

Question → Encoding Crib Sheet (Decision Support)

Principle: Encode the ANSWER on fast perceptual channels (position on a common scale; length; luminance).

Comparisons (rank, who is highest/lowest?): Sorted bars with direct labels; small multiples for cohorts.

Change over time (are we improving?): Aligned line charts; weekly deltas; reference bands; annotate breakpoints.

Distribution (how spread/where is typical?): Dotplots or ridgelines; avoid decorative histograms; show counts.

Part-to-whole (how much of total?): Bars with totals; avoid 3D or overly sliced pies; stack sparingly.

Correlation (how does X relate to Y?): Scatter with regression band; highlight outliers; annotate stories.

Composition over time (what changed): Stacked area only if few categories; else small multiples.

Question-first template: “We need to decide _____. Show _____ across _____ with _____ as reference.”

Example: “We need to decide hiring targets. Show weekly qualified candidates across teams with last quarter’s avg as reference.”

Interaction hints (optional): hover to reveal data density/intervals; toggle cohorts; export as print-safe PDF.

Checklist:

- ☐ Title answers the question
- ☐ One highlight, everything else muted
- ☐ Direct labels > legend scanning
- ☐ Uncertainty visible (bands/intervals)