

Activity 9d: Unemployment—A Geographical Look

This activity uses a different data tool—GeoFRED®—to visualize the labor market component of the Great Recession, and you will find data that pertain to the employment and unemployment picture. GeoFRED® is a great and simple tool for finding, viewing, and manipulating official data.

1. Go to GeoFRED® <https://geofred.stlouisfed.org/>.
2. Click on **Build New Map** in the green box in the upper right of the screen.
3. Near the upper left of the screen, click on the **Tools** menu. Under the menu item **Region Type**, change the setting to **State**.
4. Next, click in the **Data** box, and in the search bar, type in “unemployment rate” and click the selection. You now have a choropleth map of the United States showing the unemployment rate in each state.
5. What is the most recent date displayed on the map? What are the units? Click your home state and on the pop-up that appears, click **Details and Data**. What is the source of the data? What is the last reported value?
6. Which states currently have the highest rates of unemployment? (If some of the states are grayed out, scroll through the **Date** field in the legend and select the prior month.)
7. Mouse over or click on each of these high-unemployment states and the rate will appear. If the rates are not visible, zoom in until they display. Which state has the highest unemployment rate? What is that rate?

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8. Next, go back to the **Tools** menu and you'll see that further below the **Data** box is a **Date** box. The default date setting shows the most recent data. Change the date to the month/year of the highest level of unemployment from the 2007-09 recession. Which states had the highest rates of unemployment then?

9. Mouse over or click on 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?

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

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

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

13. 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 the improvement in the unemployment picture?

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