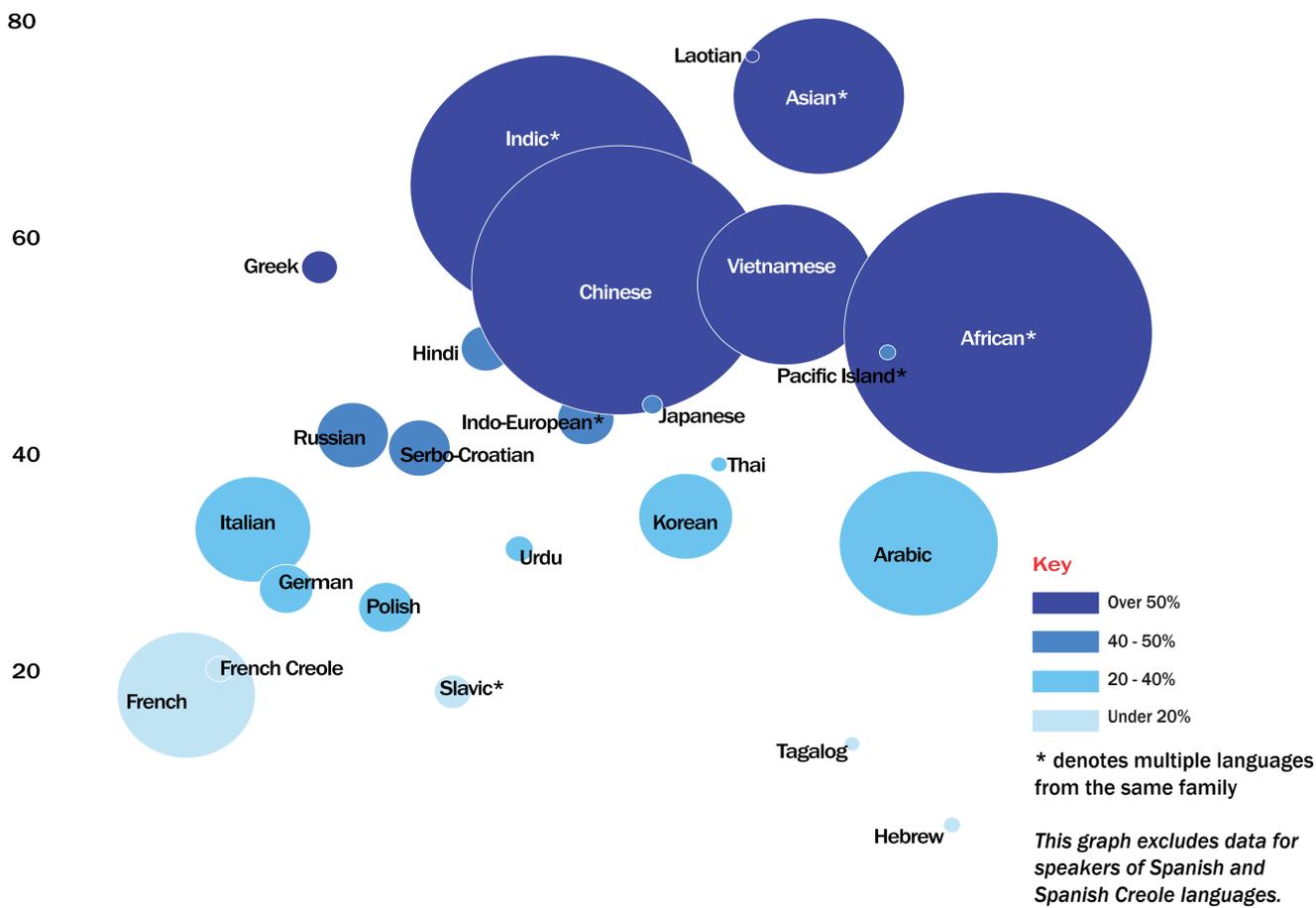# SYRACUSE: Seeing Our Struggles

% Who Struggle with English

This graph looks at the populations of Syracuse residents who speak langauges other than English at home, and what percentage of each have low confidence using English. Population sizes in this graph (bubble size) range from 100 to 2000.

Key
- Over 50%
- 40 - 50%
- 20 - 40%
- Under 20%

* denotes multiple languages from the same family

This graph excludes data for speakers of Spanish and Spanish Creole languages.
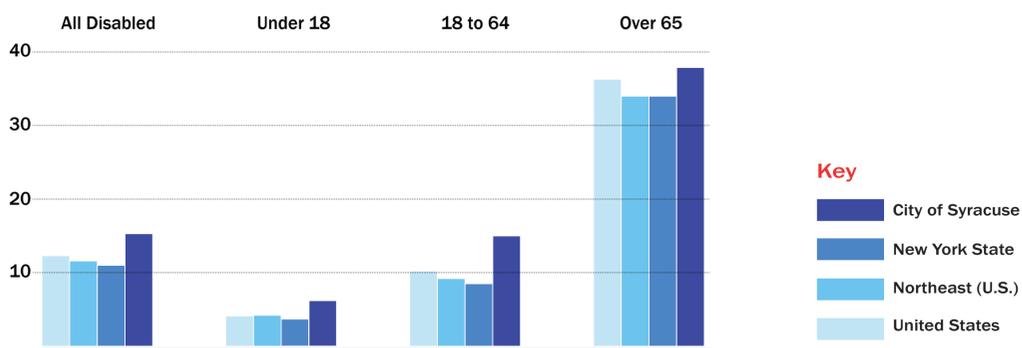
Story and Questions:

These days, we live behind our screens, heads down, dependent on social networks and our smartphones to inform the way we see the world around us. It is all-too easy to go about our lives ignoring the things we don't always see. These graphs aim to make us more socially-consious neighbors and residents.

Coming from a public library perspective, my driving question centers on identifying underserved portions of the Syracuse population. In particular, I am interested in determining minority populations as speakers of languages other than English, as well as the economically and physically disadvantaged. Here I have used data from the U.S. Census, American Communities Survey, to compare the trends in Syracuse with those of the state, region, and nation.
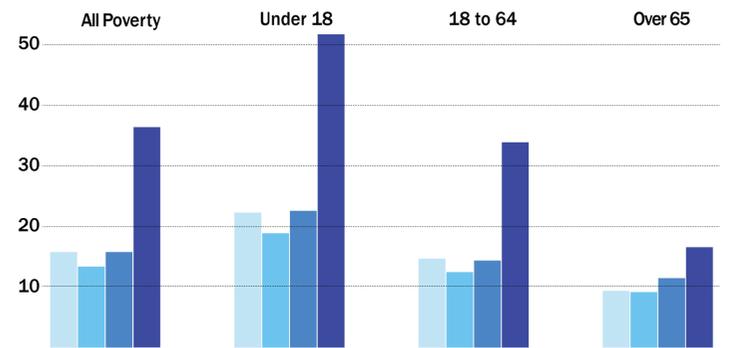
The first interesting part of this data is seeing how speakers of languages in particular language families (Asian, Indic, Romance, Slavic, African, etc) all tend to report similar degrees of confidence when it comes to speaking English.

But perhaps my most shocking findings are in the comparisons of Syracuse's poverty and disability rates with those of the rest of the country.

% Disability

Key
- City of Syracuse
- New York State
- Northeast (U.S.)
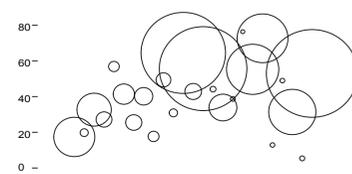- United States

% Poverty

Who Cares?

We can see direct applications of all of the findings presented here in government and of course any public service industries, including libraries, hospitals, schools, et cetera.
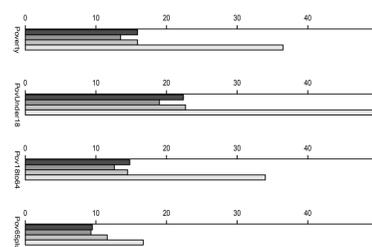
When the public library is performing an assessment of the community's needs, this kind of information can inform its future plans with regard to programs, services, and new hires. For example, they may want to hire a new member of the team with East Asian language skills (Vietnamese or Chinese, perhaps). When planning the year's budget, they may want to allocate additional resources to purchasing a bookmobile or book delivery service to foster deeper connections with those without the ability to visit the library themselves.

All that said, I think those already in public service may not be too surprised at these numbers. Those of us who live the majority of our lives in and around the university campus may actually have the most to gain from these visualizations -- seeing is believing, and sometimes belief can make good things happen.
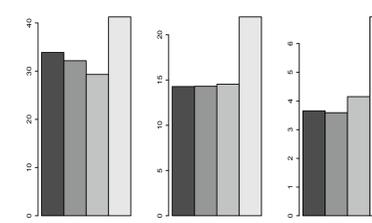
Design Process

This is the plot I started with. I loved looking through this data, and wanted to improve on the grouped bar chart I created with a similar dataset earlier in the semester.

I thought it would be easier to compare the multiple smalls this way, with multiple rows and one column, but in reality I think it turned out a bit more difficult. I opted for the last style of the last sketch instead.

Sadly, these vectors didn't make it into the final poster. It combined educational attainment numbers with the availability of computers and an internet subscription in the home. I thought it might be a little too complicated to connect the dots, in the end.