Will Peters

Visualizations Critique
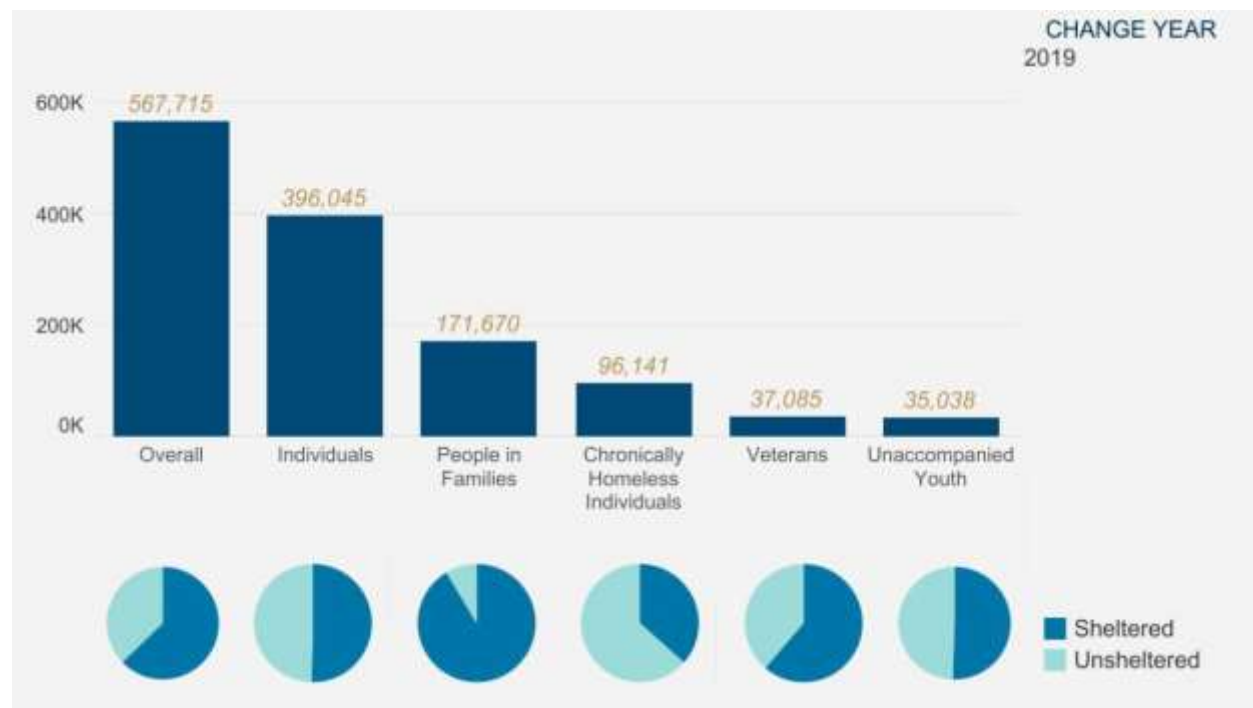
Good Visualization—Strava Project Kodos

I am absolutely enamored with this visualization. Between combining one of my personal interests and my interest in data visualization, and creatively encoding data in a form I had not seen before, this visualization really caught my eye.

This visualization comes from Strava's 'Project Kodos', a project in which the social media and exercise platform gives it users an intuitive and fun way to see their history of kudos, or likes, with their followers. Here, I have selected one of four options, this one displaying the other athletes (ie my friends and followers on strava) based on with whom I am in a kudos *deficit*. This means that all of these profile pictures shown here are people to whom I have given more kudos than they have given me.

I love this visualization for a couple of reasons. First of all, its method of encoding data is very creative I believe. The size of the circular profile picture correlates with the magnitude of the deficit; that is to say, that the bigger the picture, the bigger the deficit. Then, cleverly, instead of using names or athlete IDs/usernames, the visualization uses the *profile pictures* of the other athletes—making this visualization much more personally relevant. Because each one of these visualizations is generated for an individual, that is a relevant and important feature.

Also, I love that the visualization is interactive. I can toggle between my total kudos given by athlete, total received, deficit and surplus. I can also toggle to see this data in table form. Strava Labs makes this data very clear and easy to interact with. The interactivity, simplicity and clever encoding of data all make this visualization a
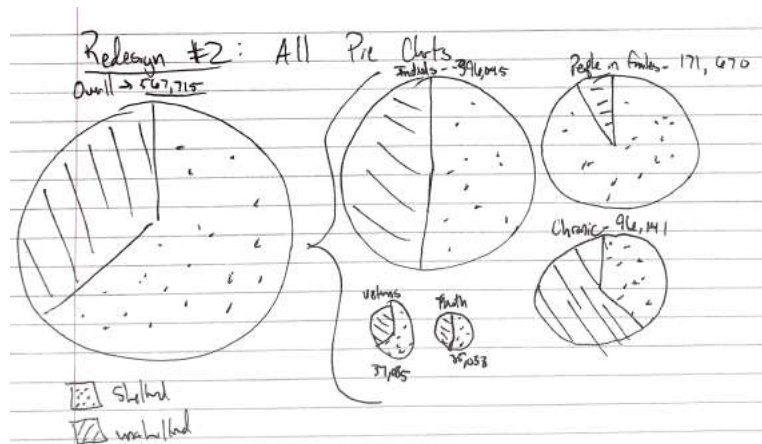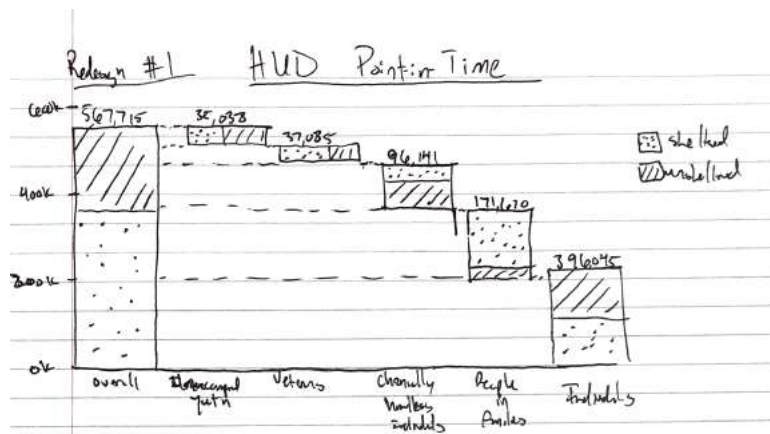
Bad Visualization—HUD Point-in-Time

While this visualization does communicate the intended message, I categorize it as a bad visualization because it had clear potential to communicate its message even more effectively than it already does.

I will start by explaining the message behind this visualization. Taken from a recent meeting with a representative from UnitedWay Boston, this visualization depicts the HUD's Annual Point-in-Time Count of homeless individuals in the US. The first bar in the graph shows the total, and then the subsequent bars show sub-categories that make up that total. The pie charts across the bottom, as indicated, show how each of those categories break into sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals respectively.

I have a couple critiques of this visualization. First and foremost, the bar chart is not being used most effectively in this version of the visualization, and you will see in one of my proposed redesigns how I think it could be improved. It is not clear that the subsequent bars after the initial 'overall' bar in the bar chart are *sub*-categories, and not separate categories entirely. It would make more sense to either more clearly show that those other bars are combined to make the 'overall' bar, or just eliminate the 'overall' bar all together, and just let the other categories stand alone.

Additionally, I find the pie charts to make the visualization a bit too crowded. This information could easily be encoded into the bar charts by coloring portions of the bars the different shades of blue to show the breakdown of sheltered and unsheltered.

My proposed redesigns can be found below.

Re-Design #3

400k — 396,045

200k —

0k —

individuals   families   chronic   vetrans   youth

181,620
96,141
37,085   35,088

Legend:
☐ sheltered
▨ unsheltered