

# Which Type of Data Do You Have?

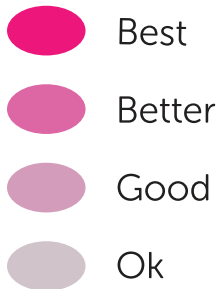
If your data can be put into increasing or decreasing order, it is "orderable" and therefore requires symbols that are visually orderable. If your data comes in types, kinds, or categories, it is "nominal" data and then it should be visualized with nominal symbols.

## Is your data orderable?

For example, city population and pollution severity can be thought of in terms of more and less, better and worse. Visually orderable symbols include changing size and colors that get lighter or darker. By contrast, changing shape (circles, squares, stars...) or using rainbow colors are not orderable. When your data isn't orderable, it's called "nominal."

### SHADES OF ONE COLOR:

Bright to grey

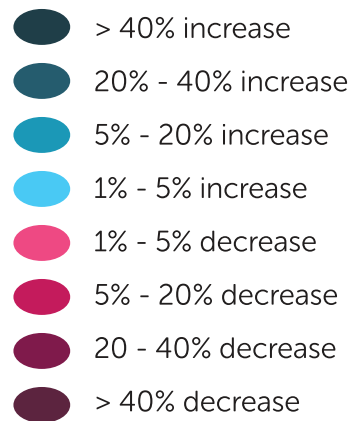


Dark to light



Brighter and darker usually imply the more extreme side of your data. If you're using a dark background, it can be the reverse.

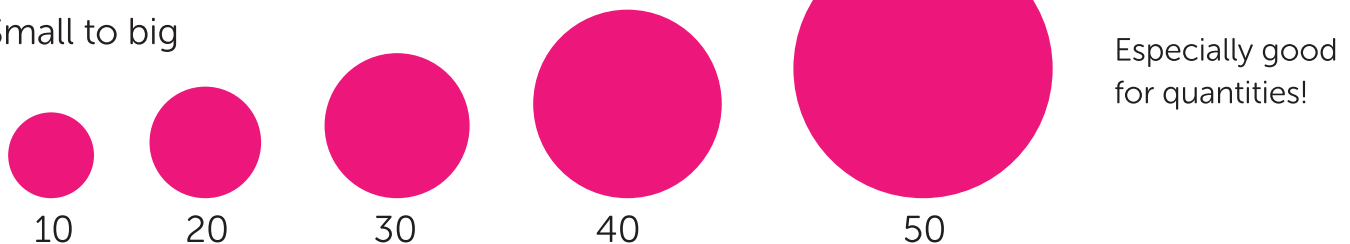
### TWO COLORS:



Use two colors for when your data diverges to highlight the break point.

### SIZE:

Small to big



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# Is your data nominal?

For example, animals come in different species. One species cannot be described as better, worse, more, or less than another. Nominal symbols make sure no category seems bigger or better than another. They use change in shape or change in color to prevent quantitative comparisons. Data that is not nominal is called "orderable."

## SHAPE:

Abstract



Leopards



Tigers



Lions



Cheetahs

Concrete



Rockets



Hippos



Bike Parking



Children

Complex shapes will be hard to distinguish from far away.

## COLOR:

Abstract



Japanese



Chinese



Korean



Vietnamese

Concrete



Mountains



Forests



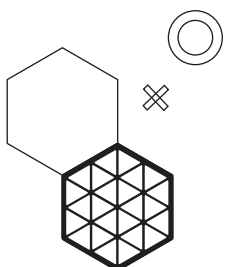
Deserts



Water

Use abstract symbols for sensitive topics, like race, religion, war, and obesity.

If you have a lot of categories, you may run out of distinctive colors and shapes. Consider combining some categories, or using color for primary categories and shape for subcategories. Or vice versa.



## Remember to Consider:

LEGIBILITY • YOUR AUDIENCE • YOUR MESSAGE • APPROPRIATENESS