



Data User Census

Summary of Results

August 2015

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Prepared August 2015



Acknowledgements: This report was written by Johanna Busch who served as 2015 Sondheim Fellow to BNIA-JFI. The Walter Sondheim Jr. Maryland Nonprofit Leadership Program is a scholarship within the Shriver Center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.



Data User Census Results

Baltimore Data Day 2015

Introduction

On the sixth annual Baltimore Data Day, the Data User Census was administered to gain a better sense of how community members use the *Vital Signs* data that the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance releases every year. Baltimore Data Day is an education and training workshop that builds community capacity to access data. More information about can be found online at http://bniajfi.org/data_day/

Responses were collected during the Opening Session of Baltimore Data Day. Live responses were displayed on a projector as well as live streamed online in order to better engage data users in a conversation about how they currently use data and what improvements might look like.

The majority of responses (89) were collected online using a Mentimeter poll. Additional responses (19) were collected on paper surveys from Data Day attendees who did not have a device to use to complete the online poll.

The two main goals of the data user census were to:

- 1) Examine current data usage
- 2) Gain a better understanding of gaps

Current Data Usage

The Data User Census attempted to create a picture of how users currently use the *Vital Signs* data. The purpose of data usage was examined as well as which indicators are most useful.

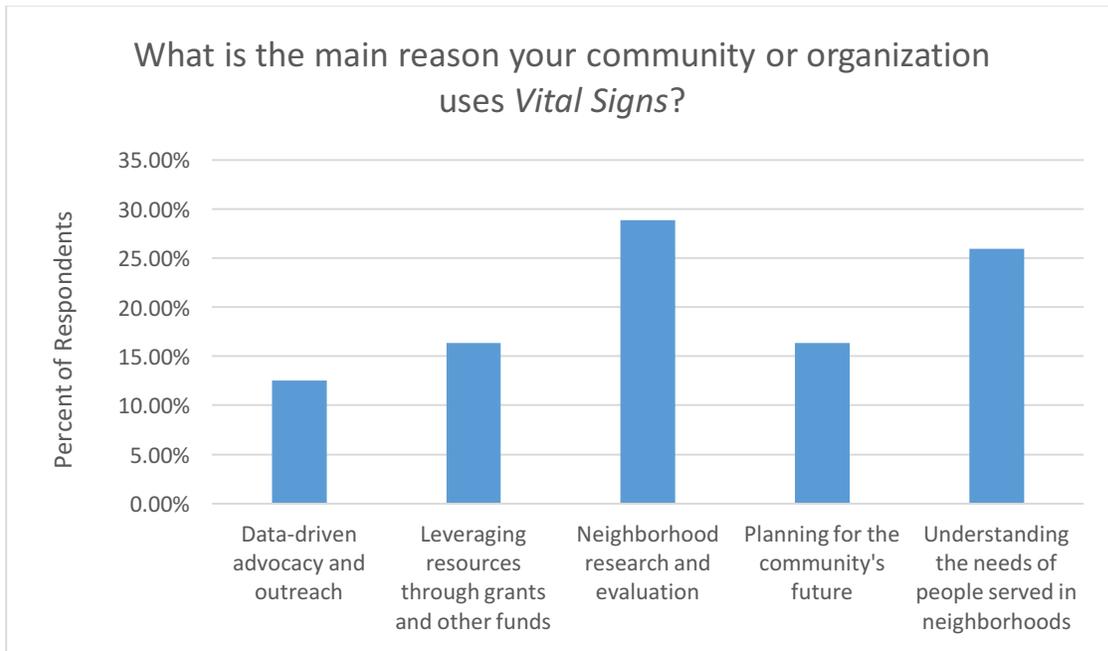


Figure 1: Responses (104 total responses) to the question “What is the main reason your community or organization uses *Vital Signs*?”

The tops responses to “What is the main reason your community or organization uses *Vital Signs*?” were:

- Neighborhood research and evaluation (29%)
- Understanding the needs of people served in neighborhoods (26%)

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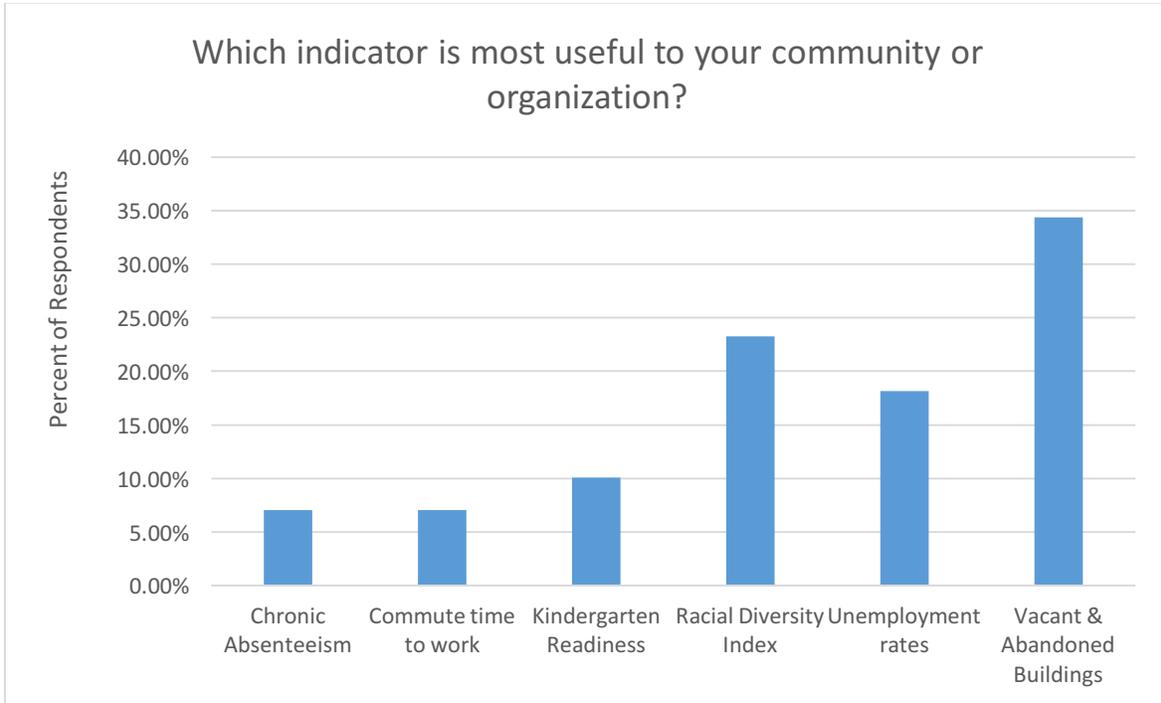


Figure 2: Responses (99 total responses) to the question: “What indicator is most useful to your community or organization?”

In addition to the purposes that organizations and communities have used *Vital Signs* to accomplish, the Data User Census also assessed which indicators most users are choosing to work with. As shown in Figure 2, the top responses to this question were:

- Vacant & abandoned buildings (34%)
- Racial diversity index (23%)
- Unemployment rates (18%)

Understanding Gaps

Gaps in Skill Sets

The Data User survey attempted to get a better sense of gaps in data accessibility in terms of both what skills are possessed and what data is available.

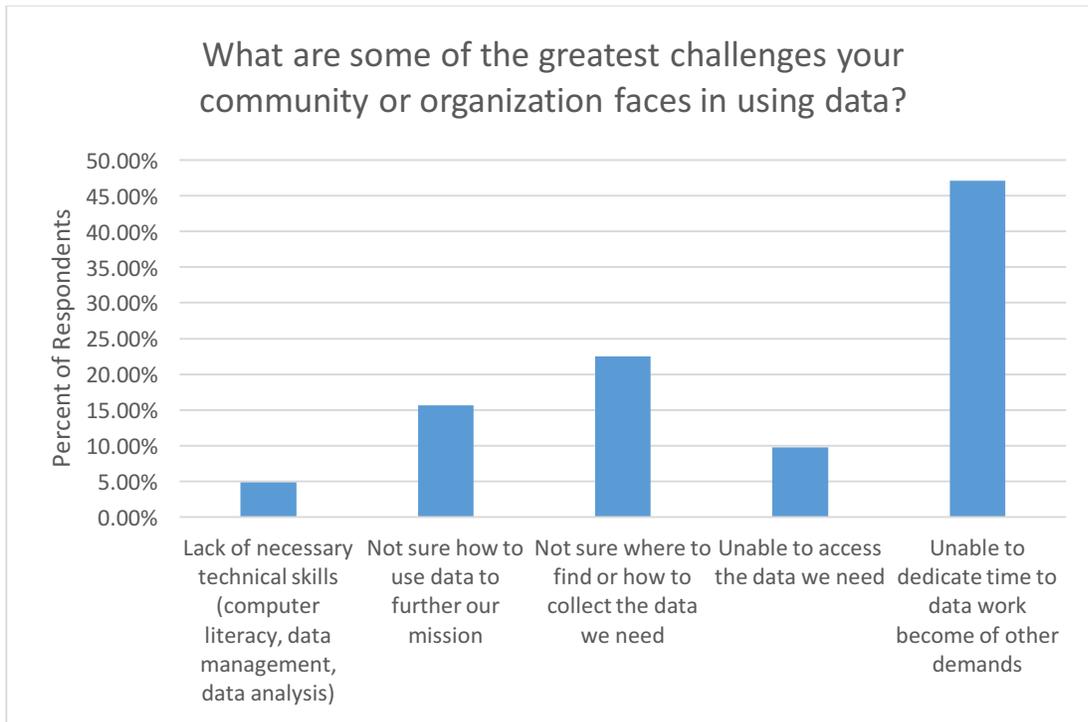


Figure 3: Responses (102 total responses) to the question “What are some of the greatest challenges your community or organization faces in using data?”

The most common obstacle (Figure 3) blocking respondents from successful data usage was a lack of time to dedicate to data work because of other demands. 47% of respondents reported that lack of time is the primary challenge facing communities and organizations attempting to work with neighborhood level data. The inability to allocate time and resources to data usage, interestingly, is a much more common barrier than a lack of necessary technical skills (5% of respondents) or an inability to access the needed data (10% of respondents).

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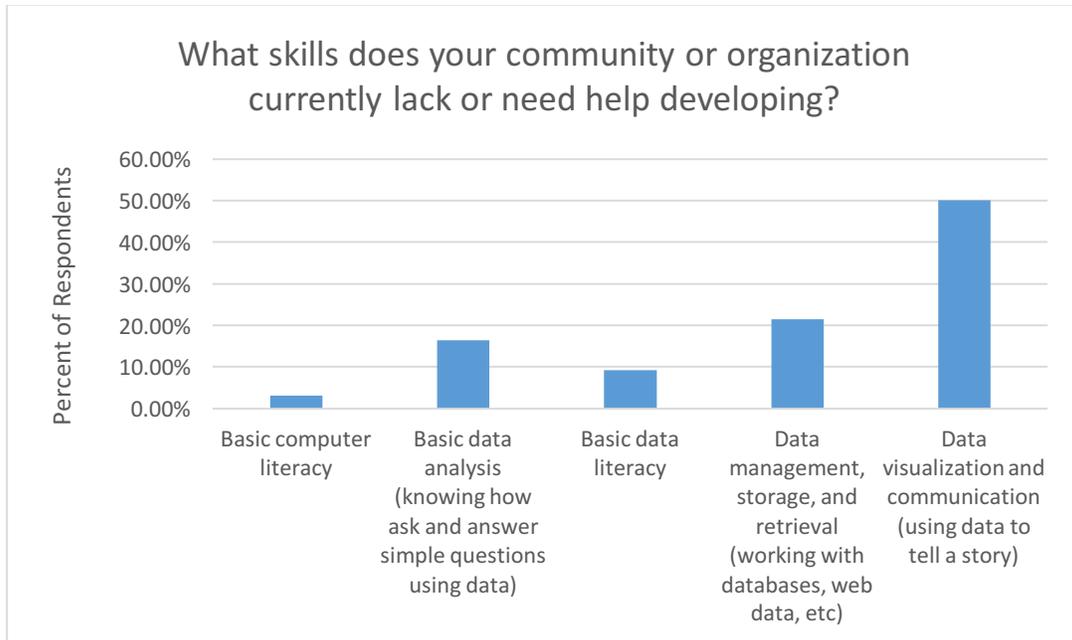


Figure 4: Responses (98 total responses) to the question: “What skills does your community or organization currently lack or need help developing?”

In terms of building capacity to work with neighborhood-level data, there is a clear demand for data visualization and communication skills. 50% of respondents said that they currently are missing or would like to develop these skills. Communities and organizations want to learn how to use data to tell their stories.

The least number of respondents selected basic computer literacy (3%) and basic data literacy (9%) indicating that though many users have the preliminary skills needed to work with data, there is a need to develop high level skills.

Gaps in Data Availability

Respondents also wrote in responses to the question “What indicator(s) would you like to see as a part of *Vital Signs* in the future?” 84 individual responses were received. These responses can be used to help add new indicators to *Vital Signs* in the future.

Demographics

- Foreign-born population
- Gender*
- LGBT population
- Marriage rates (2)



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Arts and Culture

- Arts and Culture (2)
- Cultural areas (eg. Locations of cultural resources or organizations)
- Cultural assets
- Cultural data- organizations, individuals
- Cultural participation (3)
- Cultural vitality (2)
- Cultural institutions

Crime and Safety

- Concentration of policing
- Parole/probation*
- Public defense costs
- Calls for service (911,311) (2)*
- Criminal justice outcomes
- Emergency response times
- Incarceration
- Recidivism

Education

- Graduation rates*
- Literacy rates
- English language proficiency
- Impact and usage of school choice options
- Neighborhoods draw for middle schools
- Reading skill level
- Student loan debt (2)

Health

- Asthma rates
- Food access (2)*
- Healthcare access (3)
- Health indicators
- Health related statistics
- Hospital visits
- Household members who have two or more chronic diseases
- Location of drug rehab houses
- Location of methadone clinics

Sustainability

- Community gardens*
- Energy Use (2)
- Amount of visible trash and litter (2)*

Housing and Community Development

- Access to amenities
- City to county housing mobility



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- Property value of vacant and unoccupied buildings
- Eviction rate
- Foreclosed homes*
- Historic buildings/structures
- Landlord classification (3)
- Neighborhood involvement/participation
- Rental unit prices
- Rental unit information (2)
- Tax sale foreclosures
- Vacant homes*
- Social service outcomes
- Squatters
- Use and Occupancy permits
- Voucher distribution
- Water shutoffs (2)
- Zoning

Workforce and Economic Development

- Anchor institution engagement
- Available, accessible jobs
- Business data
- Commercial activity
- How can we attract new business?
- Impact on/connectivity to other parts of the city
- Jobs (2)
- Labor force skills related to job opportunities
- Mapping public and private investment
- Nonprofit organizations and community services density (3)
- Resource inequality
- TOD (transit oriented development) opportunities
- Wealth indicators

Miscellaneous

- Harm related crimes
- Mechanism for storing qualitative data
- Networks
- What is good- why would you want to live here?

* indicates an indicator that is already included in *Vital Signs*

Conclusion

Gaining a better understanding of gaps that exist both in skills and available data is a preliminary step to filling in these gaps. The results of the Data User Census suggest that a primary challenge facing organizations in Baltimore is a lack of time to dedicate to data work.



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Workshops, like Baltimore Data Day, can teach people how to work with data more efficiently so that it takes up less time. In addition, networking opportunities can connect organizations who need help accessing and analyzing data to others who may be able to provide these skills.

There is a strong desire in the Baltimore data user community for development of better data visualization skills. Users want to learn how to use data to tell a story. Further training should be provided specifically on this topic either as a part of future Data Days or as separate workshops. Additionally, resources should be posted on the BNIA-JFI website to provide users with tools not just for downloading data, but providing examples and tutorials on how to effectively communicate using data.

A July 2015 report by Abigail Baum at the Urban Institute titled, “Expanding Audience and Impact: Nonprofits Communicating Data to External Audience” details many resources that can be used by nonprofits. These resources should be shared with Baltimore nonprofits and community organizations, perhaps on the BNIA-JFI website. Baum writes that effective communication of data by nonprofits can raise community awareness, influence policy decisions, increase funding, and increase feedback to clients.

In terms of gaps in data availability, respondents suggested indicators that they would like to see as a part of *Vital Signs* in the future. However, many of these indicators are already included in *Vital Signs*. This may indicate that users are either unfamiliar with *Vital Signs* or unsure of how to use data on the BNIA-JFI website.

Therefore, there are already many existing resources and data sources available to data users in Baltimore. However, users don’t necessarily know what data already exists or how to use it. BNIA-JFI can act as a bridge between organizations and this information to help build this community capacity.

References

Baum, Abigail. *Expanding Audience and Impact: Nonprofits Communicating Data to External Audiences*. Rep. Urban Institute, July 2015. Web. 29 July 2015.