

BBC

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Science Focus

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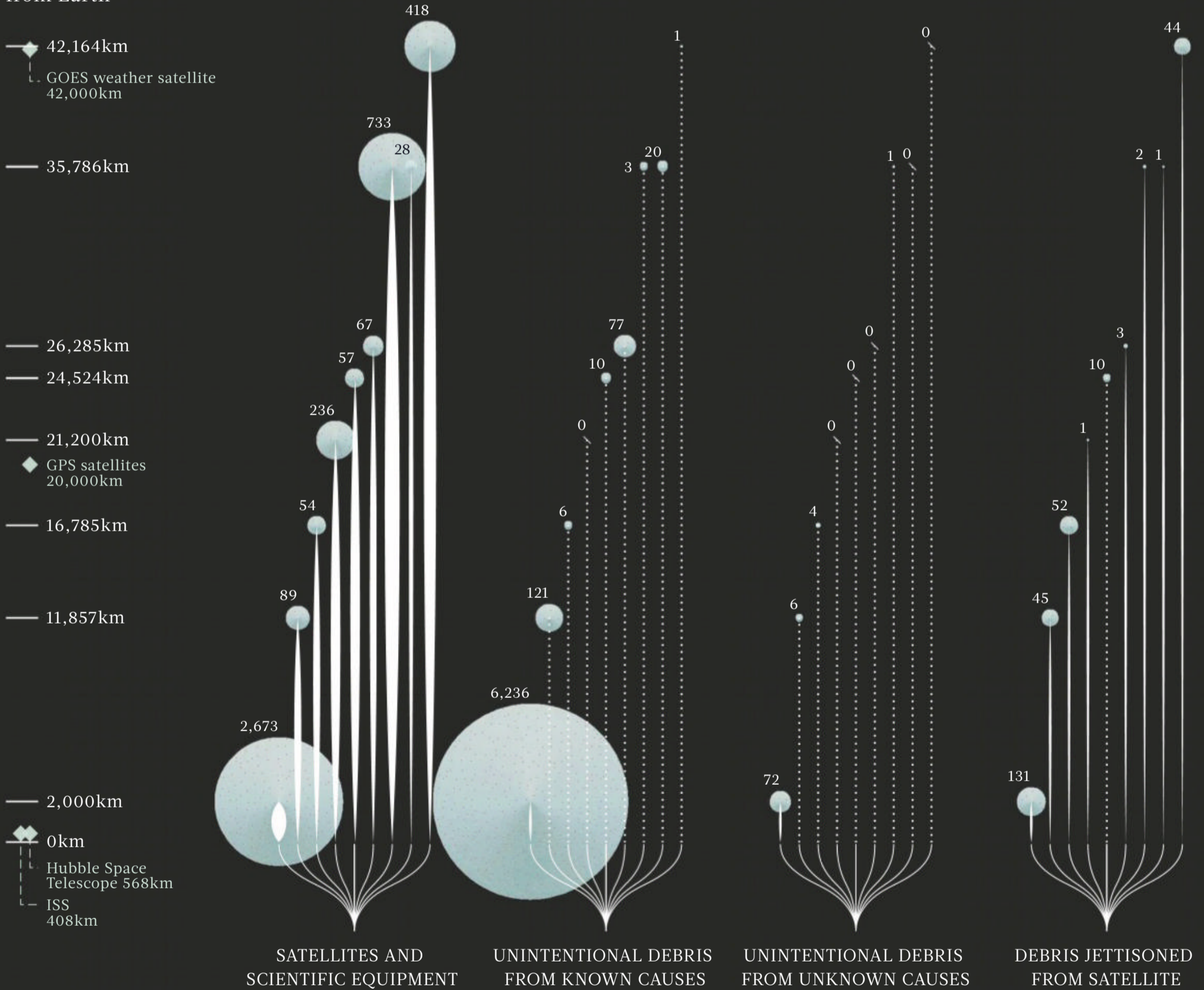
Data crunch

Space junk

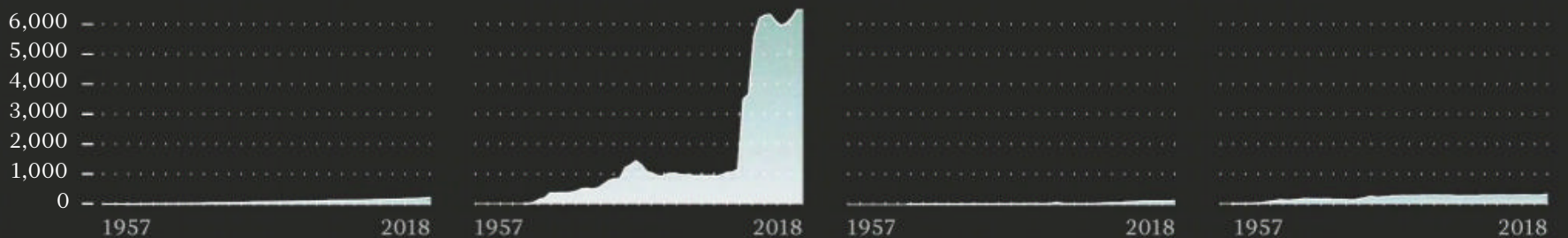
India recently shot down a satellite using a missile launched from Earth. NASA raised concerns that the resulting debris could collide with other satellites or the ISS. As the destroyed satellite was in a low orbit of just 300km, the debris will burn up as it falls back to Earth over the coming weeks. However, space junk has been increasing over the last few decades and collisions could increase if the problem is not kept in check.

INFOGRAPHIC: FEDERICA FRAGAPANE

Average distance from Earth



Historical data: count evolution by object type





Objects divided by their distance from Earth

Lines length = average distance from Earth

Colour= type of object

- payload objects
- rocket objects
- unknown objects

Area of the circle = $\frac{\text{number of objects orbiting Earth at the indicated distance}}{600}$

Lines thickness = mass in tonnes orbiting Earth at the indicated distance

