
- Reviewing income eligibility documents
- Reducing the administrative burden on SUN
- Serving as a communication channel for homeowners and the installer



## Allegheny LMI Pilot Barriers

- High attrition due to paperwork and potential lack of clarity in submittal process
- Administrative burden due to income qualification review
- Timeline delays due to manufactured houses not being complete
- Long waiting times for installer proposals
- Workforce capacity issues for installer
- Communication problems

## Opportunities for Growth

- The excitement for solar is growing with the announcement of many applications within Pennsylvania winning Solar for All funding. The \$7 billion program will provide 900,000 disadvantaged households over a period of five years through residential, multi-family, and community solar.
- Pennsylvania is also making huge strides in working toward legalizing community solar within the state legislature.