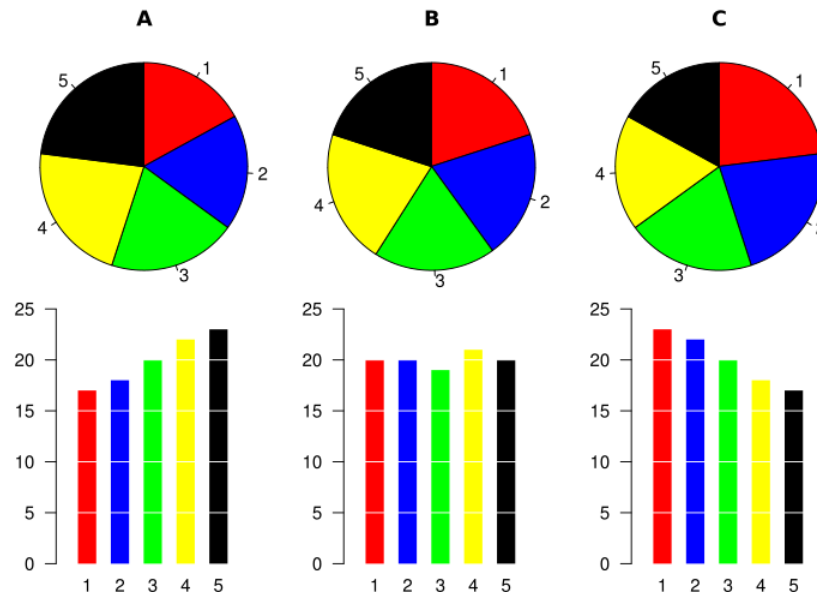


Just Say No to Pie Charts

“The only thing worse than one pie chart is lots of them.”
@EdwardTufte

“Pie charts are the Nickelback of data visualization. There, I said it.”
@WaltHickey



► **Pie charts** are one of the most common forms of data visualization and also one of the most problematic. The reason: If your pie chart has more than two or three slices, it becomes very difficult to see which values are actually the largest (see above).

► The use of multiple pie charts also make it difficult to make comparisons between them. Looking above, for example, is it clear from the pie charts alone which chart has the largest green slice?

► In almost all cases, a simple **bar chart** or **line chart** will present your data better than a pie chart. Indeed, as a general rule, it's a good idea to keep your data visualization **as simple as possible**.

► A good rule of thumb when making data visualizations is **whether your chart makes sense with the numbers removed** (as in the example above). If it doesn't, your chart isn't very good. **Bubble charts** — where different values are expressed by different-sized circles — are almost as bad as pie charts for this same reason.

► That said, there may be rare cases where you want to use a pie chart — or other problematic charts like **bubble charts** or **word clouds** — just to provide some variety to your graphics or grab the reader's attention (I argue the very case for that at tinyurl.com/chartbling). That's OK. But you should do so with great care and realize that using these graphics is going to make your data less clear.