

Exercise 6.2: put it into words

After creating a graph, I find it can be useful to come up with a sentence that describes the graph. This practice forces me to articulate a takeaway (or in some instances, a number of potential takeaways), which can sometimes even lead to different ways to show the data to better highlight the main point I want to make.

Let's practice doing this with a specific graph. Imagine you work at a bank and you are analyzing collections data. Collections departments often use dialers, machines that automatically place calls. Many calls go unanswered. When someone does answer, the collections agent is connected so they can talk to the individual to work out a payment plan and the account has been "worked." Numerous metrics are tracked related to this—we'll look at penetration rate, which is the proportion of accounts worked relative to the total number of accounts dialed.

Consider Figure 6.2a, which shows Accounts Worked, Dials Made, and the Penetration Rate.

Call breakdown over time

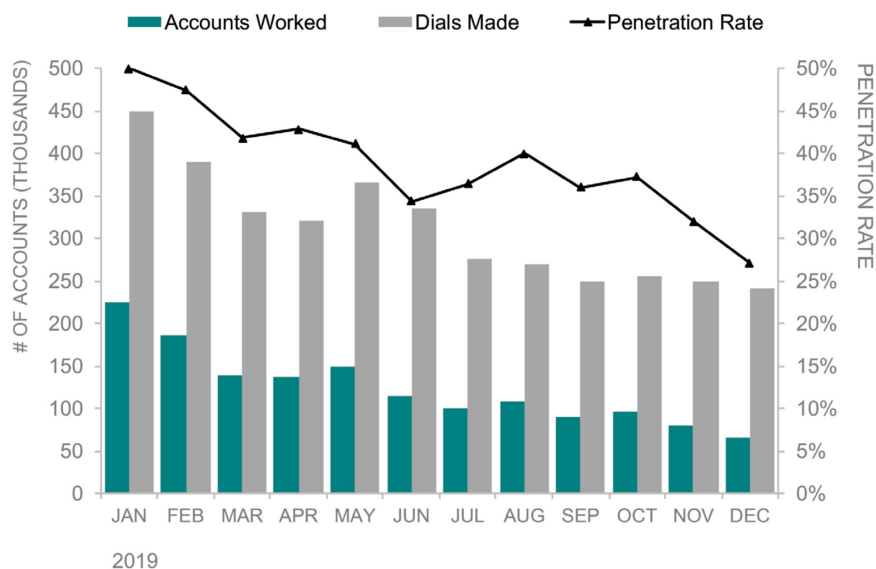


FIGURE 6.2a Put it into words

STEP 1: Write three distinct sentences articulating three different observations from this data. You may think of these as three potential takeaways that you could highlight in this data.

STEP 2: Which of the three sentences you've written would you focus on if you were communicating this data? Why? Are there any aspects of the others you'd also want to include? How can you achieve this?

STEP 3: Are there any changes you'd make to the visual to better focus the audience on the takeaway you've chosen to highlight? Outline those changes.

STEP 4: Download the data and make the changes you've outlined in the tool of your choice.