EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLACE-BASED DECISIONS AND ADVOCACY

User Guide

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

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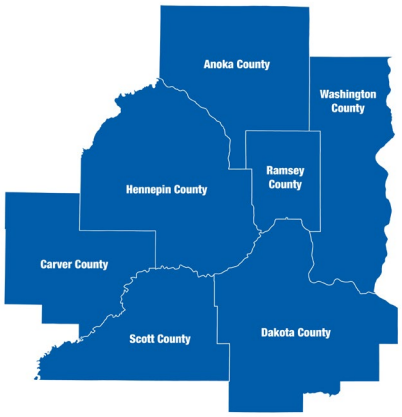

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

On request, this publication will be made available in alternative formats to people with disabilities. Call Metropolitan Council information at 651-602-1140 or TTY 651-291-0904.

Contents

Equity Considerations Dataset

Overview

The Metropolitan Council updated its "Equity Considerations for Place-Based Advocacy and Decisions in the Twin Cities Region" data, which provides equity-relevant characteristics for each of the 784 census tracts in the Twin Cities region.[1] It has been expanded to provide a much more nuanced portrait of neighborhoods and their residents, with data on:

- Geography (other areas each census tract lies within, and designations that apply to it)
- Basic demographic characteristics (total population, age, household size)
- Race and ethnicity (including detailed breakouts of major race categories)
- Migration (including when people arrived in the US and how recently they moved to their current house)
- Disability status
- Socioeconomic characteristics (poverty, affluence, education, and work)
- Historical discrimination (redlining and racially restrictive covenants)
- Housing (rates of housing cost burden, rent, when units were built, number of bedrooms for rental units, where owners of rental units are located, evictions)
- Development (residential and nonresidential)
- Land use
- Environment and climate (heat island, flood vulnerability, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution)
- Amenities (distances to buildings like hospitals and libraries)
- Employment (jobs by wage, where workers come from, demographics of workers)
- Transportation and commuting (vehicle and transit availability, where residents commute to, how residents get to work)

By bringing together key measures across planning topic areas, we hope to highlight 1) that the region's neighborhoods are diverse and multifaceted, and 2) that advancing equity requires both a holistic understanding of current conditions and historical context.

What's changed?

For the 2024 update, we've made several changes since the last release in 2021:

- ***New geographies.*** The Census Bureau has updated its census tract geographies for the 2020 Census. There are now 784 census tracts, up from 704 in the 2010-era boundaries. The additional tracts came primarily from splitting 2010-era tracts into

[1] This dataset uses the 2020-era tract boundaries: *https://gisdata.mn.gov/dataset/us-mn-state-metc-society-census2020tiger*

multiple 2020-era tracts. Many 2010-era tract boundaries stayed the same. Still, there are a few 2010-era tracts that changed substantially.

- ***Data refresh.*** Most datasets have been updated to the latest available ones. Noteworthy changes:
    - The American Community Survey data comes from the 2018-2022 five-year estimates.
    - The Eviction Lab's newest data allows for a breakdown of evictions before, during, and after the COVID-19 eviction moratorium.
- ***Better measurement of race.*** The previous release of the Equity Considerations dataset included detailed race groups, but it needed to be cobbled together from multiple questions on race, Hispanic/Latino origin, ancestry, and Tribal identification. This release uses newly available data from the 2020 Census, which was both a complete count (not a sample like the ACS) and collected systematically as a unified question. For more information, see More information on race and ethnicity.
- ***Trend variables removed.*** The previous Equity Considerations release contained several variables showing trends in incomes and housing costs. While useful, they added several columns, and they made the variable naming framework difficult. This release omits them; we are currently working on other ways to provide this information.
- ***New variables.*** We have added several new characteristics, including:
    - Population-weighted centroid coordinates of each census tract
    - Identifiers for Difficult Development Areas as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
    - Tree canopy
    - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency data on potential environmental hazards

Accessing the data

Users can find the *Equity Considerations* data on the Minnesota Geospatial Commons. The complete dataset includes nearly 300 fields. It can be difficult to scroll through that many columns to find the characteristic(s) of interest, and it is also too wide to join with shapefiles in GIS software. In addition to providing the complete dataset, we are making it easier to use by splitting it into five additional pieces listed below. For the complete listing of fields, sources, and the file(s) they can be found in, see the Equity Considerations Fields Excel file on our website. All files have basic geographic information and estimates of housing units, households, and population. The data includes six Excel workbooks:

1. Complete dataset, with all fields
2. Overview, with the most requested fields
3. Geography, basic demographics, migration, and disability status
4. Race, ethnicity, and cultural groups
5. Socioeconomic measures, historical discrimination, and housing
6. Transportation/commuting, jobs, development, amenities, land use, and environment/climate

To assist GIS users, the data also includes geospatial data for census tracts joined with the “overview” file as well as the dissolved outlines of Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP) and Areas of Concentrated Affluence (ACA). Finally, two layer files—one outlining the most current set of ACPs and ACAs; the other showing the number of ACS datasets in which tracts have been ACPs or ACAs—provide convenient ways for users to display these commonly requested characteristics.

We anticipate that many users will use the Excel files as stand-alone products outside of GIS software. While the Excel files identify the primary city or township in which each tract is located, you will need to consult other sources to find tract boundaries. Official tract reference maps (organized by county) can be found on the Census Bureau’s website. *You can also explore interactive maps via* PolicyMap or the Census Bureau’s TIGERweb product.

We have created and published an interactive tool of the “overview” excel file of the dataset at https://metrocouncil.org/equitydataset. Users can map two variables and explore relationships between up to three variables.

Highlighting Uses, Recognizing Limitations

Tabular data

This dataset shows the characteristics of geographic areas, not the characteristics of individual people or households. Accordingly, it is not well-suited for certain research and policy questions. (For more detail, see the *"Use cases"* section below.) Specific cautions include:

- **You cannot necessarily infer anything about individuals from patterns across geographic areas**. For example, census tracts in this dataset with higher shares of children also have a higher median household income—but it would be absurd to use this as evidence that children earn more money than adults. Similarly, census tracts with higher shares of residents of color also have higher shares of single-person households. One might argue from this that households of color are smaller than white households, but this is not the case when we look at individual households. Even when the associations are supported by theory—for example, tracts with higher shares of residents of color also have lower homeownership rates, in line with well-documented inequities in homeownership—researchers should not use this to draw any conclusions about the *degree* to which households of color are less likely to own their homes.
- **Patterns found in geographic areas may arise for many different reasons**. For example, some areas have relatively high shares of people who haven't worked in the past year, but the underlying dynamics can be quite different. There are several reasons why people would not have worked for a year or more: some have retired, some have disabilities that prevent them from working; some stay at home to care for friends or family; some attend school full-time; some are discouraged workers who have not been able to find a job.
- **The patterns found in geographic areas should not be used to "explain away" or justify inequities.** For example, tracts where higher shares of people have a college degree have higher median household incomes as well. While education certainly influences income, this does not imply that income gaps would be closed if everyone got a college degree, because people of color still face more discrimination in the labor market than white people with similar credentials.

Geography

Census tracts are not necessarily the most relevant geography for examining place-based equity—for example, there may be pockets of advantage and disadvantage within a single tract. They don't necessarily align with local jurisdictional boundaries. Further, they often lack resonance with the lived experience of neighborhoods. However, compiling this data at census tract level was our attempt to strike a balance between data availability, reliability, and coverage for most areas within the Twin Cities region.

Census block groups are another, finer-grained option, though sampling error tends to be much larger than for tracts. For information about block groups or measures of sampling error, contact us at research[at]metc.state.mn.us.

Data Sources

This dataset provides variables by census tract from a wide range of local/regional and national sources. To ground users in data that may not be familiar with, we've described these sources and their known limitations in the table below. In particular, the Equity Considerations dataset draws heavily on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which may be a more familiar data source but also comes with some cautions:

- The total numbers of housing units, households, and people given in ACS data is not an official Census Bureau estimate. As the Census Bureau's general handbook for ACS data users states, "the ACS was designed to provide estimates of the characteristics of the population, not to provide counts of the population in different geographic areas or population subgroups." The Council's small area estimates provide estimates of tract housing units, households, and people that better reflect recent changes in residential development and occupancy rates. This dataset provides both, distinguished by the suffix of the column name (*_MC for Metropolitan Council estimates; *_ACS for American Community Survey estimates).
- American Community Survey data is based on a sample and contains estimates that are subject to sampling error (as well as non-sampling error). Change over time in the estimates may not be statistically meaningful; the same is true of concentrated poverty and affluence statuses. Sampling error (measured by margins of error) can be considerable, particularly for smaller population groups.
- We define concentrated poverty and affluence statuses using a threshold that creates a necessary but artificial distinction among census tracts. Conditions in tracts with a poverty rate of 40% (which qualify as ACPs) may not differ substantially from those in tracts with a poverty rate of 39% (which do not qualify as ACPs). The sampling error inherent in ACS data further muddies the waters. When examining high-poverty or high-affluence areas, you may wish to look beyond the most recent set of ACPs/ACAs. Options include the "persistence" of ACP/ACA status (ACP_NYRS / ACA_NYRS) or the degree of poverty/affluence (POV185RATE / POV500RATE).

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
CoStar	CoStar gathers data on multifamily apartment building characteristics and rents. This is a proprietary data source to which the Metropolitan Council subscribes.	Data on rents comes from CoStar's research as well as listings on websites like Apartments.com. For buildings where these data sources do not provide information, CoStar estimates rents based on other similar buildings.
Eviction Lab Peter Hepburn, Jacob Haas, Renee Louis, Adam Chapnik, Danny Grubbs-Donovan, Olivia Jin, Jasmine Rangel, and Matthew Desmond. Eviction Tracking System: Version 2.0. Princeton: Princeton University, 2020. *www.evictionlab.org*	Eviction data were compiled by the Princeton University Eviction Lab from public court records.	Eviction Lab numbers reflect eviction *filings*, not actual evictions. Tenants may be double-counted because landlords may file multiple cases against a single tenant in a given year. Based on older Eviction Lab data that provides both filings and evictions, the number of actual evictions is only about 35% of the number of eviction filings. Still, not all landlords pursue evictions through the formal court system, so court records understate the true number of attempted evictions. According to The Eviction Lab website, "There is some evidence that 'informal evictions' are more common than 'formal', court-ordered evictions."[2] These two sources of bias go in opposite directions: on the one hand, some filings may not have resulted in tenants being forced to move, but filings are only a subset of evictions attempted by landlords.

[2] *https://evictionlab.org/methods/#all-evictions* [accessed September 9, 2024]

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
Historic Home Owners' Loan Corporation Neighborhood Appraisal Map	In 1934, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) rated the riskiness of insuring mortgage loans in different areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, assigning them a "zone" of risk that was influenced by the race and class of residents. As other lenders adopted such classifications, it became difficult to get mortgages in lower-wealth neighborhoods with many people of color, locking in disparities for the future.	This data was digitized from a non-georeferenced, photographic image of the original map. The accuracy is unknown, though the boundaries align well with our modern street networks. Small discrepancies between this dataset and modern tract boundaries can lead to imprecise "zone" classification, but such errors are likely to be very small. Additionally, the HOLC redlining maps were probably less influential in mortgage lending than the Federal Housing Administration mortgage risk maps that were developed shortly thereafter. We are unaware of a digitized version of these maps for the Twin Cities, but *research suggests* that they would show an even stronger relationship between mortgage risk designations and present-day outcomes.
Mapping Prejudice Project *Corey, Michael; Petersen, Penny; Delegard, Kirsten; Gillette, Rebecca; Mattke, Ryan; Ehrman-Solberg, Kevin; Mills, Marguerite; crowdsourcing community volunteers. (2024). U.S. Racial Covenants Series, Hosted by Mapping Prejudice.*	Racially restrictive covenants forbade the sale of the property to members of the groups specified in the covenant -- typically Black and Asian households -- until the Supreme Court declared them illegal and unenforceable in 1948. Researchers at the University of Minnesota digitized property deeds and had a computer scan the text to identify potential covenants in Hennepin County. Volunteer analysts then identified gathered data on these deeds. For more information, see *https://www.mappingprejudice.org*. Raw data is available at *https://github.com/UMNLibraries/mp-us-racial-covenants/*.	Some deeds with covenants may have been missed by the computer scanning. Data quality depends on the accuracy of the volunteer analysts, though the Mapping Prejudice team filtered out data from less reliable volunteers. Data are unavailable for Carver and Scott counties and are still in progress for Anoka, Ramsey, and Washington counties.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
MetroGIS Regional Parcel Dataset	On behalf of the MetroGIS collaboration, the Metropolitan Council receives parcel data from counties, assembles it into a common structure, and provides information on data availability.	Some fields lack information for some counties, though the characteristics used in this file – homestead exemptions, estimated market values, and year built – are mostly complete. We use homestead exemptions as a proxy for owner occupancy, but this indicator may be inaccurate. Additionally, estimated market values may not reflect recent changes in housing markets.
Metropolitan Council analysis of *University of Minnesota's Twin Cities Metropolitan Area 1-Meter Land Cover Classification data*	The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area 1-Meter Land Cover Classification dataset provides very detailed classification of different land cover features. Council staff used this to identify impervious surfaces, then linked those with land use data, parcel boundaries, and building footprint data to identify nonresidential buildings and parking lots large enough to support an array of solar panels or a green roof.	This data shows only the potential for solar energy production; not all sites may be suitable.
Metropolitan Council, Annual Small Area Population and Household Estimates (2023 vintage)	The Metropolitan Council creates population and household estimates for census tracts and other small areas to assist planners across the region. These estimates provide a more precise and timely picture of current conditions than the American Community Survey.	Housing unit estimates depend on accurate reporting of building permits by cities and townships. While we make reasonable assumptions about occupancy rates and average household sizes, and while these estimates are controlled to the official city/township estimates reviewed by local governments, estimates may be higher or lower than what a full enumeration of the population would find.
Metropolitan Council, Generalized Land Use 2020	Based on aerial imagery, assessor information, and other development datasets, Metropolitan Council staff assign generalized land use categories that are consistent across counties to all properties in the seven-county Twin Cities region.	Land uses provided in this dataset are meant to show general patterns, not precise acreage. Although parcel-based, land use delineations are not confined to properties. In other word, a property may have more than one use and uses are not necessarily coterminous with property boundaries. For example, local streets and small bodies of water (under 3 acres) *are not delineated separately*; they are given the land use classification of adjacent areas.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
Metropolitan Council, Growing Shade	Based on satellite imagery from 2021, Metropolitan Council staff estimated the prevalence of trees across the region.	Tree canopy data needed to be modeled from satellite imagery whose resolution is too coarse to capture individual trees. Also, changes since 2021 may have added trees to the region or removed them.
Metropolitan Council, Land Surface Temperature 2022	This data shows the surface temperature (measured by satellite thermal imagery) on September 1, 2022. It is intended to highlight the variation in temperatures across the region, not to show how hot temperatures can go on extremely hot days.	This is a one-day snapshot of temperature patterns in the middle of the day. Measurements over a longer period of time could provide more representative measurements, and changes in land use since 2022 affect what surface temperatures look like today.
Metropolitan Council landmark data (internal resource)	Metropolitan Council staff have maintained a dataset with the locations of buildings like hospitals and libraries.	The data have not been updated since 2018, so some facilities in this dataset may have closed, while others may have opened. This dataset includes only the kinds of facilities whose locations tend to be stable, and based on our manual checks, we are relatively confident in their accuracy. We will continue to examine other data sources. Additionally, these distances are measured "as the crow flies," not taking into account the road network; we may refine these calculations in a future update.
Metropolitan Council, Localized Flood Map for Climate Vulnerability Screening	This dataset uses detailed elevation data to find areas that are at risk of flooding during extreme rainfall.	This dataset measures only *potential* flooding. Flood vulnerability is also affected by stormwater infrastructure, for which no region-wide data is available.
Metropolitan Council, Nonresidential Building Permit data	The Metropolitan Council surveys cities and townships every year to determine the permit value of nonresidential construction, including commercial, industrial, and public/institutional uses.	While we perform various checks to ensure that permit data is consistent, accuracy ultimately depends on what cities and townships report to us. Also, we collect data on only projects with a permit value of at least $100,000 (or at least $1,000,000 for remodeling/renovation projects), so this is not a complete measure of investments.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
Metropolitan Council, Residential Building Permit data	The Metropolitan Council surveys cities and townships every year to determine the net change in housing units. We gather data for five different housing types on the number of units added (including new constructions, conversions, and other miscellaneous additions) and lost (including demolitions and other miscellaneous losses).	While we perform various checks to ensure that permit data is consistent, accuracy ultimately depends on what cities and townships report to us. During the annual population estimates cycle, a few cities per year correct their permit data. Also, we do not gather information on remodeling or renovation permits under $1,000,000, so this data is not a complete measure of residential *investments*.
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Areas of Environmental Justice Concern	The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency defines Areas of Environmental Justice Concern as federally recognized tribal areas along with census tracts where the poverty rate (the share of residents with income less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold) is at least 40%; the share of residents who report speaking English less than "very well" is at least 40%; and/or where BIPOC residents are at least 50% of the population. Tracts not meeting these thresholds are included if 40% is within the margin of error for poverty and limited English proficiency, or if 50% is within the margin of error for BIPOC population share.	This dataset accurately reflects MPCA's definition of Areas of Environmental Justice Concern, using the 2018-2022 American Community Survey five-year estimates.
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, What's In My Neighborhood?	The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency provides data on permits. The Equity Considerations dataset provides counts of these sites/facilities for each census tract.	This is information on the locations of facilities. It does not necessarily indicate pollution or health hazards, past or present.
StatsAmerica (Indiana University)	The Indiana Business Research Center (part of Indiana University) identifies tracts that meet unemployment or income thresholds for grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. In general, tracts qualify for EDA grants if their unemployment rate is at least one percentage point higher than the national unemployment rate, or if their per capita income is 80 percent or less of the national per capita income.	This dataset accurately reflects the set of Economically Distressed Areas.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey five-year estimates	Each year, the U.S. Census Bureau surveys approximately 2% of the nation's households to collect information on housing, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics. The print questionnaire can be viewed at *https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaire-archive.html*.	The ACS does not survey people who are living outdoors, in domestic violence shelters, or other less common forms of housing. Respondents may interpret the survey differently depending on their background or the language in which they take the survey, and some people in the sample do not respond to the survey or omit answers for certain questions. Additionally, because the ACS estimates are based on a sample, there is a margin of error around each estimate. For more information, see the U.S. Census Bureau's report on "Accuracy of the Data" at https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/code-lists.html .
U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File A (Detailed DHC-A)	This portion of the 2020 Census data provides the number of people who identify with each of more than 300 detailed race groups. The *Equity Considerations* dataset provides these numbers for the most common groups in our region.	See *More information on race and ethnicity* for details.
U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics data	The U.S. Census Bureau partners with states to collect data on employment, earnings, and addresses of employers and employees. It then combines this with other data sources to produce data on the demographics and commuting patterns of workers.	The data cover almost all jobs in the formal economy. Missing from the data are workers in the informal economy, business owners and self-employed workers, and others who are not covered by quarterly payroll reporting to the state. To protect individual identities, the Census Bureau applies methods that add random noise to the data and slightly obscure the actual location points of homes and workplaces.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Qualified Census Tracts and Difficult Development Areas (2024 classification)	The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishes this list each year. "Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Census Tracts must have 50 percent of households with incomes below 60 percent of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or have a poverty rate of 25 percent or more. Difficult Development Areas (DDA) are areas with high land, construction and utility costs relative to the area median income." (https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/qct.html). Affordable housing projects in these tracts can receive preference for tax credits and higher values of tax credits if they are one part of a "concerted community revitalization plan."	This dataset accurately reflects the set of Qualified Census Tracts and Difficult Development Areas for 2024.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017-2021 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data	CHAS data is a special tabulation of American Community Survey data that provides characteristics of housing units and households not available in the original ACS estimates. These characteristics include household income and housing affordability in terms of HUD's Area Median Income definitions, housing cost burden by race and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and overcrowding by income level.	In addition to the items noted with the American Community Survey data above, all numbers in CHAS data are rounded to the nearest 5. This helps protect respondents' identities but adds noise to the data, particularly in areas with few households of a given category. Calculations of household income and housing affordability use Area Median Income figures that do not necessarily match HUD's official income limits.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (version 3.2, July 2024)	The EJSCREEN tool provides data related to environmental justice. We provide the EJSCREEN environmental indicators.	Some data sources used in EJSCREEN are relatively old (for example, some air pollution data dates from 2020). The EPA also cautions that some environmental indicators are estimates from a model, and that uncertainty exists in small areas; these indicators are better used as a big-picture assessment and foundation for more in-depth research. Finally, the data indicate only risk and/or exposure for environmental hazards, not actual public health consequences.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
U.S. Internal Revenue Service	The Internal Revenue Service publishes a list of tracts approved as Opportunity Zones. Investments in these tracts may qualify for federal tax credits.	Opportunity Zones were defined several years ago using 2010-era census tract boundaries. These are still the official zone definitions, even though tract boundaries were redrawn for the 2020 Census data products. The 2020-era census tracts in this dataset are classified as Opportunity Zones if at least 50% of their land area lies in an Opportunity Zone. While most Opportunity Zones were not affected by the geographic changes, it is not necessarily the case that all portions of a 2020-era census tract are part of an Opportunity Zone. Also, note that not all tracts identified as having high poverty rates were selected as Opportunity Zones.
Urban Footprint	The Metropolitan Council subscribes to this proprietary source of a wide variety of data, used for assessing current conditions as well as scenario analysis. It contains estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for areas as small as census blocks; we have summarized these to census tracts.	Greenhouse gas emissions are estimates, calculated by applying national-level and state-level multipliers to local data on demographics, housing, and land use. To the extent that our region's multipliers differ from the ones Urban Footprint uses, estimates may be biased. For example, if the average household vehicle in our region gets more than 22 miles per gallon of gasoline (the fuel economy assumed by Urban Footprint), our actual greenhouse gas emissions from transportation would be lower than Urban Footprint estimates suggest. We recommend using this data for comparing relative emissions amounts across census tracts, not as a complete greenhouse gas inventory compliant with any particular protocol for community-scale greenhouse gas emissions accounting. The Council provides a sector-based greenhouse gas accounting at: *https://metrocouncil.org/Data-and-Maps/Research-and-Data/Climate-tools.aspx*

More information on race and ethnicity

Classifying people's extraordinarily complex individual identities into meaningful racial and ethnic groups requires care. For those unfamiliar with these terms, it is important to understand that race and ethnicity are conceptually distinct. Despite the common image of "race" as an inherited trait, race has no biological basis. Instead, humans take physical differences across people (primarily skin color) and assign a social meaning to them. "Ethnicity" generally refers more to cultural differences across people, such as language, traditions, foods, music, and others. Both race and ethnicity influence each other, though, and both kinds of classifications have changed over time.

Major race/ethnicity groups

Current Census Bureau data products use the standards from the United States Office of Management and Budget's 1997 *Statistical Policy Directive No. 15*, in which there are five "major" race groups (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander).[3] People may self-identify their race, and they may choose more than one race.

In this 1997 directive, the Office of Management and Budget also recognized one ethnic category – "Hispanic or Latino origin." It considered this to be separate from race; people who identify as Hispanic or Latino are also asked to report one or more races. (In the Twin Cities region, most people who identify as Hispanic or Latino identify as White or as a race that does not fit cleanly into the five major categories.)

Many analysts combine these classifications into one set of groups that are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The Metropolitan Council has traditionally used the following six categories:

- white, non-Latine
- Black or African American, non-Latine
- Asian, non-Latine
- Hispanic or Latine
- American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Latine
- Some other race (including the small number of Pacific Islanders in our region) or more than one race, non-Latine

These major categories obscure a lot of diversity, though. For example, the Black or African American category contains both African immigrants and African American descendants of enslaved people; the Asian category groups together Asian Indian people, Chinese people, Hmong people, and many others. Furthermore, people who trace their origin to the Middle East or North Africa do not fit cleanly into one of the major categories. And these categories cannot shed much light on the growing share of people who identify with more than one race.

Fortunately, a relatively new data product from the 2020 Census, the Detailed Demographic & Housing Characteristics File A ("Detailed DHC-A"), provides information on the number of people who identify with each of these detailed groups – Somali, Hmong, Mexican, and so on. Given the well-documented issues with the 2020 Census and response rates for different groups, it is not perfect, but it is the most

[3] The Office of Management and Budget revised this directive in early 2024. The largest changes are: considering "Hispanic or Latino" a race on par with "white" or "Black" rather than an ethnicity; adding a separate "Middle Eastern / North African" category; and requiring more detailed data collection wherever possible to allow for further disaggregation. It will take some time, however, for Census Bureau data collection to reflect the changes.

precise available data. The following material provides some detail on what is available, including cautions about the data.

2020 Census data on race and ethnicity

Important concepts

There is a very important distinction between "regional" and "detailed" groups.

- Regional groups nest within the race categories recognized by the federal government, like Black, Asian, and others. Examples of regional groups are "East Asian," "Central American," or "Sub-Saharan African."
- Detailed groups nest within regional groups. For example, the "Sub-Saharan African" regional group includes detailed groups like Somali, Nigerian, Liberian, and many others.
- Two large, detailed groups – "African American" and "Mexican" – do not fall under a regional group.

The Detailed DHC-A also provides data for two definitions of each group: those who identified as that group alone (and no other groups); and those who identified as that group alone or in combination with one or more other groups. To better highlight the diversity of the region, the *Equity Considerations* data uses the latter definition. Otherwise, many people of color who identify with multiple groups would be rendered invisible. Including everyone who identifies with a given group (regardless of whether they also identified with another group) also maximizes the available data, as the Census Bureau sometimes suppressed data for people who identified with a given group alone.

Data availability

As mentioned, the Detailed DHC-A file contains data on more than 300 groups. The Metropolitan Council used the following logic to select groups that appear in the Equity Considerations dataset:

- All regional groups were selected.
- Detailed groups grouped with the "white" race (German, English, etc.) were selected if its population in the Twin Cities region was at least 100,000.
- All other detailed groups were selected if they satisfy at least one of the following conditions:
    - The group's population in the Twin Cities region was at least 2,500
    - The group appears in at least 25 census tracts (this ensures that smaller groups spread widely across a county or region will still appear)
    - The group is one of the five most common in its race group (this ensures that each major race category will have its internal diversity highlighted)

Cautions with privacy protection methods

- To protect respondents' privacy, the Census Bureau provided data on detailed groups only if they had at least 22 members in a given geographic area (regional groups required at least 94 members). If a certain census tract shows no residents who identified as Hmong (for example), it does not necessarily mean that there are no Hmong residents – only that there were fewer than 22.
- Another way the Census Bureau protected respondents' privacy was to inject random noise into the published counts. That is, the numbers shown in the Equity Considerations data are the actual number of people enumerated, plus or minus a random number. The Census Bureau

designed its algorithm so that the published count would usually be within 11 people of the true count.

- The Census Bureau's method also means that the statistical noise compounds as numbers are combined, so tract-level numbers should not be added up to derive counts of people in a certain area created from multiple census tracts.

Cautions with group definitions

The Census Bureau's classification of groups in the iteration list has some limitations. For example:

- The two largest Black detailed groups are "African American" and "Other Black or African American, not specified." The latter group includes people who identified their race simply as "Black" without specifying "African American" or some other group. While users might be tempted assume that external observers would see "Black" people as African American and combine these two, it is impossible to know how these respondents would have identified if they had been required to choose a group more specific than "Black."
- American Indian/Indigenous detailed groups are often based on tribal identification. Consequently, people who identify as Chippewa/Ojibwe/Anishinabe (for example) are split across different detailed groups depending on whether they responded as part of a specific tribe and, if so, what tribe that was.
- Unfortunately, it is not possible to get a count of unique individuals who identify as a given group. Users might be tempted to add together the "Chippewa alone or in any combination," "White Earth Band alone or in any combination," "Red Lake Band alone or in any combination," and other Ojibwe bands to get a total number of people who identify as Ojibwe/Anishinabe/Chippewa, but this would double-count people who reported their race as (for example) both "Red Lake Band" and "White Earth Band." And combining "Red Lake Band alone" and "White Earth Band alone" would exclude people who identified another race (which is quite common among those who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native).
- The Census Bureau grouped the Hmong detailed group with the East Asian regional group even though most group members consider themselves Southeast Asian.
- Keep in mind that some groups were "easier" to report than others in the 2020 Census. A few groups, like Asian Indian and Mexican, could be selected with a checkbox. The rest needed to be written in. Some write-in groups – like German, Somali, Hmong, and Ecuadorian – were listed on the questionnaire as examples of what to write, but most were not.

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