

Graph Construction

Data Management and Visualization



SoftEng
<http://softeng.polito.it>

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Grammar of Graphics

- Theory behind graphics construction
 - ◆ Separation of data from aesthetic
 - ◆ Definition of common chart elements
 - ◆ Composition of such elements
- Building a graphic involves
 1. Specification
 2. Assembly
 3. Display

Leland Wilkinson, *The grammar of graphics*

Specification

- **DATA**: a set of data operations that create variables from datasets
 - ♦ Link variables (e.g., *by index* or *id*)
- **TRANS**: variable transformations (e.g., *rank*)
- **SCALE**: scale transformations (e.g., *log*)
- **COORD**: a coordinate system (e.g., *polar*)
- **ELEMENT**: visual objects (e.g., *points*)
- **AESTHETIC**: attributes (e.g., *color*, *position*)
- **GUIDE**: guides (e.g., *axes*, *legends*)

Specification for a scatter plot

- DATA: x, y, group
- TRANS: identity
- SCALE: *linear(dim(1)), linear(dim(2))*
- COORD: *rect(dim(1), 2)*
- ELEMENT: *point()*
- AESTHETIC: *position(x*y)*
- GUIDE: *axis(dim(1)), axis(dim(2))*

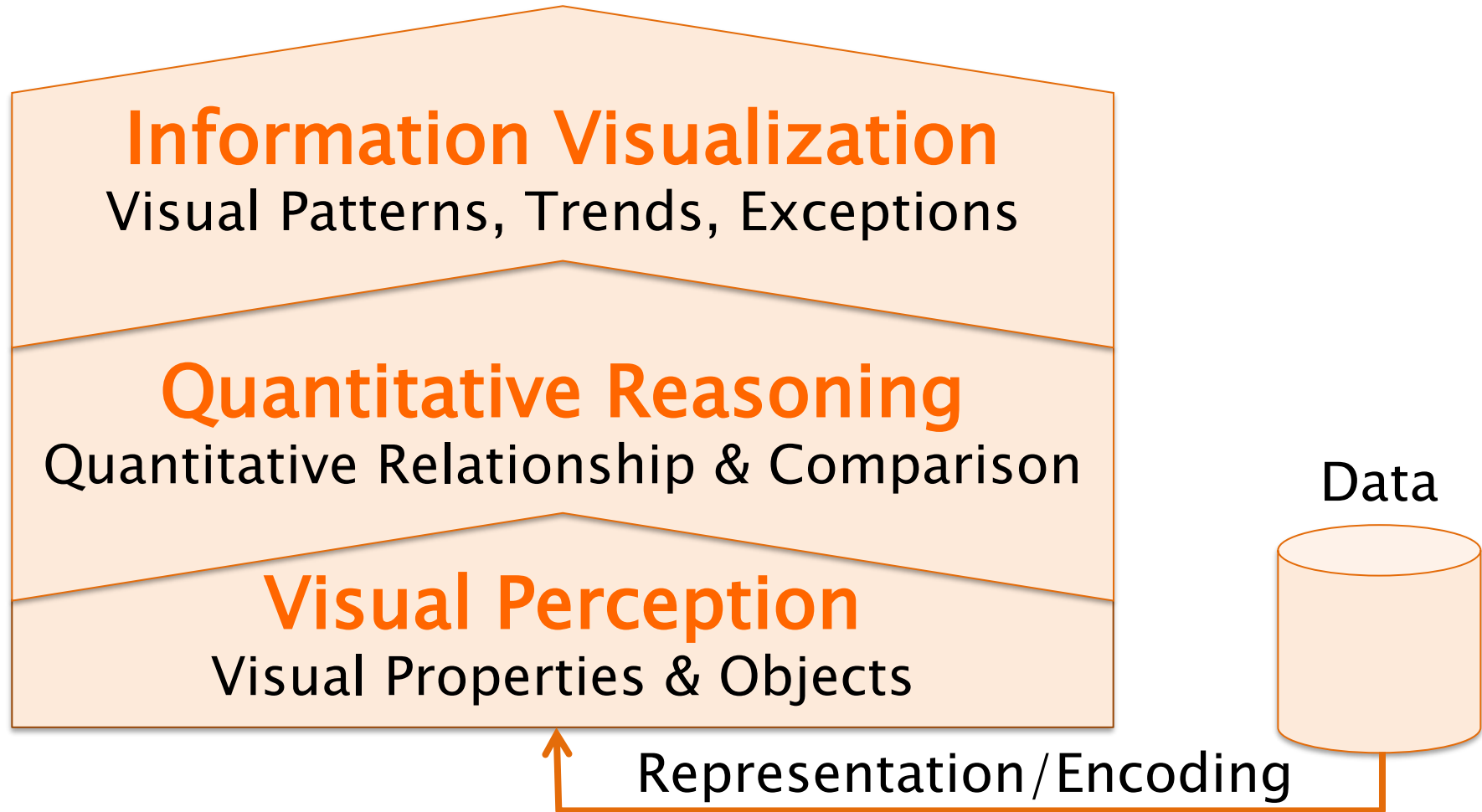
Graph visual components

- Data components
 - ◆ Visual objects associated to measures
 - ◆ Visual attributes
- Layout
 - ◆ Positioning rules (e.g. cartesian coord.)
- Support components
 - ◆ Axes
 - ◆ Labels
 - ◆ Legends

VISUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Data Visualization

Understanding



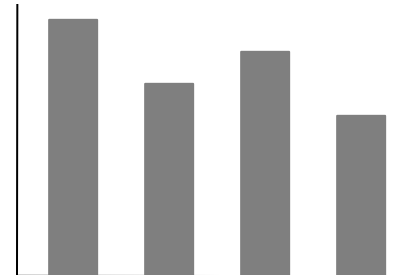
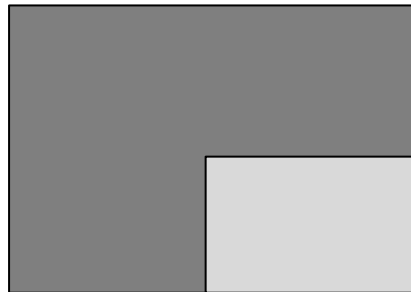
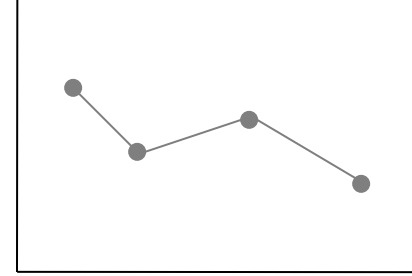
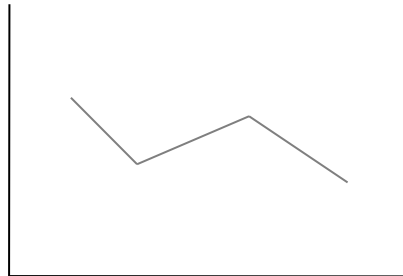
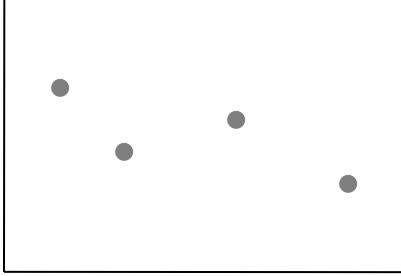
Visual Encoding

- Given a variable (measure), identify:
 - ◆ Visual object
 - ◆ Visual attribute
- Main distinction
 - ◆ Quantitative (interval, ratio, absolute)
 - ◆ Categorical (nominal, ordinal)

Relationships

- Within a category
 - ◆ Nominal comparison
 - ◆ Ranking
 - ◆ Part-to-whole
 - ◆ Distribution
- Between measures
 - ◆ Time series
 - ◆ Deviation
 - ◆ Correlation

Quantitative encoding



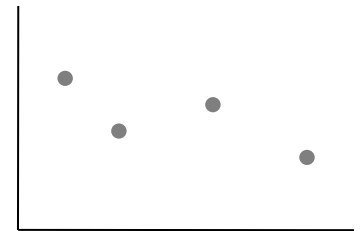
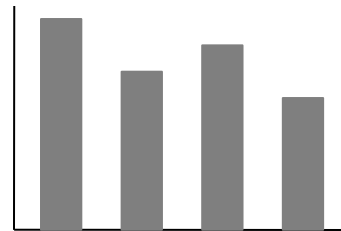
Sample data

Region	turnout (2018)	turnout (2013)
ABRUZZO	75.3%	75.9%
BASILICATA	71.1%	69.5%
CALABRIA	63.6%	63.1%
CAMPANIA	68.2%	67.9%
EMILIA-ROMAGNA	78.3%	82.1%
FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA	75.1%	77.2%
LAZIO	72.6%	77.5%
LIGURIA	72.0%	75.1%
LOMBARDIA	76.8%	79.6%
MARCHE	77.3%	79.8%

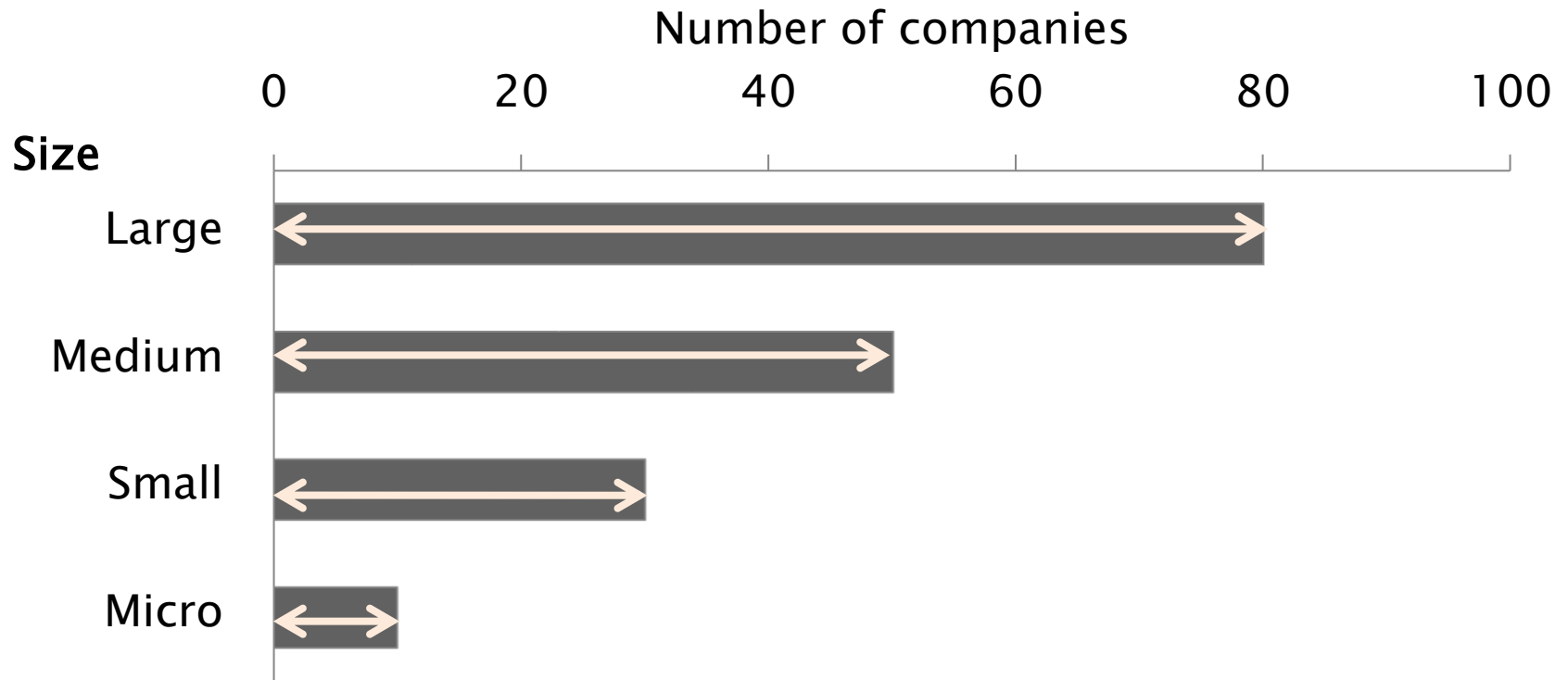
Region	turnout (2018)	turnout (2013)
MOLISE	71.6%	78.1%
PIEMONTE	75.2%	77.3%
PUGLIA	69.1%	69.9%
SARDEGNA	65.5%	68.5%
SICILIA	62.8%	64.6%
TOSCANA	77.5%	79.2%
TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE	74.3%	81.0%
UMBRIA	78.2%	79.5%
VALLE D'AOSTA	72.3%	77.0%
VENETO	78.7%	81.8%

Nominal comparison

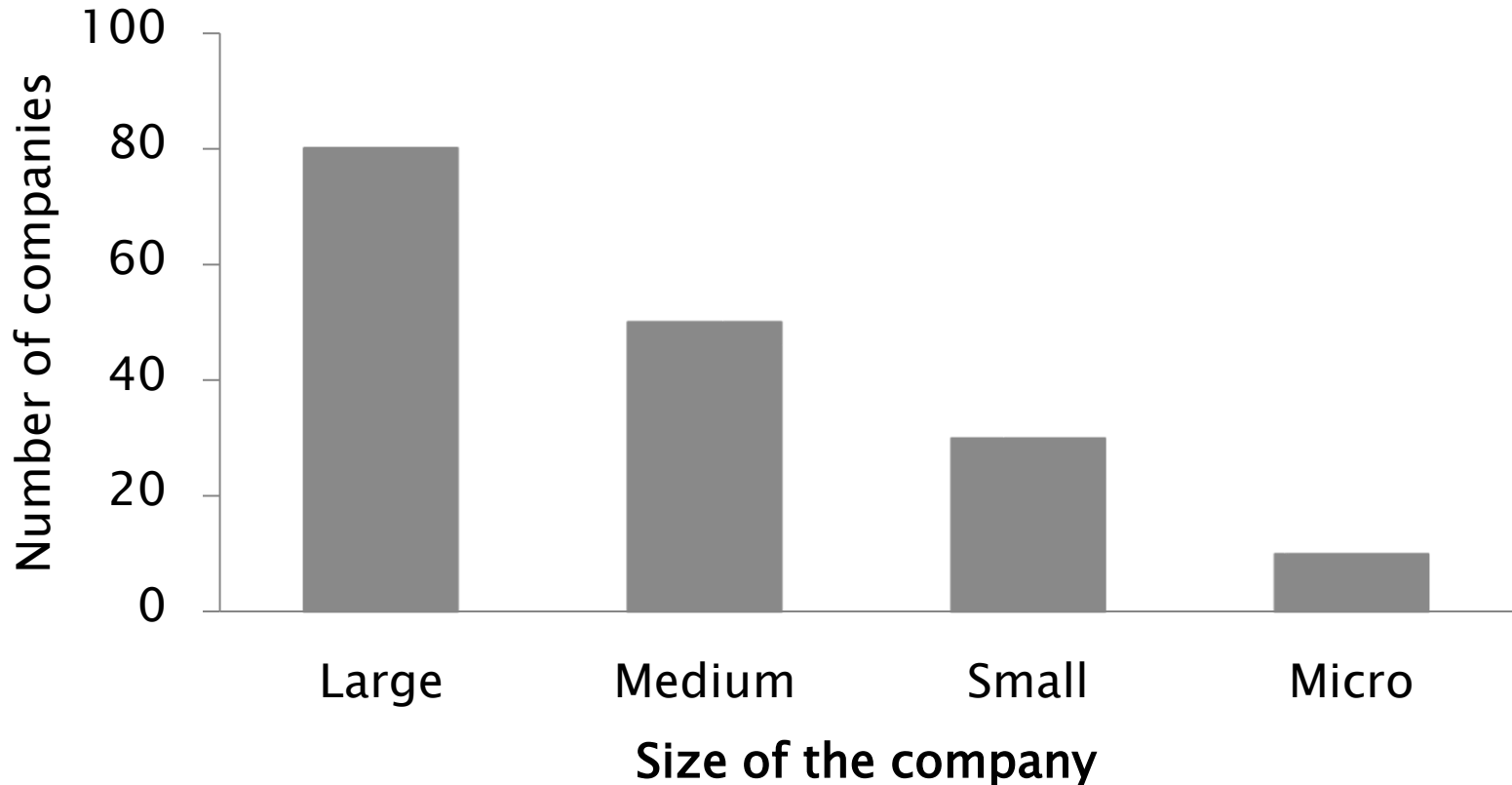
- Compare quantitative values corresponding to categorical levels
 - ◆ Small differences are difficult to see
 - Non zero-based scale can emphasize
 - ◆ Dot plots can be used for small differences
 - They do not require zero based scale



Line length – Bars chart



Vertical Bars (aka Columns)

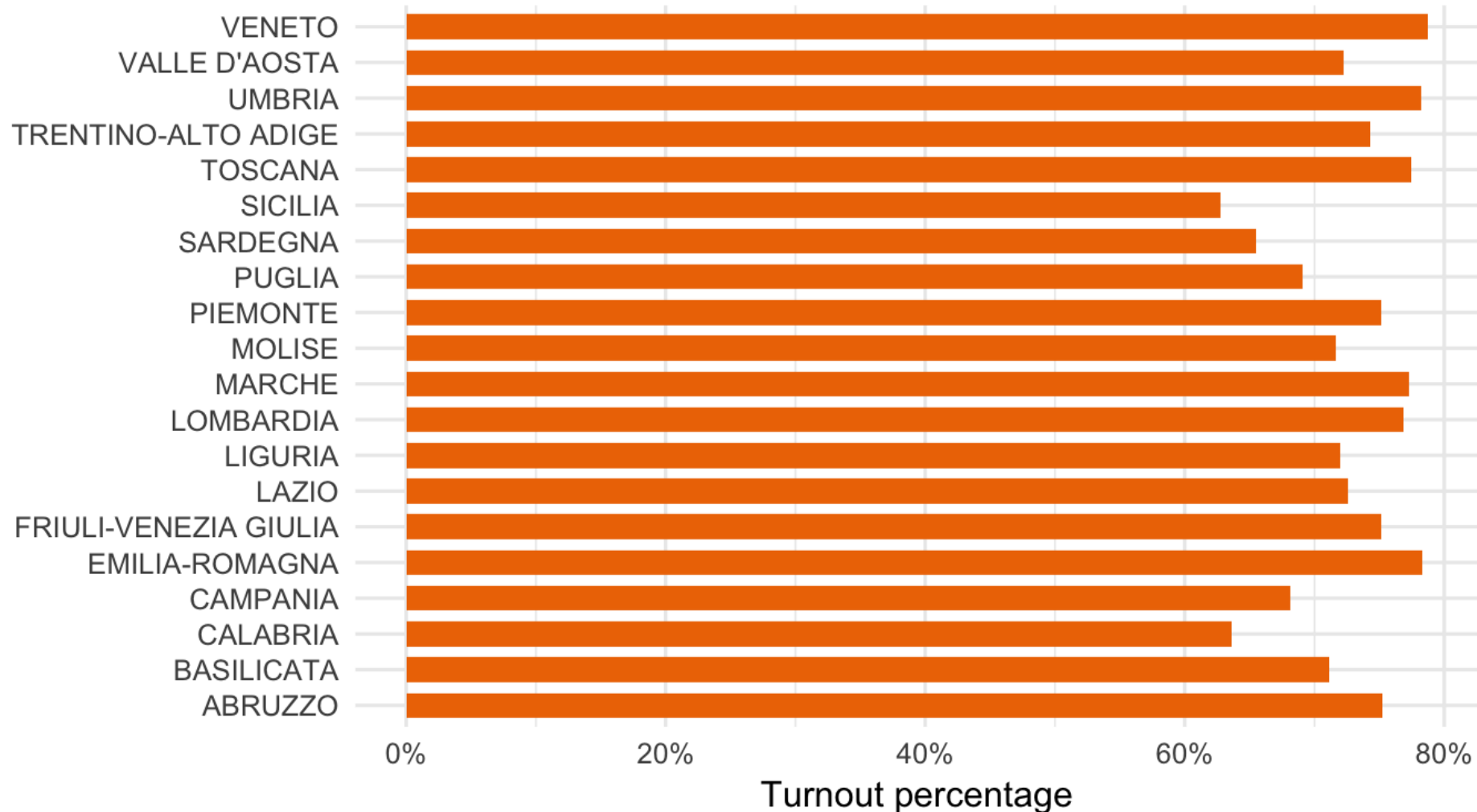


Bar charts

- Categorical values are encoded as position along an axis
- Quantitative values are encoded only as length of the bars
 - ◆ The axis is a supporting element
- Width of bars plays no role
 - ◆ Bars are just very thick lines
- Bars require a zero-based scale
 - ◆ See: Lie factor!

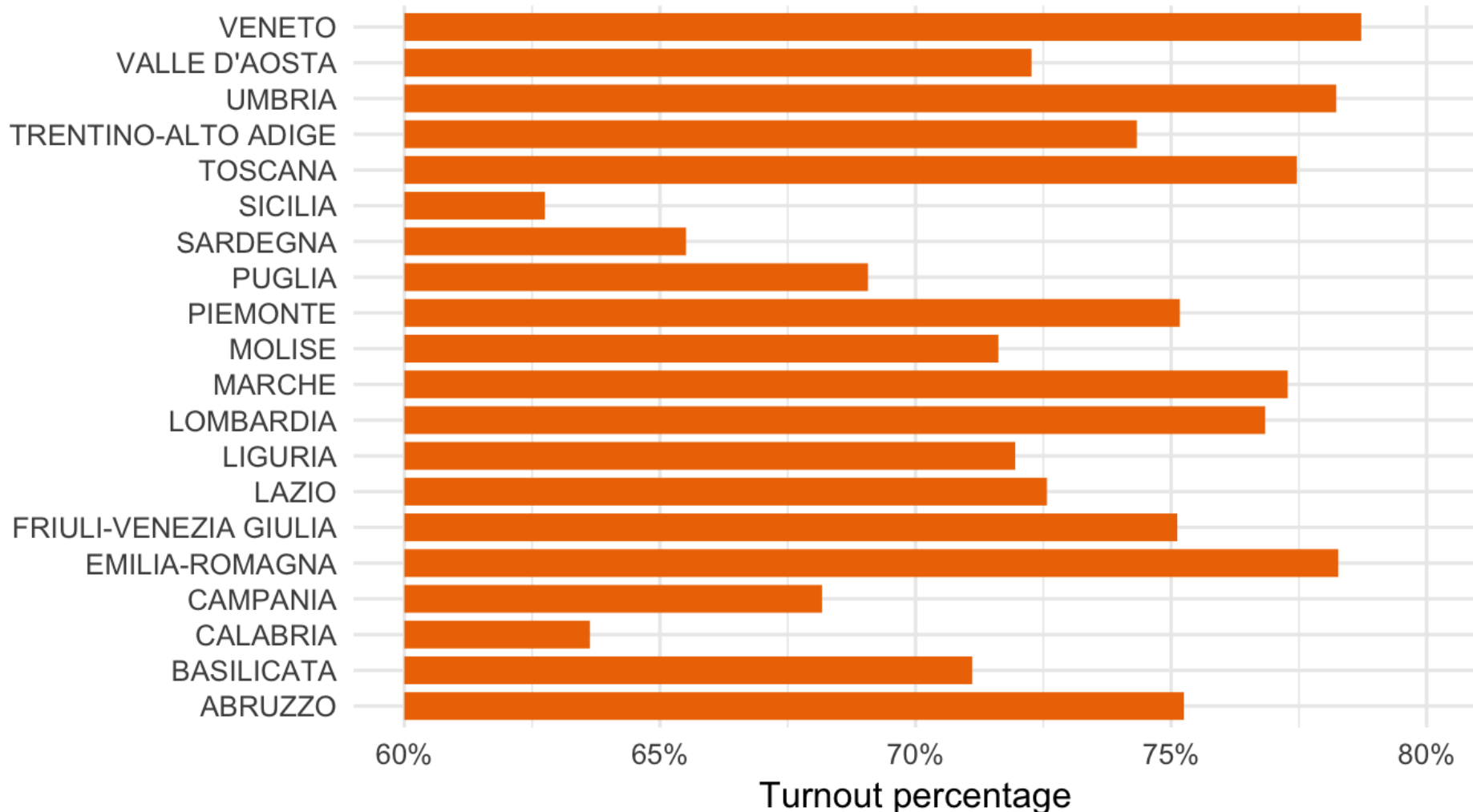
Comparison – Barplot

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



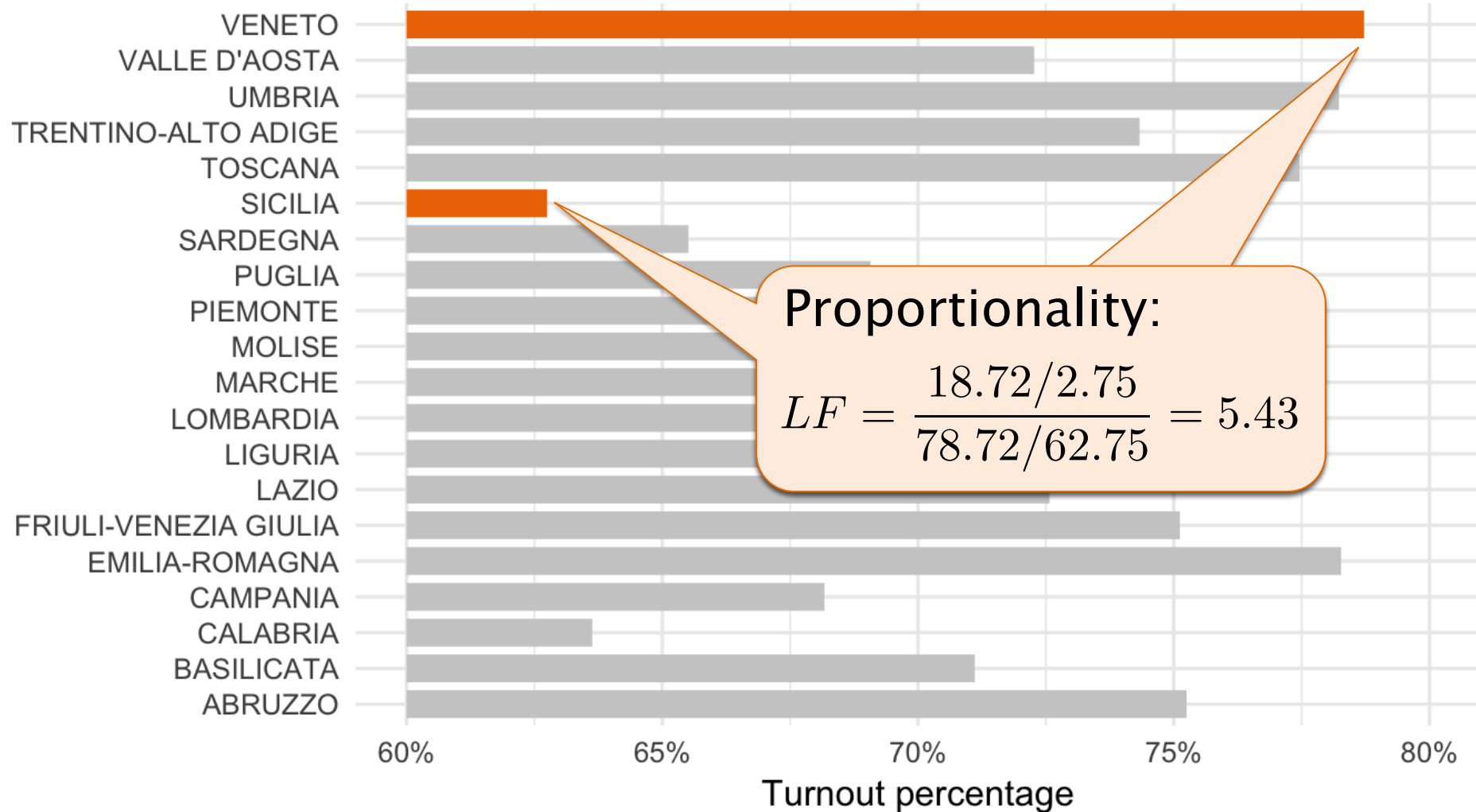
Barplot (non zero based scale)

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



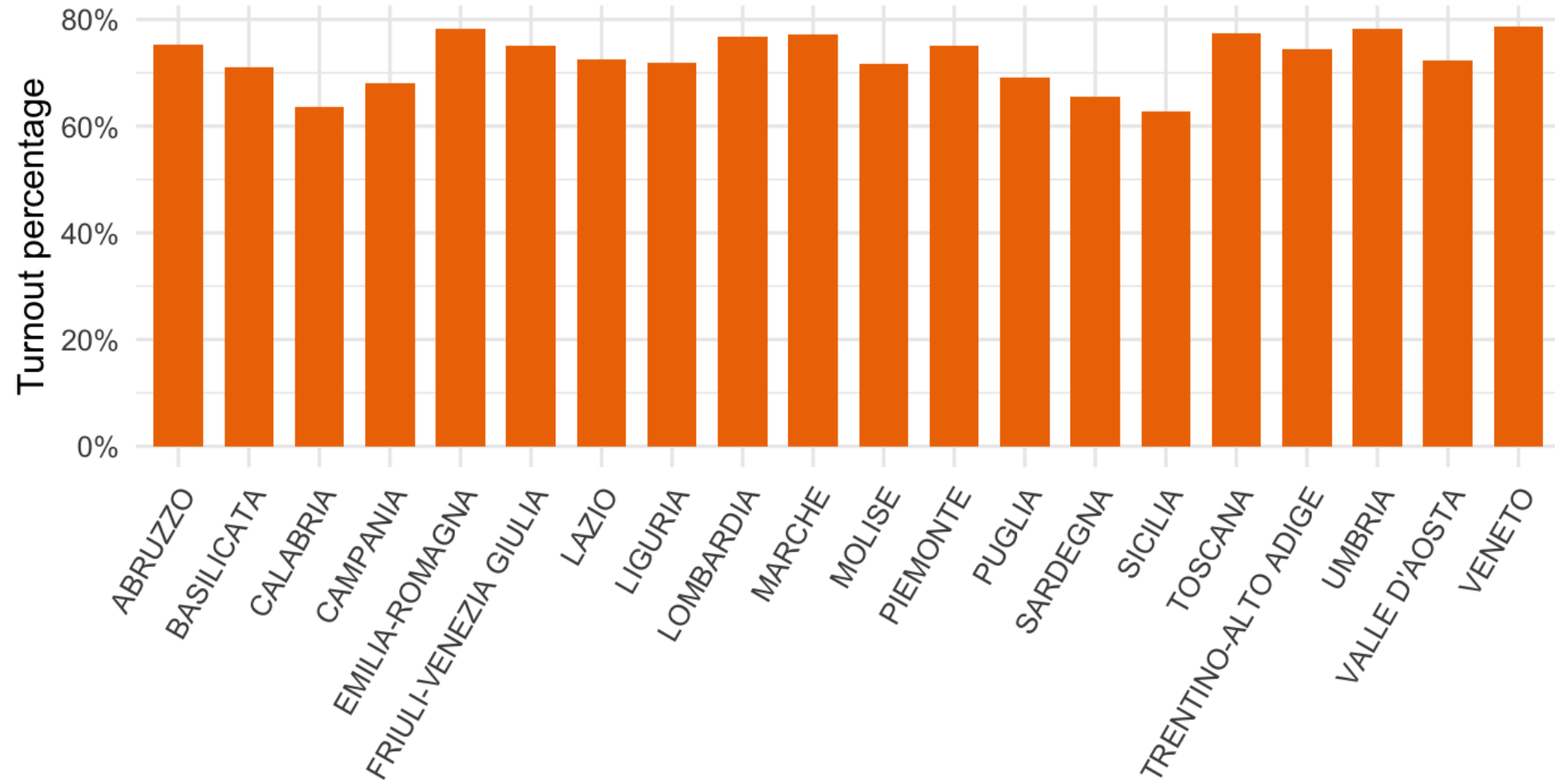
Barplot (non zero based scale)

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



Barplot vertical labels

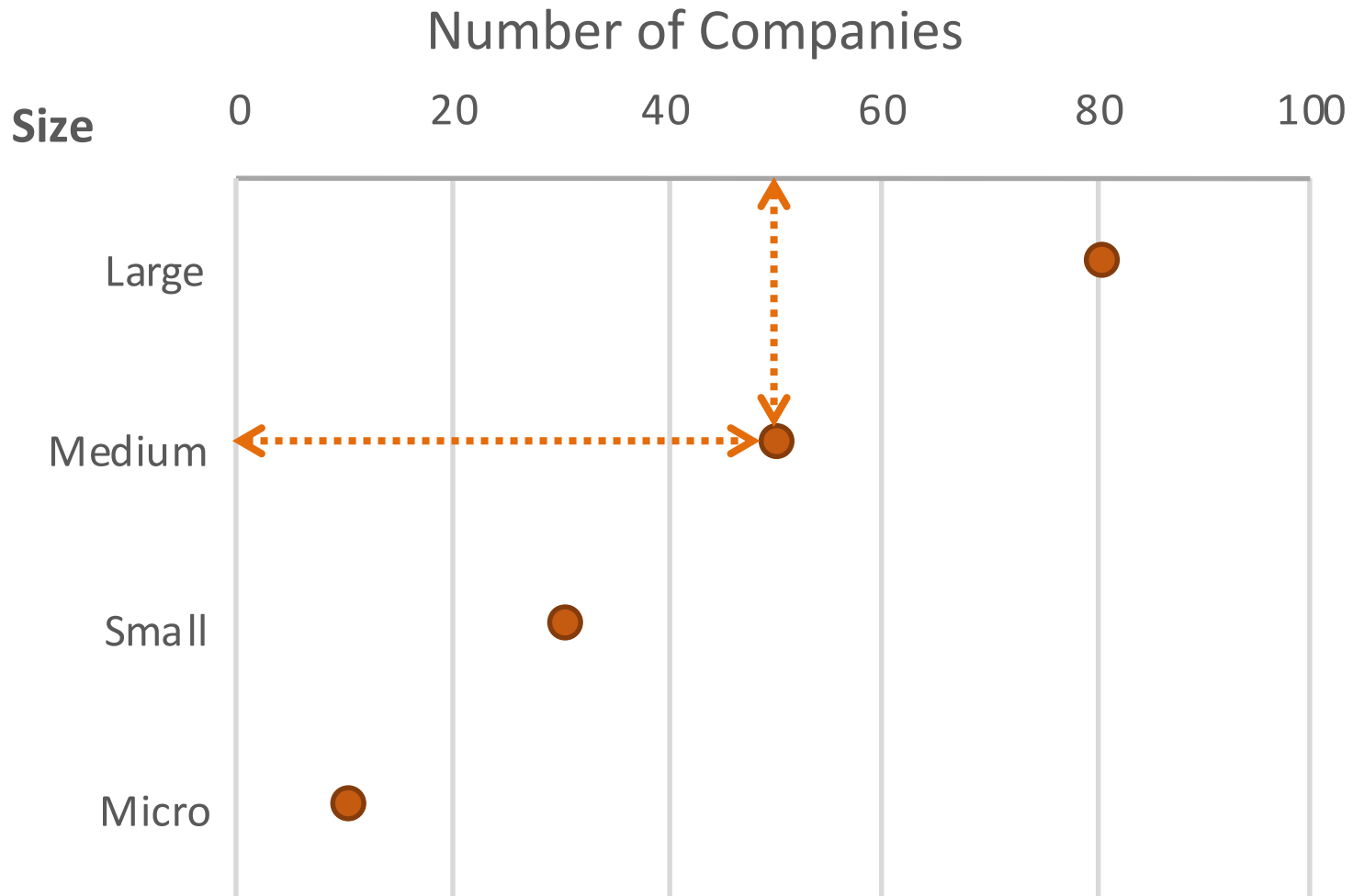
Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



Bars Guidelines

- Use horizontal bars when
 - ◆ A descending order ranking
 - ◆ Categorical label don't fit
- Proximity
 - ◆ Use a 1:1 bar:spacing ratio $\pm 50\%$
 - ◆ No spacing between bars that are not labeled on the axis (legend categories)
 - ◆ No overlapping bars

Position – Dots plot

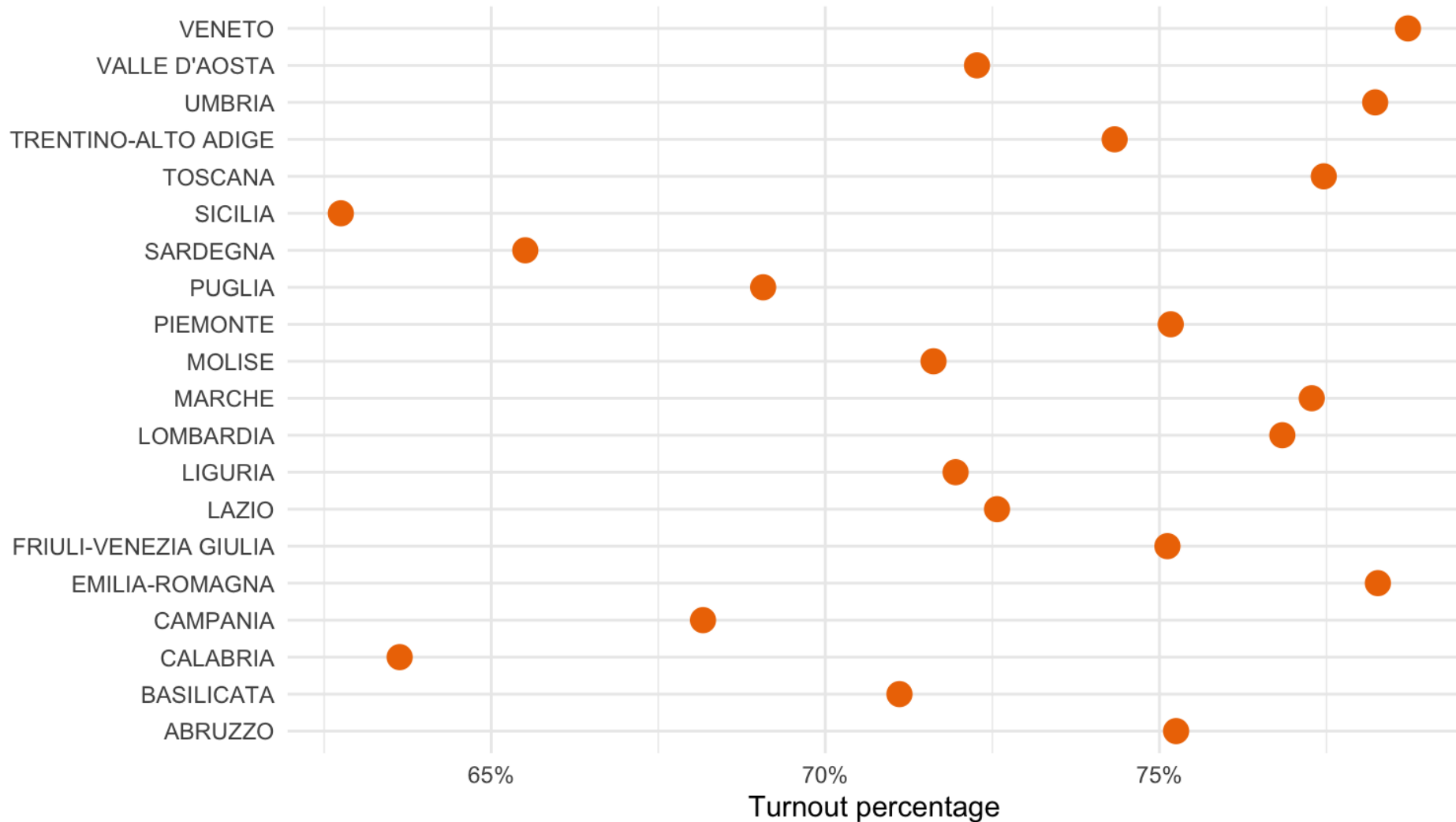


Dot plots

- Categorical values are encoded as position along an axis
- Quantitative values are encoded as position along an axis
 - ♦ There is no need to have a zero based axis range

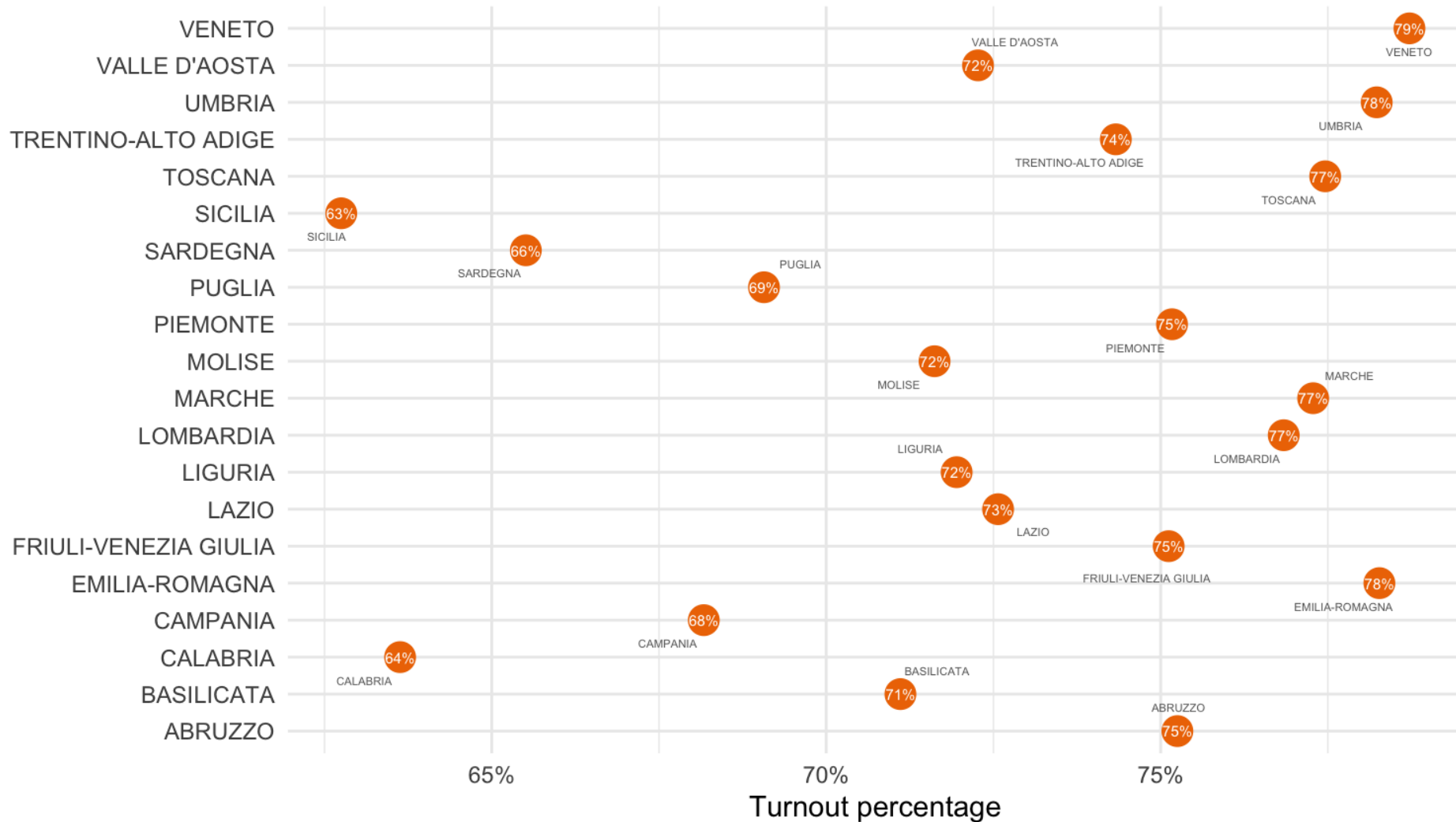
Comparison – Dot plot

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



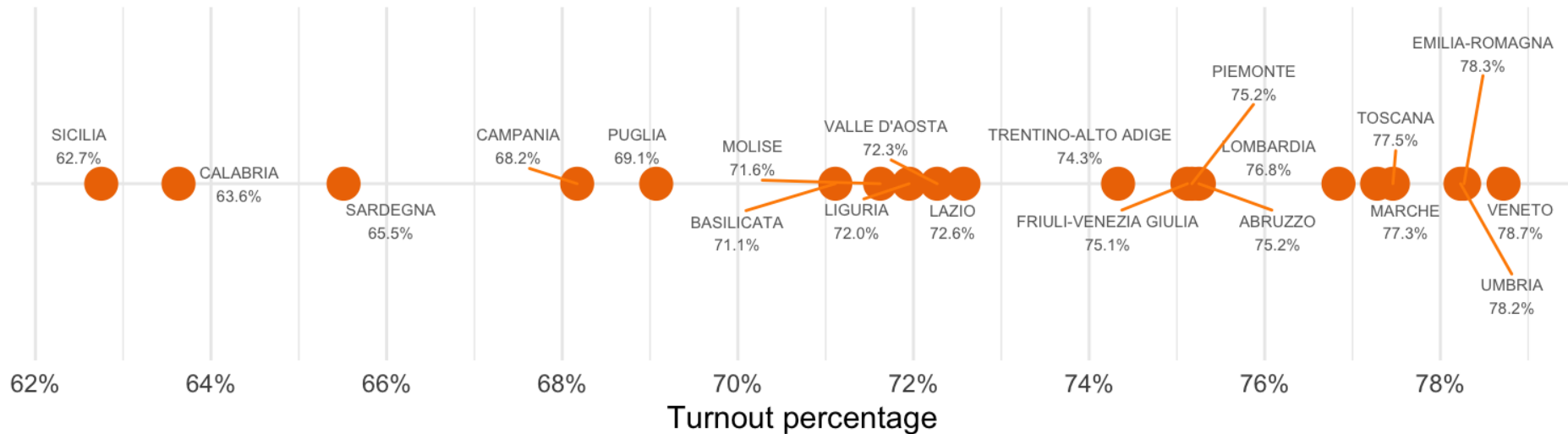
Comparison – Dot plot

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



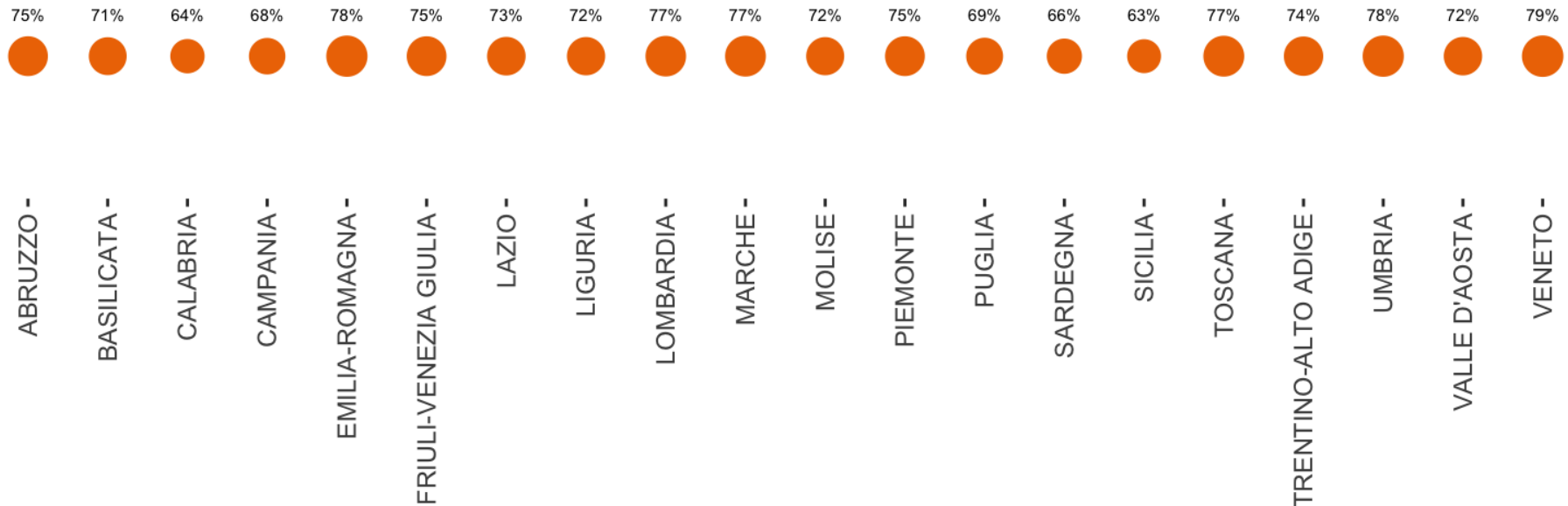
Comparison – Strip plot

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



Comparison – Area – Bubbles

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



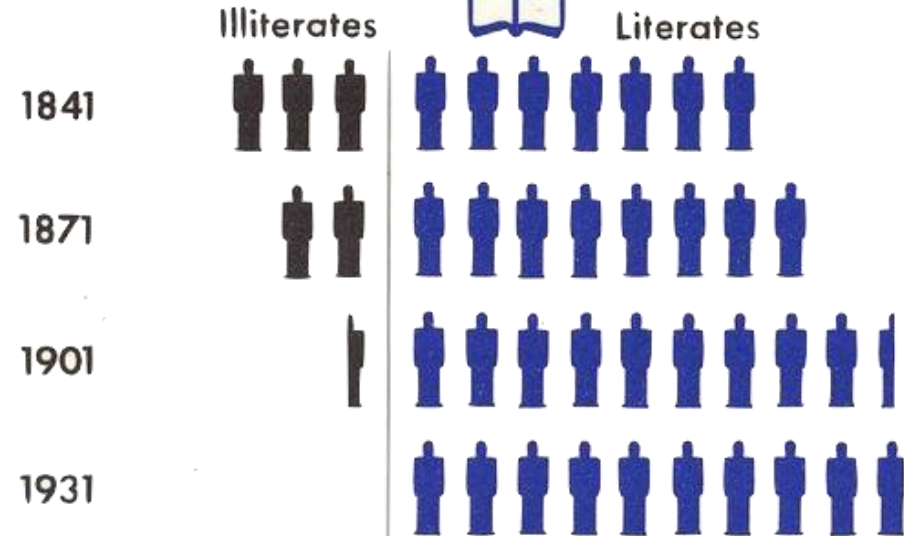
Extremely difficult to compare size

Count – Isotype

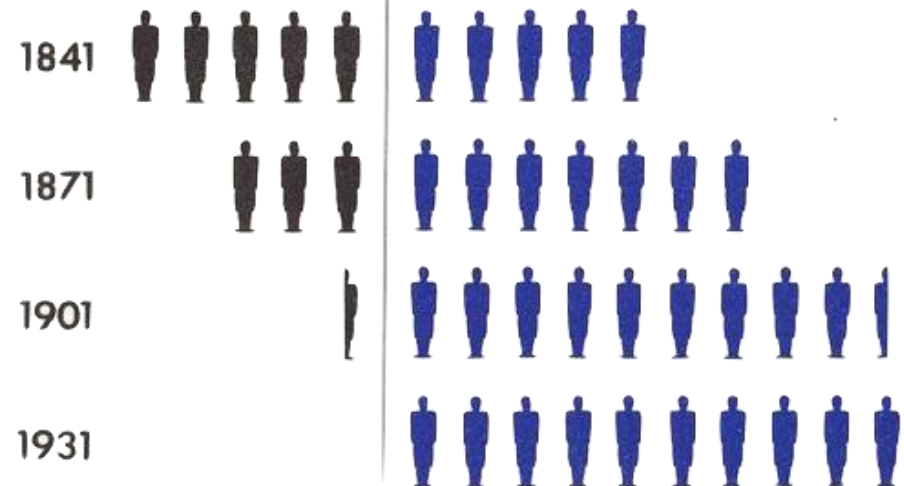
- Isotype
 - ◆ International System Of Typographic Picture Education
 - Marie and Otto Neurath
 - ◆ Vienna, 1936
-

Literacy in England and Wales

Among 10 men

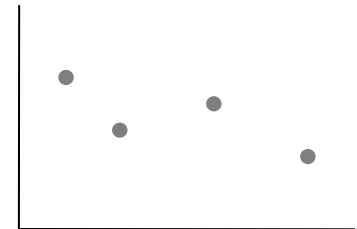
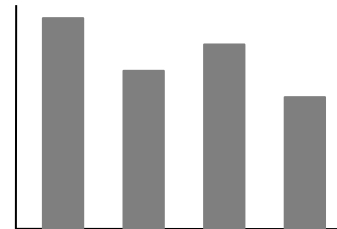


Among 10 women



Ranking

- Same type as nominal comparison
- Pay attention to order
 - ♦ Bar graphs
 - ♦ Dot plot
 - Allow non zero-based axes

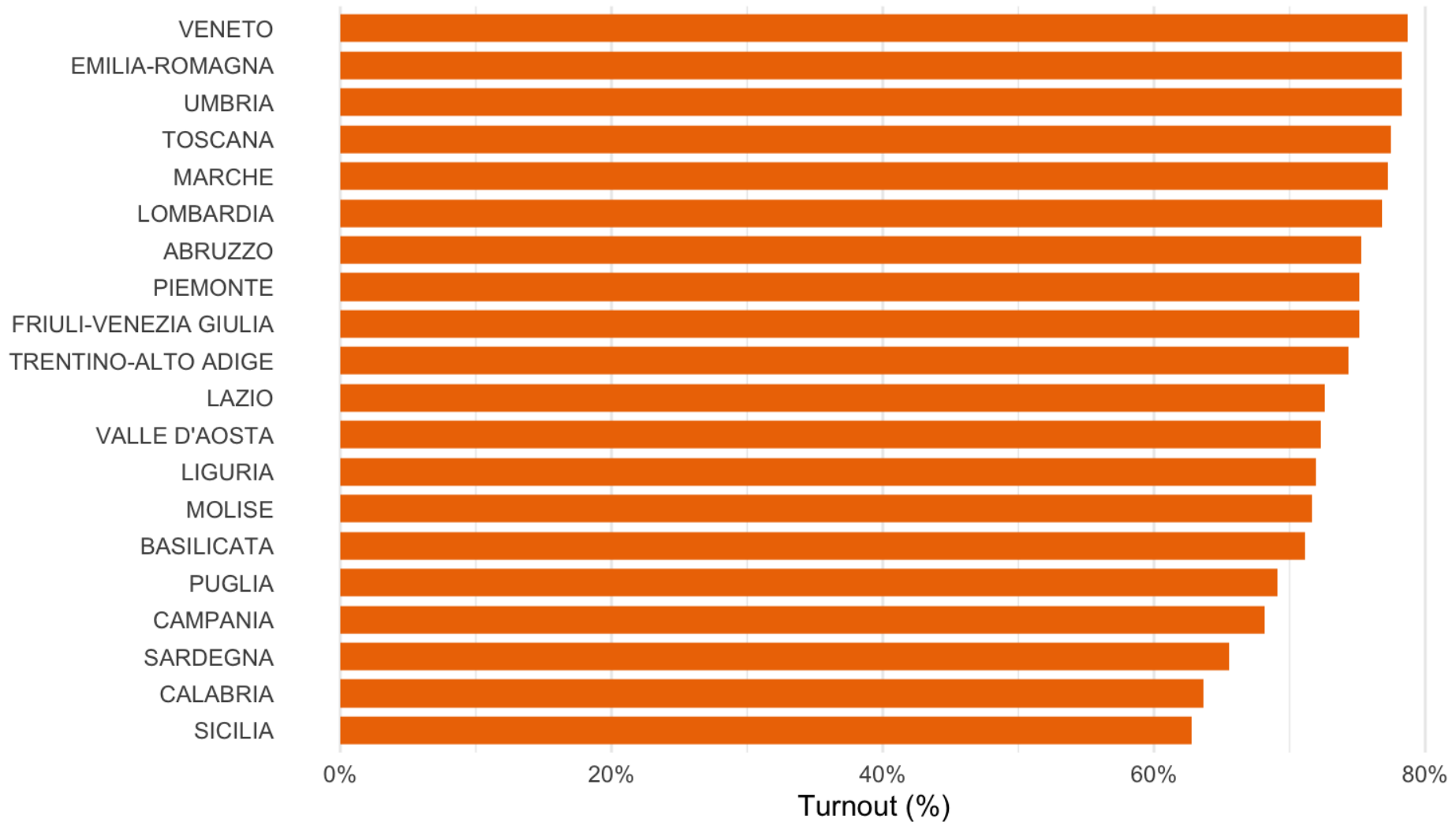


Ranking

Purpose	Sort order	Chart orientation
Highlight the highest value	Descending	H: highest on top V: highest on left
Highlight the lowest value	Ascending	H: lowest on top V: lowest on left

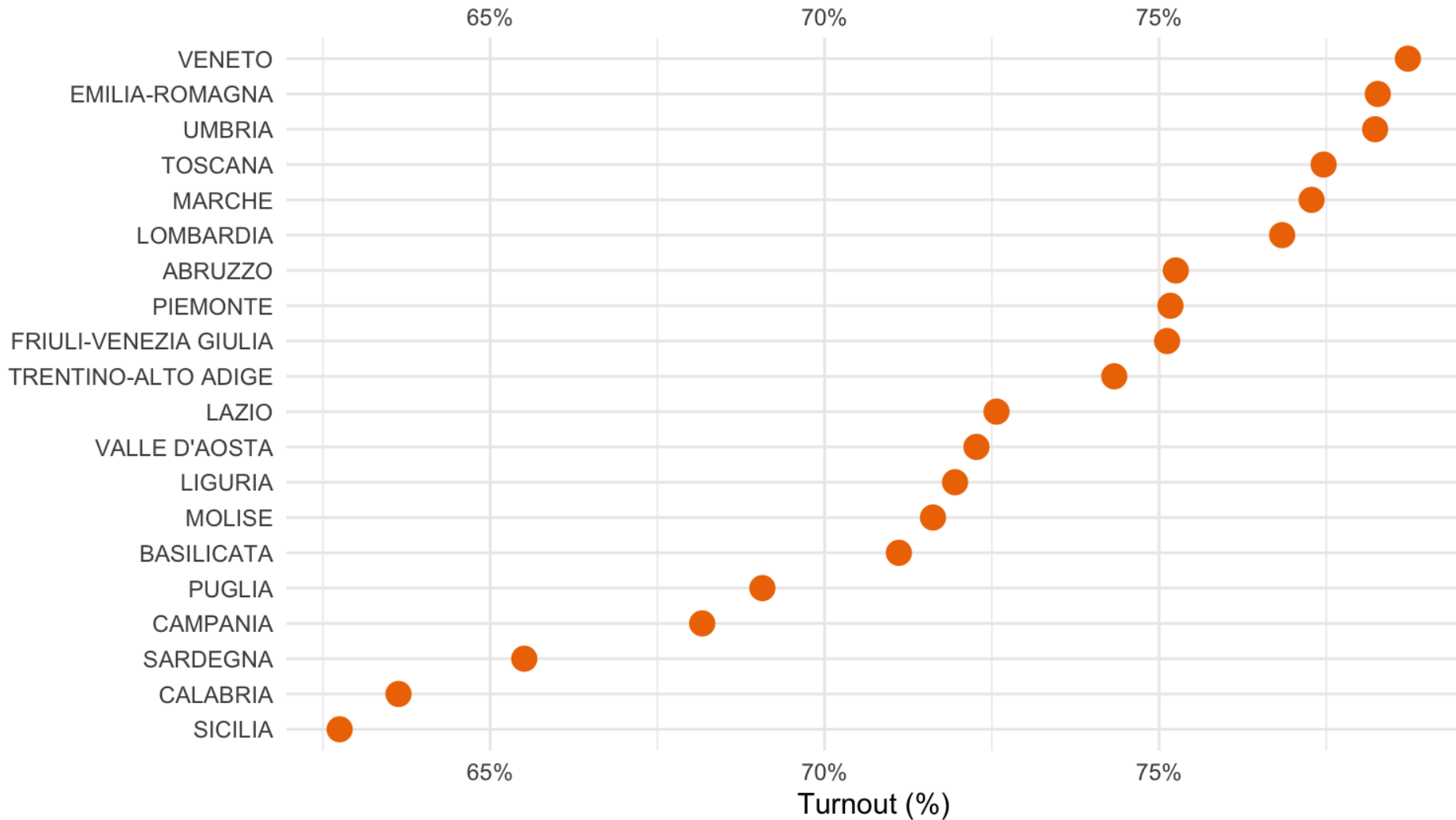
Ranking – Barplot

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



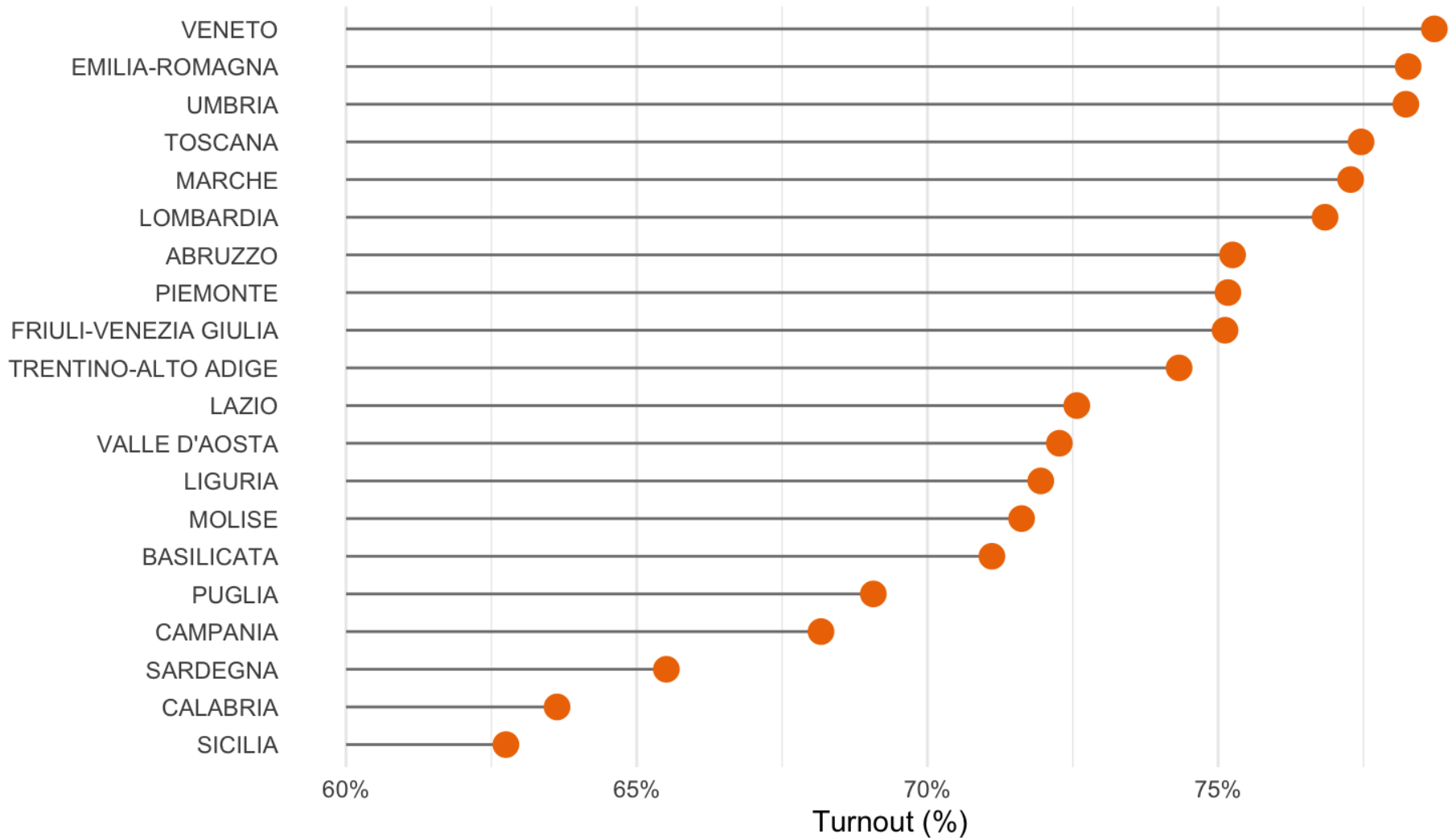
Ranking – Dot plot

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



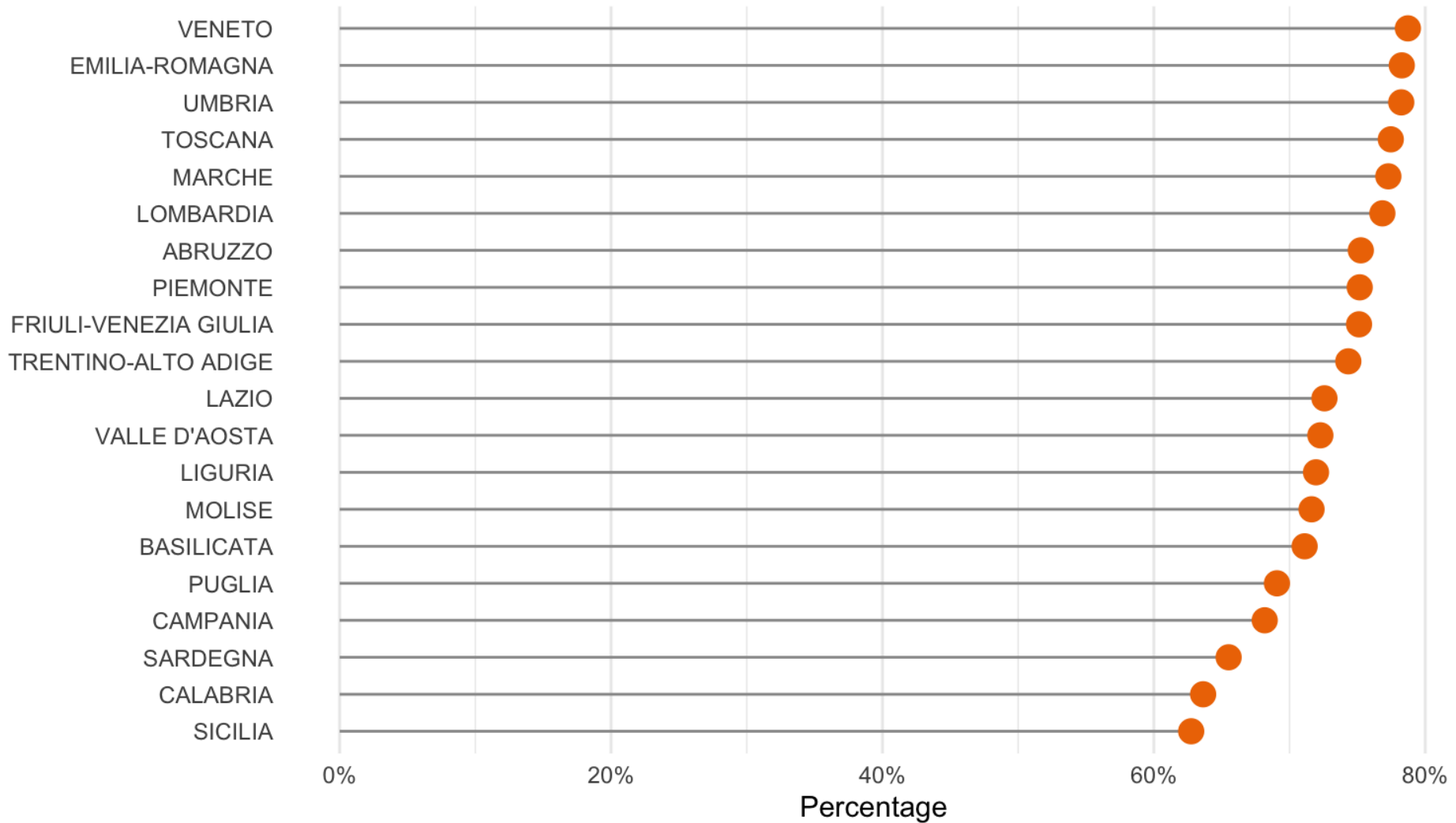
Lollypop (nonzero based scale)

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)



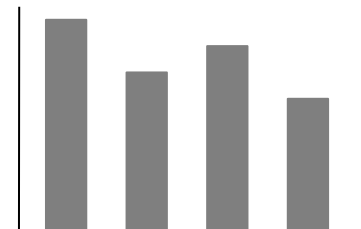
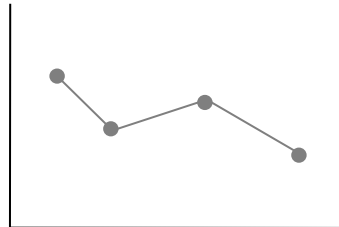
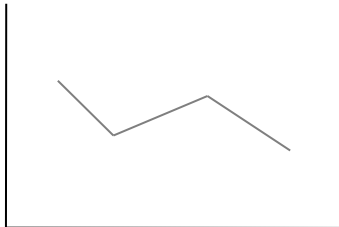
Lollypop (zero based scale)

Electoral turnout in italian regions (2018)

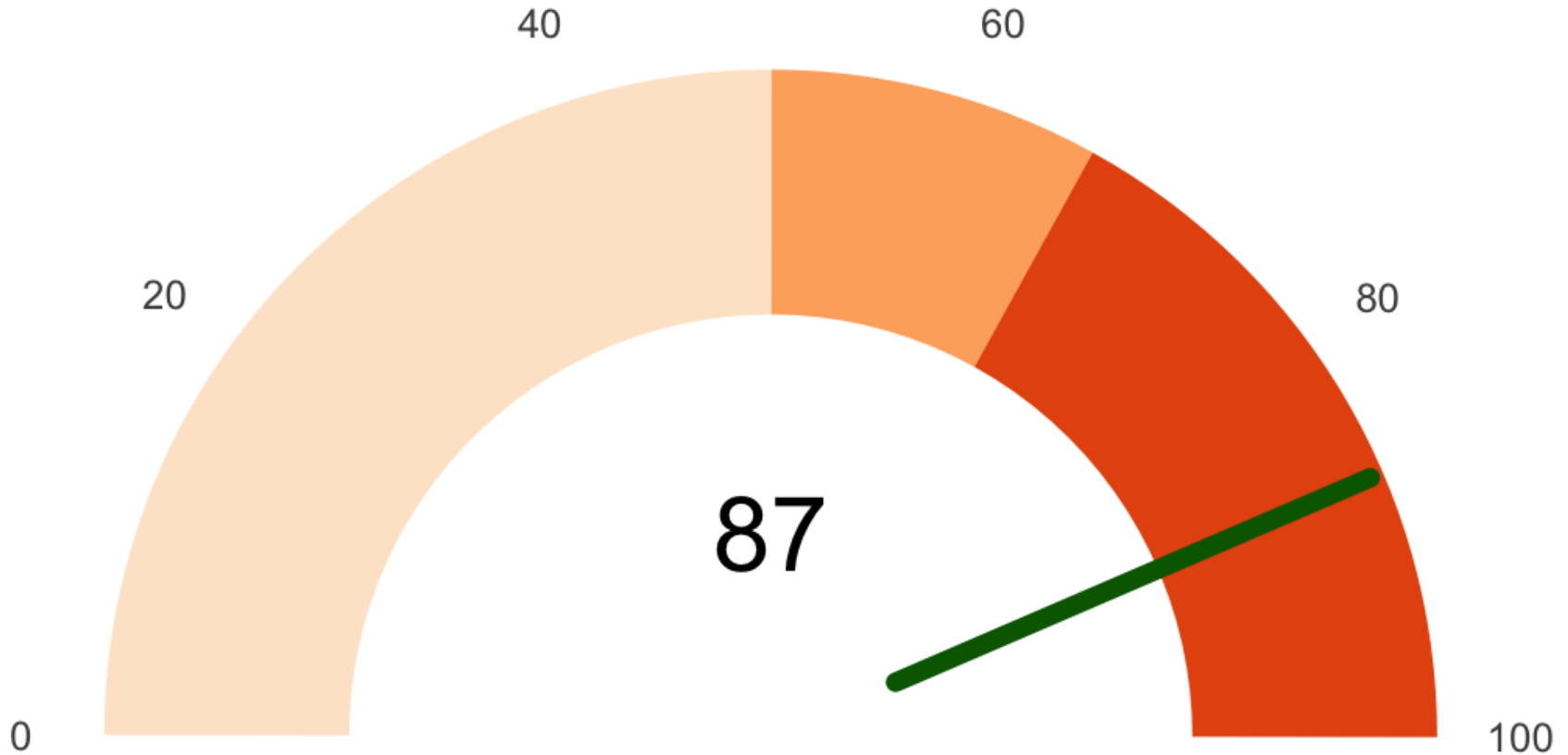


Deviation

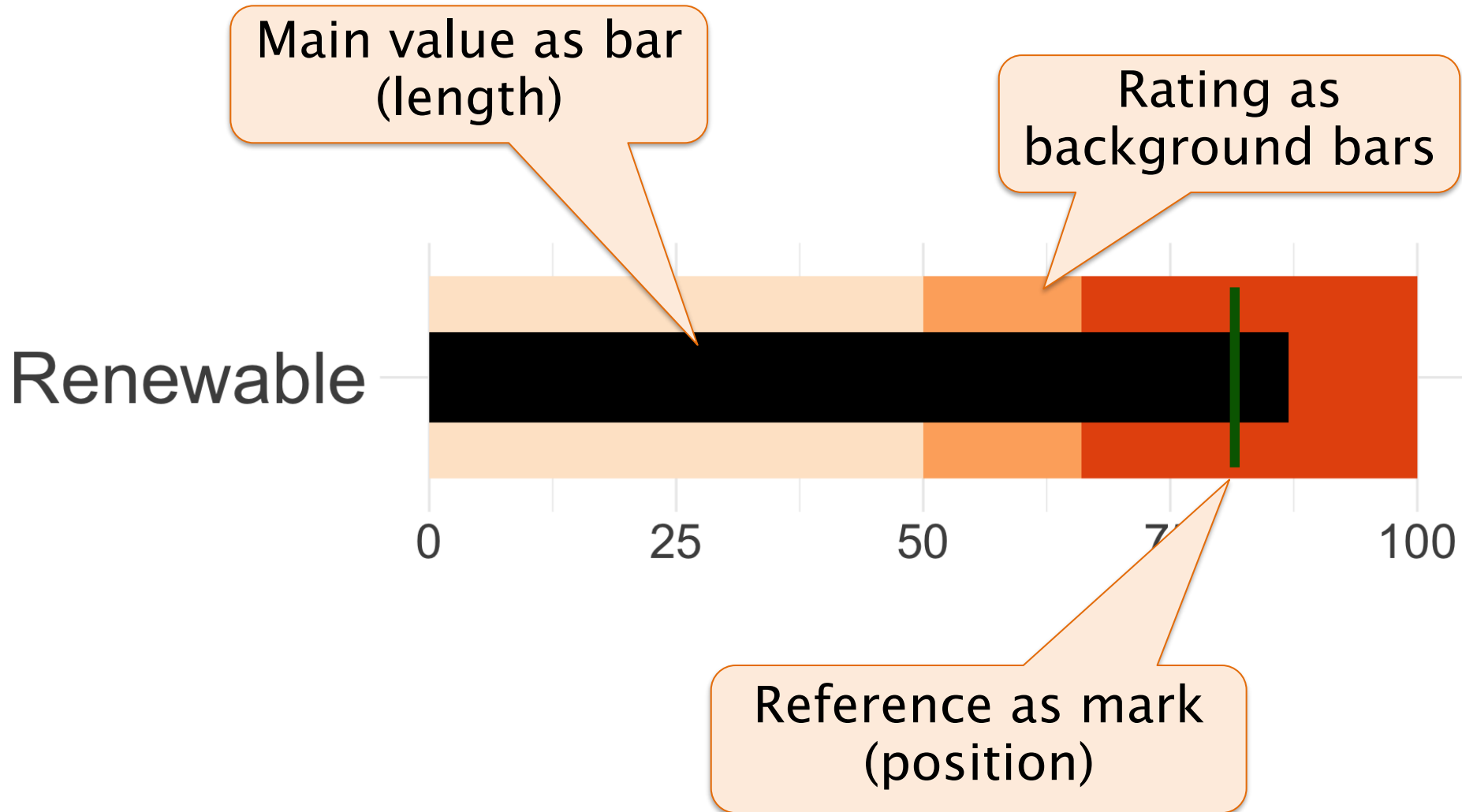
- To what degree one or more sets of values differ in relation to primary values.
 - ◆ Points (dots)
 - ◆ Gauge
 - ◆ Bars
 - ◆ Bullet



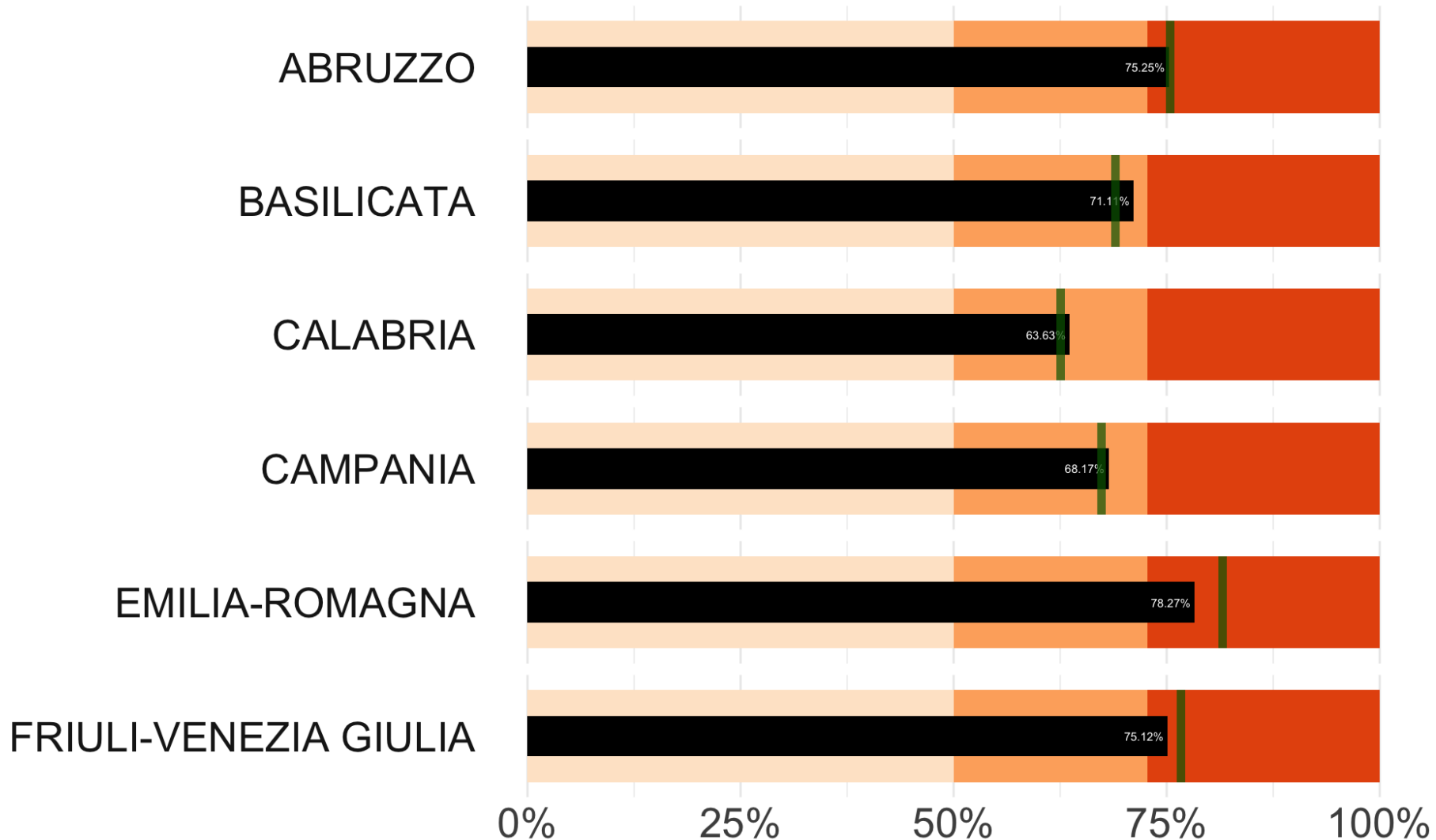
Angle + Position – Gauge



Length+Position– Bullet Graph



Length+Position– Bullet Graph

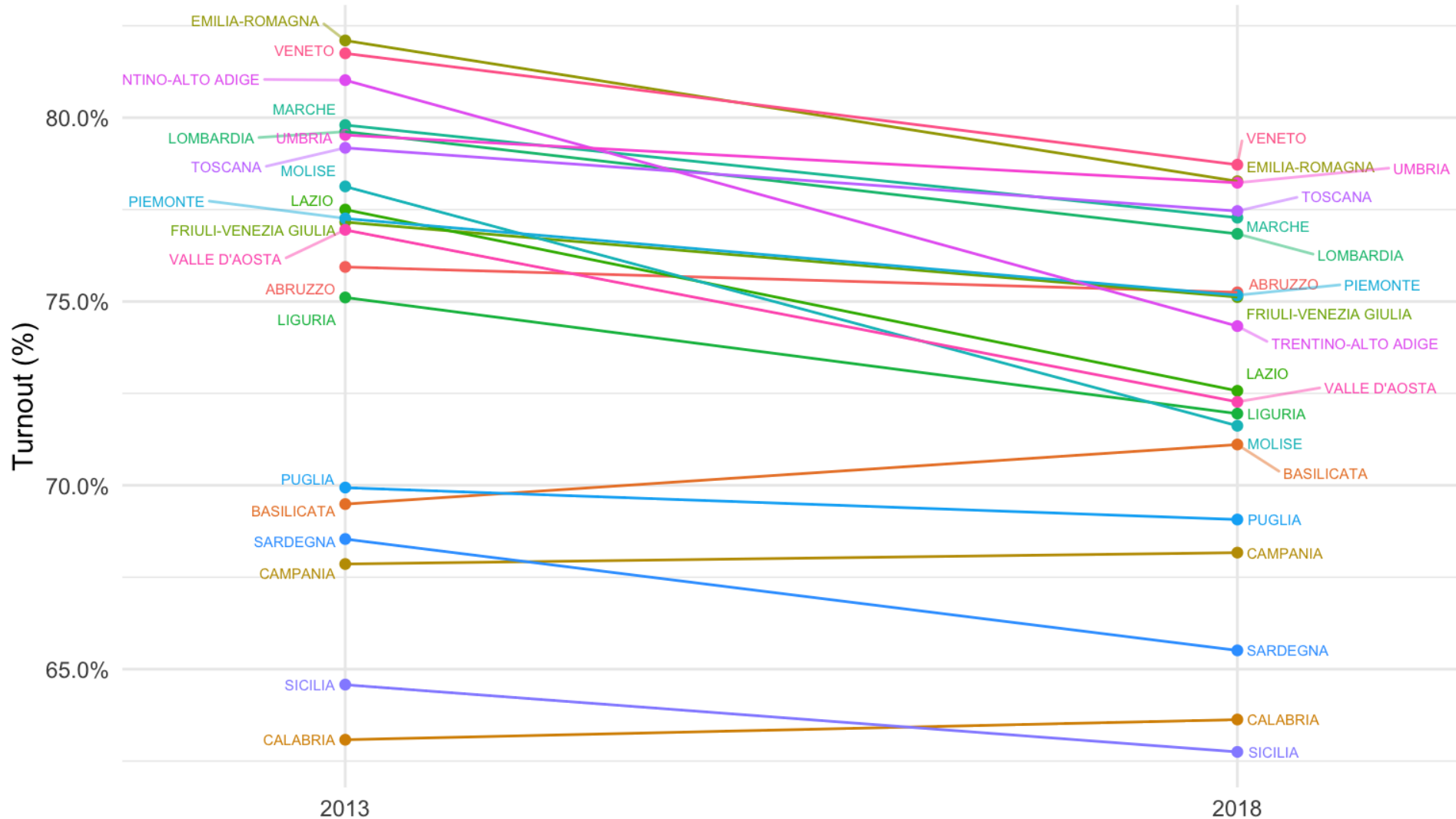


Pre-post variation

- Comparing several categorical values typically two conditions
 - ◆ Pre vs. post
 - ◆ With vs. without
 - ◆ ...

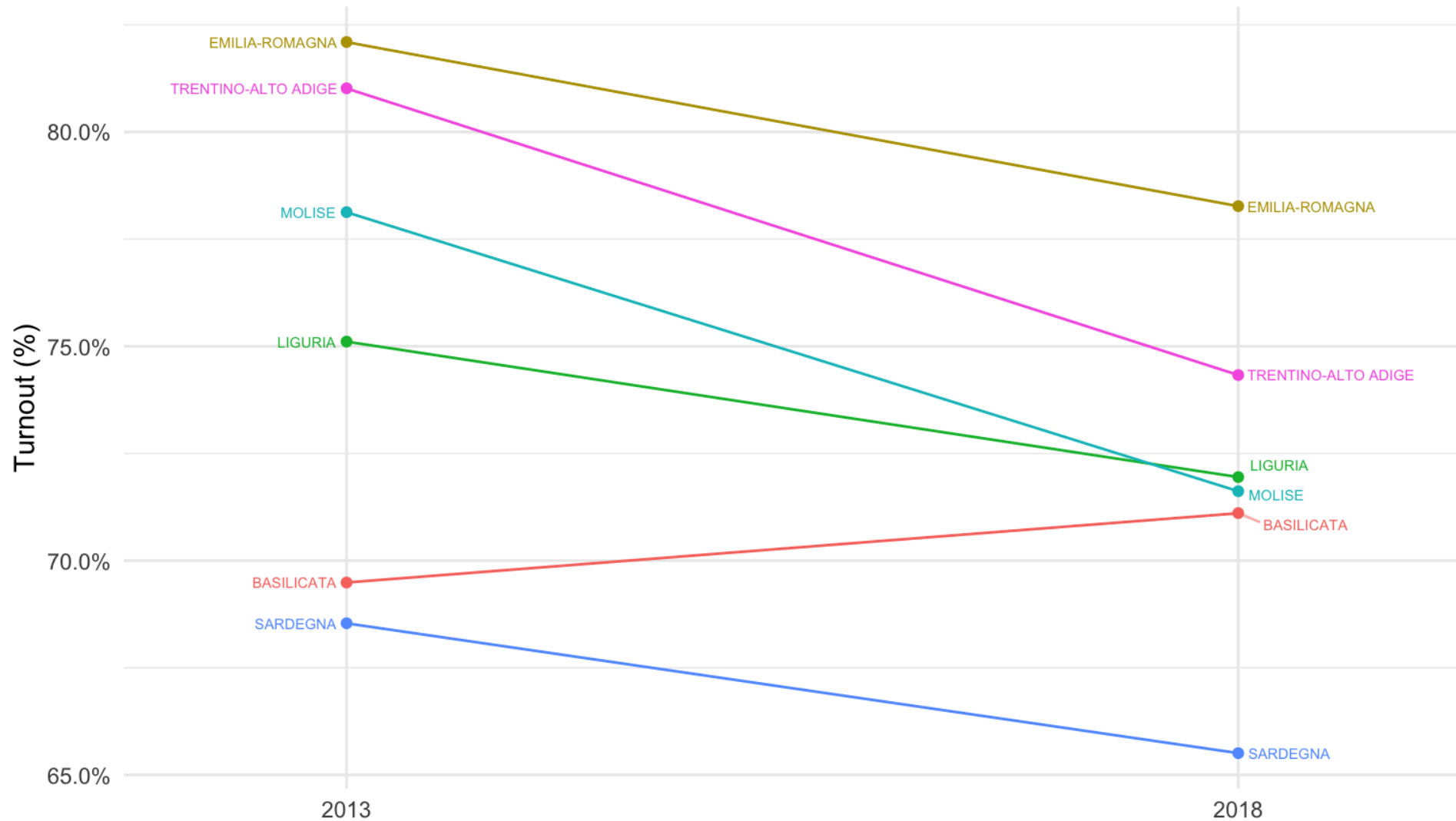
Slope chart

Change in electoral turnout for italian regions (2018 vs. 2013)



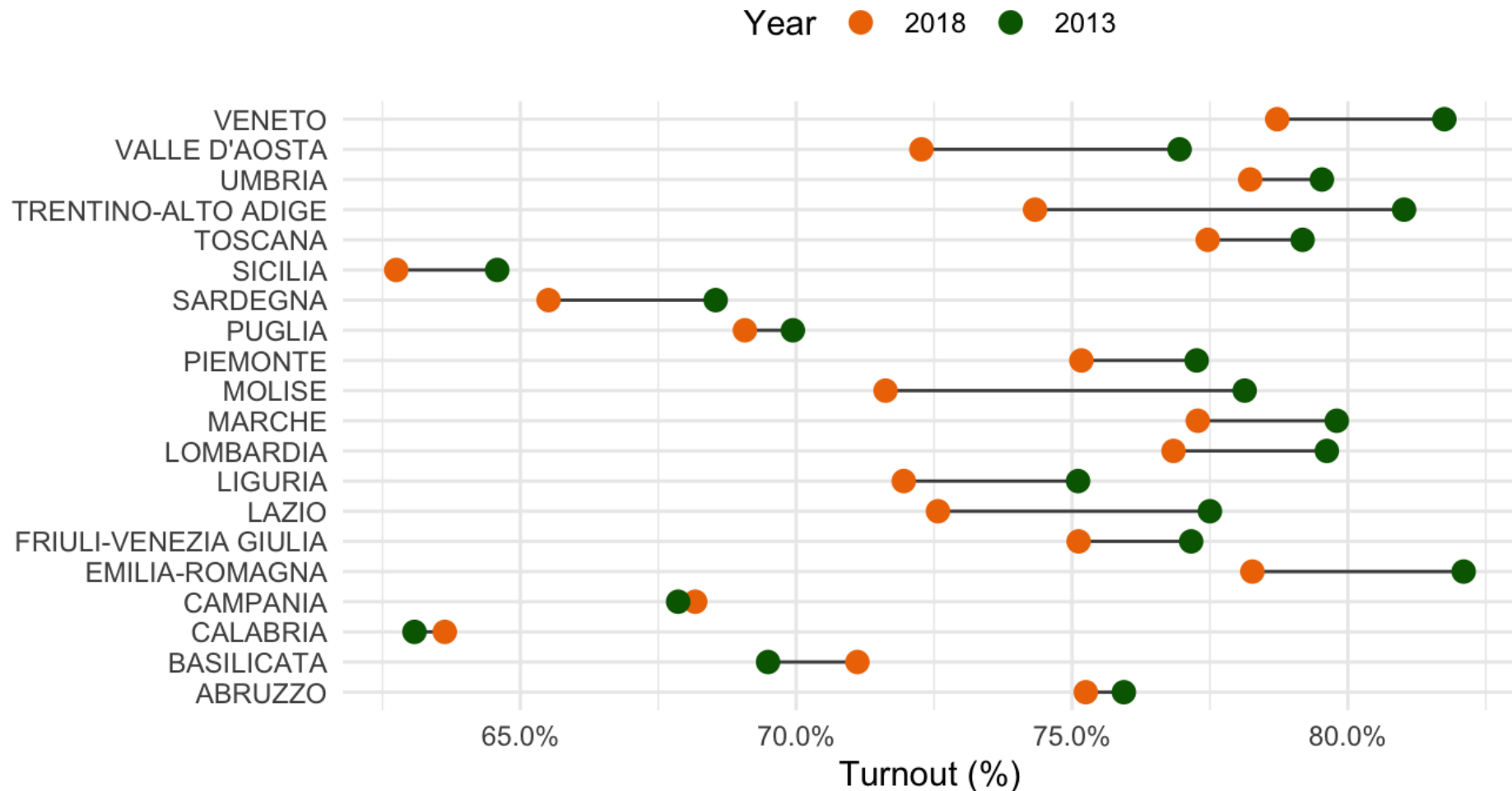
Slope chart

Change in electoral turnout for italian regions (2018 vs. 2013)



Dumbbell plot

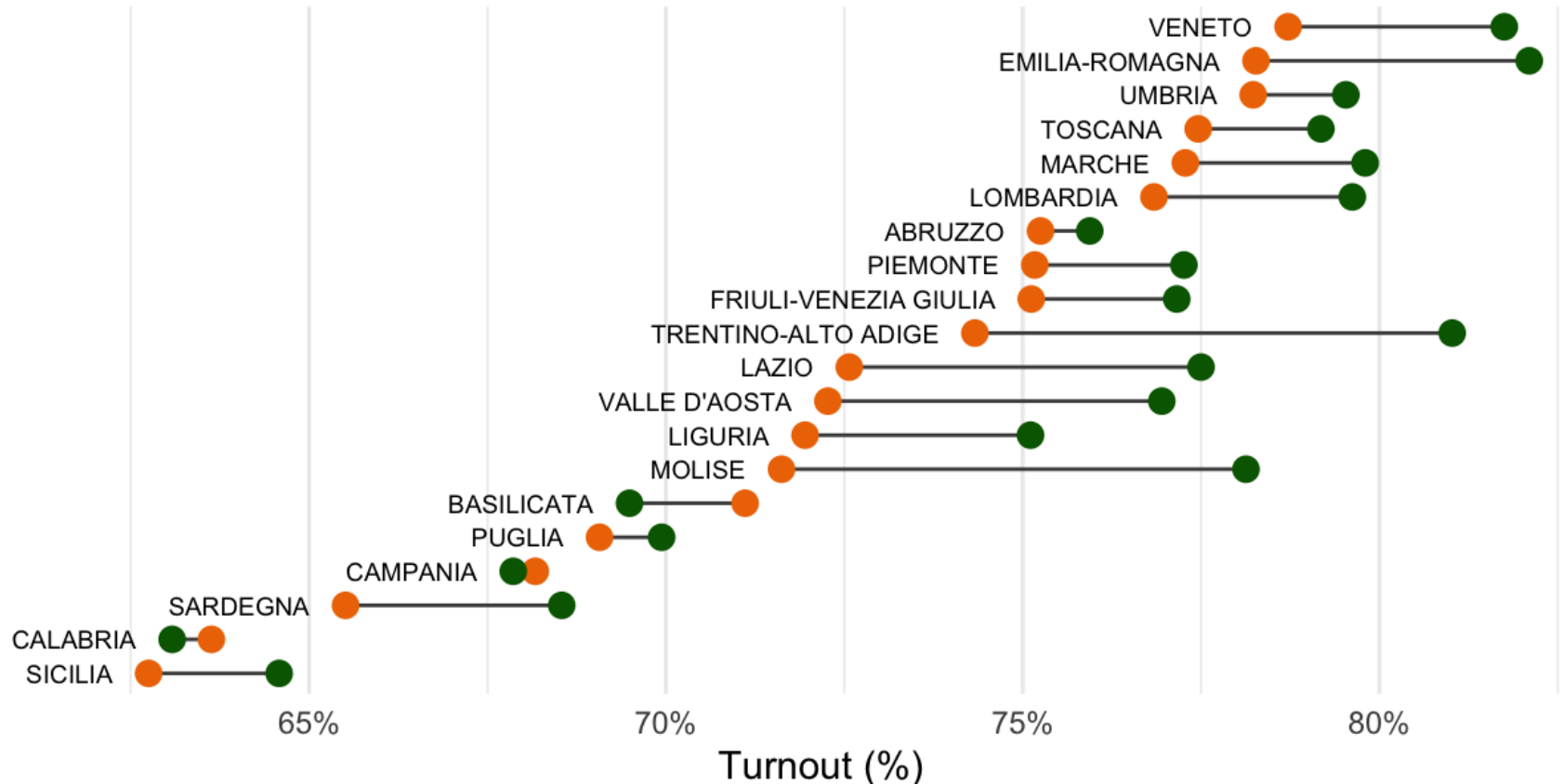
Change in electoral turnout for italian regions (2018 vs. 2013)



Dumbbell plot (sorted)

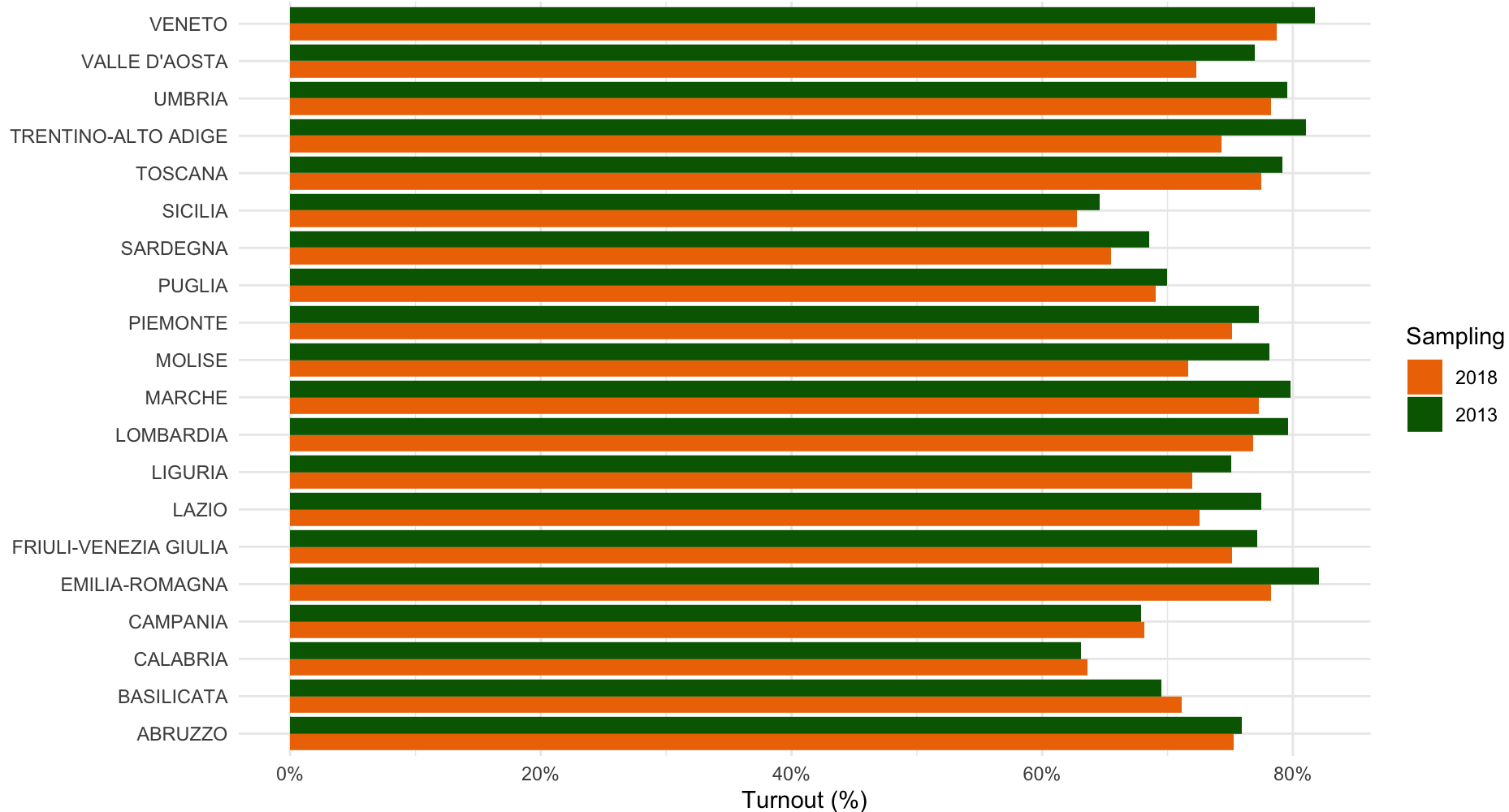
Change in electoral turnout for italian regions (2018 vs. 2013)

Year ● 2018 ● 2013



Clustered bars

Change in electoral turnout for italian regions (2018 vs. 2013)

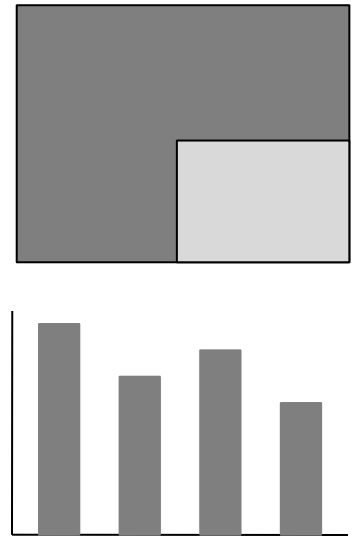


Proportion (Part-to-whole)

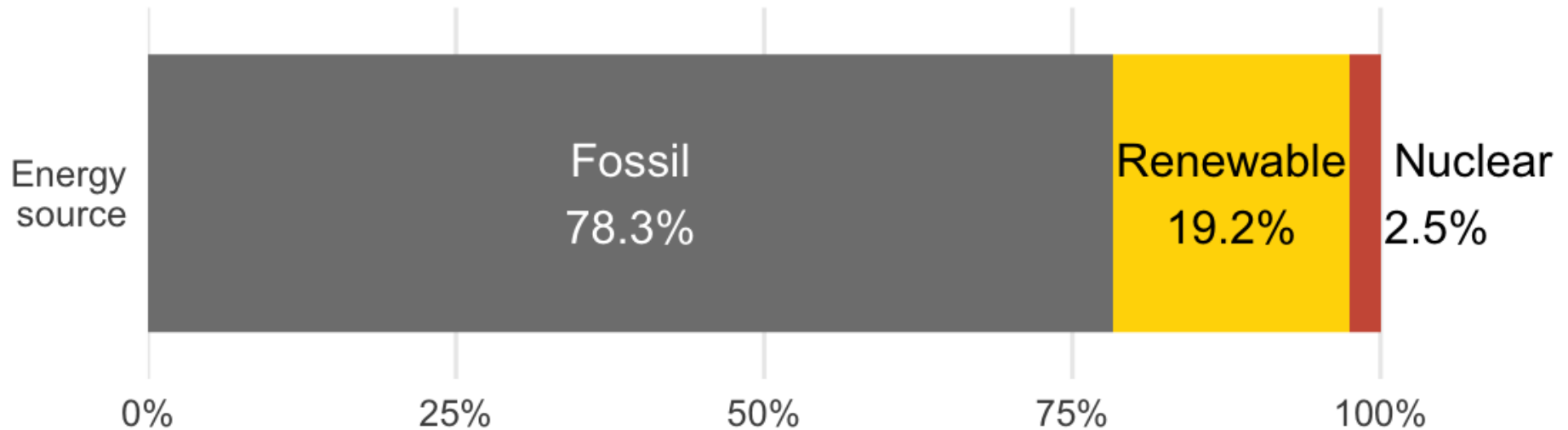
- Represent the frequency of different values within a given category
 - ◆ Be careful to use all values within the same category
- Can be used to compare frequency distribution across different categories sharing the same levels

Proportion (Part-to-whole)

- Best unit: percentage
- Stacked bar graph
 - ◆ Difficult to read individual values
- Stacked area
- Treemap
- Gridplot
- Pie / Donut
- Marimekko

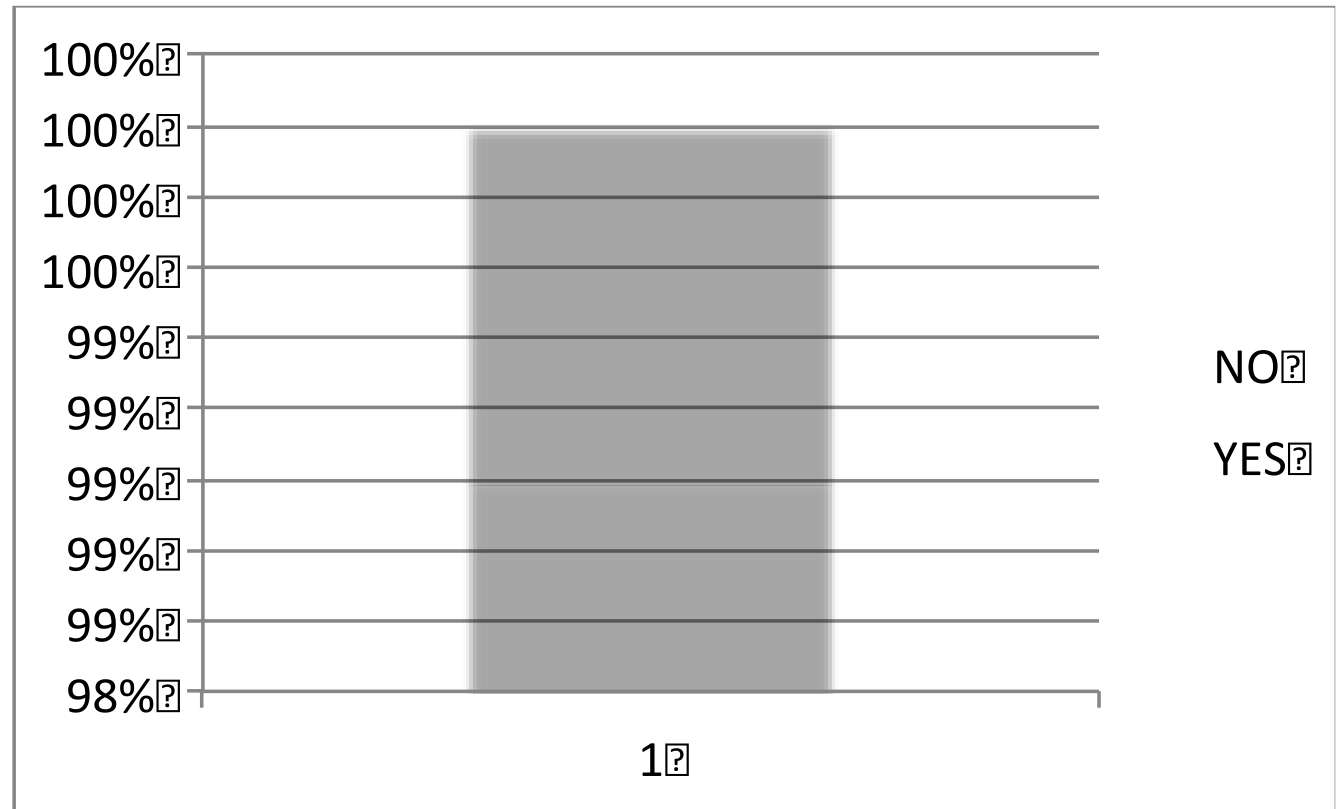
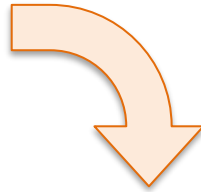


Length - Stacked Bar

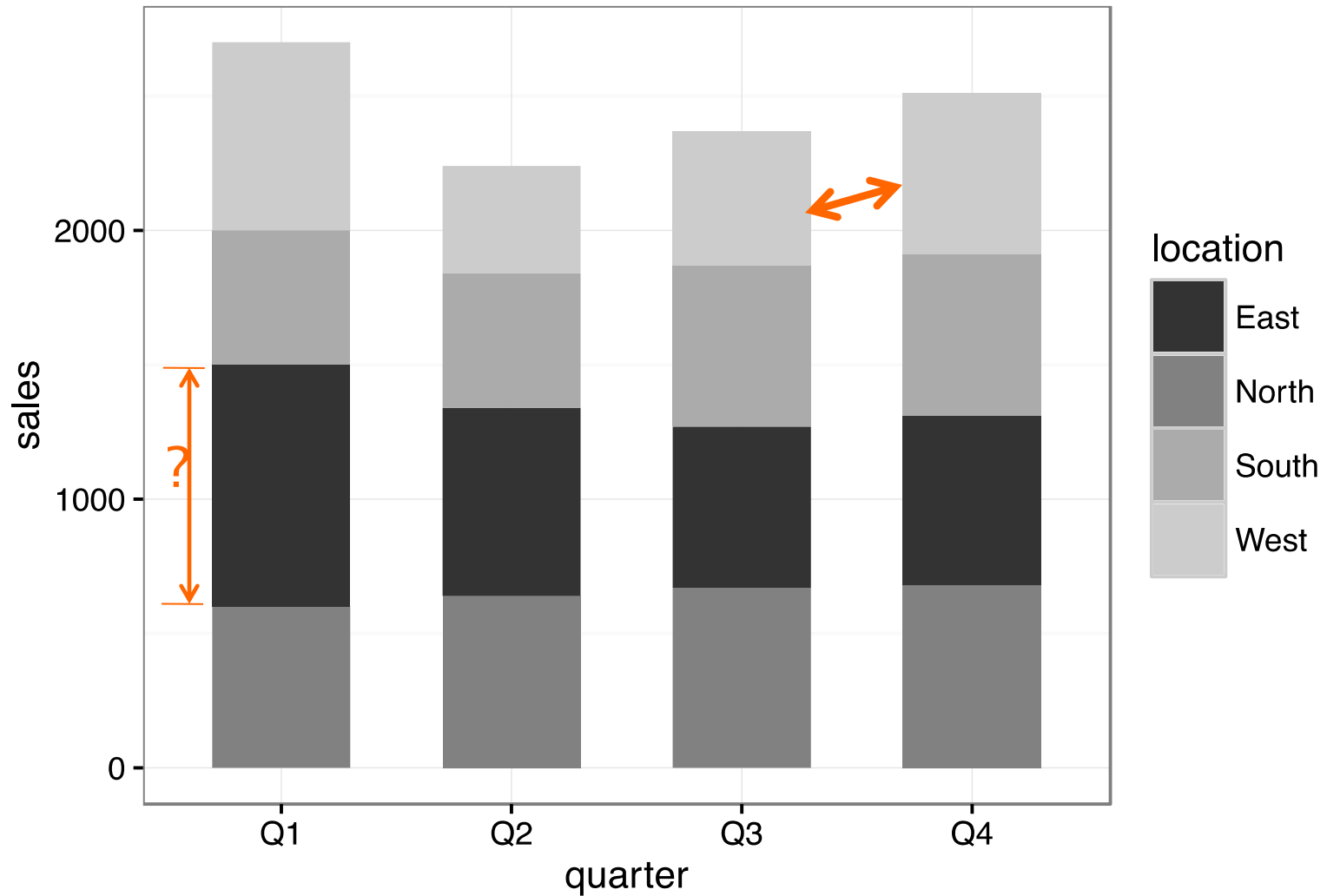


Beware of MS-Excel Defaults

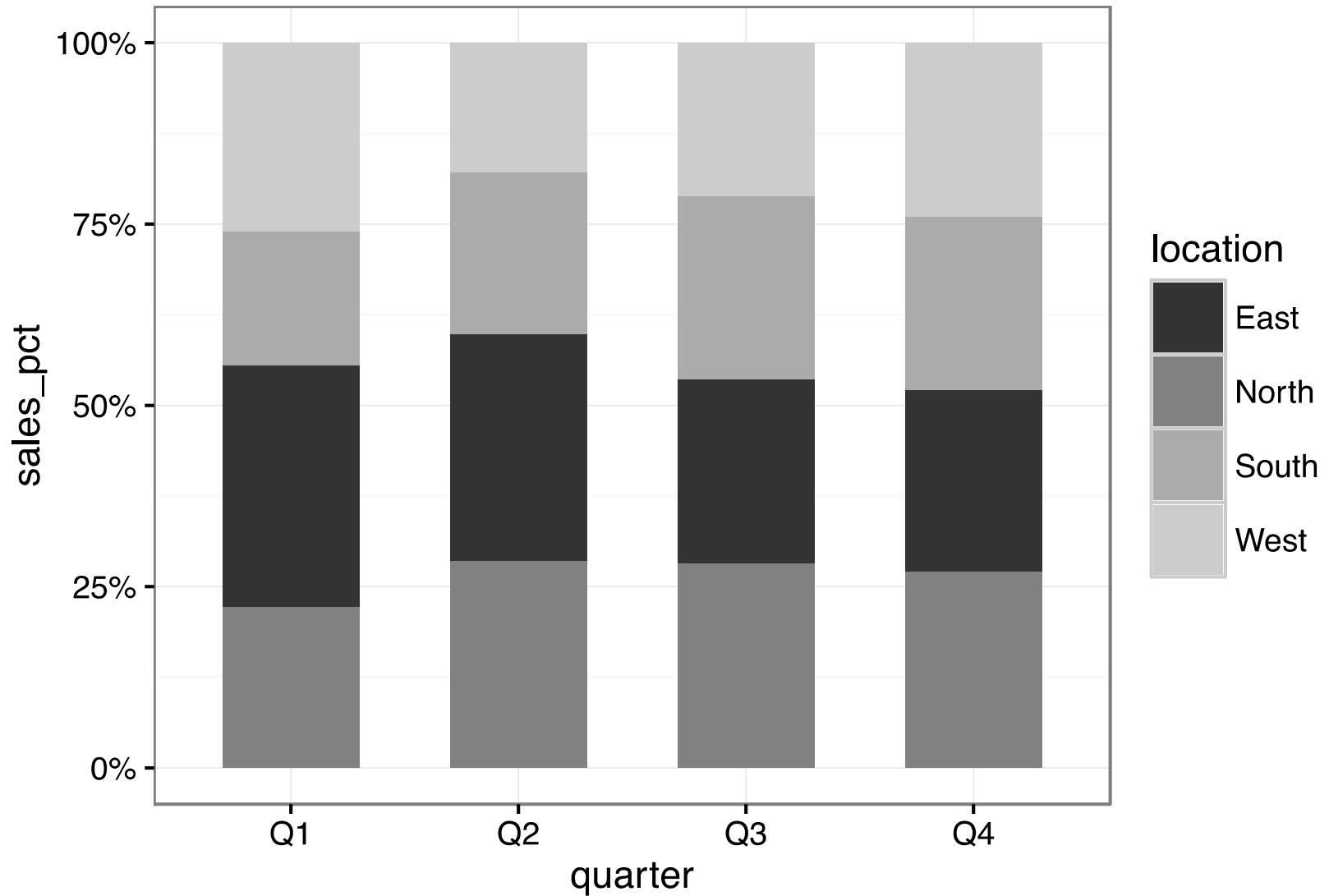
	A	B
1	YES	99%
2	NO	1%



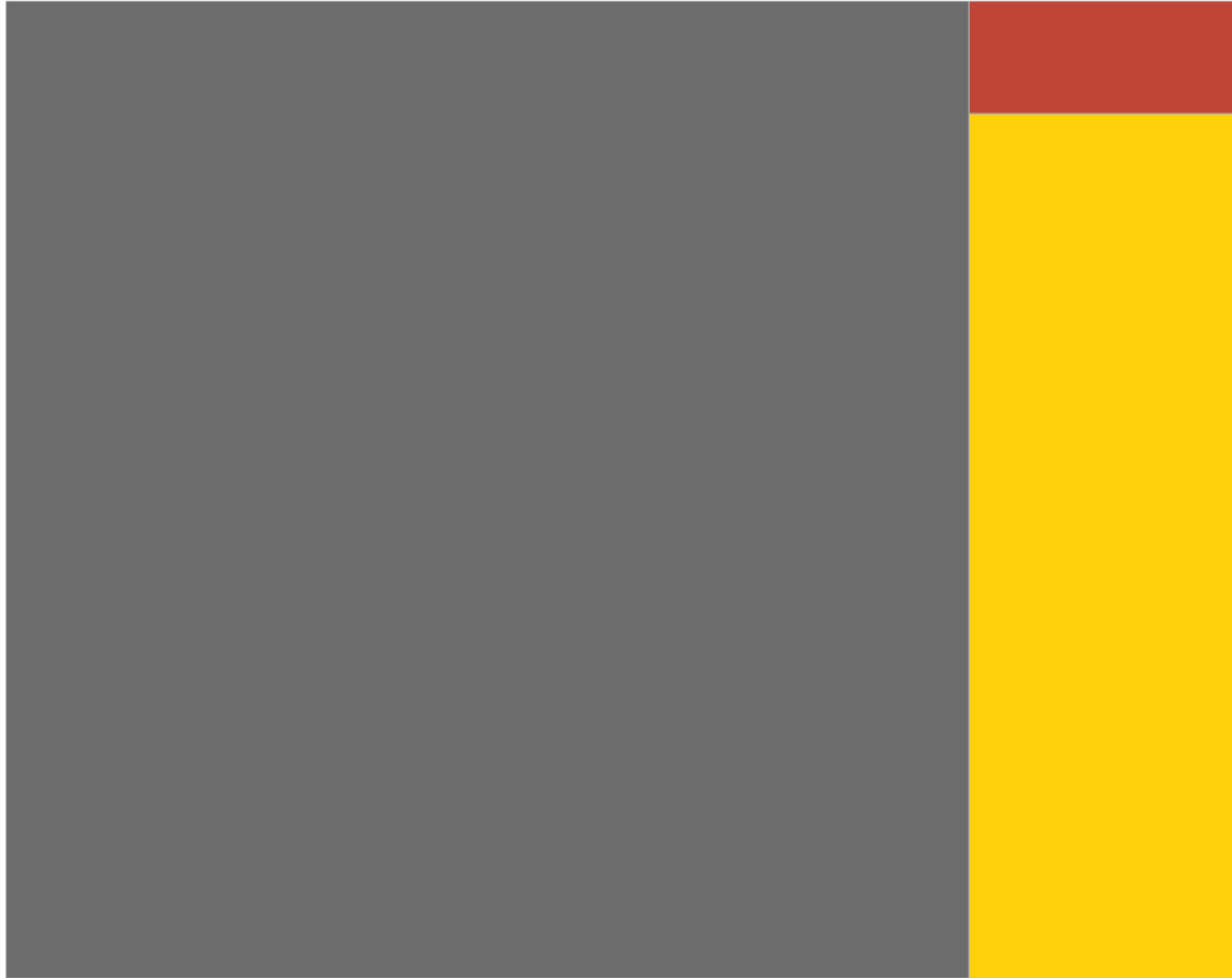
Stacked bar graph



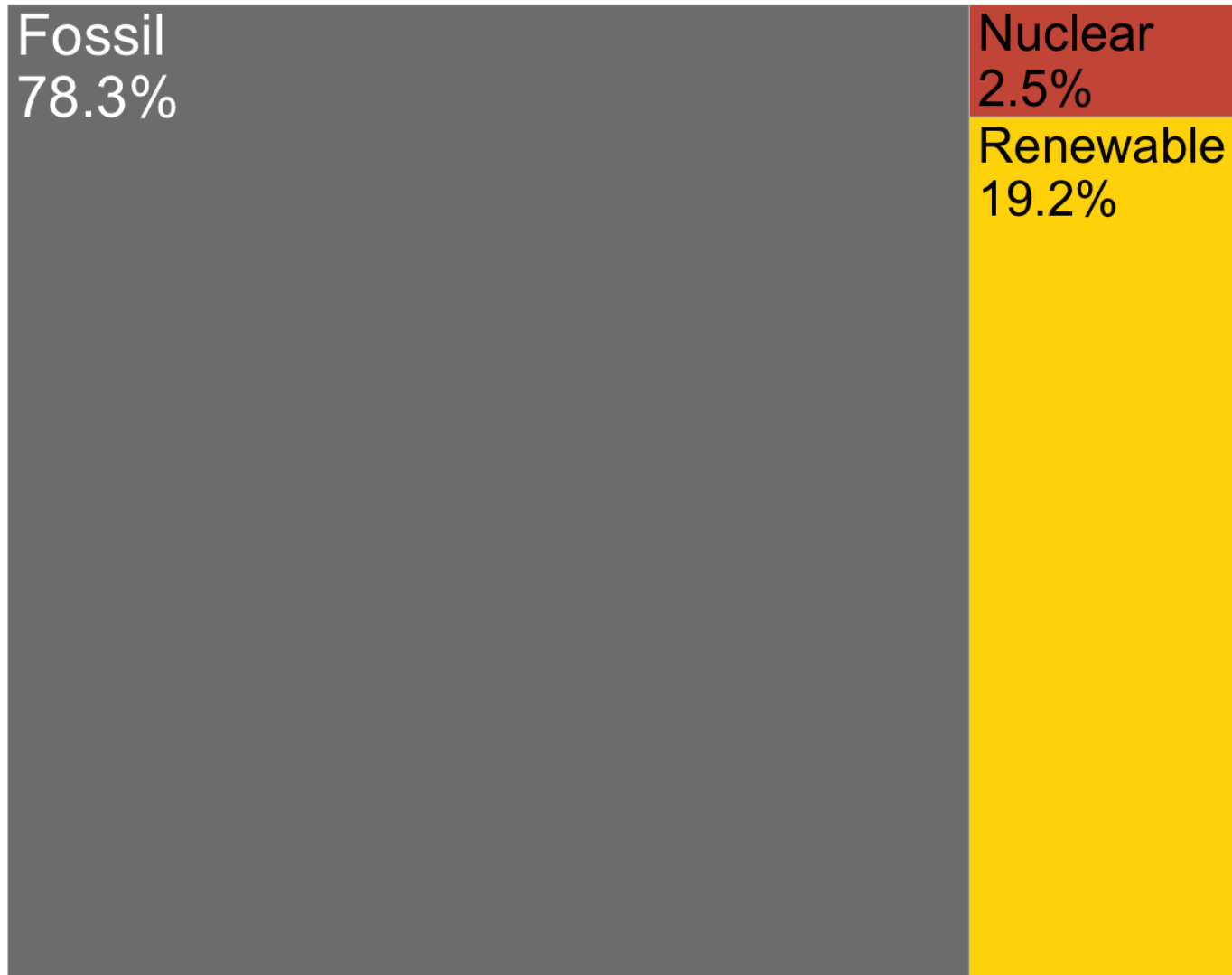
Stacked bars w/ percentage



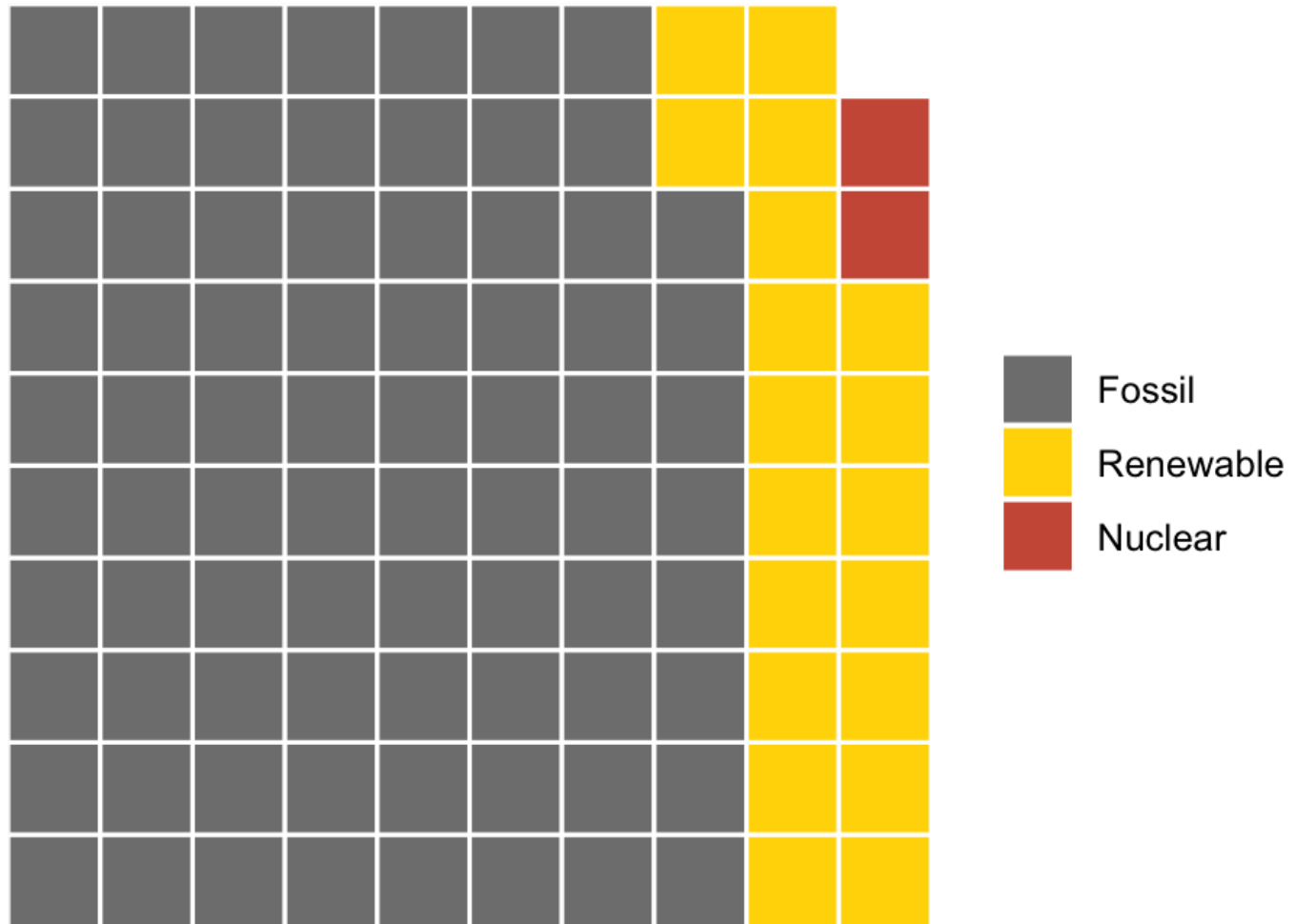
Area - Treemap



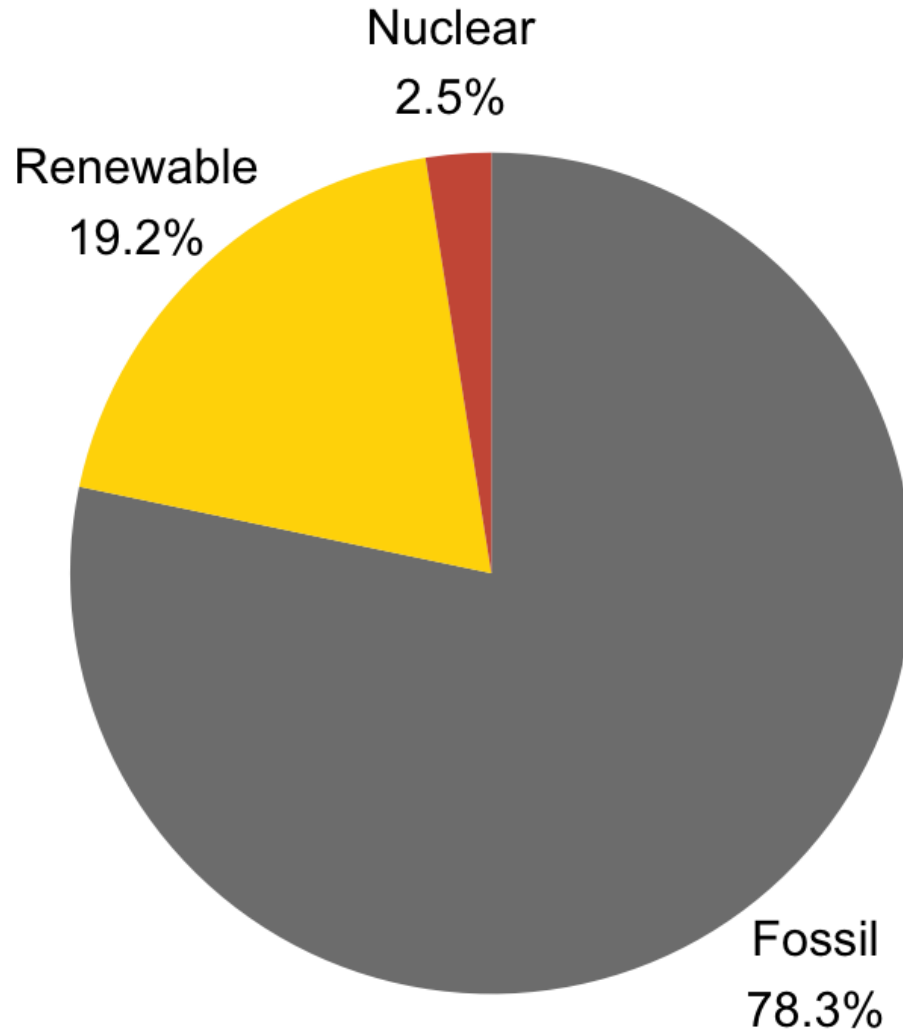
Area - Treemap



Area + Count – Waffle / Grid



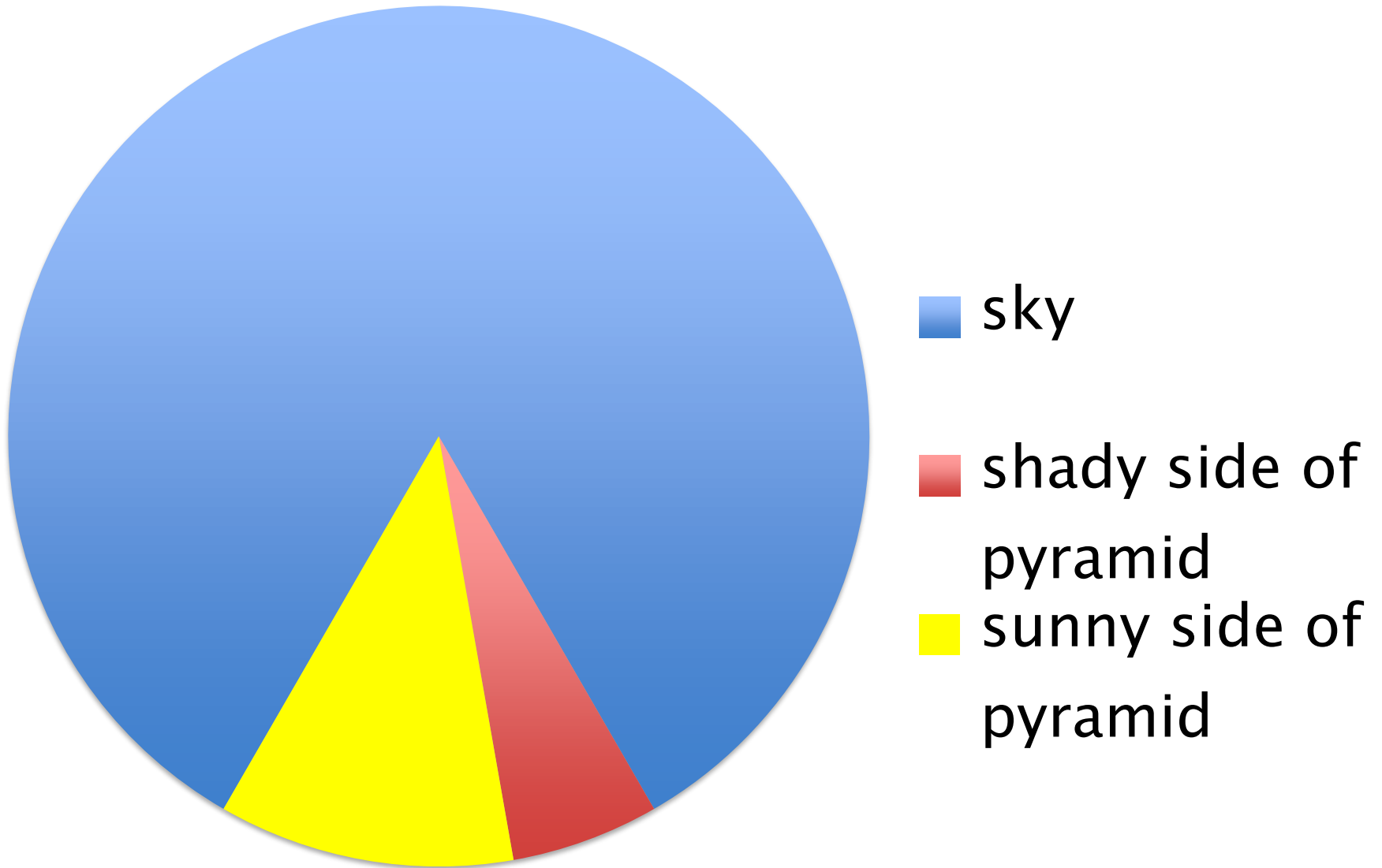
Area + Angle – Pie Chart



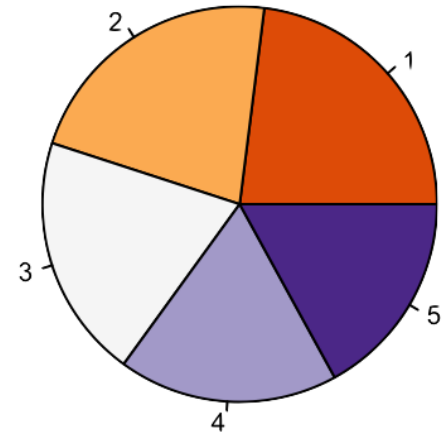
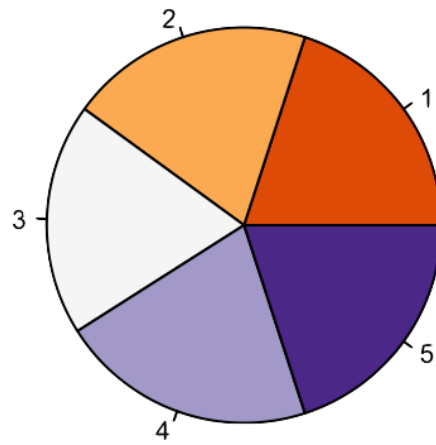
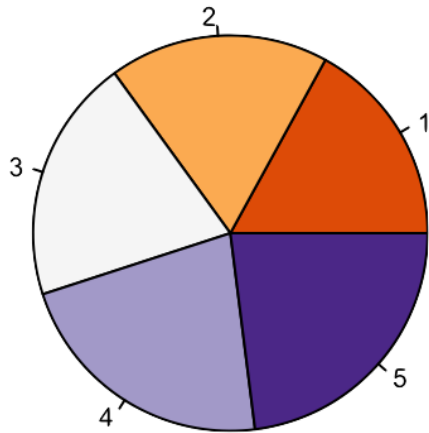
Pie charts



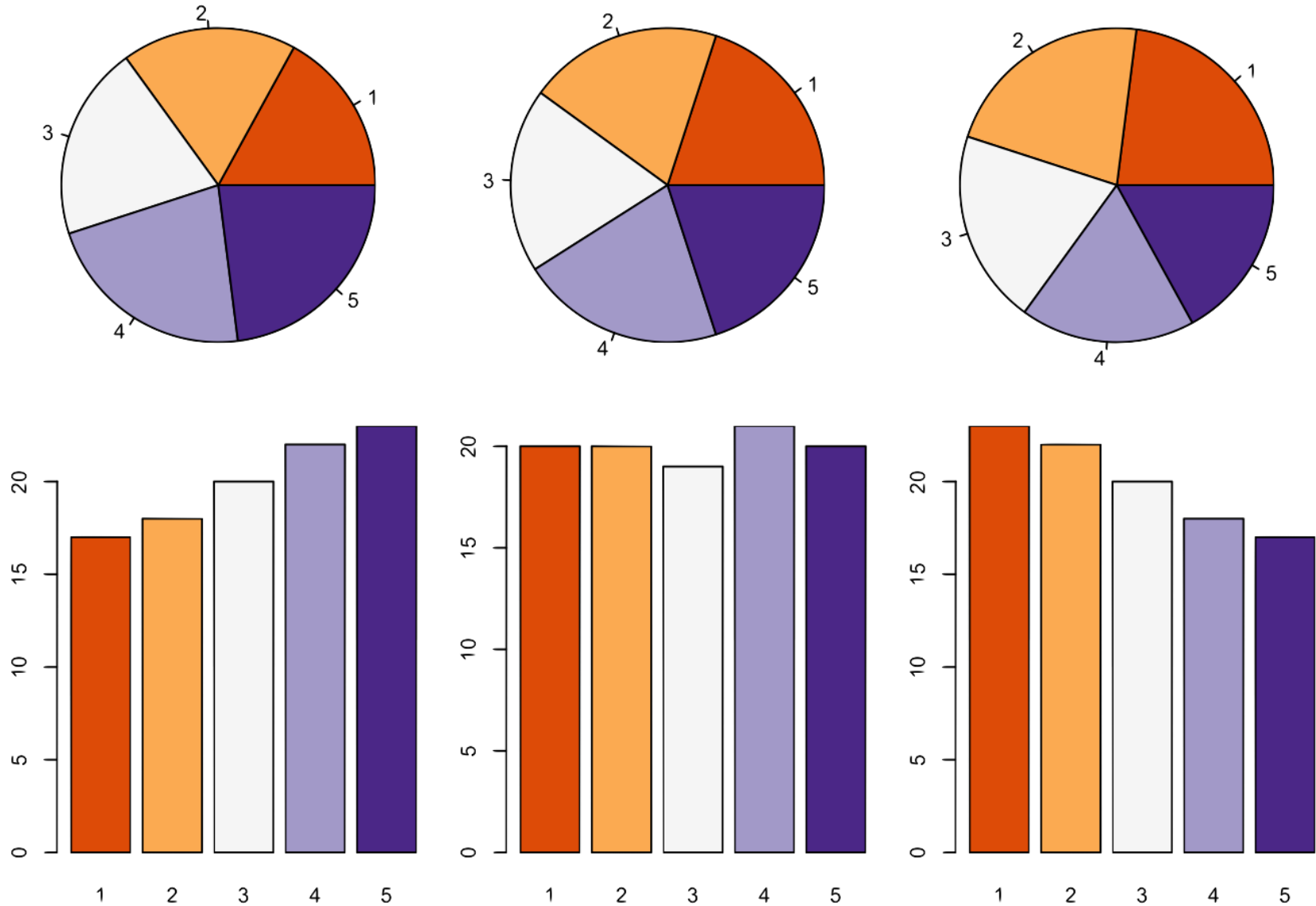
Pie charts



Pies



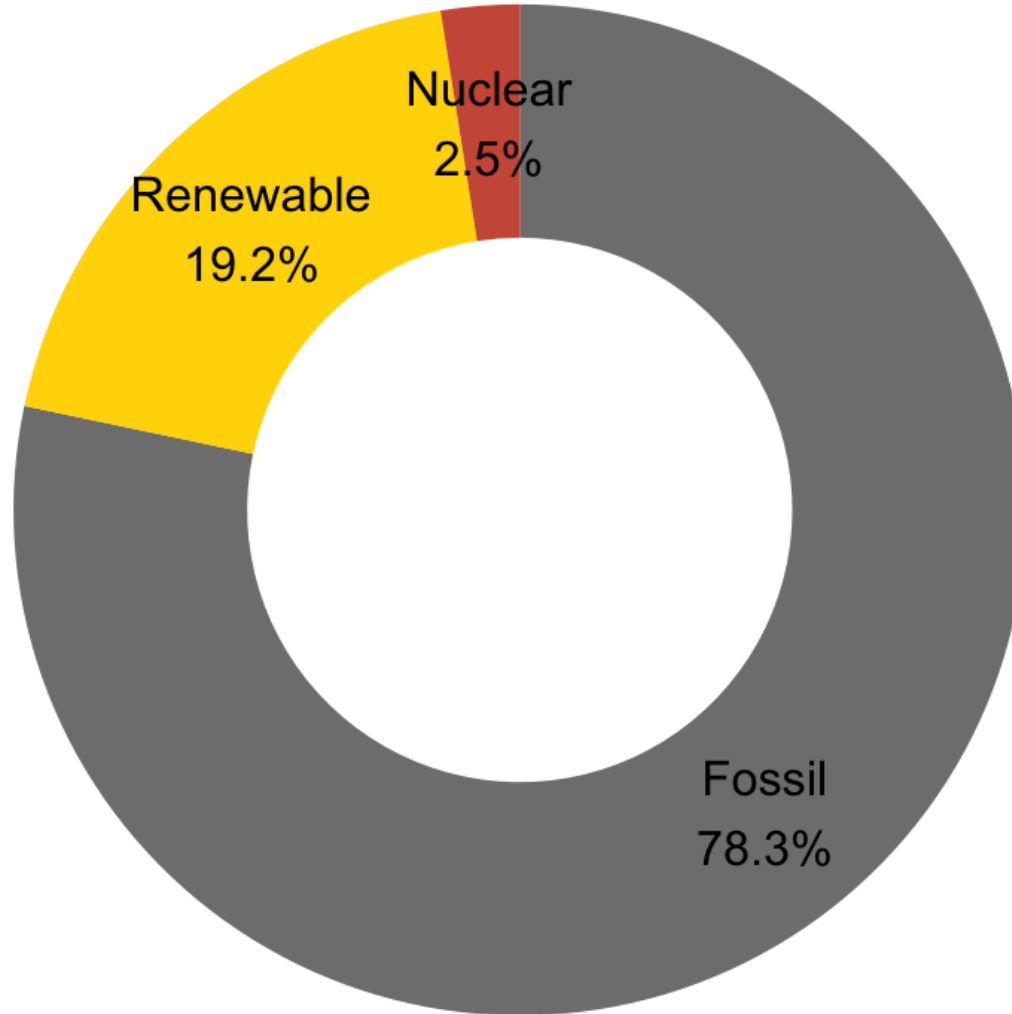
Pies vs. Bars



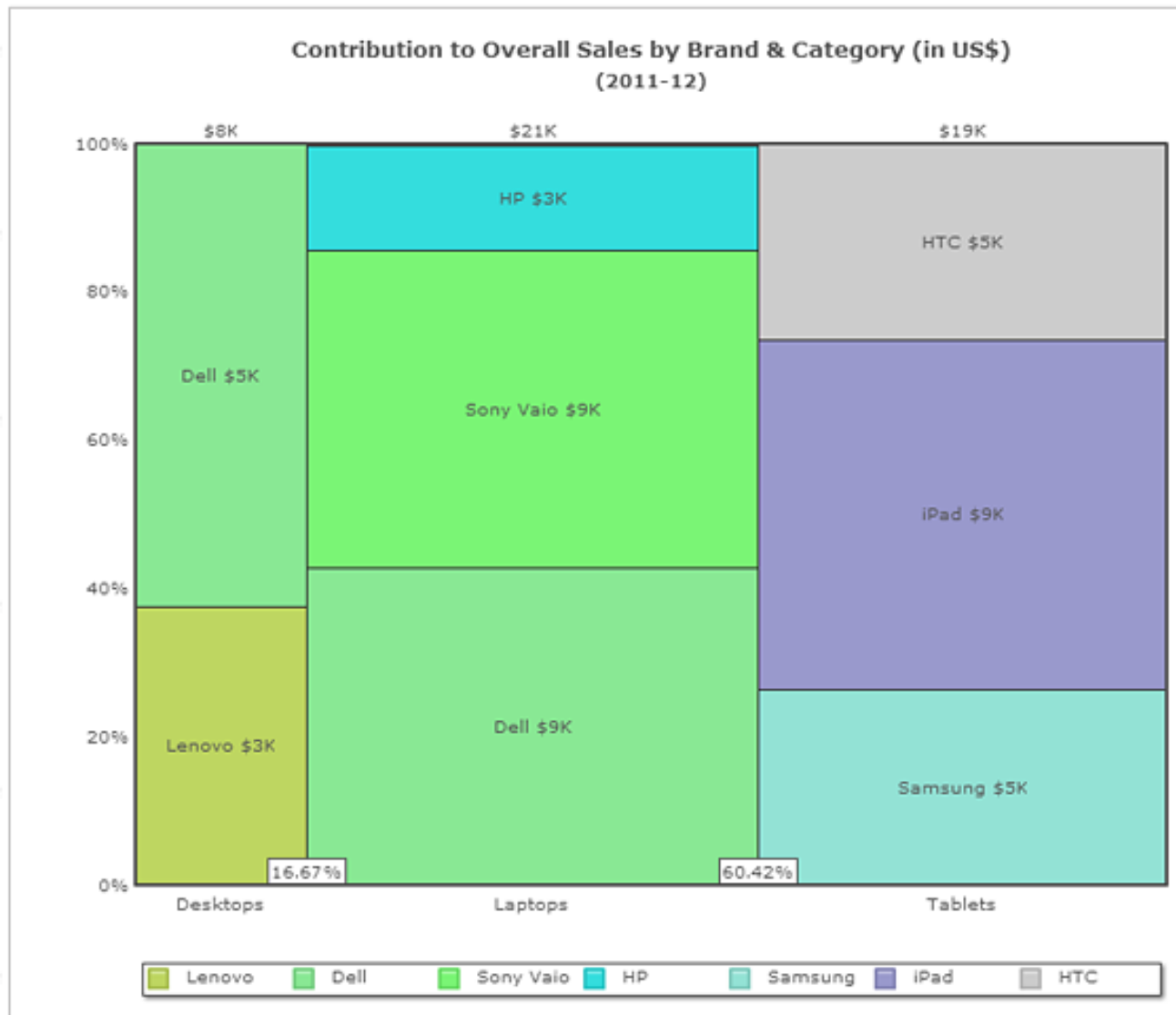
Pie Charts: guidelines

- Have serious limitations
 - ◆ To represent part–whole relationship
 - ◆ Only with a small number of categories
 - Up to four
 - Avoid rainbow pie
 - ◆ When proportions are distinct enough
- Remember to ease reading
 - ◆ Labels placed close to slices
 - ◆ Labels include values (percentages)

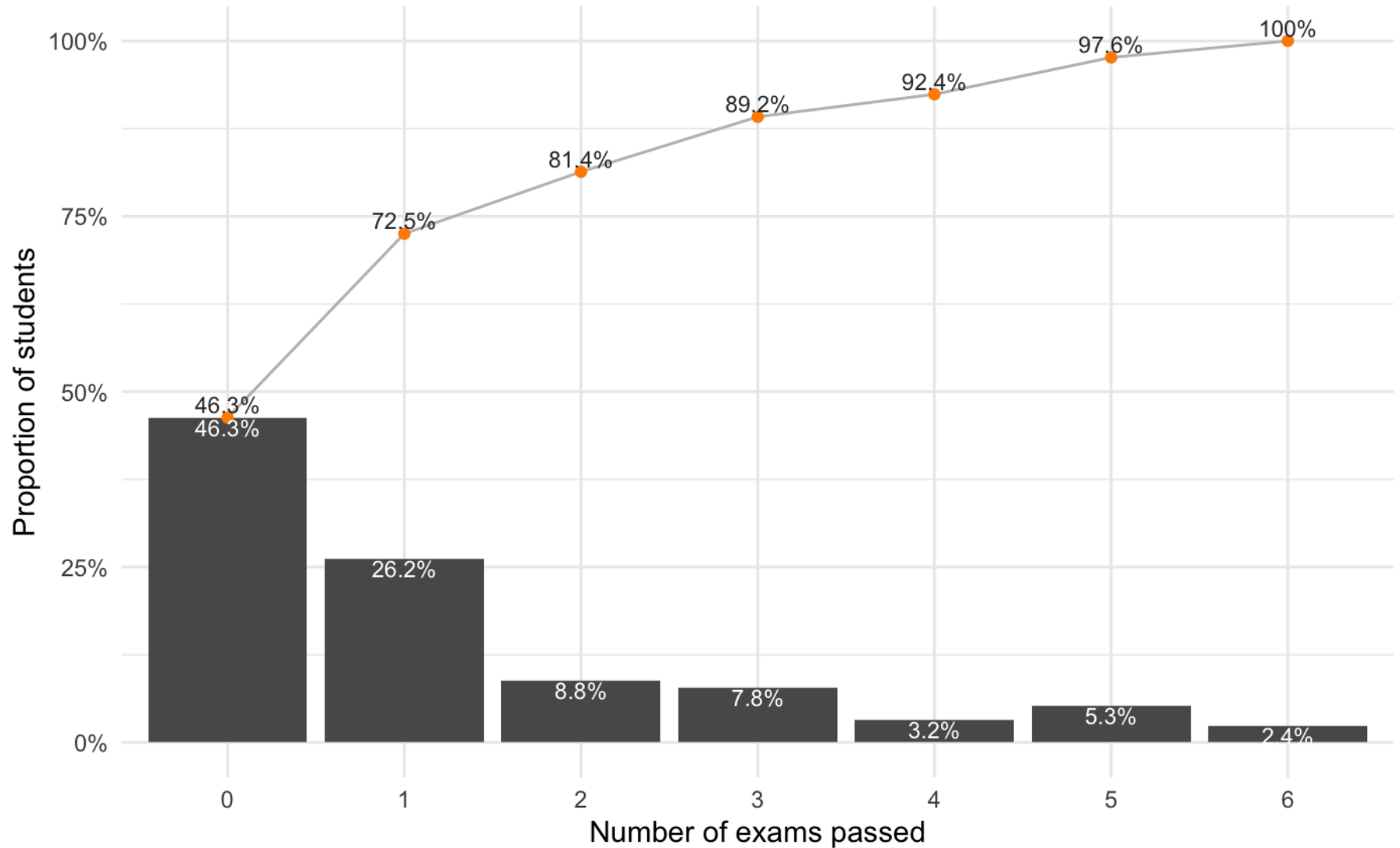
Area+Angle+Length – Donut



Marimekko Chart



Pareto chart



Distribution

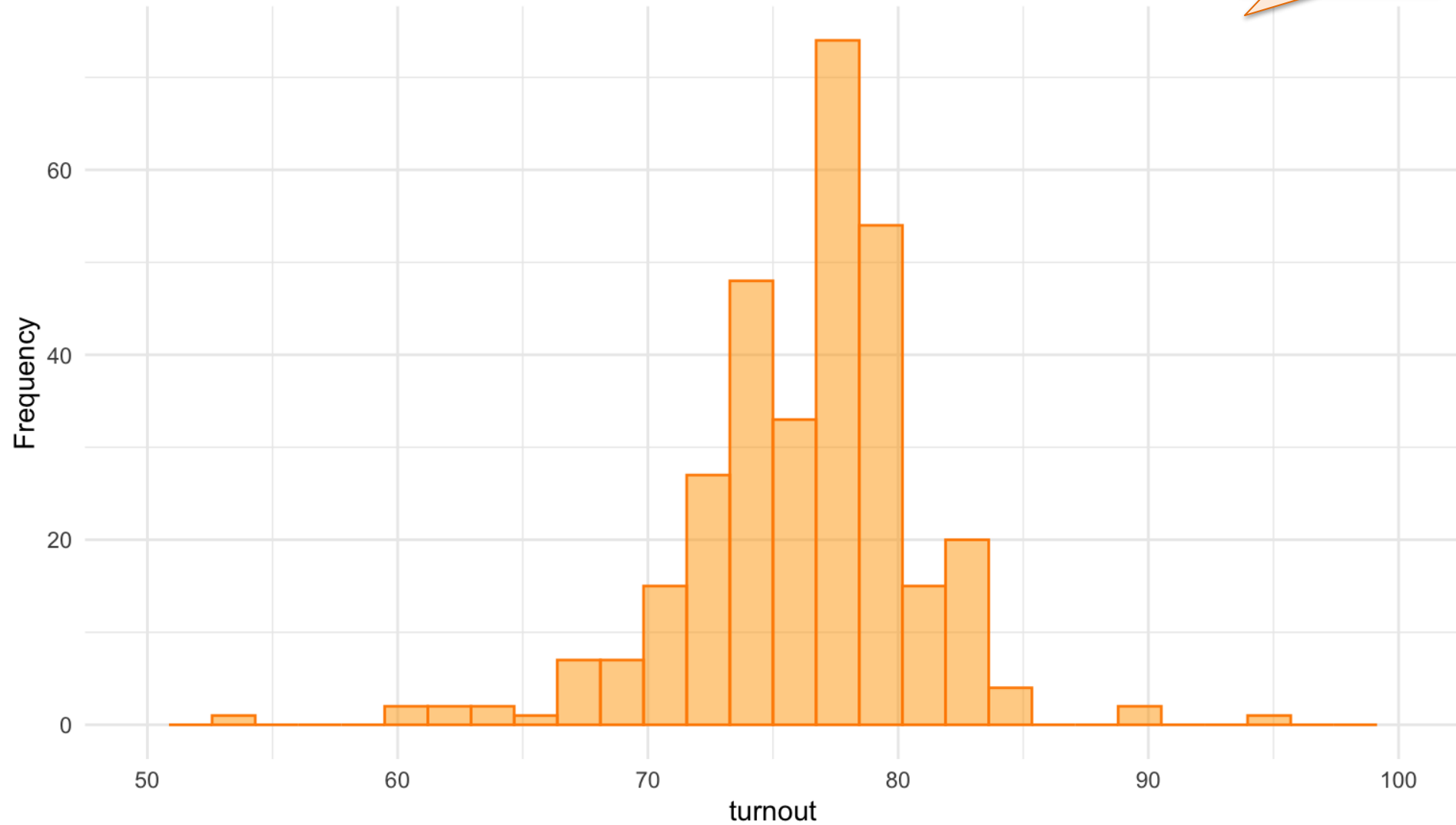
- Continuous values
 - ◆ Show distribution of single set of values
 - ◆ Show and compare two or more distributions

Single distribution

- Histogram
 - ◆ Vertical bar graph
 - ◆ Frequency for subdivision
 - Quantitative ranges
 - Categories
 - ◆ Emphasis on number of occurrences
- Frequency polygon
 - ◆ Line graphs
 - ◆ Frequency density function
 - ◆ Emphasis on the shape of the distribution
- Boxplot
 - ◆ Summary

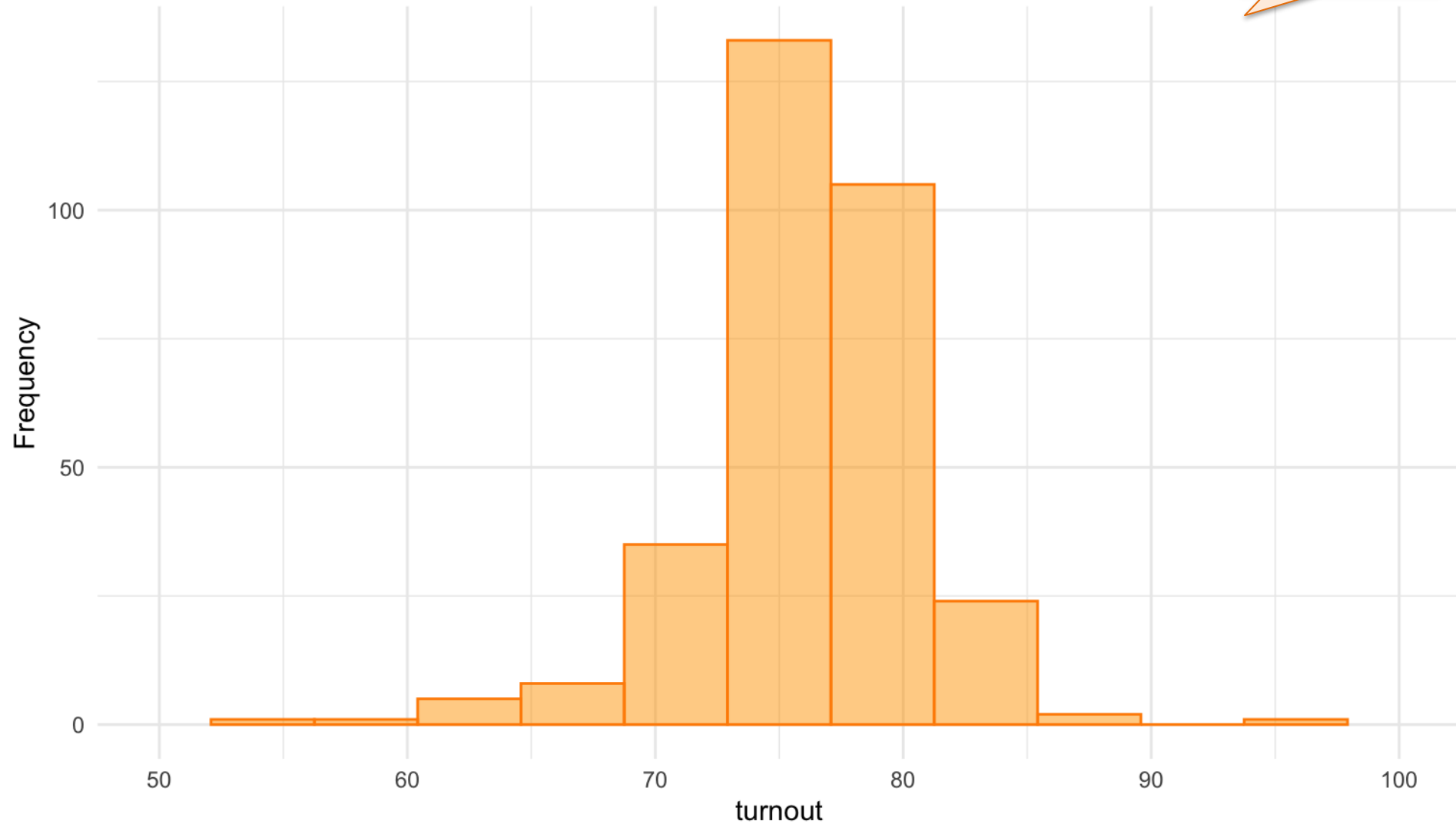
Histogram

30 bins



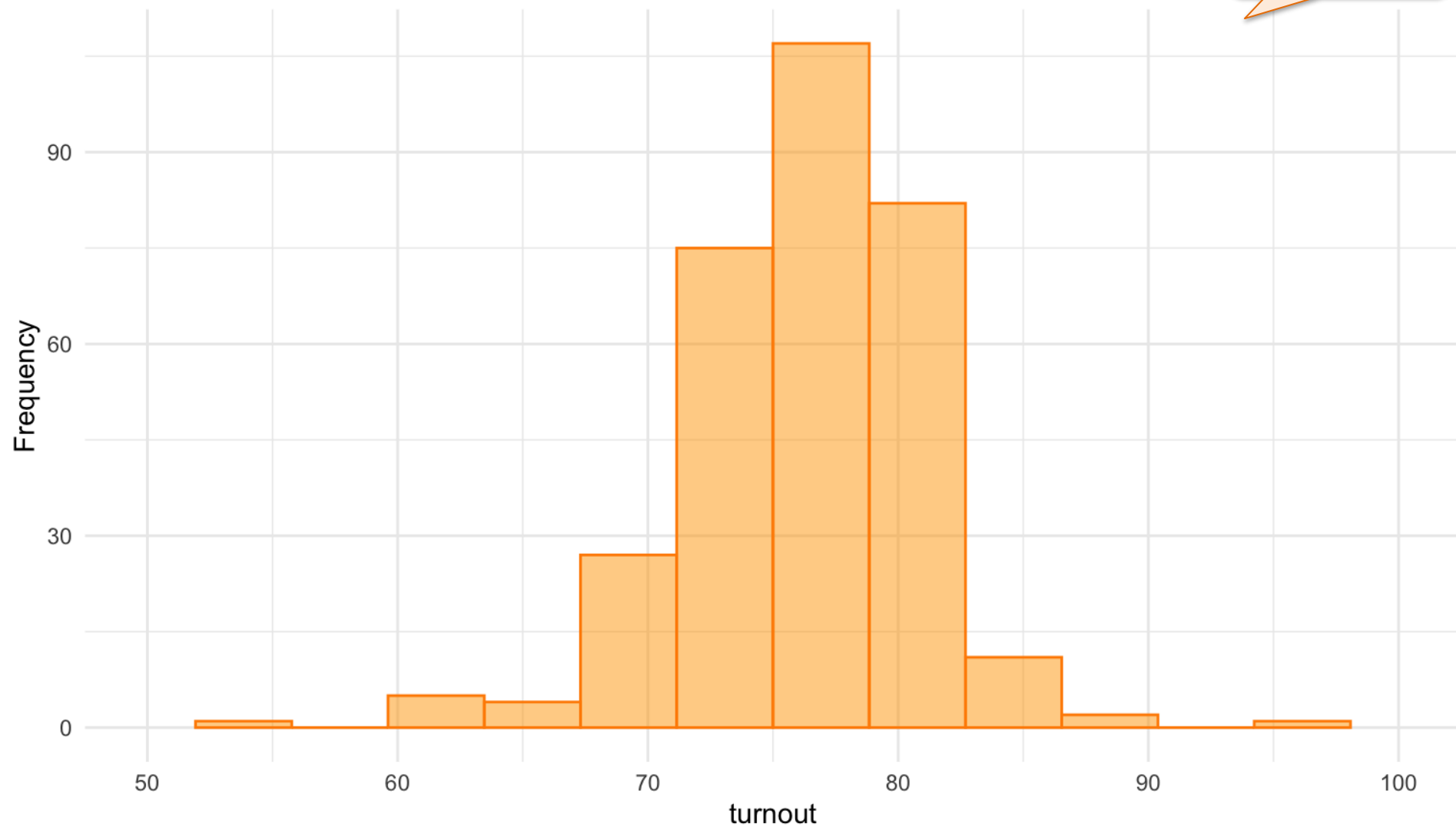
Histogram

13 bins

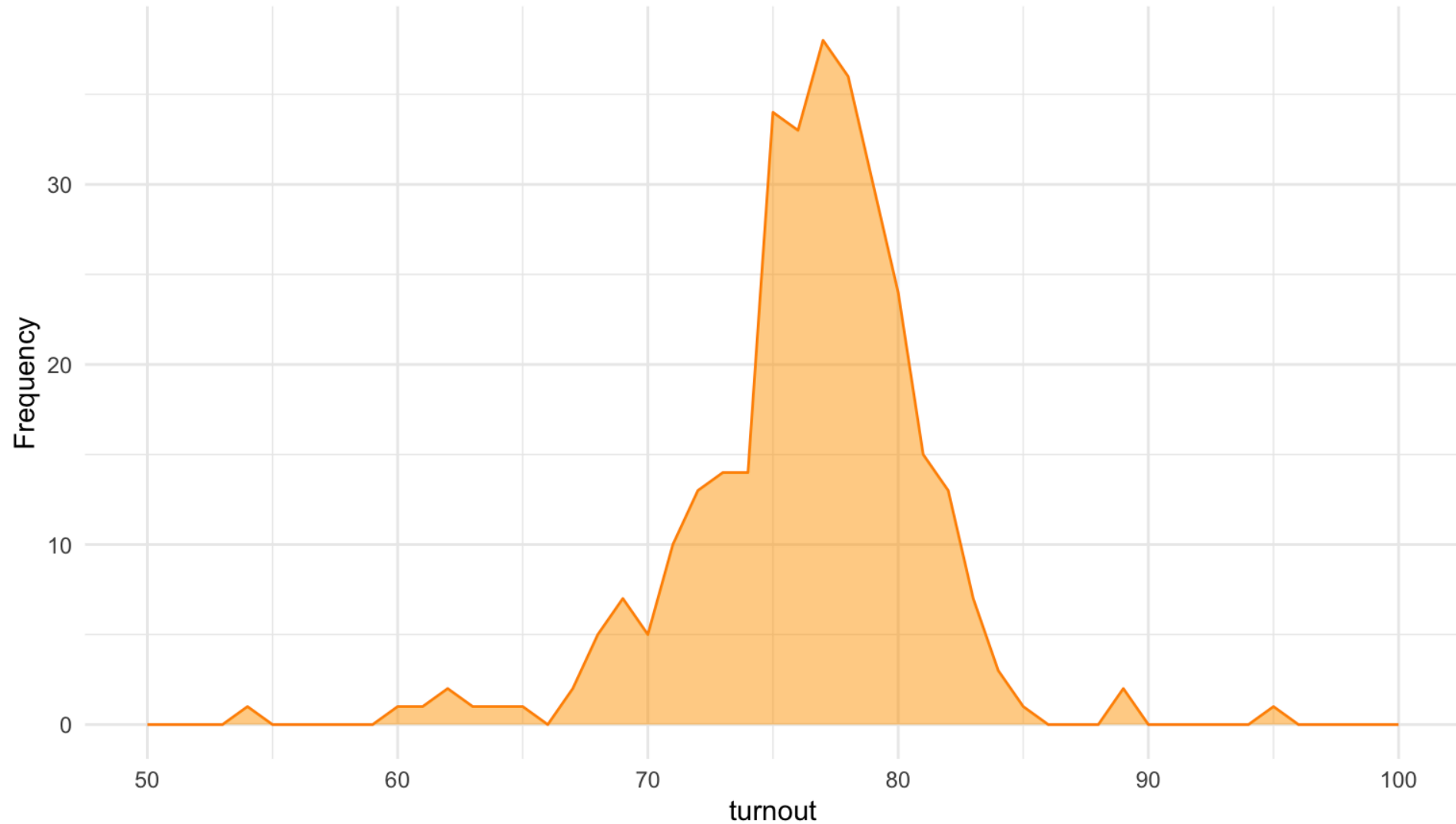


Histogram

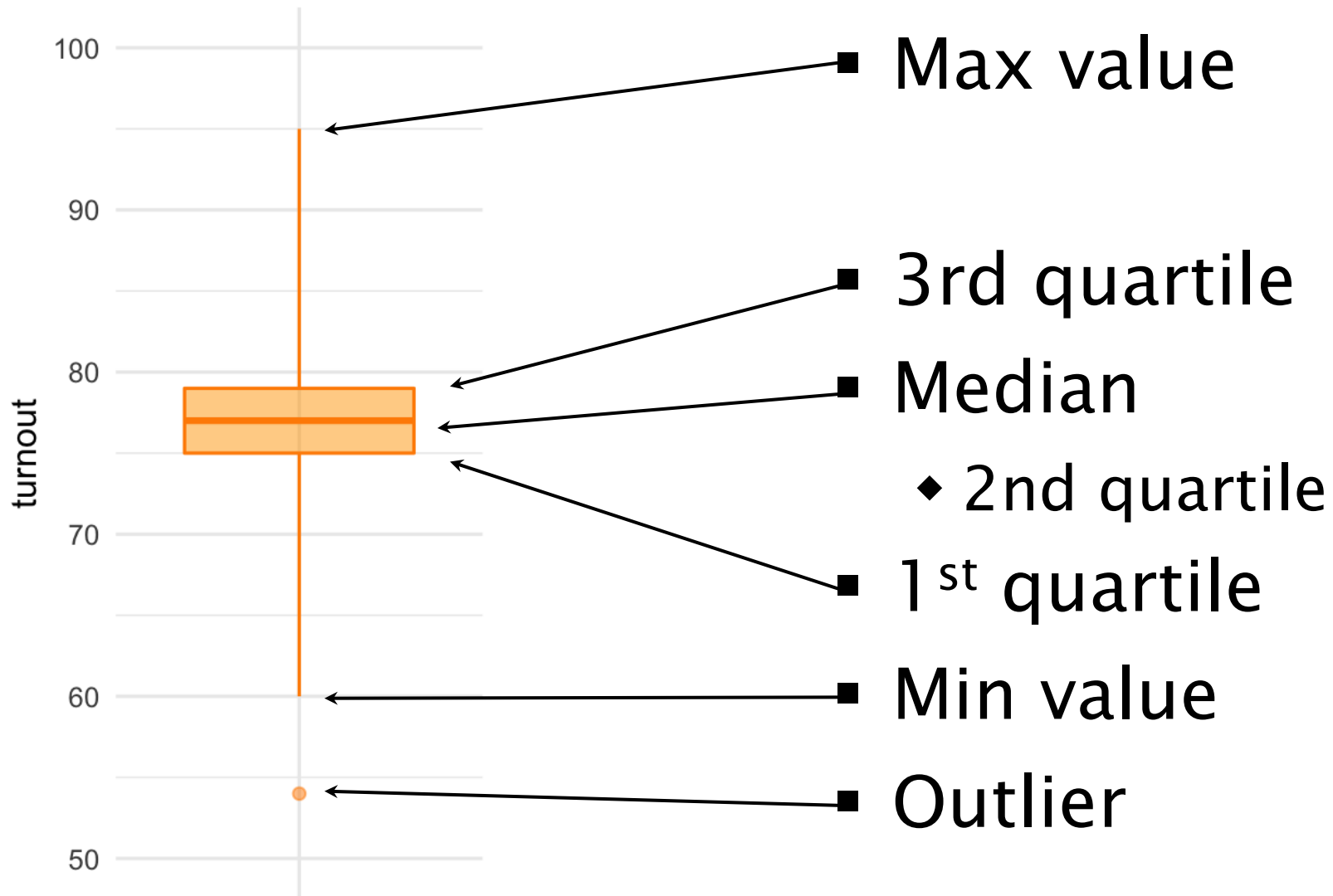
14 bins



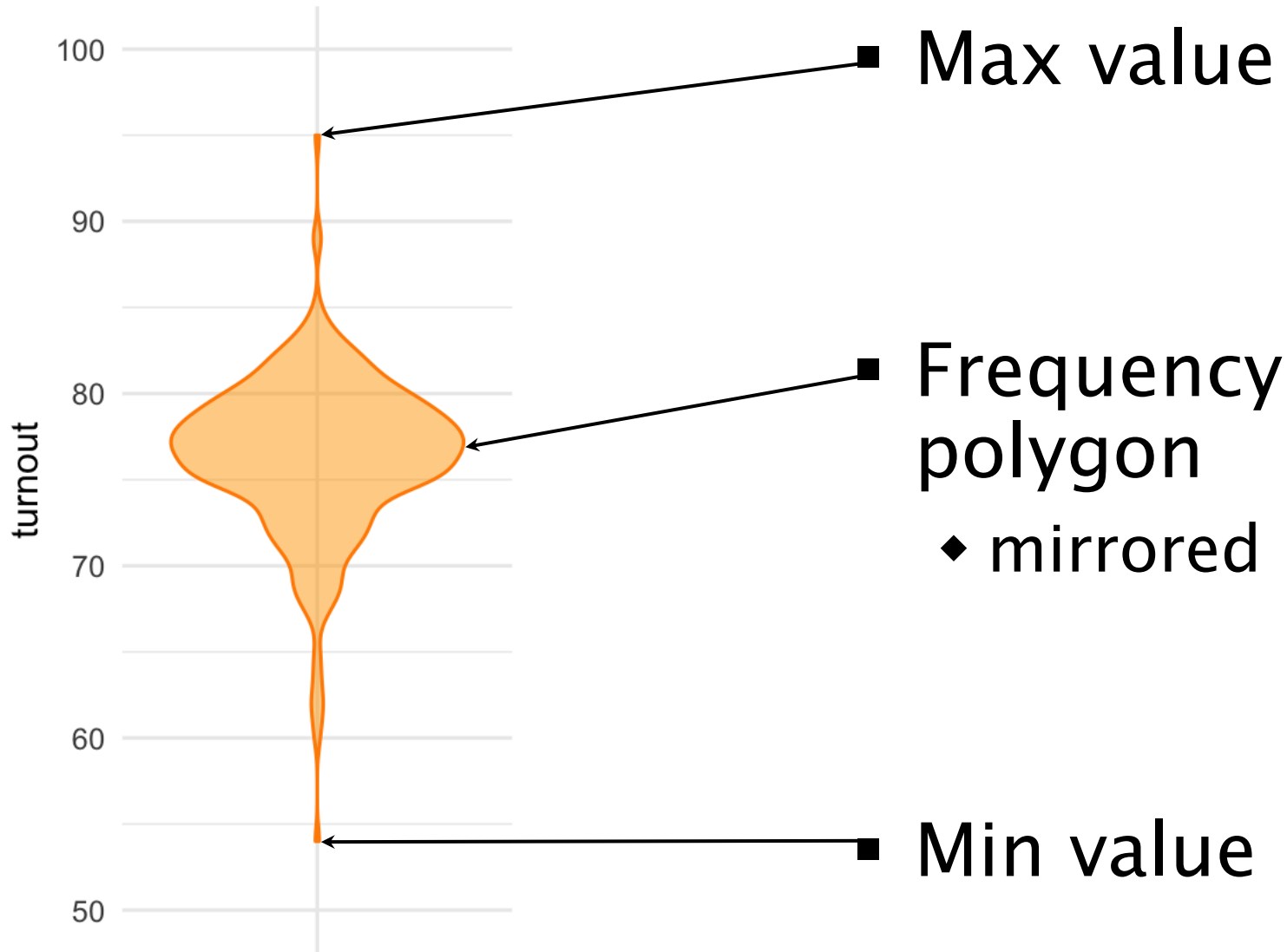
Frequency polygon



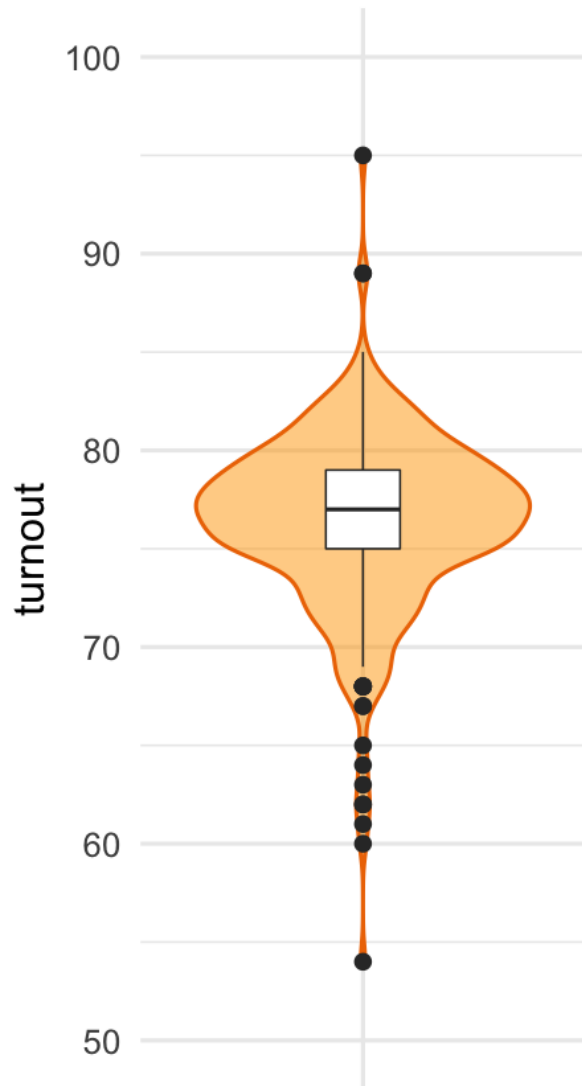
Boxplot



Violin plot



Violin + Boxplot

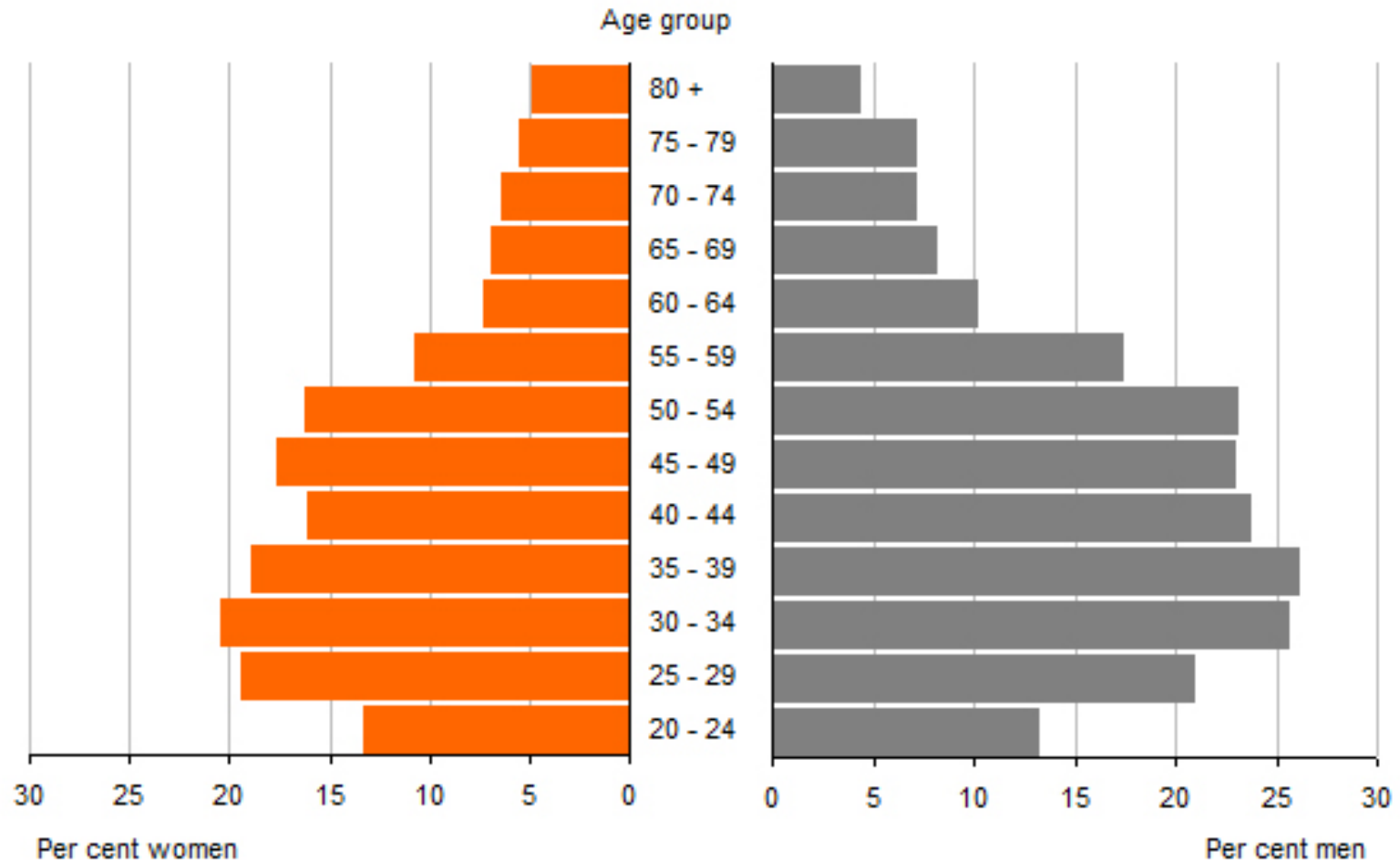


- Overlaying a box plot over the violin provides additional details

Multiple distribution

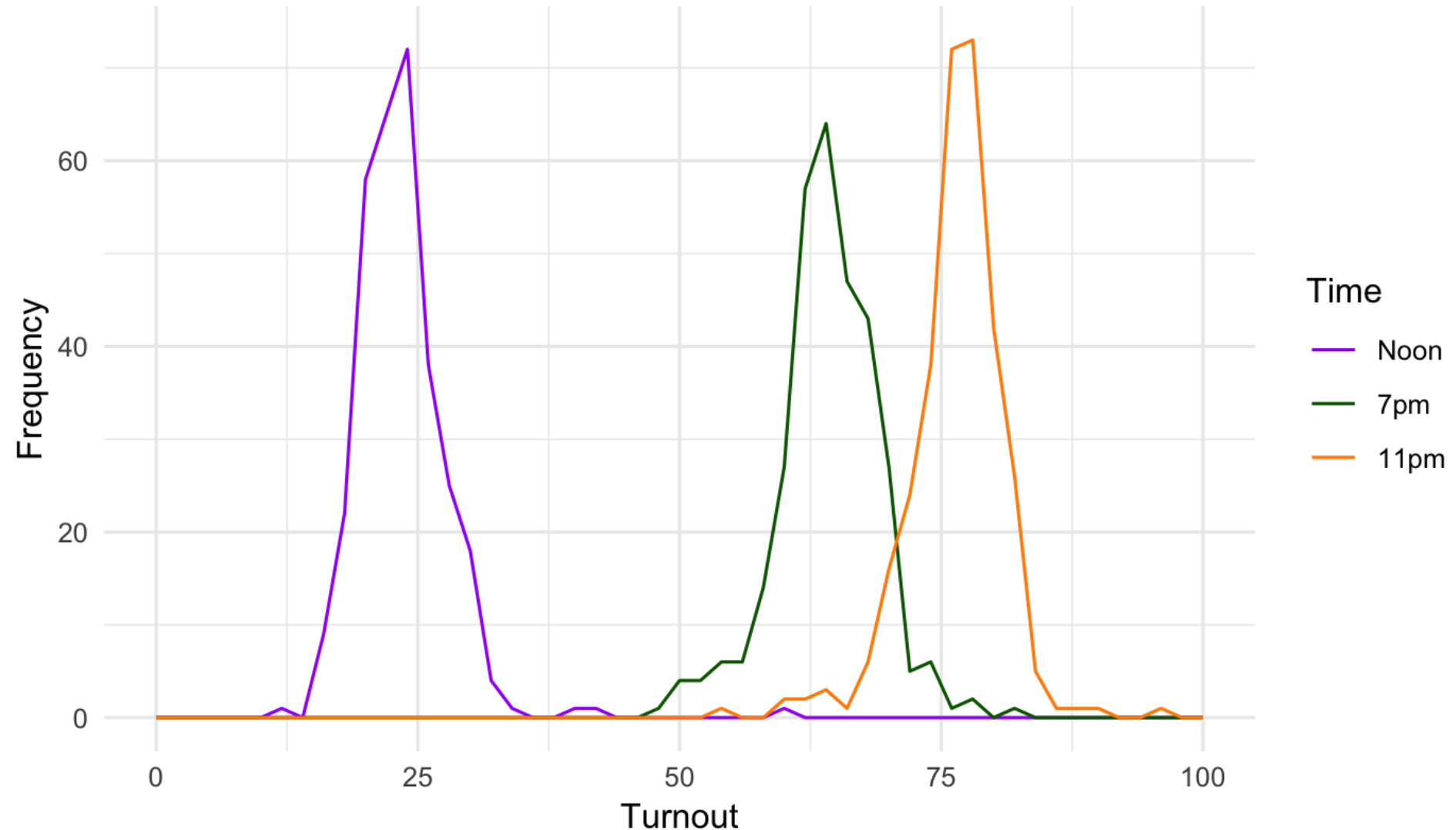
- Histogram is not suitable
- Frequency polygon
 - ◆ Line graphs
 - ◆ Frequency density function
- Boxplot
 - ◆ Summary
 - ◆ Less distracting with high number of categories

Paired diverging bargraph

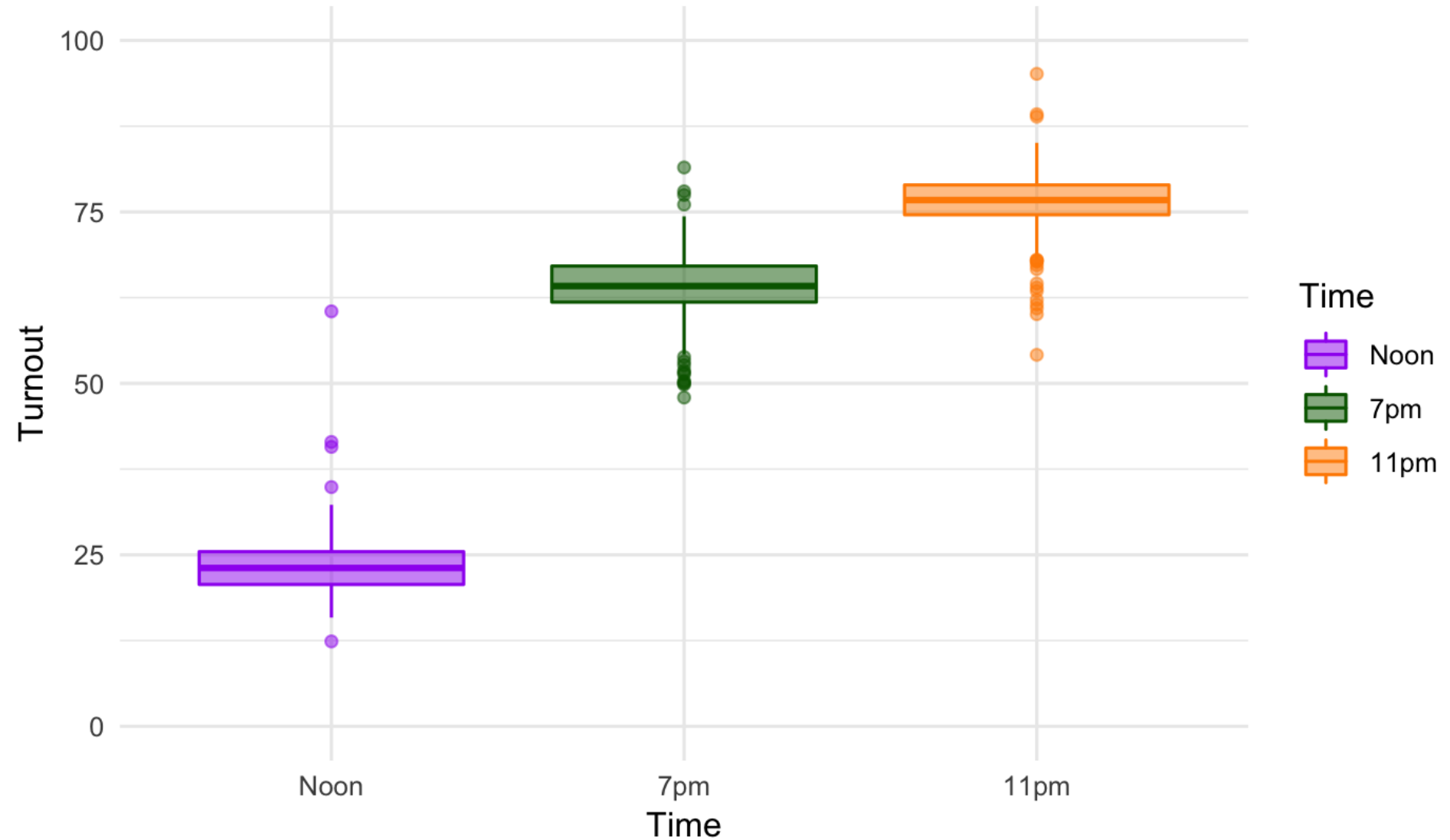


<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/genderstatmanual/Print.aspx?Page=Presentation-of-gender-statistics-in-graphs>

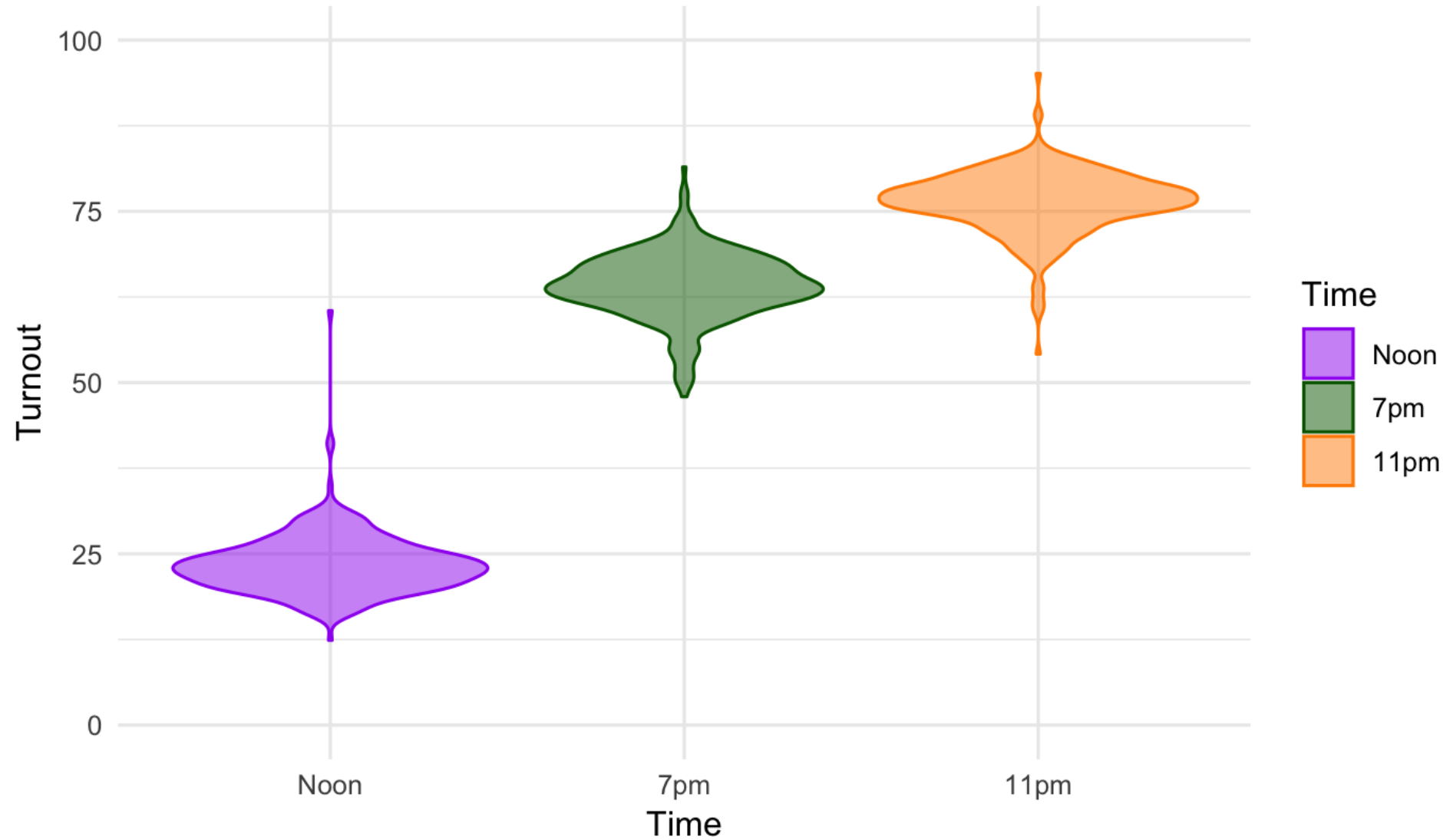
Multiple Frequency polygons



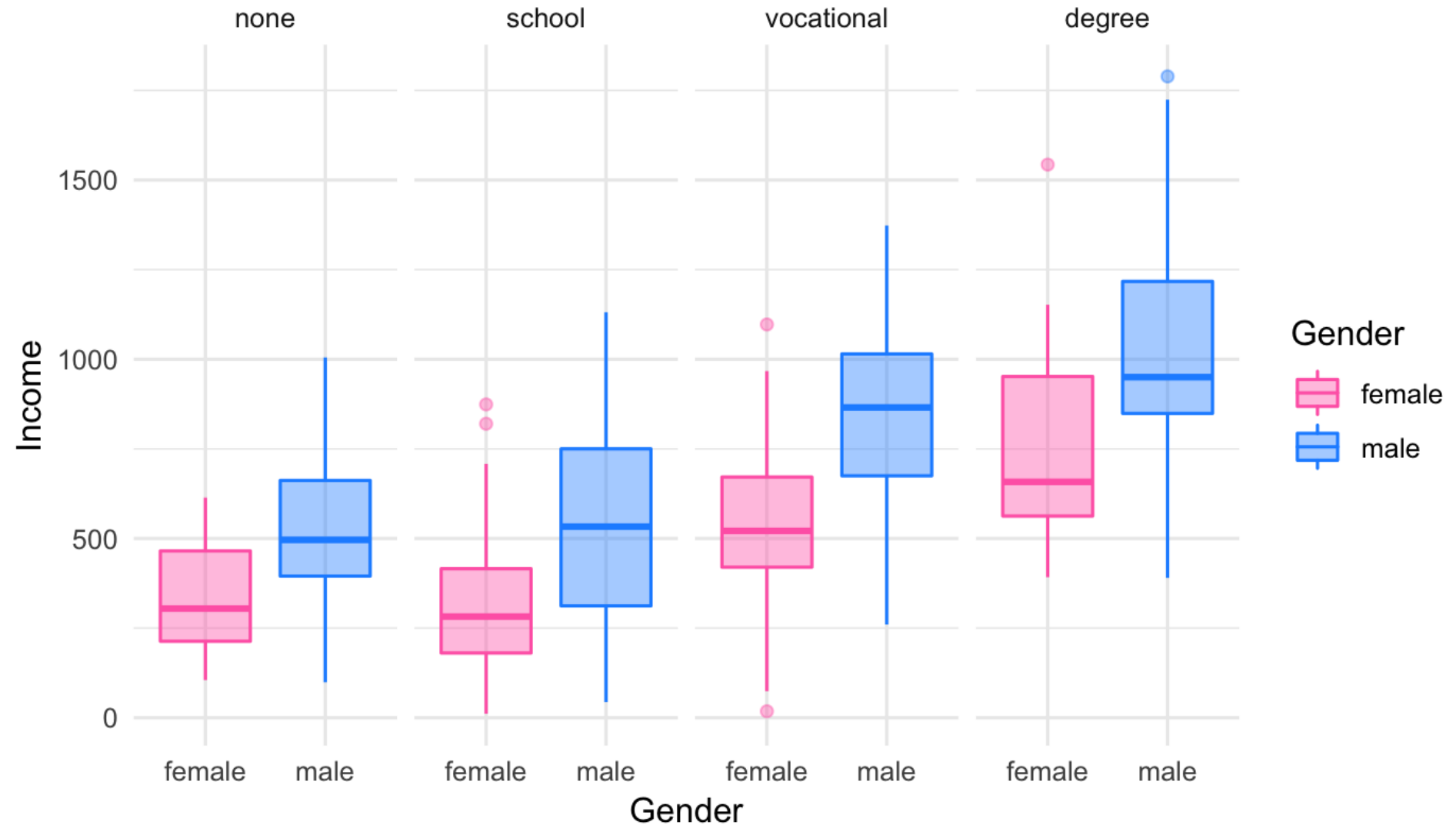
Multiple Box plot



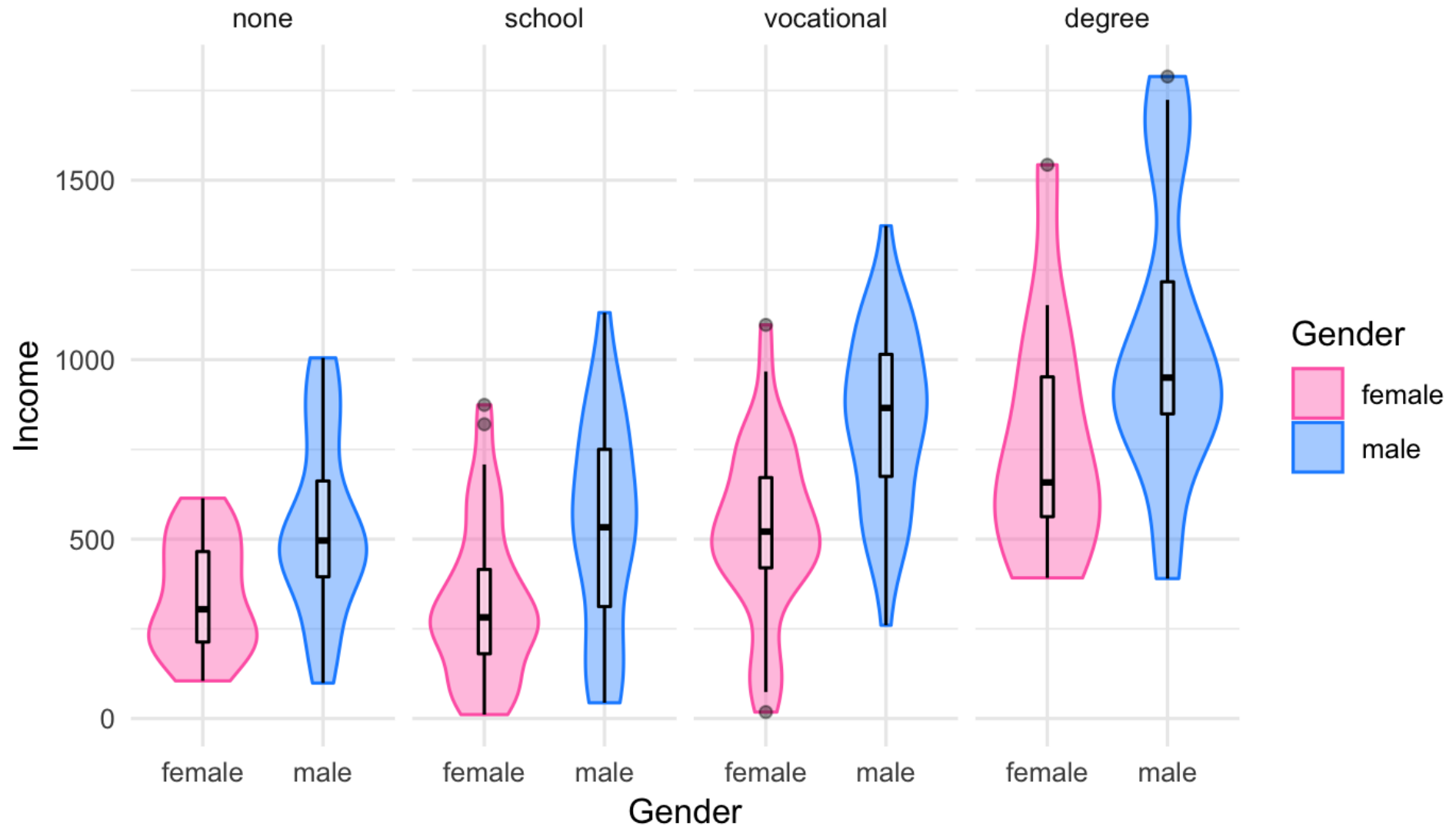
Violin plot



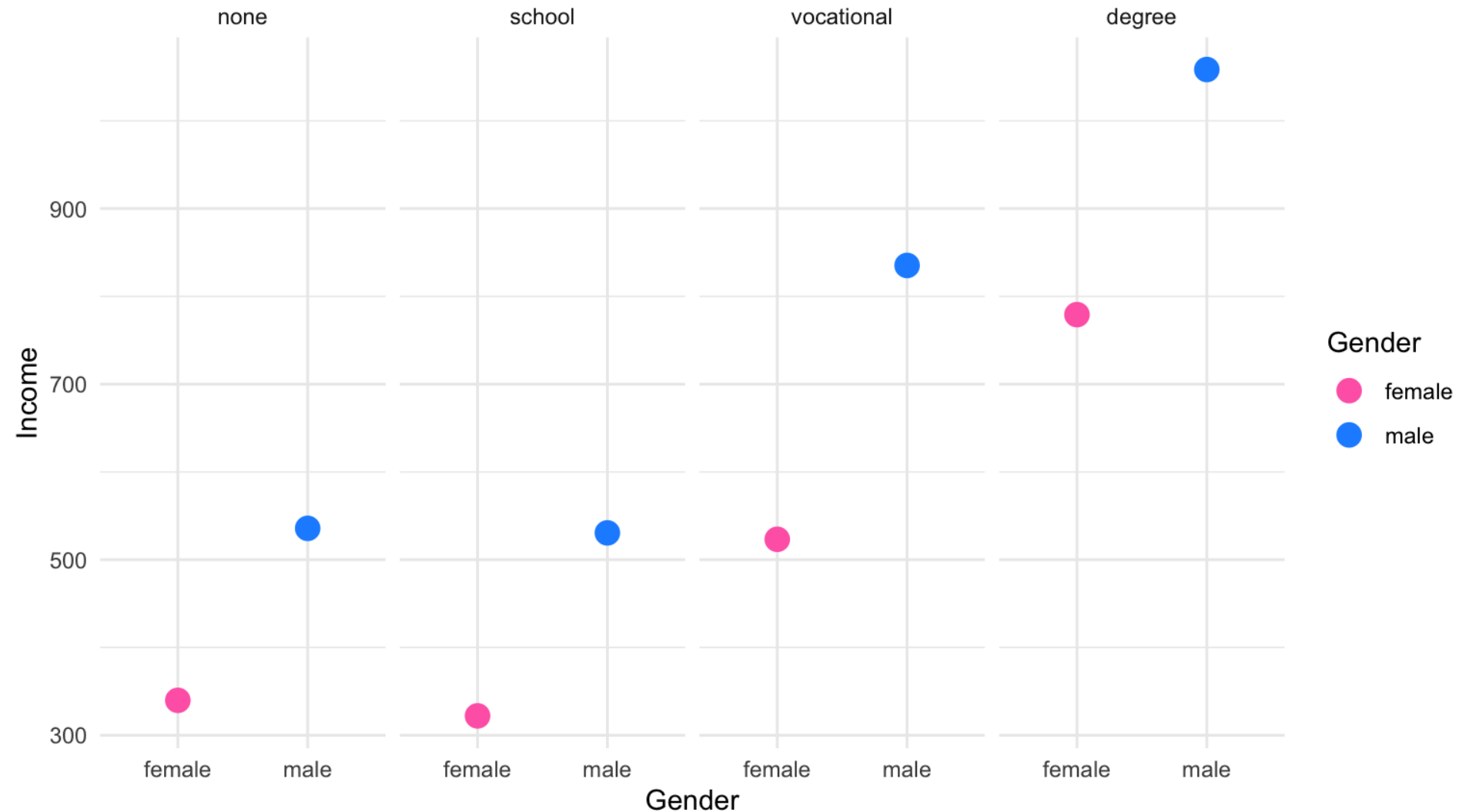
Multiple box plots



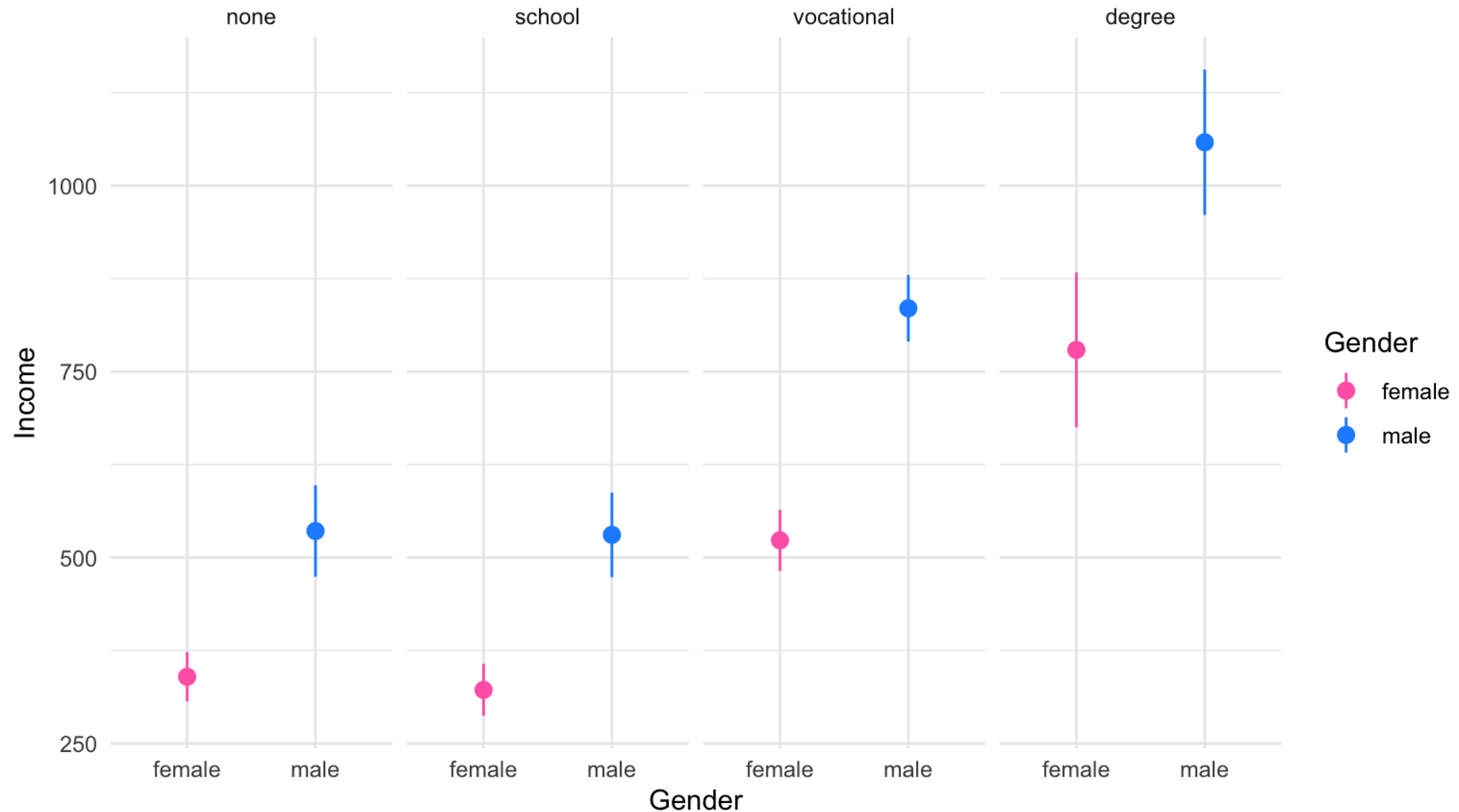
Multiple violin plots



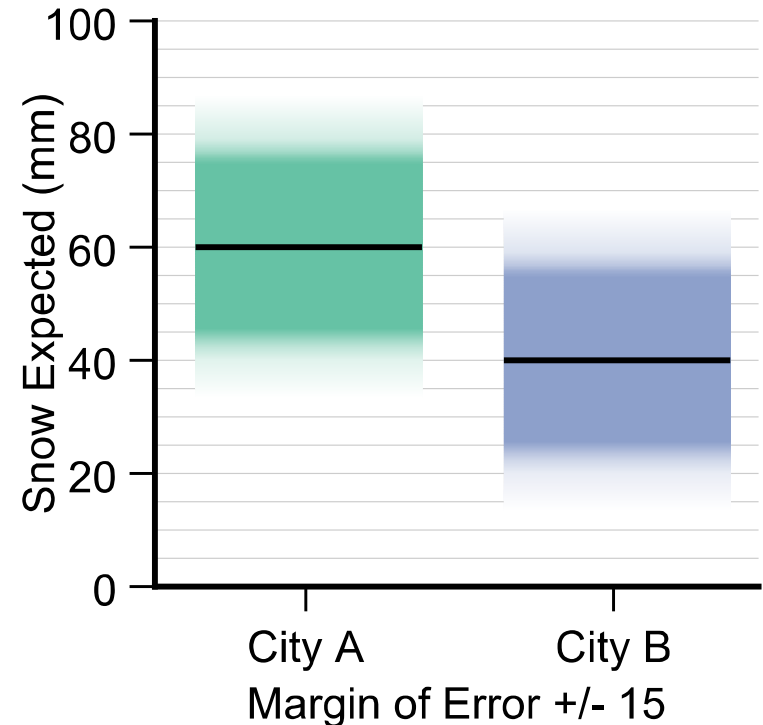
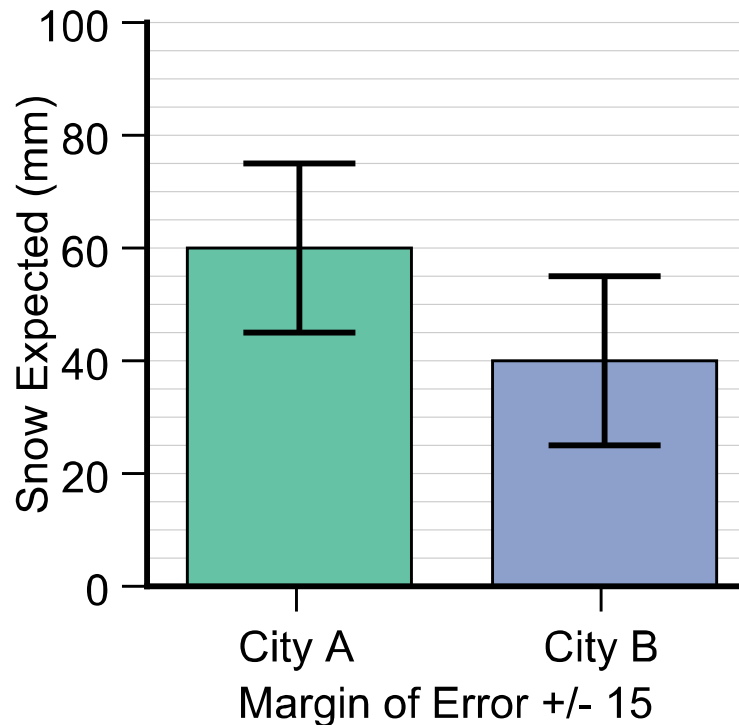
Just dots for mean values



Confidence intervals



Confidence Intervals



Error Bars Considered Harmful: Exploring Alternate Encodings for Mean and Error
Michael Correll, and Michael Gleicher
IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics, Dec. 2014

Interval may be Asymmetric

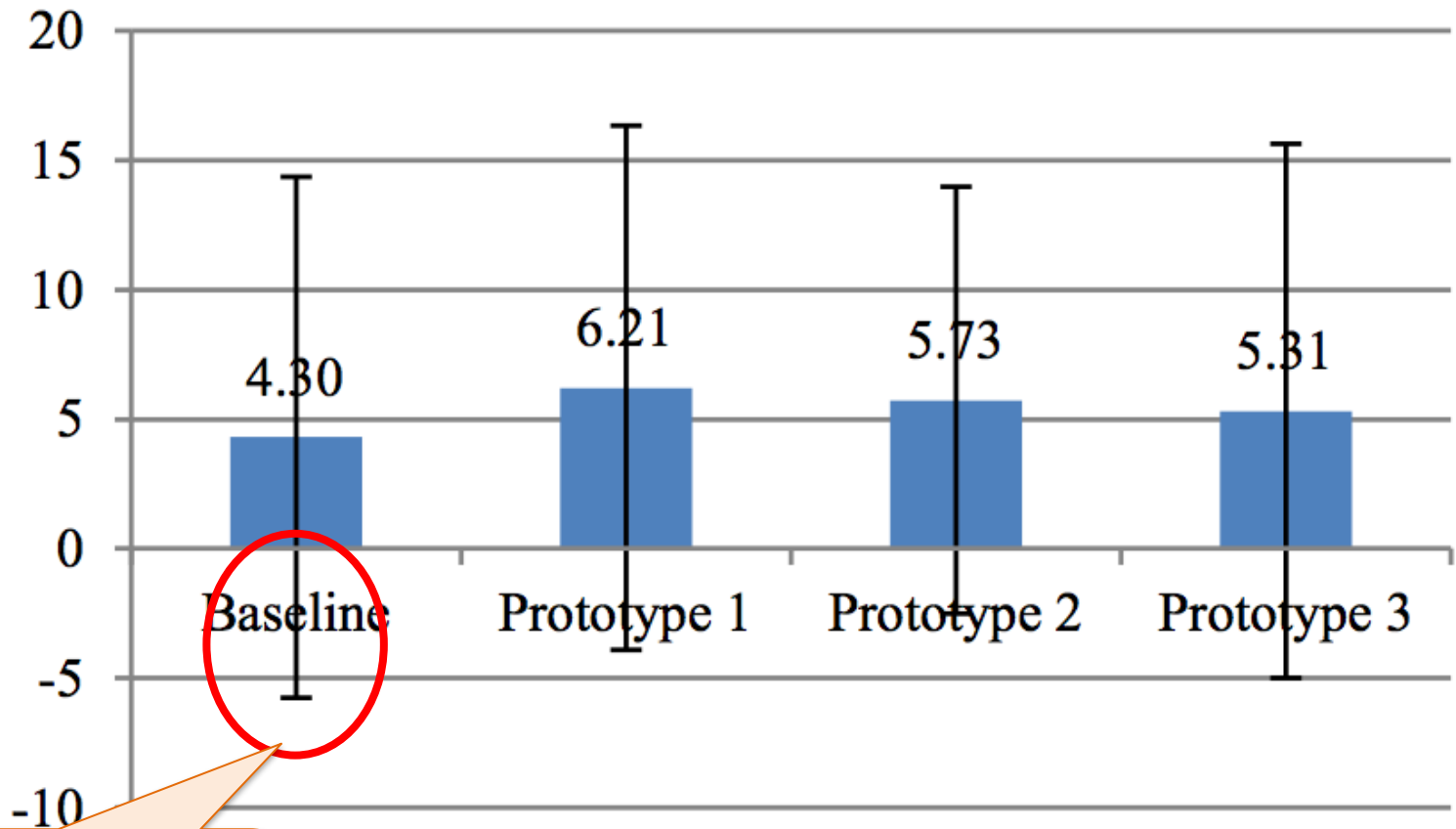


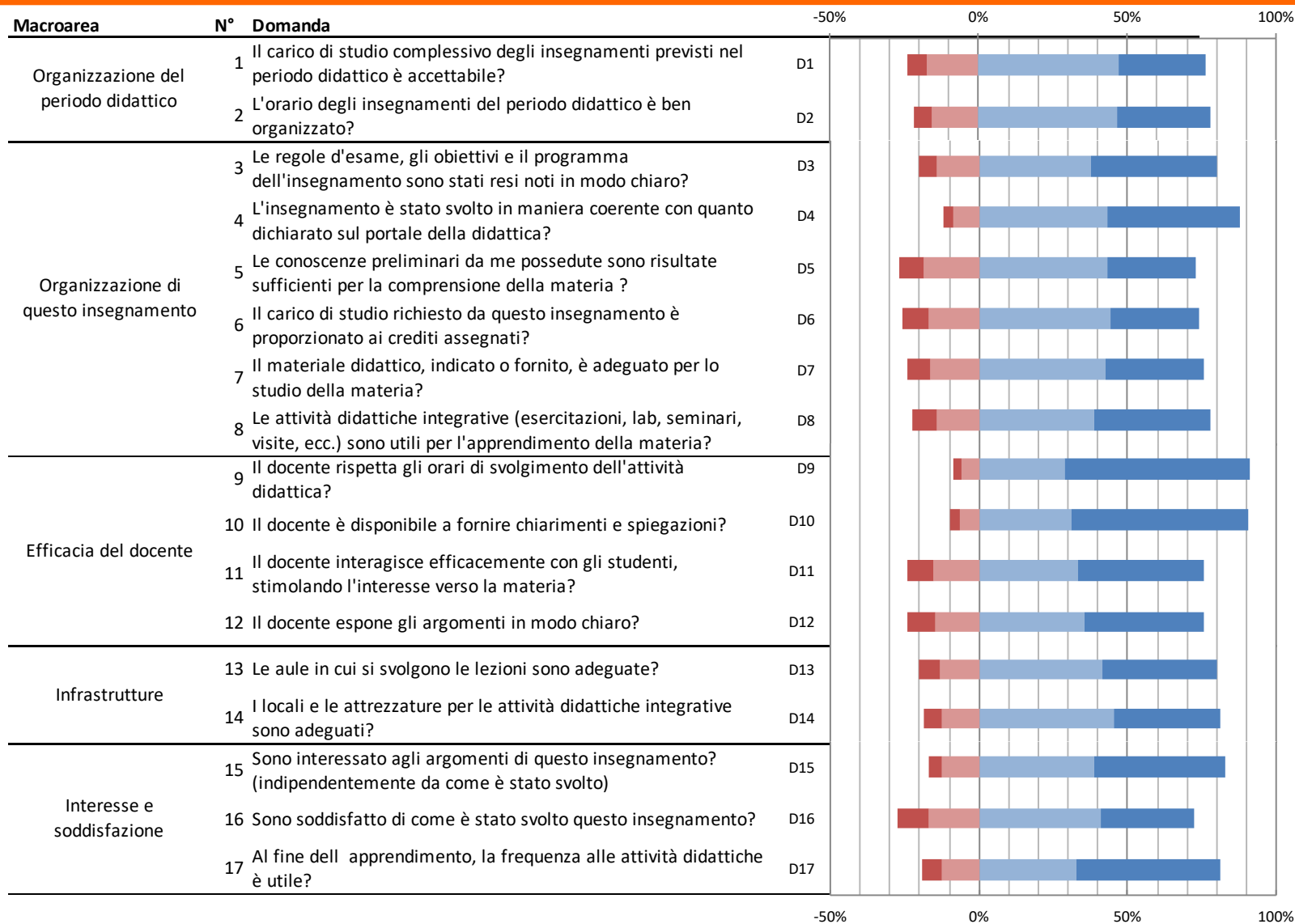
Figure 5. Mean files per changeset.

It is physically impossible to modify -6 files

Likert / Agreement

- Likert scale:
 - ◆ Measures agreement / disagreement with a given statement
 - ◆ Response on an ordinal scale, e.g.
 - Definitely No
 - Mostly No
 - Undecided
 - Mostly Yes
 - Definitely Yes
- Often used to measure positive vs. negative perception

Diverging stacked bars

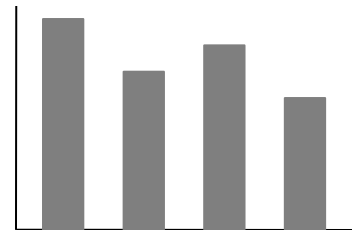
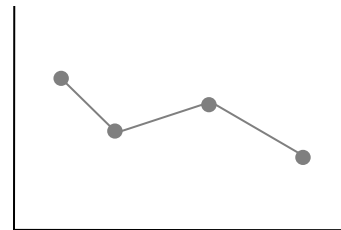
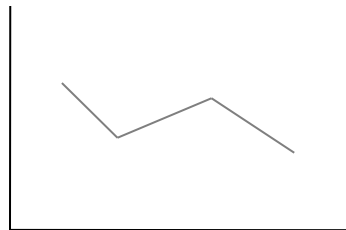


Time series

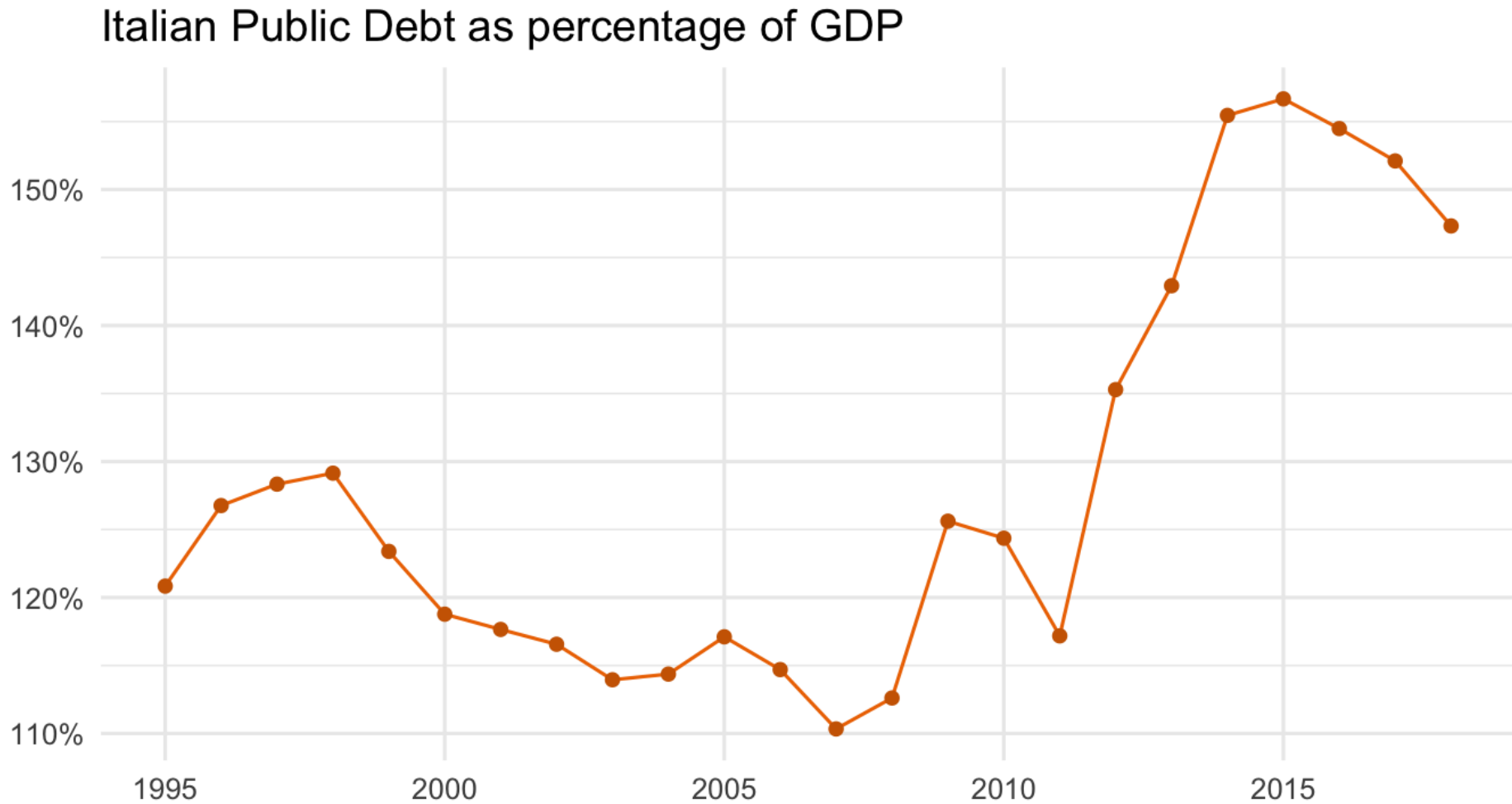
- Series of relationships between quantitative values that are associated with categorical subdivisions of time
- Communicate
 - ◆ Change
 - ◆ Rise
 - ◆ Increase
 - ◆ Fluctuate
 - ◆ Grow
 - ◆ Decline
 - ◆ Decrease
 - ◆ Trend

Time series

- Time grows from left to right
 - ◆ Cultural convention
- Vertical bars
 - ◆ highlight individual points in time
 - ◆ hide overall trend

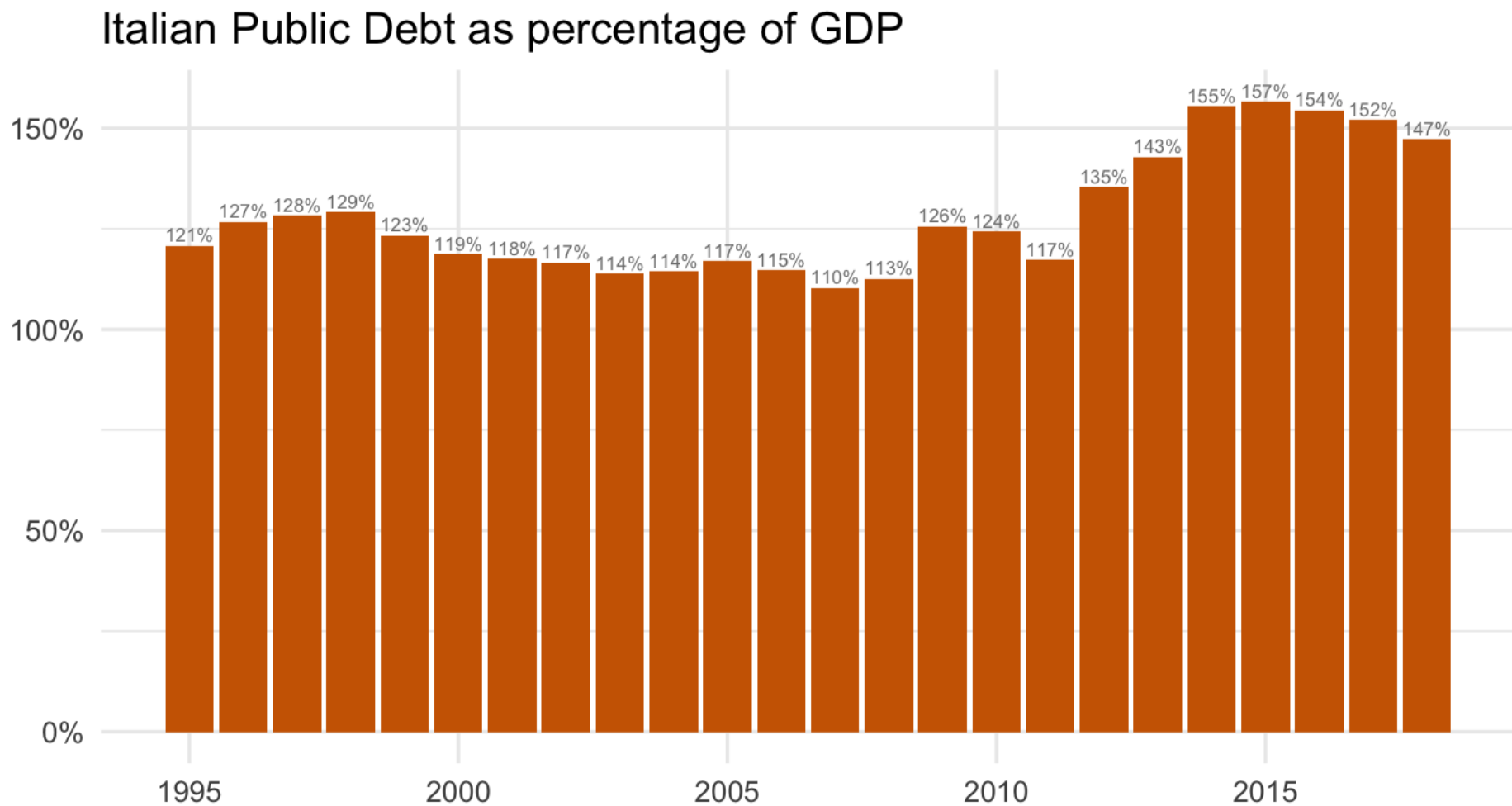


Line plot



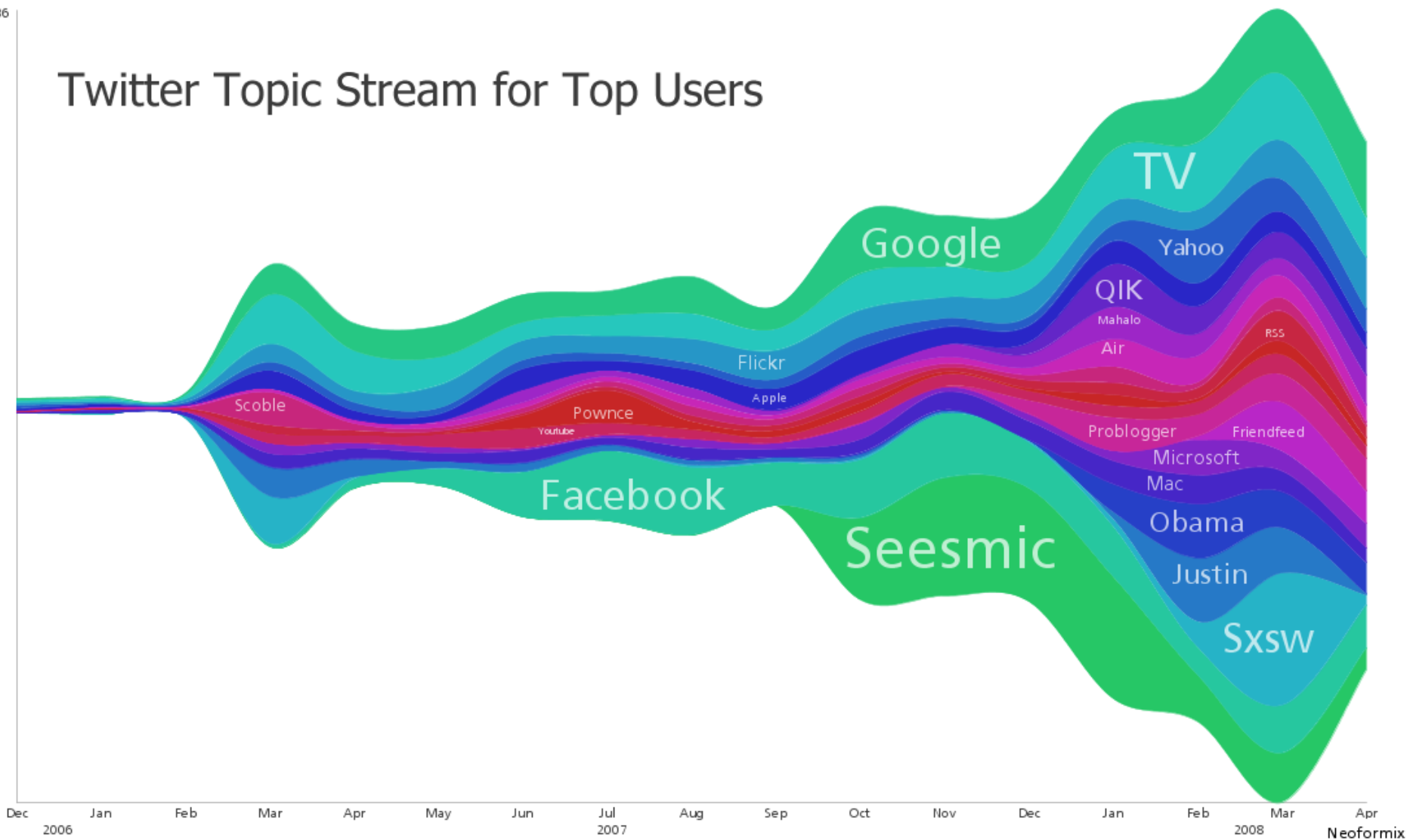
Source: OECD - <https://data.oecd.org/chart/5M2J>

Bars



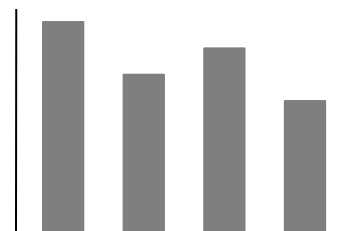
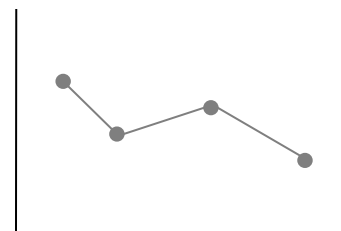
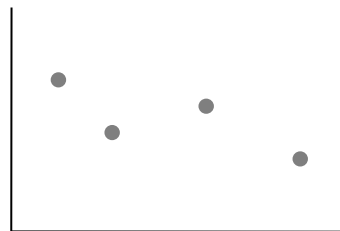
Source: OECD - <https://data.oecd.org/chart/5M2J>

Streamgraph

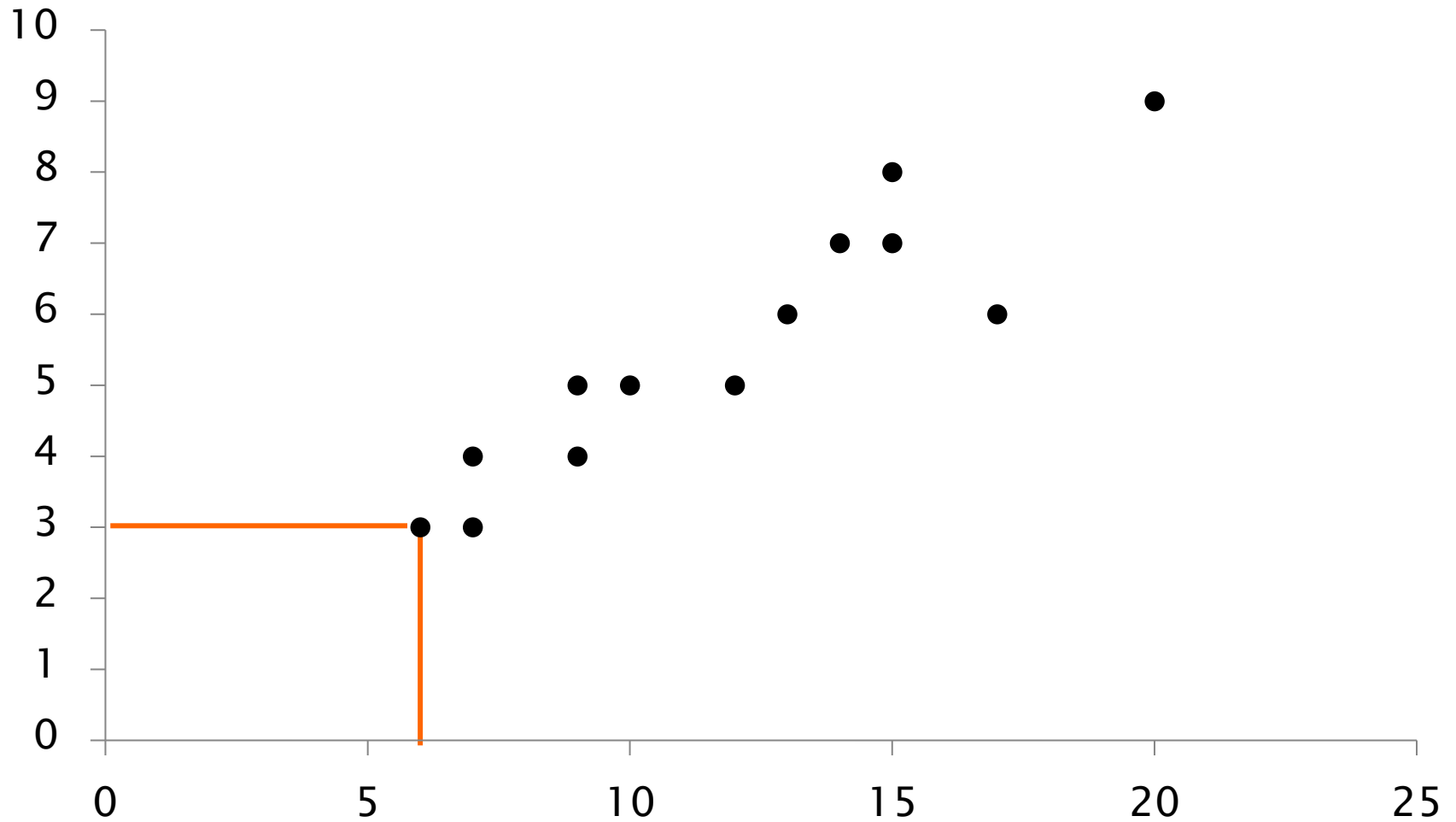


Correlation

- Relationships between two paired sets of quantitative values
 - ♦ Scatter plot w/possible trend line
 - Ok for educated audience
 - ♦ Paired bar graph



Points

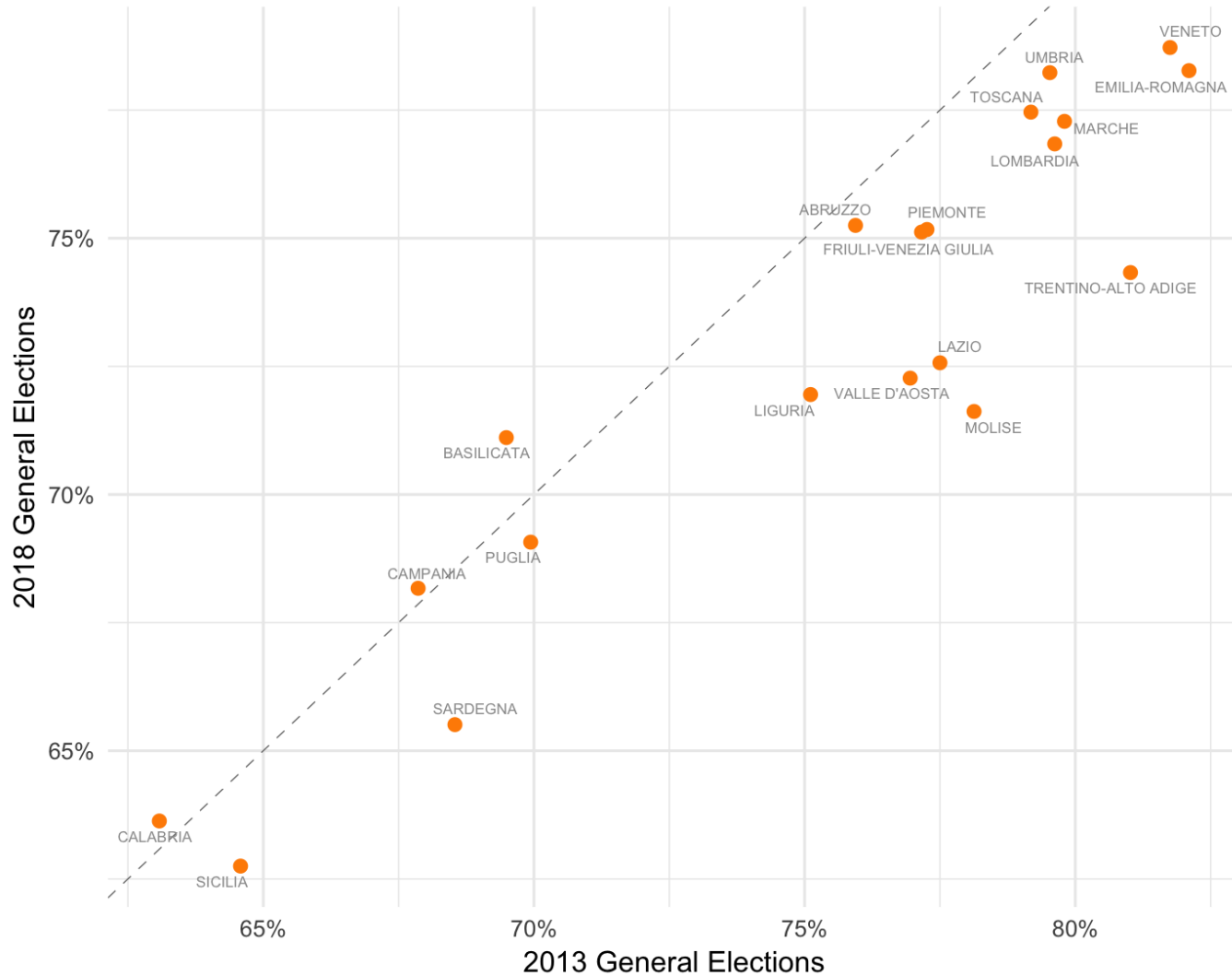


Points Guidelines

- Points must be clearly distinguished
 - ◆ Enlarge points
 - ◆ Select radically distinct shapes (**+** **○**)
 - ◆ Balance size of points and graph
 - ◆ Use outlined shapes
- Lines must not obscure points

Scatter plot

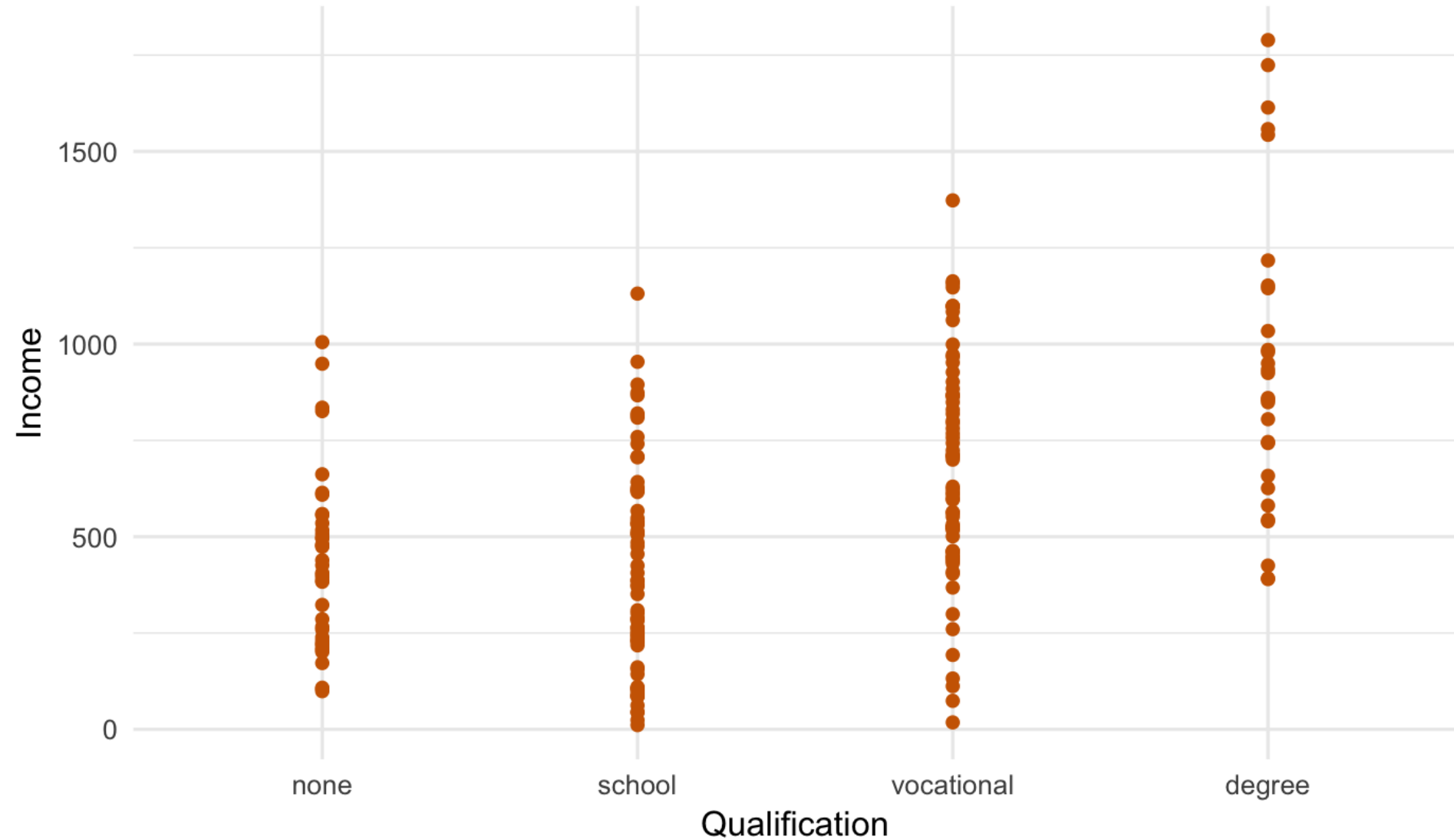
Voter turnout in Italian general elections



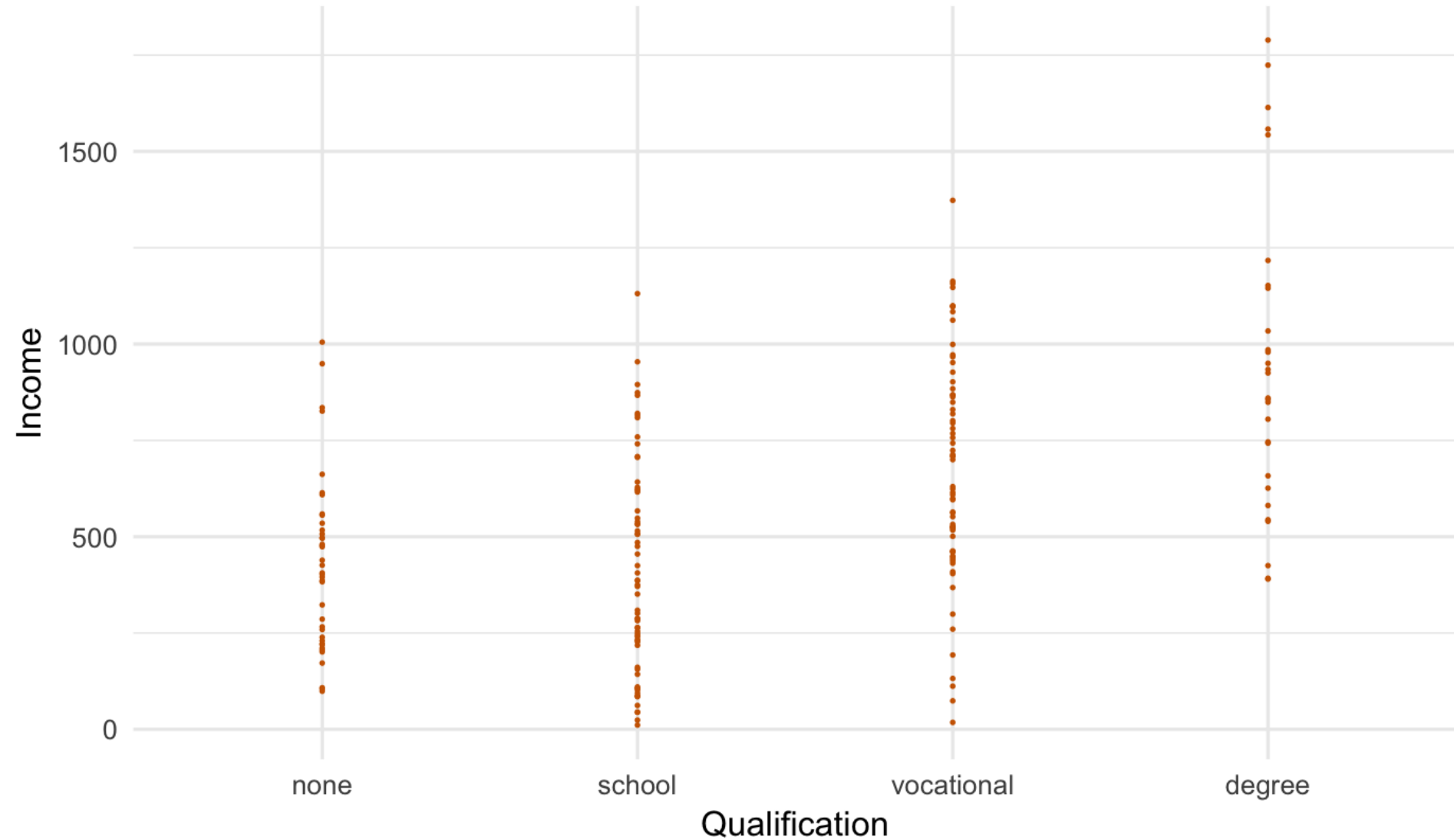
Overplotting

- Phenomenon related to multiple points (or shapes) overlapping
 - ◆ Discrete (integer) measure
 - ◆ Very large dataset
- Solutions
 - ◆ Small shapes
 - ◆ Outlined shapes
 - ◆ Transparent shapes (alpha)
 - ◆ Jittering

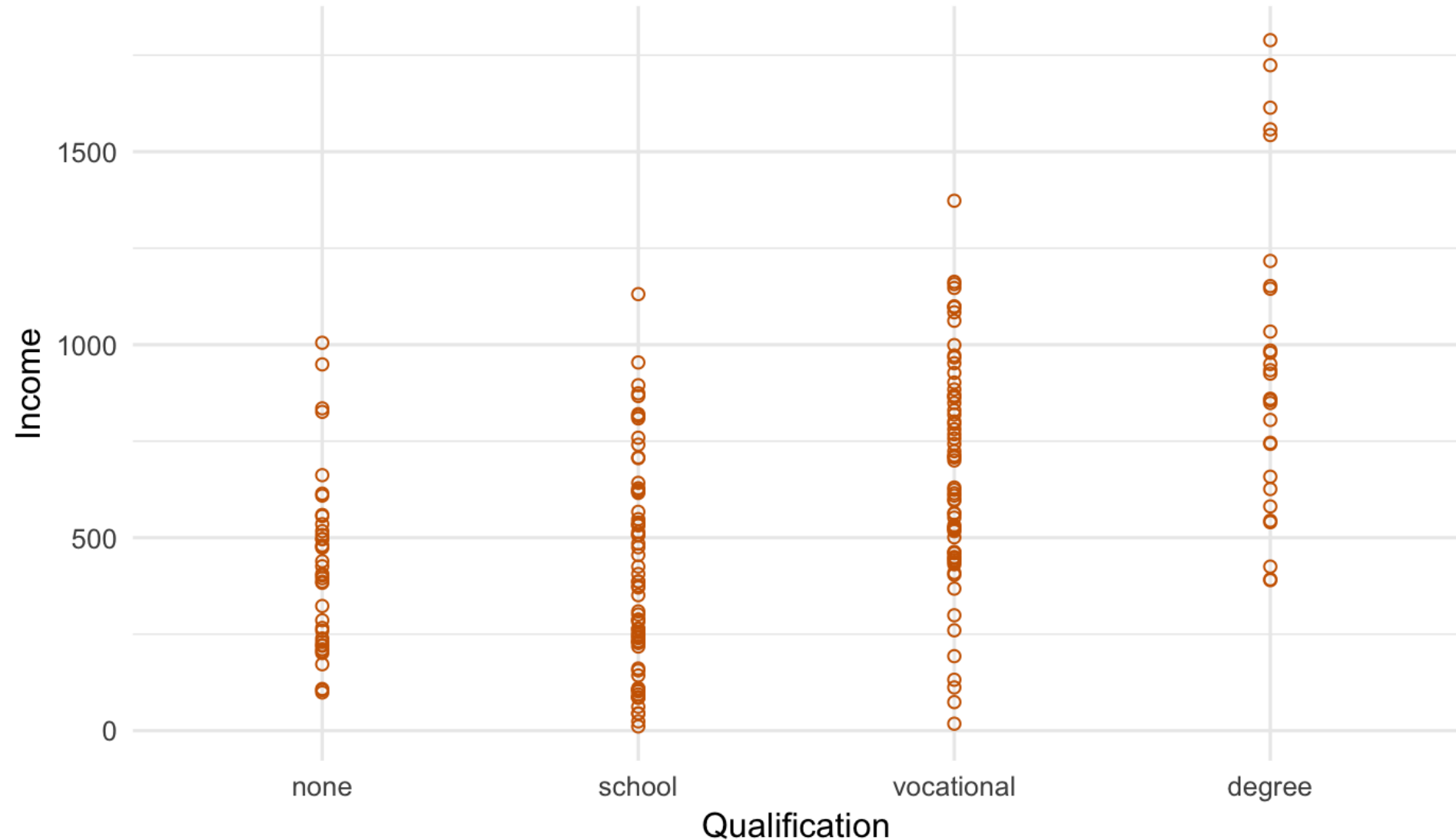
Overplotting example



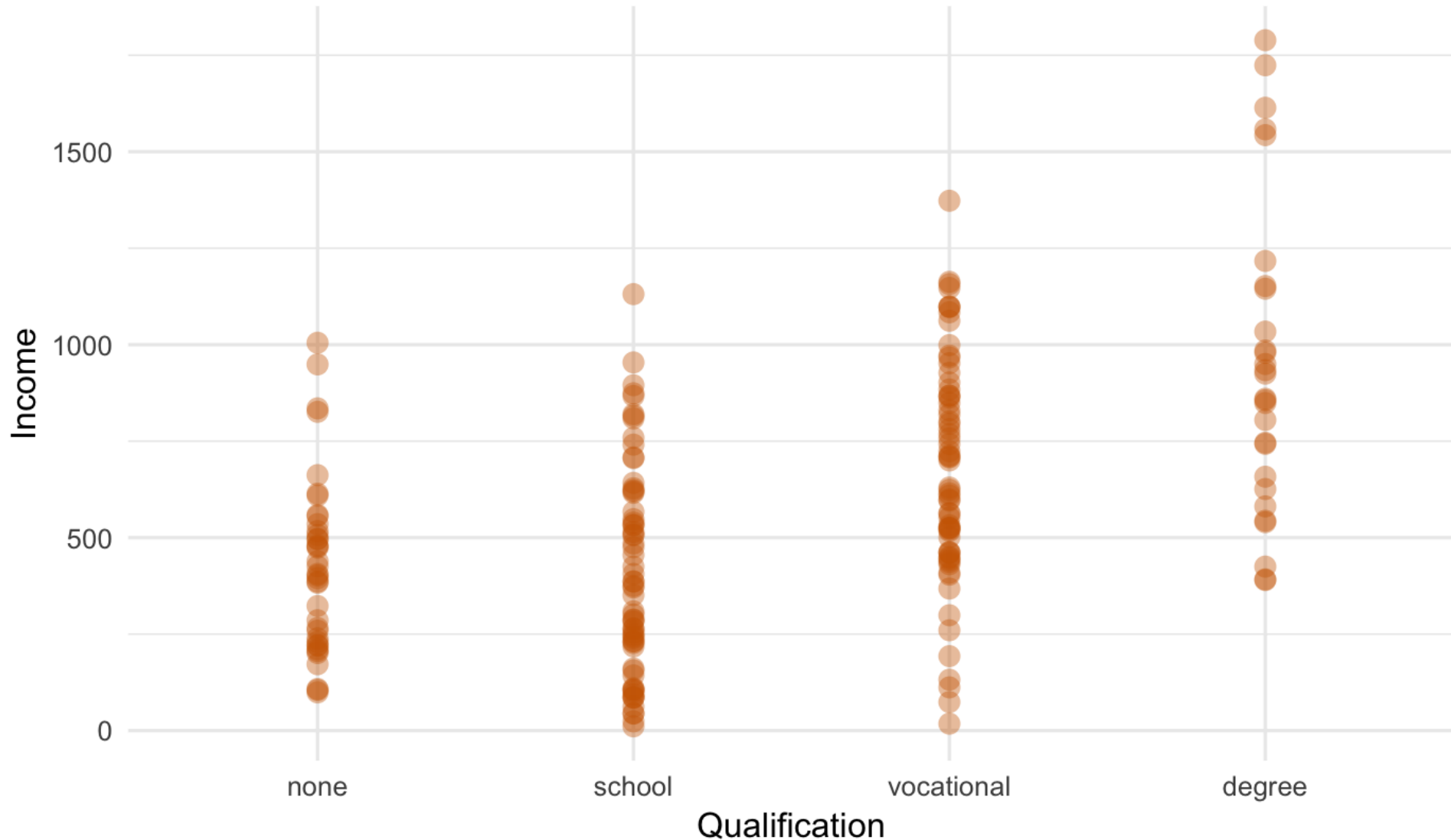
Overplotting – Small



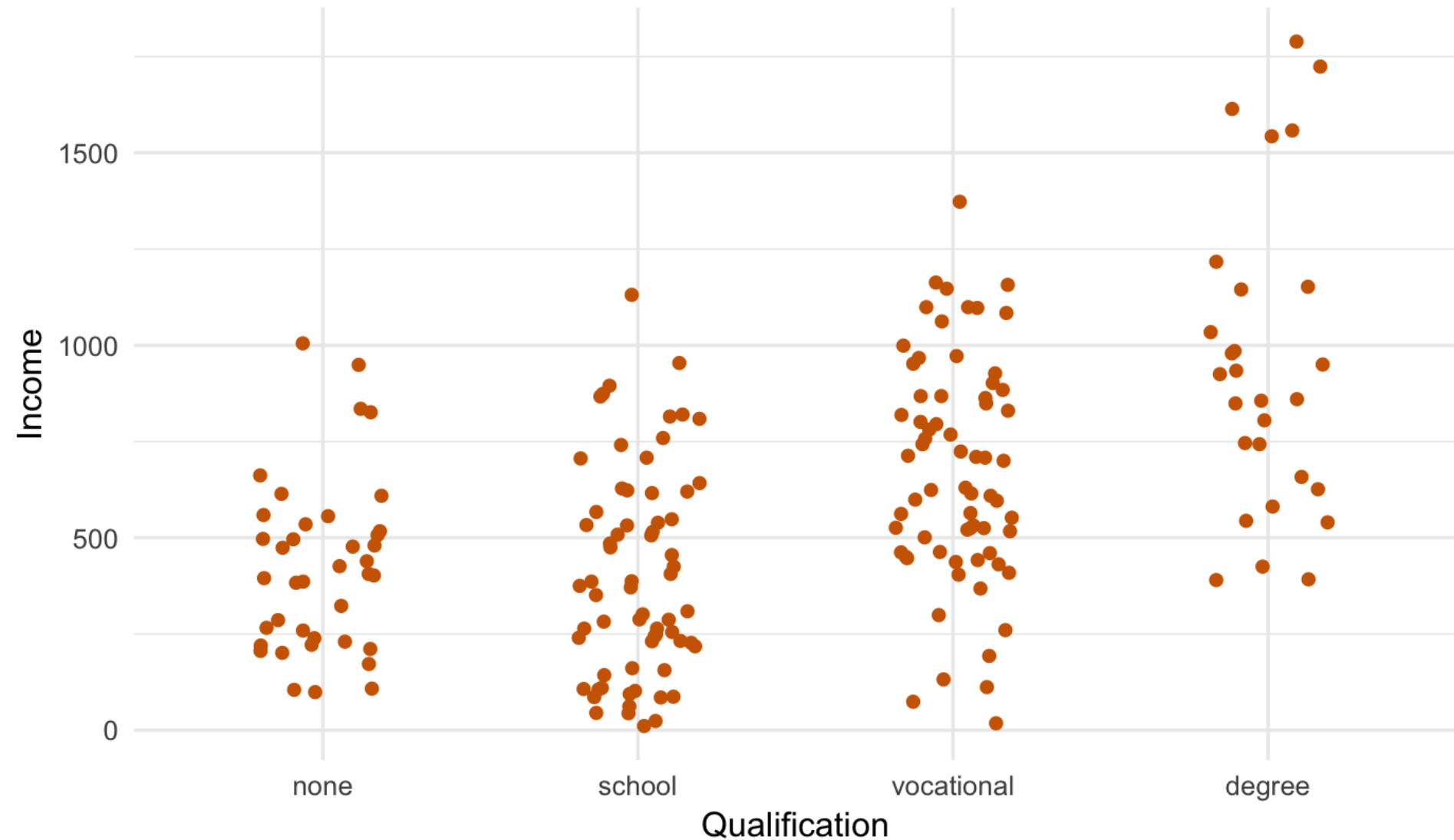
Overplotting – Outlined



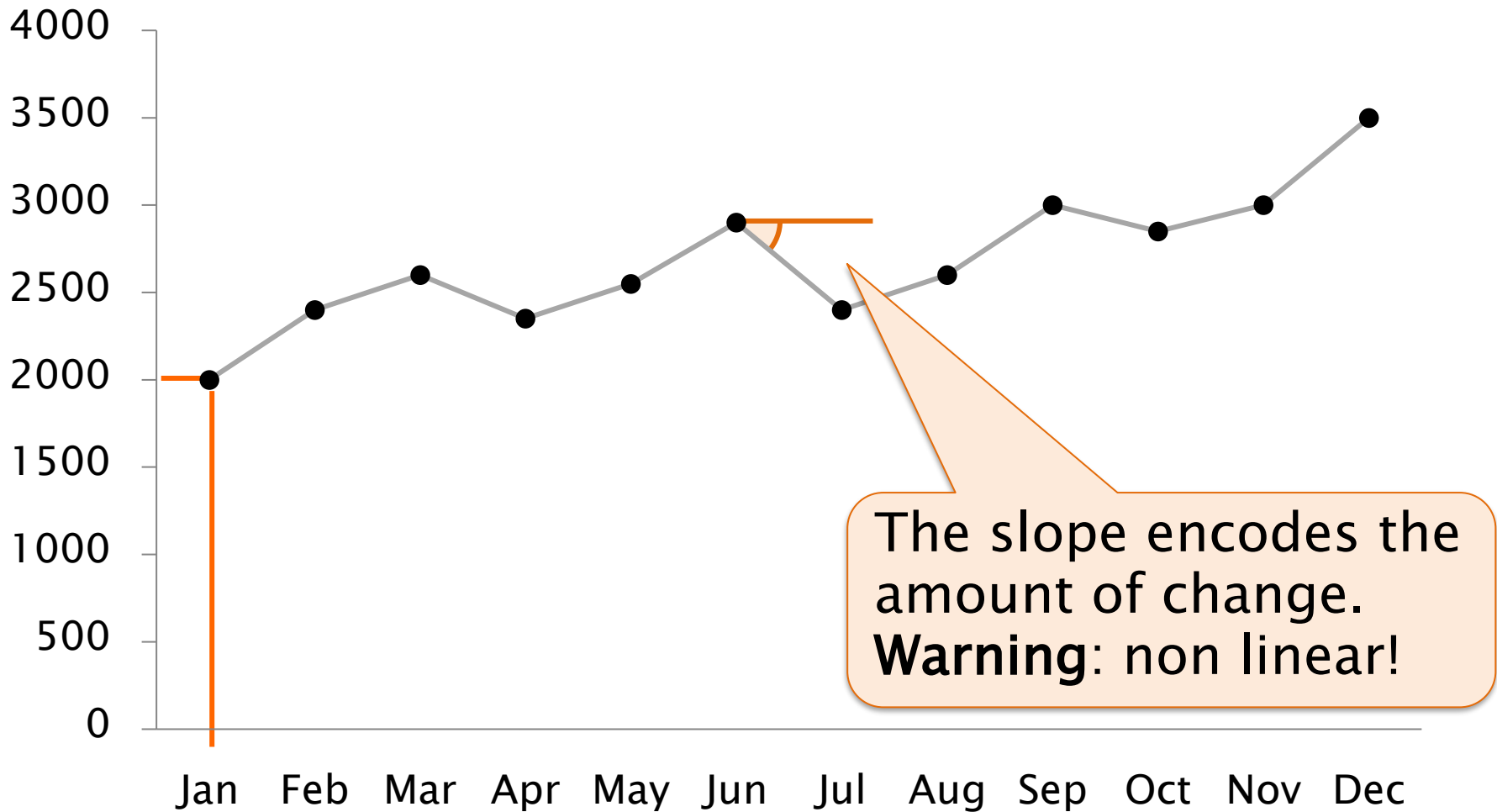
Overplotting – Transparent



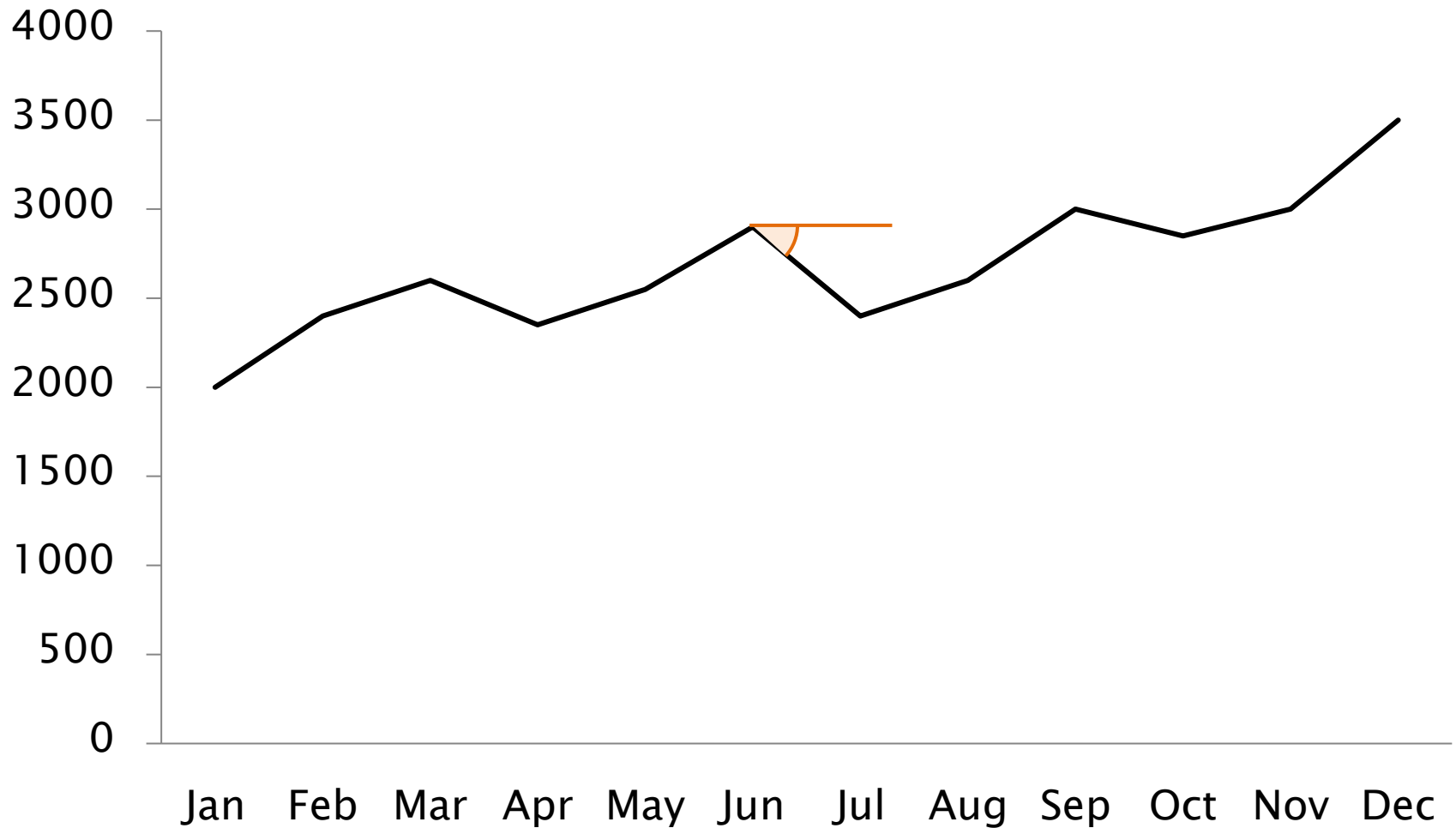
Overplotting – Jittering



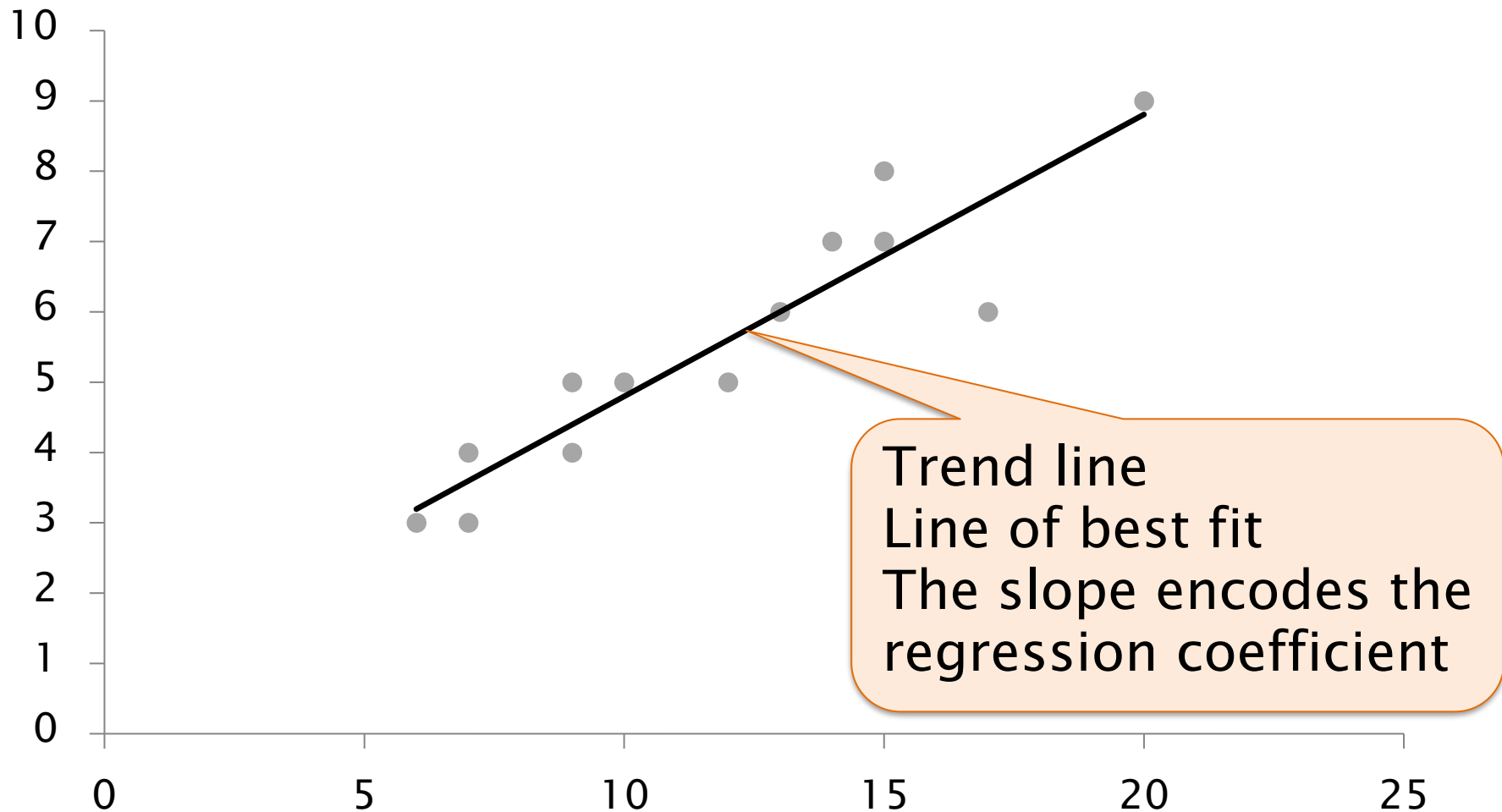
Points and Lines



Slope of lines



Slope of lines

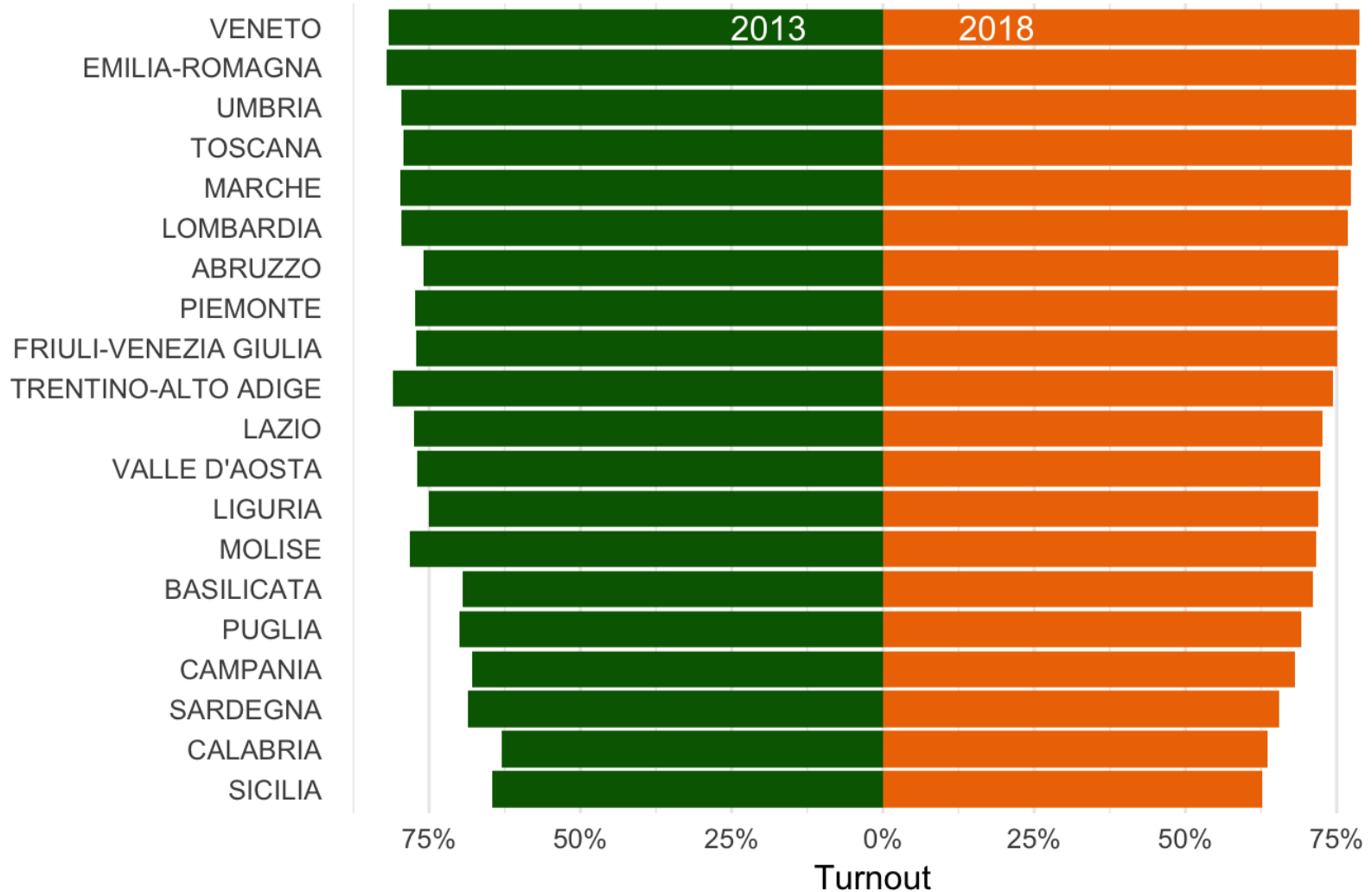


Lines

- Easy perception of trends and overall shape of data
- Best suited for time series
- Variation encoded as slope
 - ◆ Clear direction
 - ◆ Approximate magnitude

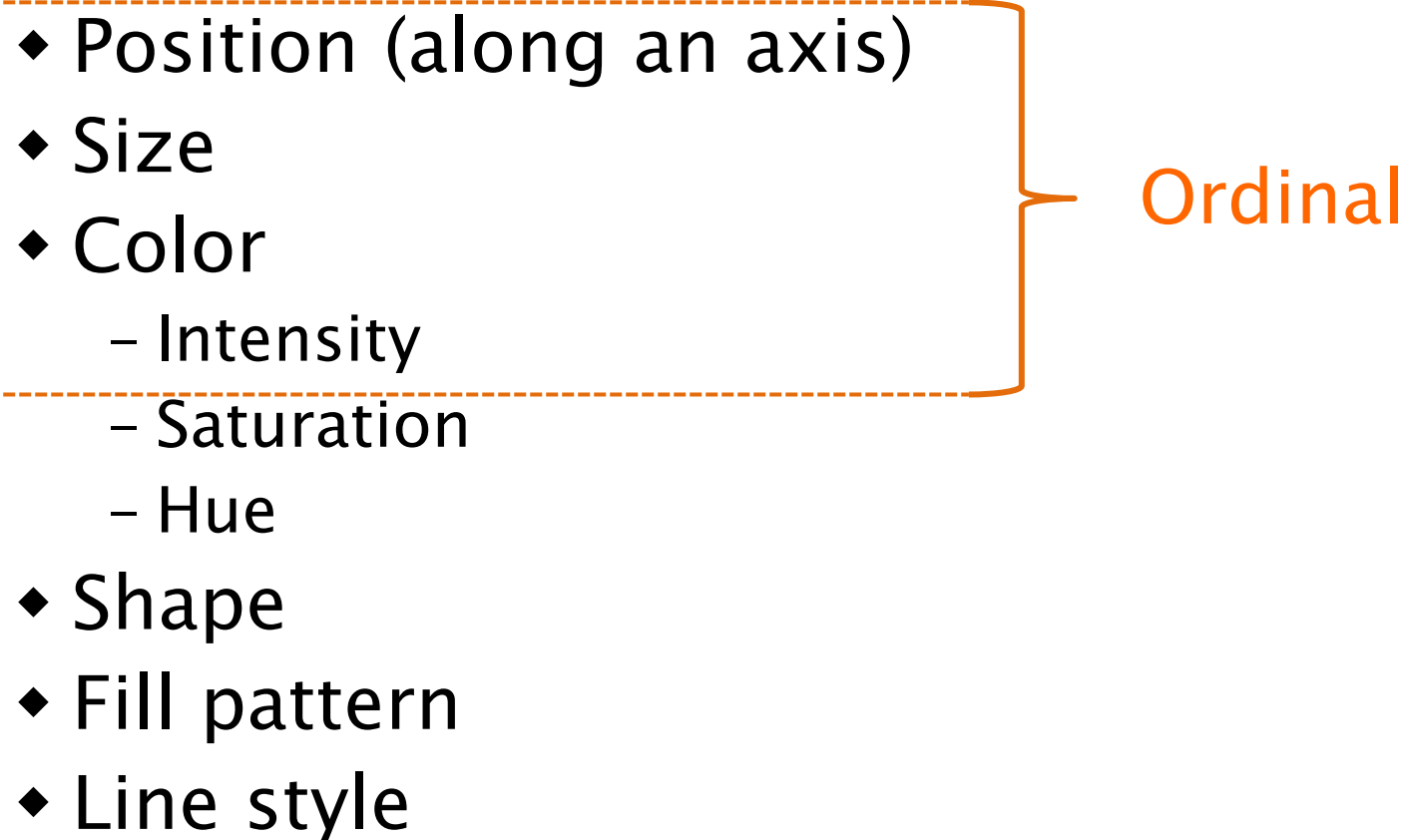
Paired diverging bars

Voter turnout in Italian general elections



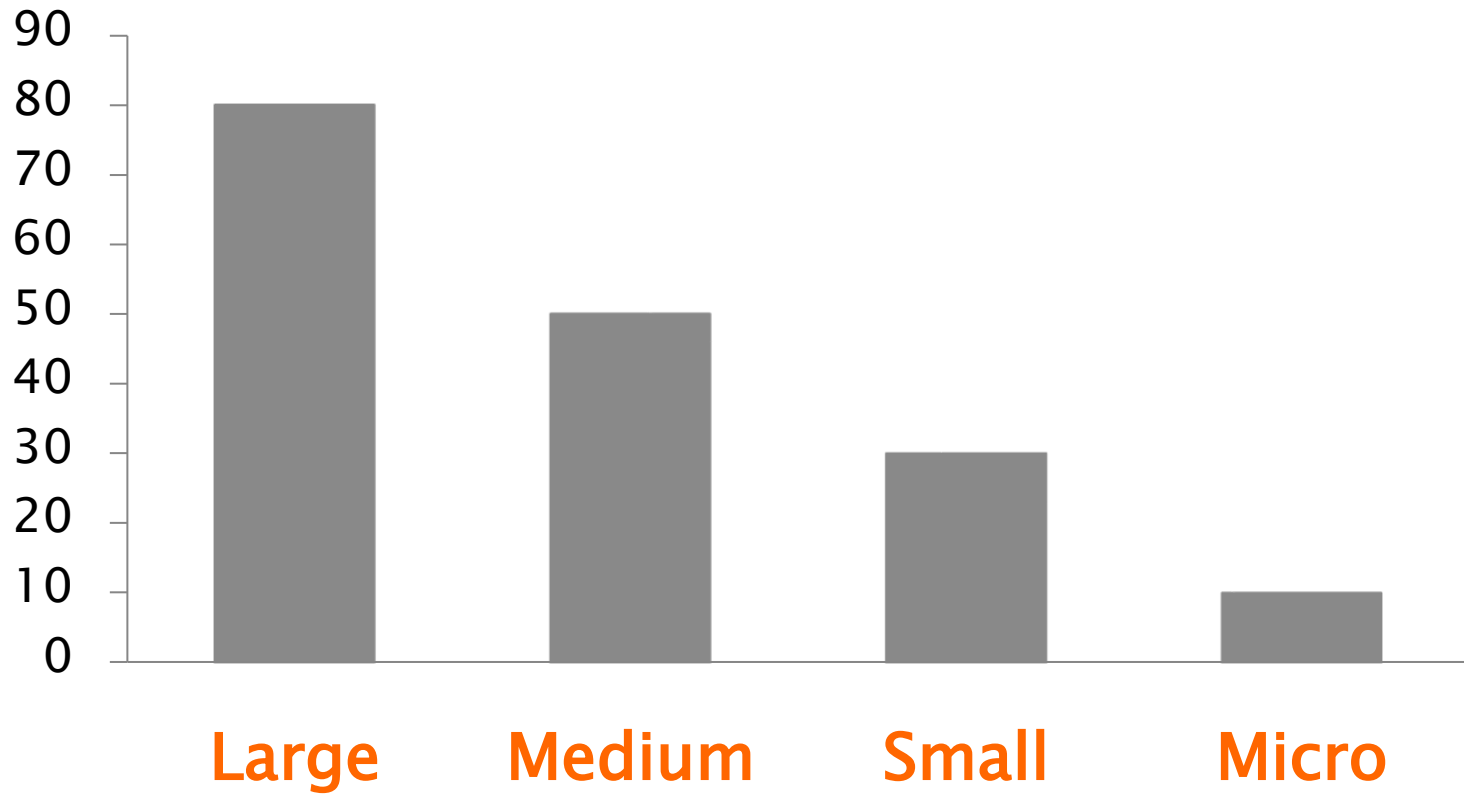
Categorical encoding attributes

- Encoding of categorical levels

- ◆ Position (along an axis)
 - ◆ Size
 - ◆ Color
 - Intensity
 - Saturation
 - Hue
 - ◆ Shape
 - ◆ Fill pattern
 - ◆ Line style
- 
- The diagram shows a list of categorical encoding attributes. An orange bracket on the right side groups the first five attributes: Position (along an axis), Size, Color (with its sub-items Intensity, Saturation, and Hue), Shape, and Fill pattern. The word 'Ordinal' is written in orange next to the bracket, indicating that these attributes are used for ordinal encoding. The 'Line style' attribute is not included in the bracketed group.
- Ordinal

Position

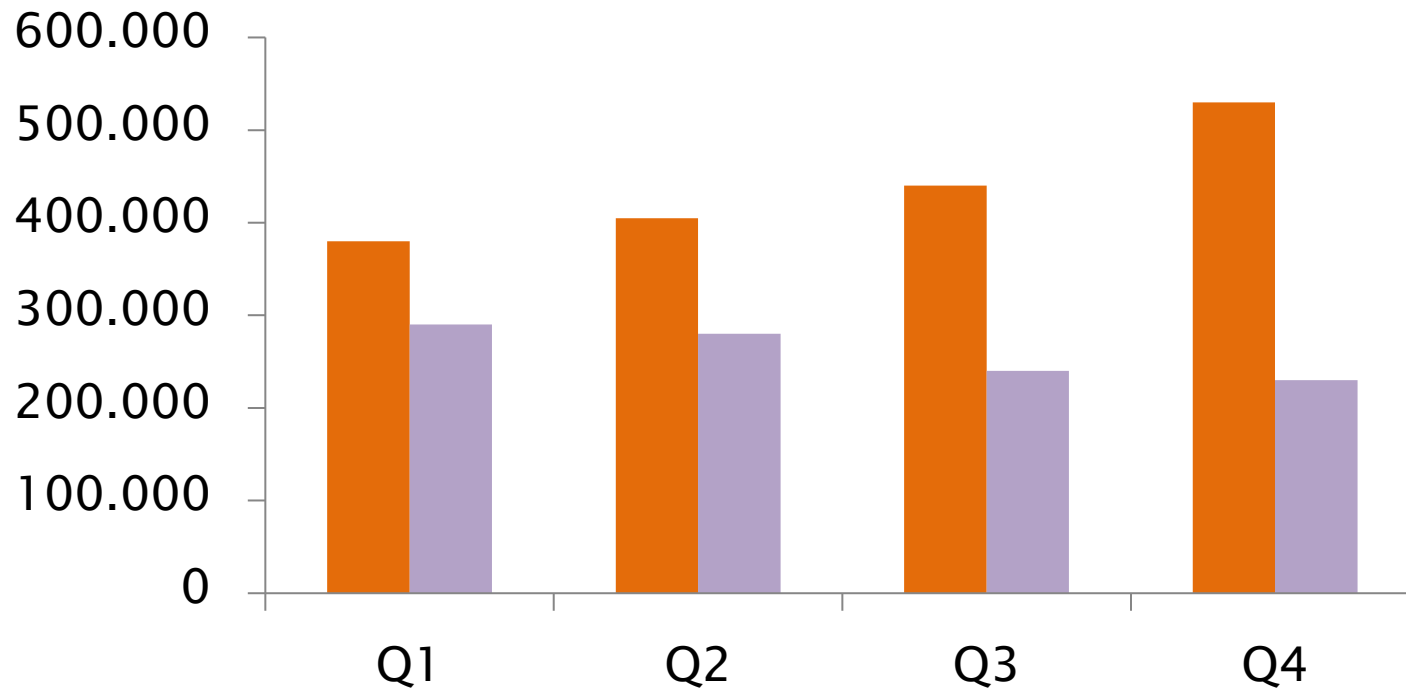
Number of
companies



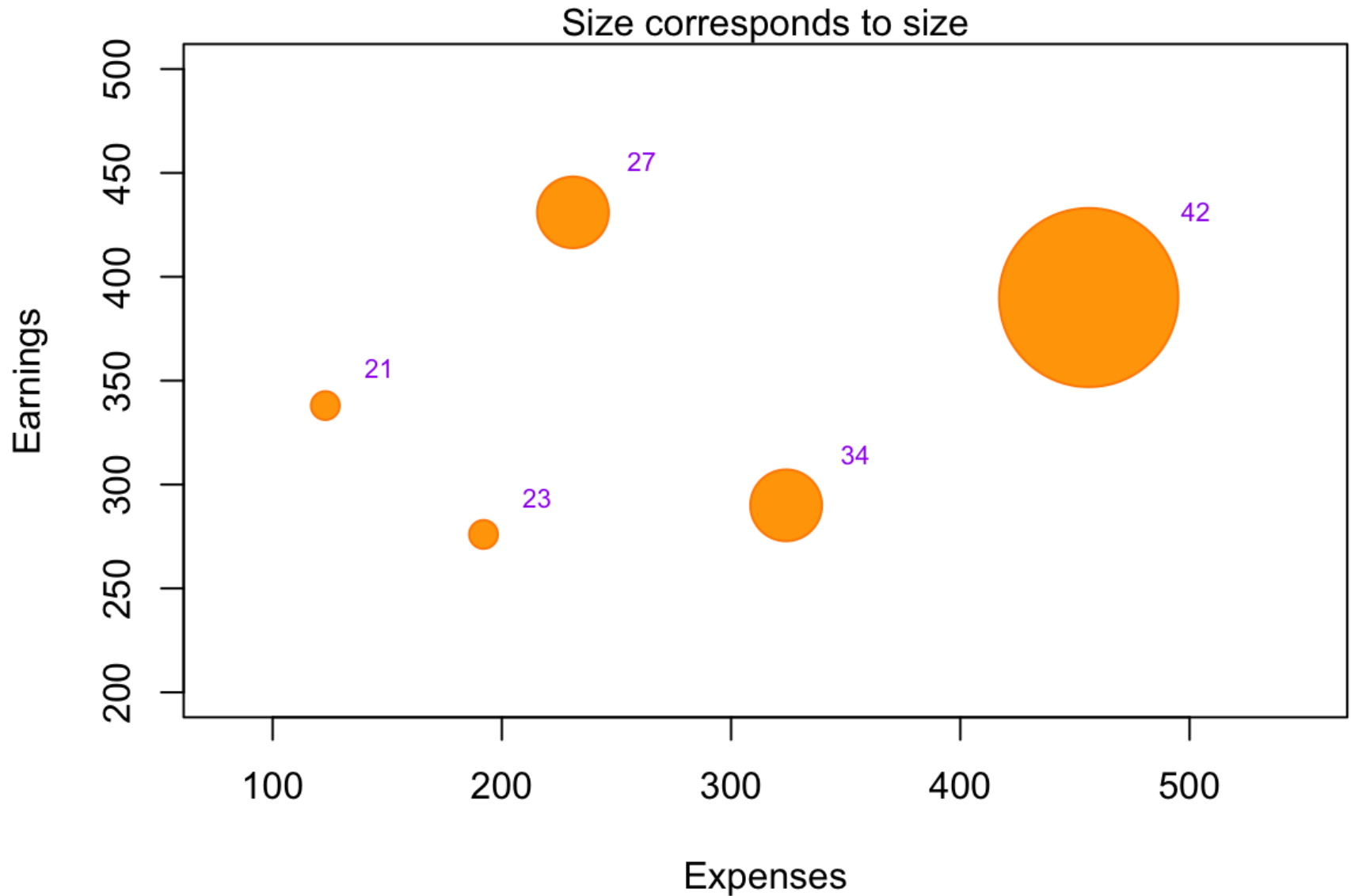
Position × Color (hue)

2003 Sales

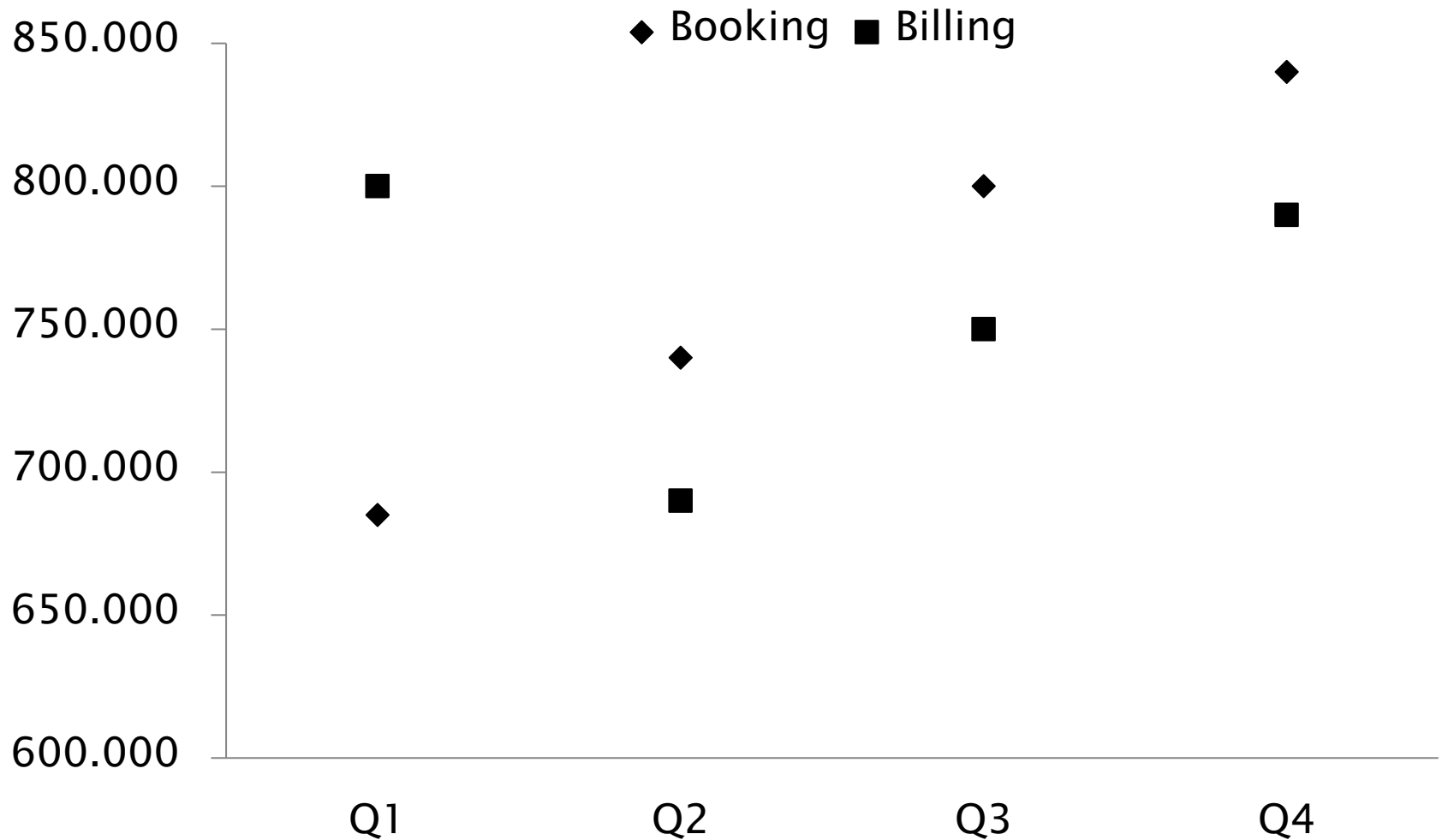
Direct Indirect



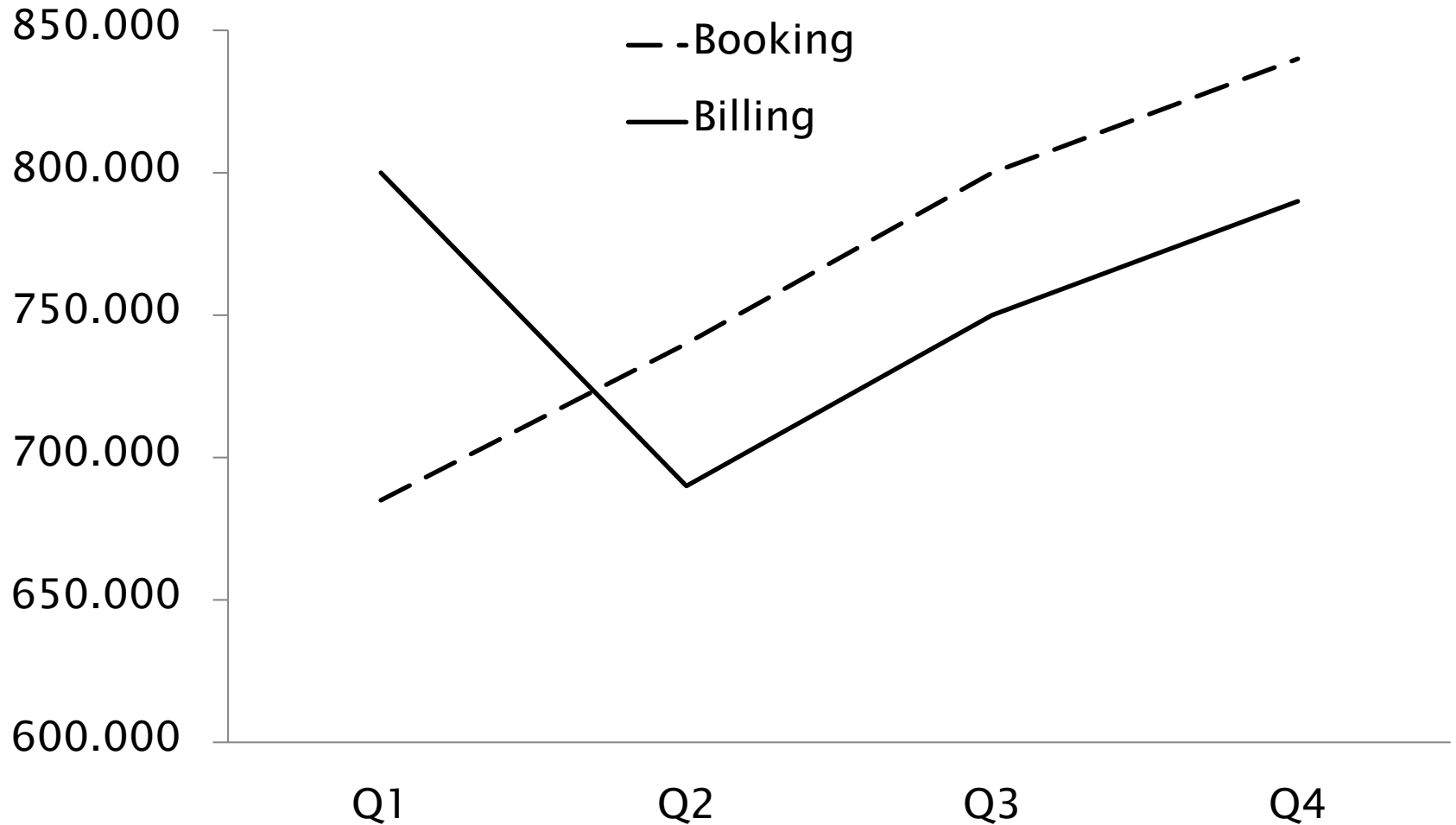
Size



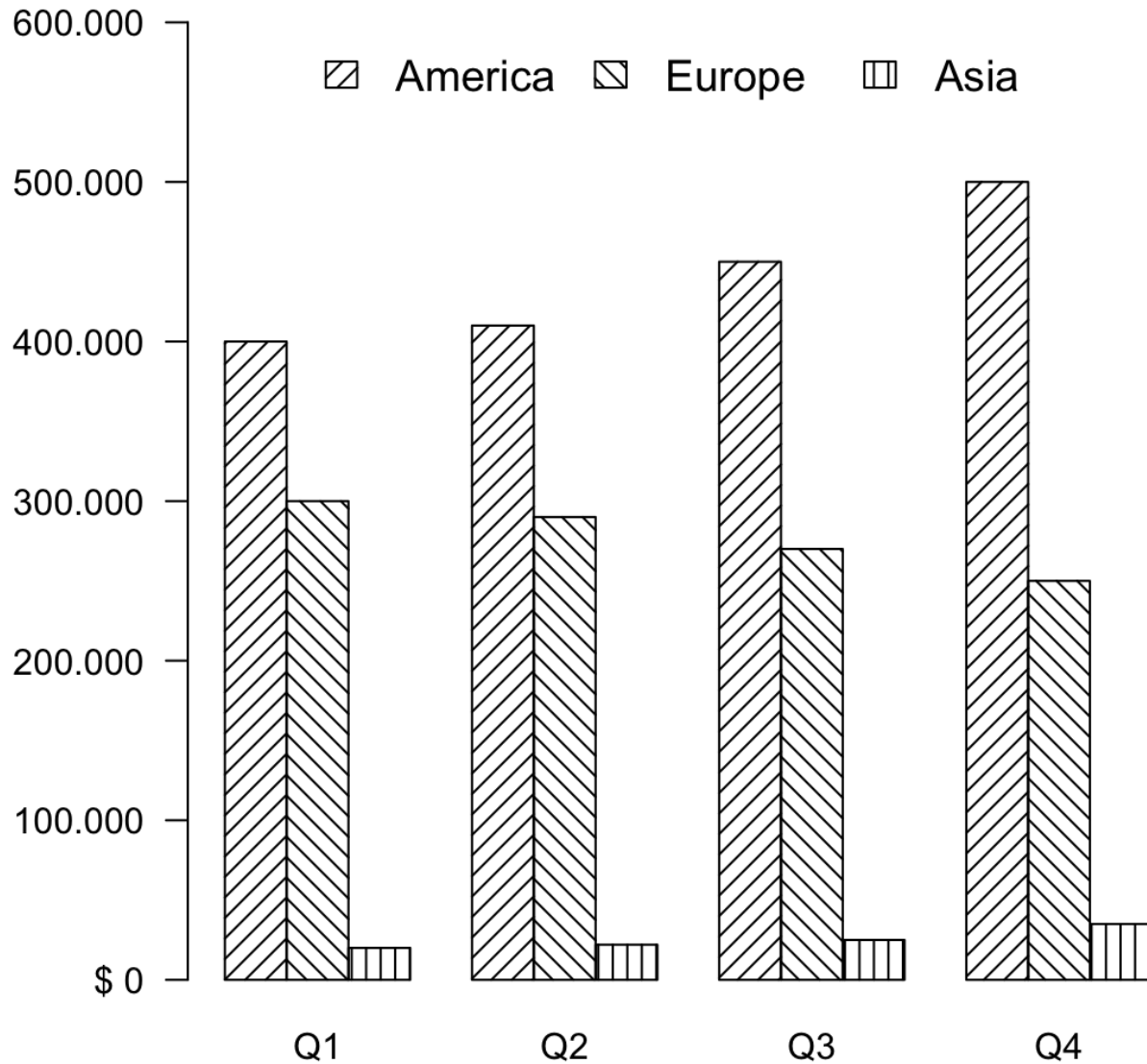
Point shape



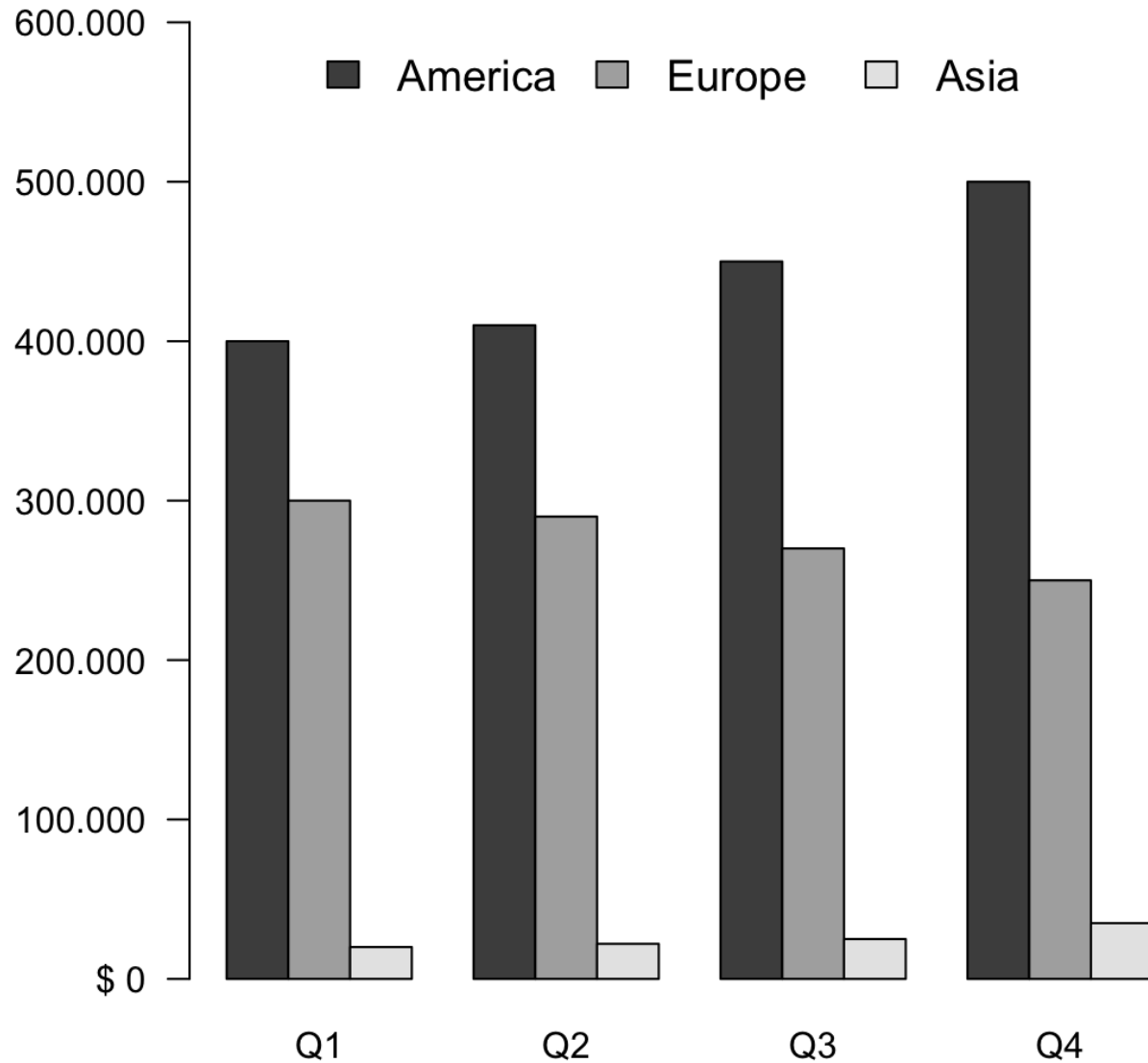
Line style



Fill Texture



Fill Gray Levels

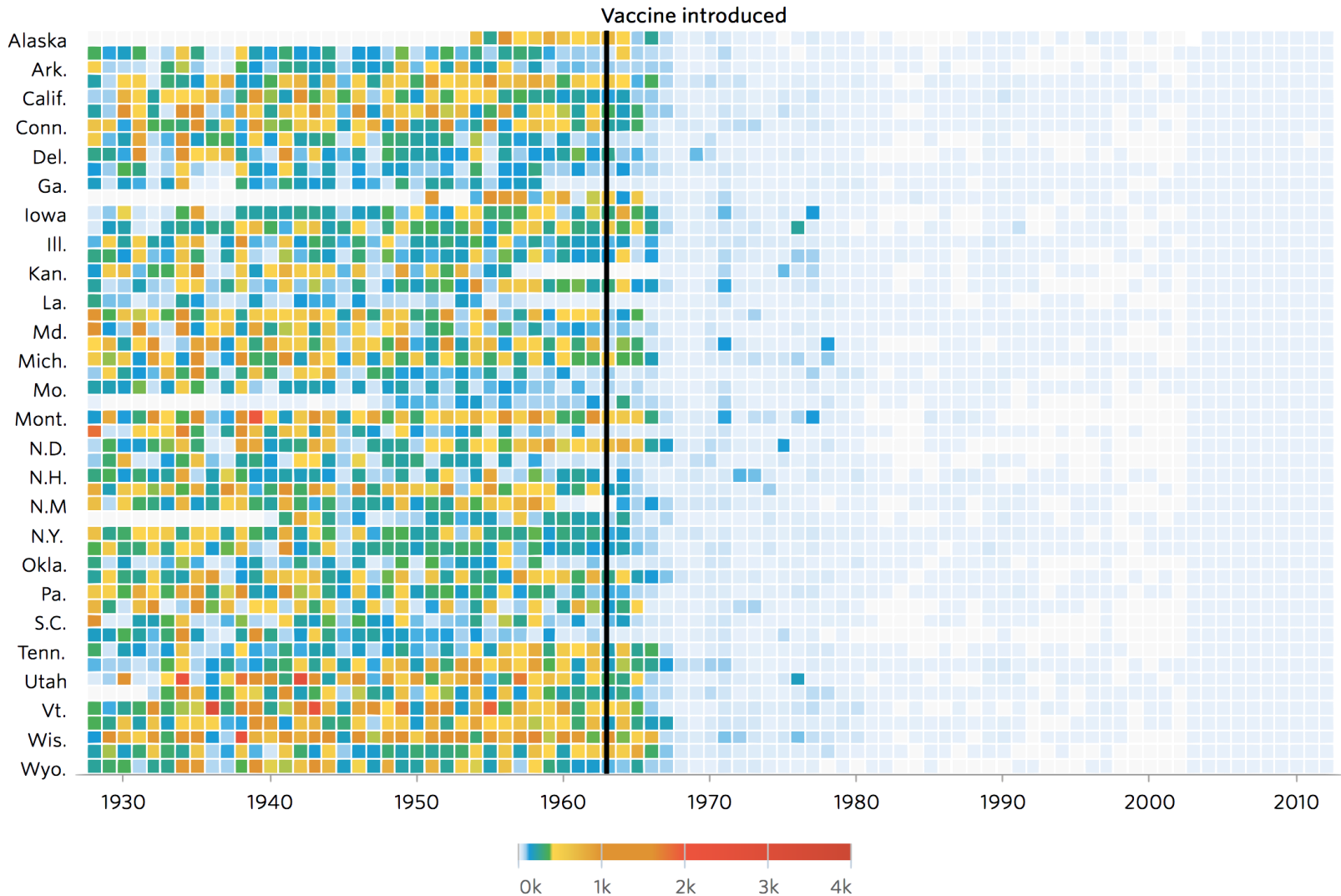


Discretization / Quantization

- A data transformation that maps a quantitative measure into an ordinal one
 - ◆ Based on the definition of intervals
- Discretized measures can be encoded using an ordinal-friendly visual attribute
 - ◆ Size
 - ◆ Color
- Warning: details are lost in the process

Heatmaps

Measles

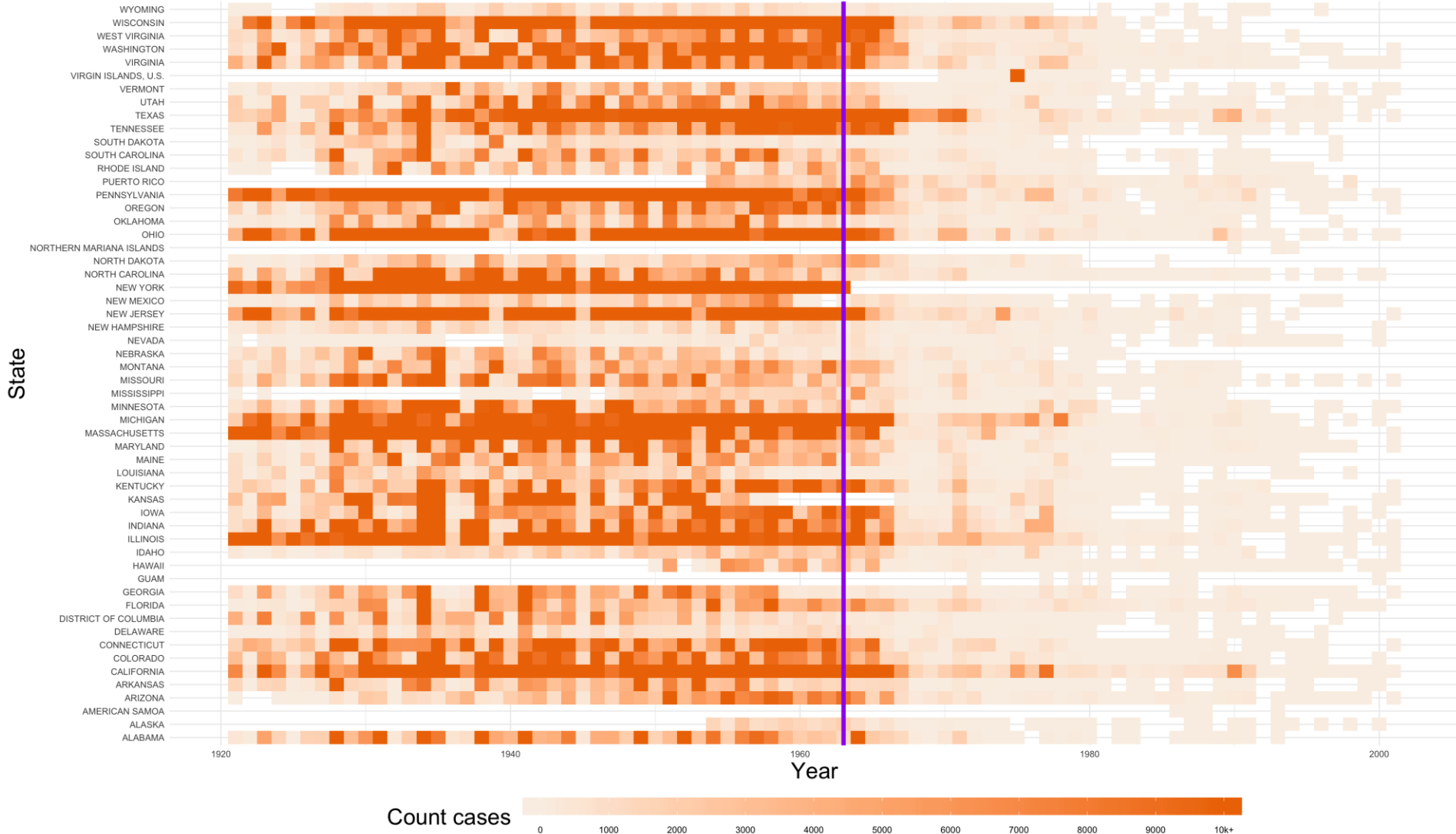


Heatmaps

- Hues have no unique order semantics
 - ◆ Only intensity has one
- Rainbow palette have serious problems for color blinds
 - ◆ Roughly 5% of the population

Heatmaps

Measles cases per US State per year



SUPPORT ELEMENTS

Support elements

- Axes
 - ◆ Ticks
- Graph area
 - ◆ Grids
- Labels
- Legends
- References
- Trellies

Axes

- Allow positioning of elements
 - ◆ Points
 - ◆ Extremes of bars and lines
- Labeled
 - ◆ What is the measure?
- Number of axis should be 2
 - ◆ 1 is fine for bars
 - continuity gestalt principle

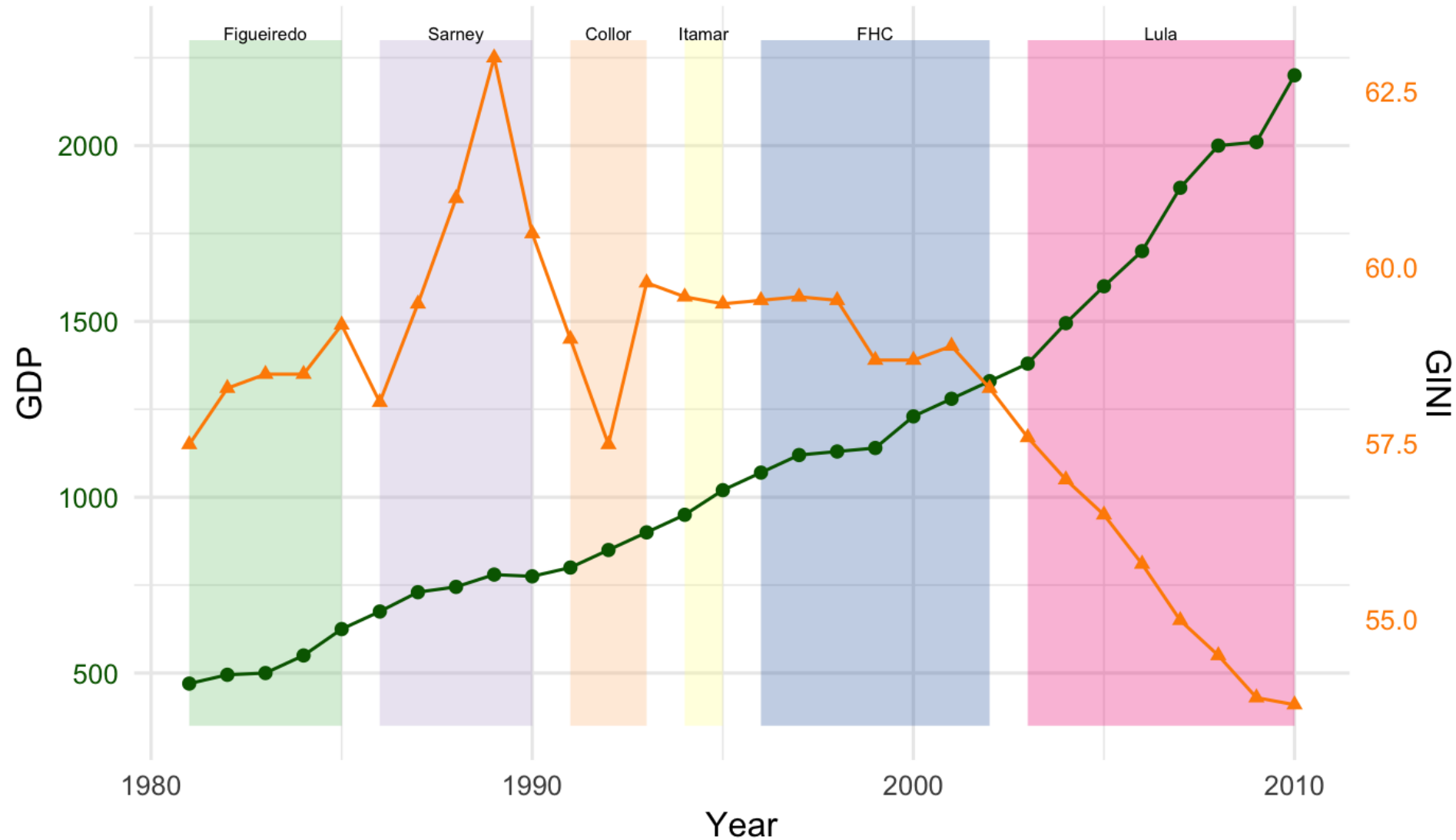
Tick marks

- Must not obscure data objects
- Outside the data region
- Avoid for categorical scales
- Balanced number
 - ♦ Too many clutter the graph
 - ♦ Too few make difficult to discern reference for data objects
 - ♦ Intervals must be equally spaced

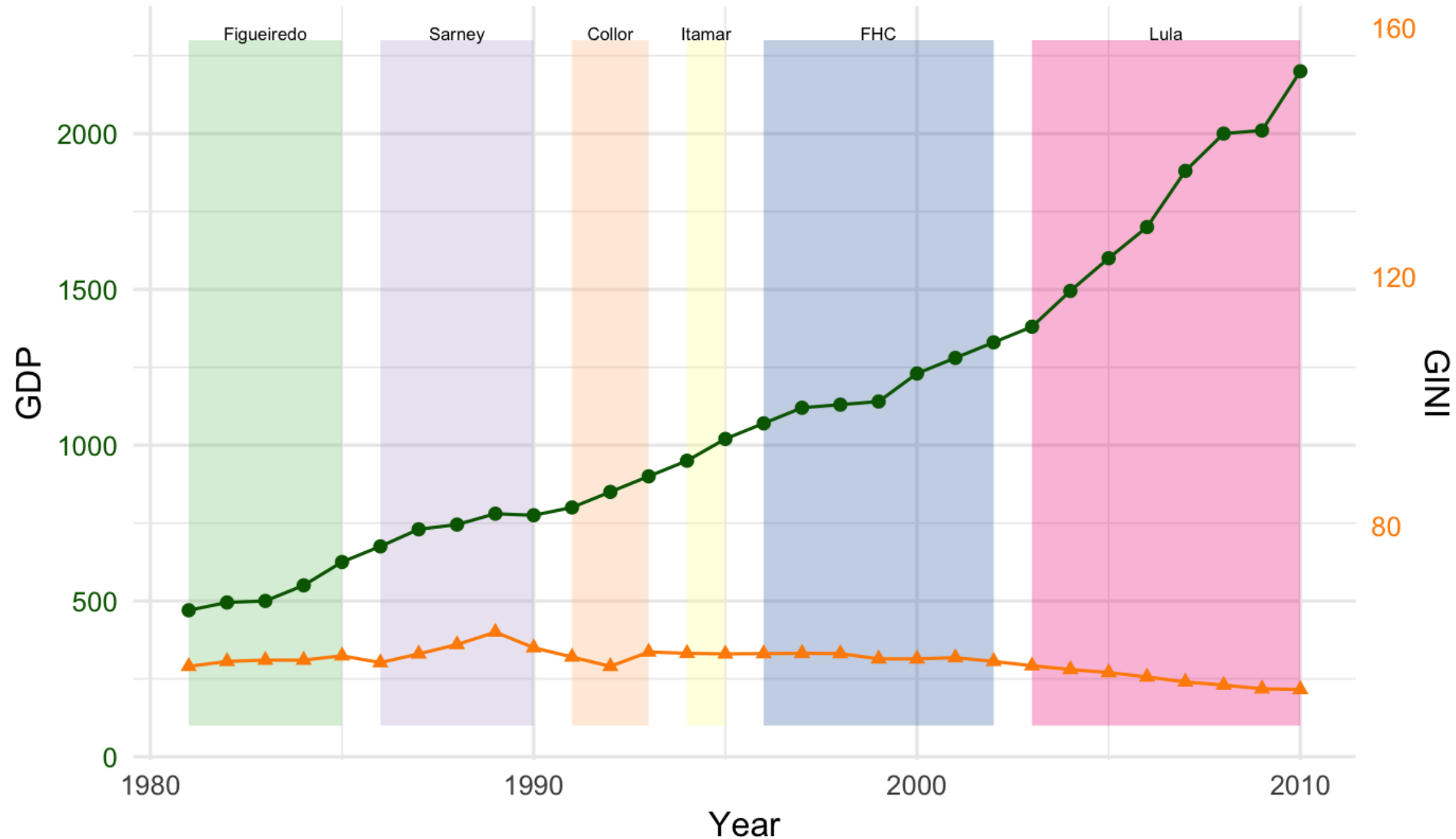
Multiple variables

- Correlation between 3+ variables
 - ◆ E.g. two measures in time series
- Multiple units of measure
 - ◆ Double quantitative (y) axis
 - ◆ Multiple graphs
 - ◆ One variable not encoded explicitly

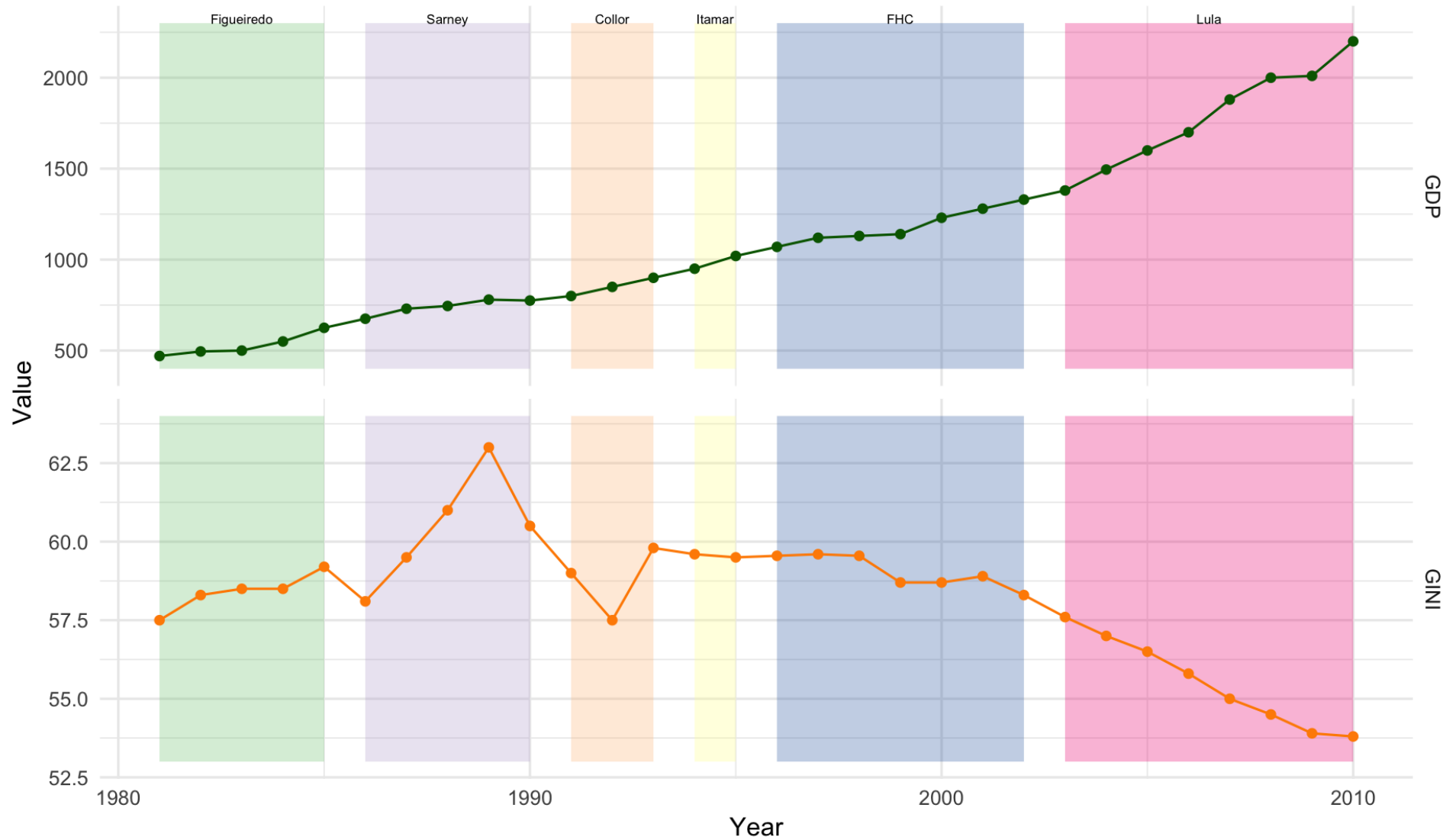
Double scale



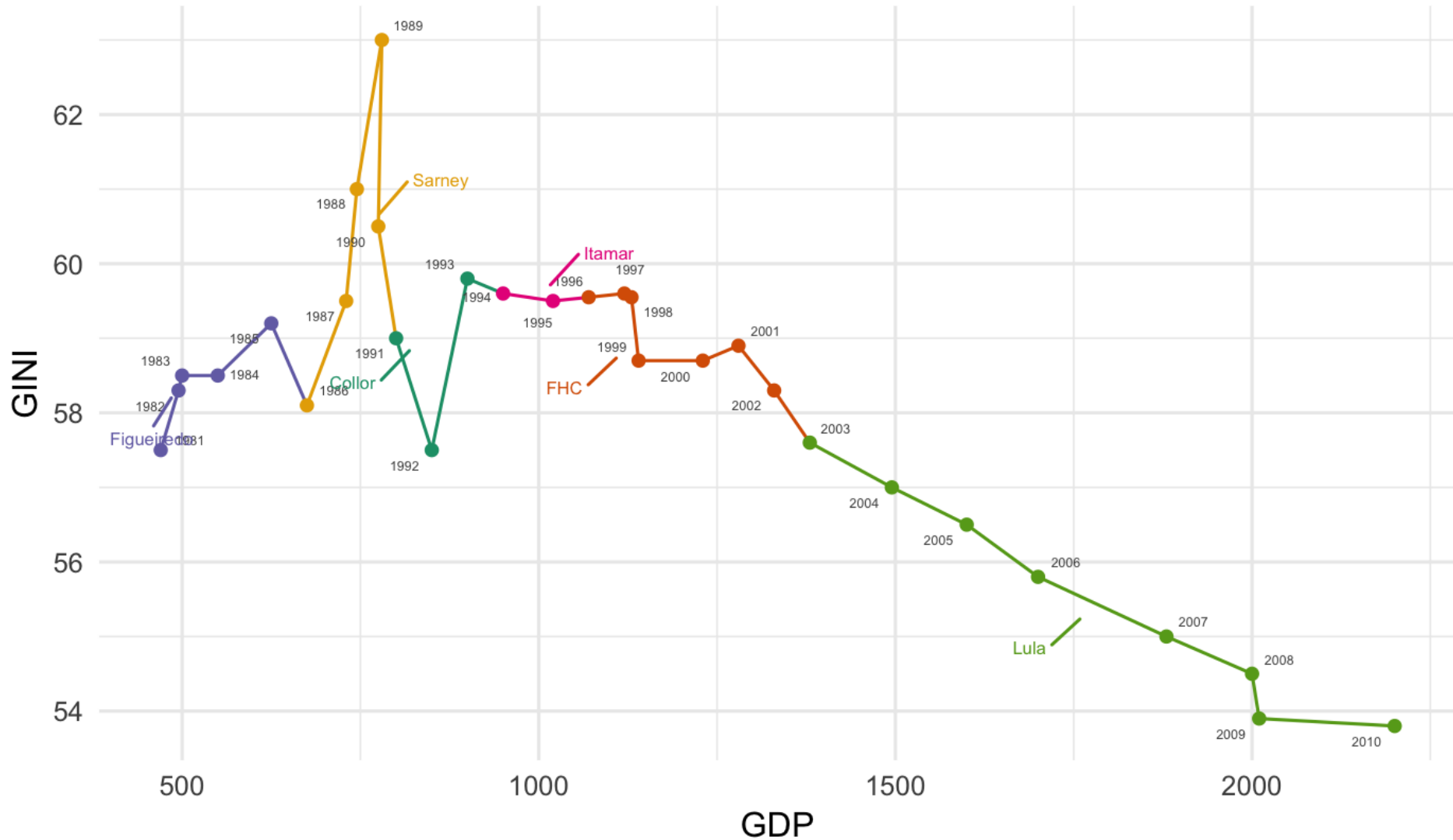
Double scale (alternative)



Multiple graphs



Path

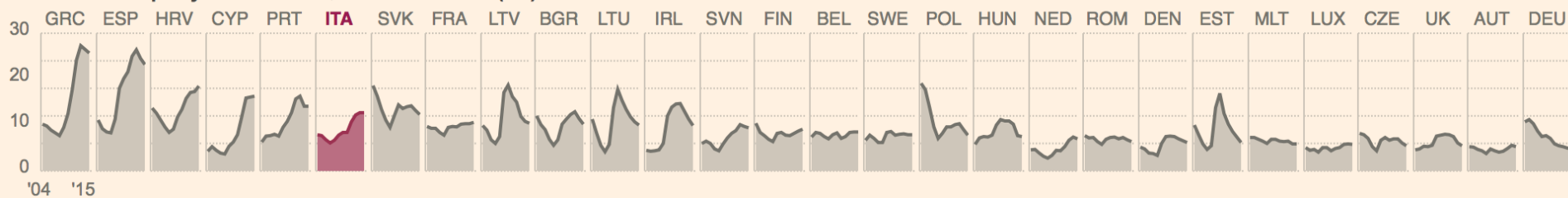


Small multiples

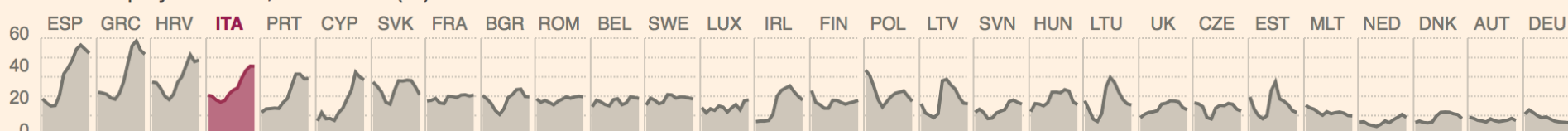
- A.k.a.
 - ◆ Trellis
 - ◆ Lattice
 - ◆ Grid
- Set of aligned graphs sharing (at least one) scale and axis
 - ◆ Enable ease of comparison among different measures

Small multiples

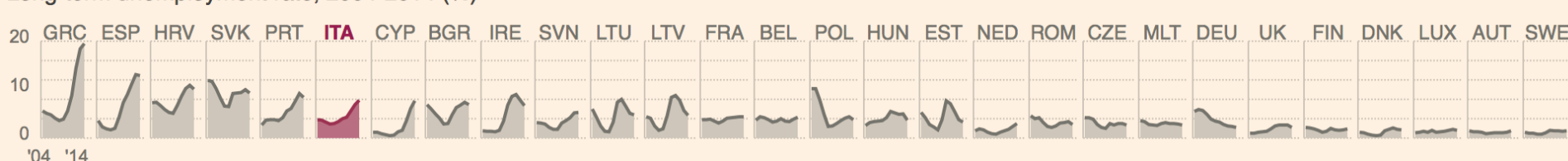
Total unemployment rate, 2004-2015 (%)



Youth unemployment rate, 2004-2015 (%)



Long-term unemployment rate, 2004-2014 (%)



FT EU unemployment tracker

<http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2015/04/17/eu-unemployment-tracker/>

Small multiples

- Consistency
 - ◆ Same scale
 - ◆ Same categorical levels
 - ◆ Same ordering of categorical levels
- Arrangement
 - ◆ Align axis that involve comparison
 - Possibly along a matrix

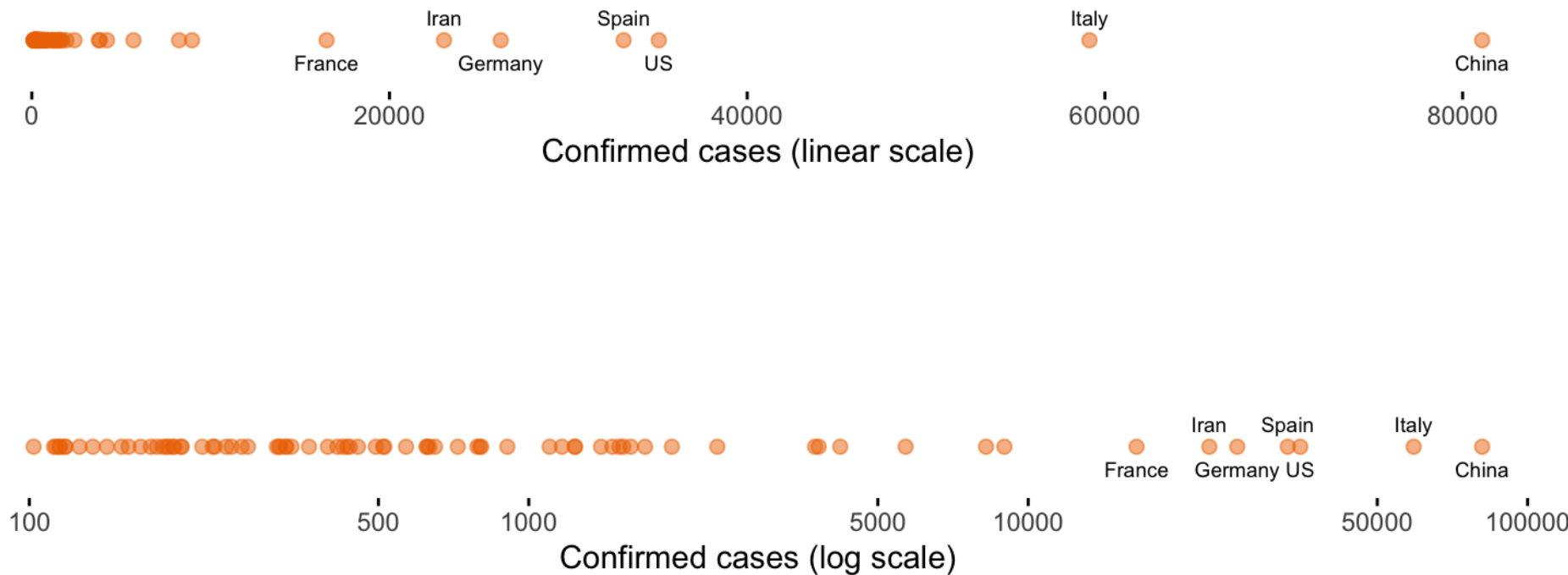
Trellis

- Sequence
 - ◆ Intrinsic order
 - ◆ Order of relevance
 - ◆ Order by some quantitative attribute
- Rules and grids
 - ◆ Use when spacing is not enough
 - ◆ Can direct the reader to scan graphs horizontally or vertically

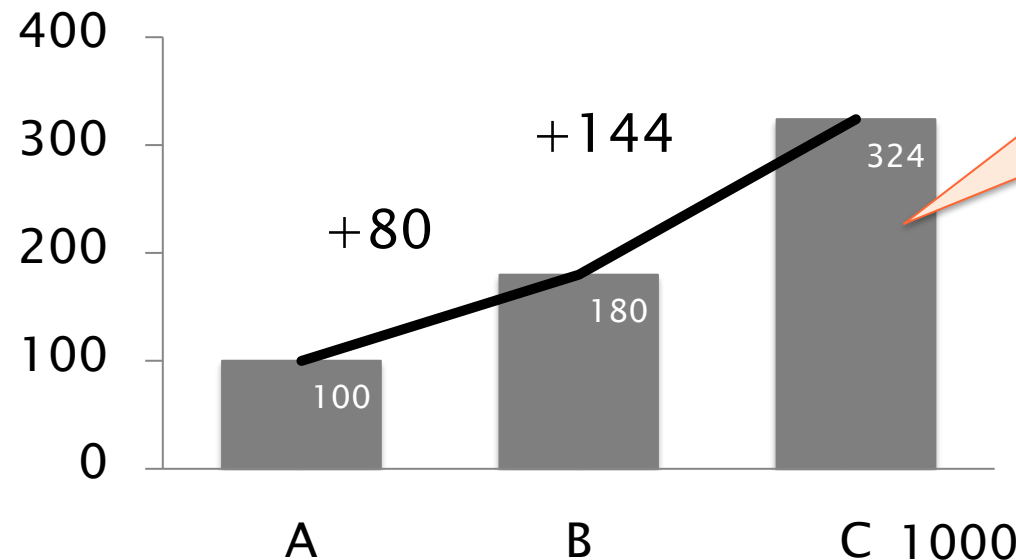
Log scale

- Reduce visual difference between quantitative data sets with significantly wide ranges
- Differences are proportional to percentages
- Constant percentage increase correspond to a line

Log scale – wide range

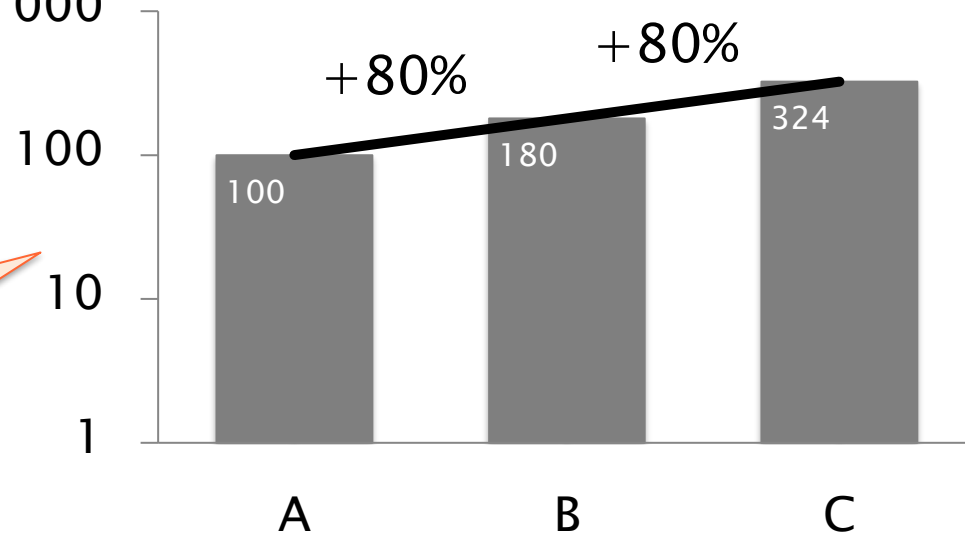


Log scale – differences

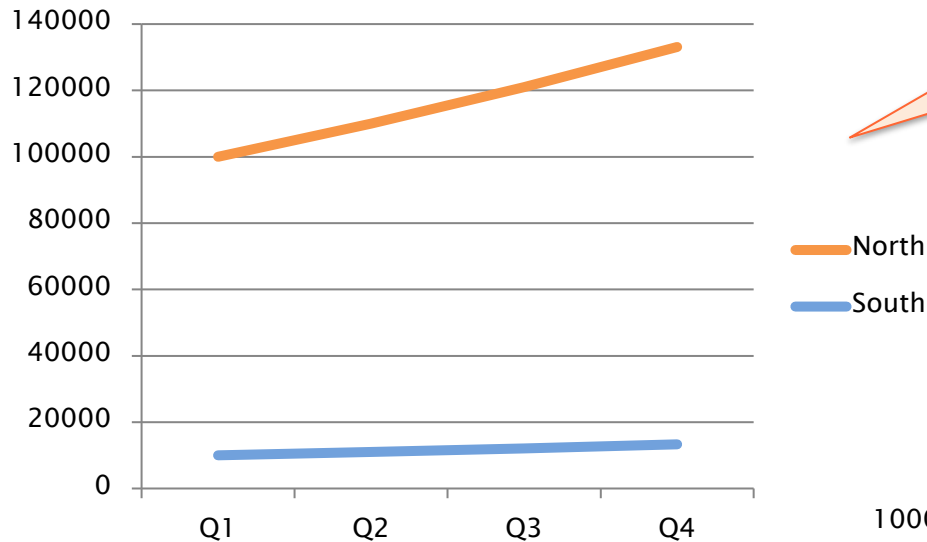


Same **absolute gains** correspond to same distance

Same **percentage gains** correspond to same distance

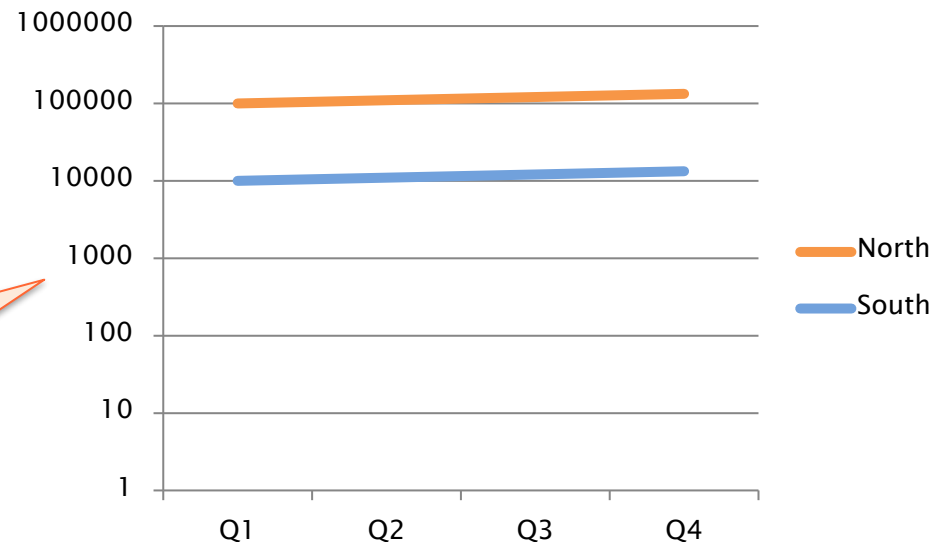


Log scale – variation



Parallel lines for same absolute gains

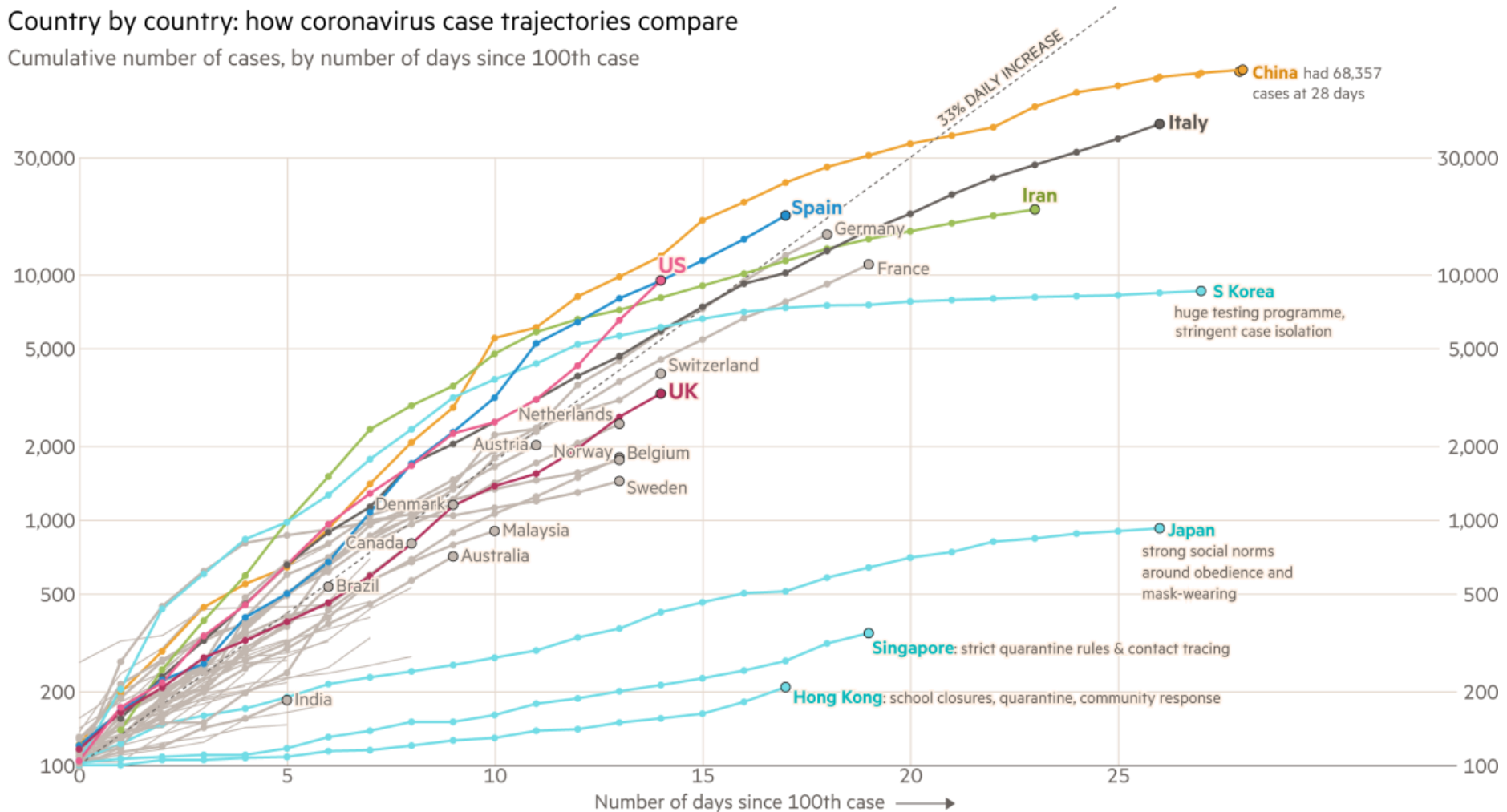
Parallel lines for same percentage gains



Log scale

Country by country: how coronavirus case trajectories compare

Cumulative number of cases, by number of days since 100th case



FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch

Source: FT analysis of Johns Hopkins University, CSSE; Worldometers. Data updated March 19, 19:00 GMT

© FT

Graph area

- Aspect ratio should not distort perception
 - ◆ Typically wider than taller
 - ◆ Scatter plots may be squared
- Grid lines must be thin and light
 - ◆ Useful to look-up values
 - ◆ Enhance comparison of values
 - ◆ Enhance perception of localized patterns

Labels

- Important elements (e.g. titles) should be prominent
 - ◆ Top
 - ◆ Larger

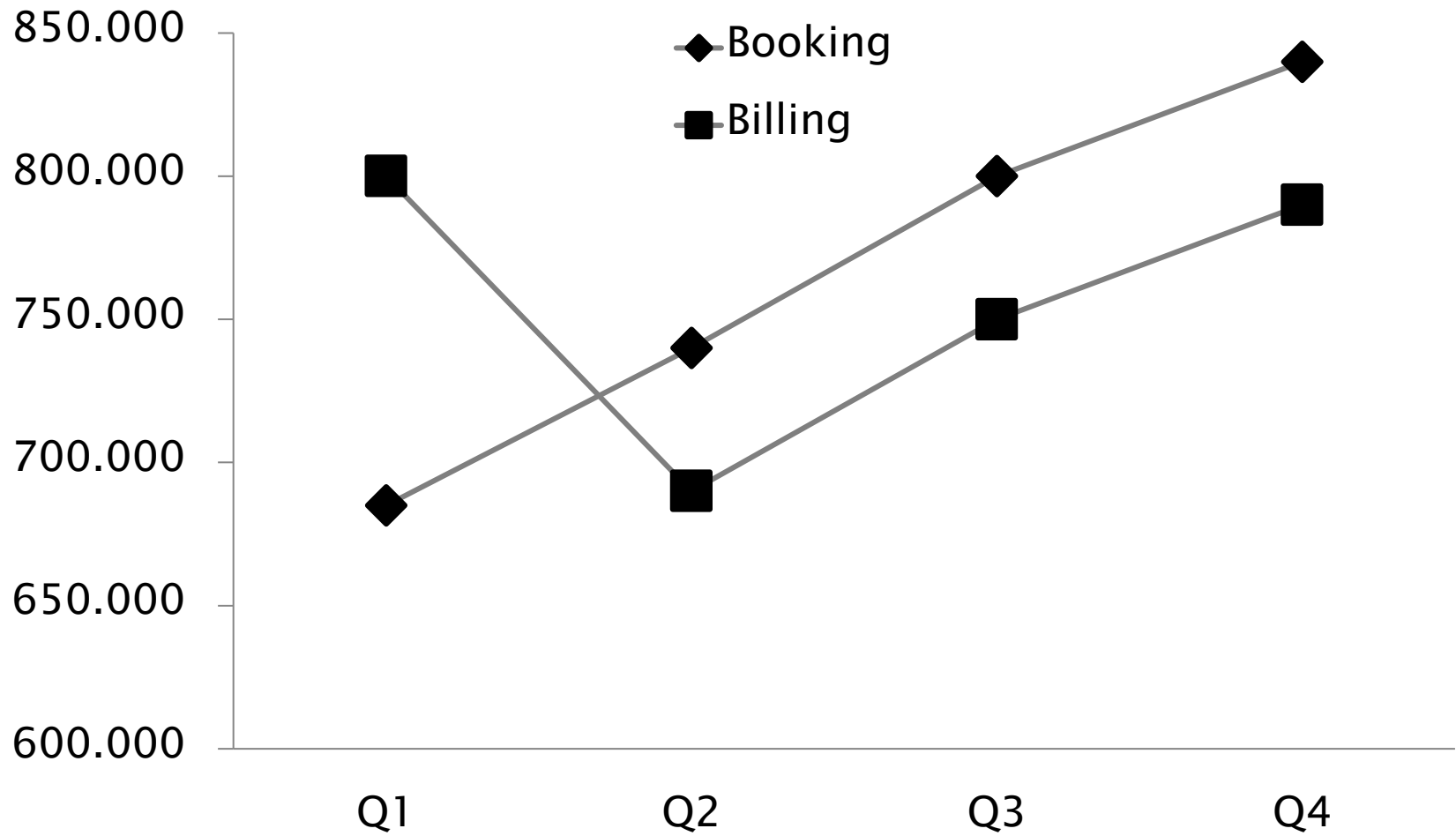
Legends

- Used for categorical attributes not associated to any axis
- As close as possible to the objects
- Less prominent than data objects
- Borders are used only when necessary to separate from other elements

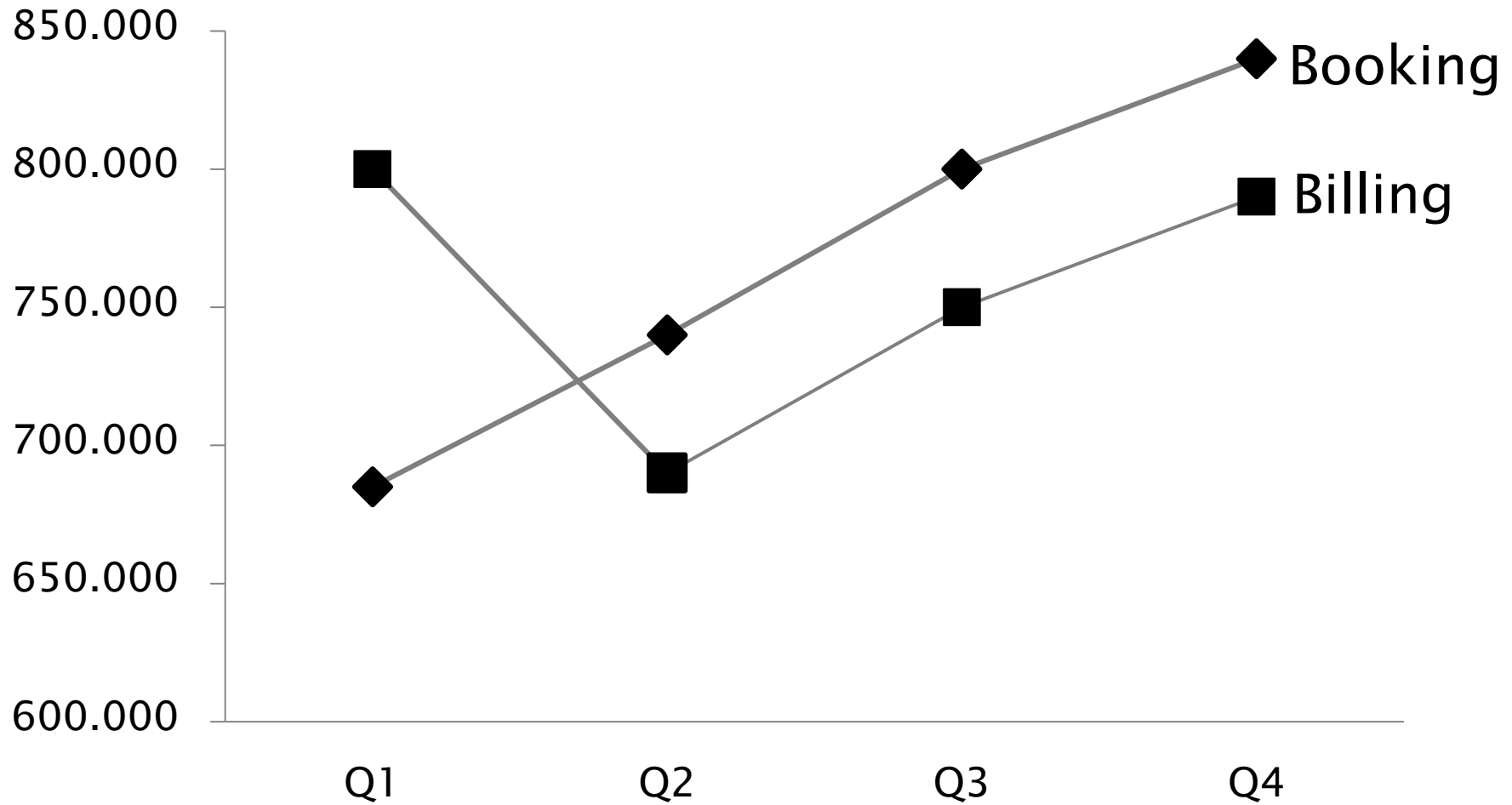
Legends

- Text should be as close as possible to the object it complements
 - ◆ Prefer direct labeling to separate legends
- Number of categorical subdivisions
 - ◆ Perceptual limit is between 5 and 8
 - ◆ Limit is independent of the visual attribute used to encode it
 - ◆ Joint use of attributes ease discrimination

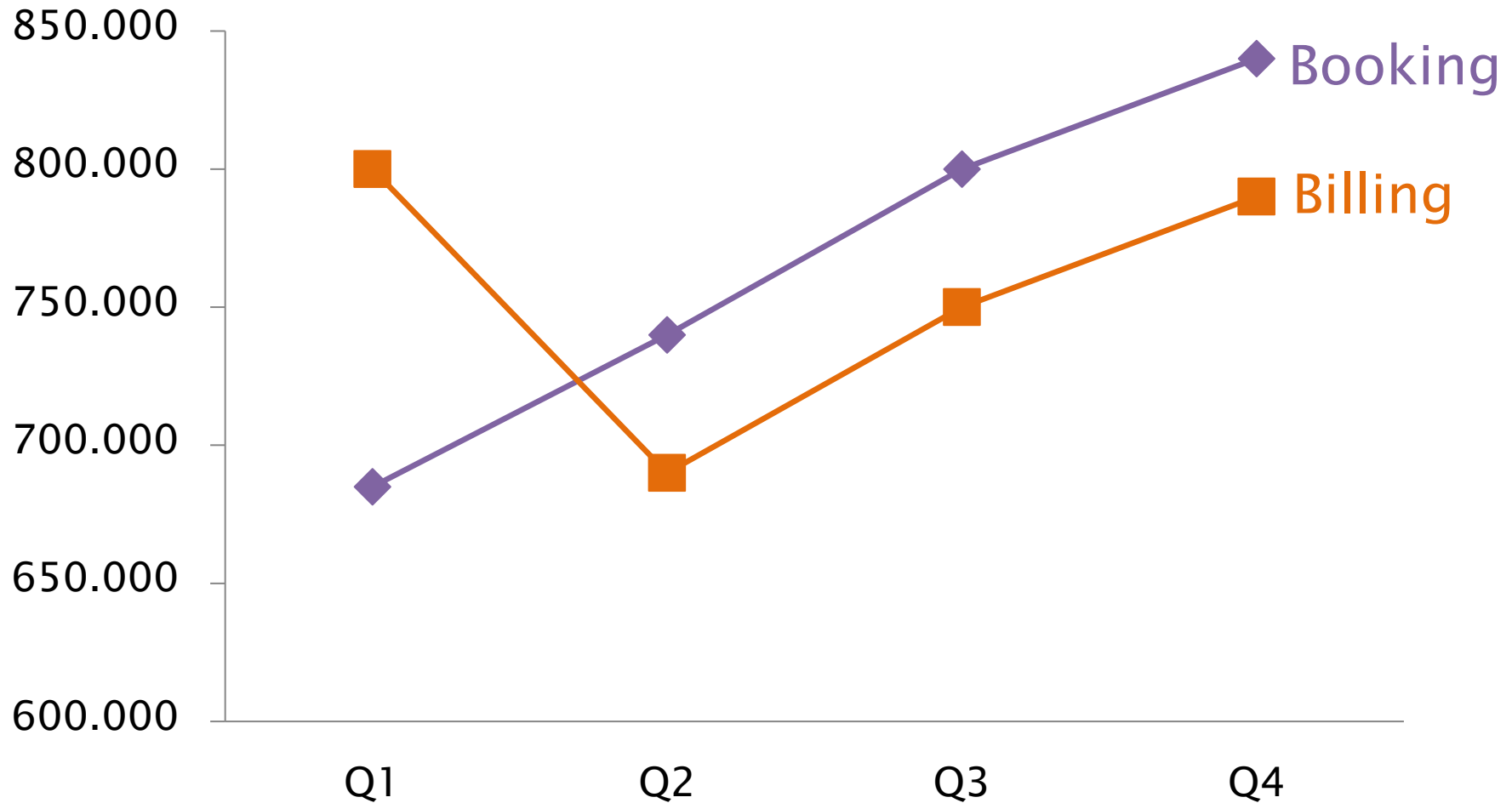
Legend



Direct labeling

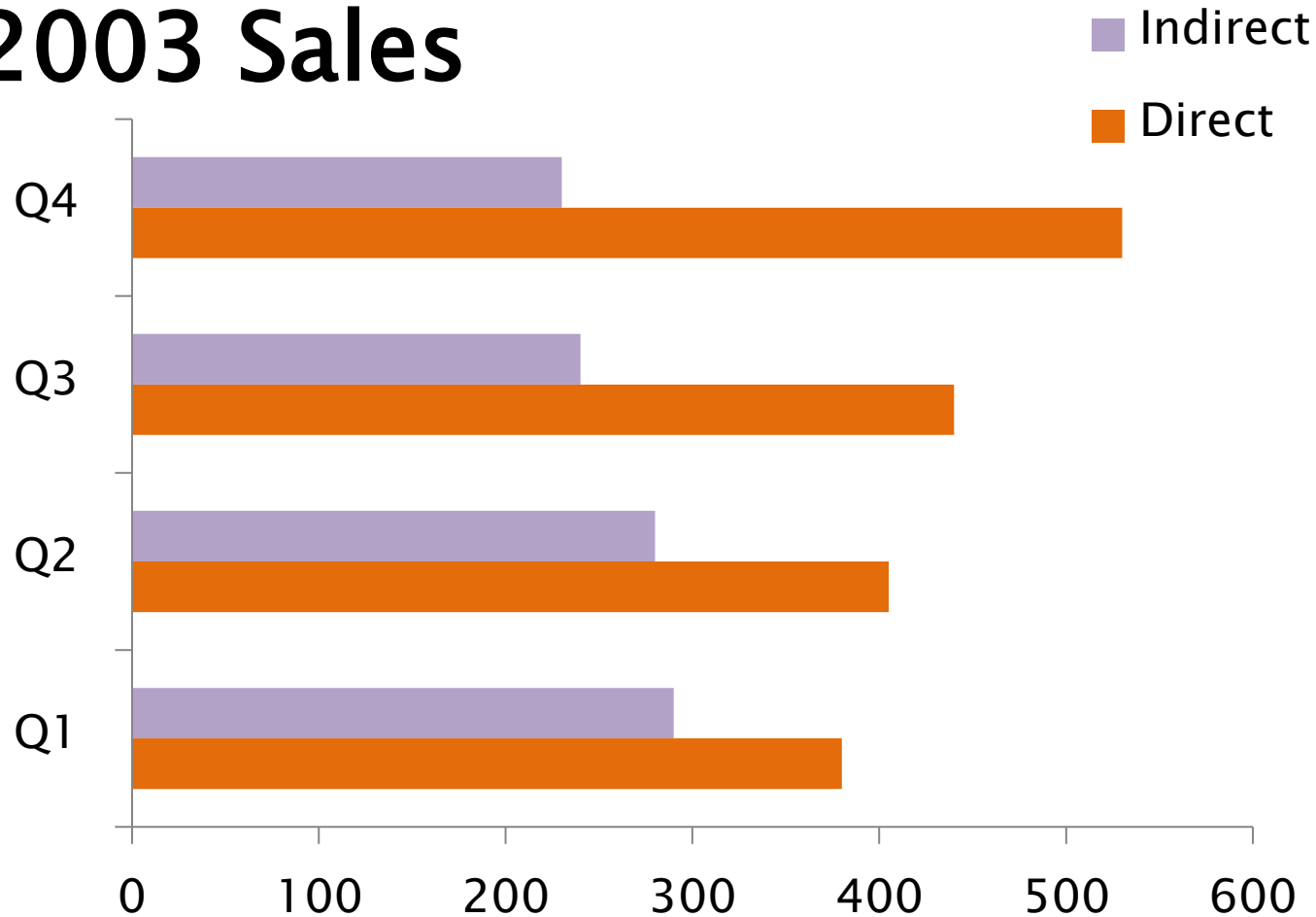


Direct labeling and color



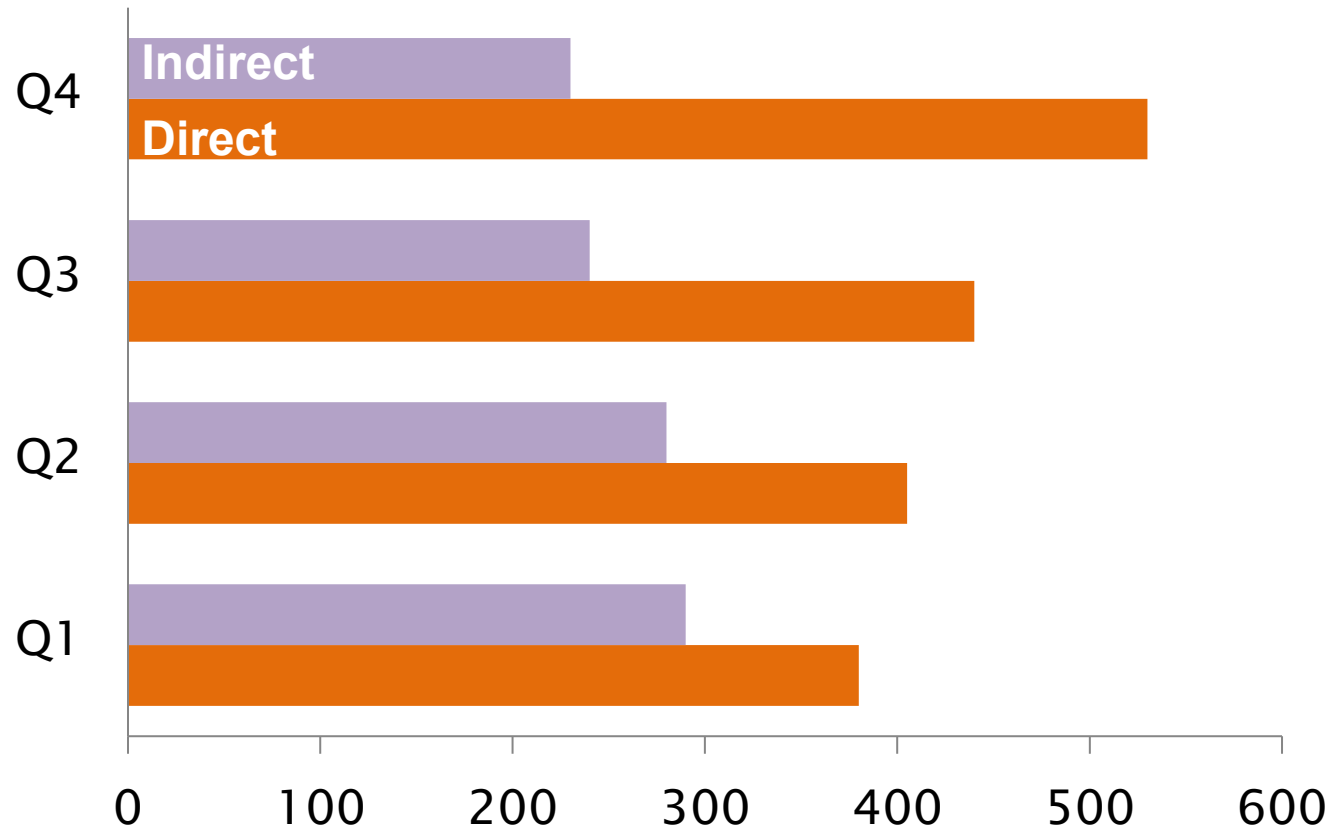
Legend

2003 Sales



Direct labeling

2003 Sales



Reference lines and regions

- Reference lines support an easy comparison to a given value
 - ◆ Mean
 - ◆ Threshold
- Reference regions allow comparison with several values
 - ◆ Use background color

DASHBOARD

Dashboard

Visualization of the most relevant
information
needed to achieve one or more goals
which fits entirely on a single screen
so it can be monitored at a glance

Dashboard

- Dashboards display mechanisms are
 - ◆ small
 - ◆ concise
 - ◆ clear
 - ◆ intuitive
- Dashboards are customized
 - ◆ To suit the goals of person, group, function

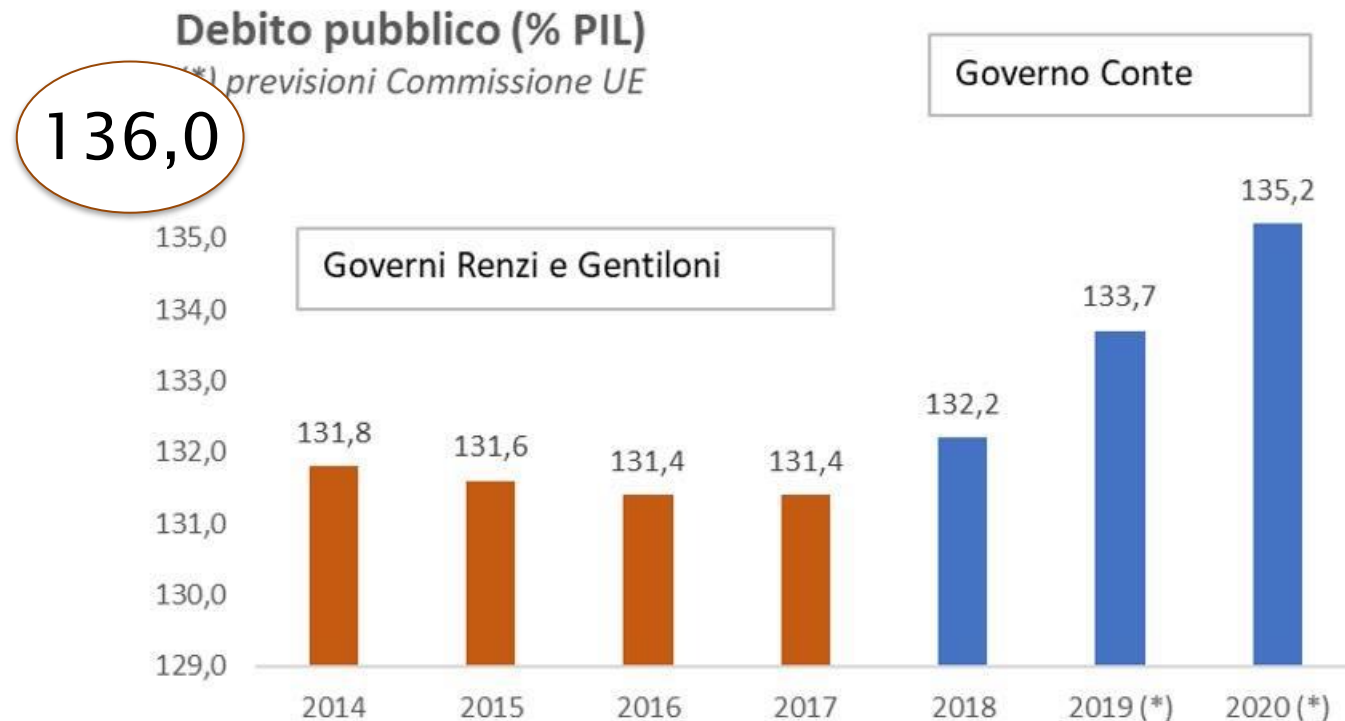
Provide context for data

- References allow judging the data



Use appropriate detail

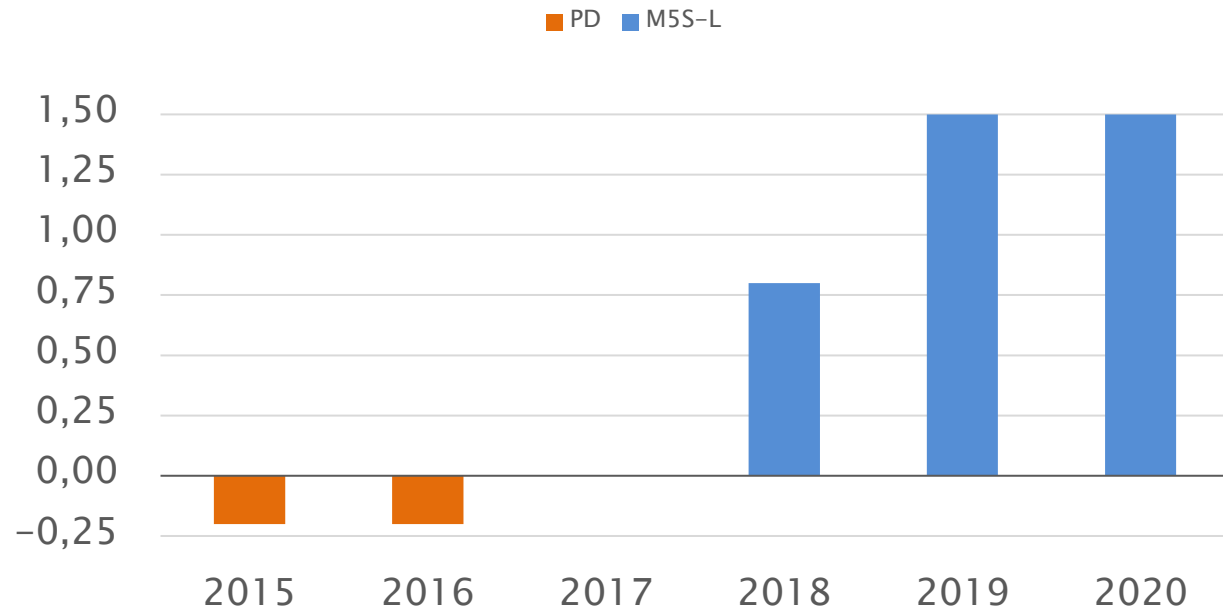
- Typical counterexamples
 - ◆ Dates with seconds detail
 - ◆ Decimals



Use the right measures

- If you are interested in e.g. the difference, ratio, variation show such derived measure

Variazione Debito Pubblico (% PIL)



Use appropriate visualization

- Typical errors:
 - ◆ Any chart when a table would be better
 - ◆ Pie-charts not representing part-whole
 - ◆ Bubble charts

Visualization instruments

- Tables
 - ◆ Textual information
- Graphs
 - ◆ Visual information

Avoid decorations

- Skeumorphic design
- Backgrounds motives
- Color gradients
- Variations not encoding any measure
 - ◆ Typically color

Avoid decorations

- Skeumorphic design
- Backgrounds motives
- Color gradients
- Variations not encoding any measure
 - ◆ Typically color

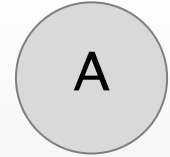


-VS-



Avoid decorations

- Skeumorphic design
- Backgrounds motives
- **Color gradients**
- Variations not encoding any measure
 - ◆ Typically color



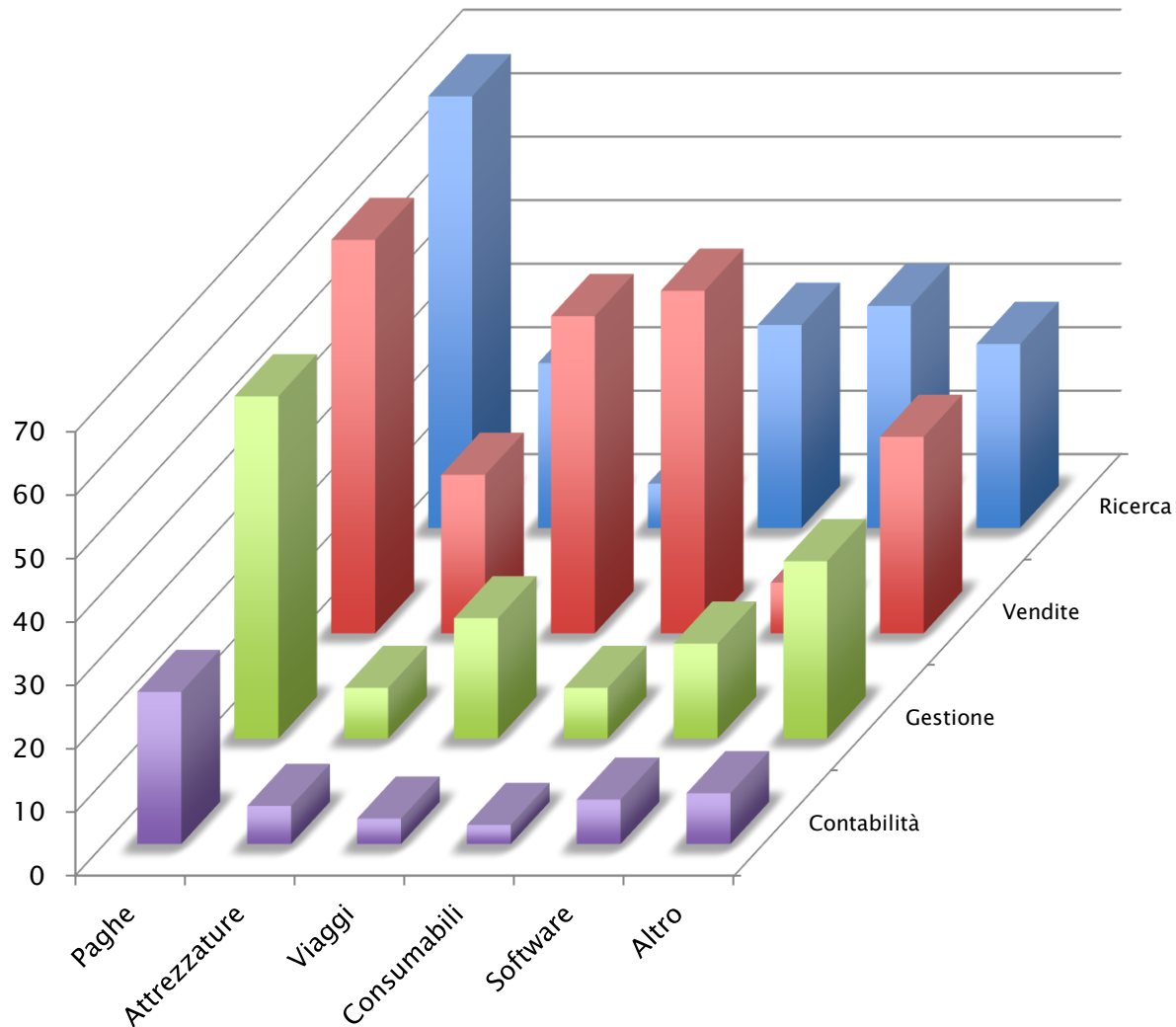
Avoid decorations

- Skeumorphic design
- Backgrounds motives
- Color gradients
- Variations not encoding any measure
 - ◆ Typically color

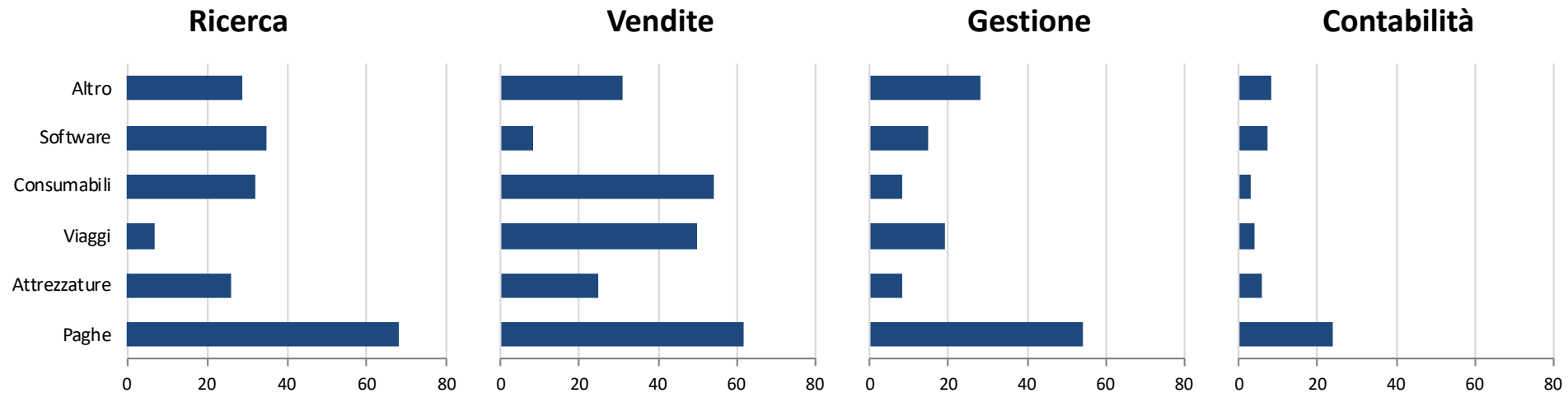
3D diagrams

- Encoding
 - ◆ Axonometry typically hides some data and makes comparison hard
- Not encoding
 - ◆ Perspective deform dimensions
 - ◆ Depth or height distract and make comparison more difficult

Encoding 3D

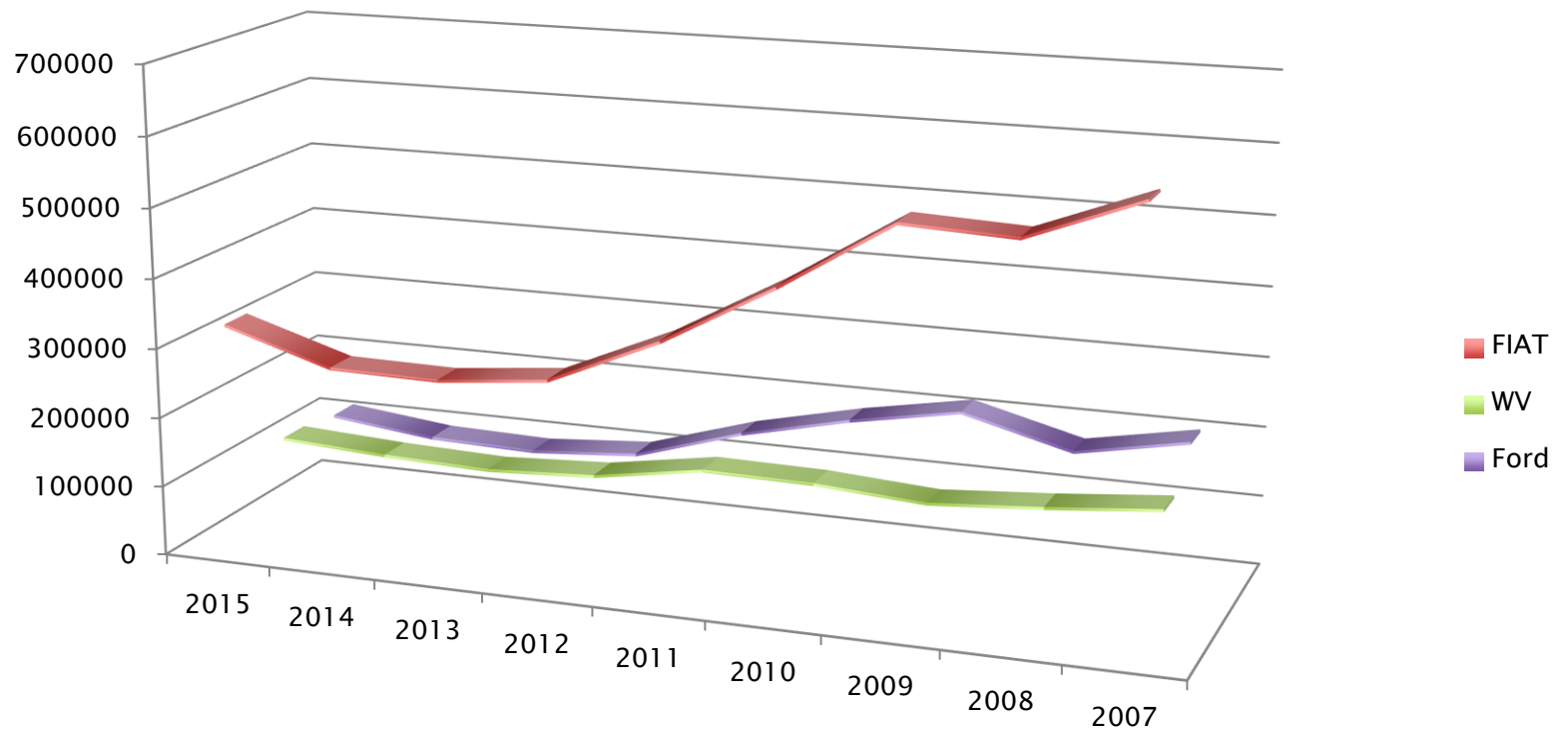


Encoding 3D → 2D



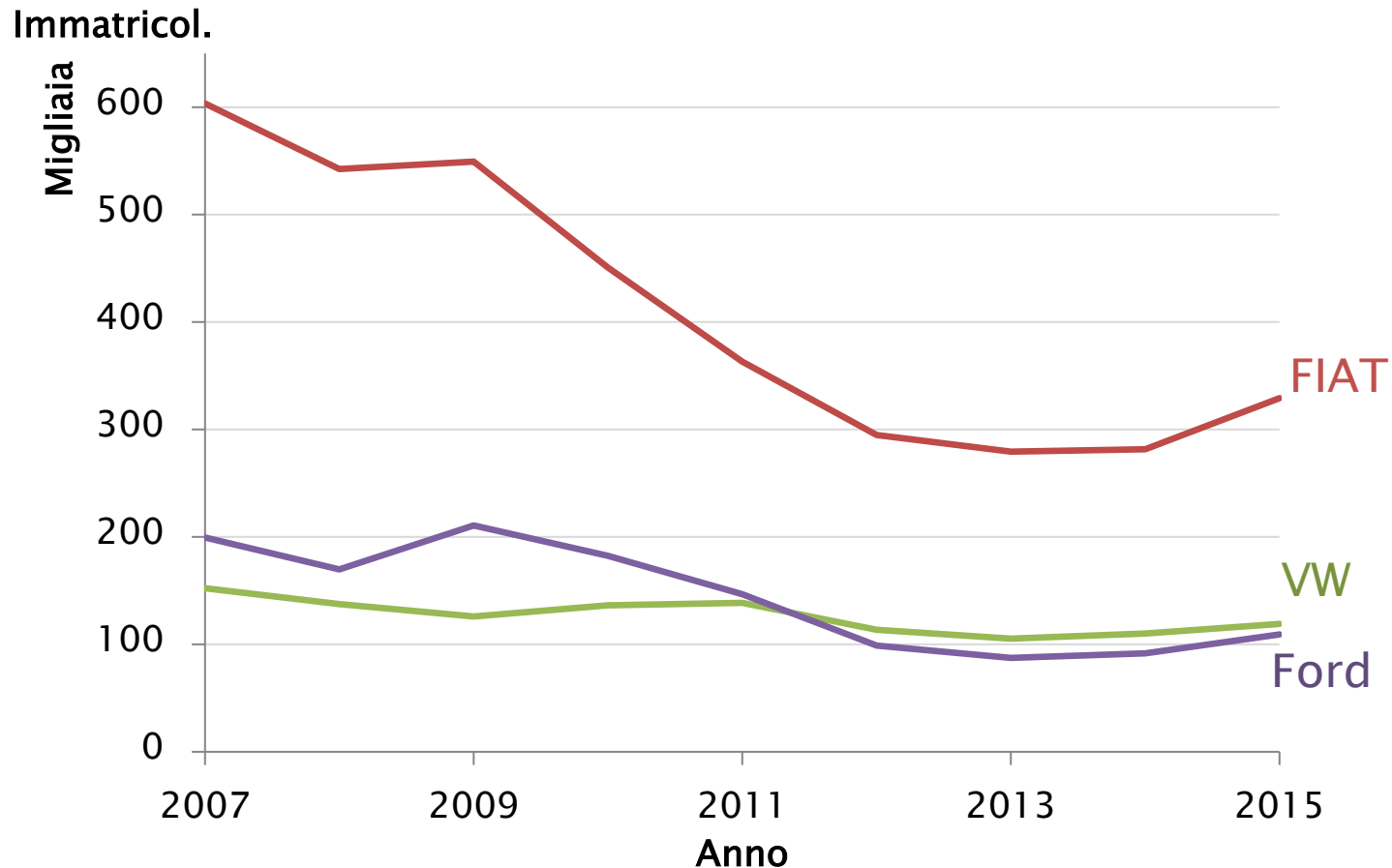
Decorative 3D

Immatricol.



Decorative 3D → 2D

Immatricolazioni auto per marchio sul mercato italiano



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