

Christine McKenna
CUNY - Lehman College, CUNY Graduate School of Journalism
Data Journalism: Using Census Data in Stories

Module Description

This Census/ACS module is part of a larger course section on data journalism. It is intended to develop the research skills of students with little or no reporting experience so that they can use Census/ACS data in subsequent journalism classes. The module also introduces them briefly to data visualization options and tools. The primary focus of the exercises is on New York demographics so that students can develop a comfort level navigating the data and the various online analytic tools. Sources of national data will also be covered to a lesser degree.

Learning Objectives

Skills

Identify Census/ACS data sets to use in reporting and writing.
Use a range of programs to access Census/ACS data.
Describe and analyze simple descriptive statistical information.
Visualize Census/ACS data in the form of charts, graphs and maps.

Substance

Develop a comfort and familiarity with types of Census/ACS data and when to use each.
Use Census/ACS data to explain or illustrate demographic trends in a New York City neighborhood.
Use Census/ACS releases to develop story ideas.

Teaching/Facilitation Notes

This module will take 2-3 weeks, depending on the class time.

Activities

Part I: What data is available on New York in the Census and where can you find it?

A. [NYC Census Factfinder](#)

1) Using the [NYC Census Factfinder](#), answer the following questions about the Lehman College neighborhood, 250 Bedford Park Bl West, Bronx 10468.

Total population (number and percentage)

White, non-Hispanic:

Black/African American non-Hispanic:

Hispanic origin:

2) How do the percentages of each compare to New York City overall?

White, non-Hispanic:

Black/African American non-Hispanic:

Hispanic origin:

3) How has the percentage of each group changed since the 2000 Census?

White, non-Hispanic:

Black/African American non-Hispanic:

Hispanic origin:

4) What Asian subgroup has experienced the biggest percentage growth from 2000-2010? Which group has increased most in number from 2000-2010?

5) Which Hispanic subgroup has experienced the largest increase in number from 2000-2010? Which Hispanic subgroup has decreased the most in number?

6) Review the Age breakdown of the neighborhood. How would you characterize the change from 2000-2010 of residents age 14 and younger?

B. [American Factfinder](#)

In the Community box on the home page, type in "Bronx" and answer the following questions.

1) Total population. What is the estimated population of the Bronx according to the 2010 Census? The 2014 Population Estimate? The 2013 ACS Population Estimate?

2) What is the median age of Bronxites? Note the source of the data, e.g. 2010 Census, American Community Survey.

3) What percentage of Bronxites are high school graduates or higher? Note the source of the data, e.g. 2010 Census, American Community Survey.

4) What is the median income for Bronx residents? Note the source of the data, e.g. 2010 Census, American Community Survey.

5) How many Bronxites were born in another country? Note the source of the data, e.g. 2010 Census, American Community Survey.

6) What percentage of Bronxites is living below the poverty level? Note the source of the data, e.g. 2010 Census, American Community Survey.

7) How many Hispanics/Latinos of any race live in the Bronx? Note the source of the data, e.g. 2010 Census, American Community Survey.

C. Newest New Yorkers – NY Dept of City Planning

1) Navigate to the “Where are New York’s immigrants living?” tab. Which neighborhood in the Bronx has the largest number of Foreign-born residents? What are the top two countries of origin?

2) Navigate to the “What are the countries of origin of the city’s immigrants?” tab. Which country had the largest number of immigrants to New York City from 2000-2011? The second largest? Which had the highest percentage change from 2000-2011? What group has the highest number of foreign-born New York residents?

3) Navigate to the “How do immigrants fare compared with the overall population? Review the “Household income by country of birth.” Which group has the lowest median income? Which has the highest? How do they both compare to the median income of the native-born?

D. Historical trends – Censusscope.org

Click on the [Charts and Trends tab for New York City](#).

1) Between which decades 1960-2000 did New York City experience a decrease in population?

2) How did the percentage of New Yorkers living in poverty change from 1990-2000?

E. ESRI Tapestry - Lifestyle characteristics

1) Type in the Lehman College zip code, 10468, into the map search box. What are the top three Tapestry segments? Describe the lifestyle characteristics of the top segment in a few sentences.

2) How does the median income compare to Bronx County? The U.S.?

3) How does the number of people per square mile compare to the U.S.?

4) Type in the zip code for 10065 in the Upper East Side. What is the top segment? Describe the characteristics in a few sentences.

5) What is the median income for 10065? How does it compare to the U.S.?

Part II. How can you use online tools to visualize Census/ACS data?

A. Census Reporter

Go to censusreporter.org and type in Bronx into the place search box.

1) How does the median income of Bronxites compare to New York State? What percentage of residents of New York State make less than \$50k? (Click on Show the data to see this information.) Grab the embed code and insert this in your homework post.

2) How does the percentage of Bronxites living under the poverty level compare to that of New York State? How does the number of children living in poverty compare to New York State? Embed the graphic in the homework post.

3) Return to the home page and type in "New York, NY." What is the average time residents of New York City spend traveling to work? How does this compare to New York State? Click on "Show the data." Describe how residents of New York City differ from those in New York State in the form of transportation they use to commute to work. Embed the graphic in the homework post.

B. Social Explorer

Note: I can't access the Lehman College Social Explorer account remotely but I plan on using this to have students build embeddable maps, side-by-side maps. I'm just not sure yet what is possible.

Part III. Using Census/ACS to develop story ideas.

Visit the [Census.gov Newsroom](http://Census.gov/Newsroom) and propose one national and one tri-state story idea. Identify specific data sets you will use in your story and explain how you will use them.

Part IV. Use Census/ACS data to write a profile of a New York City Neighborhood

Write a 800-1000 word story about your neighborhood of choice. Provide a detailed breakdown of the current demographic characteristics of the neighborhood, using the online sources used in early exercises. How has the neighborhood changed over time? Interview a long-term resident for anecdotal

information about changes and combine this data with your personal observations

Assessment (Rough description of tasks)

Objectives: Identify Census/ACS data sets to use in reporting and writing, Use a range of programs to access Census/ACS data, Develop a comfort and familiarity with types of Census/ACS data and when to use each.

Assessment: I will provide a range of story topics and ask students where I can find supporting data.

Objectives: Describe and analyze simple descriptive statistical information. Use Census/ACS data to explain or illustrate demographic trends in a New York City neighborhood.

Assessment: I will select a few demographic trends in the Bronx, provide students the data and ask them to write a few sentences describing the changes.

Objectives: Visualize Census/ACS data in the form of charts, graphs and maps.

Assessment: I will ask students to embed a Census chart from CensusReporter and a map from Social Explorer.

Objectives: Use Census/ACS releases to develop story ideas.

Assessment: I will select either a timely or topical release and ask students to develop possible story angles from the data.

Resources

[Census Data Viz](#)

[Pew Social Trends](#)

[Covering Census 2010: A Workshop for Journalists](#)

[Teaching With Data](#)

[NHGIS](#)

[Brookings State of Metropolitan America:](#)

[Urban Institute Data/Viz](#)

[Population Reference Bureau \(PRB\)](#)

[DataFinder](#)

[ACS/Census](#)

[GapMinder](#)

[Census.IRE.org](#)

[Kids Count Data Center](#)

Bibliography - TK

