

Sports Analytics - An Introduction in R

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R and R Markdown

R is one of the most popular statistical programming languages. R is the only widely-used statistical programming language that is free and open source, with a wide developer community that contributes to the core language and corresponding packages. This file was created with RStudio, our recommended IDE for use with R. For more information and to download, see <https://rstudio.com>.

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When you click the **Knit** button a document will be generated that includes both content as well as the output of any embedded R code chunks within the document. You can embed an R code chunk and its corresponding output like this:

```
summary(cars)
```

```
##      speed      dist
##  Min.   : 4.0    Min.   :  2.00
##  1st Qu.:12.0    1st Qu.: 26.00
##  Median :15.0    Median : 36.00
##  Mean   :15.4    Mean   : 42.98
##  3rd Qu.:19.0    3rd Qu.: 56.00
##  Max.   :25.0    Max.   :120.00
```

Loading Data

We are examining two datasets: The NBA player statistics and their historical salaries for the last 4 years.

Sources: <https://stats.nba.com/> for performance data and <https://hoopshype.com/salaries/players/> for salary data.

Let us first load the performance data into our R environment using the `read.csv` function. The `header = TRUE` flag tells the console that the first row of the file contains column names.

```
players1819 <- read.csv(file = "players18-19.csv", header = TRUE)
players1718 <- read.csv(file = "players17-18.csv", header = TRUE)
players1617 <- read.csv(file = "players16-17.csv", header = TRUE)
players1516 <- read.csv(file = "players15-16.csv", header = TRUE)
```

and the salary data...

```
salary1819 <- read.csv(file = "18-19_salary.csv", header = TRUE)
salary1718 <- read.csv(file = "17-18_salary.csv", header = TRUE)
salary1617 <- read.csv(file = "16-17_salary.csv", header = TRUE)
salary1516 <- read.csv(file = "15-16_salary.csv", header = TRUE)
```

Cleaning Data

We will now merge the four dataframes for salary data and remove the individual datasets from our working environment. Note that we only include players that are accounted for in all four datasets to ensure consistency in our analysis.

```
# merge concatenates two dataframes together by values in a
# certain row or column.
df_salary <- merge(salary1516, salary1617, by.x = "Player", by.y = "Player")
df_salary <- merge(df_salary, salary1718, by.x = "Player", by.y = "Player")
df_salary <- merge(df_salary, salary1819, by.x = "Player", by.y = "Player")

# rm removes dataframes and vectors from our local working
# environment. rm(salary1516, salary1617, salary1718,
# salary1819)
```

There are some issues with our data. If you click on the df_salary dataframe in the “environment” pane on the right, you will see that the year columns have weird names and that the dollar amounts are treated as factors. Factors are categorical variables best used to describe types of values (animals classified as “dog” “cat” etc.) This is undesirable for use in numerical data, and will impact any plotting or statistical analysis we want to do. Therefore, we will convert the factor vectors into numeric vectors and rename them using the code snippet below.

```
names(df_salary) <- c("Player", "y1516", "y1617", "y1718", "y1819")

df_salary$Player <- as.character(df_salary$Player)

df_salary$y1516 = as.numeric(gsub("[\\$,]", "", as.character(df_salary$y1516)))
df_salary$y1617 = as.numeric(gsub("[\\$,]", "", as.character(df_salary$y1617)))
df_salary$y1718 = as.numeric(gsub("[\\$,]", "", as.character(df_salary$y1718)))
df_salary$y1819 = as.numeric(gsub("[\\$,]", "", as.character(df_salary$y1819)))

# Trim unnecessary whitespace to prevent string matching
# errors
df_salary$Player = trimws(df_salary$Player)
```

Preliminary Analysis, Plotting, Data Visualization

We want to get an overview of the data in order to get an idea of how to consider analyzing it. We can start by simply viewing the header of the salary data, shown below.

```
head(df_salary)
```

```
##           Player    y1516    y1617    y1718    y1819
## 1   Aaron Gordon  4405071  4549389  5662481  21590909
## 2     Al Horford 12671359  27748190  28530811  28928710
## 3    Al Jefferson 14255279 10695850 10050366   4000000
## 4 Al-Farouq Aminu  8492868  8030598  7529204   6957105
## 5   Alan Williams  120677   914448  6172292    77250
## 6     Alec Burks  9728947 10355341 11156939 11536515
```

We can make a dotplot of 2018-2019 season salaries against points scored using the ggplot2 package, a popul. We will also show minutes played using a color gradient.

```
require(ggplot2)
```

```
## Loading required package: ggplot2
```

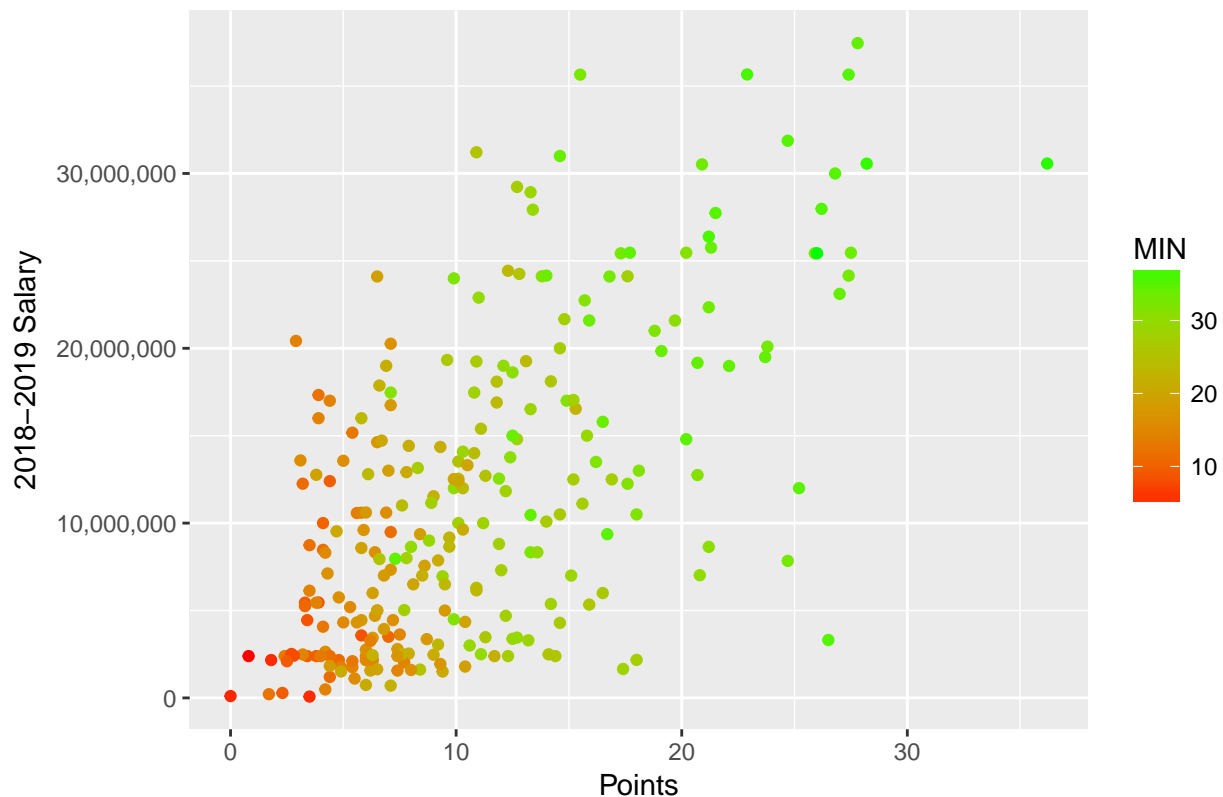
```
require(scales)
```

```
## Loading required package: scales
```

```
data1819 <- merge(df_salary, players1819, by.x = "Player", by.y = "PLAYER")
```

```
p <- ggplot(data = data1819, aes(y = y1819, x = PTS, colour = MIN))  
p + scale_y_continuous(labels = comma) + ylab("2018-2019 Salary") +  
  xlab("Points") + ggtitle("2018-2019 Season: Salary Plotted Against Points") +  
  scale_color_gradient(low = "red", high = "green") + geom_point()
```

2018–2019 Season: Salary Plotted Against Points



Interesting. We see that a higher salary is generally correlated with more scored points and more minutes played on average. This is likely an obvious observation to most of you, but it is helpful to see it confirmed graphically.

The visual examination leads us to believe that there is a positive relationship between salary and scored points. Let's run a linear regression model to examine this numerically.

```
# lm stands for 'linear model'  
points_salary <- lm(y1819 ~ PTS, data = data1819)  
summary(points_salary)
```

```
##
```

```
## Call:
```

```
## lm(formula = y1819 ~ PTS, data = data1819)
```

```
##
```

```
## Residuals:
```

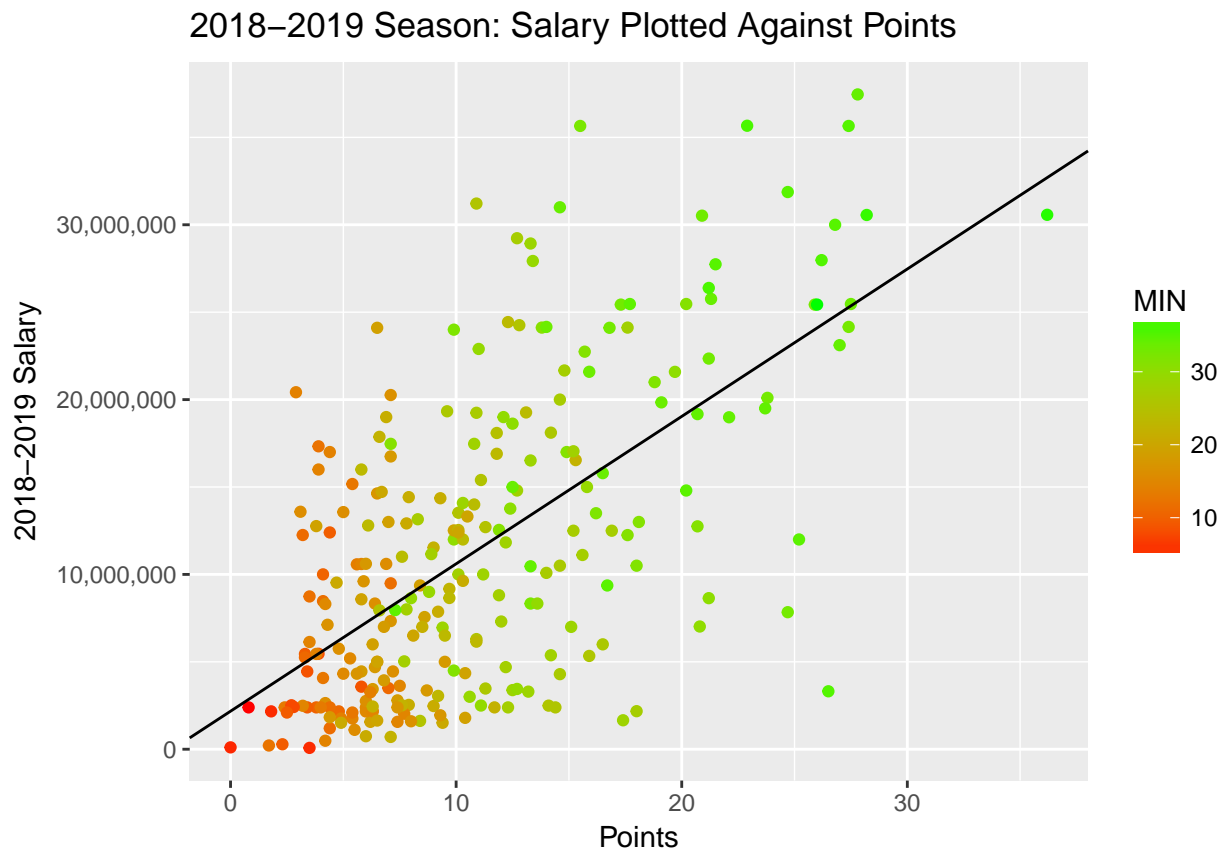
```
##      Min       1Q   Median       3Q      Max
```

```
## -21203611 -4704150 -789194 4028796 20410886
##
## Coefficients:
##             Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
## (Intercept)  2174352    830607   2.618  0.00938 **
## PTS          843156     65573  12.858 < 2e-16 ***
## ---
## Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1
##
## Residual standard error: 6814000 on 254 degrees of freedom
## Multiple R-squared:  0.3943, Adjusted R-squared:  0.3919
## F-statistic: 165.3 on 1 and 254 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16
```

Let's interpret this regression output. The line of best fit is given by $\text{data1819} = 2,174,352 + 843,156 * \text{PTS}$. We can interpret this to mean that for every additional point scored, on average the salary of that player will increase by 843,156 dollars. We note the small p-value (less than 2^{-16}), implying our results are statistically significant at the 99.99% confidence level.

The original plot with our newly found regression line is displayed below.

```
p + scale_y_continuous(labels = comma) + ylab("2018-2019 Salary") +
  xlab("Points") + ggtitle("2018-2019 Season: Salary Plotted Against Points") +
  scale_color_gradient(low = "red", high = "green") + geom_point() +
  geom_abline(intercept = 2174352, slope = 843156)
```



Optimization Example: Linear Programming

To demonstrate the power of R packages, let's consider a hypothetical scenario: You are the manager of an NBA team. Your goal is to score at least 100 points every game on average, while spending as little as possible on the players' salaries.

This is an optimization problem. We are trying to minimize a cost function (total salary cost), given a constraint (average at least 100 points). We can solve this optimization problem using a technique known as linear programming. For technical details you are welcome to review <https://www.math.ucla.edu/~tom/LP.pdf>; however, a technical understanding of the algorithm is not necessary for this example.

We will use a R package built by Michel Berkelaar, lpSolve, to solve this problem. R packages are custom-written libraries developed by statisticians, companies, and other users to extend or the functionality of R or to simplify certain procedures.

```
require(lpSolve)
```

```
## Loading required package: lpSolve
```

```
# obj represents the objective function. This is the function  
# that calculates the total cost of the team and is what we  
# are trying to minimize.  
obj <- data1819$y1819  
# constr represents the constraint functions. These are the  
# conditions that a valid solution must satisfy. The  
# conditions we impose are that the 'team' must have a  
# minimum sum of 100 points per game, the team must have at  
# least 12 players, and each player can only be chosen at  
# most once.  
constr <- matrix(append(append(data1819$PTS, rep(1, times = 256)),  
  as.vector(diag(nrow = 256))), nrow = 258, byrow = TRUE)  
# right represents the right hand side of the constraint  
# functions.  
right <- c(100, 12, rep(1, times = 256))  
# constraints_direction represents the sign of the constraint  
# functions.  
constrains_direction <- c(">=", ">=", rep("<=", times = 256))  
optimum <- lp(direction = "min", objective.in = obj, const.mat = constr,  
  const.dir = constrains_direction, const.rhs = right, all.int = T)  
  
best_sol <- optimum$solution  
names(best_sol) <- data1819$Player  
print(best_sol)
```

##	Aaron Gordon	Al Horford	Al-Farouq Aminu
##	0	0	0
##	Alan Williams	Alec Burks	Alex Len
##	1	0	0
##	Allen Crabbe	Amir Johnson	Andre Drummond
##	0	0	0
##	Andre Iguodala	Andrew Bogut	Andrew Wiggins
##	0	1	0
##	Anthony Davis	Anthony Tolliver	Aron Baynes
##	0	0	0
##	Austin Rivers	Avery Bradley	Ben McLemore
##	0	0	0

##	Bismack Biyombo	Blake Griffin	Boban Marjanovic
##	0	0	0
##	Bobby Portis	Bojan Bogdanovic	Bradley Beal
##	0	0	0
##	Brandon Knight	Brook Lopez	Bruno Caboclo
##	0	0	1
##	Cameron Payne	Carmelo Anthony	Chandler Parsons
##	0	0	0
##	Channing Frye	Chris Paul	CJ McCollum
##	0	0	0
##	CJ Miles	Clint Capela	Cody Zeller
##	0	0	0
##	Corey Brewer	Cory Joseph	Courtney Lee
##	1	0	0
##	Cristiano Felicio	D'Angelo Russell	Damian Lillard
##	0	0	0
##	Danilo Gallinari	Danny Green	Dante Cunningham
##	0	0	0
##	Dante Exum	Darren Collison	DeAndre Jordan
##	0	0	0
##	Delon Wright	DeMar DeRozan	DeMarcus Cousins
##	0	0	0
##	DeMarre Carroll	Derrick Favors	Derrick Rose
##	0	0	1
##	Devin Booker	Devin Harris	Dewayne Dedmon
##	1	0	0
##	Dion Waiters	Dirk Nowitzki	Doug McDermott
##	0	0	0
##	Draymond Green	Dwight Howard	Dwight Powell
##	0	0	0
##	Dwyane Wade	E'Twaun Moore	Ed Davis
##	0	0	0
##	Elfrid Payton	Emmanuel Mudiay	Enes Kanter
##	0	0	0
##	Eric Bledsoe	Eric Gordon	Ersan Ilyasova
##	0	0	0
##	Evan Fournier	Evan Turner	Frank Kaminsky
##	0	0	0
##	Garrett Temple	Gary Harris	George Hill
##	0	0	0
##	Gerald Green	Giannis Antetokounmpo	Glenn Robinson III
##	1	0	0
##	Goran Dragic	Gordon Hayward	Gorgui Dieng
##	0	0	0
##	Greg Monroe	Harrison Barnes	Hassan Whiteside
##	0	0	0
##	Ian Clark	Ian Mahinmi	Iman Shumpert
##	0	0	0
##	Isaiah Canaan	Isaiah Thomas	Jabari Parker
##	1	0	0
##	Jae Crowder	Jahlil Okafor	Jamal Crawford
##	0	0	0
##	James Harden	James Johnson	JaMychal Green
##	0	0	0

##	Jared Dudley	Jarell Martin	Jason Smith
##	0	0	0
##	JaVale McGee	Jeff Green	Jeff Teague
##	0	0	0
##	Jerami Grant	Jeremy Lamb	Jeremy Lin
##	0	0	0
##	Jerian Grant	Jerryd Bayless	Jimmy Butler
##	0	0	0
##	JJ Redick	Joakim Noah	Jodie Meeks
##	0	0	0
##	Joe Harris	Joe Ingles	Joel Embiid
##	0	0	0
##	John Henson	John Wall	Jon Leuer
##	0	0	0
##	Jonas Jerebko	Jonas Valanciunas	Jonathon Simmons
##	0	0	0
##	Jordan Clarkson	Jose Calderon	Josh Richardson
##	0	0	0
##	JR Smith	Jrue Holiday	Julius Randle
##	0	0	0
##	Justin Anderson	Justin Holiday	Justise Winslow
##	0	0	0
##	Jusuf Nurkic	Karl-Anthony Towns	Kawhi Leonard
##	0	0	0
##	Kelly Olynyk	Kemba Walker	Kenneth Faried
##	0	0	0
##	Kent Bazemore	Kentavious Caldwell-Pope	Kevin Durant
##	0	0	0
##	Kevin Love	Kevon Looney	Khris Middleton
##	0	0	0
##	Klay Thompson	Kosta Koufos	Kyle Anderson
##	0	0	0
##	Kyle Korver	Kyle Lowry	Kyle O'Quinn
##	0	0	0
##	Kyrie Irving	LaMarcus Aldridge	Lance Stephenson
##	0	0	0
##	Lance Thomas	Langston Galloway	LeBron James
##	0	0	0
##	Luc Mbah a Moute	Luol Deng	Marc Gasol
##	0	0	0
##	Marcin Gortat	Marco Belinelli	Marcus Morris
##	0	0	0
##	Marcus Smart	Mario Hezonja	Markieff Morris
##	0	0	0
##	Marvin Williams	Mason Plumlee	Matthew Dellavedova
##	0	0	0
##	Meyers Leonard	Michael Beasley	Michael Carter-Williams
##	0	0	0
##	Michael Kidd-Gilchrist	Mike Conley	Mike Muscala
##	0	0	0
##	Mike Scott	Miles Plumlee	Montrezl Harrell
##	0	0	0
##	Myles Turner	Nemanja Bjelica	Nerlens Noel
##	0	0	0

##	Nick Young	Nicolas Batum	Nik Stauskas
##	1	0	0
##	Nikola Jokic	Nikola Mirotic	Nikola Vucevic
##	0	0	0
##	Noah Vonleh	Norman Powell	Omri Casspi
##	0	0	0
##	Pat Connaughton	Patrick Beverley	Patrick Patterson
##	0	0	0
##	Pau Gasol	Paul George	Paul Millsap
##	0	0	0
##	PJ Tucker	Quincy Acy	Quincy Pondexter
##	0	1	0
##	Rajon Rondo	Raul Neto	Raymond Felton
##	0	0	0
##	Reggie Bullock	Reggie Jackson	Richaun Holmes
##	0	0	0
##	Ricky Rubio	Robert Covington	Robin Lopez
##	0	0	0
##	Rodney Hood	Rondae Hollis-Jefferson	Rudy Gay
##	0	0	0
##	Rudy Gobert	Russell Westbrook	Ryan Anderson
##	0	0	0
##	Salah Mejri	Sam Dekker	Serge Ibaka
##	0	0	0
##	Seth Curry	Shabazz Napier	Shaun Livingston
##	0	0	0
##	Shelvin Mack	Solomon Hill	Spencer Dinwiddie
##	0	0	1
##	Stanley Johnson	Stephen Curry	Steven Adams
##	0	0	0
##	Taj Gibson	Terrence Ross	Terry Rozier
##	0	0	0
##	Thabo Sefolosha	Thaddeus Young	Tim Frazier
##	0	0	0
##	Tobias Harris	Tony Parker	Tony Snell
##	0	0	0
##	Treveon Graham	Trevor Ariza	Trey Burke
##	0	0	0
##	Trey Lyles	Tristan Thompson	Troy Daniels
##	0	0	0
##	Tyler Johnson	Tyler Zeller	Tyreke Evans
##	0	1	0
##	Tyson Chandler	Tyus Jones	Udonis Haslem
##	0	0	0
##	Victor Oladipo	Vince Carter	Wayne Ellington
##	0	0	0
##	Wesley Johnson	Wesley Matthews	Will Barton
##	0	0	0
##	Willie Cauley-Stein	Wilson Chandler	Zach LaVine
##	0	0	0
##	Zaza Pachulia		
##	0		

The players with a “1” under their name have been chosen for this “optimal” team.


```
print(paste("Total cost: ", optimum$objval, sep = ""))
```

```
## [1] "Total cost: 12387465"
```

We find that the total cost of this “optimal” team is 12.387 million dollars.