How to make clean charts that tell your story

JOUR 71003
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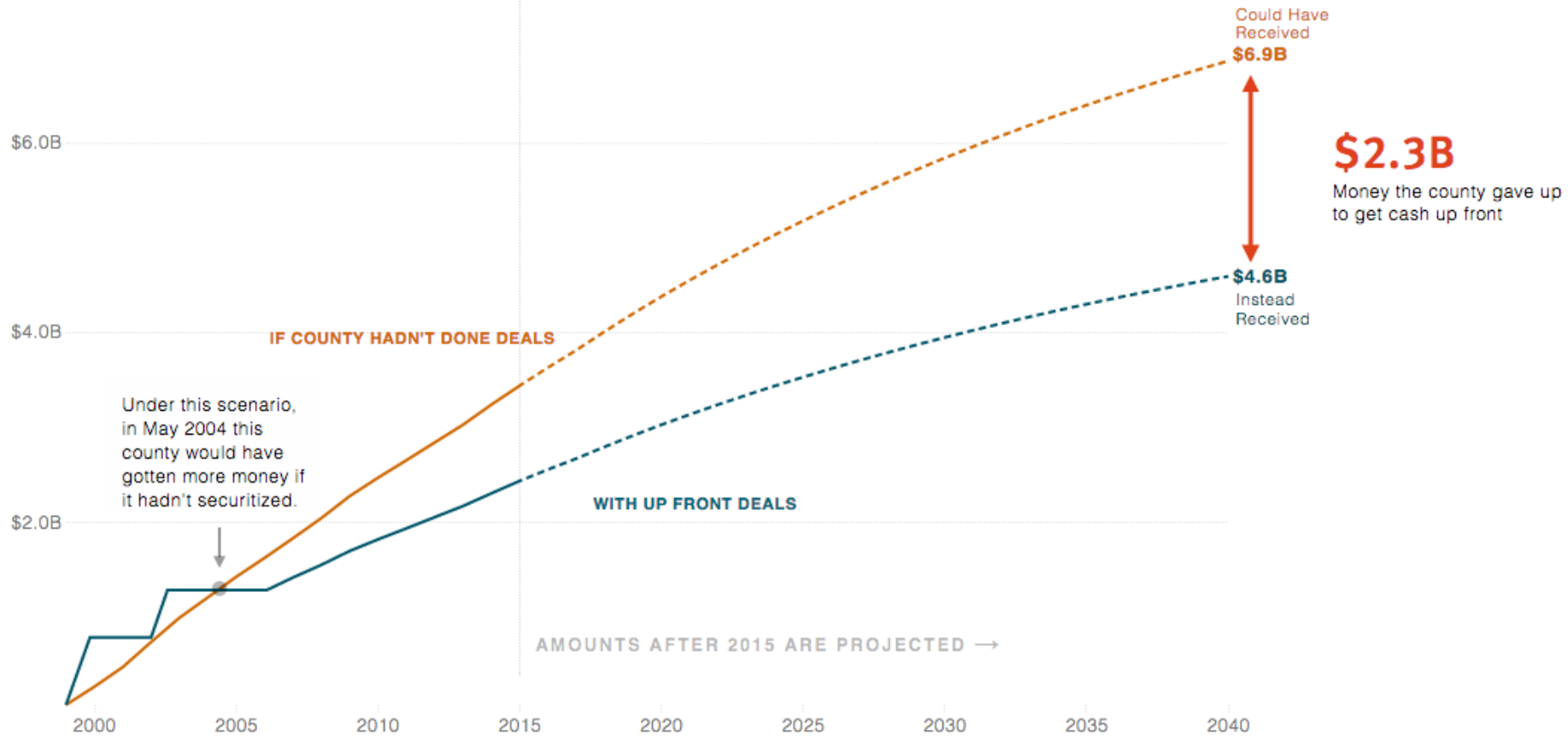# Y-axis: Make them natural

ex: 0,2,4,6,10
ex: 0,5,10,15,20

not: 1,5,9,13,17

Lines on a line chart

- If there are multiple lines, highlight one by coloring it differently. The others should be colored the same.
- No unnecessary icons or symbols on the lines.

Cumulative Money to City of New York

Could Have Received
$6.9B

$2.3B
Money the county gave up
to get cash up front

$4.6B
Instead
Received

$6.0B

IF COUNTY HADN'T DONE DEALS

$4.0B

Under this scenario,
in May 2004 this
county would have
gotten more money if
it hadn't securitized.

$2.0B

WITH UP FRONT DEALS

AMOUNTS AFTER 2015 ARE PROJECTED →

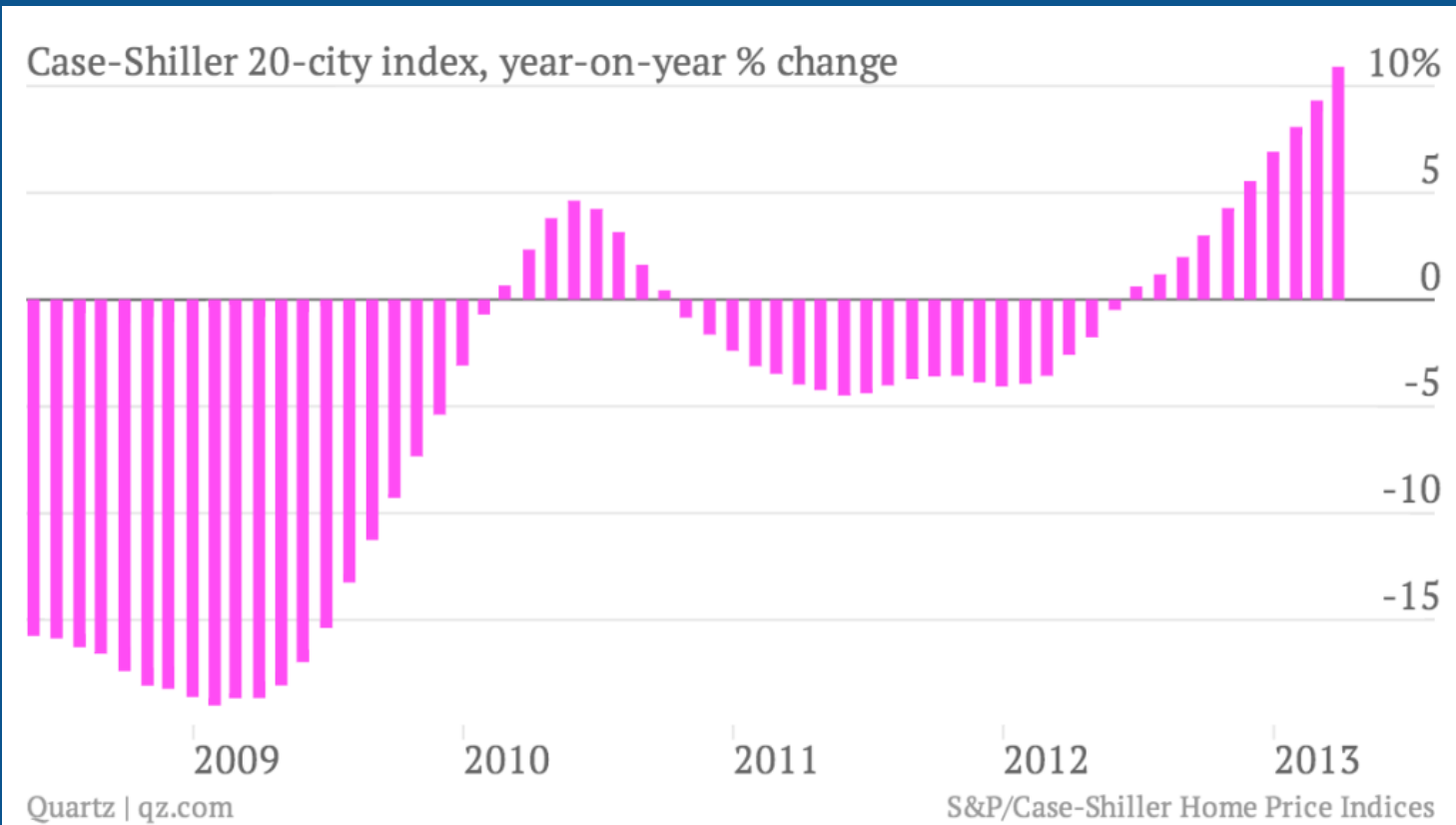2000   2005   2010   2015   2020   2025   2030   2035   2040

Remove
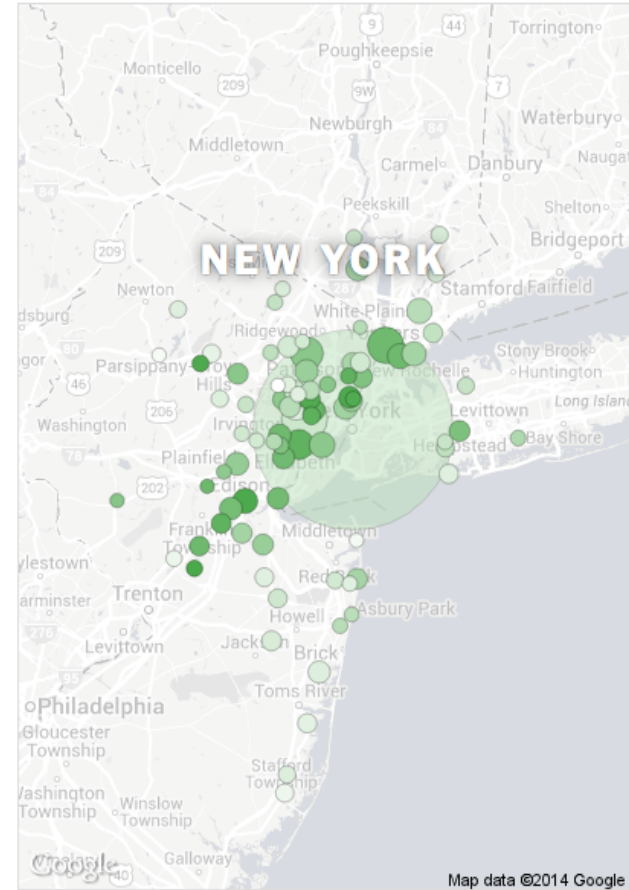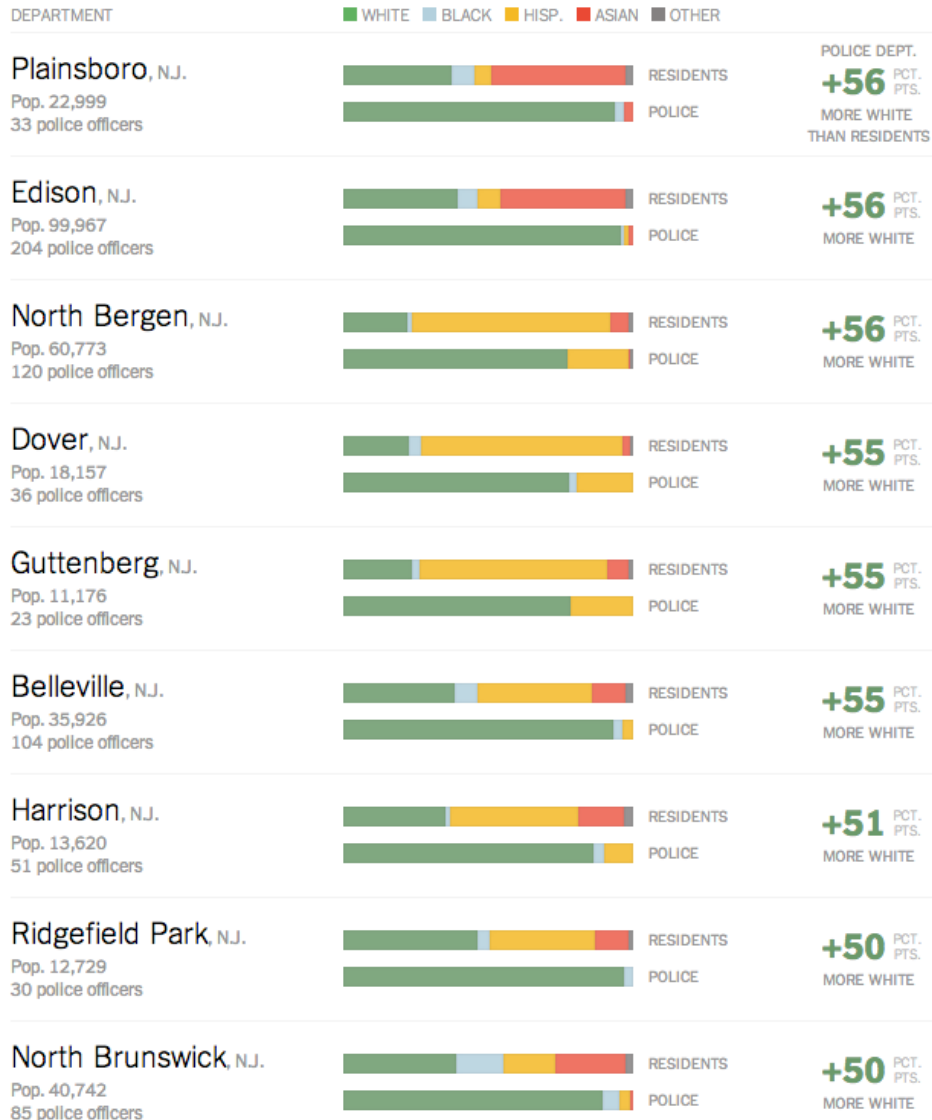## to improve
the **data tables** edition

Know your story

The best charts get straight to the point and make it easy for the eye to figure out your message.

Change in home prices in large U.S. cities

Case-Shiller 20-city index, year-on-year % change

Quartz | qz.com

S&P/Case-Shiller Home Price Indices

New York

New York City's police department is among a number of large departments where court-ordered mandates have led to more racial diversity. A federal judge ruled in 1978 that the city could not use its Civil Service exam to select new police recruits, leading to measures that increased the hiring of black and Hispanic officers. In some New Jersey towns, like Plainsboro, Dover and Edison, Hispanics and Asians are significantly underrepresented.
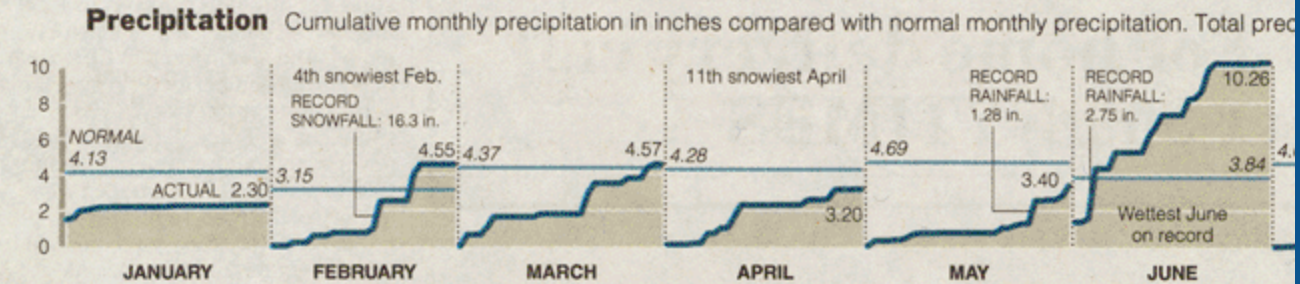
DEPARTMENT	■ WHITE ■ BLACK ■ HISP. ■ ASIAN ■ OTHER		POLICE DEPT.

Plainsboro, N.J.
Pop. 22,999
33 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+56 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE THAN RESIDENTS

Edison, N.J.
Pop. 99,967
204 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+56 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

North Bergen, N.J.
Pop. 60,773
120 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+56 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

Dover, N.J.
Pop. 18,157
36 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+55 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

Guttenberg, N.J.
Pop. 11,176
23 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+55 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

Belleville, N.J.
Pop. 35,926
104 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+55 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

Harrison, N.J.
Pop. 13,620
51 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+51 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

Ridgefield Park, N.J.
Pop. 12,729
30 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+50 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

North Brunswick, N.J.
Pop. 40,742
85 police officers
RESIDENTS
POLICE
+50 PCT. PTS.
MORE WHITE

Circles are scaled according to the size of the police department.

Map data ©2014 Google

Signal through the noise

Charts are a way to allow readers to quickly parse dense information.

New York City's Weather in 2003

JANUARY   FEBRUARY   MARCH   APRIL   MAY   JUNE

Temperature

Bars represent range between the daily high and low. Average temperature for the year was 53.4°, making 2003 the coldest year since 1978.

110°
100°
90°
80°
70°
60°
50°
40°
30°
20°
10°
0°
-10°
-20°

TIED RECORD LOW: 11°

RECORD HIGH

NORMAL RANGE

RECORD LOW

Precipitation

Cumulative monthly precipitation in inches compared with normal monthly precipitation. Total prec

10
8
6
4
2
0

NORMAL 4.13

ACTUAL 2.30

4th snowiest Feb.
RECORD SNOWFALL: 16.3 in.

3.15

4.55

4.37

11th snowiest April

4.57

4.28

RECORD RAINFALL: 1.28 in.

4.69

3.40

RECORD RAINFALL: 2.75 in.

10.26

3.84

Wettest June on record

3.20

JANUARY   FEBRUARY   MARCH   APRIL   MAY   JUNE
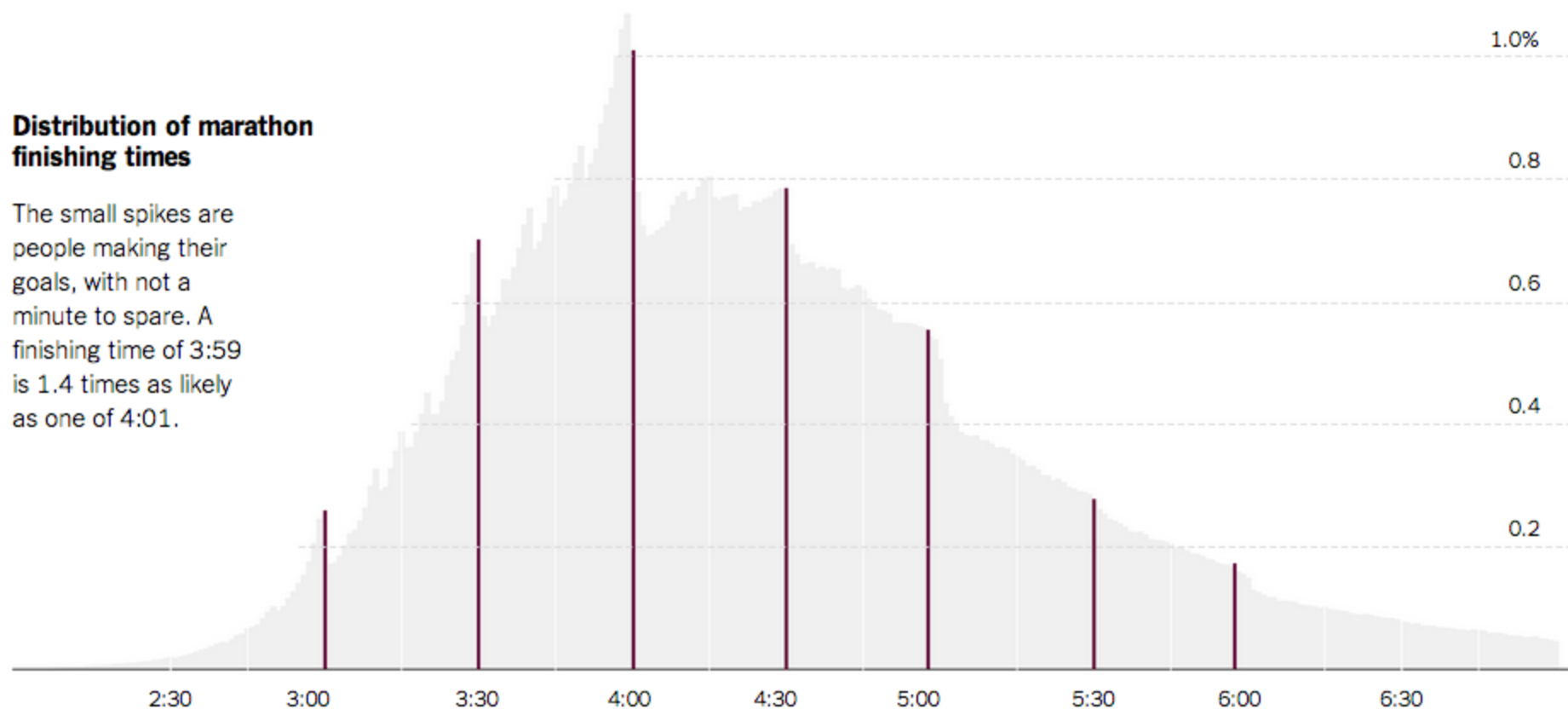
Arbitrary goals, like round numbers, can be motivating – just ask 9 million marathoners.

Distribution of marathon finishing times

The small spikes are people making their goals, with not a minute to spare. A finishing time of 3:59 is 1.4 times as likely as one of 4:01.

1.0%

0.8

0.6

0.4

0.2

2:30   3:00   3:30   4:00   4:30   5:00   5:30   6:00   6:30

Based on data from Eric Allen, USC, Patricia Dechow, U.C. Berkeley, Devin Pope and George Wu, University of Chicago.