16 ways positioning elements affects how viewers perceive your art and designs

‘Thoughts on Position’ is a piece of theoretical design research by Brazilian graphic designer Nei Valente, who currently lives in New York and works for WPP’s branding ‘supergroup’ Superunion. Nei created a survey to discover how people subconsciously ascribe meaning to positioning of elements, even with no distinguishing visual information beyond where a square is located on the page – and the results will be of interest whether your an artist or UX designer. Here he takes us through what he discovered.

‘Thoughts on Position’ is the first exercise in the series ‘Thoughts on’. The objective of the series is to contribute to design discussions using simple design experiments.The objective of the series is to contribute to design discussions using simple design experiments.

‘Thoughts on Position’ studies the relationship between the placement of an element and it’s meaning. It questions if the same element can communicate different messages when placed in different positions.

For this exploratory, I created a survey with a range of questions that were ordered randomly for each participant. To showcase the results, I have organised the questions into three categories: Human Emotions, Social Perceptions and Everyday Situations. The objective of the survey is not to bring definitive answers, but raise interest in the questions.

While this exploration is brought to life by conceptual examples with limited context, we can imagine the application of these concepts in tangible ways. Photographers use the position of elements to create emotions and perceptions about

their subjects. A person in the centre of the frame could communicate a different message than a person in the bottom-right corner. Architects and UI/UX designers, on the other hand, very often think about position in a more functional way, facilitating the interaction of the user and bringing attention to specific points.

The questions found in this survey can help us to think more carefully about the role position plays in conveying meaning in our work, regardless of whether we want to evoke emotion or maximise functionality.

01 Who is afraid?

02 Who is the happiest?

03 Who is depressed?

04 Who is jealous?

05 Who is angry?

01 Who is the singer in the band?

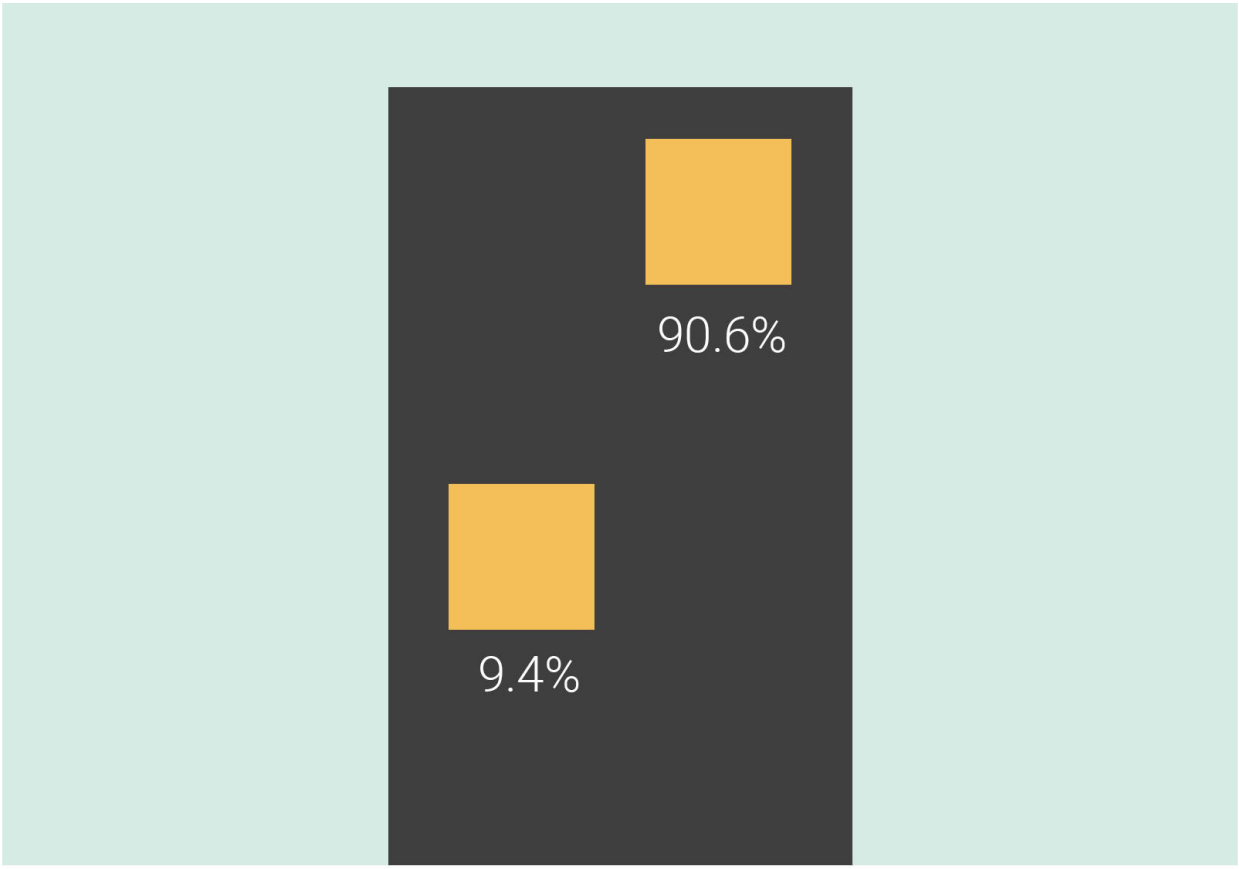
02 Who is the mother?

03 Who is mean?

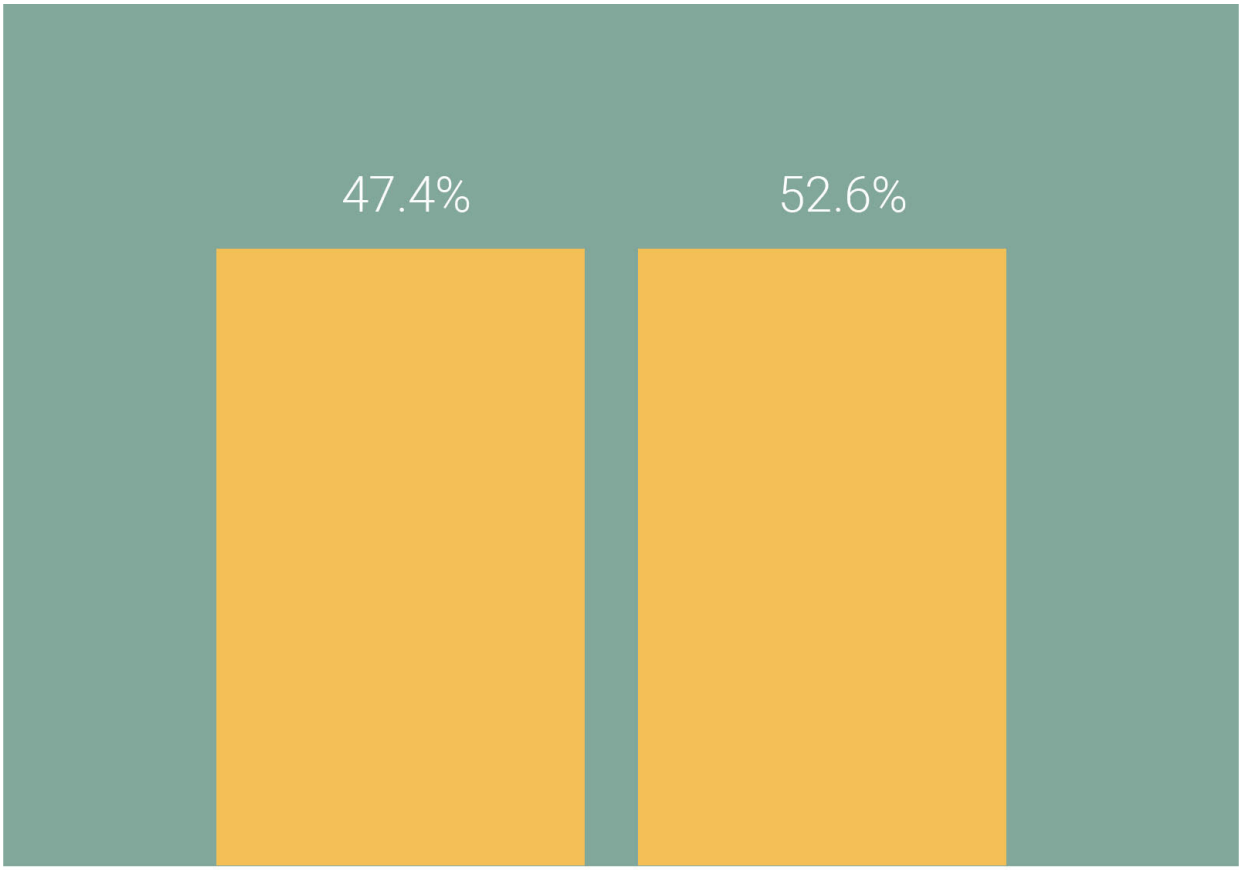
04 Who is the prisoner?

05 Who is the girl?

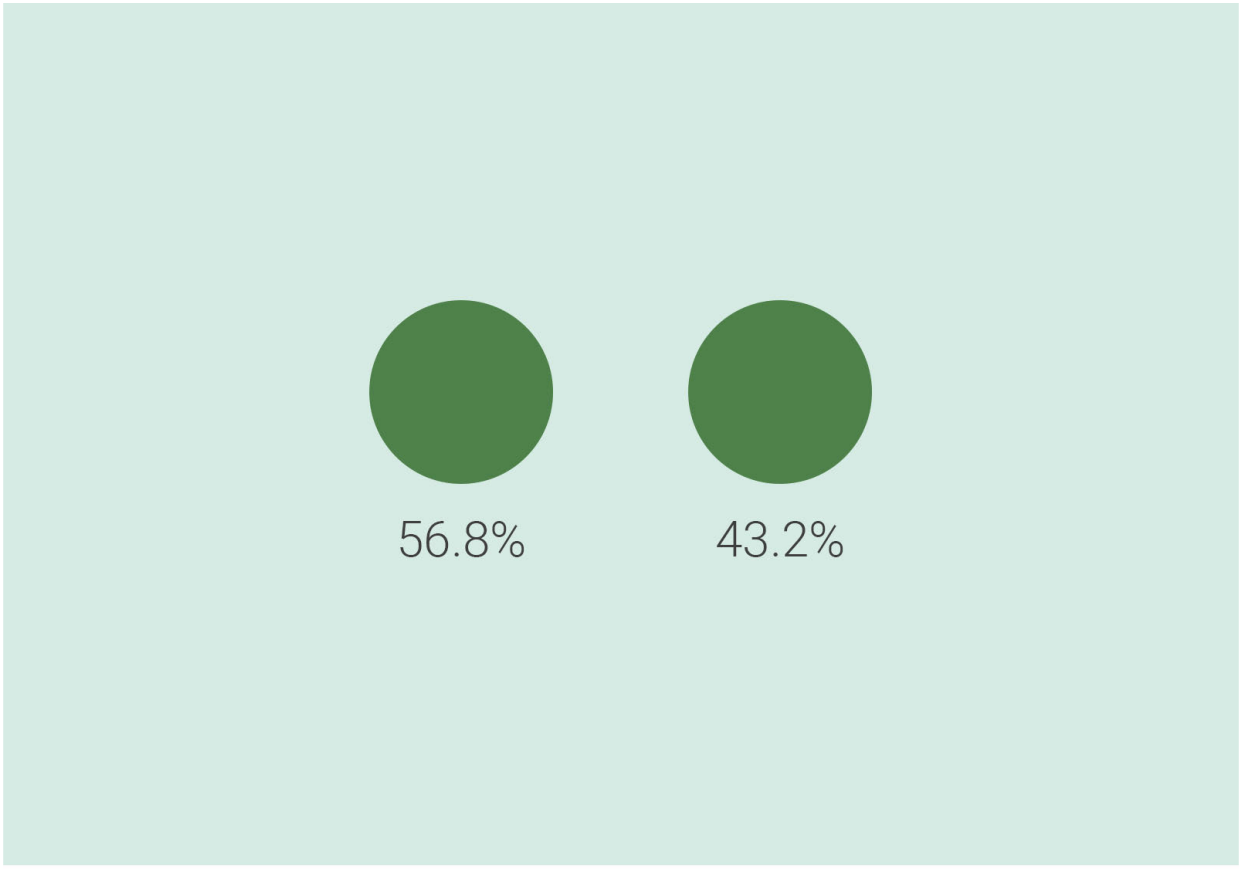
06 Who is richer?



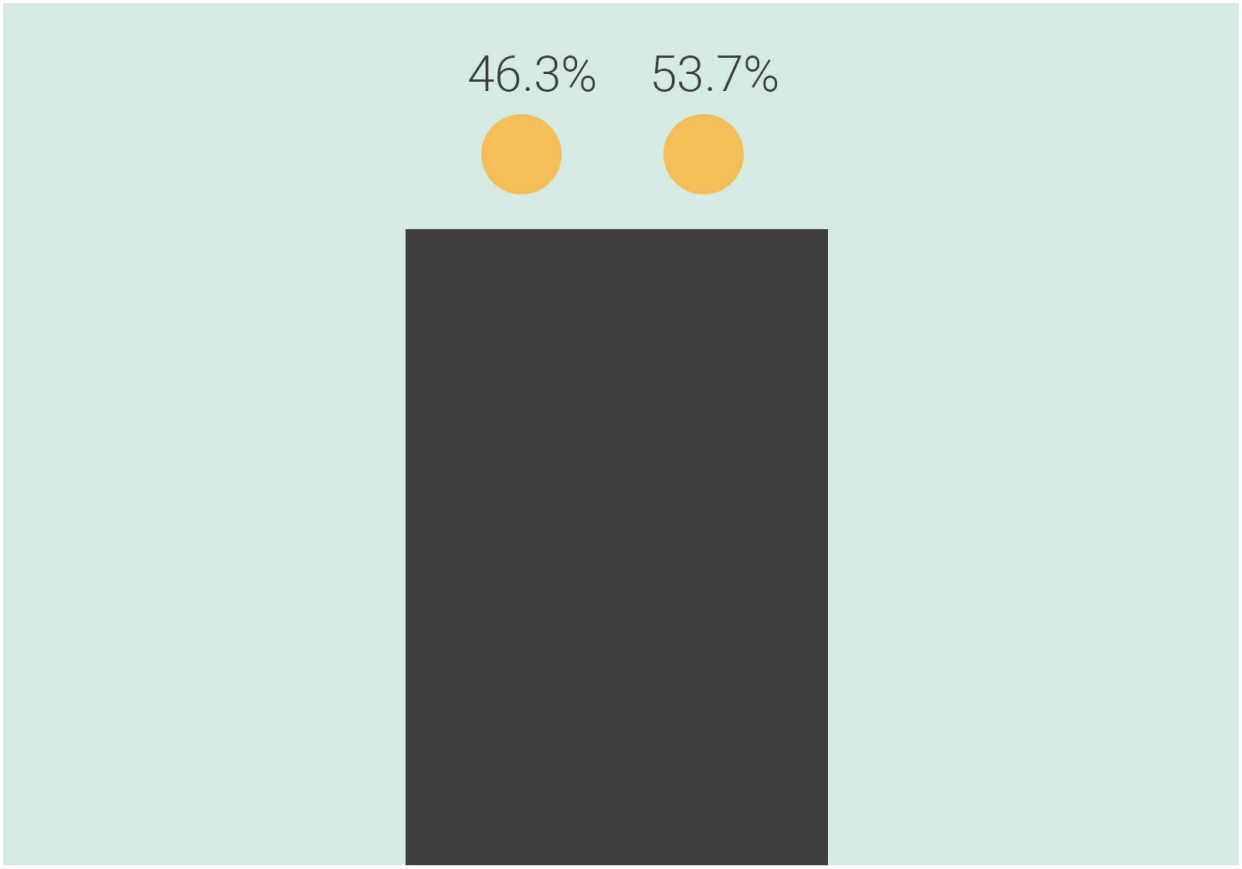
01 Which door is the men’s bathroom?



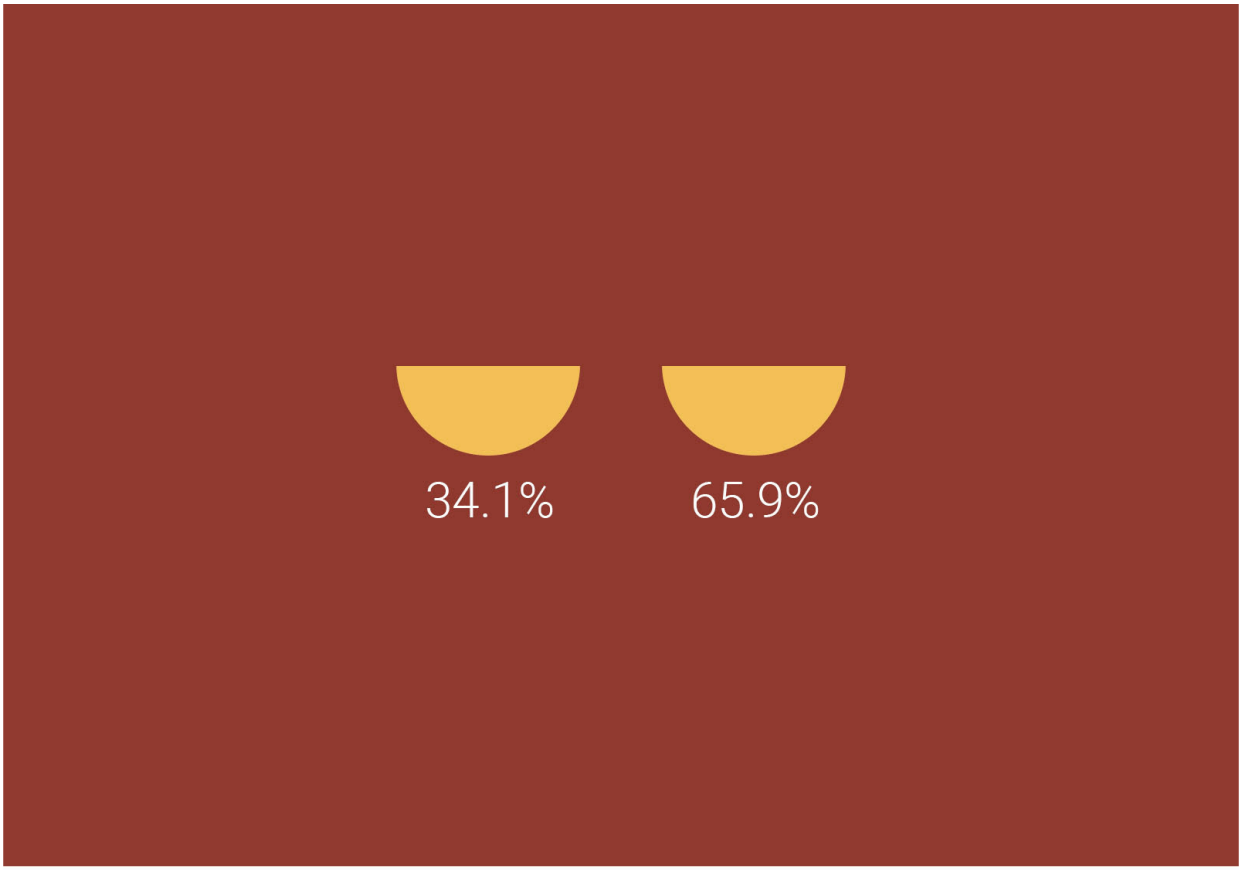
02 Which one turns on the hot water in the shower?



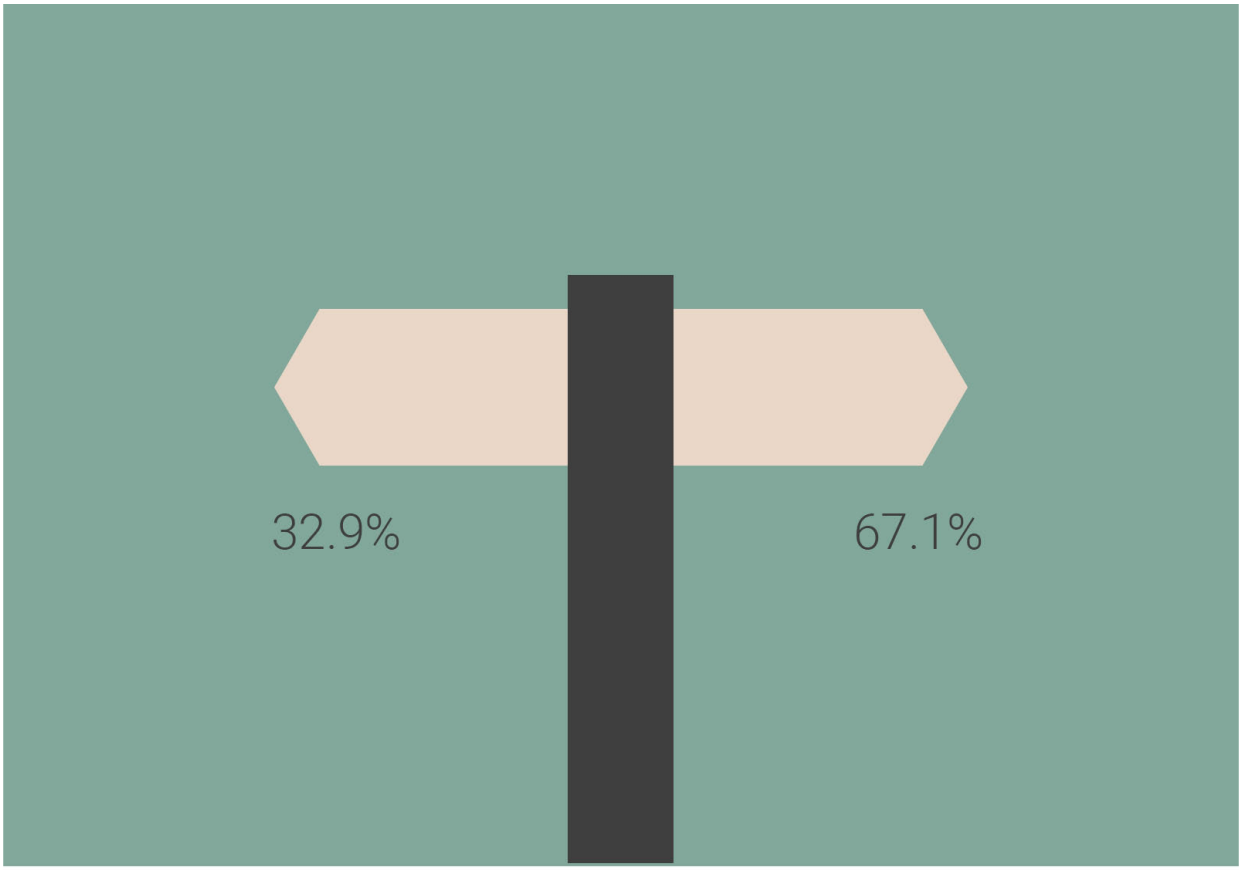
03 Which light shows the elevator is going up?



04 Which sauce is more spicy?



05 Which side of the sign points to the exit?



Nei Valente is a 28-year-old Brazilian graphic designer. He is current living in New York, where he divides his time between street photography and his work as a graphic designer at Superunion. His personal work, both in photography and graphic design have been featured on vehicles from different countries and exhibited in galleries in the United States and Holland. To know more about his work check his website and follow him on Instagram. Special thanks to Victoria Wrigley.

https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/graphic-design/16-ways-positioning-elements-affects-how-viewers-perceive-your-art-designs/