

# TOPVIEWRS: Vision-Language Models as Top-View Spatial Reasoners

Anonymous ACL submission

## Abstract

Top-view perspective denotes a typical way in which humans read and reason over different types of maps, and it is vital for localization and navigation of humans as well as of ‘non-human’ agents, such as the ones backed by large Vision-Language Models (VLMs). Nonetheless, spatial reasoning capabilities of modern VLMs in this setup remain unattested and underexplored. In this work, we study their capability to understand and reason over spatial relations from the top view. The focus on top view also enables controlled evaluations at different granularity of spatial reasoning; we clearly disentangle different abilities (e.g., recognizing particular objects versus understanding their relative positions). We introduce the TOPVIEWRS (**Top-View Reasoning in Space**) dataset, consisting of 11,384 multiple-choice questions with either realistic or semantic top-view map as visual input. We then use it to study and evaluate VLMs across 4 perception and reasoning tasks with different levels of complexity. Evaluation of 10 representative open- and closed-source VLMs reveals the gap of *more than 50%* compared to average human performance, and it is even *lower* than the random baseline in some cases. Although additional experiments show that Chain-of-Thought reasoning can boost model capabilities by 5.82% on average, the overall performance of VLMs remains limited. Our findings underscore the critical need for enhanced model capability in top-view spatial reasoning and set a foundation for further research towards human-level proficiency of VLMs in real-world multimodal tasks.

## 1 Introduction

Large Language Models (LLMs) such as Llama 2 and 3 (Touvron et al., 2023), Mistral (Jiang et al., 2023), and GPT models (OpenAI, 2022) have delivered impressive performance across a range of text-based tasks and applications such as question answering, language generation, and arithmetic

reasoning (Qin et al., 2023a; Zhao et al., 2023). Building on these text-only LLMs, the so-called Vision Language Models (VLMs), equipped with the capability to process and reason over multi-modal vision-language information, have enabled multi-modal processing (Yin et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023). They ground language reasoning ability of LLMs into the information of different modalities (Chandu et al., 2021). Prominent examples of VLMs such as LLaVA (Liu et al., 2023b), GPT-4V (OpenAI, 2023), and Gemini (Google, 2024), have demonstrated strong performance across applications such as visual question answering (Li et al., 2023d), image captioning (Diesendruck et al., 2024), and object grounding (Zheng et al., 2024).

Spatial reasoning, one of the fundamental desirable properties of and requirements for VLMs, has also gained increased attention recently (Rajabi and Kosecka, 2023; Liu et al., 2023a; Chen et al., 2024). It requires grounding the model’s reasoning ability with natural language into its visual perception of the surrounding environment (Freksa, 1991). In particular, it involves two critical steps: (i) *interpreting* the environment visually, and (ii) *reasoning* over spatial relations. As a fundamental ability for the model to recognize, understand, and navigate through the physical world, it plays a crucial role in various downstream tasks such as vision-language generation (Li et al., 2024a) and embodied AI (Cho et al., 2024). However, previous research has focused on exploring spatial reasoning abilities of VLMs only from a conventional first-person perspective view (Liu et al., 2023a). In this work, we aim to study and evaluate spatial understanding and reasoning capability of VLMs from the *top-view perspective*, also referred to as the *bird’s-eye view* (Li et al., 2024b).

When compared to the conventional perspective view, top view offers better *natural alignment*: it is the typical perspective used for reading maps or presenting floor plans. Moreover, it is inherently

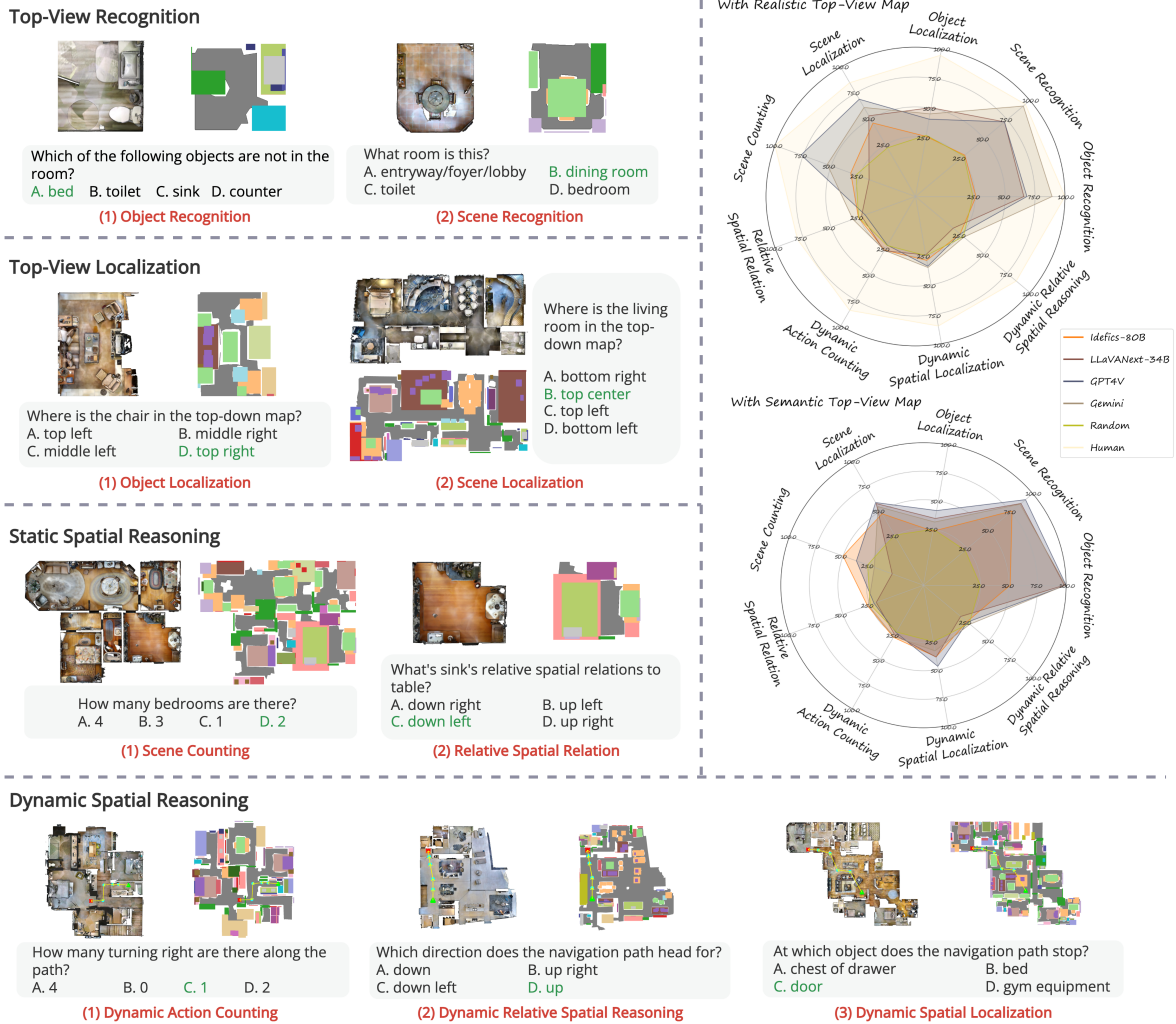


Figure 1: Illustration of the four evaluation tasks with an incremental level of complexity on the two types of top-view maps (photo-realistic versus semantic maps), covering top-view perception and spatial reasoning abilities, with 9 sub-tasks in total (red font), focusing on different, well-defined VLM abilities. The radar graphs (top right) compare the representative models’ performance on all sub-tasks, indicating a large gap with human performance.

more *complex*: top-view maps encapsulate a wealth of information about different scenes, locations, objects and their relationships in the environment based on a single image. In addition to the *photo-realistic* top-view maps, *semantic* top-view maps (Nanwani et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024a) use different colors to represent different types of objects; we run experiments with both map types, see Figure 1.

One advantage of top-view maps is that they define a controlled and interpretable experimental framework. Indoor scenes, which are the focus of this work, typically feature a relatively stable set of objects and layouts, making them ideal for controlled studies. This allows us to disentangle and investigate various aspects of spatial reasoning and VLMs’ capabilities in a controlled manner.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For instance, we can apply different interventions (e.g., drawing a navigation trajectory in a realistic map, or changing

In this work, we thus investigate the basic top-view spatial understanding and reasoning abilities of current state-of-the-art VLMs across four tasks of gradually increasing complexity, and their finer-grained sub-tasks. The tasks are as follows. 1) *Top-View Recognition* assesses whether the model can recognize concrete objects and scenes in top-view maps. 2) *Top-View Localization* evaluates the ability to localize objects or regions on a map based on textual descriptions. 3) *Static Spatial Reasoning* investigates whether the model can reason about spatial relationships among localized objects and regions within the map. 4) *Dynamic Spatial Reasoning* evaluates reasoning about spatial relations along the points of a dynamic navigation path. Figure 1 illustrates all the tasks with concrete examples. As one key finding of this study, con-

ducted evaluations reveal that current VLMs lack sufficient capability to effectively tackle top-view spatial reasoning challenges, indicating substantial room for improvement in future research.

**Contributions.** 1) We define the top-view spatial reasoning challenge for VLMs via 4 carefully designed tasks of increasing complexity, also encompassing 9 distinct fine-grained sub-tasks with a structured design of the questions focusing on different model abilities. 2) We collect the TOPVIEWERS dataset, comprising 11,384 multiple-choice questions with either photo-realistic or semantic top-view maps of real-world scenarios through a pipeline of automatic collection followed by human alignment. 3) We use TOPVIEWERS to evaluate and study 10 VLMs from different model families and sizes, highlighting the substantial performance gap compared to humans.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Related Work

**Top-View Map Understanding.** There are only limited studies in NLP focused on the use of top-view maps, though considerable research has been conducted within the broader AI community on the so-called *bird’s-eye view*, which is an instance of top view. This body of work has explored applications in autonomous driving (Unger et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024c), with contributions on fusing different types of views (Qin et al., 2023b) and working with arbitrary camera setups (Peng et al., 2023). In other application scenarios, Yan et al. (2021) introduce a bird’s-eye view person re-identification task.

Efforts to bridge top-view images with natural language in applications beyond the above are less diverse. The WAY dataset, proposed by Hahn et al. (2020), contains 6,154 dialogs aimed at localizing an observer’s position on a top-view map through conversations between an observer and a locator. This dataset has inspired follow-up research focusing on merging vision with dialog information (Zhang et al., 2024a) and leveraging pretraining strategies to enhance performance (Hahn and Rehg, 2022). In general, prior research does not assess VLMs’ basic spatial reasoning abilities with top-view images and lacks fine-grained and controllable analyses of these fundamental abilities.

**Spatial Reasoning on Multi-Modal Vision-Text.** There has been a body of work on text-only spatial reasoning with the advancement of LLMs (Yamada

et al., 2024), within the context of relative spatial relation recognition (Mirzaee et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2022), natural language navigation (Yamada et al., 2024), and planning (Momennejad et al., 2023) (see Appendix A for a more complete overview).

Cross-modal spatial reasoning puts forward higher requirements for the models in terms of language grounding (Rozanova et al., 2021; Rajabi and Kosecka, 2023). Liu et al. (2023a) investigate spatial reasoning with 2D natural realistic front-view images and Chen et al. (2024) extend the analysis to 3D point clouds. The environmental contexts become more diverse compared to synthetic symbols in text-only spatial reasoning, ranging from indoor environments (Koch et al., 2024) to outdoor street views (Chen et al., 2019). Regarding typical tasks, visual QA (VQA) is the mainstream task for benchmarking spatial reasoning abilities (Dong et al., 2021; Banerjee et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2023a; Li et al., 2023a,b; Kamath et al., 2023), while other tasks include vision-language navigation (Chen et al., 2019; Li et al., 2024a) and user interface grounding (Rozanova et al., 2021).<sup>3</sup>

We stress that none of the prior research efforts allows for *disentangled evaluation* of models’ spatial reasoning abilities. Prior work typically conflates object recognition with spatial reasoning. We thus design a dataset and conduct a study that not only offers insight into fundamental abilities but also allows for easier interpretation of results (§4).

## 3 Task Definition

Following prior work (Li et al., 2023a), we frame all tasks as multiple-choice QA tasks. Given a top-view (realistic or semantic) map of a room  $M$ , the model must choose the correct option  $o_i$  from the four options provided  $O = \{o_0, o_1, o_2, o_3\}$  that answers the question.<sup>4</sup> This format simplifies the evaluation and interpretation of the results.

**Top-View Maps.** We provide two different types of top-view maps to the models: realistic maps  $M_{\text{Real}}$  and semantic maps  $M_{\text{Sem}}$ . Realistic maps are constructed by placing a simulated orthographic camera above the scene to capture a photo-realistic top-view image. Semantic maps represent objects

<sup>2</sup>We publicly release (the part of) the dataset and code online at [URL-ANONYMOUS](https://url-anonymous).

<sup>3</sup>Research on multi-modal spatial reasoning also intersects with efforts from the computer vision community on scene understanding (Teney et al., 2017), simultaneous localization and mapping (Cadena et al., 2016), and combining LLMs with representations of the 3D physical world (Hong et al., 2023).

<sup>4</sup>For simplicity, for each question, there is always a *single correct answer*.

in the scene with colored bounding boxes. Each object is assigned a specific color and labeled at the same relative coordinates on the map to preserve the object’s semantic information and spatial allocation. In comparison to realistic maps, semantic maps simplify the initial step of spatial reasoning (i.e., environment interpretation) by labeling the object types with corresponding colors and excluding irrelevant additional details such as shape and texture found in realistic top-view maps. Given the customizable and flexible nature of color-object mapping, the semantic map can also serve as an ideal testbed for evaluating models’ out-of-distribution (OOD) performance, thereby encouraging further exploration beyond the scope of this work. Example maps are in Figure 1.

**Tasks and Sub-Tasks.** We define 4 different tasks which cover a total of 9 finer-grained sub-tasks, with concrete examples shown in Figure 1. The tasks are designed to have an increasing level of complexity, where each subsequent task depends on the abilities measured in the preceding one(s).

**(1) Top-View Recognition** evaluates the fundamental ability to interpret the input map, and covers two sub-tasks: *Object Recognition* and *Scene Recognition*. It does not require the model to identify specific locations of objects and rooms.

**(2) Top-View Localization** investigates whether the model can localize objects or rooms in the top-view map based on textual descriptions, including *Object Localization* and *Scene Localization* as two sub-tasks. Beyond understanding the top-view map as a whole, it requires the model to ground entities in the map, representing the model’s ability to align spatial descriptions with corresponding locations.

**(3) Static Spatial Reasoning** aims to evaluate the model’s spatial reasoning ability with more complex questions. It includes two sub-tasks: reasoning over *Scene Counting* and *Relative Spatial Relations* between different objects and rooms. These questions require the model to perform multi-step reasoning based on the recognition and localization of entities in the top-view map.

**(4) Dynamic Spatial Reasoning.** Finally, we introduce a novel task that involves dynamic spatial reasoning over top-view maps in the context of agent navigation. It requires the model to understand the sequential relations along the points of the navigation path (sub-task *Dynamic Action Counting*) and answer spatial questions with regard to the dynamic navigation path (sub-task *Dynamic*

*Relative Spatial Reasoning*) and the circumstantial environments (*Dynamic Spatial Localization*).

## 4 TOPVIEWRS Dataset

In order to study and evaluate the abilities of state-of-the-art VLMs on the 4 tasks spanning 9 sub-tasks from §3, we now introduce a novel evaluation dataset, TOPVIEWRS, which focuses on *top-view maps of indoor scenes* (i.e., houses and rooms), discussed in what follows.

**Dataset Features.** It introduces several advancements and innovative features that distinguish it from all prior visual spatial reasoning datasets.

**1) Multi-Scale Top-View Maps:** The selected top-view maps of indoor scenes (see Figure 1) provide a more natural representation of spatial environments that aligns with human cognitive map (Epstein et al., 2017). This makes benchmarking spatial awareness more straightforward and meanwhile mitigates spurious correlations in the positions between objects commonly found in realistic front-view images. Compared to the front view, the multi-scale top-view maps of single rooms and full houses add more divergence in the granularity of the entities (objects or rooms) in spatial reasoning. Meanwhile, we provide both realistic maps and semantic maps for more comprehensive evaluation.

**2) Realistic Environmental Scenarios with Rich Object Sets:** We provide real-world environments from indoor scenes, with 80 objects per scene on average, ensuring a natural distribution and complexity of object locations. This also sets it apart from existing front-view spatial reasoning datasets, which typically contain only a handful of objects.

**3) Structured Question Framework:** Unlike previous datasets (Li et al., 2023a; Liu et al., 2023a; Kamath et al., 2023), which conflate spatial reasoning with object recognition, our dataset clearly defines 4 tasks including 9 sub-tasks in total using diverse question templates. This structured approach allows for a fine-grained evaluation and analysis of models’ capabilities from various perspectives and levels of granularity.

**Dataset Collection.** We employ a two-stage data collection strategy that includes *automatic collection from a simulator* and *alignment through human judgment*. First, to approximate real-life scenarios, we use the Matterport3D dataset (Chang et al., 2017), which includes 90 building-scale scenes with instance-level semantic and room-level region

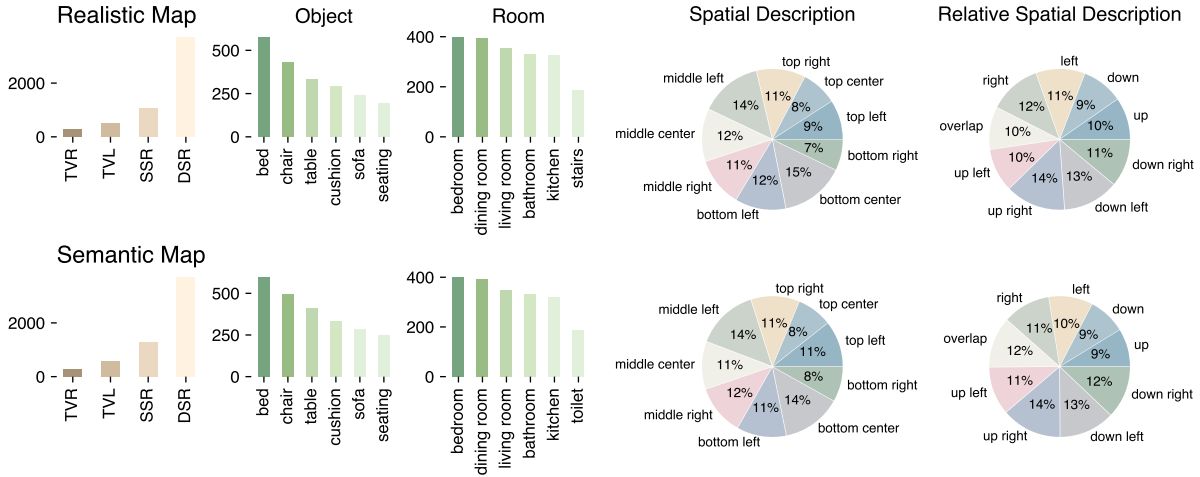


Figure 2: TOPVIEWERS data statistics, showing distribution of task sizes, objects, regions, spatial and relative spatial descriptions in realistic and semantic map settings, where the tasks are described with their initials for visualization.

309 annotations in 3D meshes. We filter these to ex- 310  
 311 clude multi-floor and low-quality scenes, select- 312  
 313 ing 7 scenes with an average of 80 objects and 12 314  
 315 rooms each. Realistic top-view maps are extracted 316  
 317 using orthographic cameras, and semantic top-view 318  
 319 maps are constructed using the Habitat (Manolis 320  
 321 Savva\* et al., 2019; Szot et al., 2021) simulation 322  
 323 environment. We then design a structured question 324  
 325 framework with 15 templates to minimize human 326  
 327 labor and standardize the data collection process. 328  
 329 To ensure quality, a second stage of manual *hu-* 330  
 331 *man judgment* aligns and verifies the data, ensuring 332  
 333 questions are natural and correct. Participants are 334  
 335 encouraged to discard or modify data points to im- 336  
 337 prove quality, maintaining alignment with human 338  
 339 judgments. We refer readers to Appendix B for fur- 340  
 341 ther details regarding the data collection process.

326 **Dataset Statistics.** TOPVIEWERS comprises a total 327  
 328 of 11,384 multiple-choice questions after human 329  
 330 verification, with 5,539 questions associated with 331  
 332 realistic top-view maps, and 5,845 with semantic 333  
 334 top-view maps. Human verification keeps 587/784 335  
 336 questions from the automatic collection phase for 337  
 338 Top-View Recognition, 1,077/1,384 for Top-View 339  
 340 Localization, 2,340/3,080 for Static Spatial Reason- 341  
 342 ing. The choices are uniformly distributed over 343  
 344 choices A (25.5%), B (24.6%), C (24.5%) and D 345  
 346 (25.4%). Figure 2 shows the distribution of differ- 347  
 348 ent tasks, objects, regions and spatial descriptions. 349  
 350 The size of each task aligns with its corresponding 351  
 352 difficulty level, where the easier task comprises 353  
 354 fewer examples. We provide further insights and 355  
 356 technical details in Appendix B.4.

## 342 5 Experiments and Results

343 **Models and Implementation.** We test a repre- 344  
 345 sentative selection of both open-sourced and close- 346  
 347 sourced models which achieve state-of-the-art per- 348  
 349 formance on a range of multimodal benchmarks 350  
 351 (Liu et al., 2023c; Li et al., 2023a) in a zero-shot in- 352  
 353 ference setup. Regarding open-sourced models, we 354  
 355 study and evaluate Idefics (9B & 80B) (Laurençon 356  
 357 et al., 2023), LLaVA-Next (7B, 13B & 34B) (Liu 358  
 359 et al., 2024), InternLM-XComposer2 (7B) (Dong 360  
 361 et al., 2024), Qwen-VL (7B) (Bai et al., 2023). The 362  
 363 chosen close-sourced models are GPT-4V (Open- 364  
 365 AI, 2023) and Gemini (Google, 2024).<sup>5</sup> All the 366  
 367 models are implemented within the VLMEvalKit 368  
 369 framework (OpenCompass Contributors, 2023).

357 **Prompts.** For realistic maps, we provide the VLMs 358  
 359 with the task description along with the multiple- 360  
 361 choice question. For semantic maps, in addition to 362  
 363 the information above, we also introduce the concept 364  
 365 of a semantic map to the model and provide the 366  
 367 color-object mapping in the prompt in order to 368  
 369 facilitate its understanding of the abstract map. We 370  
 371 only provide the color-object mappings of the col- 372  
 373 ors that are presented in the semantic map as a pre- 374  
 375 processing strategy in order to exclude irrelevant 376  
 377 information. For the specific prompting templates 378  
 379 used in this paper, we refer to Appendix C.2.

369 **Evaluation Measures.** We measure multiple- 370  
 371 choice QA accuracy via *Exact Match (EM)* and 372  
 373 *Partial Match (PM)*. EM measures whether the pre- 374  
 375 dicted option indices are exactly the same as the 376  
 377 label indices. However, there may be cases where 378  
 379

<sup>5</sup>We use *GPT-4-turbo-2024-04-09* of GPT-4V and latest stable *gemini-pro-vision 1.0* of Gemini.

the correct answer to the question can be considered partially correct, e.g., the answer is *top right* while the prediction is *top left*. PM then calculates the proportion of overlapping words between the predicted answer and the gold answer. It is calculated based on the correctness of the text spans (or words) of predicted options, as given by:

$$PM = \frac{|\{\text{labels}\} \cap \{\text{predictions}\}|}{\max(|\{\text{labels}\}|, |\{\text{predictions}\}|)}$$

## 5.1 Results and Discussion

We first discuss the models’ performance across our four tasks, with results summarized in Table 1, and fine-grained sub-task performance illustrated in Figure 3. We find that the performance of current state-of-the-art VLMs is *unsatisfactory* on the proposed TOPVIEWERS benchmark with model-wise average EM and PM over all tasks below 50%. Gemini is the best-performing model for realistic maps, while GPT-4V excels in semantic maps. For some models, such as Qwen-VL, the results are sometimes much worse than the random baseline. This issue primarily arises from the models’ difficulty in following the instructions to choose from the four provided options.

### Models perform better on recognition and localization tasks compared to reasoning tasks.

Top-View Recognition consistently demonstrates the highest performance across all models. Gemini shows human-comparable performance with the EM score over 90%. Top-View Localization exhibits lower performance compared to Top-View Recognition, followed by Static Spatial Reasoning. The performance difference of various tasks with different levels of complexity underscores *the advantage of our benchmark to capture well-defined and disentangled phenomena*, which allows for controlled studies in controlled environments.

Regarding Dynamic Spatial Reasoning, models perform better on this task than on the previous tasks. Fine-grained performance in Figure 3 indicates that the improved performance primarily stems from high accuracy in dynamic action counting and spatial localization, which constitute 18% and 66% of the data respectively for this task. We attribute the high accuracy in these areas to the equivalence between navigation path symbols and visual prompting (Shtedritski et al., 2023). Despite these advancements, the overall EM accuracy remains below 40%, and *models still struggle with reasoning over dynamic relative spatial relations*.

**Larger models do not always show better spatial awareness.** Surprisingly, our results reveal that larger model sizes do not consistently translate to better performance. In Top-View Recognition, closed-source models outperform open-source models by 31.10% EM with realistic maps and 29.33% EM with semantic maps. However, the performance gap narrows as the task complexity increases. Using realistic maps as the visual input, Gemini stands out by achieving a minimum of 5.53% higher EM accuracy in Static Spatial Reasoning compared to other models, while GPT-4V performs worse than Idefics-9B on both Static and Dynamic Spatial Reasoning tasks. This indicates a lack of significant difference in spatial awareness between closed-source and open-source models for tasks with higher complexity, despite the disparity in their model sizes. This trend holds true within open-sourced models as well. Both Idefics and LLaVANext model families in some cases show comparable or worse performance with larger model variants than with smaller ones. Similar observations have been made by previous studies (Zhong et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2024). We conjecture that this might be caused by inadequate evidence of the scaling law (Kaplan et al., 2020) in the computer vision community (Tian et al., 2024). The results on TOPVIEWERS thus advocate for further investigation and analysis in this area.

**Models perform better in easier tasks with semantic maps.** In simple tasks such as Top-View Recognition, models generally perform better with semantic maps than with realistic maps, except for Qwen-VL, showing an improvement of 20.35%. However, this advantage decreases in more complex tasks. For Top-View Localization and Static Spatial Reasoning, models struggle to utilize semantic top-view maps, yielding performances akin to random baselines in both EM and PM accuracy. One possible explanation is that the semantic top-view image and the input prompt with color-object mapping deviate too much from the models’ training data distribution. This is further evidenced by the predictions from open-sourced models such as Qwen-VL, which fail to respond to instructions and answer with numbers or RGB values 91.25% of the time for Top-View Localization and 47.65% of the time for Static Spatial Reasoning.

**Fine-Grained Insights with Sub-Tasks.** Models using realistic maps excel more in the sub-task of Scene Recognition, which involves larger entities,

Model		Idefics		LLaVANext				XComposer2	Qwen-VL	GPT-4V	Gemini
Model Size		9B	80B	vicuna 7B	mistral 7B	vicuna 13B	34B	7B	7B	API	API
<b>Realistic Map</b>											
Top-View Recognition	EM	41.10	26.71	67.47	61.30	61.64	67.81	37.67	27.05	69.52	<b>90.41</b>
	PM	41.10	26.88	67.64	61.47	61.99	67.81	37.67	27.26	69.86	<b>90.58</b>
Top-View Localization	EM	30.39	30.00	42.16	33.92	41.18	<b>50.98</b>	27.84	16.27	46.27	48.24
	PM	46.42	46.08	56.67	48.63	54.31	<b>61.76</b>	41.86	26.31	60.39	60.98
Static Spatial Reasoning	EM	24.07	26.07	19.87	24.36	20.25	22.73	25.79	14.71	22.16	<b>31.61</b>
	PM	33.68	38.52	34.40	37.34	36.26	35.56	38.73	21.15	35.59	<b>45.22</b>
Dynamic Spatial Reasoning	EM	38.10	27.94	<b>38.81</b>	24.31	29.08	23.79	24.07	22.11	30.29	32.60
	PM	40.88	30.68	<b>42.15</b>	26.69	32.89	27.28	26.86	24.65	33.86	35.80
<b>Semantic Map</b>											
Top-View Recognition	EM	60.68	59.32	88.81	80.00	88.14	94.58	43.05	19.66	<b>97.29</b>	94.92
	PM	60.68	59.32	88.81	80.00	88.49	94.58	43.05	20.05	<b>97.29</b>	94.92
Top-View Localization	EM	31.21	27.34	25.40	32.10	17.28	38.45	24.87	9.70	<b>44.44</b>	35.27
	PM	47.62	45.41	44.27	47.80	23.66	53.79	41.09	13.99	<b>58.55</b>	49.91
Static Spatial Reasoning	EM	23.82	<b>28.07</b>	18.72	24.28	16.63	18.41	23.05	14.85	21.73	26.22
	PM	34.13	38.17	30.57	37.26	29.94	31.22	35.50	21.99	33.09	<b>39.12</b>
Dynamic Spatial Reasoning	EM	36.67	34.55	37.45	26.23	19.92	33.12	21.60	23.55	<b>39.30</b>	31.41
	PM	39.92	37.75	40.69	28.89	23.63	36.86	24.32	26.09	<b>43.20</b>	34.86

Table 1: Comparison of 10 models on both realistic and semantic top-view maps. Performance is analysed according to four tasks with EM and PM. The best performance for each task is illustrated in **bold**.

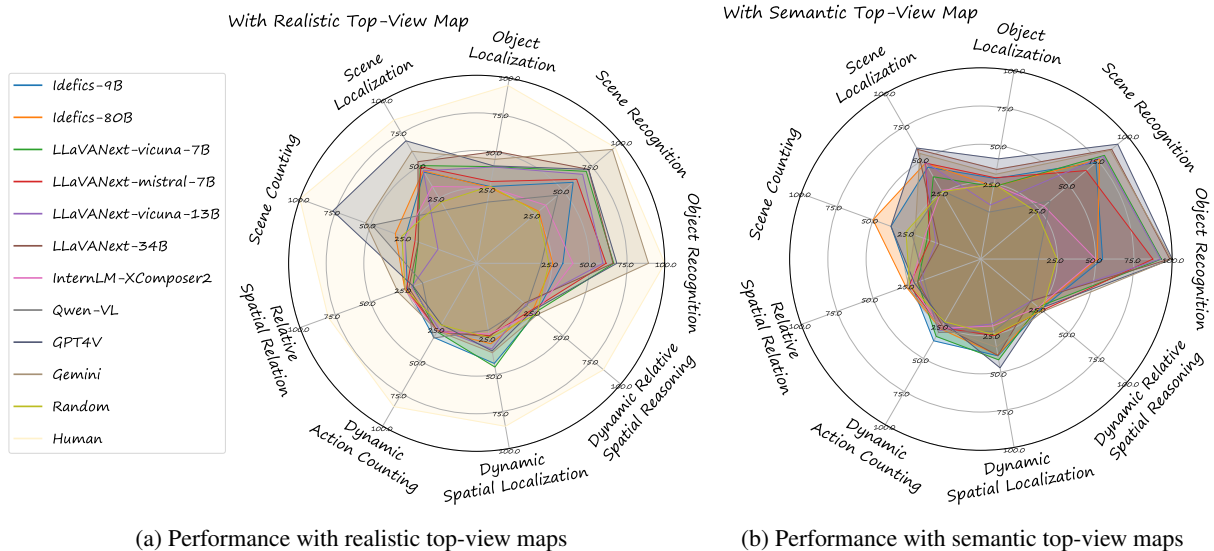


Figure 3: Visualization of fine-grained comparison with 10 models and humans on 9 sub-tasks using realistic and semantic top-view maps, demonstrating that *most current models perform on par with random baseline in spatial reasoning and has a large gap with human performance*. Exact numbers are reported in Table 15 in the Appendix.

474 compared to Object Recognition. This gap is also  
475 evident in a 12.66% and 19.73% performance dif-  
476 ference between object-level and scene-level local-  
477 ization with both map types. Conversely, with se-  
478 mantic maps, the model struggles more with scene-  
479 level recognition than with realistic maps, showing  
480 an 11.09% lower performance than object-level  
481 recognition among closed-source models. Most  
482 models perform similarly to a random baseline in  
483 reasoning over spatial relations but show higher  
484 accuracy in scene counting. This likely occurs be-  
485 cause 95% of the correct room counts are within  
486 a narrow range (1 or 2), reflecting real-life dis-  
487 tributions. Thus, models leverage commonsense

488 knowledge as the shortcut for counting, as seen in  
489 the 54.73% performance gap (with GPT-4V) be-  
490 tween counting scenes and actions. However, the  
491 spatial localization and reasoning abilities of both  
492 open-source and closed-source models still remain  
493 unsatisfactory, even at the level of sub-tasks.

## 494 5.2 Further Discussion

495 **Gap to Human Performance.** We now study how  
496 humans perform on this dataset and the gap be-  
497 tween current models and human performance. To  
498 this end, we recruited 4 human participants who  
499 were not involved in dataset creation for human  
500 evaluation. A total of 60 data points with realistic

Task	Ability	Size	Human	GPT-4V
TVR	Object Recognition	5	95	100
	Scene Recognition	5	100	80
TVL	Object Localization	5	95	20
	Scene Localization	10	85	60
SSR	Scene Counting	5	100	80
	Relative Spatial Relation	10	80	0
DSR	Dynamic Action Counting	5	85	0
	Dynamic Spatial Localization	10	85	40
	Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning	5	85	0
Average Score			90.0	42.2

Table 2: Performance (EM) between human and GPT-4V on all the sub-tasks, demonstrating a huge *gap* between GPT-4V and human.

top-view maps are randomly selected from the sub-tasks, covering all fine-grained question types.<sup>6</sup> We use Fleiss Kappa as the measure of inter-annotator agreement. The kappa score is 0.747, indicating substantial agreement shared by the human participants according to Landis and Koch (1977). The average performance of the human participants is shown in Table 2. The experimental results show that there is still a large gap with human performance by over 50% across all the sub-tasks that involve spatial awareness. We also observe that with GPT-4V, human performs 47.8% higher than the model on average. The gap between human and model performance is larger on complex reasoning tasks compared to the recognition tasks, indicating plenty of room for improvement.

**Chain-of-Thought Helps Elicit Spatial Reasoning.** Due to the compositionality of Static Spatial Reasoning based on Top-View Recognition and Localization in task design, the model is supposed to answer the question based on the locations of the entities in the top-view map. Inspired by this requirement, we explored whether Chain-of-Thought (CoT) reasoning (Wei et al., 2022) could facilitate spatial reasoning by initially prompting the model to localize entities before producing the final answer to the question. To implement this, we modified the instruction to include: “*You should first localize the entity and then answer the question based on the locations*”, thereby encouraging the model to process information and think step by step. Considering that CoT has shown effectiveness in larger models (Wei et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023c), we conducted experiments with GPT-4V and Gem-

<sup>6</sup>We did not run human evaluation on semantic maps because they are inherently easier to reason over; they skip the process of recognizing the objects before reasoning, which makes the task simpler but with more sufficient and accurate information for reasoning.

Model	GPT-4V			Gemini		
	w/o. CoT	w. CoT	$\Delta$	w/o.CoT	w. CoT	$\Delta$
<b>RGB Overall</b>	22.16	26.74	+4.58	31.61	40.02	+8.41
<i>Scene Counting</i>	76.74	25.58	-51.16	53.49	48.84	-4.65
<i>Relative Spatial Relations</i>	19.82	26.79	+6.97	30.68	39.64	+8.96
<b>Semantic Overall</b>	21.73	28.07	+6.34	26.22	30.16	+3.94
<i>Scene Counting</i>	37.50	47.92	+10.42	20.83	29.17	+8.34
<i>Relative Spatial Relations</i>	21.12	27.31	+6.19	26.43	30.20	+3.77

Table 3: Comparison of model performance (EM) w/ and w/o Chain of Thought (CoT) on Static Spatial Reasoning, showing that *CoT helps elicit spatial reasoning*.

ini to evaluate this hypothesis. As shown in Table 3, incorporating CoT into the reasoning process notably enhances performance. Specifically, the models’ accuracy improved by 4.58% when using realistic maps and 6.34% with semantic maps for GPT-4V. This improvement underscores the potential of step-by-step reasoning in enhancing the efficacy of spatial reasoning tasks, but there is still a substantial performance gap to the human ceiling.

## 6 Conclusion

In this study, we designed four tasks to examine the capabilities of VLMs as top-view spatial reasoners, progressing from basic top-view map comprehension to dynamic spatial reasoning along navigation paths. To enable investigation into top-view spatial reasoning abilities of VLMs, we collected a novel dataset, TOPVIEWERS, which includes 11,384 multiple-choice questions, featuring photo-realistic and semantic top-view maps as the visual input. Our extensive experiments involved evaluating 10 VLMs across various model families and sizes on TOPVIEWERS. The results highlight a critical observation: particularly in complex reasoning tasks, VLMs frequently perform only as well as a random baseline, with even more pronounced deficits when handling tasks with semantic maps. Moreover, there is a noticeable performance gap compared to human annotators, underscoring the significant potential for further improvements in this area. In response to these findings, we discovered that employing chain-of-thought reasoning enhances model performance in spatial reasoning by 5.82%. Despite this progress, the overall performance of VLMs on spatial reasoning remains less than satisfactory. We hope that our study can set the stage for future research in multimodal spatial reasoning and encourage further investigations into refining the reasoning techniques, moving VLMs closer to human-level proficiency in understanding and reasoning over real-world environments.



## 575 Limitations

576 The TOPVIEWRS dataset primarily evaluates  
577 model performance in entity recognition, localiza-  
578 tion, and spatial reasoning over 2D top-view maps.  
579 However, it does not yet include task-oriented plan-  
580 ning with spatial awareness, which involves more  
581 complex sequential decision-making and dynamic  
582 interactions.

583 Further, our dataset assumes one correct answer  
584 per question, but exploring scenarios with multiple  
585 correct answers or no correct answers could further  
586 challenge systems and provide valuable insights.

587 We also advocate for further research to explore  
588 how spatial awareness in models impacts down-  
589 stream tasks such as navigation instruction genera-  
590 tion (Li et al., 2024a) and task completion by lan-  
591 guage agents in real-world environments (Parashar  
592 et al., 2023).

593 Moreover, our study is currently limited to 2D  
594 top-view maps, whereas spatial reasoning can en-  
595 compass a variety of modalities and perspectives,  
596 such as 3D point clouds.

597 From the perspective of the models, the rapid  
598 progress in VLMs makes it hard to include all  
599 new releases such as Idefics 2 (Laurençon et al.,  
600 2024). Additionally, multimodal in-context learn-  
601 ing (MICL) remains underexplored and is only sup-  
602 ported by VLMs trained with interleaved image-  
603 text data (Baldassini et al., 2024). Although not  
604 universal across all VLMs, MICL has been effec-  
605 tive in handling out-of-distribution tasks (Zhang  
606 et al., 2024b), which could also be interesting in  
607 TOPVIEWRS, especially with semantic maps as  
608 visual inputs. In future work, we aim to extend  
609 our analysis to include more modalities, evaluate a  
610 broader range of models and their capabilities, and  
611 investigate additional downstream tasks involving  
612 spatial awareness.

## 613 Ethics Statement

614 Our research strictly follows ethical guidelines, fo-  
615 cusing on data privacy, bias mitigation, and societal  
616 impact. During the dataset construction, we care-  
617 fully check the licenses of the software we use  
618 and follow it strictly. The human participants in  
619 our study are recruited from our university with  
620 bachelor’s degree and are guaranteed compensa-  
621 tion above the local minimum average. They have  
622 consented to the use of their annotations in our  
623 research. We do not see any potential risk of our  
624 project.

## References

- 625 Jinze Bai, Shuai Bai, Shusheng Yang, Shijie Wang,  
626 Sinan Tan, Peng Wang, Junyang Lin, Chang Zhou,  
627 and Jingren Zhou. 2023. *Qwen-vl: A versatile vision-  
628 language model for understanding, localization, text  
629 reading, and beyond*. *Preprint*, arXiv:2308.12966. 630
- Folco Bertini Baldassini, Mustafa Shukor, Matthieu  
631 Cord, Laure Soulier, and Benjamin Piwowarski. 2024.  
632 *What makes multimodal in-context learning work?*  
633 *Preprint*, arXiv:2404.15736. 634
- Pratyay Banerjee, Tejas Gokhale, Yezhou Yang, and  
635 Chitta Baral. 2021. Weakly supervised relative spa-  
636 tial reasoning for visual question answering. In *Pro-  
637 ceedings of the IEEE/CVF International Conference  
638 on Computer Vision (ICCV)*, pages 1908–1918. 639
- Cesar Cadena, Luca Carlone, Henry Carrillo, Yasir  
640 Latif, Davide Scaramuzza, Jose Neira, Ian Reid, and  
641 John J. Leonard. 2016. *Past, present, and future  
642 of simultaneous localization and mapping: Toward  
643 the robust-perception age*. *IEEE Transactions on  
644 Robotics*, 32(6):1309–1332. 645
- Khyathi Raghavi Chandu, Yonatan Bisk, and Alan W  
646 Black. 2021. *Grounding ‘grounding’ in NLP*. In  
647 *Findings of the Association for Computational Lin-  
648 guistics: ACL-IJCNLP 2021*, pages 4283–4305, On-  
649 line. Association for Computational Linguistics. 650
- Angel Chang, Angela Dai, Thomas Funkhouser, Maciej  
651 Halber, Matthias Niessner, Manolis Savva, Shuran  
652 Song, Andy Zeng, and Yinda Zhang. 2017. *Mat-  
653 terport3d: Learning from rgb-d data in indoor en-  
654 vironments*. *International Conference on 3D Vision  
655 (3DV)*. 656
- Boyuan Chen, Zhuo Xu, Sean Kirmani, Brian Ichter,  
657 Danny Driess, Pete Florence, Dorsa Sadigh, Leonidas  
658 Guibas, and Fei Xia. 2024. *Spatialvlm: Endowing  
659 vision-language models with spatial reasoning capa-  
660 bilities*. *Preprint*, arXiv:2401.12168. 661
- Howard Chen, Alane Suhr, Dipendra Misra, Noah  
662 Snavely, and Yoav Artzi. 2019. *Touchdown: Natural  
663 language navigation and spatial reasoning in visual  
664 street environments*. In *2019 IEEE/CVF Conference  
665 on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition (CVPR)*.  
666 IEEE. 667
- Junmo Cho, Jaesik Yoon, and Sungjin Ahn. 2024.  
668 *Spatially-aware transformers for embodied agents*.  
669 In *The Twelfth International Conference on Learning  
670 Representations*. 671
- Maurice Diesendruck, Jianzhe Lin, Shima Imani, Gay-  
672 athri Mahalingam, Mingyang Xu, and Jie Zhao. 2024.  
673 *Learning how to ask: Cycle-consistency refines  
674 prompts in multimodal foundation models*. *Preprint*,  
675 arXiv:2402.08756. 676
- Tianai Dong, Alberto Testoni, Luciana Benotti, and Raf-  
677 faella Bernardi. 2021. *Visually grounded follow-up*  
678



792	<i>IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence</i> , 46(4):2151–2170.	<i>Processing Systems</i> , volume 36, pages 69736–69751.	848
793		Curran Associates, Inc.	849
794	Liunian Harold Li, Jack Hessel, Youngjae Yu, Xiang Ren, Kai-Wei Chang, and Yejin Choi. 2023c. <a href="#">Symbolic chain-of-thought distillation: Small models can also “think” step-by-step</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the 61st Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers)</i> , pages 2665–2679, Toronto, Canada. Association for Computational Linguistics.	Laksh Nanwani, Anmol Agarwal, Kanishk Jain, Raghav Prabhakar, Aaron Monis, Aditya Mathur, Krishna Murthy Jatavallabhula, A. H. Abdul Hafez, Vineet Gandhi, and K. Madhava Krishna. 2023. <a href="#">Instance-level semantic maps for vision language navigation</a> . In <i>2023 32nd IEEE International Conference on Robot and Human Interactive Communication (RO-MAN)</i> . IEEE.	850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857
802	Yunxin Li, Longyue Wang, Baotian Hu, Xinyu Chen, Wanqi Zhong, Chenyang Lyu, Wei Wang, and Min Zhang. 2023d. <a href="#">A comprehensive evaluation of gpt-4v on knowledge-intensive visual question answering</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2311.07536.	OpenAI. 2022. <a href="#">Chatgpt blog post</a> .	858
803		OpenAI. 2023. <a href="#">GPT-4V(ision) Technical Work and Authors</a> .	859
804			860
805		OpenCompass Contributors. 2023. <a href="#">Opencompass: A universal evaluation platform for foundation models</a> . <a href="https://github.com/open-compass/opencompass">https://github.com/open-compass/opencompass</a> .	861 862 863 864
806			
807	Fangyu Liu, Guy Emerson, and Nigel Collier. 2023a. <a href="#">Visual spatial reasoning</a> . <i>Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics</i> , 11:635–651.	Priyam Parashar, Vidhi Jain, Xiaohan Zhang, Jay Vakil, Sam Powers, Yonatan Bisk, and Chris Paxton. 2023. <a href="#">Slap: Spatial-language attention policies</a> . In <i>Proceedings of The 7th Conference on Robot Learning</i> , volume 229 of <i>Proceedings of Machine Learning Research</i> , pages 3571–3596. PMLR.	865 866 867 868 869 870
808			
809			
810	Haotian Liu, Chunyuan Li, Yuheng Li, Bo Li, Yuanhan Zhang, Sheng Shen, and Yong Jae Lee. 2024. <a href="#">Llava-next: Improved reasoning, OCR, and world knowledge</a> .	Lang Peng, Zhirong Chen, Zhangjie Fu, Pengpeng Liang, and Erkang Cheng. 2023. <a href="#">Bevsegformer: Bird’s eye view semantic segmentation from arbitrary camera rigs</a> . In <i>2023 IEEE/CVF Winter Conference on Applications of Computer Vision (WACV)</i> . IEEE.	871 872 873 874 875
811			
812			
813			
814	Haotian Liu, Chunyuan Li, Qingyang Wu, and Yong Jae Lee. 2023b. <a href="#">Visual instruction tuning</a> .	Chengwei Qin, Aston Zhang, Zhuosheng Zhang, Jiaao Chen, Michihiro Yasunaga, and Diyi Yang. 2023a. <a href="#">Is ChatGPT a general-purpose natural language processing task solver?</a> In <i>Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing</i> , pages 1339–1384, Singapore. Association for Computational Linguistics.	876 877 878 879 880 881 882
815			
816	Yuan Liu, Haodong Duan, Yuanhan Zhang, Bo Li, Songyang Zhang, Wangbo Zhao, Yike Yuan, Jiaqi Wang, Conghui He, Ziwei Liu, Kai Chen, and Dahua Lin. 2023c. <a href="#">Mmbench: Is your multi-modal model an all-around player?</a> <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2307.06281.	Zequan Qin, Jingyu Chen, Chao Chen, Xiaozhi Chen, and Xi Li. 2023b. <a href="#">Unifusion: Unified multi-view fusion transformer for spatial-temporal representation in bird’s-eye-view</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV)</i> , pages 8690–8699.	883 884 885 886 887 888
817			
818			
819			
820			
821	Manolis Savva*, Abhishek Kadian*, Oleksandr Maksymets*, Yili Zhao, Erik Wijmans, Bhavana Jain, Julian Straub, Jia Liu, Vladlen Koltun, Jitendra Malik, Devi Parikh, and Dhruv Batra. 2019. <a href="#">Habitat: A Platform for Embodied AI Research</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV)</i> .	Navid Rajabi and Jana Kosecka. 2023. <a href="#">Towards grounded visual spatial reasoning in multi-modal vision language models</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2308.09778.	889 890 891
822			
823			
824			
825			
826			
827			
828	Roshanak Mirzaee and Parisa Kordjamshidi. 2022. <a href="#">Transfer learning with synthetic corpora for spatial role labeling and reasoning</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the 2022 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing</i> , pages 6148–6165, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Association for Computational Linguistics.	Julia Rozanova, Deborah Ferreira, Krishna Dubba, Weiwei Cheng, Dell Zhang, and Andre Freitas. 2021. <a href="#">Grounding natural language instructions: Can large language models capture spatial information?</a> <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2109.08634.	892 893 894 895 896
829			
830			
831			
832			
833			
834			
835	Roshanak Mirzaee, Hossein Rajaby Faghihi, Qiang Ning, and Parisa Kordjamshidi. 2021. <a href="#">SPARTQA: A textual question answering benchmark for spatial reasoning</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the 2021 Conference of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies</i> , pages 4582–4598, Online. Association for Computational Linguistics.	Baifeng Shi, Ziyang Wu, Maolin Mao, Xin Wang, and Trevor Darrell. 2024. <a href="#">When do we not need larger vision models?</a> <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2403.13043.	897 898 899
836			
837			
838			
839			
840			
841			
842			
843	Ida Momennejad, Hosein Hasanbeig, Felipe Vieira Fruleri, Hiteshi Sharma, Nebojsa Jojic, Hamid Palangi, Robert Ness, and Jonathan Larson. 2023. <a href="#">Evaluating cognitive maps and planning in large language models with cogeval</a> . In <i>Advances in Neural Information</i>		
844			
845			
846			
847			

900	Zhengxiang Shi, Qiang Zhang, and Aldo Lipani. 2022.	and Denny Zhou. 2022. <a href="#">Chain-of-thought prompting elicits reasoning in large language models</a> . In <i>Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems</i> , volume 35, pages 24824–24837. Curran Associates, Inc.	959
901	<a href="#">Stepgame: A new benchmark for robust multi-hop spatial reasoning in texts</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence</i> , volume 36, pages 11321–11329.		960
902			961
903			962
904			963
905	Aleksandar Shtedritski, Christian Rupprecht, and Andrea Vedaldi. 2023. <a href="#">What does clip know about a red circle? visual prompt engineering for vlms</a> . In <i>2023 IEEE/CVF International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV)</i> . IEEE.	Jason Weston, Antoine Bordes, Sumit Chopra, and Tomas Mikolov. 2016. <a href="#">Towards ai-complete question answering: A set of prerequisite toy tasks</a> . In <i>4th International Conference on Learning Representations, ICLR 2016, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 2-4, 2016, Conference Track Proceedings</i> .	964
906			965
907			966
908			967
909			968
910	Andrew Szot, Alex Clegg, Eric Undersander, Erik Wijmans, Yili Zhao, John Turner, Noah Maestre, Mustafa Mukadam, Devendra Chaplot, Oleksandr Maksymets, Aaron Gokaslan, Vladimir Vondrus, Sameer Dharur, Franziska Meier, Wojciech Galuba, Angel Chang, Zsolt Kira, Vladlen Koltun, Jitendra Malik, Manolis Savva, and Dhruv Batra. 2021. <a href="#">Habitat 2.0: Training home assistants to rearrange their habitat</a> . In <i>Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS)</i> .	Jiayang Wu, Wensheng Gan, Zefeng Chen, Shicheng Wan, and Philip S. Yu. 2023. <a href="#">Multimodal large language models: A survey</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2311.13165.	970
911			971
912			972
913			973
914			974
915			975
916			976
917			977
918			978
919			979
920	Damien Teney, Lingqiao Liu, and Anton Van Den Hengel. 2017. <a href="#">Graph-structured representations for visual question answering</a> . In <i>2017 IEEE Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition (CVPR)</i> , pages 3233–3241.	Yutaro Yamada, Yihan Bao, Andrew Kyle Lampinen, Jungo Kasai, and Ilker Yildirim. 2024. <a href="#">Evaluating spatial understanding of large language models</a> . <i>Transactions on Machine Learning Research</i> .	980
921			981
922			982
923			983
924			984
925	Keyu Tian, Yi Jiang, Zehuan Yuan, Bingyue Peng, and Liwei Wang. 2024. <a href="#">Visual autoregressive modeling: Scalable image generation via next-scale prediction</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2404.02905.	Cheng Yan, Guansong Pang, Lei Wang, Jile Jiao, Xuetao Feng, Chunhua Shen, and Jingjing Li. 2021. <a href="#">Bv-person: A large-scale dataset for bird-view person re-identification</a> . In <i>Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV)</i> , pages 10943–10952.	985
926			986
927			987
928			988
929	Hugo Touvron, Louis Martin, Kevin Stone, Peter Albert, Amjad Almahairi, Yasmine Babaei, Nikolay Bashlykov, Soumya Batra, Prajwal Bhargava, Shruti Bhosale, Dan Bikel, Lukas Blecher, Cristian Canton Ferrer, Moya Chen, Guillem Cucurull, David Esiobu, Jude Fernandes, Jeremy Fu, Wenyin Fu, Brian Fuller, Cynthia Gao, Vedanuj Goswami, Naman Goyal, Anthony Hartshorn, Saghar Hosseini, Rui Hou, Hakan Inan, Marcin Kardas, Viktor Kerkez, Madian Khabsa, Isabel Kloumann, Artem Korenev, Punit Singh Koura, Marie-Anne Lachaux, Thibaut Lavril, Jenya Lee, Diana Liskovich, Yinghai Lu, Yuning Mao, Xavier Martinet, Todor Mihaylov, Pushkar Mishra, Igor Molybog, Yixin Nie, Andrew Poulton, Jeremy Reizenstein, Rashi Rungta, Kalyan Saladi, Alan Schelten, Ruan Silva, Eric Michael Smith, Ranjan Subramanian, Xiaoqing Ellen Tan, Binh Tang, Ross Taylor, Adina Williams, Jian Xiang Kuan, Puxin Xu, Zheng Yan, Iliyan Zarov, Yuchen Zhang, Angela Fan, Melanie Kambadur, Sharan Narang, Aurelien Rodriguez, Robert Stojnic, Sergey Edunov, and Thomas Scialom. 2023. <a href="#">Llama 2: Open foundation and fine-tuned chat models</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2307.09288.	Zhun Yang, Adam Ishay, and Joohyung Lee. 2023. <a href="#">Coupling large language models with logic programming for robust and general reasoning from text</a> . In <i>Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: ACL 2023</i> , pages 5186–5219, Toronto, Canada. Association for Computational Linguistics.	989
930			990
931			991
932			992
933			993
934			994
935			995
936			996
937			997
938			998
939			999
940			1000
941			1001
942			1002
943			1003
944			1004
945			1005
946			1006
947			1007
948			1008
949			1009
950			1010
951			1011
952	David Unger, Nikhil Gosala, Varun Ravi Kumar, Shubhankar Borse, Abhinav Valada, and Senthil Yogamani. 2023. <a href="#">Multi-camera bird’s eye view perception for autonomous driving</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2309.09080.	Shukang Yin, Chaoyou Fu, Sirui Zhao, Ke Li, Xing Sun, Tong Xu, and Enhong Chen. 2023. <a href="#">A survey on multimodal large language models</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2306.13549.	1012
953			1013
954			1014
955			1015
956			1016
957	Jason Wei, Xuezhi Wang, Dale Schuurmans, Maarten Bosma, brian ichter, Fei Xia, Ed Chi, Quoc V Le,	Chao Zhang, Mohan Li, Ignas Budvytis, and Stephan Liwicki. 2024a. <a href="#">Dialog: An iterative approach to embodied dialog localization</a> . <i>Preprint</i> , arXiv:2403.06846.	1017
958			1018
			1019
			1020
			1021
			1022
			1023
			1024
			1025
			1026
			1027
			1028
			1029
			1030
			1031
			1032
			1033
			1034
			1035
			1036
			1037
			1038
			1039
			1040
			1041
			1042
			1043
			1044
			1045
			1046
			1047
			1048
			1049
			1050
			1051
			1052
			1053
			1054
			1055
			1056
			1057
			1058
			1059
			1060
			1061
			1062
			1063
			1064
			1065
			1066
			1067
			1068
			1069
			1070
			1071
			1072
			1073
			1074
			1075
			1076
			1077
			1078
			1079
			1080
			1081
			1082
			1083
			1084
			1085
			1086
			1087
			1088
			1089
			1090
			1091
			1092
			1093
			1094
			1095
			1096
			1097
			1098
			1099
			1100
			1101
			1102
			1103
			1104
			1105
			1106
			1107
			1108
			1109
			1110
			1111
			1112
			1113
			1114
			1115
			1116
			1117
			1118
			1119
			1120

- 1015 Boyuan Zheng, Boyu Gou, Jihyung Kil, Huan Sun, and  
1016 Yu Su. 2024. [Gpt-4v\(ision\) is a generalist web agent,  
1017 if grounded](#). *Preprint*, arXiv:2401.01614.
- 1018 Ruiqi Zhong, Dhruva Ghosh, Dan Klein, and Jacob  
1019 Steinhardt. 2021. [Are larger pretrained language  
1020 models uniformly better? comparing performance  
1021 at the instance level](#). In *Findings of the Association  
1022 for Computational Linguistics: ACL-IJCNLP 2021*,  
1023 pages 3813–3827, Online. Association for Computa-  
1024 tional Linguistics.

## A Additional Related Work

In addition to Section 2 which provides a brief overview of previous work most relevant to our work, for completeness we also provide additional related work focused on unimodal spatial reasoning from text only.

**Spatial Reasoning on Text.** Spatial reasoning has been investigated with the advancement of LLMs (Yamada et al., 2024). Various benchmarks have been proposed to evaluate models’ spatial reasoning abilities, including relative spatial relation recognition (Weston et al., 2016; Mirzaee et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2022), natural language navigation (Yamada et al., 2024), and planning (Momennejad et al., 2023). Mirzaee and Kordjamshidi (2022) suggest that introducing synthetic data of spatial reasoning when pre-training helps to improve the spatial awareness of the model. Yang et al. (2023) justify the feasibility of using a logical form as an intermediate representation to improve the spatial reasoning ability in easy scenarios. Instead of describing the spatial relations with natural language, Wu et al. (2024) feed the model with a 2D square grid similar to ASCII-art format and prove that visualising the reasoning procedure explicitly helps to improve the model’s ability in multi-hop spatial reasoning. Constrained by language descriptions, most datasets focus on reasoning over symbols within simple scenarios (e.g. *grid-based navigation*) and are synthetically generated. However, real-life scenarios are often more complex and rich in physical semantics. This raises concerns about the models’ actual spatial reasoning abilities compared to their proficiency in understanding linguistic patterns.

## B Further Details on Dataset Construction

The TOPVIEWRS is derived from Matterport3D (Chang et al., 2017) and is supposed to be used for non-commercial academic use only, under the Term of Use (Matterport End User Licence Agreement For Academic Use of Model Data).

In addition to the main content in Section 4, we provide further details with regard to TOPVIEWRS dataset construction in what follows.

### B.1 Top-View Map Construction

To ensure high-quality top-view map representations, we exclude the 3D environments with low

coverage of mesh grids. We also prefer environments that are single-floor, in order to avoid the obstruction of objects from different floors. After manually going through 90 building-scale 3D environments from Matterport3D (Chang et al., 2017), we select a total of 7 scenes: 17DRP5sb8fy, 2azQ1b91cZZ, 2t7WUuJeko7, 5LpN3gDmAk7, EU6Fwq7SyZv, 8WUmhLawc2A, i5noydfURQK.

**Photo-Realistic Top-View Map.** We extract realistic top-view maps using MeshLab by placing an orthographic camera on the top of the 3D scenes and taking a camera shot.

**Semantic Top-View Map.** We construct them using the Habitat simulation environment (Manolis Savva\* et al., 2019; Szot et al., 2021). For each building floor, Matterport3D contains the 2D and 3D semantic segmentation human annotations, which can be retrieved to identify the type of objects as well as the rooms. The 3D coordinates of the entity’s (object and room) center  $(x_i, y_i, h_i)$  and the size of the entity’s bounding box  $(w_x, w_y, w_h)$  can also be retrieved as part of the circumstantial information. This information is then used for the construction of the semantic top-view map.

When we obtain the object information for the purpose of constructing a top-view semantic map, we design certain rules to exclude specific types of objects from all 40 object annotation categories of Matterport3D. We believe these objects could either 1) be less meaningful in terms of semantics or 2) take up a large area in the semantic map, which obstructs other objects beneath. The filtered objects include: ‘misc’, ‘ceiling’, ‘objects’, ‘floor’, ‘wall’, ‘void’, ‘curtain’, ‘column’, ‘beam’, ‘board panel’.

We also filter out the objects based on their heights  $h_{obj}$  and sizes  $w_{obj}$  compared to the rooms’ heights  $h_{room}$  and sizes  $w_{room}$ . We only keep the objects if they satisfy the following relations:

$$0.9 \times (h_{room} - \frac{1}{2}w_{room}) \leq h_{obj} - \frac{1}{2}w_{obj}$$

$$1.1 \times (h_{room} + \frac{1}{2}w_{room}) \geq h_{obj} + \frac{1}{2}w_{obj}$$

After having all the object annotations, we use the `get_topdown_map` API of the Habitat simulator to get the top-down map of the scene, which describes the navigable area and the overall shape of the environment, but without any object annotations. Based on this map, we then draw the bounding boxes with different colors to represent the

objects in the environments. Considering that the objects on the top may obstruct the bottom objects in the top-view map, to mimic this characteristic, we create the semantic top-view map based on the heights of the objects, where lower objects are drawn first. Table 4 shows the mapping between the RGB values and object types used for the creation of a semantic top-view map in our work.

After having the top-view maps of the whole floor, we crop them into smaller rooms according to the region boundaries obtained from the Habitat simulator.

## B.2 Structured Question Framework Design

In order to minimize human labor and standardize the collection pipeline, we adopt the template-based question generation method following the practice of Liu et al. (2023a); we design 15 different templates in total to construct the sub-tasks for each task. In particular, we consider benchmarking different perspectives of the model’s ability within each task in a fine-grained manner when designing the templates. The question templates are also multi-scale in terms of objects or rooms with full or partial top-view maps for Top-View Recognition, Top-View Localization and Static Spatial Reasoning. For Dynamic Spatial Reasoning, the designed questions evaluate the recognition and reasoning from the scale of single navigation points (Dynamic Action Counting and Spatial Localization) to the whole path (Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning).

Below we provide the designed templates for all 9 sub-tasks, with some examples shown in Figure 1. In what follows, we also introduce the logic for selecting the correct answer and other wrong choices when constructing the multiple-choice questions.

### B.2.1 Top-View Recognition

Table 5 shows the templates we use for the Top-View Recognition task. Considering that some objects and rooms may be hard to recognize from the top view, in addition to the set of filtered objects, we also remove some objects (‘picture’, ‘mirror’, ‘window’, ‘blinds’, ‘towel’, ‘furniture’, ‘door’, ‘tv\_monitor’, ‘cabinet’) and rooms (‘hallway’, ‘entryway/foyer/lobby’, ‘tv’) when we use the templates to generate questions.

### B.2.2 Top-View Localization

Table 6 shows the templates for the Top-View Localization task. For the objects, we adopt the

RGB Values	Label
[31, 119, 180]	void
[174, 199, 232]	wall
[255, 127, 14]	floor
[255, 187, 120]	chair
[44, 160, 44]	door
[152, 223, 138]	table
[214, 39, 40]	picture
[255, 152, 150]	cabinet
[148, 103, 189]	cushion
[197, 176, 213]	window
[140, 86, 75]	sofa
[196, 156, 148]	bed
[227, 119, 194]	curtain
[247, 182, 210]	chest_of_drawers
[51, 105, 30]	plant
[199, 199, 199]	sink
[188, 189, 34]	stairs
[219, 219, 141]	ceiling
[23, 190, 207]	toilet
[158, 218, 229]	stool
[57, 59, 121]	towel
[82, 84, 163]	mirror
[107, 110, 207]	tv_monitor
[156, 158, 222]	shower
[99, 121, 57]	column
[140, 162, 82]	bathtub
[181, 207, 107]	counter
[206, 219, 156]	fireplace
[140, 109, 49]	lighting
[189, 158, 57]	beam
[231, 186, 82]	railing
[231, 203, 148]	shelving
[132, 60, 57]	blinds
[173, 73, 74]	gym_equipment
[214, 97, 107]	seating
[231, 150, 156]	board_panel
[123, 65, 115]	furniture
[165, 81, 148]	appliances
[206, 109, 189]	clothes
[222, 158, 214]	objects

Table 4: RGB values and corresponding labels.

same set as for Top-View Recognition. Concerning rooms, we define a set of rooms that are easy and natural to recognize for humans, spanning: ‘office’, ‘workout/gym/exercise’, ‘kitchen’, ‘bedroom’, ‘dining room’, ‘bar’, ‘balcony’, ‘toilet’, ‘bathroom’,

<b>Object Recognition</b>	
Template 1	Which of the following objects are in the room?
Template 2	Which of the following objects are not in the room?
<b>Scene Recognition</b>	
Template 1	What room is this?
Template 2	What types of rooms are included in the top-view map below?

Table 5: Templates for Object and Scene Recognition sub-tasks.

<b>Object Localization</b>	
Template 1	Where is the <object> in the top-down map?
<b>Scene Localization</b>	
Template 1	Where is the <room> in the top-down map?
Template 2	What objects does <room> have?

Table 6: Templates for Object and Scene Localization sub-tasks.

‘living room’, ‘stairs’.

### B.2.3 Static Spatial Reasoning

Table 7 lists the templates for the Static Spatial Reasoning task. For rooms, we restrict the regions within the same range as in Top-View Localization. Concerning objects, we focus on the objects that are common and large enough to recognize in daily life, which includes: ‘chair’, ‘table’, ‘cushion’, ‘sofa’, ‘bed’, ‘chest\_of\_drawers’, ‘sink’, ‘toilet’, ‘bathtub’, ‘stool’, ‘plant’, ‘stairs’, ‘shower’, ‘fireplace’, ‘gym\_equipment’, ‘seating’.

### B.2.4 Dynamic Spatial Reasoning

For Dynamic Action Counting, we define that a valid turn should involve more than a 30-degree rotation. For Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning, the direction is also defined by the relative spatial relation between the starting point and ending point, where the spatial description is determined by 30-degree intervals.

**Multiple-Choice Question-Answer Pairs.** For

<b>Scene Counting</b>	
Template 1	How many <room> are there in the map?
<b>Relative Spatial Relation</b>	
Template 1	What’s <object1>’s relative spatial relation to <object2>?
Template 2	What’s <room1>’s relative spatial relation to <room2>?

Table 7: Templates for Scene Counting and Relative Spatial Relation sub-tasks.

<b>Dynamic Action Counting</b>	
Template 1	How many turning <action> are there along the path?
<b>Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning</b>	
Template 1	Which direction does the navigation path head for?
<b>Dynamic Spatial Localization</b>	
Template 1	What rooms does the navigation path pass by?
Template 2	At which room does the navigation path <action>?
Template 3	At which object does the navigation path <action>?

Table 8: Templates for Dynamic Action Counting, Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning, and Dynamic Spatial Localization sub-tasks

the answer to the questions, because we have all the spatial information and semantic annotation of the objects in the scene, we write a set of rules with code for each type of question in order to automatically obtain the golden answer according to the simulation environments. For all the wrong choices in the multiple-choice settings, they are randomly chosen from other possible candidates of the same kind (e.g. objects, rooms, numbers, etc.). After having all the options for multiple-choice questions, we randomize the order of the options to make the correct choices evenly distributed among possible options A, B, C, and D.

### B.3 Alignment with Human Judgments

In our preliminary quality control, we realized that semantic annotations of environments may some-

1193  
1194  
1195  
1196  
1197  
1198  
1199  
1200  
1201  
1202  
1203  
1204  
1205  
1206  
1207  
1208



1209	times be inaccurate. Moreover, even though we	1260
1210	exclude some unreasonable objects, the top view	1261
1211	of certain objects can sometimes be challenging	1262
1212	to recognize, even for humans. To address these	1263
1213	issues, we have implemented a second stage in our	1264
1214	dataset creation process: alignment and verification	1265
1215	based on human judgments.	1266
1216	When validating the automatically collected	1267
1217	data, the human participants are supposed to check	1268
1218	the correctness of the question-answer pair and	1269
1219	choose one of the following four actions according	1270
1220	to their own judgments: <b>1)</b> skip the instance if it	1271
1221	cannot be repaired and/or looks strange, <b>2)</b> modify	1272
1222	the pair by replacing the options or the entities in	1273
1223	the question in order to make it answerable by hu-	1274
1224	mans, <b>3)</b> correct the answer if it is wrong, <b>4)</b> keep	1275
1225	the data if it is answerable by humans and correct.	
1226	In order to ensure the quality of the dataset, we	<b>C Experiments: Additional Information</b> 1276
1227	communicated to the human participants that they	<b>C.1 Inference Parameters</b> 1277
1228	are supposed to be cautious when ‘accepting’ a data	We adopt most of the inference parameters for each
1229	point/instance. On a practical level, the participants	model from the implementations of VLMEvalKit
1230	may either discard this data point or modify the op-	(OpenCompass Contributors, 2023). Table 10
1231	tions of this data to make the correct choice more	shows the configuration of the inference process
1232	distinguishable by humans. This helps to exclude	for different models. If not specified in Table 10,
1233	the data points where different human judges may	we use the default configuration in Huggingface.
1234	diverge and thus ensure the alignment between the	
1235	dataset and general human judgments. We assure	<b>C.2 Prompts</b> 1284
1236	that the alignment process does not include any	Table 11 and 12 show the prompt templates of each
1237	information with regard to personal identification	task used in the main experiments (Table 1) with re-
1238	or offensive content.	alistic and semantic top-view maps as visual input,
1239	In our experiments, we also provide the corre-	respectively. Table 13 and 14 show the prompt tem-
1240	sponding rules of how we obtain the answer for the	plates used for Chain-of-Thought reasoning using
1241	model with textual description in the prompt (see	realistic and semantic top-view maps (Table 3).
1242	Appendix C.2).	Within the prompt templates, <QUESTION> and
1243	<b>B.4 Dataset Statistics</b>	<OPTIONS> are replaced with the question and op-
1244	We provide further insight into different portions of	tion list $O = \{o_0, o_1, o_2, o_3\}$ (e.g. “A. bed; B.
1245	the TOPVIEWERS dataset with regard to the object	chair; C. table; D. cushion”). For semantic top-
1246	and room distribution in Figure 4, whereas statistics	view maps, <MAPPING> is replaced with the RGB-
1247	over different sub-tasks are provided in Table 9.	object mapping, as shown below.
1248	The visualization demonstrates that the objects	(196, 156, 148) -> bed 1297
1249	or regions that are hard to recognize (e.g. <i>gym</i>	(44, 160, 44) -> door 1298
1250	<i>equipment, utility room, etc.</i> ) have fewer occur-	... 1299
1251	rences in the dataset compared to those which are	In the task of Dynamic Spatial Reasoning,
1252	easier to identify and typically more common (e.g.	<TASK-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION> contains the
1253	<i>bed, table, bedroom, etc.</i> ). <i>Bed, chair</i> and <i>table</i>	rules of how we obtain the answer from the sim-
1254	are the top-3 most frequently mentioned objects	ulator for the sub-task Dynamic Action Counting,
1255	and <i>bedroom, dining room</i> and <i>living room</i> are the	which is described as follows. 1304
1256	most common regions in the dataset. Among all the	Suppose you are a navigation agent tracing
1257	spatial descriptions, the diagonal spatial relations	the path. Your job is to assess whether
1258	(e.g. <i>top right, up left</i> ) are more frequently referred	there's a turn at each intermediate point 1306
1259	to as the correct choice as relative spatial descrip-	1307

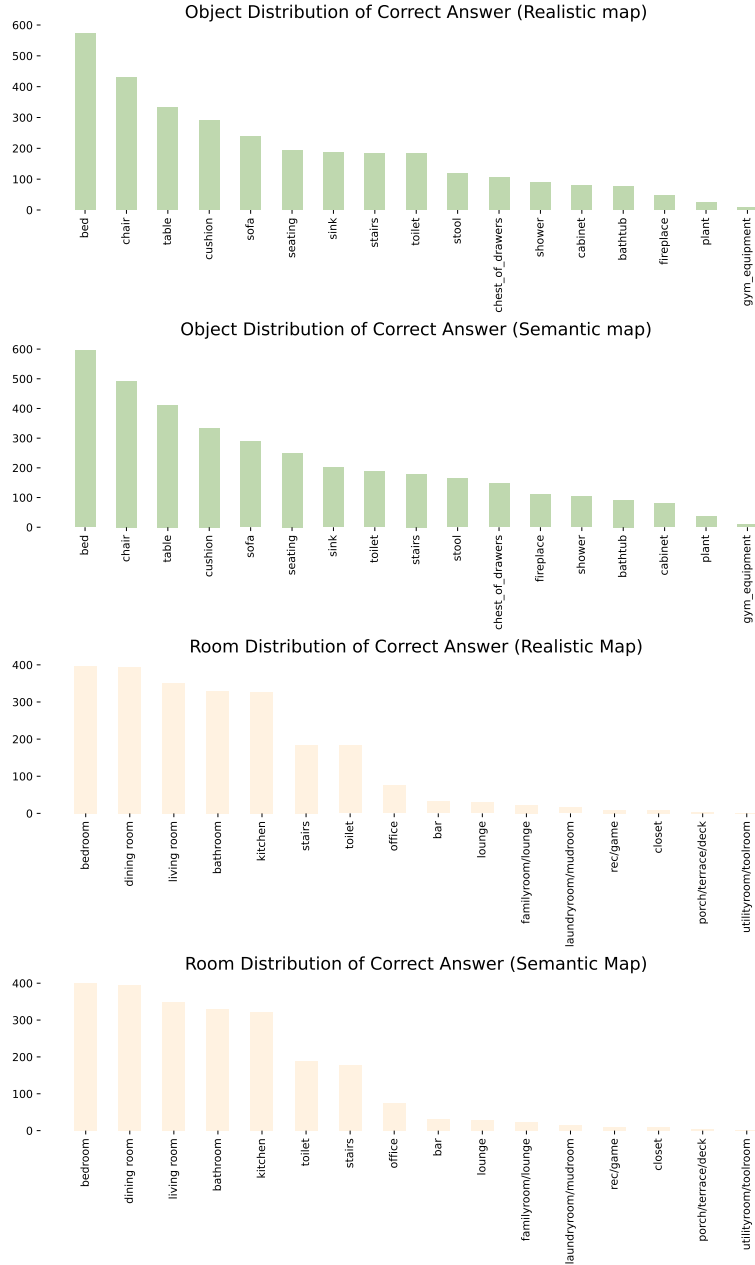


Figure 4: Additional statistics of the TOPVIEWRS dataset.

Task	Sub-Task	Realistic	Semantic
<b>TVR</b>	Object Recognition	195	198
	Scene Recognition	97	97
<b>TVL</b>	Object Localization	410	470
	Scene Localization	100	97
<b>SSR</b>	Scene Counting	43	48
	Relative Spatial Relation	1,004	1,245
<b>DSR</b>	Dynamic Action Counting	668	668
	Dynamic Spatial Localization	2,436	2,436
	Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning	586	586
<b>Total</b>		5,539	5,845

Table 9: Distribution of sub-tasks with realistic and semantic top-view maps.

Idefics 9B&80B	
max_new_tokens	20
LLaVAnext 7B&13B&34 B	
temperature	0
num_beams	1
max_new_tokens	20
do_sample	False
top_p	None
XComposer2	
temperature	1
beams	5
max_token	20
repetition_penalty	1
do_sample	False
Qwen-VL	
max_new_tokens	20
GPT4V	
temperature	0
max_tokens	1024
img_size	512
img_detail	low
Gemini	
temperature	0
max_tokens	1024

Table 10: Configurations of inference parameters.

1308 and sum up the total turns for the final  
1309 outcome.

1310 For other sub-tasks in Dynamic Spatial Reason-  
1311 ing, <TASK-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION> is replaced  
1312 with an empty string.

### 1313 C.3 Additional Experimental Results

1314 Table 15 shows the fine-grained sub-task perfor-  
1315 mance of all the models, which corresponds to  
1316 Figure 3 in the main paper.

## Realistic Top-View Maps

### *Top-View Recognition, Top-View Localization and Static Spatial Reasoning*

This is a top-view map of a room. Please respond to the question below by selecting one choice from a list of available options provided. Your response should only include the letter of the chosen option (A, B, C, or D) with no additional explanation.

Question: <QUESTION>

Options: <OPTIONS>;

Answer:

---

### *Dynamic Spatial Reasoning*

This is a top-view map of a room with the navigation path. The path starts from the green triangle (RGB [0, 255, 0]) and ends at the red star (RGB [255, 0, 0]). The direction of the path is denoted by a series of yellow arrows (RGB [255, 255, 0]), with intermediate points highlighted in RGB [25, 255, 255]. <TASK-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION> Please respond to the question below by selecting one choice from a list of available options provided. Your response should only include the letter of the chosen option (A, B, C, or D) with no additional explanation.

Question: <QUESTION>

Options: <OPTIONS>;

Answer:

Table 11: Prompt templates for main experiments with realistic top-view maps.

## Semantic Top-View Maps

### *Top-View Recognition, Top-View Localization and Static Spatial Reasoning*

This is a semantic top-view map of a room. Various objects are depicted by colored bounding boxes, each with its corresponding color, and there may be instances of overlap between them. Below are the RGB color codes associated with each object, presented in the format RGB -> Object:

<MAPPING>

Please respond to the question below by selecting one choice from a list of available options provided. Your response should only include the letter of the chosen option (A, B, C, or D) with no additional explanation.

Question: <QUESTION>

Options: <OPTIONS>;

Answer:

---

### *Dynamic Spatial Reasoning*

This is a semantic top-view map of a room with the navigation path. In the semantic map, various objects are depicted by colored bounding boxes, each with its corresponding color, and there may be instances of overlap between them. The navigation path starts from the green triangle (RGB [0, 255, 0]) and ends at the red star (RGB [255, 0, 0]). The direction of the path is denoted by a series of yellow arrows (RGB [255, 255, 0]), with intermediate points highlighted in RGB [25, 255, 255]. Below are the RGB color codes associated with each object and symbol, presented in the format RGB -> Object:

<MAPPING>

<TASK-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION> Please respond to the question below by selecting one choice from a list of available options provided. Your response should only include the letter of the chosen option (A, B, C, or D) with no additional explanation.

Question: <QUESTION>

Options: <OPTIONS>;

Answer:

Table 12: Prompt templates for main experiments with semantic top-view maps.

## Realistic Top-View Maps

### *Static Spatial Reasoning*

This is a top-view map of a room. Please respond to the question below by selecting one choice from a list of available options provided. You should explain your reasoning step-by-step by first localizing the entities and then reasoning over the question based on the locations. You should conclude your chosen option (A, B, C, or D) starting with 'The answer is '.

Question: <QUESTION>

Options: <OPTIONS>;

Answer: Let's think step by step.

Table 13: Prompt templates for Chain-of-Thought experiments with realistic top-view maps.

## Semantic Top-View Maps

### Static Spatial Reasoning

This is a semantic top-view map of a room. Various objects are depicted by colored bounding boxes, each with its corresponding color, and there may be instances of overlap between them. Below are the RGB color codes associated with each object, presented in the format RGB -> Object:

<MAPPING>

Please respond to the question below by selecting one choice from a list of available options provided. You should explain your reasoning step-by-step by first localizing the entities and then reasoning over the question based on the locations. You should conclude your chosen option (A, B, C, or D) starting with 'The answer is '.

Question: <QUESTION>

Options: <OPTIONS>;

Answer: Let's think step by step.

Table 14: Prompt templates for Chain-of-Thought experiments with semantic top-view maps.

Model Size		Idefics		LLaVANext				XComposer2	Qwen-VL	GPT-4V	Gemini
		9B	80B	vicuna 7B	mistral 7B	vicuna 13B	34B	7B	7B	API	API
<b>Realistic Map</b>											
TVR	Object Recognition	32.31	25.64	66.15	61.03	58.97	65.64	38.97	17.95	68.21	89.23
	Scene Recognition	58.76	28.87	70.10	61.86	67.01	72.16	35.05	45.36	72.16	92.78
TVL	Object Localization	26.83	26.10	40.24	30.24	40.00	50.49	26.34	16.34	40.73	45.21
	Scene Localization	45.00	46.00	50.00	49.00	46.00	53.00	34.00	16.00	69.00	61.00
SSR	Scene Counting	25.58	32.56	16.28	18.60	2.33	16.28	25.58	48.84	76.74	53.49
	Relative Spatial Relations	24.00	25.80	20.02	24.60	21.02	23.01	25.80	13.25	19.82	30.68
DSR	Dynamic Action Counting	31.89	26.80	27.54	26.95	25.30	27.40	27.54	32.34	22.01	26.95
	Dynamic Spatial Localization	42.57	29.27	45.03	23.89	32.88	24.63	22.62	20.11	34.15	35.30
	Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning	26.62	23.72	25.77	23.04	17.58	16.21	26.11	18.77	23.72	27.82
<b>Semantic Map</b>											
TVR	Object Recognition	54.55	51.01	92.93	87.37	92.42	98.48	50.00	12.63	100.00	99.49
	Scene Recognition	73.20	76.29	80.41	64.95	79.38	86.60	28.87	34.02	91.75	85.57
TVL	Object Localization	28.51	23.19	22.98	28.94	10.85	34.47	24.47	6.17	41.49	31.28
	Scene Localization	44.33	47.42	37.11	47.42	48.45	57.73	26.80	26.80	58.76	54.64
SSR	Scene Counting	37.50	50.00	12.50	10.42	6.25	4.17	14.58	22.92	37.50	20.83
	Relative Spatial Relations	23.29	27.23	18.96	24.82	17.03	18.96	23.37	14.54	21.12	26.43
DSR	Dynamic Action Counting	36.68	27.69	33.38	26.80	28.89	25.30	27.25	30.39	22.90	26.95
	Dynamic Spatial Localization	39.20	38.79	41.87	25.82	17.98	39.00	19.46	22.95	47.17	33.42
	Dynamic Relative Spatial Reasoning	26.11	24.74	23.72	27.30	17.75	17.58	24.06	18.26	25.26	28.16

Table 15: Fine-grained results of 10 VLMs on different sub-tasks, corresponding to the visualization in Figure 3.