

Tables in R - Data frames and Tibbles

Day 1 - Introduction to Data Analysis with R

Selina Baldauf

Freie Universität Berlin - Theoretical Ecology

March 3, 2024

Data frames

The built-in data structure for tables in R is a **data frame**.

Vectors in R can't represent data table where values are connected via rows

Data frames are one of the **biggest and most important ideas** in R, and one of the things that make R different from other programming languages.

(H. Wickham, [Advanced R](#))

cities	population	area_km2
Istanbul	15100000	2576
Moscow	12500000	2561
London	9000000	1572
Saint Petersburg	5400000	1439
Berlin	3800000	891
Madrid	3200000	604
Kyiv	3000000	839
Rome	2800000	1285
Bucharest	2200000	228
Paris	2100000	105

Data frames

A data frame is a **named list of vectors** of the same length.

Basic properties of a data frame

- every **column is a vector**
- columns have a **header**
 - this is the name of the vector in the list
- within one column, all values are of the **same data type**
- every column has the same length

The diagram shows a table with three columns: 'cities', 'population', and 'area_km2'. The 'cities' column is labeled 'character' with a pink arrow pointing to it. The 'population' and 'area_km2' columns are labeled 'numeric' with a pink arrow pointing to both. A green arrow points down the 'cities' column, indicating its length. The table is enclosed in a yellow border.

cities	population	area_km2
Istanbul	15100000	2576
Moscow	12500000	2561
London	9000000	1572
Saint Petersburg	5400000	1439
Berlin	3800000	891
Madrid	3200000	604
Kyiv	3000000	839
Rome	2800000	1285
Bucharest	2200000	228
Paris	2100000	105

Data frames

Data frames are created with the function `data.frame()`:

```
cities <- c(
  "Istanbul", "Moscow", "London",
  "Saint Petersburg", "Berlin", "Madrid",
  "Kyiv", "Rome", "Bucharest", "Paris")

population <- c(
  15.1e6, 12.5e6, 9e6, 5.4e6, 3.8e6,
  3.2e6, 3e6, 2.8e6, 2.2e6, 2.1e6)

area_km2 <- c(2576, 2561, 1572, 1439,
  891, 604, 839, 1285, 228, 105)

data.frame(
  cities = cities,
  population = population,
  area_km2 = area_km2
)
```

```
#>           cities population area_km2
#> 1      Istanbul  15100000    2576
#> 2         Moscow  12500000    2561
#> 3          London   9000000    1572
#> 4 Saint Petersburg   5400000    1439
#> 5          Berlin   3800000     891
#> 6          Madrid   3200000     604
#> 7           Kyiv   3000000     839
#> 8           Rome   2800000    1285
#> 9      Bucharest   2200000     228
#> 10          Paris   2100000     105
```

Tibbles

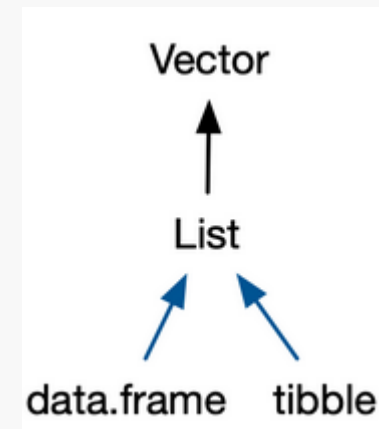
Tibbles are

a **modern reimagining of the data frame**. Tibbles are designed to be (as much as possible) **drop-in replacements** for data frames.

(Wickham, [Advanced R](#))

Have a look at [this book chapter](#) for a full list of the differences between data frames and tibbles and the advantages of using tibbles.

- Tibbles have the same basic properties as data frames (named list of vectors)
- Everything that you can do with data frames, you can do with tibbles



Tibbles



Tibbles are available from the `tibble` package.

Before we use tibbles, we need to install the package once using the function `install.packages`:

```
# This has to be done only once (in the console, not in the script)
install.packages("tibble")
```

Then, we need to load the package into our current R session using `library`:

```
# This has to be done every time R restarts
# Put it at the top of your script
library(tibble)
```

Tibbles

Create a tibble using the `tibble()` function:

```
library(tibble)

tibble(
  cities = cities,
  population = population,
  area_km2 = area_km2
)
```

```
#> # A tibble: 10 × 3
#>   cities      population area_km2
#>   <chr>          <dbl>    <dbl>
#> 1 Istanbul    15100000    2576
#> 2 Moscow      12500000    2561
#> 3 London       9000000    1572
#> 4 Saint Petersburg 5400000    1439
#> 5 Berlin       3800000     891
#> 6 Madrid       3200000     604
#> 7 Kyiv         3000000     839
#> 8 Rome         2800000    1285
#> 9 Bucharest    2200000     228
#> 10 Paris       2100000     105
```

Exploring tibbles

How many rows?

```
nrow(cities_tbl)
#> [1] 10
```

How many columns?

```
ncol(cities_tbl)
#> [1] 3
```

What are the column headers?

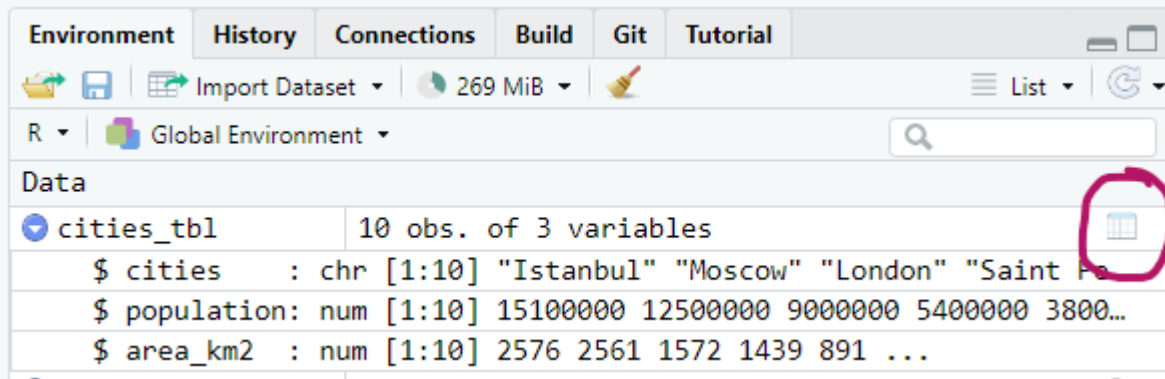
```
names(cities_tbl)
#> [1] "cities"      "population" "area_km2"
```


Exploring tibbles

Look at the entire table in a separate window with `view()`:

```
view(cities_tbl)
```

Or click on the little table sign in the Environment pane:



Exploring tibbles

Get a quick summary of all columns:

```
summary(cities_tbl)
#>      cities      population      area_km2
#> Length:10      Min.       : 2100000      Min.       : 105.0
#> Class :character 1st Qu.: 2850000      1st Qu.: 662.8
#> Mode  :character Median    : 3500000      Median    :1088.0
#>              Mean      : 5910000      Mean      :1210.0
#>              3rd Qu.: 8100000      3rd Qu.:1538.8
#>              Max.      :15100000      Max.      :2576.0
```

Indexing tibbles

Indexing tibbles works similar to indexing vectors but with 2 dimensions instead of 1:

`tibble [row_index, col_index or col_name]`

- Missing `row_index` or `col_index` means *all rows* or *all columns* respectively.
- Indexing a tibble using `[]` always returns another tibble.

Indexing tibbles

```
# First row and first column
cities_tbl[1, 1]
#> # A tibble: 1 × 1
#>   cities
#>   <chr>
#> 1 Istanbul
```

This is the same as

```
cities_tbl[1, "cities"]
```

Indexing tibbles: rows

```
# rows 1 & 5, all columns:
cities_tbl[c(1, 5), ]
#> # A tibble: 2 × 3
#>   cities      population area_km2
#>   <chr>          <dbl>    <dbl>
#> 1 Istanbul    15100000    2576
#> 2 Berlin      3800000     891
```

Indexing tibbles: columns

```
# All rows, first 2 columns  
cities_tbl[,1:2] # same as cities_tbl[, c(1, 2)]  
# same as  
cities_tbl[,c("cities", "population")]
```

```
#> # A tibble: 10 × 2  
#>   cities      population  
#>   <chr>         <dbl>  
#> 1 Istanbul    15100000  
#> 2 Moscow      12500000  
#> 3 London       9000000  
#> # i 7 more rows
```

Indexing tibbles: columns

Indexing columns by name is usually preferred to indexing by position

```
cities_tbl[,1:2] # okay  
cities_tbl[,c("cities", "population")] # better
```

Why?

- Code is much easier to read
- Code is more robust against
 - changes in column order
 - mistakes in the code (e.g. typos)

```
cities_tbl[,c(1,3)] # 3 instead of 2 -> wrong but no error  
cities_tbl[,c("cities", "popluation")] # typo -> wrong and error
```

General rule

Good code produces errors when something unintended or wrong happens

Tibbles: Select columns with \$

Select an entire column from a tibble using `$` (this returns a vector instead of a tibble):

```
cities_tbl$cities
#> [1] "Istanbul"      "Moscow"         "London"         "Saint Petersburg"
#> [5] "Berlin"        "Madrid"         "Kyiv"           "Rome"
#> [9] "Bucharest"     "Paris"
```


Adding new columns

New columns can be added as vectors using the `$` operator. The vectors need to have the same length as the tibble has rows.

```
# add a country column
cities_tbl$country <- c(
  "Turkey", "Russia", "UK", "Russia", "Germany", "Spain",
  "Ukraine", "Italy", "Romania", "France"
)
```

```
#> # A tibble: 10 × 4
#>   cities      population area_km2 country
#>   <chr>          <dbl>    <dbl> <chr>
#> 1 Istanbul      15100000    2576 Turkey
#> 2 Moscow         12500000    2561 Russia
#> 3 London          9000000    1572 UK
#> 4 Saint Petersburg 5400000    1439 Russia
#> 5 Berlin          3800000     891 Germany
#> 6 Madrid          3200000     604 Spain
#> 7 Kyiv            3000000     839 Ukraine
#> 8 Rome            2800000    1285 Italy
#> 9 Bucharest       2200000     228 Romania
#> 10 Paris           2100000     105 France
```

Summary

Tables in R: Data frames and tibbles

Summary I

data frames and tibbles

- can be used to represent tables in R
- are pretty similar, however tibbles are slightly convenient and modern
- are **named lists of vectors of the same length**
 - every column is a vector
 - columns have a header which is the name of the vector in the list
 - within one column, values are of same data type
 - every column has the same length

tibbles

- to use tibbles, install the package once with `install.packages("tibble")`
- put `library(tibble)` at the beginning of your script to load package

Summary II

Creating tibbles and data frames

```
# data frame
data.frame(
  a = 1:3,
  b = c("a", "b", "c"),
  c = c(TRUE, FALSE, FALSE)
)
# tibble
tibble(
  a = 1:3,
  b = c("a", "b", "c"),
  c = c(TRUE, FALSE, FALSE)
)
# convert data frame to tibble
as_tibble(df)
```

Summary III

Looking at tibble structure

```
# structure of tibble and data types of columns
str(tbl)
# number of rows
nrow(tbl)
# number of columns
ncol(tbl)
# column headers
names(tbl)
# look at the data in a new window
tibble::view(tbl)
# summary of values from each column
summary(tbl)
```

Summary IV

Indexing tibbles and selecting columns

Return result as tibble:

```
# rows and columns by position
tbl[1:3, c(1, 3)]
tbl[1:3, ] # all columns
tbl[, 3] # column 3, all rows
tbl[3] # same as above

# columns by name
tbl[, c("colA", "colB")]
tbl[c("colA", "colB")]
```

Return result as vector:

```
tbl$colA # select colA
```

Now you

Task (15 min)

Tibbles

Find the task description [here](#)

