

TSK 458–b: Demographic Data Collection

For a Social Analysis and to Determine if an EJ Population Exists

See also: [EM Chapter 458](#), [ESO Discipline Specialist](#)

Effective: October 2012

Start task: Region Environmental Coordinator or Consultant is asked to determine if an EJ population exists within the vicinity of the project.

End task: Documentation of existence (or non-existence) of an EJ population in the project area.

1. **Collect U. S. Census data** for the Project area to identify minority populations.
 - a) Use the [EJView](#) website to produce the Census 2010 Summary Report and the ACS Summary Report. A training module for how to use this website is available on the [EJ Demographic Data](#) web page.
 - b) Use the information in the Census 2010 Summary Report to document the
 - Overall % Minority (listed in the Summary section of the report).
 - Number of people and % of each minority present within ½ mile of the project centerline (listed in the Population by Race section of the report).
 - Number and % of elderly persons present within ½ mile of the project centerline (listed in the Population by Age section of the report).
 - c) The level of information will vary depending on the location of your project. Census data must be collected at the Block and Block Group level for projects with FHWA as the federal lead agency. Contact WSDOT ESO for guidance if this level of data is not available for your project.
 - d) The ACS Summary Report provides an estimate of the demographics based on surveys of randomly selected households conducted over a 4 year period. For this reason the population by race and population by age figures in this report are not used and may not match those given in the Census Summary Reports. Use the ACS Summary Report to document:
 - The number of people and % with low-income (In the Households by Household Income in 1999 section of the report, add the values for <\$15,000 and \$15,000-\$25,000 for an estimate the people in the study area living below the poverty level of \$23, 050¹ .
 - The number and % of people who Speak English “less than well” (listed in the Population Age 5+ Years by Ability to Speak English section of the report).

¹ \$23,050 is the 2012 poverty level for a 4-person household. See [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) website.

Follow the procedure described on the [Limited English Proficiency](#) web page to determine if you need to provide translation or interpreter services.

2. **Verify census data with at least one other information source.** This is necessary because census data is only collected every 10 years and therefore may no longer be representative. School Districts are the best secondary information source.
 - a) Use the [EJView](#) website to identify the elementary school closest to your project. A training module for how to use this website is available on the [EJ Demographic Data](#) web page.
 - b) Use the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [Washington State Report Card](#) website to find school data.
 - Enter the name of the school found in step 2a
 - Click on the “search” button. Note: The website will not retrieve information if you hit “enter” instead of clicking the “search” button. The screen flashes as if the database is working, but not data will be retrieved.
 - A table will appear at the bottom of the screen.
 - Click on the school name in the table. Note: If you click on the school district name the database will retrieve district level data. FHWA will not accept district level data. The reports look very similar. Be sure to check the title on the report to make sure you have the right level of data.
 - Print a copy of the report by using the “Print Friendly” icon in the upper right corner or save it as a pdf.
3. **Compare and verify demographic data.**
 - a) Compare the school demographic data listed in the right hand column of the OSPI school report to the Census Data for Minority populations collected Step 1b.
 - b) If the % match within 5% proceed to step 4. If not, review the project area and explain any variance greater than 5%. Differences are most commonly caused by:
 - Size of the elementary school attendance boundaries compared to the size of the project area (school’s boundaries may include an entire school district in rural areas including urban areas several miles away from the project).
 - Age of the census data (done every 10 years) compared to the age of the school data (done every year). In some cases the school data may be more representative, especially if the census data is very old and the area is experiencing significant growth.
 - c) Record your explanation of variances in the project file. (See letter to file template.)

4. Compare and verify income data.

- a) FHWA defines low –income as a person whose household income is at or below the poverty guidelines. Use the value given for a family of four in the Department of Health and Human Services [poverty guidelines](#) website.
- b) Compare the % of students in eligible for free and reduced price lunches from the OSPI Report collected in Step 2 to the % of low-income population calculated using the ACS Summary Report in Step 1.
- c) If the percentages match within 5%, proceed to Step 5. If not, review the project area and explain any variance greater than 5%. Differences are most commonly caused by:
 - Size of the elementary school attendance boundaries compared to the size of the project area (school boundaries may include an entire school district in rural areas including residential areas that are not affected by the project.)
 - Age of the ACS Summary (done every 4 years) compared to the age of the school data (done every year.)
 - Nature of the data – the ACS Summary is an estimate and the school data is a count.
- d) Record your explanation of variances in the project file. (See letter to file template.)

5. Determine if an EJ population is present by examining the reports generated in Steps 1-4. Washington State does not use a percentage threshold to determine if an EJ analysis is required because our populations tend to be dispersed. Determinations are made based on the severity of the impact, not on the number of people impacted.

- If minority and/or low income populations occur in the study area then an EJ population exists and must be considered in the analysis.
- If no minority or low income populations in the study area, then you do not have an EJ population. Document your findings in the project file (see letter to file template.)

6. If you are writing an EA or an EIS consider creating a map to illustrate the demographic data on the base map created in TSK 458-b.

- Adjust graphics to clearly show density and location of EJ populations. You may need to create more than one map if several minority groups and income groups are located in the study area.
- For very complex projects you may need to collect demographic data beyond the ½ mile limit. Additional demographic data may be needed if:

- Minority and/or low-income populations are concentrated in neighborhoods affected by part of the project, or some of the alternatives.
- The project has potential to impact community cohesion by bisecting the community, relocating residents or niche' businesses that cater to EJ populations, degrading access to public services, schools, churches, or community centers.
- The project will change transit routes or degrade pedestrian access for EJ populations.
- The project is likely to have significant adverse noise, air quality, land use, transportation, Section 4(f), hazardous materials, cultural resources, or visual effects. In this case, demographic data should be collected for the area likely to be adversely affected even if it extends well beyond the typical ½ mile limit.