

## American Creative Class

In my research, I inquired into where members of the American creative class concentrate, and what factors correspond with the places they concentrate. What decides where members of the creative class go? Is it the income of a place? Or its population density? Do other qualities of the place matter? Are regional differences important? After some initial research, I narrowed down my question: how much does it matter that a place is urban, and how much does the income of a place matter, in drawing creative people?

Members of the creative class are defined as people who create new ideas or things. Every population has some creative workers— doctors, teachers, judges— but we exclude those jobs for the purposes of our research. Because some places have *extra* creative capacity: artists, engineers, architects. These are workers who spend time building a new world, whether artistically or physically.

Creative class is crucial to our economy. When predicting economic growth, many economists look towards new businesses, innovative investment, and new technologies. Richard Florida, a noted regional scientist, “focuses on people, arguing that the knowledge and ideas requisite for economic growth are embodied in occupations involving high levels of creativity” (ERS). These members of the creative class, Florida claims, can drive forward the economy of a place. As rural economies are increasingly left behind by a growing economy—and political fracture demonstrates the dangerous tension— it has become ever more important to diagnose and repair what causes geographic inequality.

The creative class might be important to our very survival, as well. We are in the throes of the climate crisis: storms threaten our shores, and wildfires rage in backyards. To stop the worst consequences, we need to decarbonize— and to accomplish that, we need engineering minds in every corner of the country, to dream up new ways the world can work. To stay resilient in the face of what comes, we need to be better connected, and that takes artists of the highest creative caliber. Our places need creative occupations now more than ever.

I used a few data sources to answer these questions. The American Community Survey includes incredible people-related information, like population density, age, and demographics. The USDA proved particularly helpful— the department is interested in supporting farming communities. So an extension of the USDA, the Economic Research Survey, gathered data on the creative class of people, as well as income.

I analyzed the data in R Code, by identifying a few notable variables: metro, migration, income. I asked, as stated above, what effect these variables had on the creative class in a place. Those results were transformed into graphs, with lines of best fit, and a regression model. To represent where creative class is concentrated, I also shared a table of the top 25 concentrated creative places, and a map of the top 100 creative counties. Together, this shows where the national population of creativity is concentrated, but also which spots are especially dense.

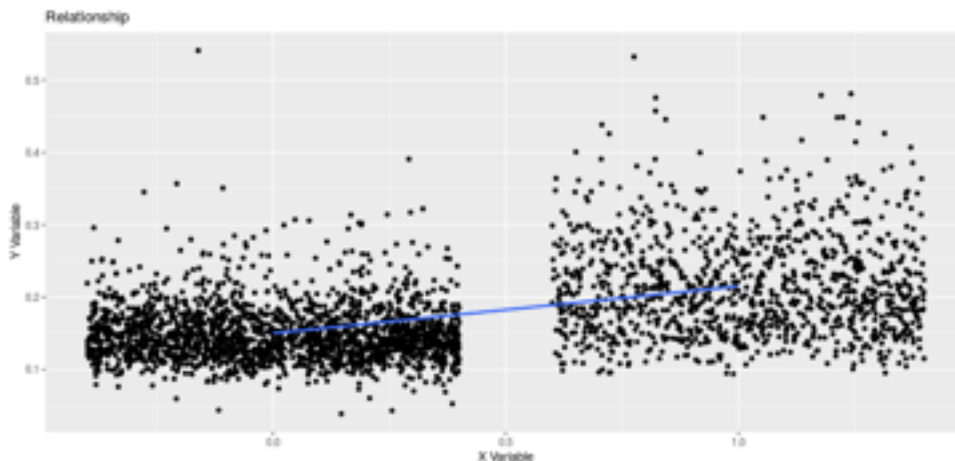
So where *are* members of the creative class?

## *Regression Model*

Estimate	Standard Error	Fit	P-Value	
Intercept	7.359211e-03	2.999358e-03	2.453596	1.419773e-02
Metro	3.843215e-02	1.541631e-03	24.929538	2.774920e-125
Income	5.834934e-06	1.176751e-07	49.585108	0.000000e+00

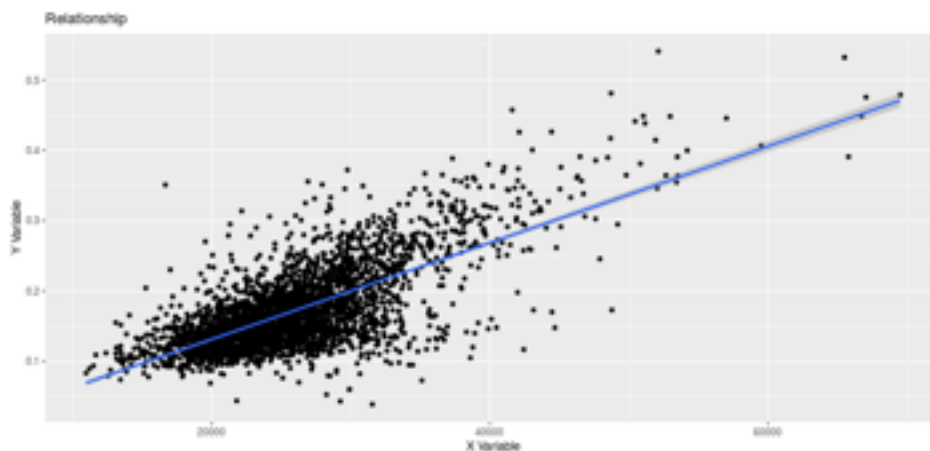
This table shows the impact of two factors on the creative share of a county: whether or not a county is urban, and the per capita income of a county. If the P-Value were higher than 0.05, it'd show a 'null hypothesis': the factor would have little to no influence on the share of creative class. But both of these factors have p-values far below 0.05, so they have a clear impact. The standard of error is low, and the fit is high, confirming that the relationship is strong. The final column, estimate, shows the specific impact of the factor on the creative share.

These numbers are all very low, because only a slim portion of a population belongs to the creative class. So relative to those numbers, whether or not a county is metro has a big impact on its share of creative class. Metro is a 1,2 choice, so either a county qualifies or not. Income is a broader range, so it takes more of an increase in income to correspond with more creative class. But as seen from the P-Value, income, too, has a very significant relationship with a county's share of the creative class.



*Graph A*

This graph affirms the findings from the model: if a county is a metropolitan area, it corresponds with an increase in creative class.



*Graph B*

This graph also affirms the model: the higher a county's per capita income, the greater its creative class.



### *Map of Creative Class*

The top 100 counties by creative class, in numbers rather than share, are shown on the map. Observe how they are centered around major cities, clustered on the coasts. These counties together hold 16 million members of the creative class. And, there are half as many members of the creative class in these 100 counties, as there are in the rest of the 3,000 counties combined! In other words-- the American creative class is highly concentrated.

Creative	County	Metro
0.5407	Los Alamos County	0
0.5320	Falls Church city	1
0.4809	Douglas County	1
0.4788	New York County	1
0.4754	Arlington County	1
0.4571	Collin County	1
0.4486	Howard County	1
0.4484	Marin County	1
0.4482	Fairfax County	1
0.4455	Alexandria city	1

This table, which shows the share of creative class rather than hard numbers, is strange because the top place isn't urban. But after more reflection, it makes sense. Los Alamos was where the government built the atom bomb! Lots of world-shifting engineers.

My research shows a conclusive link between the income and metropolitan nature of a place, and the corresponding share of creative class. But I am interested in next steps: does data show that creative place lead to more economic growth? What's the difference between artists and engineers? What compels creative class to change over time? My research sets a solid foundation, but there are more questions to answer.

**References**

Wojan, and McGranahan. "USDA ERS - The Creative Class: A Key To Rural Growth".  
Ers.Usga.Gov, 2019, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2007/april/the-creative-class-a-key-to-rural-growth/>.