

A Short Introduction to Working With Data in R

EXTRAS

Jonathan Whiteley

2023-09-11

- 1 Downloading Data From the Internet
- 2 File Encoding & Microsoft Excel™
- 3 Exporting to other formats

Section 1

Downloading Data From the Internet

Downloading Data From the Internet

Section 2

File Encoding & Microsoft Excel™

File Encoding & Microsoft Excel™

- Many OSes and applications encode text using “UTF-8” by default.
- Windows uses “latin1” encoding by default.
- Excel can save a .csv file using UTF-8 encoding, but in doing so, it adds “**byte order mark**” (“BOM”) to the file.
 - ▶ This is a special character that Excel also uses to recognize that the file is encoded using UTF-8.
 - ▶ Thus a BOM can make the file “easier” to use with Excel, by allowing it to automatically recognize the UTF-8 encoding, but it can also **cause problems for other programs** (like R) that do not expect such a non-Unicode character.
- Without the BOM, Excel will assume the file is encoded in “latin1” if you double-click on the csv file to open it in Excel, even if it was actually encoded with UTF-8.
 - ▶ This can cause special characters to appear incorrectly.
 - ▶ You can still import a .csv file encoded in UTF-8 into Excel correctly, but it requires opening the file within Excel, or **importing it using commands in the “Data” ribbon / menu**

Read a file with a BOM using read.csv()

- Reading a .csv file with a BOM using the usual method may cause the BOM to be included in the name of the first column (on Windows).

```
bom_bad <- read.csv("../data/data_example_bom.csv",  
                    encoding = "UTF-8")  
names(bom_bad)
```

- The solution with read.csv() is to use the argument 'fileEncoding = "UTF-8-BOM"' (instead of the 'encoding' argument)

```
bom <- read.csv("../data/data_example_bom.csv",  
                fileEncoding = "UTF-8-BOM")  
bom[4, 1:4]
```

```
#      Type Treatment PlantNum  X95  
# 4 Québec    chilled         1 14.2
```

Read a file with a BOM using read_csv()

- The readr package uses “UTF-8” encoding by default, and **automatically ignores a BOM**, if present.

```
bom_readr <- readr::read_csv("../data/data_example_bom.csv")  
bom_readr[4, 1:4] |> as.data.frame()
```

```
#      Type Treatment PlantNum    95  
# 1 Québec   chilled         1 14.2
```

- write_csv() (in the readr package) automatically encodes output files using “UTF-8”, for greater portability across systems.
 - ▶ *except* for base R (read.csv()) using default options. :(
- You can control the encoding used by readr functions with the locale argument.
 - ▶ see ?readr::read_csv and ?readr::locale for details.

!

Hopefully, these examples have demonstrated that using read_csv() avoids many of the pitfalls and frustrations of read.csv()

Add a BOM to an output file

- Some programs (e.g., Excel) expect a BOM in “UTF-8” encoded files.
- It is possible to add a BOM to a csv file, but it must be done *manually*:
 - ▶ code adapted from [this StackOverflow answer](#)

```
writeChar(  
  iconv("\ufeff", to = "UTF-8"),  
  "output.csv",  
  eos = NULL  
)  
write_csv(Data, "output.csv", append = TRUE, ... )
```

R does not recommend doing this (see `?file`), so use with caution.

Section 3

Exporting to other formats

Writing to Microsoft Excel™ files

Packages that can write to Excel files:

- **xlsx**: read, write, format Excel 2007 (.xlsx) and Excel 97/2000/XP/2003 (.xls) files.
 - ▶ Depends on Java and the rJava package
- **XLConnect**: comprehensive and cross-platform R package for manipulating Microsoft Excel files (.xlsx & .xls) from within R.
 - ▶ Requires a Java Runtime Environment (JRE)
- **openxlsx**: simplified creation of Excel .xlsx files (**not** .xls).
 - ▶ No dependency on Java
- **writexl**: portable, light-weight data frame to **xlsx** exporter.
 - ▶ No Java or Excel required

!

I recommend *avoiding* exporting data to Excel files if possible. csv files are easier to read to & write from, and can be read by a wider variety of software (they are more portable).

Automated reports can be produced with R Markdown and output to a variety of more portable formats (pdf, HTML, etc.) instead.

References (Extras)

CANSIM / CODR data:

- An ecosystem of R packages to access and process Canadian data
- Analyzing Canadian Demographic and Housing Data