

Types of Mapping Software (benefits and drawbacks)

Software Name	GIS capabilities	Expense	Ease of Use	Data Input/Output	Comments
ArcGIS¹	Excellent; considered industry leader in GIS analysis	Fee-based license required	Quite complex, takes time to be proficient; very good online support and documentation	High quality; many formats available for input and output	More complexity than some organizations may need
Diva GIS	Several types of data analysis and display; limited data classification methods	Free	Somewhat complex; but online documentation is available	Bitmapped output; limited layout and labeling; imports a wide variety of formats	Can be confusing; several versions available; limited output
Q-GIS²	Fairly comprehensive; good analysis available and customizable with Python language	Free	Point-and-click interface will be familiar to users of other GIS software	Imports and exports in a wide variety of formats	Can be a good choice for experienced GIS users with limited resources
E2G Tool³	Not a true GIS; intended only for data classification and map display	Free	Easy, good online documentation including video tutorials	Input process helps identify data problems; output is best for screen viewing	Limited number of countries available for mapping; easy and quick to learn and use

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Dev-Info⁴	Limited; mainly a data display tool	Free	Easy to use with available boundaries and data; free online support available	Easy to share maps and incorporate into publications; but few sub-country boundary files are available	Data formats not easily converted; limited advice on producing maps from own data
HealthMapper⁵	Limited; mainly a data display tool but can show buffers as well as class data	Free	Moderately easy, with good online documentation and tutorials provided	Limited; difficult to update content, but maps are easy to read and share	No plans to update in future
EpiMap⁶	Limited, but with some shapefile editing capabilities and some data analysis	Free	Moderately easy, may be a good choice for EpiInfo users	Inputs shapefiles and Access databases, outputs to bitmap	Limited output choices; boundary files provided have not been updated recently

¹ from ESRI, Environmental Systems Research Institute

² also known as Quantum GIS

³ Excel to Google Earth Thematic Mapping Tool, from MEASURE Evaluation

⁴ from UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund

⁵ from WHO, World Health Organization

⁶ from CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention