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When intuitions (don't) fail: Sociosyntax in the analysis of Scots

E Jamieson, Shouchun Chien, Gary Thoms, David Adger,
Caroline Heycock + Jennifer Smith

UKLVC

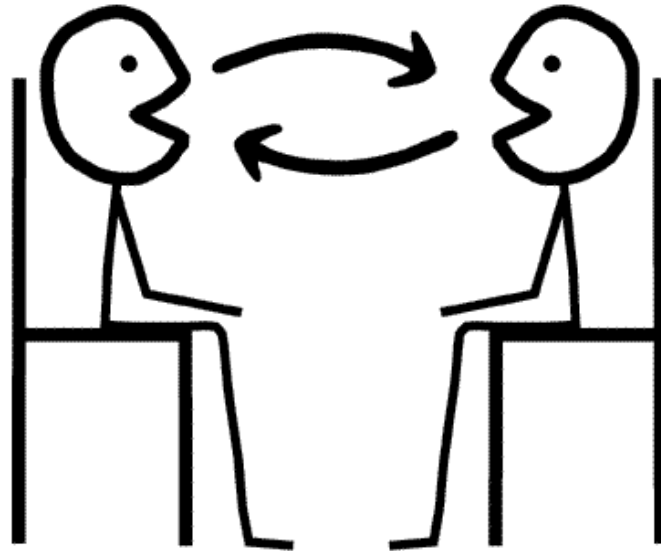
Queen Mary University of London

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Collecting variation data

- Sociolinguistic interview

(e.g. Labov 1966, 1972)



Morphosyntax in sociolinguistics

Morphosyntax in sociolinguistics

- *was/were* variation

(e.g. Tagliamonte 1998)

- Negative concord

(e.g. Fagin 1979)

- *never* for *didn't*

(e.g. Smith & Holmes-Elliott to appear)

- Irregular verbs

(e.g. Cheshire 1982)

- Relative clause *who/that*

(e.g. Cheshire, Fox & Adger 2013)

Why?

“[morphosyntactic] features of interest are of such low frequency that quantitative studies are not feasible”

(Labov 1996:78)

Acceptability judgments

1. Which man did Bill go to Rome to visit?
2. *Whom do you know the date when Mary invited?

(Haegeman, cf. Bard, Robertson & Sorace 1996)

Gonnae pass the remote.

When intuitions fail

“[speakers] agree that a certain form is completely unacceptable, yet use it themselves freely in every-day speech”

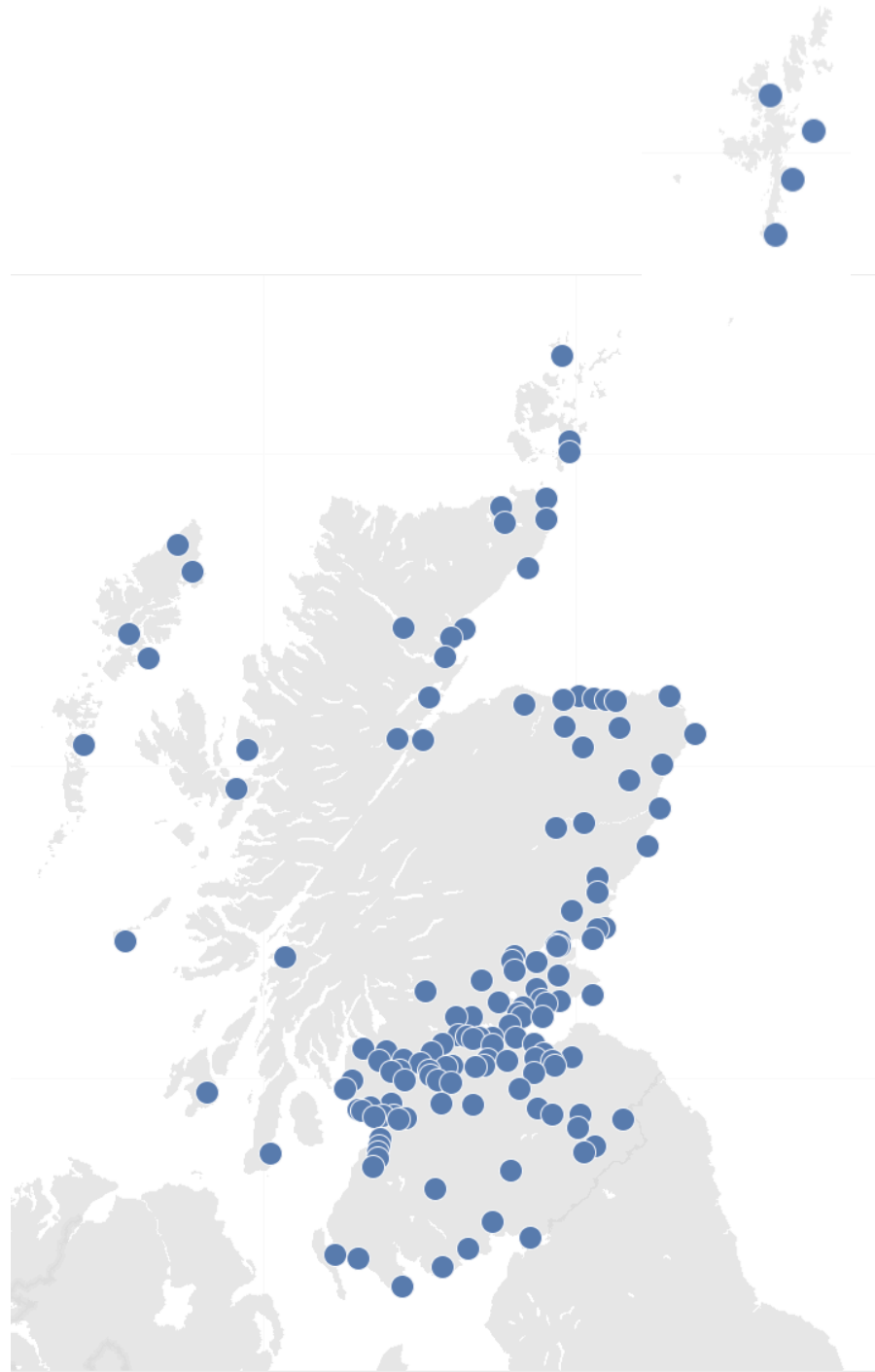
(Labov 1996:78)

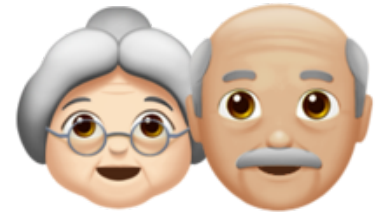
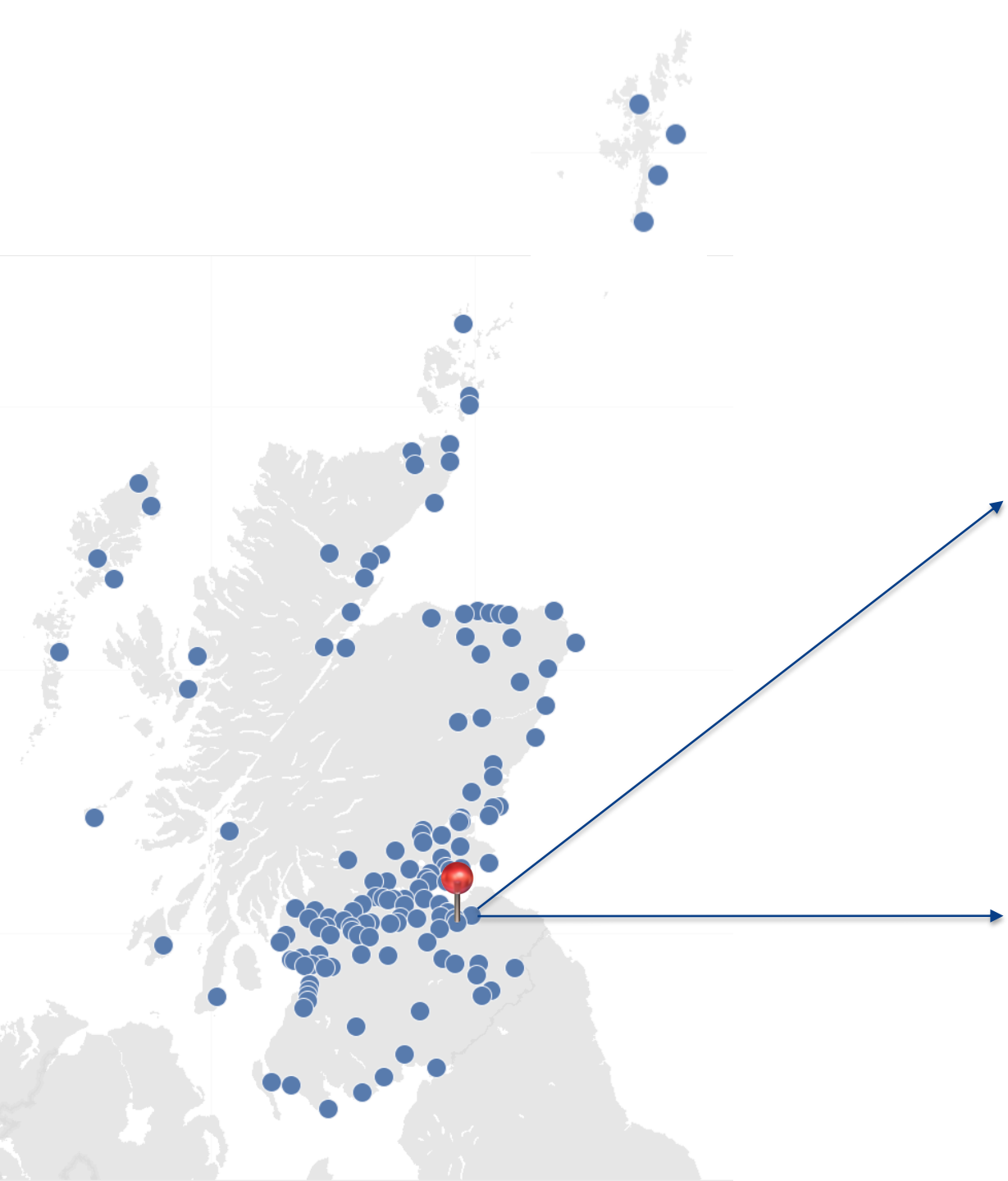
When intuitions (don't) fail?

- When do intuitions fail?
- When don't they fail?
- Comparison of judgments x conversation

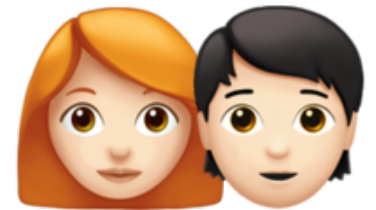


scots
syntax
atlas





65+



18-25

Data

- Acceptability judgments
- Spontaneous conversation data

Methodology

“Interview method”

(Barbiers & Bennis 2007)

- 200+ item **acceptability judgment** task
- 100,000+ judgments across these items

I'm showing you the new pair of shoes I bought. You say:

I've got **they shoes** as well.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5

I would never say that
you would never hear that here
it's very unnatural
it's bad

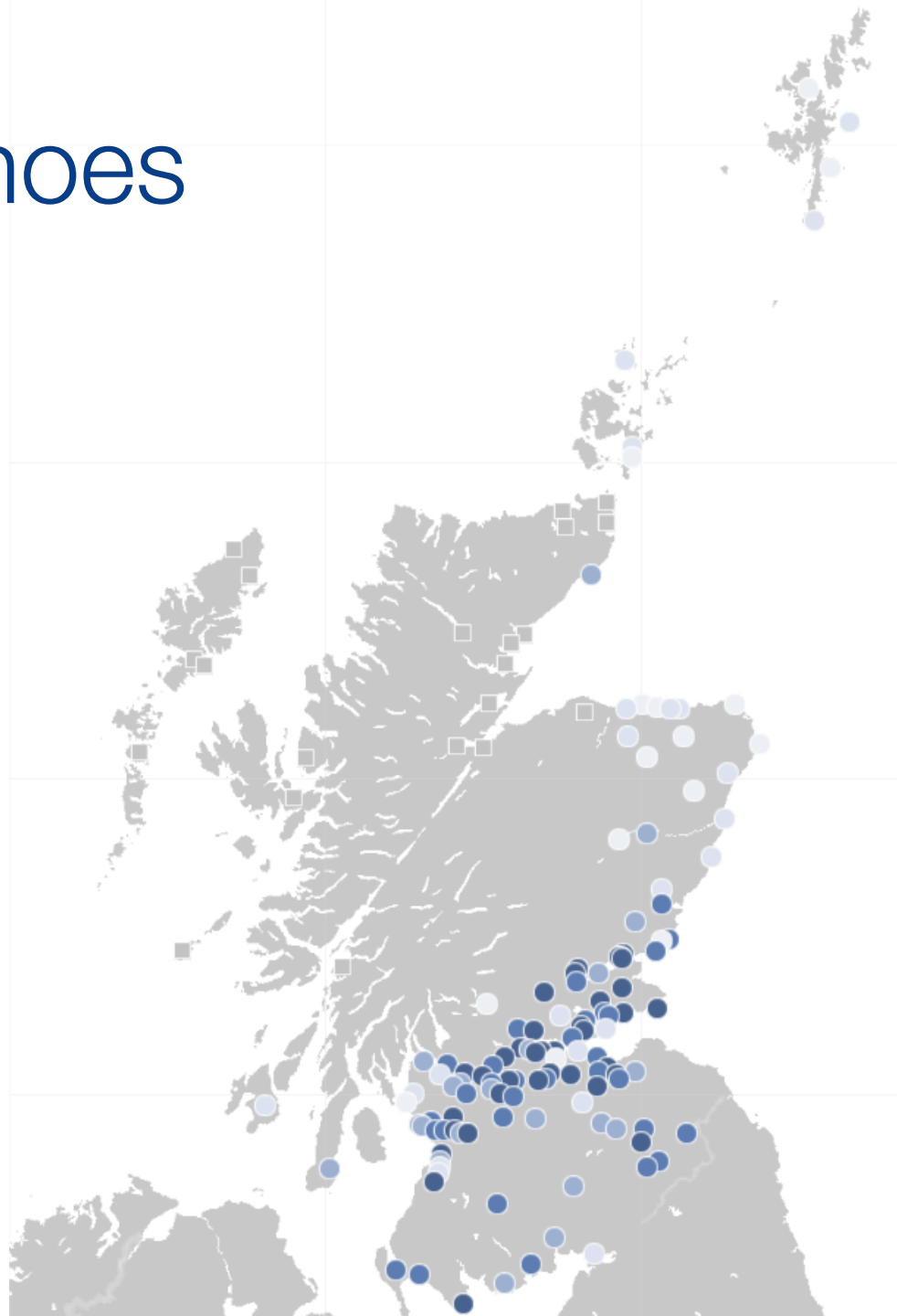
I probably wouldn't say that
you probably wouldn't hear that here
it's unnatural
it's weird

I might say that
you wouldn't hear that a lot here
it's not very natural
it's a bit weird

I would probably say that
you would hear that occasionally here
it's quite natural
it's OKish

I would definitely say it
you would hear that a lot here
it's very natural
it's fine

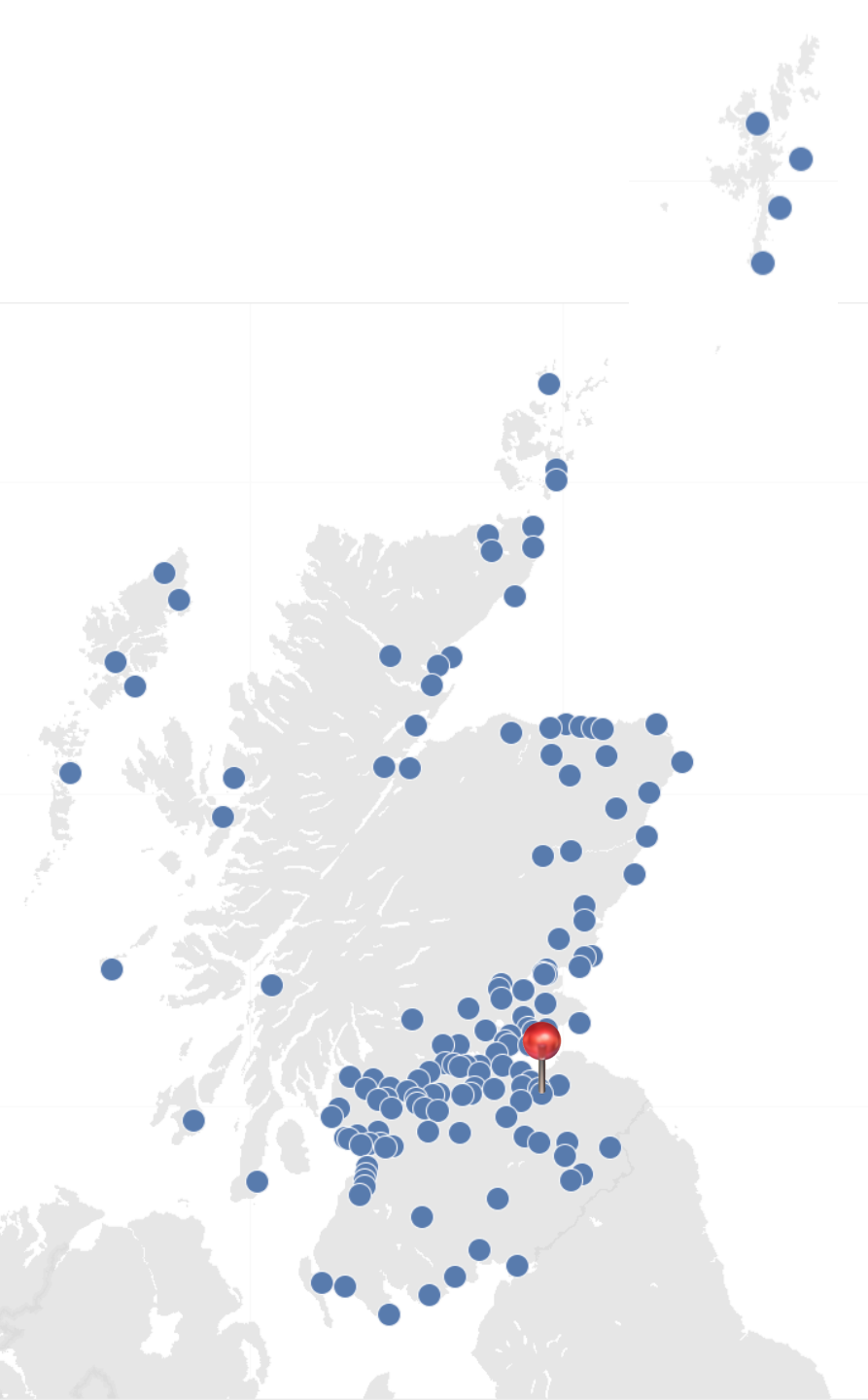
they shoes



Methodology

Spontaneous conversation data

- 1 hour sociolinguistic interview
- 275+ hours of conversation
- 3 million word corpus



- Gathered two types of data allowing comparison between acceptability judgments and spoken data
- When do(n't) intuitions fail?

Features to investigate

This car **needs washed**. needs + -ed

I **div** like a scone! div

I **canna**e see **nothing**. negative concord

Needs washed



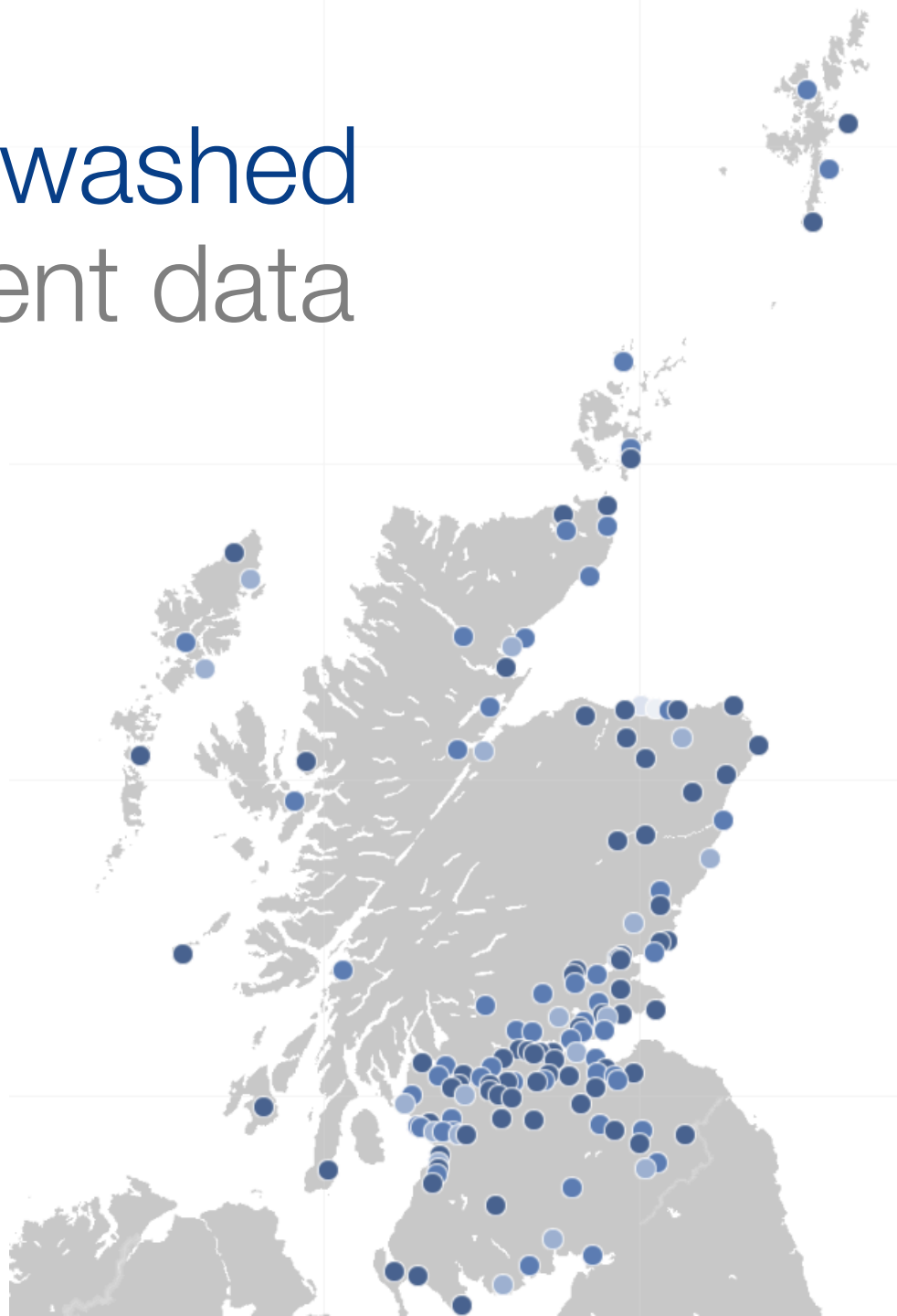
“... it’s Sunday night it **needs covered.**”

needs washed

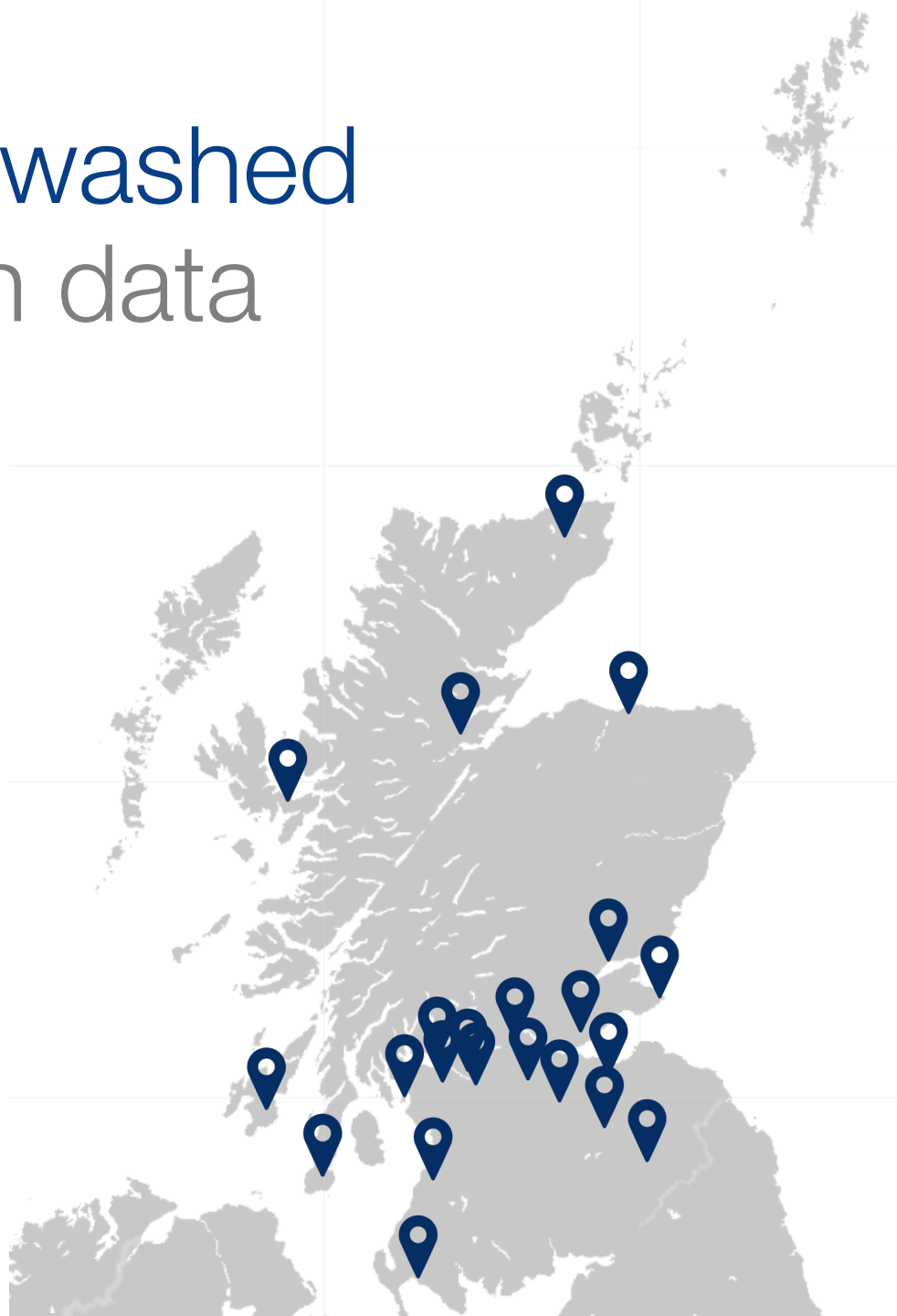
- Widespread Scottish feature
- Covert

(e.g. Aitken 1984, Trudgill 1983, Montgomery 1991)

needs washed
judgment data



needs washed
spoken data



needs washed
spoken data



div



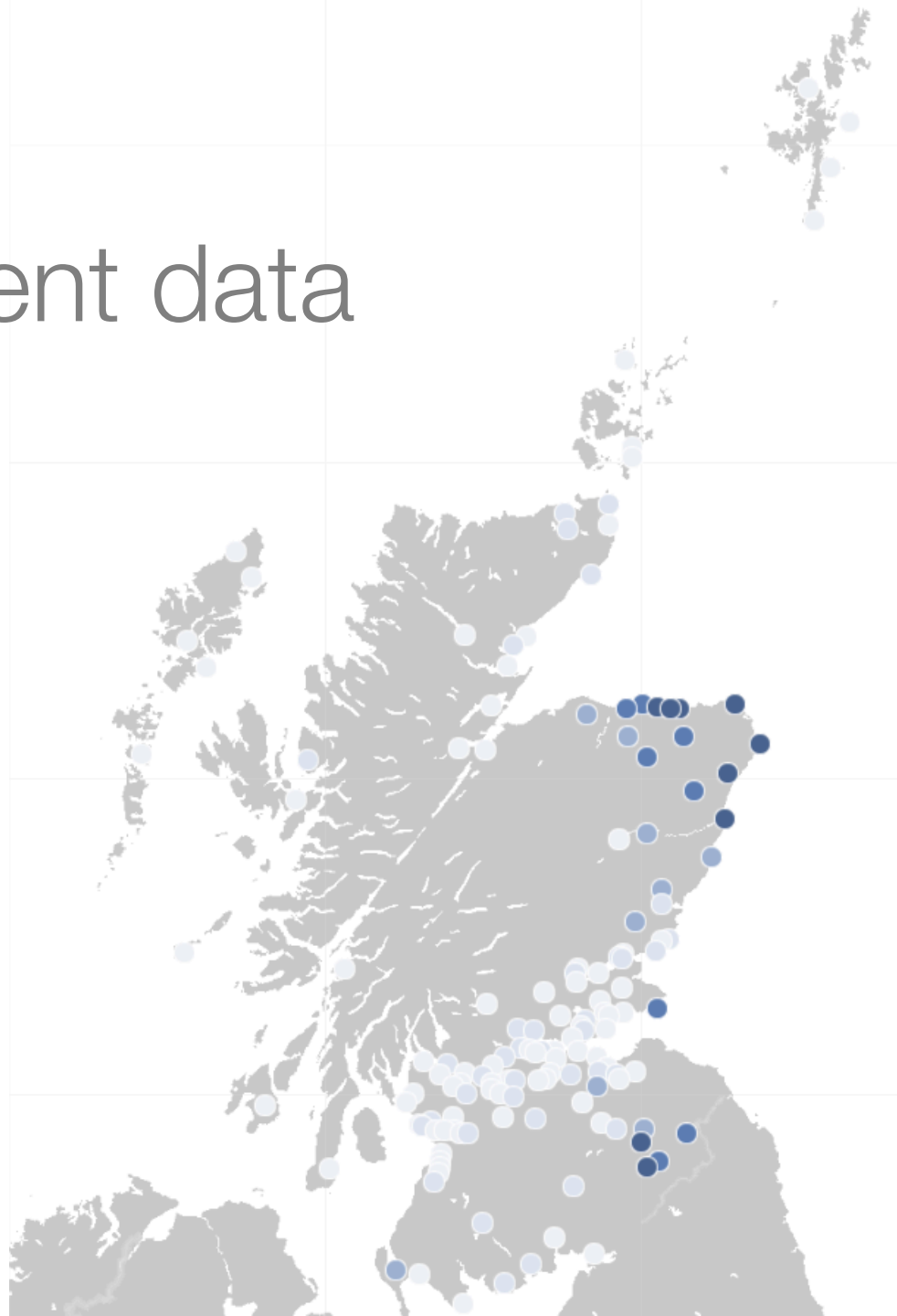
“... Neither `div` I, really.”

div

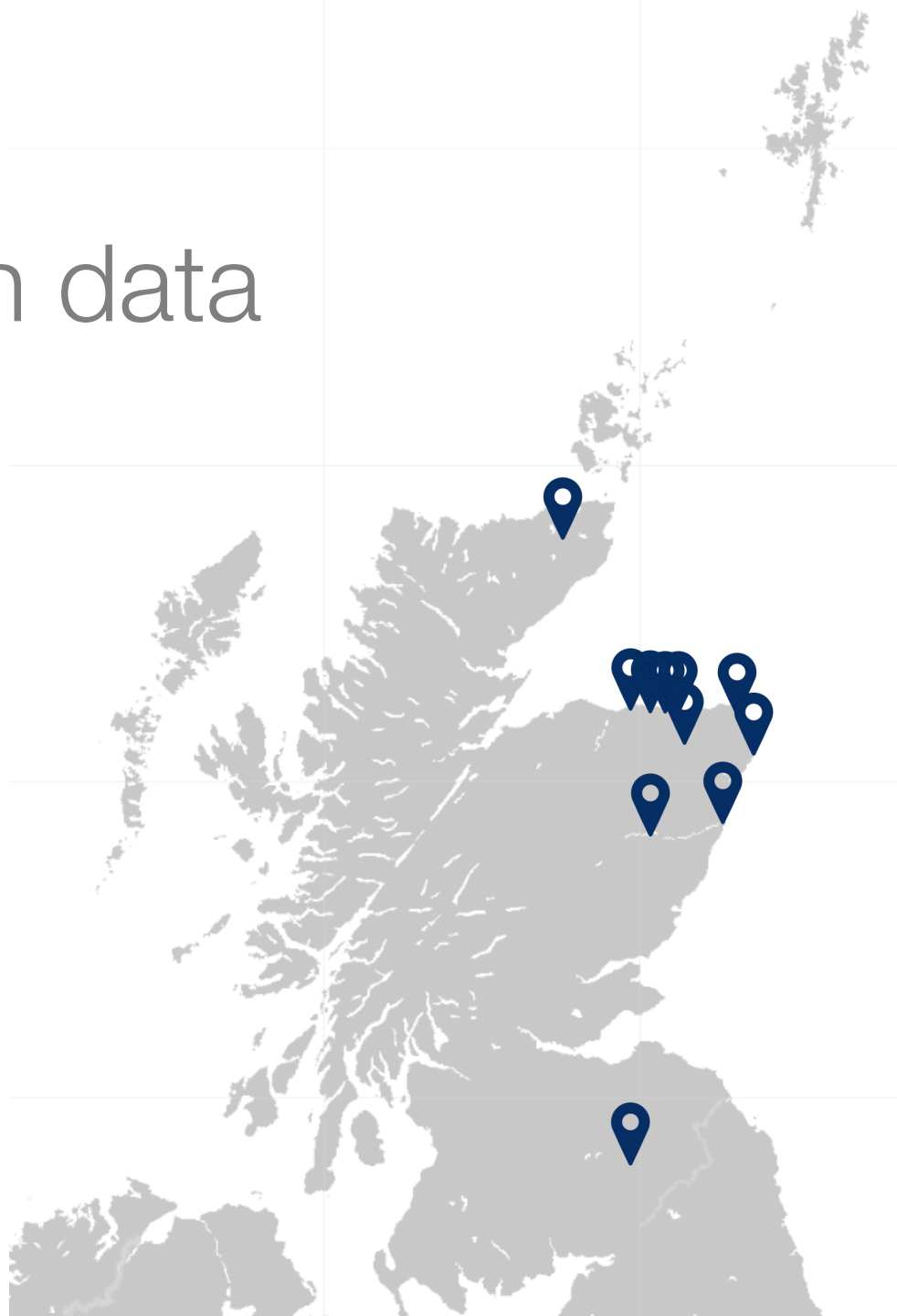
- Feature of Tyneside English
- Attested in north east Scotland

(e.g. Smith 2000, Rowe 2007, Pichler 2009, Beal et al. 2012)

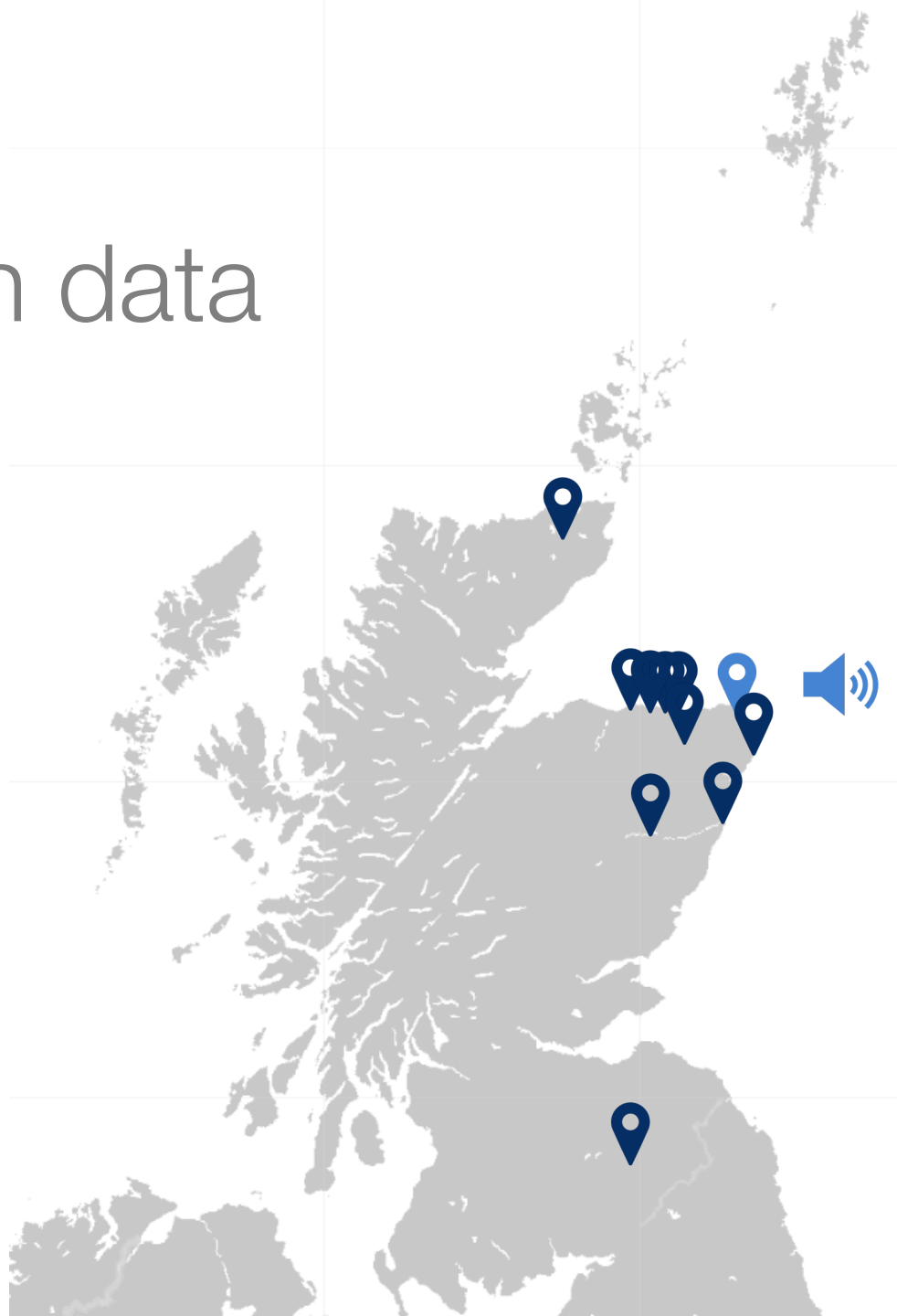
div
judgment data



div
spoken data



div
spoken data



Negative concord



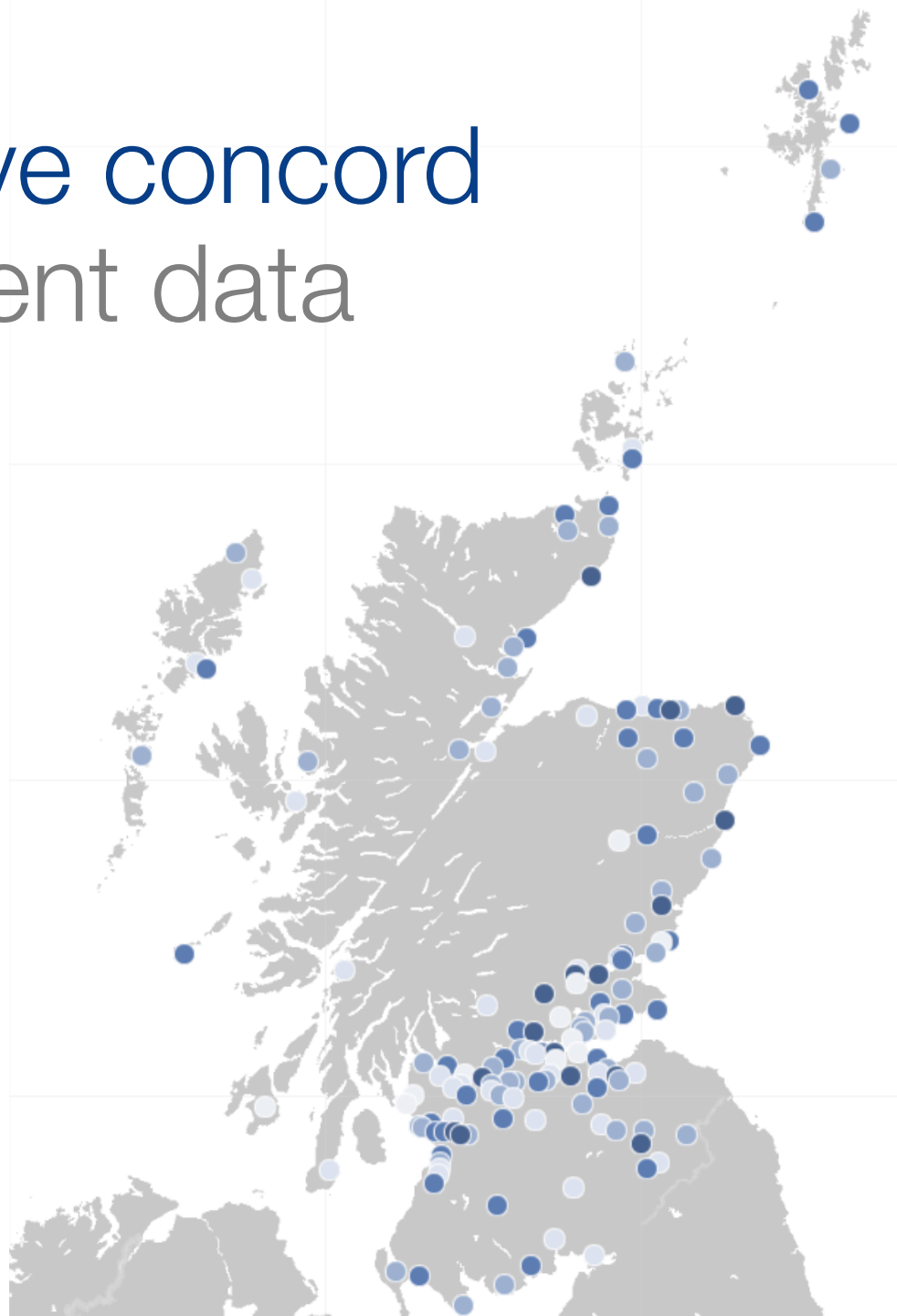
“... I couldna do nothing about it”

Negative concord

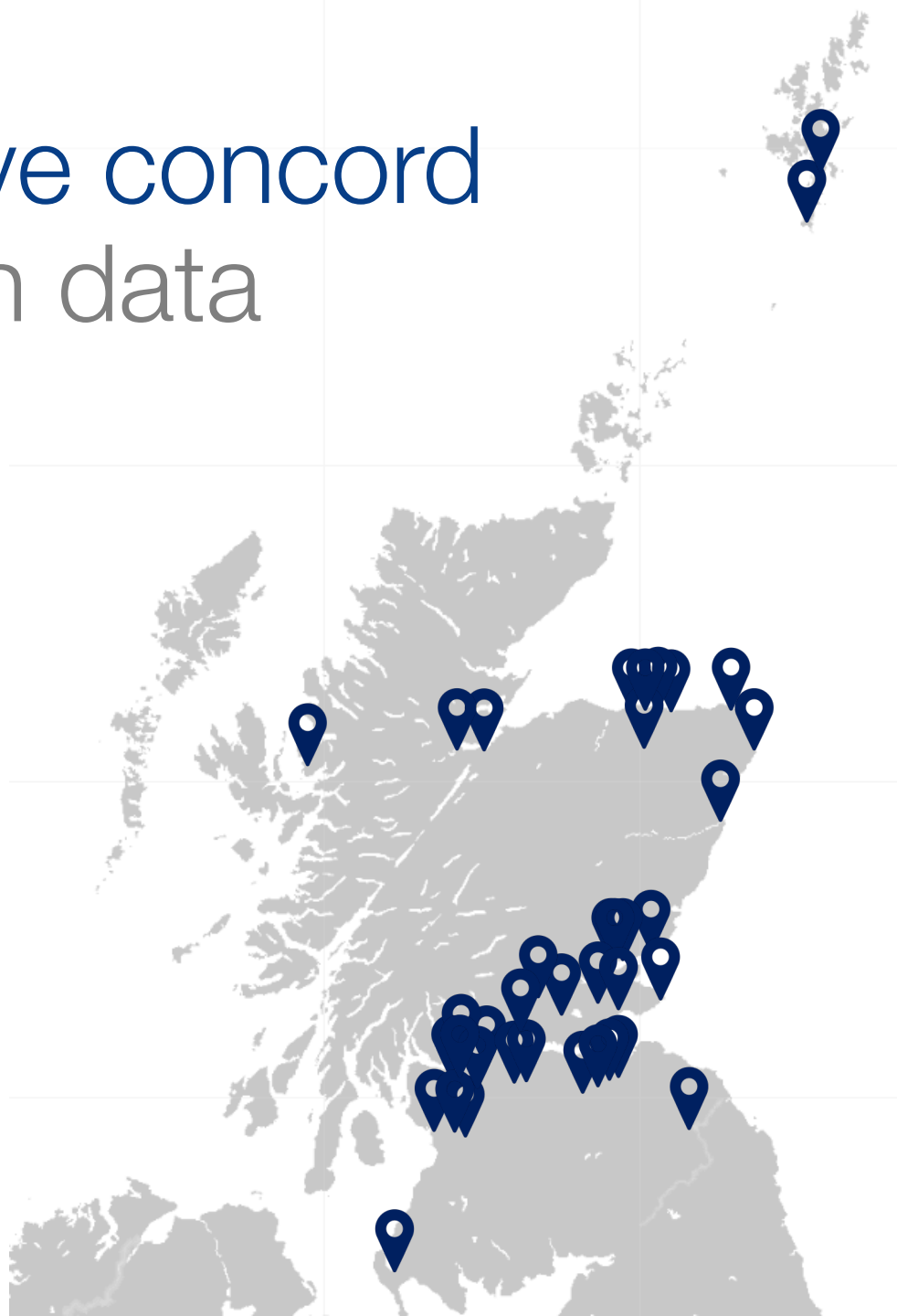
- “Vernacular universal” – including most Scots varieties
- Highly stigmatized

(e.g. Cheshire et al. 1993, Smith 2001, Chambers 2004, Anderwald 2005)

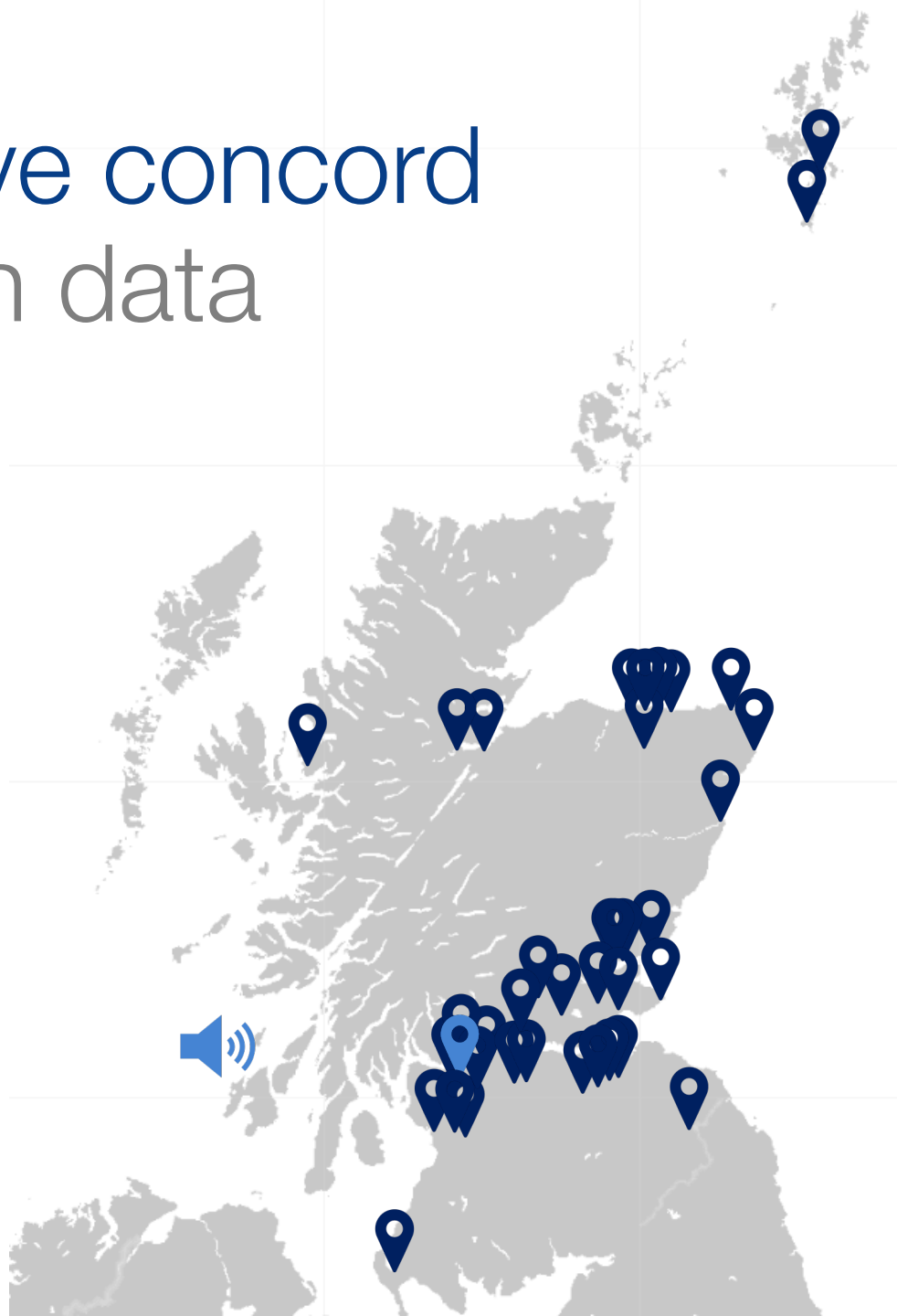
negative concord judgment data



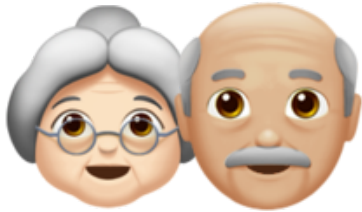
negative concord spoken data



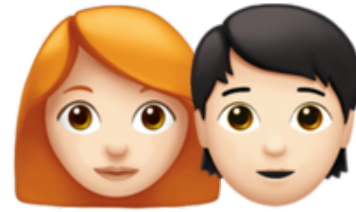
negative concord spoken data



Negative concord – age

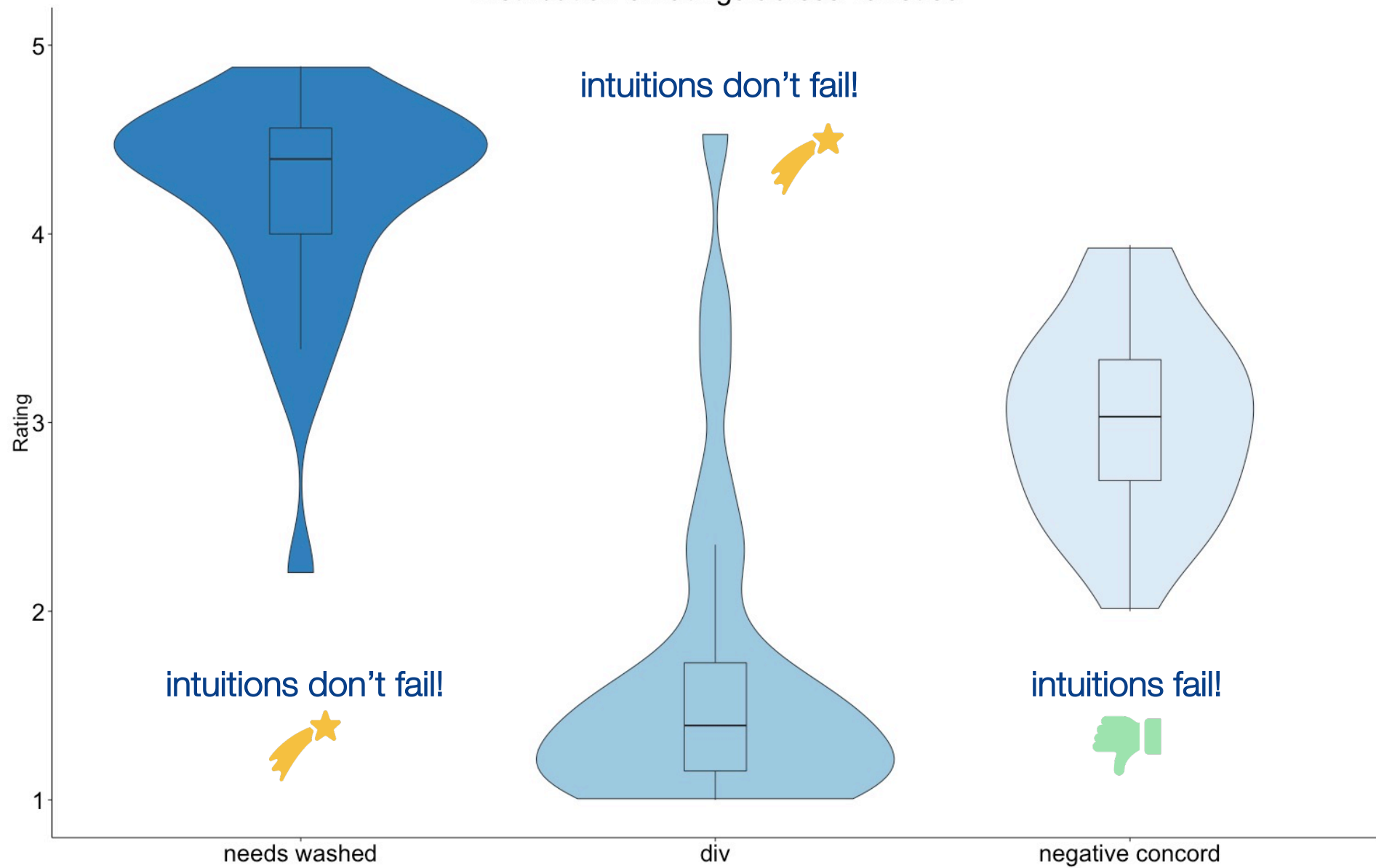


- Use it more
- Rate it lower



- Use it less
- Rate it higher

Distribution of ratings across varieties



Conclusions

- Scots Syntax Atlas – new resource, can compare judgments and spoken data
- Intuitions (don't always) fail!
- More complex than simple regional stigma

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