

TOOLKIT FOR INCREASING UPWARD MOBILITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Overlaying Demographic Data to Understand Potential Disparities

This worksheet is part of the Upward Mobility Initiative's [Toolkit for Increasing Upward Mobility in Your Community](#). Use it to understand what to do when you can't find data disaggregated by characteristics of interest. We use race/ethnicity in the example, but this method also applies to other characteristics, including gender, age, disability status, and more.

One option for understanding potential disparities when examining data that can be disaggregated by subgeography, but not by race/ethnicity or other important characteristics, is to visualize it on a map. By overlaying demographic data, we can examine variations or disparities that might trigger new questions or hypotheses.

The maps below present an example of how you might do this—they visualize two different kinds of information broken down at the same geography in the greater Washington, DC, area. The map in figure 1 on the left shows the median income for mortgage borrowers at the census tract (i.e., neighborhood) level in 2018. The map in figure 2 on the right is a demographic population map of the same region that shows the percentage of residents living in each tract from 2014 to 2018 who identified as non-Hispanic Black.

FIGURE 1
Median Mortgage Borrower Income, 2018

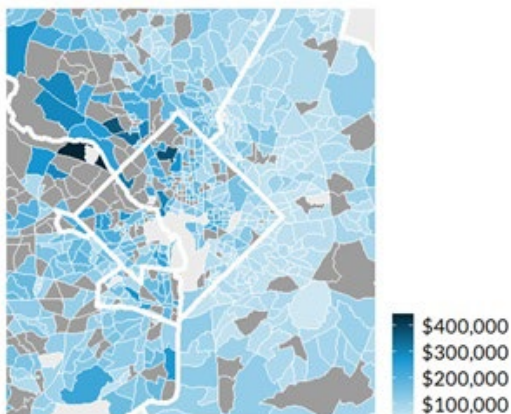
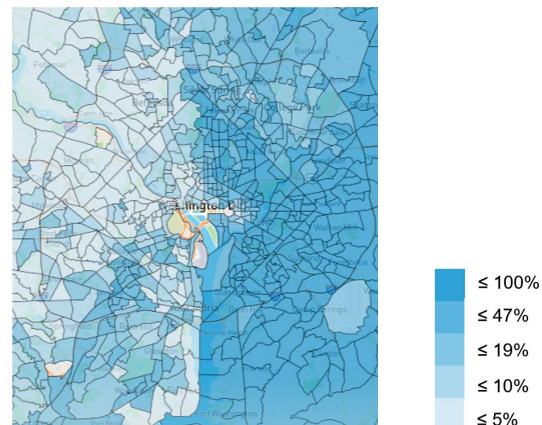


FIGURE 2
Percentage of Residents Who Identify as Non-Hispanic Black, 2014–18



A comparison of these two maps shows that neighborhoods where median mortgage borrowers have average incomes of less than \$100,000 also tend to have larger shares of Black people. Because these datasets are not linked and not at the individual level, they offer a less precise way to assess mortgage borrower income by race, but they can still be used to draw high-level conclusions about the race of low-income mortgage borrowers.

If you don't have population data available for relevant groups, try to examine your aggregated data with the lens of local insight: Which neighborhoods have large shares of immigrants? Which have large shares of nonwhite residents, low-ranked public schools, or otherwise lack community resources? How might the characteristics within these geographic areas interact? By asking yourself these questions and interrogating connections, you can create space for thoughtful reflection on what the available data may be missing about your community's circumstances.