
Is '{JSONB}' a Silver Bullet?

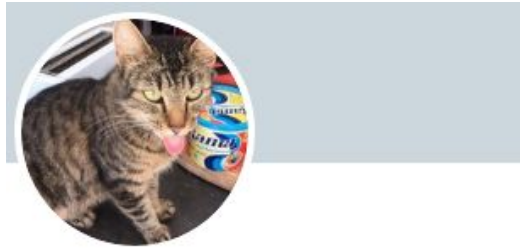
Angus Dippenaar

Who is this guy?

DevOps / Full stack developer at Quant Solutions / GoodX

We make medical / financial software using Python and Postgres

We really like Postgres



Angus Dippeaar

@AngusDippenaar

I make programmes. Sometimes they work.



Intro

- **What is JSON(B)?**
- **JSON vs JSONB**
- **Some cool things**
- **Some limitations**
- **JSON vs JSONB vs Tables**
- **When could you use JSONB?**
- **When not to use JSONB**
- **Conclusion**

\$ _

What is JSON(B)?

Imagine JSON, but you can query it

```
{
  "introduced": {
    "JSON": "Postgres 9.4",
    "JSONB": "Postgres 9.5"
  },
  "JSON": "Checks if string valid JSON, stores as text",
  "JSONB": "Stores as a decomposed Binary format"
}
```

\$ _

JSONB -> Postgres types

JSONB	PostgreSQL	Notes
string	text	Remember that it conforms to the database encoding
number	numeric	NaN and infinity values are not allowed
boolean	boolean	Only lowercase `true` and `false` spelling is valid
null	Does not translate	SQL NULL is a different concept.

(4 rows)

```
$ SELECT 'null'::jsonb IS NULL, 'null'::jsonb = 'null';
```

```
is_null | = null
-----+-----
f       | t
(1 row)
```

\$ _

JSON(B) example

From <https://www.postgresql.org/docs/11/datatype-json.html>

```
-- Simple scalar/primitive value
-- Primitive values can be numbers, quoted strings, true, false, or null
SELECT '5'::json;

-- Array of zero or more elements (elements need not be of same type)
SELECT '[1, 2, "foo", null]'::json;

-- Object containing pairs of keys and values
-- Note that object keys must always be quoted strings
SELECT '{"bar": "baz", "balance": 7.77, "active": false}'::json;

-- Arrays and objects can be nested arbitrarily
SELECT '{"foo": [true, "bar"], "tags": {"a": 1, "b": null}}'::json;
```

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB

JSON	JSONB
Stores as if it was a TEXT field	Stores as a binary format
Doesn't modify the input string Preserves whitespace. Including new lines	Trims whitespace and re-orders keys for more efficient searching
Duplicate keys are preserved	Duplicate keys are removed
Only a few operators and functions	Many operators
No indexes, no constraints	Indexes and constraints
Inserts/updates are fast	Inserts/updates a little bit slower Has to parse and convert types

(6 rows)

\$ _

Some cool things of JSONB

cool things

You can filter the data

You can index specific keys

You can index the whole thing (`jsonb_path_ops`)

You can add constraints

You can interact with JSON(B) and normal table columns in the same query

You can use JSON Path from Postgres 12

(6 rows)

\$ _

Some limitations of JSONB

limitations

No statistics

The concat operator (||) is only top-level

Max row size of 268 435 455 bytes (268.43 MB)

NaN and infinity not allowed

null IS NOT NULL

\u0000 not allowed

(6 rows)

Experiment time

1. Figure out how Twitter streaming API works. ✓
2. Over a period of a few days, save up about 4M Tweets (Avengers and GoT). ✓
3. Save these 4M Tweets into a table, one for Avengers, one for GoT. ✓
4. Join tweets_avengers and tweets_got into one table, still in JSON. ✗
5. Convert to JSONB.
6. Model single table with all 2nd level JSON objects as JSONB fields.
7. Model the Tweet fully.
8. Run experiments.

\$ _

What went wrong?

\$ _

What went wrong?

\u0000 not allowed

\$ _

What went wrong?

`\u0000` not allowed

```
INSERT INTO tweets_json (SELECT * FROM tweets_avengers);
```

```
ERROR: 22P05: unsupported Unicode escape sequence
```

```
DETAIL: \u0000 cannot be converted to text.
```

```
CONTEXT: JSON data, line 1: ...hing | ALL I WANNA DO", "url": null, "description": ...
```

```
LOCATION: json_lex_string, json.c:882
```

```
Time: 15465.960 ms (00:15.466)
```

\$ _

Let's remove the NULL bytes

```
INSERT INTO tweets_json (  
    SELECT regexp_replace(tweet::text, '\\u0000', '', 'g')::json  
    FROM tweets_avengers  
);
```

```
ERROR: 22P02: invalid input syntax for type json  
DETAIL: Token "screen_name" is invalid.  
CONTEXT: JSON data, line 1: ...tr":"1043592081766326277","name":"\","screen_name...  
LOCATION: report_invalid_token, json.c:1248  
Time: 743264.154 ms (12:23.264)
```

\$ _

Let's remove the NULL bytes

Part 2

But don't remove the best possible Twitter account name

```
INSERT INTO tweets_json (  
    SELECT regexp_replace(tweet::text, '(?!\\)\\u0000', '', 'g')::json  
    FROM tweets_avengers  
);
```

```
INSERT 0 2564034  
Time: 795585.674 ms (13:15.586)
```

YES! IT WORKED!

\$ _

What did \u0000 have to say?

```
SELECT
  tweet->'user' ->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  tweet->'text' AS text
FROM tweets_json
WHERE tweet->'user' ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

screen_name	text
lordofthedykes	woke up this early to go see endgame... again

(1 row)

Time: 109700.848 ms (01:49.701)



Experiment time

1. Figure out how Twitter streaming API works. ✓
2. Over a period of a few days, save up about 4M Tweets (Avengers and GoT). ✓
3. Save these 4M Tweets into a table, one for Avengers, one for GoT. ✓
4. Join tweets_avengers and tweets_got into one table, still in JSON. ✗ ✗ ✓
5. Convert to JSONB. ✓
6. Model single table with all 2nd level JSON objects as JSONB fields. ✓
7. Model the Tweet fully. ✓
8. Run experiments.

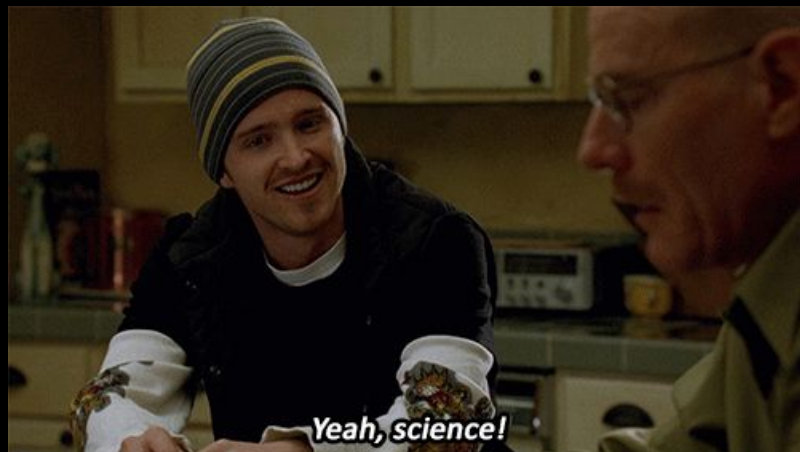
\$ _

Experiment time

Method

```
max_connections = 200
shared_buffers = 4GB
effective_cache_size = 12GB
maintenance_work_mem = 1GB
checkpoint_completion_target = 0.7
wal_buffers = 16MB
default_statistics_target = 100
random_page_cost = 1.1
effective_io_concurrency = 200
work_mem = 5242kB
min_wal_size = 1GB
max_wal_size = 2GB
max_worker_processes = 8
max_parallel_workers_per_gather = 4
max_parallel_workers = 8
```

Postgres 12 on Ubuntu 18.04
Python scripts ran 12 times, 4 concurrently
Values in slides are averages without min/max



\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Compare table sizes

● Table size

List of relations

Name	Size	
tweets_json	11 GB	63
tweets_jsonb	13 GB	76
tweets_mix_normalized	17 GB	100
place	3240 kB	0.019
tweet	4118 MB	25
user	835 MB	5.4
Total	4955 MB	30

(6 rows)

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Find \u0000 (unindexed)

● Query time

```
SELECT * FROM tweets_json WHERE tweet->'user' ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

Time: 129739.053 ms (02:09.739)

67

```
SELECT * FROM tweets_jsonb WHERE tweet->'user' ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

Time: 53394.158 (00:53.394)

27

```
SELECT * FROM tweets_mix_normalized WHERE "user" ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

Time: 195003.180 ms (03:15.003)

100

```
SELECT * FROM tweet
```

```
JOIN "user" ON tweet.user_id = "user".id
```

```
WHERE "user".name = '\u0000';
```

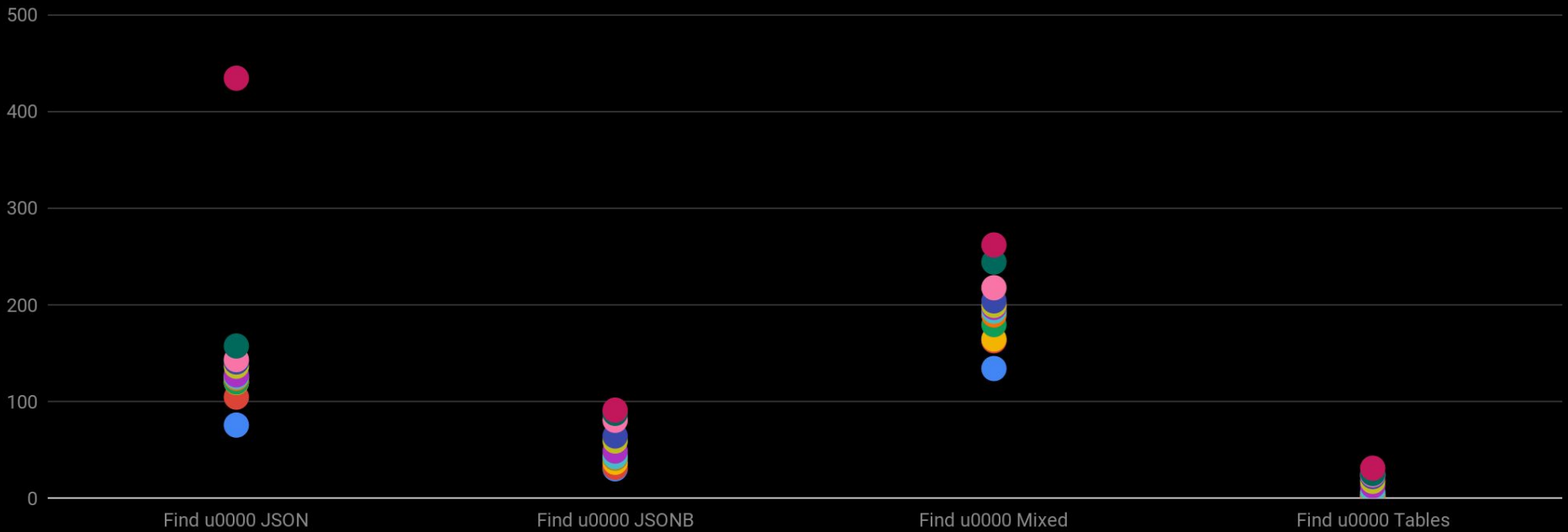
Time: 11753.515 ms (00:11.754)

6

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Find \u0000 (unindexed)



JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: Inspectability

1.

```
\d tweets_jsonb
Table "public.tweets_jsonb"
Column | Type | Collation | Nullable | Default
-----|-----|-----|-----|-----
tweet | jsonb | | |
```

2.

```
\d tweets_mix_normalized
Table "public.tweets_mix_normalized"
Column | Type | Collation | Nullable | Default
-----|-----|-----|-----|-----
created_at | text | | |
id | bigint | | not null |
id_str | text | | |
source | text | | |
truncated | boolean | | |
in_reply_to_status_id | bigint | | |
in_reply_to_status_id_str | text | | |
in_reply_to_user_id | bigint | | |
in_reply_to_user_id_str | text | | |
in_reply_to_screen_name | text | | |
user_id | bigint | | |
geo | jsonb | | |
coordinates | jsonb | | |
place | jsonb | | |
contributors | jsonb | | |
retweeted_status | jsonb | | |
quoted_status_id | bigint | | |
quoted_status_id_str | text | | |
quoted_status | jsonb | | |
quote_count | bigint | | |
reply_count | bigint | | |
retweet_count | bigint | | |
favorite_count | bigint | | |
entities | jsonb | | |
possibly_sensitive | boolean | | |
filter_level | text | | |
lang | text | | |
timestamp_ms | text | | |
Indexes:
"tweet_pk" PRIMARY KEY, btree (id)
Foreign key constraints:
"tweet_place_id_fk" FOREIGN KEY (place_id) REFERENCES place(id)
"tweet_user_id_fk" FOREIGN KEY (user_id) REFERENCES "user"(id)
```

3.

```
\d user
Table "public.user"
Column | Type | Collation | Nullable | Default
-----|-----|-----|-----|-----
id | bigint | | |
name | text | | |
screen_name | text | | |
location | text | | |
description | text | | |
protected | boolean | | |
verified | boolean | | |
followers_count | integer | | |
friends_count | integer | | |
listed_count | integer | | |
favorites_count | integer | | |
statuses_count | integer | | |
created_at | text | | |
profile_banner_url | text | | |
default_profile | boolean | | |
default_profile_image | boolean | | |
withheld_in_countries | text[] | | |
withheld_scope | text | | |
Indexes:
"user_pk" PRIMARY KEY, btree (id)
Referenced by:
TABLE "tweets" CONSTRAINT "tweet_user_id_fk" FOREIGN KEY (user_id) REFERENCES "user"(id)
```

```
\d place
Table "public.place"
Column | Type | Collation | Nullable | Default
-----|-----|-----|-----|-----
id | text | | not null |
url | text | | |
place_type | text | | |
name | text | | |
full_name | text | | |
country_code | text | | |
country | text | | |
bounding_box | jsonb | | |
attributes | jsonb | | |
Indexes:
"place_pk" PRIMARY KEY, btree (id)
Referenced by:
TABLE "tweets" CONSTRAINT "tweet_place_id_fk" FOREIGN KEY (place_id) REFERENCES place(id)
```

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: Maintainability

1. JSONB

```
SELECT
  tweet->>'id' AS id,
  tweet->>'text' AS text,
  tweet->>'created_at' AS created_at,
  tweet->>'source' AS source,
  tweet->>'retweet_count' AS retweet_count,
  tweet->>'favorite_count' AS favorite_count,
  tweet->'user'->>'name' AS name,
  tweet->'user'->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  tweet->'user'->>'verified' AS verified,
  tweet->'user'->>'profile_image_url_https' AS profile_image_url_https
FROM tweets_jsonb
ORDER BY (tweet->>'timestamp_ms')::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;
```

2. Mixed


```
SELECT
  id,
  text,
  created_at,
  source,
  retweet_count,
  favorite_count,
  "user"->>'name' AS name,
  "user"->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  "user"->>'verified' AS verified,
  "user"->>'profile_image_url_https' AS profile_image_url_https
FROM tweets_mix_normalized
ORDER BY timestamp_ms::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;
```

3. Tables

```
SELECT
  tweet.id,
  tweet.text,
  tweet.created_at,
  tweet.source,
  tweet.retweet_count,
  tweet.favorite_count,
  "user".name,
  "user".screen_name,
  "user".verified,
  "user".profile_image_url_https
FROM tweet
JOIN "user" ON tweet.user_id = "user".id
ORDER BY timestamp_ms::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;
```

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: List last 10 tweets (unindexed)

 Query time

1. JSONB

```

SELECT
  tweet->>'id' AS id,
  tweet->>'text' AS text,
  tweet->>'created_at' AS created_at,
  tweet->>'source' AS source,
  tweet->>'retweet_count' AS retweet_count,
  tweet->>'favorite_count' AS favorite_count,
  tweet->'user'->>'name' AS name,
  tweet->'user'->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  tweet->'user'->>'verified' AS verified,
  tweet->'user'->>'profile_image_url_https' AS profile_image_url_https
FROM tweets_jsonb
ORDER BY (tweet->>'timestamp_ms')::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;

```

311245.580 ms (05:11.246)

100

2. Mixed

```

SELECT
  id,
  text,
  created_at,
  source,
  retweet_count,
  favorite_count,
  "user"->>'name' AS name,
  "user"->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  "user"->>'verified' AS verified,
  "user"->>'profile_image_url_https' AS profile_image_url_https
FROM tweets_mix_normalized
ORDER BY timestamp_ms::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;

```

180532.100 ms (03:00.532)

58

3. Tables

```

SELECT
  tweet.id,
  tweet.text,
  tweet.created_at,
  tweet.source,
  tweet.retweet_count,
  tweet.favorite_count,
  "user".name,
  "user".screen_name,
  "user".verified,
  "user".profile_image_url_https
FROM tweet
JOIN "user" ON tweet.user_id = "user".id
ORDER BY timestamp_ms::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;

```

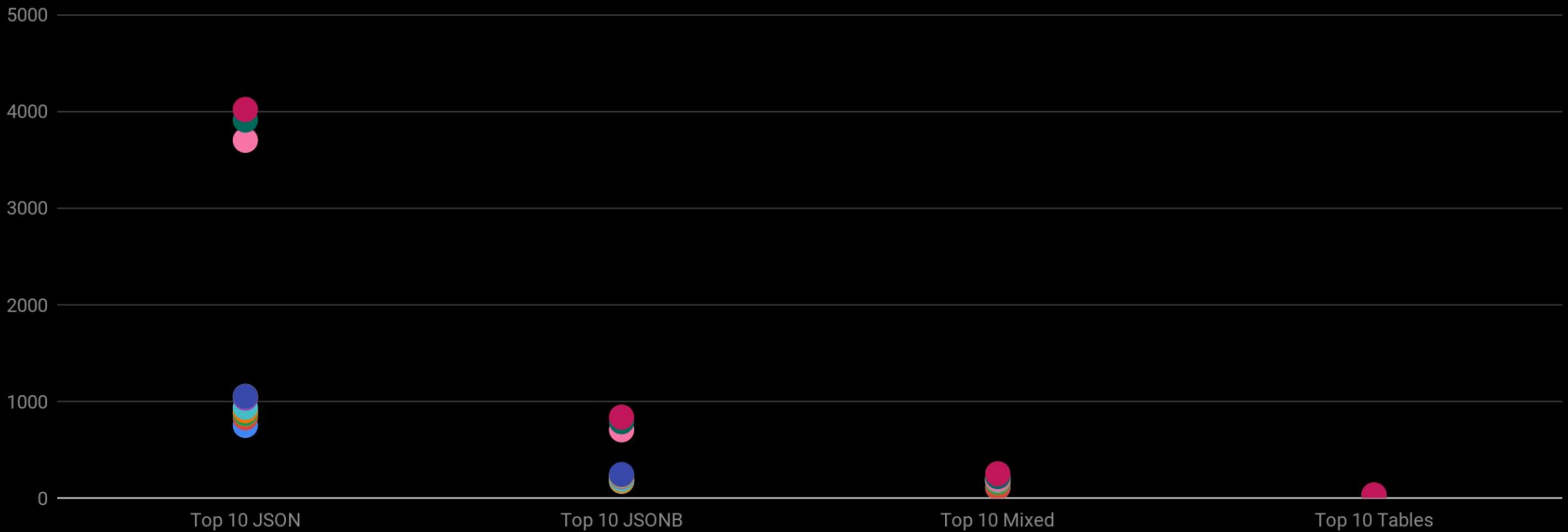
12479.723 ms (00:12.480)

4

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: List last 10 tweets (unindexed)



\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Updates

But first. Some context

\$ _



Message

Remind Me



Jason

Friday 13th is my favourite

\$ _



I Am Managr
@iammanagr



push to production
on Fridays because I
promised the client we
would



\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Updates

**But Jason made a mistake.
His script to scrape Twitter saved
everyone with less than 1000
followers with 200 too few.**

Let's fix Jason's mistake.

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Updates

● Query time

1. JSONB

```
UPDATE tweets_jsonb
SET tweet = jsonb_set(
  tweet,
  '{user, followers_count}',
  (
    (
      (
        tweet->'user'->'followers_count'
      )::INT + 200
    )::TEXT
  )::jsonb
)
WHERE (tweet->'user'->'followers_count')::INT < 1000
```

897754.2313 ms (14:57.754)

100

2. Mixed

```
UPDATE tweets_mix_normalized
SET "user" = jsonb_set(
  "user",
  '{followers_count}',
  (
    (
      (
        "user"->'followers_count'
      )::INT + 200
    )::TEXT
  )::jsonb
)
WHERE ("user"->'followers_count')::INT < 1000
```

460230.4723 ms (07:40.230)

51

3. Tables

```
UPDATE "user"
SET followers_count = followers_count + 200
WHERE followers_count < 1000
```

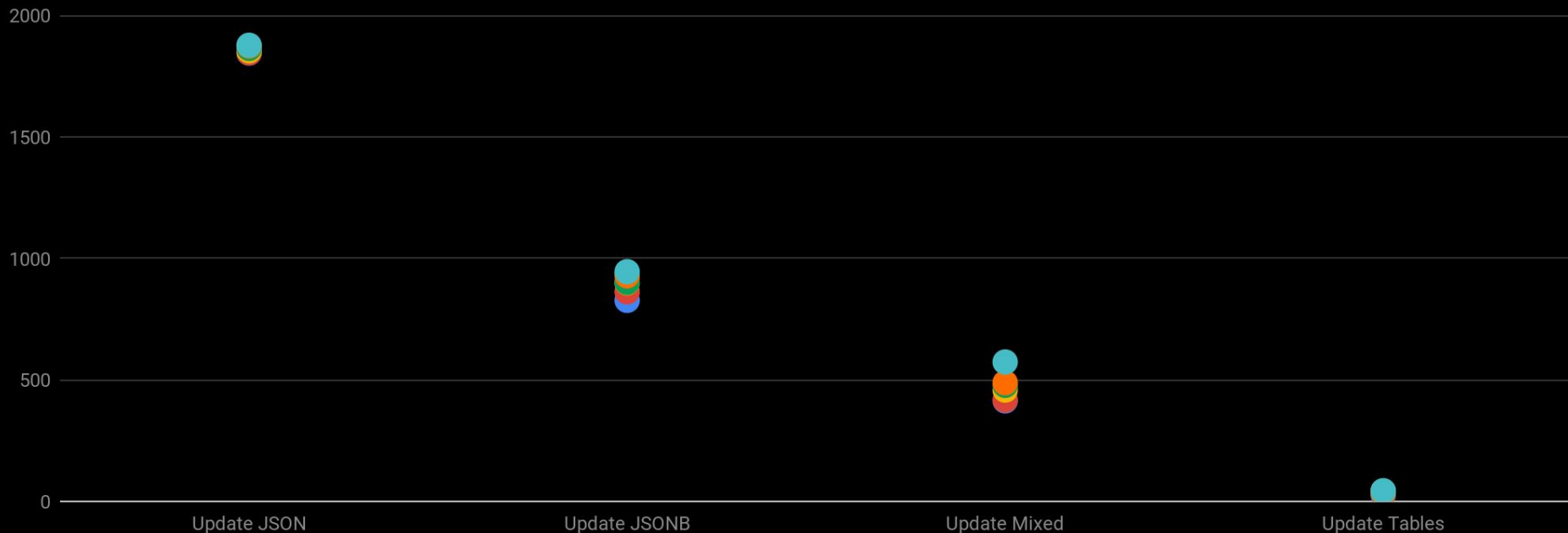
38254.552 ms (00:38.255)

4

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Updates



\$ _

Me: JSONB slower than tables
Everyone:



ACKCHYUALLY

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Creating Indexes on user's name

● Index time

```
CREATE INDEX idx_json_user_name ON tweets_json ((tweet->'user'->>'name'));
```

Time: 139393.493 ms (02:19.393)

100

```
CREATE INDEX idx_jsonb_user_name ON tweets_jsonb ((tweet->'user'->>'name'));
```

Time: 24268.704 ms (00:24.269)

17

```
CREATE INDEX idx_mixed_user_name ON tweets_mix_normalized (("user"->>'name'));
```

Time: 31793.163 ms (00:31.793)

23

```
CREATE INDEX idx_user_name ON "user" (name);
```

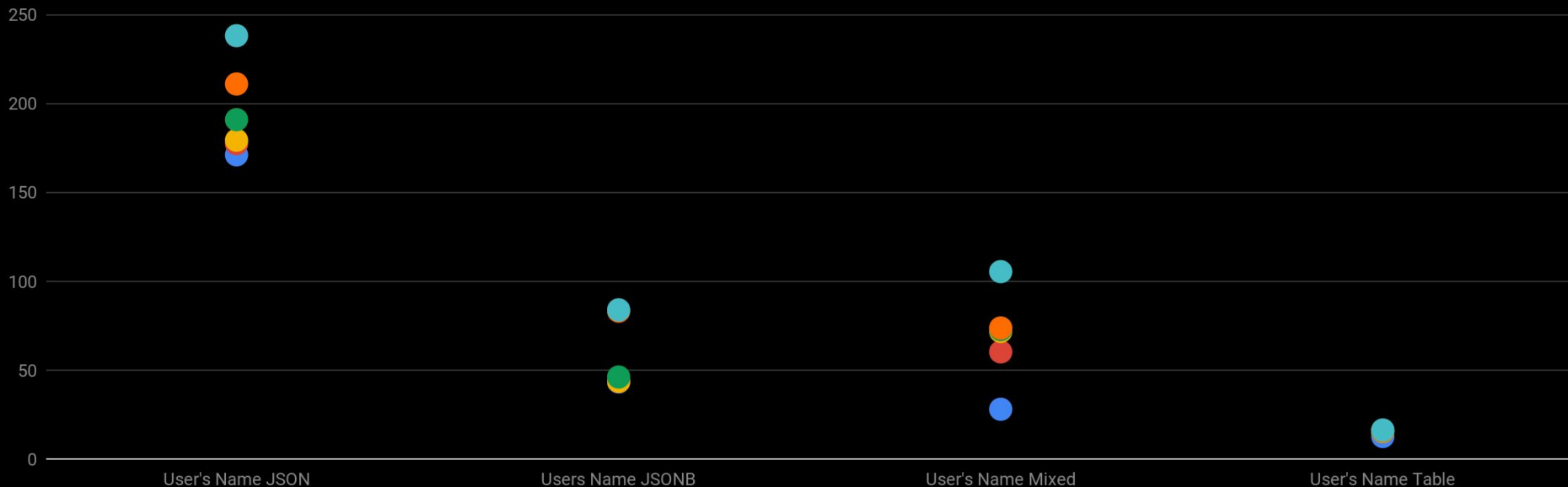
Time: 12967.147 ms (00:12.967)

9

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Creating Indexes on user's name



\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Compare Indexed queries

● Query time

```
SELECT * FROM tweets_json WHERE tweet->'user' ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

Time: 1.031 ms

67

```
SELECT * FROM tweets_jsonb WHERE tweet->'user' ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

Time: 1.161 ms

76

```
SELECT * FROM tweets_mix_normalized WHERE "user" ->>'name' = '\u0000';
```

Time: 1.108 ms

72

```
SELECT * FROM tweet  
JOIN "user" ON tweet.user_id = "user".id  
WHERE "user".name = '\u0000';
```

Time: 1.535 ms

100

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Compare Indexed queries

```
$ EXPLAIN SELECT tweet.text FROM tweet  
JOIN "user" ON tweet.user_id = "user".id  
WHERE "user".name = '\u0000';
```

QUERY PLAN

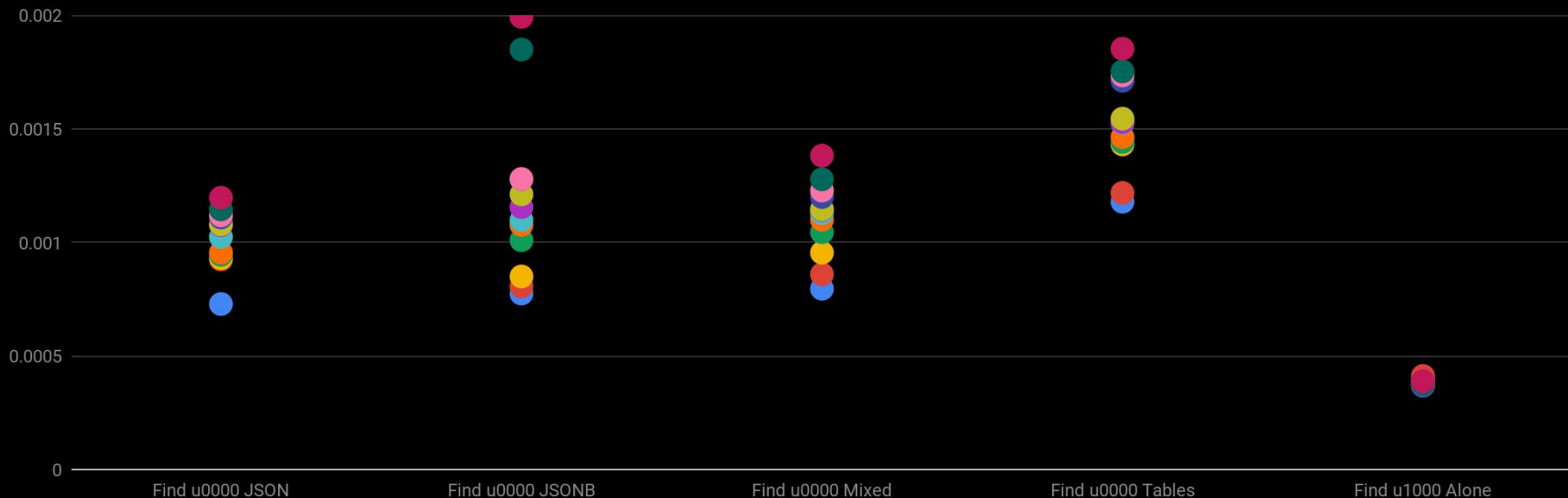
```
Nested Loop (cost=0.86..75.52 rows=16 width=119)  
-> Index Scan using idx_user_name on "user" (cost=0.43..11.59 rows=9 width=8)  
    Index Cond: (name = '\u0000'::text)  
-> Index Scan using ids_user_rel on tweet (cost=0.43..7.05 rows=5 width=127)  
    Index Cond: (user_id = "user".id)  
(5 rows)
```

Time: 0.450 ms

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Compare Indexed queries



\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Creating Indexes

● Index time

```
CREATE INDEX idx_json_timestamp_ms ON tweets_json (((tweet->>'timestamp_ms')::BIGINT));
```

Time: **139393.493 ms (02:19.393)**

100

```
CREATE INDEX idx_jsonb_timestamp_ms ON tweets_jsonb (((tweet->>'timestamp_ms')::BIGINT));
```

Time: **24268.704 ms (00:24.269)**

17

```
CREATE INDEX idx_mixed_timestamp_ms ON tweets_mix_normalized (CAST (timestamp_ms AS BIGINT));
```

Time: **31793.163 ms (00:31.793)**

23

```
CREATE INDEX idx_tweet_timestamp_ms ON tweet (CAST (timestamp_ms AS BIGINT));
```

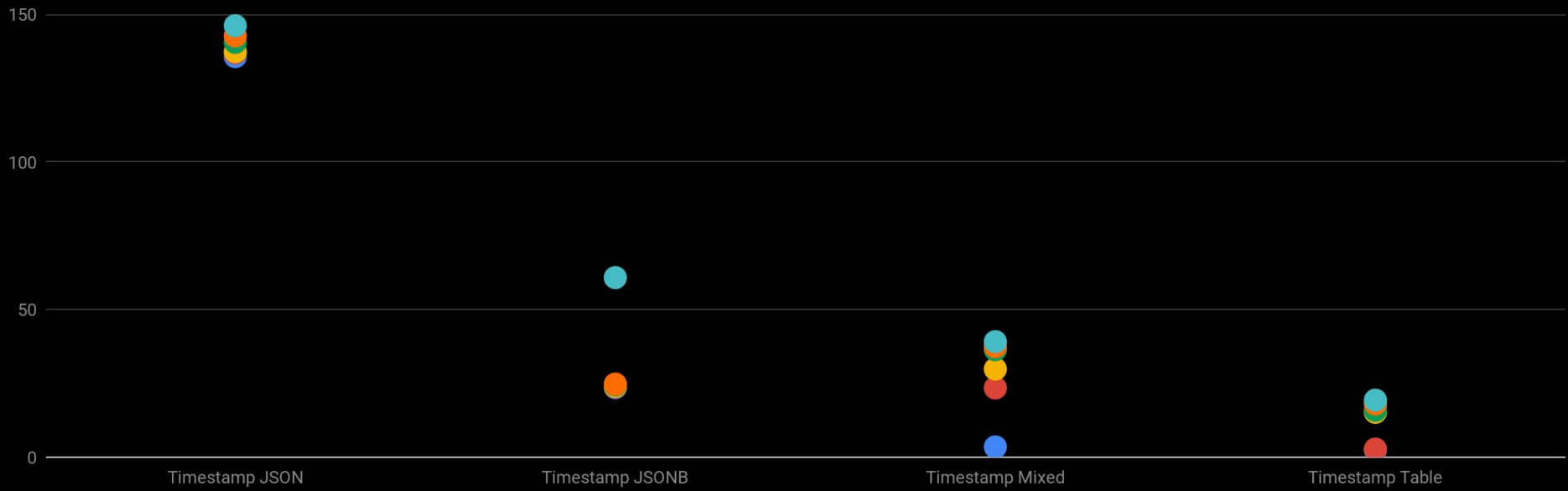
Time: **12967.147 ms (00:12.967)**

9

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Creating Indexes



JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: Last 10 Tweets (indexed)

● Indexed QT ● Unindexed QT

1.

```
SELECT
  tweet->>'id' AS id,
  tweet->>'text' AS text,
  tweet->>'created_at' AS created_at,
  tweet->>'source' AS source,
  tweet->>'retweet_count' AS retweet_count,
  tweet->>'favorite_count' AS favorite_count,
  tweet->'user'->>'name' AS name,
  tweet->'user'->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  tweet->'user'->>'verified' AS verified,
  tweet->'user'->>'profile_image_url_https' AS profile_image_url_https
FROM tweets_jsonb
ORDER BY (tweet->>'timestamp_ms')::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;
```

Time: 3.053 ms

100

100

2.

```
SELECT
  id,
  text,
  created_at,
  source,
  retweet_count,
  favorite_count,
  "user"->>'name' AS name,
  "user"->>'screen_name' AS screen_name,
  "user"->>'verified' AS verified,
  "user"->>'profile_image_url_https' AS profile_image_url_https
FROM tweets_mix_normalized
ORDER BY timestamp_ms::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;
```

Time: 1.613 ms

53

51

3.

```
SELECT
  tweet.id,
  tweet.text,
  tweet.created_at,
  tweet.source,
  tweet.retweet_count,
  tweet.favorite_count,
  "user".name,
  "user".screen_name,
  "user".verified,
  "user".profile_image_url_https
FROM tweet
JOIN "user" ON tweet.user_id = "user".id
ORDER BY timestamp_ms::BIGINT
LIMIT 10;
```

Time: 2.198 ms

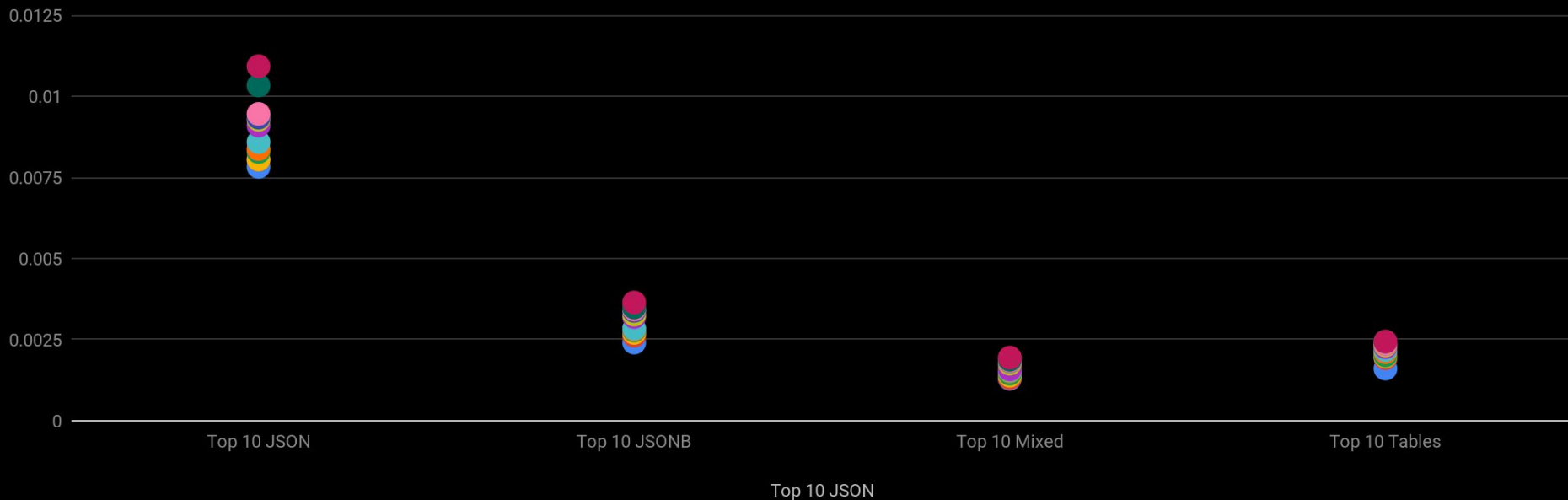
72

4

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: Last 10 Tweets (indexed)



\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Index size

Name	Table	Size
idx_json_timestamp_ms	tweets_json	87 MB
idx_json_user_name	tweets_json	132 MB
idx_jsonb_timestamp_ms	tweets_jsonb	87 MB
idx_jsonb_user_name	tweets_jsonb	132 MB
idx_mixed_timestamp_ms	tweets_mix_normalized	87 MB
idx_mixed_user_name	tweets_mix_normalized	132 MB
idx_tweet_timestamp_ms	tweet	88 MB
idx_tweet_user_id_fkey	tweet	88 MB
tweet_pkey	tweet	88 MB
place_pkey	place	352 kB
idx_user_name	user	73 MB
user_pkey	user	50 MB

(12 rows)

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Index size

Name	Table	Size
idx_json_timestamp_ms	tweets_json	87 MB
idx_json_user_name	tweets_json	132 MB
idx_jsonb_timestamp_ms	tweets_jsonb	87 MB
idx_jsonb_user_name	tweets_jsonb	132 MB
idx_mixed_timestamp_ms	tweets_mix_normalized	87 MB
idx_mixed_user_name	tweets_mix_normalized	132 MB
idx_tweet_timestamp_ms	tweet	88 MB
idx_tweet_user_id_fkey	tweet	88 MB
tweet_pkey	tweet	88 MB
place_pkey	place	352 kB
idx_user_name	user	73 MB
user_pkey	user	50 MB

(12 rows)

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: Backups

● Backup time ● Backup size

```
$ pg_dump --db twitter --table tweets_json -f tweets_json.sql
```

real 2m59.762s

30G tweets_json.sql

50

100

```
$ pg_dump --db twitter --table tweets_jsonb -f tweets_jsonb.sql
```

real 6m3.020s

30G tweets_jsonb.sql

100

99

```
$ pg_dump --db twitter --table tweets_mix_normalized -f tweets_mix_normalized.sql
```

real 5m29.481s

26G tweets_mix_normalized.sql

91

86

```
$ pg_dump --db twitter_normalized --table tweet --table user --table place -f tweets_normalized.sql
```

real 0m43.653s

4.1G tweets_normalized.sql

12

14

\$ _

JSON vs JSONB vs Tables

Real life example: Restores

● Backup size

```
$ psql backup -f tweets_json.sql
```

```
real 14m45.819s
```

54

```
$ psql backup -f tweets_jsonb.sql
```

```
real 22m54.010s
```

84

```
$ psql backup -f tweets_mix_normalized.sql
```

```
real 27m18.312s
```

100

```
$ psql backup -f twitter_normalized.sql
```

```
real 6m23.690s
```

23

\$ _

When could you use JSONB?

usage

(0 rows)

\$ _

When could you use JSONB?

usage

Got NOSQL, but you need some ACID

Storing document data - like settings, API queries (HAR format?)...

Audit trail

Fast-changing data

Data with many optional columns/keys (Could inherited tables work?)

As an aggregate

When you have JSON data and **quickly** need to do some queries on the data

(7 rows)

\$ _

When to not use JSONB

Usage

When you need to filter the data

When you need indexes

When you need constraints

When you need a key-value store

When you could use a table

When other people need to know what is going on

When you need to store a lot of data in one row

(7 rows)

\$ _

Conclusion Prelude

Programming, like all other engineering, is about compromises - there is no absolute answer.

But we need to do our best to assess the options.

\$ _

Conclusion



Conclusion

