

out. Such forms of deceptive visual representation are commonly used by politicians and media groups to promote a particular agenda.

Even if a visual representation is not deliberately designed to mislead, there are various reasons as to why it still could be a source of misinformation. For instance, a set of data may be inaccurately represented due to the selection of the wrong chart type. It is often more appropriate to use a Venn diagram rather than a pie chart when representing overlapping choices, for example. The selection of an inappropriate format can often be down to human error, or a lack of analytical experience, rather than any kind of malicious intent.

The problem may also be on the side of the individual viewing the bar or chart. As University of Miami Professor Alberto Cairo points out: “[a] substantial portion of the public isn’t numerate – or “graphicate”, graphically literate” (Cairo, 2021).

This raises the point that whilst visual representations can often be used to represent complex knowledge in a simplified manner, it cannot be assumed that the general public will be able to adequately understand them. Additionally, although visuals can be incredibly useful in an educational context, particularly for engaging younger learners, some research suggests that their overuse may be distracting and therefore counterproductive to the learning process (Bitchie 2018)