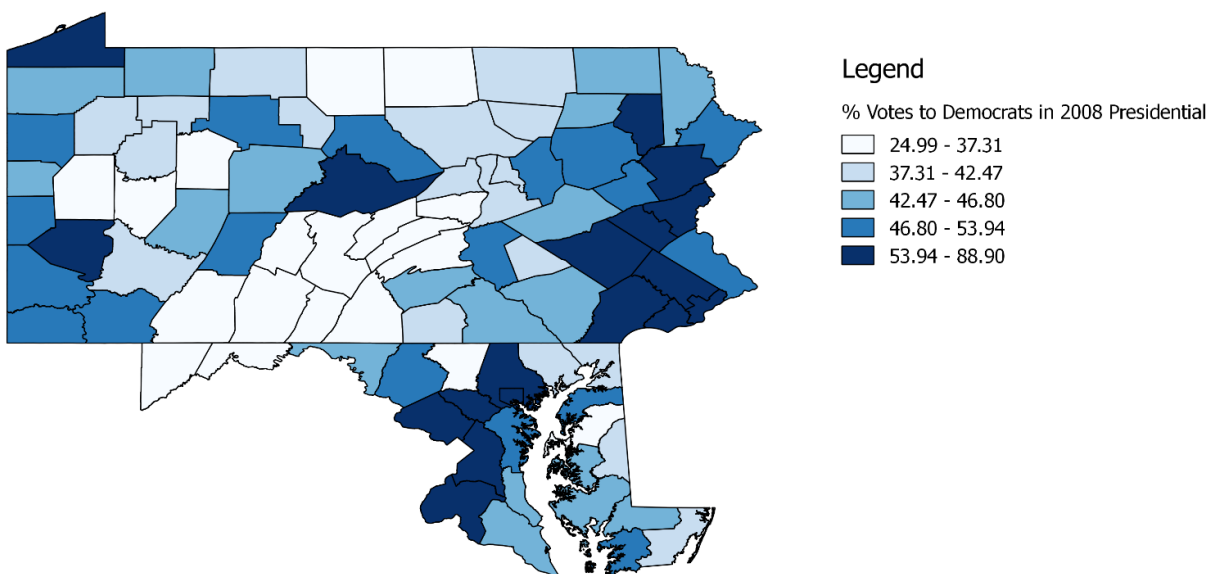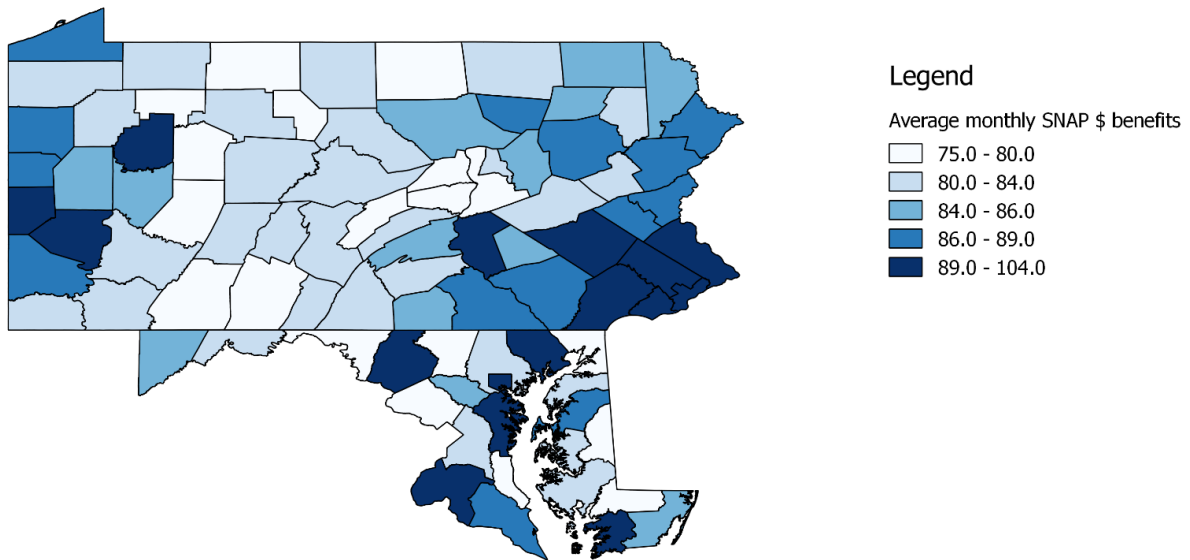# Average monthly SNAP $ benefits and % of votes to Democrats during the 2008 presidential election

Location: PA and MD

Level of detail: County

Legend

Average monthly SNAP $ benefits

- 75.0 - 80.0
- 80.0 - 84.0
- 84.0 - 86.0
- 86.0 - 89.0
- 89.0 - 104.0

Legend

% Votes to Democrats in 2008 Presidential

- 24.99 - 37.31
- 37.31 - 42.47
- 42.47 - 46.80
- 46.80 - 53.94
- 53.94 - 88.90

The top map shows the percentage of voters in each county who gave their vote to the Democrats during the 2008 campaign while the bottom map shows the average monthly SNAP $ benefits per county. SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and is essentially a food stamps program available to people who cannot afford buying food.

I used quantiles to segment data because it contrasts features on a relative basis thus enabling a whole color gradient to be displayed (from white to dark blue, for example). This provides clear visual insights on what locations have the highest and lowest feature studied. Using natural breaks will color data on an absolute basis and thus differences will be less nuanced, colors will tend to blend and variations in results will not be as clear.

To build these two maps, I recalled that Republican administrations have oftentimes attempted to cut down benefits program. Keeping this in mind, I wanted to prove the logical fact that areas where people rely on food assistance would probably vote for Democrats to save their benefits. This assumption was correct as the choropleth maps show strong spatial correlations between the two variables observed: counties that voted more prevalently for Democrats also had higher monthly average SNAP allowances. This trend is particularly obvious around large cities like Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Philadelphia.

This result must be contrasted with the actual national proportion of SNAP participants who are affiliated with Democrats, around 60%. This shows that not all SNAP participants vote for Democrats. Considering this result, I investigated why the spatial correlation we observed in PA and MD seemed so strong and found out that southern states have SNAP participants who primarily vote for Republicans. Thus, the correlation I found between SNAP participation and voting for Democrats is strong but

limited to the extent that it only applies to non-southern states like PA and MD. Moving

forward, it would be interesting to see how ethnicity and rurality contrast with this study.

Appendix: Choropleth map of the Democrat voters with centroids of SNAP $ benefits

Average monthly SNAP $ benefits overlaid with % of votes for Democrats during the 2008 presidential election, in PA and MD

Legend

Average monthly SNAP $ benefits
- 75.0 - 80.0
- 80.0 - 84.0
- 84.0 - 86.0
- 86.0 - 89.0
- 89.0 - 104.0

% Votes to Democrats in 2008 Presidential
- 24.99 - 37.31
- 37.31 - 42.47
- 42.47 - 46.80
- 46.80 - 53.94
- 53.94 - 88.90