Workshop
Storytelling using Figure.NZ data

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"We are, as a species, addicted to story.
Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories."

— Jonathan Gottschall, The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human

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Why Figure.NZ exists

Mission

Get the people of New Zealand using data to thrive.

Vision

For Figure.NZ to help the people of New Zealand use data to understand the things they care about, so they can make great choices.
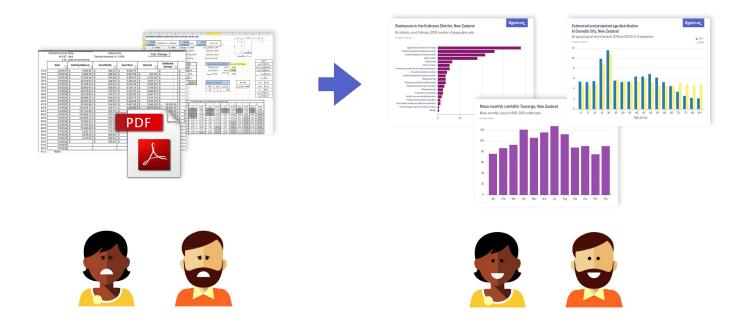
Purpose

We want New Zealand to be a place where all can participate in making our country delightful.

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Data holds many valuable stories, and everyone can benefit from using it, **but most people don't use data, and much of New Zealand's data isn't used.**

Figure.NZ processes and publishes data about New Zealand on our website, where it's free for everyone to find and use.

What we do

Figure.NZ (www.figure.nz)

- Free to use.
- Over 44,000 charts and datasets, covering a range of data about New Zealand.
- Topics include people, travel, health, education, employment, economy, crime, environment, social welfare, and technology.
- Download chart images to use, as well as CSV data files.
- Explore using the website search, or browse by topic or data provider.

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What is data storytelling?

- It's a method of building a compelling narrative crafted around and anchored by data.

- It's not just telling a story about numbers; it's telling a story of what those numbers reveal about people.

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Why is data storytelling worthwhile?

- People hear statistics, but they feel stories.

- If you want people to care about data, use it to tell a story.

- If you want people to take a story seriously, inform it with data.

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Why use Figure.NZ data to tell stories?

Our data is:

- Free to take and use.

- Easy to find and understand.

- Credible.

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Exercise

How to build a data story using Figure.NZ data

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Choose a topic.

What will your story be about?

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Define your audience.

Who are they?

What's their relationship to you?

What do they care about?

Be as specific as possible so you can make sure your story will be interesting and relevant to them.

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Define the story's purpose.

Why are you telling this story?

What do you want people to learn, think about,
or do differently as a result?

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Consider what data to use.

Think about what data would be relevant for your topic, audience, and purpose.

What will persuade your audience of your points?

Find credible data.

Figure.NZ is a great shortcut for this, because we've done the quality-checking.

You can also do a Google search to see what exists.

Make sense of the data using Figure.NZ's 5 questions.

1. What is this chart or data about?

2. What does the data show?

3. How does this compare with other data?

4. What could be happening in the real world to create these figures?

5. Who could this be relevant for, and why?

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Find the highlights in the data.

What are the most interesting and persuasive elements?

Draw attention to these and be selective about what you include.

Think about what your audience cares about and will relate to.

It's better to use a few figures that your audience will remember than it is to overload them with information.

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Work out what order the story should be told in.

What's the journey you want your audience to go on as they read the story?

Does this impact the order of information?

For example, you might start with some high-level data about New Zealand and gradually narrow down to more specific figures.

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Consider other info you could include.

What else could you include to make your story more compelling?

Consider things like background information to help your audience understand the figures, or real-life stories from people who've experienced what the data shows.

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Put the story together.

Gather all the story elements — data, other information, supporting text and visuals — and create a draft that links them together in a logical order.

Review, edit, and refine.

Does your story make sense and flow well?

Does anything need to be explained so your audience isn't confused?

Are there parts that aren't necessary?

Most importantly, does it serve the purpose you set out to achieve?

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Share your story with your audience!

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Things to remember

- Keep it simple.

- Make sure your data sources are reliable.

- Use the most recent data available.

- Use as few sources of data sources as possible.

- Credit data sources.

- Read the metadata.

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The Figure.NZ team is here to help with questions about New Zealand's public data.

Get in touch on the details below.

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www.twitter.com/FigureNZ
www.facebook.com/FigureNZ