

Leveraging Public Data Sources

Using Data and Evidence in Proposals

Learning Objectives

- Recognize key public data repositories for grant writing and program development
- Understand the unique features of the Census, ACS, ALICE, and the Rutgers NJ Food Systems Dashboard
- Learn best practices for locating specific data relevant to your community
- Develop strategies to effectively extract and describe data for proposals

Introduction to Public Data Sources

- What are public data sources?
 - Available without restrictions
- Why public data is essential for grant proposals
 - Can support needs statements
 - Describe community conditions
- Advantages of standardized, reputable datasets
 - Free accessible, often longitudinal, captures many indicators of interest
- How data can shape program narratives

U.S. Census & American Community Survey (ACS)

- High-level demographic data
 - Population, age, race, gender, etc.
- Detailed community profiles through ACS
 - Income, education, housing
- Geographic granularity
 - National, state, county, local tract
- Establishing population-based need for your proposal



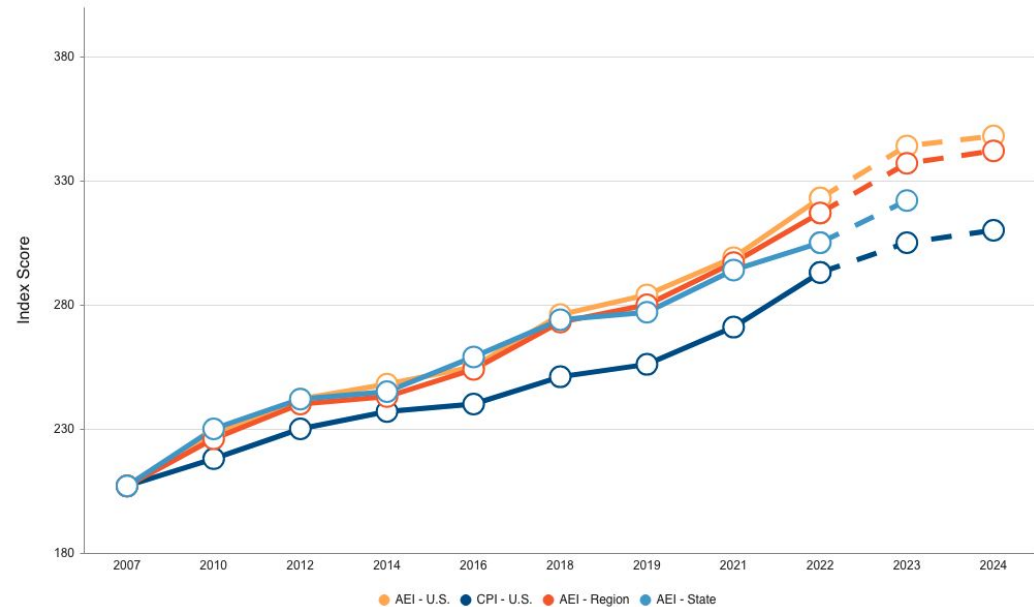
Census Data

Education	New Jersey	United States
Population estimates, July 1, 2024, (V2024)	9,500,851	340,110,988
PEOPLE		
Education		
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2019-2023	90.7%	89.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2019-2023	42.9%	35.0%
Health		
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2019-2023	6.9%	9.1%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	8.5%	9.5%

ALICE Data

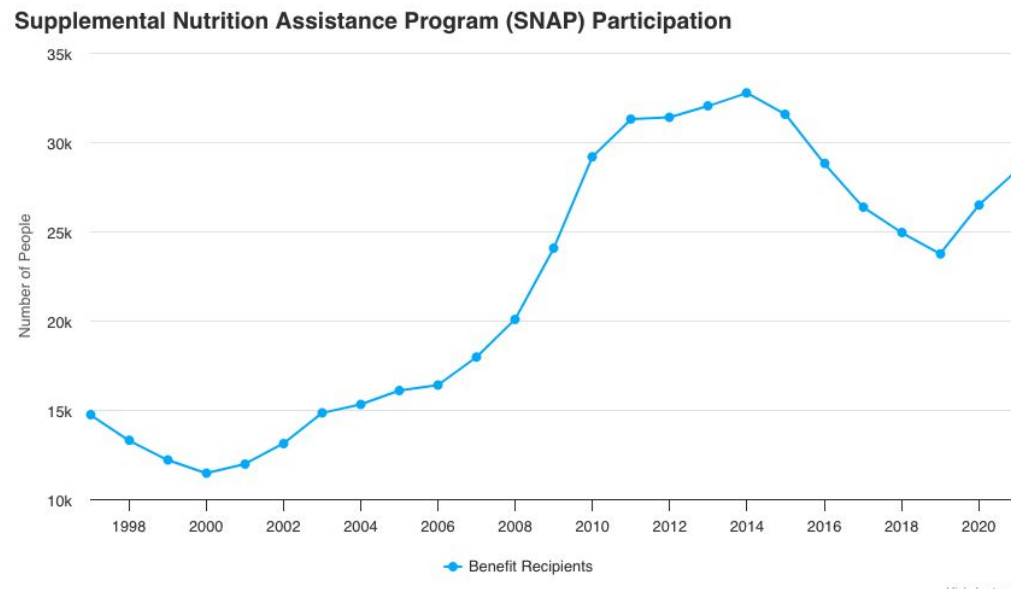
- Focus on the ‘working poor’—employed but financially struggling
- Local cost-of-living thresholds identified for each community
- Highlights hidden economic challenges not captured by federal poverty level
- Strengthening proposals with nuanced financial need

Inflation Indices, New Jersey, Region, and U.S. 2007–2024



Rutgers NJ Food Systems Dashboard

- Collaborative project from Rutgers University
- Data on food security, nutrition, and agricultural indicators across New Jersey
- Visualized dashboards for local, county, and state-level trends
- Applications for programs addressing food insecurity and public health

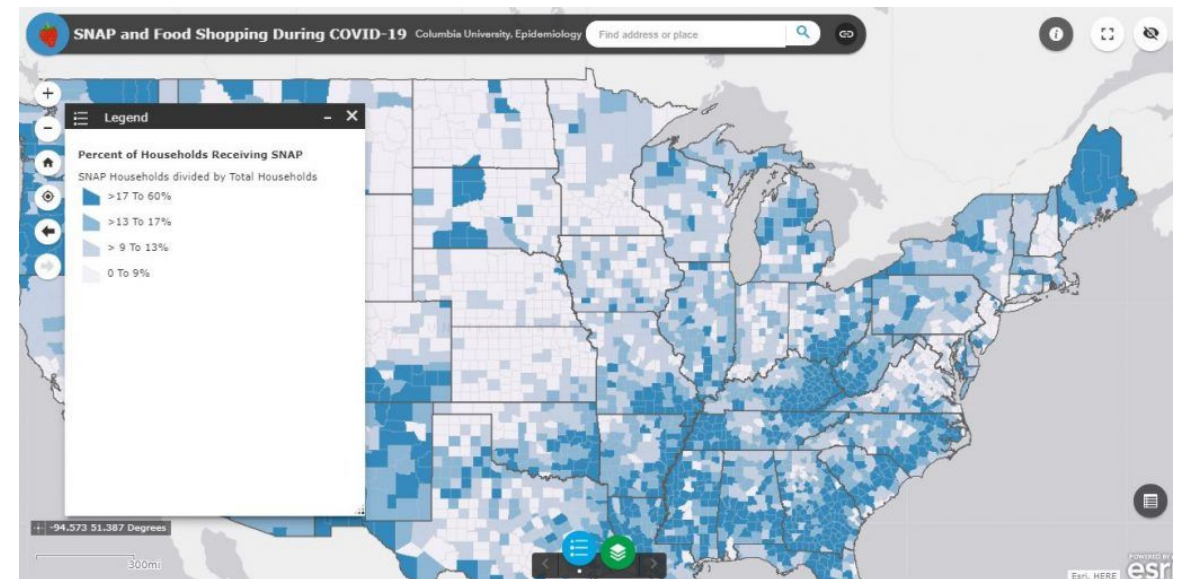


Reflection Exercise #1

- Which public data sources have you used before, and how did you verify their credibility for your funding proposals?
- Which are you most interested in using and why?
- From the data sources discussed—Census, ACS, ALICE, and Rutgers NJ Food Systems Dashboard—which do you believe aligns best with your organization's mission, and why?

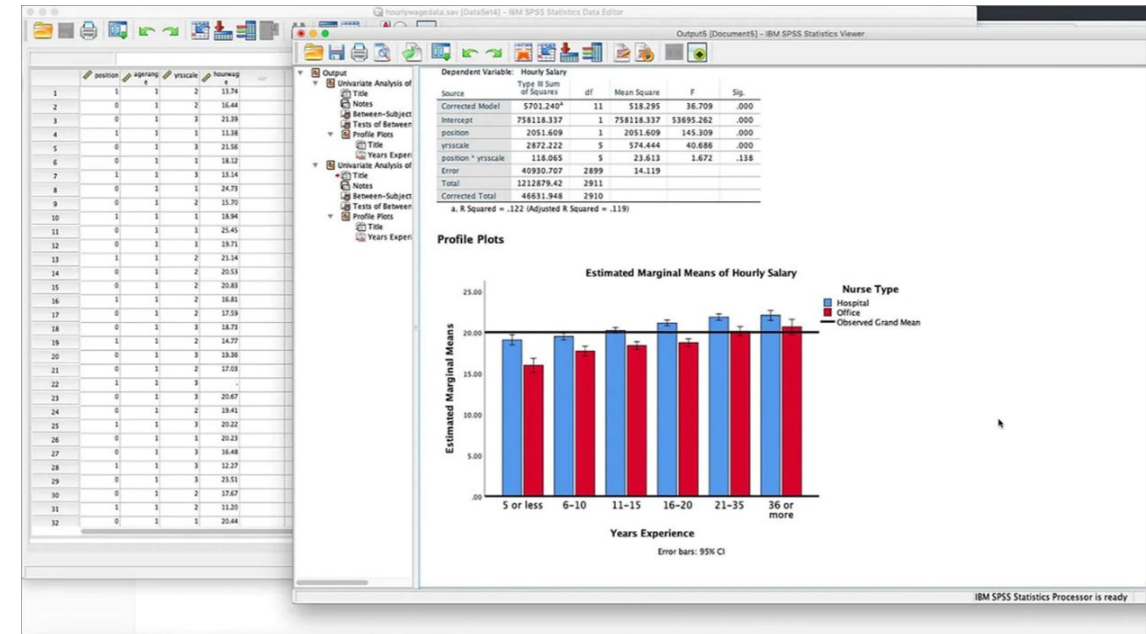
Strategies for Locating Data

- Use targeted search terms in data portals
- Explore data subsets relevant to your area
 - E.g., state, county, neighborhood
- Leverage advanced features
 - Filtering by variables, date ranges, interactive maps
- Collaborate with local agencies or universities for specialized datasets



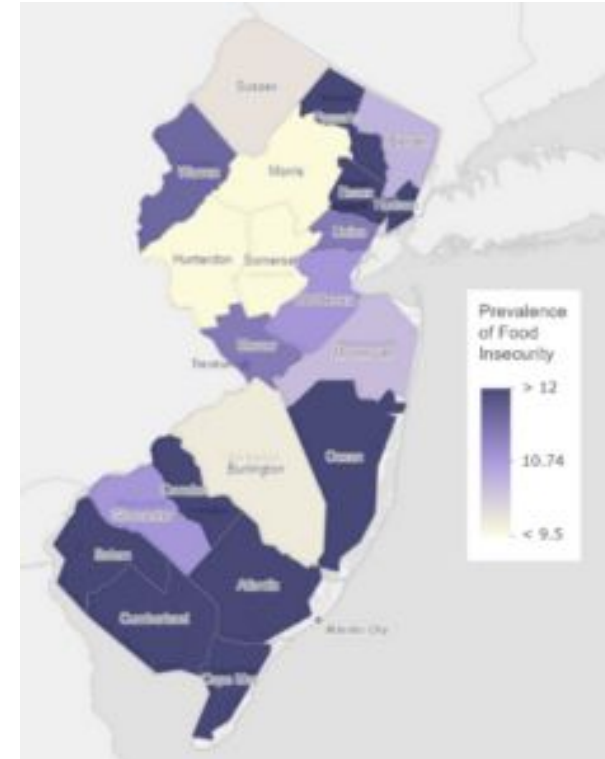
Strategies for Extracting Data

- Review data dictionaries and metadata to understand definitions
- Use spreadsheet or statistical software (e.g., Excel, R, SPSS) for analysis
- Cross-check results with local experts to ensure accuracy
- Confirm data recency and sample size before finalizing your figures



Putting It All Together

- Cross-reference multiple sources to validate data consistency
- Incorporate key statistics seamlessly into your narrative
- Demonstrate clear links between data findings and proposed program outcomes
- Ensure your proposal tells a cohesive story that funders can follow



Key Takeaways & Next Steps

- Recap of major repositories
Census, ACS, ALICE, Rutgers NJ Food Systems Dashboard
- Importance of accuracy and context in data usage
- Opportunities to combine macro (national/state) and micro (local) data
- Credible, current, and relevant data is foundational for grant success