Using Data: A Cartographer’s Dilemma

An example using employment in Oregon

Cartographers have to make decisions about how to map data. One decision is the area that is used to map the data. For example, the cartographer can use counties as an area which can then be grouped into 15 regions or into 4 regions. The result is maps which change the way you see the information.

Counties grouped into 15 different areas

These maps show two important types of employment in Oregon – natural resources and government – and the locations of those jobs seem to change depending on how the cartographer groups the counties.

Counties grouped into 4 different areas

Natural Resources
- .1% - .5%
- .6 - 1.5%
- 1.6% - 3.0%
- 3.1% - 15.0%

Government
- 12% - 16%
- 17% - 20%
- 21% - 25%
- 26% - 35%