



# Make a (Data) Scene

*Turn the data into a short scene you can perform*

This activity will take 30 or so minutes. You should have these materials on hand:

- Handouts with sample data (one for each participant)
- Space to everyone move around comfortably

## Background

Data is usually presented in charts and graphs - flat visuals that don't help you experience what the data is really saying. This activity allows people to experience data about real experiences and communities in a physical skit or scene, enhancing accessibility and impact. Participants find a story or moment from a handout, and then create a mini skit, scene, or movement piece with a partner that represents it. Merging artistic and creative thinking with the traditional mathematical representations of a line chart and a bar chart breaks down pre-conceptions of what data is "supposed" to look like. This helps participants overcome the fear of math and numbers, and creates accessibility in the form of deeper understanding and engagement of muscle memory. This activity allows participants to reflect on the human experience often buried in numbers through acting, directing, and acting as a group. Be prepared for emotions to surface when tackling difficult subject matter, and allow ample time for reflection, reaction and discussion.

## Kick off the Activity

Once the group has had the chance to familiarize themselves with the concept of data embodiment through a warm up or another activity, distribute the handouts. These should be about two pages, with data about some real topic people recognize as important. We use topics such as food security.



**Going Virtual?** Make sure to post the PDF handouts to the in-session virtual chat, or have just one on-screen via screen-share while people build. Don't email them in advance; this can give curious folks a bit too much time to consider the data.

Give participants 5 minutes to review and reflect on the graphs. Split the participants into pairs. Introduce the idea that each pair will be finding something that speaks to them in the data, and embodying it through a short skit or scene. After the 5 mins of reflection, bring the whole group together to discuss initial reactions, thoughts, or questions. This element is vital in gauging the group emotional reaction to the data, which may represent a difficult community or personal experience. Ask individuals or pairs if there was a data

point they found particularly interesting or moving, and then allow everyone to react as a group through using the “thumbs up, thumbs sideways, and thumbs down” approach. Once the group has a chance to react as a unit, allow the pairs to meet for 10 minutes in planning a short skit/scene that represents the data point. Remind them that they do not need to use words or movement, and that they can take this any direction they feel is best- a silent scene, a spoken piece standing in place, a narrative with multiple characters, etc.



**Going Virtual?** Put each team in a breakout room and bring them back to perform the scene. While they are performing, ask other participants to keep their video turned off. Remind folks that the virtual setting can be used to their advantage and integrated too!

## Present & Reflect

After 10 minutes, bring the whole group back together and choose a group to go first. One at a time, each pair should perform their scene to the group. After each scene, if the environment seems heavy or tense, encourage taking a group “breath” to bring the group back to reality. Ask some questions to get the group reflecting on how their scenes were different than the data on the page, and how they felt representing it.

- Which scene was the most impactful to you?
- Which scene told the most compelling story? Why was it more compelling, or not, than the chart version of the same data?
- A lot of data is just a record of something people did in the world. Which scene made you think about the people behind this data?
- How did representing the data with your body change your attitude towards it, or your understanding of it?

Leave participants with a few examples from the scenes shared that you thought were really interesting.