

DATA VISUALIZATION

Data Analysis for Journalism and Political Communication
(Spring 2026)

Prof. Bell

JOB LOSSES SOAR; U.S. VIRUS CASES TOP WORLD



Since the coronavirus descended on Brooklyn Hospital Center three weeks ago, the city has handled over 800 patients.

Under Trump, Unfilled Posts Hinder Action

By JONATHAN SAWALSKI
and DAVID E. SANGER
WASHINGTON — Of the 17 new posts created by the Trump administration to combat the coronavirus pandemic, only one has been filled, according to records obtained by The New York Times.

The National Park Service, which oversees the country's 414 national parks, has failed to hire its first chief medical officer since the agency was created in January. The agency has also failed to hire a chief medical officer for its 100 million visitors per year.

The agency's chief medical officer would have been responsible for helping to hire medical staff at all the nation's parks. The department of interior, which oversees the parks, has not yet appointed a chief medical officer.

At the Department of Health and Human Services, the agency that oversees medical supplies and equipment used in hospitals, no one has been appointed to oversee the agency's work in combating the virus.

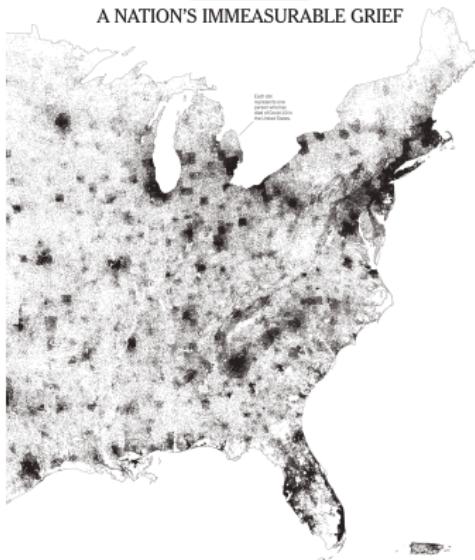
Even worse, President Trump has not even appointed a chief medical officer for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which oversees the nation's health insurance programs.

None of these top posts have been filled.

Communication is key.

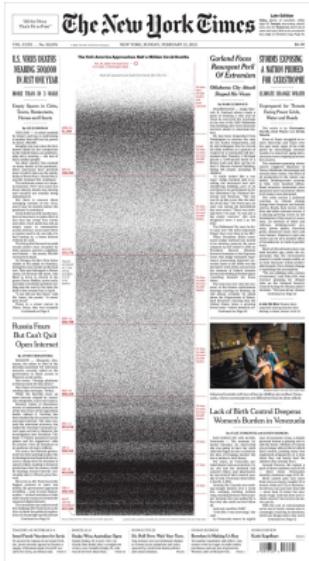
ONE MILLION

A NATION'S IMMEASURABLE GRIEF

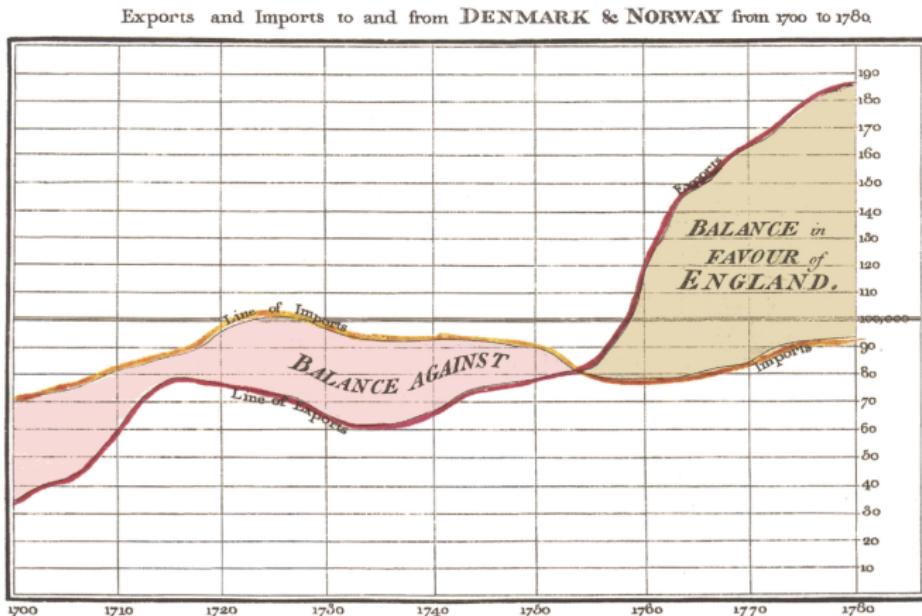


They were mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons. More Americans have died in the pandemic now than in two decades of our country's warfields or in all of the country's wars combined — a death rate higher than almost any other wealthy nation. Each dot on this map represents a person who died of Covid, a reminder of the toll the virus has taken on the United States. Their families have been left behind, fading in and out of memory, and the very that their loved ones will be forgotten is a nation determined to move on. PAGES 10-12



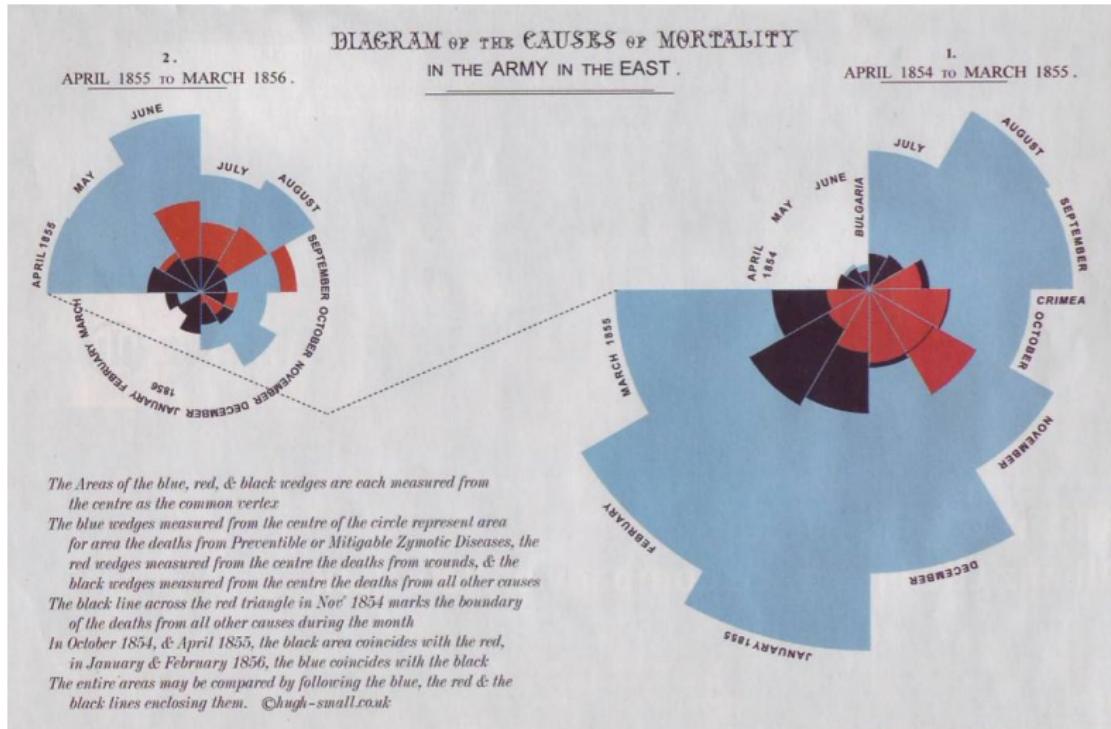


EARLY DATA VISUALIZATION



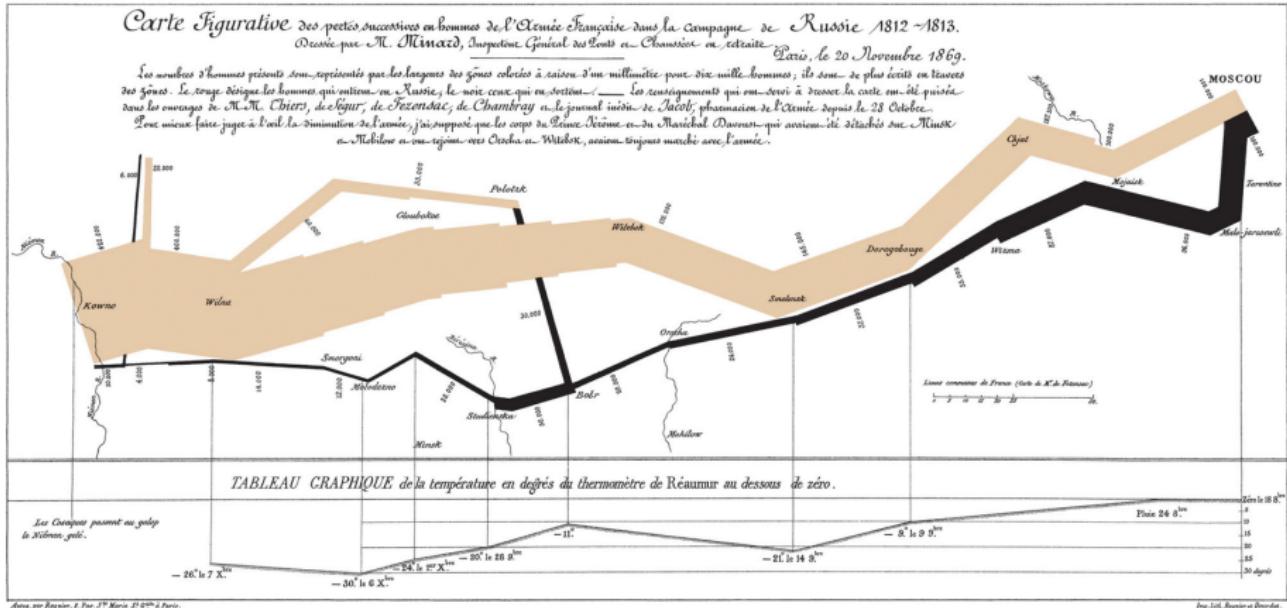
William Playfair (late 1700s)

EARLY DATA VISUALIZATION



Florence Nightingale (1858)

EARLY DATA VISUALIZATION



Charles Minard (1861)

EDWARD TUFTE

Published *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* in 1983

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- ① “Above all else, show the data.”

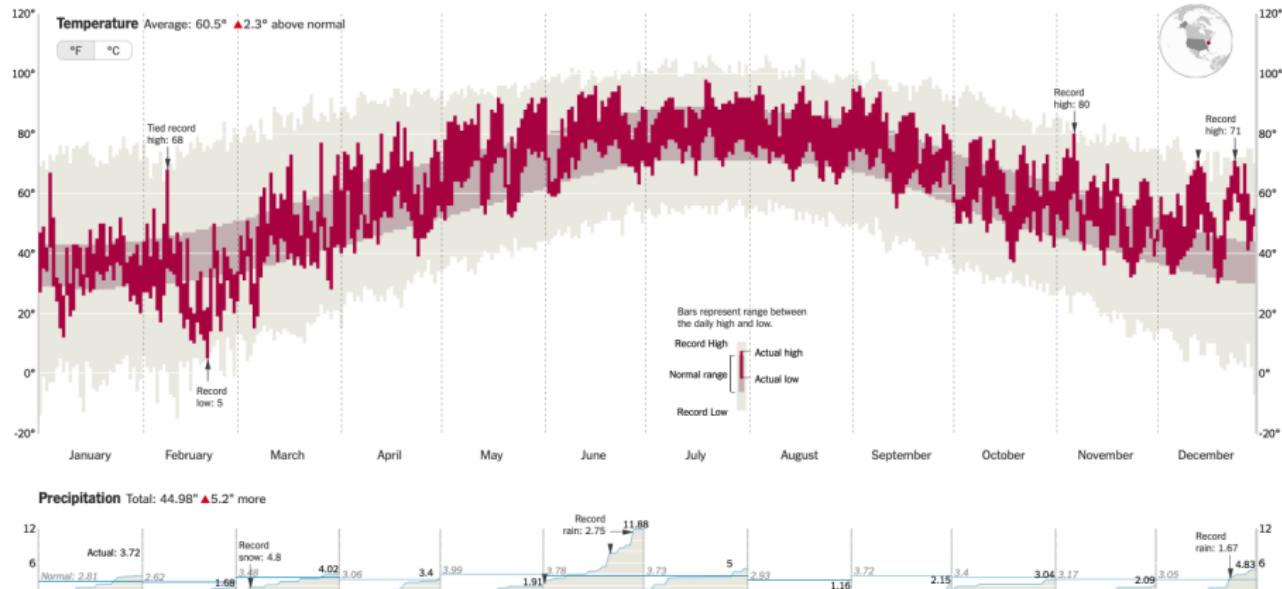
EDWARD TUFTE

Published *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* in 1983

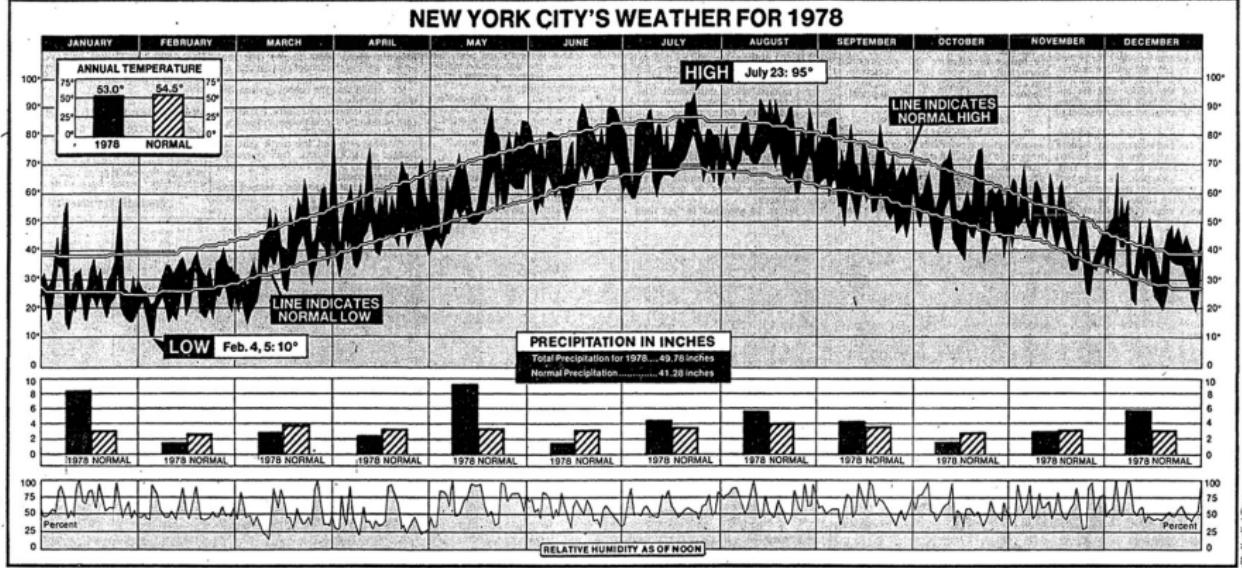
- ① “Above all else, show the data.”
- ② Maximize the amount of data and minimize the amount of ink

EDWARD TUFTE

Washington, D.C.



NEW YORK CITY'S WEATHER FOR 1978



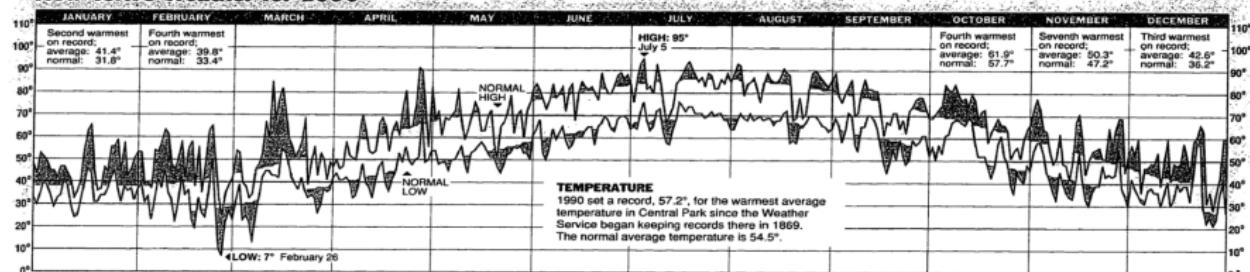
The New York Times

EDWARD TUFTE

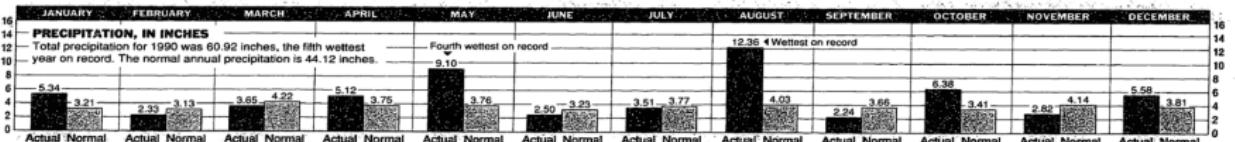
THE NEW YORK TIMES WEATHER SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1991

L+ 23

New York's Weather for 1990



TEMPERATURE
1990 set a record, 57.2°, for the warmest average temperature in Central Park since the Weather Service began keeping records there in 1869. The normal average temperature is 54.5°.

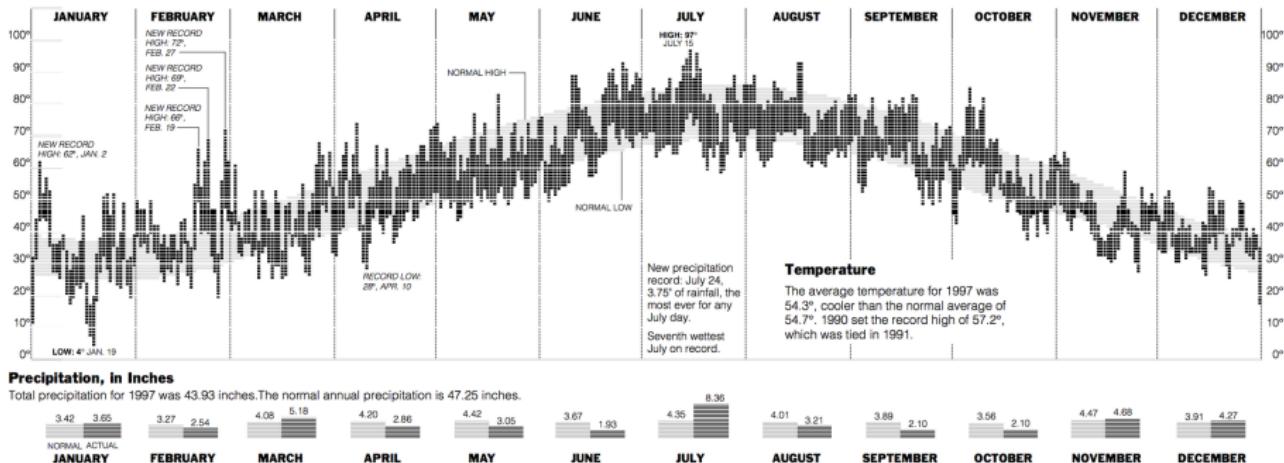


Source: National Weather Service



EDWARD TUFTE

New York City's Weather for 1997



Source: National Weather Service

The New York Times

EDWARD TUFTE

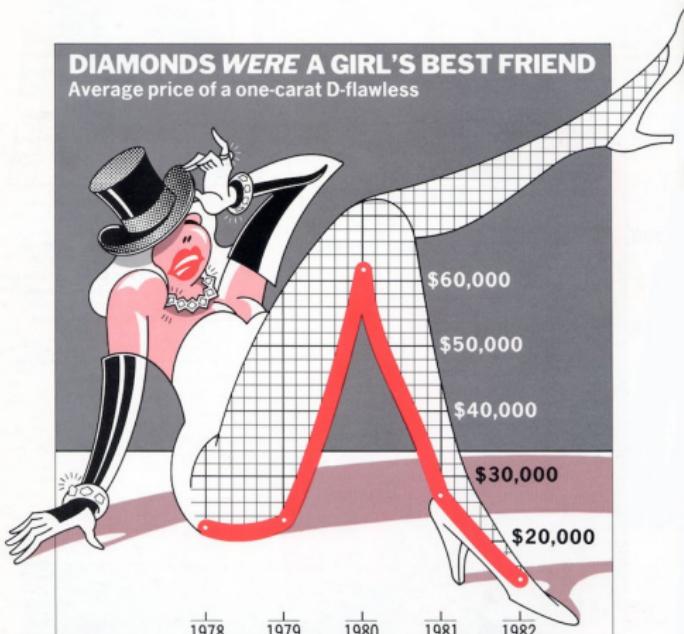
Published *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* in 1983

- ① “Above all else, show the data.”
- ② Maximize the amount of data and minimize the amount of ink
- ③ Opponent of unnecessary graphical design (“chartjunk”)

EDWARD TUFTE

DIAMONDS WERE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

Average price of a one-carat D-flawless



TIME Chart by Nigel Holmes

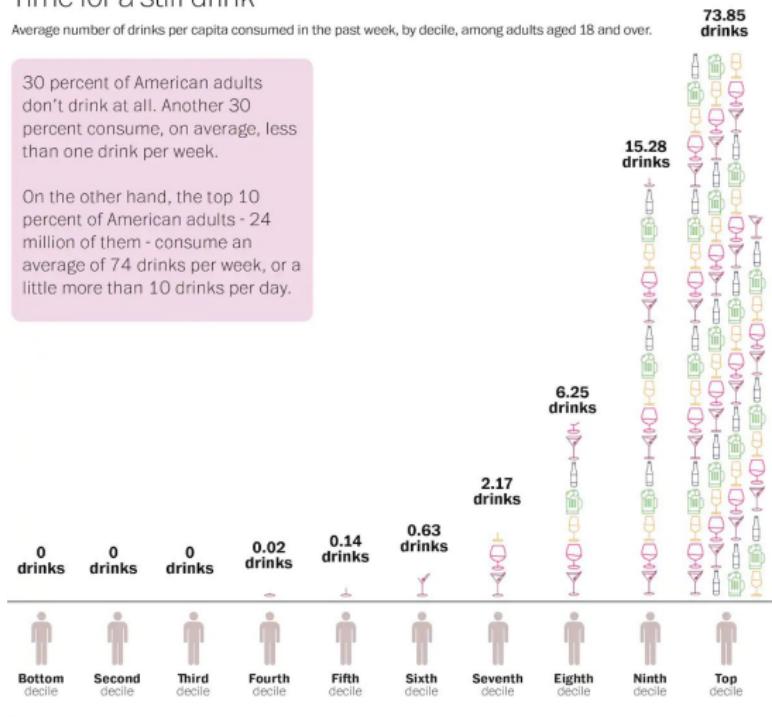
Source: The Diamond Registry

Time for a stiff drink

Average number of drinks per capita consumed in the past week, by decile, among adults aged 18 and over.

30 percent of American adults don't drink at all. Another 30 percent consume, on average, less than one drink per week.

On the other hand, the top 10 percent of American adults - 24 million of them - consume an average of 74 drinks per week, or a little more than 10 drinks per day.

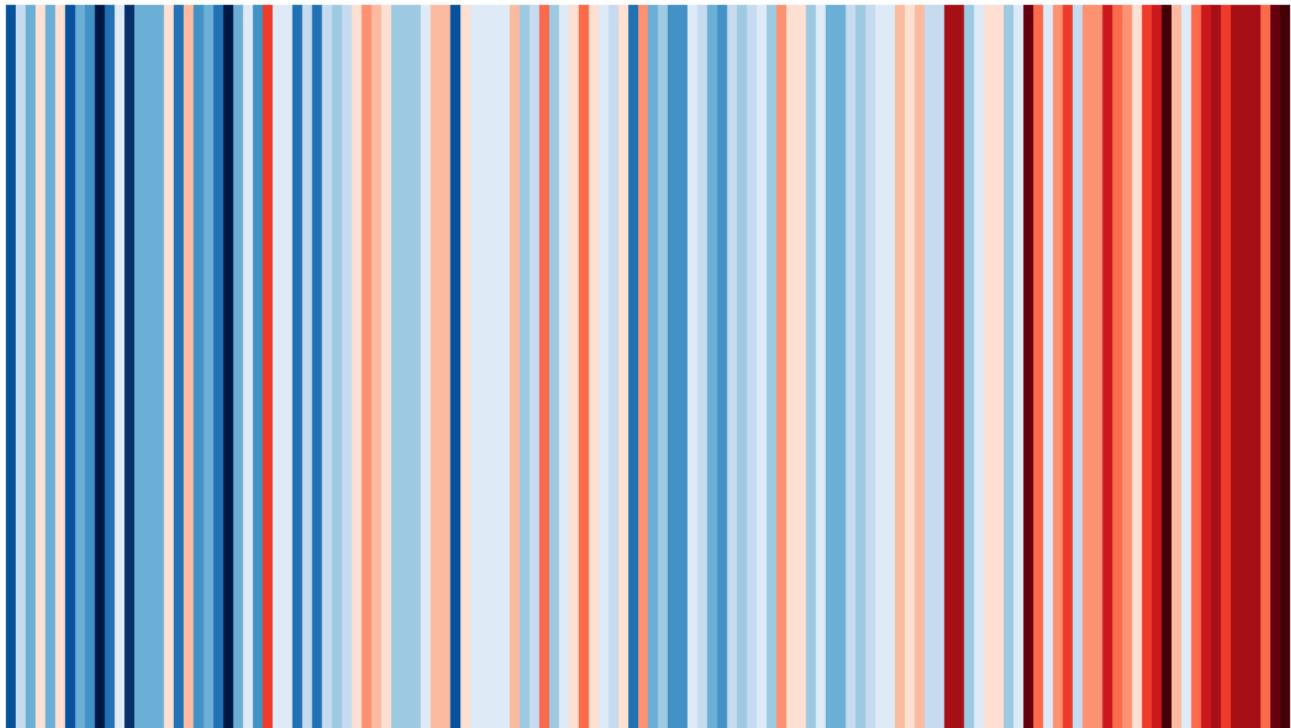


WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WONKBLOG

Source: "Paying the Tab," by Philip J. Cook

ENGINEERS vs. DESIGNERS

| Engineers | Designers |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplicity of design• Maximize the data• Assumes the viewer is alert and interested• Form follows function | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artistic expression• Express only a few ideas• Assumes the viewer is inattentive• Many forms can convey the same data |



Warming Stripes: Washington, DC
Creator: Ed Hawkins

Sight → Perception → Cognition

Sight

- The eyes send small snapshots of high-resolution focus to the brain, which puts the snapshots together into a single image

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- The order in which the eyes take these snapshots is not random – it is optimized through evolution (i.e., moving objects, pure colors get attention first)

Sight

- The eyes send small snapshots of high-resolution focus to the brain, which puts the snapshots together into a single image
- The order in which the eyes take these snapshots is not random – it is optimized through evolution (i.e., moving objects, pure colors get attention first)
- When we design data visualization, the first question to ask is: **where do my eyes go first?**

Perception

- Known as “preattentive features”

Perception

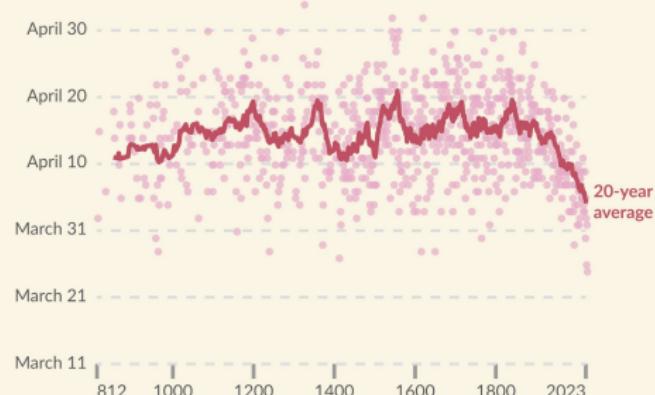
- Known as “preattentive features”
- The brain is optimized to quickly identify contrasts in color and recognize groups

SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Color Contrasts

Cherry trees have been blossoming earlier due to warmer spring temperatures

Date of peak cherry tree (*Prunus jamasakura*) blossom in Kyoto, Japan



Data source: Yasuki Aono (2021; 2024)

Note: The 20-year average is calculated when there are at least five years with data in the 20-year window. The dates are off by one day on leap years.

OurWorldInData.org/biodiversity | CC BY

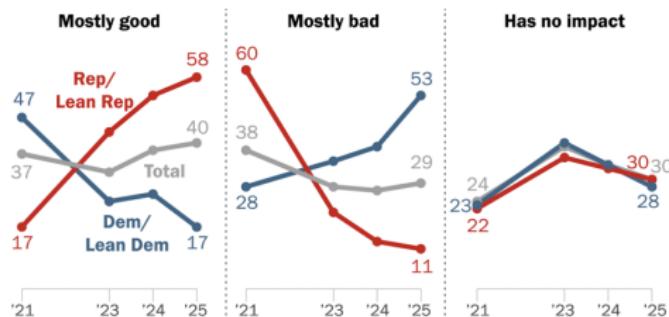


SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Proximity and Distance

Steep increase in the share of Republican X users who say the platform is good for American democracy, decrease among Democrats since 2021

% of U.S. X (formerly Twitter) users who say X (is) ___ for American democracy



Note: Question wording in 2021 and 2023 (fielded before the platform's name change) referenced "Twitter," while the question in 2024 and 2025 referenced "X (formerly Twitter)." Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 24-March 2, 2025.

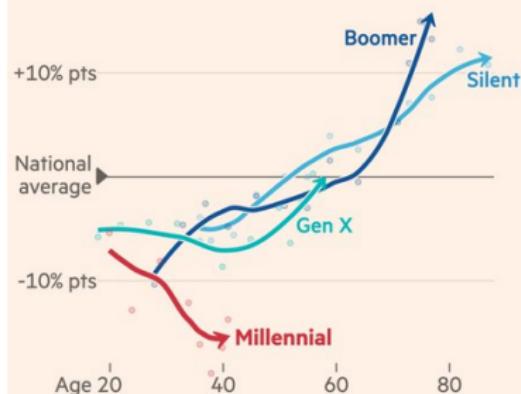
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

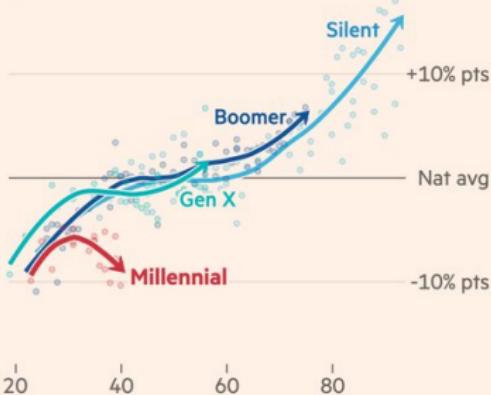
Proximity and Distance

Millennial voters in the UK and US are not following the typical pattern of growing more conservative as they age

UK: Conservative vote share by age within each generation, relative to national average



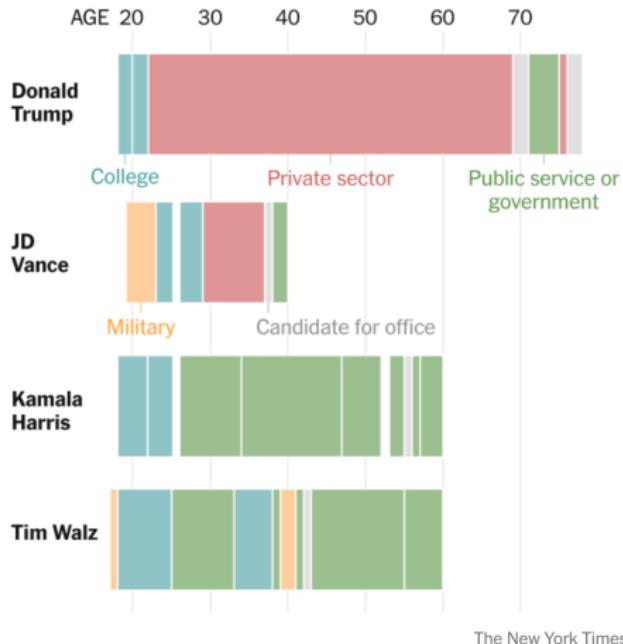
US: Republican vote share by age within each generation, relative to national average



Sources: FT analysis of British Election Study, US General Social Survey, American National Election Studies and Cooperative Election Study
FT graphic by John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch
© FT

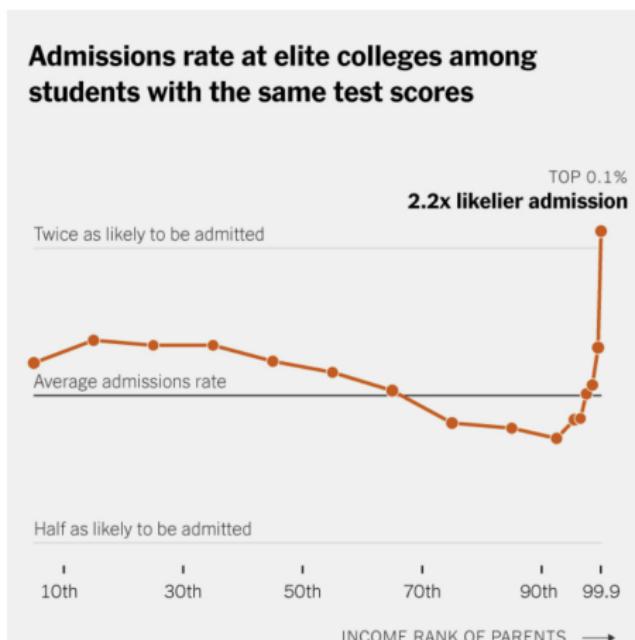
SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Similarity and Difference



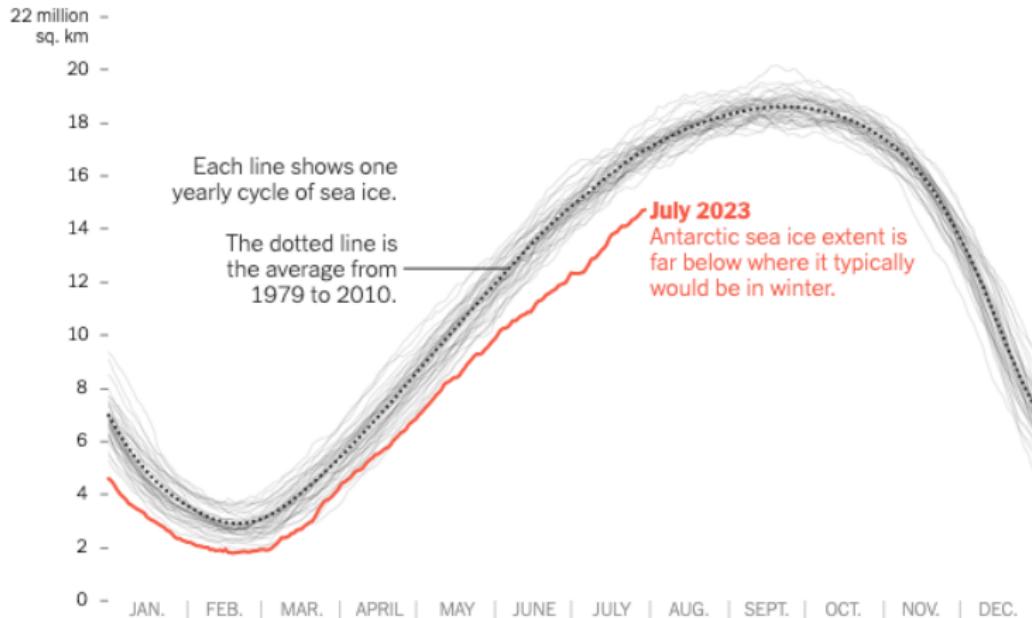
SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Connectedness



SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

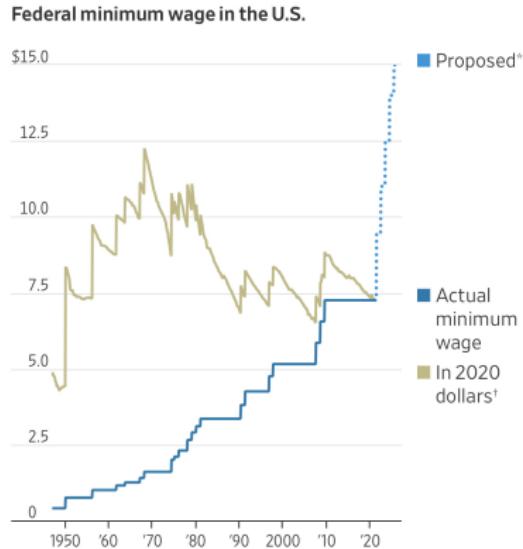
(Dis)Continuity



National Snow and Ice Data Center • Leanne Abraham

SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

(Dis)Continuity



*Reflects if new law became effective June 1, 2021 †Inflation-adjusted to 2020 dollars using the consumer-price index

Sources: Labor Department via St. Louis Fed; House Committee on Education and Labor

SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Closure

Public concern with immigration has historically tracked tabloid newspapers' coverage even more closely than it tracks actual immigration levels



*Includes mentions of immigration, refugees or asylum seekers, and all variations of wording/phrasing

Sources: Ipsos Issues Index; FT analysis of Factiva. Based on prior work by Geoff Evans and Jon Mellon

FT graphic by John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch

© FT

SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Closure

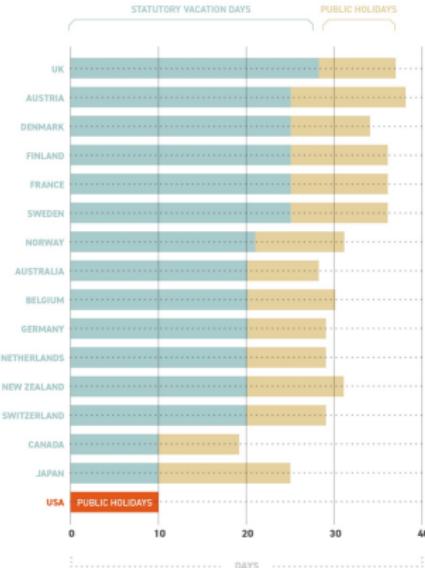


FIGURE 11 VACATION DAYS BY COUNTRY (2016)

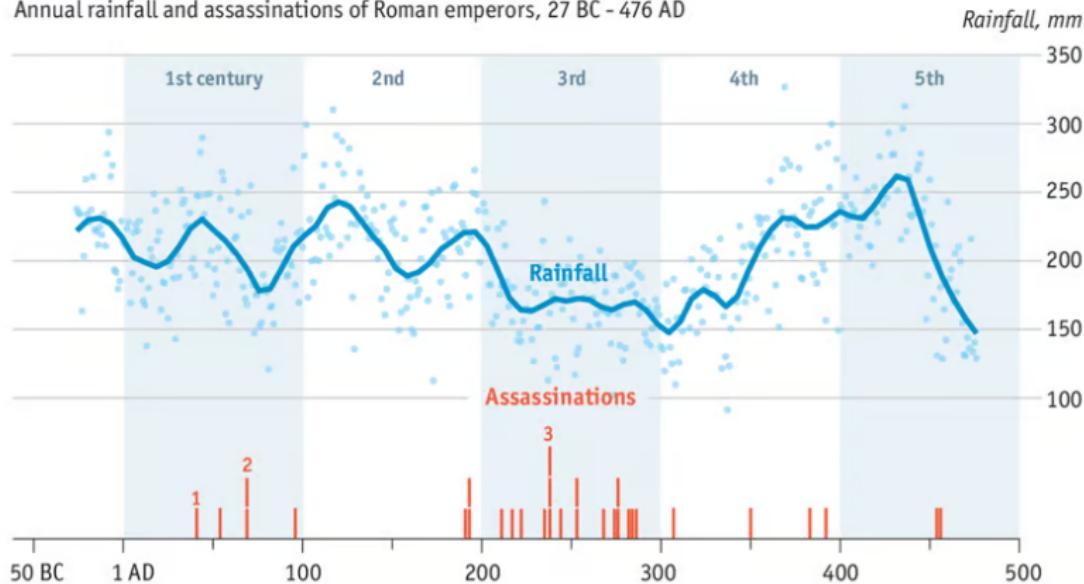
SOURCE: OECD

Source: People's Policy Project

SCIENCE OF DATA VISUALIZATION

Reign falls

Annual rainfall and assassinations of Roman emperors, 27 BC - 476 AD



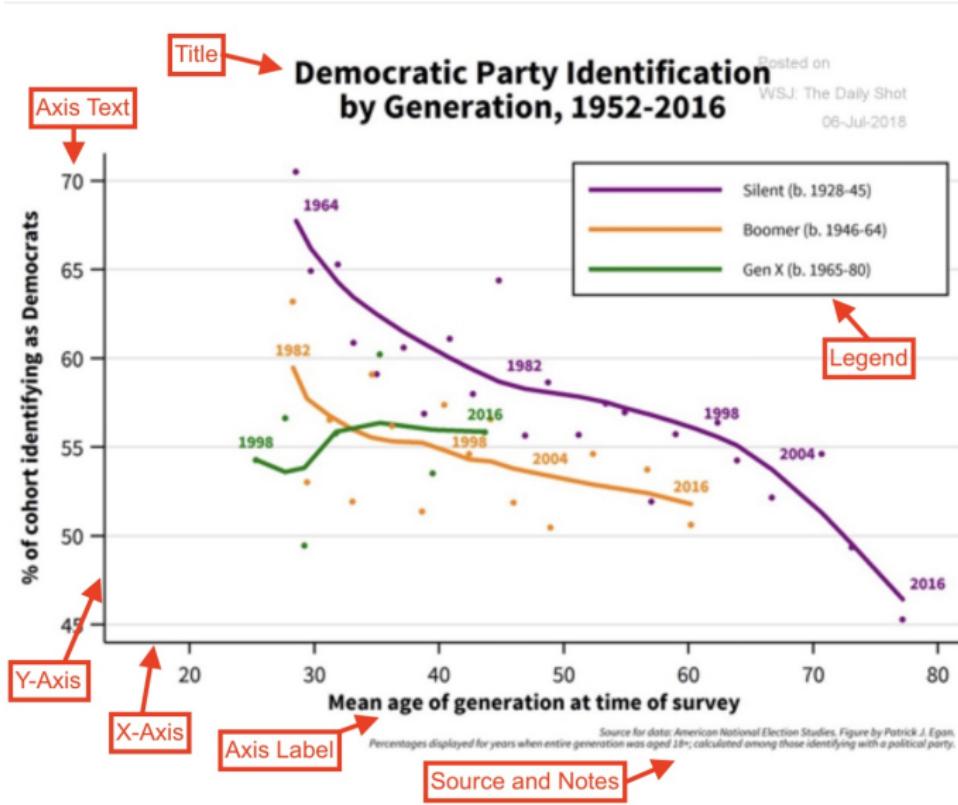
Source: "Shocks to military support and subsequent assassinations in Ancient Rome",
by Cornelius Christian and Liam Elbourne, *Economics Letters*, 2018

The Economist

Perception

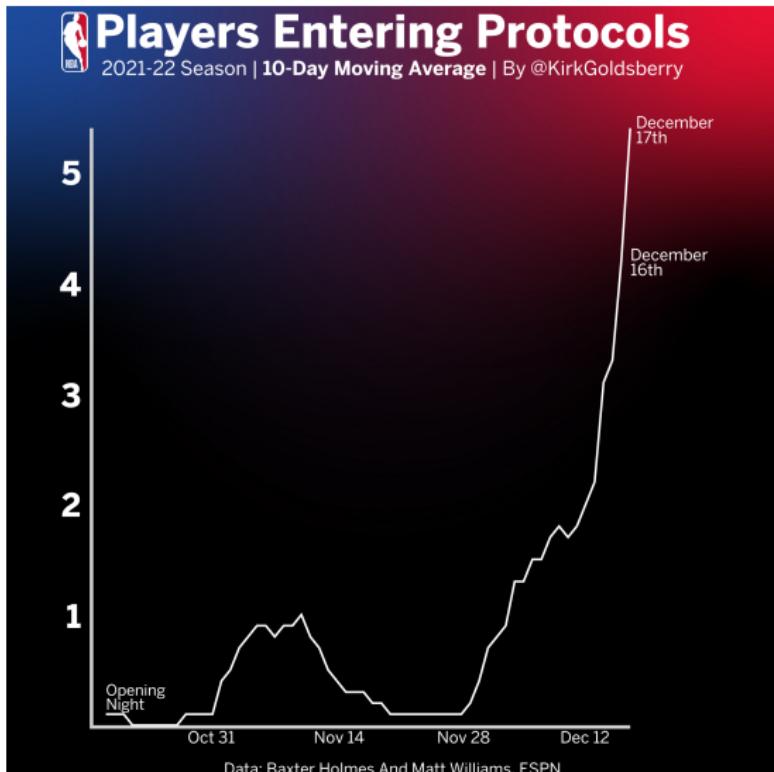
- Known as “preattentive features”
- The brain is optimized to quickly identify contrasts in color and recognize groups
- After “where do my eyes go first?”, the next question is:
what is the first idea that comes to mind?

PARTS OF A GRAPH



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- 1 Show the context of the data



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- 1 Show the context of the data

The Democrats' problems run deep, nearly everywhere.
This is where voters shifted toward President Trump in each of the last three elections.



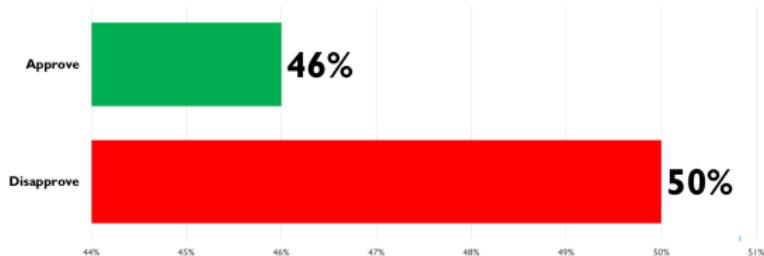
And this is where voters shifted toward Democrats.



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- ① Show the context of the data
- ② The main axis should show the scale of the data

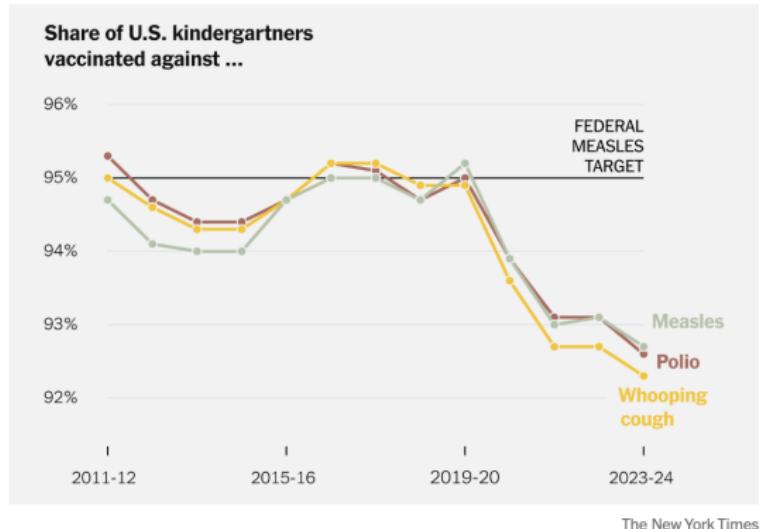
Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the job Donald Trump is doing as President?



Source: Susquehanna Polling & Research

DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

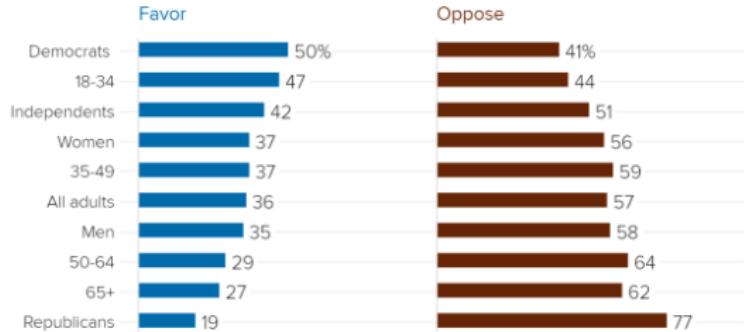
- 1 Show the context of the data
- 2 The main axis should show the scale of the data



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- 1 Show the context of the data
- 2 The main axis should show the scale of the data
- 3 Use conventional ordering and meanings

Favor or oppose the Boy Scouts admitting girls?



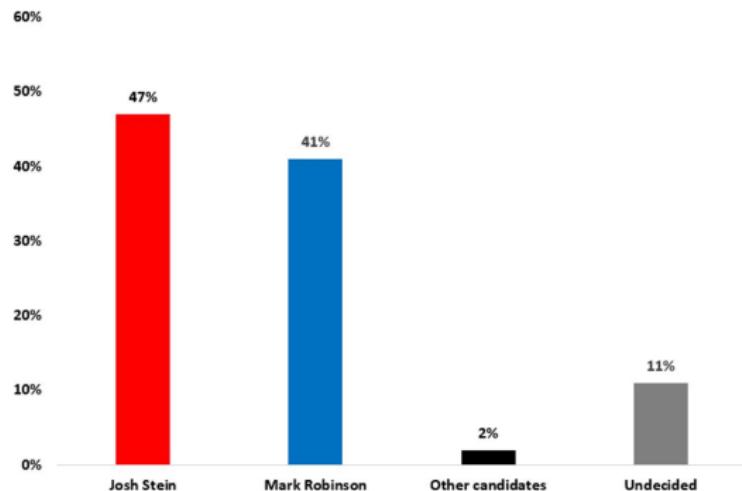
NBC NEWS

Data: NBC/WSJ poll, October 23-26, 2017.

DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

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North Carolina General Election: Governor

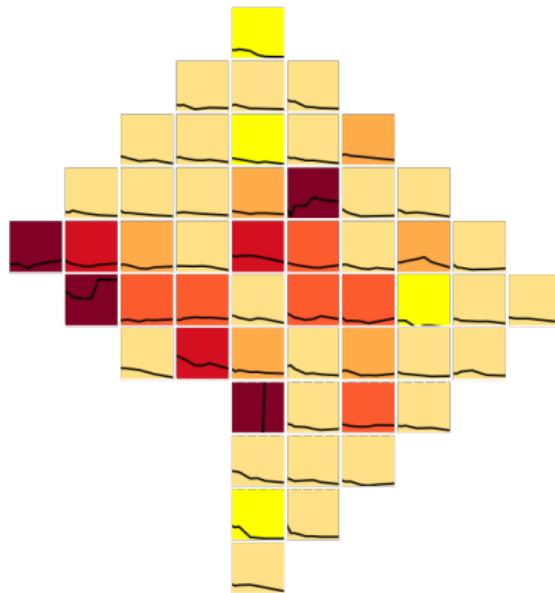


Note: Other candidates receiving support (all individually at 1% or less) include Mike Ross (Libertarian Party), Wayne Turner (Green Party), and Walter Vinny Smith (Constitution Party).

DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

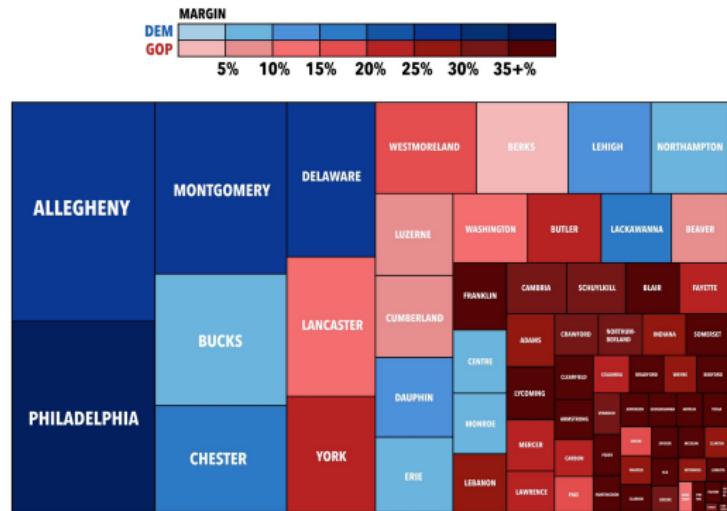
- 1 Show the context of the data
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7-Day Average Cases per 10,000 Residents (Last 2 Weeks)



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

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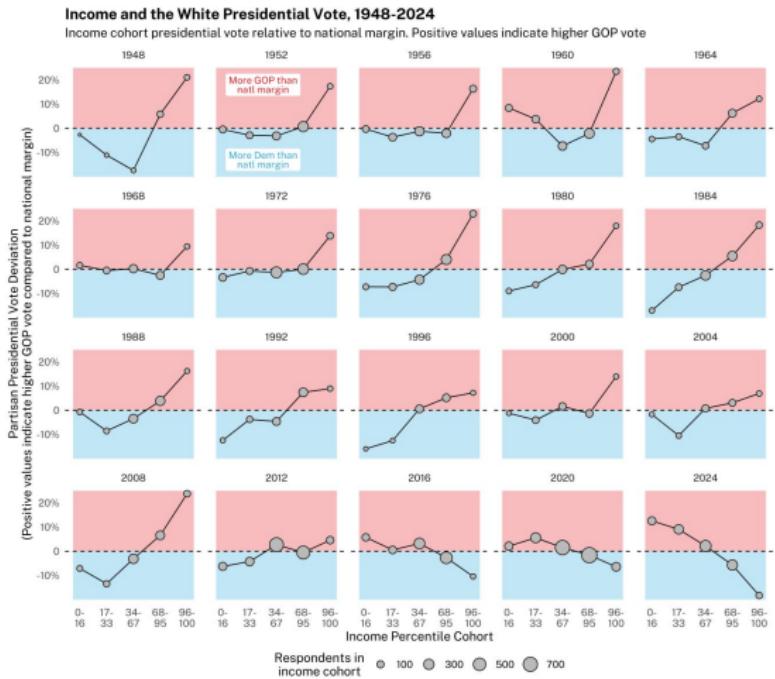
| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------|-------|
| JOHN FETTERMAN | DEM | 51.2% | +4.9% |
| MEHMET OZ | GOP | 46.3% | |

Source: Pennsylvania Department of State

@maxtmcc

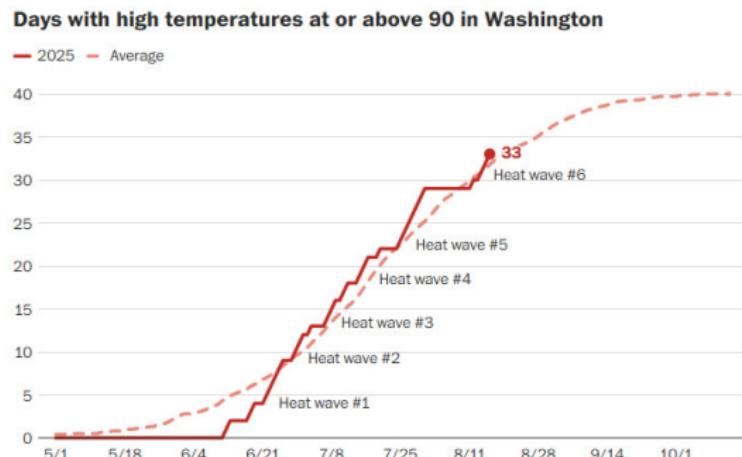
DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- 1 Show the context of the data
- 2 The main axis should show the scale of the data
- 3 Use conventional ordering and meanings
- 4 Data visualizations are paragraphs about data



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

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The 1991-2020 average for 90-degree days annually is 40. Current year count as of August 16

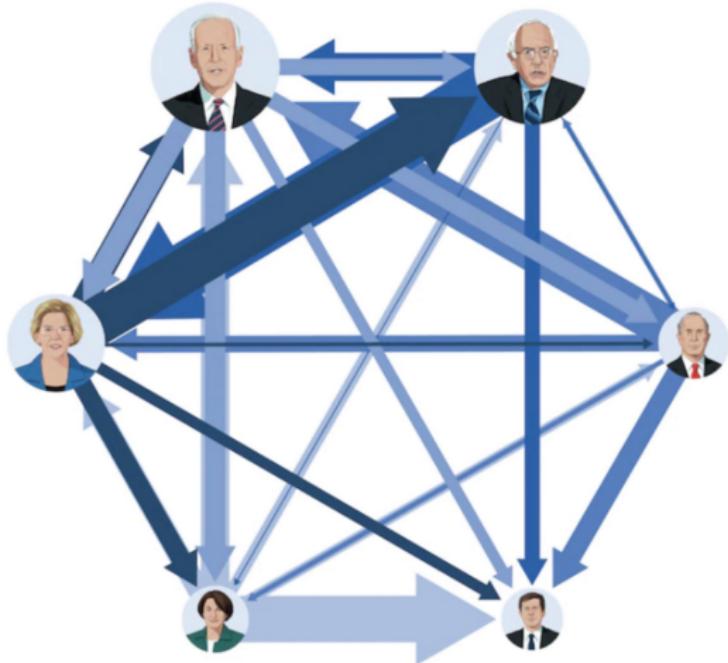
Source: [Applied Climate Information System](#)

IAN LIVINGSTON / THE WASHINGTON POST

DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- ➊ Show the context of the data
- ➋ The main axis should show the scale of the data
- ➌ Use conventional ordering and meanings
- ➍ Data visualizations are paragraphs about data
- ➎ Limit cognitive load

Where second-choice support goes



Source: Quinnipiac University polling, January 2020

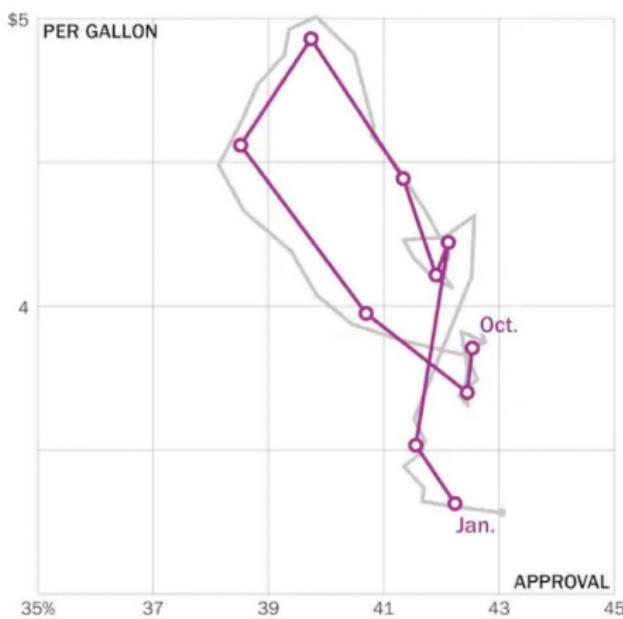
Quinnipiac poll of second choices. (Philip Bump)

THE WASHINGTON POST

DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

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Gas prices vs. Biden approval
From the beginning of the year to mid-October.



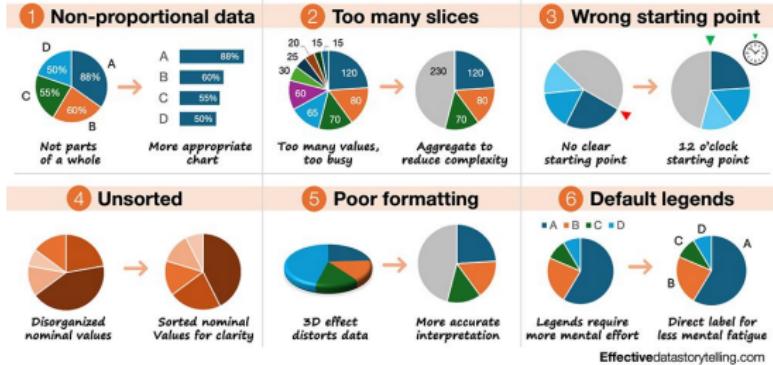
Sources: FiveThirtyEight, Energy Information Administration

THE WASHINGTON POST

DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

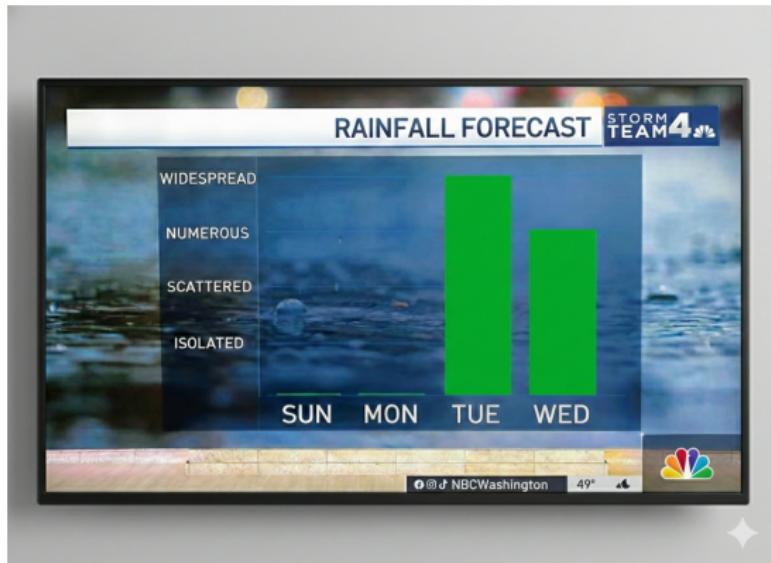
- 1 Show the context of the data
- 2 The main axis should show the scale of the data
- 3 Use conventional ordering and meanings
- 4 Data visualizations are paragraphs about data
- 5 Limit cognitive load
- 6 No pie charts

Pie charts: Don't ruin them with these 6 mistakes



DESIGNING FOR STATISTICS

- 1 Show the context of the data
- 2 The main axis should show the scale of the data
- 3 Use conventional ordering and meanings
- 4 Data visualizations are paragraphs about data
- 5 Limit cognitive load
- 6 No pie charts
- 7 Not all data should be in a chart



EVALUATING A GRAPH

- ① Make a note of the first few things you see

EVALUATING A GRAPH

- ① Make a note of the first few things you see
- ② Make a note of the first idea that forms in your mind and then search for more

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- ① Make a note of the first few things you see
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- ③ Make notes on likes, dislikes, and wish-I-saws

EVALUATING A GRAPH

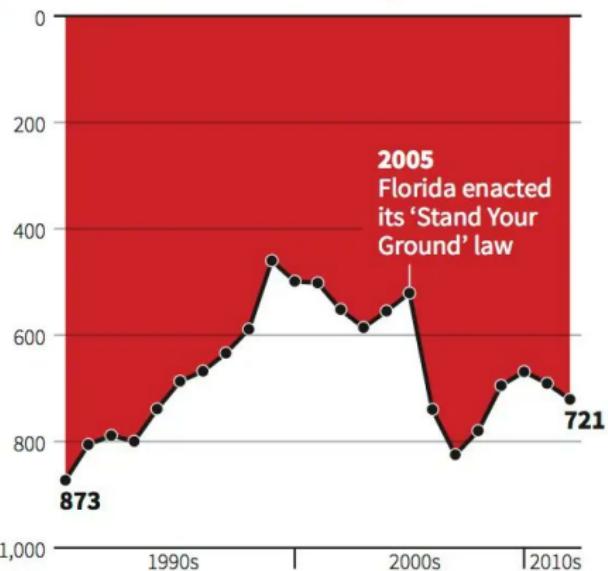
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- ④ Find three things you'd change and briefly say why

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Gun deaths in Florida

Number of murders committed using firearms



Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement

C. Chan 16/02/2014

REUTERS

EXERCISE