

Frequently Asked Questions

DATA2GO.NYC

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General

What is DATA2GO.NYC?

DATA2GO.NYC is a free, easy-to-use online mapping and data tool created by Measure of America, an initiative of the nonprofit Social Science Research Council, with the support of the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

DATA2GO.NYC brings together for the first time federal, state, and city data on a broad range of issues critical to the well-being of all New Yorkers. The website includes over 300 indicators for New York City's 59 community districts; 150 of these indicators are also available by census tract. Many of these indicators were previously unavailable to the public.

Who funded this project?

DATA2GO.NYC was funded by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust as the first project in their [New York City Regional Grants Program](#), launched in early 2014. This new program seeks to identify and solve specific problems to help the region's residents meet basic needs for themselves and their families, maintain economic security, and access public goods and services that improve economic well-being, security, and quality of life.

New York City and many organizations already make a great deal of data public. What value does DATA2GO.NYC add?

Lots of great online data tools exist. But many are the product of one-time-only efforts, focus on just one issue or sector, or are tricky for regular people to navigate. In addition, different indicators are available using different geographic boundaries, time periods, definitions, interfaces, and methodologies. This variety makes comparisons very challenging. DATA2GO.NYC is:

- **Intuitive and easy-to-use.** It's designed to provide access to official government data for “data civilians”—people who need accurate, up-to-date information but lack advanced statistical and research training. All data are presented by NYC community district, and some 150 indicators are available by both community district and census tract.
- **Comprehensive and multi-sectoral.** DATA2GO.NYC includes data from 11 different sectors, including health, education, environment, political engagement, and public safety, covering a wide range of issues that affect the well-being of everyday New Yorkers and shape the choices and opportunities open to them.
- **Informed by a holistic vision.** A unique blend of datasets, interactive maps, and analytical tools links data on human need, resources, and outcomes and helps users see social and economic realities in the interconnected way in which people actually experience them.
- **Sustainable.** DATA2GO.NYC provides a snapshot of current realities alongside a commitment to update data regularly for at least five years.
- **Transparent and rigorous.** DATA2GO.NYC is an impartial, independent source for methodologically sound, reliable, fully sourced data.
- **Customizable.** DATA2GO.NYC allows users to tailor the set of indicators they see on their screens based on the issues that are important to them.
- **Useful to experts.** DATA2GO.NYC allows the pros to access underlying data and primary source material in sortable spreadsheet form with detailed sourcing and methodological notes.

Who is DATA2GO.NYC for?

Anyone can use DATA2GO.NYC! It is a free website available to everyone with a passion for understanding and improving the amazing city we call home. It was, however, designed with the needs of these users in mind:

- **Decision-makers in and outside NYC government**, who can access a comprehensive picture of human assets and needs, neighborhood by neighborhood.
- **Foundations, philanthropists, and service delivery organizations**, which can pinpoint need and service gaps, establish baselines, and track change to gauge the impact of their investments and programs.
- **Communities and community-based organizations**, which can create and print customized maps, data visualizations, and comparisons for program development, fundraising, and advocacy without expending resources on costly and time-consuming in-house data collection and analysis.
- **Teachers and students**, who can easily access data for analyzing their communities, how their communities compare to others, and how issues interact to shape people's everyday lives and long-term prospects.
- **Researchers**, who can download clean, well-sourced, accurate datasets for hundreds of indicators.

Who created DATA2GO.NYC?

DATA2GO.NYC was created by Measure of America, a project of the nonprofit Social Science Research Council, the designer Rosten Woo and developed and coded by Codie Joseph See.

Measure of America provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America. Through [reports](#), custom-built dashboards, interactive online maps and tools, and evidence-based analysis, Measure of America works with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of need, pinpoint levers for change, and track progress over time. Measure of America's hallmark is the [American Human Development Index](#), a composite measure of health, education, and earnings indicators based on a time-tested model developed at the United Nations and used in countries worldwide. Cofounders Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis founded Measure of America in 2007, and Measure of America joined the **Social Science Research Council** (SSRC) in 2008. For more information, please see our website at www.measureofamerica.org.

Rosten Woo is an artist, designer, and writer living in Los Angeles. He produces artworks and educational projects about complicated systems and group decision-making. Visit rostenwoo.biz.

Codie Joseph See's expertise is in geospatial technologies and cartography. Codie has worked for state and city cartography and GIS offices in his home state of Wisconsin.

An **Advisory Committee** of 25 leading NYC policy-makers and thinkers has been involved from the start to make sure DATA2GO.NYC builds on, rather than duplicates, existing tools and that it benefits from expertise in every sector. These advisors came from numerous city agencies and offices of elected officials; from the city's leading universities; from Philanthropy New York, the Robin Hood Foundation, and other philanthropic organizations; and from City Harvest and other leading civil society and community-based organizations.

What are some practical uses for DATA2GO.NYC?

DATA2GO.NYC has virtually unlimited possibilities! Here are a few examples of how people might use the tool:

- Health service providers could investigate the **CONNECTIONS** between a specific health disease or ailment such as asthma or diabetes and various neighborhood conditions that might contribute to it to ensure that their programming addresses root causes and to inform public information campaigns.
- Community organizers could go to **DASHBOARDS**, select relevant indicators of well-being, and present them at a community meeting to support their case for shifting priorities or creating new programs.
- Staff at nonprofit organizations working on food security could use **MAPS** to see where the greatest needs for their services are. They could use **DASHBOARDS** to see what other challenges high-food-insecurity neighborhoods face. With this information, they could identify potential partners for joint outreach and programming.
- NYC government agencies could use the data to inform policy-making and ensure that services reach the most vulnerable; elected officials could use the resource to better understand the needs of their constituents.
- Community-based organizations could download infographics and maps related to their service area to include with grant applications or public information materials.
- Teachers could use the data to better understand out-of-classroom challenges their students face.
- Service-delivery organizations could use **CORRELATIONS** to identify possible programming priorities. For instance, a strong relationship exists between the share of the population receiving SNAP benefits and the share of the population eating too few fruits and vegetables;

this finding might suggest that assistance to people receiving SNAP should aim to boost fruit and vegetable consumption by improving access, lowering cost, or providing nutrition education.

How were the indicators chosen from all the datasets available?

DATA2GO.NYC focuses on human well-being. Given the myriad factors that affect people from the day they are born until the day they die—from living conditions and safety to schools and jobs to health and family structure—we curated the dataset behind DATA2GO.NYC to be as expansive as possible within a well-being framework. If an indicator matters for people’s ability to live freely chosen, rewarding lives and we could access that indicator, we added it. If you see something missing, tell us:

contact@measureofamerica.org. Please keep in mind that we are able to include only those data sets that will be collected regularly and meet a high standard of accuracy, rigor, and transparency.

Can I add my own indicators to DATA2GO.NYC?

We love crowdsourcing, too! But DATA2GO.NYC is intended as a reliable resource containing only the most accurate, up-to-date information. We would, however, love to hear your ideas for new indicators to include. If the data are collected by a public entity, university, or other provider of high-quality data and are either already available by community district or can be geocoded by community district, we would be happy to consider adding them to DATA2GO.NYC. Please email us at contact@measureofamerica.org with your suggestion.

How should students and researchers cite DATA2GO.NYC in projects and papers?

Thanks for asking. The suggested attribution is:

Measure of America, Social Science Research Council. 2016. *DATA2GO.NYC*. www.data2go.nyc.

Are there plans to adapt DATA2GO.NYC for other cities?

We would love to take DATA2GO to other cities. We encourage foundations, business groups, government entities, and others interested in a DATA2GO for their town to get in touch with us at contact@measureofamerica.org.

Can DATA2GO.NYC be used on iPhones and iPads?

Yes! DATA2GO.NYC is available on both iPads and iPhones. The iPad version has all the features of the computer version. For optimal performance, use it in the landscape (horizontal) view. The mobile-friendly version of DATA2GO.NYC for iPhones contains a subset of the full version and, if you allow it to access your NYC location, starts with data where you are.

Maps

Should I view MAPS in full screen mode?

Yes. The **MAPS** view works best in full screen mode, or at least in a window that covers most of the screen. In a smaller window, some of the functionality is lost.

What geographic area is covered by the MAPS section in DATA2GO.NYC?

DATA2GO.NYC covers all areas within the city limits of New York City, comprising the five boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island.

What kinds of data are available in the MAPS section of DATA2GO.NYC?

Two kinds of data are available in the **MAPS** section of DATA2GO.NYC: geographic-area data and facility-location data.

Geographic-area data are available for the 59 community districts of NYC and, for a smaller subset of DATA2GO indicators, for most of the 2,166 NYC census tracts designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. To get area data, click on “select an indicator.” For example, if you click the indicator “median personal earnings,” you will see represented on the map the median earnings (in dollars) of all workers ages 16 and up for each census tract in NYC. If you click “smoking,” you will see the percentage of adults in each community district who currently smoke. The MAPS section shows the indicator at the smallest geographic unit for which the data are available, community district for most and census tract for a smaller group.

Facility-location data tell you information about a specific facility—for example, a school, a library, a park, or a waste facility. Of the 18 features available, nearly all are operated, funded, licensed, or certified by a government agency. So the schools, colleges, and universities do not include private or for-profit schools (though they do include charter schools), and the supermarkets and waste facilities are all government licensed or certified. These data were all obtained from the licensing source, and that source is accessible by clicking the *i* in the data box. Of these thousands of records, we expect that, in some cases, records may be incorrect or outdated. We welcome corrections. Email us at contact@measureofamerica.org.

To get these data, click on “Features of Interest” to get a dropdown menu. When you click on a Feature of Interest category, a dot for each facility of that type will appear on the map. To learn more about a specific facility, click the individual dot, and its name and information about it will appear in a box on the lower right part of the screen. For example, if you want to know more about CUNY City College, choose the “colleges and universities” category, then click the dot that represents its location in upper Manhattan; detailed information on the school, including tuition, graduation rates, and demographic data, will appear in the box. The source of these data can be obtained by clicking on the *i*.

Why choose community districts as the main unit of analysis?

The community-district level was chosen for DATA2GO following consultations with the project’s Advisory Committee and interviews with potential end-users. The consensus was that this is the best unit of analysis available today, given the many constraints on data collection, for the intended uses of DATA2GO. While there is, of course, tremendous variation in well-being outcomes within each of these 59 community districts, data analysis by community district opens up access to a whole set of data collected through the U.S. Census Bureau’s annual American Community Survey, because the Census-

designated Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) for NYC map almost exactly onto the city's community districts. See more on PUMAs below for details.

Census tracts are an excellent geographic unit of analysis for understanding variation, but because they average only about 4,000 people, the numbers can get too small for reliable estimates. This is especially true when you are looking at a subset of these 4,000 residents, for example, measuring something related only to children under five years of age. As a result, data for over half of DATA2GO.NYC's indicators are not available by census tract. Where we were able to obtain tract-level data, nearly all of the tract-level indicators in DATA2GO are five-year estimates, meaning that 60 months of data have been combined together. Though the data are less timely, this approach is a common best practice with small sample sizes in order to increase greatly the precision and accuracy of the data.

Dashboards

What are DASHBOARDS?

The **DASHBOARDS** section of DATA2GO.NYC lets users select a unique set of indicators for a specific community district as well as compare multiple districts on those indicators. The **DASHBOARDS** section features data visualization modules that make the data behind DATA2GO.NYC clear, informative, and ready for presentation. Examples of the type of information within these modules include racial and ethnic composition, age and gender distribution, and levels of educational attainment, to name a few. Users can share their customized **DASHBOARD** via social media or print a hard copy to present at a conference.

Can I save my DASHBOARD?

Each customized Dashboard view has been designed to have its own unique URL. This enables you to return to this view whenever you want, save it as a printable file, or share it via social media.

Should I view DASHBOARDS in full screen mode?

Yes. The **DASHBOARDS** view works best in full screen mode, or at least in a window that covers most of the screen. In a smaller window, some of the functionality is lost.

Sometimes the indicator percentages don't add up to 100%; why is that?

We rounded most indicators; as a result, the percentages for a handful of indicators don't sum to 100%.

Connections

What are CONNECTIONS?

The **CONNECTIONS** section of DATA2GO.NYC enables users to do two things: explore the correlation between two variables across NYC's 59 community districts and examine how individual community districts stack up when compared with other city districts on the given variables. The **CONNECTIONS** page asks and answers the following question: "Is there a correlation between variable x and variable y, and if so, how strong is the relationship?"

What is a correlation?

A correlation describes the relationship between two variables. Correlations can be very useful in understanding whether, and to what extent, one variable relates to another. Identifying a correlation is often a first step leading to further research.

The **CONNECTIONS** section of DATA2GO.NYC uses Pearson's correlation coefficient, which measures the linear relationship between two variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient yields a number ranging from -1 to $+1$ and is represented with the symbol r . If r is positive, the linear relationship between the two variables is positive, meaning that as one variable increases across the 59 NYC districts, the other also tends to increase. If r is negative, then as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. The further r is from zero (in either a positive or negative direction), the stronger the relationship between the two variables.

For example, the correlation between the indicators "Median Household Income (2013 \$)" and "Completed at Least a Bachelor's Degree (% of adults 25+)" has an r value of 0.87, meaning that, across NYC's 59 community districts, these two variables have a strong, positive correlation. In plain English we can say that as median household income increases, the share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree tends to increase. There is a strong relationship between these two variables.

If I find a correlation between two variables and want to investigate this further, where can I go?

We highly encourage our users to dive deeper analytically than the information available in the **CONNECTIONS** section. For those wishing to further explore specific indicators, sourcing information is available in great detail in the downloadable dataset, including source URLs.

What indicators are available in the CONNECTIONS section of DATA2GO.NYC? What if I want to see connections between indicators not listed in CONNECTIONS?

CONNECTIONS includes a carefully selected set of x and y variables. By clicking on the dots on the graph, you can obtain the (x,y) coordinates for every NYC community district. You can also compare two sets of coordinates by clicking on one dot and then passing your cursor over a second dot.

This section includes a subset of DATA2GO.NYC indicators. These indicators were selected based on the social science literature on these topics that shows that these relationships are important to explore for well-being. Researchers interested in exploring the full range of correlations can access the complete DATA2GO.NYC datasets by clicking the "download" tab.

Are there any issues in comparing data in the CONNECTIONS section?

While all the data were the most recent available in the fall of 2016, the original data sources conduct their studies with differing frequency. This should not, however, undermine the value of the analysis for pinpointing need, identifying areas for further research, developing fact-based solutions, and more.

What conclusions can be drawn from the CONNECTIONS section?

The Pearson's correlation describes the linear relationship between two variables. But it does not prove that a change in one variable *causes* a change in the other variable. For example, ice cream sales and murder rates tend to rise in tandem in places with hot summers. Does that mean that ice cream consumption makes people murderous, or that murder makes people crave ice cream? Of course not. Research shows that they both rise in the summer months because warm weather makes ice cream a particularly appealing treat, and summer is a time when people are more likely to get together and to be outside, where they come into greater contact with one another. Determining causal relationships requires extensive research and subject-matter expertise.

Should I view CONNECTIONS in full screen mode?

Yes. The **CONNECTIONS** view works best in full screen mode, or at least in a window that covers most of the screen. In a smaller window, some of the functionality is lost. Data2Go.NYC can also be viewed on an iPad and iPhone. When using an iPad, Data2Go performs best in the landscape (horizontal) view.

Data and Sourcing

Can I download the data on DATA2GO.NYC?

Yes! We have made nearly the entire dataset behind DATA2GO.NYC available to the public. Please find the Download tab and select either .xls or .csv format.

How were the data sets available in DATA2GO.NYC produced?

Measure of America staff undertook nearly a year of work, involving negotiations, calculations, geocoding, statistical exercises, and number-checking, to arrive at a user-friendly dataset. DATA2GO.NYC was built with the needs and skills of a data layperson in mind. While experts can put raw data into forms that they can analyze, most people don't have the skills or software for this task. In DATA2GO.NYC, much of the raw data were converted into rates to make the indicator more meaningful for analysis and more reliable for comparisons. It's not very useful to compare the number of robberies in one community district to those in another when the total population size in each is very different. For this, a rate per 1,000 residents does the trick. All voting data were geocoded from addresses provided by special agreement in order to present them by community district. Some of the data were manipulated to present them in a more accessible format. The NYC Department of Sanitation, for example, provides data on tons of waste per person per month. This number is infinitesimally small but if converted into annual waste data, is much easier to understand and use. Some indicators are calculated by Measure of America, such as the disconnected youth rate and the American Human Development Index score. For questions regarding specific indicators, please ask us at contact@measureofamerica.org.

Where do the data come from?

Most of the indicators available in DATA2GO.NYC are from federal, state, or NYC public sources. A few were obtained from nonprofit sources such as the Food Bank for New York City and the NYU Furman Center. The source of each and every indicator in DATA2GO.NYC can be found by clicking INFO in MAPS or the “i” near the indicator name in DASHBOARDS and in the Features of Interest. These institutions use rigorous sampling techniques, often sampling over several years to ensure a more accurate estimate.

What is a Census Tract?

Census Tracts are small, relatively permanent subdivisions of a county (or NYC borough) that are updated prior to each decennial census, which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Tracts have a population size between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimum size of 4,000 people. Tracts usually cover a contiguous area and generally follow identifiable features.

Can you compare data from different time periods—for example, data that samples just 2014 to data that samples 2012–2014?

Ideally, all data in DATA2GO.NYC would sample the exact same time period. However, it is not realistic to expect the many different agencies and organizations across the wide variety of sectors included in DATA2GO.NYC to conduct uniform survey data collection. DATA2GO.NYC was created in part to provide these data in one geographical unit to enable such comparisons. All data included are the most recent available as of the fall of 2016. While there may be some minor methodological issues comparing slightly different periods of sampling, we believe that these potential issues are far outweighed by the power of uniform geographies within DATA2GO.NYC.

Geographies

What geographic areas are available in DATA2GO.NYC?

Where possible, we’ve pulled area data for four distinct geographic levels:

- NYC
- The five boroughs
- 59 community districts OR 55 Public Use Microdata Areas
- 2,166 Census Tracts

City- and borough-level data are available from the wide variety of sources found in DATA2GO.NYC. The community district-level data primarily come from city agencies. PUMA- and census-tract-level data primarily come from the U.S. Census Bureau.

What are community districts?

Community districts correspond to community planning boards. The 59 NYC community districts roughly line up with neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods, and NYC community boards have limited authority over planning and some types of local expenditure within them. The names of

neighborhoods within community districts are not officially designated, and the names used in DATA2GO.NYC do not include all known neighborhood names within the various districts. City Council districts are separate geographical units. They are not present in DATA2GO.NYC. Please see http://www.NYC.gov/html/dcp/html/neigh_info/nhmap.shtml for more information.

Twelve areas fall outside community district boundaries, comprising the two NYC airports and 10 large parks/recreation areas, including Central Park and Flushing Meadows. For these areas, called “Joint Interest Areas” by the Department of City Planning of NYC, no data are available. For details, please see <http://www.NYC.gov/html/dcp/html/lucds/cdstart.shtml>.

What are Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs)? Are they the same as community districts?

The U.S. Census Bureau does not report data by NYC community districts. In order to provide Census Bureau data by community district in DATA2GO, Measure of America mapped each Census tract onto the district of which it is a part. For tracts that fall in multiple community districts, the population in that tract is allocated proportionally to the area of the tract in each community district. This was done for several hundred DATA2GO variables. Just over a dozen variables remain in PUMAs due to statistical challenges in proportional allocations. Medians, for example, cannot be allocated in this way.

Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) are Census Bureau–defined geographies that generally correspond to the 59 community districts of NYC. However, eight community districts’ populations are too small, so the Census Bureau has combined them into four separate PUMAs. These combined community districts comprise the following PUMAs: Manhattan 1 & 2, Manhattan 4 & 5, Bronx 1 & 2, and Bronx 3 & 6. To see how these geographies interact, please see http://www.NYC.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/puma_cd_map.pdf.

Within DATA2GO.NYC there are several indicators that describe change over time. The ideal goal was to look at data from 2000 as the first year for the change. However, for a variety of technical reasons, mostly stemming from the fact that the U.S. Census Bureau did not sample PUMA-level data in a way that was representative of all states until 2005, PUMA data is sourced from three-year samples from 2005 to 2007. Reliable PUMA-level data were not available for earlier years.

Can I make comparisons between Public Use Microdata Area and community-district-level data?

Yes! It is important to note the difference between the four PUMAs that comprise two community districts each, as discussed above, but otherwise we hope that new and interesting connections are found between these similar geographical units.

How are Census Tracts used in DATA2GO.NYC? Are they reliable?

Census Tract-level data are available for indicators that come from the U.S. Census Bureau (Decennial Census 2000 or 2010 and the annual American Community Survey). There are 2,166 Census Bureau–designated census tracts in New York City. For accurate analysis, tracts with total populations under 100 people (or no people at all) are suppressed entirely from the dataset. They are notated with gray on the maps. Suppressed tracts include bodies of water, industrial areas, cemeteries, or parkland.