

So who is in your community?

Knowing about our community is an important part of being God's people in mission. Having this sort of information does not mean that we're becoming the same as the community, or that sociology dictates our mission – it informs us and lets us begin to understand who is our neighbour. (Matthew 22:34-40)

1. Primary Demographic Information

If you want a 30-minute grab of your community, start with the sources of information that has already been collected:

- The **National Census** at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Not only full of information about the make-up of the Australian community as a whole, but also you can also target information from your local community. You can access the ABS community profiles at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@census.nsf/3.2.1?OpenView>
- The **National Church Life Survey (NCLS)** is a absolute gold-mine of information about your local church, national church trends, why people choose to attend or not to attend church, what the community perception of church is like. You will find the information at <http://www.ncls.org.au/>
- Your **Local Council** often has reports and papers about the local community, and in particular plans for changes in the near future. The council will be the point of coordination (even if not control) for development (commercial, property and social). A directory of local councils can be found at the website for the Australian Local Government Association - http://www.alga.com.au/site/page.cfm?site_page_id=91&site_nav_id=92

2. Community Organisations

You will often be surprised at the number and variety of local community groups and the information that they have. Most are extremely happy to talk to you about their work and how they see the community. Examples include:

- Historical Societies
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Organisations (Landcare, SES, charities,
- Local Indigenous community (co-ops, residents, regional land council etc..)
- Cultural Organisations (eg: Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre, Philippine-Australian Community Services Inc)

3. Individuals

While statistics and organisations are a central part of understanding your community, sometimes the best way to understand a place is to ask the people who live there. Interviewing local residents doesn't have to be a serious, meticulous process. Sometimes a cup of coffee will open up a conversation that illustrate important aspects about the community that statistics will never tell you. And chances are it will be a lot more fun

Who would you interview?

Anyone who is willing, and you would be interested in. One of the major resources that most congregations have is people who have lived in the local area for some time. What stories and memories about the area do they have? What changes have they witnessed? How do they see the future?

These components are just some of those that can make up a good community analysis. If you want to go further, two helpful links about community analysis are:

Very good framework from WA - <http://www.communitywise.wa.gov.au/index.htm>

(US context) -

http://www.epi.umn.edu/react/main/community_org/community_analysis.html