Methods for Accessing Demographic Data

Excerpted from:

Measuring What Matters: Neighborhood Research for Economic and Environmental Health and Justice in Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo

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The full report is available at http://www.pacinst.org/reports/measuring_what_matters/

METHODS FOR ACCESSING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The information in this report on people's income, race, household size, and age all comes from the U.S. Census which is available to the public online. By following the methods we used, you can compare the demographics of neighborhoods within a city, cities and towns within a county, and even counties or states in the U.S.

Identify the area of focus and the scale.

1. To identify the area you want to focus on, go to the Census Fact Finder online (www.factfinder.census.gov). On the left side of the screen, put your cursor over the heading Maps, and click on the link to Reference Maps.

2. In Reference Maps, click the circle next to "2000 Census Tracts and Blocks," type in your zip code, and press "Go."

3. To re-position the map to see the block groups and census tracts surrounding a particular address, click "A Street Address or Zip Code" on the left of the screen. Type in the address.

4. Now you see a map that is zoomed-in on the address you chose. On the left side of the screen, the Legend shows what each colored line means. Each one represents a type of Census boundary. You can get demographic information for each different type of boundary (but limited information for the smallest type, which are called "Blocks").

   The order of Census boundaries, from smallest to largest, is:

   i. Block (about the size of a city block)
   ii. Block Group (this is the size of a small neighborhood)
   iii. Tract (this is the size of a bigger neighborhood)
   iv. Place (this is the category for towns or cities)
   v. County Subdivision
   vi. County
   vii. State
   viii. Region
   ix. United States

5. Next, choose what areas you want to compare to your area. Looking at the Reference Map of your area, see whether there are Block Groups or Census Tracts that line up with the boundaries of your neighborhood. Do you want to compare all the block groups in a city with each other, all the census tracts, or all the cities in a county? Once you have decided, go on to downloading the data.

Download census data.

To obtain Census data on the total population per city and town in your county:

1. Go to Census Factfinder online at http://factfinder.census.gov. In the middle of the page, under the heading "Getting Detailed Data," look for "Decennial Census." Just below it click on "Get Data."

2. In the middle of the next page, click the circle next to "Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data." To the right, click on "Detailed Tables."

3. Now click on the gray tab "geo within geo."

4. For this example, we will download data to compare cities within a county. Under "Show me all," select "Places." Under "Within," select "County." Select your state. Select your county.

5. Click "All Places," and then click "Add." Click "Next."

6. The web page now knows what places for which you need information. Next, select the type of information you want. In this example we will look at race. Note: the Census does not consider Latino a race, so it reports whether people are Latino separate from reporting which race they are.

7. Click on "P.7 Hispanic or Latino by Race." Click on "Add." Click on "Show Result."

8. Now you will see a table with the race breakdown for every town and city in the county.

9. To download the information, click on the blue tab near the top of the page, "Print / Download," and click "Download."

10. To download the table and open it in Excel, just go to the bottom of the page that pops up and click "OK." The table should open in Excel and you can now save it to your computer.