

Chart titles and text

Help on the textual elements of charts commonly used in statistical commentary.

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Use solid lines, dotted lines and dashed lines to differentiate between time series. This also means lines look more distinct when printed in black and white or if a user is colour-blind.

For continuous data axes centrally align labels over tick marks.

EXAMPLE



For categorical data axes labels should be aligned between tick marks.

EXAMPLE



You can use more tick marks than labels; ticks indicate the scale or level of detail of the data.

Label the final tick if there are more ticks than labels and there is space to do so.

EXAMPLE

Economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64

UK, January 1980 to October 2014

A legend or key shouldn't be used, instead label the data directly. If a legend or key is necessary, place it on the chart as close as possible to the data.

EXAMPLE

Do

EXAMPLE

Don't

The order and orientation of the legend or key should be the same as the data.

EXAMPLE

Do

EXAMPLE

Don't

Use a horizontal bar chart rather than a vertical bar chart if your data has long category names.

EXAMPLE

Do

EXAMPLE

Don't

If the subcategories are not the same in all of the main categories, label the main categories and subcategories directly on the y-axis.

EXAMPLE

In a statistical bulletin or report all charts should be labelled as a figure and numbered, based on the order in which they appear. Write the titles in sentence case. Be concise, noting the main axes of the chart, unless one of the categories is included in the subtitle. Include the geography and a time period in the subtitle.

EXAMPLE

Figure 1: Economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64

UK, Dec 1980 to Oct 2014

Or

Figure 2: Number of unemployed persons by region

England, 1993

Chart text must be horizontal. If the labels won't fit into the required space, transpose the chart or convert the units.

EXAMPLE

Do

Unemployed adults age 16 to 64 by region

England, 1993

EXAMPLE

Don't

Unemployed adults age 16 to 64 by region

England, 1993

Right align y-axis values.

EXAMPLE

Pets by nation

UK, 2012

Bar charts shouldn't need data value labels. If you need data value labels, create a chart-table combination.

EXAMPLE

Do

If you can't create a chart–table combination, make sure the data value labels are placed at the base of each bar and right-aligned.

EXAMPLE



EXAMPLE

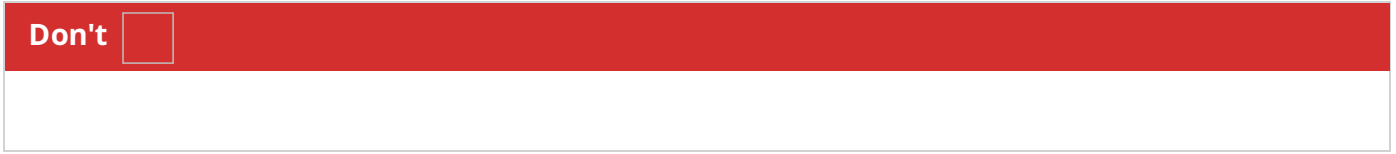


Chart annotations can be very useful to highlight key messages in your data. They must be concise and relevant. Place annotations on the chart as close as possible to the data points of interest.

Avoid chart footnotes where possible. If extra information is needed:

- annotate the chart
- include the information in the statistical commentary accompanying the chart
- add a footnote to the chart title

EXAMPLE

Number of divorces¹
England and Wales, 1910 to 2011

Footnotes (include at end of accompanying copy text)
¹ Divorce figures include both decree absolutes and decrees of nullity