

Handout for November 2020 Newsletter Mapping Travel Economics in GeoFRED®

Purpose.

1. Create a county-level geographical map of mean commuting times.
2. Edit the map by modifying its legend and color.
3. Interpret the information displayed in the map.

Pedagogical Rationale. This assignment requires that you first search for data online, select a particular series, and display it in the form of a geographical map. Next, you will edit the format of the map. Lastly, you will interpret the economic information displayed in the map. These tasks will develop your proficiency in searching for, transforming, and interpreting data.

Grading. Your grade will be determined by (a) how precisely you complete the search and transformation data tasks and (b) how accurately you interpret the data.

Steps to Search for and Transform the Data.

1. Access <https://geofred.stlouisfed.org> and click on “Build New Map.”
2. Click on “Choose Data” and under “Region Type” select “County.”
3. Under “Data:” search for “Mean Commuting Time for Workers (5-year estimate).”
4. Select “Frequency: Annual,” “Units: Minutes,” and “2018” as the date.
5. Click on “EDIT LEGEND” and select from “Interval method” the option “User Defined.”
6. Define the maximum interval values by typing the following values in each interval box:
 - 20
 - 25
 - 35
 - 40
 - 45
7. Click on “CHOOSE COLORS” and select from “Multi Hue,” the second-to-left-most color scheme on the first row (tagged “ylgnbu”).

Discussion Prompts. Answer the following questions:

1. In 2018, which of these two counties reported longer mean commuting times for workers: Cook County, IL (home to the City of Chicago) or Los Angeles County, CA (home to the City of Los Angeles)?
2. Describe the opportunity cost of commuting times for workers, both going into work and returning home. Explain how working remotely and not commuting to work would impact work and personal routines.
3. Consider the wide range of mean commuting times reported for counties in Texas. Explain why large differences in population density across counties can explain that phenomenon.
4. Consider the narrow range of mean commuting times reported for counties in South Carolina. Explain why small differences in population density across counties can explain that phenomenon.