

Community Profile Builder In-Depth Guide on Family Structure

<http://www.thearda.com/DemographicMap/>

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This guide is designed to help you understand the characteristics of the families in your neighborhood, community, or any area you select. Using recent data collected by the U.S. Census, you can generate maps and a report that will help you to learn more about the area you want to serve.

- What are the different marital statuses in your community?
- What are the different household/family types in your community?
- How do family characteristics vary by neighborhood?
- What family characteristics are unique to your area?

These are just a few of the many questions that can be explored using this guide and the ARDA's Community Profile Builder.

First Steps

Using the ARDA's Community Profile Builder online tool is easy. The following are step-by-step instructions on how to start gathering quality data on your community:

1. First, go to the following address: <http://www.thearda.com/DemographicMap/>
2. Enter your U.S. ZIP code, city and state, or complete address in the box at the top of the page and click "Go." After clicking "Go," the map will take you to your community and show you all of the congregations in the area.
3. Enter the radius (in miles) that you would like the online tool to include. One option is to think of driving distance. How far do people typically travel to come to your congregation?
4. Click on the map to set the center point for the radius you selected. A dashed circle will appear showing you the areas from which the tool will draw its data.
5. Finally, click the "Profile" button. Doing so will generate your report for the area you selected.

6. This first page will give you some introductory information about the area you selected. For more information, see “About Your Profile” at the end of this guide.

7. Investigate family structure in your community by clicking on the “Family” tab!

Families in Your Community

This first page of family-oriented data provides the following information about your community, and each type of information has important implications for congregations.

Marital status – How common are different marital statuses in your community? In applying this information to your congregation, consider that congregations can offer ministries, for example, for single people, parents, divorced persons, and those who have experienced bereavement.

Household/family type – What types of families are present in your community? When considering this information, it can be helpful to compare married-parent families with single-parent families and also to examine whether or not families have children.

Here are some important definitions for understanding household/family types:

- Household – All people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence.
- Householder – A person (age 15+) who rents or owns a housing unit.
- Family household – A household where at least one person is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.
- Nonfamily household – A household where the householder lives alone or where the householder shares the living quarters with someone to whom he/she is not related.

This information is also presented in the ARDA’s Community Profile Builder Guide. The ARDA has additional information on family structure that is not presented in the Community Profile Builder Guide.

Digging Deeper

Want to learn even more about families in your community? Find the yellow box under the “Family” tab: “click here for additional family structure data and color coded maps.” You can now get additional information about:

- Variation in your community – Do certain neighborhoods have more families?
- Your community vs. the USA – Compared to the USA, what family characteristics are more common in your community?

Starting with the map, explore what neighborhoods in your community have higher percentages of families. Based on your knowledge of your community, what does this tell you about the different neighborhoods and their potential needs?

Below the map, there are graphs that compare the family structure characteristics of your community with the family structure characteristics of the USA. These graphs contain information on:

- Family types – Married couples, single parents, having children, or living alone?
- Single adults – Never married, divorced or separated, or widowed?

These graphs are helpful for determining what family characteristics are normal in the country and how the family structure characteristics of your community may be unique. Underneath each graph, there are suggestions for how you can use the information to minister in your community.

Preparing to Serve

In addition to the ministry applications suggested throughout this guide, this section provides some questions to consider when thinking about how to address family-related needs in your community.

- What stands out to you about the marital statuses and family types in your community?
- What does this information tell you about the types of people who live in your community, their needs, etc.?
- What needs might families in your community have?
- What community-based resources can you consult to learn more about needs in your community?
- Is there a specific neighborhood in which you want to serve?
- Do you know people in the neighborhood where you want to serve? If you do, talk with them about what they feel is needed in their neighborhood. If not, how can you develop relationships there?
- What do you need to address needs in your community (volunteers, skills, space, etc.)?
- Are there other congregations and social service organizations in your community with which you can collaborate?
- Are there family-oriented needs around which you can advocate in your community?
- What other questions should your congregation consider (concerning your congregational or local context) when preparing to serve?

About Your Profile

Geographic Area

On the “Introduction” tab, the dashed circle represents the radius you designated on the previous page. The map also shows the [census block groups](#) (areas of 600-3000 people) that are included in the report. It is important to realize that any census block group that is touched by the radius you designate is included, even if the radius only covers a small portion of the total census block group. The map also provides markers for each congregation on the map. In the text above the map, you can find the total number of block groups included in the report, the counties from which these results are drawn, and the total population included in the report. This information is repeated at the top of the “Family” tab as well.

Data Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is the largest household survey in the United States. Each year, about one in 38 U.S. households are invited to participate in it. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of people and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Understanding the Data

There are three ways to numerically describe the family structure data, all of which provide important information about your community.

1. **Raw numbers** indicate the number of people in your community that have a certain characteristic. If you care about, for example, the number of single-parent families in your community, this number is for you.
2. **Percentages** indicate what share of the population has a certain characteristic. For each characteristic, we give you these percentages in parentheses. If you care about, for example, the percentage of people who are married in your community, this number is for you.
3. **Percentage change** indicates whether certain characteristics are becoming more or less common in your community. Positive percent changes denote increases while negative percent changes signal decreases. If you care about, for example, whether the number of people experiencing divorce has increased or decreased in your community, this number is for you.