

Telling better data stories

OECD

18 December 2025

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oecd.org/data



data-explorer.oecd.org



OECD Statistics



@OECD_Stat



» Outline

Time (minutes elapsed since PPT began)



» Five key vexillological principles: Good flag, bad flag

1. Keep It Simple.

YES



ALASKA (USA)

NO



BEY OF TUNISIA

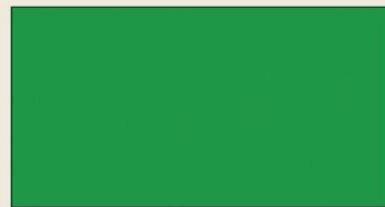
2. Use Meaningful Symbolism.

YES



ITALY

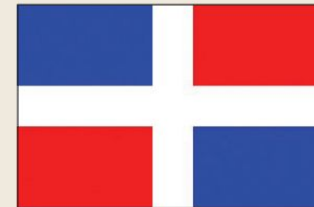
NO



LIBYA
(1977-2011)

3. Use two or three Basic Colors.

YES



DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

NO



DOMINICA

4. No Lettering or Seals.

YES



SOUTH CAROLINA (USA)

NO



SOUTH DAKOTA (USA)

5. Be Distinctive or Be Related.

YES



GHANA

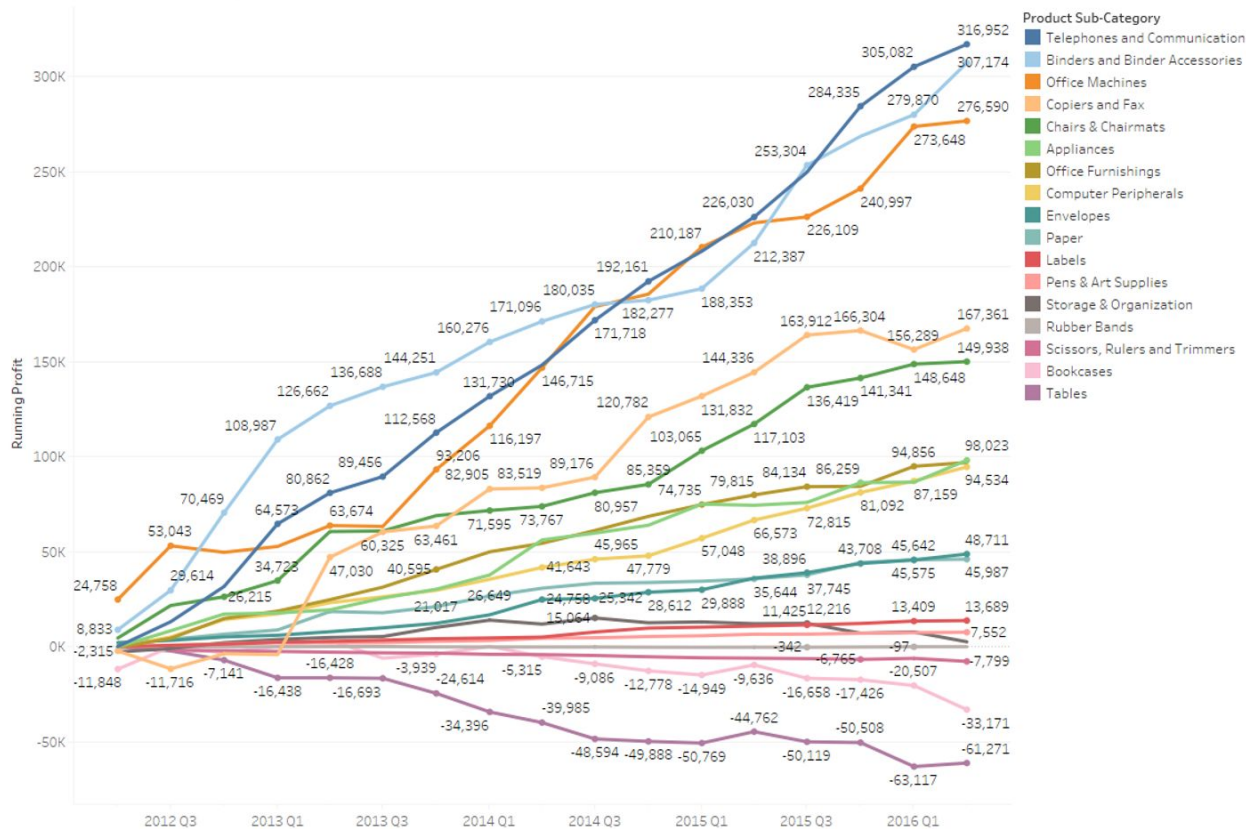
NO



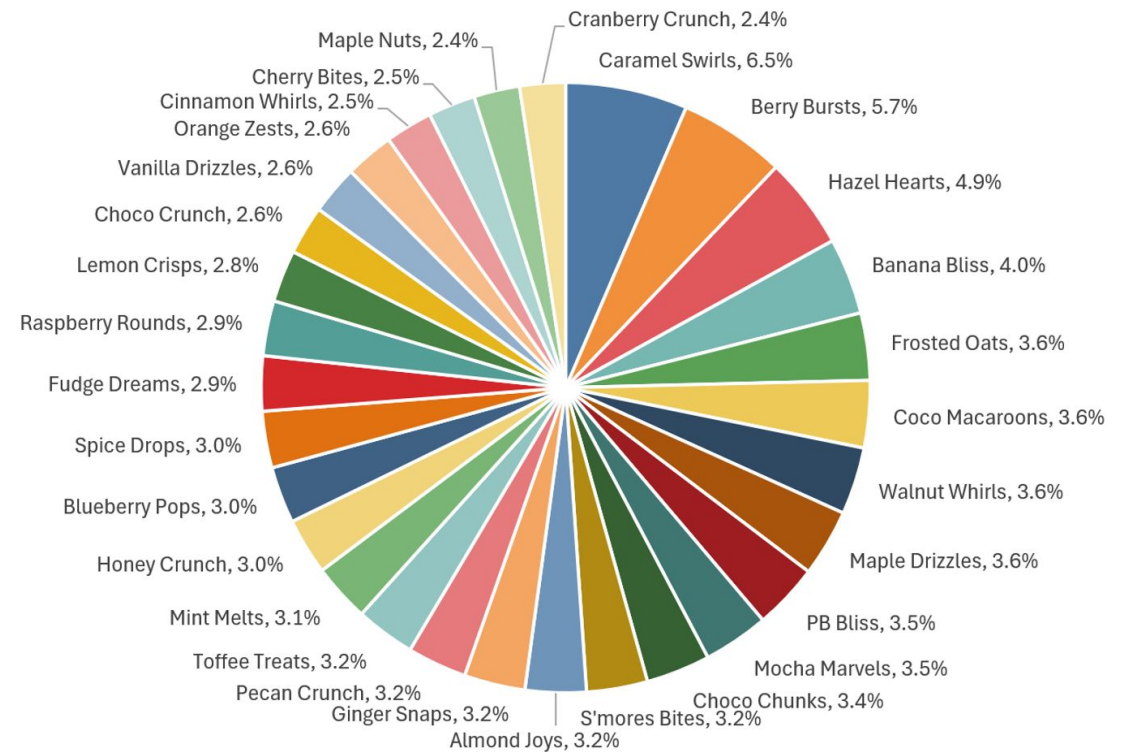
INDONESIA



Too much of a good thing



Cookie market share, 2023

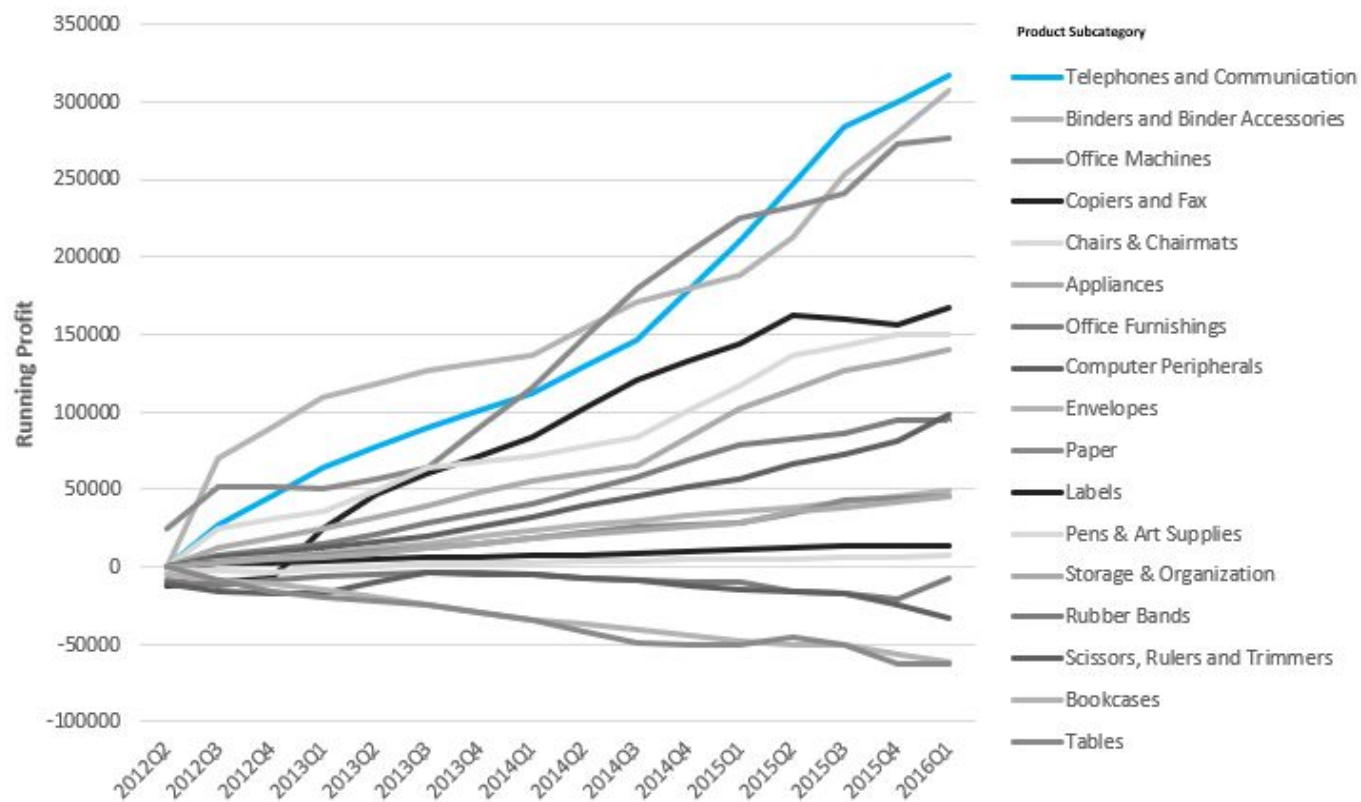


Source 1 (left): <https://www.datarevelations.com/how-many-lines-are-too-many-lines/>

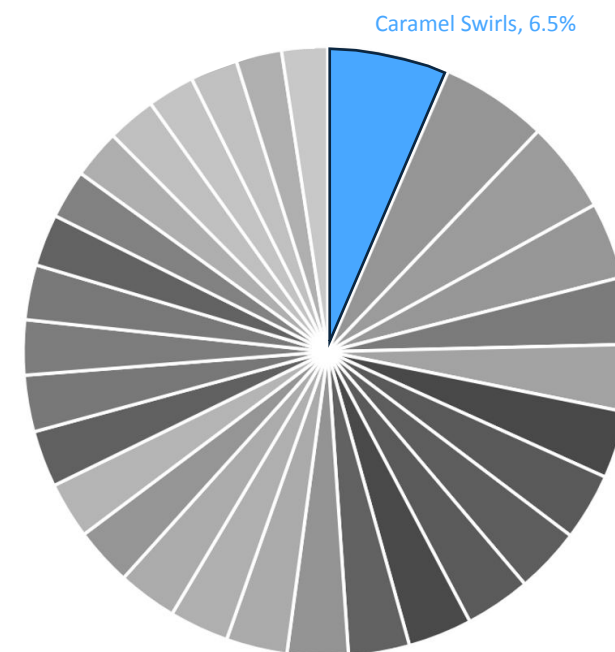
Source 2 (right): <https://www.practicalreporting.com/blog/2024/7/25/how-many-slices-can-you-put-in-a-pie-chart>



Sometimes less is more



Cookie market share, 2023

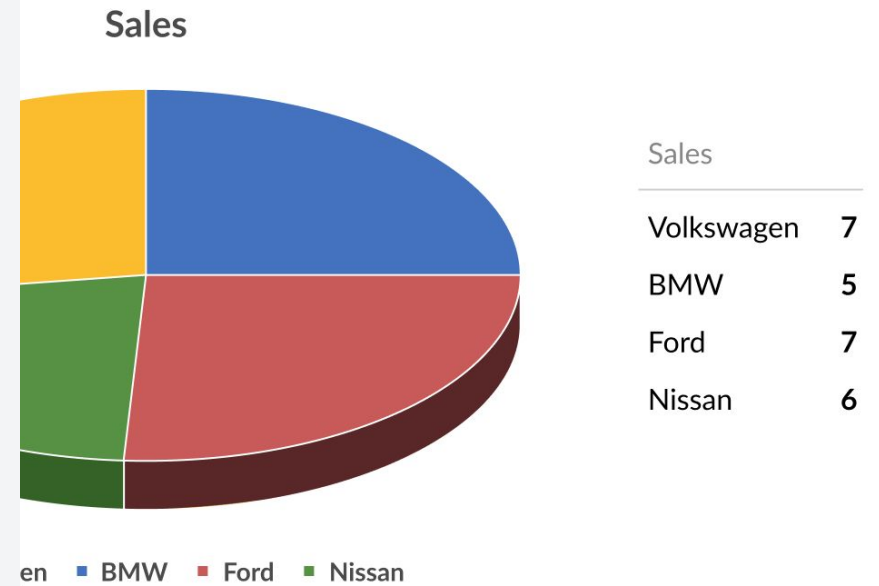
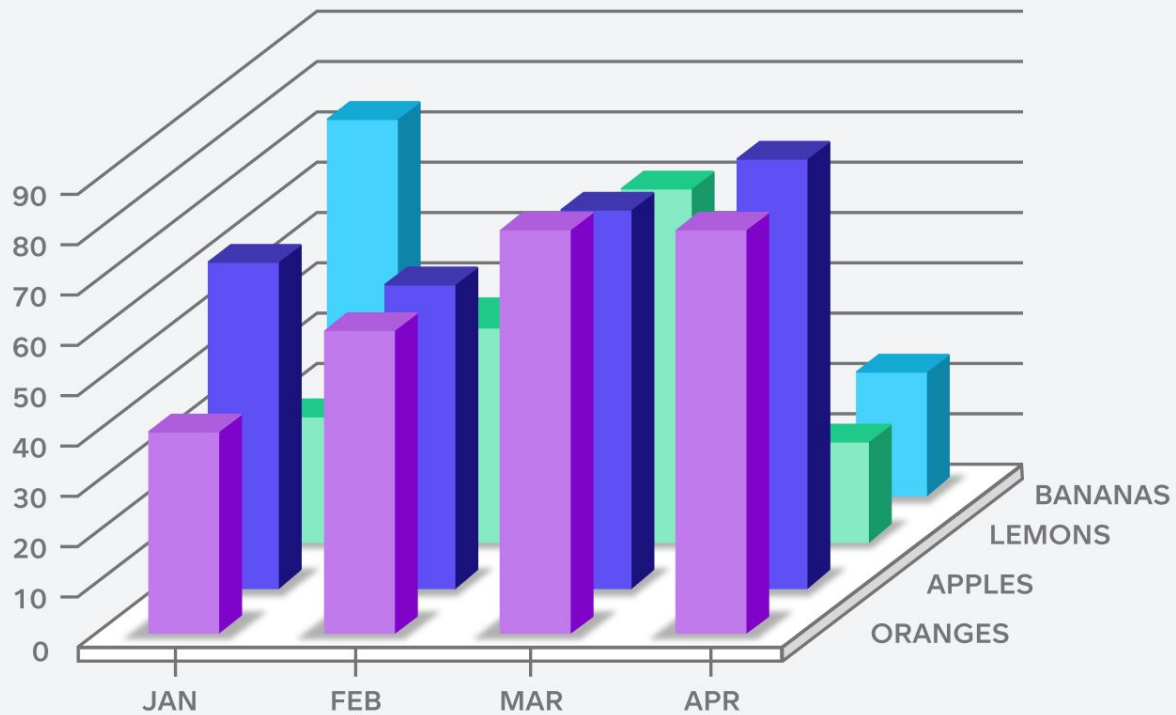


Source 1 (left): <https://www.datarevelations.com/how-many-lines-are-too-many-lines/>

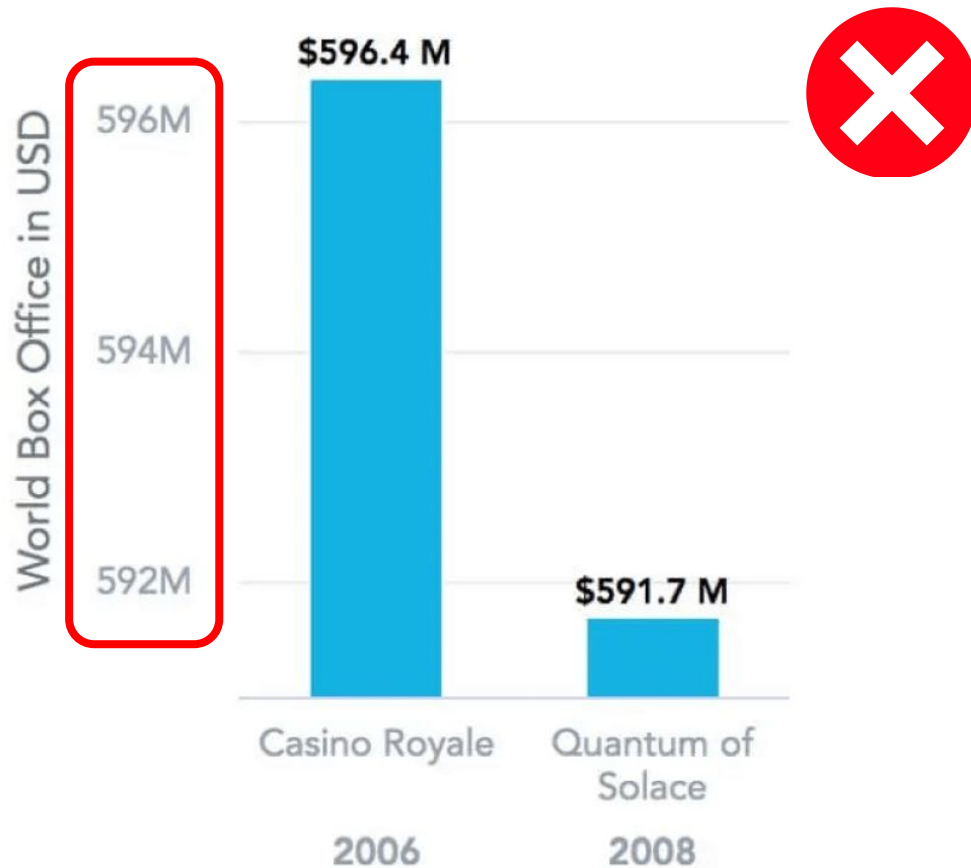
Source 2 (right): <https://www.practicalreporting.com/blog/2024/7/25/how-many-slices-can-you-put-in-a-pie-chart>



3D charts: BAD!



» Axes matter: truncation tricks

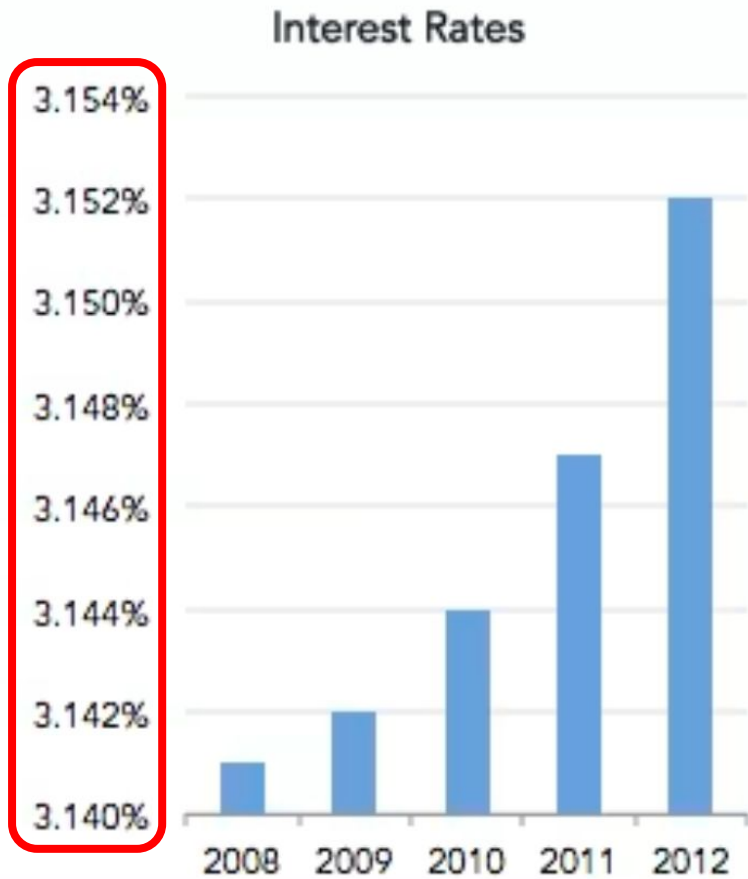


**From Royale Riches to Slight Solace:
Bond's Box Office Takings Falls Slightly
between 2006 and 2008**

World Box Office in millions of US Dollars

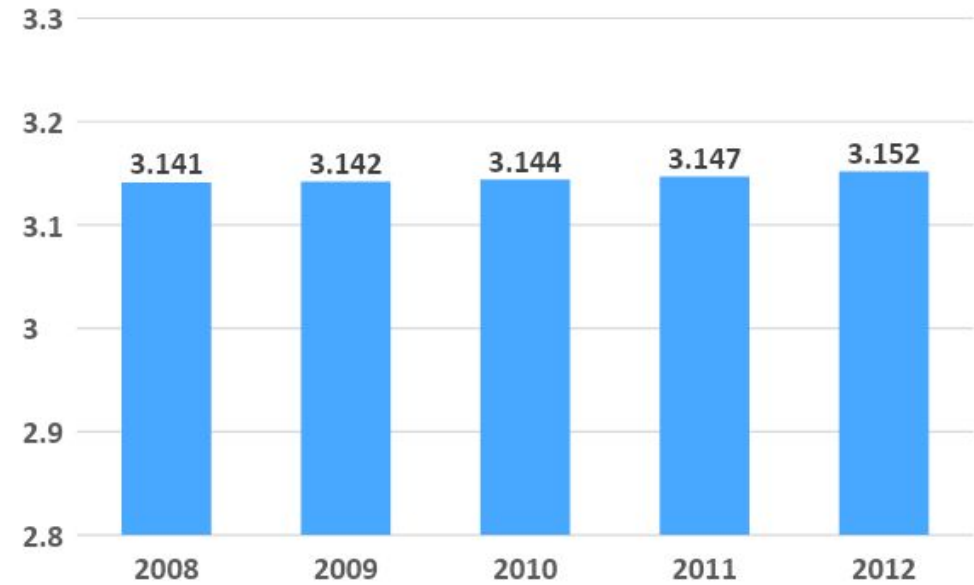


» Axes matter: truncation tricks



A Fractional Climb: Interest Rates Tiptoe Upwards

Interest Rates, %

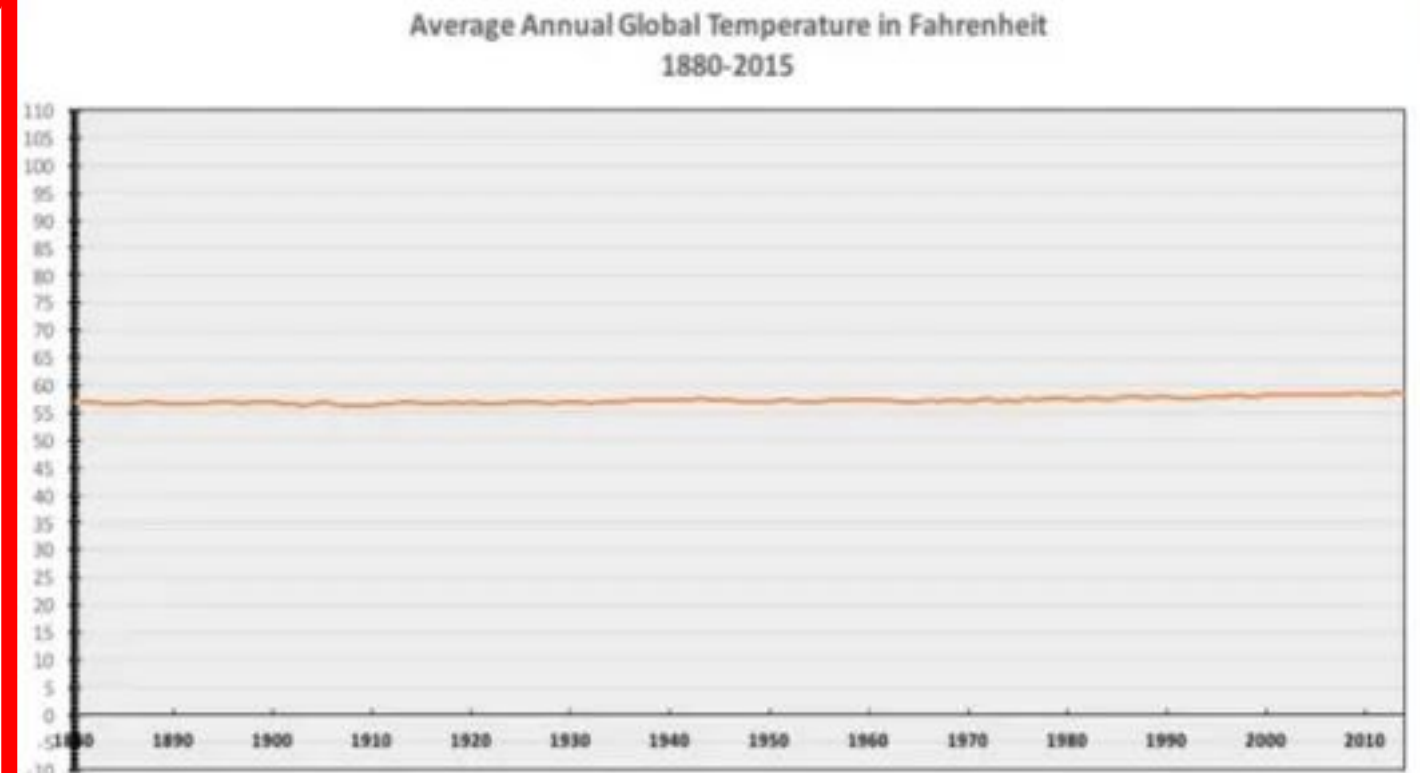
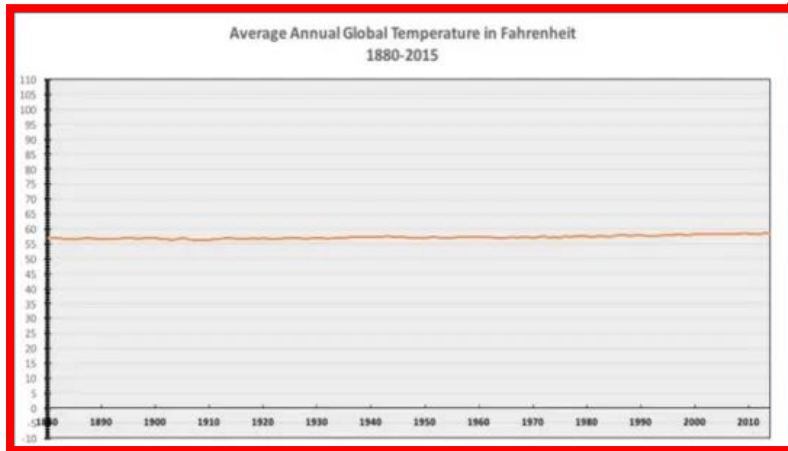


» Axes matter: cunning compression



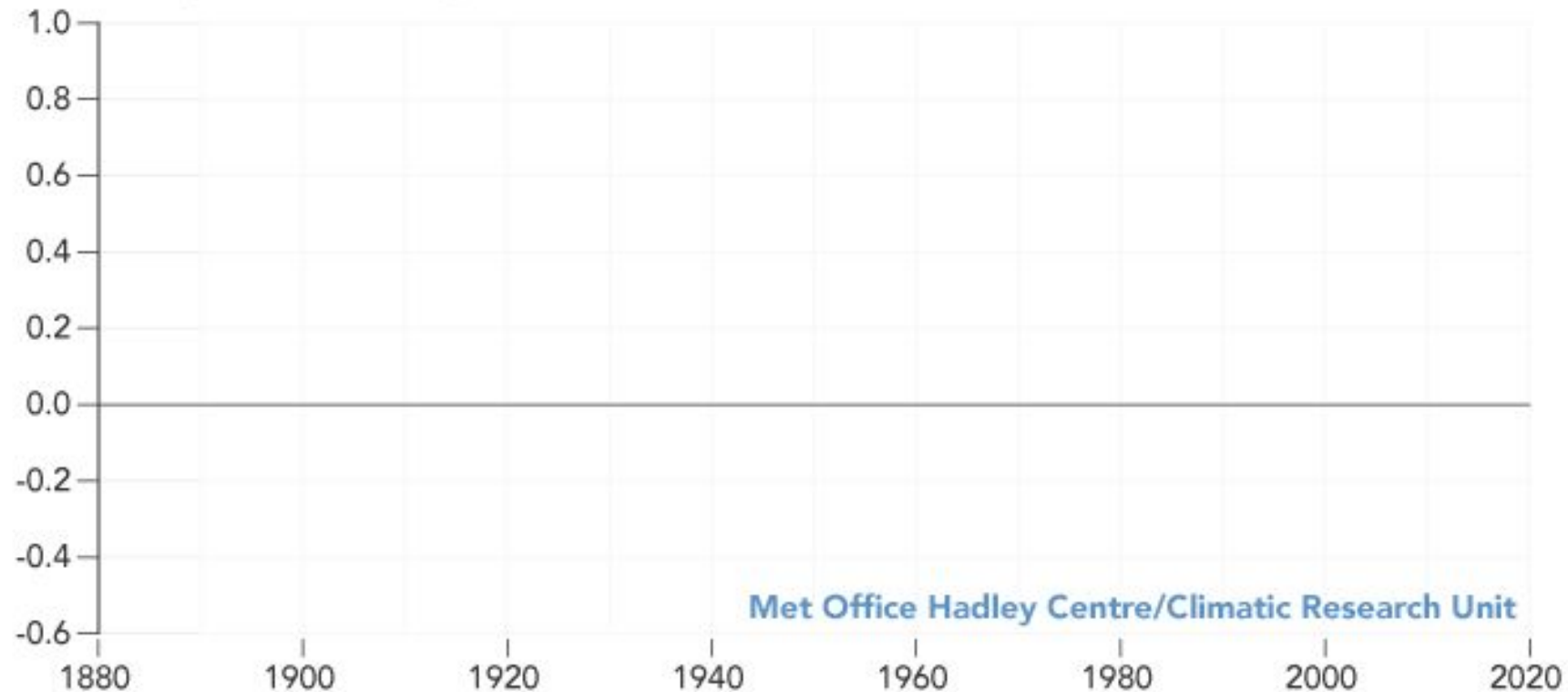
The only [#climatechange](#) chart you need to see. natl.re/wPKpro

(h/t [@powerlineUS](#))

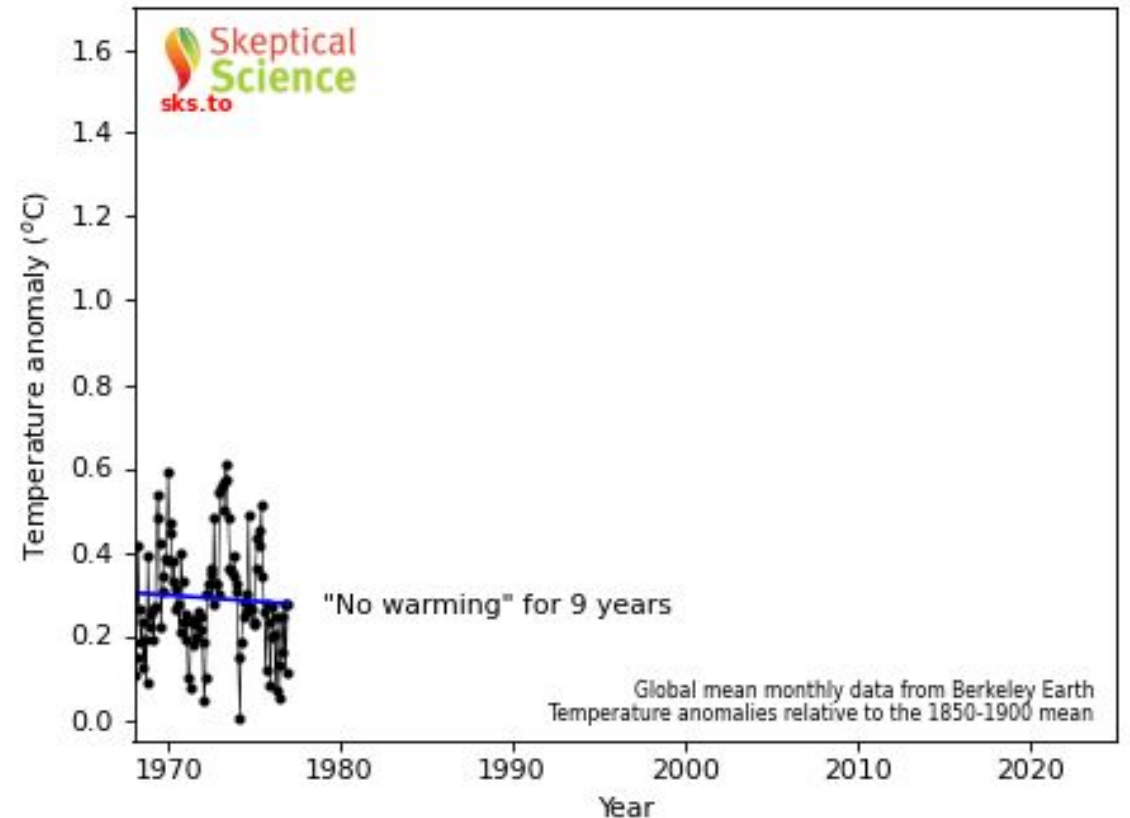
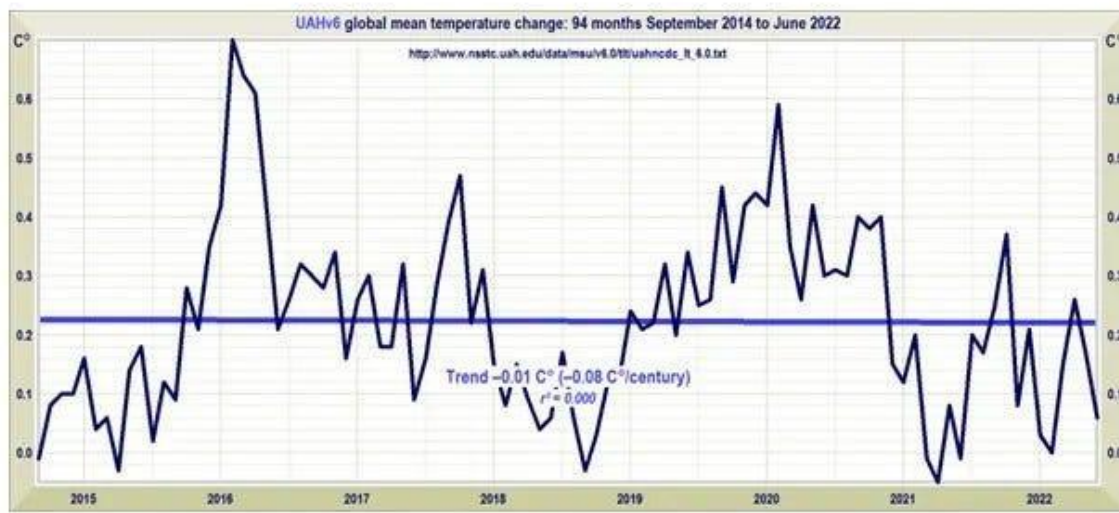


» Axes matter: cunning compression

A World of Agreement: Temperatures are Rising
Global Temperature Anomaly (relative to 1951-1980, °C)



» Cherry picking the X-axis: "The Staircase of Denial"

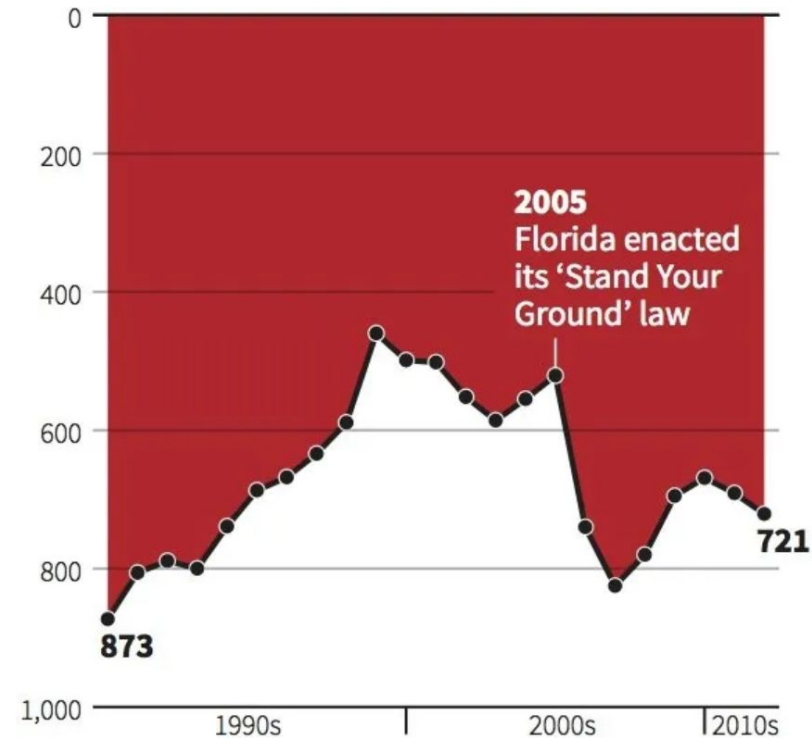




Unintuitive inversion

Gun deaths in Florida

Number of murders committed using firearms



Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement

C. Chan 16/02/2014

REUTERS

Source : <https://www.livescience.com/45083-misleading-gun-death-chart.html>

» What's wrong with this picture?

Cost of living rises at fastest rate in two years

f SHARE

TWEET

Google+

+ SHARE

Friday, March 11, 2011

By Niamh Hennessy

THE cost of living is increasing at its fastest rate in more than two years, with food, clothes, mortgages and rent on the rise.



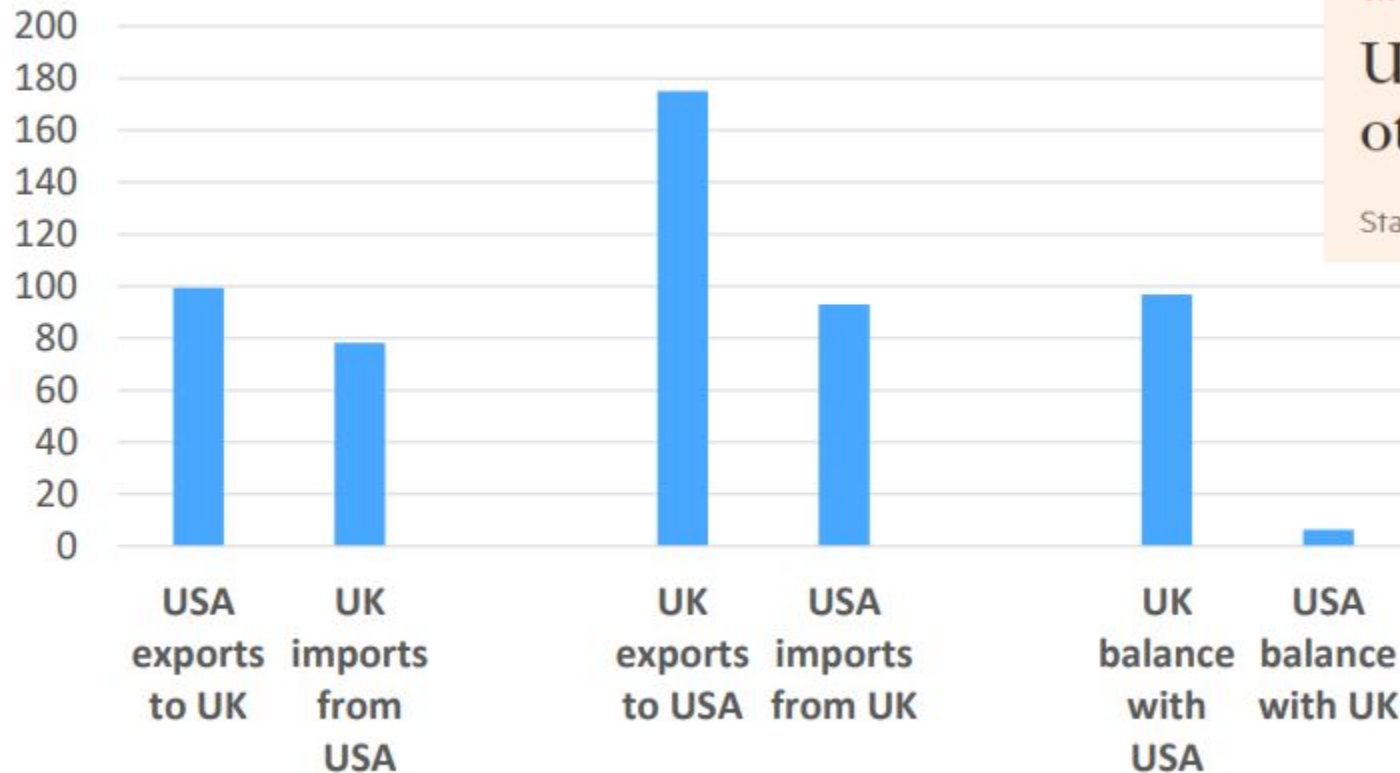
Rising fuel prices linked to the Libyan uprising, severe hikes in health insurance premiums and an end to sales last month also hit households in the pocket.

The annual rate of inflation is at 2.2% after seven months of steady rises — a level not seen since November 2008.

» The 'mystery' of the double surplus

Trade in services between the United Kingdom and United States

USD billion, 2024



UK trade + Add to myFT

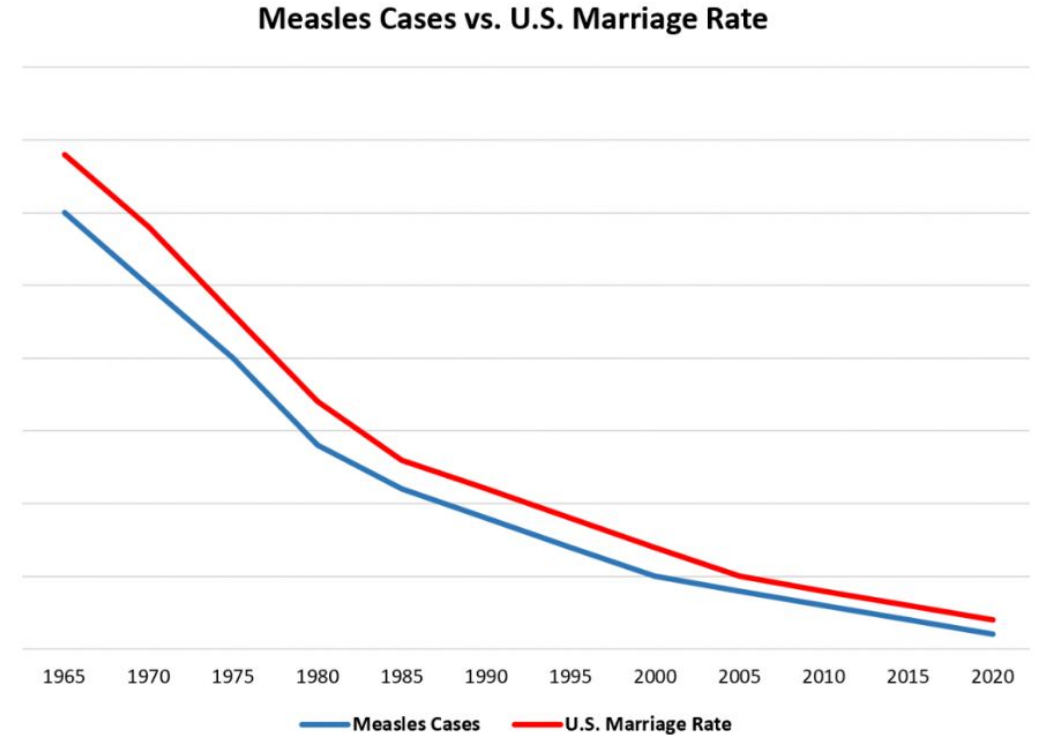
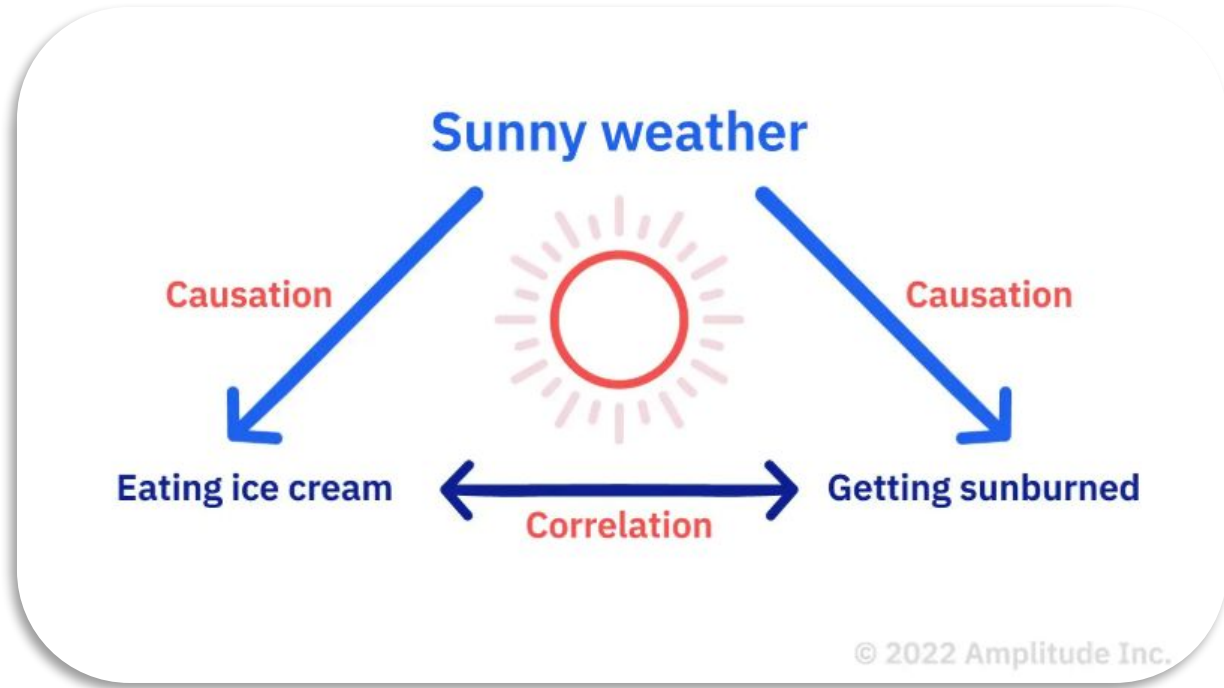
UK and US report trade surplus with each other

Statisticians attempt to solve mystery of differing figures

- The USA and UK are leading traders in services
- And they report a surplus with each other



» Spurious correlations NE causation



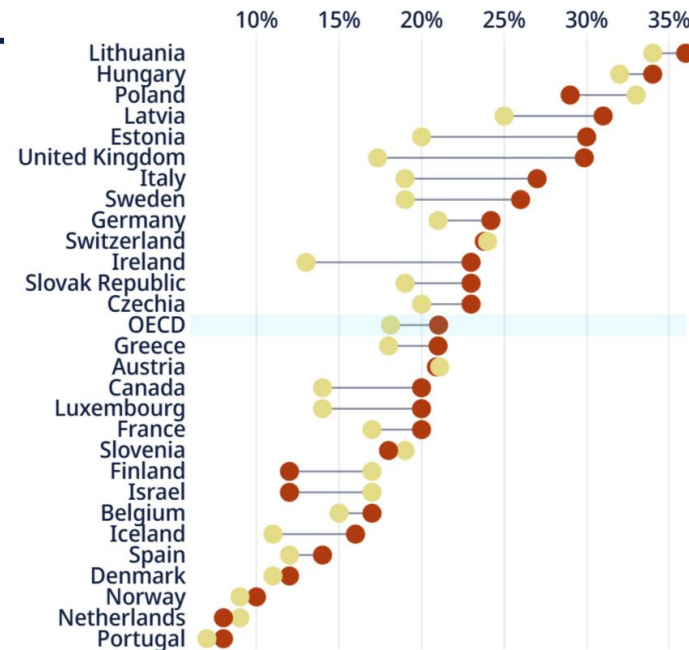
» Some ingredients of a good DataViz

It knows what it wants to convey, and does so concisely

In most countries, e-cigarette use is more prevalent among girls (21%) than boys (18%)

Vaping in the past month among 15-year-olds, 2022

Boys Girls



The measure, period, and legend are all clearly stated

The axes are clear, and the text sized for accessibility

A highlight is used to draw focus to the reference aggregate



Health at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators

Use of clear branding and sourcing

» Some ingredients of a good DataViz

It knows what it wants to convey, and does so concisely

The centre of the chart presents the country/regional sources of energy demand

The world's demand for energy continues to grow

iea

Global demand has grown by nearly 60% since 2000, with all the increase coming from emerging and developing economies. All major energy sources grew over this period.

By region



By fuel

416 EJ

654 EJ

China

India

Other emerging & developing economies

United States

European Union

Other advanced economies

International bunkers

2000

2024

Coal

Oil

Natural Gas

Nuclear

Renewables

Traditional use of biomass

Other

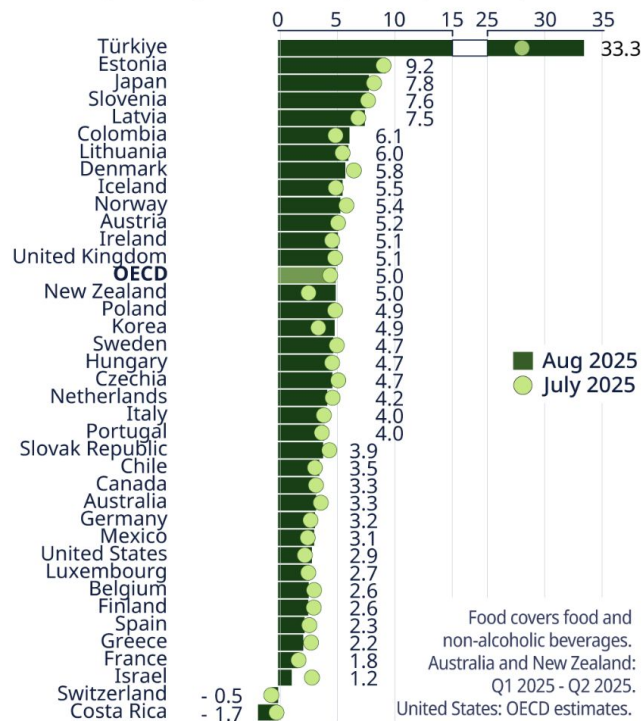
Use of clear branding

The enlarged energy sources scale paints the growth between 2000 and 2024 starkly

Some ingredients of a good DataViz

OECD food inflation rose to 5.0% in August 2025

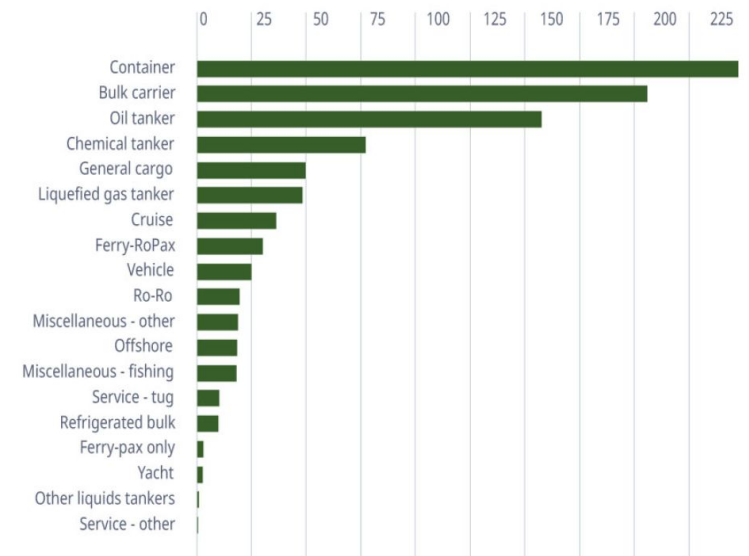
Percentage change over same period previous year



OECD (2025), Consumer price indices (CPIs, HICPs), COICOP 1999 - Consumer price indices (CPIs), COICOP 2018

Container and bulk carriers vessels contribute the most to global CO₂ emissions.

Total emissions by vessel type
2024, million tonnes



OECD | COP30

#OECDatCOP30

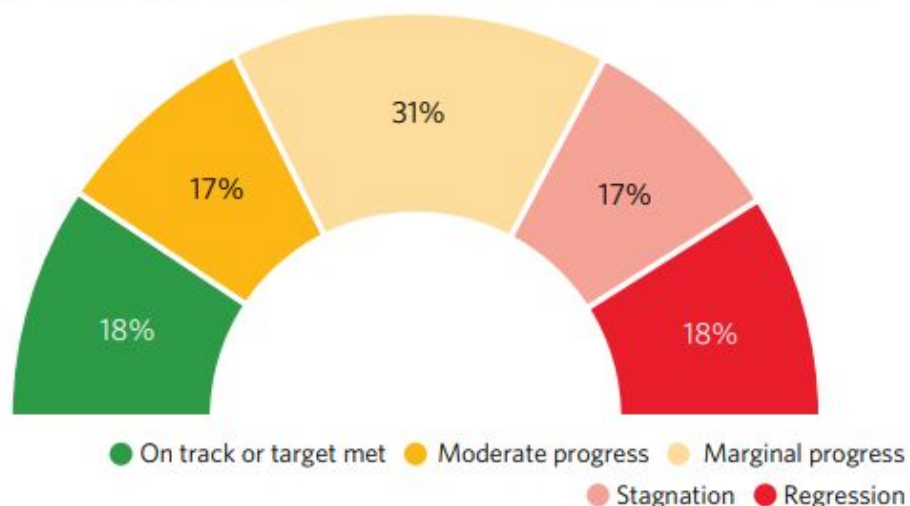


SDGs: Clear message



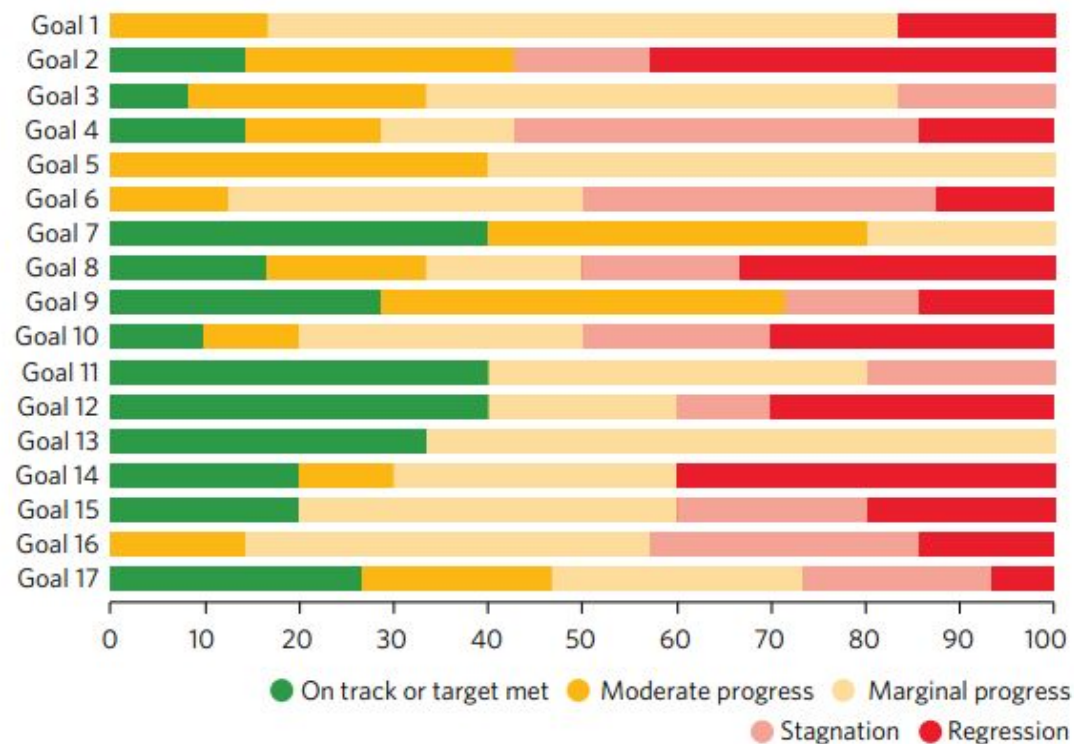
The Sustainable
Development
Goals Report
2025

Overall progress across targets based on 2015–2025 global aggregate data



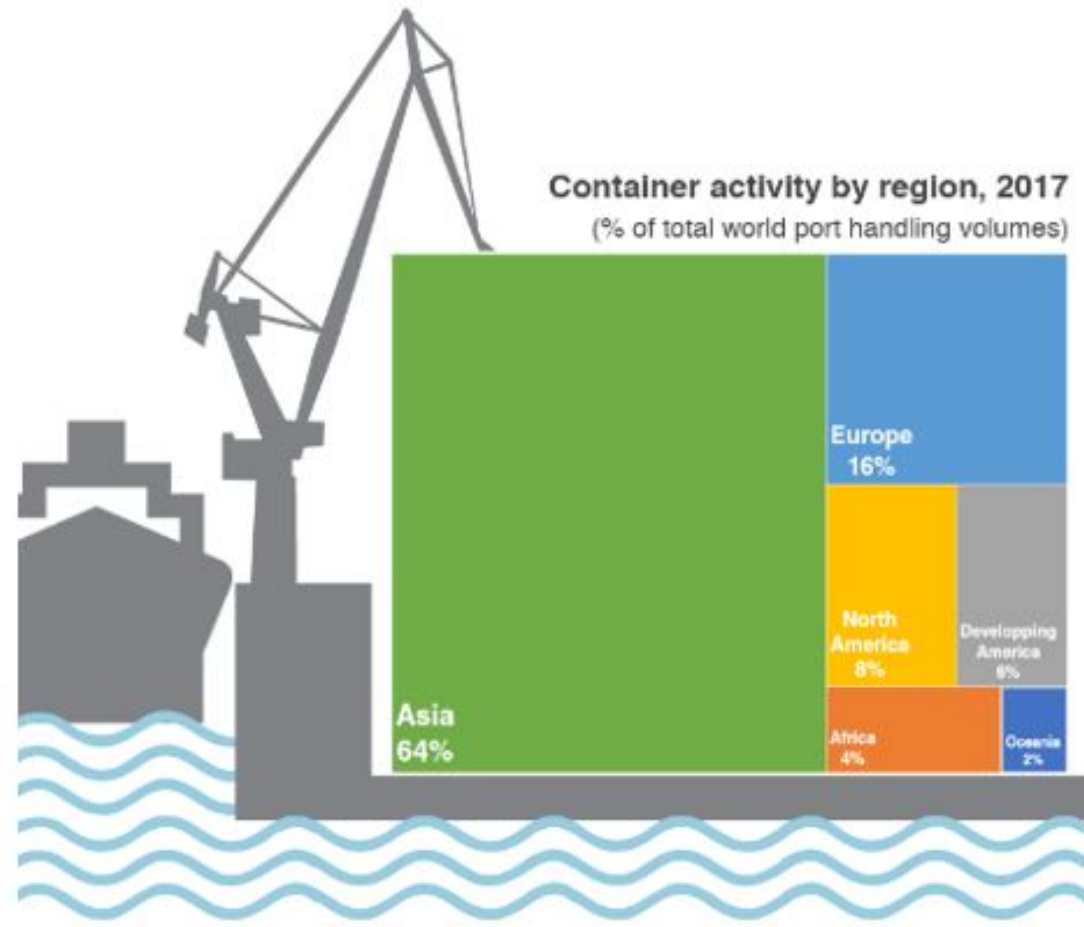
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Progress assessment for the 17 Goals based on assessed targets, by Goal (percentage)

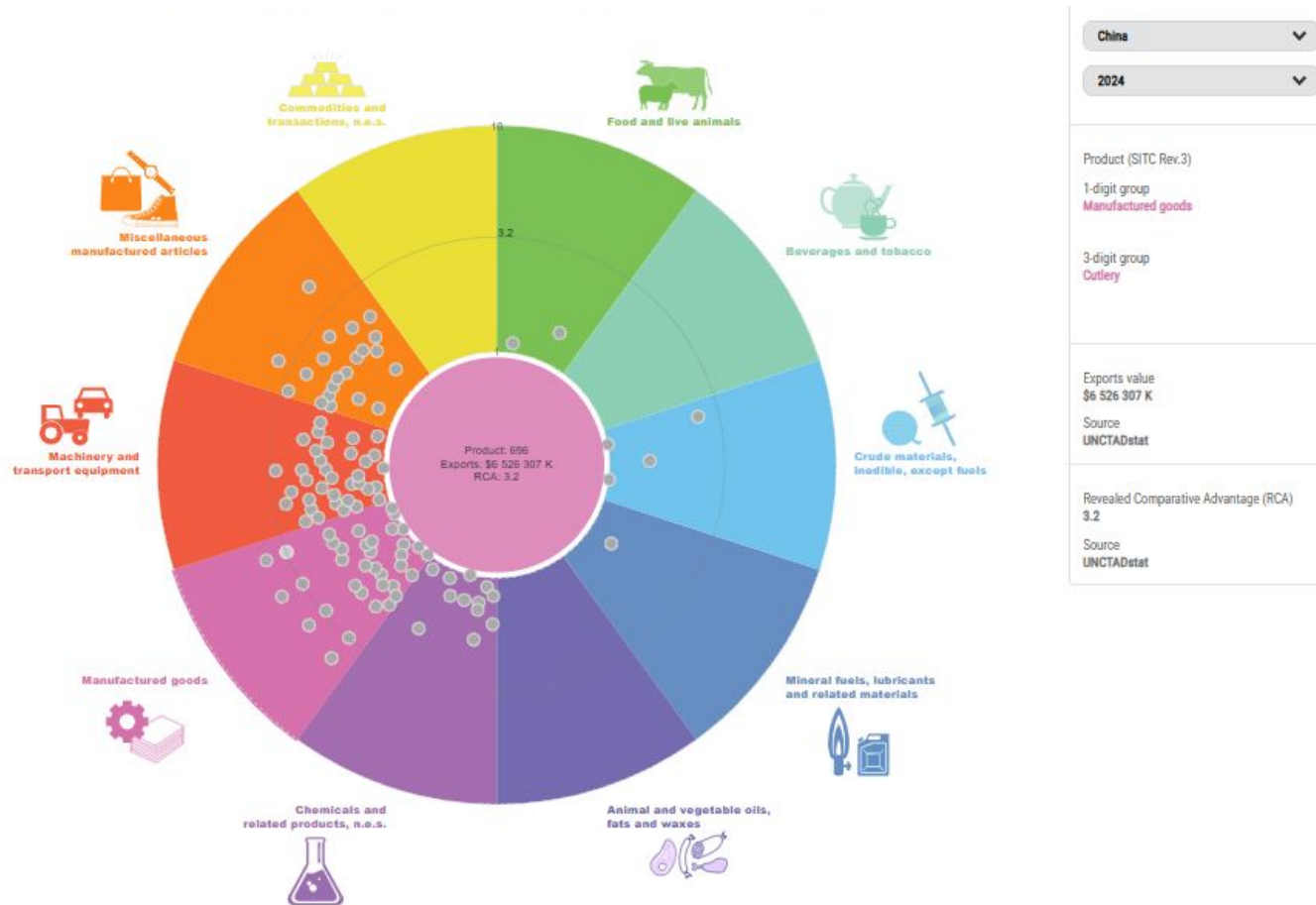




Clever infographics



Interactive tools facilitate exploration



Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) radar plot

Plot presents a full picture of a country's RCA in producing and exporting a full range of products for a specific year.

Products level information presented at SITC revision 3 (3-digit level).

Interactive maps can help contextualise

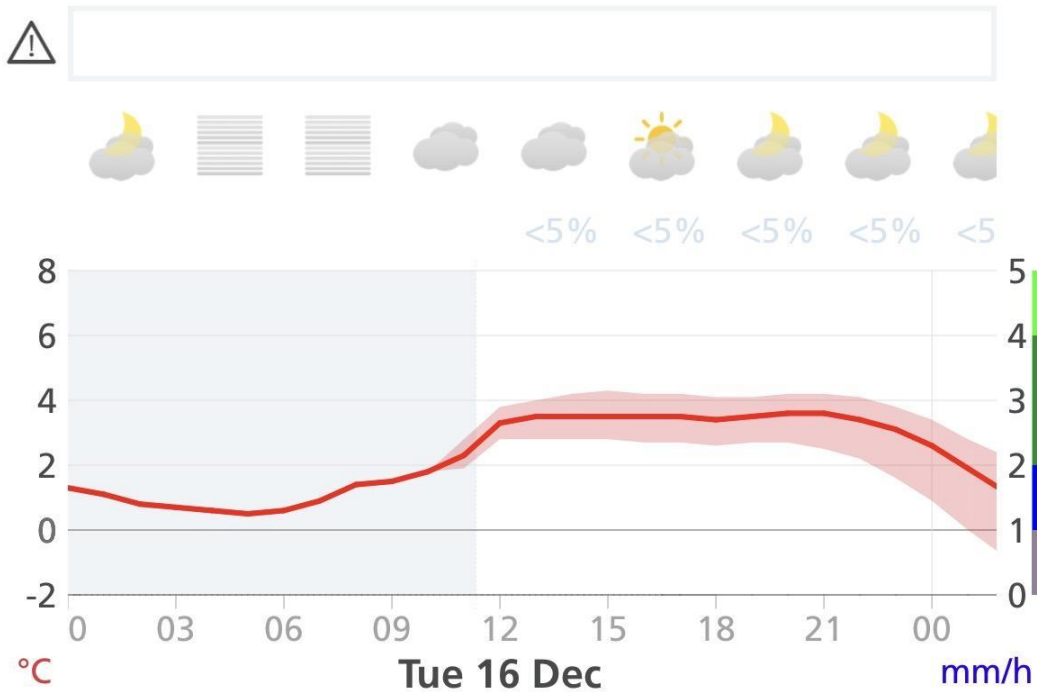
Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS

	Bahrain
	Cabo Verde *
	Comoros *
	Guinea-Bissau
	Maldives *
	Mauritius *
	Sao Tome and Principe *
	Seychelles *
	Singapore

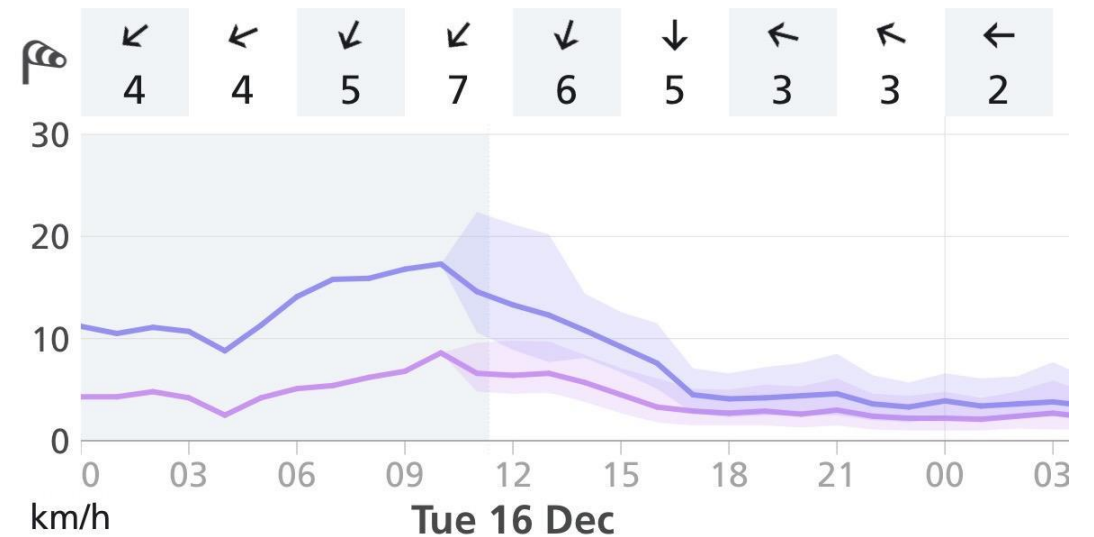


Meteo Suisse: Uncertainty in Zurich

Warnings, Temperature, and Precipitation



Wind and Gusts



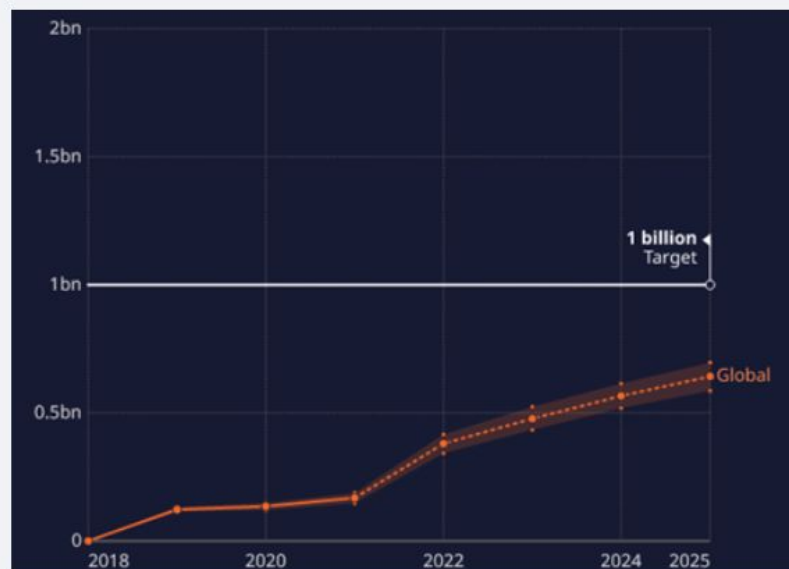
» Why uncertainty matters

Healthier populations



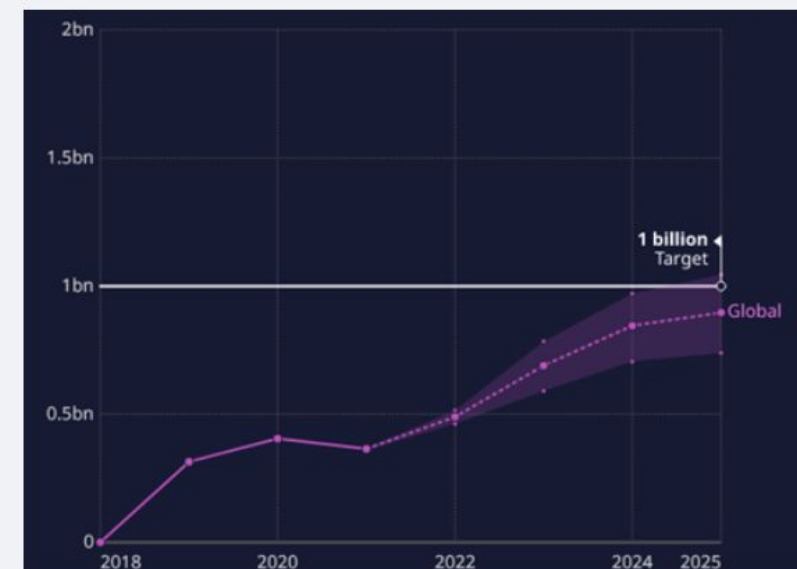
Worldwide, 1.26 Billion [0.96 - 1.49 B] more people are expected to be **enjoying better health and wellbeing** by 2023 compared to 2018. But this is still insufficient to reach SDG targets.

Universal health coverage



477 Million [433 - 523 M] more people are expected to be **covered by essential health services and not experiencing financial hardship** by 2023 compared to 2018. However, efforts need to be re-doubled to achieve the UHC target.

Health emergencies protection



690 Million [591 - 784 M] more people are expected to be **protected from health emergencies** by 2023 compared to 2018. But more needs to be done to ensure everyone is protected.

» Careful comms approaching a target

Health emergencies protection



» Key takeaways

- Be clear about what you want to communicate
- Keep it simple!
- Label axes, use legends, title, sources
- Select appropriate chart for purpose
- Avoid 3D charts
- Make it beautiful
- 10 second rule!





Need some help?

Deviation Correlation Change v Time Ranking Distribution Part to whole Magnitude Spatial Flow

Change v Time

Give emphasis to changing trends. These can be short (intra-day) movements or extended series traversing decades or centuries: Choosing the correct time period is important to provide suitable context for the reader

Examples of use

Share price movements, economic time series

Chart types

line



The standard way to show a changing time series. If data are irregular, consider markers to represent data points

column-timeline



Columns work well for showing change over time - but usually best with only one series of data at a time

column-line-timeline



A good way of showing the relationship over time between an amount (columns) and a rate (line)

stock-price



Usually focused on day-to-day activity, these charts show opening/closing and hi/low points of each day

slope



Good for showing changing data as long as the data can be simplified into 2 or 3 points without missing a key part of story

area



Use with care. These are good at showing changes to total, but seeing change in components can be very difficult.



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