

Understanding Housing Patterns in the United States

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Summary

This module examines housing patterns in the United States using data from the 2000 U.S. Census. Students analyze data concerning homeownership and housing type and discuss the implications of their findings. Of particular interest are the influences of stage of life course and race/ethnicity on housing.

Learning Goals

Skill

- Use data to describe and analyze statistical information
- Identify independent and dependent variables
- Calculate and read a cross-tabulation to describe the relationship between two variables
- Draw conclusions from data analysis

Substance

- To consider housing patterns in the United States
- To relate housing patterns to stage of the life course
- To relate housing patterns to racial and ethnic inequality

Context for Use

This exercise was developed for an upper-level course in urban sociology, although it could also be used in courses in urban studies or urban planning. The exercise is designed to be assigned after discussion of topics such as community, neighboring, social networks, and density. Students are required to relate their findings from their data analysis to other concepts discussed in the course. The exercise has several parts, which could be assigned separately.

Exercise Instructions

To complete this exercise, you will need to access data from the Social Science Data Analysis website.

1. Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts>
2. Click on the “Data” in the menu bar

3. From there, click “Browse” on the bar underneath Data. Find “**cen2000**” in the drop-down box, select it, and click “submit.”
4. Scroll down through the list of data sets until you find “**housng2K.dat.**” Select it and click “submit.”
5. Click on [New WebCHIP 2.0](#).
6. You can also click [here](#) to launch the dataset in WebCHIP.
7. Under “Command,” click on “Marginals” to see the variables included in the data set.

I. To begin, you will use information from the marginals to examine homeownership (**Homeownr**).

- a. What percent of respondents own their own home? _____
- b. What percent of respondents rent their home? _____
- c. Which group do you think would have more attachment to their residence? Why?
- d. How do you think residential status would affect their neighboring patterns?
- e. Do you think an area with more home owners or renter would have a greater sense of community? In your answer you might reference concepts such as Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft, mechanical/organic solidarity, social networks.

II. Use the information from the marginals to examine the **Housing** variable.

- a. Report the percents for the following categories:

House	_____
Apartment with 2 to 9 units	_____
Apartment with 10 or more units	_____
Mobile Home	_____

- b. Which type of housing unit do you think would have the highest residential density (consider both persons per room and persons per square mile)? Explain your answer.

- c. Which type of residence do you think would foster a greater sense of community?

III. Now, examine factors that might influence residence beginning with stage of the life course. Use respondent's age as a measure of stage of life course, and examine the relationship between age and homeownership.

- a. What would be the independent variable in this relationship?
- b. What would be the dependent variable in this relationship?
- c. Use **Crosstab** under **Command** to examine the relationship between these two variables. Let the dependent variable be the row variable and the independent variable be the column variable and examine the column percents (i.e., **Percent Down** under **Table**). For what age group is homeownership the highest?
- d. Why is homeownership highest at this age?
- e. For what age group is homeownership the lowest?
- f. Why is homeownership lowest at this age?

IV. Family type might also influence homeownership. Use **Crosstab** under **Command** to examine the relationship between household type (**HHType**) and homeownership. Use homeowner as the row variable and household type as the column variable and examine the column percents (i.e., **Percent Down** under **Table**).

- a. Which household type has the largest percent of homeowners?

Record the percent: _____

- b. Briefly discuss what these findings suggest about neighborhood stability.

V. Use **Crosstab** under **Command** to consider how inequality relates to housing. Use homeowner as the row variable and race/ethnicity (**Race/Lat**) as the column variable and examine the column percents (i.e., **Percent Down** under **Table**).

a. Record the percents for the three groups with the highest percent of homeowners:

	Group	Percent
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

b. Record the percents for the bottom three percents of homeowners:

	Group	Percent
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

c. Suggest a factor that might account for the relationship between race/ethnicity and homeownership.

VI. Use **Crosstab** under **Command** to consider further the relationship between housing and inequality. Use **housing** as the row variable and **Race/Lat** as the column variable and examine the column percents (i.e., **Percent Down** under **Table**).

a. What group has the highest percent living in mobile homes?

b. How does this relatively high percent help to account for this group's relatively high rate of homeownership?

c. Would you conclude that racial/ethnic inequality exists in housing in the United States in 2000? Why or why not?

Teaching Notes and Tips

This activity uses a customized data set made from information in the 2000 U.S. Census. It guides students through data manipulation using WebCHIP software found at [DataCounts!](#) To open WebCHIP with the dataset for the activity, please see instructions and links in the exercise

documents under teaching materials. For more information on how to use WebCHIP, see the How To section on DataCounts!

Assessment

Please indicate how confident you feel about doing the following tasks? Mark the response that most accurately describes your confidence level for each item.¹

	<i>Not at all confident</i>	<i>Not very confident</i>	<i>Somewhat confident</i>	<i>Very confident</i>
Understand a table for a single variable with counts and percentages (frequency distribution)	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
Correctly interpret a table of two variables with counts and percentages (crosstabulation table)	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
Choose the correct way to percentage a crosstabulation table	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
Identify the independent and dependent variable in a relationship	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
Identify additional factors that might be important in determining the relationship between two variables	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
Take a position on or make an argument about a topic based on empirical findings	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very

¹ Assessment of confidence with quantitative literacy adapted from similar treatment of math skills in: Angelo TA, Cross KP. 1993. *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass; chapter 8, pp. 255-315.