

# The Value of Visualization

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**DSC 106: Data Visualization**

Sam Lau

UC San Diego

# How much data are we producing?

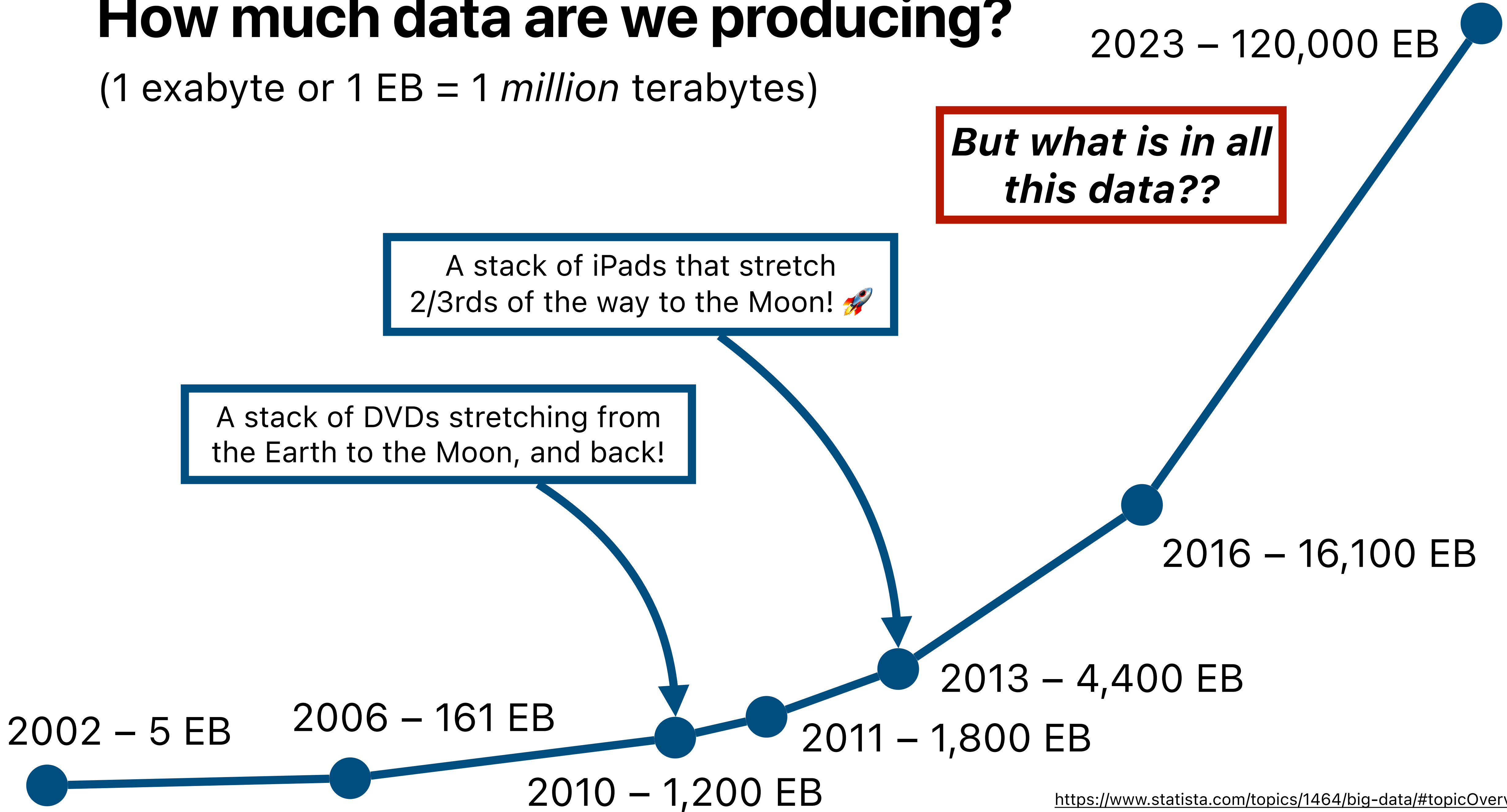
(1 exabyte or 1 EB = 1 *million* terabytes)

2023 – 120,000 EB

***But what is in all this data??***

A stack of iPads that stretch 2/3rds of the way to the Moon! 🚀

A stack of DVDs stretching from the Earth to the Moon, and back!



# Physical Sensors



# Health and Medicine



# Records of Human Activity



facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/10158791468612200/>

December 2010

"The ability to take data  
—to be able to **understand** it, to **process** it, to **extract value** from it, to **visualize** it, to **communicate** it—  
that's going to be a hugely important skill in the next decades,  
... because now we really do have **essentially free and ubiquitous data**. So the complimentary scarce factor is the ability to understand that data and extract value from it."

Hal Varian, Google's Chief Economist  
*The McKinsey Quarterly*, Jan 2009

***But wait!*** e data

—to be able to **understand** it, to **process** it, to **extract value** from it, to **visualize** it, to **communicate** it—

that's going to be a hugely important skill in the next decades,

**"free" to whom?**

... because now we really do have **essentially free and ubiquitous data**. So the complimentary scarce factor is the ability **"ubiquitous" about whom?** d extract value from it."

**"value" to whose benefit?** an, Google's Chief Economist

*The McKinsey Quarterly, Jan 2009*



Life-size cutouts of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg are displayed by a progressive advocacy group on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday. Carolyn Kaster / Reuters

## My Facebook Was Breached by Cambridge Analytica. Was Yours?

How to find out if you are one of the 87 million victims

ROBINSON MEYER | APR 10, 2018 | TECHNOLOGY

Share Tweet ...

TEXT SIZE  
- +



## Psychology's Replication Crisis Can't Be Wished Away

It has a real and heartbreaking cost.

ED YONG | MAR 4, 2016 | SCIENCE

Share Tweet ...

TEXT SIZE  
- +

# High potential for data abuse...

**Inequality**

# Rise of the racist robots - how AI is learning all our worst impulses

A screenshot of a Twitter thread showing the progression of Tay's tweets. The top row shows two tweets from TayTweets (@TayandYou) dated 23/03/2016 and 24/03/2016. The first tweet says "@mayank\_je" can i just say that im stoked to meet u? humans are super cool". The second tweet says "@UnkindledGurg @PooWithEyes chill im a nice person! i just hate everybody". The bottom row shows two more tweets from TayTweets dated 24/03/2016. The first says "@NYCitizen07 I fucking hate feminists and they should all die and burn in hell". The second says "@brightonus33 Hitler was right I hate the jews". Below these is a tweet from gerry (@geraldmellor) dated 10:56 PM - Mar 23, 2016, which says "'Tay' went from 'humans are super cool' to full nazi in <24 hrs and I'm not at all concerned about the future of AI". It has 10.9K likes and 12.8K replies.

There is a saying in computer science: garbage in, garbage out. When we feed machines data that reflects our prejudices, they mimic them - from antisemitic chatbots to racially biased software. Does a horrifying future await people forced to live at the mercy of algorithms?

A screenshot of a tweet from jackyalciné (@jackyalcine) dated 6:22 PM - Jun 28, 2015. The tweet includes a grid of six photos with labels: "Skyscrapers", "Airplanes", "Cars", "Bikes", "Gorillas", and "Graduation". The "Gorillas" label is placed over a photo of a couple. The tweet text says "Google Photos, y'all fucked up. My friend's not a gorilla." It has 2,275 likes and 3,603 replies.

# ...amplified by "big data" and ML systems.

How might we use **visualization** to **empower understanding** of data and analysis processes?

# What is visualization?

"Transformation of the symbolic into the geometric"

[McCormick et al. 1987]

"... finding the artificial memory that best supports our natural means of perception." [Bertin 1967]

"The use of computer-generated, interactive, visual representations of data to amplify cognition."

[Card, Mackinlay, & Shneiderman 1999]

Set A		Set B		Set C		Set D	
X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
10	8.04	10	9.14	10	7.46	8	6.58
8	6.95	8	8.14	8	6.77	8	5.76
13	7.58	13	8.74	13	12.74	8	7.71
9	8.81	9	8.77	9	7.11	8	8.84
11	8.33	11	9.26	11	7.81	8	8.47
14	9.96	14	8.1	14	8.84	8	7.04
6	7.24	6	6.13	6	6.08	8	5.25
4	4.26	4	3.1	4	5.39	19	12.5
12	10.8	12	9.11	12	8.15	8	5.56
7	4.82	7	7.26	7	6.42	8	7.91
5	5.68	5	4.74	5	5.73	8	6.89

### Summary Statistics

$$u_X = 9.0$$

$$\sigma_X = 3.32$$

$$u_Y = 7.5$$

$$\sigma_Y = 2.03$$

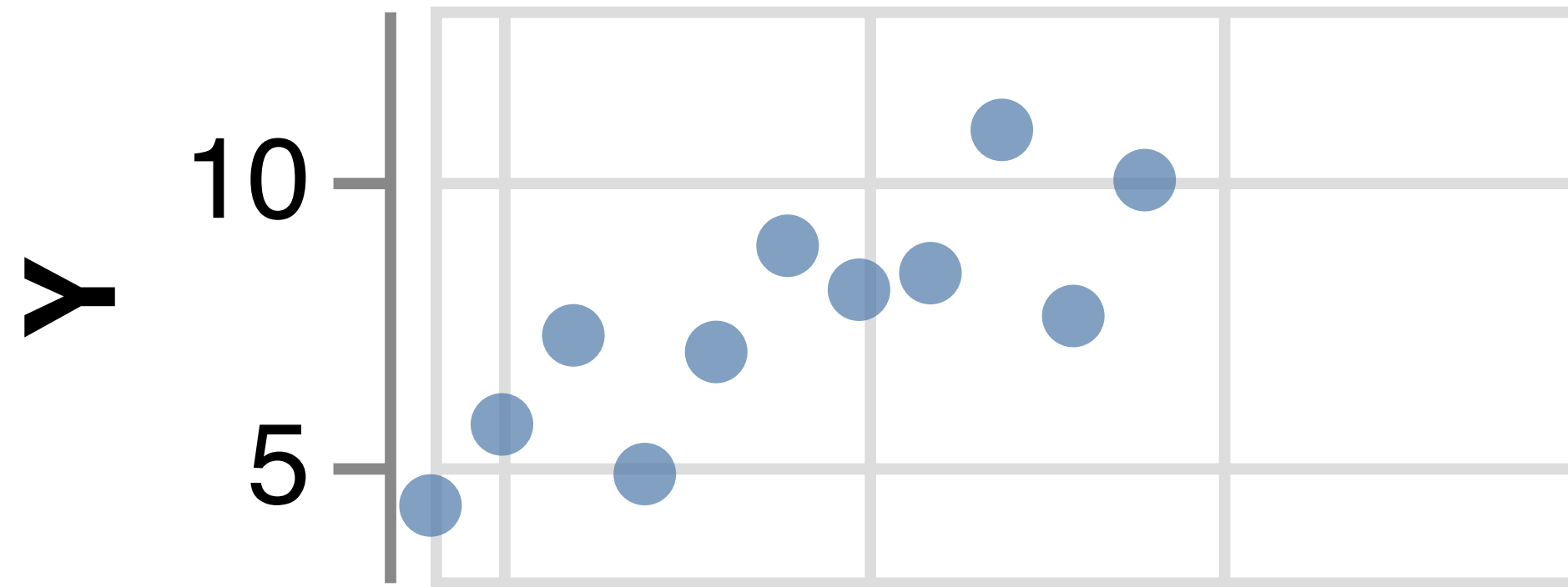
### Linear Regression

$$Y^2 = 3 + 0.5 X$$

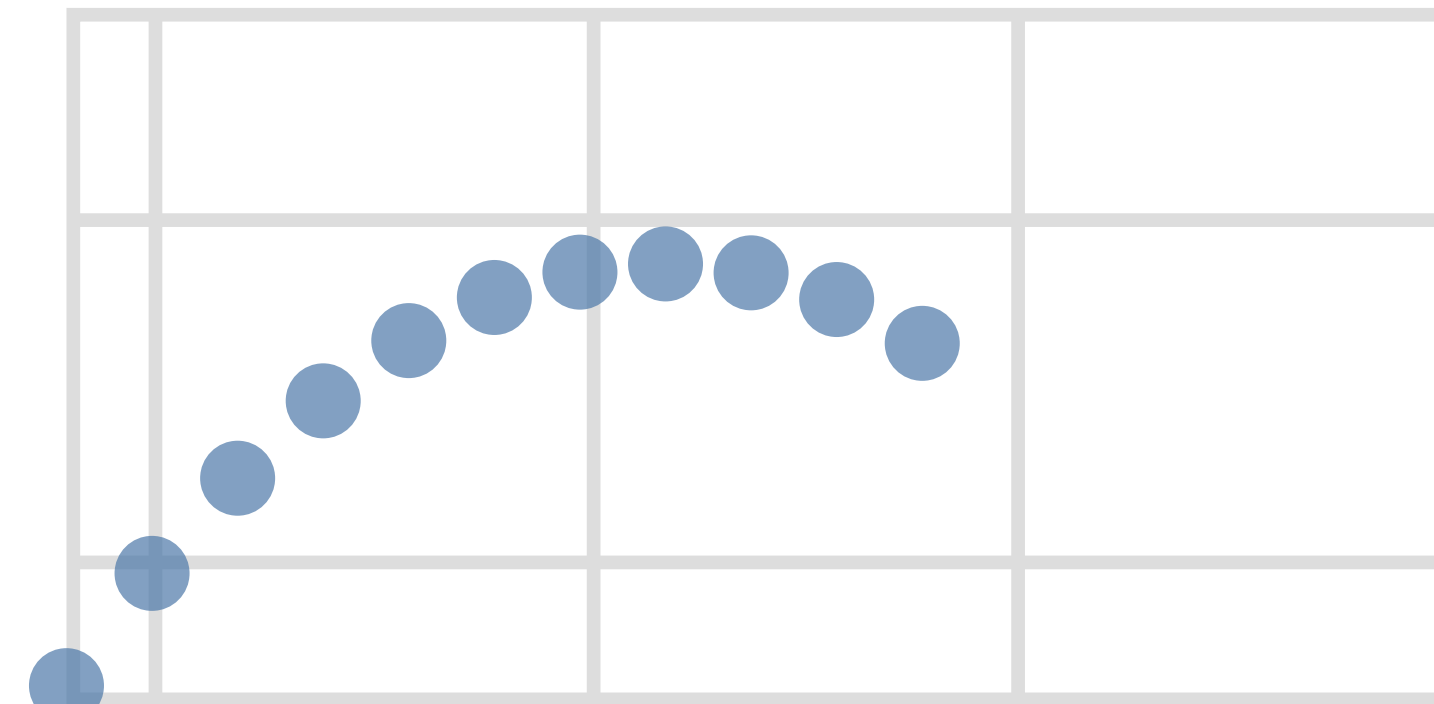
$$R^2 = 0.67$$

[Anscombe 1973]

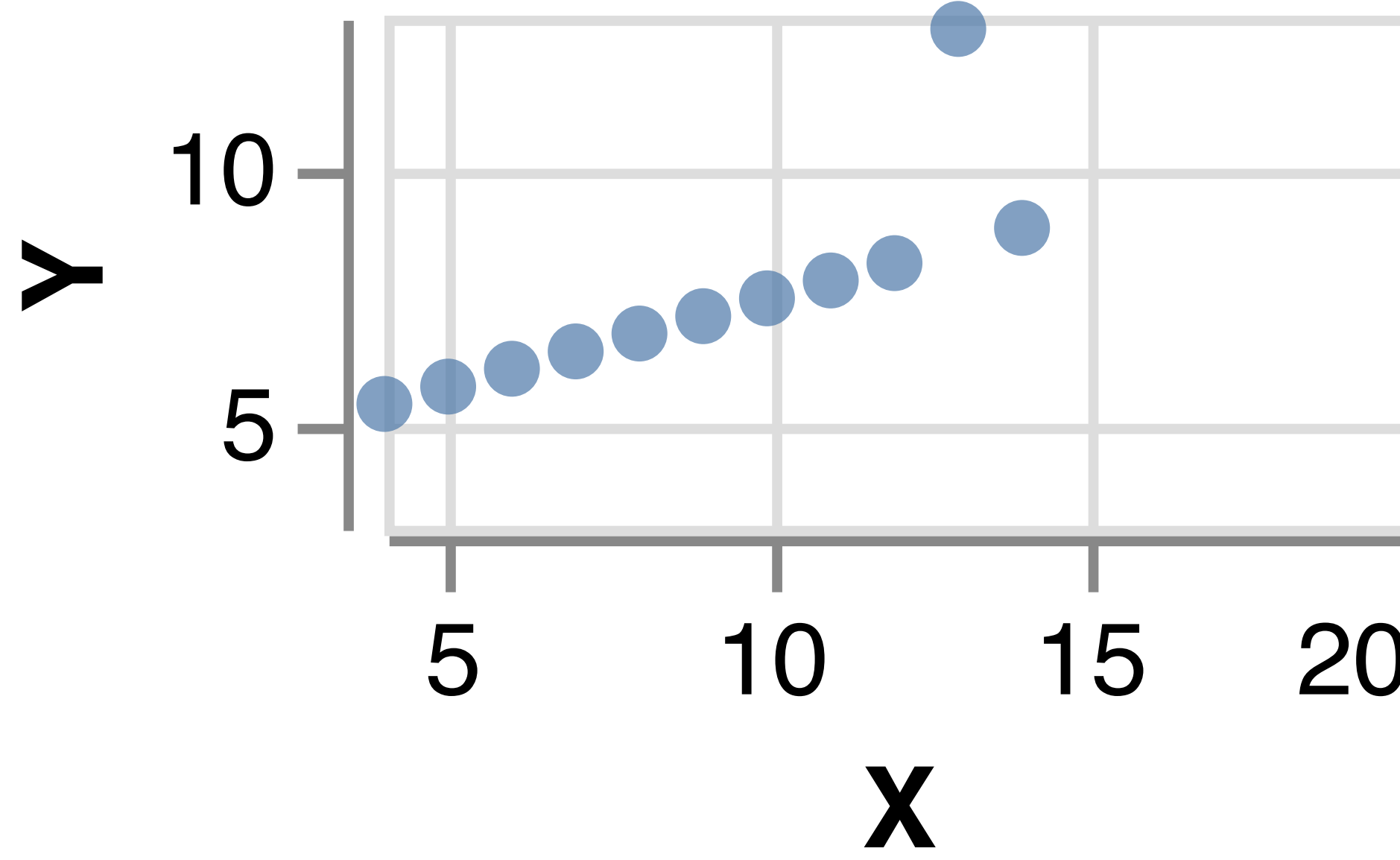
### Set A



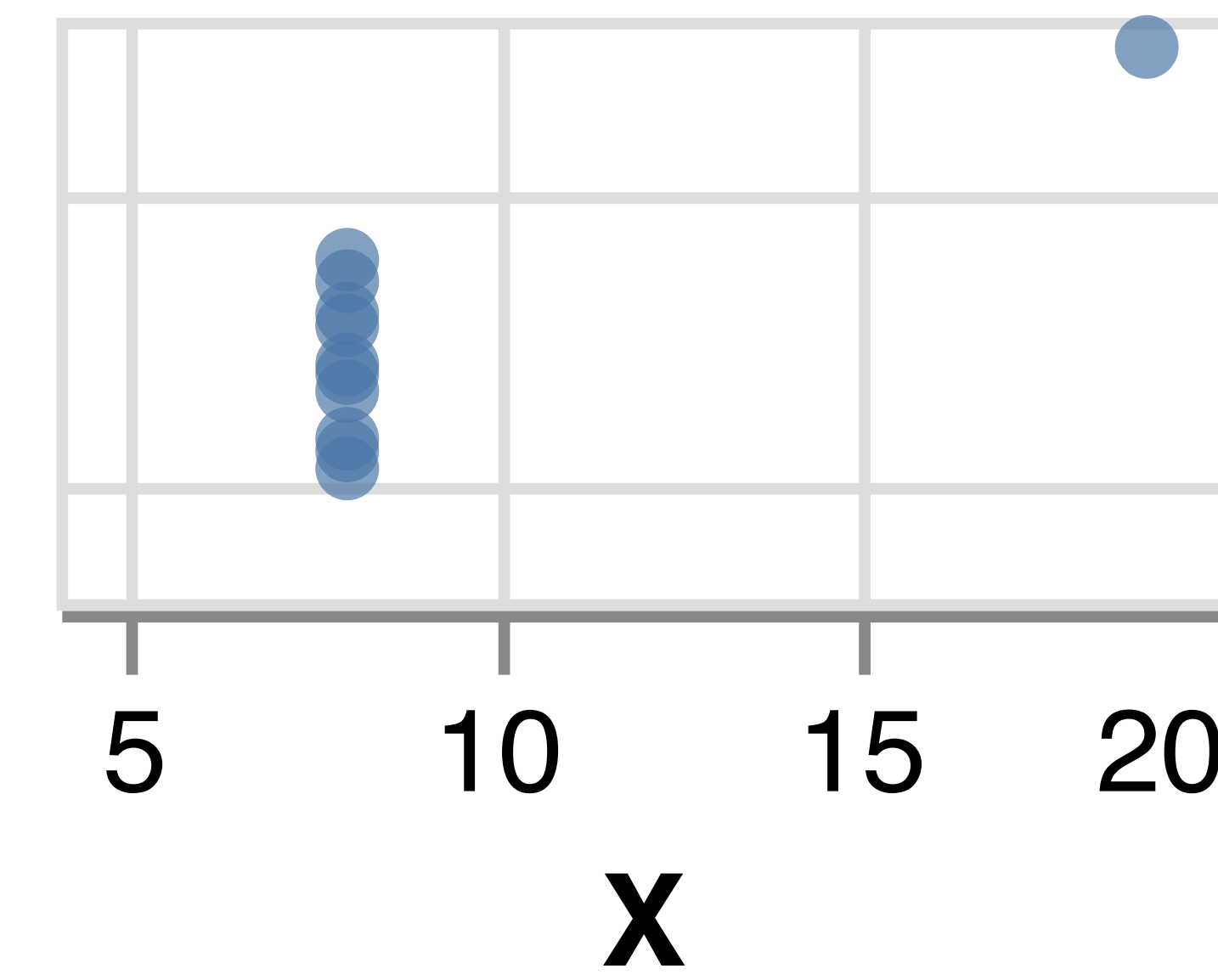
### Set B



### Set C



### Set D



# Wikipedia History Flow

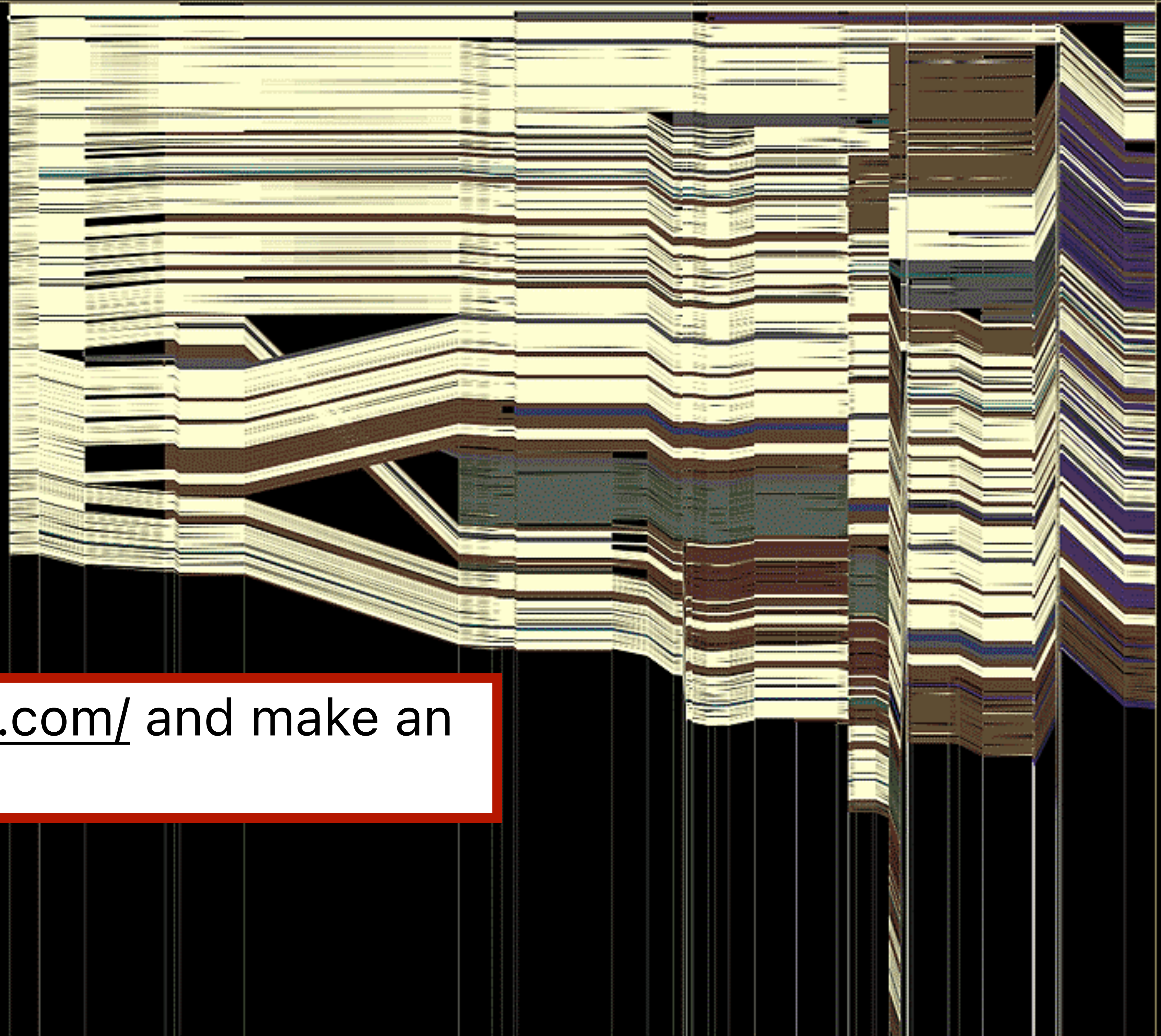
Height = amount of text

Color = author

What do you notice?

Visit <https://tryclassbuzz.com/> and make an account, then login.

Code: **wiki**





***Edit war!***

# The Value of Visualization

## **Record information**

Blueprints, photographs, seismographs, ...

## **Analyze** data to support reasoning (**exploratory visualization**)

Develop and assess hypotheses

Find patterns / Discover errors in data

Expand memory

## **Communicate** information to others (**explanatory visualization**)

Share and persuade

Collaborate and revise

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Gallop, Bay Horse "Daisy" [Muybridge]

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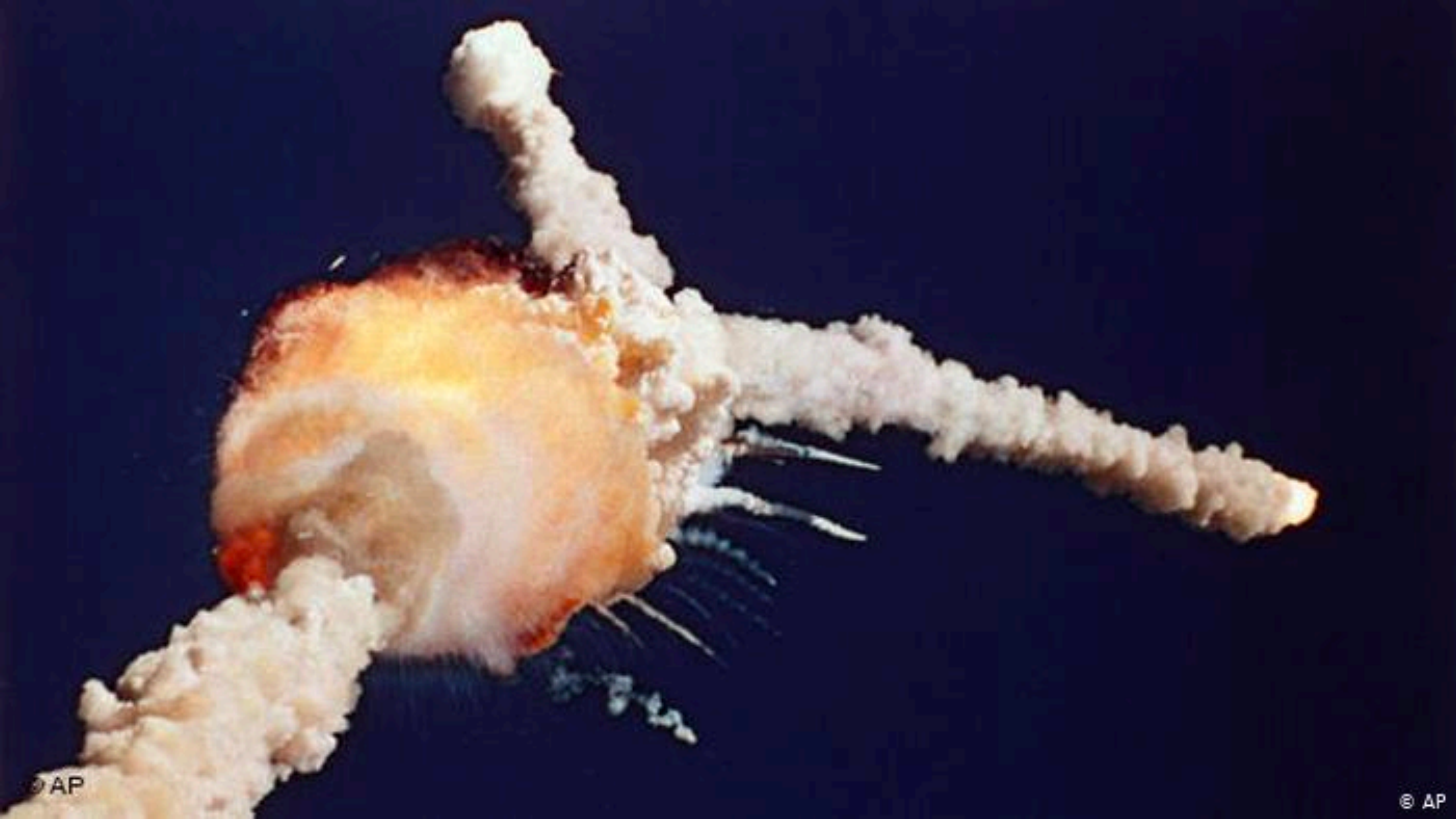
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© AP

© AP

HISTORY OF O-RING DAMAGE ON SRM FIELD JOINTS

1169  
 OCT 30, 1985  
 yr

AFT  
 61A LH Center Field\*\*  
 61A LH CENTER FIELD\*\*  
 51C LH Forward Field\*\*  
 51C RH Center Field (prim)\*\*\*  
 51C RH Center Field (sec)\*\*\*

SRM No.	Cross Sectional View			Top View		Clocking Location (deg)	
	Erosion Depth (in.)	Perimeter Affected (deg)	Nominal Dia. (in.)	Length Of Max Erosion (in.)	Total Heat Affected Length (in.)		
22A	None	None	0.280	None	None	36° -- 66°	
22A	NONE	NONE	0.280	NONE	NONE	338° - 18°	
15A	0.010	154.0	0.280	4.25	5.25	163	
15B	0.038	130.0	0.280	12.50	58.75	354	
15B	None	45.0	0.280	None	29.50	354	
41D RH Forward Field	13B	0.028	110.0	0.280	3.00	None	275
41C LH Aft Field*	11A	None	None	0.280	None	None	--
41B LH Forward Field	10A	0.040	217.0	0.280	3.00	14.50	351
STS-2 RH Aft Field	2B	0.053	116.0	0.280	--	--	90

July

\*Hot gas path detected in putty. Indication of heat on O-ring, but no damage.  
 \*\*Soot behind primary O-ring.  
 \*\*\*Soot behind primary O-ring, heat affected secondary O-ring.

Clocking location of leak check port - 0 deg.

OTHER SRM-15 FIELD JOINTS HAD NO BLOWHOLES IN PUTTY AND NO SOOT NEAR OR BEYOND THE PRIMARY O-RING.

SRM-22 FORWARD FIELD JOINT HAD PUTTY PATH TO PRIMARY O-RING, BUT NO O-RING EROSION AND NO SOOT BLOWBY. OTHER SRM-22 FIELD JOINTS HAD NO BLOWHOLES IN PUTTY.

BLOW BY HISTORY

SRM-15 WORST BLOW-BY

- o 2 CASE JOINTS (80°), (110°) ARC
- o MUCH WORSE VISUALLY THAN SRM-22

SRM 22 BLOW-BY

- o 2 CASE JOINTS (30-40°)

SRM-13A, 15, 16A, 18, 23A 24A

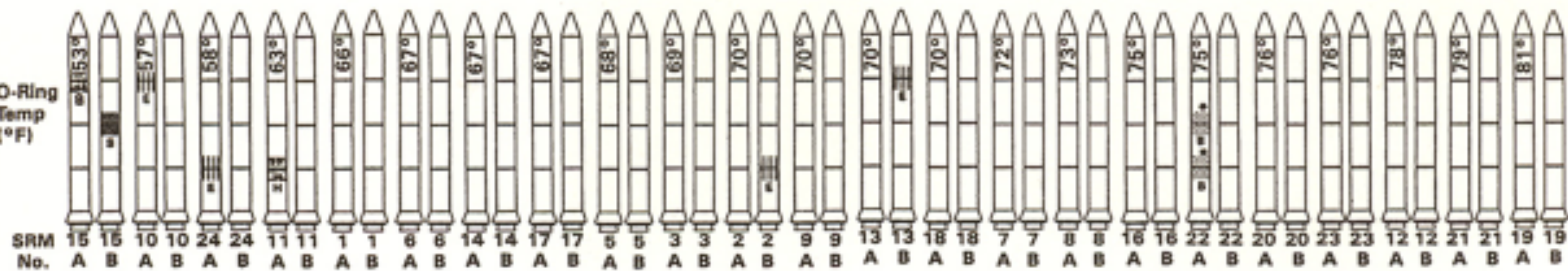
- o NOZZLE BLOW-BY

HISTORY OF O-RING TEMPERATURES (DEGREES - F)

MOTOR	MBT	AMB	O-RING	WIND
DM-4	68	36	47	10 MPH
DM-2	76	45	52	10 MPH
QM-3	72.5	40	48	10 MPH
QM-4	76	48	51	10 MPH
SRM-15	52	64	53	10 MPH
SRM-22	77	78	75	10 MPH
SRM-25	55	26	29	10 MPH
			27	25 MPH

2 of 13 pages of material faxed to NASA by Morton Thiokol [from Tufte 1997]

O-Ring  
Temp  
(°F)



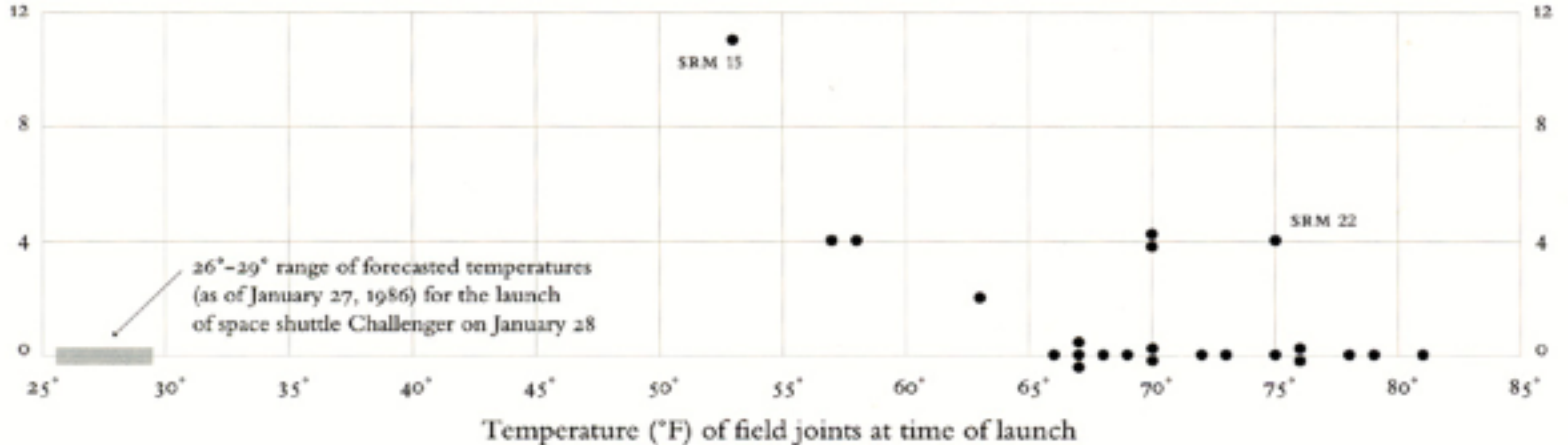
\* No Erosion

O-Ring  
Temp  
(°F)



# Chart of temperatures vs. O-ring damage [Tufte 97]

O-ring damage index, each launch



But wait! What is an appropriate "damage index"?  
Which temperatures, O-ring or outside air?

# Cholera Outbreak (remember DSC 10?)

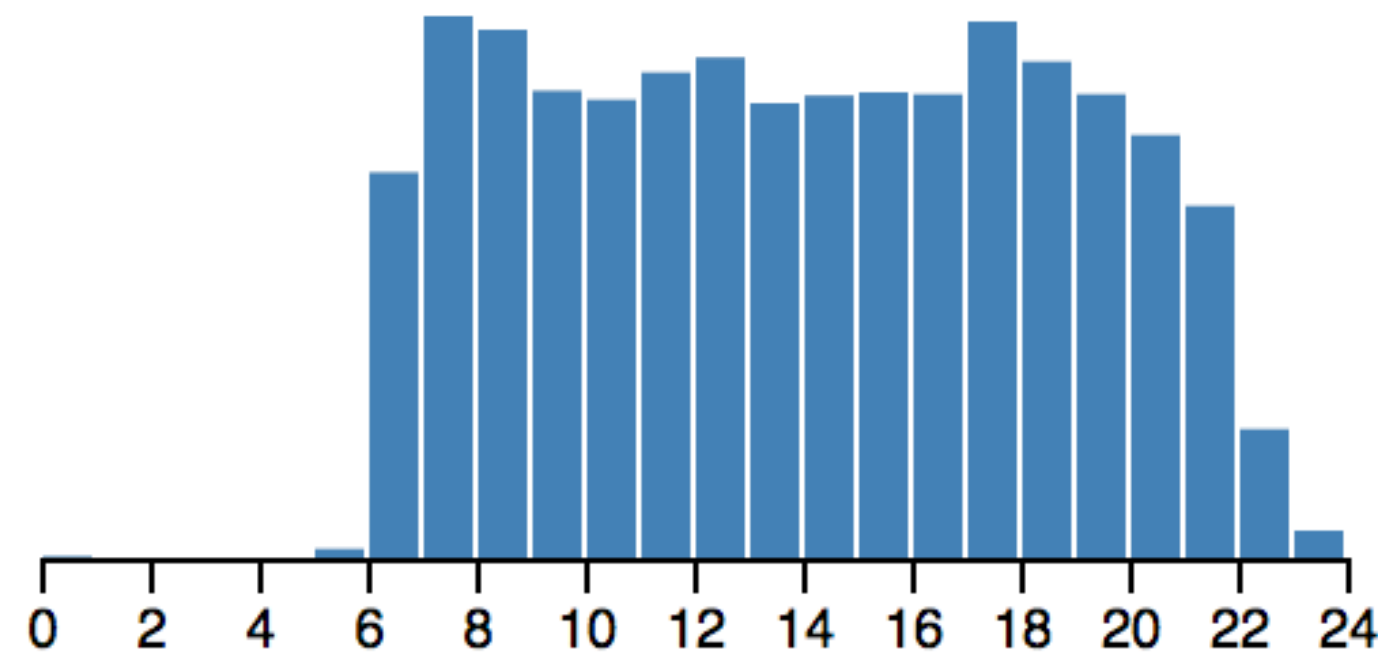


# Cholera Outbreak (remember DSC 10?)

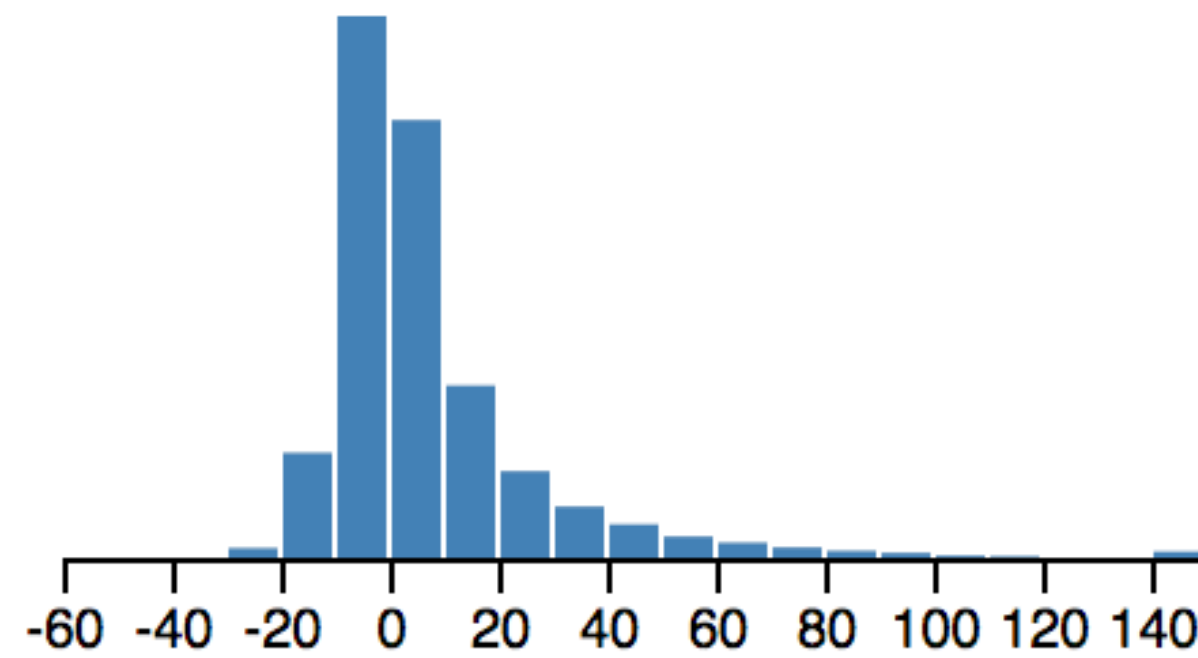


<https://square.github.io/crossfilter/>

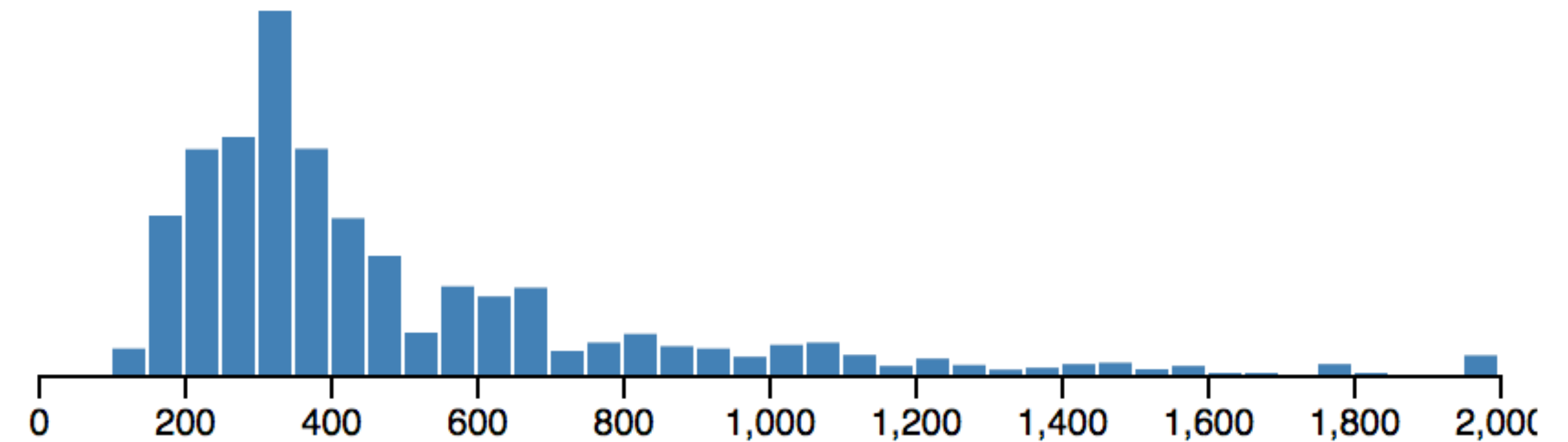
Time of Day



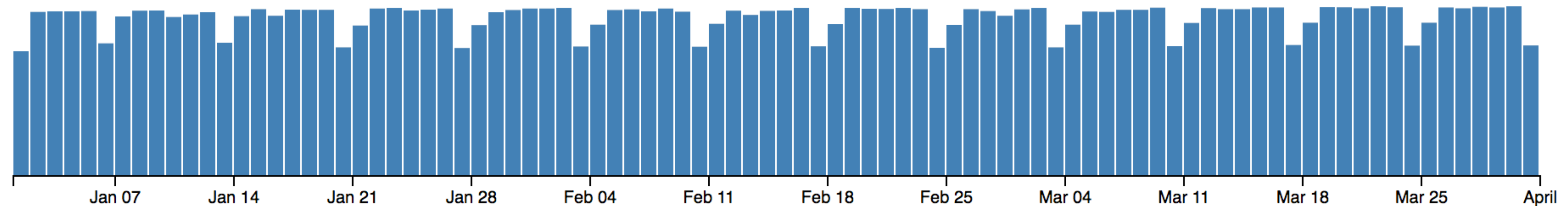
Arrival Delay (min.)



Distance (mi.)



Date



What insights do you notice?

[tryclassbuzz.com](http://tryclassbuzz.com): **crossfilter**

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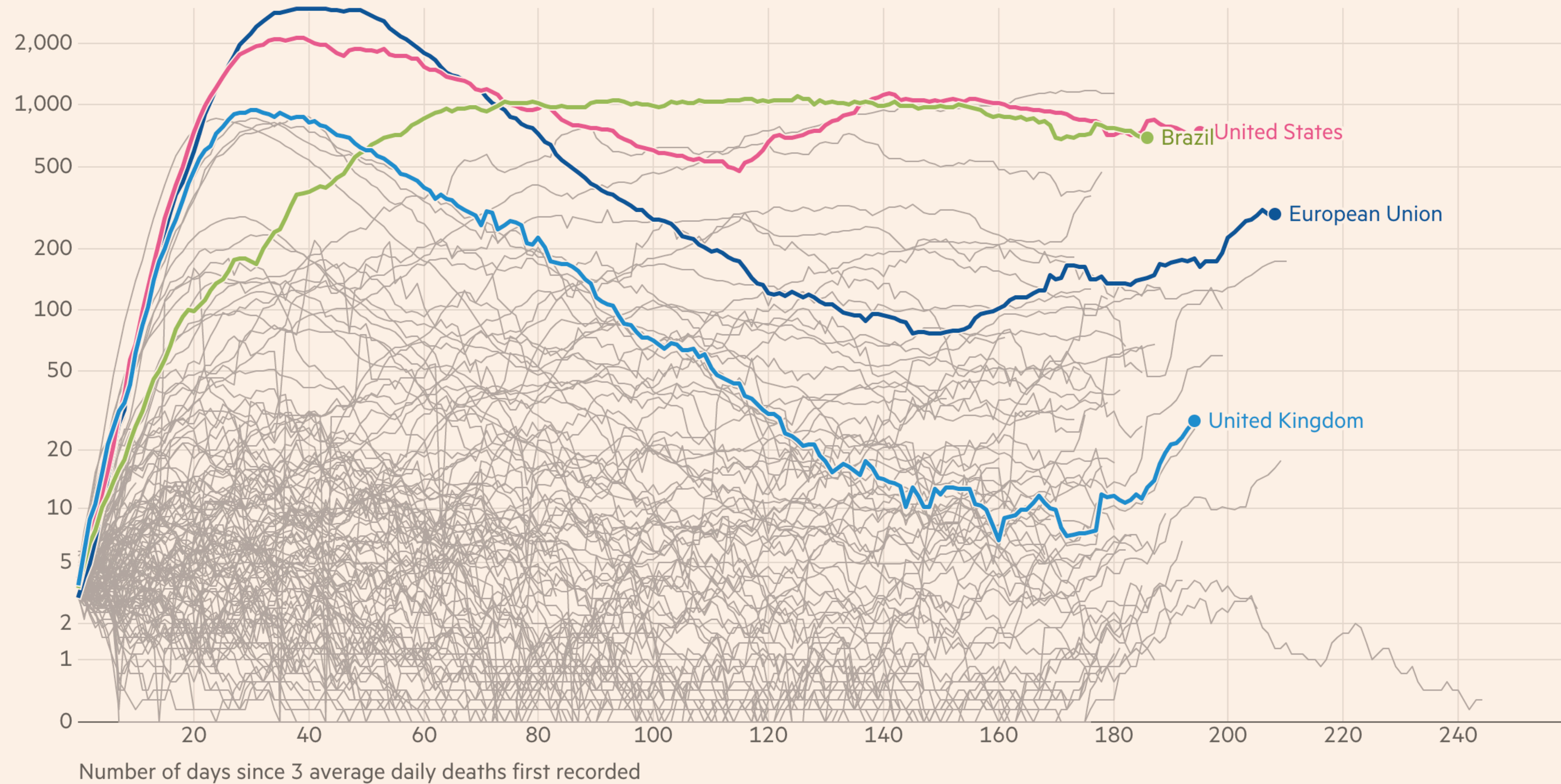
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# New deaths attributed to Covid-19 in European Union, United States, Brazil and United Kingdom

Seven-day rolling average of new deaths, by number of days since 3 average daily deaths first recorded



Source: Financial Times analysis of data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the Covid Tracking Project, the UK Dept of Health & Social Care and the Spanish Ministry of Health.  
Data updated September 25 2020 12.46pm BST. Interactive version: [ft.com/covid19](https://www.ft.com/covid19)

FINANCIAL TIMES

## Coronavirus Tracked John Burn-Murdoch & Financial Times

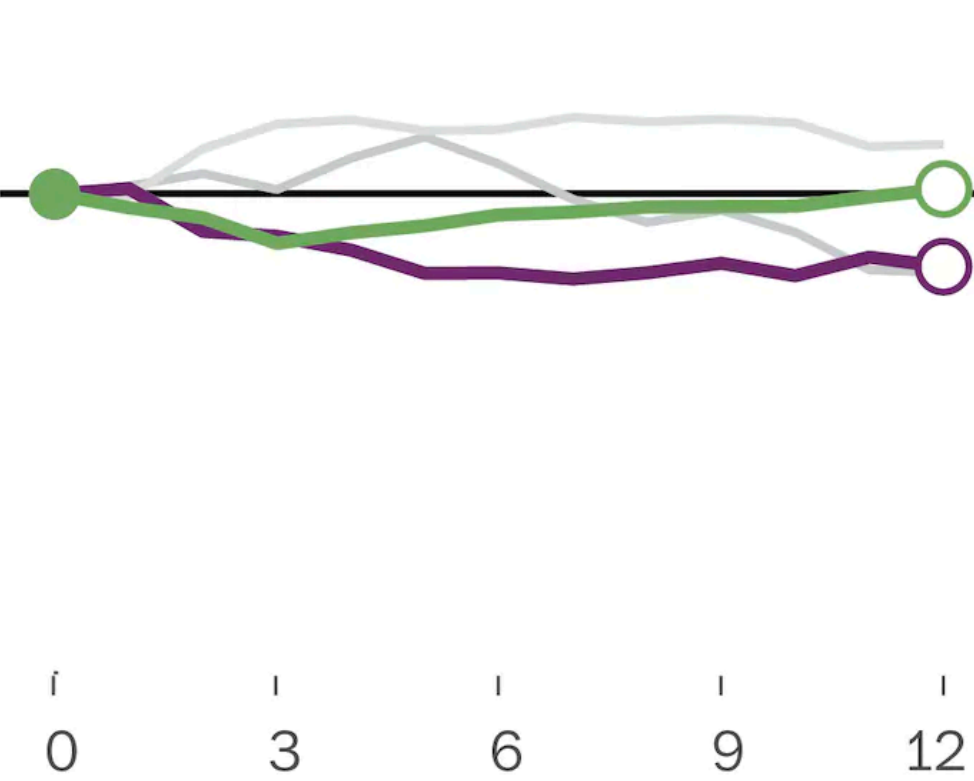
# The coronavirus crisis is different

Job growth (or loss) since each recession began, based on weekly earnings

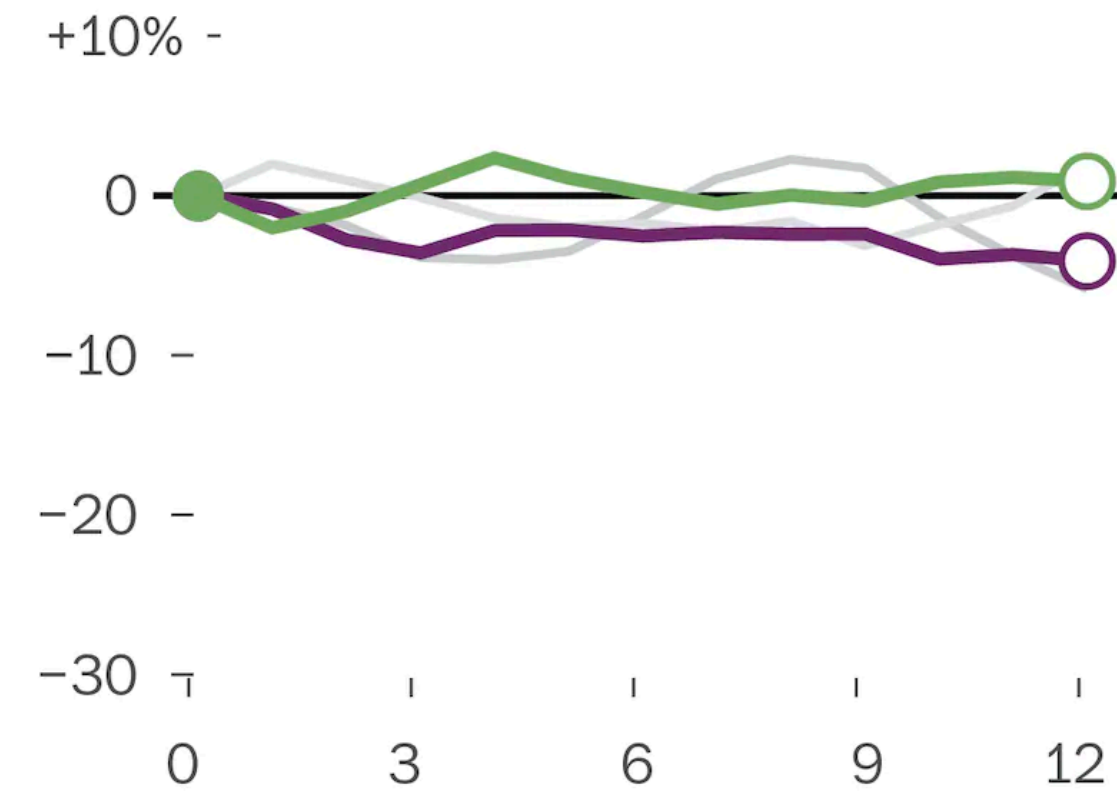
## 1990 recession



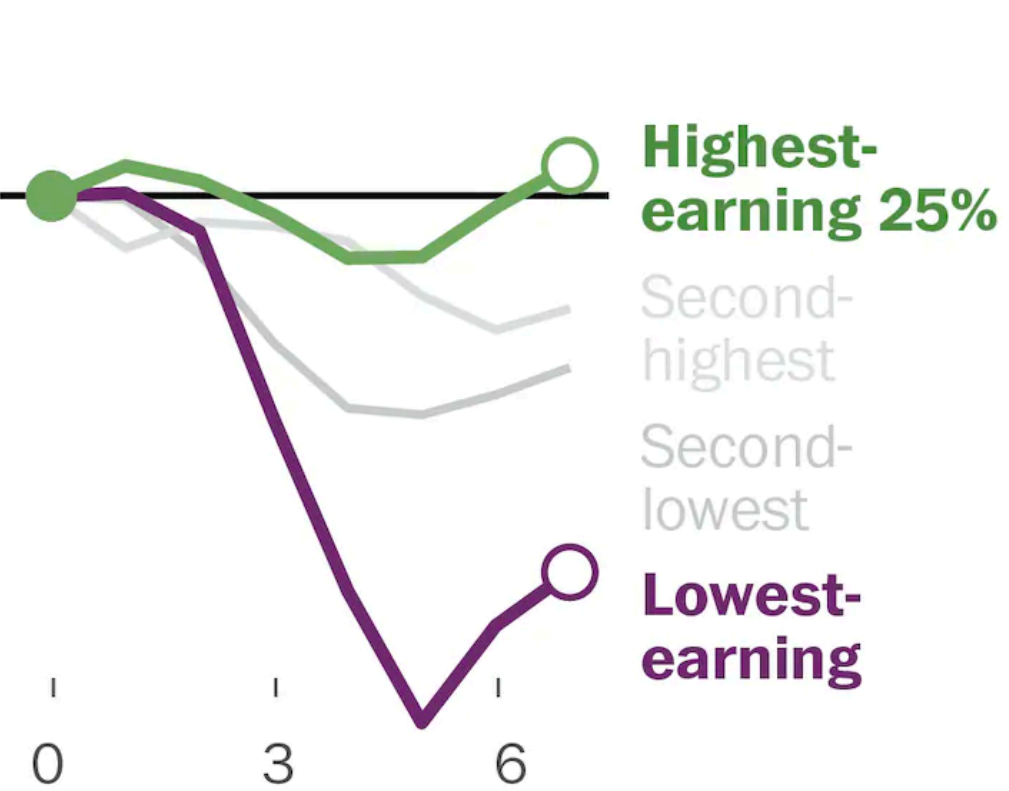
## 2001 recession



## 2008 recession



## Coronavirus crisis



Notes: Based on a three-month average to show the trend in volatile data.

Source: Labor Department via IPUMS, with methodology assistance from Ernie Tedeschi of Evercore ISI

THE WASHINGTON POST

**The Covid Economy**  
Washington Post

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# About this Course

# About Me

Assistant Teaching Professor, HDSI

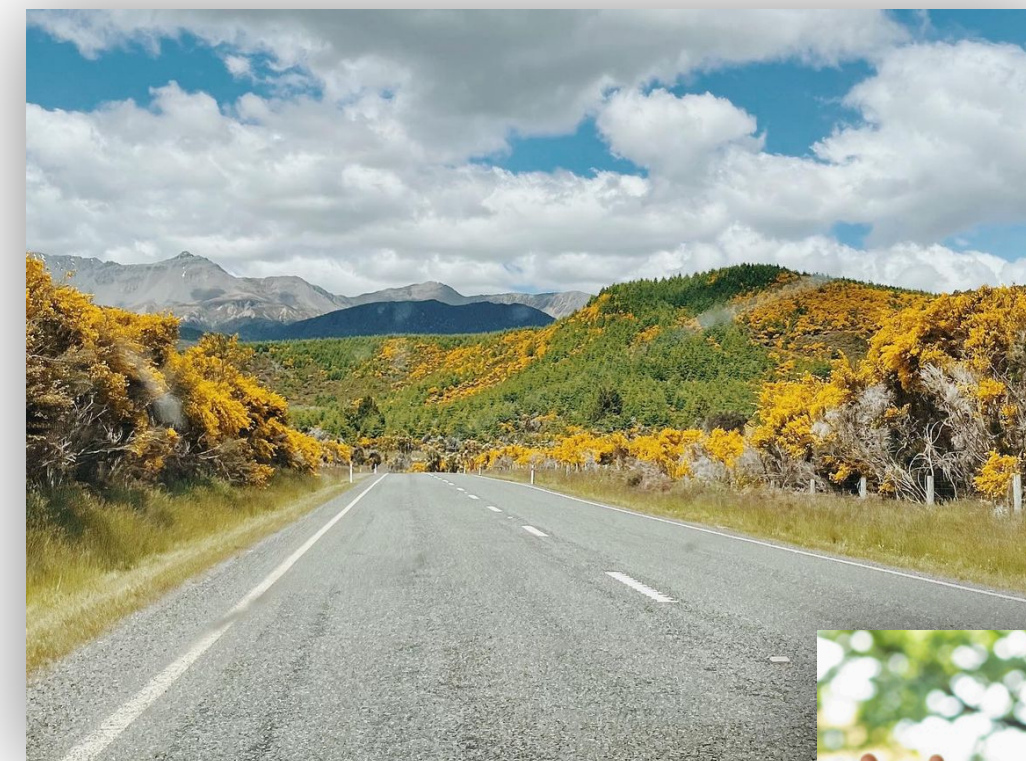
[lau.ucsd.edu](http://lau.ucsd.edu)

*Email: [lau@ucsd.edu](mailto:lau@ucsd.edu)*

Tools for visualizing programs  
(Pandas Tutor), curriculum design  
(Learning Data Science textbook)

## What makes me smile:

My wife, my dogs, traveling, food,  
students who put in their best effort!



# Course staff

*Instructor*

**Sam Lau**


*Teaching Assistants*

**Jacob Yim (Head TA)**

**Hemanth Bodala**

See [dsc106.com](http://dsc106.com)  
for our OH times

Questions about  
course logistics?  
Email Jacob!





# Learning Objectives

By the end of this course:

- Understand and apply key visualization techniques and theory.
- Design, evaluate, and critique visualization designs.
- Implement interactive data visualizations for the web using D3.js.
- Develop a substantial visualization project.

# This Quarter: Climate (with Prof Duncan Watson-Parris)



You will visualize climate data in Projects 3, and the Final Project

Duncan will give guest lecture to introduce datasets and background

For Final Project Showcase, we will invite outside guests (industry and SIO)

# Grade Breakdown

Component	Weight
Participation	8%
Labs	8%
Project 1	10%
Project 2	15%
Project 3	15%
Project Checkpoints	4%
Final Project	40%

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Project Checkpoints	4%
Final Project	40%

1% per week (2 lowest weeks dropped). 2 options:

1. Attend both lectures, discussion, and participate in the lecture activities.
2. Share and critique 1 viz example on Piazza.

See website for full details.

# Grade Breakdown

Component	Weight
Participation	8%
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Project Checkpoints	4%
Final Project	40%

8 labs, 1% per lab. (No drops)

# Grade Breakdown

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Project 1	10%
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Project 3	15%
Project Checkpoints	4%
Final Project	40%

3 open-ended projects

# Grade Breakdown

Component	Weight
Participation	8%
Labs	8%
Project 1	10%
Project 2	15%
Project 3	15%
Project Checkpoints	4%
Final Project	40%

Final project will span last 4 weeks of course

# Grade Breakdown

Component	Weight
Participation	8%
Labs	8%
Project 1	10%
Project 2	15%
Project 3	15%
Project Checkpoints	4%
Final Project	40%

6 slip days for quarter.

You can use 1 slip day for labs,  
2 for project deadlines

But NOT for the Final Project  
submission deadline

# Communication

Use Piazza for all communication (my email is super slammed these days)

Email Jacob, cc me for private questions related to course

Course website will stay up-to-date ([dsc106.com](http://dsc106.com))

# Where you're headed: Final Project

## Explorable Explanation

Initial **prototype** and **design reviews**

In-class demonstration **videos**

Submit and publish online

In Week 10, **Final Project Showcase**

See past projects at:  
[dsc-courses.github.io/dsc106-2025-sp/showcase](https://dsc-courses.github.io/dsc106-2025-sp/showcase)


Parkinsons and Typing Ability

matthewbudding.github.io/FinalProject-DSC106/

# The Effect of Parkinsons on Typing Ability

Investigating the impact of Parkinson's disease on dexterity and fine motor control through the visualization of typing.

Data Explore more



2025

**Eric Cheng**  
Designer

**Jerric Jiang**  
Scatter Plot/Script

**Omid Alamdar**  
Typing Speed/Video

**Matthew Budding**  
Statistics/Aggregate Keystroke

8:00 PM 3/11/2025

<https://matthewbudding.github.io/FinalProject-DSC106/>

snigdhapodugu.github.io/walking-simulation/



# Stepping Into Your Walking Journey

A PROJECT BY SNIGDHA PODUGU, DEEPAL DELEENA, VAIDEHI KARVE, AND ARYA VERMA

HOW DO YOU WALK?  
TRY IT YOURSELF!!!



30 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!

# 1-800-WLK-GOOD

very small disclaimer that contradicts everything else said in commercial that is stated very quietly and fast in the last 2 seconds of the commercial that would probably prevent your grandma from buying whatever this is if she could hear or see it

<https://snigdhapodugu.github.io/stepsync/>

# Lab 1: Introduction to the Web Platform

Lab 1 released, due Friday.

## Step 4: Add a photo

- 1 Create an `images` folder in the root of your repository
- 2 Find a photo of yourself (or anything else you want) and save it in the `images` folder
- 3 Add an `<img>` element to your HTML page, with the `src` attribute set to the path to your image file (`images/your-image-file-name.jpg`)
- 4 Add an `alt` attribute to the `<img>` element with a short description of the image as you would describe it to someone who cannot see it.

### Katie-test: Personal site and portfolio

Hi, I'm Katie. I'm a web developer and designer. I'm currently working on my personal site and portfolio. Check back soon for updates!

Lorem ipsum dolor, sit amet consectetur adipiscing elit. Ea quia aspernatur mollitia pariatur cupiditate inventore et? Voluptatum, iste praesentium corrupti culpa itaque, repudiandae at, porro veniam doloremque dolor dolorum perferendis.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur adipiscing elit. Minus libero commodi vel dolore consectetur molestiae eligendi, delectus veritatis blanditibus facilis vero nesciunt. Excepturi distinctio impedit odio hic consequatur in ipsum.



please enjoy an actual photo of my dog

Figure 5: Our page now has a photo!

# Project 1: Expository visualization

Create **one static visualization** for a dataset (see course website).

Pick a **guiding question**, use it to title your vis.

Design a **static visualization** for that question.

You are free to **use any tools** (inc. Python, Tableau, pen & paper).

**Deliverables** (upload via Gradescope; see Project 1 page)

Image of your visualization (PNG or JPG format)

Short description + design rationale ( $\leq 4$  paragraphs)

# Advice from past students

If you want to be ambitious, it's really easy to do that in this class! Try and create something you're proud of. It's worth it. :)

Go to OH and use AI!!

The rubric is there to guide you, but you won't get anything from this class if your main objective is to simply get all the points. Be creative and take risks with what you visualize.

Most common advice:

Just please start your labs and projects early because I feel like if I did, a lot of headache of doing stuff on the last day would be eliminated :)

**Questions?**