

MARYLAND AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SCORECARD

SUMMARIZING THE
2019 - 2021 REPORT

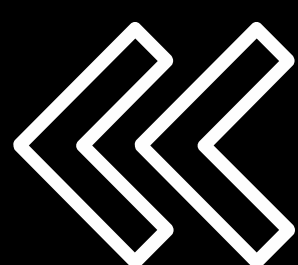
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Introduction

What is Environmental Justice?

According to Dr. Bunyan Bryant, “environmental justice is served when people can realize their highest potential, without experiencing the ‘isms” (1). This directly addresses the underlying causes of inequity. Government structures and policies can institutionalize and reinforce the “isms” (racism, classism, sexism, ableism, etc.) that perpetuate inequitable environmental, social, health, and economic outcomes (2,3).



Maryland’s path towards environmental justice has been accelerated by a global pandemic, economic crisis, and protests for racial justice. These events have elucidated historic and growing inequities for communities isolated from power and meaningful involvement in policy making. Government transparency and public accessibility is a major component of environmental justice. Recognizing the benefits of other scorecards, such as the 2020 CEJA EJ Scorecard, CEEJH sought to develop EJ scorecards for Maryland at the state agency level.



Methods

We created the Maryland Agency Scorecard to track state agency actions to advance EJ by focusing attention on five key areas: (1) establishment of EJ office; (2) commitment to protect the environment both from past policies and protections for the future; (3) prioritization of those impacted by environmental racism; (4) existing resources towards building environmental literacy; and (5) proactive EJ work. The MD EJ Agency Scorecard was modeled after the 2020 CEJA EJ Agency Assessment. CEEJH staff selected relevant Maryland state agencies, developed scoring criteria, collected and analyzed publicly available data. CEEJH staff then communicated with agencies about their scores, received additional materials from select agencies, and revised those scores accordingly. Each procedural step is explained in further detail below.

Selecting Relevant Agencies

After comparing the agencies in the CEJA scoring criteria to Maryland agencies, we identified nine agencies that were relevant for our purposes and to environmental justice:

- Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Planning
- Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
- Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- Maryland Department of Health (MDH)
- Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)
- Public Service Commission (PSC).

Developing Scoring Criteria

The nine agencies were reviewed across five criteria developed from the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice and CEJA's 8 Principles of Collaboration (4,5). CEEJH staff analyzed these principles, ranking and voting on which criteria points to include. We specifically focused on racial and social equity, particularly agency proactiveness in acknowledging and rectifying environmental racism.

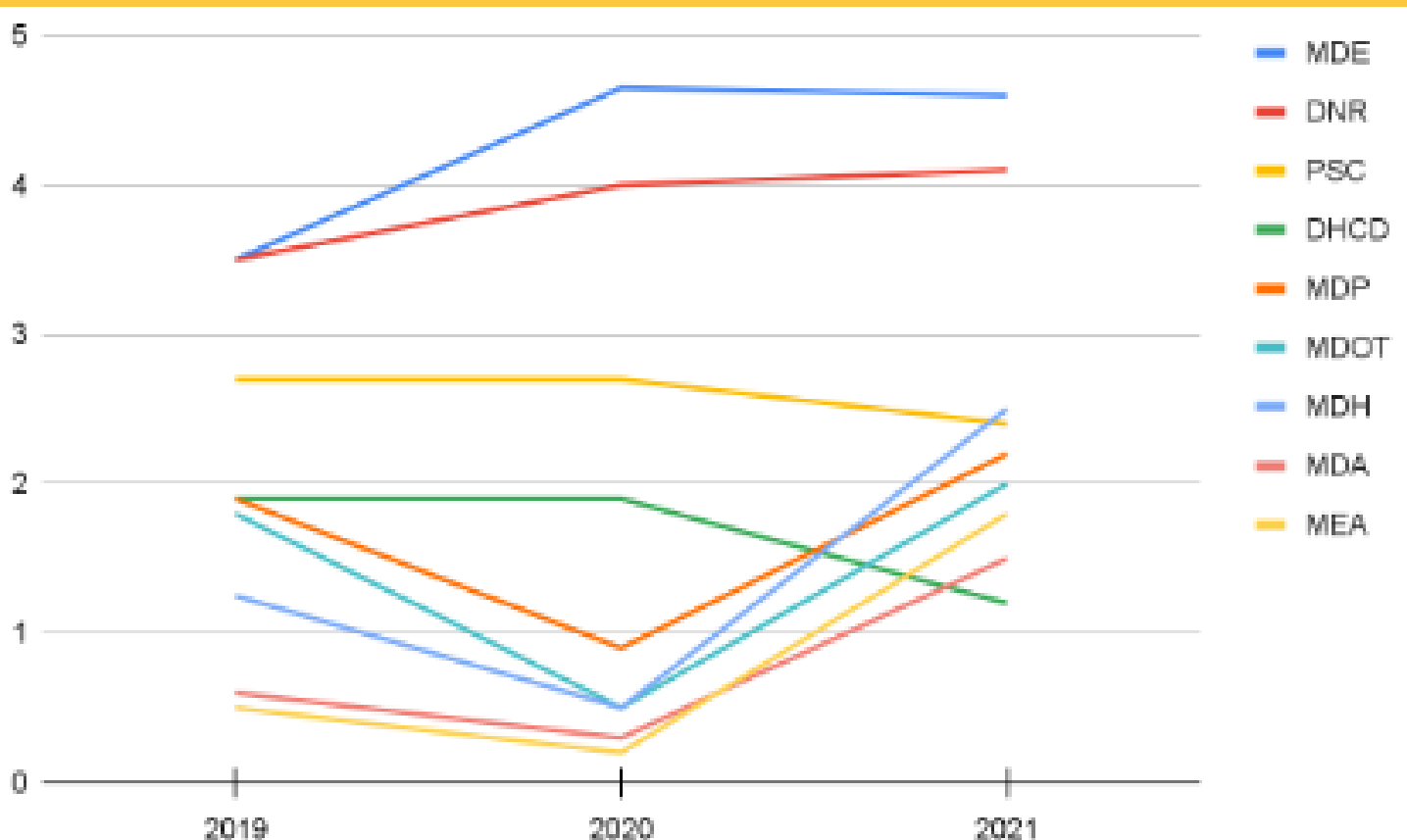
Results

The table below reveals the 2019, 2020, and 2021 agency scores, respectively. After an initial round of scoring, agencies were given the opportunity to improve their score by providing additional documentation of ways they were promoting environmental justice. Only the DNR, DHCD, MDE, and PSC provided further evidence for us to assess. Updated scores are noted, along with the original scores.

Maryland Agency Environmental Justice Scorecard

Agency	2019 Letter Grade	2020 Letter Grade	2021 Letter Grade
Maryland Department of the Environment	C	B	B
Department of Natural Resources	C	B	B
Public Service Commission	D	D	D
Department of Housing and Community Development	F	F	F
Department of Planning	F	F	D
Maryland Department of Transportation	F	F	D
Maryland Department of Health	F	F	D
Department of Agriculture	F	F	F
Energy Administration	F	F	F

The figure below presents a rolling average of agency scores from 2019-2021. Here, we see the “risers” and “fallers” across the study period, with MDE and DNR showing promise, while PSC and DHCD appear to be on the decline. The Department of Agriculture and the Energy Administration scored the poorest from 2019-2020, but according to the percentages across the years, they improved the most out of all the agencies.



Major Takeaways

The agencies with the strongest efforts toward advancing environmental justice from 2019-2021 were the MDE (overall average = 4.25) and DNR (overall average = 3.86). In terms of most improved agencies, MDH's score increased from 1.25 to 2.5 from 2019-2021 (+100%), suggesting they have taken the most EJ measures in recent years.

2019-2021 Environmental Justice Champions



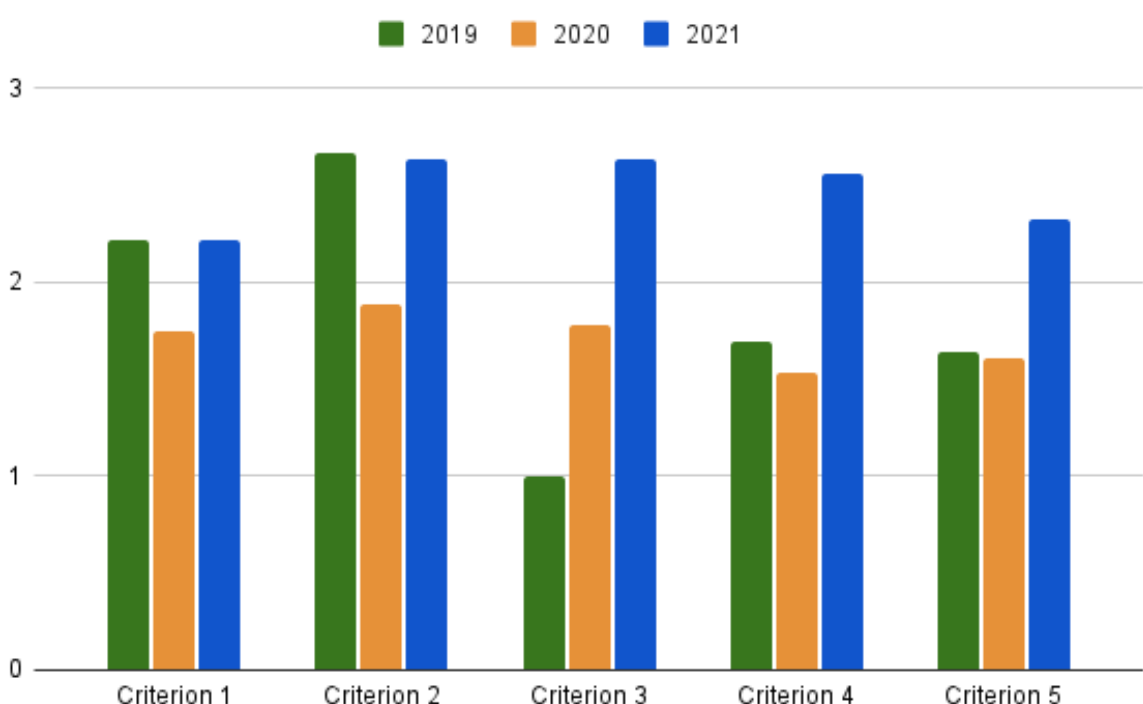
Maryland
Department of
the Environment



MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Results by Criteria

In terms of specific criteria, in 2019 and 2020, agencies received their lowest scores in Criterion 3: prioritization of the health of workers and communities historically impacted by environmental racism. In 2021, agencies scored lowest in Criterion 1: a solid, established form of connection with the community including having an EJ office and officer with a direct line of contact; and transparency with the public about their work. In 2019 and 2020, agencies collectively scored highest in Criterion 2: commitment to a “one health” approach in protecting the physical environment, animals, and human health by both repairing harm done from past policies and creating further protections via their current policies. Contrary to the findings from 2019-2020, in 2021, the agencies collectively scored the highest in Criterion 3, making it the most improved Criterion over the study period.



Recommendations

1. Require each agency to develop an environmental justice strategic plan.
2. Take an Intersectional Approach:
Examine places where forces of power (white supremacy, misogyny, class, etc.) overlap and intersect, and what those effects look like (6).
3. Prioritize meaningful community engagement in all agency actions (7).
4. Require environmental justice and anti-racism training workshops for agency employees (8).
5. Develop screening methodologies to ensure actions do not create or exacerbate health, environmental, or racial inequities.
6. Directly acknowledge environmental racism and introduce policies that center restorative action (9).
7. Utilize tools such as MD EJSCREEN and EPA EJSCREEN to micro target areas in greatest need of program and policy intervention (10,11).
8. Scale the White House's Justice40 Initiative and the Center for American Progress's recommendations to the state level for Maryland (12).

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