

Key Economic Data by State: Poster Activity (Answer Key)

Discover key economic data for your state with these posters from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. The posters feature data from the St. Louis Fed's free data tools, FRED and GeoFRED. Click this [link](#) to select your state's poster. Answer the following questions to evaluate the data found on the poster. Click the graphs to find answers to some questions.

1. What were your state's, or a neighboring state's, top three employment sectors in the most recent year represented on the graph? *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Texas as an example, in 2015 the three largest employment sectors were: 1) Trade, Transportation, and Utilities with 2.39 million employees; 2) Professional and Business Services with 1.59 million employees; 3) Education and Health Services with 1.58 million employees.*
2. Select one job workers from your state's largest employment sector would perform. Identify the educational attainment required for that job. *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Texas as an example, employees in the number one sector as identified in the answer to question one work in retail and wholesale trade as well as transportation and public utilities. Cashiers at retail stores require no formal educational credential.*
3. What was the top employment sector by average weekly earnings in the most recent year on the graph? What might explain the higher average weekly earnings in this sector? *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Texas as an example, in 2016 the largest employment sector by average weekly earnings was manufacturing at \$1,176.55. The supply of and demand for labor, related to workers' productivity and relative to the derived demand for the products produced, contribute to higher average weekly earnings for workers in the manufacturing sector.*
4. Click this [link](#) and review the infographic to answer these questions. What is human capital? How is the educational attainment of workers related to their median weekly earnings? *Human capital is the skills, knowledge, and training people possess, measured by their economic value. Workers with higher levels of educational attainment have higher median weekly earnings. An example from data featured on the infographic is as follows: in 2014 workers with an associate's degree received \$792 in median weekly earnings, while those with less than a high school diploma made only \$488.*
5. Click on the employment sector graph, and use the slider to find 2006 data. How many workers were employed in the construction sector in 2006? Reset the slider to find 2010 data. How does the number of workers employed in the construction sector in 2010 compare to the 2006 data? What is one possible explanation for the change in this data? *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Texas as an example, in 2006 there were 605,600 workers in the construction sector and in 2010 that number had fallen by 41,200 to 564,400. Fewer new homes and commercial buildings were being built during the recession of 2007–09, which resulted in a decreased demand for construction workers.*



Key Economic Data by State: Poster Activity (Answer Key Continued)

6. What is the average weekly earnings for workers in the leisure and hospitality sector? What is one possible explanation for your answer? *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Texas as an example, in 2016 the average weekly earnings for workers in the leisure and hospitality sector was \$365.67. Many workers in this sector work for minimum wage or slightly higher than that wage as hourly laborers. In addition, many employees in this sector work in low-skill jobs that require no formal educational credential.*
7. What factors contribute to certain counties having a higher concentration of people holding bachelor's degrees or higher? *State universities and colleges as well as business firms that require workers to attain formal educational credentials are often located in counties that have a larger percentage of people holding bachelor's degrees or higher, according to the data represented on the map.*
8. What is the relationship between counties with the lowest per capita income and their percentage of people holding bachelor's degrees or higher? *In many instances, but not always, counties with the lowest per capita personal income also have a lower percentage of people holding bachelor's degrees or higher. Since per capita personal income is determined by dividing personal income by total population, the population density of a given county relative to the mix of business firms/employers or presence of a university or research center may result in an inverse rather than direct relationship between per capita personal income and the percentage of people with higher levels of educational attainment.*
9. What is your county's per capita personal income? What is the percentage of residents with at least a bachelor's degree or higher in your county? What might explain this data? *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Travis County, Texas, as an example, the per capita personal income in 2014 was \leq \$57,000 and the percentage holding bachelor's degrees or higher was \leq 49. The state capital, Austin, is located in Travis County. Also, it is the home of the University of Texas. In 2014, it had an estimated population of 1.15 million and was the fifth-most populous county in Texas.*
10. On the graph depicting unemployment rates, what do the grey shaded areas represent? *The grey shaded areas represent periods when the economy was in recession.*
11. Click on the unemployment rate graph. Use the cursor to hover over the shaded area closest to 2008, which will be December 2007, and identify the state and national civilian unemployment rates. Move your cursor to the far right side of that grey shaded area and identify the state and national civilian unemployment rates. What happened to both unemployment rates during this period? Explain your reasoning. *Answers will vary. Using Texas as an example, in December 2007, Texas's unemployment rate was 4.3 percent while the civilian unemployment rate was 5.0 percent. By the end of the recession in June 2009, Texas's rate was 8.1 percent, while the civilian unemployment rate was 9.5 percent. During the most recent recession, 2007–09, both state and national unemployment rates increased as employers laid off workers.*

Key Economic Data by State: Poster Activity (Answer Key Continued)

- 12.** How did your state's unemployment rate compare to the civilian unemployment rate during the period identified in question 11? *Answers will vary depending on the state data. Using Texas as an example, while both the state and national unemployment rates increased during the recession, Texas's rate was lower than the national unemployment rate.*