A thematic map is a map that focuses on a particular theme or special topic. Choosing how to represent that topic can be a difficult task. This website will go over the pro’s and con’s of some popular mapping techniques to help you decide which one if best for the data that you have. We will look at choropleth maps, popular because of their visual and intuitive appeal, and dot/dot density/heat maps.

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With choropleth maps, geographical areas, usually defined by administrative boundaries, are filled with color or pattern to reflect the magnitude of the data to be mapped.

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In a dot-density map, each case which occurred in an area is represented as a dot on the map.

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A heat map is a graphical representation of data where the individual values contained are represented as colors.

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Both interactive maps show the same data, EPA sites, albeit differently.