

FT PUBLISHING

HOW CHARTS WORK

UNDERSTAND
AND EXPLAIN
DATA WITH
CONFIDENCE

ALAN SMITH

THE FT CHART DOCTOR

Foreword by Tim Harford



Praise for *How Charts Work*

'This book is a chance to learn data visualisation from perhaps the best teacher there is. Alan Smith brings the secrets of his widely acclaimed Royal Statistical Society courses to the general public, helping you to present data and statistics clearly, honestly and insightfully. An essential read for anyone who wants to communicate with data!'

Stian Westlake, Chief Executive, Royal Statistical Society

'The quintessential activity of data visualisation is working out how to graphically show what it is you want to say. This invaluable addition to the library of texts in this subject gives readers the most comprehensive reference through the range of contemporary charting options, as well as their potential variations and smart innovations. Knowing what options are available is one thing, but knowing when and why – and when not and why not – you should use certain charts is the real art of this game and Alan expertly demonstrates the practical rationale for deploying each method. This is simply a fabulously useful book that will heighten the creative and critical thinking of novice and experienced data visualisation practitioners alike.'

Andy Kirk, Independent consultant, educator,
and author; founder of visualisingdata.com

'With *How Charts Work*, Alan Smith has done us all a great favour. He has taken everything he knows about charts and put it all in a highly readable, hugely interesting and heavily illustrated book! Everything Alan knows – as the Head of Visual and Data Journalism at the *Financial Times* – is just about all there is to know, and the book is written in such a way that the reader is gripped from start to finish, with charts galore – and so much more. The book is meticulously researched and, in today's data saturated media world, essential reading for everyone from casual observers to experienced data journalists. As someone who works with data, charts and maps on a daily basis, I hadn't quite appreciated how much I would learn from this book, so if you already consider yourself a dataviz connoisseur, *How Charts Work* will definitely be a great new addition to your collection. This is a book interspersed with personal stories, and along the way you'll learn why charts matter, everything there is to know on chart types, why spatial is special (maps!), the importance of colour, layout and text – and who won the English First Division in 1950. You'll also learn about the science behind good charts, the importance of good writing, and the need to understand uncertainty. But I'm certain you'll love this book and that it will quickly become an essential reference for the global dataviz community.'

Alasdair Rae, founder of Automatic Knowledge;
former Professor of Urban Studies and Planning
at Sheffield University

How Charts Work

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