

Handout for January 2021 Newsletter
Mapping the Economics of Education in GeoFRED®

Purpose.

1. Create county-level geographical maps of educational attainment and unemployment.
2. Edit the maps by modifying their legends and colors.
3. Interpret the information displayed in the maps.

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 “Bachelor's Degree or Higher (5-year estimate).”
4. Select “Frequency: Annual,” “Units: Percent,” and “2017” as the date.
5. Click on “EDIT LEGEND” and select from “Interval method” the option “Fractile.”
6. Click on “CHOOSE COLORS” and select from “Single Hue,” the second-to-right-most color scheme (tagged “oranges”).

7. Open a new tab, access <https://geofred.stlouisfed.org> and click on “Build New Map.”
8. Click on “Choose Data” and under “Region Type” select “County.”
9. Under “Data:” search for “Unemployment rate.”
10. Select “Frequency: Annual,” “Units: Percent,” and “2017” as the date.
11. Click on “EDIT LEGEND” and select from “Interval method” the option “Fractile.”
12. Click on “CHOOSE COLORS” and select from “Multi Hue,” the second-to-left-most color scheme on the second row (tagged “rdpu”).

Discussion Prompts. Answer the following questions:

1. Compare both maps. What differences or similarities do you see between educational attainment and unemployment across geographical areas in the U.S.?
2. Do the maps show a direct or an inverse relationship between educational attainment and unemployment?
3. Why does this relationship exist? Explain how completing a college education contributes to building human capital and how knowledge and skills give workers more opportunities to find employment.