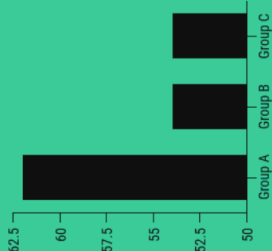


1

OMITTING THE BASELINE

In most cases, the baseline for a graph is 0. But writers can skew how data is perceived by making the baseline a different number. This is known as a "truncated graph".



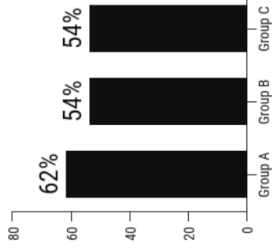
MISLEADING

- Starting the vertical axis at 50 makes a small difference between groups seem massive
- Group A looks much larger than Groups B and C

VS

ACCURATE

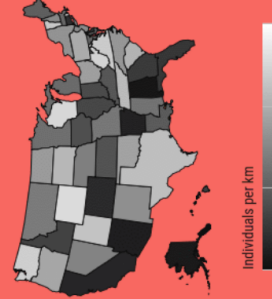
- Starting the vertical axis at 0 offers a more accurate depiction of the data
- The difference between the groups does not seem as dramatic



2

GOING AGAINST CONVENTIONS

Over time, we have developed standards for how data is visualized. Flipping those conventions can make a graph confusing or misleading to readers.



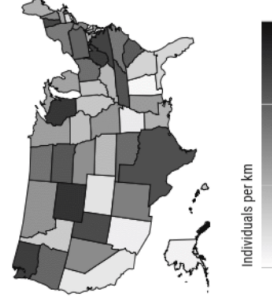
MISLEADING

- Normally, darker shades are associated with density on a map but here, dark has been used to depict lower population density
- This graph can confuse and mislead readers, who expect dark to represent a higher population density

VS

ACCURATE

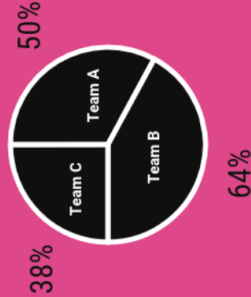
- This map follows the convention of using lighter shades for lighter density and darker shades for higher density
- Readers will intuitively know how to interpret the data



3

USING THE WRONG GRAPH

The type of graph you use should depend on the type of data you want to visualize. Using the wrong type of graph can skew the data. Writers will sometimes use the wrong type of graph on purpose.



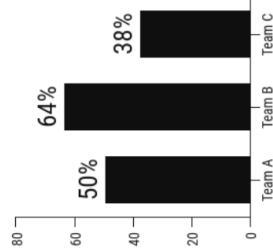
MISLEADING

- Pie charts are used to compare parts of a whole, not the difference between groups
- A different type of graph should be used to compare the three teams

VS

ACCURATE

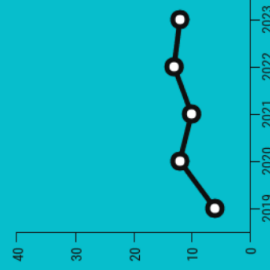
- Bar graphs are better for showing the differences between groups
- This chart is a better visualization of the data



4

MANIPULATING THE Y-AXIS

Expanding or compressing the scale on a graph can make changes in data seem more or less significant than they actually are.



MISLEADING

- The scale is disproportionate to the data, making the change over time seem small

VS

ACCURATE

- The scale is proportionate to the data, showing a greater change over time

