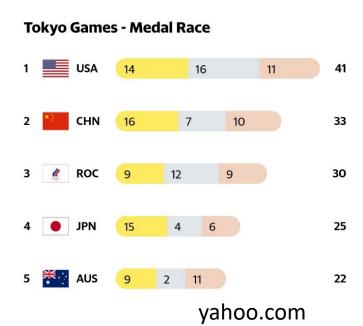
#### **Plots & Charts**

Goal: know some useful principles (or *guideline*) for generating effective plots and charts; know some basic types of plots/charts



### Why Should We Care?

- Everyone uses plots and/or charts (graphs)
- But...most people ignore or are unaware of some simple principles
- Default plotting tools (or default settings) are not always the best
- More importantly, it is easy to lie or deceive people with bad plots



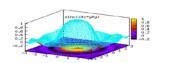


# Some examples of available plotting tools!

https://www.r-project.org/

http://www.gnuplot.info/

https://www.tableau.com/



0 0



http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel/default.aspx

The MathWorks™
Accelerating the pace of engineering and science

http://www.mathworks.com/



https://vega.github.io/voyager2/ https://vega.github.io/vega-lite/

http://www.sigmaplot.com/products/sigmaplot/sigmaplot-details.php



http://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/

And many more!!

http://www.wolfram.com/

**WOLFRAM**RESEARCH

#### What Can Plots Do?

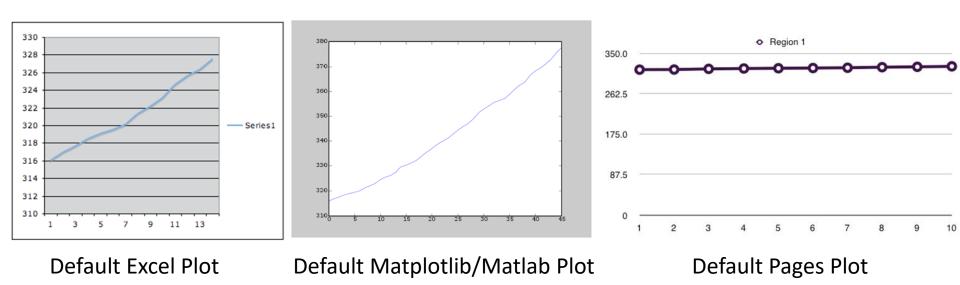
Data analysis and communication

— What plots do: In a <u>Simplistic view</u>, plotting reduces a large amount of information to a smaller form that is more easily understood via certain graphical representation.

	Lifetime	Plane Hortzone				
Gas	(years)	26 years	50 years	100 years	300 years	500 year
CO <sub>2</sub>		1	1	1	1	
CH.	10.5	35	19	11	,	4
N <sub>1</sub> O	132	260	270	270	240	170
CPC-LL	55	4500	4100	3400	2400	1400
CFC-12	116	7100	7400	7100	6200	4100
HCPC-22	15.8	4200	2600	1600	970	540
CPC-113	110	4600	4700	4500	3900	2500
CPC-II4	220	6100	6700	7000	7000	5800
CPC-115	550	5500	6200	7000	7800	8500
HCPC-123	1.71	330	150	90	55	30
HCPC-124	6.9	1500	760	440	270	150
HPC-125	40.5	5200	4500	3400	2200	1200
HPC-134a	15.6	3100	1900	1200	730	400
HCPC-1415	10.8	1800	980	580	350	200
HCFC-142b	22.4	4000	2900	1800	1100	620
HPC-143s	64.2	4700	4500	3800	2800	1600
HPC-152a	1.8	530	250	150	89	49
CCL	47	1800	1600	1300	860	480
CH <sub>2</sub> CCI <sub>3</sub>	6.1	360	170	100	62	34
CF <sub>2</sub> Br	77	5600	5500	4900	3800	2300

Benefit: Reduction of the data to its <u>simplest</u> and <u>cleanest</u> form, such that the <u>relationships/patterns</u> inherent in the data (points) are easily perceived.

# **Examples of plots generated by a few tools using their default setting**



They look different visually!

The above examples demonstrate two important points:

**First**, there is no obvious standard for what a plot should look like. This is easy to see by the differences in the axes and scale lines, the data rectangle inside the plot, and the actual representation of the data values.

**Second**, creating a plot is an iterative process. Different data and emphasis may need different iterative processes.

Given these many types and styles of plots/charts, how to determine which one(s) are good or more effective?

### **Graphical Excellence**

Graphical excellence is that which gives to the viewer the greatest number of ideas in the shortest time with the least ink in the smallest space.

And it requires telling the truth about the data.

# Summary of Tufte's Principles

- 1. Tell the truth (Expressiveness)
  Graphical integrity, authenticity, completeness...
- **2. Do it effectively (effectiveness)** with clarity, precision, emphasis, ...

The information provided here should be considered as guidelines

#### PRINCIPLES OF PLOTTING

Visualizing Data [Cleveland 93] and Elements of Graphing Data [Cleveland 94] by William S. Cleveland

There are other similar principles!!!!

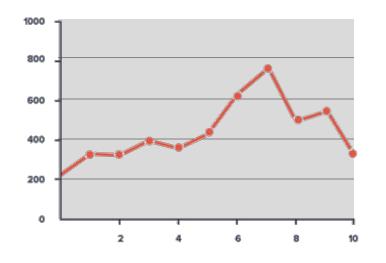
# Principles of Plotting

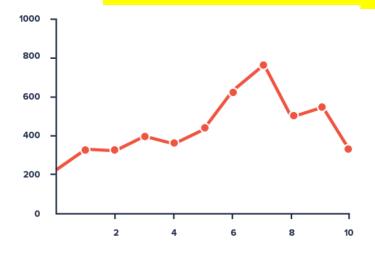
- Improving the vision
  - Improve the readability of the plot

- Improving the understanding
  - Ensure that the analysis of the plot is effectively communicated.

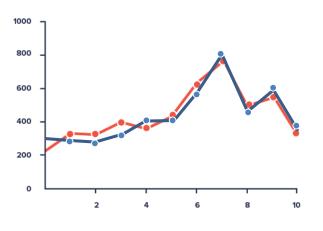
- Principle 1: Reduced clutter, <u>Make data stand out</u>
  - The main focus of a plot should be on the data itself, any superfluous elements of the plot that might obscure or distract the observer from the data needs to be removed.

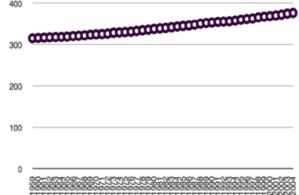
Less is more!!!!

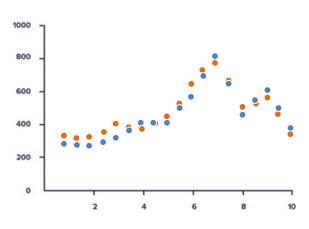




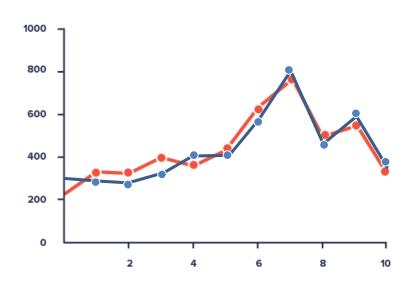
- Principle 2: <u>Use visually prominent graphical elements</u> to show the data.
  - Connecting lines should never obscure points and points should not obscure each other.
  - If multiple data sets are represented in the same plot (superposed data), they
    must be visually separable.
  - If this is not possible due to the data itself, the data can be separated into adjacent plots that share an axis.

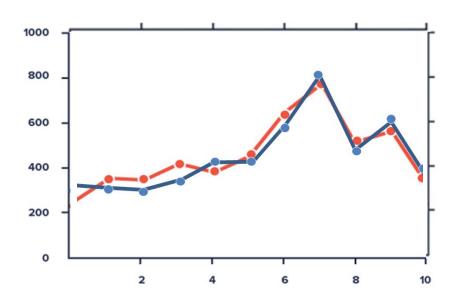






- Principle 3: <u>Use proper scale lines and a data rectangle</u>
  - Two scale lines should be used on each axis (left and right, top and bottom) to frame to data rectangle completely (optional, may against the closure principle).
  - Add margins for data to make the plot prominent.
  - Tick-marks outs and 3-10 for each axis.



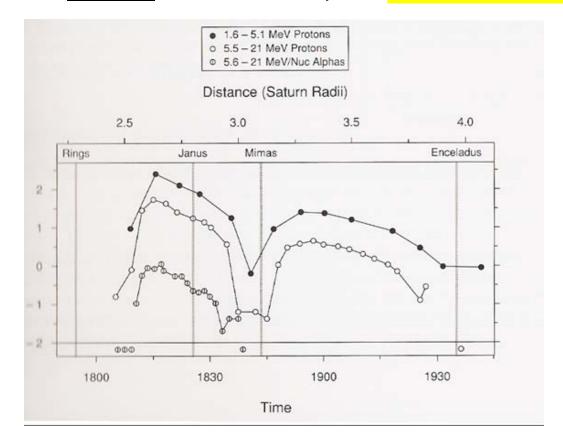


• Principle 4: Reference lines, labels, notes, and keys (optional).

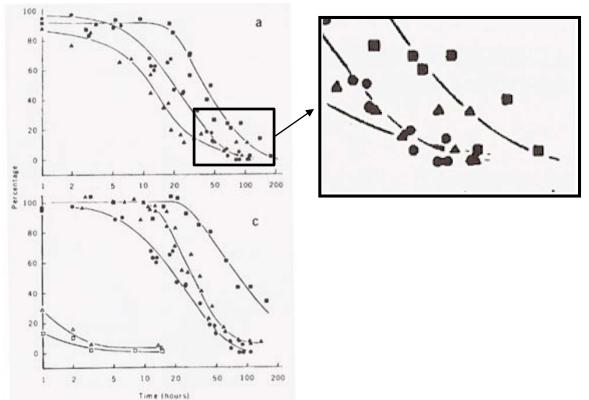
Reference lines are only used to show the thresholds within data.

Only use them <u>sparsely</u> when necessary and don't let them obscure

<mark>data</mark>.



- Principle 5: Superposed data set
  - Symbols should be <u>separable</u> and data sets <u>should be</u> <u>easily visually assembled</u>.

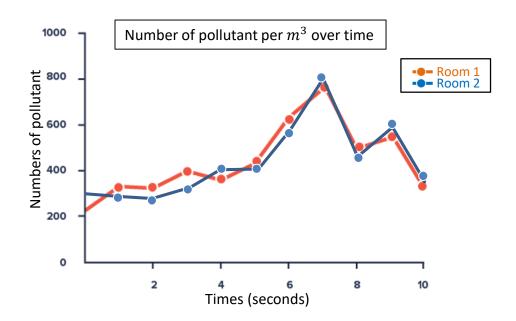


## **Summary of Principles**

#### Improve vision

- **1. Reduced clutter**, make data stand out
- 2. Use **visually prominent** graphical elements
- 3. Use proper scale lines and tick marks
- 4. Reference lines, labels, notes, and keys should not block data
- 5. Superposed data set easily separable

- Principle 1: Add plot title, axis labels!
  - Add a title to the plot to summarize what the plot is about.
  - Name the axes and provide units if possible
  - Add legends if needed



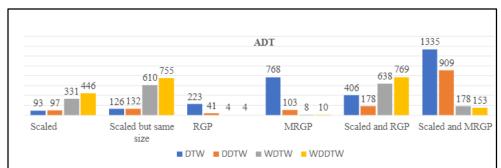
- Principle 2: Provide explanations and draw conclusions
  - A graphical representation is often the means in which a hypothesis is confirmed, or results are communicated.

Describe everything, draw attention to major features, describe

conclusions

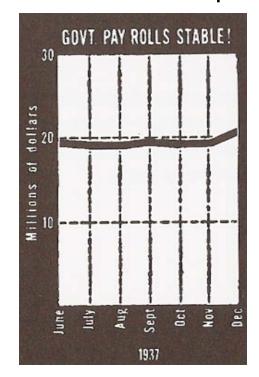
Explain everything in the plot. Do not let the observer guess.

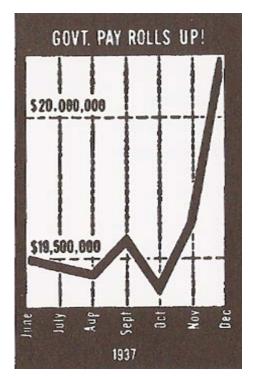
Add figure caption!



**Figure 1**. Performance of different variations of DTW. The average distance in 50 signal pairs for each variation is shown. From this comparison, we can see WDTW and WDDTW perform well in RGP, MRGP, and the combination of scaled and MRGP, while DTW and DDTW outperform the others in Scaled and Scaled but same size.

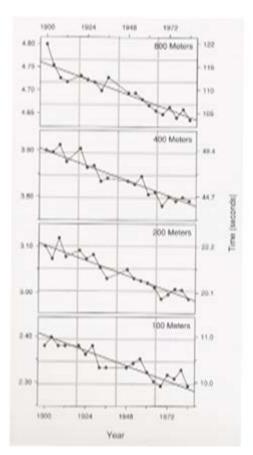
- Principle 3: Use all available space (Optional).
  - Fill the data rectangle as much as you can
  - Use absolute values for scientific data! But, you may use relative scale for comparison!

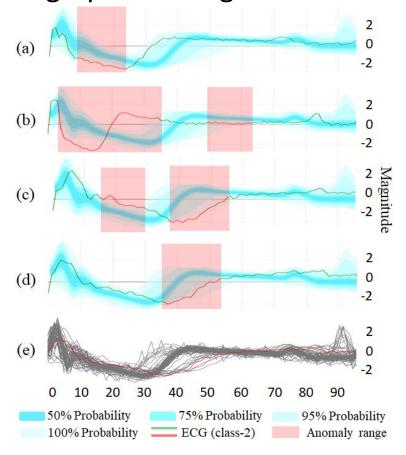




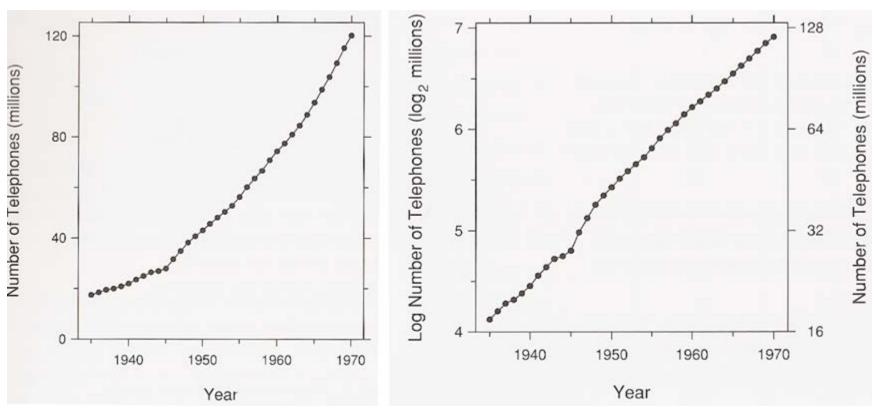
Principle 4: Align juxtaposed plots

Make sure scales match and graphs are aligned





- Principle 5: Use log scales when appropriate
  - Used to show percentage change, multiplicative factors and skewness



### **Summary of Principles**

- Improve vision
  - **1.** Reduced clutter, make data stand out
  - 2. Use **visually prominent** graphical elements
  - 3. Use proper scale lines and tick marks
  - 4. Reference lines, labels, notes, and keys should not block data
  - 5. Superposed data set easily separable
- Improve understanding
  - 1. Provide title, axis labels, and legends
  - 2. Provide <u>caption</u> with explanations and draw conclusions
  - 3. Use all available space when appropriate
  - **4. Align** juxtaposed plots
  - 5. Use log scales when appropriate

#### Other Useful Guidelines

- Show the data clearly
- Use simplicity in design of the graph
- Use alignment on a common scale
- Keep the visual encoding transparent
- Use standard forms that work

(https://scc.ms.unimelb.edu.au/resources-list/data-visualisation-and-exploration/data-visualisation)

#### An efficient/iterative way to proceed while constructing a graph is to:

- 1) figure out the contexts and the message
- 2) figure out the way of presenting it, so the type, layout and style of graph to be used
- 3) construct the graph
- 4) check Tables 1 and 2 and revise the graph accordingly
- 5) check whether the revised version conveys the 4. Do not clutter the interior of the scale-line rectangle. message you want it to convey
- 6) check Tables 1 and 2 and revise the graph accordingly
- 7) and so on...

Table 1 - Elements to check while constructing a graph. Refer to the text for details.

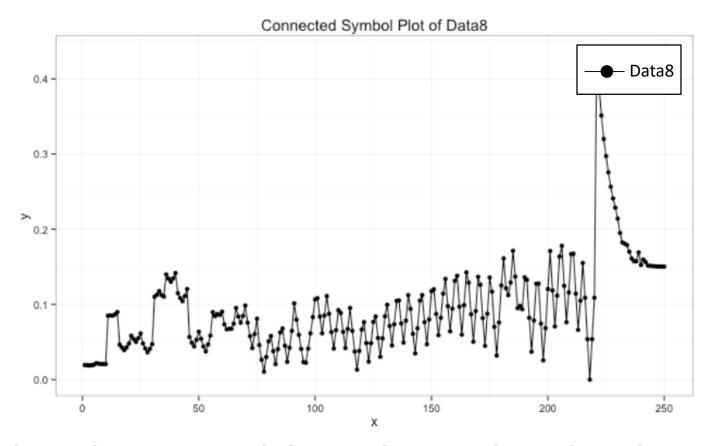
Data points	symbol, size, color, overlap
Lines	type, width, color, overlap
Color	check whether needed at all; check whether all elements are easily distinguished
Box and axes	type of box, aspect, minimum and maximum value, data rectangle and scale-line rectangle, tick marks (number of, location, direction, length and width), tick marks' labels (font type, length, rotation, numbering style, abbreviations of text labels)
Legend	check whether needed, position, box around, size, elements within (see above for "data points" and "lines", and "labels" within "box and axes")
Background	of the graph; of bars, cross-hatching, shading, color
Text inside the graph	check whether needed; font style, size and color
Captions	check whether informative, explaining everything that is needed to understand the graph and the

Table 2 – Clear vision principles given by Cleveland (1994).

- 1. Make the data stand out. Avoid superfluity.
- 2. Use visually prominent graphical elements to show the data.
- 3. Use a pair of scale lines for each variable. Make the data rectangle slightly smaller than the scale-line rectangle. Tick marks
- 5. Do not overdo the number of tick marks.
- 6. Use a reference line when there is an important value that must be seen across the entire graph, but do not let the line
- 7. Do not allow data labels in the interior of the scale-line rectangle to interfere with the quantitative data or to clutter the
- 8. Avoid putting notes and keys inside the scale-line rectangle. Put a key outside, and put notes in the caption or in the text.
- 9. Overlapping plotting symbols must be visually distinguishable.
- 10. Superposed data sets must be readily visually assembled.
- 11. Visual clarity must be preserved under reduction and reproduction.
- 12. Put major conclusions into graphical form. Make captions comprehensive and informative.

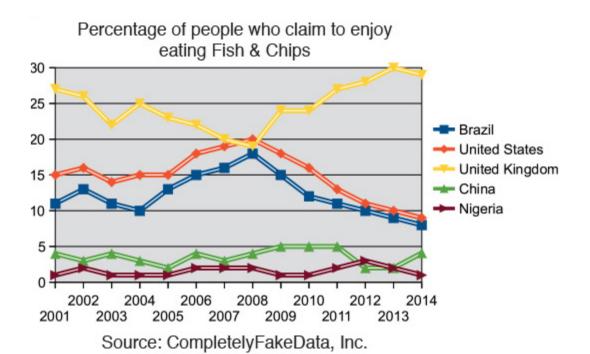
https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0103-90162010000400017&script=sci\_arttext&tlng=en

#### **Example for discussion**

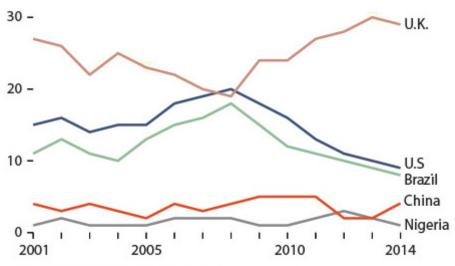


There are three parts in Data7, the first part is from 1 to 70, the second part is from 71 to 220, and the third part is from 221 to 250.

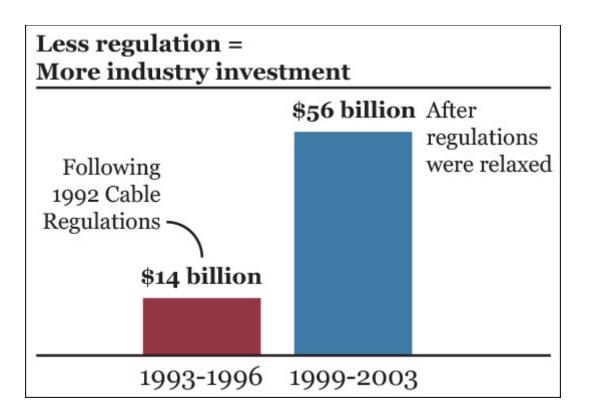
In the first two parts, there are two periodic fluctuating trends, and the frequencies are different. The third part is a sharply descending trend.



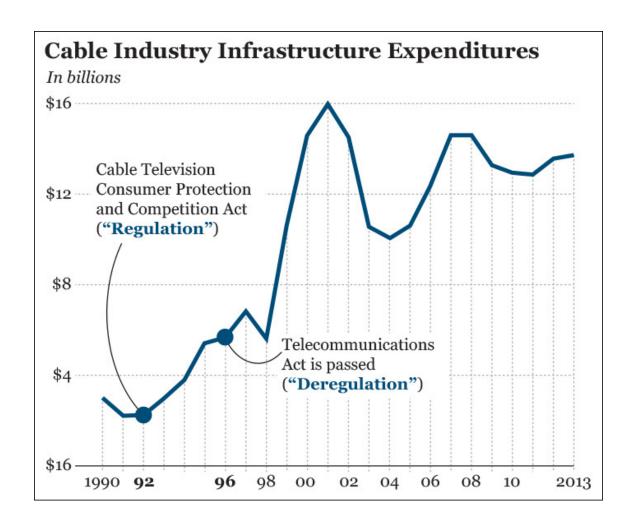
#### People who claim to enjoy Fish & Chips (%)



Source: Completely Fake Data, Inc.



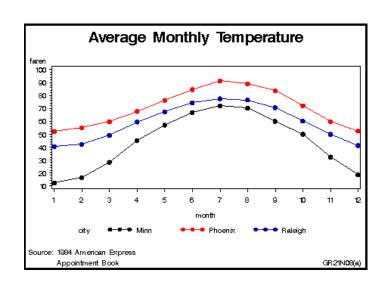
Any thing looks suspicious here??

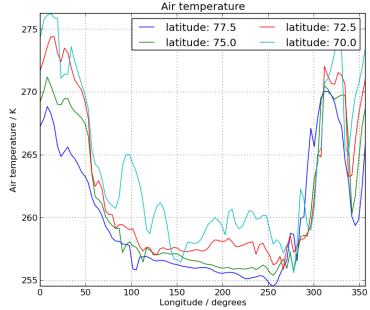


# SOME SIMPLE PLOTTING TECHNIQUES

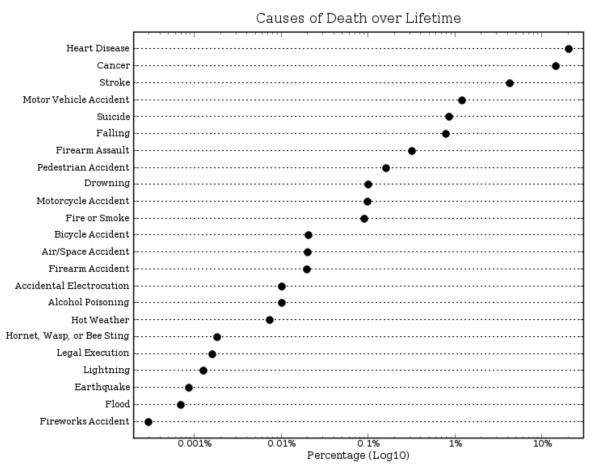
#### **Connected Symbol Plots (Line Plots)**

- The most common plotting technique
- Used to plot time series or other 1D data with intrinsic order





- Similar in nature to bar charts or pie charts
- Should be used for quantitative labeled data



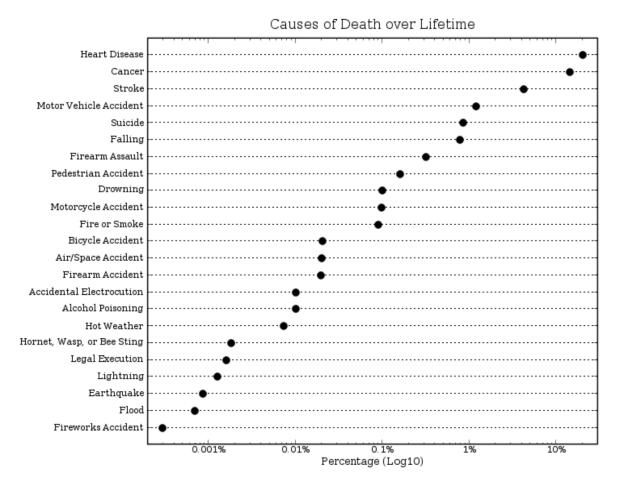
The data points do not have sequential relation!!

A dot plot showing the odds of dying.

The values should normally be sorted such that the largest value is at the top.

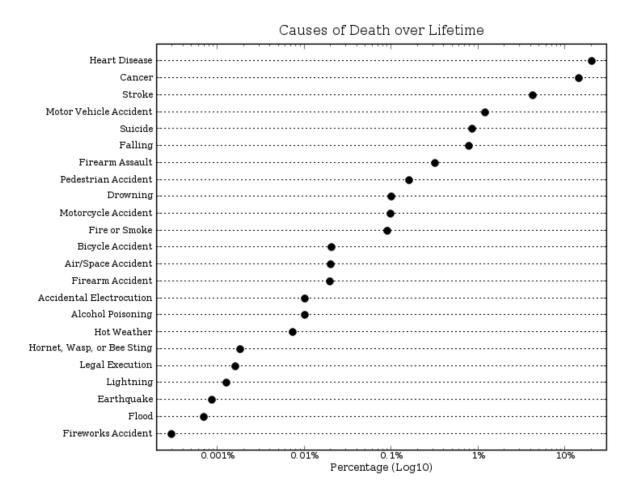
- Exception: the data has an inherent order that must be preserved

A log scale should be used to reduce skewness in the data



A dot plot showing the odds of dying.

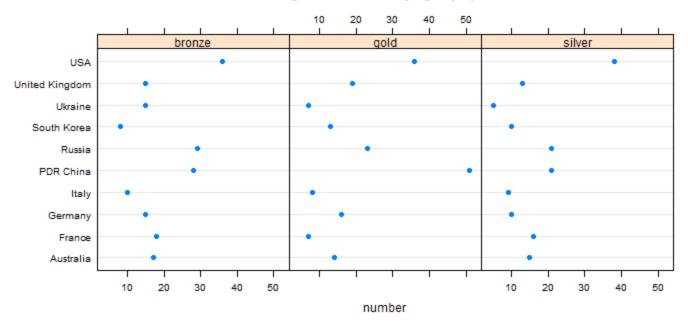
- Real world data is not always univariate.
- To represent multi-dimensional data, a multiway dot plot can be used



A dot plot showing the odds of dying.

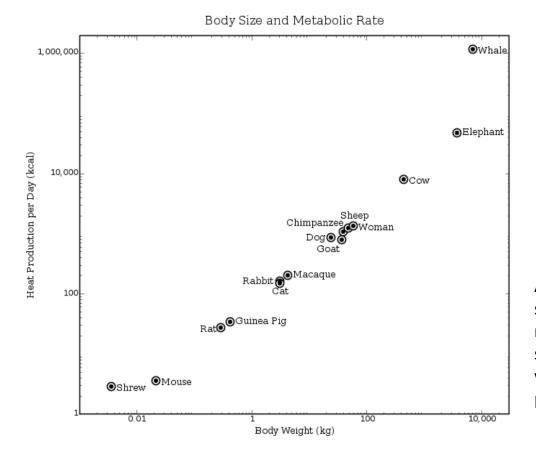
 A multiway dot plot is just several dot plots that share common labels and are juxtaposed such that they share an axis.

#### Medal Rankings from 2008 Beijing Olympics



#### **Scatter Plots**

 Scatter plots are used to show how one variable is affected by another, or correlated, in 2D data.

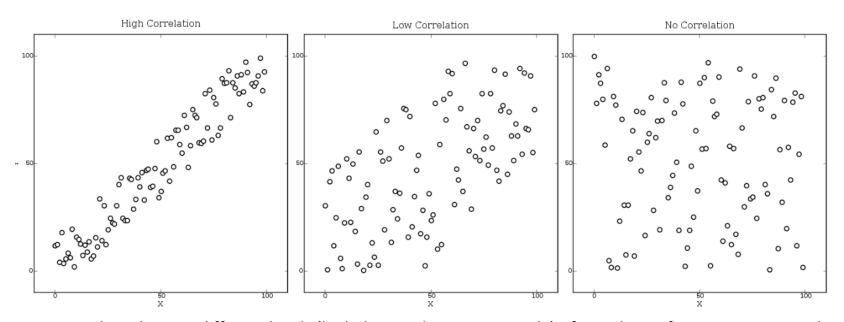


Need to make the symbols in the data stand out and keep the labels from obscuring the data and making the trend difficult to perceive

A scatter plot showing the biological principle of scaling for mammals. For each sample, the metabolic rate is plotted against the body mass to show a high correlation between the two variables. The points have also been labeled to provide additional information.

# **Scatter Plots**

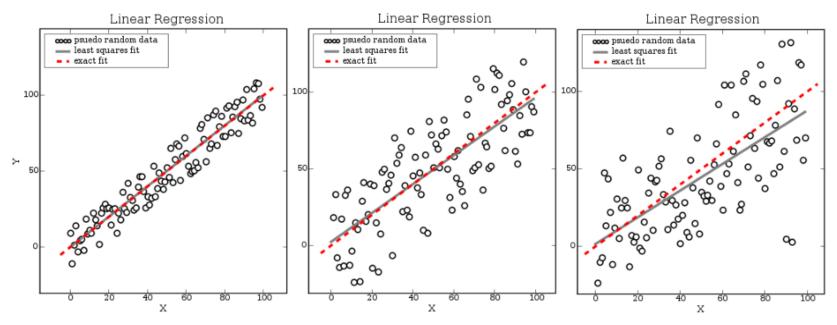
• If used properly, the correlation of the data can easily be discerned.



Scatter plots showing different levels (high, low, and no, respectively) of correlation for points generated with different magnitudes of randomness.

# **Scatter Plots**

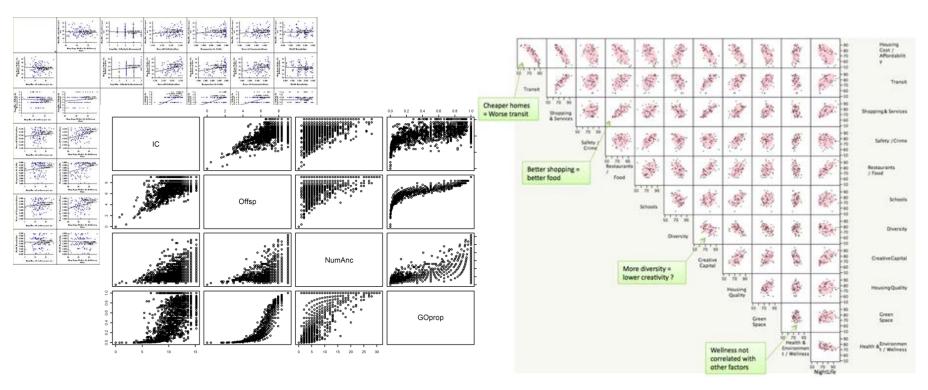
• It is often desirable to express the correlation as a line that provides the best fit for the data.



Linear regression using least squares fits a line to the data. The fit is good for high and low correlation (left and middle), but can result in problems in the case of outliers (right)

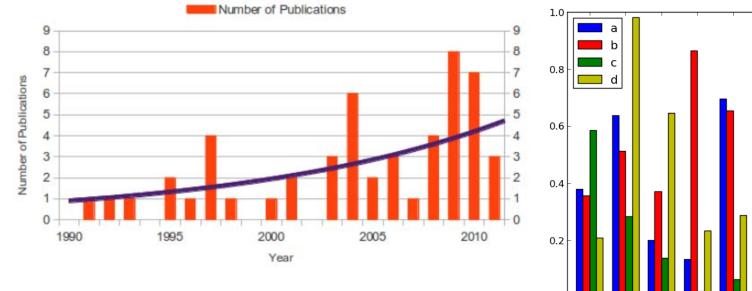
# **Scatter Plots**

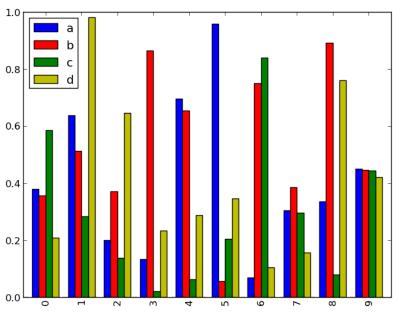
- As with dot plots, scatter plots can be used to represent data in higher dimensions. This is frequently done with a scatter plot matrix.
- This assigns each dimension of the plot to a single row and column in the matrix. The variables are then plotted against each other as a standard scatter plot for each entry in the matrix.



# **Histograms**

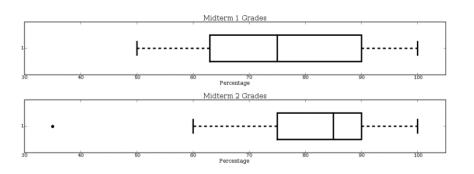
- Histograms are a special type of bar charts used for plotting distributions in data.
- The horizontal axis represents fixed intervals of the data and the vertical axis represents the number of values that lie within the intervals.

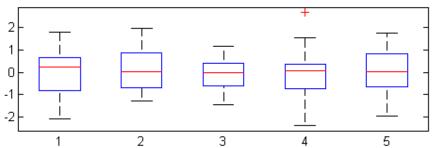


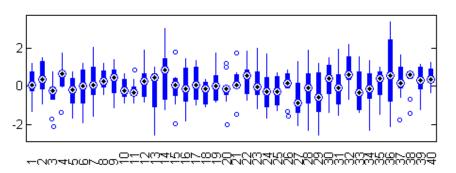


## **Box Plots**

 Box plots are typically used to represent the statistical variation in the data

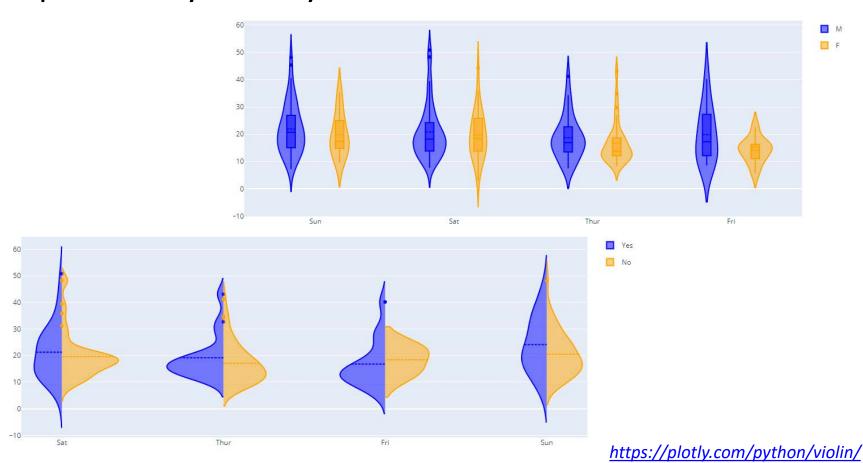




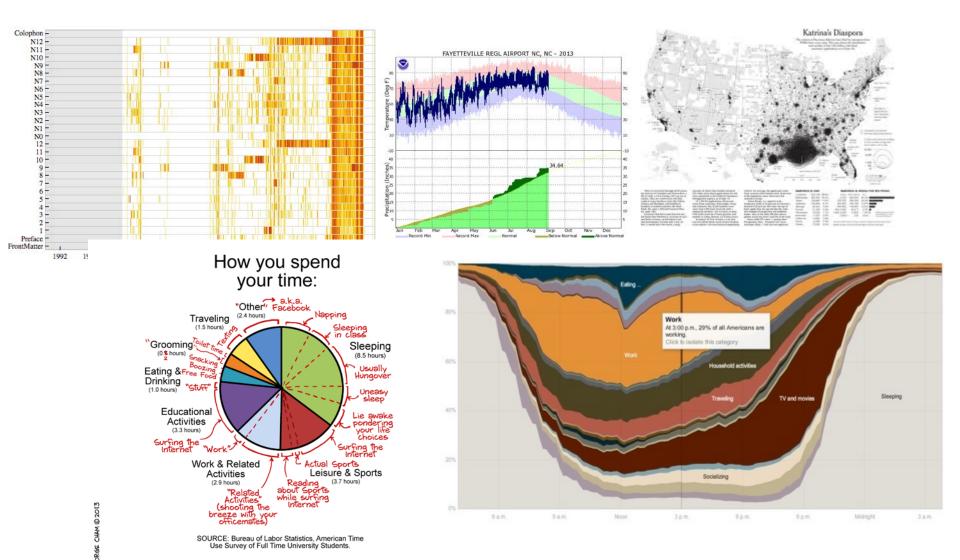


# **Violin Plots**

 similar to box plots, except that they also show the probability density of the data at different values



# **Others**



WWW. PHDCOMICS. COM

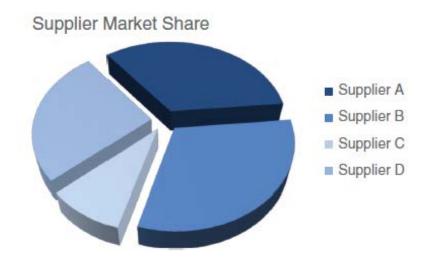
#### **Brief Overviews of Types of Graphs**

2D Graphs	M Spectral	3D Categorized Graphs
Bar/Column	▼ Trace	Contour
💾 Bar Dev		Deviation
📰 Bar Left Y	3D Sequential Graphs	Scatterplots
Bar Right Y	Bivariate Histograms	Space Space
T Bar Top	Box	100 Spectral
<b>III</b> Bar X	Range	Surface
Box	Raw Data Contour/Discre	te
Detrended Probability	Sequential Contour	Ternary Categorized Graphs
Half-Normal Probability	y 👺 Sequential Surface	🛕 Ternary Contour/Area
Hanging Bar Histograms	s 🌉 Raw Data Spikes	Ternary Contour/Line
Histograms	Raw Data Surface	Ternary Scatterplot
Pie Charts	4D/Ternary Graphs	nD/Icon Graphs
Probability		Chernoff Faces
Probability-Probability		Columns Columns
Quantile-Quantile	Contour/Area	😂 Lines
III Range	Contour/Line	Pies Pies
Scatterplots	3D Deviation	<b>?</b> Polygons
Sequential/Stacked	3D Space	Profiles
₩ Voronoi Scatterplot		Stars
	2D Categorized Graphs	Sun Rays
3D XYZ Graphs	Detrended Probability	
Contour	Half-Normal Probability	Matrix Graphs
Deviation	Normal Probability	Columns Columns
Scatterplots	Probability-Probability	Lines
<b>ॐ</b> Space	Quantile-Quantile	Scatterplot

#### **Recall the Gestalt Principles**

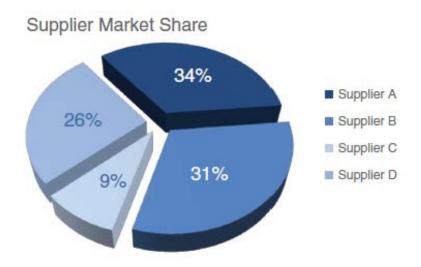
- Proximity
- Similarity
- Enclosure
- Closure
- Continuity
- Connection
- Simplicity
- Common fate
- Symmetry
- Past experience

Try not to use pie charts



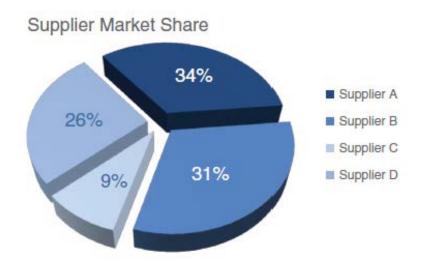
Which supplier is the largest based on this visual?

• Try not to use pie charts



Actual percentage!

Try not to use pie charts

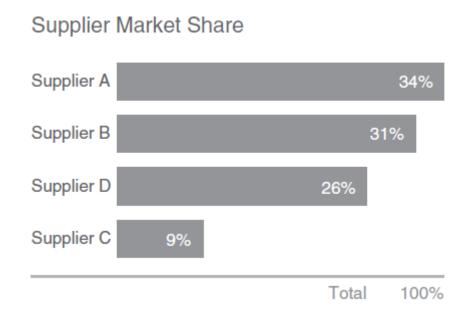


Actual percentage!

You may blame the 3D representation, but the more important issue is pie charts try to use area and angles to convey the difference in values!

Try not to use pie charts

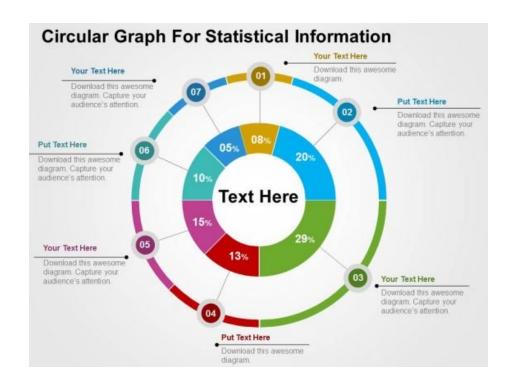
Most pie charts can be replaced by the following form of bar chart



Try not to use pie charts

Alternatively, you can use the following circular graphic/diagram



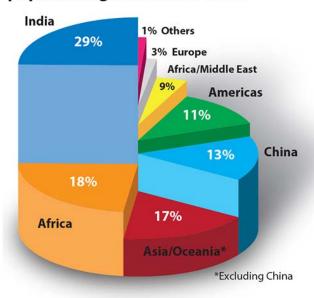


#### Never use 3D in your plots

#### Number of issues



## Share of worldwide urban population growth 2010-2050



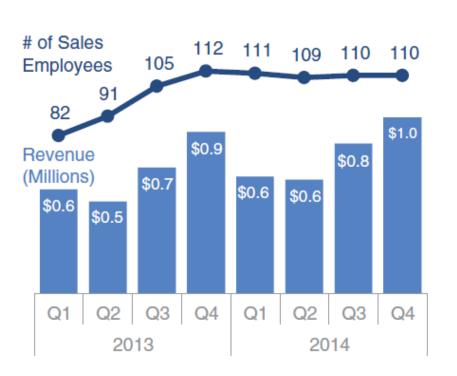
Secondary y-axis: generally not a good idea

Secondary y-axis



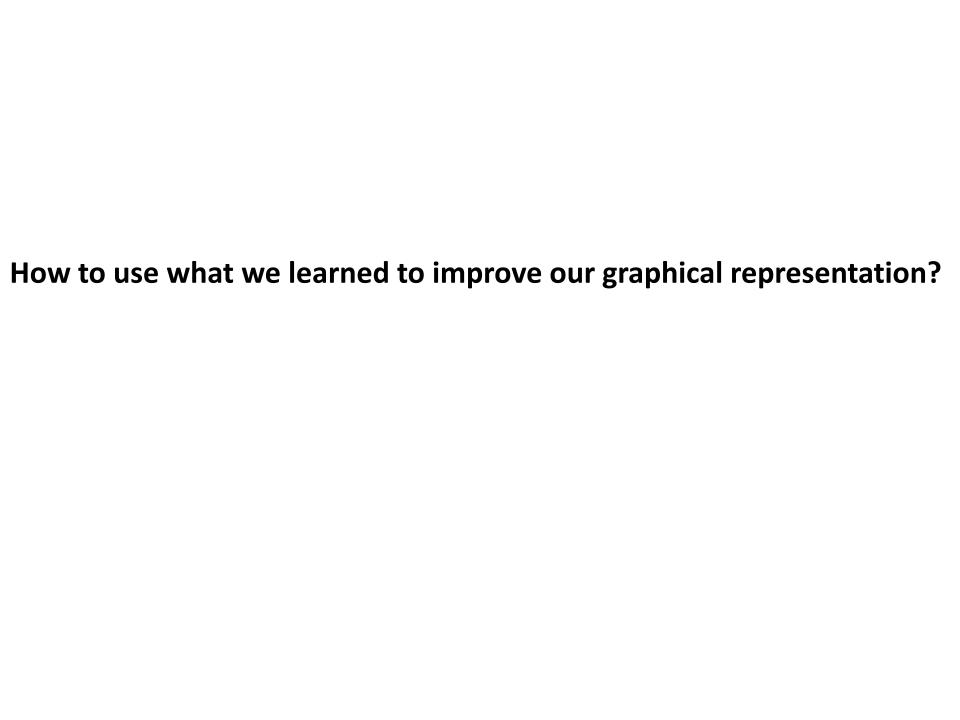
Secondary y-axis: possible alternatives

#### Alternative 1: label directly



#### Alternative 2: pull apart vertically

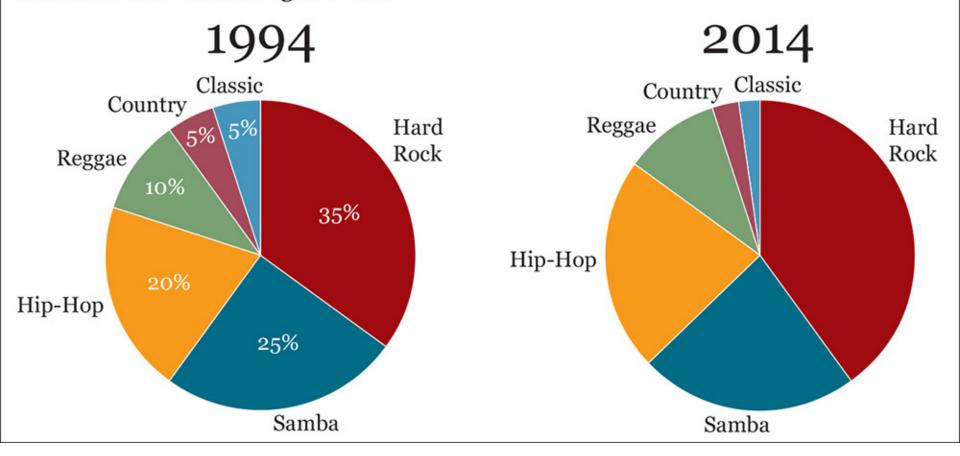




#### How to make this visualization more effective?

# How Music Preferences Have Changed in Two Decades

Music styles preferred by University of Miami students. Survey based on interviews with 1,000 students. **SOURCE: WishfulThinkingData Inc.** 



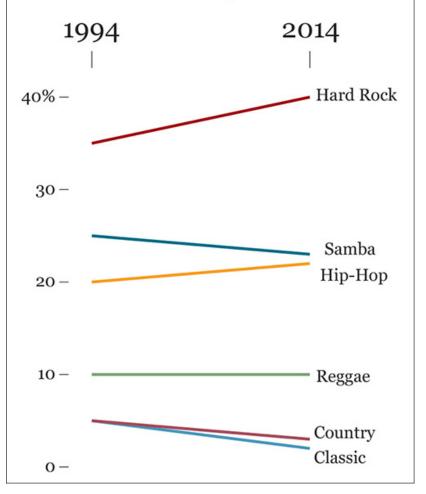
From "The Truthful Art Data, Charts, and Maps for Communication" by Alberto Cairo

### How about now?

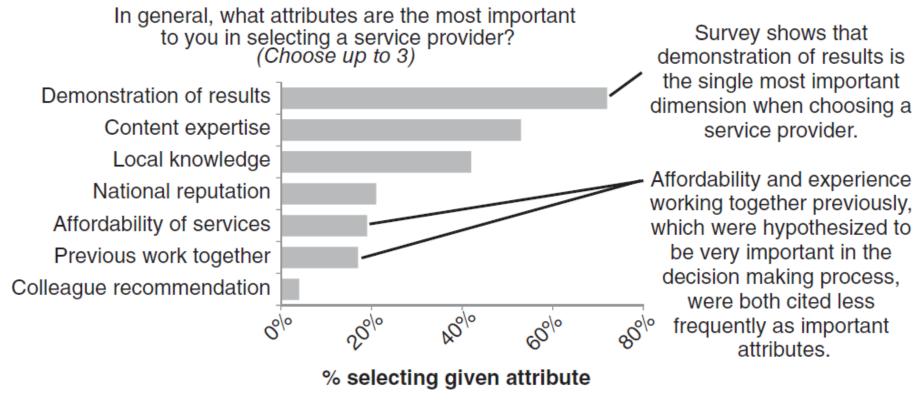
#### How Music Preferences Have Changed in Two Decades

Music styles preferred by University of Miami students. Survey based on interviews with 1,000 students.

SOURCE: WishfulThinkingData Inc.



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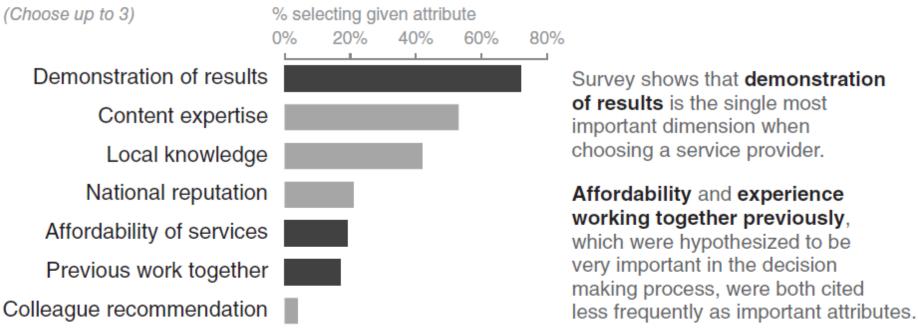
Data source: xyz; includes N number of survey respondents. Note that respondents were able to choose up to 3 options.

#### What are the issues?

## An improved version

**Demonstrating effectiveness** is most important consideration when selecting a provider

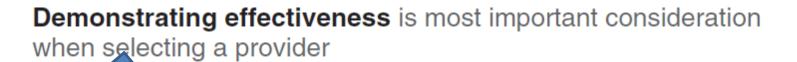
In general, what attributes are the most important to you in selecting a service provider?



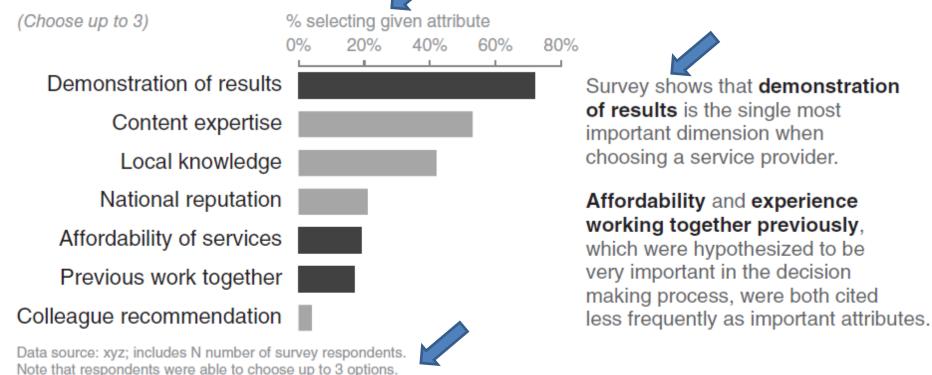
Affordability and experience working together previously, which were hypothesized to be very important in the decision

Data source: xyz; includes N number of survey respondents. Note that respondents were able to choose up to 3 options.

choosing a service provider.



In general, what attributes are the most important to you in selecting a service provider?





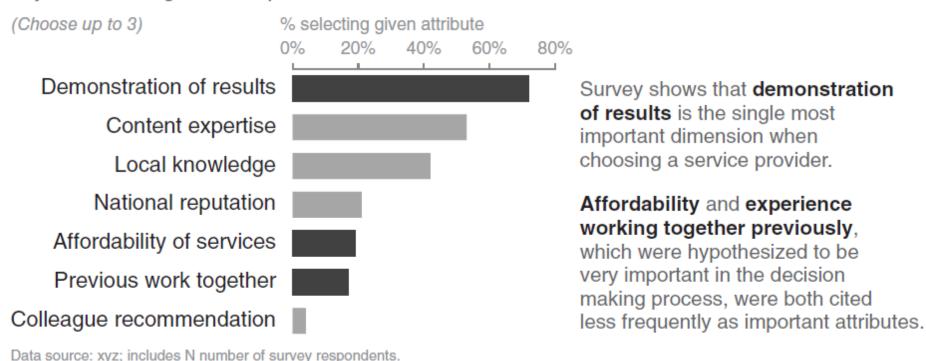
Use left-justified alignment rather than central alignment

**In many cases:** Without other visual cues, your audience will typically start at the top left of the page or screen and will move their eyes in a "z" shape (or multiple "z" shapes, depending on the layout) across the page or screen as they take in information.

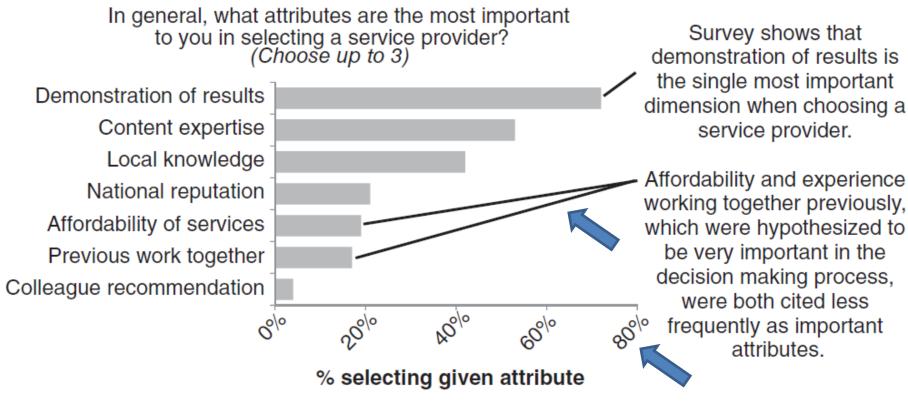
Therefore, upper-left-most justifying/aligning the text (title, axis titles, legend) enables the audience to hit the details on how to read the data before reading the data.

In general, what attributes are the most important to you in selecting a service provider?

Note that respondents were able to choose up to 3 options.



Eliminate diagonal elements as much as possible.

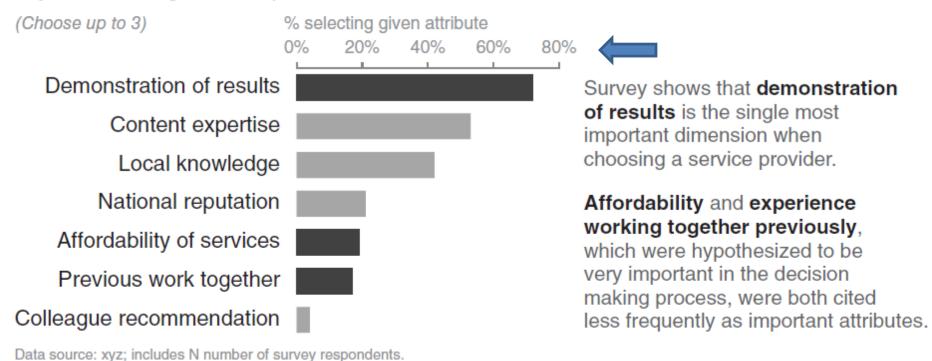


Data source: xyz; includes N number of survey respondents. Note that respondents were able to choose up to 3 options.

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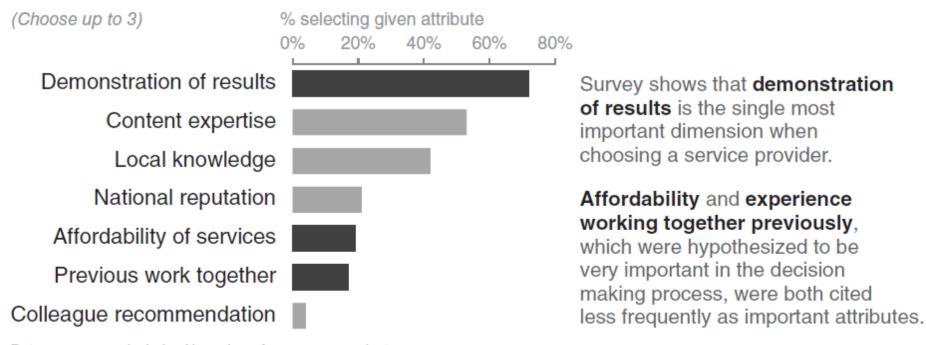
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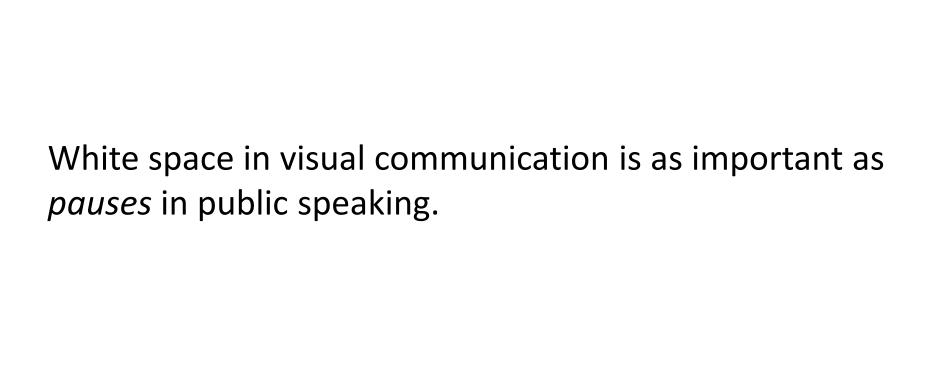
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In general, what attributes are the most important to you in selecting a service provider?



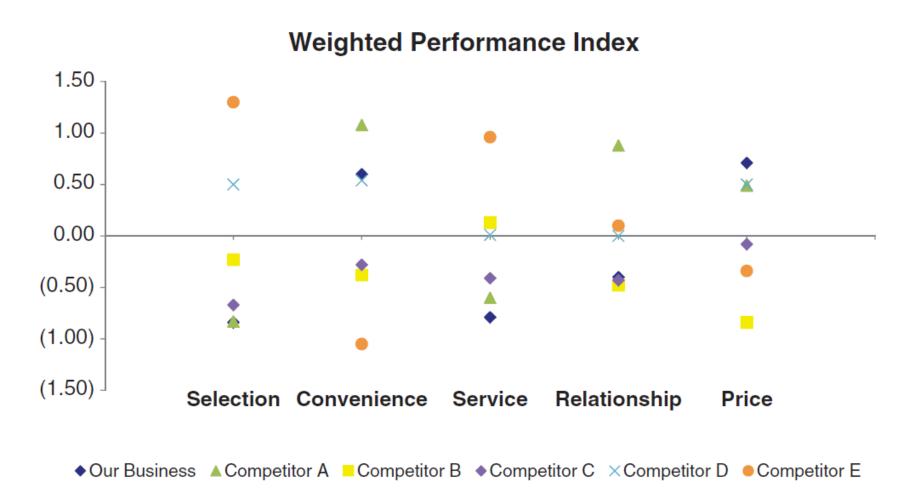
Data source: xyz; includes N number of survey respondents. Note that respondents were able to choose up to 3 options.

## Importance of White Space!!

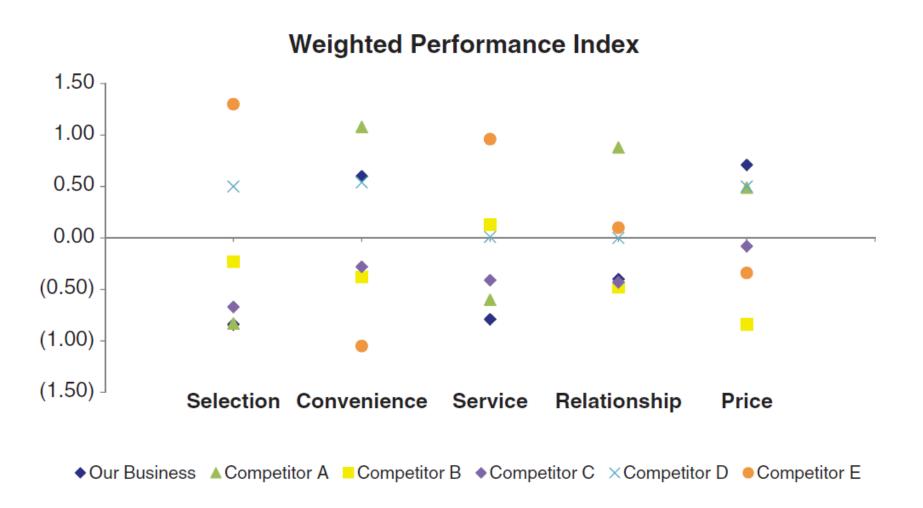


There is a speaker up in front of you and possibly due to nerves or perhaps because they're trying to get through more material than they should in the allotted time they are speaking a mile a minute and you're wondering how they're even able to breathe you'd like to ask a question but the speaker has already moved on to the next topic and still hasn't paused long enough for you to be able to raise your question

## **Another example**



## **Problem:** Non-strategy use of contrast



## An improved version

#### Performance overview

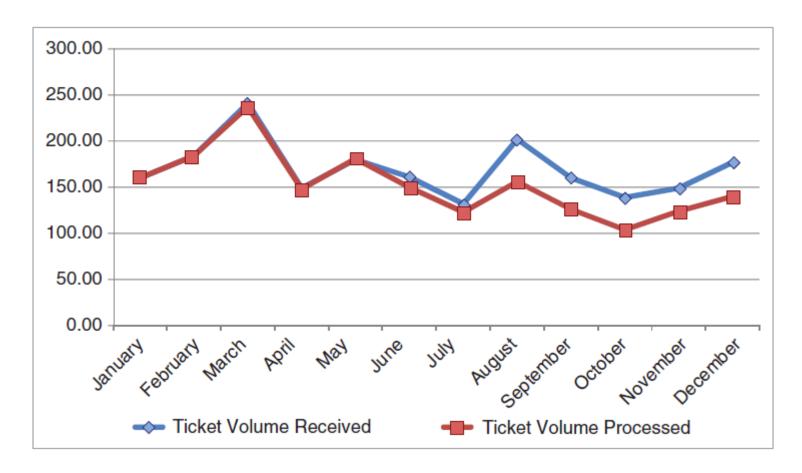


## **Another example**

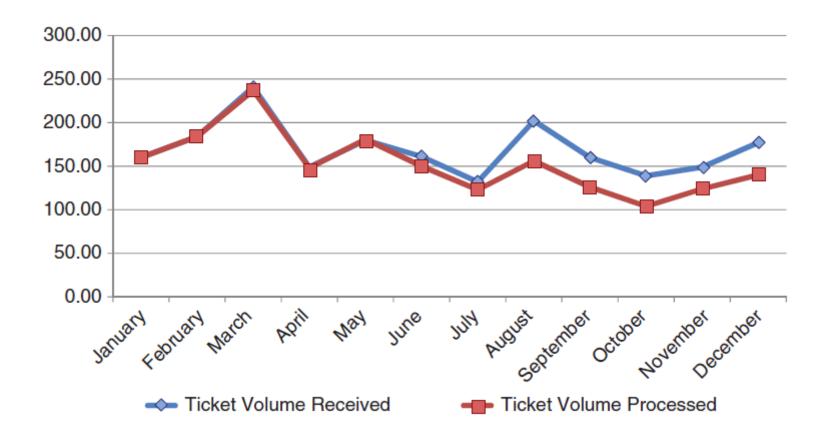
**Scenario**: Imagine that you manage an information technology (IT) team. Your team receives tickets, or technical issues, from employees. In the past year, you've had a couple of people leave and decided at the time not to replace them. You have heard a rumbling of complaints from the remaining employees about having to "pick up the slack." You've just been asked about your hiring needs for the coming year and are wondering if you should hire a couple more people.

You plot the monthly trend of incoming tickets and those processed over the past calendar year. You see that there is some evidence your team's productivity is suffering from being short-staffed and now want to turn the quick-and-dirty visual you created into the basis for your hiring request.

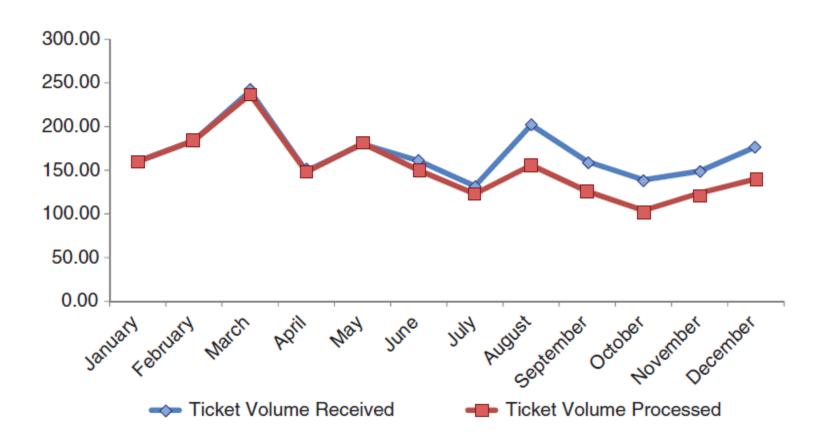
#### Original plot



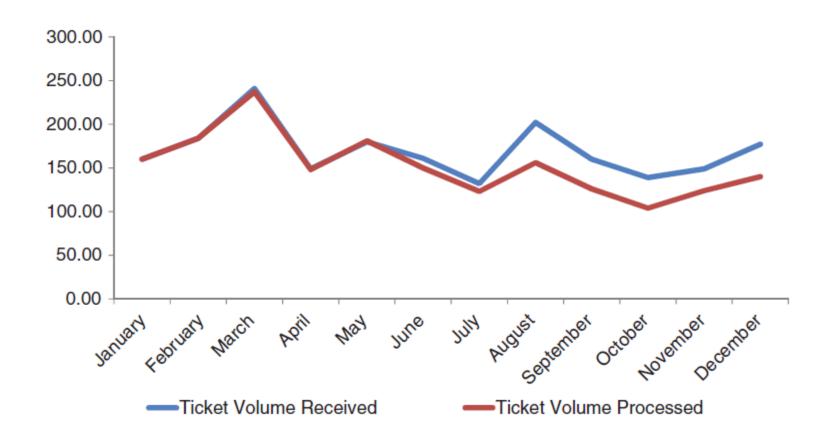
#### Remove chart border



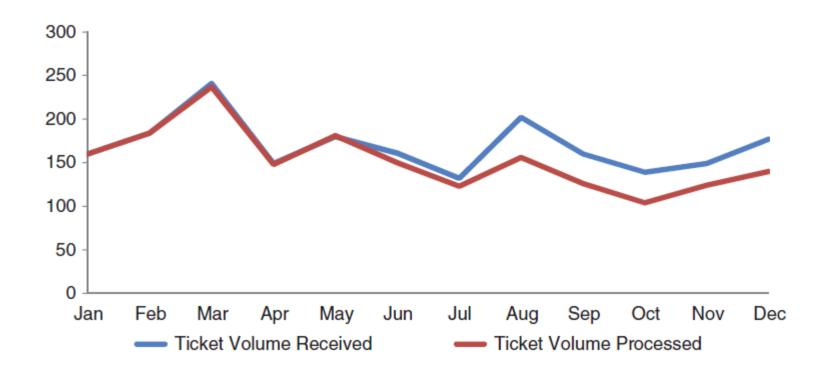
#### Remove gridlines



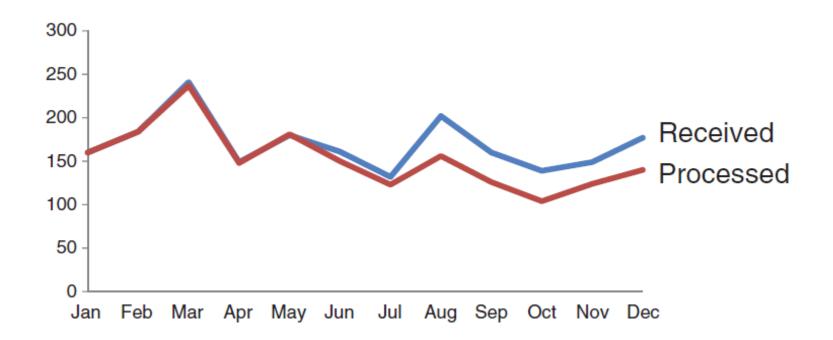
#### Remove data markers



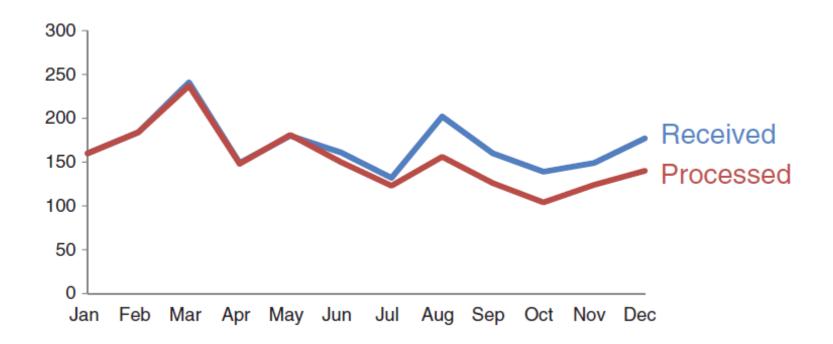
#### Clean up axis labels



### Label the data directly



#### Leverage consistent color



Note that the above de-cluttering process need not be suitable for other situations!



Created by Darkhorse Analytics

www.darkhorseanalytics.com

https://stat545.com/effective-graphs.html

# Additional Reading

- Tufte's design principles
  - http://classes.engr.oregonstate.edu/eecs/spring2015/cs419-001/Slides/tufteDesign.pdf
- Bad graphs
  - http://people.math.sfu.ca/~cschwarz/Stat-301/Handouts/node8.html
- E. R. Tufte. The Visual Display of Quantitative Information, 2nd Edition. Graphics Press, Cheshire, Connecticut, 2001.
- Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, Storytelling with data a data visualization guide for business professionals, Wiley, 2015