# Kickstarter Project Trends and Data Limitations

Background

Kickstarter is a global platform that allows users to source and fund projects via “crowdfunding”. Since Kickstarter’s launch in 2009, the platform has launched 481,308 projects with a 37.62% success rate (Source: Kickstarter Stats page).[[1]](#footnote-1) The data used for this write-up was a sample of projects on Kickstarter between 2010 and 2017. This report will briefly cover how the raw data was prepared for analysis, some trends found in the data, limitations of the dataset, and some additional factors to consider.

Data Cleaning Methodology

While this data was given to us, it looks substantially similar to the data provided on Kickstarter’s site. Columns were added to the data to display the percentage of a project’s funding goal that was met and the average contribution to a project. Unicode timestamps were converted to dates to make the data more easily comparable and cells containing both category and sub-category were split to provide more granularity. Funding goal data was also lumped into various intervals. Finally, percentage of funding goal met and status of project were conditionally formatted to easily show differences in values.

Key Takeaways

**Keep your ask small.** Generally, people don’t ask for more than one million in the currency they choose, but of those asks that were above one million, all requests failed or were canceled.

**Don’t launch during the holidays.** The lowest number of successful projects are started in December – this could be because holiday spending means less discretionary income for most people. Accordingly, the monthly failure rate is highest in December compared to other months.

**Journalism isn’t your best shot.** Artistic projects (film, theater and music) make up the majority of the Kickstarter projects. Music has the largest percentage of successful projects out of all the categories at a 77.1% success rate. Journalism has the largest failure rate at 100.0%

**Visibility matters.** Every single project that was a staff pick AND was spotlighted succeeded in their fundraising goal. While not all projects that were given a spotlight were staff picks, every single project that was spotlighted was successful.

Limitations

**Sample Size.** Sample is 4,000, which represents a little over 1% of the ~300,000 projects on the website. It’s likely that this sample isn’t actually a representative sample.

**Holistic Timeframe.** The sample also is from a very specific time frame – it would be hard to make the same generalizations about what type of project would be successful if, for example, coronavirus hits and we face a global economic recession or depression.

**Correlation vs causation – Highlights.** Kickstarter has a page on their website that answers the question, “How do I get on the ‘Projects We Love’ list?”. Tips include having visually appealing pages, not spamming interested backers, and having a clear plan. Kickstarter goes on to explain that the highlighted projects are the “best of the best” of the Projects We Love category; however, they also use an algorithm that generates popular projects. It’s entirely possible that a significant percentage of the projects that were highlighted were already successful. We can’t say, without additional statistical analysis, that being highlighted *causes* your project to become successful.

Alternative Graphs or Analysis

**How to get visibility** – looking at the kinds of projects that get picked for staff-picks and get selected. Calculating what the probability is that given a project is a certain category, that project gets picked as a staff-pick. Then comparing across categories to see if those probabilities are statistically significant.

**Alternative table/chart** – we could look at the average donation across different categories, sub-categories, and status.

1. Kickstarter Stats Page – March 28, 2020 (https://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)