How To Guide:
What is the unemployment rate for your region?

The unemployment rate in your region provides the percent of workers in your labor market who are currently out of work, but actively seeking employment. These data are often used in grant writing and are important for measuring the relative strength of the regional labor market, or the amount of distress in a given labor market. These data are available through the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Local Area Unemployment Statistics program. Unemployment rates are available for states, metropolitan statistical areas, counties or equivalents and cities of 25,000 or more.

1. Go to www.bls.gov

2. Click on the subjects tab at the top of the page.

3. Under the section labeled UNEMPLOYMENT, click on State & Local Unemployment Rates.

4. This will bring you to the Local Area Unemployment Statistics website. Halfway down the page, under databases click on the button for "One-screen Data Search". (Note: it is important to have the most up to date version of Java. If you are not able to use java, use the Multi-Screen Data Search).

5. In this example, we are going to find the unemployment rate for the Charleston, WV Metropolitan Statistical Area. Follow these steps:
   a. Begin by selecting the state, in this case West Virginia.
   b. Then select the type of geography you need, in this case Metropolitan Statistical Areas.
   c. Then select the Charleston, WV MSA.
   d. When the Get Data button is enabled, click the Get Data button.

6. In this example, we can see that in April 2015 there were 99,103 people in the Charleston, WV MSA labor force, and of those 6,898 people were unemployed. As a result, this MSA had a 7.0 unemployment rate.

7. It should also be pointed out that at the top of the page, you are able to change the years of the data that you are looking. You can also include graphs or annual averages. Also an excel version of the table is available at the top of the table.

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