

Large clear heading: e.g. Writing a Good Policy Brief

Then a smaller subhead that also gives a clear indication of what the brief is about, e.g. What elements make a policy brief most effective?



A picture on the front page can help make a clear statement and give an overview of the issue. Explain what it shows.

Here is where you describe the challenge

State clearly and without bias what the problem is, giving some statistics and explain these relative to a comparator – e.g. how much has the situation increased or decreased in recent years? Who is impacted and how?

Is the situation you are explaining better or worse than average, or in neighbouring regions? Who has measured it and where have these results been published? Is there a longer report which this brief is summarising, in which more detailed information can be found?

What is this policy brief attempting to do, and who is it trying to influence? Who are you, and why do you want to influence the situation? What is the likely outcome of the change(s) that could come about because of the points the brief highlights? Is there evidence that these outcomes have been achieved in other places by implementing the potential solutions you are suggesting? What helped or hindered this?

Key points

Setting out the key points at the start can help to get the message across clearly.

- ◆ Make sure that any points made in this section are backed up by clear evidence elsewhere in the brief, ideally with graphs.

- ◆ Putting a coloured tint behind the key points box can help it to stand out.

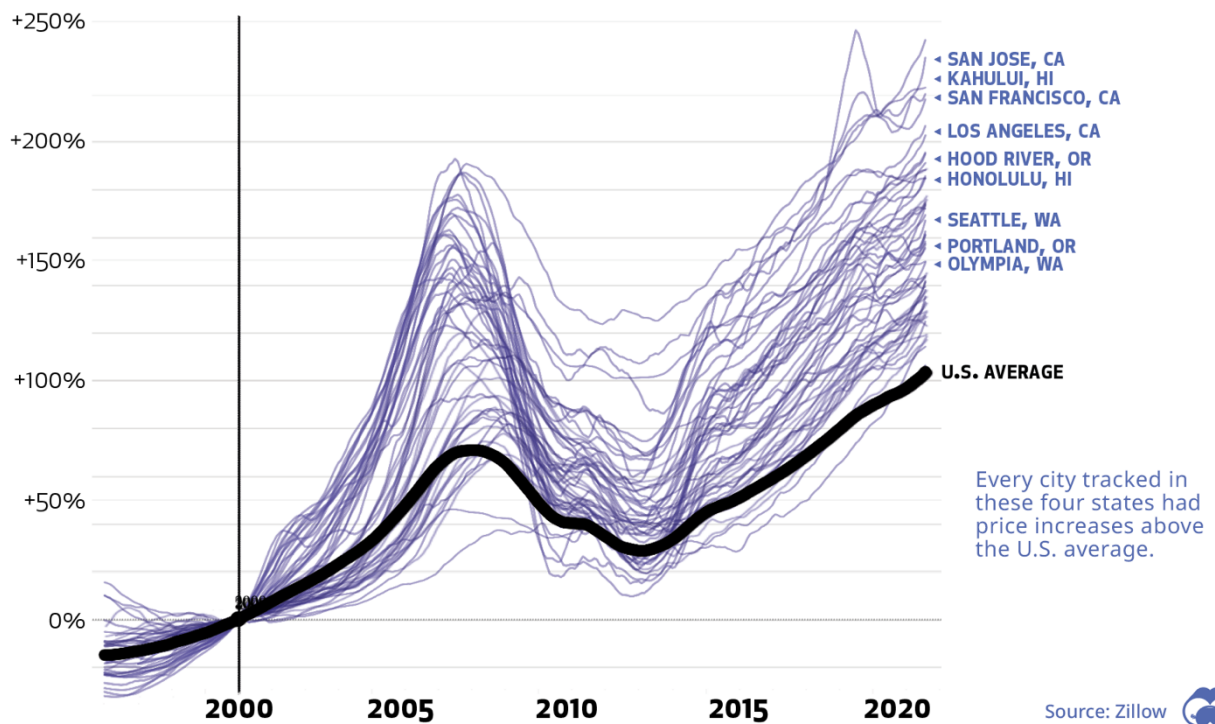
- ◆ Precise figures and statistics, set out over a clear time period and geographic region, have more impact than vague statements: e.g.

- ◆ By 2050, antimicrobial resistance is predicted¹ to cause 39 million deaths, an annual increase from 1.14 million in 2021 to 1.91 million in 2050. This is more than the deaths caused by malaria and AIDS combined.

- ◆ Make sure you give a citation (see below) for the figures to show they are trustworthy.

¹ <https://www.ndm.ox.ac.uk/news/antibiotic-resistance-could-cause-39-million-deaths-between-now-and-2050>

THE WEST: CALIFORNIA, OREGON, WASHINGTON, HAWAII



Graphs and charts are a useful way of giving a clear visual of the issue. Make sure the figures are clear, relate to a baseline, and that what the graph is showing is clearly explained.

Give evidence supporting your position

Clear graphs and infographics showing the current situation, how things have changed over time, how this relates to a baseline or other comparator, and what this means can help to prove a point. Make sure the graph or table is clear to someone who may not be an expert in statistics and explain how and why the figures shown relate to other problems – e.g. the graph shows that high house prices in the U.S. States shown mean people in those States cannot pay as much for health insurance as people in other States.

What might help to create change?

Policy briefs work better when they don't tell the policymakers exactly what to do but provide examples of what has worked well and offer ideas and alternatives. For example, highlight that in another State with high house prices, tying health insurance to mortgages helped people to afford both; or targeting subsidised healthcare clinics in areas with high house prices helped to keep local populations healthy and saved healthcare costs down the line. How much would this cost to implement compared with how much it would save?

Conclusions

State some clear conclusions to ensure the reader has fully understood the points you wanted to make.

◆ Note that the design of the brief is clean and simple. Only one font is used (but at different sizes). Shades of a single colour are used, not different colours.

◆ Images are large, clear and well labelled.

◆ A policymaker should be able to get a sense of the issue from just the headings alone.

◆ You could have more pages between the front and back but keep the layout simple.

◆ The longer your brief is, the less likely it is that the policymaker will read all of it.