

## Demographic Information Resources

Many public sources of demographic information exist to help NORC programs capture a picture of the local population, an essential foundation for responding to the needs of the older residents who live there. Among the key resources:

### Census Data

**The U.S. Census Bureau** ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) is mandated by federal law to survey every U.S. resident every ten years. Arguably the most definitive source of demographic available, the Decennial Census provides detailed information both about the nation as a whole, and about many geographic sub-divisions, including counties, census tracts, block groups, and zip codes. The capacity to mine data at these levels makes the census indispensable reading if you want to understand your local community.

Navigating the Census Bureau's website is time-consuming and somewhat difficult, however, particularly for inexperienced researchers. Also, because it is only conducted every ten years, the data eventually becomes outdated.

The **American Community Survey**, conducted five years after the Decennial Census, and the **Annual Population Estimates** provide demographic data that is often more current. While these sources do not offer detail at the level of the census tract, you can learn a lot about your city, county, and region here. The data are found on the Census Bureau website ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

**CLARITAS** (<https://www.claritas.com>) is a marketing research company that provides accurate, detailed, and up-to-date demographic data based on the Census. You can specify your information needs, and your geographic area of interest, and the company will send you detailed reports for a reasonable fee. This is a great option for NORC programs that do not have the time or personnel to undertake the research themselves.

### Health Data

For demographic and health information about older adults on the national, state, and regional levels, try these sources:

The National Center for Health Statistics **Data Warehouse on Trends in Health and Aging**, a huge repository of health-related data (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/datawh.htm>).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's **Healthy Aging** website, which includes extensive statistics on health among seniors in America (<http://www.cdc.gov/aging>).

The **Administration on Aging**, which compiles other statistical information on health and aging (<http://www.data.aoa.gov>).

Health data at the local level is also available from the **Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System** (<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>). Supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the survey tracks health and behavior, collecting data on access to care, chronic diseases, nutrition, physical activity, and much more. The health departments in all 50 states, in the District of Columbia, and in the U.S. territories contribute to the database.

#### **Other resources**

State and city health departments, city planning departments, and Area Agencies on Aging are all potential sources of good data.

**Large cities and counties** are particularly likely to gather and report a substantial amount of information about their residents and infrastructure. For example, the New York City Department of City Planning ([www.nyc.gov/dcp](http://www.nyc.gov/dcp)) has detailed information by Census tract about the 59 planning districts in its five boroughs. In addition to demographic data from the 2000 Census by Census tract, this includes maps showing how residential and non-residential land is used and where schools, health care services, senior-related facilities, parks, and other key resources are located.

**Smaller cities and towns** are seldom able to be as thorough but they are also likely to have resources on which you can draw.

Other demographic data may be available from the **housing management** entity connected with your NORC program. Typically, it will collect basic information about its residents, including the number of households and the percentage of residents who are seniors. Housing managers may also be willing to share aggregated data on income.