OK. You got the data. Congratulations! What are you going to do now?

Next steps

- What’s the story there?
- Question how the numbers and statistics were obtained and put together
- Recheck and challenge the figures. DO THE MATH!
- Put relevant numbers in your story, but make sure they’re accurate and easy to understand

MATH!

Do you like it? or hate it?

We can’t run away from numbers

- Look at the story idea. List the numerical or statistical information it needs

Divorced women in Jordan lose financial support and even custody of their children because of a legal loophole that has made them lose court battles

The perks of being a lawmaker

On July 23, 2001, hours before the 12th Congress formally opened, the secretary of a first-term congressman from Mindanao handed her boss his first paycheck.

The solon was astonished. He was already getting paid for work he had not rendered? He was nevertheless grateful. The elections in May had drained his finances.

Knowing each member of Congress to receive a 35,000-peso in monthly salary, the congressman reckoned there wasn’t a lot of cash he would have to carry around, with taxes already withheld. So he ordered his secretary to have the check cashed. He endorsed it without looking at the sum.

The secretary returned later with a bulging envelope. “When I opened it, all the pieces were blue. At first, I thought they were 100-peso bills. It turned out that they were 1,000-peso bills,” the congressman recalls.

“Why is this so much?” he asked his secretary.

“Sir, your salary is 26,000 pesos. The balance is your allowance—for you to spend when you go home to your province, for the rental of your house in the capital, for consultation, research and other stuff,” she replied.

And, without being asked further, the secretary added, “And if you don’t want to spend any of it, it’s up to you. You can keep it and don’t have to account for it.”

After the congressman finished counting the thick wad, he was flabbergasted. It added up to P247,500, of which he didn’t have to account for a single centavo...
10 reasons to doubt the 2004 election results

The devil is in the numbers.

In the run-up to the 2004 elections, surveys predicted a neck-and-neck race between President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and leading opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. When the official canvassing closed, Arroyo got 40 percent of the votes, beating Poe by 3.5 percentage points.

The legitimacy of Arroyo’s election has since come under question following the disclosure of the wiretapped conversations between her and former elections commissioner Virgilio Garcillano suggesting her knowledge and possible involvement in electoral fraud, including vote padding, and its cover-up.

But there are other indicators that all was not well in last year’s elections.

3. Votes cast for all presidential candidates exceed actual voters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Reg’d Actual Voters</th>
<th>VOTES FOR PRESIDENT</th>
<th>OFFICIAL TURNOUT</th>
<th>VOTER TURNOUT</th>
<th>President</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batangas</td>
<td>121,192</td>
<td>106,324</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>116%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Ecija</td>
<td>154,958</td>
<td>117,999</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Samar</td>
<td>284,485</td>
<td>228,075</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>98%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aurora</td>
<td>77,669</td>
<td>61,479</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>94%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabela</td>
<td>607,209</td>
<td>465,181</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>85%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albay</td>
<td>541,465</td>
<td>458,205</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan Kudarat</td>
<td>313,701</td>
<td>226,922</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Cotabato</td>
<td>513,291</td>
<td>387,666</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Norte</td>
<td>432,698</td>
<td>307,790</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Round off—a lot, but don’t chop off digits (Round down, round up)
• But use extra precision when it matters
• Think in simple ratios
  • One out of 285 people...

Working with numbers

• Memorize common numbers on your beat
• Envision your dream number. Calculate if it isn’t given to you
• Learn to use a SPREADSHEET like Excel or Calc (Entry-level to data journalism/CAR)

• Keep the number of digits to a minimum
• Separate number-packed paragraphs with anecdotes, sources’ explanation, quotes, observations
• Simplify/describe numbers: “double,” “nearly,” “more than”
• Use graphics to convey information
Beware of tricky graphs

Reporting studies and surveys

Questions you ought to ask

• Who commissioned and paid for the research? Why was it done?
• Who did the research?
• How many people were chosen by the research? How were they chosen?
• Who should have been included and was not?
• When was the research done?
• How was the research carried out?

• What question were asked? How were they ordered?
• How were they asked?
• Are the results based on the answers of all the people interviewed?
• Are the results weighted?
• What is the sampling error for survey results?
• How do the results of this study compare to other similar studies?
Back to your story idea and investigative hypothesis

Look at your story idea and hypothesis

Who has the info?

Identify numerical and statistical info needed to develop it

ACTIVITY TIME

YVONNE T. CHUA / University of the Philippines & VERA Files