

Lecture 8

Visual perception and colors

[Data visualization · 1-DAV-105](#)

Lecture by Broňa Brejová

Acknowledgement: materials inspired by lectures from Martina Bátorová in 2021

Aside: data analysis / visualization project phases

- Obtaining data
- Data preprocessing, **checking**, cleaning
- **Exploratory** analysis (many tables and graphs for your use)
- Formation of **hypotheses**
- Verification of hypotheses (careful reanalysis, new data, other sources)
- **Explanatory** visualizations for the final report / presentation (best views selected for the audience)

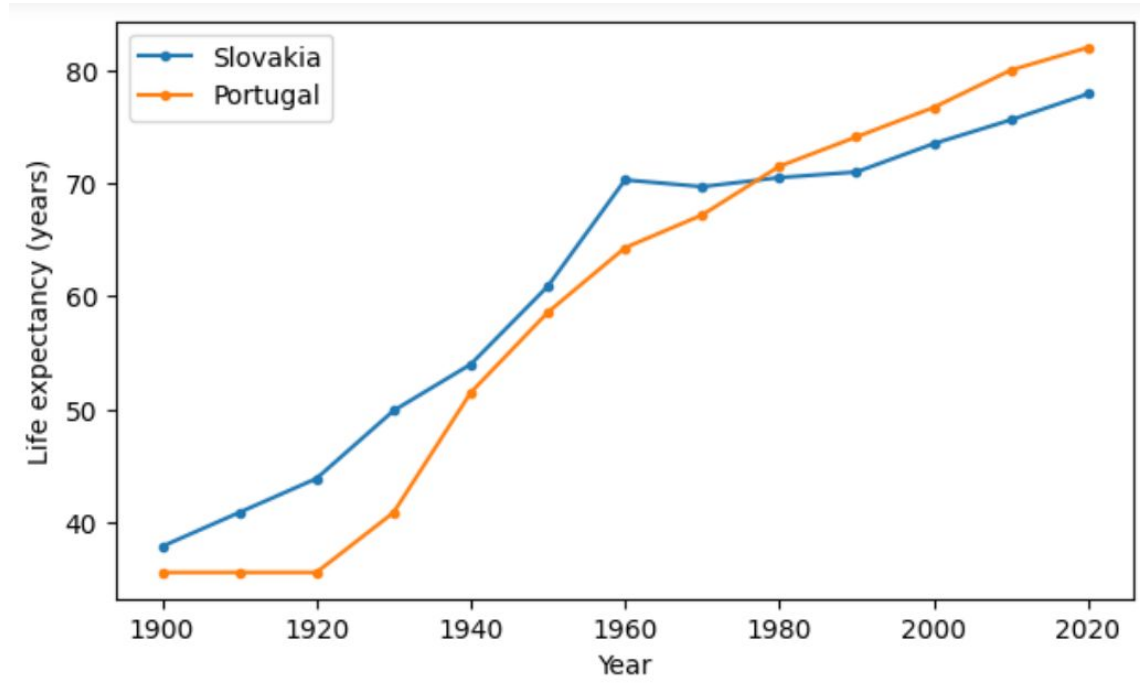
More in two weeks

Why talk about visual perception
in visualization?

In which period of time was life expectancy higher in Slovakia than in Portugal?

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
country													
Slovak Republic	37.9	40.9	43.9	49.9	54.0	60.9	70.3	69.7	70.5	71.0	73.5	75.6	77.9
Portugal	35.6	35.6	35.6	40.9	51.5	58.6	64.3	67.2	71.5	74.1	76.7	80.0	82.0

In which period of time was life expectancy higher in Slovakia than in Portugal?



Visual brain, table vs. graph

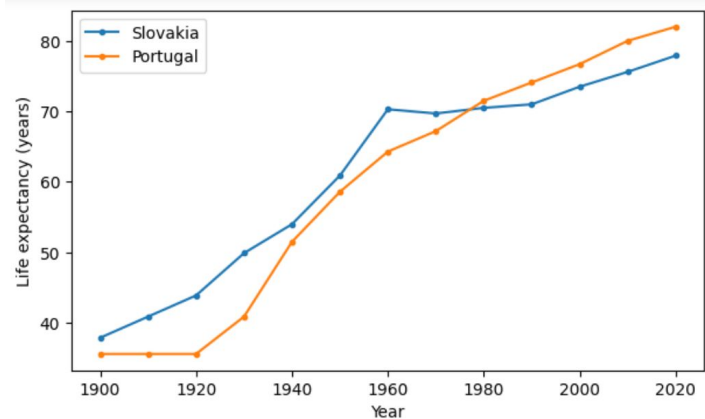
We "read" tables, verbal processing

We "see" plots, visual processing

Visual processing is very parallel and fast, evolved to spot predators

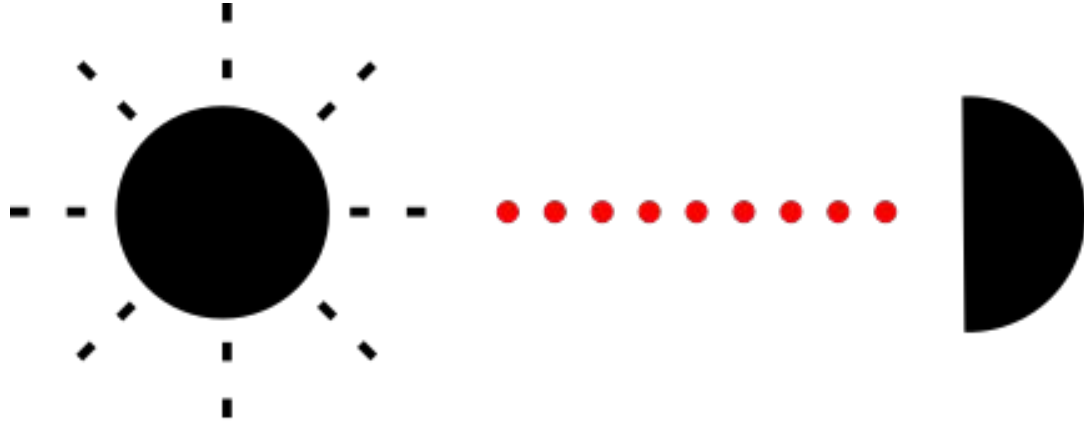
In which situations is a table preferable to a plot?

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
country													
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Human visual perception

What happens when we look at the figure below?



Human visual perception

Human visual perception

What happens when we look at the figure?

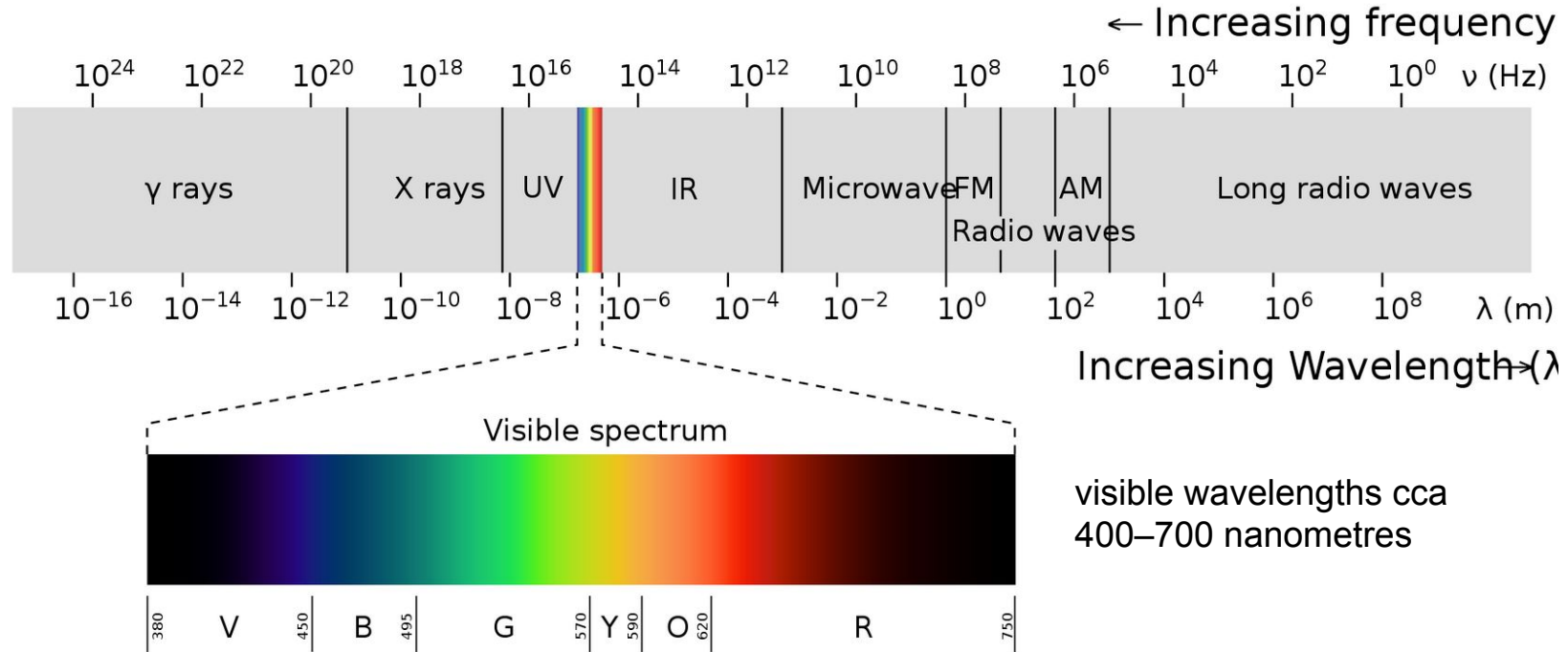


- The **light** from the screen / projector hits the retinas of our **eyes**
- Photoreceptor cells **transduce** (convert) this signal into nerve impulses
- In the brain:
 - detection of **basic features**
 - recognition of **patterns**
 - interpretation, assignment of **meaning**

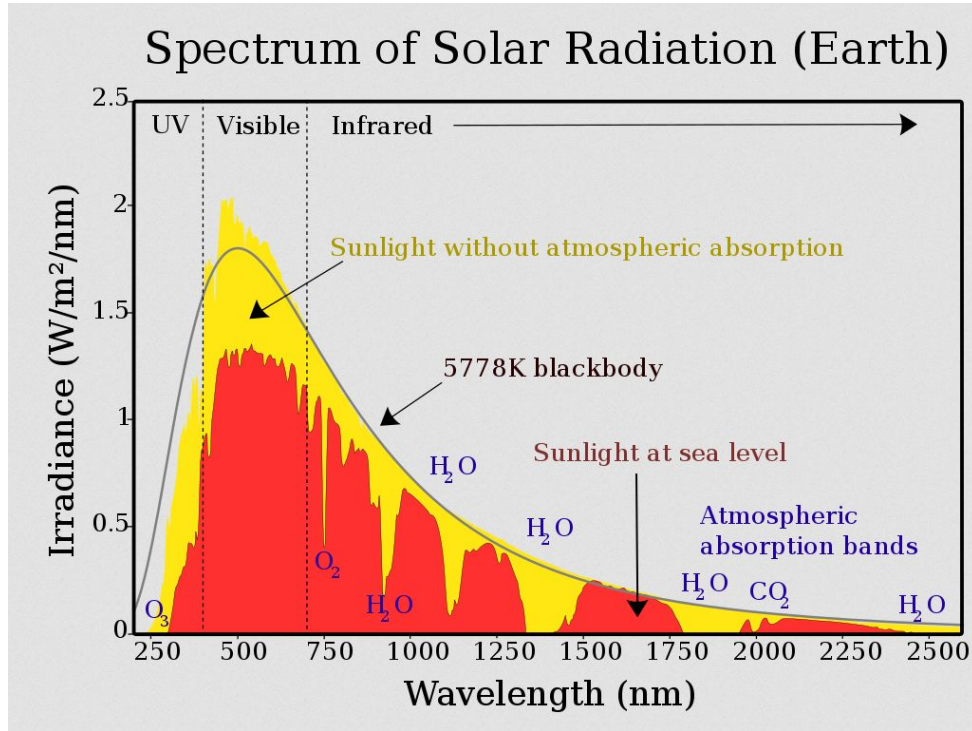
Today: Focus on the light, eyes and colors, later stages next week

Light

Visible light as a part of electromagnetic spectrum



Sunlight is a mixture of different wavelengths

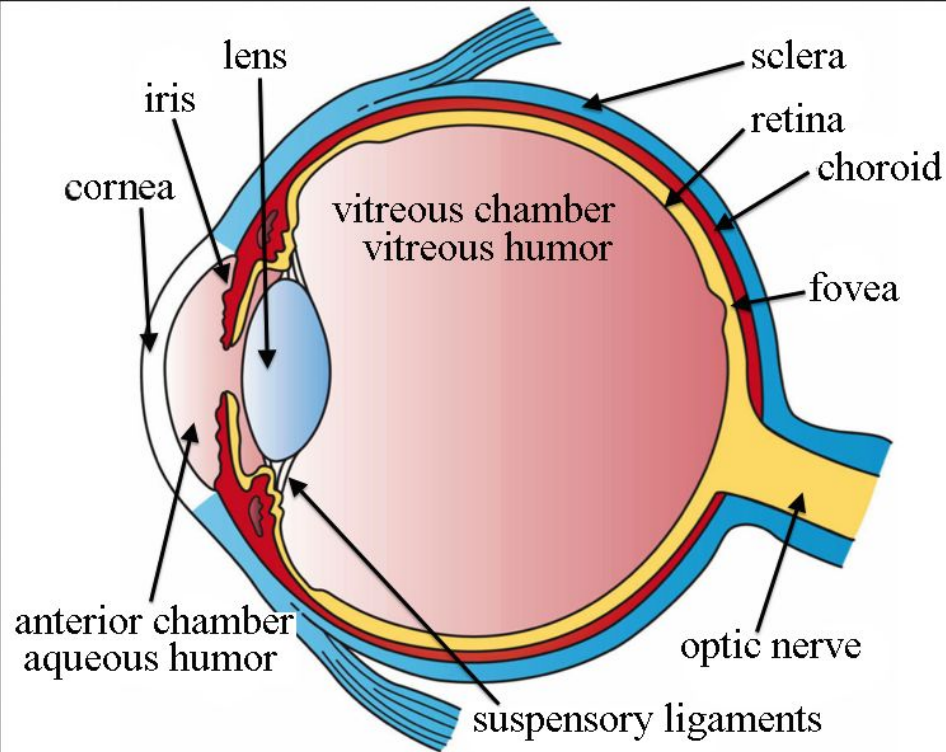


https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Solar_spectrum_en.svg

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WhereRainbowRises.jpg>

Human eye

Human eye

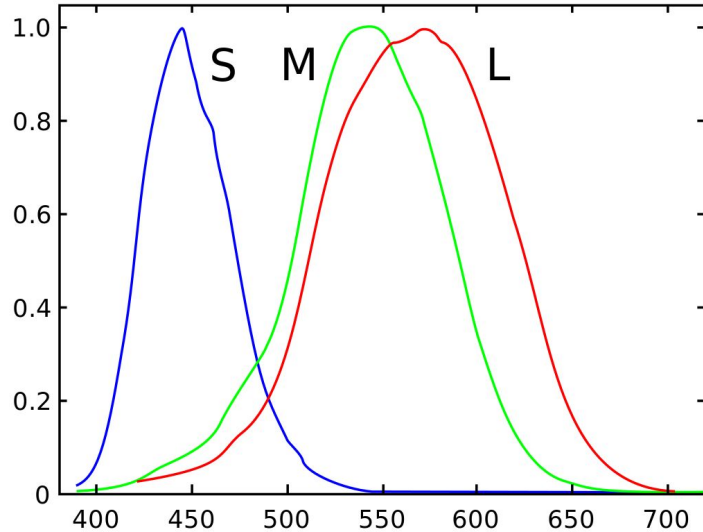


Retina (sietnica): light-sensitive layer

Lens (šošovka): focus light to retina

Pupil (zrenica): hole in iris where light enters the eye, its size regulated by the amount of light

Photoreceptor cells in the retina

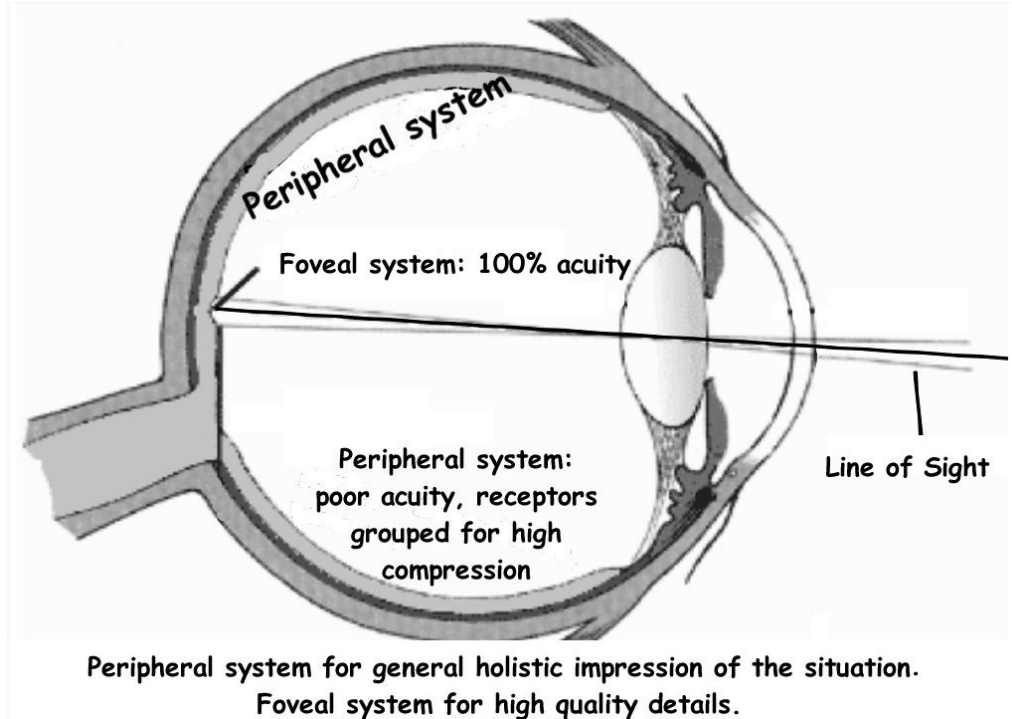


Rods (tyčinky): more sensitive to low light, not used for color vision

Cones (čapíky): color vision, three different types sensitive to different wavelengths (blue, green, red)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cones_SMJ2_E.svg

Foveal vs peripheral vision



Fovea: central zone with many cones, sharp color vision, only about $1-2^\circ$

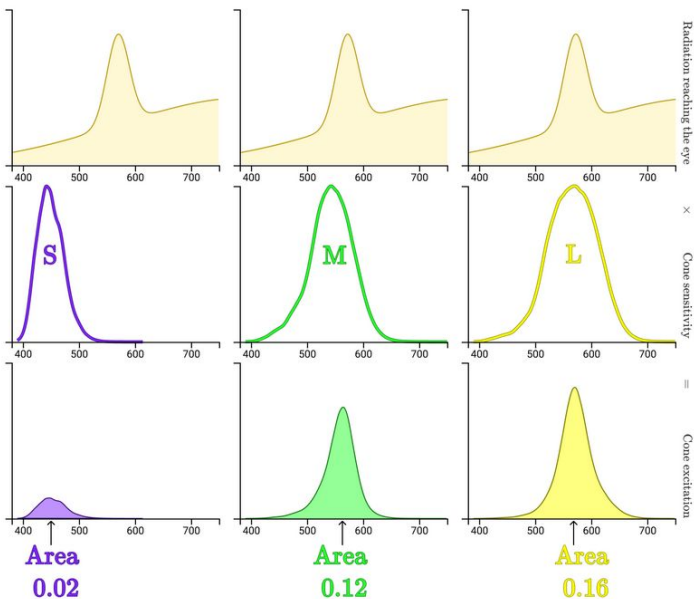
Peripheral vision: mostly rods, fast monochrome vision

The eyes make fast **movements** (saccades) between fixations on different points of interest to create a composite image

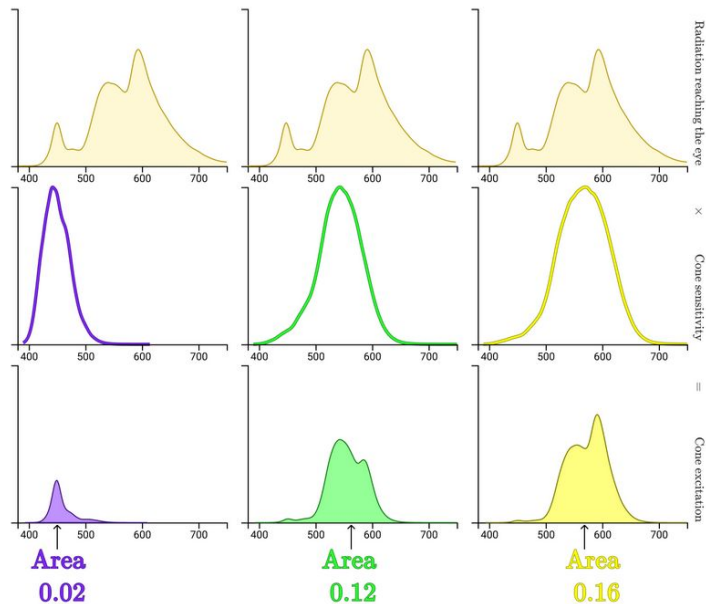
Colors and color spaces

Metamers: light with different spectra that appear the same (to typical humans)

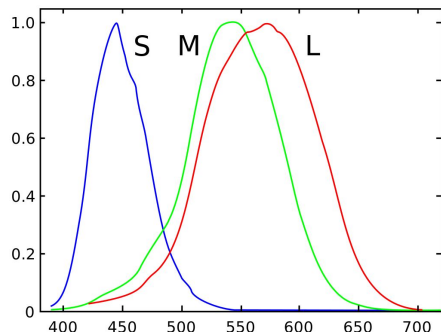
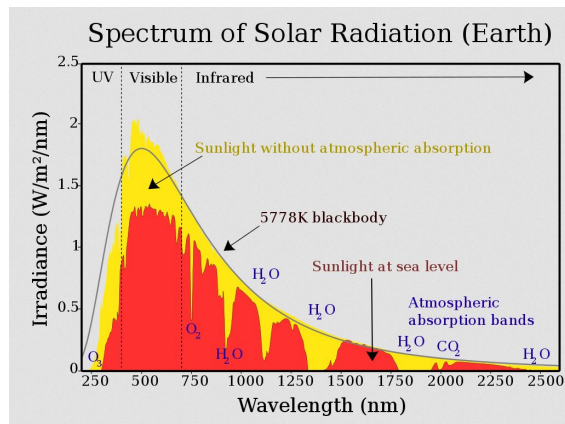
Cone excitation by a point on a lemon



Cone excitation by a pixel of a lemon on a screen



Color spaces, LMS



A **color space** is an organization of colors.

Our eye projects a full light spectrum into three values: response of the three types of cones.

S (short), M (medium), L (large) wavelength

LMS color space uses these three values to represent a color.

Metameric colors have the same values.

Derived models, e.g. CIE with better properties.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Solar_spectrum_en.svg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cones_SMJ2_E.svg

Additive color models, RGB

Monitors, projectors etc.

Component lights in **primary colors**,
other colors mixtures of these.

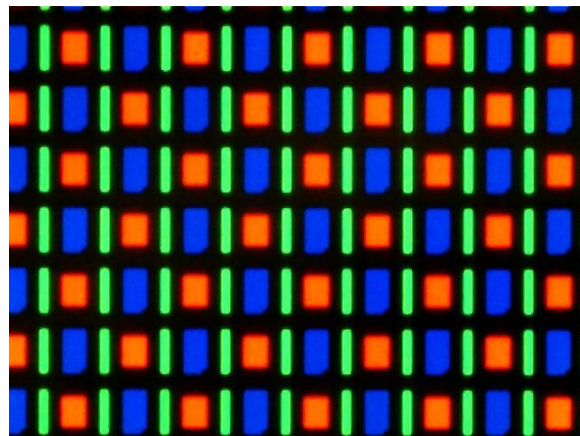
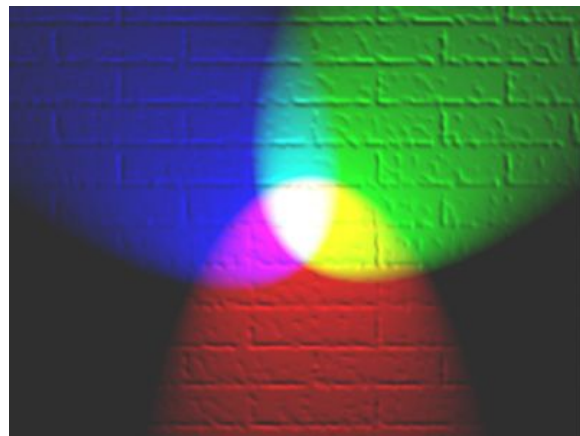
White can be achieved by combining colors.

RGB uses **red, green, blue** as primary
(corresponds to LMS peaks).

The **gamut** is a set of colors representable by a
device, usually a subset of the visible spectrum.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RGB_illumination.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nexus_one_screen_microscope.jpg



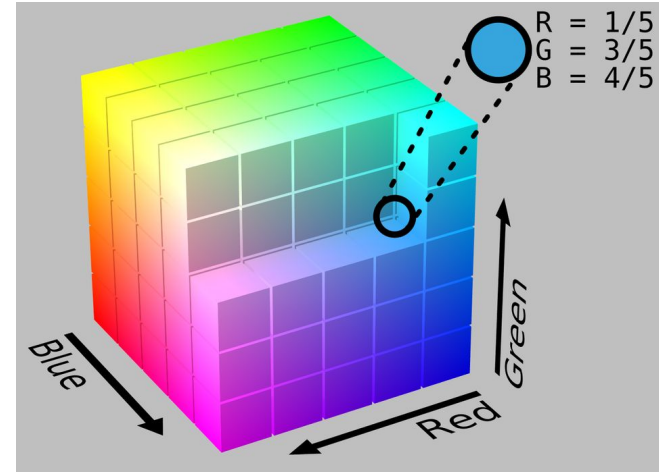
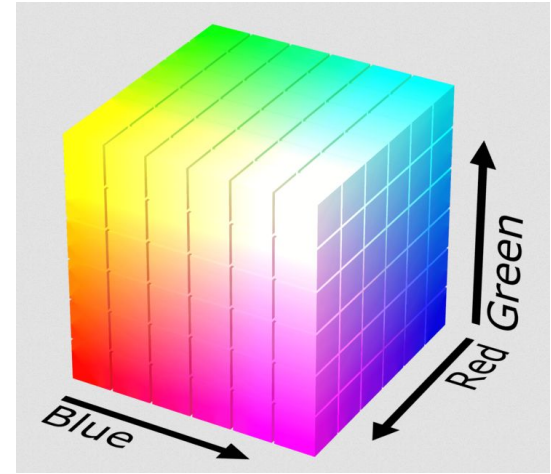
Colors in RGB space (RGB cube)

RGB is often used to specify colors.

Each coordinate e.g. a real number between 0 and 1 or integer between 0 and 255.

Also hexadecimal notation, e.g. #ff0000 is pure red.

Greytone on the main diagonal (x,x,x).



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RGB_color_solid_cube.png

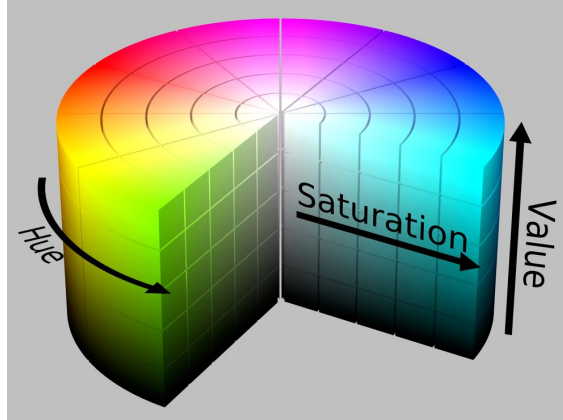
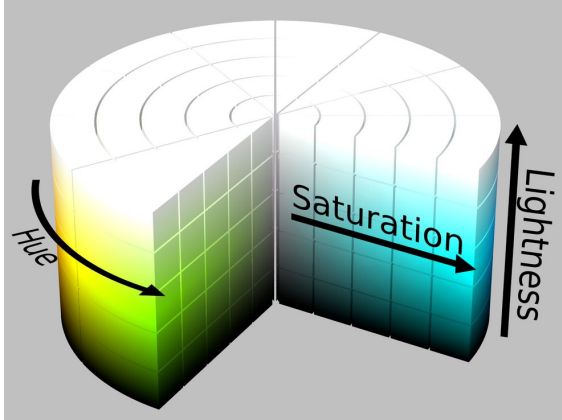
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RGB_Cube_Show_lowgamma_cutout_b.png

HSL and HSV color models

Transformations of RGB model with more intuitive coordinates.

Useful for color pickers, color palettes, image transformations etc.

Hue, saturation, lightness / hue, saturation, value.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HSL_color_solid_cylinder_saturation_gray.png

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HSV_color_solid_cylinder_saturation_gray.png

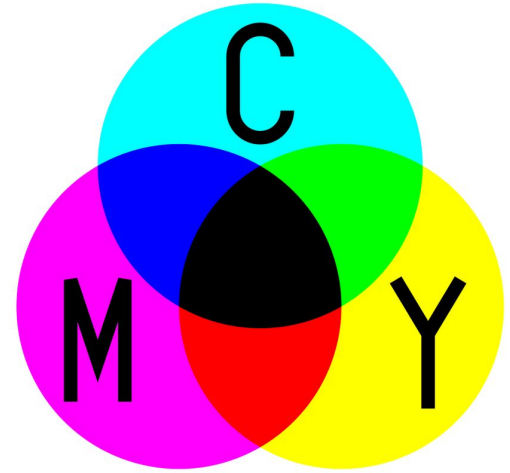
Subtractive models, pigments

Pigments block part of the light spectrum.

Adding more pigments blocks more light.

Black can be achieved by combining colors.

Example: CMY(K) color model used in printing.



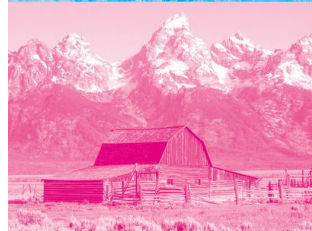
CMY(K) color model

Primary colors cyan, magenta and yellow

- **cyan** absorbs red
- **magenta** absorbs green
- **yellow** absorbs blue

Black (K) added because

- it is cheaper
- it hides artifacts in dark colors



Conversion from RGB to CMYK is difficult,
device-dependent.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barns_grand_tetons.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMY_separation_%E2%80%93_no_black.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMYK_separation_%E2%80%93_maximum_black.jpg

Color wheel, RYB model

Subtractive model developed in art,
for mixing pigments

Dates back to 17th century

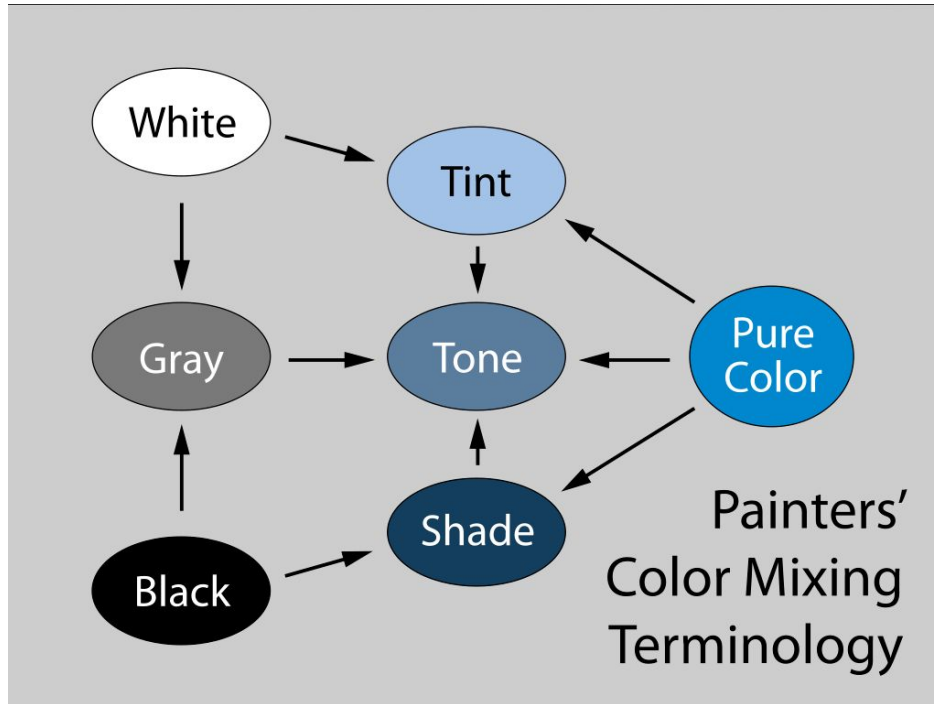
Primary colors red, yellow, blue

Secondary orange, green, purple
(each a mix of two primaries)



https://www.w3schools.com/colors/colors_wheels.asp

Tint, tone, shade - more painter terminology



Examples of color schemes

Monochromatic: tints / tones / shades of the same hue

Complementary: 2 colors opposite on the color wheel
(e.g. orange and blue)

Split complementary: color and 2 neighbors
of its complement (e.g. orange and blue-green, blue-purple)

Analogous: 3-5 adjacent colors on the wheel

Each of these can be desaturated (tints / tones / shades)

See also <https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel>



Color and meaning, cultural differences

Colors often symbolize different things both within and between cultures:

- for example red: blood, love, passion, life, anger, violence, danger, emergency, speed, heat ...
 - China: good luck, prosperity vs. Europe: warning
 - "in the red" mean losses in English, what about China?
- mourning color is black in Europe, white in the East

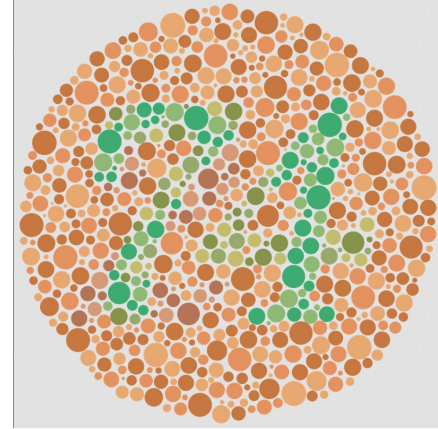
Colors in data visualization

Not everybody will be able to see your colors

Color blindness or color vision deficiency

Various forms and causes

Most often genetic red–green color blindness, where L or M opsin gene is mutated (8% of males)



Technical problems

- Projectors often distort colors
- Black-and-white printing

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ishihara_9.svg

Choose your colors wisely to avoid these problems as much as possible

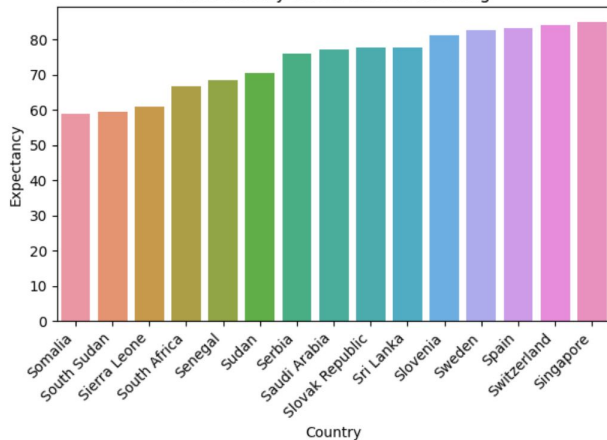
Color draws attention, use it sparingly

Rely on neutral tones

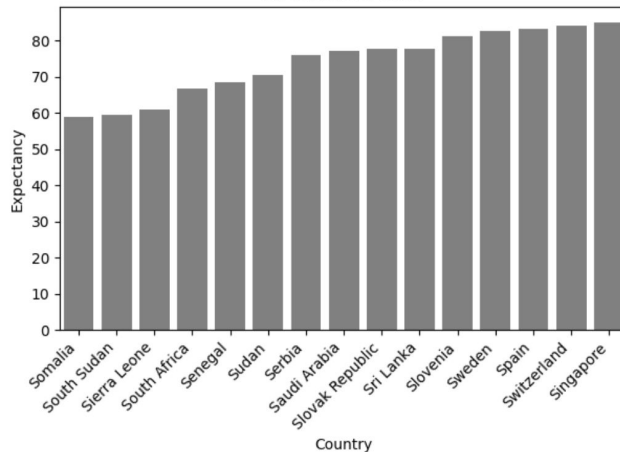
Use color sparingly, avoid unnecessary colors

Colors are great for highlighting points of interest

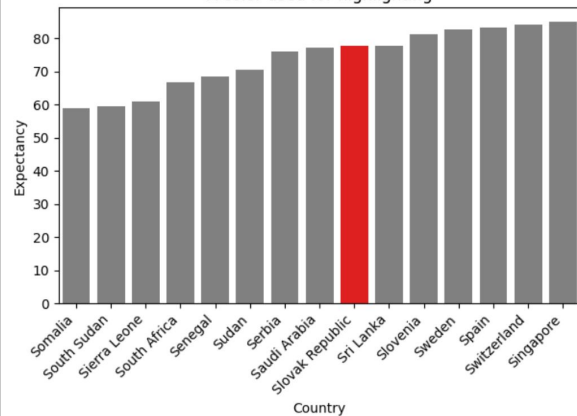
Unnecessary colors without meaning



All in neutral color



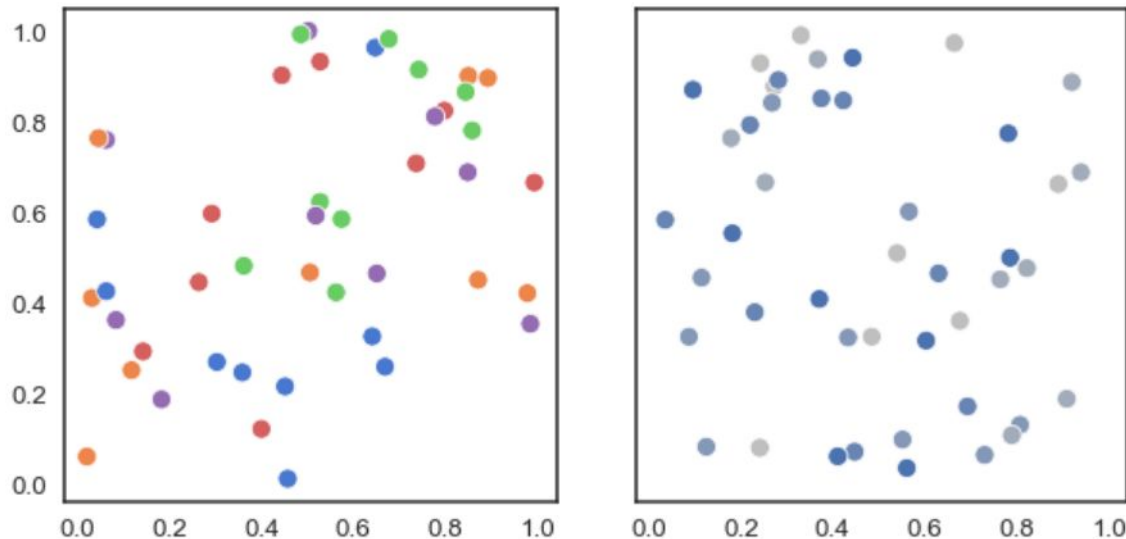
A color used for highlighting



Qualitative palettes (for categorical variables)

Typically vary hues, easier to distinguish than lightness of the same hue

Try to keep the number of colors low



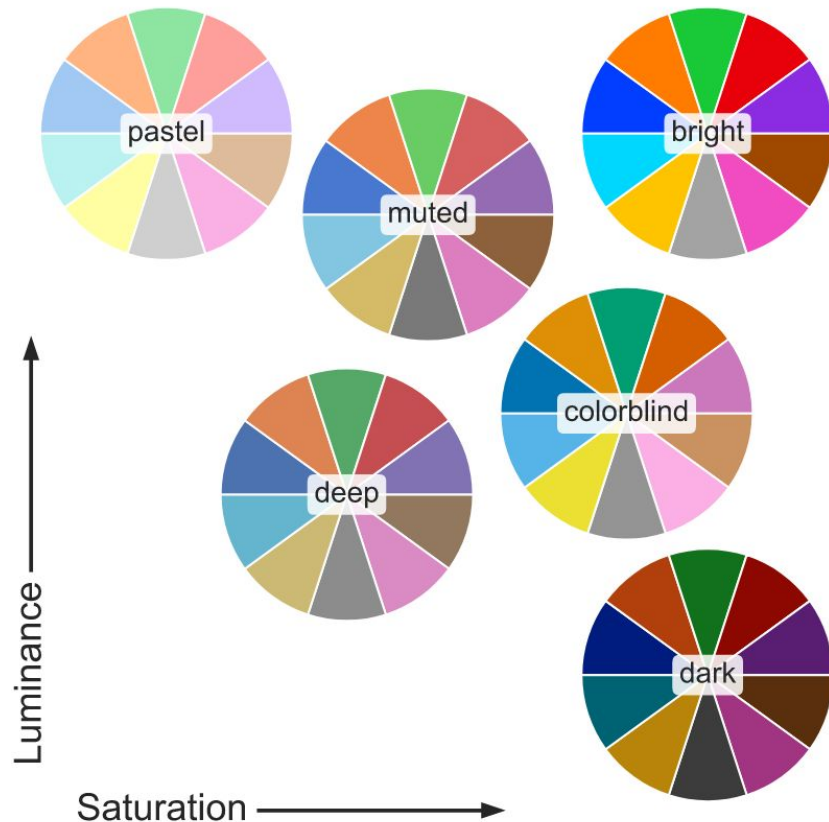
Qualitative palettes (for categorical variables)

Examples from Seaborn library
on the right:

[Color Brewer](#) tool:



https://seaborn.pydata.org/tutorial/color_palettes.html



Quantitative palettes (for numerical variables)

Vary lightness rather than (just) hue (hue is circular, hard to interpret)

Discrete vs continuous:



https://seaborn.pydata.org/tutorial/color_palettes.html

Diverging quantitative palettes

For numerical variables with a special midpoint, often 0
(such as increase / decrease)

Midpoint displayed as a special neutral color, e.g. grey



https://seaborn.pydata.org/tutorial/color_palettes.html

Graphical file formats

Bitmap formats: store your plot as pixels at some resolution

- resolution leads to tradeoff between size and quality
- prefer lossless compression (PNG rather than JPEG)
- transparent background may be also a good idea

Vector formats: store your plot as geometric objects (SVG, PDF, EPS)

- can be arbitrarily enlarged, editable
- can be large if many points / lines (subsample data?)
- vector formats usually preferable unless not supported by software
- it is a good idea to include fonts in the file
- beware that these file formats may include bitmaps