

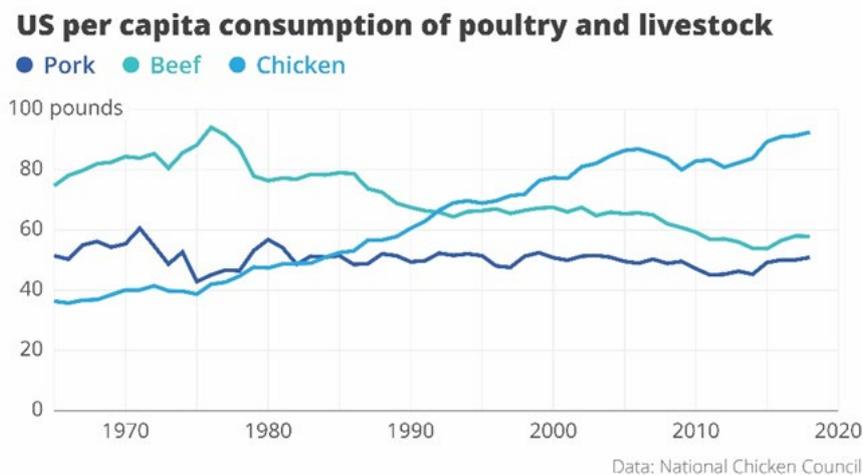
## A POWERFUL CHART TELLS A STORY

A powerful chart has a clear message. It should be short and meaningful, and obvious in the blink of an eye. If there's only one thing our audience remembers at the end of the day, this should be it.

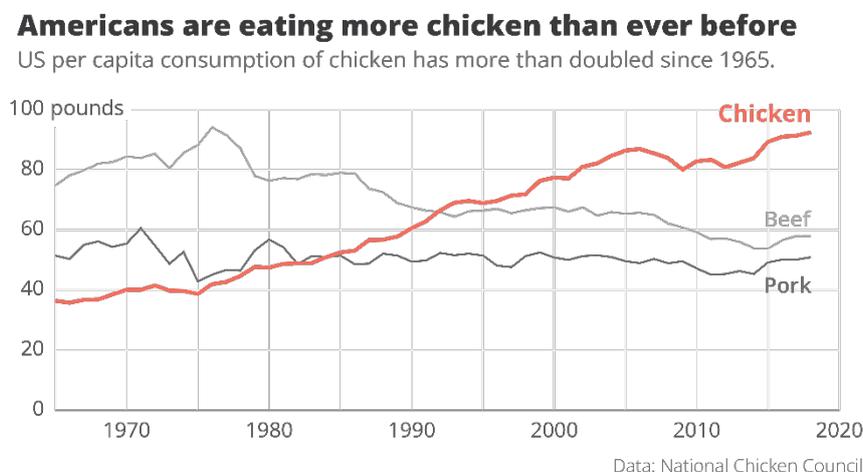
### Answering the 'so what' question

A visual without a clear key message might show the data, but it doesn't show what's interesting, surprising or noteworthy about the data. It leaves our audience guessing, they have to do all of the thinking work. Ideally, we want to create a visual that helps them to quickly see what's important. A visual that not only answers the 'what' question, but more importantly also the 'so what' question.

Here's one of my favourite examples to illustrate the importance of visual storytelling. This chart shows the evolution of meat consumption in the US since the 1960s. By itself, this chart is pretty clear. It shows us the data, in a way that is easy to understand. It answers the 'what' question. The design is satisfactory, with pleasing colours and good readability. But can it be improved?



Here is an attempt at a rework. Even though we're looking at exactly the same data - we wouldn't want to lie to our audience! - the message in this new visual is loud and clear. It's right there in the title: Americans are eating more chicken than ever before!



## The power of data visualization at work

Two simple changes turned the original 'what' visual into this super-clear 'so what' visual.

- First of all, clever colour choices: the line that interests us – the one for chicken consumption – gets a bright orange colour, the other two become grey. They're still there, but pushed a bit to the background.
- Secondly, clever text: the original title was very factual - 'US per capita consumption of poultry and livestock'. All the thinking work is left for the reader. But what if we simply tell them the interesting part? The new title 'Americans are eating more chicken than ever before' is still 100% true, but now it tells us why this visual is actually quite surprising.

These two small but impactful changes turned the original visual, which simply shows the data, into a great visual that actually tells a story. For me, that's the real power of data visualization at work.

If you want to know more about visualizing data in the right way, you can check out the other videos in this series. Or I invite you to read my book, [Powerful Charts](#), that will give you actionable insights and practical guidelines to create data visuals that truly engage and inspire your audience.