Cottage Data2Go

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **General**
- **Maps**
- **Dashboards**
- **Connections**

- **Health**
- **Data and Sourcing**
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GENERAL

1. What is Cottage Data2Go?

Cottage Data2Go is a free, easy-to-use online mapping and data tool created by Cottage Health and Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council.

Cottage Data2Go brings together federal, state, and city data on a broad range of issues critical to the well-being of all Santa Barbara County (SBC) residents. The website includes nearly 200 indicators available for Santa Barbara County's 87 census tracts and 26 cities and towns.

2. The State of California and many organizations already generate a great deal of public data. What value does Cottage Data2Go add?

Great data tools exist online. Many of these are the product of one-time-only efforts, focus on just one issue or sector, or are tricky for the average person to navigate. In addition, indicators are available using different geographic boundaries, time periods, definitions, interfaces, and methodologies. This variety makes comparisons very challenging. Cottage Data2Go is:

- **Intuitive and easy-to-use.** It's designed to provide access to official government data for "data civilians"—people who need accurate, up-to-date information, but lack advanced statistical and research training. In Cottage Data2Go, data are presented by both census tract and city/town.

- **Comprehensive and multi-sectoral.** Cottage Data2Go includes data from 9 different sectors, including health, education, environment, political engagement, and public safety, covering a wide range of issues that affect the well-being of everyday Santa Barbarans and shape the choices and opportunities open to them.

- **Informed by a holistic vision.** A unique blend of datasets, interactive maps, and analytical tools links data on human need, resources, and outcomes and helps users see social and economic realities in the interconnected way in which people actually experience them.

- **Sustainable.** Cottage Data2Go provides a snapshot of current realities alongside a commitment to update data regularly for at least five years.

- **Transparent and rigorous.** Cottage Data2Go is an impartial, independent source for methodologically sound, reliable, fully sourced data.

- **Customizable.** Cottage Data2Go allows users to tailor the set of indicators they see on their screens based on the issues that are important to them.

- **Useful to experts.** Cottage Data2Go allows the pros to access underlying data and primary source material in sortable spreadsheet form with detailed sourcing and methodological notes.

3. Who is Cottage Data2Go for?

Anyone can use Cottage Data2Go. It is a free website available to everyone with a passion for understanding and improving the amazing county we call home. It was, however, designed with the needs of these users in mind:

- **Decision-makers in and outside SBC government**, who can access a comprehensive picture of human assets and needs, neighborhood by neighborhood

- **Foundations, philanthropists, and service delivery organizations**, which can pinpoint need and service gaps, establish baselines, and track change to gauge the impact of their investments and programs

- **Communities and community-based organizations**, which can create and print customized maps, data visualizations, and comparisons for program development, fundraising, and advocacy without expending resources on costly and time-consuming in-house data collection and analysis

- **Teachers and students**, who can easily access data for analyzing their communities, how their communities compare to others, and how issues interact to shape people's everyday lives and long-term prospects

- **Researchers**, who can download clean, well-sourced, accurate datasets for hundreds of indicators

4. Who created Cottage Data2Go?

Cottage Data2Go was created by Cottage Health, Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council, designer Rosten Woo, and developer Codie Joseph See.

About Cottage Health

Cottage Health was established more than 125 years ago when a group of women in Santa Barbara opened a nonprofit hospital dedicated to providing care to all, regardless of ability to pay. Today, Cottage Health includes Goleta Valley Cottage Hospital, Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, with its affiliated Cottage Children's Medical Center and Cottage Rehabilitation Hospital, and Santa Ynez Valley Cottage Hospital.

Cottage Health's specialties include the Cottage Children's Medical Center, Level 2 Trauma Center, Neuroscience Institute, Heart & Vascular Center, Center for Orthopedics, and Rehabilitation Hospital. Its medical staff is comprised of more than 700 physicians, many with subspecialties typically found only at university medical centers. In 2015, the Cottage Health hospitals in Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Santa Ynez Valley provided inpatient care for 19,000 people, treated 76,000 patients through 24-hour emergency departments, and helped deliver 2,200 newborns.

As a leader in providing advanced medical care to the Central Coast region, Cottage Health's mission is to serve its community with excellence, integrity, and compassion.

About Measure of America

Measure of America provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America. Through reports, custom-built dashboards, interactive online maps and tools, and evidence-based analysis, Measure of America works with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of need, pinpoint levers for change, and track progress over time. Measure of America's hallmark is the American Human Development Index, a composite measure of health, education, and earnings indicators based on a time-tested model developed at the United Nations and used in countries worldwide. Cofounders Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis founded Measure of America in 2007, and Measure of America joined the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 2008. For more information, please see our website at www.measureofamerica.org.

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Rosten Woo is an artist, designer, and writer living in Los Angeles. He produces artworks and educational projects about complicated systems and group decision-making. Visit rostenwoo.biz.

Codie Joseph See's expertise is in geospatial technologies and cartography. Codie has worked for state and city cartography and GIS offices in his home state of Wisconsin.

5. What are some practical uses for Cottage Data2Go?

Cottage Data2Go has virtually unlimited possibilities. Here are a few examples of how people might use the tool:

- Community organizers could go to DASHBOARDS, select relevant indicators of well-being, and present them at a community meeting to support their case for shifting priorities or creating new programs.

- Staff at nonprofit organizations working on affordable housing could use MAPS to see where the greatest needs for their services are. They could use DASHBOARDS to see what other challenges housing insecure neighborhoods face. With this information, they could identify potential partners for joint outreach and programming.

- SBC government agencies could use the data to inform policy-making and ensure that services reach the most vulnerable; elected officials could use the resource to better understand the needs of their constituents.

- Community-based organizations could download infographics and maps related to their service area to include with grant applications or public information materials.

- Teachers could use the data to better understand out-of-classroom challenges their students face.

- Service-delivery organizations could use CONNECTIONS to investigate possible programming priorities. For instance, as the share of households receiving CalFresh benefits increases, the percentage of 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in preschool tends to decrease; this finding might encourage outreach and cross-program collaboration in order to connect CalFresh recipients with preschool programs in their area.

6. How were the indicators chosen from all the datasets available?

Cottage Data2Go focuses on human well-being. Given the myriad of factors that affect people across their lifespans—from living conditions and safety to schools and jobs to health and family structure—we curated the dataset behind Cottage Data2Go to be as expansive as possible within a well-being framework. If an indicator impacts people's ability to live freely chosen, rewarding lives and is accessible, we added it.

If you see something missing, contact us at contact@measureofamerica.org. Please keep in mind that we are able to include only those data sets that will be collected regularly and meet a high standard of accuracy, rigor, and transparency.

7. Can I add my own indicators to Cottage Data2Go?

We love crowdsourcing, too. Cottage Data2Go is intended as a reliable resource containing only the most accurate, up-to-date information. We would love to hear your ideas for new indicators to include. If the data are collected by a public entity, university, or other provider of high-quality data and are either already available by community district or can be geocoded by community district, we would be happy to consider adding them to Cottage Data2Go.

Please email us at contact@measureofamerica.org with your suggestion.

8. How should students and researchers cite Cottage Data2Go in projects and papers?

Thanks for asking. The suggested attribution is:
Measure of America, Social Science Research Council. 2017. *Cottage Data2Go.* http://www.cottagedata2go.org.

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9. **Are there plans to adapt Cottage Data2Go for other cities?**

Cottage Data2Go builds on our work on the original Data2Go site for New York City (data2go.nyc). We would love to take Data2Go to other cities. We encourage foundations, business groups, government entities, and others interested in a Data2Go for their town to get in touch with us at contact@measureofamerica.org.

10. **Can Cottage Data2Go be used on mobile devices?**

Yes. Cottage Data2Go is available on both tablets and phones. The tablet version has all the features of the computer version. For optimal performance, use it in the landscape (horizontal) view. The mobile-friendly version of Cottage Data2Go for phones contains a subset of the full version, and if you allow it to access your location, starts with data where you are.

MAPS

1. **Should I view MAPS in full screen mode?**

Yes. The MAPS view works best in full screen mode, or at least in a window that covers most of the screen. In a smaller window, some of the functionality is lost.

2. **What geographic area is covered by the MAPS section in Cottage Data2Go?**

Cottage Data2Go covers all areas within the county limits of Santa Barbara County.

3. **What kinds of data are available in the MAPS section of Cottage Data2Go?**

Two kinds of data are available in the MAPS section of Cottage Data2Go: geographic-area data and facility-location data.

Geographic-area data are available for the 87 census tracts of SBC whenever possible and, when not possible, by the 26 cities/towns designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. To get area data, click on "select an indicator." For example, if you click the indicator "Median Personal Earnings," you will see represented on the map the median earnings (in dollars) of all workers ages 16 and up for each census tract in SBC. If you click "Immunization in Childcare," you will see the percentage of students in child care establishments with all required vaccinations by city/town. The MAPS section shows the indicator by census tract, except for a handful of cases in which the data is only available by city/town.

Facility-location data provide information about a specific facility—for example, a school, library, or waste facility. The 15 features available are gathered either directly from the source organization or a comprehensive listing of county-wide resources. The source is accessible by clicking the i in the data box. Of these thousands of records, we expect that, in some cases, records may be incorrect or outdated. We welcome corrections. Email us at contact@measureofamerica.org.

To get these data:

- Click on "Features of Interest" to access a dropdown menu.
- When you click on a Feature of Interest category, a dot for each facility of that type will appear on the map.
- To learn more about a specific facility, click the individual dot, and its name and information about it will appear in a box on the lower right part of the screen. For example, if you want to know more about Santa Maria High School, choose the "Public Schools" category, then click the dot that represents its location in Santa Maria; detailed information on the school, including graduation rates, proficiency on state exams, and college-readiness, will appear in the box.
- The source of these data can be obtained by clicking on the *i*.

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4. Why choose census tracts as the main unit of analysis for maps?

Census tracts cover the entire land area of the county and count everyone, including people living outside of cities or towns in more rural areas. They are re-drawn with each decennial census to include an approximately consistent number of residents—4,000 people on average. Thus they cover a greater land area in more rural areas, but can be as small as a few blocks in urban areas. All of the tract-level indicators in Data2Go are five-year estimates, meaning that 60 months of data have been combined together. Though the data are less timely, this approach is a common best practice with small sample sizes in order to increase greatly the precision and accuracy of the data.

DASHBOARDS

1. What are DASHBOARDS?

The DASHBOARDS section of Cottage Data2Go lets users select a unique set of indicators for a specific city/town as well as compare multiple towns on those indicators. The DASHBOARDS section features data visualization modules that make the data behind Cottage Data2Go clear, informative, and ready for presentation. Examples of the type of information within these modules include racial and ethnic composition, age and gender distribution, and levels of educational attainment, to name a few. Users can share their customized DASHBOARDS via social media or print a hard copy to present at a conference.

2. Can I save my DASHBOARD?

Each customized Dashboard view has been designed to have its own unique URL. This enables you to return to this view whenever you want, save it as a printable file, or share it via social media. A shortened URL is available on the Share menu.

3. Should I view DASHBOARDS in full screen mode?

Yes. The DASHBOARDS view works best in full screen mode, or at least in a window that covers most of the screen. In a smaller window, some of the functionality is lost.

4. Sometimes the indicator percentages don't add up to 100%; why is that?

We rounded most indicators; as a result, the percentages for a handful of indicators don't sum to 100%.

5. Why choose cities/towns as the main unit of analysis for dashboards?

The dashboard view allows you to compare across multiple indicators for one or two places. For this task, it is important to have geographic units with recognizable names and boundaries. With just the name of a city and a small reference map, you can easily understand what area the information on the dashboard corresponds to. Census tracts by comparison do not have names and do not always follow geographic boundaries that residents associate with.

The 26 cities and towns for which data is available are the Places of Santa Barbara County as determined by the Census Bureau. Together these areas encompass 90% of the population of the county. They range widely in population, with the smallest home to only about 100 residents. For this reason, five-year estimates are used to increase reliability. Even with this measure, it is important to remember that most of the data comes from a survey, so in a small area the results are based on a very small number of respondents.

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CONNECTIONS

1. What are CONNECTIONS?

The CONNECTIONS section of Cottage Data2Go enables users to do two things: explore the correlation between two variables across SBC's 26 cities/towns and examine how individual places compare with others on the given variables. The CONNECTIONS page answers the following question: "Is there a correlation between variable X and variable Y, and if so, how strong is the relationship?"

2. What is a correlation?

A correlation describes the relationship between two variables. Correlations can be very useful in understanding whether, and to what extent, one variable relates to another. Identifying a correlation is often a first step leading to further research.

The CONNECTIONS section of Cottage Data2Go uses Pearson's correlation coefficient, which measures the linear relationship between two variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient yields a number ranging from –1 to +1 and is represented with the symbol *r*. If *r* is positive, the linear relationship between the two variables is positive, meaning that as one variable increases across the 26 cities/towns, the other also tends to increase. If *r* is negative, then as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. The further *r* is from zero (in either a positive or negative direction), the stronger the relationship between the two variables.

For example, the correlation between the indicators "Median Household Income (2013 $)" and "Completed at Least a Bachelor's Degree (% of adults 25+)" has an r value of 0.69, meaning that, across SBC's 26 cities/towns, these two variables have a strong, positive correlation. In other words, we can say that as median household income increases, the share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree tends to increase. There is a strong relationship between these two variables.

3. If I find a correlation between two variables and want to investigate this, where can I go?

We highly encourage our users to dive deeper analytically than the information available in the CONNECTIONS section. For those wishing to further explore specific indicators, sourcing information is available in great detail in the downloadable dataset, including source URLs.

4. What indicators are available in the CONNECTIONS section of Cottage Data2Go? What if I want to see possible correlations between indicators not listed in CONNECTIONS?

CONNECTIONS includes a carefully selected set of X and Y variables. By clicking on the dots on the graph, you can obtain the (X,Y) coordinates for each city/town. You can also compare two sets of coordinates by clicking on one dot and then passing your cursor over a second dot.

This section includes a subset of Cottage Data2Go indicators. These indicators were selected based on the social science literature on these topics that shows that these relationships are important to explore for well-being. Researchers interested in exploring the full range of correlations can access the complete Cottage Data2Go datasets by clicking the Download tab.

5. Are there any issues in comparing data in the CONNECTIONS section?

No, all of the data used in CONNECTIONS comes from the American Community Survey, so it is all from the same time period.

6. What conclusions can be drawn from the CONNECTIONS section?

The Pearson's correlation describes the linear relationship between two variables. But it does not prove that a change in one variable causes a change in the other variable...

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For example, ice cream sales and murder rates tend to rise in tandem in places with hot summers. Does that mean that ice cream consumption makes people murderous or that murder makes people crave ice cream? Of course not. Research shows that they both rise in the summer months because warm weather makes ice cream a particularly appealing treat, and summer is a time when people are more likely to get together and be outside, where they come into greater contact with one another. Determining causal relationships requires extensive research and subject-matter expertise.

7. Should I view CONNECTIONS in full screen mode?

Yes. The CONNECTIONS view works best in full screen mode, or at least in a window that covers most of the screen. In a smaller window, some of the functionality is lost. Cottage Data2Go can also be viewed on a phone or tablet. When using a table, Data2Go performs best in the landscape (horizontal) view.

HEALTH

1. What is the source of the data in the Health section?

Cottage Health conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in 2016 to analyze and describe Santa Barbara County's most pressing health needs. Cottage Data2Go's Health section summarizes the findings from the 2016 CHNA and includes data on the well-being of Santa Barbara County's residents and selected social determinants of their health. It also connects selected health indicators for Santa Barbara County to the goals or targets in Healthy People 2020 (HP 2020), the national planning document created every 10 years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2. What are the methods for the 2016 CHNA?

Cottage Health's 2016 CHNA included a telephone survey with approximately 2,500 community members and a Listening Tour with more than 230 individuals who represent the broad interests of the community, including medically underserved, low-income, and vulnerable populations. The telephone survey, conducted in the summer of 2016, obtained data from Santa Barbara County adults ages 18 and older. A group of trained interviewers contacted randomly selected residents and asked a series of questions based on the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey instrument, created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The data were weighted to make sure that survey results were representative of county demographics, such as age, race/ethnicity, and gender, and then analyzed data to determine relationships among the various health indicators. To access the complete 2016 CHNA, including a full description of methods, visit cottagehealth.org/chna.

3. Which indicators include comparisons to other health factors?

These indicators are listed in orange in the "Select a Question" drop-down menu and include the following:

1. Overall Good Health
2. Alcohol Use (Binge Drinking During the Past 30 Days)
3. Physical Inactivity
4. Oral Health
5. Smoking Cigarettes
6. Adult Obesity
7. Insurance Status
8. Primary Care Provider
9. Cost as a Barrier to Care
10. Diabetes
11. Food Insecurity
12. Mental Health
13. Housing Insecurity

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4. How were these indicators with comparisons to other health factors selected?

Based on results from the 2016 CHNA's phone survey, secondary data analysis, and Listening Tour, Cottage Health chose 13 health indicators for in-depth analysis and created health indicator profiles for each one. These indicators were selected using the Leading Health Indicators from Healthy People 2020 and CDC's Community Health Status Indicators (CHSI).

DATA AND SOURCING

1. Can I download the data on Cottage Data2Go?

Yes. We have made nearly the entire dataset behind Cottage Data2Go available to the public. Please find the Download tab, complete a short form, and select either .XLS or .CSV format.

2. How were the data sets available in Cottage Data2Go produced?

Measure of America staff undertook nearly a year of work, involving negotiations, calculations, geocoding, statistical exercises, and number-checking, to arrive at a user-friendly dataset. Cottage Data2Go was built with the needs and skills of a data layperson in mind. While experts can put raw data into forms that they can analyze, most people don't have the skills or software for this task. In Cottage Data2Go, much of the raw data were converted into rates to make the indicator more meaningful for analysis and more reliable for comparisons. For questions regarding specific indicators, please ask us at contact@measureofamerica.org.

3. Where do the data come from?

Most of the indicators available in Cottage Data2Go are from federal, state, or SBC public sources. A few were obtained from nonprofit sources, such as the Central Coast Collaborative on Homelessness and the Center for Social Services Research UC Berkley. The source of each and every indicator in Cottage Data2Go can be found by clicking INFO in MAPS or the *"i"* near the indicator name in MAPS, DASHBOARDS and Features of Interest. Most data in the MAPS context box comes from the American Community Survey. Data in the HEALTH context box come from Cottage Health's 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment. These institutions use rigorous sampling techniques, often sampling over several years to ensure a more accurate estimate.

4. Can you compare data from different time periods—for example, data that samples just 2014 to data that samples 2012–2014?

Ideally, all data in Cottage Data2Go would sample the exact same time period. However, it is not realistic to expect the many different agencies and organizations across the wide variety of sectors included in Cottage Data2Go to conduct uniform survey data collection.

Cottage Data2Go was created in part to provide these data in one geographical unit to enable such comparisons. All data included are the most recent available as of the spring of 2017. While there may be some minor methodological issues comparing slightly different periods of sampling, we believe that these potential issues are far outweighed by the power of uniform geographies within Cottage Data2Go.

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GEOGRAPHIES

1. What geographic areas are available in Cottage Data2Go?

Where possible, we've pulled area data for three distinct geographic levels:

- Santa Barbara County
- 26 Census Places (cities/towns)
- 87 Census Tracts

In the Maps view, data is available by Census Tract whenever possible and Census Place (city/town) otherwise. In the Dashboard and Connections views, data is available by Census Place. Data in the Health view is available at the county level.

2. What is a Census Tract?

Census Tracts are small, relatively permanent subdivisions of a county that are updated with each decennial census. Most tracts have a population size between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimum size of 4,000 people. Tracts usually cover a contiguous area and generally follow identifiable features.

3. What is a Census Place?

The 26 cities and towns for which data is available in Cottage Data2Go are the Places of Santa Barbara County as determined by the Census Bureau. There are two types of Places—Incorporated Places and Census Designated Places. Incorporated Places are legally in existence under state law. In Santa Barbara County, 8 of the 26 places are incorporated: Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Solvang. The remaining areas are Census Designated Places—concentrations of population with locally understood names and boundaries. Together these 26 areas encompass 90% of the population of the county. They range widely in population, with the smallest home to only about 100 residents and the largest more than 100,000.

4. Some of these areas are very small. Are the data reliable?

There are 90 Census Bureau-designated census tracts in Santa Barbara County. For more accurate analysis, census geographies with total populations under 90 people (or no people at all) are suppressed entirely from the dataset. Suppressed tracts include bodies of water, industrial areas, or parkland. Aside from these three suppressed tracts, all data available from the U.S. Census Bureau is presented in Cottage Data2Go, regardless of the margin of error of the estimate. In order to increase reliability, five-year estimates are used for both Census Tracts and Census Places. Even with this measure, it is important to remember that most of the data in DATA2GO comes from a survey, so in a small area the results are based on a very small number of respondents. If you would like to conduct more rigorous statistical analysis, please obtain the data with margins of error directly from the source by clicking the "Get Data" link in the variable's info box.

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