

“Mapping Community Needs: A Social Work Approach Using Census Data”

Author(s)

Junghee Han, jhan2@usi.edu, University of Southern Indiana

Learning Goals

Skill

1. Students will learn and demonstrate the ability to access and analyze Census data using CensusScope to obtain statistical information relevant to developing a social work program within their community context (state, city, or county).
2. Students will articulate demographic trends in their local community-including population growth, racial composition, age distribution, household structure, and income levels-based on their analysis of census data.
3. Students will use demographic data from their local community to address community-level changes by proposing potential social work programs and/or resources.

Substance

1. Students will articulate the value of demographic data from Census in identifying community needs and informing social work interventions.

Context for Use

This exercise is for the course "Macro Social Work Practice with Community and Organization," required for graduate students without a bachelor's degree in social work.

Learning Activity Instruction

Social work agencies often decide where to place their facilities based on the characteristics of the local population. Imagine you are a social worker at a community agency in your area (e.g., Evansville). You need to design a new community intervention and resource for the target population with the most pressing needs in your local area.

While you'd like to conduct a survey to assess your community needs, you lack the resources to do so. Instead, you will analyze Census data to identify the target population with the most urgent needs.

a. Data Gathering

- 1) Go to www.censusscope.org, a website providing U.S. Census information at the state and city levels.

- 2) At the top of the CensusScope homepage, click on the **“Maps”** tab. Select your state (e.g., Indiana) from the map.
- 3) Under **“Census Trend Charts”** on the upper-left side of page, you’ll find a list of 13 variables/demographic characteristics you can explore.

- Population Growth
- Population by Race
- Multiracial Profile
- Age Distribution
- Household & Family Structure
- Educational Attainment
- Language
- Migration
- Nativity & Citizenship Status
- Income
- Poverty
- Ancestry & Ethnicity
- Industry & Occupation

Select one variable (e.g., Income) from the options.

- 4) Under the **“Change Location”** section on the lower-left side of the page, choose "Evansville-Henderson" from the **“Choose Metro”** menu or "Vanderburgh County" from the **“Choose County”** menu. Then, click on **“View Chart”** to display the data. By selecting the **“Zoom Out”** tab, you can view the same data (income in 1990 & 2000) for the entire state of Indiana.
 - 5) After completing the income analysis, repeat Steps 3 and 4 for each of the other demographic variables you selected from the 13 options. Collect information on five different demographic characteristics in total.
- b. **Create a Summary Report** highlighting the demographic trends you observed, using either bullet points or a brief narrative.

“For example, compared to 1990, the income of Evansville-Henderson residents appears to have increased, with 44.61% of residents earning below \$35,000, down from 62.36% in 1990. However, this rate remains higher than the Indiana state average of 41.44”.

A brief report should be 1-2 pages, typed and double-spaced, describing the characteristics of your local community based on the five selected variables and identifying the target population for potential intervention.

- c. In the summary report, based on your analysis, you should recommend a social work program and/or community resource to address the needs of the identified target population.

“For example, compared to 1980 and 1990, there has been little increase in the overall population of Evansville-Henderson. However, the percentage of people of color has grown from approximately 10% to 15%, a trend that continues under the Biden administration's policies on immigration and refugees. Given that Evansville has limited programs for immigrants and refugees—such as those offered by the Evansville Immigrant Welcome and Resource Center, Good is Good Foundation, and Haitian Center of Evansville, all of which were established recently (2023-2024)—there is a need for additional social work programs targeting these groups. It would be especially beneficial to create programs that are accessible by public transportation”.

Grading Rubric

Criteria	Excellent	Competent	Needs Improvement
Data Analysis	Demonstrates a clear, thorough analysis of all five selected variables. Data is accurately interpreted and directly relevant to community needs.	Adequate analysis of five variables with minor errors or omissions. Data is mostly relevant to community needs.	Limited or incomplete analysis of selected variables. Data is not well-interpreted or relevant to community needs.
Identification of Trends	Clearly identifies and explains significant demographic trends with specific examples. Trends are supported by data and reflect changes over time.	Identifies trends but may lack specific examples or full explanations. Somewhat supported by data and reflects general changes.	Fails to identify or explain trends meaningfully. Examples may be missing, and explanations lack clarity or data support.
Target Population	Accurately identifies a specific target population based on analysis. Provides a strong rationale using demographic data to support the choice.	Identifies a target population but lacks a detailed rationale. Rationale is somewhat supported by demographic data.	Does not identify a clear target population or lacks a rationale. Analysis does not support the identified population.

Proposed Program/Resource	Proposes a relevant, thoughtful social work program or resource that addresses the needs of the target population. Clearly connects to trends and data.	Proposes a relevant program/resource but lacks detail or full connection to trends. Somewhat addresses the target population's needs.	Proposal is vague, lacks relevance, or does not address the needs of the target population effectively. Limited connection to data.
Report Structure and Clarity	Report is well-organized, clear, and concise, with logical flow. Free of grammar or spelling errors.	Report is organized and clear but may contain minor grammar or spelling errors. Flow is generally logical.	Report is poorly organized, with multiple grammar or spelling errors. Lacks clarity or logical flow.