

pretty (and smart)

adam okulicz-kozaryn

adam.okulicz.kozaryn@gmail.com

this version: Friday 19th September, 2025 04:50

outline

looks matter

general: displaying data (in a map)

maps specifically

but wait, smart is important too! see final_project.pdf [later]

examples from past [if time]

today

- switching gears and relaxing: art of mapping

outline

looks matter

general: displaying data (in a map)

maps specifically

but wait, smart is important too! see final_project.pdf [later]

examples from past [if time]

“looks vs brains”

- of course, still, great idea ('the story') for a map is the key! like 50% of success; and also very important (like another 40%) :
 - good/quality data: GIGO!
 - the right vars (eg measurement, standardization)
 - at the right level (resolution or aggregation)
- but if map's ugly,
people won't bother to get its “internal beauty”
 - mapping is about the “visual appearance”
 - it has to be pretty! yes, “the looks” come first!

outline

looks matter

general: displaying data (in a map)

maps specifically

but wait, smart is important too! see final_project.pdf [later]

examples from past [if time]

make it interesting!

- “the greatest value of a picture is when it forces us to notice what we never expected to see”
- if a dog bites a man its no news,
if a man bites dog, that's news
- or less poetically, the maps need to make the point (tell a story), ideally unexpected, fascinating, etc
 - still, of course, must tell a story in a convincing (and rigorous) way
- ref: Tufte (multiple)
<http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/>

be simple

- everything made as simple as possible, but not simpler
- no padding: present only data needed for a specific purpose
- no clutter: put in a single graph only the data that are highly related and must be compared
- put in appendix if it is not very relevant but may be useful
 - people looking for extra info will find it
 - people interested in main story will not get distracted

avoid visual clutter

- all parts of graph should be meaningful
- good practices:
 - do not use shades
 - do not use fancy colors
 - do not use any decoration

use space efficiently

- get rid of white space, blow up your map
 - it should be as big as possible, use all space
- put legend in an efficient way
 - eg in water or forest, etc

balance! keep balance in:

- colors (say either use toned down colors for everything or use stark contrasts, etc)
btw colors have meaning! eg red v green; yellow is happy, green calming <https://towardsdatascience.com/the-crucial-role-of-color-theory-in-data-analysis-and-visualization/>
- fonts: titles, notes, labels etc should be proportional
- thickness of lines
- and everything else
- in general
 - rather use less ink than more
 - spend ink on what matters, the story

one v several graphs/maps

- usually to convey an idea, need several graphs/maps
- say if you want to show deprivation in SJ:
 - eg low educ, poverty, crime, etc etc
 - but can also show a summary, eg an index
- sometimes better in one graph/map
 - eg showing change: better one than 2; just calc chng var
 $100 * (\text{pop10} - \text{pop00}) / \text{pop00}$

think about it/meaning: the 'so what?' question

- ok, you've got the map
- now think about it...
- what does it mean?
 - (beyond technical correctness; lack of mistakes)
 - eg is it interesting or informative or helpful... etc?
 - as you look at it, ask yourself the 'so what?' question
 - if not happy with the answer:
 - move it to the appendix, and produce a better map
- i will be grading substantive meaning, too

outline

looks matter

general: displaying data (in a map)

maps specifically

but wait, smart is important too! see final_project.pdf [later]

examples from past [if time]

some examples [if time]

- we can have a look at some examples and discuss if they are pretty (and smart/interesting)
- [http://twistedsifter.com/2013/08/
maps-that-will-help-you-make-sense-of-the-world/](http://twistedsifter.com/2013/08/maps-that-will-help-you-make-sense-of-the-world/)
- also do “map lit rev” ie google images “what you study” + “map” eg “healthy food stores philly map,” “industry clusters map”

outline

looks matter

general: displaying data (in a map)

maps specifically

but wait, smart is important too! see final_project.pdf [later]

examples from past [if time]

outline

looks matter

general: displaying data (in a map)

maps specifically

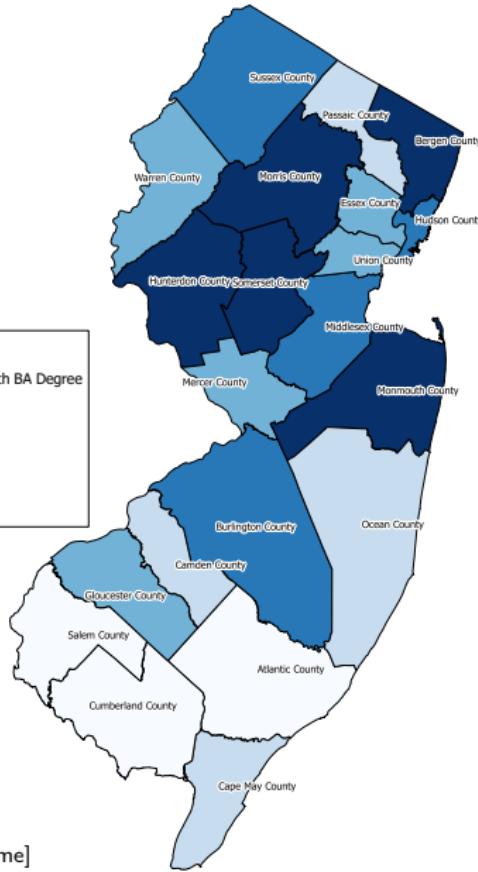
but wait, smart is important too! see final_project.pdf [later]

examples from past [if time]

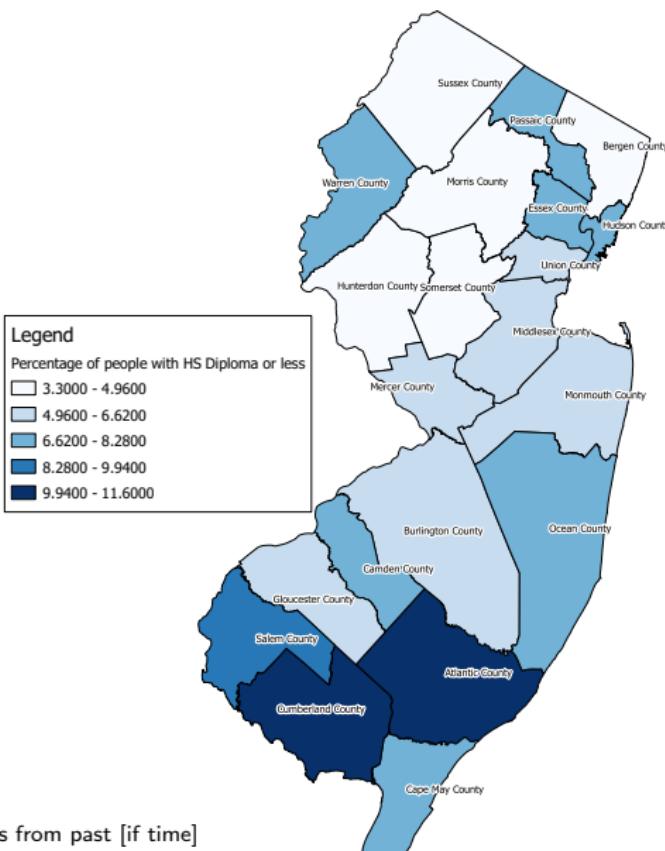
nj force [only on campus or vpn!]

- <https://maps-dppa.camden.rutgers.edu/index.php?search=ethan&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go>

New Jersey Residents with Bachelor Degree or Higher



New Jersey rate of residents earning less than a High School Diploma



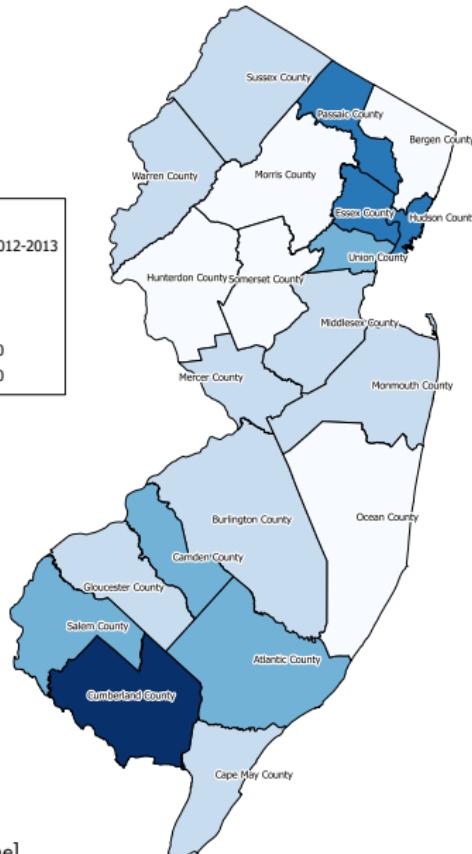
examples from past [if time]

2012-2013 NJ K-12 Education Aid per resident

Legend

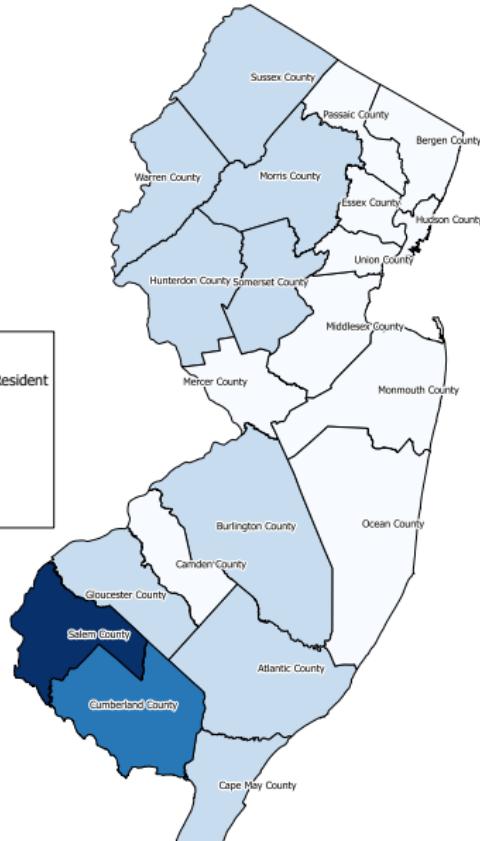
NJ State Aid Per Resident 2012-2013

- 226.0000 - 609.6000
- 609.6000 - 993.2000
- 993.2000 - 1376.8000
- 1376.8000 - 1760.4000
- 1760.4000 - 2144.0000



examples from past [if time]

NJ 2013 Transportation Aid Per Resident



Legend

NJ 2013 Transportation Aid Per Resident	
■	5.0000 - 9.6000
■	9.6000 - 14.2000
■	14.2000 - 18.8000
■	18.8000 - 23.4000
■	23.4000 - 28.0000

examples from past [if time]

NJ counties

- many variables about similar topic: education
 - great: triangulation
- good use of space, could be little better
- nice color ramp
- good fonts, maybe title little smaller
- fewer decimal points !
- could list data source (but may do it elsewhere, say in paper)

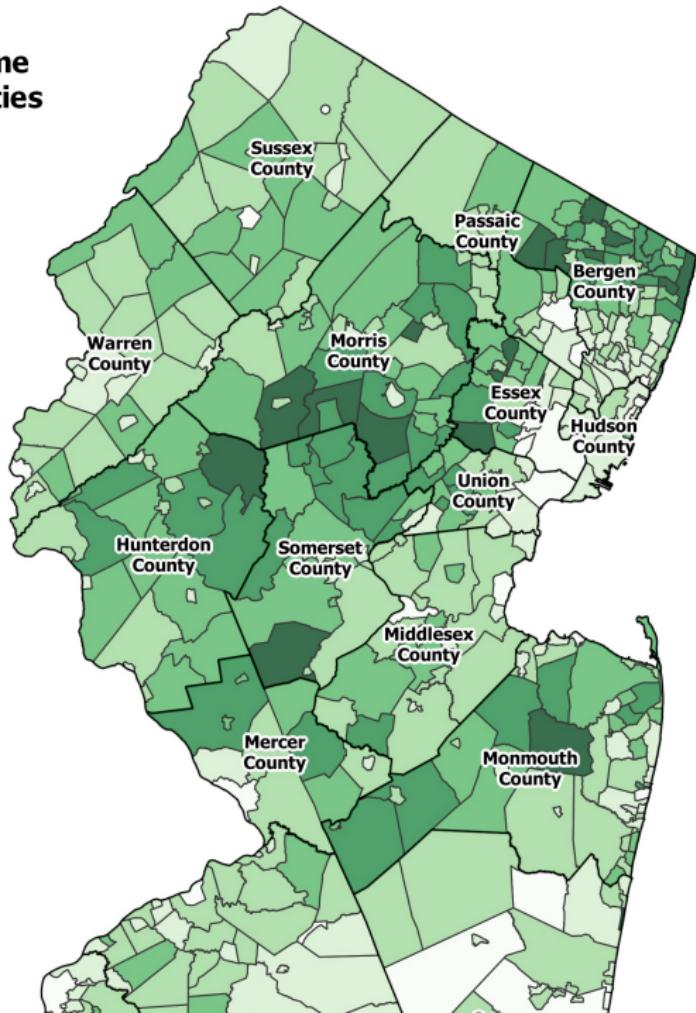
Median Household Income in New Jersey Municipalities

For 2006-2010

Median Income: \$67,681

Legend

- Median Income Range
- \$25,682 - \$48,702
 - \$48,703 - \$69,915
 - \$69,916 - \$90,411
 - \$90,412 - \$113,542
 - \$113,542 - \$144,299
 - \$144,300 - \$250,001
 - No data available

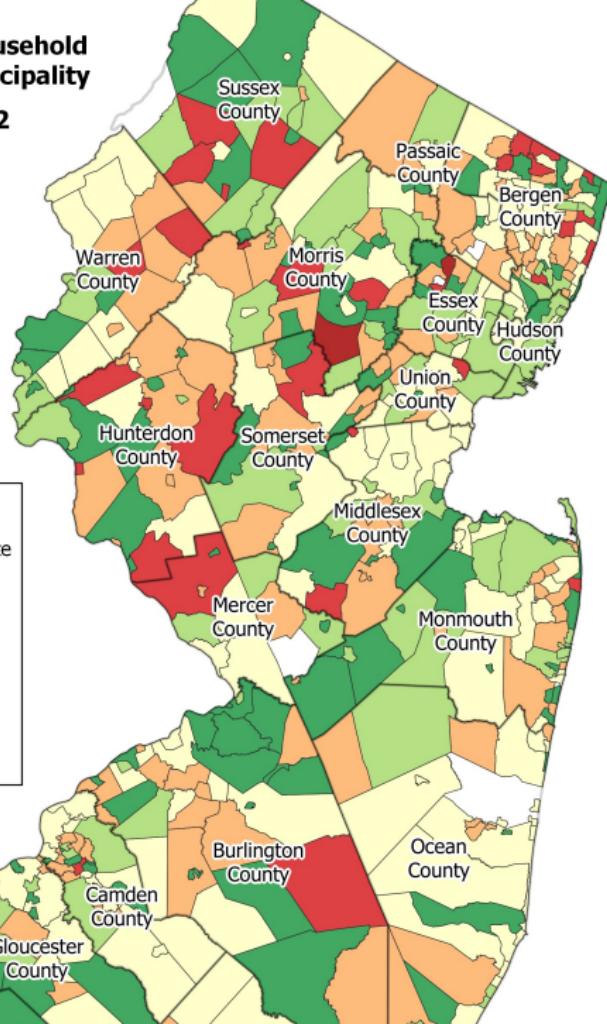


income in NJ

- note, map cut to display detail
- nice title, we know timeframe
- legend: note decimal points; love yellow for missing data
- really nothing to fix; 2 things below *personal* preference:
 - use white borders for municipalities—little cleaner
 - use a 2 color ramp (say red-green) to signal poverty-affluence
- interesting: such big disparities so close to each other
- a note on level of analysis:
 - if county level data: N dark green; S: bright green
 - it would cover up deep poverty pockets in NYC metro!
- aggregation does matter! results are totally different

Percent Change in Household Poverty Rates by Municipality

From 1999-2012



Legend

Percent Change In Poverty Rate

- 100% - -9.1%
- 9.0% - 9.1%
- 9.2% - 46.2%
- 46.3% - 137.6%
- 137.6% - 499.9%
- Greater than 500%
- No data available

poverty change

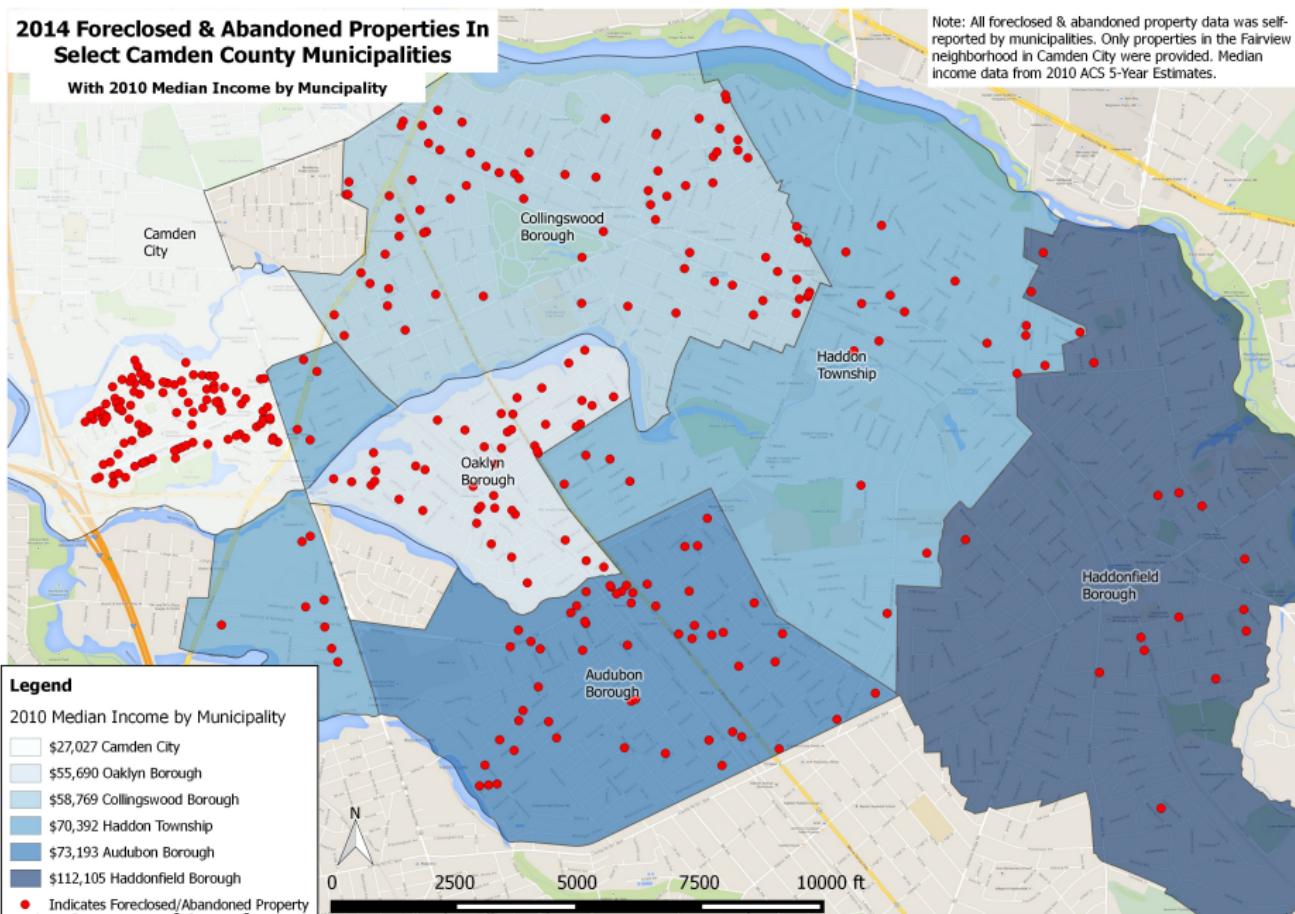
- readable, informative, great!
- great variation ! quite striking
- wonder why some places do quite well and some so bad...
- future: change from 1% to 5% and from 10% to 50% are both 500%
 - yet they mean different things
- can use it for policy analysis...
- say could thing why such great divergence...
- any policies that could have worked?

properties

2014 Foreclosed & Abandoned Properties In Select Camden County Municipalities

With 2010 Median Income by Municipality

Note: All foreclosed & abandoned property data was self-reported by municipalities. Only properties in the Fairview neighborhood in Camden City were provided. Median income data from 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates.



properties

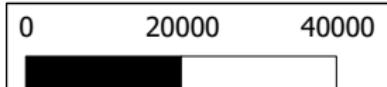
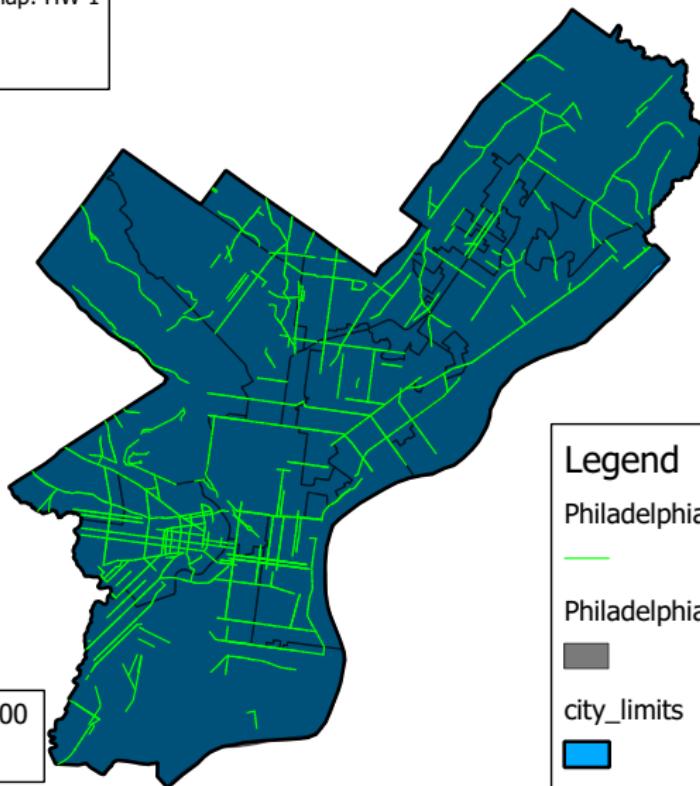
- superb use of space! labeling neatly in corners
- pretty map!
- interesting map—clearly foreclosures correlate negatively with income

properties

- guess some data missing in top right corner? should be indicated more clearly...
- perhaps make it reddish or cover with dashed or dotted pattern
- so that we know clearly for which areas there are no data
- 2014 is still going—should mention months
- note how hi resolution google map is! can zoom in and see all road names
- is it median hh income? (it is explained in journal though)

bike lanes

Philadelphia bike map: HW 1



examples from past [if time]

bike lanes

- very nice !
- can improve: beautify fonts, colors...
- future research:
 - add bike traffic (not sure if available, but can measure...)
 - add sociodemographics by tract
 - eg do young or rich or educated people bike ?
 - compare with other cities, eg Boston, Portland...

future ps

- we'll be doing thematic maps throughout the course
- and i will be much more picky