

Activity 9d: Unemployment—A Geographical Look

This activity uses a different data tool—FRED® maps—to visualize the labor market component of the Great Recession, and you will find data that pertain to the employment and unemployment picture. FRED® maps are great and simple tools for viewing and transforming official data.

1. Go to FRED® <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/> and sign in to your personal FRED® account.
2. In the search bar, type in “unemployment rate in Alaska” (or any other state name). One of the first few results should be **Percent, Monthly, Seasonally Adjusted**. Click on this. What is the frequency? What are the units?
3. Next, click the **View Map** button. You now have a choropleth map of the United States showing the monthly, seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in each state.
4. What is the most recent date displayed on the map? What are the units? What is the source of the data? What is the last reported value in your state? (Hover on your home state and a pop up appears.)
5. Which states currently have the highest rates of unemployment? (If some of the states are grayed out, change the date field above the map and select the prior month.)
6. Mouse over each of these high-unemployment states and the rate will appear. Which state has the highest unemployment rate? What is that rate?

Tools *for* Teaching with FRED®

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7. Next, use the **Date** box above the map to change the default date setting, which shows the most recent data, to a custom month and year. Select October 2010, the date of the highest level of unemployment resulting from the 2007-09 recession. Which states had the highest rates of unemployment then?

8. Mouse over each of these high-unemployment states and the monthly rate will appear. Which state had the highest unemployment rate? What was that rate? What may have been happening in that state's economy?

9. Save your FRED® map by clicking **Save Map** in the **Account Tools** menu. Type a name for your map in the space provided. You may add it to a **Category** you create. Click **Save Map**.

10. Dashboard option: Open the dashboard in which you want to save the map. Click **Add Widget** and select **Map**. Find your map on the list that appears. Click it and then click **Add Widget to Dashboard**.

11. Return to FRED®. Next, change the date to the most recent month with complete data and repeat the steps to save the map.

12. Open your downloaded maps or dashboard and compare the maps side by side. What other general observations can you make by comparing and contrasting these two maps, especially regarding changes in the unemployment picture?