Numeracy

2 min

Wow, we've made it through a lot of content! Let's kick off the final section: analysis, or turning data into useful information. The key question of analysis is, "what's the takeaway?"

Let's start with a humble reminder that humans have some limitations when it comes to numbers.

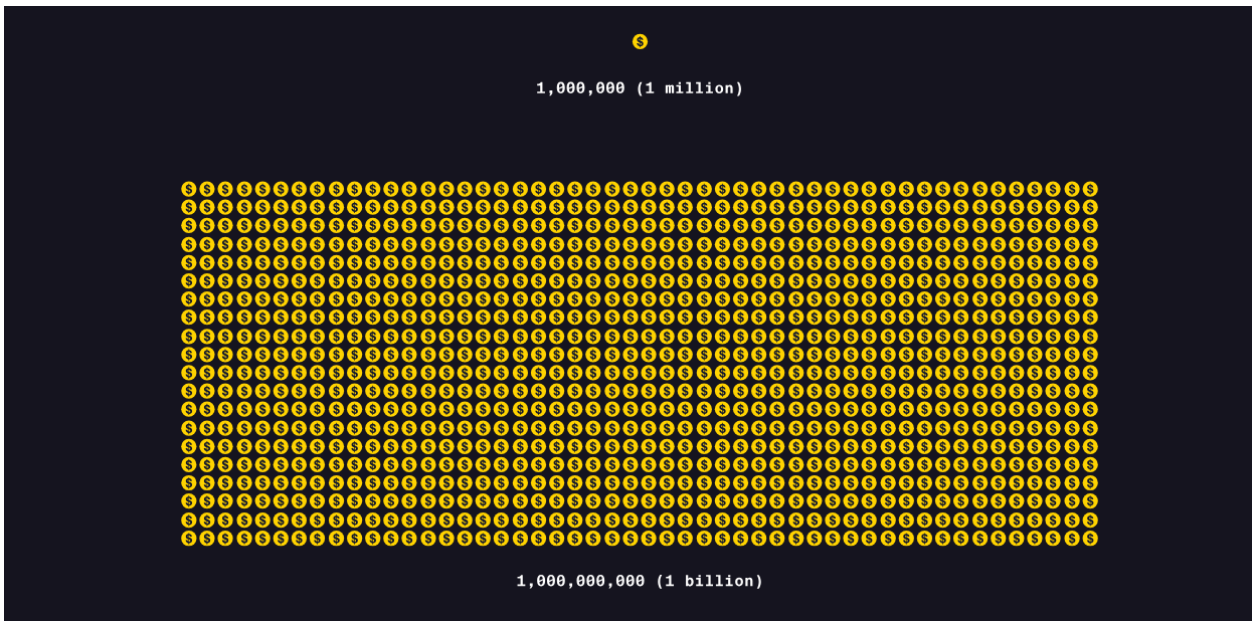
We're generally very good when it comes to numbers we can count, or numbers we use in context. For example, money makes a lot of sense in everyday amounts like coffee, bills, or rent. We can visualize what those numbers mean and understand the consequences of them increasing or decreasing by, say, 20%.

But numbers without everyday context are another story. Think about the GDP of a country, or the personal wealth of an evil billionaire. How would that number change if we added 20% to it? We can probably do the calculation without too much challenge, but what does the change in that number actually mean in real life terms?

With really big (or really small) numbers, it takes extra care and attention to understand how big or how small the quantity is.

On that note, powers of ten make a big difference, especially at a large scale! A million vs. a billion? Really different! (1 million seconds is equal to about 11 days. 1 billion seconds is equal to about 32 years 😳)

Part of an analyst's job is to provide context and clarifications to make sure that audiences are not only reading the correct numbers, but understanding what they mean.


1,000,000 (1 million)
1,000,000,000 (1 billion)