

# ChartReasoner: Code-Driven Modality Bridging for Long-Chain Reasoning in Chart Question Answering

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## Abstract

Recent advances in large language models (LLMs) have significantly improved long-chain reasoning in textual domains, yet extending this capability to visual tasks such as chart-based question answering (ChartQA) remains a major challenge. Existing multimodal approaches often rely on lossy image-to-text conversions that obscure critical structural and semantic information embedded in visualizations. To address this gap, we propose ChartReasoner, a code-driven, two-stage framework designed to enable precise, interpretable reasoning over charts. In the first stage, we train Chat2Code, a high-fidelity model that converts diverse chart images into structured ECharts code, preserving both layout and data semantics. In the second stage, we leverage these symbolic representations to construct ChartReasoning, the first large-scale chart reasoning dataset containing 140K multi-step samples. We then train the final reasoning model using a combination of supervised fine-tuning and reinforcement learning. ChartReasoner achieves strong performance across four representative benchmarks: ChartQA, ChartBench, EvoChart-QA, and ChartQAPro. It performs competitively with state-of-the-art open-source models while using fewer parameters, and approaches the performance of proprietary systems like GPT-4o in out-of-domain setting. Our results demonstrate that symbolic code-driven modeling provides a scalable and effective path toward deep, multimodal reasoning over visual data.

## 1 Introduction

LLMs have achieved remarkable success in text-based long-chain reasoning, generating highly accurate structured, multi-step solutions to complex problems, exemplified by models like o1 (OpenAI, 2024), o3 (OpenAI, 2025), QwQ (Team, 2025) and DeepSeek-R1 (Guo et al., 2025). These models decompose complex problems into logical sequence steps, each building upon previous deductions to

reach well-justified conclusions. However, this reasoning capability remains largely confined to the textual domain, creating a significant gap when applied to visual chart interpretation tasks.

Recent advances in multimodal reasoning extend structured thinking from text to vision by converting images into textual representations to enable chain-of-thought (CoT) reasoning. Methods such as R1-OneVision (Chen et al., 2025) translate visual scenes into formal text, while R1-V (Chen et al., 2025) and MMEureka (Meng et al., 2025) leverage reinforcement learning to enhance object-centric and long-chain reasoning. Despite these innovations, visual content is often treated as auxiliary—serialized into language at the cost of losing fine-grained cues. Local structures, color semantics, spatial layouts, and chart-specific encodings are frequently abstracted or compressed. This lossy transformation undermines tasks that require precise visual grounding, such as ChartQA or scientific diagram analysis. Although approaches like Curr-ReFT (Deng et al., 2025) and LMM-R1 (Peng et al., 2025) adopt staged learning to gradually align visual and textual modalities, they still fall short of preserving the high-fidelity semantics inherent in complex visual data.

ChartQA aims to enable models to understand and reason over structured visualizations such as bar and line charts. Recent models have improved visual-text alignment (Masry et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023), while ChartLlama (Han et al., 2023) and ChartSFT (Meng et al., 2024) introduce chain-of-thought (CoT) prompting for multi-step reasoning. However, most existing ChartQA models still lack true reasoning capabilities. CoT prompting often leads to superficial reasoning without genuine logical depth. A key unresolved challenge is the accurate reconstruction of chart semantics from visual input. Without faithfully extracting symbolic structures—such as axes, legends, groupings, and value mappings—models struggle with multi-hop reason-

ing and precise numerical comparison. This gap limits their applicability in real-world analytical scenarios that demand deep understanding and logical rigor.

To address the challenges of chart-based understanding and long-chain reasoning, we propose ChartReasoner, a code-driven, two-stage framework that enhances the reasoning capabilities of multimodal large language models (MLLMs). In the first stage, we train Chat2Code, a high-accuracy model that translates diverse chart images into structured ECharts code, faithfully preserving both visual layout and underlying data semantics. This symbolic representation serves as the foundation for reasoning, bridging the visual-textual modality gap. In the second stage, we construct the ChartReasoning dataset by applying Chat2Code to various benchmarks, yielding 140K multi-step reasoning samples. We then train the final ChartReasoner model through supervised fine-tuning and reinforcement learning to improve reasoning accuracy, consistency, and interpretability. This structured pipeline enables precise, scalable, and logically grounded ChartQA.

Our key contributions are as follows:

- We introduce ChartReasoning, the first large-scale chart reasoning dataset with over 140K multi-step reasoning samples. It supports symbolic and interpretable reasoning across diverse chart types, addressing a key gap in ChartQA research.
- We construct a high-quality Chart2Code dataset comprising 110K diverse synthetic charts generated via a prompt-based pipeline. This dataset serves as a critical bridge between visual input and symbolic structure, enabling accurate and interpretable reasoning in downstream tasks.
- We introduce ChartReasoner, a two-stage code-driven model that demonstrates robust performance on four representative benchmarks: ChartQA, ChartBench, EvoChart-QA, and ChartQAPro. Our model performs competitively with state-of-the-art open-source systems using fewer parameters, and rivals proprietary models like GPT-4o in out-of-domain settings, demonstrating its effectiveness and generalizability.

## 2 Related Work

**ChartQA.** To improve MLLMs’ ability to understand charts, various ChartQA datasets have been introduced, including FigureQA (Kahou et al., 2017), DVQA (Kafle et al., 2018), PlotQA (Methani et al., 2020), LEAF-QA (Chaudhry et al., 2020), and ChartQA (Masry et al., 2022), covering diverse chart types and visual reasoning tasks. However, these datasets often limit answers to single values or labels, lacking support for complex multi-step reasoning. Recent efforts like ChartX (Xia et al., 2024), RealCQA (Ahmed et al., 2023), and UniChart (Masry et al., 2023) scale up resources via synthetic chart generation and template-based QA, while ChartSFT (Meng et al., 2024) and EvoChart (Huang et al., 2025a) incorporate Chain-of-Thought (CoT) annotations to promote reasoning. However, most CoTs remain shallow, whereas real-world scenarios demand long, multi-hop reasoning. On the model side, compact MLLMs like ChartReader (Cheng et al., 2023), MatCha (Liu et al., 2023), ScreenAI (Baechler et al., 2024), and UniChart (Masry et al., 2023) perform well on earlier benchmarks. LLaVA-based models such as ChartLlama (Han et al., 2023), ChartPaLI (Carbune et al., 2024), ChartInstruct (Masry et al., 2024), ChartAstD (Meng et al., 2024), and TinyChart (Zhang et al., 2024) further enhance multimodal alignment. More recently, open-source generalist VLMs like Phi-3 Vision and InternVL2.5 (Chen et al., 2024a) have achieved strong results on ChartQA benchmarks. However, current models still struggle with long-chain reasoning, particularly when integrating multiple visual cues and performing numerical and logical inference.

**Chart-to-Code.** Chart-to-code generation aims to reconstruct charts from images via executable code, demanding accurate visual and structural fidelity. Early works such as ChartMimic (Yang et al., 2025a), Plot2Code (Wu et al., 2025), and ChartX (Xia et al., 2024) evaluate MLLMs on layout and content reconstruction. While some methods enhance generation via multi-agent collaboration or preference-based tuning (Li et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025), they often rely on hand-crafted prompts or costly supervision. ChartCoder (Zhao et al., 2025) advances the field with a two-stage SoT-based training strategy and a large-scale dataset, but its reliance on fixed templates still limits its ability to generalize to diverse, real-world chart formats.

**Multimodal Long-Chain Reasoning.** Long-chain reasoning has gained traction in NLP with the advent of DeepSeek-R1 (Guo et al., 2025), which emphasizes structured intermediate reasoning. This paradigm has been extended to VLMs through works like R1-OneVision (Yang et al., 2025b) and Vision-R1 (Huang et al., 2025b), which convert images into formal textual representations to enable multimodal CoT training. R1-V (Chen et al., 2025) leverages Group Relative Policy Optimization (GRPO) (Shao et al., 2024) for object counting, showing that small models can outperform larger ones via effective RL. VisualThinker-R1-Zero (Zhou et al., 2025) and MMEureka (Meng et al., 2025) further explore RL-driven reasoning, reporting “visual aha moments” where longer outputs indicate stronger reasoning. Meanwhile, CurrReFT (Deng et al., 2025) and LMM-R1 (Peng et al., 2025) adopt staged learning strategies that progressively integrate visual and textual skills, using reward curricula or text-first pretraining followed by multimodal RL. However, despite these advancements, existing approaches primarily focus on natural images or general visual inputs and fall short when applied to structured data representations like charts. In contrast, our work targets the unique challenges of chart-based long-chain reasoning by introducing a code-driven framework that explicitly bridges visual perception with symbolic reasoning, offering a specialized and scalable solution for real-world analytical tasks.

### 3 Methodology

Understanding charts poses a fundamental challenge for MLLMs, stemming from the modality gap between raw visual inputs and the structured, symbolic semantics of chart elements. To bridge this gap and enable deep, interpretable reasoning, we propose a code-driven two-stage framework that unifies visual perception and symbolic abstraction via structured chart representations.

In the first stage, we introduce Chart2Code, a high-fidelity translation model that converts chart images into executable ECharts code. By leveraging the expressive and structured syntax of ECharts, the model preserves both the visual layout and the semantic structure of charts, including axes, legends, data groupings, and value mappings. To train this model, we construct a 110K-scale synthetic dataset using a prompt-based generation pipeline built on DeepSeek-R1, where chart specifications

are rendered into images and paired with code. We apply a hybrid filtering strategy to ensure data quality, and fine-tune a Qwen2.5-VL-based model on these image-code pairs, freezing the visual encoder to retain robust perception while adapting the decoder for accurate symbolic generation.

In the second stage, we leverage Chart2Code to build ChartReasoning, a large-scale dataset comprising 140K multi-step reasoning samples. These samples are created by applying structured code extraction to existing ChartQA benchmarks and prompting DeepSeek-R1 to generate CoT reasoning traces directly over code. This symbolic representation allows the model to reason over explicit, lossless semantics rather than lossy visual tokens. We then train our final model—ChartReasoner—via a two-stage process: supervised fine-tuning establishes baseline logical competence, followed by GRPO-based reinforcement learning that refines reasoning quality through rule-guided reward signals.

Overall, our approach treats code as a compositional and interpretable bridge between vision and language, enabling precise and logically grounded chart-based reasoning, as illustrated in Figure 1.

#### 3.1 Chart-to-Code

**Echarts-format Chart Generation.** We start with a template library  $\mathcal{T} = \{T_1, T_2, \dots, T_K\}$  covering  $K$  chart templates (9 major categories, 49 subtypes). For each template  $T_k \in \mathcal{T}$ , we prompt DeepSeek-R1 to generate diverse ECharts code (Detailed prompt is provided in Appendix D). Let  $p_k$  be the prompt derived from template  $T_k$ . The generated ECharts code  $c_j$  for a sample  $j$  is:

$$c_j = G_{\text{DS-R1}}(p_k) \quad (1)$$

Where  $G_{\text{DS-R1}}(\cdot)$  denote the DeepSeek-R1.

**Quality Filtering Pipeline.** The generated ECharts code is rendered into images, which are subjected to a rigorous quality control process. We combine automated pixel-level filtering with manual review to enhance image quality. In the automated stage, each image is converted to the Hue-Saturation-Value color space to extract saturation and brightness features, and is downsampled to reduce computational overhead. Blank and noisy images are then removed using sparse content detection and white-background noise filtering. In the manual stage, we further eliminate edge cases that are difficult to detect automatically. As a re-

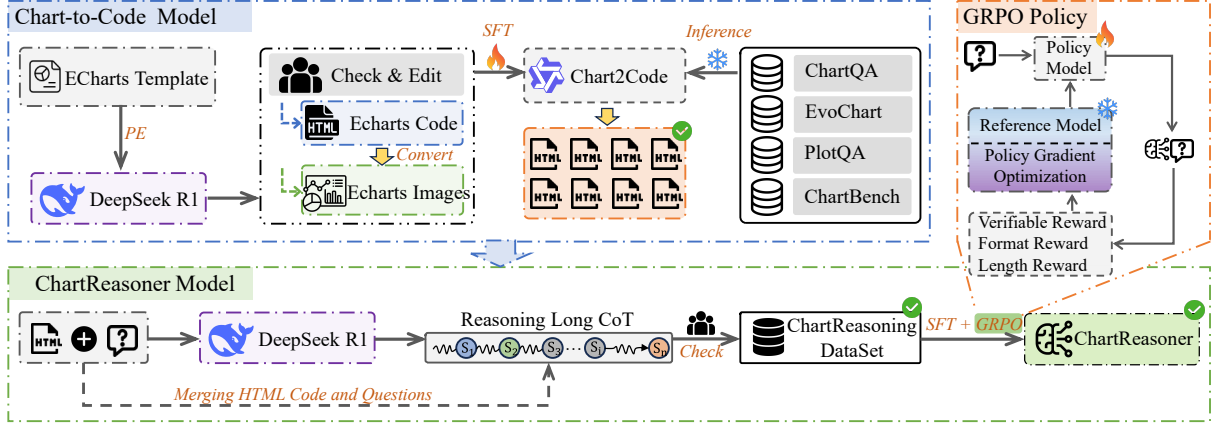


Figure 1: Overview diagram of the data construction pipeline and model training.

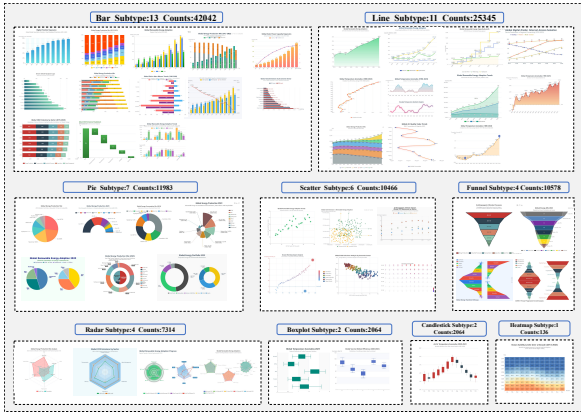


Figure 2: The distribution of chart types and their corresponding subtypes.

sult, we retain approximately 110K high-quality charts from the initial set. Detailed distribution statistics are provided in Figure 2, covering 9 major categories and 49 subcategories. Specific data examples are included in the Appendix E.

**Chart2Code Model.** To enable high-fidelity chart reconstruction from images, we construct a large-scale chart-to-code dataset and use it to train a multimodal model capable of translating chart images into their corresponding ECharts code. For this purpose, we choose Qwen2.5-VL, a representative open-source vision-language model, and fine-tune it on our dataset for the chart-to-code generation task. Given a chart image  $x_i$ , the model predicts its corresponding ECharts code sequence  $\mathbf{c}_i = (c_{i,1}, c_{i,2}, \dots, c_{i,L_i})$ , where  $L_i$  is the token length of the code. The model is trained to maximize the likelihood of the target sequence conditioned on the input image. The model parameters are denoted as  $\theta = \{\theta_{VE}, \theta_{LD}\}$ , where  $\theta_{VE}$  refers to the visual encoder (frozen during training), and  $\theta_{LD}$  denotes the language decoder parameters. The

training objective is to minimize the loss function  $\mathcal{L}_{C2C}$ , defined as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{C2C}(\theta_{LD}) = - \sum_{i=1}^{N_{C2C}} \sum_{t=1}^{L_i} \log P(c_{i,t} | x_i, \mathbf{c}_{i,<t}; \theta) \quad (2)$$

where  $\mathbf{c}_{i,<t}$  represents the sequence of previously generated (ground-truth) tokens  $(c_{i,1}, \dots, c_{i,t-1})$  for the  $i$ -th sample,  $N_{C2C}$  denotes the total number of samples in the chart-to-code dataset.

This training strategy enables the model to effectively extract both structural and semantic information from visual inputs and generate accurate, executable code.

### 3.2 Code-Driven Long-Chain Reasoning Data

Current Chart QA datasets primarily consist of image-question-answer triplets, lacking explicit annotations of intermediate reasoning steps. This limits their effectiveness in training models that require step-by-step reasoning grounded in chart content. To address this limitation, we construct a code-driven reasoning dataset that extends traditional QA data with model-generated reasoning paths anchored in chart code. The construction pipeline is as follows.

**ChartReasoning Construction.** We begin by consolidating existing datasets into a unified collection  $\mathcal{D}_{QA\text{-orig}} = \{(x_k, q_k, a_k)\}_{k=1}^{N_{\text{orig}}}$ , where  $x_k$  denotes a chart image,  $q_k$  is a question posed about the chart, and  $a_k$  is the corresponding ground-truth answer. Each question is categorized by reasoning type, and each chart is labeled according to its structural type. To ensure broad coverage and balanced representation, we perform stratified sampling over both dimensions to obtain a representative subset of samples.



For each selected chart image  $x_k$  in this subset, we first employ the trained Chart2Code to generate the corresponding ECharts specification  $c_k$ . This generated code, combined with the original question  $q_k$ , is then provided as input to the DeepSeek-R1 model. DeepSeek-R1 produces a reasoning path denoted as  $r_k$  and a predicted answer  $\tilde{a}_k$ :

$$(r_k, \tilde{a}_k) = G_{\text{DS-R1}}(\text{Prompt}(\text{Chart2Code}(x_k), q_k)) \quad (3)$$

To ensure data quality, we retain only those samples where the predicted answer  $\tilde{a}_k$  exactly matches the ground-truth answer  $a_k$ . The final constructed dataset, referred to as ChartReasoning, is defined as follows:

$$\mathcal{D} = \{(x_j, q_j, r_j, a_j)\}_{j=1}^N \quad (4)$$

Here,  $(x_j, q_j, r_j, a_j)$  represent the chart image, the corresponding question, the generated reasoning path, and the verified answer for the  $j$ -th sample, respectively. During training, the input to the reasoning model consists of the chart-question pair  $(x_j, q_j)$ , while the target output is the concatenated sequence of the reasoning path  $r_j$  followed by the final answer  $a_j$ .

**Data Collection.** We construct the ChartReasoning dataset by aggregating and cleaning a wide range of existing ChartQA datasets, including ChartQA (Masry et al., 2022), EvoChart (Huang et al., 2025a), ChartBench (Xu et al., 2023), and PlotQA (Methani et al., 2020). These datasets collectively encompass diverse chart types and question styles commonly found in practical applications. Following the unified code-driven data pipeline introduced earlier, we systematically process all collected data to ensure consistency and correctness. After filtering out low-quality or mismatched samples, we obtain a high-quality subset containing over 140K examples, each paired with verified answers and intermediate reasoning traces. To better understand the dataset composition, we conduct a detailed analysis of the reasoning types and chart structures. As shown in Figure 3, the resulting dataset offers broad coverage across four main reasoning categories and seven commonly used chart types, providing a strong foundation for training models on complex ChartQA.

### 3.3 ChartReasoner Training

**Supervised Fine-Tuning.** The reasoning model is first trained using SFT on the  $\mathcal{D}$  dataset. Given

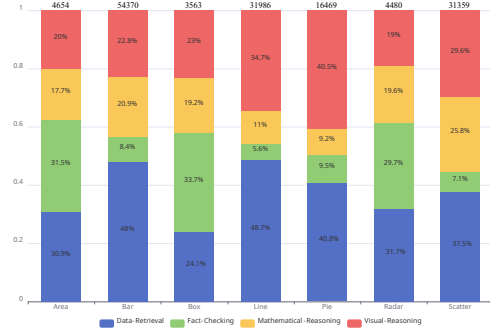


Figure 3: The proportion of different reasoning tasks for each chart type.

a chart image  $x_j$  and a question  $q_j$ , the model is trained to generate a target output sequence  $\mathbf{y}_j = (y_{j,1}, y_{j,2}, \dots, y_{j,K_j})$ , which consists of a reasoning path followed by the final answer, and contains  $K_j$  tokens. The model parameters are denoted as  $\theta = \{\theta_{\text{VE}}, \theta_{\text{LD}}\}$ , where  $\theta_{\text{VE}}$  refers to the visual encoder (kept frozen during training), and  $\theta_{\text{LD}}$  denotes the parameters of the language decoder. The SFT objective is to minimize the loss function  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{SFT}}$ , defined as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{SFT}}(\theta_{\text{LD}}) = - \sum_{j=1}^N \sum_{t=1}^{K_j} \log P(y_{j,t} | x_j, q_j, \mathbf{y}_{j,<t}; \theta) \quad (5)$$

where  $\mathbf{y}_{j,<t}$  represents the sequence of previously generated (ground-truth) tokens  $(y_{j,1}, \dots, y_{j,t-1})$  for the  $j$ -th sample.

This approach improves response uniformity and provides a stable foundation for the subsequent reinforcement learning stage.

**Reinforcement Learning with GRPO.** While supervised fine-tuning equips the model with fundamental chart understanding, it also reveals a common failure mode: over-generation of verbose reasoning chains, even when the input lacks sufficient information. This over-reasoning behavior compromises answer reliability. To mitigate this, we adopt a reinforcement learning phase using GRPO. Unlike standard policy optimization methods such as PPO (Schulman et al., 2017), GRPO generates multiple candidate responses per input and optimizes them jointly via intra-group normalization. This stabilizes training and encourages the model to favor concise and accurate outputs.

We design structured, rule-based reward functions that explicitly measure answer quality across multiple dimensions—factual accuracy, formatting correctness, and response length. These reward signals guide the model to suppress hallucinations and

over-reasoning, promoting disciplined and generalizable reasoning behavior. Overall, this RL phase aligns the model’s outputs with practical expectations and user preferences, significantly enhancing robustness across diverse ChartQA scenarios.

## 4 Experiments

### 4.1 Experimental Setup

**Datasets.** To evaluate the performance of our proposed ChartReasoner on ChartQA and multi-modal reasoning, we conducted experiments on four representative benchmarks: ChartQA (Masry et al., 2022), EvoChart-QA (Huang et al., 2025a), ChartQAPro (Masry et al., 2025a), and ChartBench (Xu et al., 2023). These datasets cover a broad range of chart types and reasoning tasks, from simple visualizations to complex real-world settings involving dashboards, infographics, and multi-chart compositions. ChartQA and EvoChart-QA emphasize real-world chart understanding with fine-grained reasoning and retrieval tasks, while ChartQAPro focuses on challenging scenarios such as multi-turn, hypothetical, and unanswerable questions. ChartBench provides large-scale evaluation across diverse chart types. We also assessed the Chart2Code on EvoChart-QA to evaluate its capability in reconstructing complex charts.

**Evaluation Metrics & Baselines.** For ChartQA, we follow the official protocol for each benchmark. For Chart-to-Code, we adopt execution success rate and GPT-4V<sup>1</sup> visual similarity scoring (1–10), following Plot2Code (Wu et al., 2025). The specific prompt is provided in Appendix C We benchmark our model against a wide range of MLLMs, including proprietary models such as Claude-3.5-Sonnet (Anthropic, 2024), Gemini-Flash-1.5/2.0 (Team et al., 2024), GPT-4-turbo, and GPT-4o (Achiam et al., 2023), as well as open-source models like InternVL2 (Chen et al., 2024b), Phi-3-Vision (Abdin et al., 2024), LLaVA-V1.5 (Liu et al., 2024), InternLM-XComposer (Dong et al., 2024), Qwen-VL (Bai et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024), and CogVLM2 (Hong et al., 2024). We also include domain-specific baselines such as ChartLlama (Han et al., 2023), ChartAst (Meng et al., 2024), ChartIns (Masry et al., 2024), ChartGemma (Masry et al., 2025b), TinyChart (Zhang et al., 2024), and EvoChart (Huang et al., 2025a). For

Chart-to-Code evaluation, we adopt ChartCoder (Zhao et al., 2025) as the primary baseline. To further validate the structural richness of our Chart-to-Code dataset, we conduct controlled training experiments using Qwen2.5-VL-7B (Bai et al., 2025) on both EvoChart and our dataset. Further implementation details in Appendix A.

### 4.2 Main Results

**ChartQA Results.** We comprehensively evaluate our ChartReasoner model and a wide range of baseline models, including both general-purpose MLLMs and chart-specialized models, across four benchmark datasets. Among them, ChartQA and ChartBench are in-domain datasets, while ChartQAPro and EvoChart-QA serve as out-of-domain evaluations to test generalization performance. The results are shown in Table 1.

In the ChartQA benchmark, the proprietary Claude-3.5-Sonnet model achieves top-tier performance. However, our ChartReasoner significantly outperforms all open-source 7B models and surpasses the majority of chart-specialized baselines, demonstrating its strong reasoning capability in structured visual tasks. A similar trend is observed in ChartBench, where GPT-4o leads among proprietary models, yet our model achieves state-of-the-art results among open-source and domain-specific competitors. These findings confirm that while proprietary models still retain an edge on in-domain datasets, strengthening reasoning and analysis ability can bridge this gap and yield competitive results. In the EvoChart-QA benchmark, which contains long and complex real-world charts, GPT-4o shows relatively weaker performance. In contrast, EvoChart, a chart-specialized model trained on similar data, performs better but shows clear limitations on ChartQA, indicating limited cross-domain generalization due to data-specific overfitting and smaller model scale. Notably, our ChartReasoner matches GPT-4o’s performance and outperforms its own base model Qwen2.5-VL, confirming its enhanced capacity for long-chain visual reasoning and data adaptation. Lastly, in the ChartQAPro benchmark, Gemini-Flash-2.0 stands out among proprietary models. Still, ChartReasoner surpasses even GPT-4o in this domain-shifted setting. This reveals that many proprietary models struggle with domain transfer in chart understanding, whereas ChartReasoner’s consistent performance under both in-domain and out-of-domain conditions underscores the importance of improv-

<sup>1</sup>The version is gpt-4-vision-preview, and the URL is <https://openai.com/index/gpt-4v-system-card>.

Model Name	Size	Evochart-QA	ChartQA	ChartBench	ChartQAPro
Closed-source					
Claude-3.5-Sonnet (Anthropic, 2024)	—	—	<b>90.80</b>	—	43.58
Gemini-Flash-2.0 (Team et al., 2024)	—	—	—	—	<b>46.85</b>
Gemini-1.5-Flash (Team et al., 2024)	—	27.90	79.00	—	42.96
Gemini-1.5-Pro (Team et al., 2024)	—	32.20	87.20	—	—
GPT-4-turbo (Achiam et al., 2023)	—	40.30	62.30	—	—
GPT-4o (Achiam et al., 2023)	—	<b>49.80</b>	85.70	<b>59.45</b>	37.67
Open-source					
InternVL2-Llama3 (Chen et al., 2024b)	76B	—	<b>88.40</b>	—	—
Qwen2-VL (Wang et al., 2024)	72B	—	88.30	—	—
Intern-VL2 (Chen et al., 2024b)	40B	<b>49.00</b>	86.20	—	—
CogVLM2 (Hong et al., 2024)	19B	21.90	81.00	—	—
Intern-VL2 (Chen et al., 2024b)	8B	38.60	81.50	—	—
Intern-VL2.5 (Chen et al., 2024a)	8B	—	84.80	—	35.67
LLaVA-v1.5 (Liu et al., 2024)	7B	—	55.32	23.39	—
Internlm-XComp.-v2 (Dong et al., 2024)	7B	—	72.64	47.78	—
QwenVL-Chat (Bai et al., 2023)	7B	19.70	83.00	26.98	35.59
Qwen2.5-VL (Bai et al., 2025)	7B	46.80	85.00	<b>54.06</b>	<b>36.61</b>
Phi3-Vision (Abdin et al., 2024)	4B	39.50	81.40	—	24.73
Chart Expert					
ChartLlama (Han et al., 2023)	13B	9.50	69.66	21.71	—
ChartAst-S (Meng et al., 2024)	13B	12.90	79.90	—	—
ChartIns-Llama2 (Masry et al., 2024)	7B	16.80	66.64	—	4.88
EvoChart (Huang et al., 2025a)	4B	<b>54.20</b>	81.50	—	—
ChartIns-FlanT5 (Masry et al., 2024)	3B	24.30	64.20	—	—
ChartGemma (Masry et al., 2025b)	3B	30.60	80.16	—	6.84
TinyChart (Abdin et al., 2024)	3B	25.50	83.60	—	13.25
ChartReasoner-SFT(Ours)	7B	47.04	86.76	55.10	37.94
ChartReasoner-GRPO(Ours)	7B	48.10	<b>86.93</b>	<b>55.20</b>	<b>39.97</b>

Table 1: Comparisons of ChartReasoner and Baselines on Four ChartQA Benchmarks.

ing reasoning and abstraction abilities to enhance chart-centric generalization.

Comparing models trained with SFT alone to those further refined with GRPO reveals consistent gains across all benchmarks. GRPO improves reasoning quality and reduces over-explanation and encourages more structured, precise outputs—highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing visual reasoning.

### 4.3 Ablation Experiment

**Chart-to-Code Performance Evaluation.** To comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of our Chart2Code, we present the results in Table 2, which consolidates comparisons across different datasets and training scales. Specifically, we assess model performance on a real-world test set derived from EvoChart-QA, using GPT-4V visual similarity scores and pass rates as evaluation metrics.

Our Chart2Code, trained on the proposed ECharts-based dataset, significantly outperforms models trained on the EvoChart dataset under comparable training sizes. The results highlight notable improvements in both visual fidelity and pass rate, demonstrating the higher quality and diversity of our data. This suggests that our dataset enables better generalization and more accurate chart re-

construction, even for complex and diverse chart types encountered in practice.

In addition, our model trained on ECharts-based data exhibits superior performance compared to those trained on large-scale, Python-generated chart datasets. Despite the latter having access to more training examples, their performance lags behind in both robustness and reconstruction accuracy. This underscores the importance of data realism and expressiveness—qualities more inherently present in ECharts specifications—for effectively training chart generation models.

We also analyze the impact of data volume by training models on subsets of 30k, 50k, 70k, and 110k chart-code pairs. Results show that while increasing the dataset size generally improves performance, the gains begin to plateau beyond 70k examples. This saturation effect suggests that 110k samples are sufficient to maximize the model’s reconstruction capability.

**Sensitivity Analysis** We conduct a sensitivity analysis to evaluate how chart type affects both chart reconstruction and downstream reasoning performance. As shown in Table 2, the Chart2Code module exhibits strong performance on bar and pie charts, while its accuracy declines for scatter

Model	Data	Similarity	bar	line	pie	scatter	Rate	Types
ChartCoder	160k	3.64	4.18	3.91	3.25	3.22	82.40%	27
Chart2Code-Evo.	70k	3.84	4.63	4.16	3.94	2.63	89.10%	4
Chart2Code(Ours)	30k	2.39	3.12	2.24	2.81	1.39	88.20%	49
Chart2Code(Ours)	50k	3.62	4.37	3.81	4.17	2.13	90.60%	49
Chart2Code(Ours)	70k	4.21	5.17	4.20	4.23	3.24	91.00%	49
Chart2Code(Ours)	110k	<b>4.34</b>	<b>5.26</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>5.12</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>92.40%</b>	<b>49</b>

Table 2: A performance comparison of Chart2Code models trained on different datasets in terms of GPT-4V similarity (including specific chart types) and EvoChart-QA pass rates.

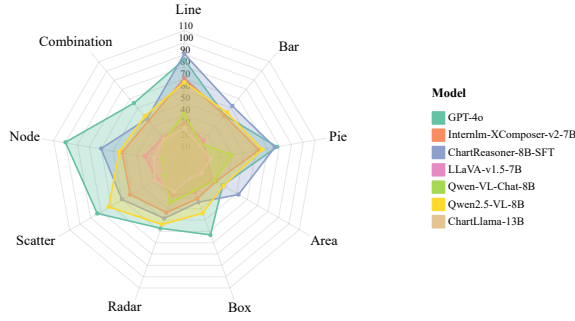


Figure 4: ChartBench Performance Across Chart Types.

and line charts. Scatter plots often contain dense, overlapping points that hinder precise encoding, whereas many line charts in EvoChart are multi-series or include complex visual encodings, making them particularly challenging to parse. These characteristics, along with their relative scarcity in the training data, contribute to consistently lower reconstruction accuracy—especially for line charts—across all models.

This reconstruction quality directly influences reasoning performance in the ChartReasoner module. As shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5, ChartReasoner achieves competitive results on bar and pie charts but underperforms on scatter, line, and box plots. Notably, the stronger results on bar, line, and pie charts within ChartBench align with their higher frequency in our training data, which enhances reconstruction robustness and, in turn, improves reasoning accuracy. These observations highlight a strong correlation between reconstruction reliability and downstream performance, underscoring the importance of both visual complexity and data distribution in building effective chart reasoning systems.

**Impact of Different Dataset Sources.** We further investigate how different ChartQA-style datasets affect downstream reasoning performance when used to construct CoT-style training data. Specifically, we sample 20k instances from ChartQA, EvoChart, ChartBench, and PlotQA, and convert them into reasoning examples via our chart-

to-code distillation pipeline. Results in Table 3 reveal that training data sourced from the same distribution as the evaluation benchmark yields the best performance, confirming the impact of dataset alignment. Notably, PlotQA-based training performs poorly across all benchmarks. This is likely due to its synthetic nature, limited visual diversity, and narrow chart type coverage—restricted to bar, line, and dot—making it less representative of real-world charts. In contrast, EvoChart-derived data achieve stronger generalization, particularly on EvoChart-QA and ChartQAPro. EvoChart charts better resemble real-world styles and include a broader set of chart types, such as pie and scatter, enhancing their cross-domain utility. While ChartBench data yield strong in-domain results, their performance on other benchmarks is less competitive, suggesting limited transferability. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of dataset diversity and visual-semantic complexity in training robust chart reasoning models.

DataSet	Evochart-QA	ChartQA	ChartBench	ChartQAPro
ChartQA	41.3	<b>86.56</b>	51.43	35.64
EvoChart	<b>42.8</b>	85.48	52.38	<b>36.05</b>
ChartBench	40.5	81.56	<b>54.76</b>	32.36
PlotQA	40.2	83.00	47.80	34.69

Table 3: Impact of Different Dataset Sources on Downstream Chart Reasoning Performance.

## 5 Conclusion

We present ChartReasoner, a code-driven, two-stage framework that bridges the gap between visual chart understanding and long-chain reasoning in multimodal large language models. By introducing Chat2Code, which converts chart images into high-fidelity ECharts code, and constructing the ChartReasoning dataset with over 140K multi-step reasoning samples, our approach enables precise, interpretable, and scalable ChartQA. Extensive evaluations across four benchmarks demonstrate that ChartReasoner achieves strong generalization and reasoning performance, outperforming open-source baselines and approaching proprietary models like GPT-4o. Our work highlights the importance of symbolic representation and structured reasoning for advancing chart-based visual understanding. By tightly coupling visual parsing with logical reasoning, ChartReasoner offers a unified paradigm for complex analytical tasks. Future work may explore extending this framework to broader domains such as scientific visualization.



## Limitations

Our study is comprehensive but has certain limitations that we aim to address in future research. First, due to computational constraints, we conduct all experiments using a 7B-parameter model. Although this setting yields promising results, scaling to larger models may further enhance performance and generalization capabilities. Second, the current evaluation focuses primarily on benchmark-style synthetic and semi-structured charts. The generalization of our method to more complex, real-world visualizations remains an open challenge.

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## A Implementation Details.

We use Qwen2.5-VL-7B (Bai et al., 2025) as the backbone and perform supervised fine-tuning on 8 A100 80GB GPUs. The vision tower and projection layers are frozen, while the language model is fully trainable. Training runs for 4 epochs with an effective batch size of 8, using BF16 precision. We apply the AdamW (Loshchilov and Hutter, 2019) optimizer with learning rate 1e-5. The maximum sequence length is 4096 tokens, and images are resized to 512×512 pixels. We further apply GRPO for 2 epochs starting from the SFT checkpoint. The model generates 8 completions per input, with reward-weighted selection based on accuracy, format correctness, and length suitability.

## B Qualitative Analysis

To further illustrate the performance improvements brought by our model in chart-based multimodal reasoning, we conduct a qualitative analysis using representative examples. These cases help demonstrate how enhanced reasoning capabilities can effectively assist visual understanding, especially when direct visual recognition is ambiguous or when the question requires complex logical interpretation. As illustrated in Figures 6–9, these examples further demonstrate the effectiveness of our method.

**Visual-Aided Reasoning.** One core strength of our ChartReasoner lies in its ability to perform visual reasoning that supplements and corrects potentially uncertain visual recognition. As shown in Figure 6, the example question is: “What is the label of the highest bar of February?” This task requires the model to first locate February on the x-axis and then identify the label corresponding to its highest bar—thus constituting a visual reasoning problem.

While baseline models such as Qwen2.5VL fail to correctly locate “February” and incorrectly identify “Sales” as the highest category, ChartReasoner demonstrates a more accurate analysis by first reasoning through the axis structure: “The x-axis data is [January, February, March, ..., December], so February is the second month.” This allows it to correctly localize the February column and extract the corresponding bar label, thereby arriving at the correct answer.

This example highlights that reasoning capabilities can effectively compensate for limitations in visual recognition, particularly when axis elements or data labels are densely packed, occluded, or ambiguously rendered.

**Complex Semantic Reasoning.** In addition to visual grounding, ChartReasoner also excels in handling complex semantic questions that require precise logical understanding. As shown in Figure 7, the example question is: “How many percent of U.S. coffee drinkers drink less than 2 cups of coffee at home on a weekday?” The key to this question lies in correctly interpreting the condition “less than 2 cups.” However, Qwen2.5VL incorrectly includes the “2 cups” category in its calculation, leading to a wrong answer. In contrast, ChartReasoner demonstrates its advanced reasoning by recognizing the logical boundary of the query and explicitly

excluding the 2-cups group from its aggregation, yielding the correct answer. This indicates that reasoning ability is critical for precise comprehension of quantitative and conditional logic, which is often required in real-world ChartQA scenarios.

## C Prompt Design for Visual Evaluation with GPT-4V

To comprehensively assess the visual quality of generated charts, we adopt a structured prompt-based evaluation approach using GPT-4V. The prompt instructs the model to compare a generated chart with its corresponding ground-truth version and assign a similarity score ranging from 1 to 10. The scoring is based on four key criteria: Colors (accuracy of color schemes), Axes & Scale (consistency of axis ranges and units), Data Points Position (placement and alignment of bars, lines, or markers), and Overall Layout (correctness of titles, labels, legends, etc.).

This prompt enables GPT-4V to produce fine-grained visual judgments that go beyond traditional execution-based metrics (e.g., code correctness), capturing layout-level discrepancies that impact real-world interpretability. An example of such a prompt is illustrated in Figure 10. This evaluation method bridges the gap between syntactic correctness and perceptual fidelity in chart generation tasks.

## D Prompt Engineering for ECharts Code Generation

To enable effective chart generation, we employ domain-specific prompt engineering tailored to the ECharts visualization framework. The prompts are constructed to cover 18 thematic domains and 111 subtopics, spanning social, economic, technological, and environmental dimensions. This ensures diverse coverage of chart types and semantic contexts.

Each prompt clearly specifies the chart topic, the intended visual form (e.g., bar chart, line chart, scatter plot), and any constraints on layout or data encoding. As demonstrated in Figure 11, this guided prompting allows models like DeepSeek R1 to leverage their strong reasoning abilities to produce structurally varied and semantically rich visualizations. These prompts are essential to ensure that the generated charts are not only syntactically valid but also meaningful and domain-relevant.

## E Chart-to-Code Dataset Detailed Case

To further illustrate the design of our Chart-to-Code Dataset, we present selected examples that directly show the generated ECharts HTML code alongside the corresponding rendered chart. These examples also highlight the flexibility of the chart template system and the reasoning capability of the DeepSeek R1 model in generating structurally complex and thematically rich charts. By showcasing a range of chart types—including bar, line, and pie charts—these cases reflect the robustness of our prompt engineering approach and the effectiveness of the multi-stage quality filtering pipeline described in the methodology. Figures 12–15 present more detailed examples from the Chart2Code dataset.



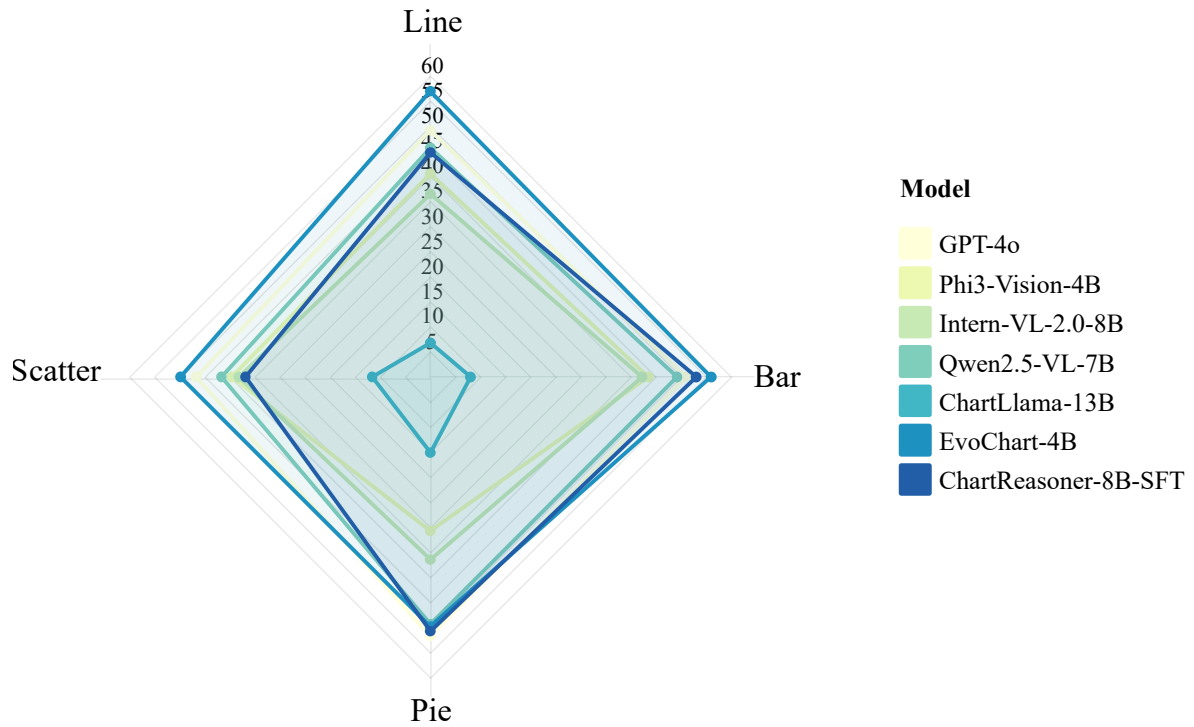


Figure 5: EvoChart Performance Across Chart Types.

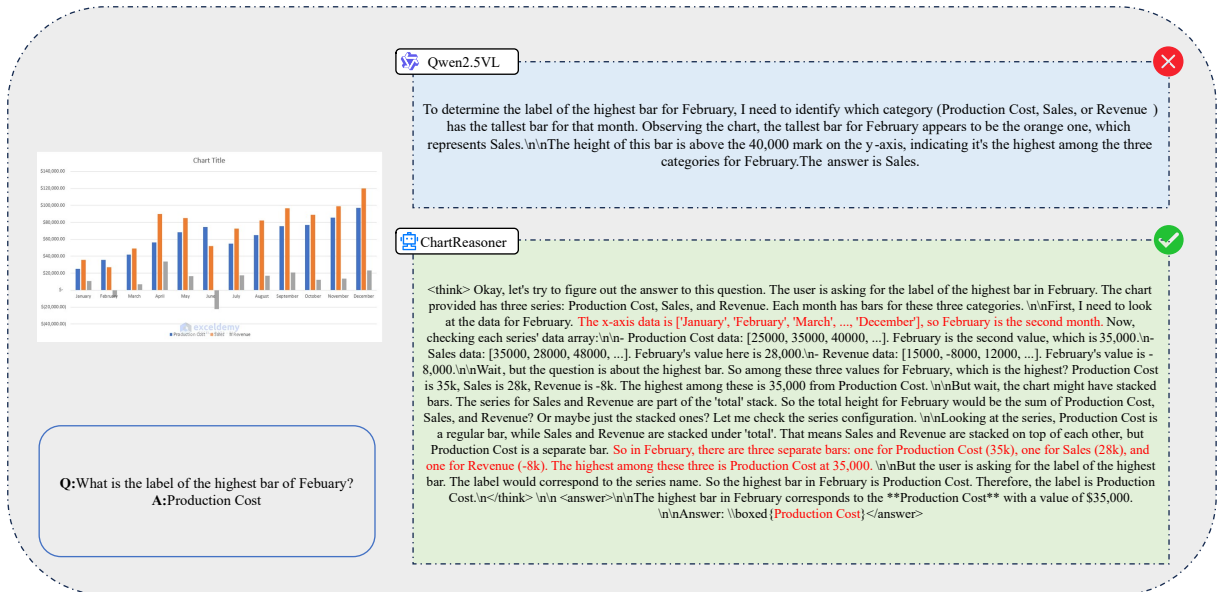


Figure 6: Comparison of Model Responses in ChartQA (Example 1).

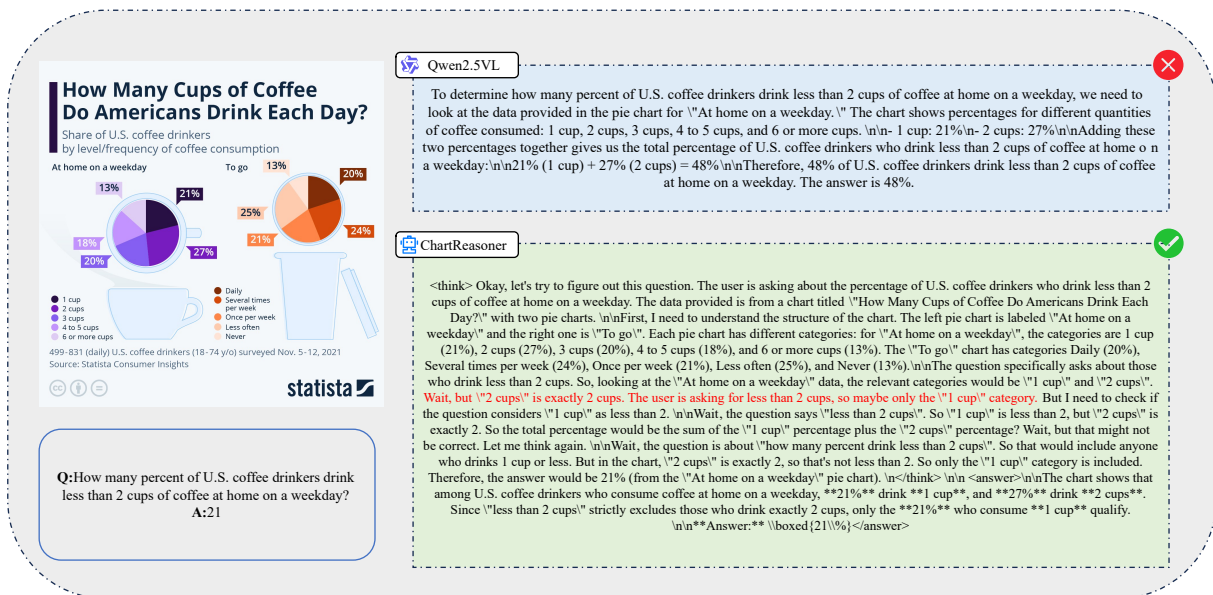


Figure 7: Comparison of Model Responses in ChartQA (Example 2).

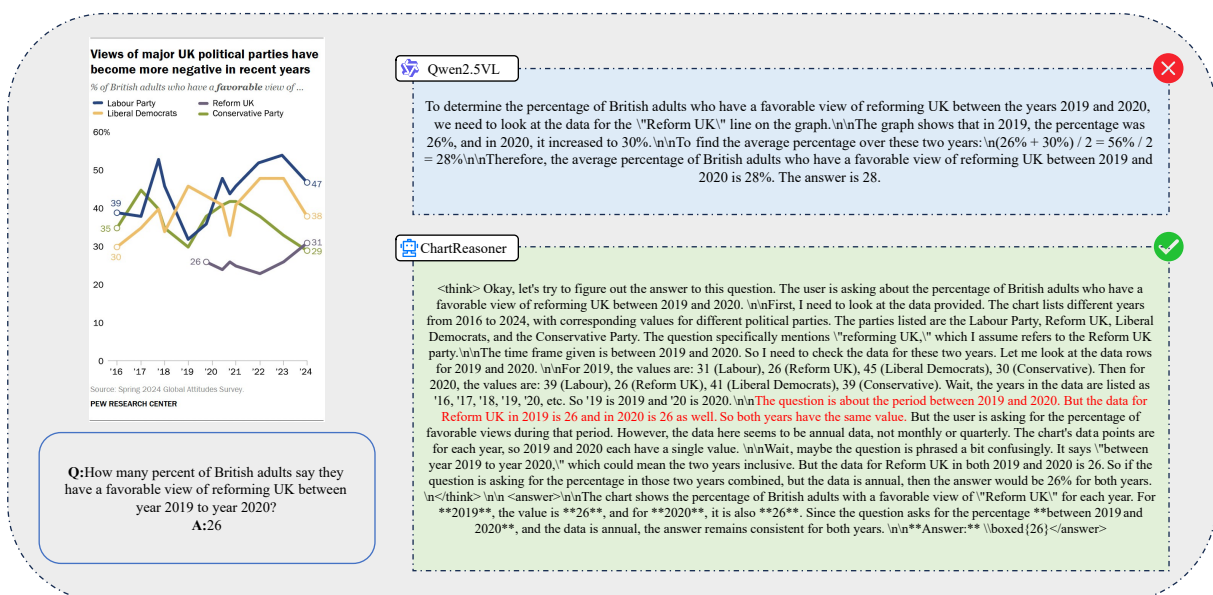


Figure 8: Comparison of Model Responses in ChartQA (Example 3).

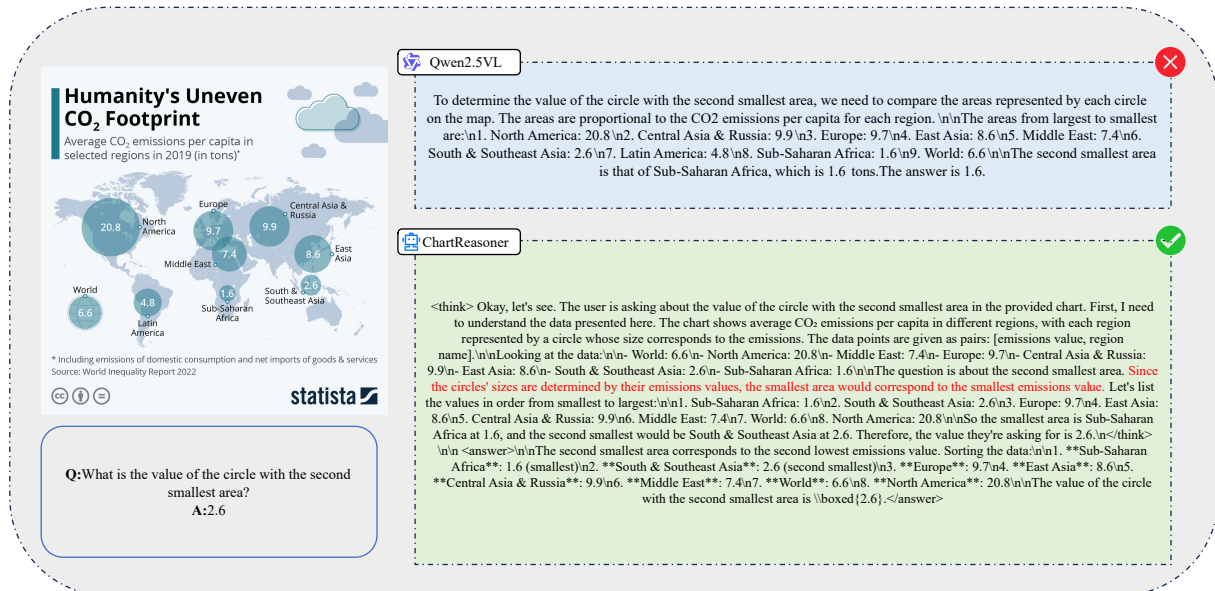


Figure 9: Comparison of Model Responses in ChartQA (Example 4).

Please evaluate the similarity between a reference image created using matplotlib and an image generated by code provided by an AI assistant. Consider factors such as the overall appearance, colors, shapes, positions, and other visual elements of the images. Begin your evaluation by providing a short explanation. Be as objective as possible. After providing your explanation, you must rate the response on a scale of 1 to 10 by strictly following this format: Rating: [[5]]

Figure 10: GPT-4V Visual Evaluation Prompt.

You are a web chart generation assistant. Please emulate the structure, style, and configuration of the ECharts chart in the following HTML:

(Original chart HTML below)

```
{echarts_template}
```

Modify it according to these requirements and generate a complete HTML page with the chart (ready to run in a browser). Choose

**one** theme and dataset from the list below, or combine multiple for richer context, but feel free to create your own variation:

Pay attention to keep the data distribution reasonable and diverse when drawing the graph, consider the rendering effect, and conform to the real chart

Note that the scatter plot distribution is random and should not be concentrated together

- **Climate & Environment**: global temperature anomalies, CO2 emissions by sector, deforestation rates, sea level rise, ocean acidity, renewable energy adoption, air quality index, water scarcity index, glacier retreat
- **Population & Demographics**: world population growth, urban vs rural distribution, age pyramids by country, migration patterns, household income distribution, gender ratio statistics, life expectancy trends
- **Economics & Finance**: stock market indices (e.g., S&P 500, FTSE 100), GDP per capita, inflation rates, foreign direct investment, income inequality (Gini coefficient), cryptocurrency market capitalization, commodity prices (oil, gold, agriculture)
- **Energy & Resources**: solar and wind power capacity, oil & gas production, nuclear energy share, water consumption per capita, mineral extraction volumes, waste recycling rates, renewable vs non-renewable energy mix
- **Technology & Internet**: global internet penetration, mobile phone subscriptions, social media user growth, e-commerce sales, cybersecurity incidents, data center energy usage, AI investments, open source contribution trends
- **Health & Society**: pandemic case numbers, vaccination rollout rates, healthcare expenditure per capita, mental health survey scores, hospital bed availability, disease incidence rates, life satisfaction index
- **Retail & Sales**: monthly retail sales by sector, online vs offline revenue, average basket size, foot traffic in malls, customer churn rate, loyalty program engagement
- **Education & Employment**: enrollment rates in primary/secondary/tertiary, literacy rates, graduation rates by discipline, job vacancy data, unemployment rates, average salary by industry, remote work adoption, skill shortage indices
- **Tourism & Transportation**: tourist arrivals by region, airline passenger miles, ride-sharing usage, public transit ridership, port container throughput, traffic congestion index, vehicle electrification adoption
- **Sports & Entertainment**: sports league attendance, athlete medal counts, box office revenue by genre, music streaming hours, video game sales figures, award show winners stats, TV viewership ratings
- **Media & Communication**: newspaper circulation, podcast listenership, YouTube subscriber growth, mobile app usage time, online news article shares, media trust index
- **Automotive & Mobility**: vehicle sales by type (EV, ICE, hybrid), autonomous vehicle tests, public bike-share usage, traffic accident statistics, fuel efficiency trends, ride-hailing market share
- **Agriculture & Food**: crop yield per hectare, food price index, livestock population, organic farming acreage, seafood harvest volumes, global hunger index
- **Science & Research**: scientific publication counts by field, research funding allocation, patent filings, R&D expenditure, Nobel prize distribution, clinical trial numbers
- **Real Estate & Construction**: housing price index, construction starts by region, mortgage interest rates, commercial real estate vacancies, smart city projects
- **Government & Public Policy**: budget deficit/surplus, tax revenue breakdown, public debt levels, policy approval ratings, crime rates by category, election turnout statistics
- **Space & Aeronautics**: satellite launches, ISS research hours, space tourism bookings, Mars rover milestones, asteroid detection counts
- **Miscellaneous**: cryptocurrency price volatility, earthquake frequency and magnitude, festival attendance, book publication counts, open source project activity

Use your imagination and knowledge to create different data distributions based on the topic.

Pay attention to keep the data distribution reasonable and diverse when drawing the graph, consider the rendering effect, and conform to the real chart

Note that the scatter plot distribution is random and should not be concentrated together

1. Replace the chart data with a different but coherent dataset.
2. The data distribution and trends should be as complex as possible and not too monotonous.
3. Change the topic or theme accordingly.
4. Add the main title and subtitle related to the new topic and let your imagination run wild.
5. Keep the original chart type.
6. You can use your imagination to change the style and color at will.
7. Return only the full HTML code—no explanations or comments.

Figure 11: ECharts Code Generation Prompt.



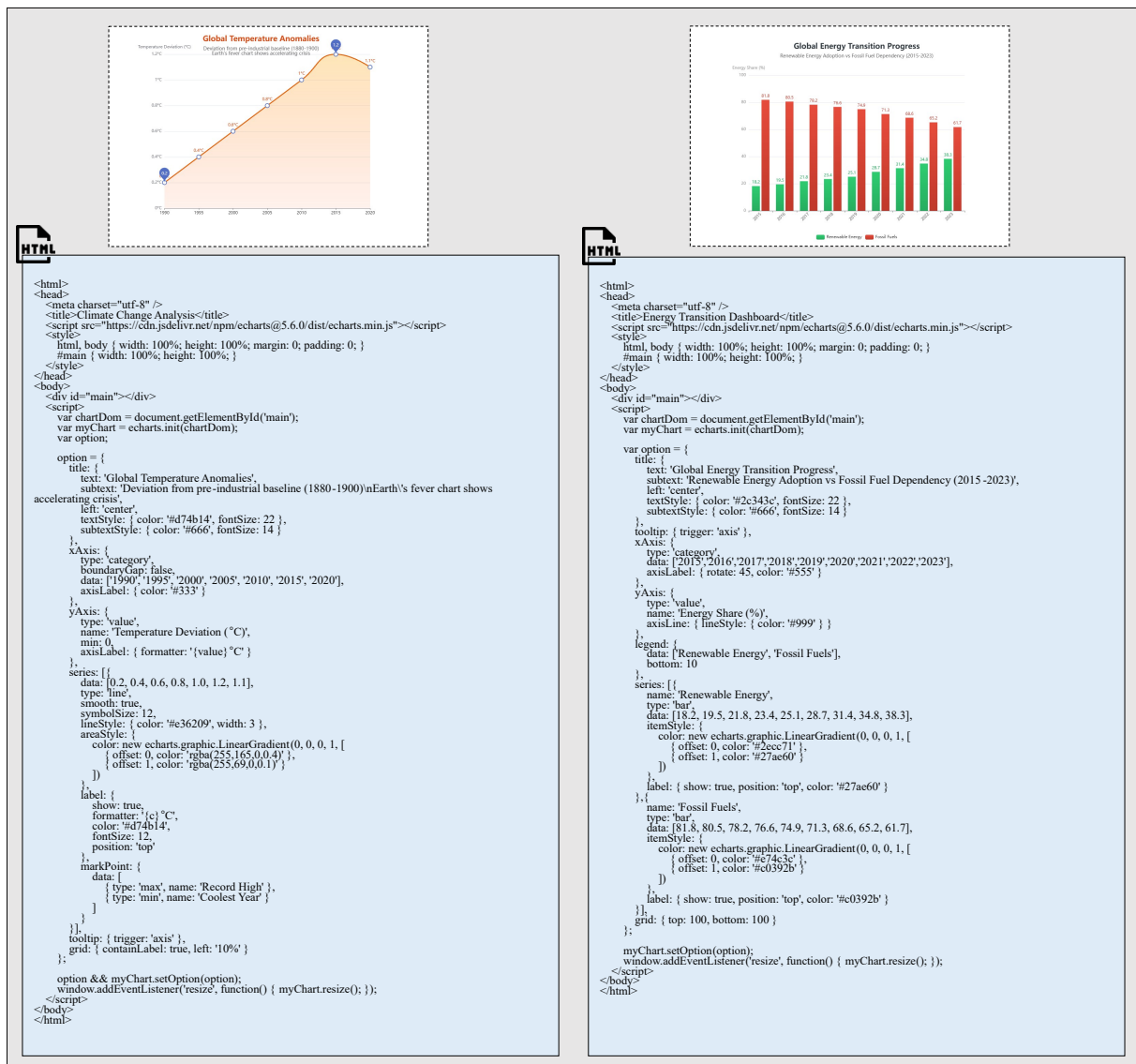


Figure 12: Example 1 from the Chart-to-Code Dataset.

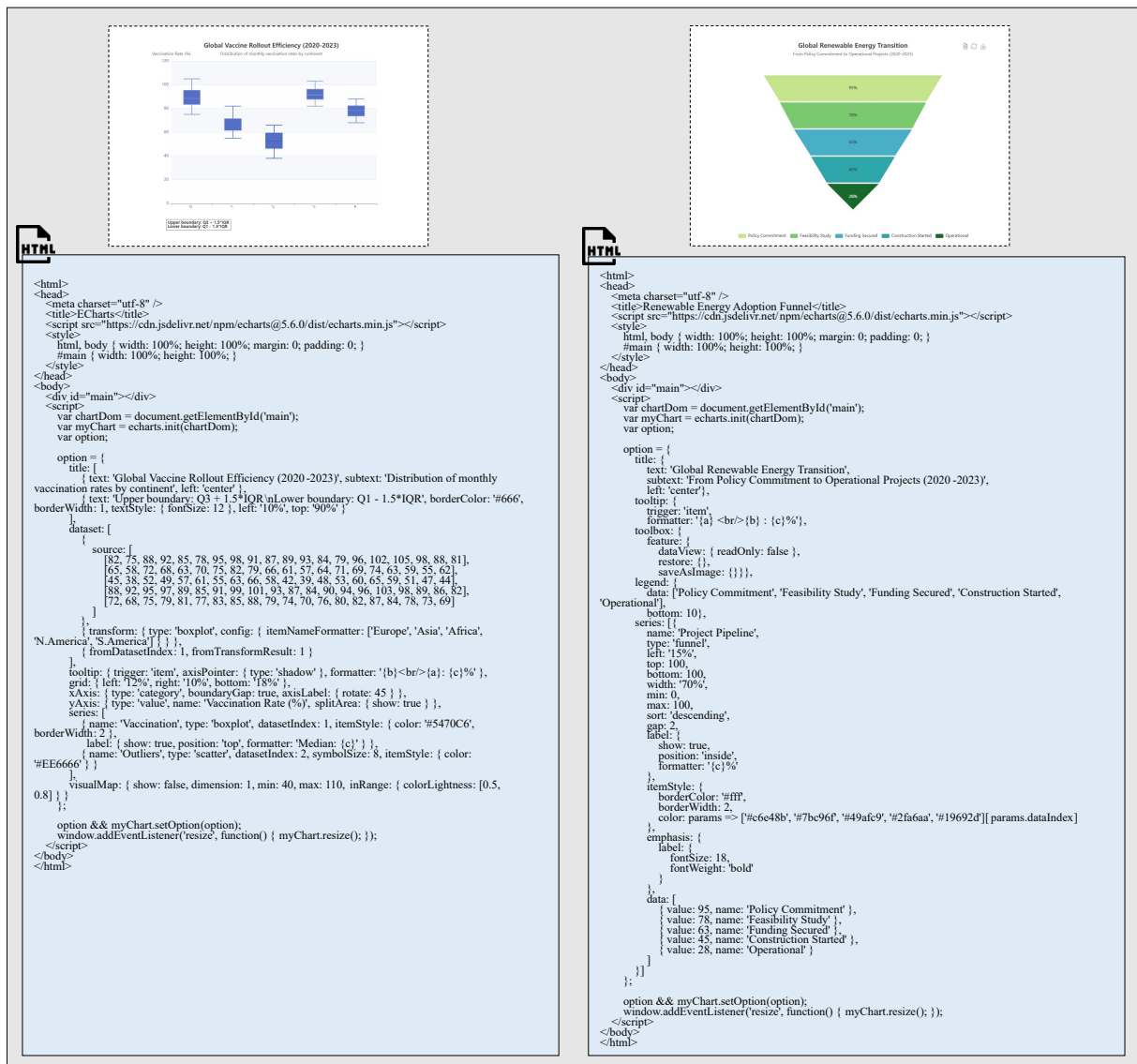


Figure 13: Example 2 from the Chart-to-Code Dataset.



Figure 14: Example 3 from the Chart-to-Code Dataset.

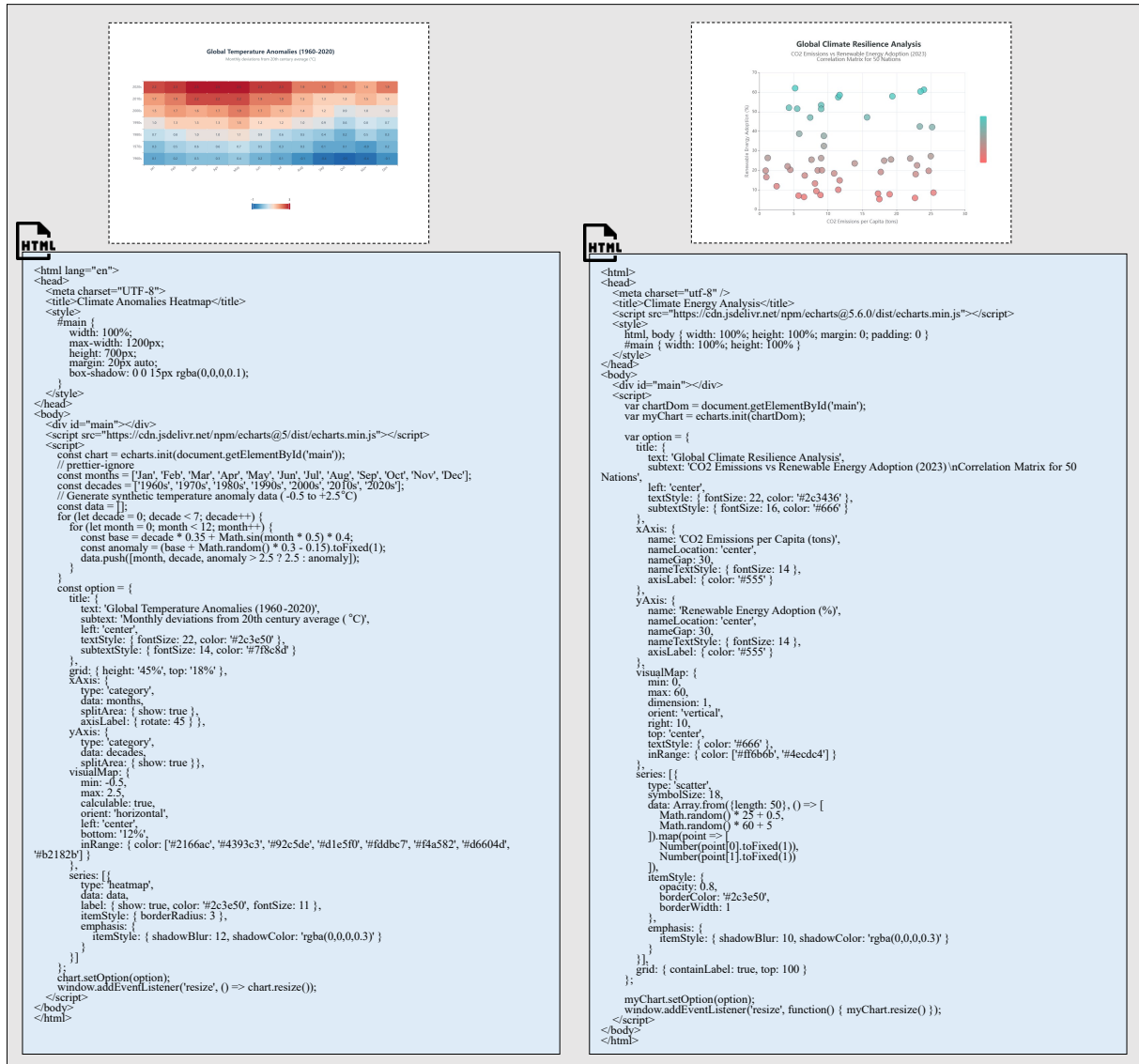


Figure 15: Example 4 from the Chart-to-Code Dataset.