

DATA MATTERS

August 2014

HOW COOL ARE SENIORS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

By Katherine Stuehrk

RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC

Explore the data and learn more about senior poverty, cooling centers, and the impact of heat on seniors with these resources:

Peruse the [poverty and cooling center data set](#) we put together to see what jumps out at you

Explore data on [Chicago Community areas](#)

Read about the [effects of heat on seniors](#)

Learn more about [City of Chicago weather relief services](#)

DATA SOURCES

City of Chicago Data Portal, Cooling Centers, as of 2014.

Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates program.

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As temps heat up, most of us crank up our AC or crash somewhere cooler. But what about the 48,000 poor Chicago seniors who are less likely to have air conditioning, are much less mobile, and are far more susceptible to the dangers of heat and humidity?

That's where the City of Chicago's cooling centers come in. There are 113 public cooling centers scattered throughout the city during the summer months. We got to wondering, how accessible are these cooling centers to the seniors who likely need them most?

Cooling centers are located in places seniors would likely be comfortable going.

Housed in a mix of public libraries, police stations, senior centers, and community centers, cooling centers are located in neighborhood institutions that generally seem to be places seniors already go or would feel safe going.

- 78 cooling centers are in public libraries
- 23 are in police stations
- 6 are in community service centers
- 6 are in regional senior centers

47% of poor Chicago seniors do not have a cooling center within a quarter mile of their home.

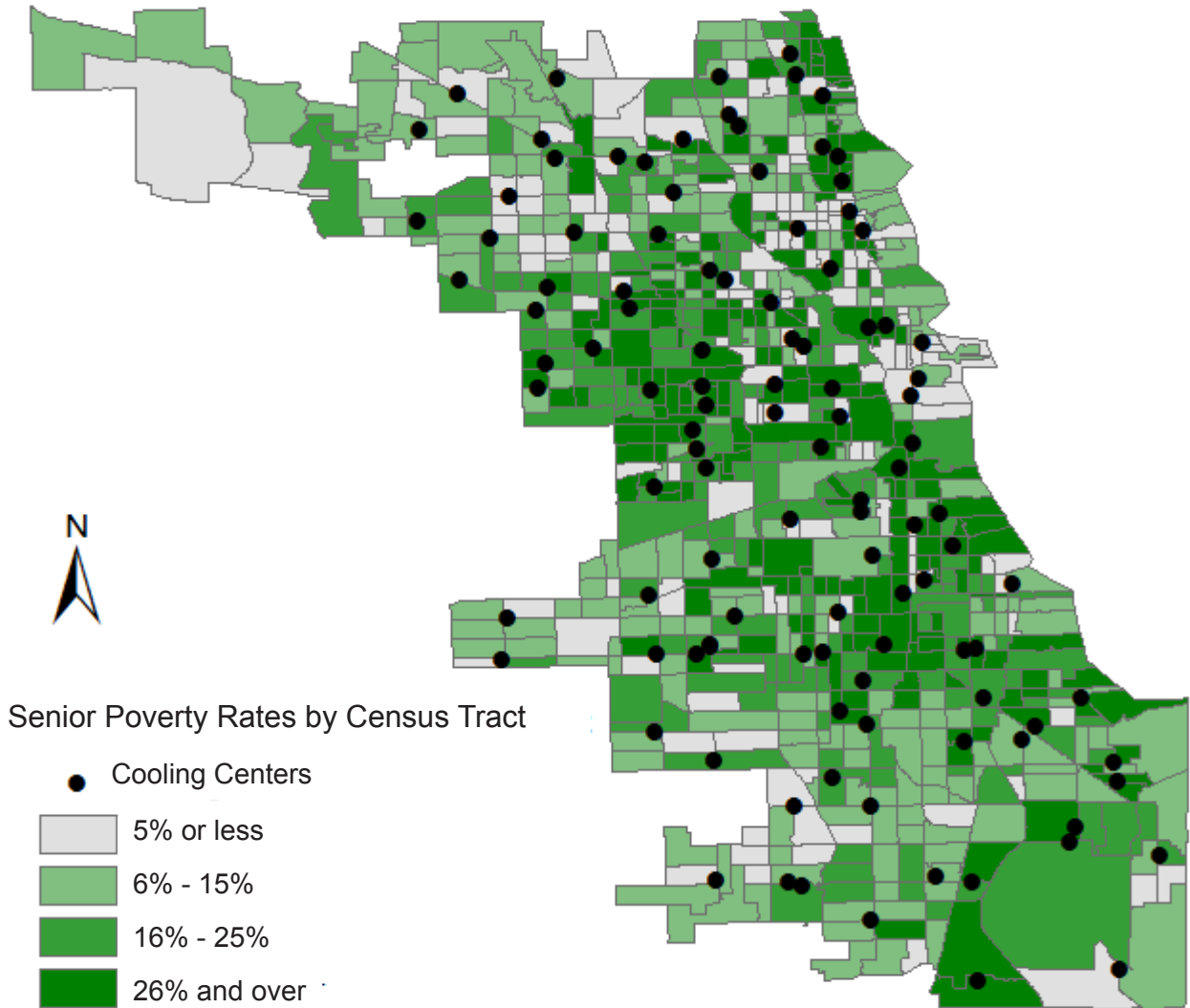
Sixty eight of Chicago's 77 community areas have at least one cooling center. But community areas can cover many miles, and on a scorching hot day, walking far or waiting for public transit can be unsafe. Over 22,000 poor Chicago seniors live in a census tract that is over a quarter mile from a cooling center.

80% or more of the cooling centers are open during daytime hours Monday through Saturday. Hopefully, though, it doesn't get too hot on Sunday, when only 26% of centers are open.

With most library, community, and senior centers closed on Sundays, seniors must rely mostly on cooling centers at police stations. These 29 cooling centers are farther apart, leaving large swaths of poor senior residents quite far from a cooling center. In fact, on Sundays, 83% of poor Chicago seniors do not have a cooling center within a quarter mile of them.

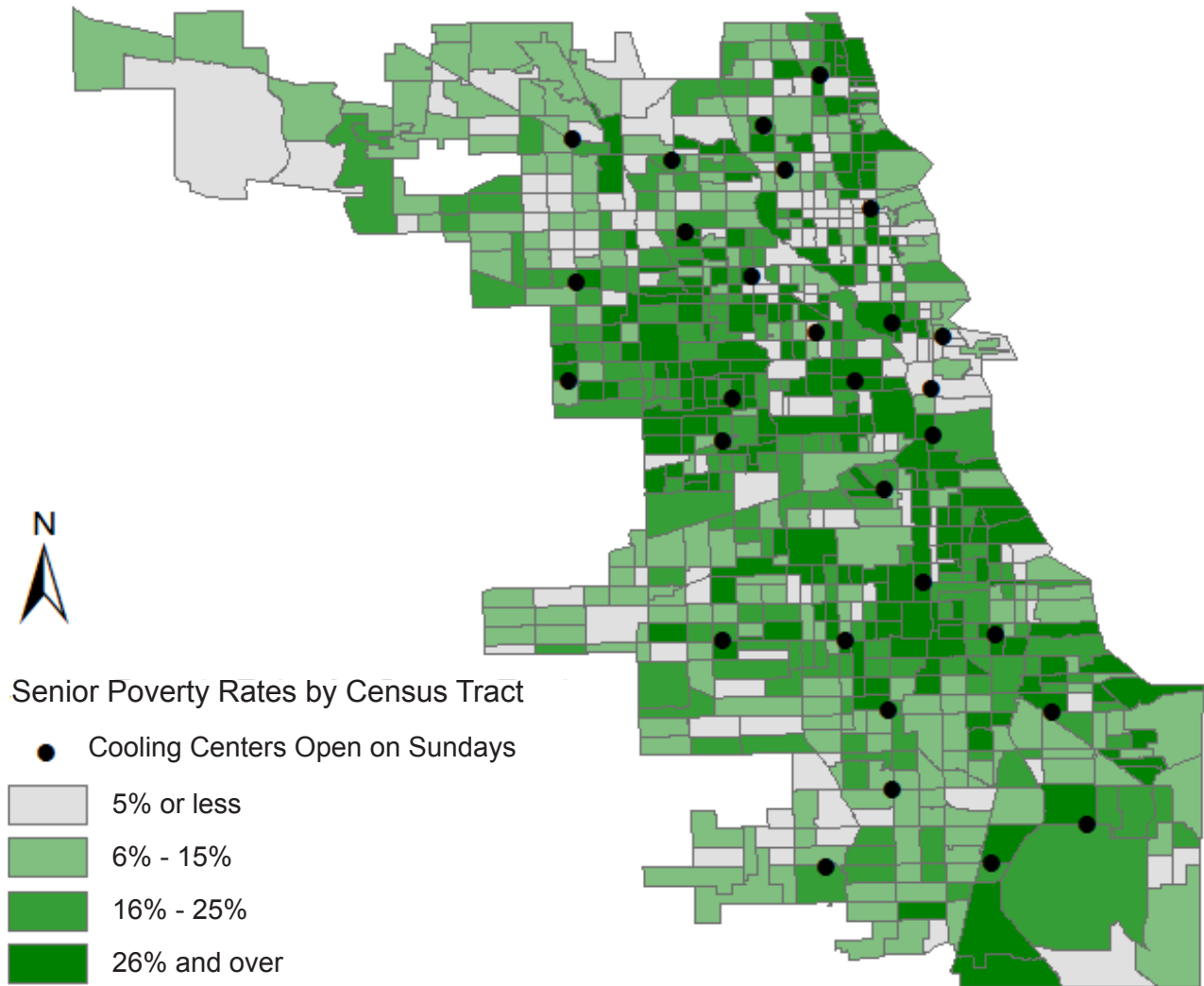
Check out the maps on the following pages to see how cooling centers are dispersed throughout the city in relation to senior poverty.

CITY OF CHICAGO COOLING CENTERS AND SENIOR POVERTY BY CENSUS TRACT



Sources: City of Chicago Data Portal, Cooling Centers as of 2014. Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates program. The 2012 poverty threshold for seniors (age 65 and over) is \$11,011 for one person and \$13,892 for two people annually.

CITY OF CHICAGO SUNDAY COOLING CENTERS AND SENIOR POVERTY BY CENSUS TRACT



Sources: City of Chicago Data Portal, Cooling Centers as of 2014. Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates program. The 2012 poverty threshold for seniors (age 65 and over) is \$11,011 for one person and \$13,892 for two people annually.

The Social IMPACT Research Center (IMPACT), a Heartland Alliance program, conducts applied research in the form of evaluations, data services, and studies for decision makers in nonprofits, advocacy groups, foundations, governments, coalitions, and the media to help them inform and improve their work. Visit www.socialimpactresearchcenter.org to learn more.

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