

Community Profile Builder

In-Depth Guide on Income, Employment, and Poverty

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

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This guide is designed to help you understand the income, employment, and poverty levels of the residents 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.

- How many people in your community are experiencing a significant lack of resources?
- How many people in your community are employed, and in what sector are they employed?
- What are the income levels in your community? How do they vary across different neighborhoods?
- How do the income, employment, and poverty levels in your community compare with the United States?

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 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 income, employment, and poverty in your community by clicking on the “Income” tab!

Income, Employment, and Poverty in Your Community

This first page of information provides the following information about your community, and this information has important implications for congregations.

Poverty – How many people in your community are experiencing a significant lack of resources? The Census Bureau uses income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is at or near the poverty level. You can find out more about how the Census Bureau measures poverty, read examples, and view the income thresholds used by the Census Bureau [here](#). Based on what needs are present in a community, congregations could help to provide food, clothing, or other goods and services.

Employment – How many people in your community are employed, and in what sector are they employed? Click [here](#) for more information about how the government defines unemployment and labor force participation. Ministry applications include, for example, serving military families in your community and providing services for people who are unemployed. Having a high percentage that are not in the labor force may also indicate a substantial number of retirees.

Occupation Type – For those who are employed, what sectors do they work in? Are they in white color or blue color occupations? What types of jobs are available in your community?

Household income – How much money does each household bring in? Household income includes earnings, investment income, retirement income, government assistance, and more. Learn more about what is included in household income [here](#). The average household income for your community is also presented below the household income table.

This information is also presented in the ARDA’s Community Profile Builder Overview Guide. The ARDA has additional information on income, employment, and poverty that is not presented in the Community Profile Builder Overview Guide.

Exploring Income, Employment, and Poverty in More Depth

Want to learn even more about income, employment, and poverty in your community? Find the yellow box under the “Income” tab: “click here for additional economic indicators and color coded maps.” You can now get additional information about:

- Variations in your community – How do income levels vary across neighborhoods?

- Your community vs. the USA – Compared to the USA, how do income, poverty, and occupational characteristics differ in your community?

Starting with the map, explore what neighborhoods in your community have higher and lower average household incomes. Based on your knowledge of your community, what does this tell you about what neighborhoods may be more affluent or more in need?

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

- Household income levels
- Poverty levels
- Occupational and employment statuses

These graphs are helpful for determining what income, employment, and poverty characteristics are normal in the country and how the characteristics of your community may be unique.

Underneath the graphs, 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 needs in your community.

- What stands out to you about the income, employment, and poverty levels in your community?
- What does this information tell you about the types of people who live in your community in terms of affluence, needs, etc.?
- What needs might people 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 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?

How can your congregation engage in the community?

From *7 Creative Models for Community Ministry*

1. Donate Goods or Money

Pros and Cons (pp. 42-53)

- Can be simple and inexpensive
- Not as relational as other models
- Does not address deeper personal and structural issues that contribute to the need

Tips to remember

- Seek information about what is needed (pp. 44-46)
- Communicate needs clearly with attenders (p. 52)
- Consider unrestricted giving for monetary donations (pp. 49-50)

2. Mobilize Volunteers

Pros and Cons (pp. 54-56)

- Supporting, not duplicating existing community efforts
- More relational
- More attainable for congregations that cannot organize their own programs
- Some attenders may be too busy

Tips to remember

- Match volunteering opportunities with attenders' strengths and interests (pp. 58-60, 62-63)
- Communicate opportunities with clear instructions and expectations (p. 62-64, 66)
- Provide training, if needed (pp. 64-65)

3. Partner with Other Organizations

Pros and Cons (pp. 68-70)

- Avoids duplicating existing community efforts
- Can maximize staff and volunteers, resources, and space
- Takes time to develop collaboration, clear expectations

Tips to Remember

- Carefully choose partners (pp. 73-74)
- Develop clear expectations and roles (pp. 69-71)
- Engage in open and frequent communication (pp. 79-80)

4. Advocate around Public Policy

Pros and Cons (pp. 82-84)

- Can result in structural change
- Contributes to in-depth knowledge of social issues
- Often involves interfaith collaboration
- May be too political for some congregations
- Does not always result in desired change

Tips to Remember

- Match area of advocacy to congregations' interests and identity (pp. 91-92)
- Partner with local, regional, national, or international policy organization (pp. 80-90)
- Develop theological rationale for advocacy (p. 91)

5. Engage in Community Organizing

Pros and Cons (pp. 96-100)

- Is more relational with a stronger focus on empowering the community
- Contributes to in-depth knowledge of social issues
- Often involves interfaith collaboration
- May be too political for some congregations
- Can result in structural change but does not always do so

Tips to Remember

- Involve and build relationships with a wide range of people (pp. 103-104)
- Identify and equip grassroots leaders (p. 104)
- Identify issue, which officials to engage, and desired change (pp. 105-107)

6. Develop a Ministry Program

Pros and Cons (pp. 111-114)

- Can tailor to interests and identity of congregation
- Can address community issues that other organizations are not focusing on
- Needs clear vision and effective implementation
- Requires more resources and expertise

Tips to Remember

- Align program goals with attendees' interests and congregational identity (p. 122)
- Develop a clear program design and specific goals (pp. 117-121)
- Ensure that the program does not duplicate other community efforts (p. 111)
- Consider whether your congregation has the resources (staffing, financial resources, facilities, etc.) to develop its own program (p. 111)

7. Create a Nonprofit

Pros and Cons (pp. 126-129)

- Engages a wider range of volunteers, funding opportunities
- Can drift from faith orientation, connection to congregation
- Often requires more financial resources
- Unattainable for many congregations

Tips to Remember

- Consider whether the congregation has the capacity to launch a nonprofit (pp. 125-126)
- Develop a board of directors and clarify its role vis-à-vis the congregation (pp. 131-136)
- Commit to long-term partnership with nonprofit and its board (pp. 137-139)

For more information, please see: Joy F. Skjogstad. 2013. *7 Creative Models for Community Ministry*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.

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 “Income” 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 income, employment, and poverty 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 people in the armed forces 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 live in poverty, 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 who are unemployed has increased or decreased in your community, this number is for you.