

East Metro Pulse

User Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help you use East Metro Pulse data to answer your questions and help you with your planning, programming and advocacy efforts. This is designed to be used with the East Metro Pulse data book (PDF and interactive online versions), but the guidance can also be helpful for any other robust population-based data sources.

East Metro Pulse Data, what it is (and what it isn't)

East Metro Pulse is a good source of information about East Metro residents' opinions, perceptions and experiences with the surveyed topics. It is not a good source for East Metro residents' status on the survey topics. If you want to know East Metro residents' status on topics like housing status, employment status or educational attainment, it is better to use MNCompass.org or other sources.

Identify the relevant East Metro Pulse survey question(s)

- Review the survey itself, which is in the Appendix of the PDF version of the data book, which is available online at eastmetropulse.org.
- If you're using the PDF data book, you can look at the table of contents to see a complete list of the tables – there is one table for every question on the survey.
- If you're using the interactive data book, you can go to "Survey questions" and see what questions were asked by topic. A list of all relevant questions will pop up after you choose a topic. Please note that the respondents' demographic information might be informative to you and your topic area of interest as well!
- You can also search for a specific word or question in the interactive data book. For example, if you are interested in learning more about residents' attitudes about schools in their area, you can search "school" and see the questions that included that word.

Determine what demographic or geographic data you want to see

After you determine that there are relevant data included in East Metro Pulse to help answer your question(s), then you need to identify the specific data that you want to use.

- Each table in the data book breaks out the survey results by region, gender, age, education level, household income, housing status, home language, and race/ethnicity.
- In the interactive data book, you can choose the demographic group(s) or geography of interest under "Result types"; you can select as few or as many as you want.

Create your own data tables

In the interactive data book, after you select at least one result type and question, data tables immediately pop up on the screen. You can download these tables as an Excel document to allow you to easily use and visualize the data.

If you're using the PDF data book, you can manually identify the data you want to use (which may only be two or four cells out of the entire table). Because there is so much data in each table in the data book, this step will make it easier to hone in on what you want to say about your question. Make sure to name your table with an informative and accurate name, and to label the rows and columns.

Determine what demographic or geographic data you want to see

After you have identified the data tables of interest to you, spend some time figuring out what it means. Of course, your interpretation should align with what the data show, but you should pick which data you want to use and decide how to frame the data to make it work for your purposes. When sharing key findings from East Metro Pulse (or any survey), it is important to use the same wording as the survey questions used when describing results, so the meaning does not get changed.

While these data are a great resource for nonprofits and community groups to use to help answer your questions, be sure not to stretch your conclusions too far!

- We only know how respondents answered the questions that we actually asked them. We do not know how they might have answered other questions we could or should have asked them, nor do we know why they answered this way.

It is important to be aware of the margin of error for this survey data.

- There is always some margin of error when a representative sample is used to generalize to a population. The margin of error is about 3% overall for the East Metro, but it is larger for each subgeography and subgroup
- Therefore, it is best to only consider differences of at least 10 percentage points as "real" differences that are not likely just due to chance, and that may have a practical impact on people's lives.

It is important to use caution when comparing across groups, due to the margin of error, as described above, and because cultural differences in survey responding and understanding of various issues may also affect differences across groups.

Then use your data – Summarize your findings in writing, or make a chart, graph, or other visual to emphasize the key points

There are many ways to use your data. You can develop social media posts, headlines, or soundbites that will draw attention to your key points. Or you can create a graph, chart or other visual to help your audience understand your key messages.

Always cite the data source on any charts, tables, or graphs. For this data source, the proper citation is: East Metro Pulse, 2018, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, Saint Paul, Minnesota (eastmetropulse.org).