A consolidated, consistent and current database of spatiotemporal and demographic data on missing persons can help law enforcement and advocacy groups identify trends in missing persons data, including but not limited to human trafficking or serial crime. Local law enforcement and government agencies lack consistency in the data capture methods and availability of structured missing persons data, making spatial analysis difficult to conduct.

In researching available data in several major cities, there were drastic inconsistencies in the availability of data. Most websites had some sort of search engine, however the data was often unstructured, with each requiring a custom web scraping API to extract the data. As each jurisdiction captures different data attributes, normalizing the data from multiple jurisdictions would be a laborious task.

Limitations: The current API is limited to data as of 2018. Further, the dataset only has 11,000 records (16,000 as of 2019); but “Over 600,000 individuals go missing in the United States every year… ” (NamUs) : On average, 90,000 people are missing in the USA at any given time, according to Todd Matthews from the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, or NamUs, a national database for missing people. (usatoday)” As of 2018, there were over 85,000 active missing persons cases, but only 16,000 in NamUs.

Using the NamUs dataset as a proof of concept, this research uses and API to extract missing persons data, load it into a cloud database, conduct spatial analyses and test hypothesis in various jurisdictions.