



greenlink equity map

San Antonio, TX

6 Years of Energy Burden Impacts

February 2021

Prepared by Greenlink Analytics



6 Years of Energy Burden Impacts:

San Antonio in Focus

February 2021

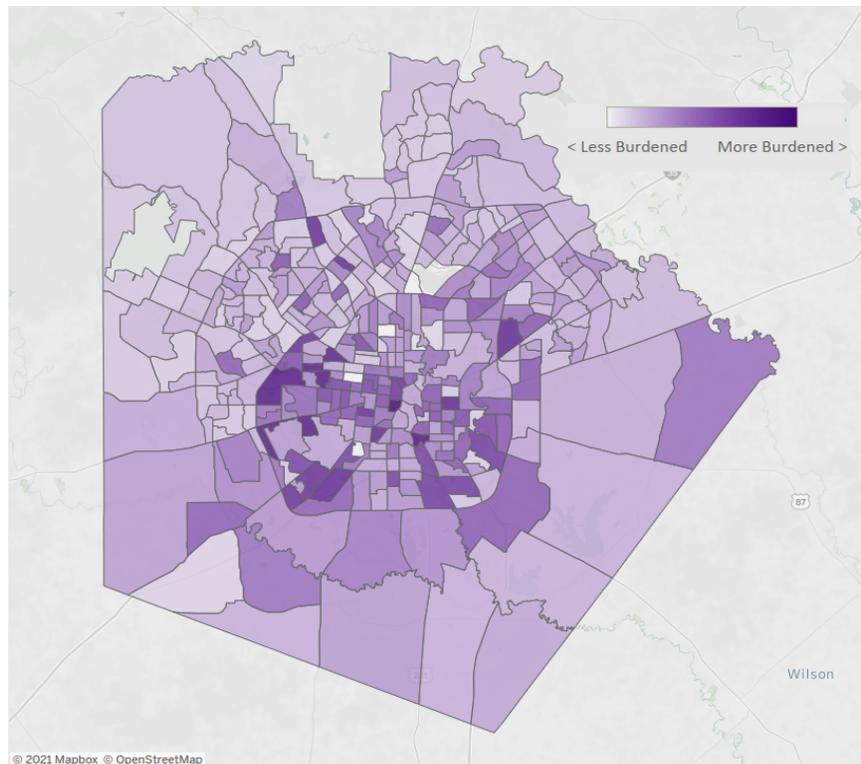


Figure 1. 2019 San Antonio Energy Burden ranges from 1% to 20%¹

Thanks to generous support from the Energy Foundation in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies, the 25 cities of the Bloomberg Philanthropies American Cities Climate Challenge (“ACCC”) are receiving a 6 Years of Energy Burden Impact report with information on the current energy burdens that residents of their city face, how that burden has changed over time, and how other equity indicators are related to energy burden.

¹ Clear tracts have insufficient data. Energy burden is the percent of income that a household spends on electricity and gas bills; an energy burden over 6% is considered “high” or “unaffordable” while a burden over 10% is considered “severe”. San Antonio and Bexar County are used interchangeably in this report.



Energy Burden in San Antonio at a Glance

On average, households nationally pay about 3.6% of their income on energy (gas and electricity) bills. San Antonio is currently the **8th** most energy burdened city out of the Climate Challenge cities. Across the city, San Antonio’s average energy burden is 4.5% as of 2019, 1.3 times the national average. When energy burden is mapped across the city by neighborhood (Figure 1), the data shows that energy burden disproportionately impacts residents in the center portions of the city. For 2019, the 20% least burdened tracts in the city have an average energy burden of 2.6%, below the national average, whereas the 20% most burdened tracts have an average energy burden of 8.0%, demonstrating high energy burdens in these neighborhoods. The table below shows how San Antonio compares on energy burden and how it has changed over time.

Table 1. Median Energy Burdens Over Time²

	2013 Overall	2019 Overall	Change
San Antonio (Bexar County)	4.5%	4.5%	0%
Texas	4.8%	4.5%	-0.3%
25 ACCC Leadership Cities	4.4%	4.0%	-0.4%
National³	3.8%	3.6%	-0.2%

San Antonio Energy Burden: Change Over Time and City Disparities

In 2013, San Antonio’s median energy burden of 4.5% was above the national average (Table 1). It was however, below Texas’ median of 4.8%. Energy burden remained the same in 2019 and was still above the national average. Figure 2 shows how energy burden has changed over time tract-by-tract in Bexar County. Even though burden remains the same city wide, neighborhood by neighborhood the story is varied. Many of the highest burdened neighborhoods are seeing worsening conditions at the same time as the city and country’s energy burdens are improving. There are many reasons why energy burdens may fluctuate year-to-year in an area including displacement, resident turnover, changing incomes, or rapid changes in energy usage behavior.

² City by city energy burden for Climate Challenge cities found at the end of this document. Data from the Greenlink Equity Map (GEM) except where otherwise noted.

³ National data from the US Energy Information Administration (Forms 861 and 176) and the US Census.

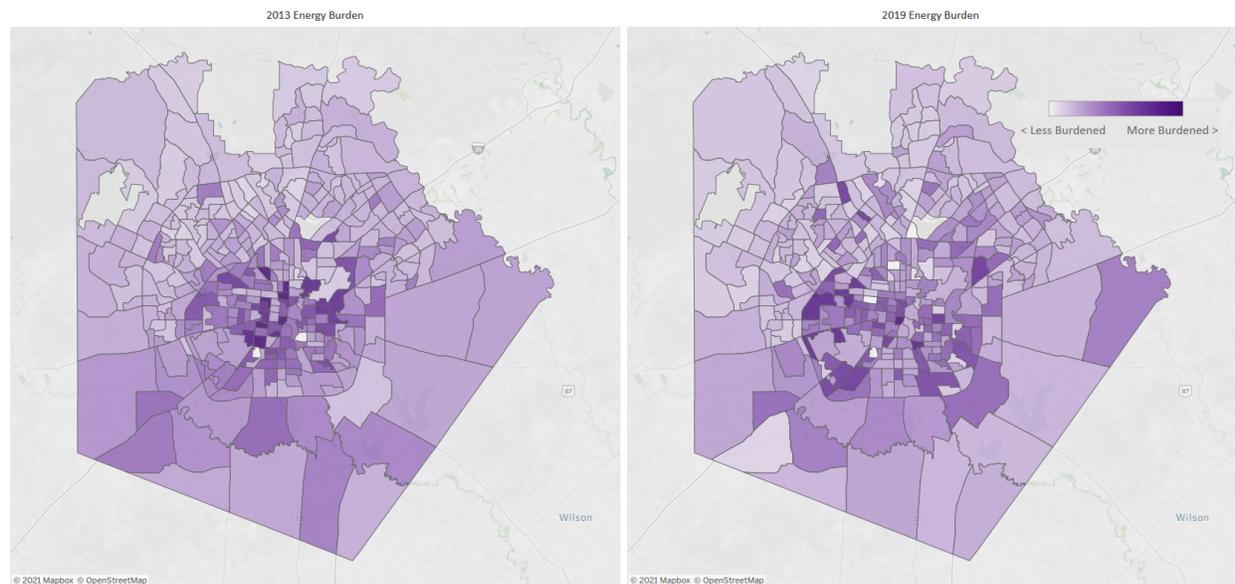


Figure 2. San Antonio's (Bexar County) Change in Burden Between 2013 and 2019

The data show wide disparities between the top 20% most burdened and 20% least burdened census tracts in the city.⁴ The 20% least energy burdened tracts had a median burden of 2.6% in 2013 and remained the same in 2019, below the national average. By comparison, the 20% most burdened tracts in the city had an energy burden of 8.5% in 2013 and 8.0% in 2019, indicating continuing levels of severe energy burdens in these neighborhoods across time. To look further at how burden is impacting San Antonio's most heavily burdened communities, Figure 3 illustrates San Antonio's top 20% most burdened tracts in 2013 and in 2019.

⁴ Most and least burdened tracts are defined by the household-weighted average census tract energy burden from 2013-2019 and represent the top and bottom quintiles.

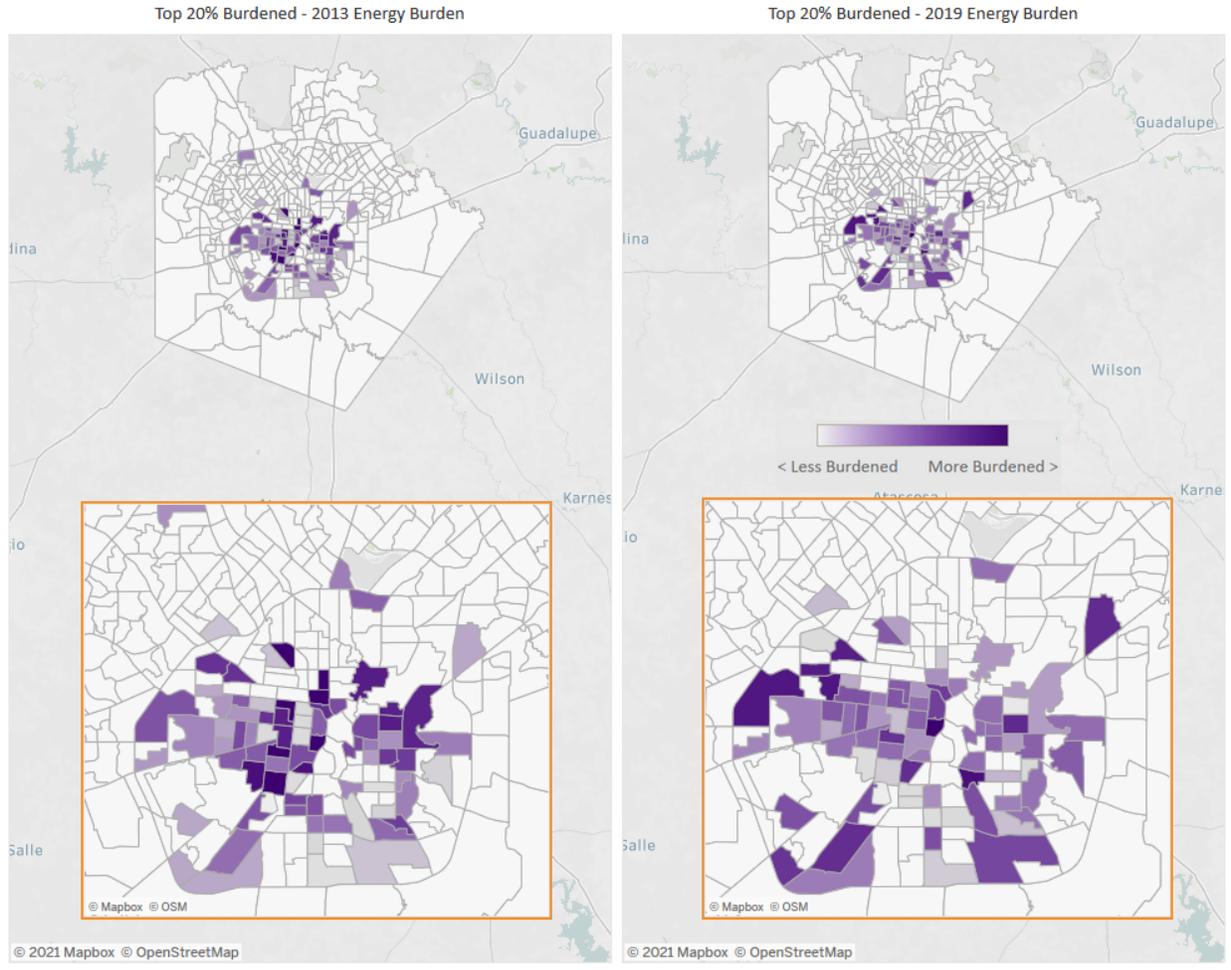


Figure 3. San Antonio's Top 20% Most Burdened Tracts in 2013 and 2019

Figure 4 shows the highest burdened areas in the city that have seen their energy burdens markedly increase or decrease between 2013 and 2019.⁵ This demonstrates that while the average burden has remained the same across the city, some of the most burdened areas are not sharing in these benefits.

⁵ Top quintile (20%) is shown, averaged across all years.

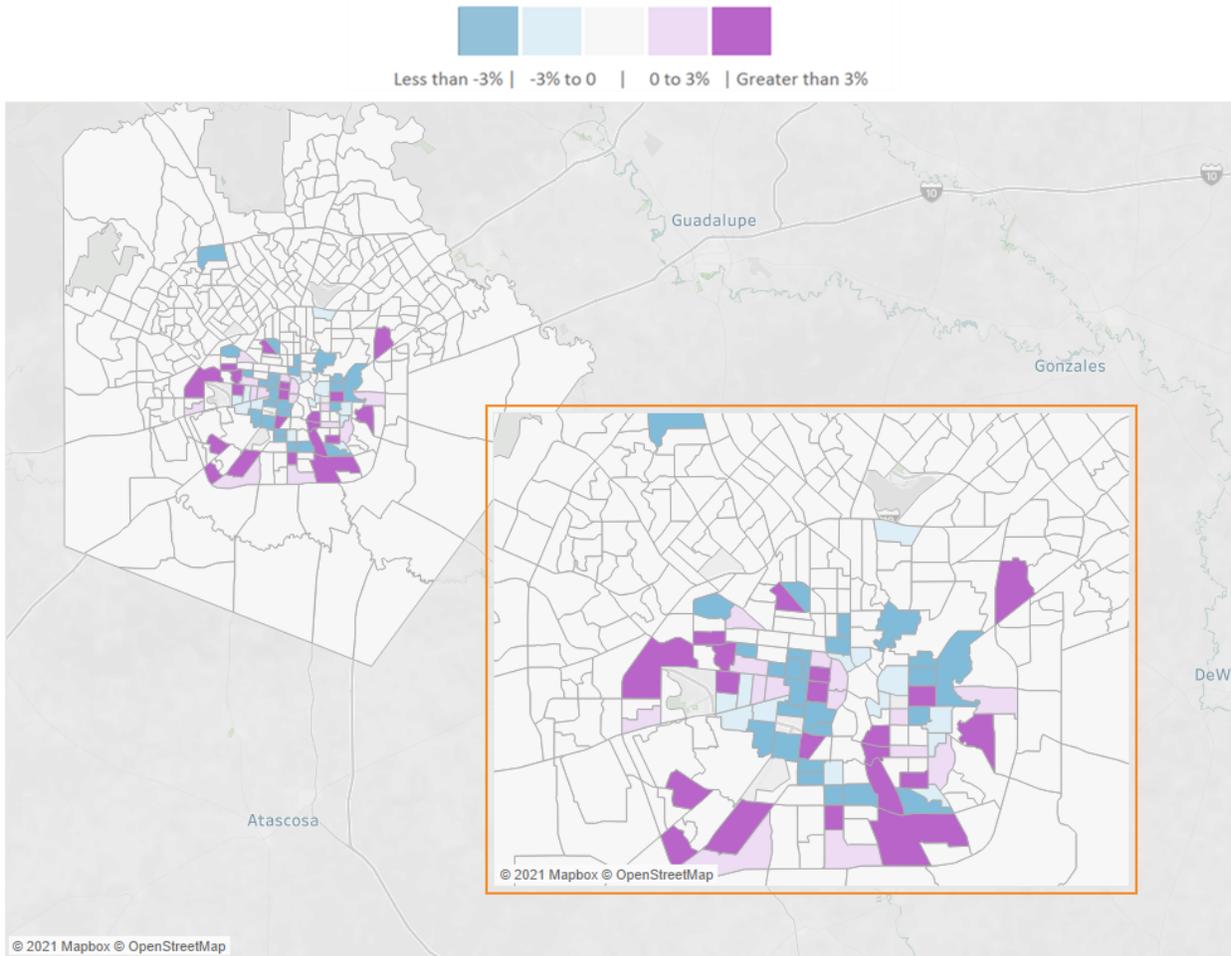


Figure 4. Change in Energy Burden in Highly Burdened Tracts Since 2013

Table 2, below, shows how the number of households living in the most energy burdened parts of the city have changed between 2013 and 2019. San Antonio saw its total number of households increase from 628,000 in 2013 to 636,000 in 2019.

Table 2. Households in High and Severe Energy Burden

	High Energy Burden (> 6%)	Severe Energy Burden (> 10%)
2013	128,000	30,000
2019	119,000	27,000



Connective Issues: Equity Indicators Correlated with San Antonio’s Energy Burden

Energy burden is concerning not only because of the strains it produces on its own, but also because it ties into and may deepen other equity issues. Many communities are simultaneously facing multiple equity challenges at once. Across these years of data, San Antonio’s energy burdens are highly correlated with poor health outcomes and moderately correlated with higher proportions of Hispanic populations.⁶ Given these relationships, there may be opportunities to improve outcomes by increasing efforts that emphasize equity, health, and sustainability. Identifying these relationships may open doors for collaboration with other groups inside and outside of City Hall, ultimately advancing strong equity improvements across the city.⁷

Summary

- San Antonio experiences energy burdens 25% higher than the national average.
- Since 2013, San Antonio’s energy burden has been relatively consistent across the city and decreased by 0.5% across the most burdened communities. The number of households with unaffordable energy costs has declined by 9,000, although 119,000 continue to face high energy burdens.
- Over this time period, a 3.1x disparity exists in San Antonio’s average energy burdens between the 20% least burdened and 20% most burdened communities, which highlights the need for additional resources to address energy burden in top burdened neighborhoods. This is the **thirteenth greatest disparity** among ACCC cities.
- Energy burden in San Antonio is connected to other equity issues like healthcare and race. Cities, counties, and other organizations may be able to work together across departments and agencies to share resources and come up with solutions that multisolve to address several issues simultaneously.

⁶ Energy burden is strongly correlated ($R^2 > 0.6$) with lack of access to healthcare. It is also moderately correlated ($R^2 > 0.4$) diabetes, poor mental health, pulmonary disease, stroke, asthma, sleep deprivation, coronary heart disease, high cholesterol, and is more common in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods (and negatively correlated with predominantly white neighborhoods).

⁷San Antonio’s efforts to improve racial and health equity may also improve energy equity and vice versa. Partnering with community and other stakeholders to “multisolve” on these issues may yield positive synergies when combined with strong processes. See <https://www.equitymap.org/process-guide> for assistance.



Energy Burden Across Climate Challenge Cities

	Median Burden 2019	Highest Quintile 2019	Lowest Quintile 2019	Disparity ⁸
Philadelphia	6.7%	13.1%	3.0%	4.4
St. Louis	6.7%	12.0%	4.0%	3.0
Indianapolis	5.9%	11.5%	3.4%	3.4
Cincinnati	4.9%	9.7%	2.8%	3.5
St. Petersburg	4.7%	7.4%	3.1%	2.4
Pittsburgh	4.6%	9.4%	2.7%	3.5
Atlanta	4.5%	9.7%	2.2%	4.4
San Antonio	4.5%	8.0%	2.6%	3.1
Boston	4.3%	10.6%	2.3%	4.6
Orlando	4.3%	6.7%	3.2%	2.1
Chicago	4.1%	9.5%	1.9%	5.0
Charlotte	3.9%	7.9%	2.1%	3.8
Saint Paul	3.7%	6.8%	2.3%	3.0
Columbus	3.6%	7.1%	2.1%	3.4
Albuquerque	3.5%	6.3%	2.0%	3.2
Los Angeles	3.5%	6.4%	2.0%	3.2
Honolulu	3.3%	6.0%	2.0%	3.0
Austin	3.2%	5.8%	1.9%	3.1
Minneapolis	3.1%	5.6%	1.9%	2.9
Washington DC	3.1%	7.6%	1.5%	5.1
Portland	2.7%	4.6%	1.9%	2.4
San Diego	2.7%	4.0%	1.8%	2.2
Seattle	2.6%	4.4%	1.8%	2.4
Denver	2.4%	3.8%	1.3%	2.9
San Jose	2.1%	3.7%	1.3%	2.8

⁸ The factor difference between the least burdened quintile and the most burdened quintile.