

Geographic Distribution of Poverty

Goals of this exercise:

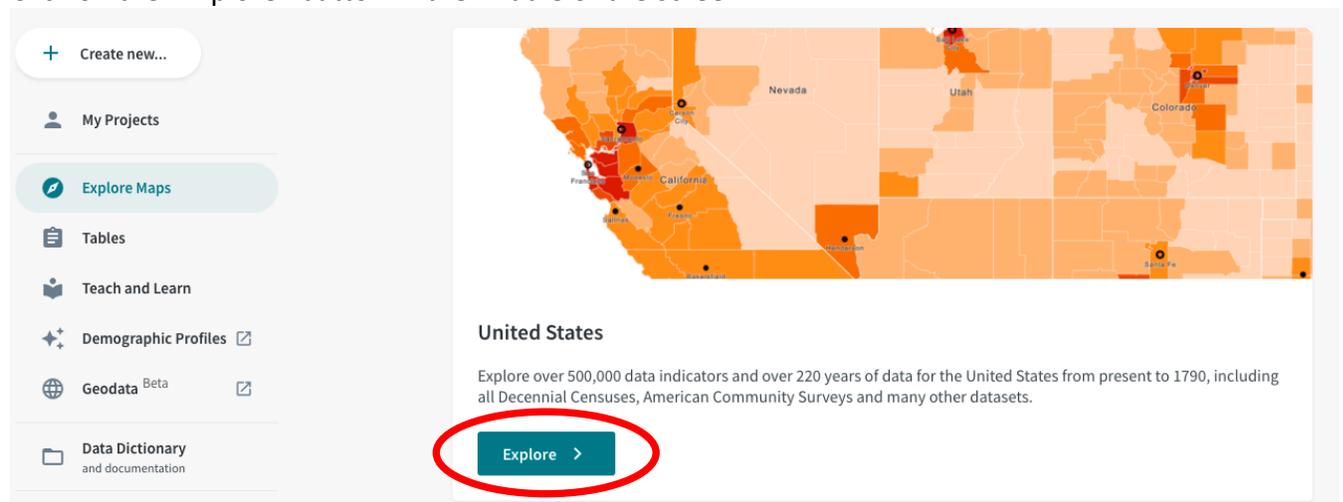
1. Understand how poverty is distributed in the U.S.
2. Figure out how the distribution of poverty has been changing
3. Learn to use Social Explorer to access public datasets
4. Practice answering empirical questions

Step 1

Use Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer or another browser to go to www.socialexplorer.com.

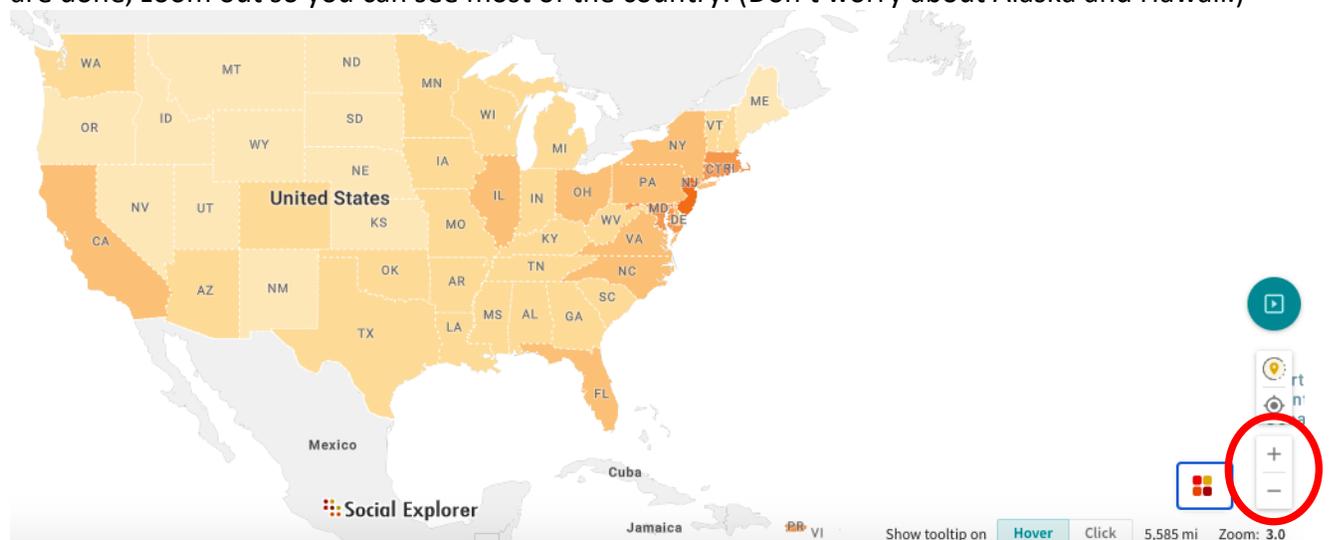
Step 2

Click on the “Explore” button in the middle of the screen.



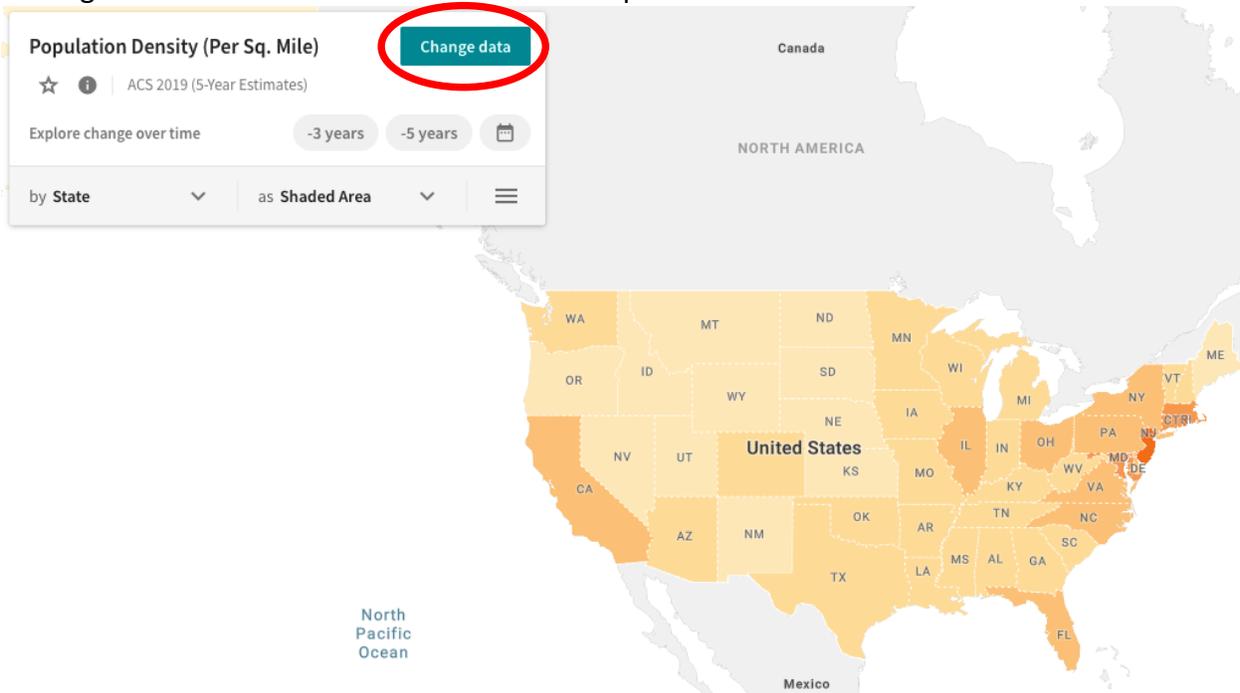
Step 3

Get familiar with map. Try zooming in on the map by using the + and – buttons at the bottom right-hand side of the screen. You can also zoom in by double clicking on the map. When you are done, zoom out so you can see most of the country. (Don't worry about Alaska and Hawaii.)



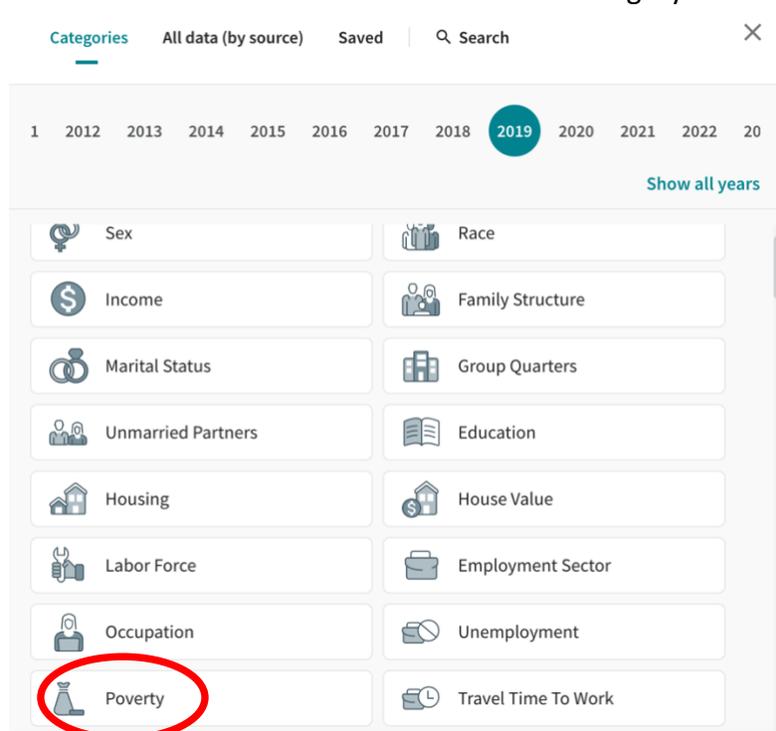
Step 4

Now we are going to change the data (or the information) displayed in the map. The map displays “Population Density” by default. You can change the data displayed by clicking on the “Change data” button found in the box at the top left-hand side of the screen.



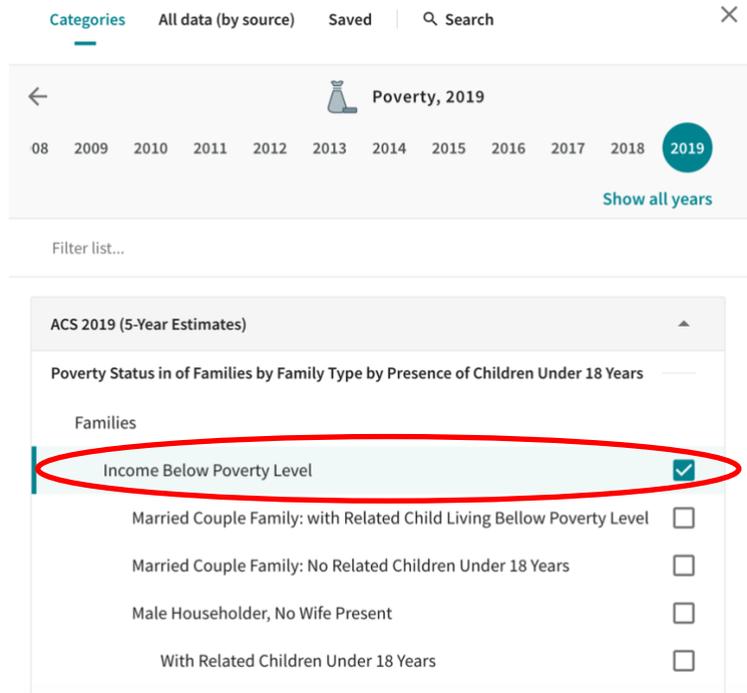
Step 5

Click on “Change data” and then scroll down and click on the category of data called, “Poverty.”



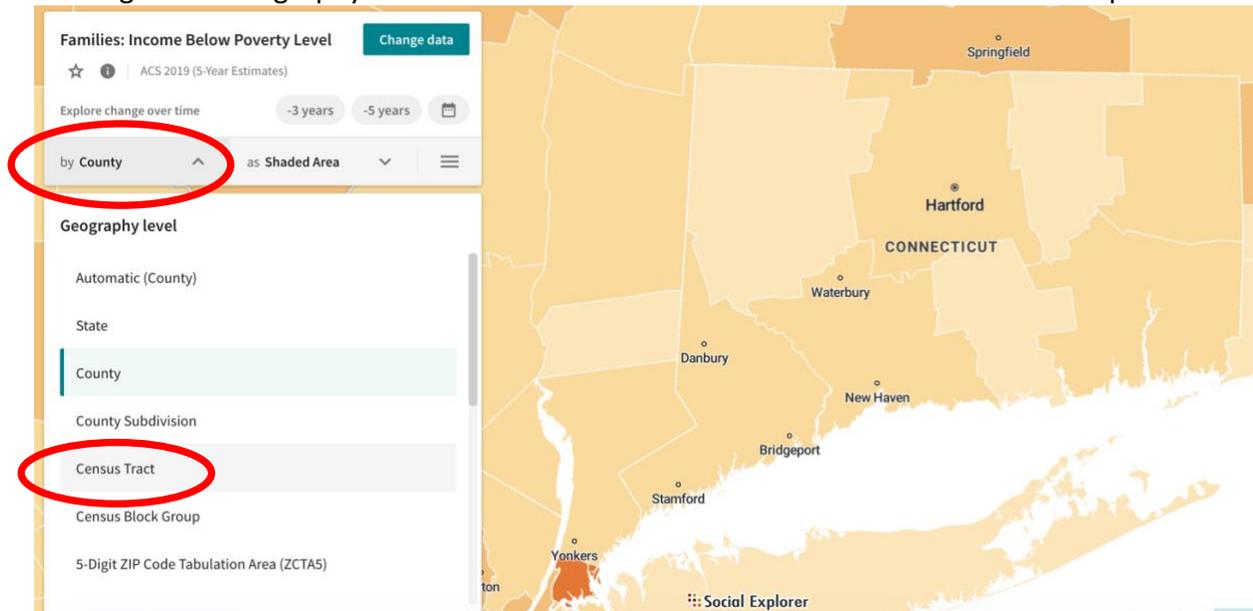
Step 6

After clicking on “Poverty,” click the variable called, “Income Below Poverty Level.” Clicking this variable will load the data from the variable into the map. Once you select the variable, close the box and go back to the map. Note how the map changed. Hover the mouse over different states to see descriptive statistics. What region of the U.S. had states with the highest poverty rates in 2019? What state had the highest poverty rate? What about the lowest poverty rate?



Step 7

Now zoom in on a state you are familiar with. If you’re having trouble choosing, zoom in on Connecticut. Then click the arrow next to “by County” (see picture below). You will then be able to change the “Geography Level.” Click on “Census Tract” and then return to the map.

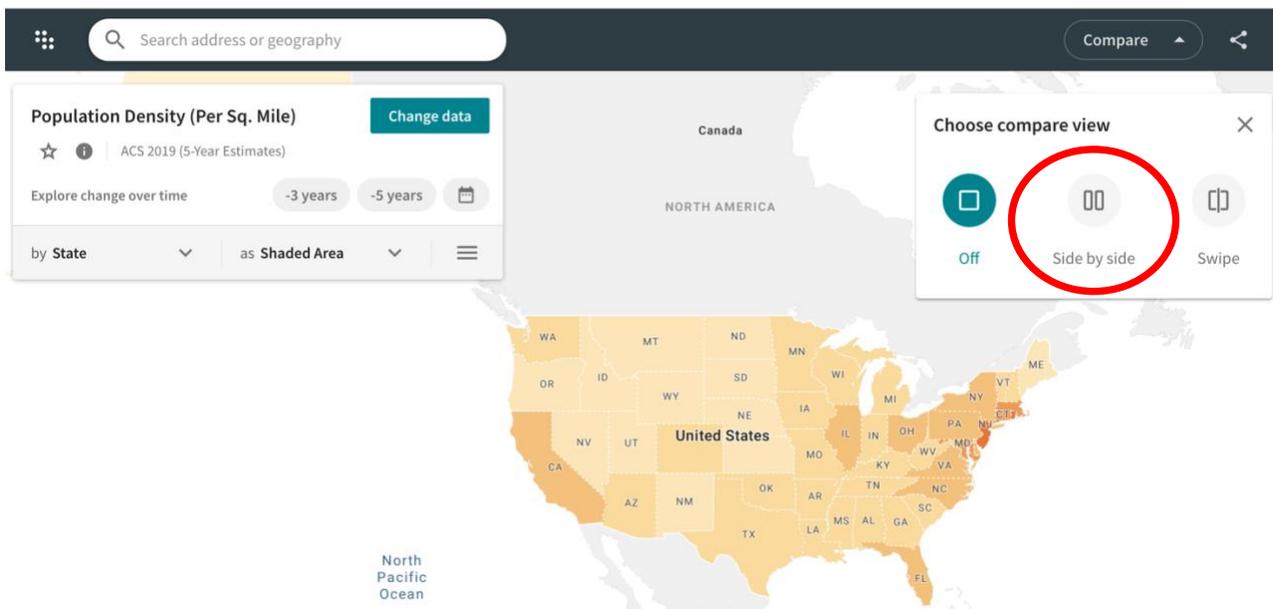
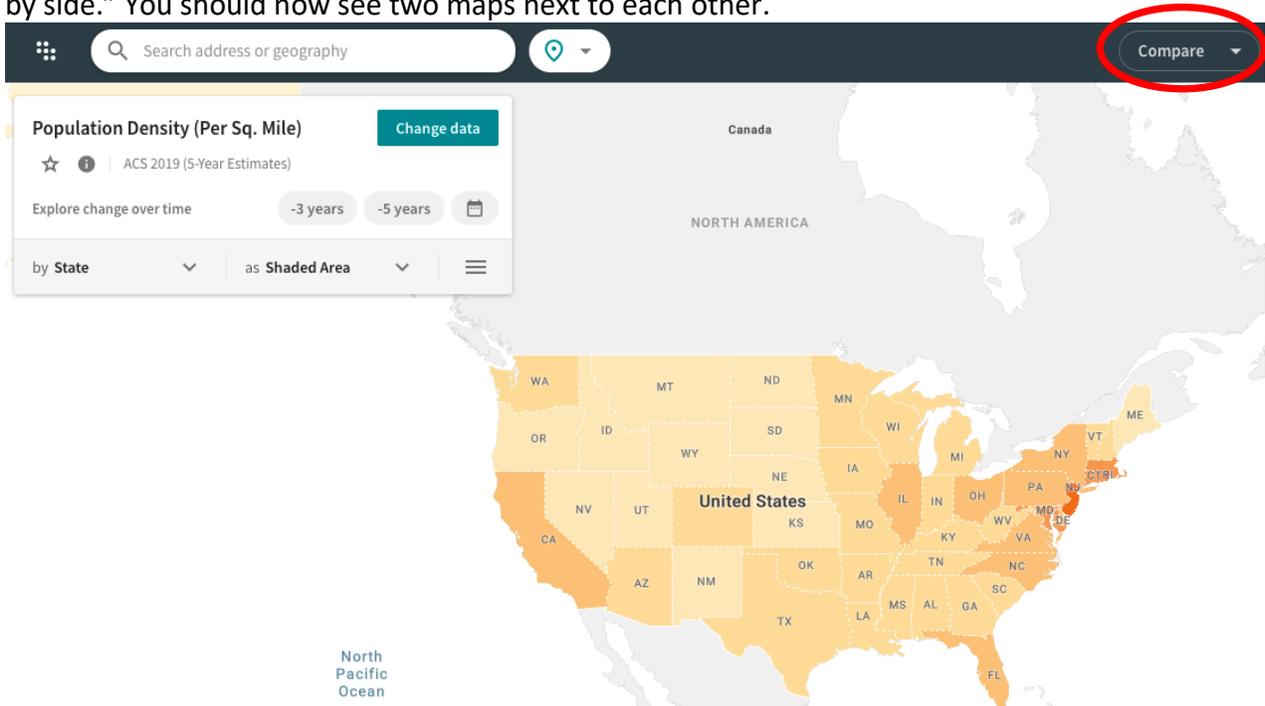


Step 8

The census tracts will allow you to see the state you chose in greater detail. Census tracts are similar in size to neighborhoods so now you are looking a neighborhood-level poverty rates. What does the distribution of poverty look like in this state? Are high-poverty neighborhoods concentrated in certain parts of the state? If so, where? What about low-poverty neighborhoods?

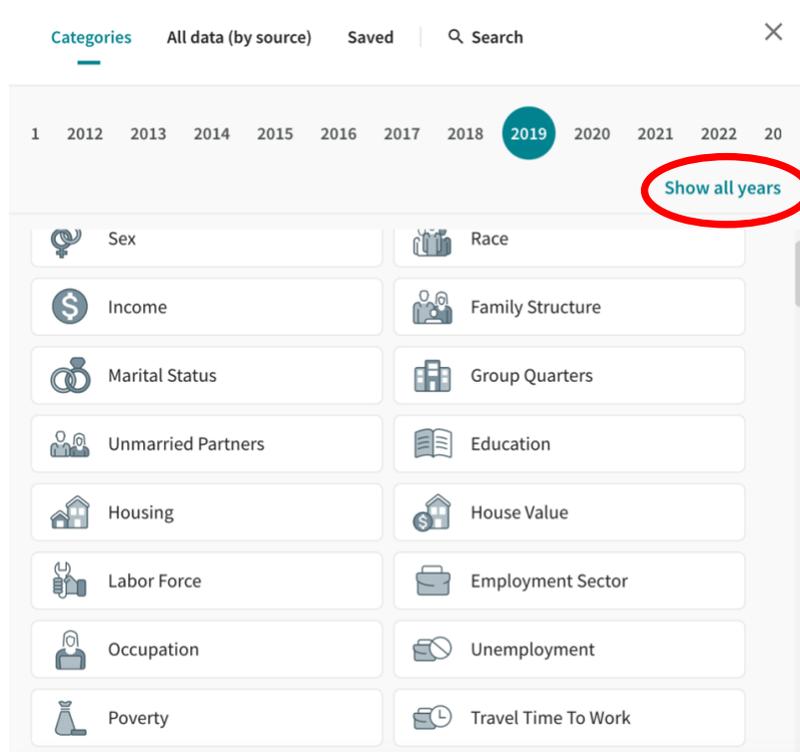
Step 9

Now try evaluating changes in poverty over time. To do this, go to the map and then click on the button at the top of the screen called “Compare.” When the options appear, click on “Side by side.” You should now see two maps next to each other.



Step 10

For the map on the left, click “Change Data,” then click “Show all years” and select “1990.” Then select the poverty variable, “Families: Income in 1989 below poverty level.” Close the box. Leave the map on the right as it is; it should have data from 2019 already loaded. For the state you are observing, did the distribution of poverty change between 1990 and 2019, or does it look the same?

**Step 11**

Based on the maps you created, can you draw any conclusions about the distribution of poverty in the U.S.? If so, what are they?