Brand Guidelines

Lightcast

Great brands are built with consistency, creativity, and coherence.

These guidelines are designed to help employees, brand ambassadors, designers, communicators, and agency partners to preserve and protect our brand expression.

How to use these guidelines

When we share what Lightcast is, or communicate on the company's behalf, it's important we're all on the same page. This document is a resource that shows how Lightcast should look and sound across any kind of platform, helping us build a cohesive identity that is recognized, liked, and trusted.

This document outlines key tenets of the Lightcast brand. It articulates what language we should use in company materials, including descriptions, voice, tone, syntax, and style. These guidelines also provide specific usage instructions for the Lightcast design elements, including the logo, color palette, typography, iconography, photography, and visual identity.

These standards apply to all media and formats. This document should be used as a handbook and reference for everyone creating Lightcast materials, including writers and designers both within and outside the company.

Our Brand

Lightcast

Our Mission

We unlock new possibilities in the labor market.

Lightcast Principles

L

Live the mission

We genuinely care about the work we do and never lose sight of the human behind the data.

I

Innovation, inside and out

We take personal responsibility for finding new and better ways to do all things—large and small, internally and externally.

G

Give customers the unexpected

We aim to exceed customer expectations and seek opportunities to excite and delight with every interaction.

H

Hide nothing, own everything

We strive to be transparent in our actions, own our mistakes, and remain humble in our approach.

T

Teamwork make the data work

We work together, respect our differences, play to our strengths, and celebrate our successes. #crushedit

As we pursue our mission and work according to our principles, we need to keep in mind what we do, how we do it, and why. This focus is important for communicating what Lightcast is to those who are unfamiliar (including prospects and new hires), and can also help orient us as we make decisions about products, partnerships, or content to pursue.

What

Lightcast is the global leader in labor market analytics. Through software, APIs, and consulting, we provide data-driven insight that helps businesses, higher education institutions, and communities make better labor market decisions.

How

Our tools pioneered the collection and big-data analysis of job postings, and this provides us with the most robust and up-to-date picture possible of the global labor market. In addition to our postings data, we also incorporate proprietary analysis of individual career profiles, as well as other labor market statistics from government sources, so we can provide our customers with the exact collection of data they need.

Why

We want to create a job market that works for everyone. A better understanding of the labor market enables efficiency, growth, and prosperity for our customers in business, education, and community leadership. Ultimately, this connects the right people with the right jobs, allowing individuals to achieve success themselves.

Our Value

We have the most comprehensive and robust labor market data, and we're here to help customers use it. We know more than anyone else about the labor market, and we know how to focus and curate that knowledge to answer customers' specific questions. We show them how to solve complex problems in a user-friendly way.

The right insight allows customers to understand the present and plan for the future. Any decision made without data is a shot in the dark, but with Lightcast, customers can move forward with confidence.

In a fast-changing and confusing world of work, Lightcast delivers clarity.

Taglines

Unlocking new possibilities in the labor market

A global leader in labor market analytics

Creating a job market that works for everyone

Brand Story

This is further messaging that helps explain and contextualize the work we do and the value we provide.

When the labor market doesn't work, companies can't find talent, people can't find opportunities, and communities don't reach their full potential. Learning providers need to see the future of work today in order to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. Businesses need a strategy to grow and stay ahead of the curve in a fast-paced world. Community leaders need to align the public and private sectors to create opportunities and prosperity for their region. The pieces are out there—someone just needs to connect them.

At Lightcast, we've devoted over two decades to unlocking new possibilities in the labor market. We're here to light the way forward. By collecting and analyzing global data on skills and occupations, we can deliver the best labor market insight in the world. We see things nobody else can see—expansive, real-time patterns in supply and demand throughout the labor market.

More importantly, we understand how this insight powers our customers' ambition, mission, and mandate. People are at the heart of everything we do, and our data powers research, innovation, and growth all over the globe at the highest levels of government, business, and education. And we're here to help navigate them: our job is to illuminate the exact solution our customers need to make a difference—nothing more, nothing less.

When the right people have the right jobs, companies succeed, communities thrive, and educators can empower new generations with unlimited possibilities. Lightcast delivers solutions for all three sectors, so that together, we can create a job market that works for everyone.

Defining Characteristics

It's important the company always sounds and feels consistent, whether that's in the content we produce, the products we deliver, or in any other interaction we may have with those outside the company.

Our three defining characteristics inform how we make those decisions and maintain that consistency: Lightcast is **trustworthy**, **helpful**, and **approachable**.

If something we produce is unreliable, irrelevant, or inaccessible, it doesn't help unlock new possibilities in the labor market. By making sure Lightcast is presented as trustworthy, helpful, and approachable, we can ensure we're working toward our mission.

Trustworthy

Lightcast is trustworthy because our approach is always guided by best-in-class data. Customers and other audiences should always feel and understand that our findings are reliable and defensible. We stand behind the content our company produces so that everyone else can, too.

Helpful

Among our principles are the ideas that we never lose sight of the human behind the data, and we aim to exceed customer expectations with every interaction. For Lightcast to be defined by its helpfulness, our solutions must meet our customers' exact needs—which also means we need to be active and deliberate in learning and understanding what those needs are.

Approachable

The labor market may be complex and overwhelming, but Lightcast isn't—we deliver clarity. We're approachable because we never talk over people's heads. Everybody should feel comfortable navigating and understanding our products, solutions, and content, and nobody should feel intimidated.

Voice

Our defining characteristics guide our decisions about what content to create. Our voice is how we articulate that content—and consistency here is just as important.

So while our writing covers a wide range of topics, discussing different products, and addressing diverse audiences across the world, the "voice" in our writing needs to remain recognizable as coming from one company.

The Lightcast voice is **clear**, **conversational**, and **confident**.

Our voice is not

✕ Clinical   ✕ Elitist

✕ Political   ✕ Irreverent

✕ Gimmicky   ✕ Sarcastic

Clear

People need to understand what we say. The labor market is complex and our customers' problems are difficult, so it's vital we don't add to their confusion. Instead, we provide clarity. Lightcast has the answers, but they're only helpful if they're put in terms people understand. Clarity is our highest priority in everything we write.

Conversational

This is related to writing clearly (don't use technical jargon), but more specific to our relatable approach. We talk to people like people, because we're on their side. Don't be afraid of contractions; they're fine because they're used in conversation. Avoid long, complex sentences or any dense language that's a headache to get through.

Confident

We know what we're talking about, and we have the data to back it up. Having a confident voice doesn't mean bragging or exaggerating, but rather that we speak with authority and trustworthiness.

Writing Style Guide Basics

The full writing style guide is available for download. Here is a short overview and fixes to common issues. We use the Chicago Manual of Style for most formatting questions and the Merriam-Webster dictionary for spelling.

Abbreviations

Keep clean without periods: US, not U.S.

APIs

Not "API's."

COVID-19

Preferred to Covid-19. Avoid "Covid" on its own.

Data

Treated as plural to match government statistics format— the data "show" instead of "shows." Writing "according to the data" helps avoid awkward usage.

Dates

Use consistent with audience (June 12 in the US, 12 June in the UK). In either case, the numeral stands alone (January 7, not 7th).

Ethnic and Racial Groups

Capitalized and not hyphenated (Black, Asian American, Native American, and so on). Hispanic, Latino, and Latinx are all acceptable, provided one consistent term is used throughout an entire document.

Emsi Burning Glass

The former name of the company now known as Lightcast. It was created by the merger of the companies Burning Glass Technologies and Emsi.

Use legacy brand names only when necessary to refer to relevant past context: "Chris Kibarian joined us as CEO in April 2022, when the company was known as Emsi Burning Glass."

Use "Lightcast" whenever possible, including when referencing past products and information.

For example: "According to Lightcast job posting data dating back to 2016..."

Also note that The Burning Glass Institute is a separate nonprofit organization. It is supported by Lightcast, but not part of it.

Jobseeker

Not "job seeker."

Numerals

Spell out numbers one through nine; use numbers for 10 and above.

Oxford Comma

Used. We think it's useful, more intuitive, and easier to read.

Logo

Lightcast

Our mark, the **Tessell**, is a symbol of progress. The two repeating shapes indicate partnership as well as growth, pointing to prosperity. Progress is the process, prosperity is the destination.
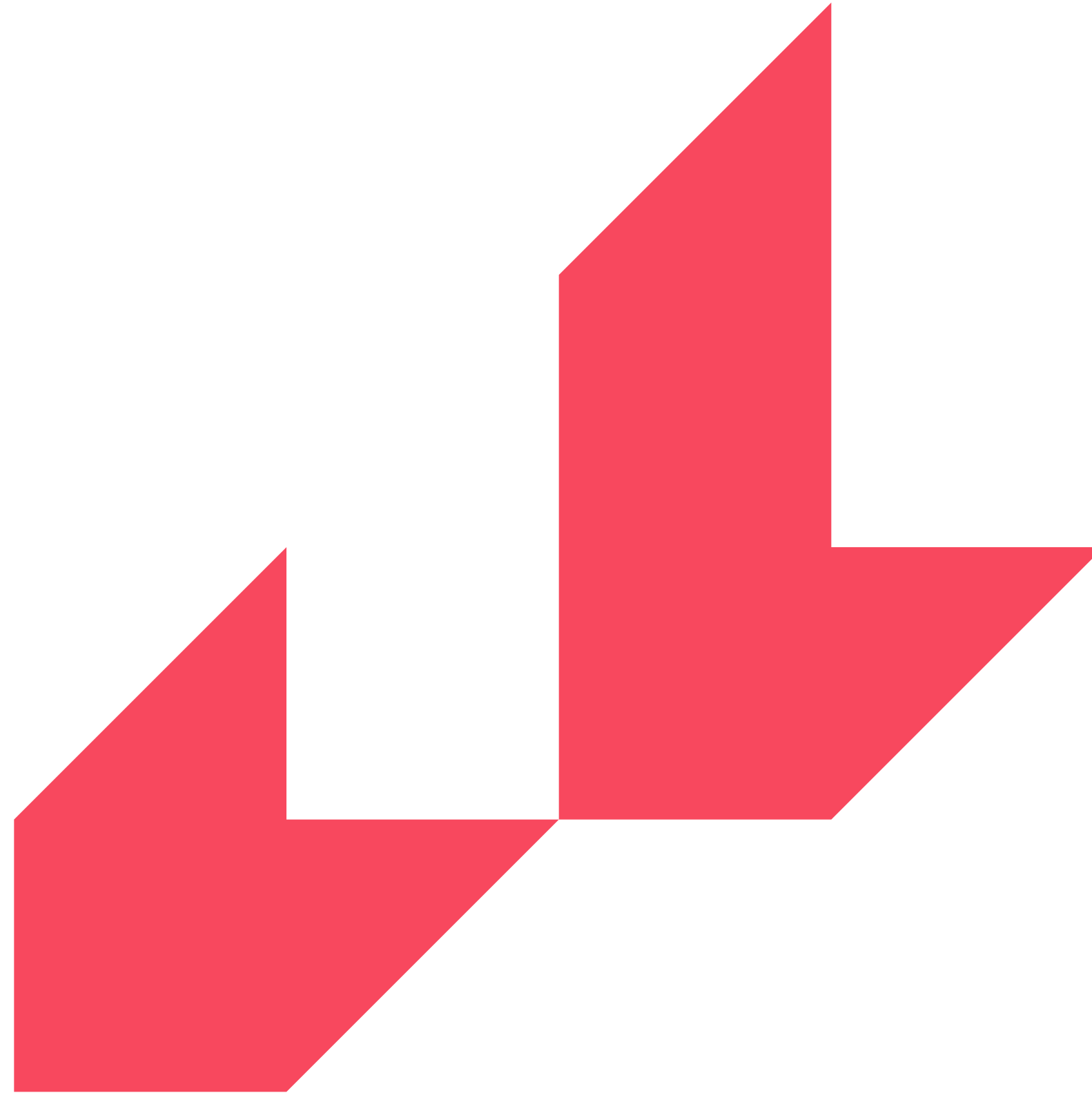
Our mark is built in an 8x8 grid of squares, with 0°, 90°, and 45° angles that reveal two repeating polygons. The second polygon is taller, which symbolizes the idea of progress.
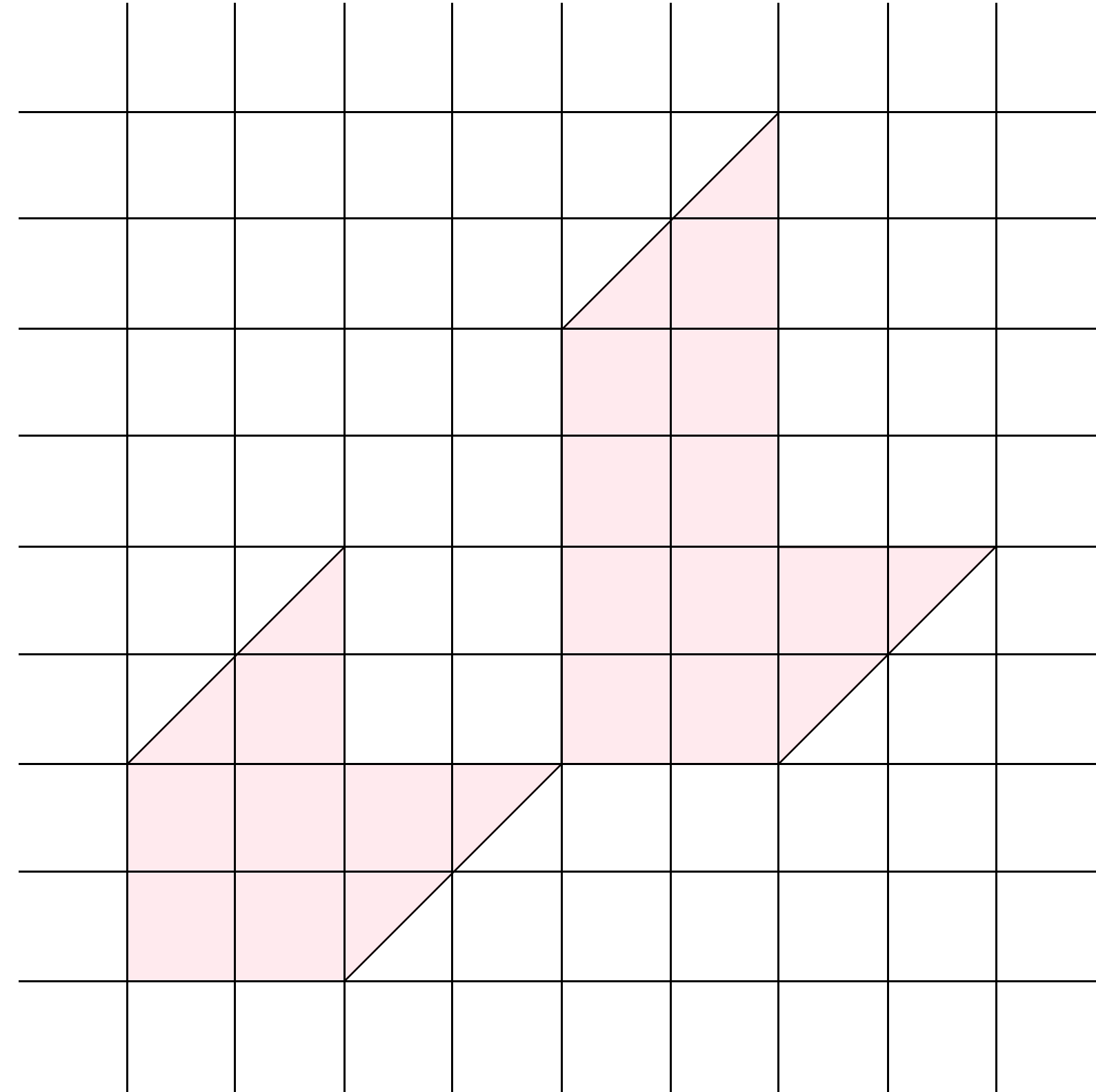
Our primary logo and brand expression is the lockup of the Tessell and the Logotype. The space and size relationship has been carefully considered and should not be altered.

The space and size relationship between the elements of the lockup is derived from size of the Tessell.

X = 1/4 Tessell

The distance between the mark and logotype is 0.5x. The baseline of the Logotype aligns to the bottom of the second polygon in the Tessell. And the top of the Logotype aligns to the point in the second polygon where the 45º angle begins.

1X

0.5X

Ligł
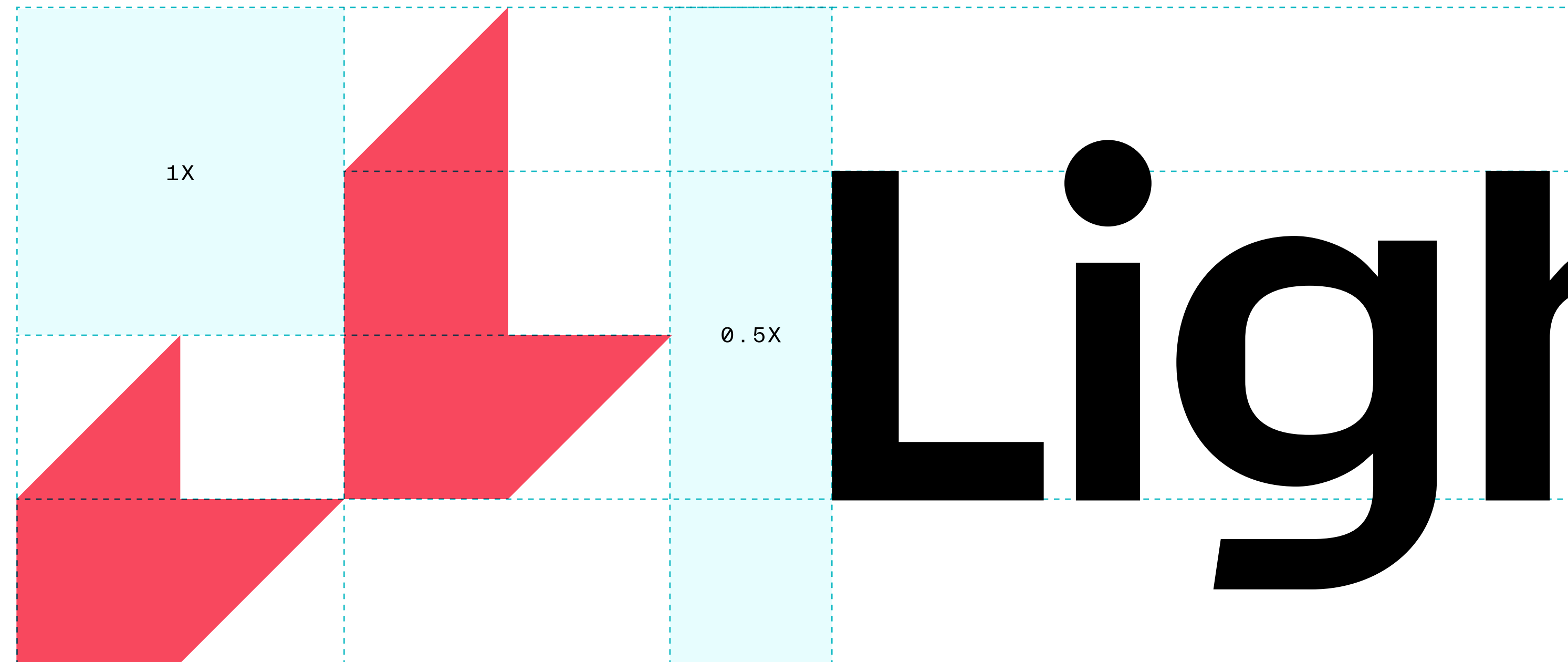
Our logotype has been carefully constructed to feel technical, but still full of personality.

It should not be used as an element on its own. It should always appear locked up with the mark.

Lightcast

When used within text, our name should appear in the same font, color and size as the surrounding text. It may not be emphasized by underlining, increasing its size or setting the font appearance to bold or italic.

Our name should be set in Title case, with the "L" capitalized. However the "c" in Lightcast should never be capitalized.

When our name is typed out in a sentence, it should look like this: Lightcast.

Incorrect use in text

LightCast

Do not capitalize the "c."

lightcast

Always capitalize the "L."

The logo lockup is available in four colorways: Red + Black (primary version), Black, White, and Red + White. The Tessell is available in Red, Black, and White.

When applying the logo on color or photographic backgrounds, always select the most appropriate version of the logo, and use brand colors with maximum contrast for backgrounds.
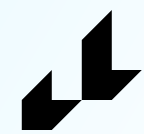
When creating signage in the real world, opt for maximum contrast and simplicity. In this case, the White Lockup is best due to the high legibility and likelihood of consistent execution.

Always allow for clearspace around the Tessell and Logotype. X is 1/4 the size of the mark, and that clearspace should be applied on every side.

For minimum sizing, the mark and logotype should not be smaller than 16px tall for digital applications, or 5.6mm in print applications.

Mark and Lockup Minimum Clearspace
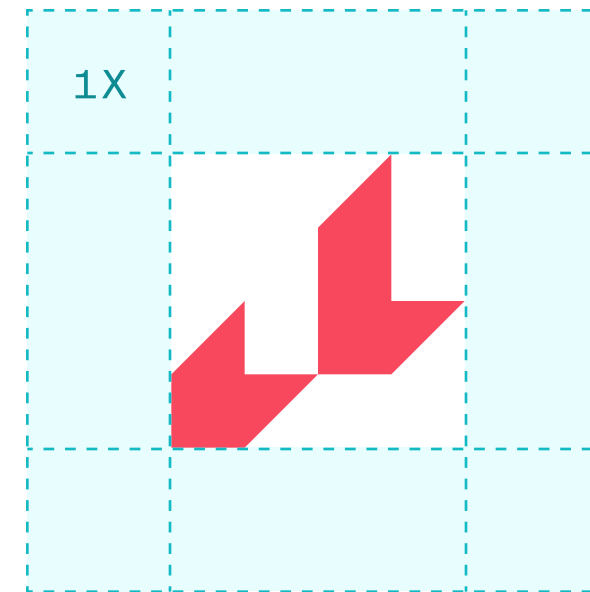
Mark and Lockup Minimum Size (not to scale)
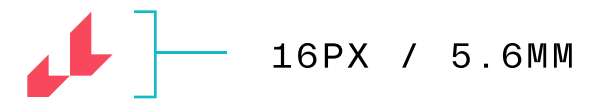
16PX / 5.6MM

16PX / 5.6MM

Color

Lightcast

There is an old adage that says "Red sky at night, sailors' delight. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning." While Lightcast is not the business of forecasting the weather, we do specialize in understanding our surroundings through data and analysis.

Our core brand color, **Sailor Red**, is named after this commonplace. The highly-visible **Ahoy** is available when optimal contrast is needed.*

Alongside this are also the foundational colors of Black, White, and Fog that illustrate the concept of light.

*Sailor Red meets WCAG AA standards for large text (18px & above). Ahoy meets these standards for smaller text as well.

Ahoy

PMS: N/A
CMYK: 0 66 55 15
HEX: #DA324D

Black

PMS: N/A
CMYK: 0 0 0 100
HEX: #000000

Sailor Red

PMS: 1785 C
CMYK: 0 82 65 0
HEX: #F54562

White

PMS: N/A
CMYK: 0 0 0 0
HEX: #FFFFFF

Fog

PMS: N/A
CMYK: 2 1 1 0
HEX: #F7F7F7

A set of secondary colors forms the foundation of our gradients, bringing a vibrant burst of color to compliment our core palette. These may also be used sparingly as accents or small details.

Turquoise, and its accompanying tints and shades, should be given priority as a main accent.
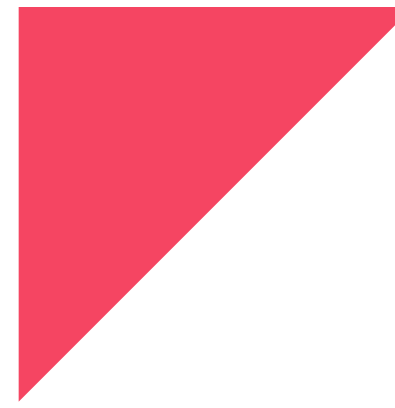
Sailor Red
HEX: #FF2F59

Fire
HEX: #FF781F
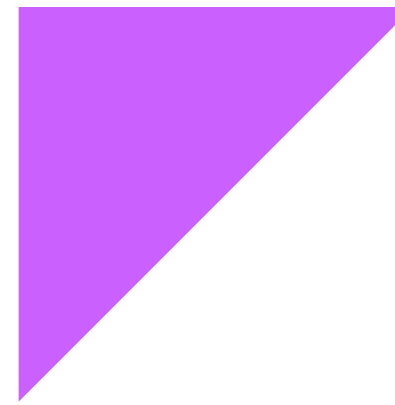
Amethyst
HEX: #CA61FF
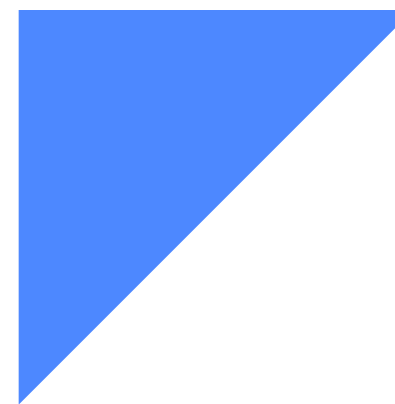
Sapphire
HEX: #4D88FF
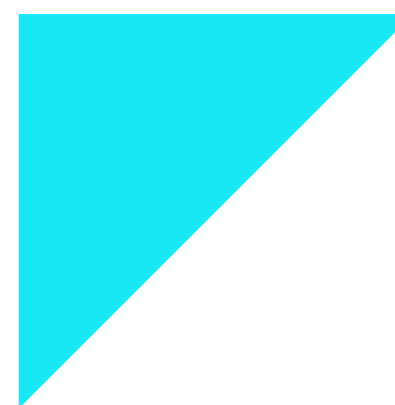
Turquoise
HEX: #18E8F5
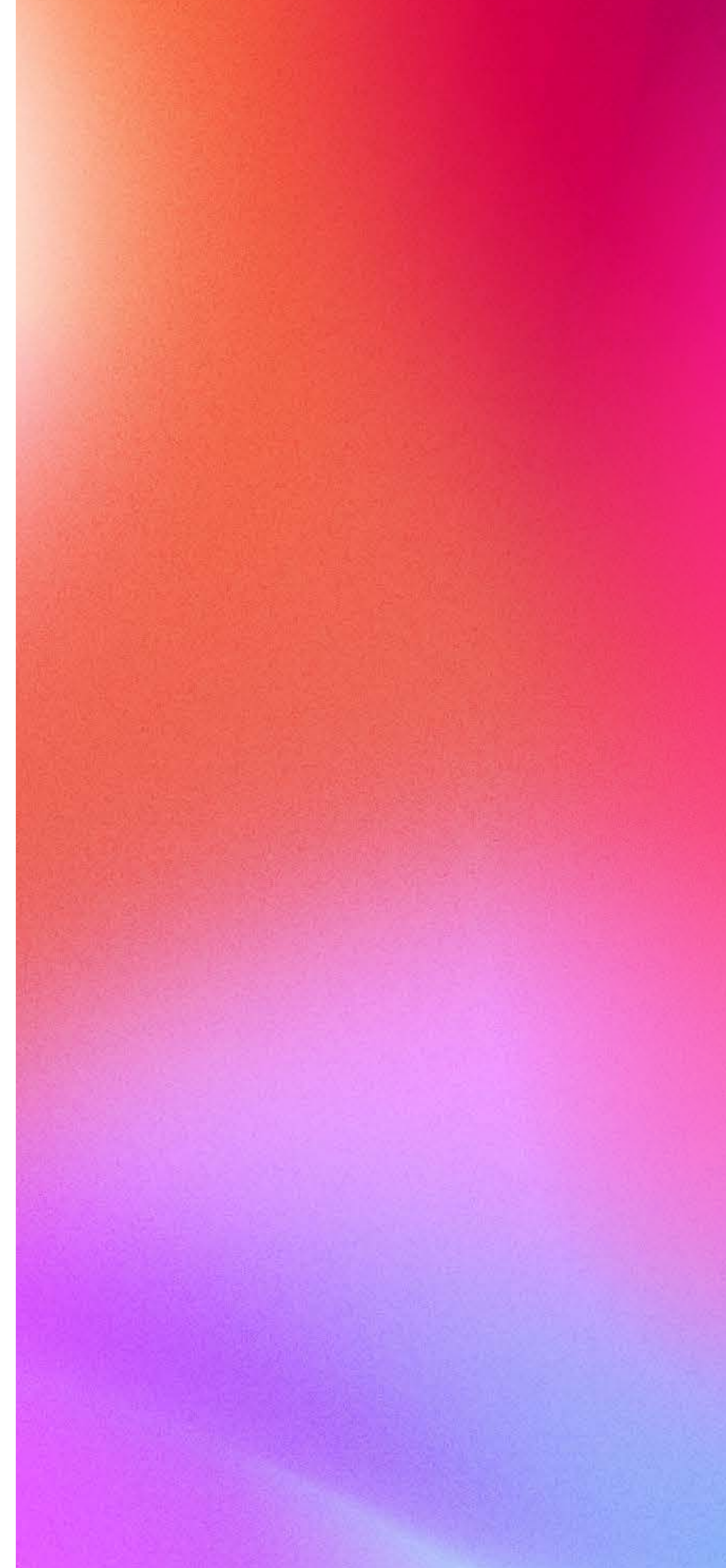
For UI components and data visuals, refer to this table of expanded colors. This palette is created using the Primary and Secondary palettes to establish hues. Darker and lighter shades have been added.

Darker shades are prefixed with "D-" and the percentage that corresponds with the addition of Black. Lighter shades are prefixed with "L-" and the percentage that corresponds with the addition of White.

Overcast

	D-60	#454545
	D-40	#676767
	D-20	#8A8A8A
	OVERCAST	#ACACAC
	L-30	#C5C5C5
	L-60	#DEDEDE
	FOG	#F7F7F7

Amethyst

	D-60	#512766
	D-40	#793A99
	D-20	#A24ECC
	AMETHYST	#CA61FF
	L-30	#DA91FF
	L-60	#EAC0FF
	LAVENDER	#FAEFFF

Turquoise

	D-60	#0A5D62
	D-40	#0E8B93
	D-20	#13BAC4
	TURQUOISE	#18E8F5
	L-30	#46EDF7
	L-60	#A3F6FB
	SKY	#E7FDFE

Sailor Red

	DUSK	#621C27
	D-40	#93293B
	D-20	#C4374E
	SAILOR RED	#F54562
	L-30	#F87D91
	L-60	#FBB5C0
	BLUSH	#FEECEF

Fire

	D-60	#66300C
	D-40	#994813
	D-20	#CC6019
	FIRE	#FF781F
	L-30	#FFA163
	L-60	#FFC9A5
	SUNSHINE	#FFF1E8

Saphire

	D-60	#1F3666
	D-40	#2E5299
	D-20	#3E6DCC
	SAPPHIRE	#4D88FF
	L-30	#83ACFF
	L-60	#B8CFFF
	L-90	#EDF3FF

Tuscany

	D-60	#655411
	D-40	#977D19
	D-20	#CAA722
	TUSCANY	#FCD12A
	L-30	#FDDA55
	L-60	#FEEDAA
	L-90	#FEF6D4

Emerald

	D-60	#205030
	D-40	#307848
	D-20	#40A060
	EMERALD	#50C878
	L-30	#73D393
	L-60	#B9E9C9
	L-90	#DCF4E4

Gradients can be used as backgrounds to create distinction in layouts. Gradients should always run from corner to corner, from the lighest shade to White. For instance, the following gradients are

- Sunshine
- Sky
- Lavender
- Blush
- Fog
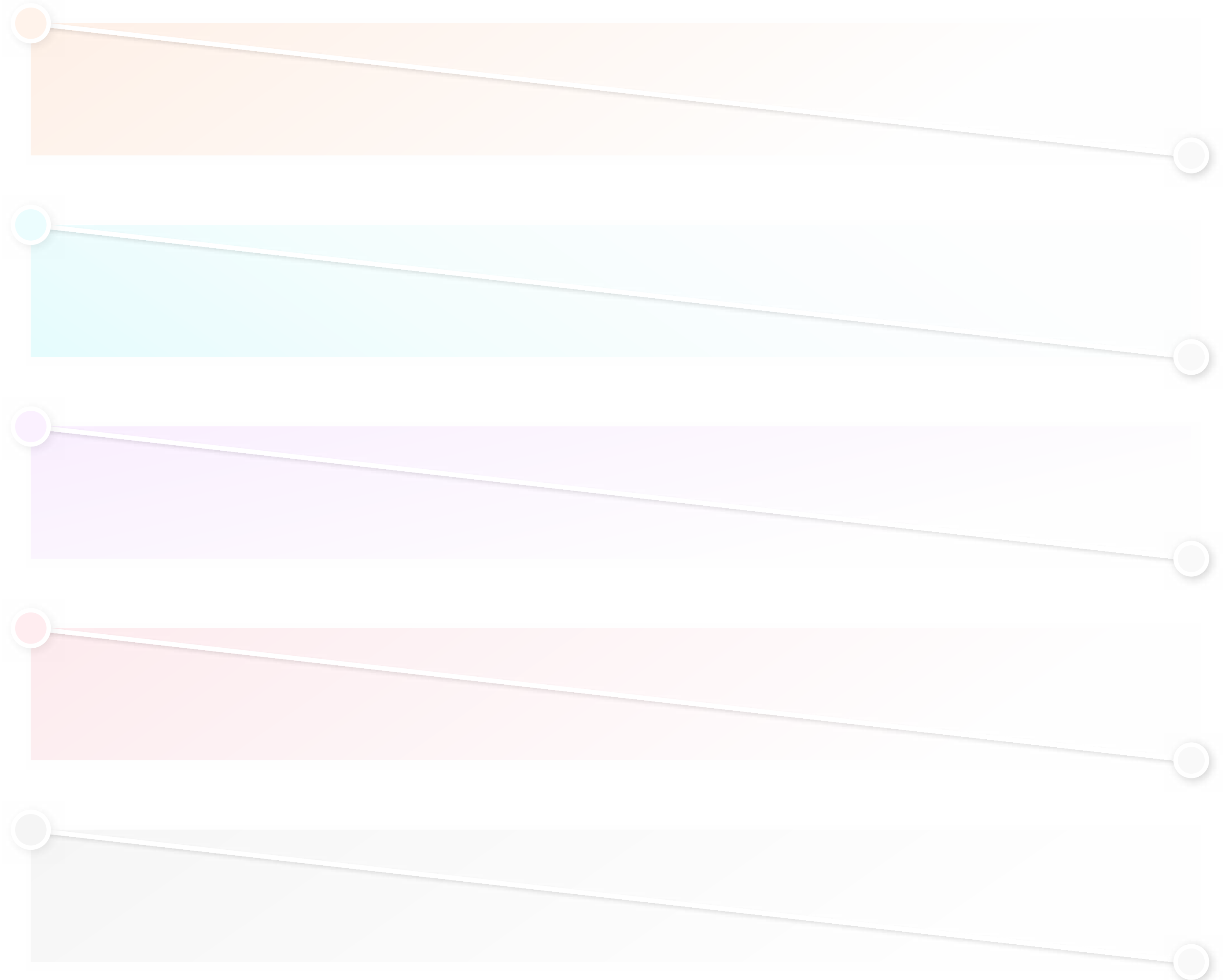
Due to our broad secondary palette, it's important not to overdo those colors. Note the following balance of color, with a high emphasis on White, Black, and Sailor Red. Then the secondary palette fills in through smaller amounts and pops.

Typography

Lightcast

Our brand identity system relies on two type families: Lausanne and Everett Mono.

For display purposes, headlines, and otherwise more top-line messaging, Lausanne should be used in either 400 or 600 weight.

For data or small details, Everett Mono should be used in Regular, or Bold. It's usually best used in all caps, but it can also be used in sentence case.

Lausanne   600   326pt

Lausann

Everett Mono   REGULAR   304pt

EVERET

Lausanne has many weights and styles, however only 400 and 600 ought to be used in both regular and italic styles.

Everett Mono has two weights and two styles that can be utilized in the system.

Lausanne

Light ³⁰⁰

Regular ⁴⁰⁰

SemiBold ⁶⁰⁰

Bold ⁷⁰⁰

Light Italic ³⁰⁰

Italic ⁴⁰⁰

SemiBold Italic ⁶⁰⁰

Bold Italic ⁷⁰⁰

Everett Mono

REGULAR & **BOLD**

In general, larger type is set with tighter letter-spacing, and line height ranging from 0.8 to 1 or 1.2.

Medium-sized headlines and body copy will have more open letter-spacing and line height.

Clear, actionable insight

Lausanne 600

`104pt | 104pt`
`-0.4em`

Labor market data to help your institution, organization, or community thrive.

Lausanne 400

`36pt | 46pt`
`-0.2em`

About Us

Lausanne 700

`20pt | 32pt`
`-0.2em`

The world's most comprehensive and complex labor market data, delivered in simple, easy-to-understand tools.

Lausanne 300

`20pt | 32pt`

Everett Mono

`14pt | 20pt`
`Uppercase`

When using Lausanne, commas, semi-colons, and quotation marks should be set as "typographer's marks" rather than the default straight marks.

This setting can be adjusted in OpenType features.

Lausanne

When applications call for it, such as email clients, slide presentations, and other media where our typefaces cannot be embedded, use the following fallbacks to keep a consistent look.

Lausanne   600   64pt   -0.2em

Clear, actionable insight

Arial   Bold   64pt   -0.3em

Clear, actionable insight

Everett Mono   Regular   48pt

CLEAR, ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

IBM Plex Mono   Regular   56pt

CLEAR, ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Visual Language

Lightcast

The component parts of the Lightcast collage style—especially photography, numerals, and data visualization—serve to reinforce the idea that Lightcast brings people and data together.

A photo or illustration of "data" on its own might show a computer server room, a circuit board, or an abstract representation of cyberspace. That's not where our customers do their most crucial work; instead, we want to show people as they relate to their jobs or relate to one another, because people are at the heart of everything we do. Photography gives us an opportunity to represent our customers in business, community leadership, and education while active in their work.

By placing such photos in an array with charts, graphs, and numbers, we can display people and data both at once, with efficiency and clarity. Applying a consistent color scheme, including the Glow, helps viewers understand that the images are distinctively Lightcast.

The following pages provide further detail about creating and applying each of those elements.

GROWTH

7%

SUPPLY
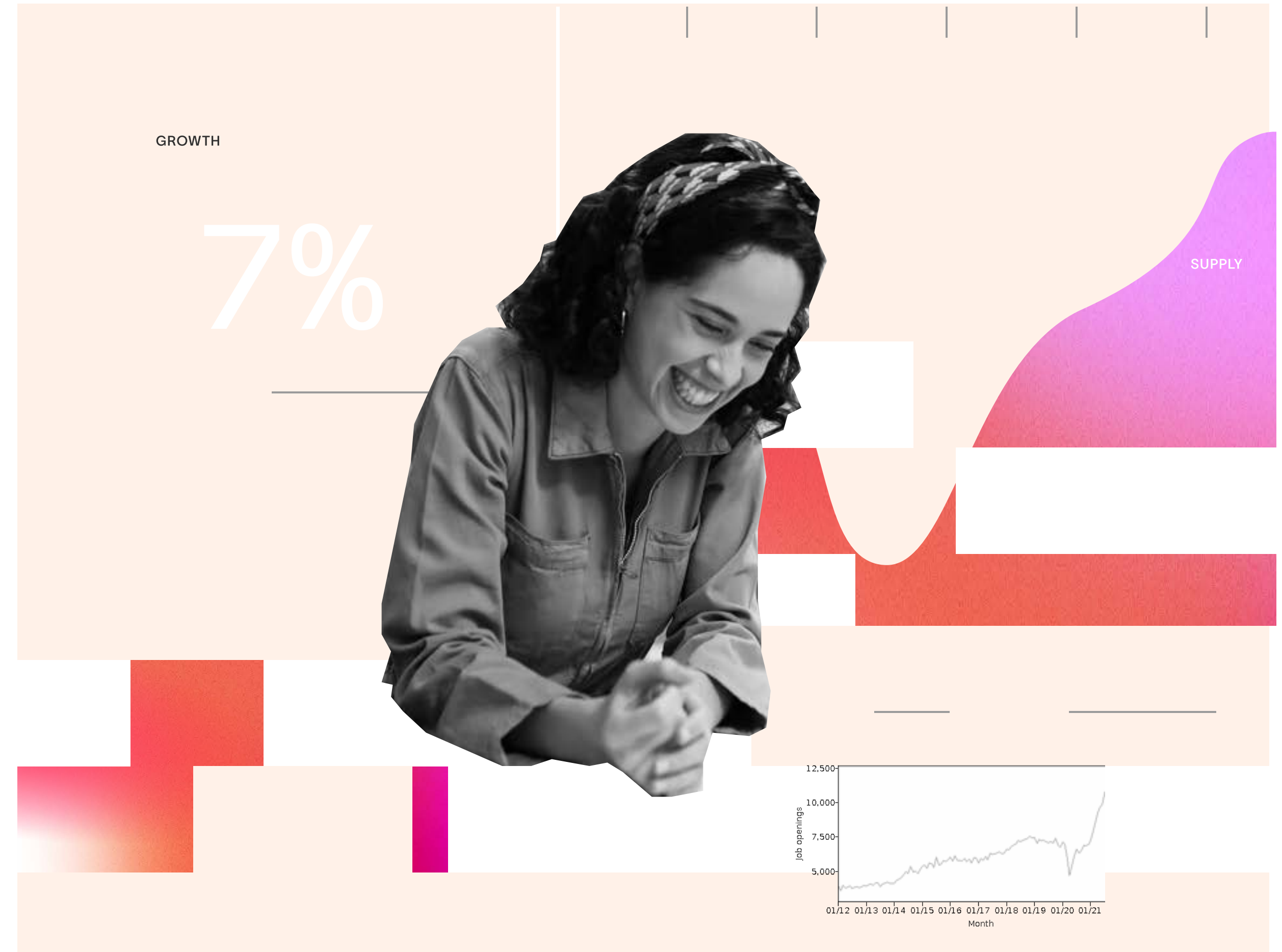
The Lightcast design style combines many elements of the brand identity system into a collage-style editorial graphic. The elements that can be combined are:

- Black and white photos
- Typography
- Numerals
- Lightcast color palette
- Data graphs and visuals
- Grid
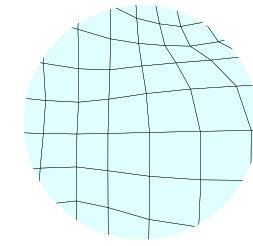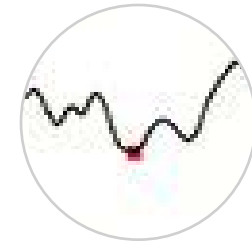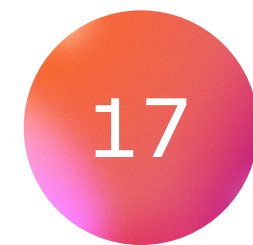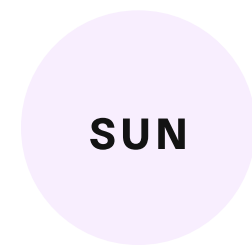
Lightcast collage graphics should follow certain principles to maintain consistency.

1. Compositions should be created on a vertical or horizontal grid, which is used as a framework for a dynamic data pattern.

2. An image should be selected for a primary focal point. The subject(s) should be cut out with a layer mask, and converted to black and white.

3. The grid blocks that make up the data pattern should then be thoughtfully arranged to compliment the image. Note how the layering of blocks behind and in front of the image creates additional depth.

4. A brand color should be applied to the background, and the Glow may be brought in as a counterpoint element. Glow blocks should follow the existing grid, but should provide additional leading lines to support the overall composition.

5. Finally, data visualization imagery and contextual typography can be incorporated to provide visual balance and bring meaning to the graphic.
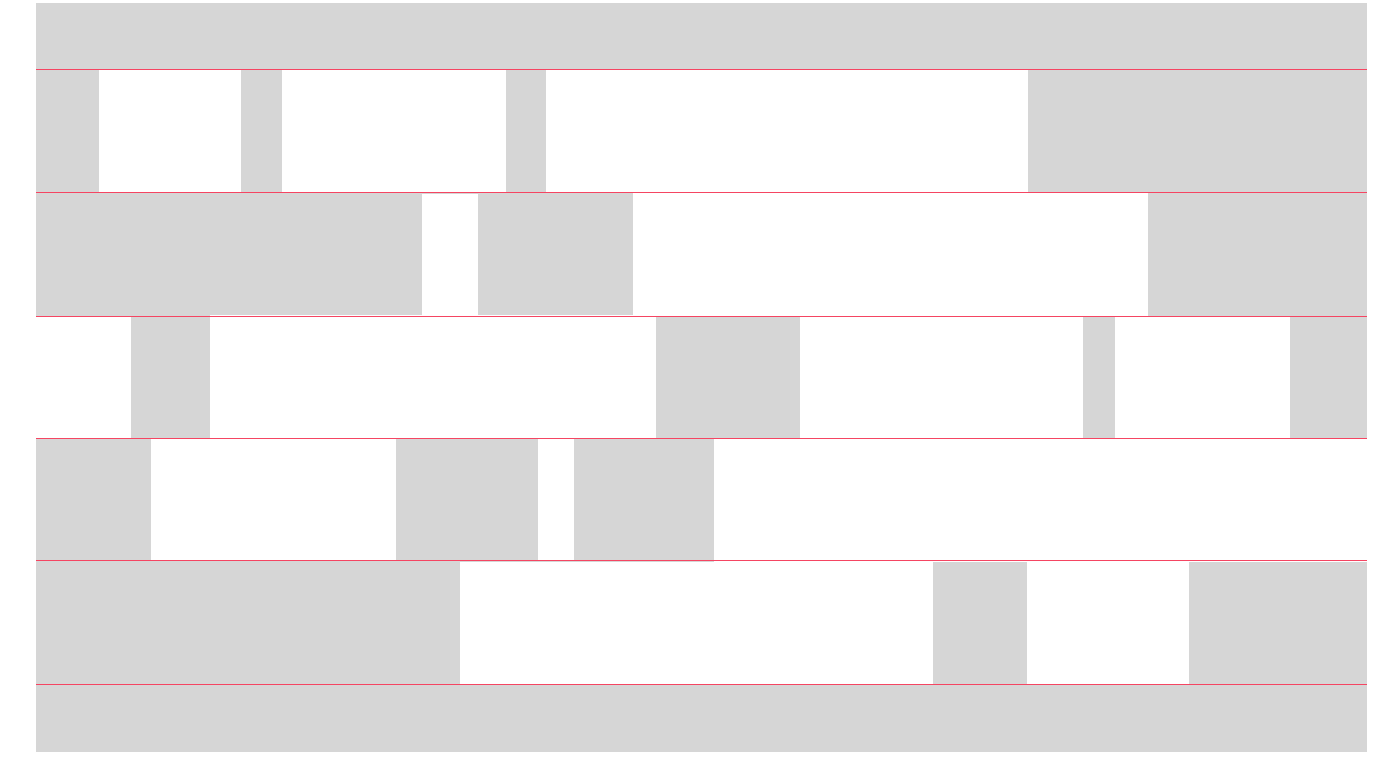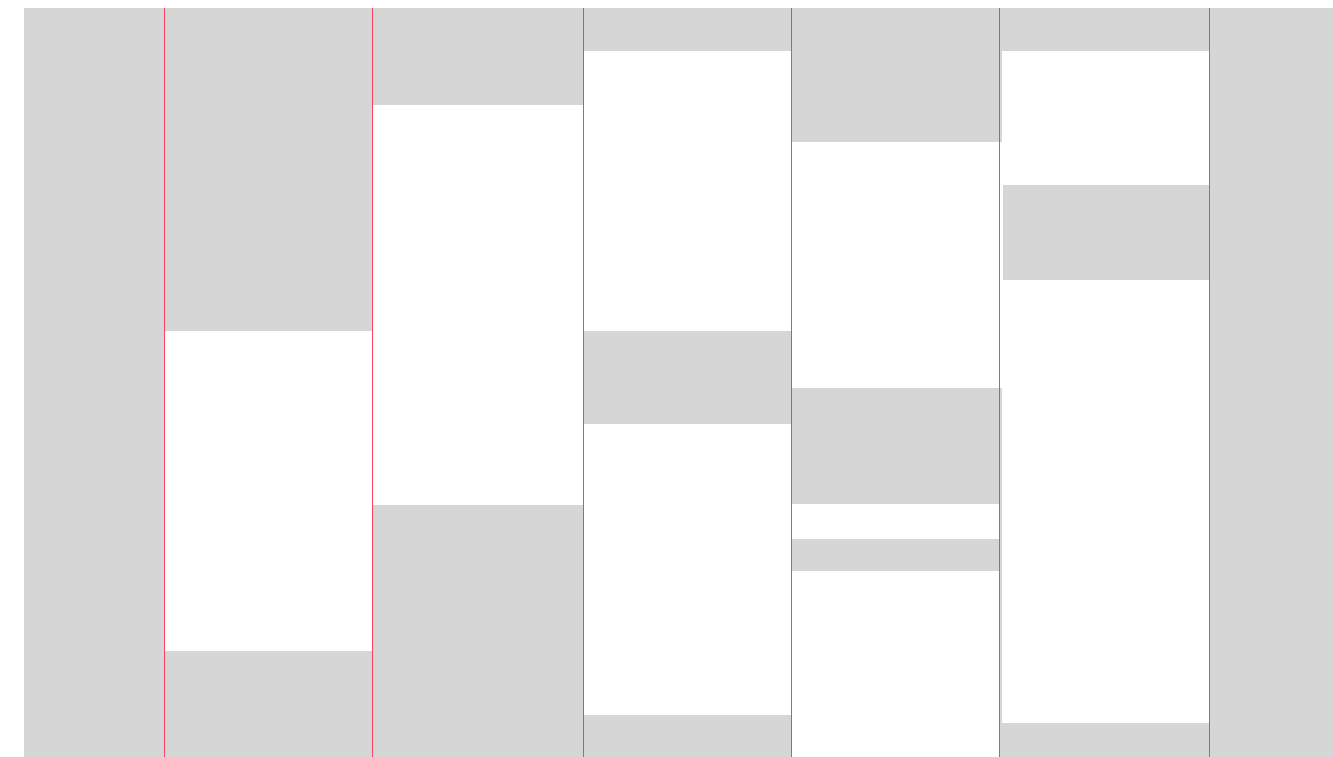
When creating Lightcast collages, consider how a narrative might be constructed through image selection, shape, positive and negative space, color, texture, interactions between elements, and overall composition.

By Ben Stafford

By Ben Stafford
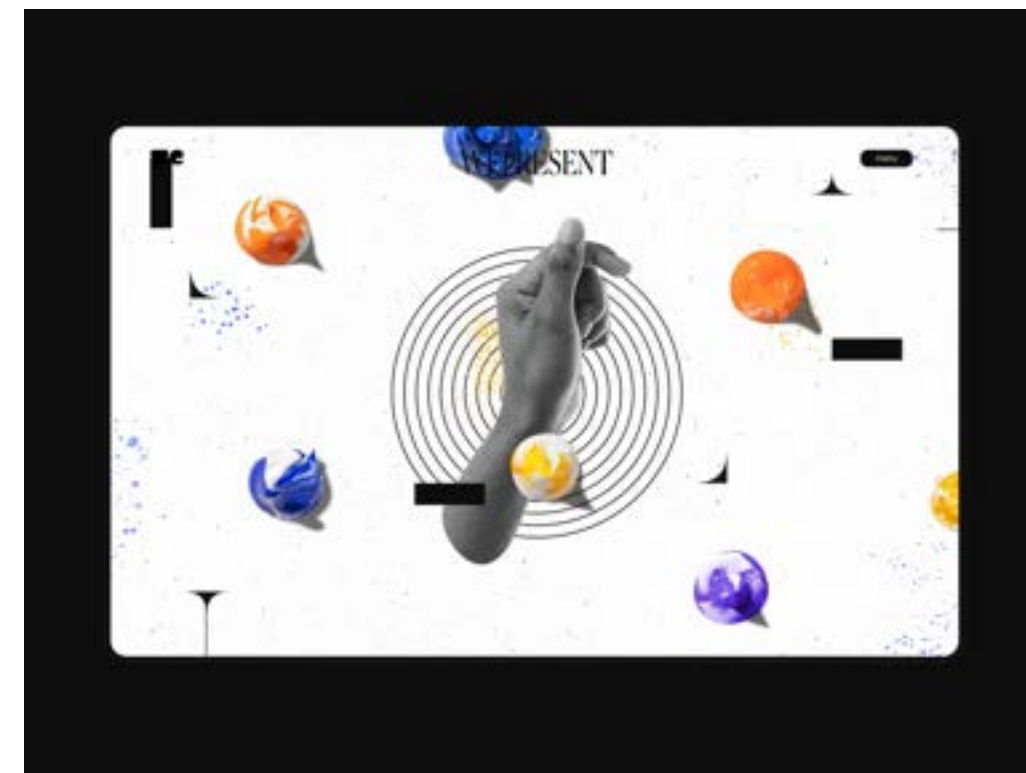
By Gabrielle Merite

By Mike Mcquade

By Mike Mcquade

The Glow is a foundational part of the Lightcast visual language. It feels optimistic and warm, and communicates the tone of gratitude we endeavor to have in all of our work.

The following gradients are what is used to create
the effect. By combining these elements with
color blend modes, new and interesting colors
and textures emerge.
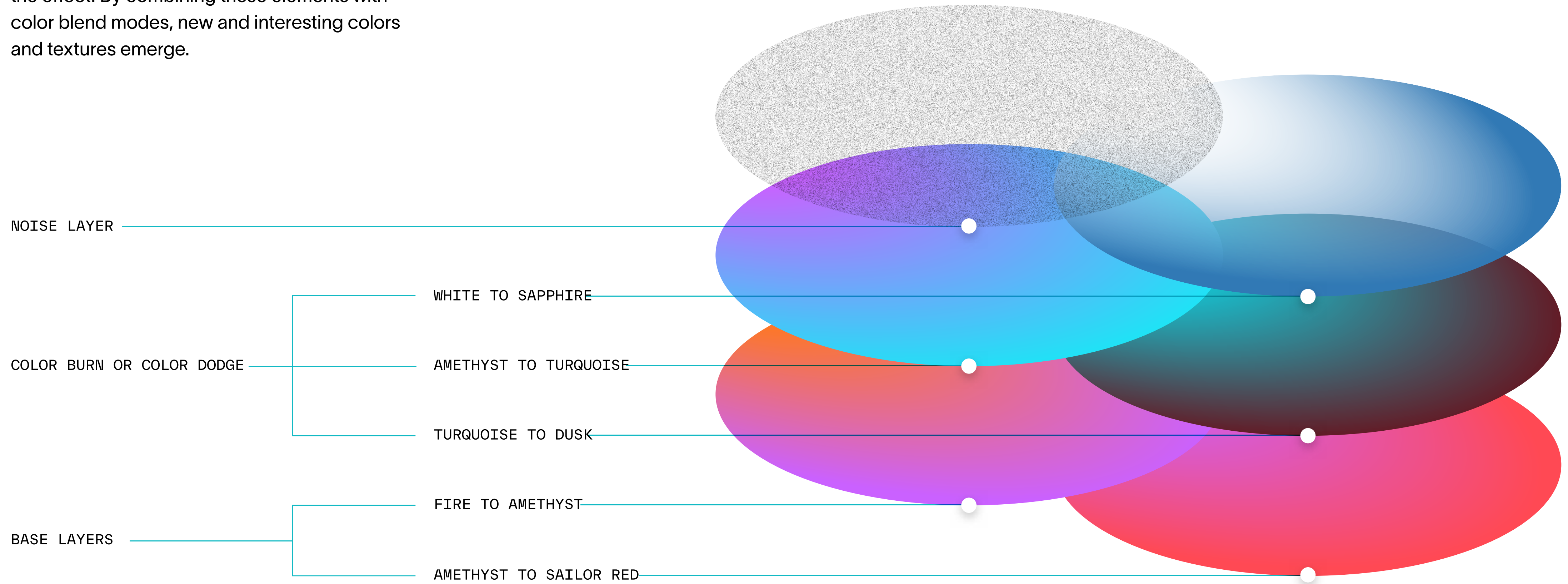
NOISE LAYER

COLOR BURN OR COLOR DODGE

WHITE TO SAPPHIRE

AMETHYST TO TURQUOISE

TURQUOISE TO DUSK

BASE LAYERS

FIRE TO AMETHYST

AMETHYST TO SAILOR RED

Step 1

Create the base layers and shape. The form can be any amorphous shape.
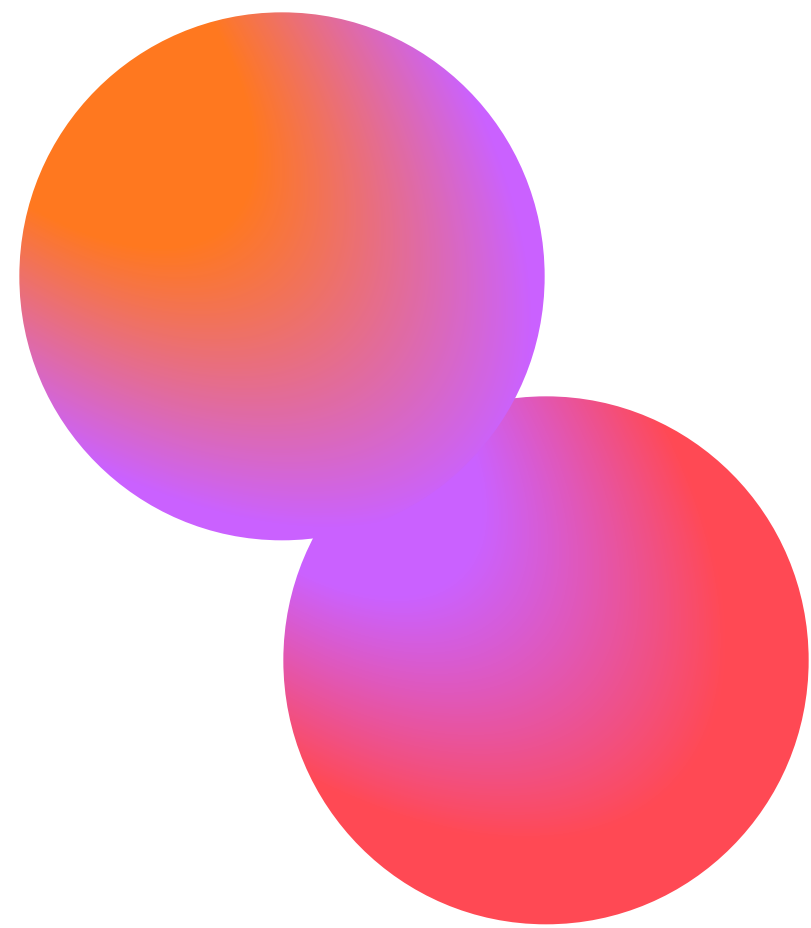
Step 2

Add Color Blends. Use Color Burn for adding color, and Color Dodge for removing color.
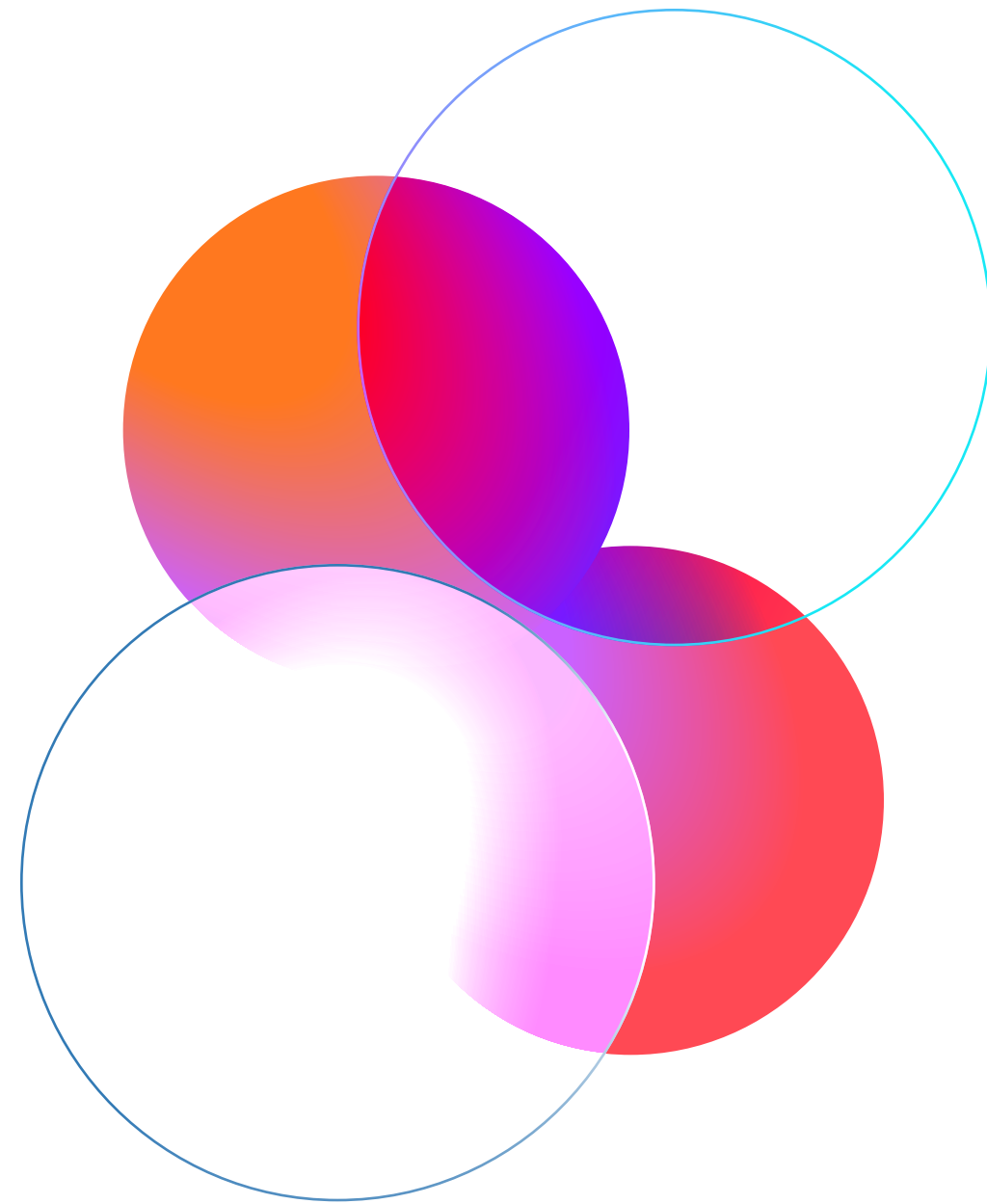
Step 3

Apply a layer blur to the layers such that the shape is unrecognizable, but not too dull.

Step 4

Apply a noise layer with an Overlay blend mode. This prevents unusual digital noise.

Step 1

Create the base layers and shape. The form can be any amorphous shape.
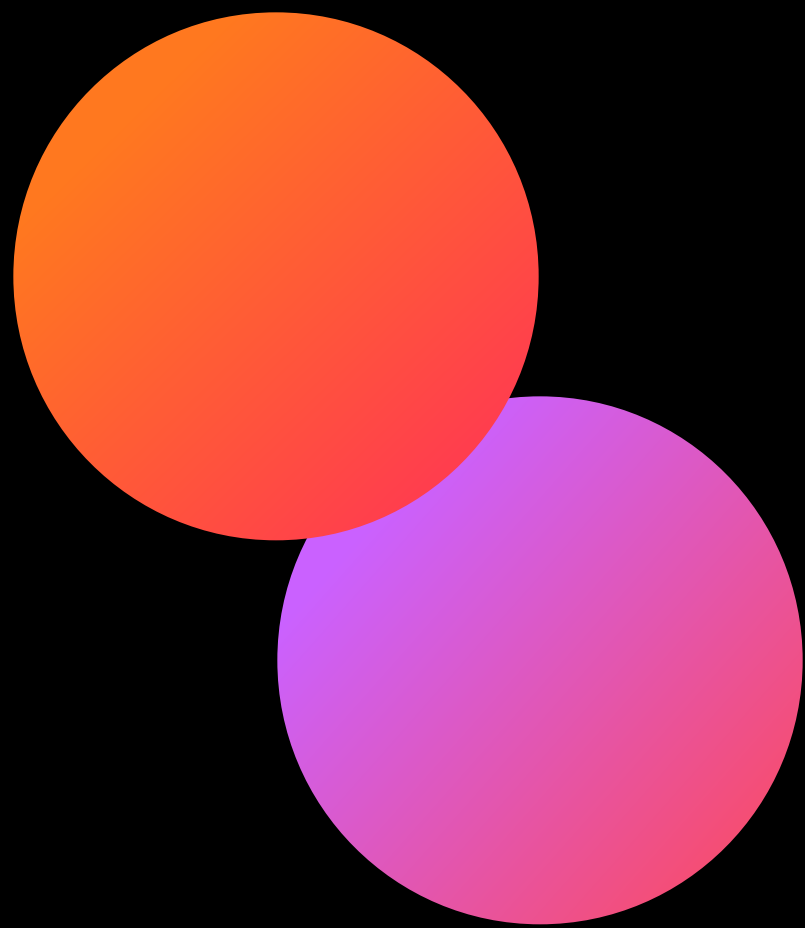
Step 2

Add Color Blends. Use Color Burn for adding color, and Color Dodge for removing color.
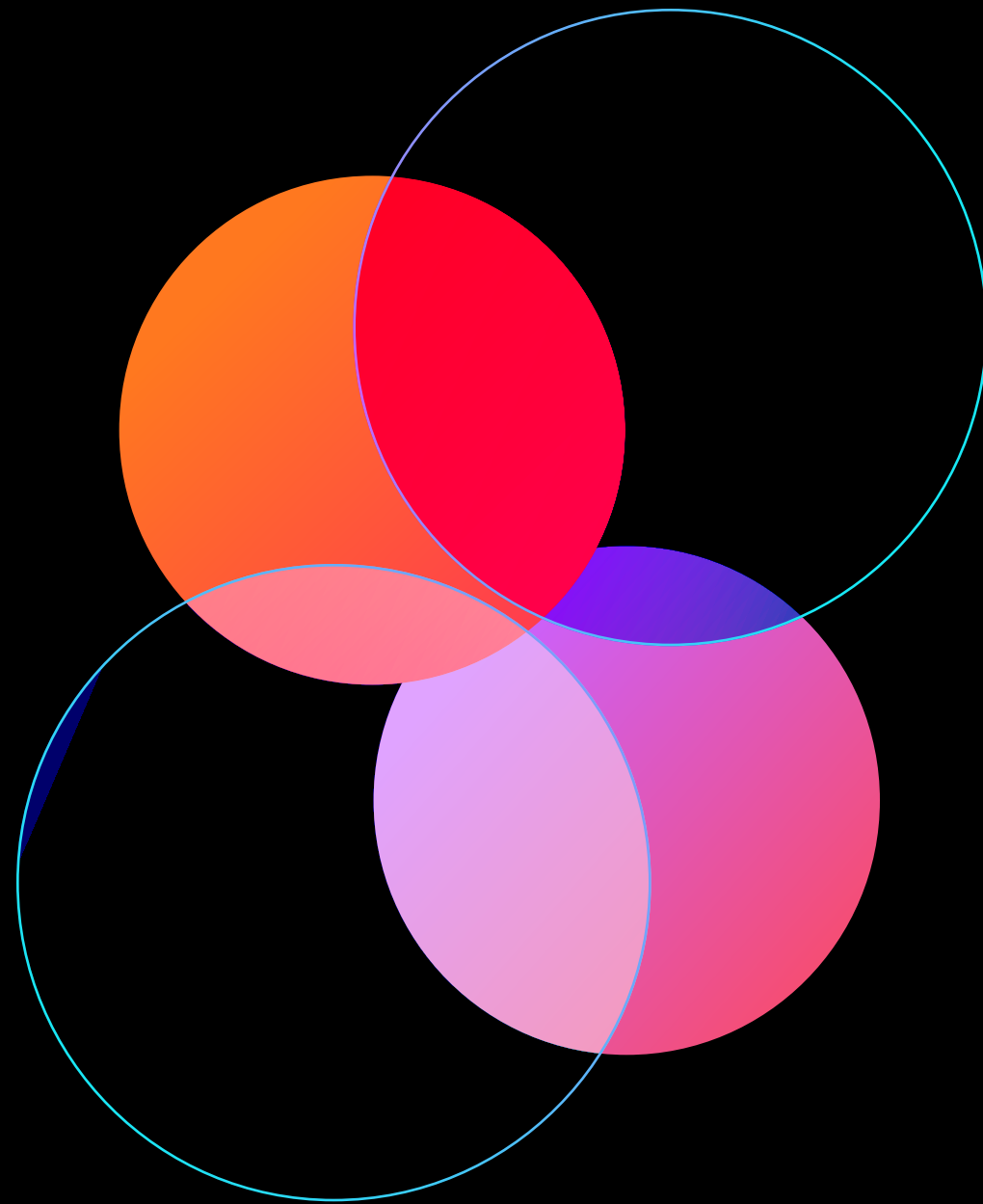
Step 3

Apply a layer blur to the layers such that the shape is unrecognizable, but not too dull.
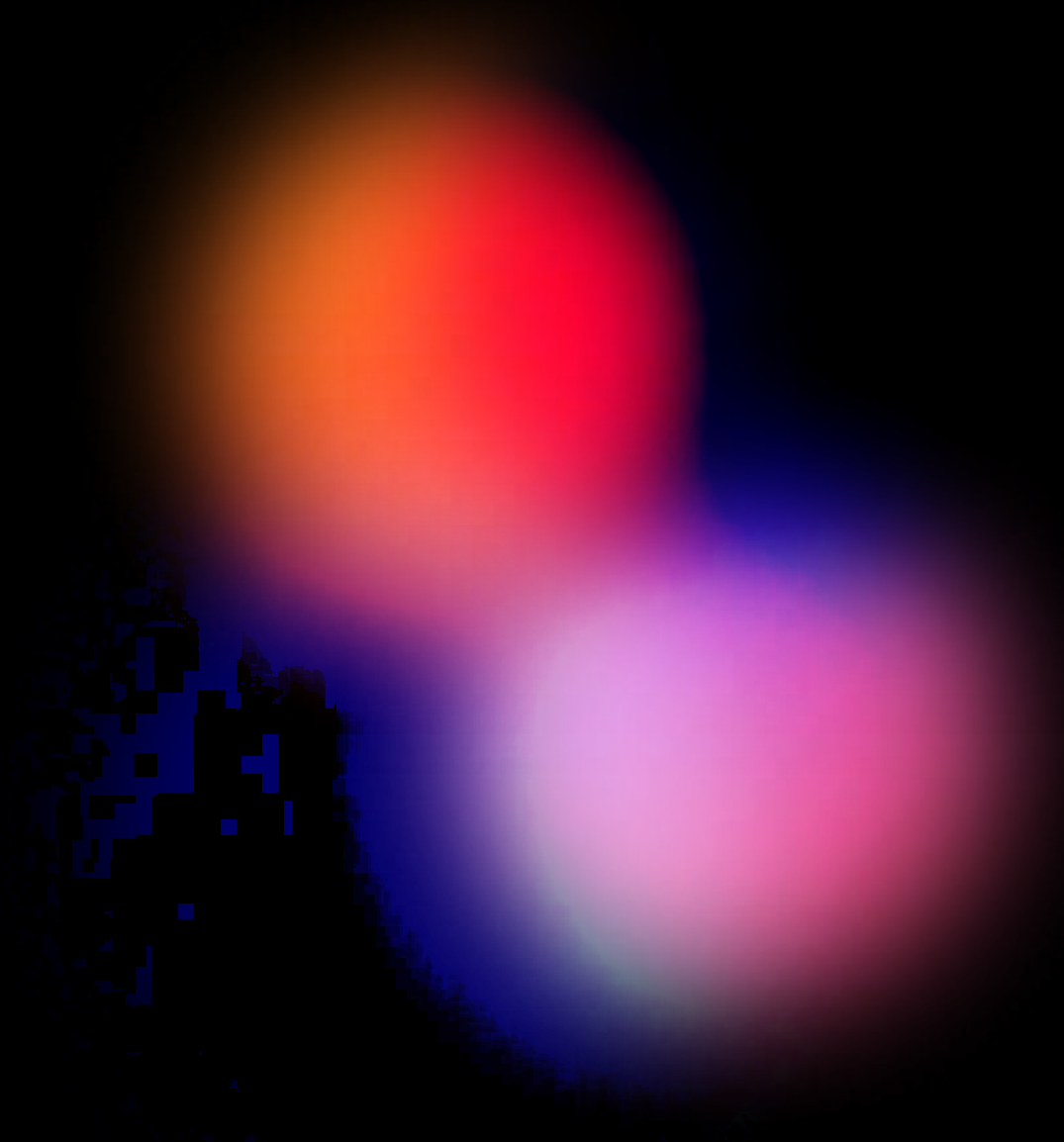
Step 4

Apply a noise layer with an Overlay blend mode. This prevents unusual digital noise.
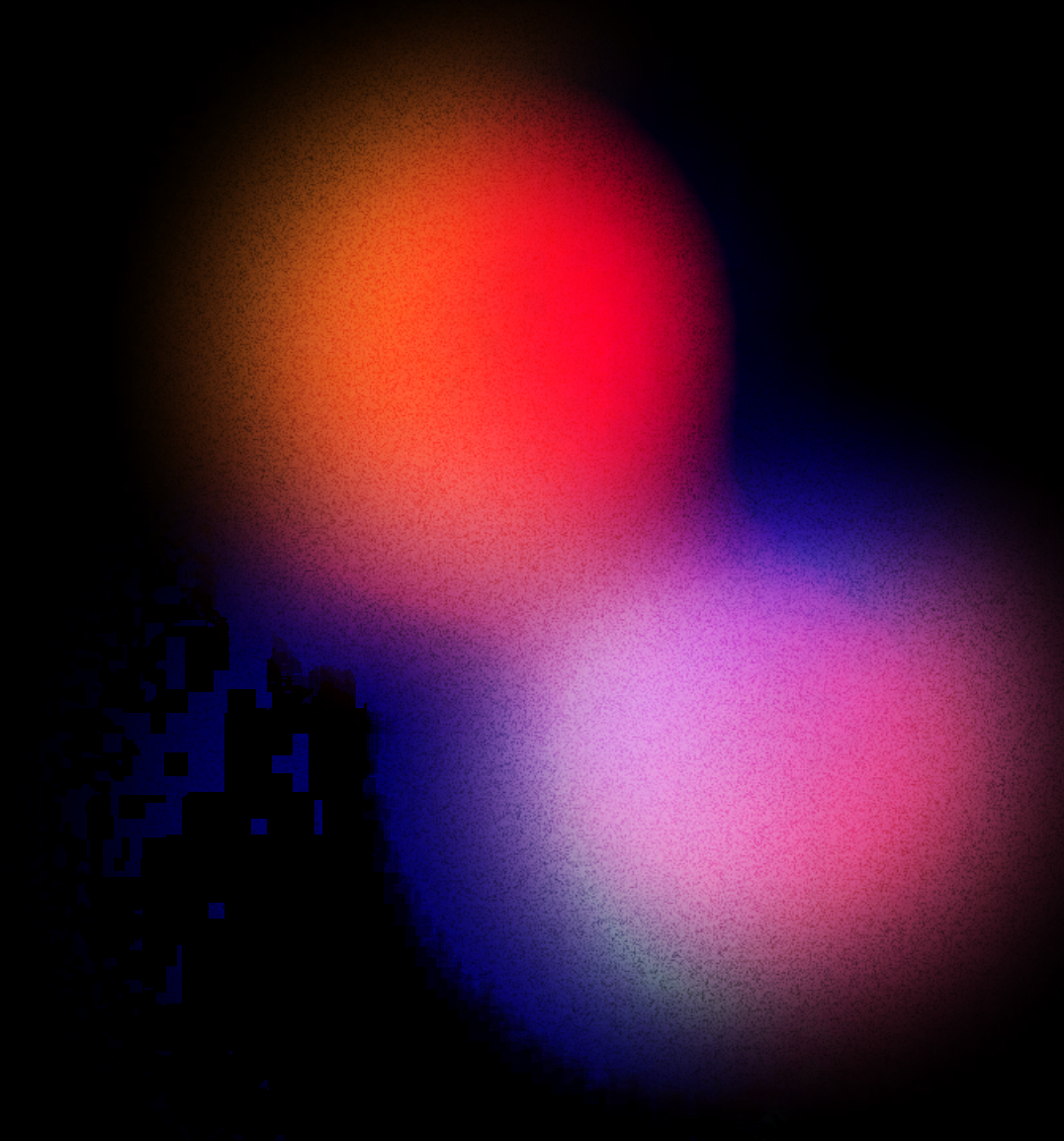
The Glow can be applied to the following patterns: Dots, Blocks, and Rays. Each of these patterns are reminiscent of data displays and add a great deal of variety to the visual language.

More patterns may be developed over time, and should always be rooted in some kind of data visualization.
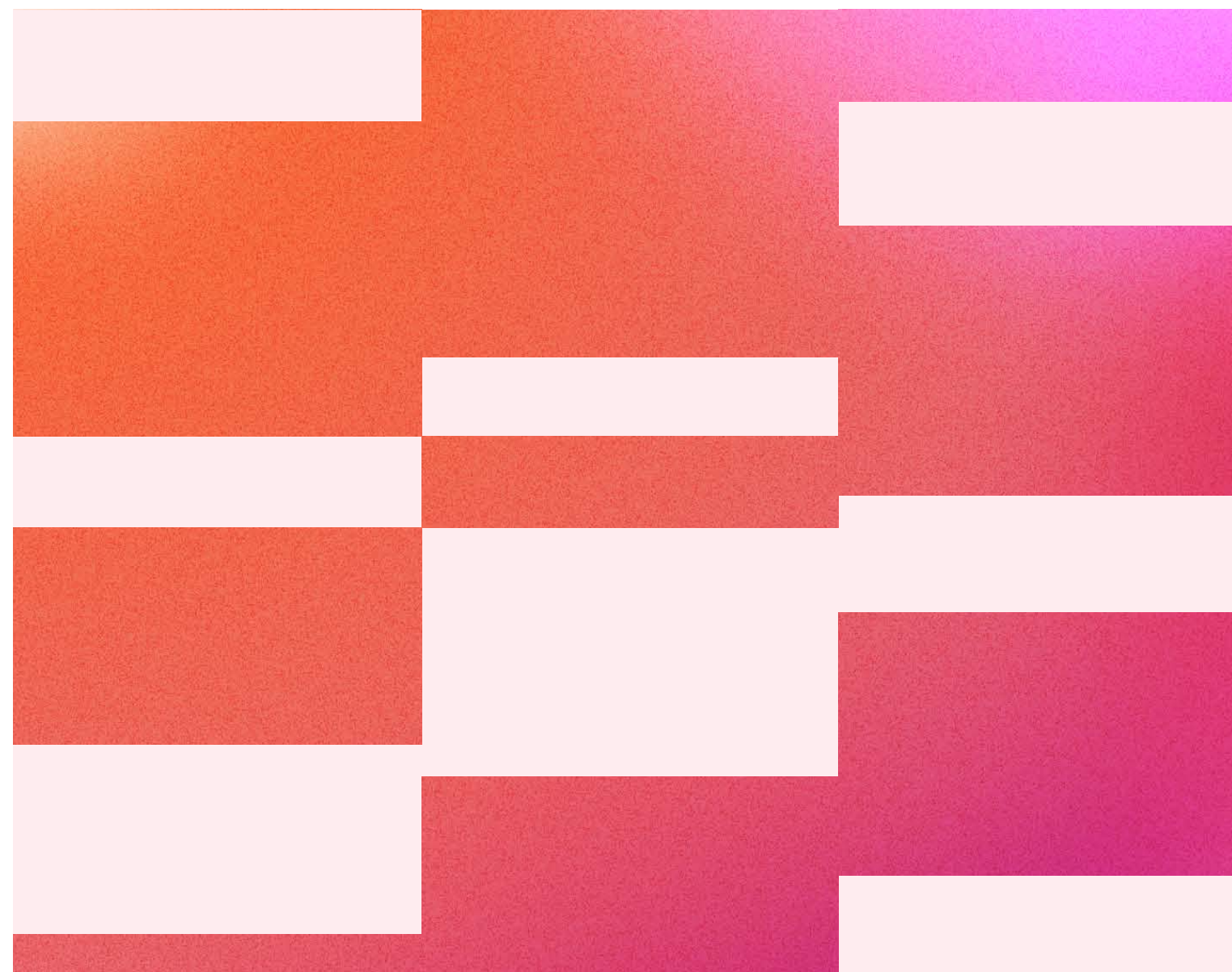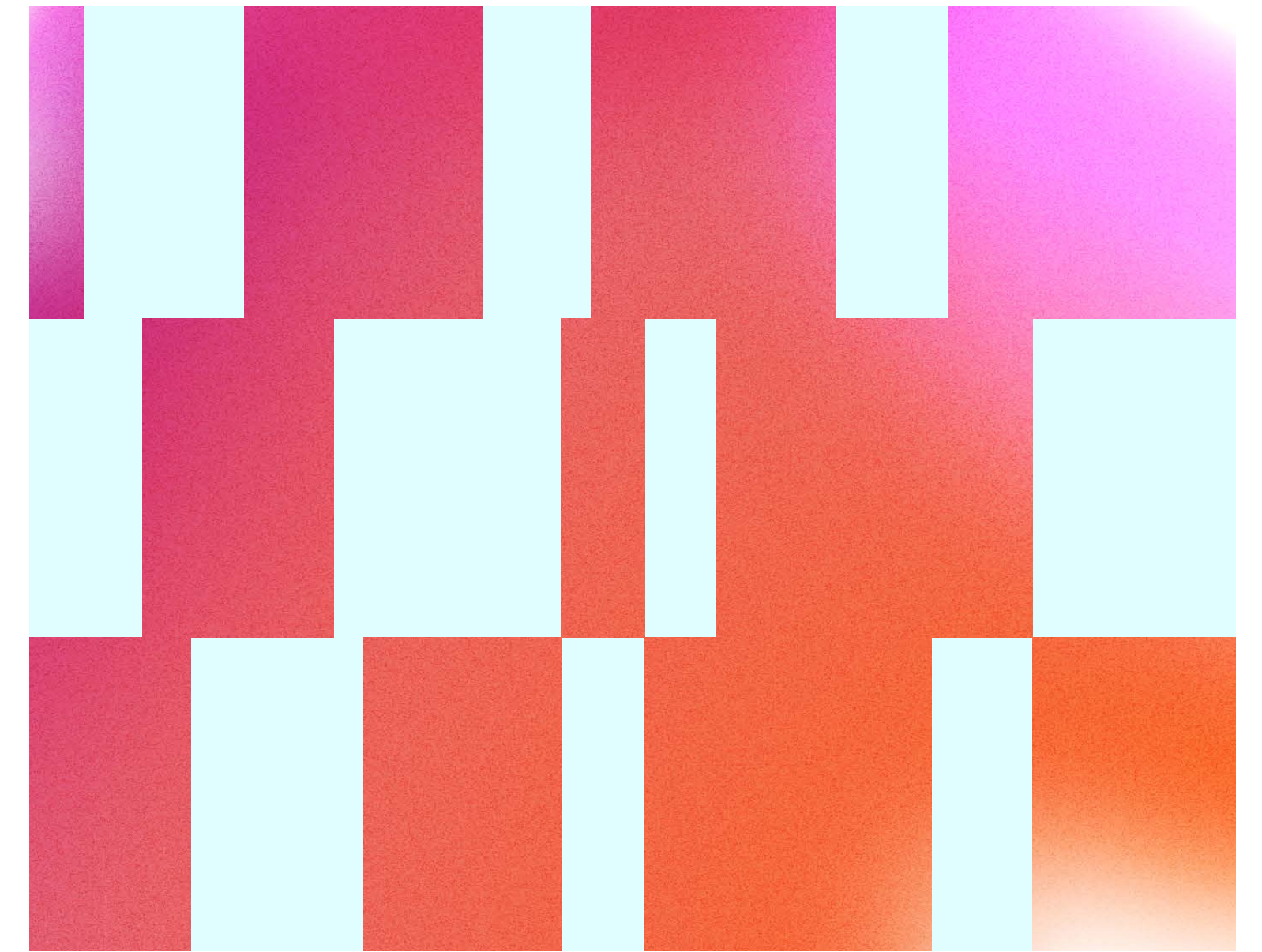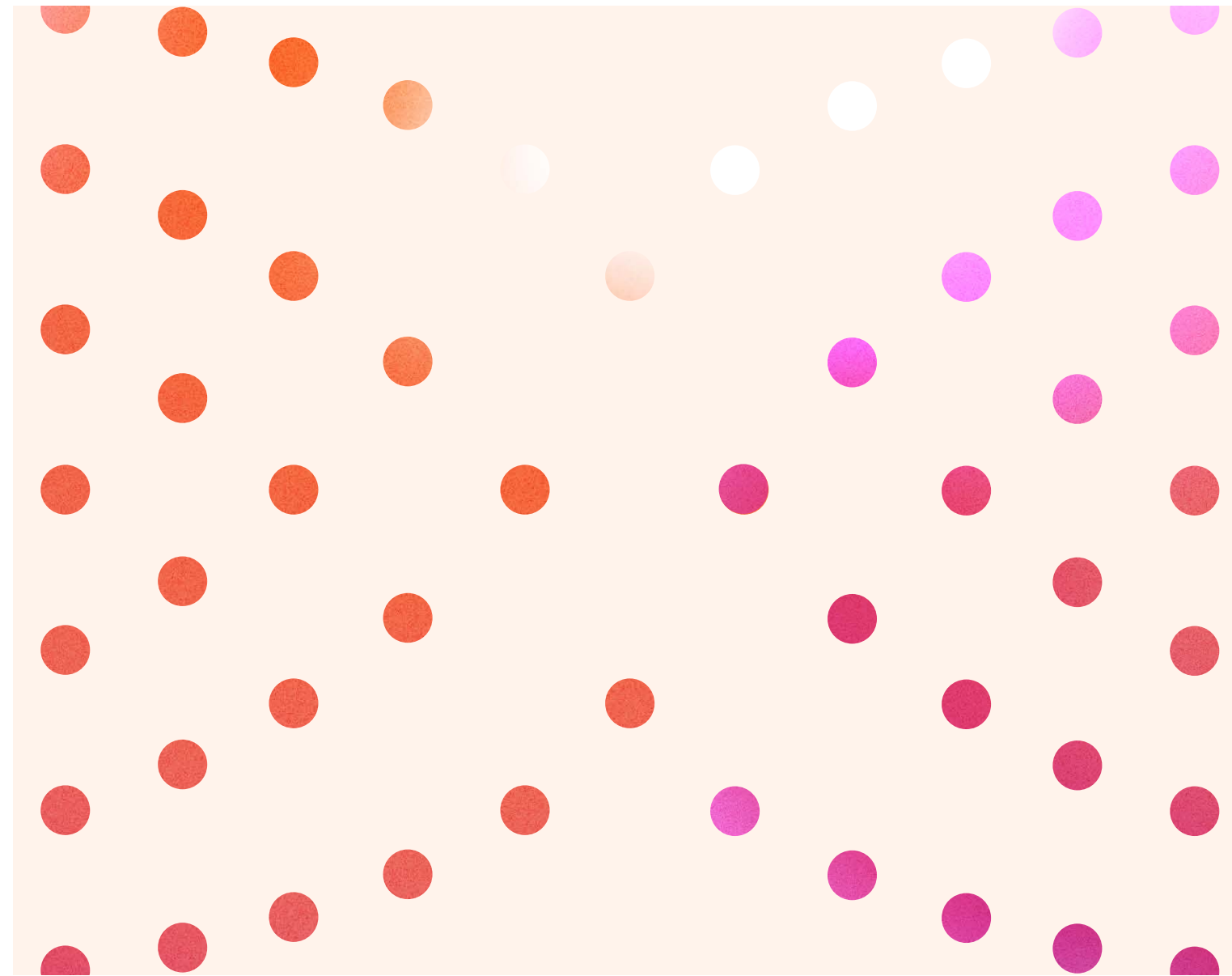
Photography is another core element of our brand and highlights people in their work. Keep the following things in mind when choosing photography.

- Lighting should always be natural and clear
- Subject should not be camera-aware
- Gestures of people should appear natural, and not include any over-the-top signals like high fives, fist bumps, or forced smiles
- Photos of shadows can be combined alongside other photos and graphic elements to add additional texture
- Note that these guidelines are distinct from our collage design style, which requires photos to be black and white

Video
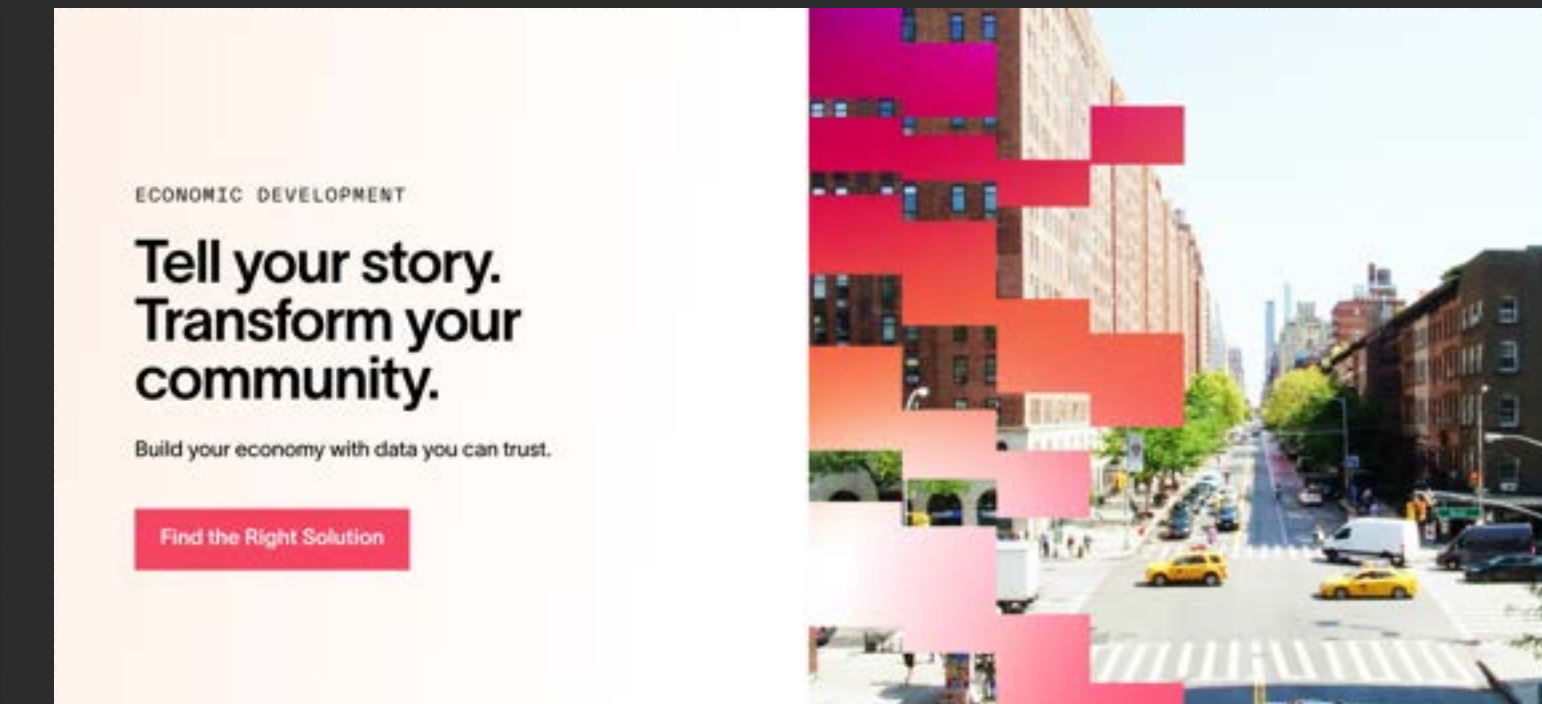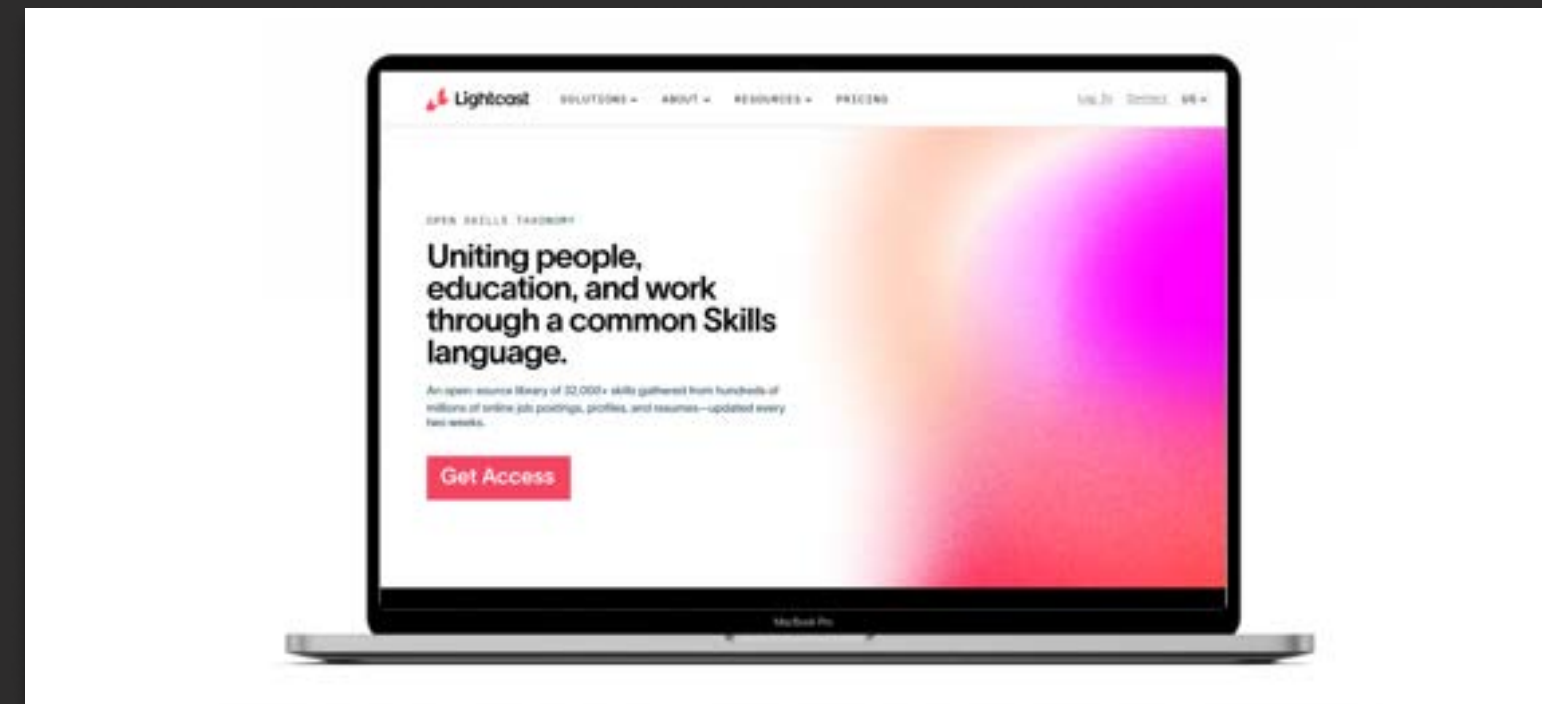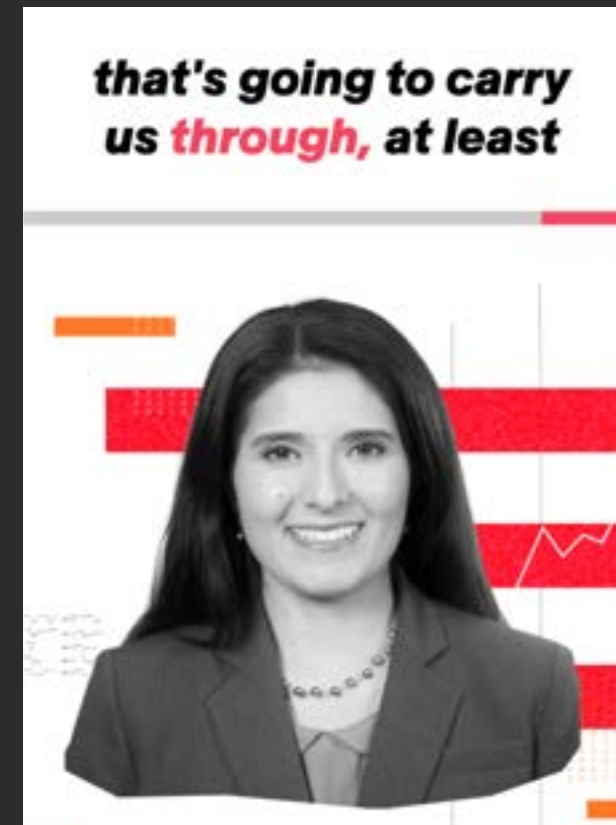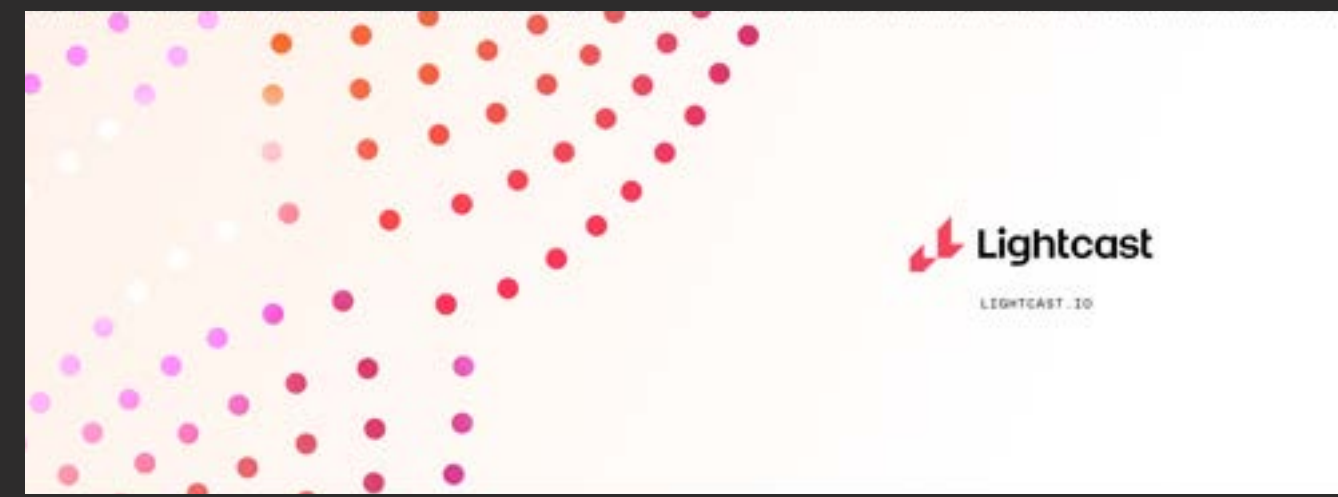
Lightcast

Movement and animation may be incorporated with our brand collage style to create video graphics that explain concepts relevant to our industry.

Use the Lightcast Explainer Video as reference for execution of this style.

This video series features a single speaker presenting high-level information about relevant topics. The style is casual and fast-paced, featuring a solid background, on-screen text, and the use of candid, unscripted edits.

Beer with Lightcast Videos

Beer with Lightcast Production Book

On-screen text should always be set in our brand typefaces. Consider highlighting important words or phrases in Sailor Red for additional impact.

Consider the use of large numbers and stats to provide context and meaning.

The Lightcast Tessell should be applied as a watermark in the lower right corner.

Names and other information should be displayed in the lower left corner.

Information level 1

Level 2

Elizabeth Crofoot
Senior Economist

Rucha Vankudre
Senior Economist
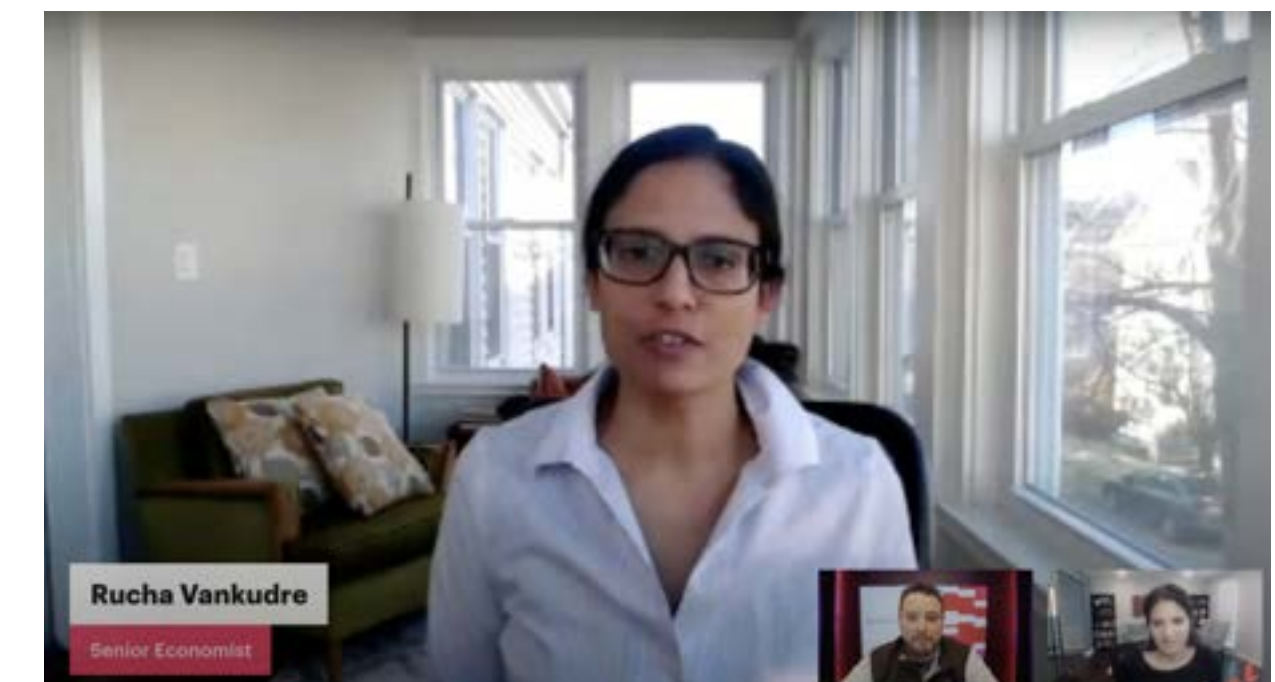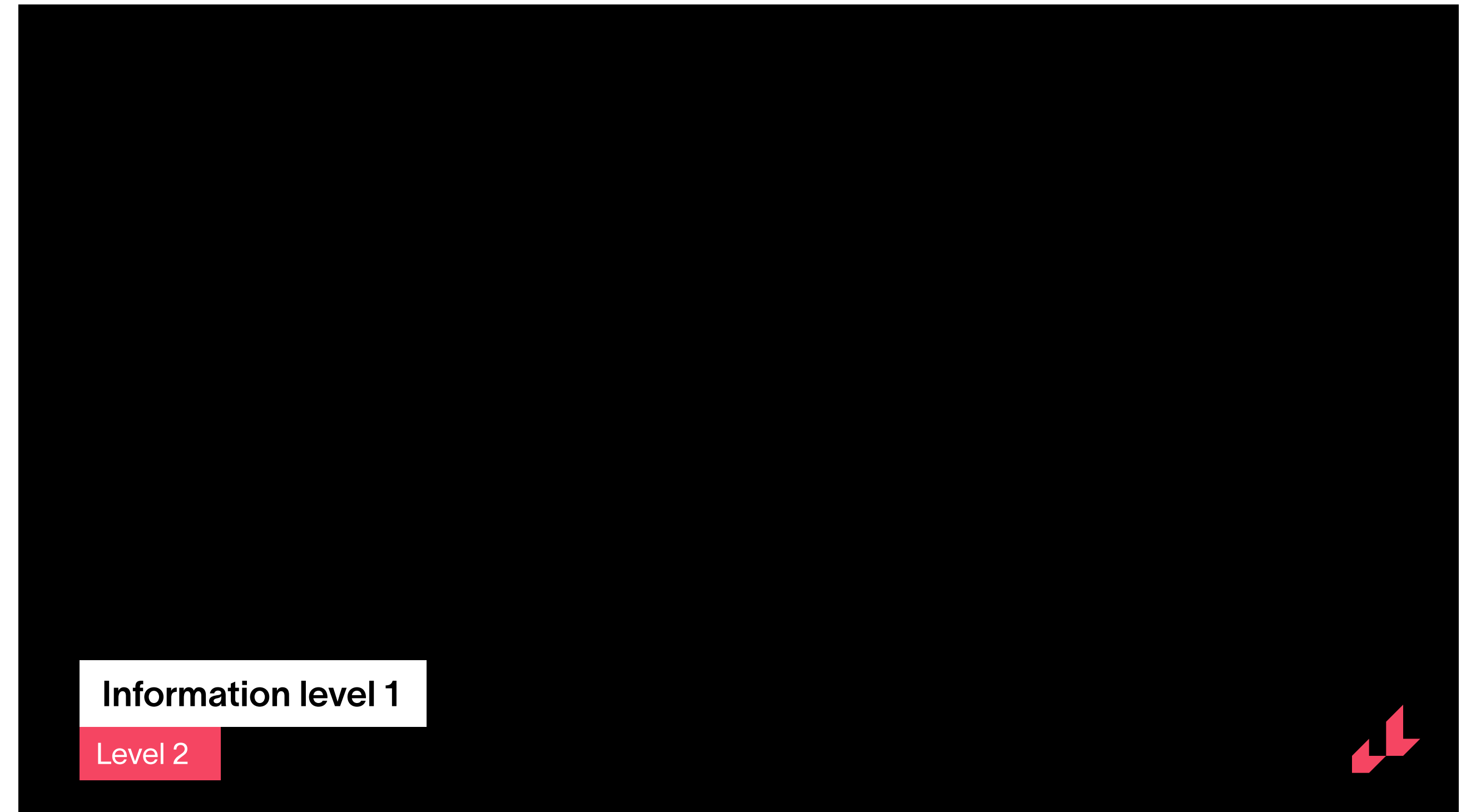
An animated sequence of our logo is
available on Google Drive.
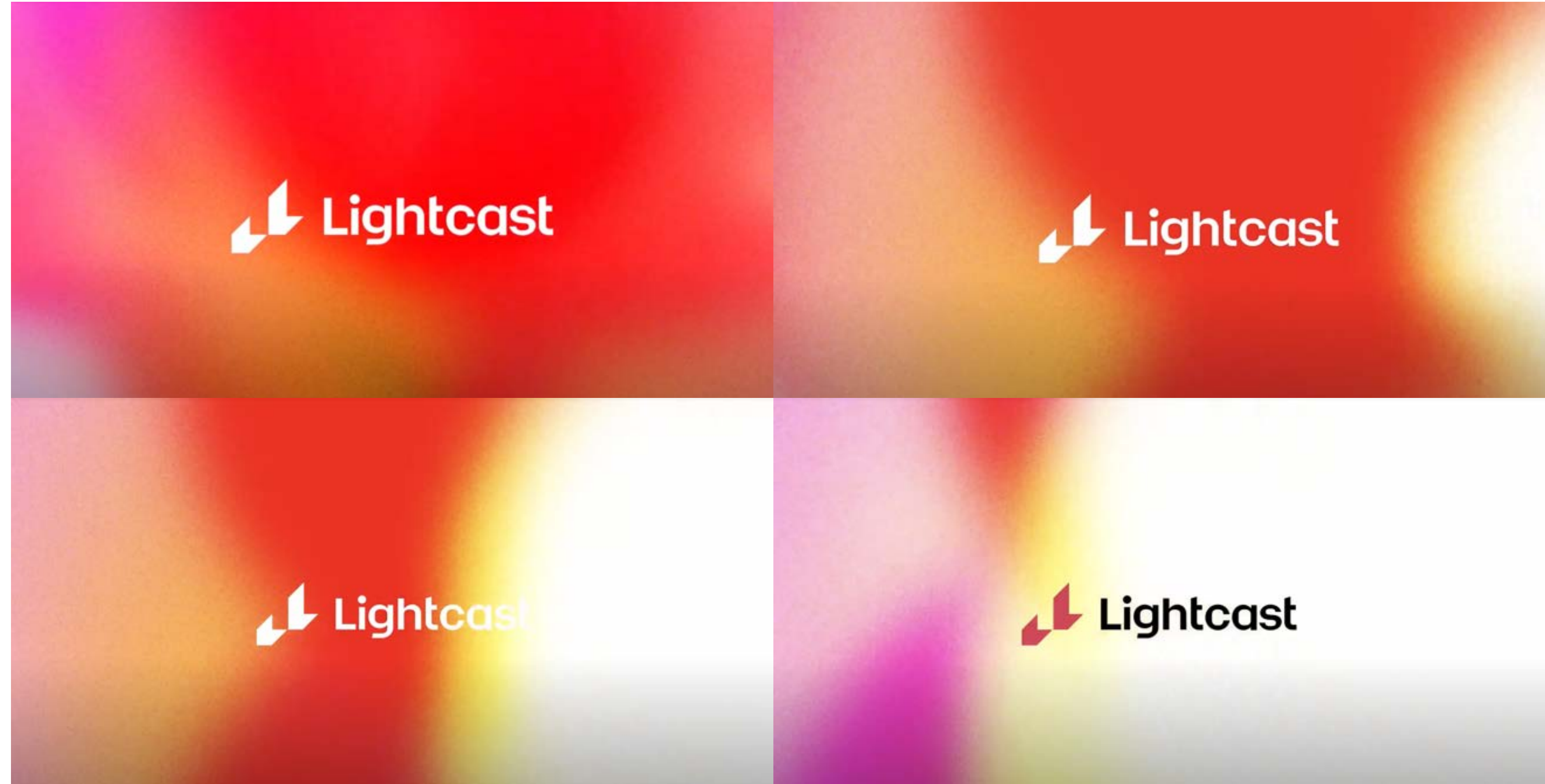
Data Visualization

Lightcast

Good data visualization is essential for building trust and recognition for the Lightcast brand.

Lightcast isn't just a data company. Lightcast is a company that transforms data—the "raw material" of numbers and isolated points of information—into actionable insights. But in order to make our data actionable, **we first have to make it understandable, which is what good data visualization ("data viz") does.**

Data viz is a kind of metaphor, giving concrete shape to abstract information. The primary goal of good data viz is to **clearly and honestly translate complex information into an easy-to-grasp format**—whether that's lines on a graph, bubbles along an axis, areas on a map, or icons in a grid.

Our visuals should be instantly identifiable as Lightcast data and graphically consistent across all our public-facing channels—from our website, to our reports, to our social media posts, to our tools.

In short, our data viz should strive to be:
1. **Understandable:** clear and as simple as the data allows
2. **Honest:** truthful, avoiding exaggerated or misleading visuals
3. **Actionable:** provides useful insights for building prosperity
4. **Recognizable:** easily identifiable as Lightcast data

The following guidelines should help us achieve these four key goals for our data viz.

17% Intuition
33% Inspiration
21% Creativity
29% Perspiration

100%
of our Best-in-Class Data Deserves Great Data Visualization

Every chart, map, and graph we design at Lightcast should help illuminate and clarify the data we provide to our clients.

Every element should serve a clear purpose and help to make complex information easier to understand and easier for people to act on.

Let's make our data shine.

Source: Lightcast, 2022

Anatomy of a Chart

TYPEFACES & COLORS:

1. Title in Lausanne 600 (or Arial Bold) in Sailor Red.

2. Subtitle in Lausanne 600 (or Arial Bold) in Gray D40.

3. Source/footnote, in lower left, in Everett Mono Regular
(or IBM Plex Mono Regular), in Gray D40, no period.

4. Bars/columns in Amethyst or Fire, with Turquoise
and Sapphire hues as secondary or tertiary colors.
Additional colors (a max of 6 total) only as needed.
NOTE: *Change colors in the chart ONLY if you
need to distinguish between different categories of data.
(If you wanted to label high-tech and non-tech industries in
different colors on this bar chart, for example.)*

5. Longer, non-numerical labels in Lausanne 300, Gray D60.

6. Numerical labels in Atkinson Hyperlegible Bold.
• Numerical labels should be Sailor Red on the X and Y axes.
• Numerical labels on the data itself should match the color of
the data. (Donut charts are one possible exception.)

7. Keep Sailor Red for titles and labels ONLY, *except* for
a highlighted element (see map pin example).
Do not use Sailor Red to color the data itself.

8. Tessell (not full lockup) in lower right.

Government was the Industry that Posted the Most Job Openings.
Health Care and Retail Trade round out the top three with Manufacturing not far behind.

Industry	Value
Government	24M
Health Care and Social Assistance	22M
Retail Trade	17M
Manufacturing	13M
Accommodation and Food Services	13M
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	12M
Admin/Support & Waste Management &Remediation Services	11M
Construction	9M
Other Services (except Public Administration)	8M
Transportation and Warehousing	7M
Finance and Insurance	7M
Wholesale Trade	6M
Educational Services	4M
Information	3M
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3M
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3M
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2M
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2M
Utilities	1M
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1M

0   5M   10M   15M   20M   25M

Source: Lightcast, 2022

TEXT ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS:

- Except for widely recognized acronyms (USA, COVID), always spell out terms on the first reference. Then use the acronym on subsequent references when appropriate: ("Labor Force Participation Rate" first, then "LFPR").

- Clean abbreviations with no periods: US, UK, DC, PhD (not U.S., U.K., D.C., Ph.D.). Times are an exception to the rule: a.m. and p.m. take periods and are lowercase.

- Write out numbers under 1 million whenever space permits (4,500, not 4.5K). For numbers of 1 million or higher, abbreviations of M (millions), B (billions), etc., are best.

These Sectors Have Expanded to Employ 32 Million Americans in 2022

The number has more than tripled since 2016.

Year	Value
2016	9M
2017	14M
2018	22M
2019	25M
2020	28M
2021	30M
2022	32M
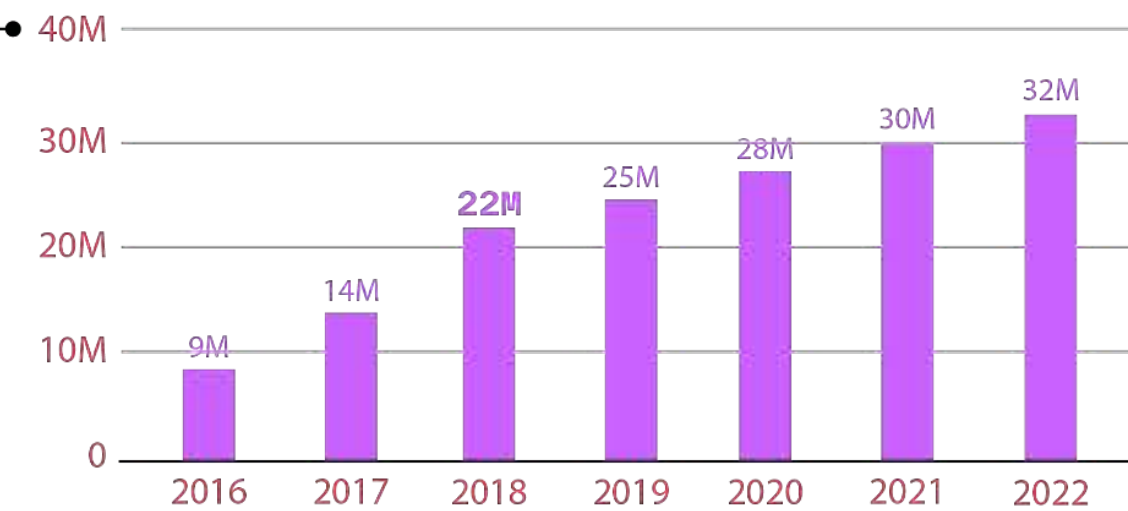
Source: BLS, Lightcast analysis, 2022

Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for Teens and Older Adults

For decades, the US LFPR trend lines for teens and older adults have roughly mirrored each other.

In late 2008, the LFPR for older Americans surpassed that of teens for the first time.

55+ LFPR

16–19-year-old LFPR
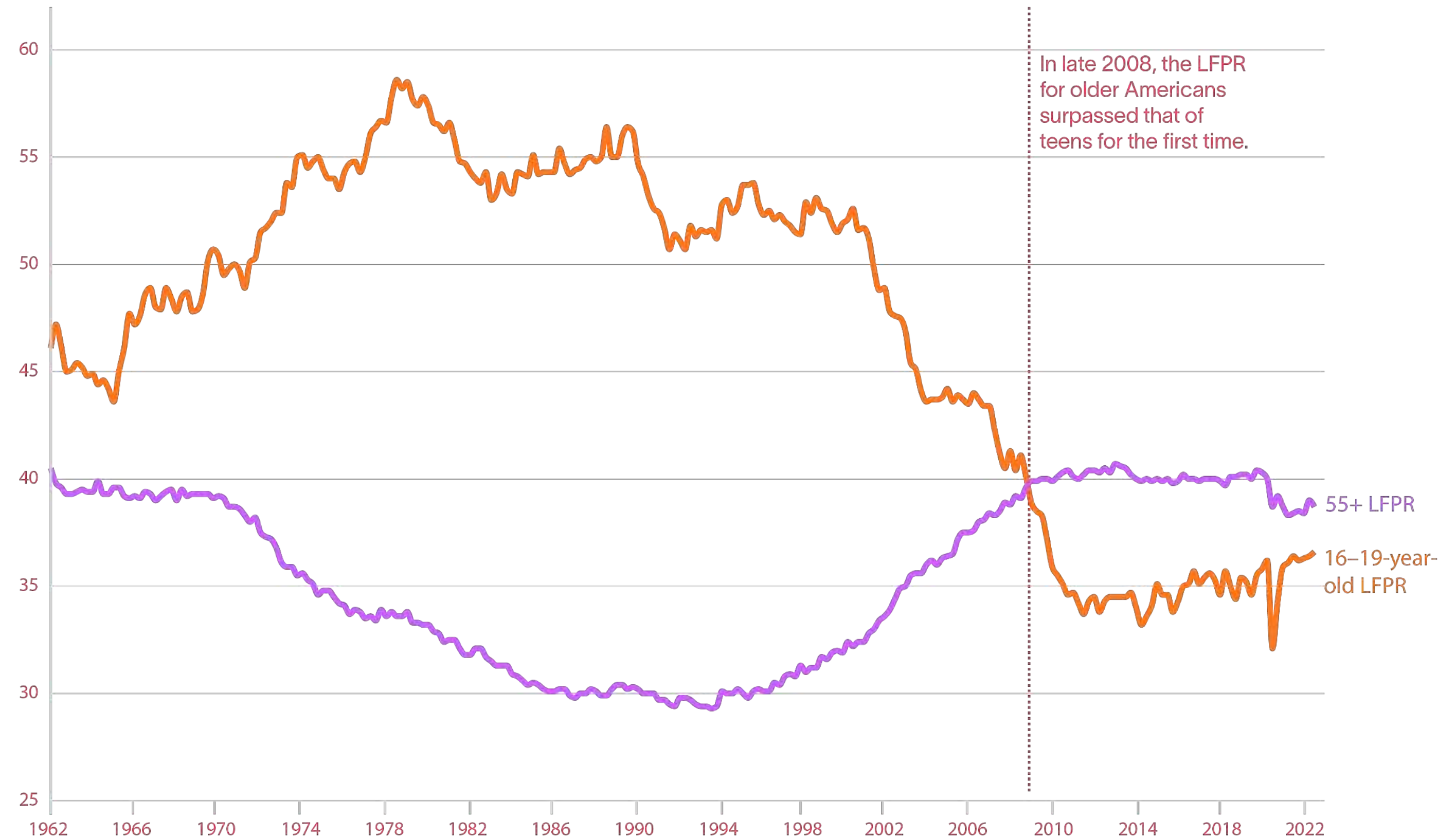
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lightcast Analysis, 2022
Rates shown are quarterly averages

Data Viz Dos and Don'ts:

DO: REMEMBER BASIC DESIGN AND UX PRINCIPLES

- Even with lots of complex data, the principles of good design—color, balance, contrast, etc.—still apply.
- White space is your friend, so give your charts some breathing room. (Dashboards and software are prone to crowding. Don't cram too much data into one place.)

DO: TELL CLEAR STORY

- Ensure that your data viz helps provide clear takeaways and aligns with your overall narrative.
- Make key points stand out by using visual contrast.
- Limit data points to what's relevant and valuable.

DO: MAKE YOUR TITLE AND SUBTITLE COMPELLING

- Your chart title should add value and generate interest—not just restate the obvious.

  For example, on the map on the right, instead of using the boring title: *"The Top Five States",* try ***"Number One New Jersey Stands Out as the Only Top-Ranked Eastern State."*** *This adds information, piques interest and makes the reader ask questions: "Why? How'd they do it?"*

- Not every chart needs a subtitle, but include one if it adds clarity and value.

Highlight What Matters

This chart uses color contrast to draw the viewer's eye to the surplus and the gap, which indicates that those data points are the most important elements for the narrative.

Source: Lightcast, 2022

It May Not Be Worth 1,000 Words, But a Picture Can Easily Replace a Dozen

Icons can help tell a story more clearly and effectively on certain simple charts—but limit them to a handful.
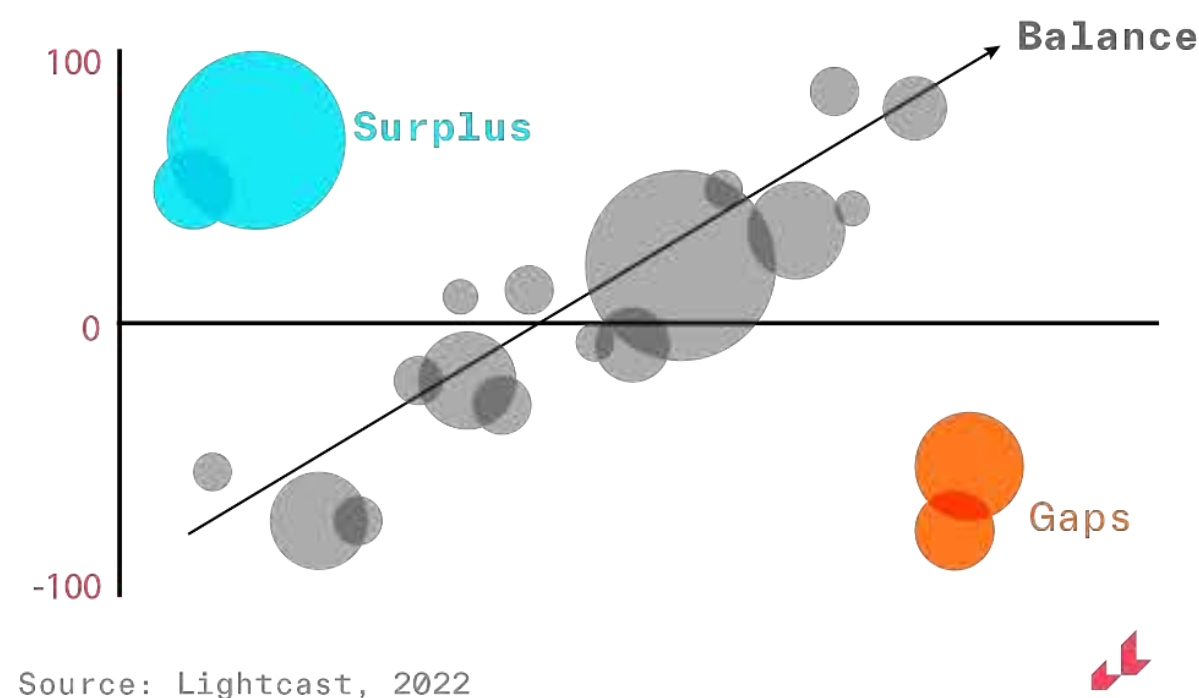
Source: Lightcast, 2022

Simplify the Data to Tell a Clearer Story

If only the top 5 states are relevant to the story, limit the visual to those 5 instead of cluttering it with all 50.
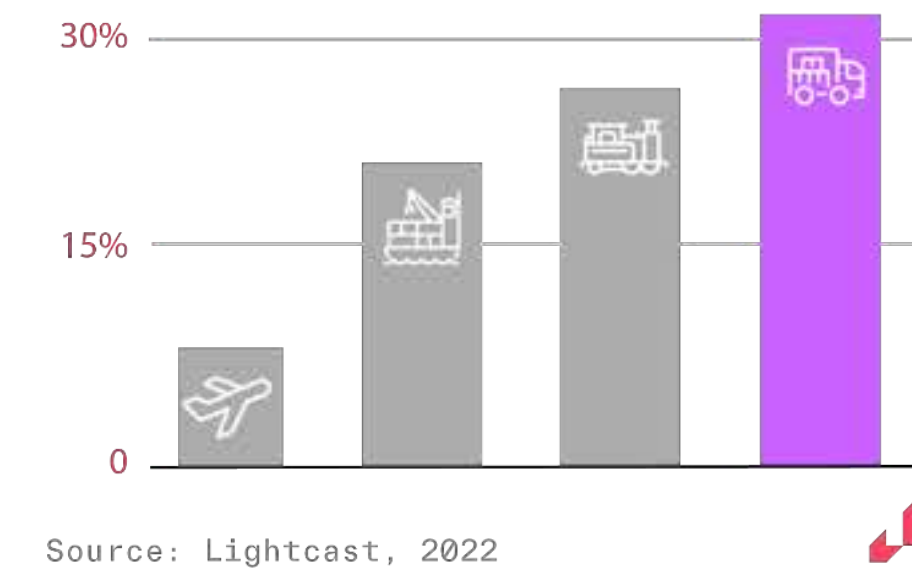
Source: BLS, Lightcast analysis, 2022

Consider an Infographic for Very Simple Charts

Infographics can serve as a more engaging data storytelling alternative to standard charts—especially for simple data points or comparisons. But as with icons, use sparingly and only if it adds value.

These Occupations Employ More than Twice as Many College Graduates as Non-Graduates.

48M Graduates

21M Non-Graduates
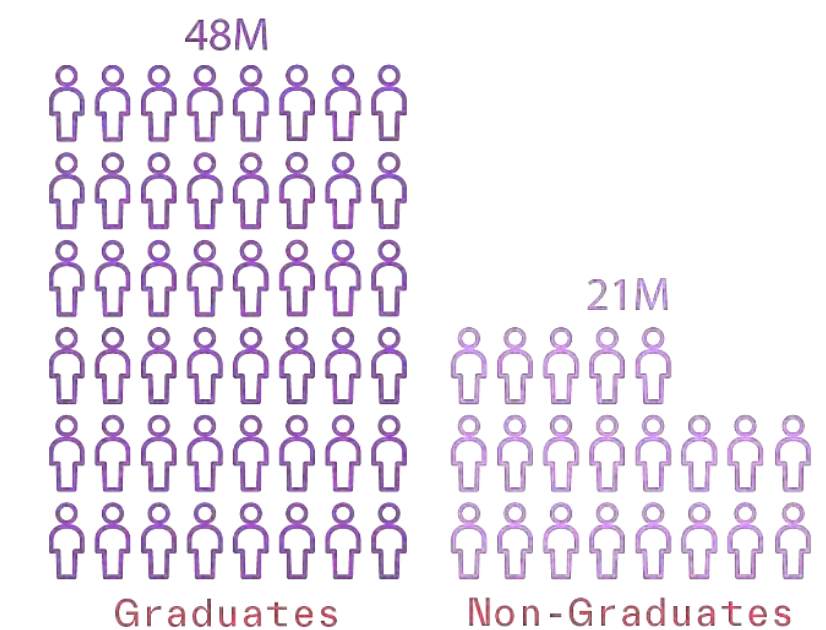
Source: Lightcast, 2022

DO: SELECT A CHART TYPE THAT MAKES THE DATA EASIEST TO UNDERSTAND

- Some data can be represented using a variety of different chart types—or even no chart at all. Select the one that is most clear, simple, and intuitive.

- Break up complex data sets into smaller sets. If you have data for hundreds of countries, consider dividing the data into multiple charts by continent or category.

- Use donut charts (for percentages only) instead of pies. The segment lengths of a donut are easier to interpret.

- If your chart is not using percentages that add up to 100%, opt for a bar or column chart instead.

DO: SORT AND ORGANIZE THE DATA

- Sort the data from largest to smallest (or, in certain cases, from most to least relevant).

- Organize the sorted data top to bottom on a bar chart, left to right on a column chart, and clockwise from the top on a donut chart.

Do You Need a Chart? Or Will a Callout Do the Job?

If the monthly earnings data is important to the narrative, then the column chart on the left works well. But if the main point is the overall growth since the start of the year, then a simple infographic or callout is the clearer, simpler choice.

Earnings Have Risen by $24M Since January of 2023.

Source: Lightcast, 2023

Earnings Have Risen by $24M Since January of 2023.
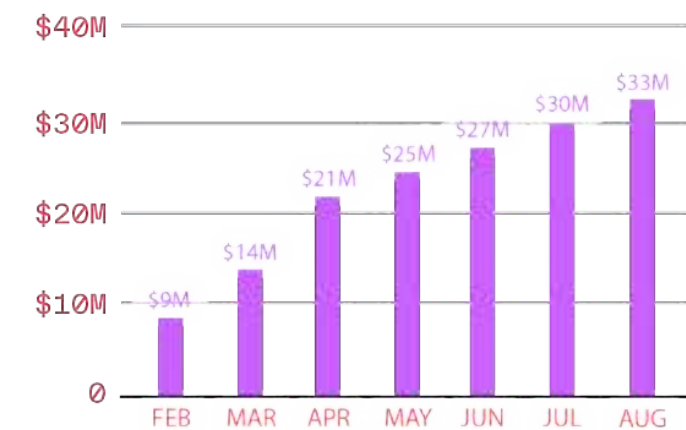
Source: Lightcast, 2023

Sort Data from Large to Small and by What's Most Relevant

In this example, the most recent year is the most relevant, so the data is sorted largest to smallest according to 2023 data, with 2023 in the darkest shade.
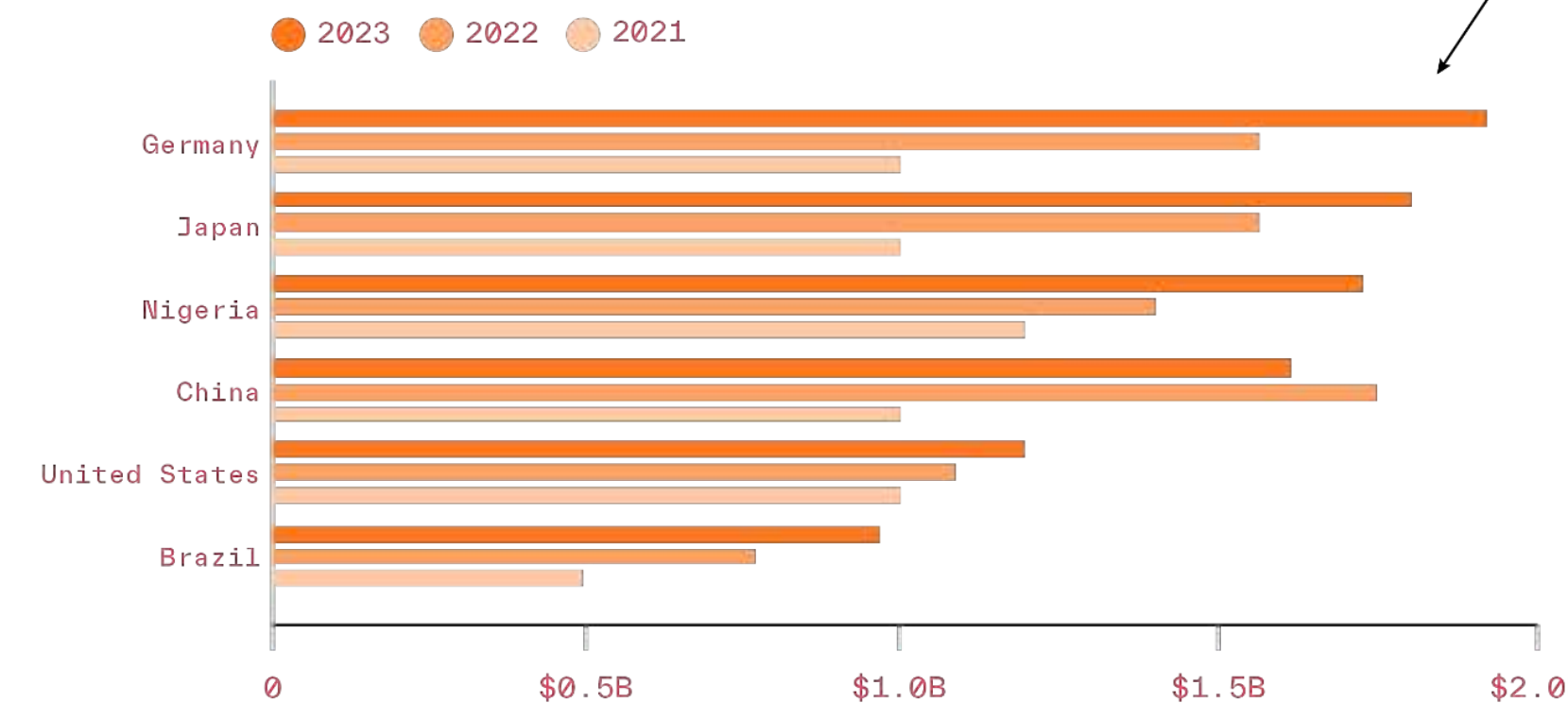
Source: Lightcast, 2023

Lightcast Serves Up Donuts, Not Pies

This isn't just a matter of taste. The segment length of a donut chart is actually easier for the human eye to decipher than the wedges of a pie.

5% Intuition

62% Inspiration

33% Perspiration

Donut charts are for percentages. **All segments should add up to a total of 100%.** In most cases, order the data from largest to smallest, starting clockwise from the top.
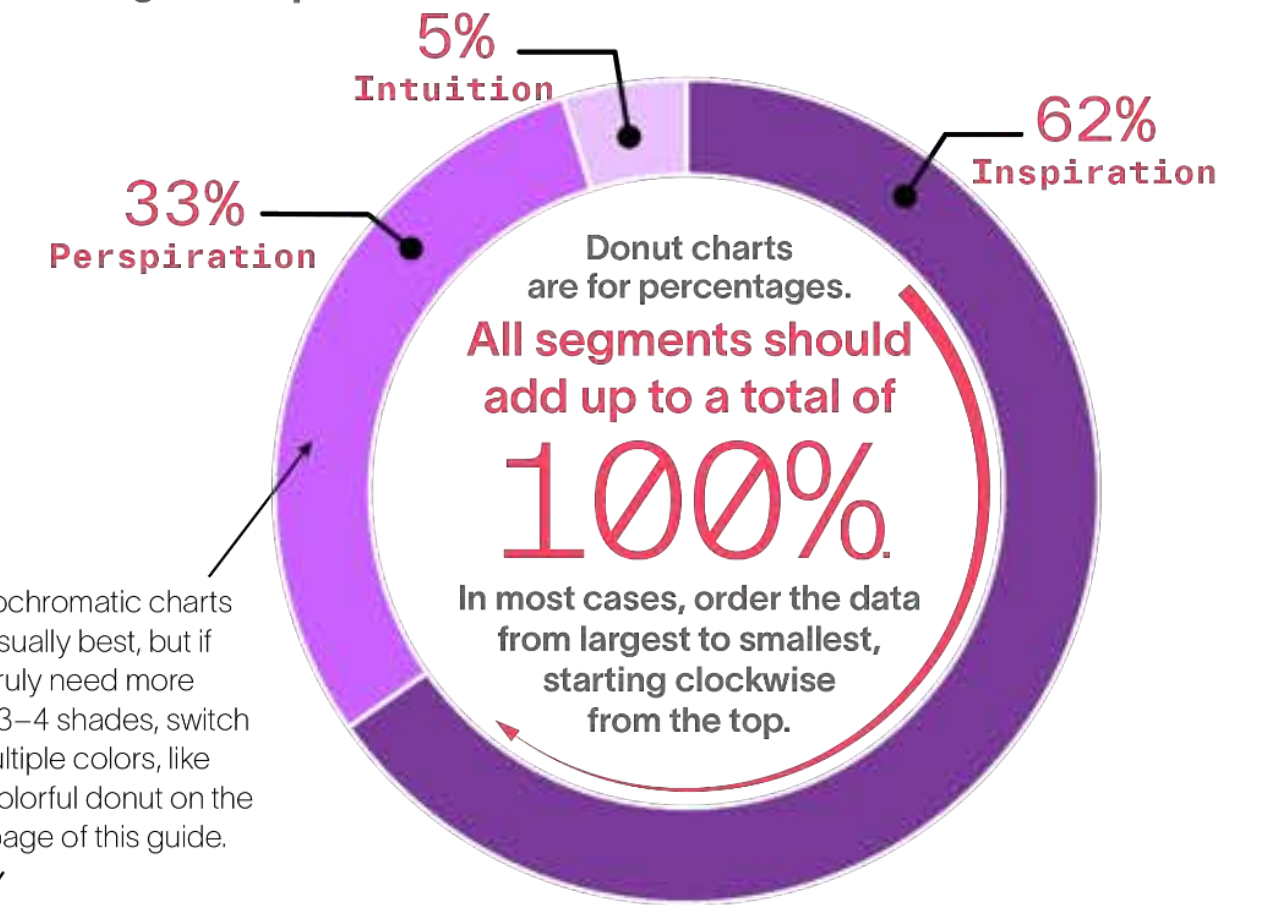
Monochromatic charts are usually best, but if you truly need more than 3–4 shades, switch to multiple colors, like the colorful donut on the first page of this guide.

Source: Lightcast, 2022

Why Bars Are Often Better than Donuts

Bar length is easier to spot in most situations. Use bars when:
- The data is not in percentages that add up to 100%
- You have more than a few percentage segments to depict
- The percentages are close in number and hard to distinguish

Which segment is biggest? Bars make it easier to tell.
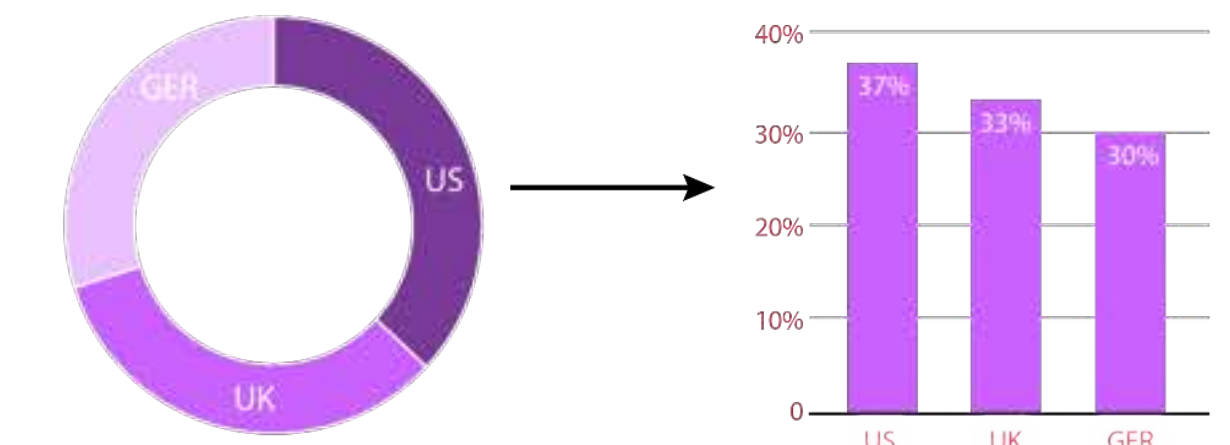
Source: Lightcast, 2023

DO: USE ACCURATE AND HONEST SCALES/COMPARISONS

- For donut charts make sure that all percentages add up to 100% and that each segment is accurately sized as a percentage.

- For line charts, start your axis at zero when possible.

- Data in bar and column plots must **always** start at zero.

- Use a single scale across all axes for comparing data. (**Dual-axis charts** have their place, but they are also notorious for creating misleading comparisons, so proceed with extreme caution.)

- Use the same color ramp, axis scale, date range, and so on for comparing two or more sets of data.

- Be very intentional about sizing your charts. Stretching a chart vertically or horizontally will affect a viewer's perception of the data.

> Data visualization has the power to shape public opinion, drive policy, and affect lives, so use this power responsibly and honestly.

Same data, different perceptions

Make sure your charts and graphs start at zero when possible and are scaled/colored/labeled similarly across multiple charts of similar data.

These two charts depict the **same data** but create very different impressions. The chart on the right appears to show more rapid growth than the chart on the left, when in fact it's the same. Changing the scale and starting the Y axis at a number other than zero may skew perceptions—sometimes in a dishonest or misleading way.
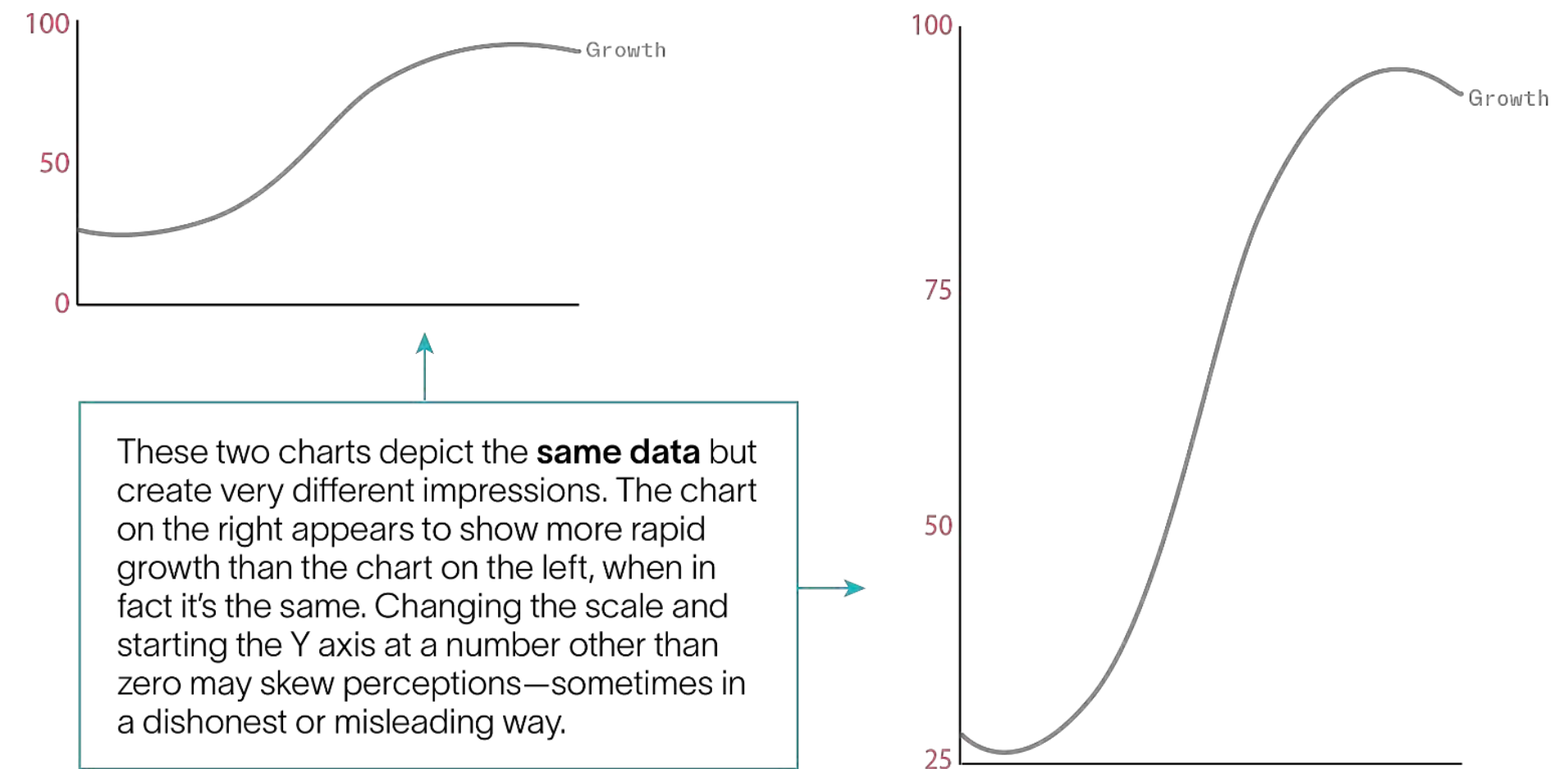
Know when to break the rules

Sometimes starting at zero makes subtle changes too hard to see. In that case, shift the axis for clarity's sake—not for deception.

Starting at zero may not make sense on a chart that shows relatively minor change.

DO: KEEP MAPS UNDERSTANDABLE

- Stick to white or gray outlines, that provide adequate contrast to the fill color(s).

- For regions within regions—such as counties within states—vary the outline thickness to distinguish between types of region.

- Use colored outlines only in limited circumstances (a rollover highlight on an interactive map, for example)

- Limit colors to the same ones recommended on other types of charts (no red regions!).

- Avoid red/blue color combinations since they have strong political associations, especially on a map.

- In addition to colors showing a range of data, individual labels and callouts might be needed on the map itself. **Data for each region should be included on interactive maps whenever possible.**

- Include a legend with a color ramp (either binned or gradient) for most heat maps and choropleths. But for less complex maps, a few labels added directly onto the map itself may work better.

Data Ranging from Lower to Higher Numbers Works Well with a Dark-to-Light Color Ramp

Keep the range of dark to light values easy to distinguish, however.

2023 Share of Workers: 0%   50%   100%
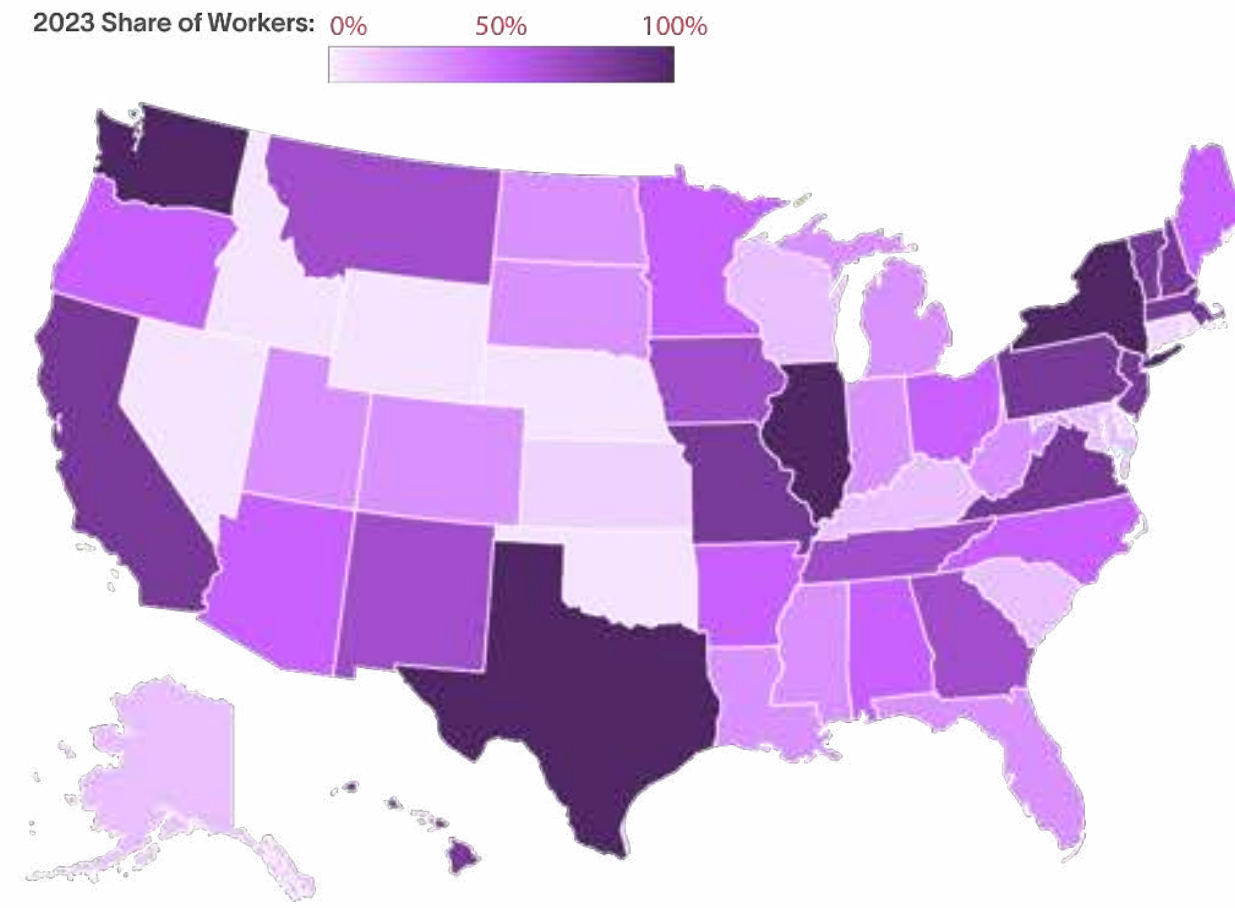
Source: Lightcast, 2022

Some Data (Especially Showing Negative to Positive Numbers) Requires a Diverging Color Ramp

Orange = decline, gray = little/no change, and turquoise = growth.

2023 Total Change: -100   0   100
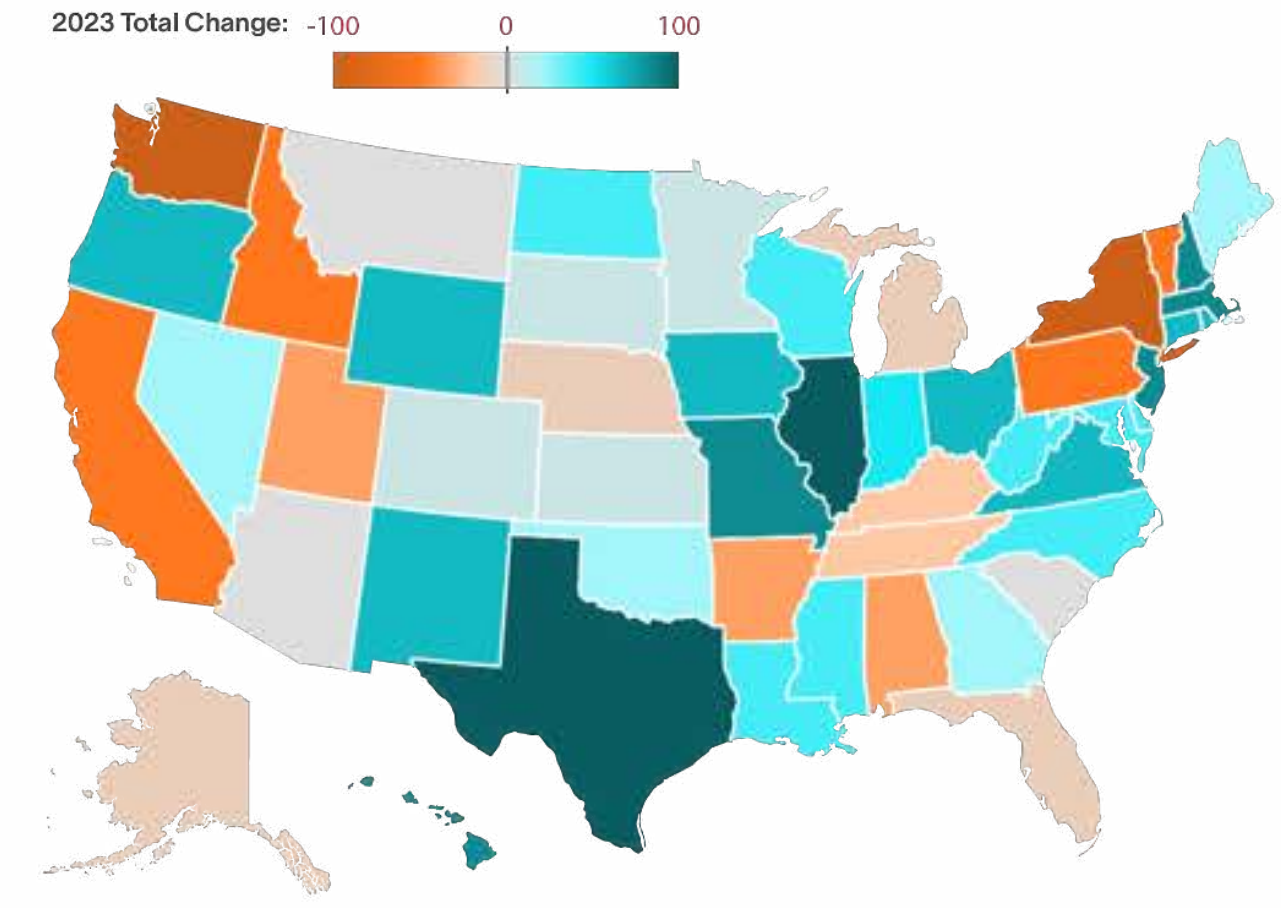
Source: Lightcast, 2022

Remember: Not Every Region Requires Data Every Time

It's sometimes best to simplify the data and label or color only the regions that matter to the narrative or takeaways. This map tells a story about just the top five states.

Source: Lightcast, 2022

Very Complex Maps May Need Special Treatment

White borders with colored fill can cause confusion on a complex map. Use colors with good contrast, and adjust border thickness for each type of region (state vs county in this case).

#1   #157   #312
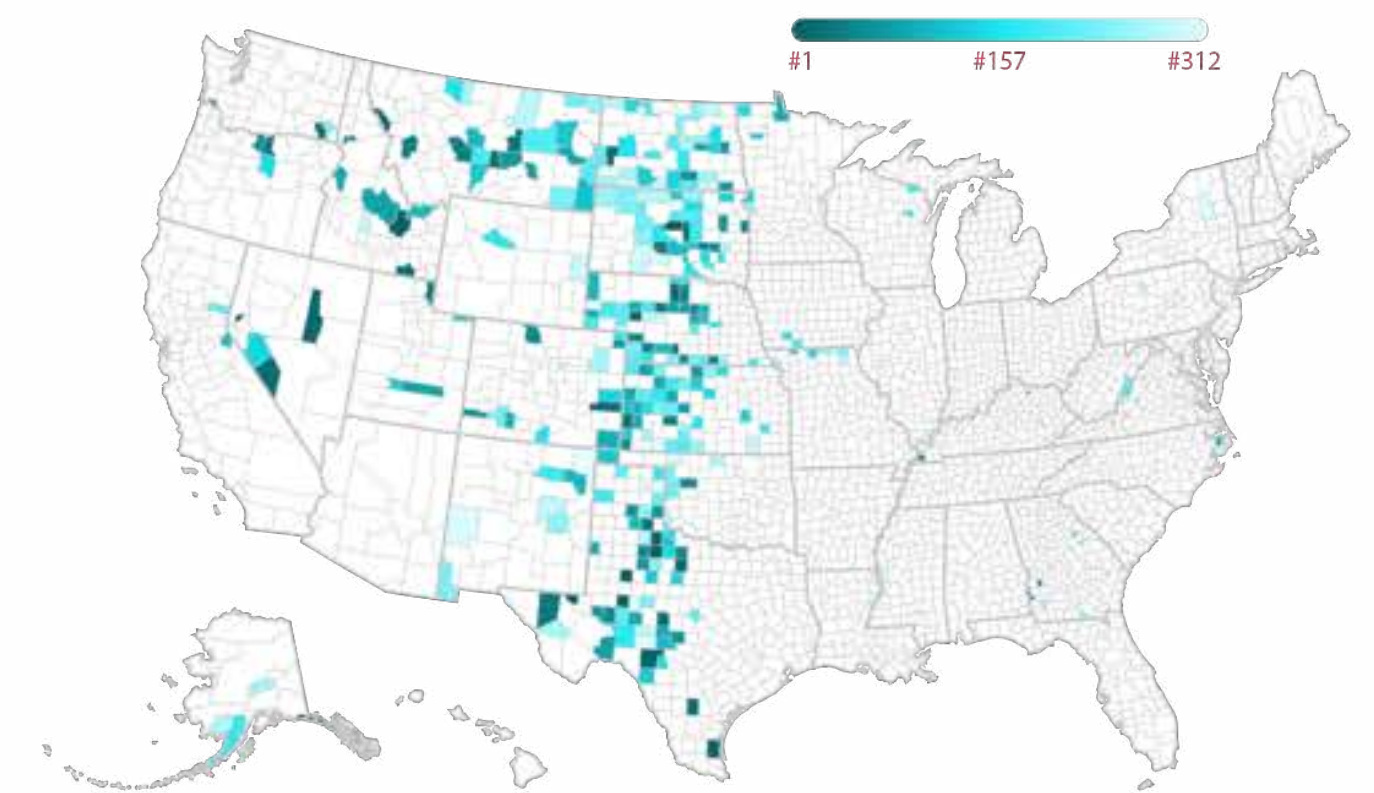
Source: Lightcast, 2022

DO: DECLUTTER YOUR TABLE

- Generally reserve tables for complex sets of data that require multiple columns. Otherwise consider a more engaging visualization like a chart or map.

- Tables tend to be the least eye-catching and most content-heavy type of data presentation, but resist the temptation to make them overly fancy. With lots of different types of data represented in a single figure, tables need to get the job done clearly and simply.

- Remember color connotations. Gray background fills work best for highlighting information in a judgment-neutral way. Orange shades can be used to show declines, while turquoise/blue can indicate growth/increase.

- Keep grid lines to a minimum. Vertical lines are rarely necessary. Horizontal dividers are useful for separating *sections*, but should not be used to separate each row. Instead, use indents and text weight (bold, light, etc) for hierarchy as needed.

- Text styles for tables are as follows:
  - Titles and row/column headers are in Lausanne 600/Arial Bold.
  - Remaining text is in Lausanne 300/Arial Bold.
  - First column and category columns align left.
  - The remaining/numeric columns align right (on the ones case).
  - Every number in a column should have the same number of decimal points (ideally no more than 1 decimal point unless 2+ are required for clarity). *Example: 6.0 and 2.5, **not** 6 and 2.49.*

This Table Requires No Colored Fields, No Vertical Lines, and No Nonsense

Note that the left hand column is aligned left, with indents to show subcategories, while the other numerical columns align right. Gray fills are used to draw attention to the most important data.

	Labor income (thousands)	Non-labor income (thousands)	Total income (thousands)	Sales (thousands)	Jobs supported
Initial effect	**$104,524**	**$0**	**$104,524**	**$182,606**	**1,496**
Multiplier effect					
Direct effect	$17,875	$10,141	$28,016	$54,751	226
Indirect effect	$5,680	$2,649	$8,329	$16,688	70
Induced effect	$34,932	$30,743	$65,676	$111,041	687
Total multiplier effect	**$58,488**	**$43,533**	**$102,020**	**$182,479**	**983**
Gross impact (initial + multiplier)	**$163,011**	**$43,533**	**$206,544**	**$365,085**	**2,479**
Less alternative uses of funds	–$17,698	–$17,080	–$34,778	–$52,439	-396
Net impact	**$145,313**	**$26,453**	**$171,766**	**$312,646**	**2,084**

Source: Lightcast impact model, 2022

This Table Focuses on County N

The rest of the data is simply providing some comparison/context, but is less important. It's fine to use colored text for negatives.

Region	Female	Latinx	Black
County A	15%	7%	3%
County B	21%	7%	5%
County C	47%	7%	5%
County D	48%	5%	1%
County E	68%	5%	3%
County F	35%	11%	6%
County G	76%	8%	9%
County I	4%	14%	2%
County J	22%	10%	9%
County K	61%	5%	3%
County L	26%	19%	7%
County M	71%	6%	6%
County N	**43%**	**11%**	**6%**
County O	9%	–15%	5%
County P	24%	–15%	–10%
County Q	–74%	8%	5%
County R	–50%	8%	5%
County S	–58%	–12%	–9%

Source: Lightcast, 2022

Colored Heat Maps Reveal Overall Patterns

These colors showing percentages reveal clear patterns of growth/decline. Bold text or heavier lines can be used to call out a specific row of data.

Region	Female	Latinx	Black
County A	15%	7%	3%
County B	21%	7%	5%
County C	47%	7%	5%
County D	48%	5%	1%
County E	68%	5%	3%
County F	35%	11%	6%
County G	76%	8%	9%
County I	4%	14%	2%
County J	22%	10%	9%
County K	61%	5%	3%
County L	26%	19%	7%
County M	71%	6%	6%
County N	**43%**	**11%**	**6%**
County O	9%	–15%	5%
County P	24%	–15%	–10%
County Q	–74%	8%	5%
County R	–50%	8%	5%
County S	–58%	–12%	–9%

Source: Lightcast, 2022

DON'T: LET YOUR DESIGN UNDERMINE CLARITY

Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. We have powerful design tools at our fingertips, but fancy special effects usually come at the cost of clarity or readability.

When it comes to data viz, choose function before fun.
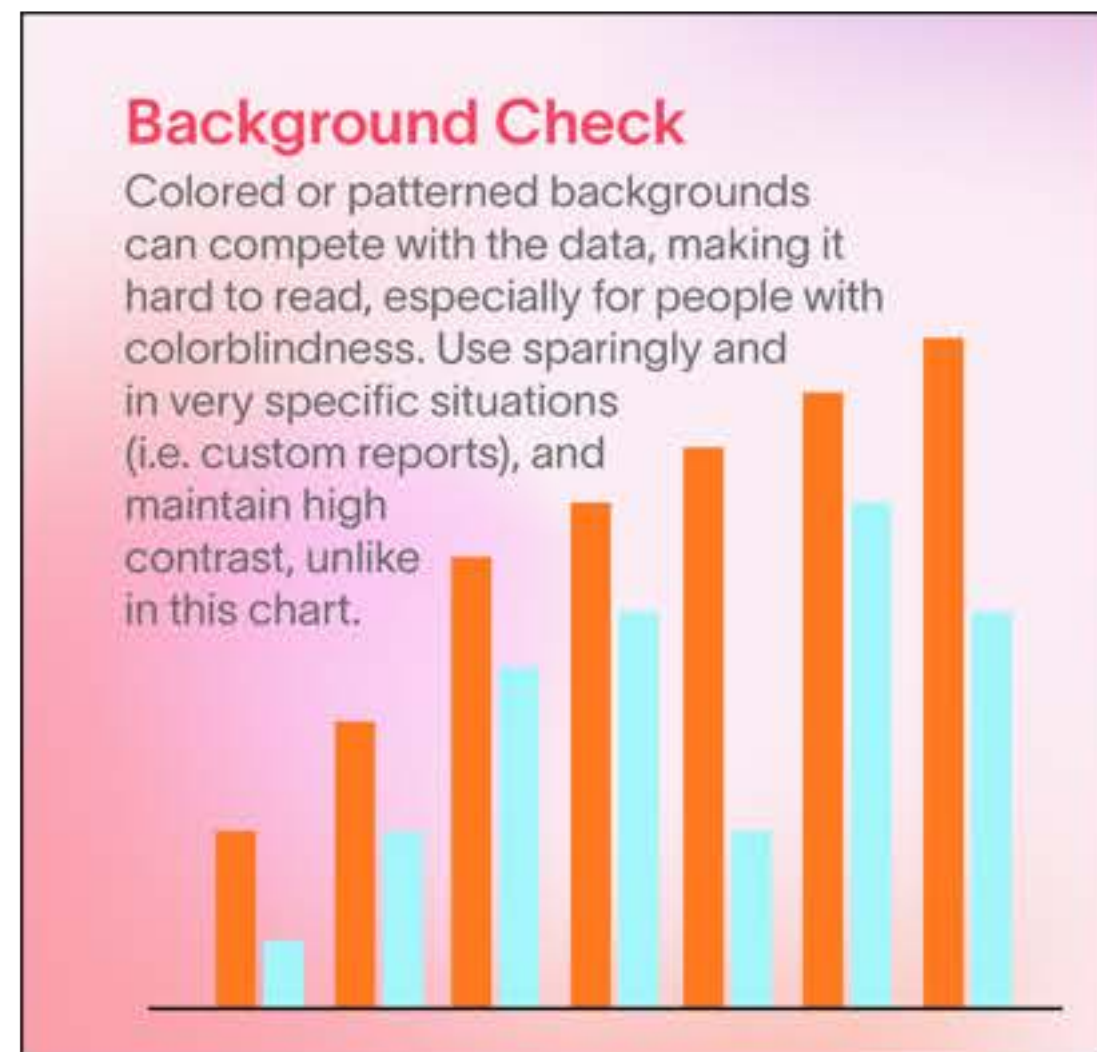
Keep the Data on Solid Ground

Stick to solid-colored, 2-dimensional elements as much as possible.
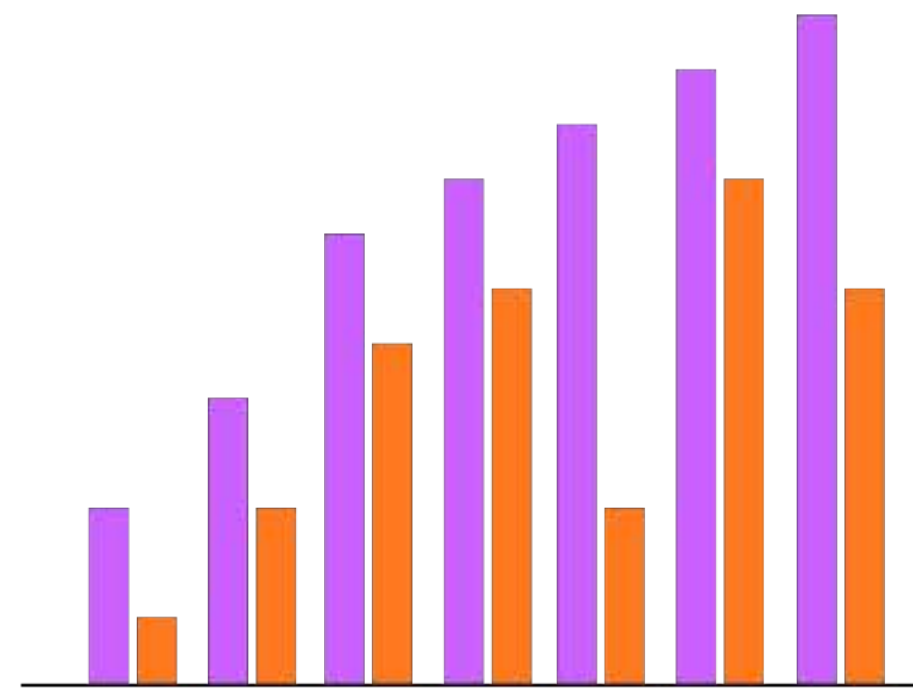
Source: Lightcast, 2022

Gradients Should Illuminate the Data

Never use gradients just to be "fun." Gradients imply some kind of gradual alteration in concentration, trajectory, or intensity, as in this example.

USA

32,502
Millennials
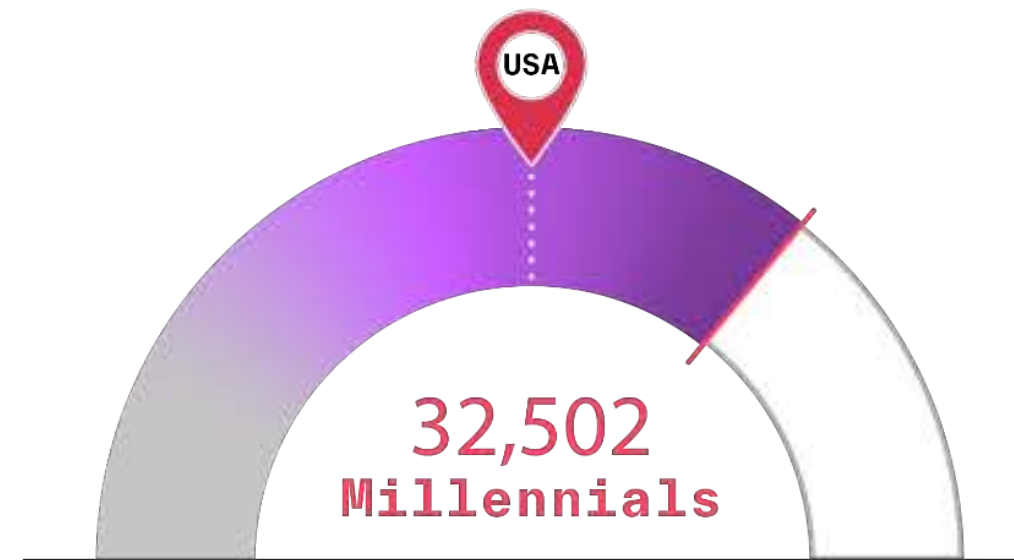
Source: Lightcast, 2022

3D is 2 Bad

Never, ever, under pain of banishment, use 3D elements. They distort the data and add nothing but eye strain and confusion. Stick to flat, 2D charts without shadows.

Source: Lightcast, 2022

The "Glow" Might Need to Go

The Lightcast "glow" is great next to a chart, but unless your chart is extremely simple, avoid using it as part of your data visualization. Like gradients, the "glow" can easily undermine the clear presentation of data.
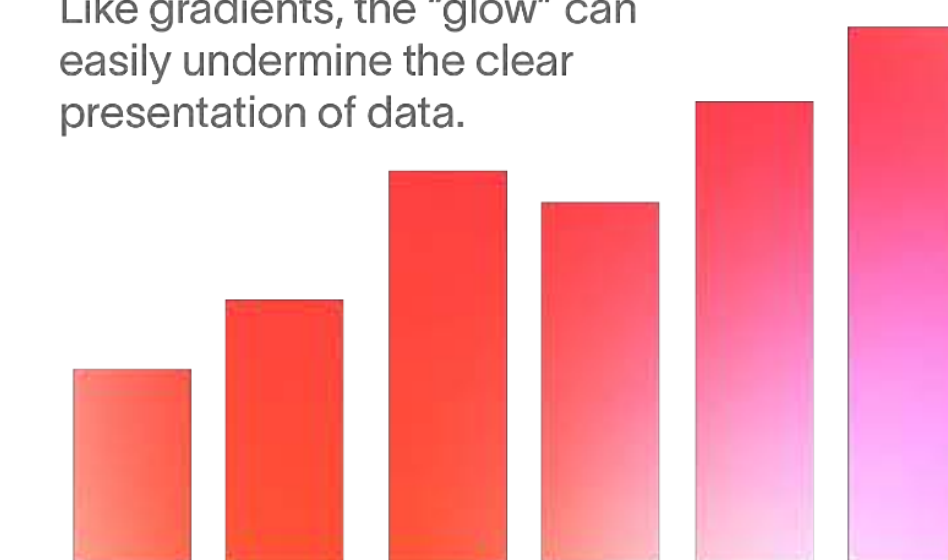
Does this pink corner mean something different is happening? If not, opt for a solid color on all the bars.

Source: Lightcast, 2022

DON'T: SHOW TOO MUCH DATA AT ONCE

- More than six lines and colors starts to create tangled confusion and readability issues.

- If you need more than six lines, it's better to break up the data into separate charts.

- Instead of a complex color key, direct label your lines or bars whenever possible.

DON'T: USE DASHED OR DOTTED LINES IN PLACE OF A SECONDARY COLOR

- Dashed or dotted lines imply uncertainty or future projections, so save them for when showing data that has not yet been confirmed.
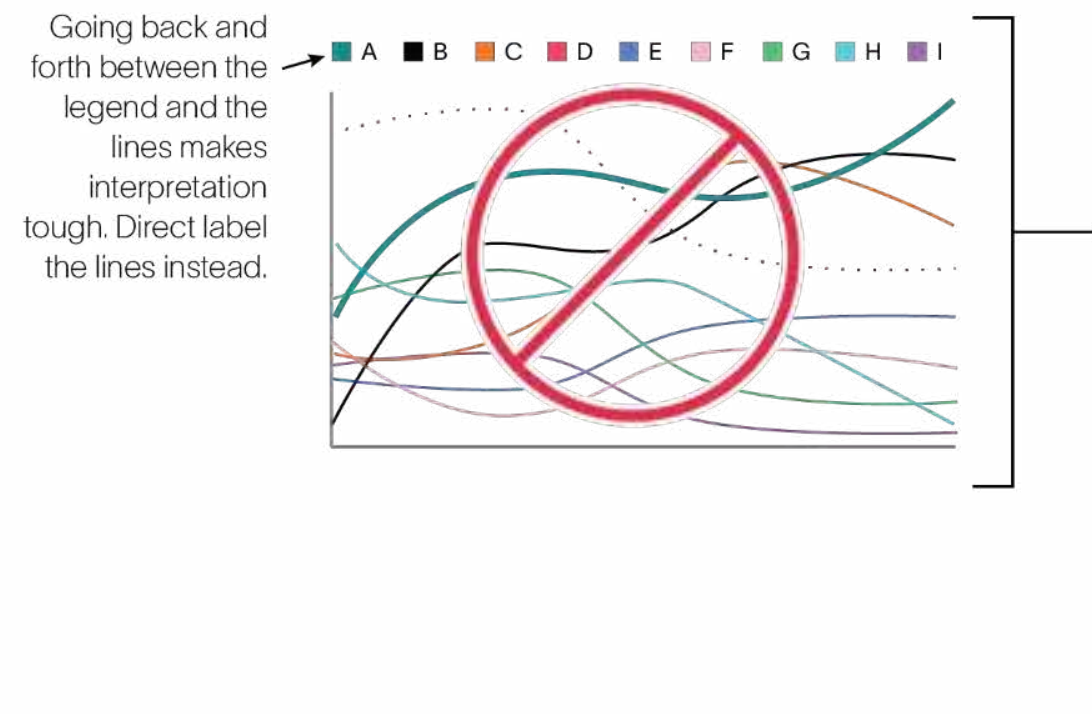
DON'T: USE RED FOR DATA BARS, LINES, ETC.

- Avoid red lines, bars, segments, etc., since red can imply decline, warning, or alert. "In the red," "seeing red," and "red alert" are commonly understood connotations. **Save red for titles, lables, and callouts.**

DON'T: USE OUTLINES AS A SECONDARY COLOR

- Outlines imply that something is missing.

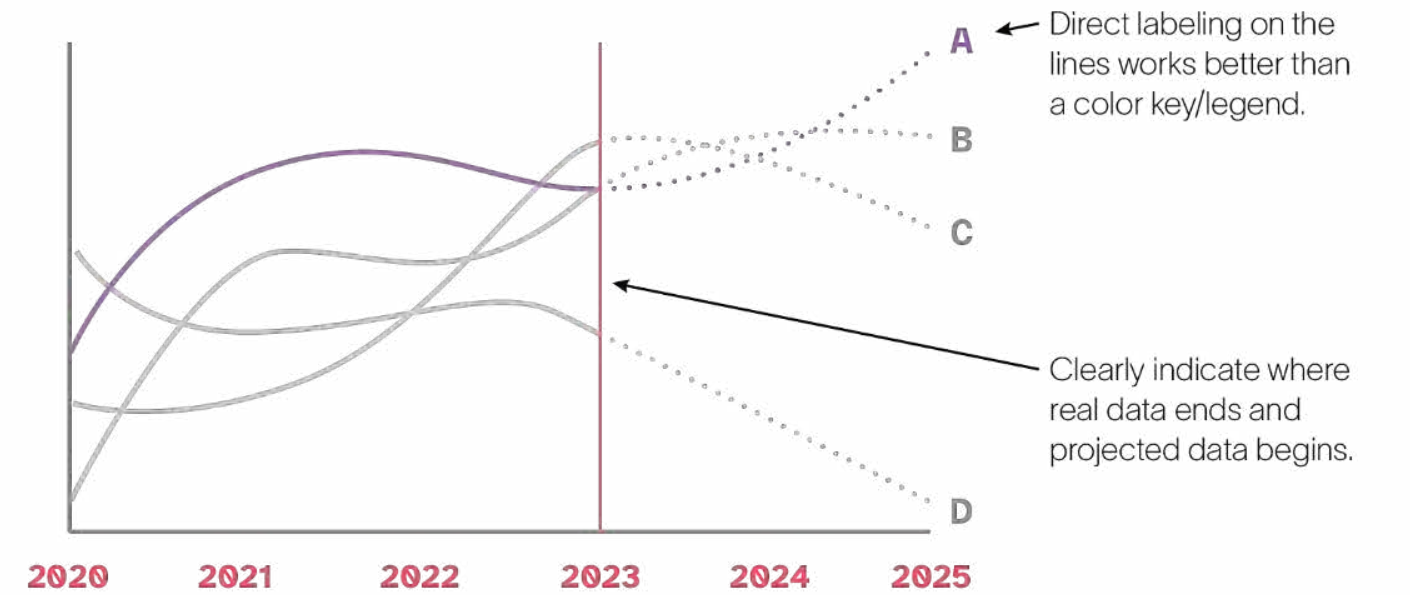- Outlines can also be misread as two thinner lines, which may confuse people.

Untangle the Spaghetti

If you need more than six colors or lines, split up the data into more than one chart or gray out the less relevant lines. Too many lines and colors is confusing and not color-blindness friendly.

Going back and forth between the legend and the lines makes interpretation tough. Direct label the lines instead.

A B C D E F G H I

Sweden
20%

Italy
10%

Japan
13%

Canada
5%

Dots & Dashes

Avoid dashed and dotted lines—EXCEPT for future projections/uncertain numbers that are clearly marked as such. Otherwise, just use varied colors (but no more than six).

Direct labeling on the lines works better than a color key/legend.

A
B
C

Clearly indicate where real data ends and projected data begins.

D

2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025

Red Alert

Avoid red as a color for data bars, lines, etc. Red often connotes alert, negative numbers, decline ("in the red") or danger, so use it for labels only.

Red *does* work well for accents, callouts, and labels, but if you simply need to add an additional color, avoid red. Try Fire (orange) instead.

-30 -20 -10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80
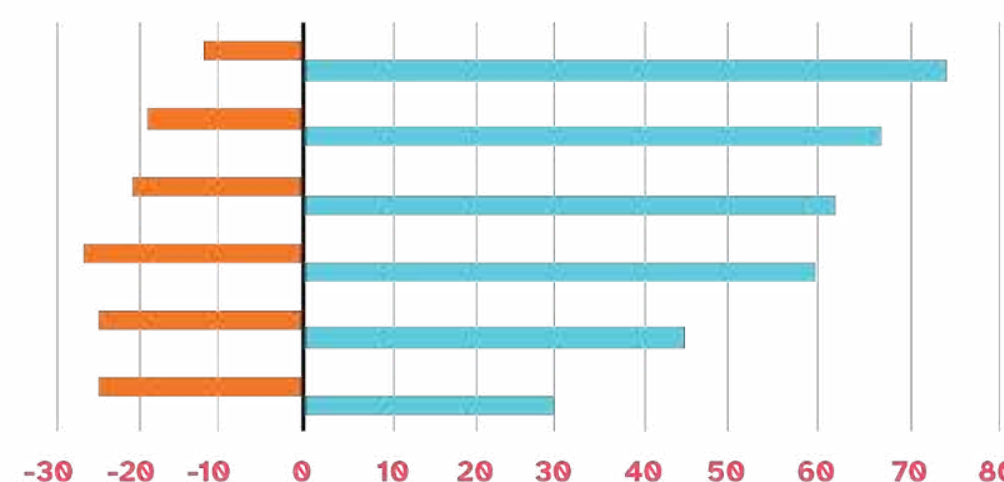
Outlines

Avoid outlined elements unless something is present (solid) and missing (outlined).

2020 2022

Use 2 solid colors instead

80% have a college degree

20% have no college degree

The outlined segment makes sense here.
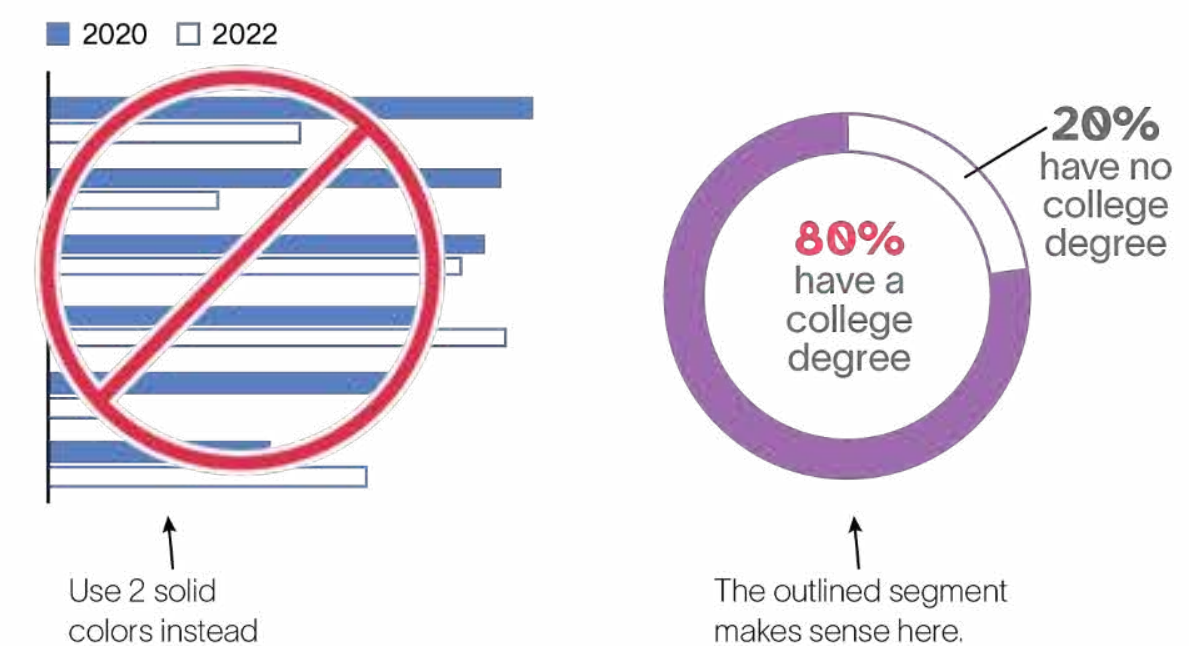
DON'T: SHADE THE AREA UNDER A LINE CHART, *BUT*
DO: SHADE THE AREA UNDER A DENSITY PLOT

- A line chart shows discreet points of data in relationship to one another over time, so people focus on the angle of the line—rising or falling.

- Filling in the area underneath the line (making an area chart) adds no additional information and can create confusion by indicating volume. This is especially bad if you shift the Y axis to something other than zero.

- Shading a **density plot** like the one below, however, is good. It may *look* like an area plot, but it's actually showing distributions of something rather than change over time. That's because the volume under the line actually matters. When showing the total distribution of something (the percent of people making a certain salary, for example), a shaded plot actually makes sense. The axis of density plot, just like a column or bar chart, should *always start at zero.*

An Annual Wage of $82K to $111K Adds the Most Workers
Beyond $120,000, few additional workers will be added for this occupation.

This is a density plot, showing the distribution of workers added by salary. Shading the area makes sense since it depicts volume and has an axis that starts at zero.

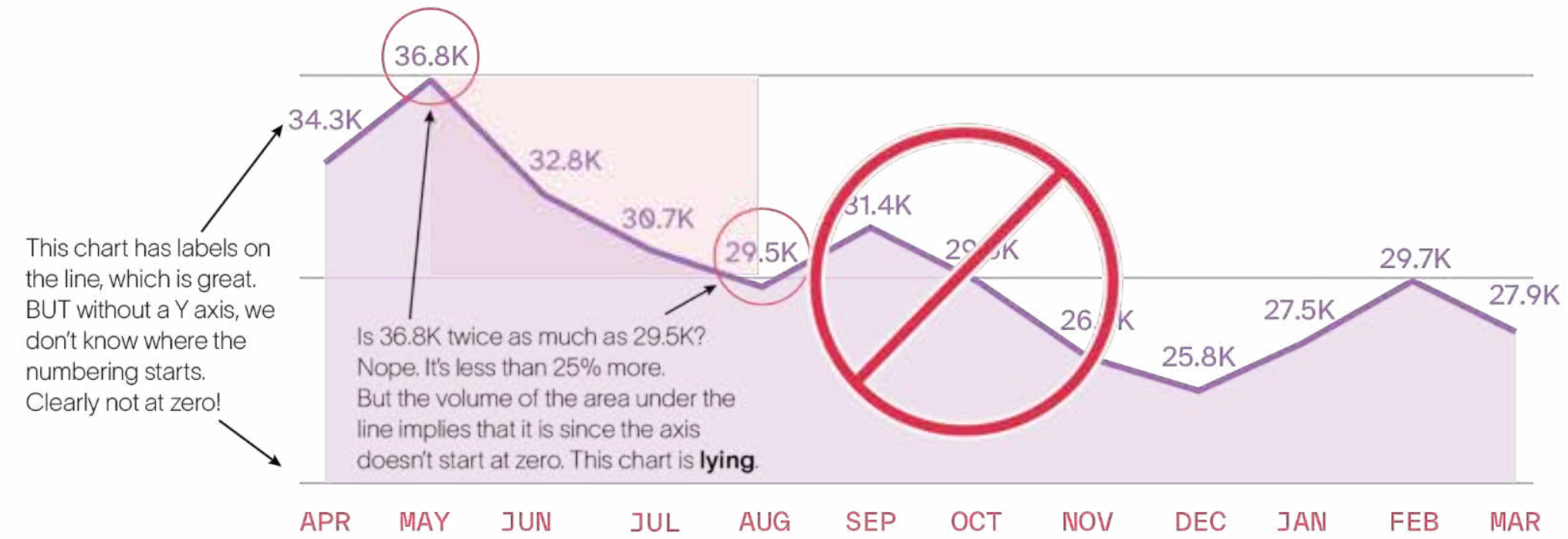# Use a Simple Line Chart

To show change over time, use a simple ine chart. Adding shading to create an area chart instead of a simple line does not add any information. Instead, it creates a perception of total volume, which is misleading, as in the example below.
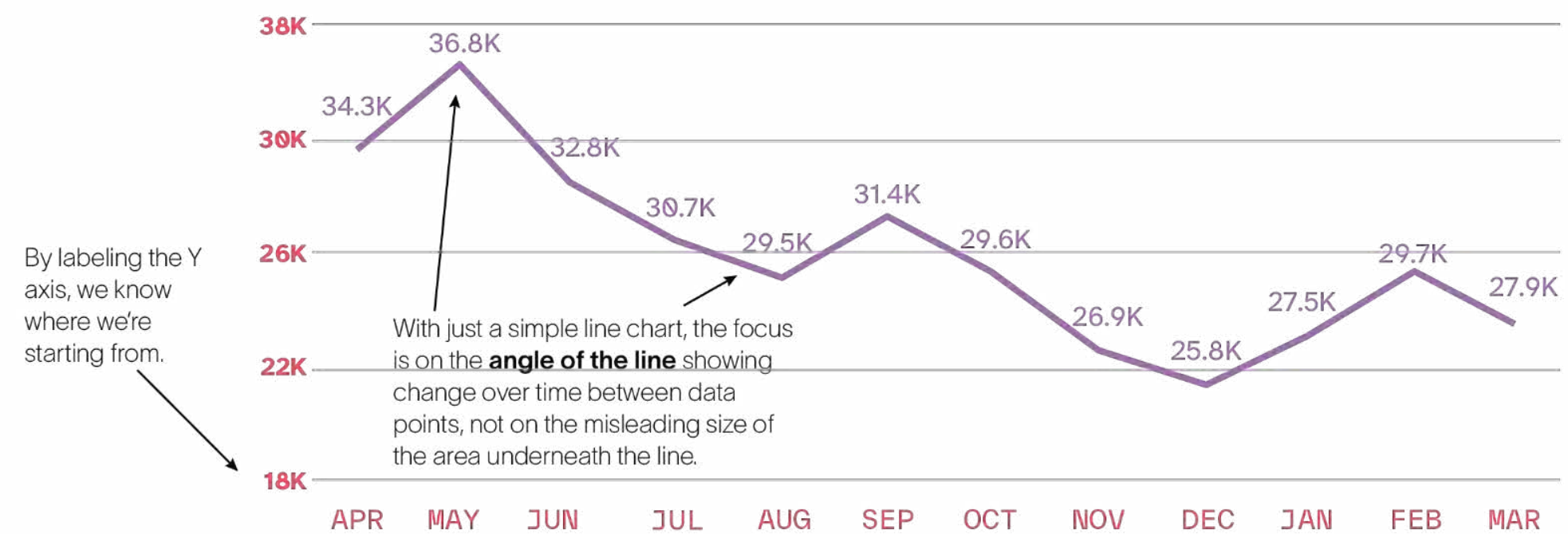
What Does Employer Hiring Demand Look Like?
Unique job postings for this occupation have fallen over the last 12 months.

This chart has labels on the line, which is great. BUT without a Y axis, we don't know where the numbering starts. Clearly not at zero!

Is 36.8K twice as much as 29.5K? Nope. It's less than 25% more. But the volume of the area under the line implies that it is since the axis doesn't start at zero. This chart is **lying.**

Remove the shading and label the Y axis for a more truthful chart.

What Does Employer Hiring Demand Look Like?
Unique job postings for this occupation have fallen over the last 12 months.

By labeling the Y axis, we know where we're starting from.

With just a simple line chart, the focus is on the **angle of the line** showing change over time between data points, not on the misleading size of the area underneath the line.