

# PUTTING DATA TO WORK FOR IMMIGRANTS AND COMMUNITIES:

Tools for the Washington DC Metro Area  
and Beyond

A project of  
Numbers in the Public Interest  
and the Migration Policy Institute

By Suzette Brooks Masters  
Kimberly A. Hamilton  
and Jill Wilson

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# How to Obtain This Report

**Additional copies of this publication may be obtained by contacting the Migration Policy Institute at (202) 266-1940. The document is also available in PDF format on the following websites:**

**Migration Policy Institute**  
[www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/)

**Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees**  
[www.gcir.org/resources/bibliography/demographic.htm](http://www.gcir.org/resources/bibliography/demographic.htm)

**International Center for Migration, Ethnicity and Citizenship at New School University**  
[www.newschool.edu/ICMEC/](http://www.newschool.edu/ICMEC/)  
(click on Projects, then Current Projects)

**The National Immigration Forum's Community Resource Bank**  
[www.communityresourcebank.org](http://www.communityresourcebank.org)

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# A letter from the Co-Directors of Numbers in the Public Interest

December 2003

## To Our Readers:

Numbers in the Public Interest promotes the effective use of demographic data by community-based organizations working with and on behalf of immigrants. We believe it is vitally important for these organizations to unlock the power of demographic proficiency in order to succeed in their missions. Data about immigrants—where they are from, where they live, how they fare—tell organizations where their services are needed and what issues merit attention. Data also help organizations mobilize public support with facts rather than rhetoric and attract resources with persuasive grant proposals and testimony before government officials.

Numbers in the Public Interest grew out of research conducted by Suzette Brooks Masters on the information needs and use patterns of 120 immigrant advocacy and service organizations in the United States. In **Networking the Networks: Improving Information Flows in the Immigration Field** (New School University 2001, available at [www.gcir.org/resources/bibliography/NetworkingTheNetworks.pdf](http://www.gcir.org/resources/bibliography/NetworkingTheNetworks.pdf)), the surveyed groups identified understandable and available demographic information relating to newcomers as a key need. Respondents noted a number of different dimensions to their thirst for demographic data:

- the need for greater guidance on how to access, work with, and customize demographic data to meet specific organizational needs
- the desire to use demographic data as a tool to strengthen advocacy, programs, services and fundraising
- a demand for more localized demographic information as well as more disaggregated data, particularly with respect to Asian and Latino categories, and
- the need to marshal demographic data to understand newcomers and their settlement and integration patterns.

Since there are more demographic resources available today than ever before, these findings suggest that the connection between available resources and the data interests and needs of organizations needs to be strengthened. This is especially true with regard to access, training, and building a broader understanding of the kinds of data that are available and their appropriate uses.

With this in mind, Numbers in the Public Interest concentrated its efforts on a well-defined geographic zone, the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The DC metro area was chosen for a variety of reasons—its status as a recent immigrant gateway area, with a burgeoning but still new organizational infrastructure to serve and advocate on behalf of immigrants, the size of its immigrant population, now ranking 7th among US metro areas, and the presence of the US Census Bureau and think tanks with demographic expertise, including the Migration Policy Institute, the Urban Institute, the Brookings Institution, and the Population Reference Bureau. This regional focus also allowed us to understand local dynamics and needs and to identify with great specificity useful resources.

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) was a logical partner for this project. MPI is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank based in Washington, DC dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide and to the dissemination of useful information about these movements and their impact. Through its immigration integration work, MPI promotes a better understanding of how newcomers and receiving communities interact and identifies ways to improve this interaction for the benefit of all. In addition, MPI's flagship online resource, the Migration Information Source ([www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)), provides timely and accurate migration and refugee data and analysis.

Over the course of a year, we analyzed the data needs of immigrant service and advocacy organizations in the Washington DC metro area and examined potential resources and services that could fill the gap. We interviewed a variety of organizations in the region, convened a focus group discussion with local immigrant service providers, met with local foundations involved in immigration work, consulted with demographers and other researchers, participated in a private training workshop on demographic analysis where we spoke with trainers from the US Census Bureau's Community Liaison Office and Marketing Services Office, and interviewed staff at US Census Bureau headquarters, local State Data Centers and Census Information Centers.

**Putting Data to Work for Immigrants and Communities** is the product of our efforts. Featuring a compact "data users pullout guide" designed for easy reference by staff at non-profit organizations, this report surveys the most commonly used migration data sources in the field, discusses budget-conscious ways to commission customized analysis through government and private sources, and outlines good providers of training for staff.

Placing data more firmly in the hands of immigrant service and advocacy organizations is a national challenge. While this report looks most closely at one important immigrant-receiving region in the United States, its findings will be useful to a much broader audience. We encourage other communities to think about the power of good data in the work that they do on behalf of immigrants and to use this guide as a template for action.

**Sincerely,**



**Suzette Brooks Masters**  
New School University



**Kimberly A. Hamilton**  
Migration Policy Institute



# WHAT CAN DATA TELL ME THAT I DON'T ALREADY KNOW?

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## Can I Trust Any Data Other Than What I Collect From the Field?

Whether serving immigrant communities or advocating on their behalf, non-profit groups need a realistic picture of the immigrant population they are serving and how it is evolving over time. Data on the number, geographic distribution, and characteristics of immigrants are essential to designing service programs, performing needs assessments, determining where to expand into new service areas, preparing testimony or advocacy materials, writing persuasive and defensible grant proposals and reports, and responding to inquiries from the press, community, and affiliate organizations.

While community-based organizations have hands-on knowledge of the local population that they serve, and may even use intake numbers to track their clients, statistics from well-known and reliable sources using defensible statistical methodologies such as census data can carry great weight with local and state government representatives and funding sources. Census data are invaluable in describing the larger context in which a community-based organization does its nuts-and-bolts work. It is therefore critical that organizations learn to access and use the most commonly cited and relied upon demographic resources and understand how to use them to leverage their own knowledge of the realities "on the ground." The more groups learn about available data and how the most commonly cited data are compiled, the better they will be able to understand how these data relate to the groups they are working with.

## What If My Organization Has Unique Data Needs?

To determine the data needs of groups working with immigrants in the Washington DC metro area — the “demand” side — we interviewed a number of national and local advocacy and service organizations based in the DC metro area and convened a focus group to discuss these issues in greater depth. We were struck by the wide-ranging data needs (from data on the international marriage-broker industry to health issues facing female Vietnamese immigrants) that emerged from our discussions.

Clearly, data needs vary greatly among organizations: no two organizations will need exactly the same statistics, or use statistics in exactly the same ways. Of course, the types of information most useful to particular organizations will always depend on their specific mission and constituency. Are they advocacy or service oriented? Do they cover “macro” policy issues or focus on defined community

needs? Are they pan-immigrant or ethnically or issue-focused? The size of the immigrant group and the nature of the issue of interest — from housing to language acquisition — will determine how useful available data can be.

Generally speaking, national advocates and umbrella organizations tend to use national or more aggregated information. Local service groups often need information covering a smaller geographic area, such as a city or neighborhood, or a specific ethnic group within those locales. Increasingly, however, organizations are using both kinds of data—either to put a local issue in perspective or to illustrate national trends with specific examples.

The good news is that data are plentiful as long as people know where to look and how to make use of what they find. It is our hope that this report will demystify the process and unlock the power that data have to offer.

## How Can Using Data Make A Difference to My Organization?

In the interviews we conducted for this project, we found tremendous variability in the demographic sophistication of non-profit staff and their openness to numbers. At one extreme, some groups we spoke with had experience collecting their own data and had partnered with area universities. Others had very limited knowledge of how to use the most basic statistical resources.

Our goal is to tear down the many roadblocks preventing groups from using data as effectively as possible by making the process of finding and using data more transparent. Toward that end, this report lists what data are available and where to find them, identifies providers of low cost demographic training and local resources whose mission includes helping non-profits with their data needs, and provides guidance on how to get more obscure forms of data and commission statistical studies.

This kind of information is important for non-profit organizations because achieving a basic comfort level with data can sharpen testimony and grant proposals, add punch to rhetoric, strengthen needs assessments and planning for demographic changes and their consequences, and improve the efficacy of organizations working on immigrant-related issues. However, the most persuasive argument we can make for why data can make a difference comes from non-profit organizations themselves, as described in the Data Save the Day issue highlight on the following page. As shown in those examples, marshalling the power of data, particularly when combined with politically powerful collaborations, can lead to important tangible change on the ground.

## Data Save the Day: How Data Affect Real World Outcomes

The Asian American community in New York City, led by the Asian American Federation of New York (AAFNY), used census data to prove that the boundaries defining the post-September 11 relief area in Chinatown were not adequately capturing the Chinatown population adversely affected by the terrorist attacks. AAFNY's report, grounded in solid data, received widespread attention. Most importantly, it ultimately led to a change in the relief area boundaries to include more people in Chinatown.

The Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF) used census data and mapping software to prepare a demographic workbook for use in Latino communities. The workbook gave Latino activists information on ethnic population concentrations and their relation to state and congressional geographic boundaries. This information, in turn, enabled Latino communities to become actively involved in redistricting efforts.

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF), in a Minnesota pilot program, used census data to help identify geographic areas with the greatest unmet need for child care, food assistance and medical care. By comparing income-eligible children with actual participant counts from state records, CDF was able to locate counties or zip codes with the highest and lowest use of services and income supports. This translated into direct action on the ground as CDF increased outreach in locations with the lowest participation levels.

These examples illustrate how organizations can and do use data to achieve concrete results to further their missions. A recent US Census Bureau publication, **Using Census Data to Help Local Communities: Census Information Centers at Work** (September 2003), presents 11 case studies (including the three summarized above) showcasing how the US Census Bureau's Census Information Centers (CICs) work with community-based organizations, universities and government officials to bring data to bear on problems "on the ground." The Census Information Center (CIC) Program is a cooperative program between the US Census Bureau and 52 national, regional, and local non-profit organizations representing the interests of underserved communities. The centers are repositories of census data and reports, making Census information and data available to the public and the communities they serve. For a listing of CICs, see [www.census.gov/clo/www/cic.htm](http://www.census.gov/clo/www/cic.htm). The case studies are available online at [www.census.gov/mso/www/casestudies/](http://www.census.gov/mso/www/casestudies/).

# WHERE CAN I FIND GOOD DATA?

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Public data about immigrants at the national level are the most commonly cited and widely available figures. The main source of such national data is the federal government, through agencies like the US Census Bureau, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, formerly a part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service) within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the US Department of Health and Human Services.

As explained more fully on page 5, census data are especially useful given the issues that many locally based organizations address. Contrary to many preconceptions, census data can apply to very small geographic areas such as zip codes and census tracts. These more finely cut numbers can be of great use to community-based organizations looking for specific data on their service areas. Not all government agencies, however, make data publicly available or announce when data are released. Private organizations also make available government data, in a variety of formats and tabulations that can be easier to use than the raw data available from the government sources themselves. In addition, local governments can be providers of a variety of data of relevance to immigrant serving organizations.

**“Census data are invaluable in describing the larger context in which a community based organization does its nuts and bolts work [and,] contrary to many preconceptions, can apply to very small geographic areas such as zip codes.”**

## Census Data and the Foreign Born: Advantages and Limitations

By Elizabeth Grieco, PhD

Taken once every 10 years, the census is the primary source for demographic, social, and economic information on the foreign-born population of the United States. Not only is it currently the most comprehensive tool available for studying immigrants, it is unique in that it provides the sole means by which to study small groups of the foreign-born population (e.g., Hmong, Samoan, German, etc.) at the national and detailed sub-national levels (i.e., state, county, and sub-county).

Because of its ability to estimate the characteristics of foreign-born groups at many levels of geography, the census is an important resource for community-based organizations. Most importantly, census data can provide information on the characteristics of immigrants and their households. For many community-based groups, basic demographic characteristics, such as the number of immigrant-headed households in a neighborhood, the mean age of all immigrants in a county, the number of immigrant children under 18 years of age in a school district, and the percentage of all immigrants in a state who do not speak English, are essential for program planning and policy debate. Although census data aren't organized by "neighborhood," census tracts and zip codes can be combined to approximate the neighborhoods of interest.

Census data can also provide information on the context in which immigrants live. For example, the economic characteristics of communities, such as the number employed, percent in poverty, or median household income, can help define the opportunities and constraints faced by all residents. Census data can also be used to compare the characteristics of immigrants with natives or other foreign-born groups in the same community or with the same immigrant group in other communities. These comparisons allow community-based organizations to see how the foreign-born population of interest is faring compared with other groups in the same or nearby areas.

There are drawbacks to census data, however, especially for small foreign-born groups. To protect the identity of respondents, the Census Bureau will collapse smaller country of origin groups into larger, regional categories. For example, data from Census 2000 does not list the number of foreign born from Somalia but instead collapses Somali immigrants into the "other Eastern Africa" category, which is part of the "East Africa" regional category. While Census 2000 may not provide data on a specific immigrant group of interest, the characteristics of the broader categories can still provide useful, although more general, contextual information. When combined with data collected by community organizations themselves, however, census data on the foreign born, either specific or more general, can be a powerful aid in planning policies, grant writing, justifying program funding, and defining areas of needed research.

# Data from US Government Sources

## US Census Bureau

The US census provides the most comprehensive national source of demographic information, and it contains a good deal of data related to immigrants. Because it is so widely used and considered the most reliable overall survey of the US population, it has a good reputation among the public, government, and grant makers. The US Census Bureau is trying to make its services easier to use and has recently launched a new webpage highlighting uses of census data and providing information about data in a very user-friendly format. See Using Census Data Effectively at [www.census.gov/mso/www/casestudies/](http://www.census.gov/mso/www/casestudies/). Some of the more popular sources of summary census data are surveyed below.

### DECENNIAL CENSUS

The US Census Bureau conducts its decennial census in years ending in zero. Thus, Census 2000 is the most current. The goal of the census is to provide a complete count of every person residing in the United States at the time the survey is conducted. The US Census Bureau uses two different questionnaires for its decennial census: the short form, which is sent to the entire population, and the long form, which is sent to a sample of one out of every six people (about 17 percent of the total population). The long form contains the same questions as the short form, in addition to questions related to immigration. These include place of birth, citizenship status, year of entry, ancestry, and language spoken at home. The data collected from this sample are then weighted to produce figures for the total population. These data are summarized in tables made available through Census 2000 Summary Files 3 and 4.

The fastest and easiest way to access tables from Summary Files 3 and 4 is to use the American FactFinder tool on the Census website (<http://factfinder.census.gov/>). For more information about using American FactFinder, click on Help in the upper right corner of the main Census web page.

This interactive tool allows the user to select subjects of interest (i.e., people, housing, business, and government) and the level of geography desired (nation, state, county, metropolitan area, tract, etc.) in order to generate the relevant data tables. Another easy way to find immigration data is to use the “keyword search” feature. Type in “immigration” or “foreign born,” for example, to get a list of all of the tables and maps in American FactFinder containing information on these topics. American FactFinder also allows the user to produce maps based on Census 2000 data.

## Defining the Foreign Born

When describing international migrants, the US Census Bureau uses the term foreign born, defined simply as “people who are not US citizens at birth.” The foreign-born population includes immigrants, legal non-immigrants (e.g., refugees and persons on student or work visas), and persons illegally residing in the United States. (Note: the Census Bureau does not ask questions about immigration status.) By comparison, the term native refers to people residing in the United States who are US citizens in one of three categories: 1) people born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, 2) people born in the US Insular Areas such as Puerto Rico or Guam, or 3) people born abroad of a US citizen parent.

## Microdata: Creating Your Own Tables

In addition to the summary data tables outlined above, Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) are available for Census 2000, the ACS/Supplementary Surveys, and CPS. In microdata, the basic unit of analysis is an individual housing unit and the people who live in it. The record shows all the information associated with a specific housing unit, with names, addresses, and other identifying information removed for confidentiality purposes. To further guarantee confidentiality, only large geographic areas are identified. The threshold may be the state, areas with 500,000 or more, or areas with 100,000 or more, depending on the data set.

Users of microdata can structure their own tables based on the variables they choose.

Microdata are useful for examining relationships that are not available through the pre-defined summary tables. However, use of microdata requires statistical knowledge and software. (See page 15 of this report for a discussion of data skills training.)

PUMS data for the Decennial Census and the ACS are available at [www.census.gov/main/www/pums.html](http://www.census.gov/main/www/pums.html). Microdata for CPS can be accessed via [www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm](http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm).

### AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY AND SUPPLEMENTARY SURVEYS

The American Community Survey (ACS) is being developed to produce annual estimates of demographic data similar to that collected through the long form of the Decennial Census, including the questions related to immigration. It is intended to replace the long form and will provide demographic data every year for all states, cities, counties, metropolitan areas, and population groups of 65,000 or greater. For geographic areas with fewer than 65,000 people, multi-year averages will be produced, down to the block level.

Between 1999 and 2001, the US Census Bureau collected complete data for 31 ACS test sites, most of which are individual counties. The results are available through American FactFinder under Annual Releases. In addition to the 31 test sites, the Census Bureau conducted national tests of the ACS survey in 2000, 2001, and 2002 in 1,203 counties across the United States. The results

have been released as Census 2000 Supplementary Survey (C2SS), 2001 Supplementary Survey, and 2002 Supplementary Survey. See [www.census.gov/acs/www/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/).

Although the ACS has yet to receive full funding, it is expected that it will be implemented in all United States counties in July 2004. Under the current plan, data for 2005 will be released in 2006 and every subsequent year for places with populations of 65,000 or more. Estimates for progressively smaller areas will become available thereafter. The ACS may be of even greater relevance to immigrant-focused organizations than the US census since the data will be released annually rather than once every 10 years. The release of data, available at detailed sub-national levels of geography, will provide a wealth of information never before available in an ongoing and timely manner from either decennial censuses or smaller surveys.

## CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a combined effort of the US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is conducted monthly on 50,000 households to determine the labor force characteristics of the civilian population. Although its purpose is not to measure immigration, since 1995 the CPS has included questions on place of birth, parental nativity, citizenship status, and year of entry to the United States.

The March annual demographic supplement to the CPS includes questions about poverty status, income, health insurance, household and family characteristics, marital status, and geographic mobility. The March supplement is commonly used to study the foreign born since it includes an increased sample size of about 2,500 housing units containing at least one individual of Hispanic origin. The CPS is helpful for getting an up-to-date, broad picture of the foreign-born population at the national level. However, because of its relatively small sample size, especially when compared to the census sample data, it does not provide a reliable estimate of the foreign born at detailed levels of geography (such as the county level or smaller) or of smaller populations. Accordingly, CPS data are not recommended for use at the metropolitan or sub-metropolitan level.

The easiest way to access immigration-related data based on the CPS is via the prepared tables at [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/). These tables include national-level data on the foreign-born population by citizenship, year of entry, world region of birth, and Latin American region of birth. The US Census Bureau also produces annual reports on the foreign-born population based on CPS data. These are available at [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign).

## US Citizenship and Immigration Services

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is probably the second most commonly used national data source for immigration statistics. Its Office of Immigration Statistics produces annual statistical yearbooks containing data on immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, temporary admissions, tourists, H-1B workers, naturalizations, and enforcement. For legal immigrants, data tables include immigrants admitted from each country by year, type of visa, refugee status, occupation, gender, marital status, class of admission, and state/metropolitan area of intended residence. It is important to note that the “year of admission” for immigrants refers to the year they were granted permanent residence status, which may be considerably later than their year of entry. Also, the data on intended residence may not accurately reflect where an immigrant actually settles or eventually resides. Finally, the data differentiate between country of birth, last residence, and citizenship. See <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/index.htm>.

To understand some of the complexities regarding data on the undocumented population, see the article by Jeffrey Passel, “New Estimates of the Undocumented Population in the United States” published by the Migration Information Source on May 22, 2002, [www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=19](http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=19). Other information can be found at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/lllegals.htm>.

## Office of Refugee Resettlement

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the US Dept. of Health and Human Services provides monthly data on refugee arrivals by state or country of origin at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/index.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/index.htm). These data do not include asylum seekers and are only available at the state level.

## FedStats and DataWeb

The FedStats website ([www.fedstats.gov](http://www.fedstats.gov)) contains links to statistics from over 100 US federal agencies. The MapStats link provides a quick way to get a table of basic demographic data (including number of foreign born) for any state.

The US Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control have collaborated to create DataWeb ([www.thedataweb.org/index.html](http://www.thedataweb.org/index.html)), a network of online data libraries. Topics include census data, data on economics, health, income and unemployment, population, labor, crime and transportation, family dynamics, and vital statistics. Using DataFerrett, an extraction software and data mining tool associated with DataWeb, users can access the data. DataFerret can be installed as an application on a desktop or used through the Internet. Users can benefit

from a help desk, email support, a user's guide, and tutorials for using microdata and aggregate data.

## United Nations Agencies

The United Nations produces global data related to international migration. For example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) produces a variety of data on refugee and asylum seeker arrivals by year and country of origin. The site also posts several analytical reports based on their data. See [www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home](http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home).

The United Nations Population Division produces data on immigration and emigration for every country. See [www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm).

# Private Data Sources

As immigration grows in political and economic significance in the United States, private organizations are playing an increasingly important role in disseminating quality data on immigration to the United States. The two sources listed below are a good place to start.

## Migration Information Source

The Migration Information Source ([www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)) is a project of the Migration Policy Institute. The Source is an online resource that provides data and analysis on international migration and refugees. From the Global Data Center of The Source, you can generate state profiles on immigrant groups based on US census data, look at where immigrant groups are settling, and find information on how many people enter the United States, and from which countries. The Source also includes refugee information, an overview of current policy changes and discussions, and articles on various other international migration topics.

## Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees provides international and US migration statistics on its website, [www.gcir.org](http://www.gcir.org). The US immigration statistics are based on Census 2000, BCIS, and ORR data. They are organized by state and, in some cases, county. The user can click on a map or list of places to get tables and graphs of the relevant data. Variables include foreign born by region of origin, citizenship, year of entry, language spoken at home and English ability (for the entire population, not just the foreign born), and the role of immigration in population change. International migration statistics are based on the World Refugee Survey and BCIS data and include refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people.

# Local Data for the DC Metro Area

## DC Office of Planning

In the District of Columbia, the lead State Data Center is the DC Office of Planning. The most requested data are available through their website and other requests can be made by calling (202) 442-7632. Most services are free, although there is a charge for mapping and large projects. See [www.planning.dc.gov/](http://www.planning.dc.gov/).

## Northern Virginia Regional Commission

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) reproduces Census tables from Census 2000 Summary Files 1 and 3 for all cities, counties, and places in Northern Virginia. Relevant variables include ancestry, foreign-born, citizenship, language, linguistic isolation, income, poverty, and race/ethnicity. Census data from 1990 and 1980 are also available for comparison. Data can be downloaded in several formats: Excel spreadsheets, four-page summaries of demographic highlights, 34-page profiles of basic population and housing data from Summary File 1 (short form data), or 60-page profiles from Summary File 3 (long form data). Though the data is limited to the Northern Virginia region, this site provides a broad range of Census tables, not just those related to immigration, in a user-friendly format. See [www.novaregion.org](http://www.novaregion.org).

## Neighborhood Information Service of DC Agenda

The Neighborhood Information Service website combines Census, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and local police and health department data into user-friendly neighborhood profiles, tables, and maps for various geographic levels (ward, tract, neighborhood, ANC, PSA) within the District of Columbia. The variables include those related to the foreign born, race/ethnicity, income, and housing. There are plans to extend the available tables and maps to include the entire Washington metropolitan region. See [www.dcagenda.org/nis/](http://www.dcagenda.org/nis/).

## Maryland State Data Center

The Maryland State Data Center, a program of the Maryland Office of Planning, provides technical assistance and services to state, regional and local governments, the private sector, and the general public. Their website ([www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/](http://www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/)) posts Census and USCIS data on immigration at the state and local levels. Data are organized into various tables, graphs, and maps. A useful PowerPoint presentation gives an overview of immigration in the state, including some focus on Montgomery and Prince George counties ([www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/census/cen2000/sf3/foreign\\_Born/1](http://www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/census/cen2000/sf3/foreign_Born/1)) and a variety of maps are also available at [www.mdp.state.md.us/GIS/mdmaps.htm](http://www.mdp.state.md.us/GIS/mdmaps.htm).

## Other Local Sources

Planning departments, human service departments, and public schools are all good sources of data on DC metro area immigration. School districts, for example, collect data on the number of international students and students in ESOL programs by country of origin and language spoken at home. Some planning departments produce their own reports on the foreign-born population that may contain unique maps or tables not available via the Census. The data vary by jurisdiction. The following sources can be contacted to obtain more information:

**Alexandria City Department of Planning**  
703-838-3866  
<http://ci.alexandria.va.us/>

**Alexandria City Public Schools**  
703-824-6635  
[www.acps.k12.va.us](http://www.acps.k12.va.us)

**Arlington County Department of Demography**  
703-228-3555  
[www.co.arlington.va.us/census](http://www.co.arlington.va.us/census)

**Arlington County Public Schools**  
703-228-6000  
[www.arlington.k12.va.us](http://www.arlington.k12.va.us)

**Fairfax County Department of Demography**  
703-324-4531  
[www.co.fairfax.va.us/aboutfairfax/](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/aboutfairfax/)

**Fairfax County Public Schools**  
703-846-8632  
[www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu)

**Maryland Department of Planning**  
410-767-4500  
[www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc](http://www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc)

**Montgomery County Department of Planning**  
301-495-4610  
[www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

**Montgomery County Public Schools**  
301-279-3334  
[www.mcps.k12.md.us/](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/)

**Prince George's County Department of Planning**  
301-952-3065  
[www.mncppc.org/pgco/home.htm](http://www.mncppc.org/pgco/home.htm)

**Washington DC Planning Office**  
202-442-7600  
[www.planning.dc.gov/](http://www.planning.dc.gov/)

**Washington DC Public Schools**  
202-576-8850  
[www.k12.dc.us/dcps/home.html](http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/home.html)

# Articles and Reports About Immigration and Immigrants

In addition to data in the form of tables, graphs, and maps, published reports about immigrants and immigration can be a useful resource for non-profits. There are many good sources of such reports, only a few of which are listed here.

## Single Publications

The following publications are of particular relevance to those wishing to learn more about data issues generally and the DC metro area in particular.

Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development. 2003. **2000 Census: Foreign-Born Population.** Arlington, Virginia: Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development. Available at [www.co.arlington.va.us/census/people/foreignborn.htm](http://www.co.arlington.va.us/census/people/foreignborn.htm)

Capps, Randy and Jeffrey S. Passel. 2003. **The New Neighbors: A User's Guide to Data on Immigrants in US Communities.** Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, prepared for the Annie Casey Foundation. Available at [www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310844](http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310844)

Council of Latino Agencies. 2002. **The State of Latinos in the District of Columbia: Trends, Consequences and Recommendations.** Washington, DC: Council of Latino Agencies. Available at [www.consejo.org/news.htm](http://www.consejo.org/news.htm)

Department of Systems Management for Human Services, Fairfax County, Virginia. 2000. **A Community Sampler: Eight Immigrant and Refugee Communities with Public School Children.** Fairfax County, Virginia. Available at [www.co.fairfax.va.us/comm/demogrph/pdf/RefugeeRep.pdf](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/comm/demogrph/pdf/RefugeeRep.pdf)

Grieco, Elizabeth M. 2003. **Census 2010 and the Foreign Born: Averting the Data Crisis.** Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. Available at [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MPIPPolicyBriefCensus.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MPIPPolicyBriefCensus.pdf)

Roy, Krishna with Dr. Heather McClure. 2003. **The State of Latino Kids in the District of Columbia.** Washington, DC: Council of Latino Agencies. Available at [www.consejo.org/news.htm](http://www.consejo.org/news.htm)

Singer, Audrey. 2003. **At Home in the Nation's Capital: Immigrant Trends in Metropolitan Washington.** Washington, DC: Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Brookings Institution. Available at [www.brookings.edu/es/urban/gwrp/publinks/2003/immigration.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/gwrp/publinks/2003/immigration.htm)

Singer, Audrey, Samantha Friedman, Ivan Cheung, and Marie Price. 2001. **The World in a Zip Code: Greater Washington DC as a New Region of Immigration.** Washington, DC: Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Brookings Institution. Available at [www.brookings.edu/es/urban/immigration/abstract.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/immigration/abstract.htm)

US Census Bureau. 2003. **Using Census Data to Help Local Communities: Census Information Centers at Work.** Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, COL/03-CIC. Find the case studies online at [www.census.gov/mso/www/casestudies/](http://www.census.gov/mso/www/casestudies/)

## Regularly Updated Sources

### **Ameristat**

[www.ameristat.org](http://www.ameristat.org)

Summary reports on various US population trends. Includes sections on the foreign born and migration. Some articles contain maps and links to spreadsheets of related data.

### **Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees**

[www.gcir.org](http://www.gcir.org)

Contains fast facts on employment, education, childcare, health, and other demographics. Includes a comprehensive annotated bibliography of immigrant-related publications.

### **Migration Information Source**

[www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)

This online resource provides feature articles that discuss current issues within the refugee and immigration fields. Join the listserv, issued monthly, to receive an overview of the newest data and articles on the site.

### **Migration News**

[www.migration.ucdavis.edu/](http://www.migration.ucdavis.edu/)

Migration News summarizes the most important immigration and integration developments of the preceding month. Many issues also contain summaries and reviews of recent research publications. Topics are grouped by region. Reports can be accessed via the website. To subscribe, send your email address to: [migrant@primal.ucdavis.edu](mailto:migrant@primal.ucdavis.edu).

### **US Census Bureau Annual Profiles of the Foreign Born Population**

[www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/) (click on reports)

## When All Else Fails

Sometimes, the data that an organization needs simply do not exist. In this case, it may be desirable for an organization to collect its own data. Most community-based organizations, however, do not have the capacity to design and implement a large-scale survey, and private consultants are often too expensive.

One alternative is to seek the help of a local university. The departments of sociology, anthropology, demography, geography, social work, public health, or law may have already completed research on immigration in your area of interest. Similarly, they may have graduate students interested in interning or doing a research project that would benefit your organization. Some universities have research labs that will assist your organization in designing and implementing a customized survey. Consider the following metropolitan Washington area universities:

### American University

[www.american.edu](http://www.american.edu)

### Catholic University

[www.cua.edu](http://www.cua.edu)

### Georgetown University

[www.georgetown.edu](http://www.georgetown.edu)

### George Mason University

[www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu)

### George Washington University

[www.gwu.edu](http://www.gwu.edu)

### Howard University

[www.howard.edu](http://www.howard.edu)

### Johns Hopkins University

[www.jhu.edu](http://www.jhu.edu)

### Marymount University

[www.marymount.edu](http://www.marymount.edu)

### Southeastern University

[www.seu.edu](http://www.seu.edu)

### University of the District of Columbia

[www.udc.edu](http://www.udc.edu)

### University of Maryland

[www.umd.edu](http://www.umd.edu)

Private organizations that collect their own data may be willing to share or sell them. By networking, announcing your organization's data resources, and collaborating with other organizations to commission studies that are mutually beneficial, organizations working with immigrants can gain access to sources of data not publicly available.

A second alternative is to contact professional organizations. While there are several, the three listed below are a good place to begin.

The Population Association of America (PAA) is a society of professionals working in the population field. PAA members include demographers, sociologists, economists, and public health professionals, many of whom have an interest in immigration. PAA also has a state and local demography group. See [www.popassoc.org](http://www.popassoc.org).

The Southern Demographic Association, like the PAA, is a professional association for demographers attracting both academically focused and "applied" demographers, who work in the business, service or government sectors. See [www.fsu.edu/~sda/](http://www.fsu.edu/~sda/).

Finally, the American Sociological Association, the national association for sociologists and other interested social scientists, has a useful set of links to migration information at [www.asanet.org/sectionintermig/links.html](http://www.asanet.org/sectionintermig/links.html).

# HOW CAN I LEARN TO USE DATA?

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## Training Programs

There are training seminars that cover the basics of using census data and provide hands-on experience using American FactFinder. The US Census Bureau conducts two such seminars. "Using Census Statistics" is a two-day seminar held at the University of Maryland. Participants get hands-on experience accessing census data via the Internet and CD-ROM and take an exclusive look at the background elements of census data. The seminar includes a tour of the Census website, an explanation of Census geographies and data products, training in using American FactFinder, and an overview of the American Community Survey and Economic Census. The class size is 20-25, and the cost in 2003 was \$250. For more information, go to [www.census.gov/mso/www/ucs/index.htm](http://www.census.gov/mso/www/ucs/index.htm).

"Understanding Federal Statistics" is another Census-sponsored seminar that provides American FactFinder training but also covers data from other federal agencies. This is a four-day seminar held at the University of Maryland. It provides a comprehensive look at the entire spectrum of US Census Bureau programs and services and includes hands-on experience in a series of practical exercises. Included are sessions on data programs of other major statistics-producing Federal agencies. The seminar introduces key geographic concepts, geographic areas, map products, and the US Census Bureau's Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) system (a digital map database). It describes key demographic concepts and data products from the 2000 Census and related current demographics programs, examines the breadth of US Census Bureau data on the Internet, and explores data products available from other Federal statistical agencies. No special skills are required. The cost in 2003 was \$450. For more information, go to [www.census.gov/mso/www/ufs/overview.html](http://www.census.gov/mso/www/ufs/overview.html).

A similar training service is provided by a private company called Smartgirl Technologies. Smartgirl offers a one-day training seminar called “Local Demographic Analysis Workshop: Understanding the Census to Better Understand Changing Places and People” in a variety of locations around the country, including Washington and Baltimore, on a rotating basis. The seminar provides hands-on training in using American FactFinder. Census data sets and geography are explained and direction is given in accessing data, downloading it into useful formats, and presenting data for grant proposals and presentations. Basic mathematical formulas are reviewed to turn raw data into meaningful percentages and comparisons. ArcExplorer, a free mapping software, is briefly demonstrated and provided on CD. Examples use data relevant to the city in which the seminar is held, but ideas are easily transferable to other locations. The maximum class size is 16 people to facilitate student-instructor interaction. Both novices and those with prior experience can benefit from this training. The cost in 2003 was \$249 per person. For more information, go to [www.smartgirltechnologies.com](http://www.smartgirltechnologies.com) or call (503) 234-5959.

The US Census Bureau also sponsors training indirectly through its regional offices, State Data Centers, and Census Information Centers. The regional office for the Washington, DC area is in Philadelphia. This office provides free data services from experienced staff who take requests by phone, email, fax, or walk in. For more information, go to [www.census.gov/rophi/www/](http://www.census.gov/rophi/www/) or call (215) 656-7550.

The State Data Center (SDC) Program is a cooperative program between the states and the US Census Bureau that was created in 1978 to make data available locally to the public through a network of state agencies, universities, libraries, and regional and local governments. Each state has a lead center as well as other agencies that serve as SDCs. For a listing of SDCs by state, go to [www.census.gov/sdc/www/](http://www.census.gov/sdc/www/). The DC Planning Office and DC Agenda’s Neighborhood Information Service can both arrange for data training for community-based organizations at no charge.

## Experts to Consult

For questions on immigration statistics, contact the Immigration Statistics Staff at the US Census Bureau by calling (301) 763-2411. To access working papers on migration and other topics, visit [www.census.gov/population/www/techpap.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/techpap.html).

For questions regarding the US Census Bureau’s foreign-born population products, call the Ethnic and Hispanic Statistics Branch of the Population Division at (301) 763-2403 or visit [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign).

## Is Mapping Right For Me?

Sometimes a map can make a point more quickly and effectively than words or numbers. By displaying data visually, a map can help an organization tell a story. Increasingly, individuals and organizations are using the power of geographical information systems (GIS) to analyze data and create their own maps. Before deciding whether to use GIS technology, however, it is important to understand exactly what GIS is and what resources—both technological and human—are needed to implement it.

A geographical information system is a set of tools for collecting, storing, manipulating, retrieving, and displaying spatial data. It combines the power of a database with computerized mapping and allows users to discover and analyze geographic patterns. A geographical information system includes computer hardware, software, and the trained personnel necessary to use it properly. In the social sciences, GIS is often applied to the analysis of movement and settlement. In this sense, GIS can be very useful to the study of immigration.

Examples of questions that can be answered using GIS include:

- How many immigrants live in a particular state/county/city/neighborhood?
- What parts of the country/state/city/neighborhood have the most immigrants?
- What are the characteristics (citizenship status, year of arrival, income, English ability etc.) of immigrants from a particular country or in a particular neighborhood/city/state?
- Where are most of the immigrants from a particular country located?
- What neighborhoods do immigrants live in and what is the average income of those neighborhoods?
- Are immigrants concentrated together or scattered around a metropolitan area?

Most organizations do not have the software or trained staff to perform their own GIS analyses. The Center for Data and Geographical Information Services is a Census Information Center that offers competitive prices on special customized data and GIS work to non-profits working with minority populations. For more information, go to [www.ssgmain.org/CDGIS-2a.htm](http://www.ssgmain.org/CDGIS-2a.htm) (see “Help Using Census Data” for other sources of assistance with GIS). For those organizations that do their own GIS work, free map and data files are available for download at [www.geographynetwork.com](http://www.geographynetwork.com).

# BUILDING ON WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

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In the many conversations that shaped this project, we heard repeatedly from immigrant advocacy and service organizations about how hard they are working just to deliver their programs and raise their annual operating budgets. In this context, where spare time is rare and making ends meet is an endless struggle, talking about data may seem like a luxury. But we hope that this publication makes a compelling case for deploying data to support those very programs and annual budgets.

Although we are awash in data every day, knowing how to find the right data and using them to strategic ends can be time consuming and sometimes confusing. The goal of this report is to illustrate how integrating data expertise into ongoing operations can strengthen the capacity of immigrant-serving organizations. Good data are plentiful if you know where to find them and what they mean. The resources outlined in this report are designed to help those organizations and individuals who are ready to put data to work for immigrants and their communities.

**“Talking about data may seem like a luxury  
but...integrating data expertise into ongoing  
operations can strengthen the capacity  
of immigrant-serving organizations.”**

## A number of specific recommendations follow from our research:

- Leverage the Resources that Already Exist.** Data suppliers need to reach out to communities and other potential data users and affirmatively encourage the use of their data on the ground. Many institutions are mandated to provide data skills training at little or no cost and to guide organizations as they undertake research projects. These services need to be better advertised and promoted in individual communities.
- Establish Collaborations Between Academia, Local Government, Foundations and Non-Profits.** As is evident in the case studies prepared by the Census Bureau on its Census Information Centers, real-world outcomes can be influenced by good data in the right hands. Local governments, community foundations, and other foundations concerned with community development and immigrant integration should consider entering into collaborations to develop data-based solutions to difficult local issues involving immigrants.
- Develop the Data Skills Within Non-Profit Organizations to Capture the Power of Data.** The leadership and staff at non-profit organizations working with and on behalf of immigrants need to recognize the value of having data-savvy staff members and invest in their personnel accordingly. Community foundations and corporations with strong local roots have a role to play in facilitating the training of key staff in the organizations they support.
- Underwrite Subsidized Demographic Consultancies and Customized Research.** Funders should consider supporting customized demographic research or occasional consultancies when these efforts are linked with broader program goals within immigrant organizations. That information can also be shared more broadly within the community, thus increasing the fact-based knowledge of all stakeholders.
- Assemble a Nationwide Corps of Expert Volunteer Demographers.** Demographic research can be costly and specialized. There are a number of researchers in universities, the public sector, and think tanks who would volunteer their time or charge reduced rates to provide support to non-profit organizations, given the opportunity. Assembling a group of experts willing to help and creating a “one-stop” website to match community needs with volunteer interest and expertise would add value by creating lower cost alternatives to the private market for demographic analysis.

Although this initiative deals most directly with the DC metropolitan area, many of the resources listed herein are national in scope. Certainly, the ideas that we propose to strengthen access to and use of data can be applied to any community looking to improve its immigrant service and outreach functions, and would benefit many community-based organizations working on behalf of those immigrant populations. The assessment of data needs on the ground conducted for the DC metro area can be replicated around the country. Simply raising awareness about the value of data, sharing the information contained in this report, and beginning a fruitful conversation about putting data to work for immigrants and communities is a worthy goal itself.

**The Migration Policy Institute (MPI)** is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank in Washington, DC dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

MPI's work is organized around four research pillars:

- Migration Management
- Refugee Protection and International Humanitarian Response
- North American Borders and Migration Agenda
- Immigrant Settlement and Integration

The Migration Information Source ([www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)) is MPI's online resource that provides current and authoritative data on international migration and expert analysis on current migration topics.



**1400 16th St NW**  
**Suite 300**  
**Washington, DC 20036**  
**[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)**  
**[www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)**