

How to use National Center for Education Statistics

How can I obtain school data that will help with social and EJ analysis?

Some local schools are willing to give out aggregated demographic data on their students, while others are not. Talk to the local schools and explain that you only want aggregated demographic data and how you will use it. Ask for aggregated data on minorities, free and reduced price lunch students and numbers of students in their English Language Learner (ELL) program. Also, ask for which languages the ELL students speak. If the schools are not willing to give out even aggregate data or it is not complete, then use the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) website.

If I use the NCES website, is there an easy way to obtain the data?

The easiest way to obtain school demographic data from the [NCES](#) website is to use the school, college and library search tab. It will take you to a [page](#) where you can enter state, county, city and school district and school name if you have it. Another option is to enter zip code and a mileage factor to search a specific area around a zip code. You can choose to include only public schools or private schools as well.

What kind of information can I get from NCES?

Once you have entered specifics, if you choose a school, you will get demographic data on number of students, minority status and numbers of students eligible for free and reduced price lunches. It also tells you if the school is a Title I school, receiving federal money for disadvantaged students. You will need to work out percentages so you can compare to census data. The NCES website has a lot of valuable information, including information on English Language Learner programs for students who are limited English proficient.

Isn't comparing school data and census data like apples and oranges?

School data is usually not a perfect match with census data since school boundaries and census boundaries seldom match. Moreover, not all households have students attending school, some families would have many children in school, and others might only have one. However, school data still has a lot of value to help verify or refute census data. Since school data is updated annually, it can help to show demographic changes that were not present when the last census was taken.