

Community Profile Builder Overview Guide

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

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What is the Community Profile Builder?

The ARDA's Community Profile Builder allows you to examine the demographic, religious and cultural contours of your community online. Using just a ZIP code (or an address) and setting the parameters for how large an area you would like to examine, the ARDA's Community Profile Builder provides a wealth of information about your community and shows how your community is changing.

To build your community's profile, go to: <http://www.thearda.com/DemographicMap/>

What types of information are available in the Community Profile Builder?

The Community Profile Builder offers you information on the residents and the religious organizations in your community.

I. Information on Residents

The foundation of a community profile is demographic data such as the age, race, education, income and family structure of community residents.

II. Information on Religious Congregations

The Community Profile Builder shows the location of each congregation in your selected area, gives you a list of the congregations, and summarizes the overall religious makeup of your county, metro area or state.

What types of communities can I profile?

The types and sizes of communities that you will be able to explore using the ARDA's Community Profile Builder are completely at your discretion. You are in charge of how large a net is cast around your community.

How do I decide what community level to profile?

The community level (town, county, state, etc.) that you choose to profile should be based on both your own interests and how the data will be used. Typically, you will want to profile the community or area your organization is seeking to serve, although you also may be interested in comparing your area with nearby communities, counties, or states.

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 away do people normally come to your congregation or community?
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. Investigate your community!

ARDA Community Profile

The report generates eight different types of community profile information. You can cycle through each type of information using the gray tabs toward the top of the page. The following section provides a description of what can be found under each tab (labeled "Navigating"), where the numbers come from ("Sources"), what certain terms mean ("Definitions"), as well as suggestions on how the community profile can be used (labeled "Application").

Introduction

This page provides a map of the area you selected. The dashed circle represents the radius you designated on the previous page. The map also shows the [census block groups](#) 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 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 each different tab.

Religion

Navigating

Under the religion tab, you will find a list of the congregations in the area you specified. This list provides both the name of each congregation as well as its denomination. Is your congregation missing? Please [contact us](#) to have it added to our databases.

Use the hyperlinks for many of the denominations to further explore their history, membership data, trends and member profile on the ARDA.

Below the list of congregations you will find a religious change report from 2000 to 2010 for the counties included in your selected area. This report shows the growth or decline of the various religious groups operating in your community over a 10-year period.

Sources

The 2000-2010 change data were collected by the [Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies \(ASARB\)](#) and include statistics for 236 religious groups, providing information on the number of their congregations and adherents within each state and county in the United States.

Definitions

Percent change: Percent change from 2000 to 2010 highlights the growth or decline of each religious group over that period. Positive numbers denote growth; negative numbers indicate decline. It is important to note that often the most quickly growing religious groups are not the largest religious groups in a community.

Application: Understanding Your Religious Ecology

The information under the “Religion” tab gives an overview of your congregation’s religious environment. This information may help you find other congregations for partnering to more efficiently serve the community. It also reveals the religious changes in your area and shows you what religious groups have grown or declined most dramatically.

Housing

Navigating

The next tab provides information on housing for your community. The first table highlights the overall population mobility for your area. This data can give you a sense for how much turnover there is in a given area.

This tab also provides a housing report that displays the total housing units in your community and the proportion of those that are rental units. In addition, the ages of the housing units and their value are listed.

Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is the largest household survey in the United States. It has an annual sample size of about three million addresses. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab, and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of population and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Definitions

Percent change: The percent change column under “Housing Report” shows the growth or decline in the total number of housing units that exist in your selected area, as well as the growth or decline of certain types of housing units. Positive percent change denotes a greater number of units while negative percent changes signals fewer units.

Application: Population Turnover

Under the “Housing” tab, you will find information about the percentage of residents in your community who were in the same house, in the same census tract, in the U.S., or outside of it one year ago. This information sheds light on the amount of turnover there is in your community. High levels of turnover can result in various ministry challenges for a congregation. However, such challenges may result in unique opportunities to serve an area with high population turnover.

The percent of your community living in rental housing also may signal unique areas of ministry for your congregation.

Income

Navigating

The income tab first displays the percentage of residents in your area that are either at the poverty level, or near the poverty level.

The next table provides data on how many residents in your area are employed, in the armed forces, unemployed or not in the labor force. This report also shows the types of occupations that are employing the workforce.

The final table provides the percent of residents that are at each level of household income, as well as the average income for your selected area.

Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) which is the largest household survey in the United States. It has an annual sample size of about three million addresses. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab, and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of population and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Definitions

Poverty level: A collection of money income thresholds that varies by family size and composition is used by the Census Bureau 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](#).

Percent Change: Percent change in the “Employment” and “Occupation Type” tables signals the growth or decline in the total numbers for each employment or occupation type.

Census tract: Census tracts are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population of 2,500 to 8,000. For more information on these areas, and how they are defined, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Unemployed vs. Not in Labor Force: Find out about the categories the government uses to determine employment status [here](#).

Application: Poverty and (Un)employment

The income and employment data found under the “Income” tab can highlight areas within your community that your congregation may be able to serve. For some communities, there are high numbers of military. This group may benefit from particular types of ministries. Similarly, a large population of unemployed individuals in your community may signal an area that your congregation can more effectively serve. Finally, a large number of individuals counted as “not

in labor force” may highlight large numbers of young people or retired individuals in your community. Comparing this to the age breakdown of your community may generate areas of ministry to the specific needs of the people surrounding your congregation.

The poverty and household income data can provide a great look at whether there are people in your community in need of assistance. Congregations in areas with people at or near the poverty level could find ways to serve those who need assistance in meeting their physical needs.

Gender/Age

Navigating

This tab first provides the total population for the selected area. Directly beneath this is the gender distribution for the total population. In addition, age distributions for the total population are provided.

Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) which is the largest household survey in the United States. It has an annual sample size of about three million addresses. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab, and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of population and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Definitions

Percent change: The percent change column in each table shows the growth or decline in total numbers for each row. Positive numbers signal growth in total numbers, while negative numbers signal decline.

Application: Youth Groups or Bingo Night?

Or both? Looking at the age distribution of your community under the “Gender/Age” tab can provide your congregation with useful information as to whether there are a lot of young people in your area, or a significant number of older individuals who may be best served by different ministries. Perhaps, your community has many individuals in both age ranges.

Education

Navigating

This tab first provides information about the educational attainment of adults age 25 and older. Directly beneath this is information about the types of schools that people in the community attend.

Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) which is the largest household survey in the United States. It has an annual sample size of about three million addresses. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab, and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of population and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Definitions

Percent change: The percent change column in each table shows the growth or decline in total numbers for each row. Positive numbers signal growth in total numbers, while negative numbers signal decline.

Application: GED classes and College Ministries

The “Education” tab can provide your congregation with useful information about education levels and schooling options in your area. If there is a significant number of people without a high school diploma, perhaps your congregation could partner with another organization to provide GED classes. If there is a significant number of college students in your area, perhaps you congregation can serve them.

Family

Navigating

This tab first provides the marital status of the population. Directly beneath is information about different types of families and households in your community.

Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) which is the largest household survey in the United States. It has an annual sample size of about three million addresses. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab, and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of population and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Definitions

Percent change: The percent change column in each table shows the growth or decline in total numbers for each row. Positive numbers signal growth in total numbers, while negative numbers signal decline.

Non-family household: This household type includes people who live alone as well as people who live with others with whom they are not related. Click [here](#) for more information.

Application: Singles Groups, Single Parent Support Groups, or Divorce Support Groups?

Or all three? Looking at the marital statuses and family types in your community under the “Family” tab can provide your congregation with useful information as to whether there are a lot of single or divorced people in your area, or a significant number of single-parents who may be best served by different ministries. Perhaps, your community has many individuals across these groups.

Race & Ethnicity

Navigating

The first table under the final tab shows the relative size of the different racial groups present in your community. Below this is a table showing the languages that are spoken in the homes of your community.

Sources

The information shown here is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) which is the largest household survey in the United States. It has an annual sample size of about three million addresses. The ACS collects the information shown in this tab, and other important data in order to describe the characteristics of population and housing in the United States. For more information, go to the [U.S. Census](#).

Definitions

Percent change: The percent change column denotes the overall increase or decrease in the total numbers of people in your chosen area who identify with each particular racial category.

White (non-Hispanic/Latino): Individuals who report that they are “White” as their only answer to the race question and who further respond “No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.”

Hispanic/Latino: Individuals who report that they are one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic or Latino categories listed – “Mexican,” “Puerto Rican” or “Cuban” – as well as those who indicate they are “another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.” (This explanation is drawn directly from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).)

Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other race, multi-racial: Find out more about how the U.S. Census Bureau classifies these racial categories [here](#).

Application: Diversity

Like much of the other information found in the Community Profile Builder, the diversity of your community highlighted in the “Race & Ethnicity” tab may provide unique opportunities for ministry and service for your congregation. It could be that there is an ethnic enclave of a particular ethnic group in your community. Particular ministries or service projects could serve this group.

At the bottom of this page you may find that Spanish or another language are commonly spoken in the home. Knowing this could shape outreach efforts into the community.

Wrapping Up: Comparing Congregation and Community Profiles

Congregations are integral parts of their communities. However, not all congregations and their congregants reflect their surrounding communities. Using any data you have on who worships in your congregation and comparing it to your community profile will give you an idea as to whether your congregation reflects your surrounding community. Some areas that you may be able to directly compare are:

- Gender
- Age
- Race/Ethnicity
- Marital status

It also may be possible to indirectly compare the educational level and poverty status of your congregants with that of the surrounding community.

If your congregation does not reflect the surrounding community, you may want to use the information from your community profile to strategize about how your congregation might better serve or reach out to individuals and families in your area.

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. Skjegstad. 2013. *7 Creative Models for Community Ministry*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.