Tips and Tools for Communicating Demographic Research

Mark Mather (@MarkSMather)

October 2018
Knowledge of Basic Population Trends and Concepts is Limited

Yet People Are Interested Learning More About Science, Health

U.S. Adults Saying They are Interested in Each Topic

- Health and medicine: 70%
- Events in your community: 61%
- Science and technology: 59%
- Government and politics: 58%
- Religion and spirituality: 53%
- Entertainment and celebrities: 46%
- Sports: 44%
- Business and finance: 43%
- Art and theater: 41%

Not an Effective Dissemination Tool:

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What ‘Demography’ is All About

Source: Analysis of terms in the most recent issue of *Demography*.
Tips for Making Research Widely Available

- Don’t lock up the content or findings
- Share results in different ways to reach a broader audience
- Make it visually appealing
- Be proactive and develop a dissemination plan from the outset
Don’t Lock Up Your Content

World Bank Reports with Zero Downloads, 2008-2012

- 2008-2012: 32%
- 2008: 29%
- 2009: 30%
- 2010: 28%
- 2011: 34%
- 2012: 41%

PRB Recent Example

- PRB Collaboration with the Michigan Center on The Demography of Aging
  - Disseminate NIA-funded research
- Healthy aging in neighborhoods
  - Report
  - Web article
  - Infographic, visually appealing graphics
  - Social media outreach
  - Journalist outreach
  - Targeted email distribution list
How Neighborhoods Affect the Health and Well-Being of Older Americans

Most Americans say they want to age in place in their own communities, but their health and ability to remain independent is shaped in part by their neighborhoods. Research finds that the social, economic, demographic, and physical characteristics of communities may influence older residents' health and well-being.
Today's Research on Aging: How Neighborhoods Affect the Health and Well-Being of Older Americans

Most Americans say they want to age in place in their own communities, but their health and ability to remain independent is shaped in part by their neighborhoods. Research finds that the social, economic, demographic, and physical characteristics of communities may influence older residents’ health and well-being.
Consider Alternatives to Regression Coefficients

A Variety of Neighborhood Features Are Related to Healthy Aging in Place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Features</th>
<th>Self-Rated Health</th>
<th>Physical Limitations</th>
<th>Cognitive Function</th>
<th>Heart Disease Risk</th>
<th>Obesity</th>
<th>Physical Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walkable — More intersections sidewalks, and crosswalks; few cul-de-sacs or dead end streets; residents view walking in the neighborhood as pleasant and easy.</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessible — Public transportation on the street, and/or barrier-free and well-maintained streets and sidewalks.</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
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<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plentiful Resources — Public transit on the street; community centers, parks, and libraries; well-maintained public spaces such as sidewalks.</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Air — Low concentrations of fine particulate matter air pollution that can be inhaled and damage organs, including the brain.</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Red Arrow]</td>
<td>![Green Arrow]</td>
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Source: This table summarizes research on the relationship between neighborhood physical environment and health described in this report.
Use Infographics to Present Key Findings Quickly and Clearly

Neighborhood features play a role in Healthy Aging in Place
Shareable Infographics Can Help Broadcast Research Findings

PRB @PRBdata · Feb 14
Sidewalks, community centers & parks can influence #health of older adults, supporting walking & socializing ow.ly/bLjq308Yf2R

Walkable
Sidewalks, crosswalks, intersections, few dead-end streets or cul-de-sacs.

Potential Benefits:
• Lower obesity rates.¹
• Better self-rated health.²
• Lower rates of self-reported disabilities.³

Sources available in full report at prb.org
Reach out to Trusted Journalists
Other Tools We Use at PRB

- Tableau (least expensive)
- Short video presentations
- Multimedia presentations
- Custom data visualizations (most expensive)
Visualizing Death Rates: Print Publication

Visualizing Death Rates: Interactive Map

Death Rates for Older Women in 1979
Per 100,000 Women Ages 55 and Older

Select a year
Select a gender: Women, Men

Note: Death rates are for adults ages 55 and older in each state, and adjusted so that age differences across states and over time are eliminated to allow for comparison. Map categories are based on quintiles, which divide the states into five categories with a roughly equal number of states in each category. State rankings are shown in parentheses. Additional

https://assets.prb.org/prb17/mortality/index.html
Visualizing Death Rates: Interactive Map

Death Rates for Older Women in 2015
Per 100,000 Women Ages 55 and Older
- Lowest
- Lower
- Medium
- Higher
- Highest

Select a year
Select a gender
- Women
- Men

Note: Death rates are for adults ages 55 and older in each state, and adjusted so that age differences across states and over time are eliminated to allow for comparison. Map categories are based on quintiles, which divide the states into five categories with a roughly equal number of states in each category. State rankings are shown in parentheses. Additional information can be found at: [https://assets.prb.org/prb17/mortality/index.html](https://assets.prb.org/prb17/mortality/index.html)
Challenges

- People are busy
- Policy implications may be unclear
- Topic may be very narrow
- Research is ongoing
- What is the incentive?
Potential Benefits May Outweigh Costs

- Get broader exposure for your work
- Establish a feedback mechanism
- Develop relationships with a broader network, including journalists
- Develop communication tools to reach more students
- Help change the conversation around an issue that you care about
Where to Start

- Look for resources and training opportunities
  - Visit PRB’s PopResearchCenters website (“Tools & Training”)
- Seek out individuals who are doing this effectively
- Think about dissemination strategy when you start a project, not when you finish it
- Contact staff at your university’s Public Information Office
Thank You!

Mark Mather (@MarkSMather)

mmather@prb.org