

Data 201
Project 1
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Link to Github page with Python coding file and supporting .csv files:

https://github.com/jcj217-mc/Data201_Project_1

File name: “FINAL_Data201_Group Project_Team3.ipynb”

Supporting .csv files: “offensedf3.csv” and “violentstatus.csv”

Introduction

As a group, we decided to explore the CT Bail dataset, a listing of individuals being held in Department of Correction facilities while awaiting trial dating back to (date/year). This dataset interested us in particular because of the current social climate within the United States. In most recent years, there has been a spotlight on our flawed criminal justice system/policing/laws and policies (i.e., Kalief Browder). Overall, as a group, we wanted to identify any racial bias in the context of bail decisions, especially between white and black defendants.

Pretrial Process

When a person is arrested, they are either written a citation or booked into jail and charged. Those that are booked will then have an initial bail hearing, in which the judge will inform the accused of the charges they are facing and make a decision regarding pretrial release. Judges typically only have a few minutes to make this decision, which entails an evaluation of the defendant’s likelihood to flee from court, whether they pose a threat to society, and their ability to pay (Stevenson and Mayson 2017). If a judge does not consider the defendant a risk, the judge can decide to release the defendant and trust that they will show up to court (release on recognizance). The judge can also decide to set conditions on release, ranging from the financial (bail) to the nonfinancial (pretrial supervision). If the risk is high enough, the judge can decide to deny release outright.

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/BailFineReform_EA_121818_6PM.pdf

Currently many local, state and federal initiatives to reform bail, including an initiative by the MD Attorney General. For a history of bail and bail reform in the United States the following two articles are informative:

- American Bar Association article on the history of bail:
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/judicial/publications/judges_journal/2018/summer/a-brief-history-bail/
- American Bar Association article on the history of bail reform:
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/judicial/publications/judges_journal/2018/summer/

About the Data

Since the dataset includes over 5 million rows, it was too large of a dataset to upload to Github. The data can be accessed via the following links:

<https://data.ct.gov/Public-Safety/Accused-Pre-Trial-Inmates-in-Correctional-Facility/b674-jy6w>
json: <https://data.ct.gov/resource/b674-jy6w.json>

How the data is collected:

A listing, updated nightly, of individuals being held in Department of Correction facilities while awaiting trial. This data is appended on a nightly basis reflecting the individual inmates being held in correctional facilities each day beginning July 1, 2016.

Possible Sources of Bias in the Data

- We do not know exactly who is collecting the data
- Only the primary charge is known, we do not know which cases have multiple charges
- We do not know any conviction history (however, that lack of information may also prevent bias, while still being a confounding variable to be aware of)
- Any data provided prior to 2016, when the dataset was created, may be based on incomplete records
- The race category – we do not know if this is self-identified or externally applied

Dataset Variables

RACE: Race of inmate

AGE: Age of inmate

BOND AMOUNT: Amount of bond for which the inmate is being held. In some instances, for particularly low (less than \$100), this bond amount may be considered a placeholder value

OFFENSE: Controlling offense for which the bond amount has been set.

FACILITY: Department of Correction facility where the inmate is currently held.

DETAINER: Denotes whether an inmate is being held at the request of another criminal justice agency, or if another agency is to be notified upon release.

Variables we will primarily examine

- Race
- Age
- Gender
- Bond Amount
- Offense
- Admission Date

Important Terms

Bail—A set amount of money that must be paid before someone may be released from jail. Generally speaking, the more severe the (alleged) crime, the more expensive the bail will be.

Bail Bond—A written agreement between a defendant and a bail bondsman that states that the bondsman must pay the full amount of bail or forfeit a given collateral in the event that the defendant does not appear on a scheduled court date.

<https://freedomAustin.com/bail-bond-legal-terms-and-definitions/>

Questions Addressed

1. Are men and women charged the same in bail/bond amounts?
2. Is the defendant's race correlated with the bail amount?
3. Is the defendant's age correlated with the bail amount?
4. Is the type of offense correlated with the bail amount?
5. How have the mean and median bail amounts changed over time?