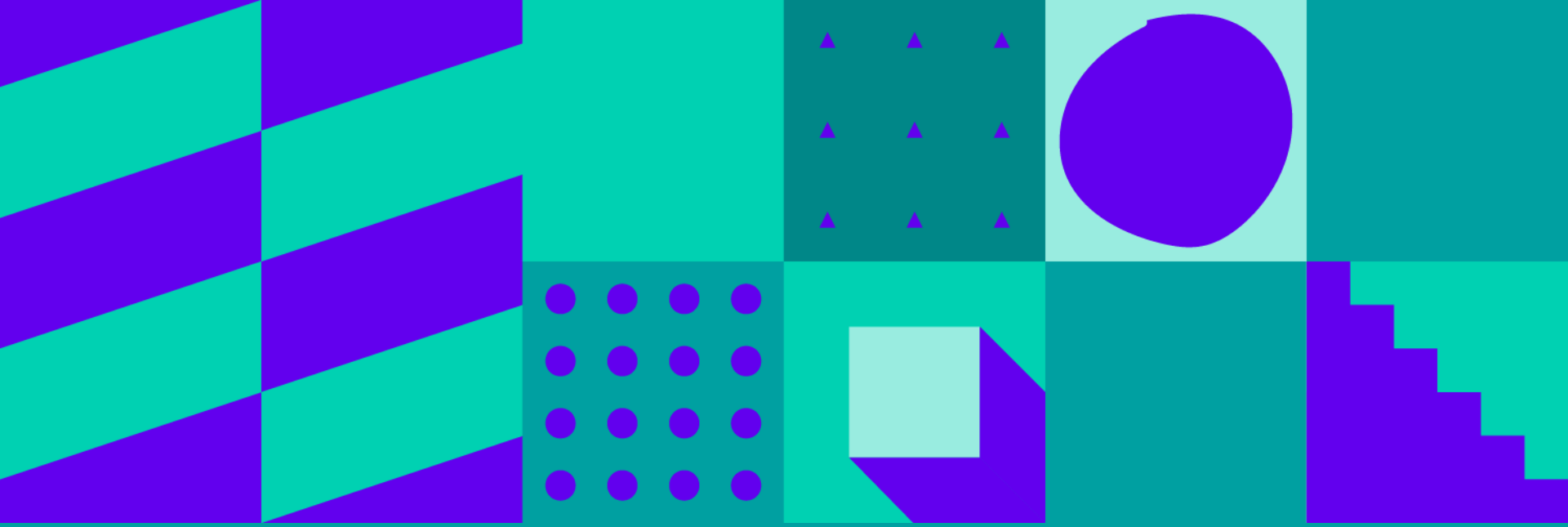


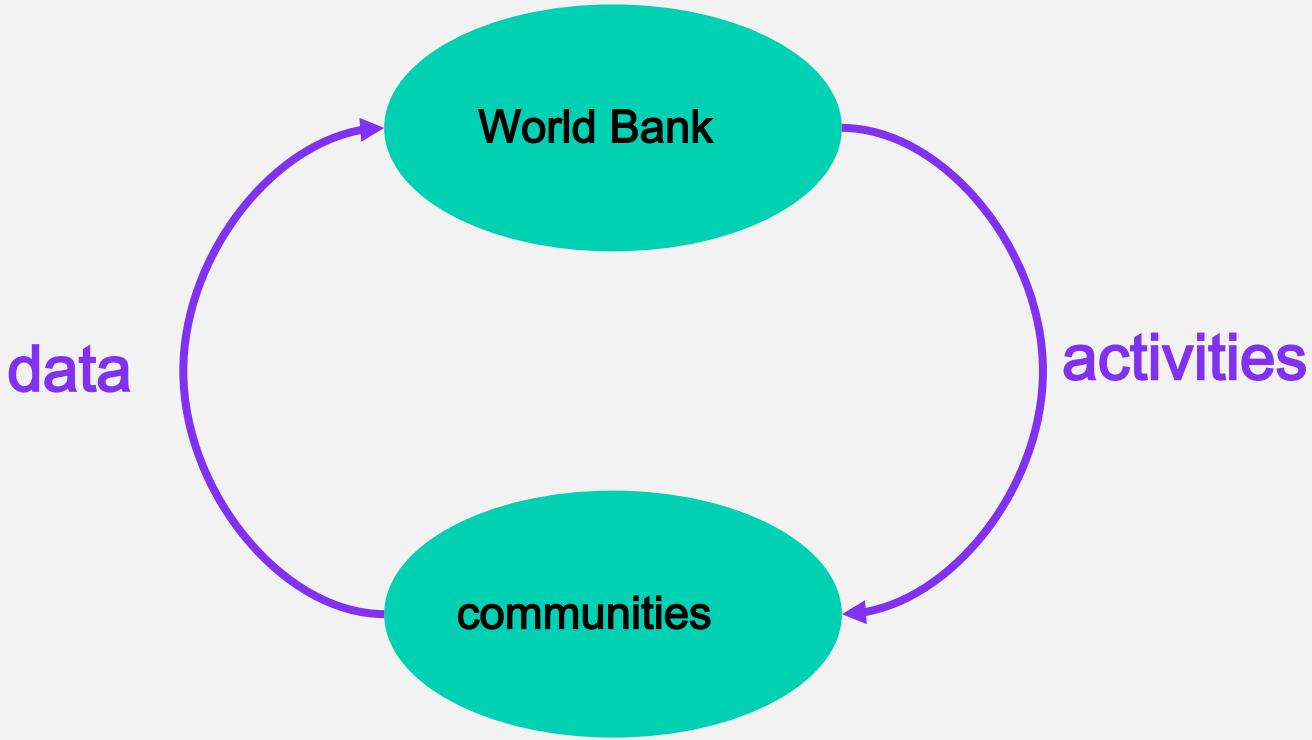
The importance of user and public voice in official statistics

Jeni Tennison ▪ @JeniT

CONNECTED BY DATA

World Bank Data Day 2019 . See https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/data-day-data-decade

data - driven decision making



withdraw
data consent

affecting data
quality and
generalisability

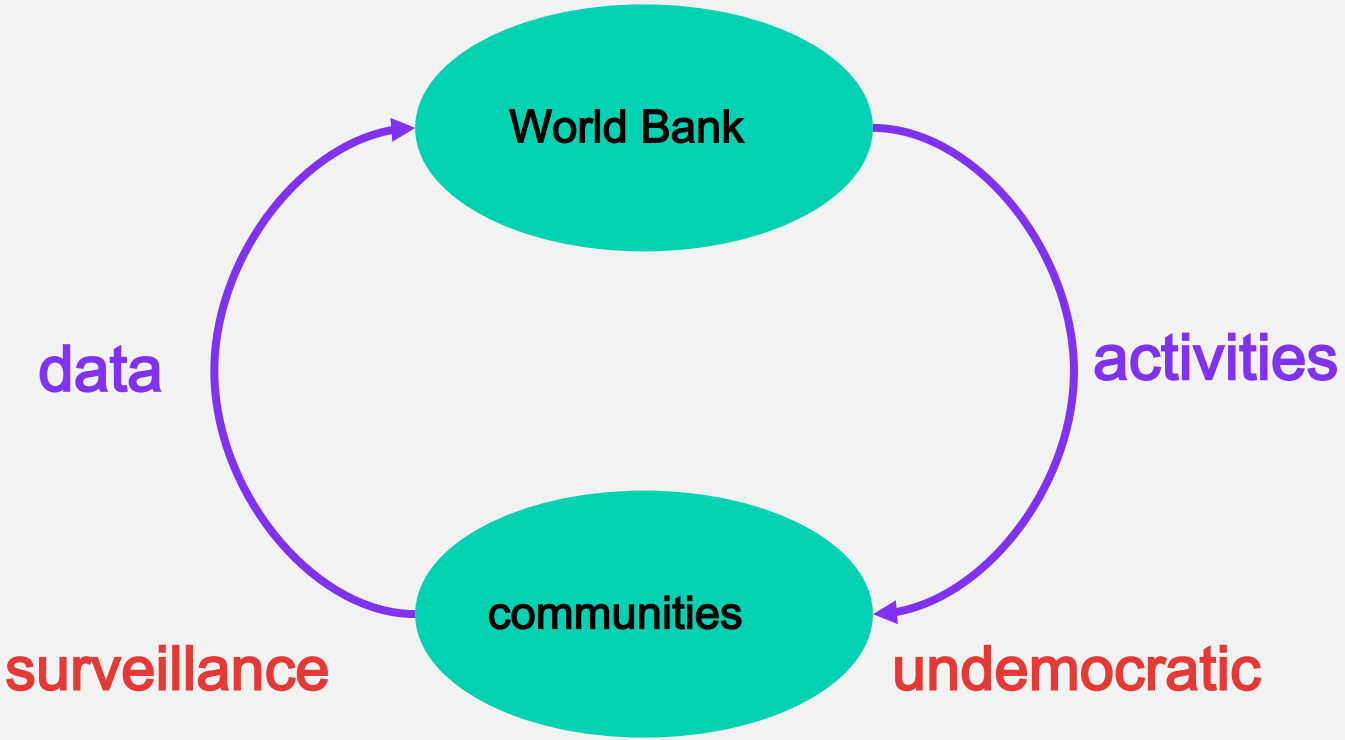
avoid
services

affecting public
health and
wellbeing

object and
protest

damaging
public trust

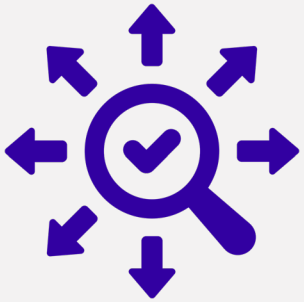
data - driven decision making



Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA), **Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Data** . https://www.gida-global.org/data-rights

better
quality data

improving strength of findings



impactful
evidence

demonstrating importance of research

avoid costly
failures

saving public money

how do we get there?

UK stats world

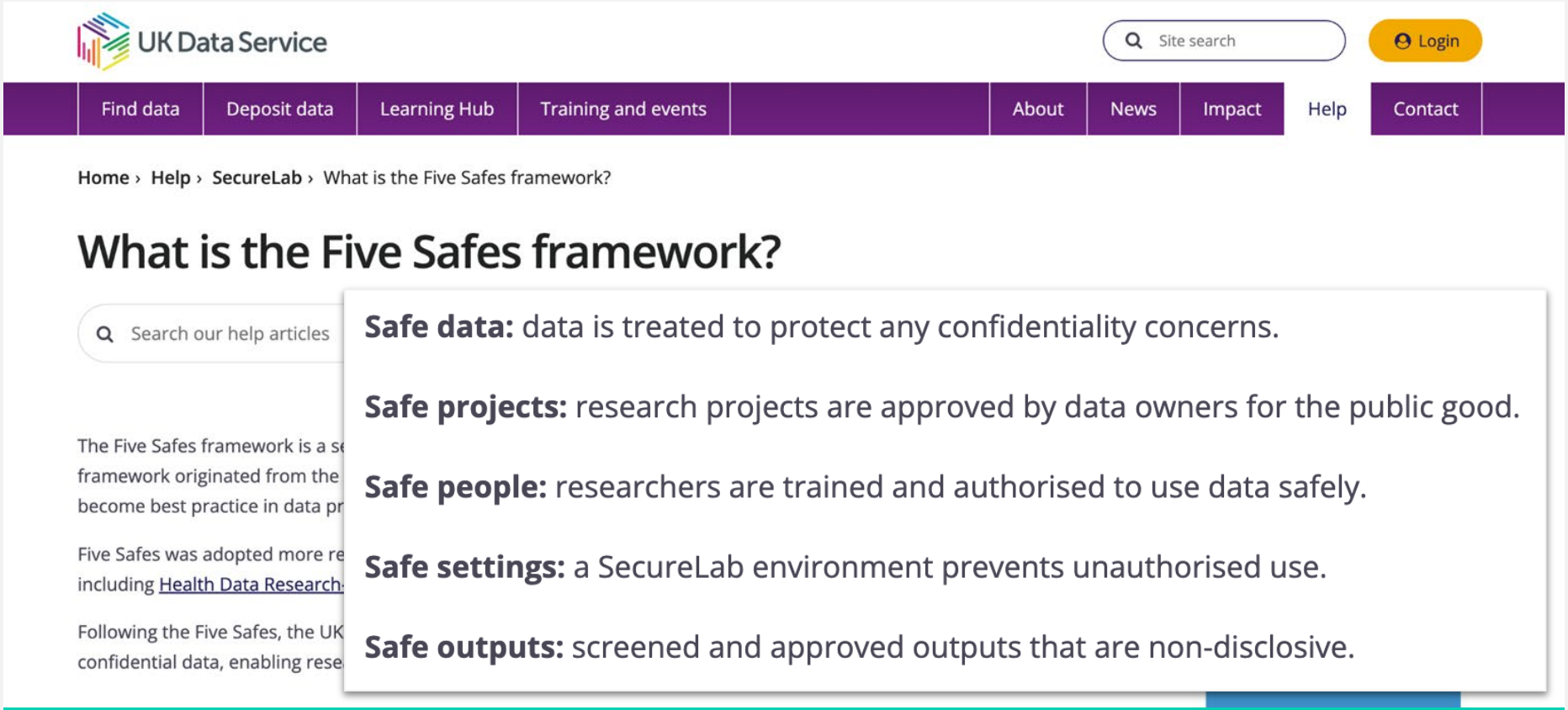
We do this by setting the standards official statistics must meet in the Code of Practice for Statistics. We ensure that producers of official statistics uphold these standards by conducting assessments against the Code. Those which meet the standards are given National Statistics status, indicating that they meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value. We also report publicly on system-wide issues and on the way that statistics are being used, celebrating when the standards are upheld and challenging publicly when they are not.

Our vision is simple. Statistics should serve the public good.

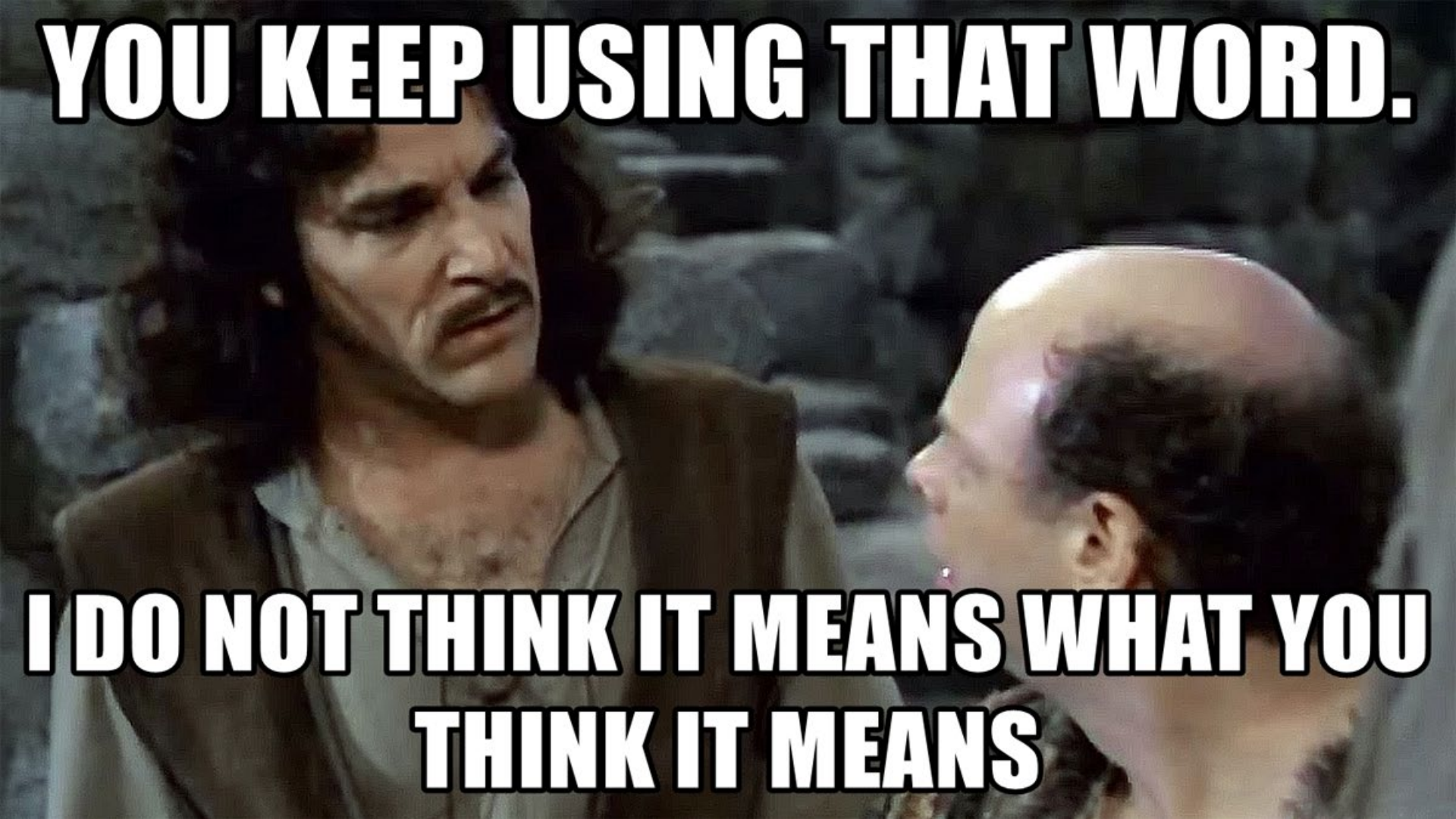
Statistics should be produced in a trustworthy way, be of high quality, and provide value by answering people's questions: providing accountability, helping people make choices and informing policy.

Our 5-year plan sets out our vision and priorities for 2020-2025 and how we will contribute to fostering the Authority's ambitions for the statistics system. Our annual business plan shares our focus for the

Office for Statistics Regulation, **What we do** . https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/what-we-do/



UK Data Service, **What is the Five Safes framework?** https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/help/secure-lab/what-is-the-five-safes-framework/


YOU KEEP USING THAT WORD.
I DO NOT THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS

BOOK IV

1. THAT THE GENERAL WILL IS INDESTRUCTIBLE

AS long as several men in assembly regard themselves as a single body, they have only a single will which is concerned with their common preservation and general well-being. In this case, all the springs of the State are vigorous and simple and its
common good is everywhere c
are the enemies of political s
simplicity; lures and ingeniou
When, among the happiest pe
and always acting wisely, can
illustrious and wretched with s

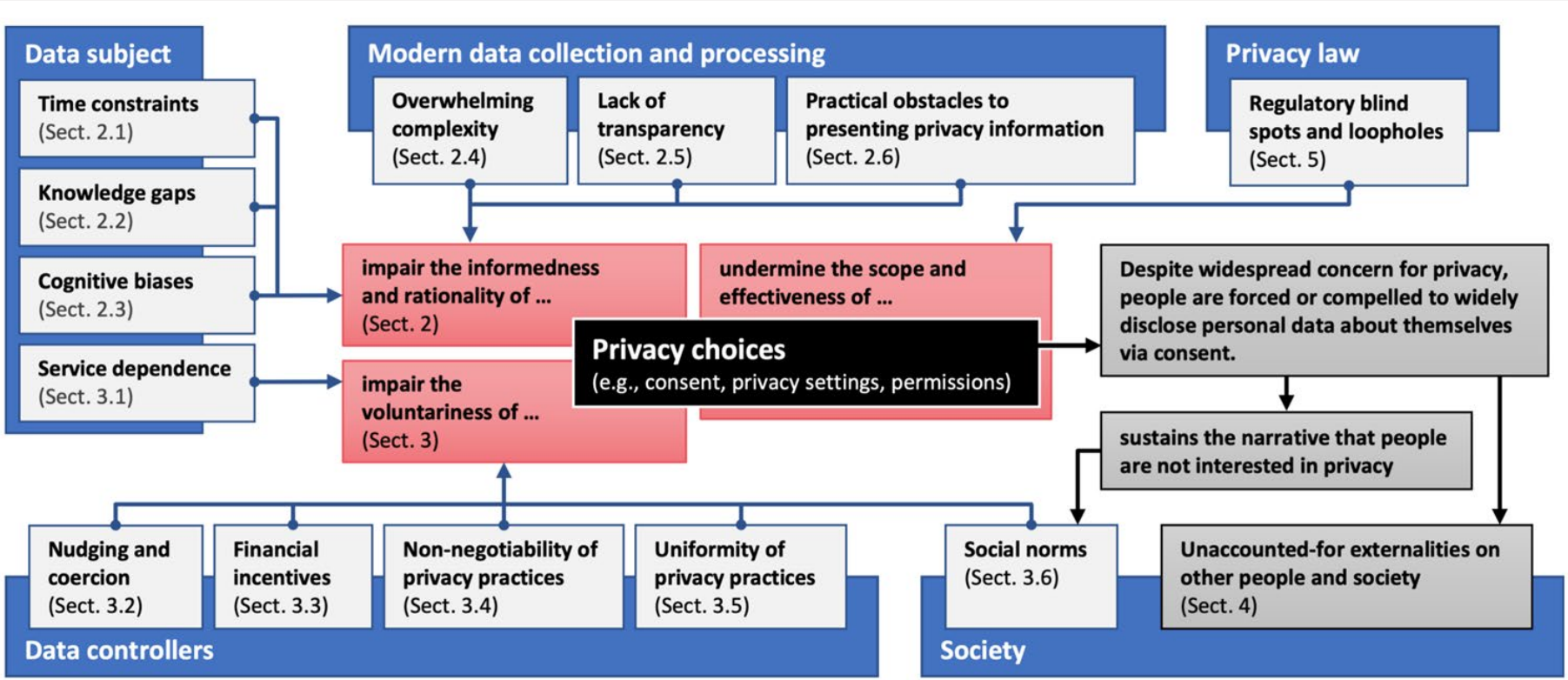
Finally, when the State, on the eve of ruin, maintains only a vain, illusory and formal existence, when in every heart the social bond is broken, and the meanest interest brazenly lays hold of the sacred name of "public good," the general will becomes mute: all men, guided by secret motives, no more give their views as citizens than if the State had never been; and iniquitous decrees directed solely to private interest get passed under the name of laws.

A State so governed needs very few laws; and, as it becomes necessary to issue new ones, the necessity is

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1762), **The Social Contract**
https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/rousseau/social-contract/ch04.htm

you have to ask people

individual consent?



Kröger, Jacob Leon and Lutz, Otto Hans-Martin and Ullrich, Stefan, **The Myth of Individual Control: Mapping the Limitations of Privacy Self -management** (July 7, 2021). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3881776

collective
data governance

A RELATIONAL THEORY OF DATA GOVERNANCE

Forthcoming, Yale Law Journal, Vol. 131

Salomé Viljoen[*]

Data-governance law—the legal regime that regulates how data about people is collected, processed, and used—is the subject of lively theorizing and several proposed legislative reforms. Different theories advance different legal interests in information. Some seek to reassert individual control for data subjects over the terms of their datafication, while others aim to maximize data-subject financial gain. But these proposals share a common conceptual flaw. Put simply, they miss the point of data production in a digital economy: to put people into population-based relations with one another. This relational aspect of data production drives much of the social value and harm of data collection and use in a digital economy.

This Feature advances a theoretical account of data as social relations, constituted by both legal and technical systems. It shows how data relations result in supra-

Viljoen, Salome, **A Relational Theory of Data Governance** (November 11, 2020). Yale Law Journal, Forthcoming, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3727562 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3727562

Living with data

- About this website
- What's new?
- Current research
- Previous research
- People
- Resources & publications
  - Summary of Living With Data findings
  - Public sector data uses
  - Producing accounts of data uses
  - LWD data archive
  - Attitudes to data uses in different public sectors
  - LWD focus group & interview results
  - LWD survey results
  - LWD literature review
  - Qualitative research during Covid

Data matters are human matters: summary of Living With Data findings

Home > Resources & publications > Data matters are human matters: summary of Living With Data findings

Living With Data (2019-2022) is finally at an end. We have produced a report of our main findings from across our research, which included:

- an evidence review
- producing visualisations and accounts of specific public sector data uses
- two waves of a survey of public attitudes to these data uses
- a series of focus groups and interviews on the same topic.

Click here → to access the report, or read on for a summary.

Living with Data (2022), **Data matters are human matters: summary of Living With Data findings** . https://livingwithdata.org/resources/data-matters-are-human-matters-summary-of-living-with-data-findings/

“it depends”

The public expect public data to be used for public good …

… with appropriate safeguards

privacy

is my data protected from those who could harm me?

ethics

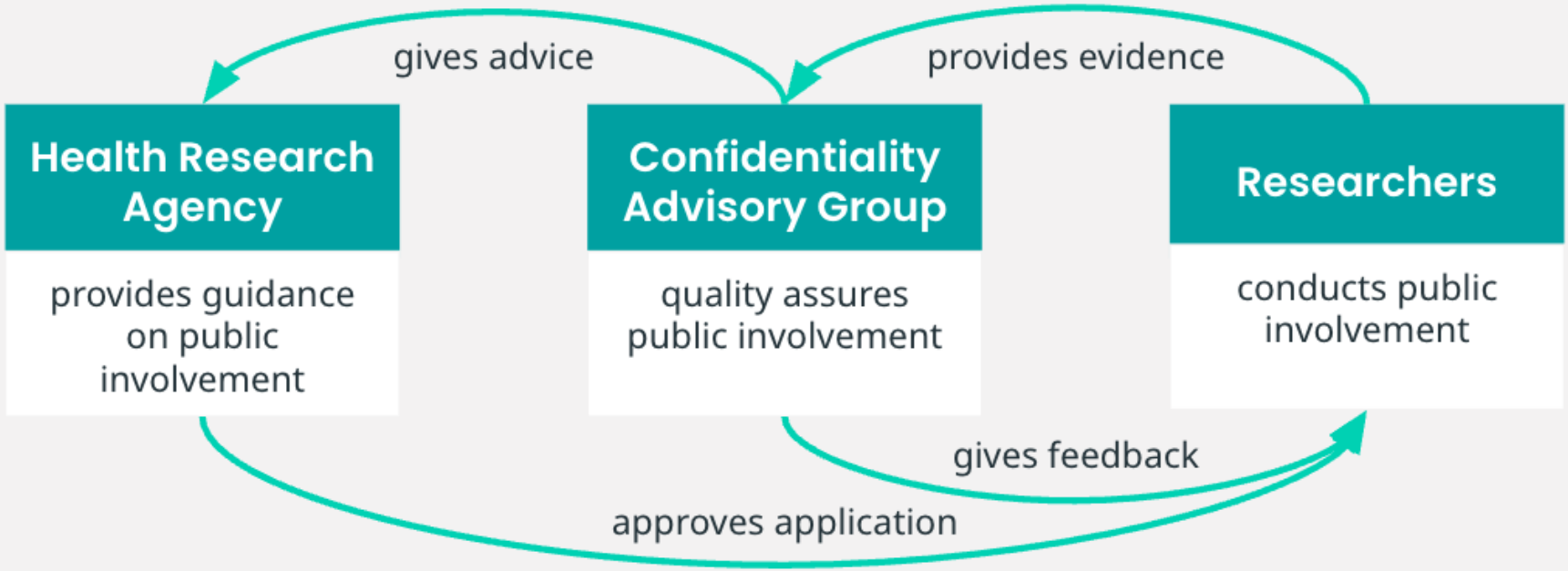
is our data being used to bring benefits?

exploitation

is our data just benefiting the rich and powerful?

public opinion is
diverse and
context - dependent

you have to ask people
specifically about your research



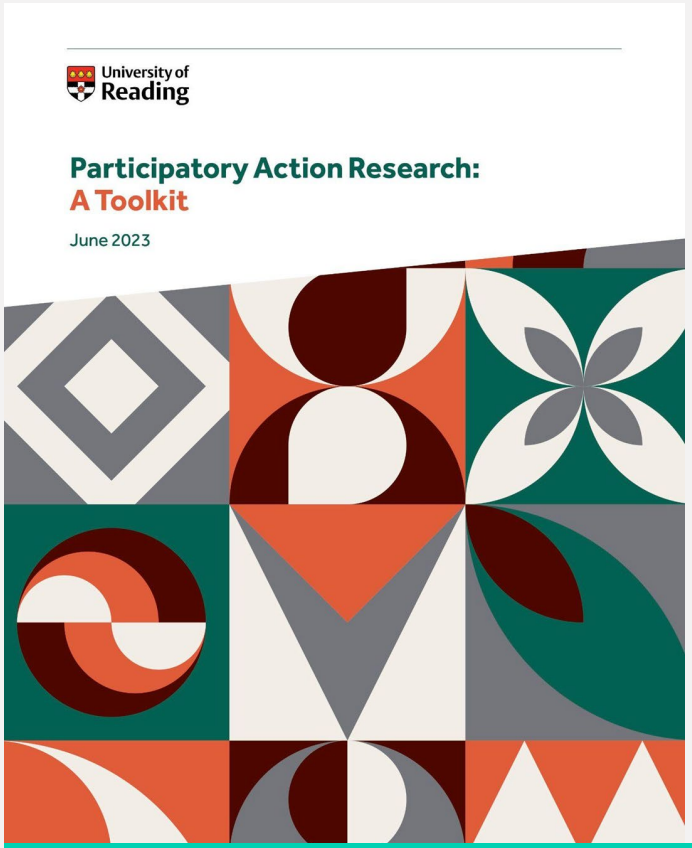
Connected by Data (2025), **How can we ensure public data is shared in the public interest?**
https://connectedbydata.org/resources/case-study-cag

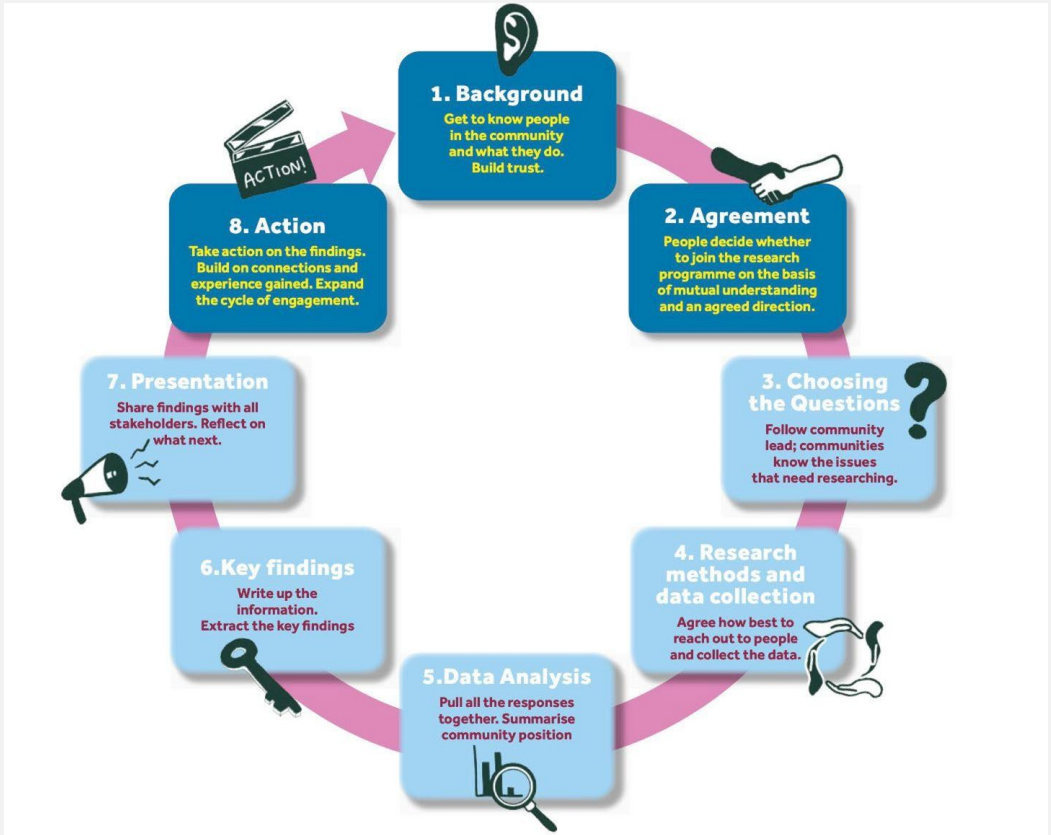
- seen as an add on / barrier
- rubber stamp late in the process
- easy-to-reach participants

- time / cost
- representation / legitimacy
- uncomfortable truths

can you do better?

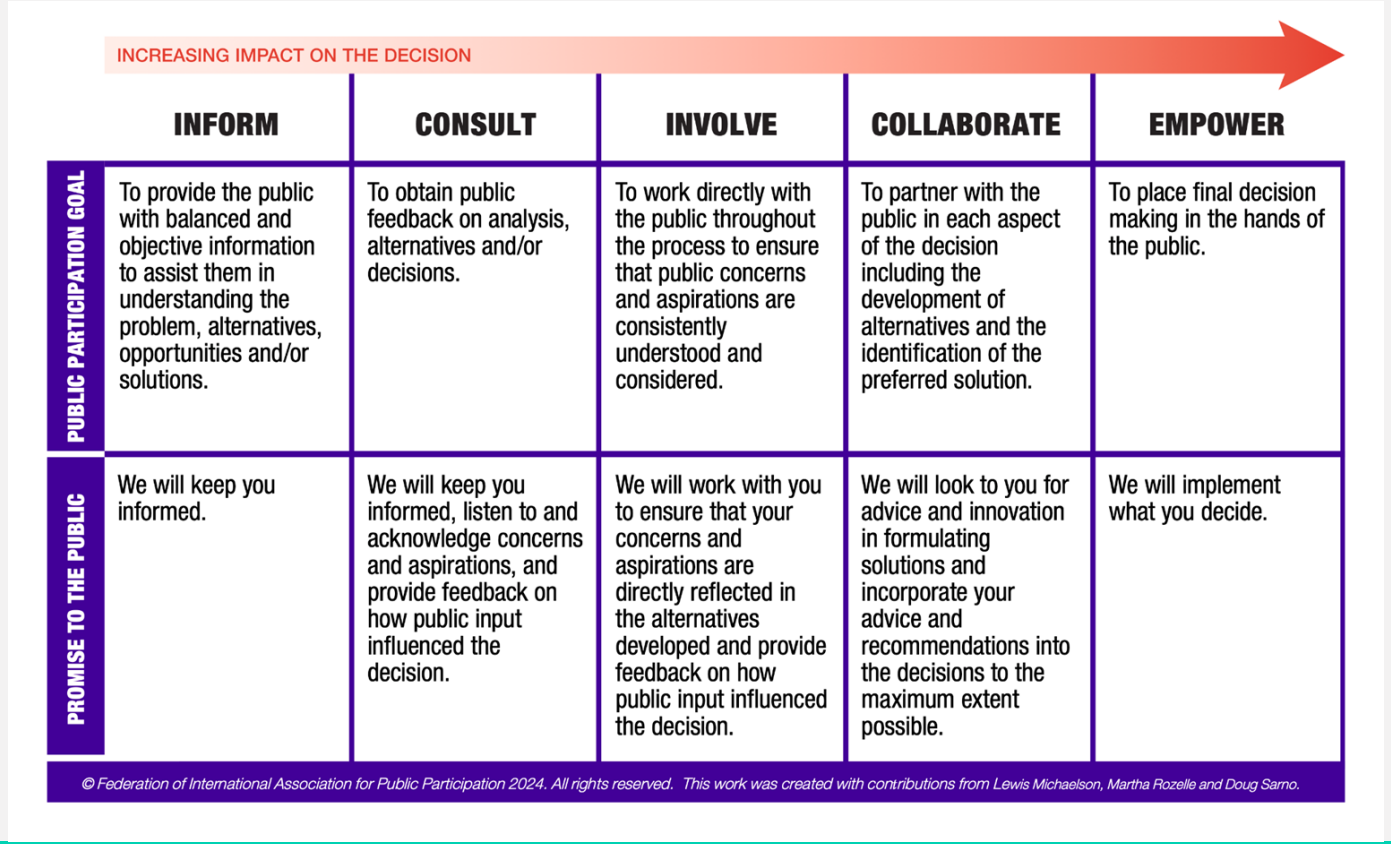
one step at a time



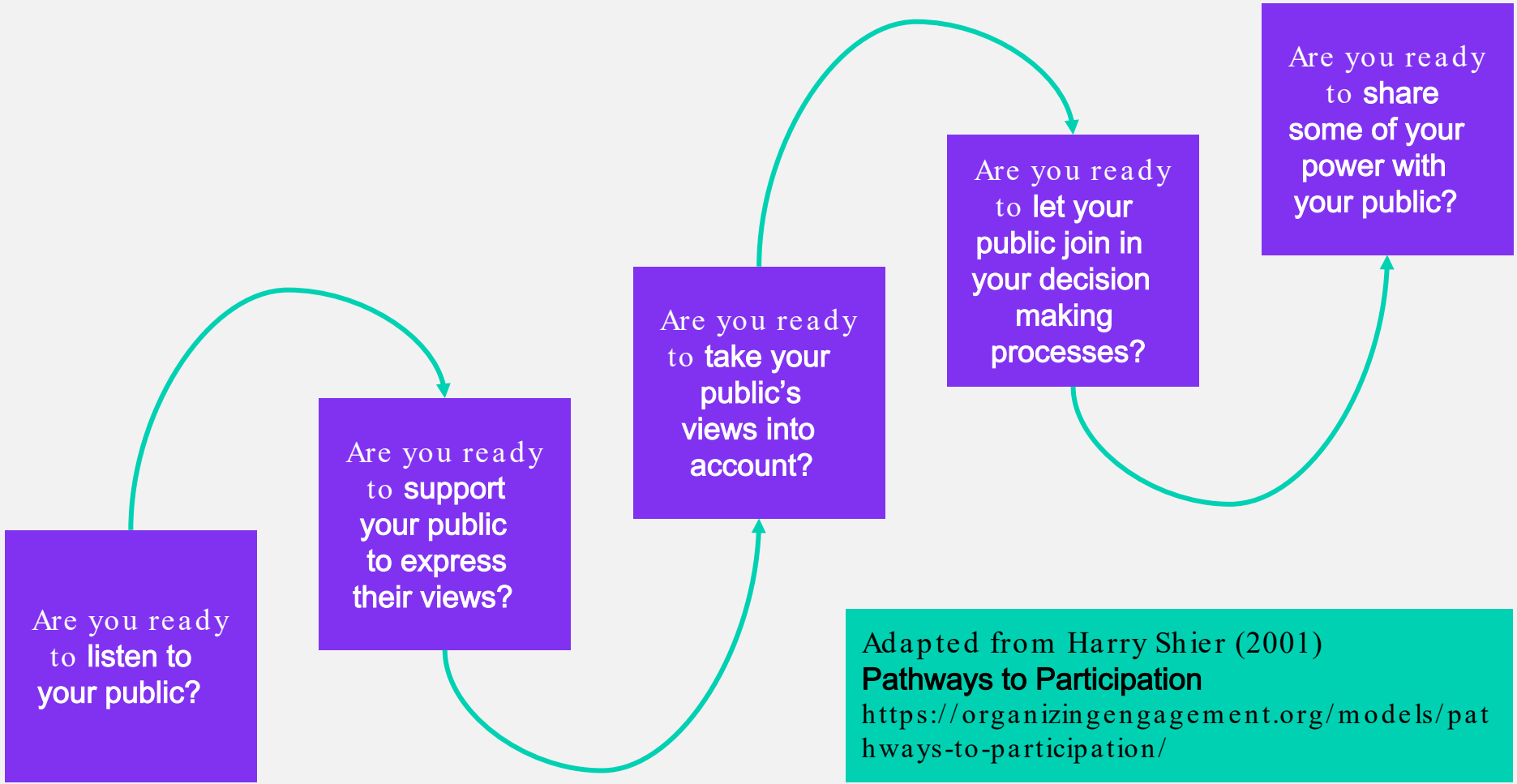


University of Reading (2023), **Participatory Action Research: A Toolkit** .
https://research.reading.ac.uk/community-based-research/participatory-action-research-a-toolkit/

Maternity Engagement Action (2024), **Findings from a community research initiative led by Black mothers in Birmingham** . https://maternityengagement.uk/campaign/see-me-hear-me-2024/



Federation of International Association for Public Participation (2024), **IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation** https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars



Adapted from Harry Shier (2001)
Pathways to Participation
https://organizingengagement.org/models/pathways-to-participation/

what did you do differently as a result?

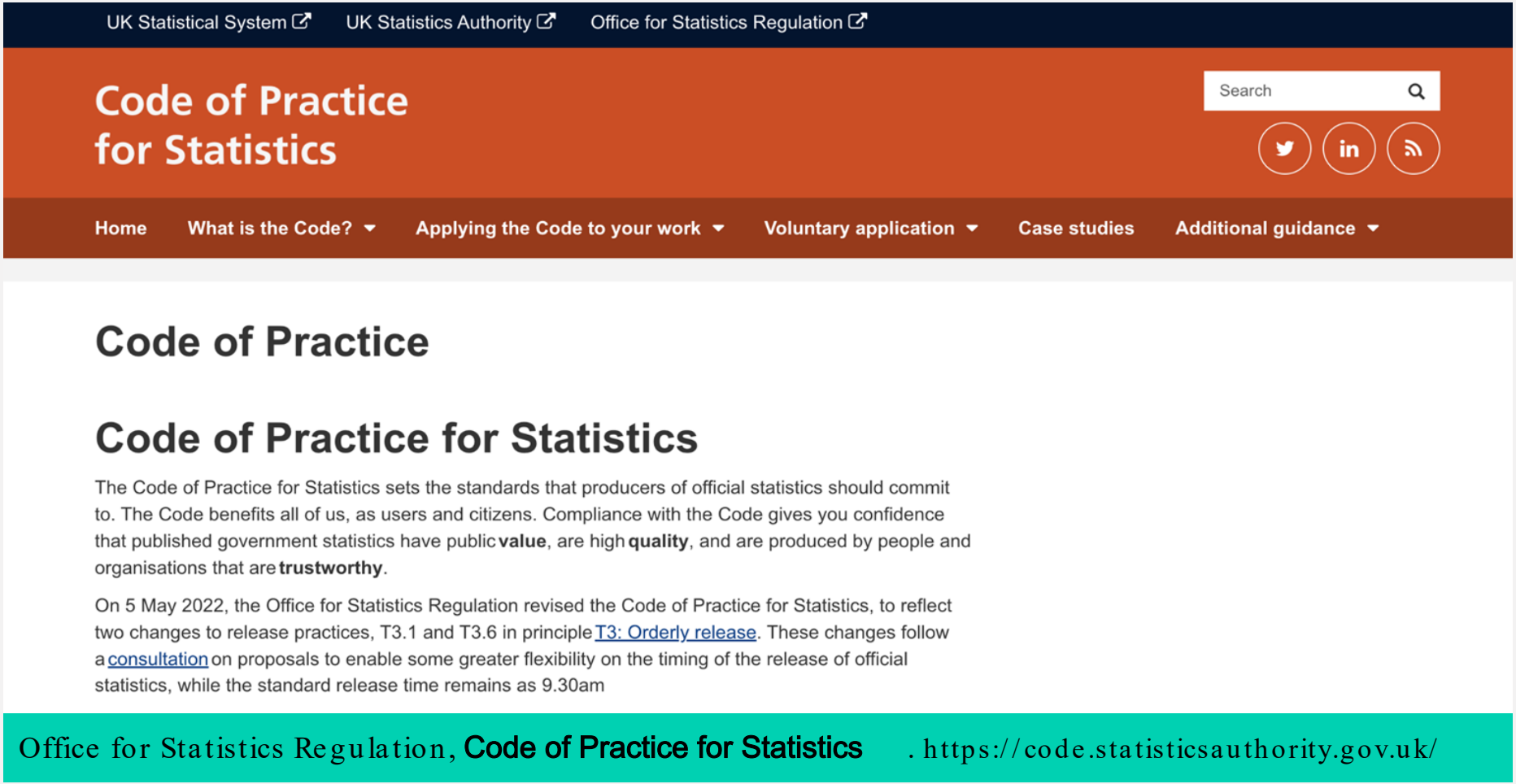
PEDRI

Contact

Championing public engagement with data and statistics

We share insights, tools and guidance for people who do data research to work well with the public.

Public Engagement and Data Research Initiative (PEDRI) https://www.pedri.org.uk/



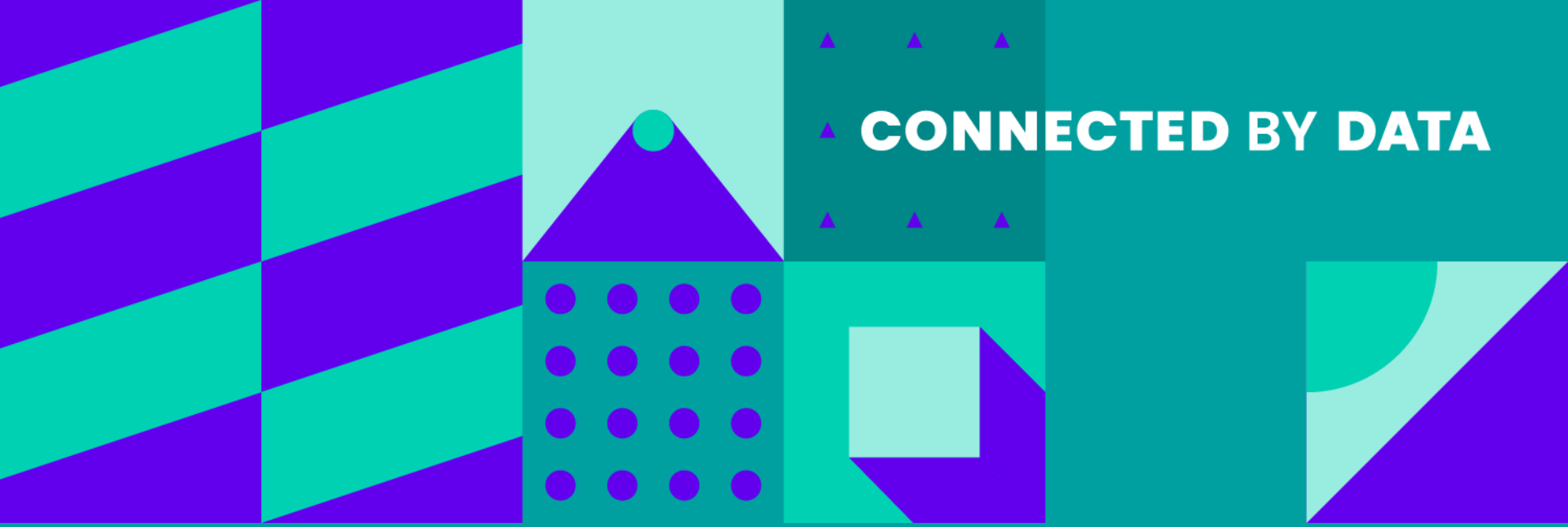
Office for Statistics Regulation, **Code of Practice for Statistics** . https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/

In summary…

Data should be used for public good

We can’t claim public good without involving the public

One step at a time



Thank you

@JeniT ▪ jeni@connectedbydata.org