

403 Demographic Analysis

Demographic analysis is an essential part of accurately identifying the public for public involvement conducted by the Department. Demographic analysis involves gathering and reviewing data about the characteristics of a population in a defined area. The findings of a demographic analysis help us better understand the communities we seek to involve in project planning and decision-making processes so that engagement activities can be tailored to be most effective and inclusive. The table below describes ways that demographic analysis supports public involvement for Department plans and projects.

Demographic Analysis Uses in Public Involvement

Approach	Uses
Inclusive Engagement	Gain insights on affected communities in an analysis area
Title VI and Environmental Justice Engagement	Determine the presence of affected population groups addressed in federal and state nondiscrimination laws and directives
Targeted Outreach	Determine the presence of population groups that may be harder to reach through traditional public involvement
Tailored Engagement	Recognize who is missing from public involvement activities and readjust approaches to include them in future activities

If a Sociocultural Effects (SCE) Evaluation will be conducted for the project, the demographic analysis prepared for that effort can inform the public involvement plan. Learn more about this process on the FDOT SCE Evaluation Process [webpage](#).

Data Collection

When planning for public involvement, demographic data for the analysis is collected from three general sources:

- Desktop data – US Census Bureau data tables and maps for Census Block Groups in the analysis area
- Field review – First-hand observation of the human environment in the analysis area
- Community outreach – Information from knowledgeable locals (context experts) about the population in the analysis area

These sources can offer quantitative and qualitative data to provide the most accurate depiction of population groups and communities that could be affected by a transportation action.

Data Tools

There are several user-friendly, demographic data tools that can facilitate a plan- or project-level demographic analysis. Such tools include:

- [Area of Interest Tool](#), FDOT Environmental Screening Tool (also see Sociocultural Data Report section of this guide)
- [Environmental Screening Tool](#) (EST), FDOT Efficient Transportation Decision Making Process (a user account is required)
- [Data.census.gov](#), U.S. Census Bureau data and digital content platform
- [EJScreen](#), USEPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool
- [Transportation Outreach Planner](#), Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization

Data Analysis

Step 1: Define the Analysis Area

The *analysis area* encompasses the geographic area where communities and community resources have potential to be affected by the plan or project under consideration. An appropriately sized analysis area helps ensure that all affected groups are accounted for and accommodated in public involvement activities. In the planning phase, when the type and severity of such effects are less well understood, the analysis area may need to be larger (e.g., the one-half-mile area surrounding a project). In contrast, the analysis area for a design phase project might only encompass the area within 300 feet of the project right of way, especially when potential effects have been ruled out through impact assessment and public input from an earlier phase. In any phase, it is important that the analysis area be sized to include all potentially affected populations.

Learn more about creating an analysis area with a GIS buffer or Census Block Groups in the Sociocultural Data Report section of this guide.

Step 2: Review Desktop Data

The primary data source for demographic analysis is the U.S. Census Bureau, which creates the Decennial Census Program every ten years and the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS provides data estimates (with margins of error), while the decennial census are 100% counts. ACS estimates are currently reported in one-year and five-year data sets. Although the five-year data set is less current than the one-year data set, it is based on more data points (lower margin of error). For this reason, the five-year data set is the preferred data set for a plan- or project-level demographic analysis. However, circumstances in the analysis area, such as recent population growth, may warrant use of one-year data set.

Learn more about the using US Census Bureau data for demographic analysis on the FDOT SCE Evaluation Process [webpage](#), which includes a three-part [video series](#) on demographic analysis.

Step 3: Conduct a Field Review

While desktop data from the US Census Bureau is an excellent resource for demographic analysis, the data may not present a complete picture of communities in the analysis area. Consider that seasonal residents and visitors are not included in the Census data. Visiting the project area allows a first-hand account of the analysis area to bring context to the desktop data. For example, signs on businesses and churches in a non-English language are a good indication that a non-English language is spoken to a significant degree by local residents, workers, or visitors. It is important that such groups be accounted for when planning for public involvement.

Step 4: Interview Context Experts

Another way to expand on the desktop data is to speak with people who are familiar with communities in the analysis area. Local agency planners, school principals, social service agencies, civic groups, and church leaders are reliable sources of information about their clients/ constituencies and communities and organizations in their service area. As you speak with community members, offer to add them to the project contacts list.

Step 5: Document Findings for Public Involvement

After analyzing the desktop data (e.g., Sociocultural Data Report), field review notes, and context expert interview notes, compile your findings in a simple report or memorandum to accompany the public involvement plan. Point out significant details that would provide guidance for reaching and engaging population groups in the analysis area. Tailored engagement techniques may be necessary to ensure inclusion of all groups.