**Project summary:**After death, a body becomes unclaimed when the coroner's office cannot find any relatives to claim the body or when relatives are found, nobody is willing to come and get it. The number of unclaimed bodies is on the rise. In early 2016, the Massachusetts state medical examiner's office worried it might run out of room to store the bodies, and nearly doubled the amount it pays to funeral homes to take the unclaimed and perform funerals. The incidence of unclaimed bodies is not just a social cost upon death, it is symptomatic of the rise of social problems in life, from economic strain to the social isolation of the elderly. Some forensics journals have started to characterize who is at greater risk of being unclaimed. We look at reasons why these people, usually male, tend to be unclaimed. After linking county level unclaimed persons databases with census data and overall mortality data from the CDC, we can test the following hypotheses:

1. The number of unclaimed bodies are on the rise because mortality rates are on the rise.

2. The number of unclaimed bodies are on the rise because of increased levels of homelessness or economic strain.

3. The number of unclaimed bodies are on the rise because of changes in kinship patterns parallel to the rise of single motherhood that leads to increasingly more socially detached single old men.

**Background news articles:**

<https://journalistsresource.org/studies/government/unclaimed-bodies-burial-medical-examiner-cremation>

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/02/19/fearing-backup-unclaimed-bodies-state-raises-payment-funeral-homes/eTKDaHkZ5qaOXGS4QTyN7H/story.html>

<https://worcestermag.com/2014/03/20/unclaimed-dead-buried-alone-massachusetts/21843>

**Next steps:**

Call claimus asking if they have other data they are willing to share but aren't on their website (particularly, cause of death)

---- if this isn't possible, perhaps it actually would be possible to figure it out using county level death data from CDC?

Call claimus asking what they do about bodies that *do*get claimed. Do they take them down? Is there a way to see the ones that got taken down?

Call claimus asking whether there is a way to see whether kin was found and nobody wanted the body or whether no kin was found

Scrape the claimus data and merge with CDC mortality data and census county level data

Literature review

**Exploratory:**

How many:

Total cases? Done

How many years in data? Done

How many cases in each year total? Done

How many counties observed total? Done

How many observations on average per county per year? Done

How many observations per county overall? Done

Missing:

Anyone missing a name? Done

What proportion missing race total and per year Done

What proportion missing age total and per year Done

What proportion missing gender total and per year Done

Proportion male by year

Breakdown race by year

Average age by year

**Notes:**

No data for 2004 for some reason?

Maybe the rise exists due to better data/body collection or a better system to enter data for a wider range of counties?

How to handle NAs for proportions of race, gender, age?