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Notes on implementing the cemetery lab:

1 group used census data (because they wanted data to compare races; mortality rates for white and black men in the US during the 1960s)

4 groups used cemetery data from online sources

The census data provides a snapshot, so the questions being answered with census data are slightly different than the ones that can be answered with cemetery data.

Problems/issues:

Cemetery data:

* Some cemeteries don’t have 200 records online, so students had to combine data from multiple cemeteries.
* Also, students should understand that they are comparing groups (within or between cemeteries). Most groups did this well, comparing males and females or one sex from two different eras, etc.

Census data:

* Finding the right census data took a little bit of time
* Understanding that this is a snapshot and that it doesn’t track individual lifespans
* In at least one case, the number of individuals increased in age class compared to the previous age class (explanations: post-WWI baby boom? Immigration?)
* Using census data is much faster from a data collection standpoint—more class time can be spent on how to calculate values for life table

I told students they didn’t have to answer the study questions but could use them in their presentations if they wanted more to talk about.

Students needed help with Excel—sorting data to organize into age classes; typing formulas or using pull-down feature to fill rows; and editing graphs to have the right X and Y values

They could use statistical test to compare survivorship curves (e.g. log-rank test), but I didn’t teach them how to do this in this implementation. I recommend it for other next time.