An Investigation Into What Causes Crash Injuries, Fatalities

Using crash data from the City of Chicago (Summer 2018)

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ABSTRACT

Being able to save human life is one of the most important tasks facing different communities. An unfortunately common reality in which lives are lost is due to car accidents, and there are always public service announcements to advise on avoiding them. In this paper, an analysis is conducted regarding the true factors that lead to injuries and fatalities when it comes to car crashes. Data from the City of Chicago, during the summer of 2018, is used to find out what these causes are, and a model is built to determine accident severity outcomes given the factors involved. The summer season was picked to minimize external factors such as snow leading to crashes, and the most recent summer was that of the current year, 2018. A goal from this paper is to raise awareness regarding what can be done to avoid such tragedies.

1 Data Analysis

1.1 Visualization of Car Accidents in Chicago

During the summer of 2018, there were approximately thirty thousand recorded car crashes throughout Chicago, as reported by city officials. Recorded information about these crashes ranged from data about the incident’s occurrence, such as geolocation, to data about the driver, such as their sex.

Naively mapping the latitude and longitudes with matplotlib’s pyplot yielded an image similar to the shape of Chicago as it can be seen here:



Not being able to discern much information from this map, though, we decided to plot each accident against an actual map of Chicago. This was accomplished using Baseplot in python along with associated helper files. Mapping the accidents on an actual map yielded much more informational results:



While this graph was helpful in visualizing our data, it was very intriguing how one location in the Southeast had very few crashes. Thus, an investigation into why that is the case took place. The population map of Chicago revealed that only a few individuals lived in that location, with a vast majority of them choosing to live along the center of Chicago, rather than its outskirts.



From this map, the suspicion that the majority of car accidents would occur throughout the densest areas of Chicago naturally came about, and mapping the accidents against the population densities seemed to corroborate our hypothesis:



As can be seen from the map above, the outskirts of Chicago have fewer accidents, with the majority of accidents being in the center of Chicago, where it is most dense in population.

**1.2 Analysis of Chicago Accidents**

Prior to data mining work, it was also insightful to find that some obvious patterns in the data were confirmed when the data was graphed. But in other times, the answer did not seem as intuitive as originally thought.



Figure 1: Injury Severity vs. Posted Speed Limit

In here, the intuitive thought that roads that have higher speed limits are involved in more severe crashes was confirmed. The x-axis in Figure 1 is the posted speed limit where a crash occurred, and the y-axis is the % occurrence of each accident severity. As can be seen, accident severities gradually get worse as the speed limit is increased. There are a few outliers when it came to higher speed limits, due to lack of data involving the same road conditions. As an example, only one crash happened when the speed limit was 70 during the summer of 2018, and fortunately, no serious injuries occurred. Due to this anomaly, however, a suggestion that roads that have a speed limit of 70 have a 100% survival rate may arise, which is definitely a false conclusion.



Figure 2: Weather Condition vs. Crash Severity

A somewhat intuitive graph that was also generated involved the severity of the crash when it came to weather conditions. As it can be seen, rainy days involved much more injuries than clear/overcast days. But what came in as very surprising is the amount of injuries and fatalities that occurred during foggy/smoky/hazy days, which far exceeds rainy days. However, this graph may also lead to a few false conclusions, as one can draw that injuries never occur during days with snow or hail, but again, this was only due to the infrequency of data elements in that subset, as snow/hail rarely occurred in Chicago during the summer of 2018.



Figure 3: Lighting vs. Crash Severity

The last graph that was generated during pre-data mining analysis was the lighting conditions at the time when the crash occurred. The results here were also consistent with natural biases, where crashes that occurred at night involved much more injuries than daylight. However, it was surprising to find out that in pitch darkness, without any streetlights to light up the path, crashes that involved injuries were relatively infrequent when compared to crashes that occurred during daylight. A possible explanation for this phenomenon may be that streets with pitch darkness are not as populous as streets where streetlights have been installed, and individuals there are much more cautious when driving.

2 Data Mining

2.1 Data Preprocessing

In the below paragraph, it is explained how alt-txt value is placed in **MS Word 2010**. To add alternative text to a picture in Word 2010, follow these steps:

1. In a Word 2010 document, insert a picture.
2. Right click on the inserted picture and select the **Format Picture** option.
3. Select the **Alt Txt** option from the left-side panel options.
4. In the "Title:" and "Description:" text boxes, type the text you want to represent the picture, and then click "Close".

2.2 Transformation

Below are steps to place alt-txt value in **MS Word 2013/2016**. To add alternative text to

2.3 Data Mining

a picture in Word 2013/2016, follow

2.4 Evaluation

these steps:

1. In a Word 2013/2016 document, insert a picture.
2. Right click on the inserted picture and select the **Format Picture** option.
3. In the settings at the right side of the window, click on the "Layout & Properties" icon (3rd option).
4. Expand **Alt Txt** option.
5. In the "Title:" and "Description:" text boxes, type the text you want to represent the picture, and then click "Close".

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