Census Data Literacy
Resource Guide

What is data literacy? Why is it important?

Libraries were central to helping people be counted in the 2020 Census. Now, make the data count for your library and community. Data literacy, at its most basic, involves the ability to identify, understand, communicate, and use data. The Public Library Association's (PLA) Census Data Literacy project was launched to build data literacy skills among library staff and to increase awareness and use of Census data in their communities.

Your library can help individuals and groups make sense of Census data and use it to:

- Advance the work of community organizations and nonprofits
- Assist businesses and entrepreneurs with data-driven planning
- Strengthen civic and community engagement around local issues
- Deepen understanding of diverse neighborhoods
- Enhance children and young adult's learning about statistics
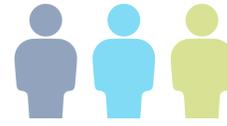- Explore local and family history

Census data can also enhance your library's understanding of the community.

What types of data are available from the U.S. Census Bureau?

Demographic Data: Decennial Census

What is it? A constitutionally-required count of every person living in the U.S. and where they live on April 1, every ten years (years ending in -0).

Why it matters (and to whom): Census results determine the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives and representation in the Electoral College and are the basis for drawing districts for state and local offices. The census count also determines the allocation of more than 1.5 trillion dollars each year in federal funding for federal programs, including K-12 and higher education, health care and hospitals, social services, highway planning and construction, and, of particular importance to libraries, Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA) grants to states. Government agencies, businesses, community organizations, and researchers rely on census data for critical information about U.S. demographics for planning and decision making.

Demographic Data: American Community Survey (ACS)

What is it? An ongoing annual survey about the U.S. population that provides data about jobs and occupations, educational attainment, veterans, whether people own or rent their homes, and other topics. Data is gathered from a segment of the population, using a longer set of questions than the decennial census. It presents an overview of the economic and social status and needs of the country, states, and communities. The datasets come with 1-year or 5-year estimates.

Why it matters (and to whom): The ACS data helps local and public officials, community leaders, and businesses understand changes taking place in their communities.

Business and Economic Data: Economic Census

What is it? Published every five years (years ending in -2 and -7), it's the official measure of the U.S. economy and businesses. It presents industry data for the U.S, states, counties, and zip codes broken down by industry, product, commodity, or service. Multiple economic surveys are released monthly, quarterly, and yearly to supplement the Economic Census.

Why it matters (and to whom): Businesses, chambers of commerce, policymakers, governments, and communities frequently use the data for economic planning, business decisions, and strategic planning.

Government Data: Census of Governments

What is it? Data about state and local governments is published every five years (years ending in -2 and -7), including finances of governments, public employment numbers, payroll amounts, and organization structures. Local government data covers counties, cities, townships, school districts, and special districts (e.g., water, library, mosquito abatement, fire).

Why it matters (and to whom): State and local governments use the data to develop budgets, assess financial conditions, and perform benchmark comparisons. Public policy researchers, economists, market specialists, and journalists report on and study changes in the government sector of the economy.

COVID-19 Data Hub

What is it? The central portal for key U.S. Census Bureau data and resources related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including results from the pulse surveys administered to small businesses and households.

Why it matters (and to whom): These resources can help government agencies (including libraries!), businesses, and communities make decisions to aid their pandemic response and recovery.

Other

The Census Bureau oversees more than 130 surveys and programs. View the full list online.

Where can I find the data?

Data.census.gov is the go-to spot to start a search for census data. Use a straightforward free-form search bar or an advanced search filtering option. Discover helpful links to tables, data profiles, maps and visualizations, and FAQs.

Narrative Profiles: Quickly create data profiles by pulling together the most frequently requested social, economic, housing, and demographic census data for an area. Different geographical options are available: nation, state, county, place (city/town), zip code, and more. Narrative profiles are frequently used by researchers and students, community organizations and nonprofits, businesses, and government and public officials. They present a snapshot of a geographic area with a text summary, key statistics, and charts.

Census Business Builder: Easy search tools to explore all types of businesses in geographic areas you select, including interactive maps and downloadable reports. Two versions are available:

- Small Business Edition is designed for small business owners and entrepreneurs who need data for planning and understanding potential markets.
- Regional Analyst Edition provides chambers of commerce and regional planning staff with data about people and businesses in a geographic area.

Infographics and Visualizations: View a gallery of interactive data visualizations that highlight many different types of census data.

How can I learn more about using Census data?

✓ Register for PLA's <u>Census Data Literacy webinars</u> to explore different types of library programming that promotes awareness and use of census data, such as census data to build businesses, data literacy for youth, leveraging civic and community engagement with census data, and dig deeper into local and family history.

✓ New to evaluation and data analysis? Check out the <u>Public Library Data and Performance Measures resource</u> created by PLA's Measurement, Evaluation, and Assessment Committee. It is intended to raise awareness of data-related resources useful to public libraries, and to assist library staff from all levels in a variety of decision-making moments.

✓ Visit <u>Census Academy</u>, the Census Bureau's virtual hub for learning data skills.
- Find <u>educational resources by topic</u>, including geography, population and housing, business and economy, data science and visualization, and data tools.
- Watch <u>Data Gems</u>, a collection of over 30 short video tutorials that present tips and techniques on accessing and using census data and navigating the Census Bureau data website.
- Participate in upcoming Census Bureau <u>webinars</u> or view recordings of past webinars.
- Take self-paced <u>courses</u> about census data and data tools.

✓ View *<u>Introduction to Census Bureau Data</u>*, a one-hour webinar presented by a Census Bureau Data Dissemination Specialist that explains the three census counts (i.e., decennial, economic, and governments) and the more frequent surveys that supplement the census counts with more specific, specialized data.

✓ Contact your Census Bureau <u>Regional Office</u> to arrange a training session at your library for your staff or your community.