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“Young People See Greater Progress for Children in Many Key Areas” Critique

“Young People See Greater Progress for Children in Many Key Areas” uses horizontal bar charts to display seven categories for the greater progress of children. It segments each category based on responses from two different age groups: people who are 15-24 years old and over 40. The visualization uses color to differentiate opinions between the two groups by using orange to denote the highest level of disagreement and blue to denote the highest level of agreement. However, the choice of colors for representing the two most significant categories could be improved.

Andy Kriebel, the author of the visualization, wisely uses color to distinguish the two most similar and divergent categories (Access to Healthy Food and Physical Safety) across the two groups of people. Rather than rendering all categories gray, coloring the bars allows the audience to identify the category with the most consensus and disagreement easily. However, substituting orange for red to represent the category that had the most disagreement and blue for green to represent the category that had the most agreement could further enhance the visualization. Red can emphasize the negative image since it often indicates error and damage and green can underscore the positive image due to its success and safety. Andy chose to only highlight the two categories with color while keeping the others in gray, allowing the audience to focus on the most critical contrasts. In other words, the usage of vibrant colors (orange and blue) with other bars with gray ensures an emphasis on the two colored categories, facilitating a quick understanding of the main message of the visualization. This is because gray is a neutral color that avoids competition for attention with other colors, which minimizes visual distraction and enhances the ability of viewers to concentrate on essential insights.

The author used complementary colors to represent the two categories, which was a good choice because these categories contrast each other (disagrees most and agrees most). Opting for closely related colors that are adjacent on the color wheel would have implied a positive connection between them, contradicting the message the author was trying to deliver. While a diverging color palette to show the varying degrees of agreement across all categories can be more visually appealing, the current approach would be better since it would introduce an excessive amount of color, complicating the visual focus and detracting from the central narrative of the visualization. A more streamlined approach can be sorting the seven categories from the highest to lowest difference or vice versa between the two age groups. In addition, the usage of a sequential palette on the sorted horizontal bar chart (with only one main color) could be more effective since it minimizes color but preserves the impact by emphasizing the gradation of agreement.

“Young People See Greater Progress for Children in Many Key Areas” displays seven distinct categories and highlights the most disagreeing and most agreeing classes from people 15-24 years old and 40+ years old. Despite the effectiveness of adding color to allow easier interpretation for the audience, the author could have made a few changes (changes of color from blue to green and orange to red and sorting the bar graphs) to improve clarity.