

1001 common problems when submitting a paper (and how to avoid them)

The point of view of the Editor

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Editor:

Frontiers Group (MacMillan)

Associate Editor:

Ticks and Tick-borne Diseases

Parasitology Research

Medical and Veterinary Entomology

Reviewer:

PLoS ONE

Journal of Medical Entomology

Veterinary Parasitology

What I want to transmit

They are no tricks...if your data are solid rock

But they are some rules that authors tend to ignore and that improve
the "enjoyment" of editors and reviewers
(happy editors and reviewers are necessary to publish papers)

Golden rule #0

Adhere to the rules of the journal

Seriously, adhere to the rules of the journal, or your paper will be rejected without circulation to the reviewers

The target journal

Write always with a target journal in mind

The target parts of a paper by an average reader (with scientific background)

- The title plus the abstract
- The charts and figures
- The first and last paragraph of the Discussion

Golden rule #1

The Editor assesses your paper *after* reading it, never *before*

If the Editor can understand your paper, 50% of the work
has been done

Golden rule #2

The Abstract is prepared after the paper is ready and you should NOT include literal sentences from Methods, Results or Discussion

The reader will decide whether to continue reading after the abstract

The Editors *hate* to read the same sentences in the abstract (copy/paste) because it points to a laziness in preparing the paper and a lack of creativity

The Cover Letter

- The Editor do not wants to read how great he/she is
- Explain what you did and why
- Explain why you paper should be published
- Explain why your approach is different and how it contributes to the field of research
- Avoid wordy sentences and put things clear

Importance of a cover letter

November 26, 2002

Editor
Nature Genetics
345 Park Avenue South, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10010-1707
USA

Dear Editor,

It is not clear why a cover letter is required except to fulfill the silly British preoccupation with letterhead and other emblems of status.

Please accept my correspondence.

Sincerely,

The introduction

- They are potential readers who are not experts in your field, but WANT to read your paper
- Focus the problem in simple terms (avoid "encyclopedic approaches" in the introduction)
- Why your approach is different?
- What you did? Please avoid dozens of references in the Introduction, just the necessary to focus the issue

The Introduction

- If the reader is lost in the second paragraph will stop to read
- If the Editor is lost in the second paragraph will begin to consider negatively your paper
- They are not “nuts readers”, but you wrote poorly

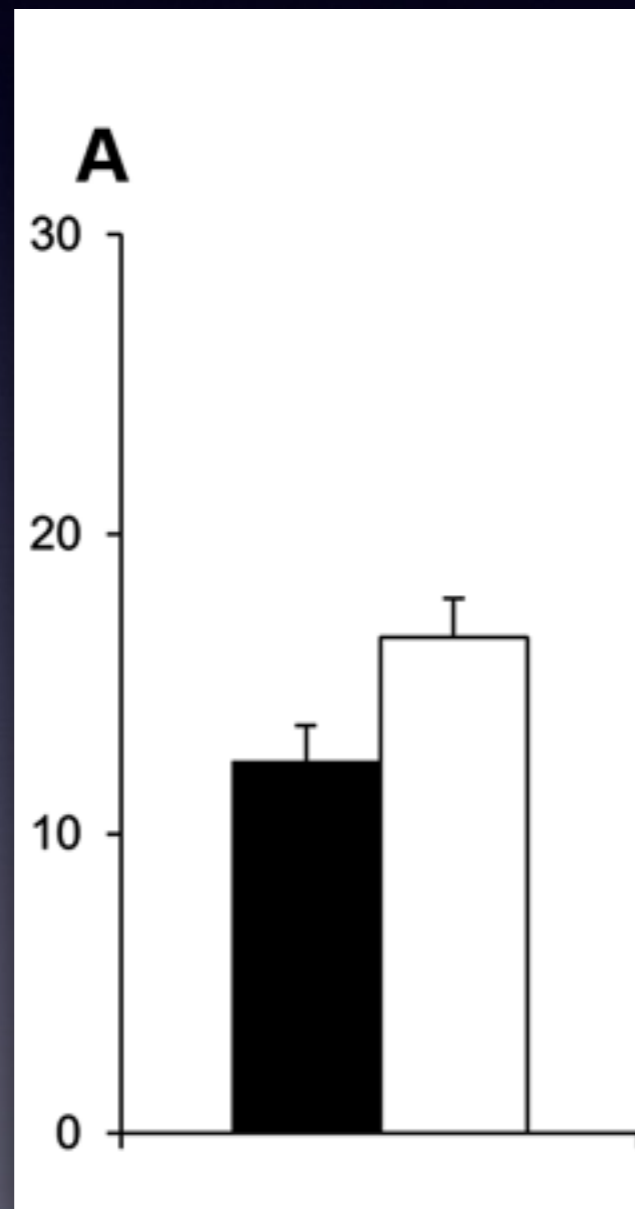
The Results

- Results must to be succinct
- Results are sometimes raw (and rough)
- Because tables and figures exist to help you
- *Never* repeat in the text what can be read in tables or figures (but prepare good tables and readable charts)

The Charts

- I am sorry, but Excel is not adequate in preparing charts for publication
- By the way, *every time* a picture is included in PowerPoint it is scaled at 72 dpi (but the journals request a minimum of 300 dpi)
- Oh, yes, you should have some expertise in programming computer charts

The Charts (the headache of reviewers)



What is missing in this chart?

Names of axes

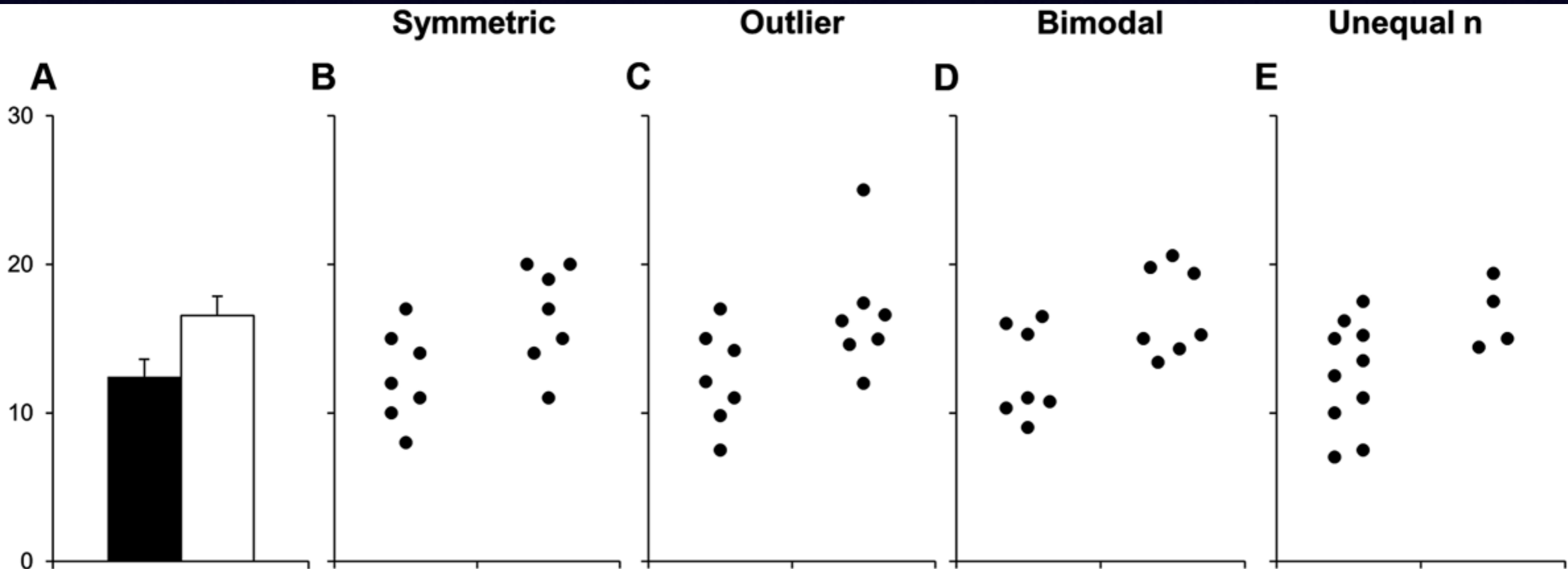
References for axis X

A chart must to be self-readable and eye catching

Are standard histograms adequate for today's science?

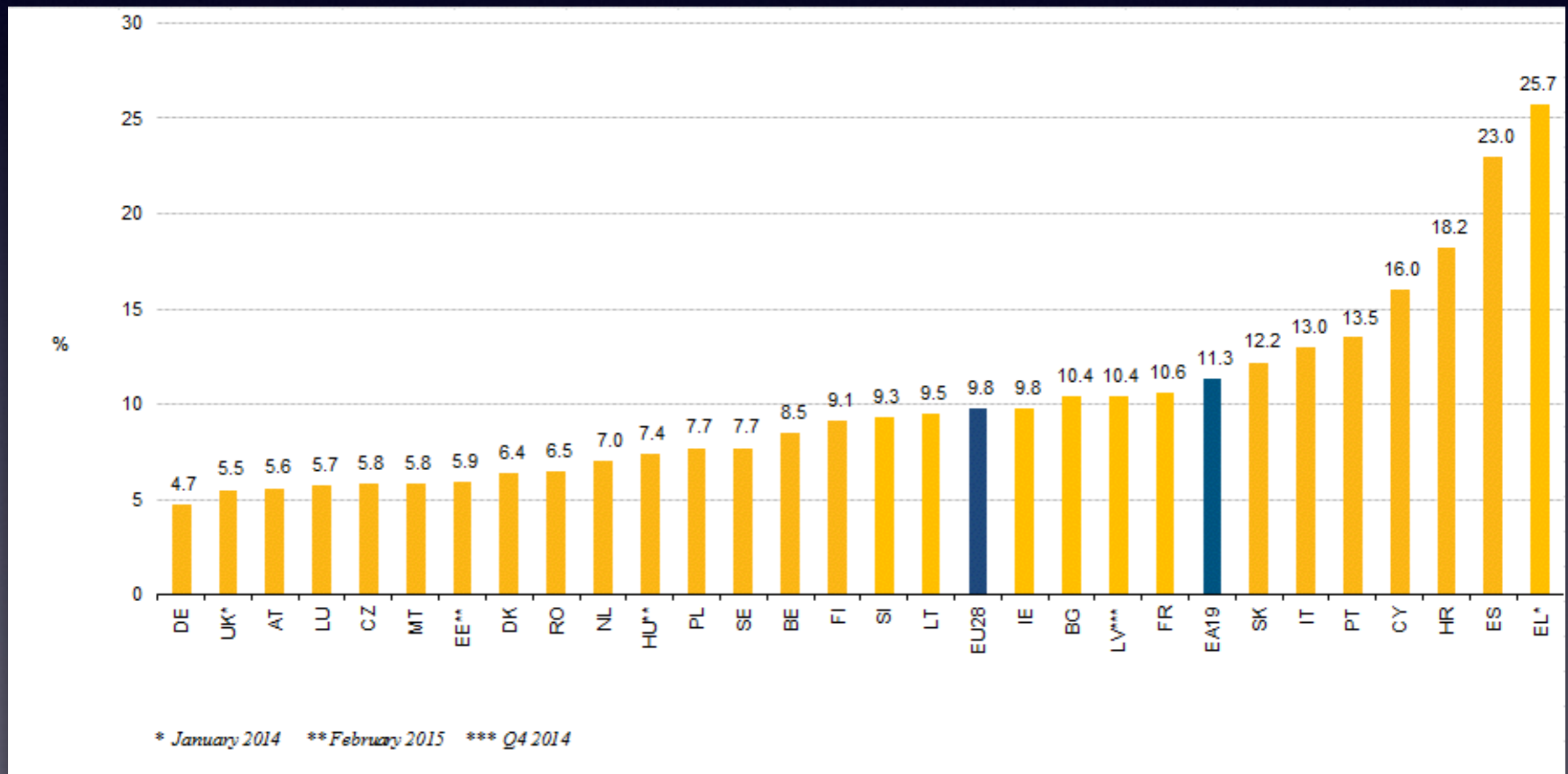
The Charts

(the headache of reviewers)



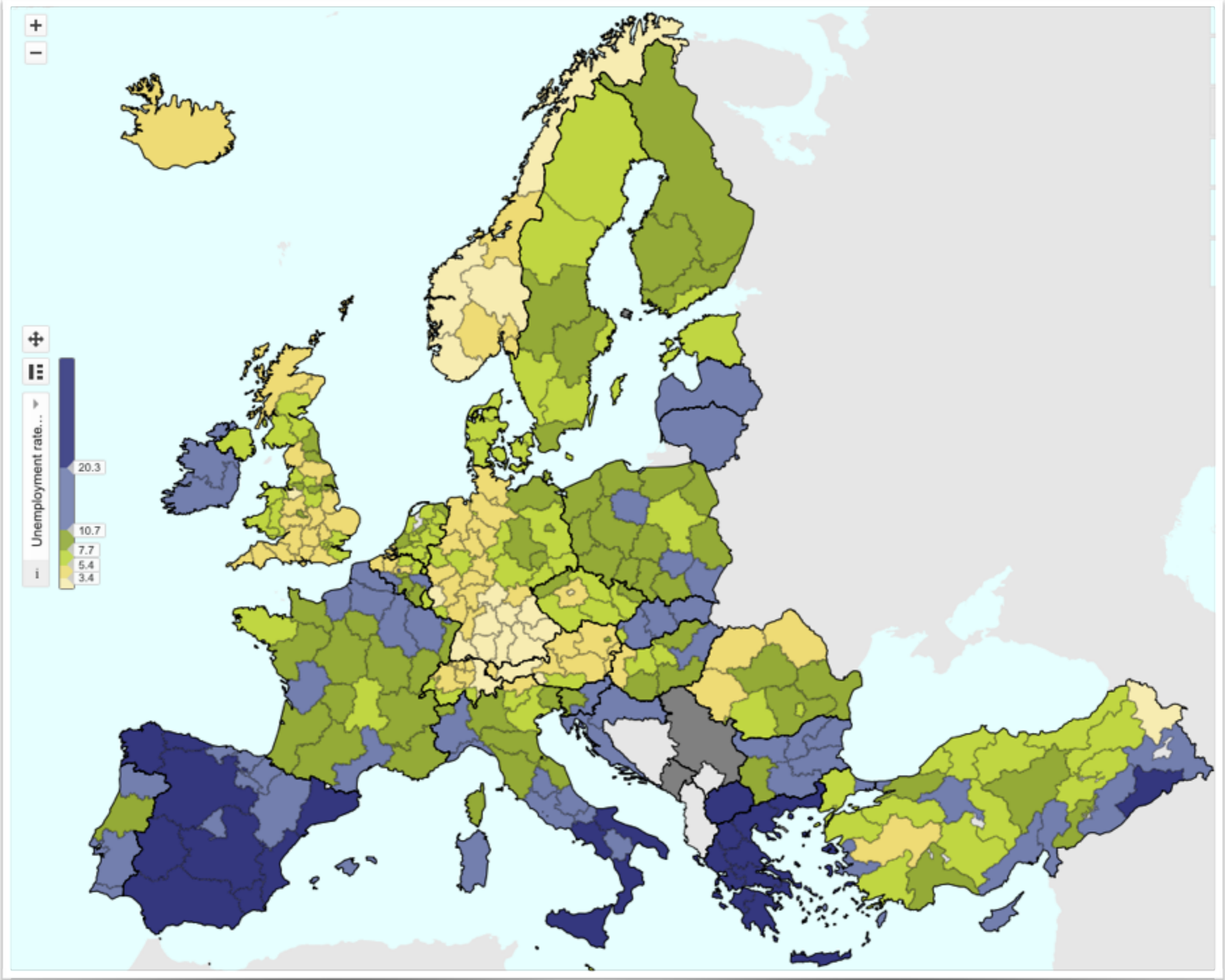
The Charts

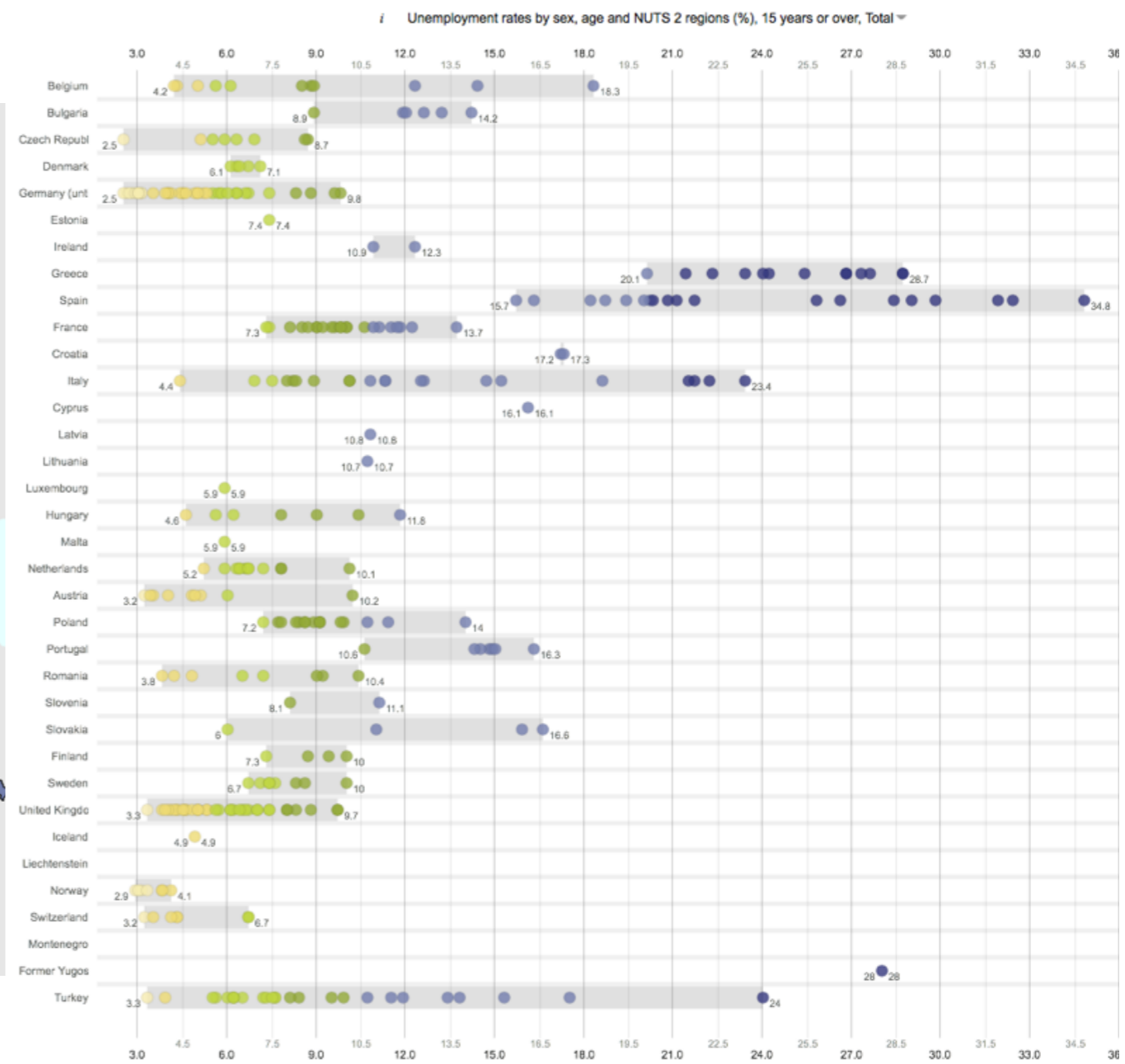
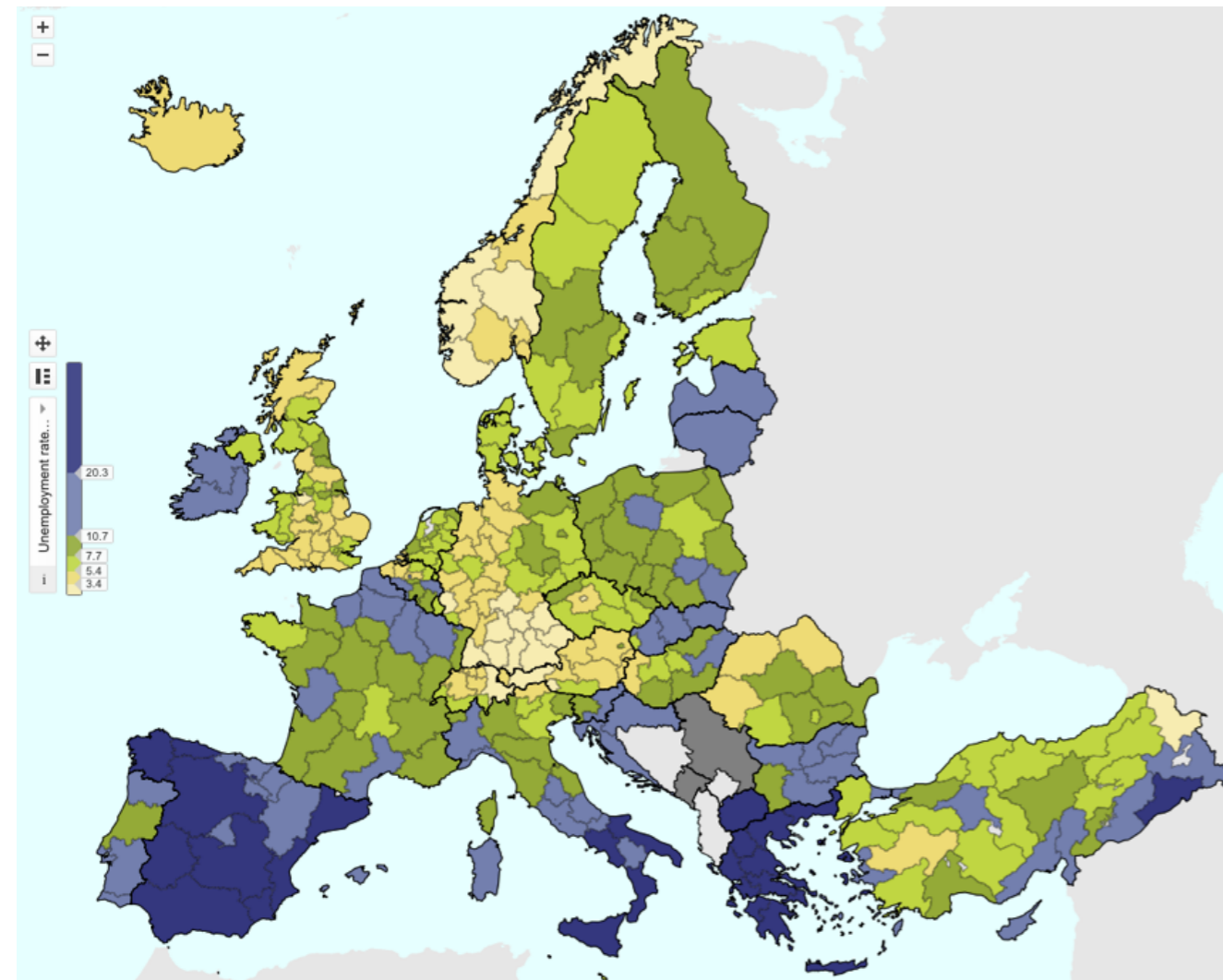
Unemployment rates in Europe (data and charts by Eurostats, not mine!)



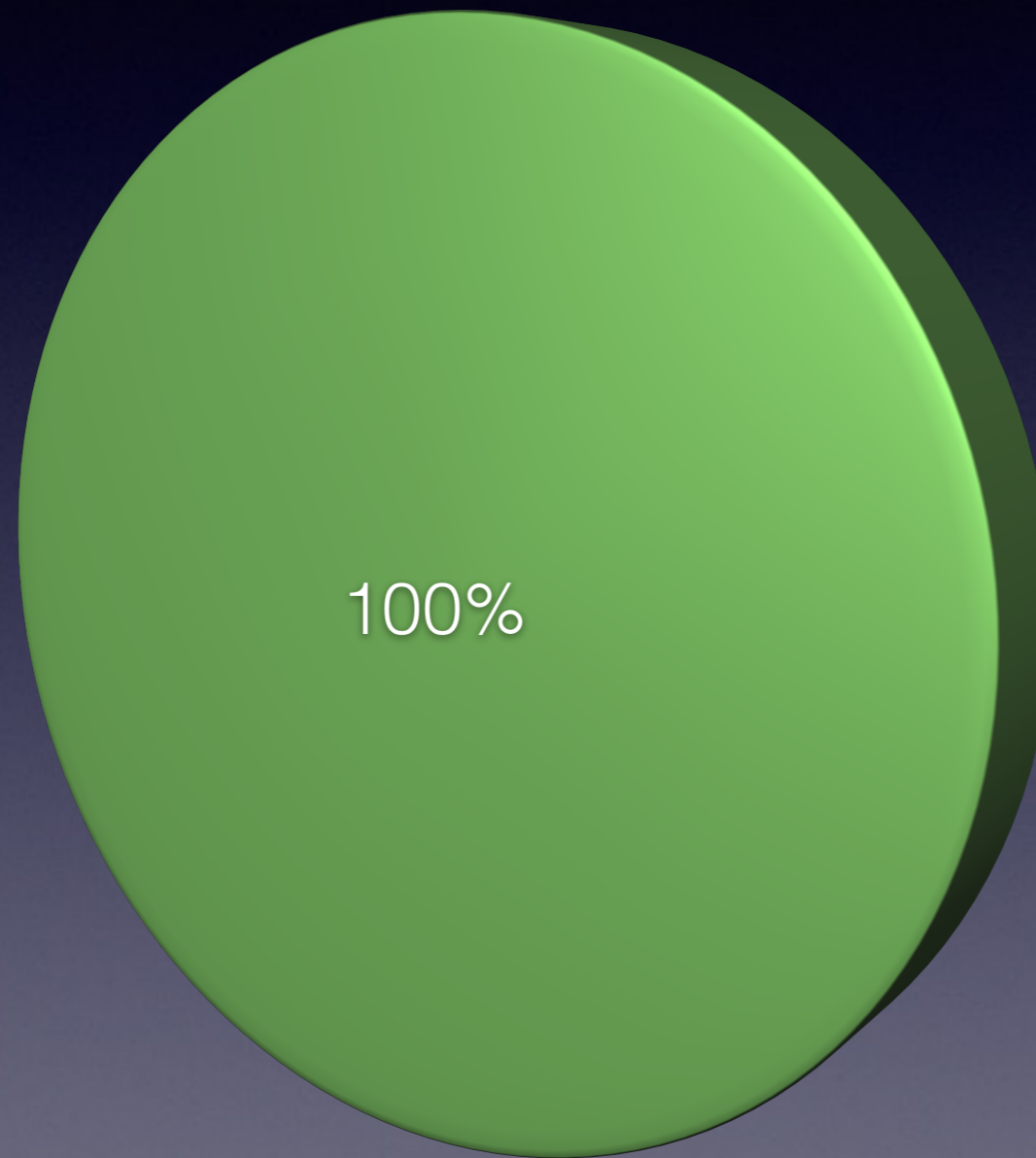
i Unemployment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (%), 15 years or over, Total







How many times is it adequate to use 3D charts?



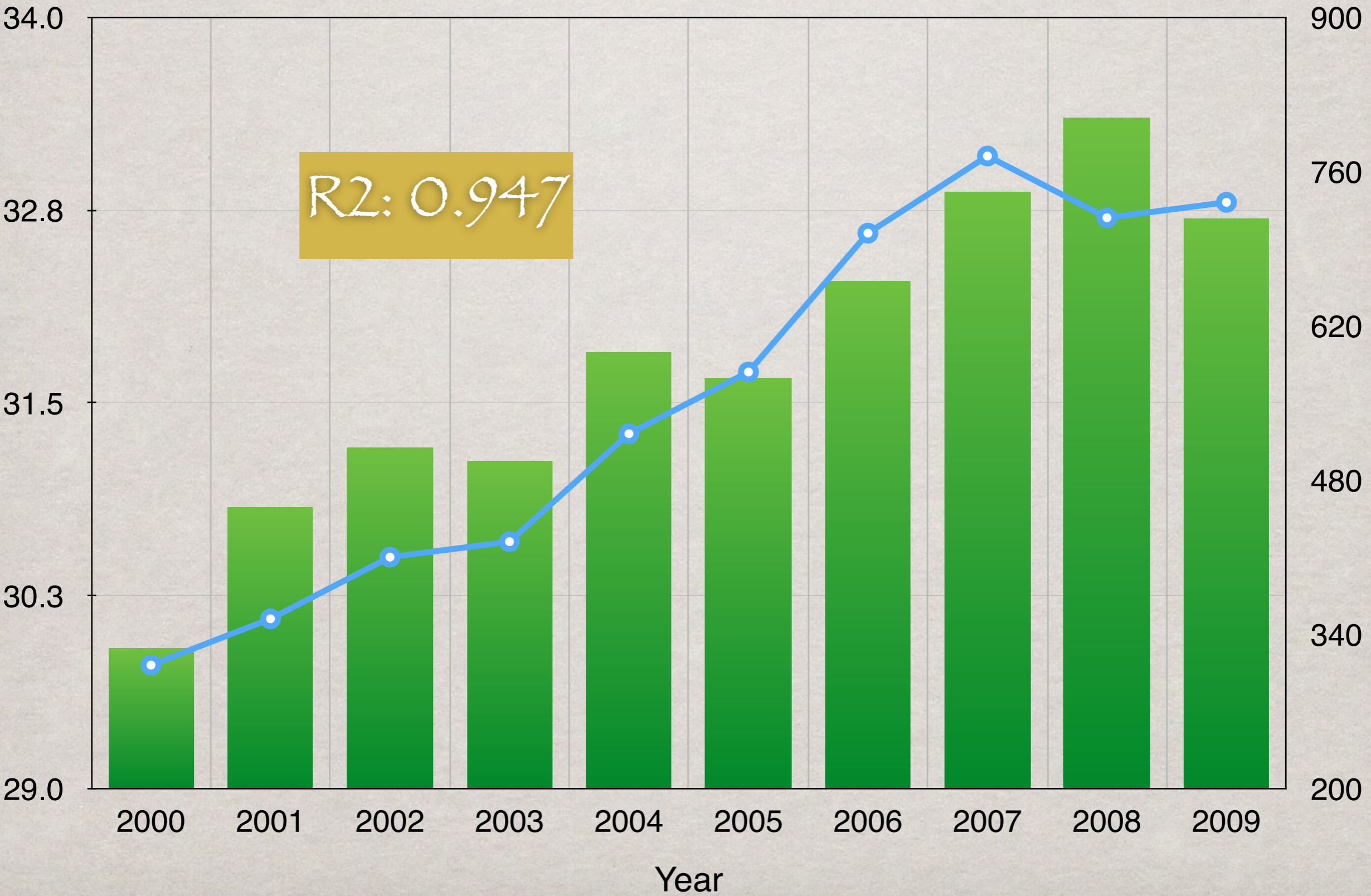
● always

● never

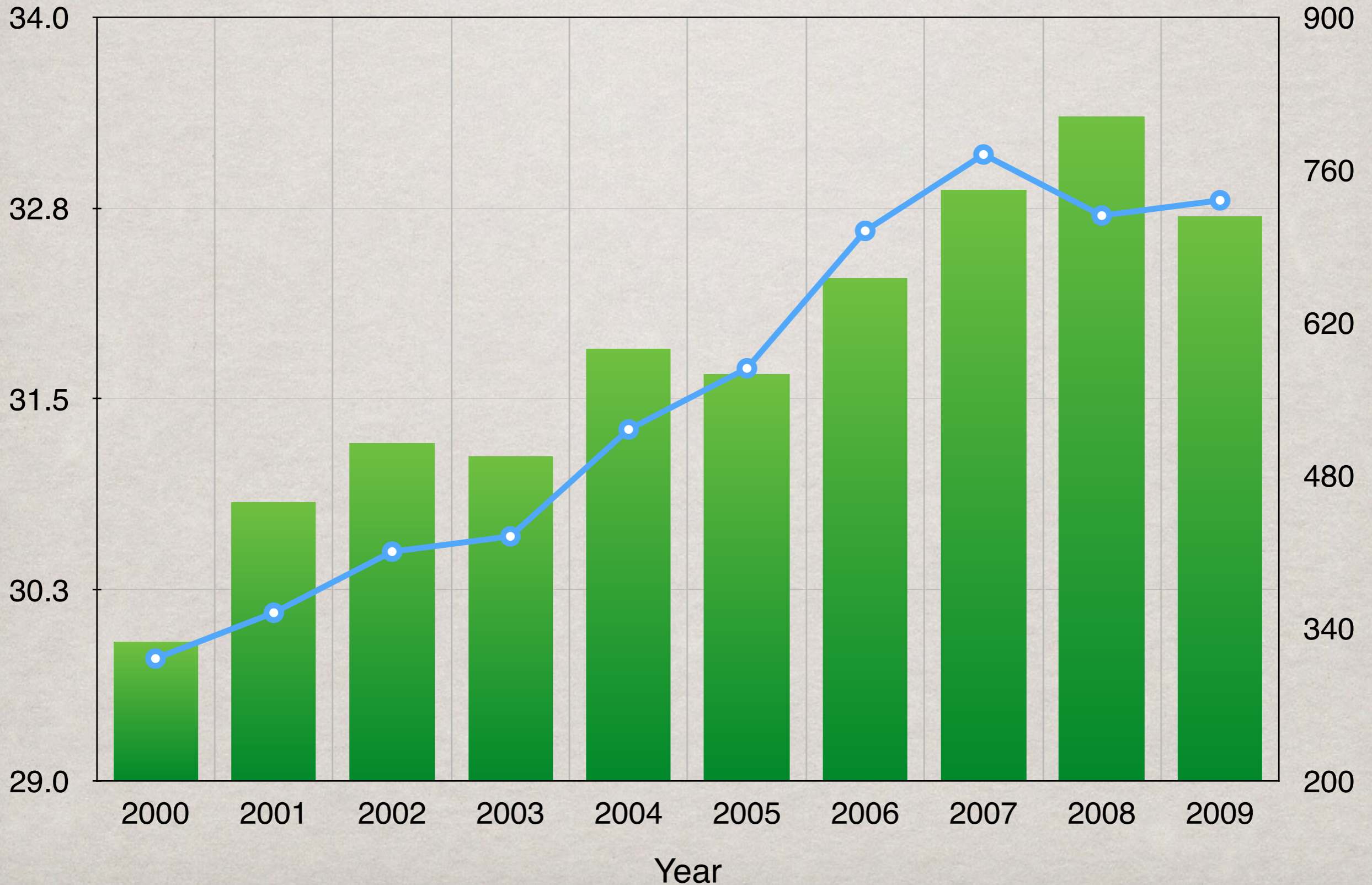
The Statistics

The second headache of reviewers

The meaning of the correlation coefficient



- Per capita consumption of cheese (US)
- Number of people who died by becoming tangled in their bedsheets



Hopefully things changed a lot and...

- Most journals have a section for supplementary material
- Your code and statistics should be placed there to be *evaluated*

The feeling of the Editor after assessing the statistics of some papers



The Discussion

- I think is the most important part of the paper
- Put your results in context
- Discussion is not *only* a comparison with previously published data on the topic
- Discussion is to explain the *meaning* of the results. It is time to elaborate, to make *literature*

The Discussion

- Begin the discussion with short sentence(s) summarizing your results (but avoid copy/paste!!!)
- Finish your discussion with a short paragraph where *all the meaning* of the paper is transmitted to the reader
- Never repeat results in the Discussion (never, never, never)

And the title?

Think about the title from the beginning

But write it at the end...just before the Cover Letter

An appraisal of the effects of climate on the spring migratory flights of birds: the increase of temperatures promotes an earliest dissemination into Europe

Warmer winters impact bird migratory flights

Circulate your paper
among the fellows
(not yet to the boss)

If you understand it, but 10 other people can not,
something is wrong

The response letter

- It is extremely important because it reflects how seriously you addressed the issues detected by the reviewers
- You must to explain point by point how each point was addressed
- If something remained unaddressed, you probably have good reasons, but the Editor must to know and evaluate your reasoning and the comments by the reviewers.

The response letter

- It can be a long letter, but avoid wording and be direct, clear, and candid. The Editor wants to read something constructive
- Sometimes, Editors check the response letter and do not recirculate the paper to the reviewers, if he/she feels that issues are adequately addressed

Some final words of
caution...for naive students



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Critical analysis of scholarly open-access publishing

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This is a list of questionable, scholarly open-access publishers. We recommend that scholars read the available reviews, assessments and descriptions provided here, and then decide for themselves whether they want to submit articles, serve as editors or on editorial boards. The criteria for determining predatory publishers are [here](#).

We hope that tenure and promotion committees can also decide for themselves how importantly or not to rate articles published in these journals in the context of their own institutional standards and/or geocultural locus. We emphasize that journal publishers and journals change in their business and editorial practices over time. This list is kept up-to-date to the best extent possible but may not reflect sudden, unreported, or unknown enhancements.

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Predatory journals

Your paper will be published (of course after payment)

No citations (no indexed)

Your fellows will perceive it as unreliable...a nice way to trash your efforts

Target always a solid journal in your field if you are confident of your paper

Famous last words...

HOW TO WRITE GOOD

1. Avoid Alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. They're old hat.
4. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
5. Be more or less specific.
6. Writers should never generalize.
- Seven: Be consistent!
8. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.