Traffic stops case study

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Contents

This is from the fifth chapter of learn.r-journalism.com.

We're going to take what we've learned so far and do some spatial analysis of traffic stops.

Goal: We'll figure out which town and census tract each stop occurred in and then pull in demographic data from the Census to determine what types of neighborhoods police tend to pull people over more often.

You could conduct this analysis using software like ArcGIS or QGIS, but we're going to be doing it all in R.

It is better to stay in a single environment from data importing, to analysis, to exporting visualizations because the produced scripts make it easier for others (including your future self) to replicate and verify your work in the future.

Start with the data. It's raw traffic stops between 2013 and 2014. It includes race, reasons for the stop, and many other factors. The state of Connecticut collects this information from all police departments but only a handful of them included location-specific information. Researchers at Central Connecticut State University's Center for Municipal and Regional Policy geolocated as many as possible, focusing on eight departments that showed signs of racial profiling.

About 34,000 stops were geolocated.

We're looking specifically at Hamden for this case study— so about 5,500 stops. We'll revisit the other towns later.

Let's load the packages and data we'll need.

```
# if you don't have any of these packages installed yet, uncomment and run the lines below
#install.packages("tidycensus", "ggplot2", "dplyr", "sf", "readr")
```

```
library(tidycensus)
library(ggplot2)
library(dplyr)
library(sf)
library(readr)
```

stops <- read_csv("data/hamden_stops.csv")</pre>

View(stops)

Let's get rid of some of the bad data– where there was no latitude or longitude data (Don't worry, that's only about two percent of the data).

stops <- filter(stops, InterventionLocationLatitude!=0)</pre>

Let's map what we've got. Let's download the Census tract shapefiles in Hamden's county– New Haven County– with **tigris**.

```
# If you don't have tigris installed yet, uncomment the line below and run
#install.packages("tigris")
```

🗇 🖒 🗊 🖓 Filter							Q,	
InterventionDate	Month	SubjectRaceCode	SubjectEthnicityCode	SubjectSexCode	SubjectAge	ResidentIndicator	TownRecidentIndicator	Inte
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	w	N	F	28	TRUE	FALSE	F
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	В	N	м	33	TRUE	TRUE	ŀ
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	В	N	м	25	TRUE	FALSE	ŀ
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	w	N	F	33	TRUE	FALSE	٢
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	w	N	м	45	TRUE	TRUE	F
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	w	н	F	19	TRUE	TRUE	F
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	w	N	м	20	FALSE	FALSE	F
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	В	N	м	23	TRUE	TRUE	F
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	В	N	м	25	TRUE	FALSE	ŀ
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	w	N	F	26	TRUE	FALSE	F
Tuesday, October 01, 2013	NA	В	N	м	25	TRUE	FALSE	F
Wednesday, October 02, 2013	NA	w	N	F	50	TRUE	TRUE	F
Wednesday, October 02, 2013	NA	w	N	м	27	TRUE	FALSE	F
Wednesday, October 02, 2013	NA	В	N	м	24	TRUE	TRUE	F
Wednesday, October 02, 2013	NA	w	н	м	35	TRUE	FALSE	ŀ
Wednesday, October 02, 2013	NA	w	N	F	50	TRUE	FALSE	ŀ
Wednesday. October 02. 2013	NA	w	н	м	25	TRUE	TRUE	F

Figure 1:

Traffic stops in Hamden



Alright, it's a start.

Deeper analysis

If you have a data set with latitude and longitude information, it's easy to just throw it on a map with a dot for every instance.

But what would that tell you? You see the intensity of the cluster of dots over the area but that's it.

If there's no context or explanation it's a flashy visualization and that's it.

Heat map

One way is to visualize the distribution of stops.

We'll use the stat_density2d() function within ggplot2 and use coord_map() and xlim and ylim to set the boundaries on the map so it's zoomed in more.

TIP: When you're stacking ggplots or dplyr commands, the line can't end with a + or a %>% normally, right? Well, if you stick a NULL at the last line, you can have the + or %>% precede it. This is kind of an advanced tip for folks who play around with scripts and are tired of commenting out before the + or %>%.



That's interesting.

What's nice about ggplot2, is the functionality called **facets**, which allows the construction of small multiples based on factors.

Let's try this again but faceted by race.

```
# Creating a race column
stops$race <- ifelse(stops$SubjectEthnicityCode=="H", "H", stops$SubjectRaceCode)
stops <- stops %>%
mutate(race=case_when(
   race=="A" ~ "Asian",
   race=="B" ~ "Black",
   race=="H" ~ "Hispanic",
   race=="W" ~ "White"
))
```

Traffic stops distribution around Hamden by race



Interesting.

But it still doesn't tell the full story because it's still a bit misleading.

Here's what I mean.

```
stops %>%
group_by(race) %>%
count()
```

A tibble: 4 x 2
Groups: race [4]

<□ <> <□ <> Filter								Q	Q	
-	GEOID [‡]	NAME [‡]	summary_value 🗦	X1 [‡]	x ‡	ProfileNo 🗦	OrganizationIdentificationID $\ \ ^{\diamond}$	DepartmentName	† O	
1	09009154600	Census Tract 1546	4029	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	N,	
2	09009154700	Census Tract 1547	6384	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	N	
3	09009157200	Census Tract 1572	3837	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	N	
4	09009165100	Census Tract 1651	3928	15046	15046	1918577	СТ0006200	Hamden	Ra	
4.1	09009165100	Census Tract 1651	3928	15071	15071	1918630	СТ0006200	Hamden	Ra	
4.2	09009165100	Census Tract 1651	3928	15091	15091	1918493	СТ0006200	Hamden	Ra	
4.3	09009165100	Census Tract 1651	3928	15125	15125	1918413	СТ0006200	Hamden	Ra	
4.4	09009165100	Census Tract 1651	3928	15127	15127	1918415	СТ0006200	Hamden	Ra	
4.5	09009165100	Census Tract 1651	3928	15130	15130	1918414	СТ0006200	Hamden	Ra	

Figure 2:

##		race	n
##		<chr></chr>	<int></int>
##	1	Asian	71
##	2	Black	2035
##	3	Hispanic	444
##	4	White	2808

The distribution is comparitive to its own group and not as a whole.

Gotta go deeper.

.. ..

Let's look at which neighborhoods police tend to pull people over more often and compare it to demographic data from the Census.

So we need to count up the instances with the st_join() function from the sf package.

Points in a Polygon

We already have the shape file of Census tracts in Hamden.

We just need to count up how many times a traffic stop occurred in each tract.

First, let's make sure it will match the correct coordinate reference system (CRS) as the shapefile we've just downloaded. We'll use the **st_as_sf()** function to create a new geometry with the latitude and longitude data from the **stops** data frame. And we'll transform the CRS so it matches the CRS from the **new_haven** shapefile we downloaded.

Now we use the spatial_join() function that sees where the geometries we've set in stops_spatial fall into which polygon in new_haven.

points_in <- st_join(new_haven, stops_spatial, left=T)</pre>

View(points_in)

This is great.

What just happened: Every point in the original **stops** data frame now has a corresponding census tract and has been saved in the **points_in** data frame.

Now, we can summarize the data by count and merge it back to the shape file and visualize it.

```
by_tract <- points_in %>%
  filter(!is.na(X)) %>%
  group by (GEOID) %>%
  summarise(total=n())
head(by_tract)
## Simple feature collection with 6 features and 2 fields
## geometry type: POLYGON
## dimension:
                   XY
## bbox:
                   xmin: -72.97291 ymin: 41.31282 xmax: -72.9033 ymax: 41.35039
## epsg (SRID):
                   4269
## proj4string:
                   +proj=longlat +datum=NAD83 +no_defs
## # A tibble: 6 x 3
##
     GEOID
                 total
                                                                      geometry
##
     <chr>
                 <int>
                                                                 <POLYGON [°]>
## 1 09009141300
                     6 ((-72.97291 41.3474, -72.96833 41.34797, -72.96767 41~
                     3 ((-72.95252 41.3228, -72.95084 41.32394, -72.94852 41~
## 2 09009141400
## 3 09009141500
                    97 ((-72.94236 41.32899, -72.9397 41.33203, -72.93923 41~
## 4 09009141600
                     1 ((-72.94043 41.31991, -72.94131 41.32058, -72.94048 4~
## 5 09009141800
                     6 ((-72.92738 41.32651, -72.92708 41.32729, -72.92654 4~
## 6 09009141900
                     9 ((-72.91891 41.31964, -72.91649 41.32468, -72.91579 4~
We have enough here to visualize it.
# If you don't have viridis installed yet, uncomment and run the line below
#install.packages("viridis")
library(viridis)
ggplot(by_tract) +
  geom_sf(aes(fill = total), color=NA) +
  coord_sf(datum=NA) +
  labs(title = "Total traffic stops by Hamden police",
       subtitle = "In 2013 and 2014",
       caption = "Source: data.ct.gov",
       fill = "Total stops") +
  scale_fill_viridis(option="magma", direction=-1)
```

Total traffic stops by Hamden police In 2013 and 2014



Source: data.ct.gov

Pretty, but we're unclear which part is Hamden and which are parts of other towns.

That's fine because we can layer in a tract of Hamden only with tigris.

```
new_haven_towns <- county_subdivisions(state="CT", county="New Haven", cb=T)
hamden_town <- filter(new_haven_towns, NAME=="Hamden")</pre>
```

We've got a single polygon for Hamden now. Let's place it on top of our other map layers with a second geom_sf().

```
ggplot() +
geom_sf(data=by_tract, aes(fill = total), color=NA) +
geom_sf(data=hamden_town, fill=NA, color="black") +
coord_sf(datum=NA) +
labs(title = "Total traffic stops by Hamden police",
        subtitle = "In 2013 and 2014",
        caption = "Source: data.ct.gov",
        fill = "Total stops") +
    scale_fill_viridis(option="magma", direction=-1) +
NULL
```

Total traffic stops by Hamden police In 2013 and 2014



Source: data.ct.gov

Alright, excellent.

It's much clearer now that the bulk of the traffic stops occur at the southern border of Hamden.

We can go deeper by going to our joined data frame and summarize by race and adding more variables to group_by()

```
by_tract_race <- points_in %>%
  filter(!is.na(X)) %>%
  group_by(GEOID, race) %>%
  summarise(total=n())
head(by_tract_race)
## Simple feature collection with 6 features and 3 fields
## geometry type: POLYGON
## dimension:
                   XY
## bbox:
                   xmin: -72.97291 ymin: 41.31666 xmax: -72.9249 ymax: 41.35039
## epsg (SRID):
                   4269
## proj4string:
                   +proj=longlat +datum=NAD83 +no_defs
## # A tibble: 6 x 4
## # Groups:
               GEOID [3]
##
     GEOID
                          total
                 race
                                                                      geometry
##
     <chr>
                 <chr>
                          <int>
                                                                 <POLYGON [°]>
## 1 09009141300 Black
                              5 ((-72.97291 41.3474, -72.96833 41.34797, -72~
                              1 ((-72.97291 41.3474, -72.96833 41.34797, -72~
## 2 09009141300 White
```

```
## 3 09009141400 Black 2 ((-72.95252 41.3228, -72.95084 41.32394, -72~
## 4 09009141400 White 1 ((-72.95252 41.3228, -72.95084 41.32394, -72~
## 5 09009141500 Black 73 ((-72.94236 41.32899, -72.9397 41.33203, -72~
## 6 09009141500 Hispanic 7 ((-72.94236 41.32899, -72.9397 41.33203, -72~
```

Very tidy data frame!

We can repurpose the map code above and add a single line of code to facet it.

```
ggplot() +
geom_sf(data=by_tract_race, aes(fill = total), color=NA) +
geom_sf(data=hamden_town, fill=NA, color="black") +
coord_sf(datum=NA) +
labs(title = "Total traffic stops by Hamden police",
    subtitle = "In 2013 and 2014",
    caption = "Source: data.ct.gov",
    fill = "Total stops") +
scale_fill_viridis(option="magma", direction=-1) +
facet_wrap(~race)
```

Total traffic stops by Hamden police



Source: data.ct.gov

Well, that's pretty revealing.

So these are raw numbers. Let's try to figure out the percent breakdown of drivers who are White versus those who aren't per Census tract. We just have to wrangle by_tract_race data frame a little bit. We've done this before in previous sections.

```
by_tract_race_percent <- by_tract_race %>%
  mutate(type=case_when(
   race=="White" ~ "White",
   TRUE ~ "Minority")) %>%
  group_by(GEOID, type) %>%
  summarize(total=sum(total)) %>%
  mutate(percent=round(total/sum(total, na.rm=T)*100,2))
head(by_tract_race_percent)
## Simple feature collection with 6 features and 4 fields
## geometry type: POLYGON
## dimension:
                  XY
                  xmin: -72.97291 ymin: 41.31666 xmax: -72.9249 ymax: 41.35039
## bbox:
## epsg (SRID):
                 4269
## proj4string:
                  +proj=longlat +datum=NAD83 +no_defs
## # A tibble: 6 x 5
## # Groups: GEOID [3]
##
    GEOID
                         total percent
                type
                                                                   geometry
     <chr>
                         <int> <dbl>
                                                              <POLYGON [°]>
##
                <chr>
## 1 09009141300 Minority 5 83.3 ((-72.97291 41.3474, -72.96833 41.34~
## 2 09009141300 White
                           1 16.7 ((-72.97291 41.3474, -72.96833 41.34~
## 3 09009141400 Minority 2 66.7 ((-72.95252 41.3228, -72.95084 41.32~
                           1 33.3 ((-72.95252 41.3228, -72.95084 41.32~
## 4 09009141400 White
## 5 09009141500 Minority 80 82.5 ((-72.94236 41.32899, -72.9397 41.33~
## 6 09009141500 White 17 17.5 ((-72.94236 41.32899, -72.9397 41.33~
We can easily this.
ggplot() +
  geom_sf(data=by_tract_race_percent, aes(fill = percent), color=NA) +
  geom_sf(data=hamden_town, fill=NA, color="black") +
```

```
coord_sf(datum=NA) +
```

```
labs(title = "Total traffic stops by Hamden police",
    subtitle = "In 2013 and 2014",
    caption = "Source: data.ct.gov",
    fill = "Percent of all stops") +
    scale_fill_viridis(option="magma", direction=-1) +
    facet_wrap(~type)
```

Total traffic stops by Hamden police In 2013 and 2014



Source: data.ct.gov

So that's even more stark difference.

What's it tell us? Most of the stops up north are White drivers.

Most of the stops in the southern part of the town, particularly by the town border, are Minority drivers.

What's one argument that could explain this?

"Well, maybe that's where minorities live."

Perhaps. But we can measure that thanks to the Census.

We know the percent make up of traffic steps in Hamden.

Let's calculate the percent make up of residents in those neighborhoods and compare them.

Ideally, the rate of traffic stops should match the rate of residents, right?

We'll use the **tidycensus** package.

Don't forget to load your Census API key. census_api_key("YOUR API KEY GOES HERE")

hamden_pop <- get_acs(geography = "tract", variables = racevars,</pre>

state = "CT", county = "New Haven County")

head(hamden_pop)

Great, we have total population and white population per tract.

Let's summarize this data by *GEOID*.

```
library(tidyr)
```

head(hamden_pop_perc)

##	#	A tibble: 6	x 6						
##		GEOID	NAME			Total	White	white_residents	minority_reside~
##		<chr></chr>	<chr></chr>			<dbl></dbl>	<dbl></dbl>	<dbl></dbl>	<dbl></dbl>
##	1	09009120100	Census	Tract	1~	6189	4762	76.9	23.1
##	2	09009120200	Census	Tract	1~	6566	5112	77.9	22.1
##	3	09009125100	Census	Tract	1~	4557	3880	85.1	14.9
##	4	09009125200	Census	Tract	1~	6002	4933	82.2	17.8
##	5	09009125300	Census	Tract	1~	4932	3103	62.9	37.1
##	6	09009125400	Census	Tract	1~	3459	2612	75.5	24.5

Nice. Let's join it back to the *by_tract_race_percent* dataframe so we can calculate the gap.

```
by_tract_race_percent_spread <- by_tract_race_percent %>%
select(-total) %>%
spread(type, percent) %>%
rename(minority_stopped=Minority, white_stopped=White) %>%
filter(!is.na(minority_stopped) & !is.na(white_stopped))
```

stops_population <- left_join(by_tract_race_percent_spread, hamden_pop_perc)</pre>

Great. Let's do some math real quick and visualize what we have with a diverging color palette from the **scales** package.

```
# If you don't have scales installed yet, uncomment and run the line below
#install.packages("scales")
```

library(scales)

```
ggplot() +
geom_sf(data=stops_population, aes(fill = gap), color="white", size=.25) +
geom_sf(data=hamden_town, fill=NA, color="black") +
coord_sf(datum=NA) +
```

•	GEOID [‡]	minority_stopped 🔅	white_stopped 🔅	NAME	Total 🗘	White $^{\diamond}$	white_residents $\stackrel{\diamond}{}$	minority_residents $\hat{}$	geometry
1	09009141300	83.33	16.67	Census Tract 1413, New Haven County, Connecticut	6415	3170	49.42	50.58	list(c(-72.9508
2	09009141400	66.67	33.33	Census Tract 1414, New Haven County, Connecticut	4561	885	19.40	80.60	list(c(-72.9423
3	09009141500	82.29	17.71	Census Tract 1415, New Haven County, Connecticut	5639	33	0.59	99.41	list(c(-72.9273
4	09009141800	66.67	33.33	Census Tract 1418, New Haven County, Connecticut	4226	1705	40.35	59.65	list(c(-72.9277
5	09009141900	11.11	88.89	Census Tract 1419, New Haven County, Connecticut	5305	4365	82.28	17.72	list(c(-72.9157
6	09009165100	45.00	55.00	Census Tract 1651, New Haven County, Connecticut	4226	2533	59.94	40.06	list(c(-72.9025
7	09009165200	41.09	58.91	Census Tract 1652, New Haven County, Connecticut	2309	2073	89.78	10.22	list(c(-72.9130
8	09009165300	18.97	81.03	Census Tract 1653, New Haven County, Connecticut	2407	2028	84.25	15.75	list(c(-72.9088
9	09009165400	58.20	41.80	Census Tract 1654, New Haven County, Connecticut	4849	3464	71.44	28.56	list(c(-72.9130
0	09009165500	74.73	25.27	Census Tract 1655, New Haven County, Connecticut	4602	947	20.58	79.42	list(c(-72.9246
1	09009165600	54.07	45.93	Census Tract 1656, New Haven County, Connecticut	5915	3352	56.67	43.33	list(c(-72.9397
2	09009165700	60.90	39.10	Census Tract 1657, New Haven County, Connecticut	4432	1961	44.25	55.75	list(c(-72.9405
3	09009165801	39.64	60.36	Census Tract 1658.01, New Haven County, Connecticut	6124	2644	43.17	56.83	list(c(-72.9423
4	09009165802	48.91	51.09	Census Tract 1658.02, New Haven County, Connecticut	4501	3161	70.23	29.77	list(c(-72.9423
5	09009165900	20.00	80.00	Census Tract 1659, New Haven County, Connecticut	8183	6860	83.83	16.17	list(c(-72.9136
6	09009166001	25.45	74.55	Census Tract 1660.01, New Haven County, Connecticut	6293	4348	69.09	30.91	list(c(-72.9154
7	09009166002	16.28	83.72	Census Tract 1660.02, New Haven County, Connecticut	7635	6679	87.48	12.52	list(c(-72.8888
8	09009167100	25.47	74.53	Census Tract 1671, New Haven County, Connecticut	8222	7112	86.50	13.50	list(c(-72.8746

Figure 3:

Hamden: Minority traffic stops versus population In 2013 and 2014



Source: data.ct.gov

Add annotations to graphic

We'll use the annotate() function with a combination of segments, points, and text.

```
stops_population$gap <- (stops_population$minority_stopped -</pre>
                           stops_population$minority_residents)/100
ggplot() +
  geom_sf(data=stops_population, aes(fill = gap), color="white", size=.25) +
  geom_sf(data=hamden_town, fill=NA, color="black") +
  coord sf(datum=NA) +
  labs(title = "Hamden: Minority traffic stops versus population",
       subtitle = "In 2013 and 2014",
       caption = "Source: data.ct.gov") +
  scale_fill_distiller(type="seq", trans="reverse", palette = "PuOr", label=percent,
                       breaks=pretty_breaks(n=10), name="Gap") +
  #continuous_scale(limits=c(-30, 30)) +
  theme_void() +
  theme(panel.grid.major = element_line(colour = 'transparent')) +
  # NEW CODE HERE
  annotate("segment", x = -72.93, xend = -72.87, y = 41.325, yend = 41.325,
           colour = "lightblue", size=.5) +
  annotate("point", x = -72.93, y = 41.325, colour = "lightblue", size = 2) +
```

Hamden: Minority traffic stops versus population In 2013 and 2014



Source: data.ct.gov