

KEVIN GUYAN

# QUEER DATA

Using Gender,  
Sex and Sexuality  
Data for Action

BLOOMSBURY

# Data and Identity. The Politics of Counting LGBTQ Communities

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LGBTQ lives.



Research methods and data practices.

# Outcomes

Clearer understanding of challenges when using data about LGBTQ communities and other minoritised communities.

Develop a critical understanding of the power, politics and histories that underpin the collection, analysis and use of data.

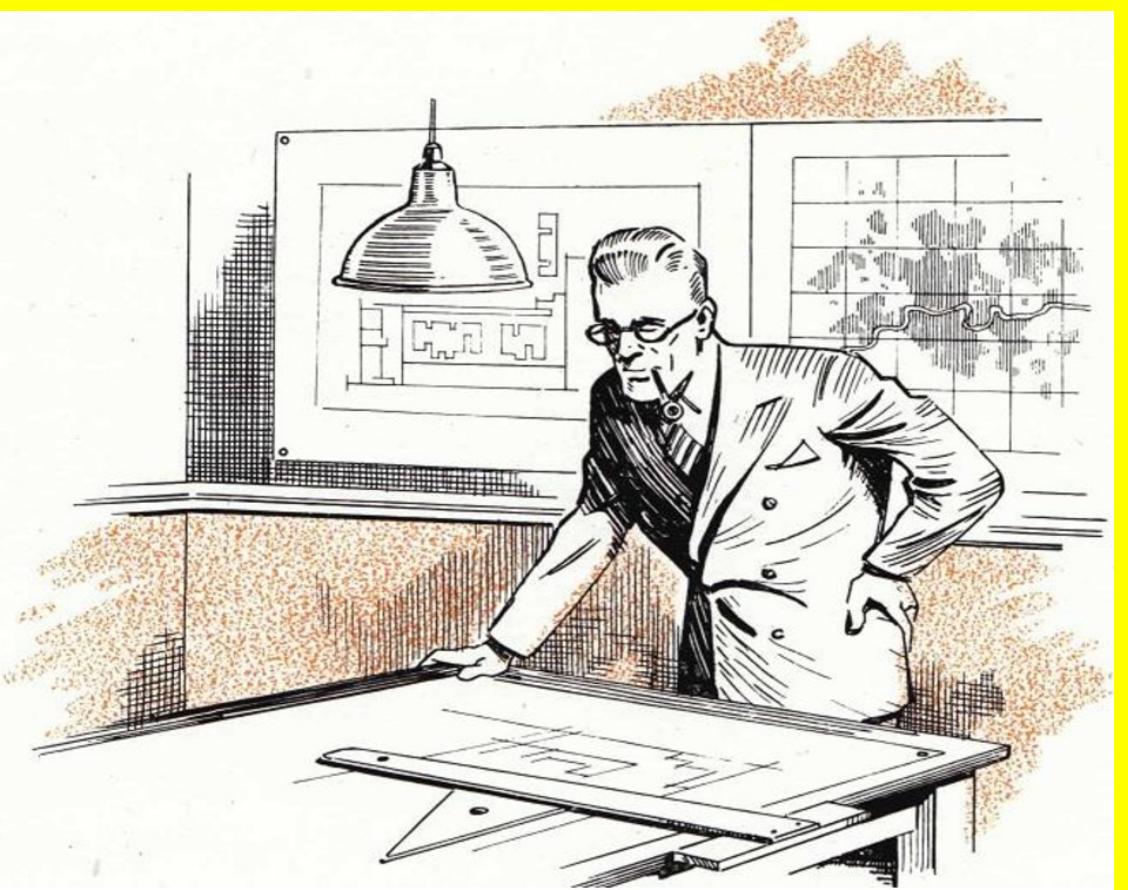
# Outline

My work

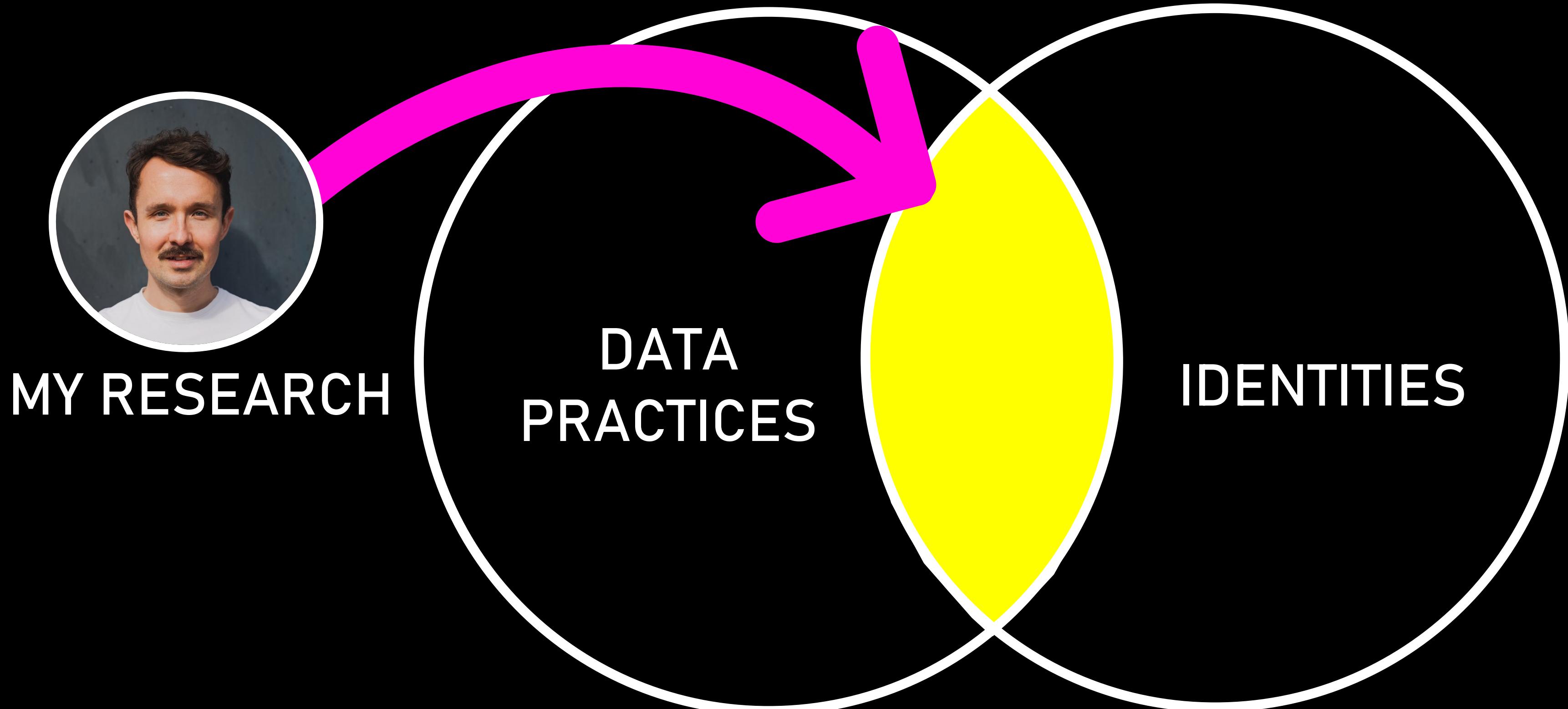
What do I mean by queer data???

Who is centred in your work?

Five challenges when working with LGBTQ data



# The intersection of data and identity



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# Queer Data

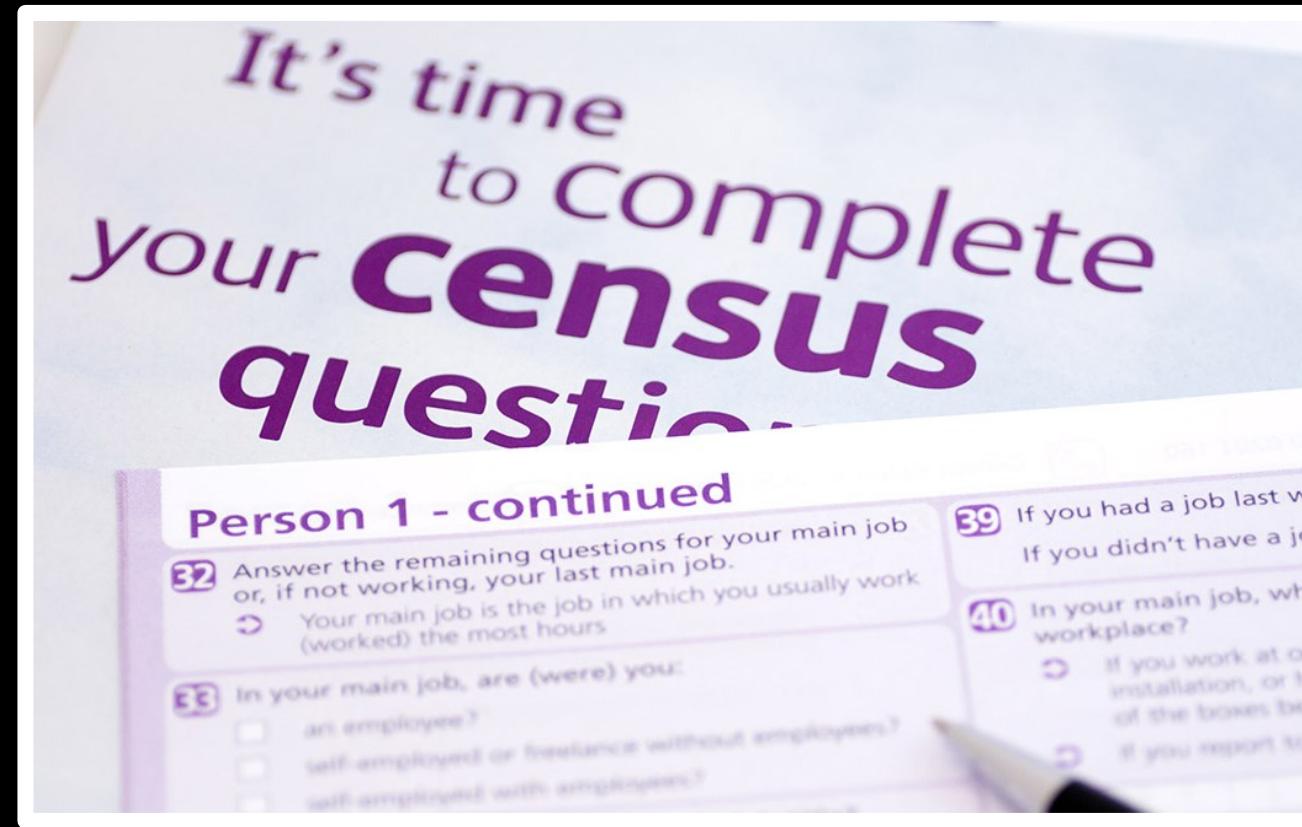
Using Gender, Sex and  
Sexuality Data for Action

# Queer data

Data about LGBTQ communities.

Queering of methods used to collect,  
analyse and present data on LGBTQ  
and non-LGBTQ communities.

# LGBTQ lives and the census



# LGBTQ lives and the census

**8 Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**

- ◆ This question is **voluntary**
  - ◆ Answer only if you are aged 16 or over
  - ◆ Tick **one** box only

Straight / Heterosexual

Gay or Lesbian

## Bisexual

Other sexual orientation, please write in:

# Sexual orientation question, Scotland's national census, 2022.

## **4 Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?**

- ◆ This question is **voluntary**
  - ◆ Answer only if you are aged 16 or over
  - ◆ Trans is a term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were registered at birth
  - ◆ Tick **one** box only

No

Yes, please describe your trans status (for example, non-binary, trans man, trans woman):

# Trans status/history question, Scotland's national census, 2022.

# LGBTQ lives and the census

**4.0%**

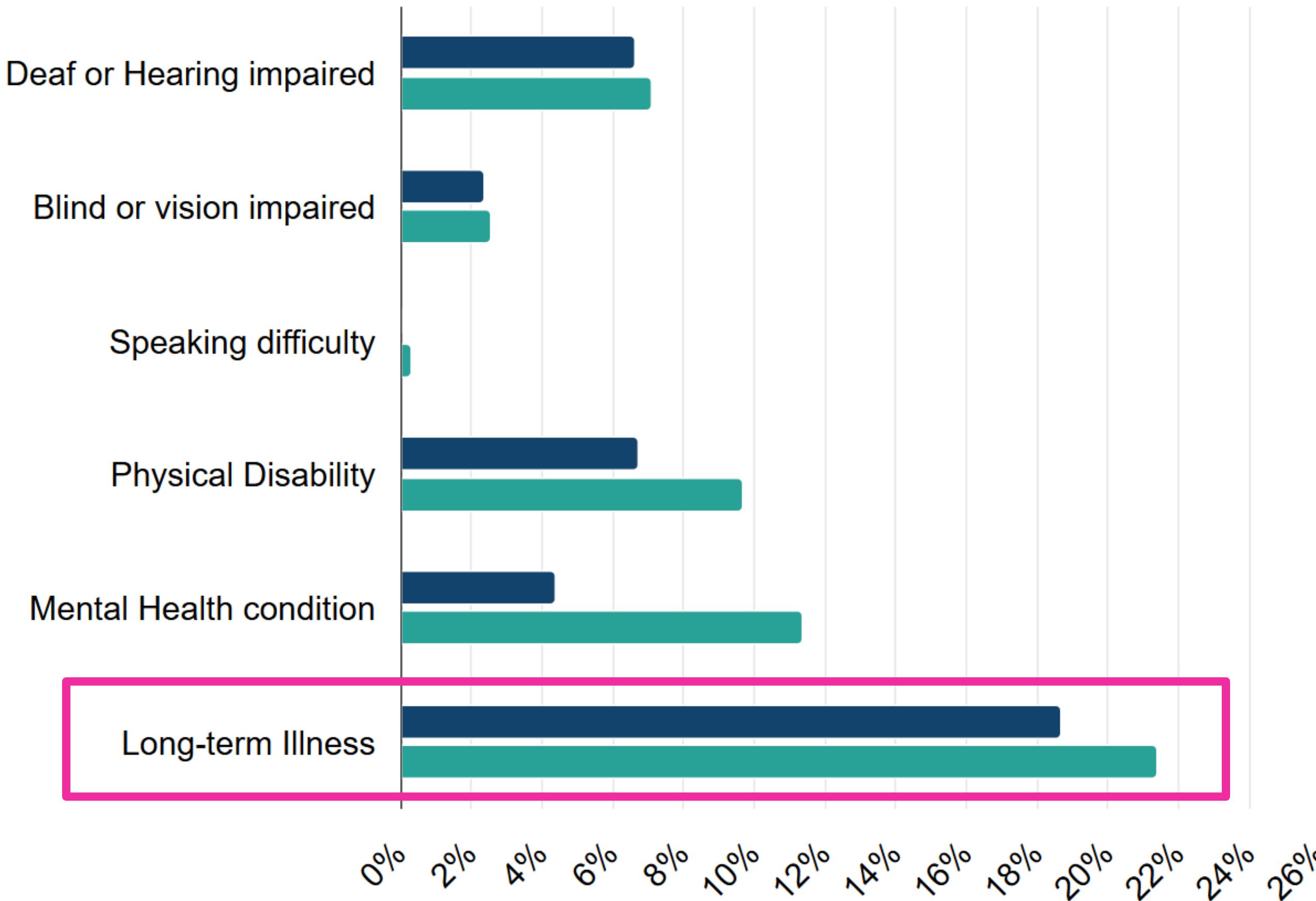
of the Scottish population aged 16 or above identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or a sexual orientation 'other' than heterosexual (NRS).

**0.4%**

of the Scottish population aged 16 or over identified as trans or as having a trans history (NRS).

**Figure 1: The most common condition reported in the census was a long-term illness, disease or condition**

Percentage of people who reported specific health conditions, 2011 - 2022, Scotland

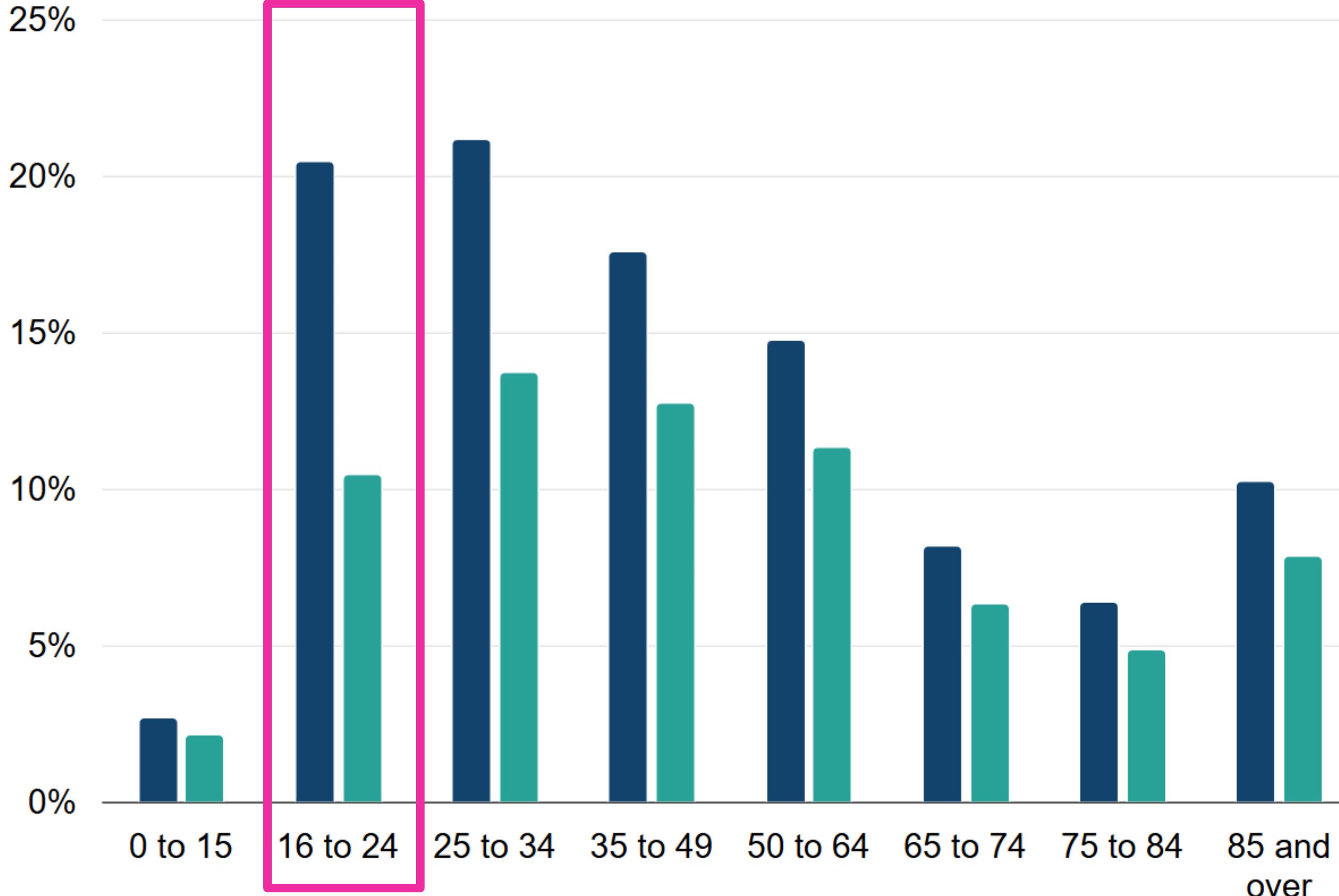


2011 2022

Scotland's 2022 census.

### Figure 3: More females than males reported a mental health condition across all age groups

Percentage of people who reported a mental health condition by sex and age, 2022, Scotland



Female Male

Scotland's 2022 census.

# The data tells us...

4.0% of the population in Scotland aged 16 or above identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or a sexual orientation 'other' than heterosexual (NRS).

0.4% of the population in Scotland aged 16 or above identify as trans as trans or as having a trans history (NRS).

Four-fifths of older LGBT people do not trust professionals to understand their culture or lifestyle (Age UK).

51% of LGBT people living in Scotland's rural areas have personally experienced prejudice or discrimination (Equality Network).

Just one in four LGBT people of faith think their faith community is welcoming of trans people (Stonewall).

# Queer data

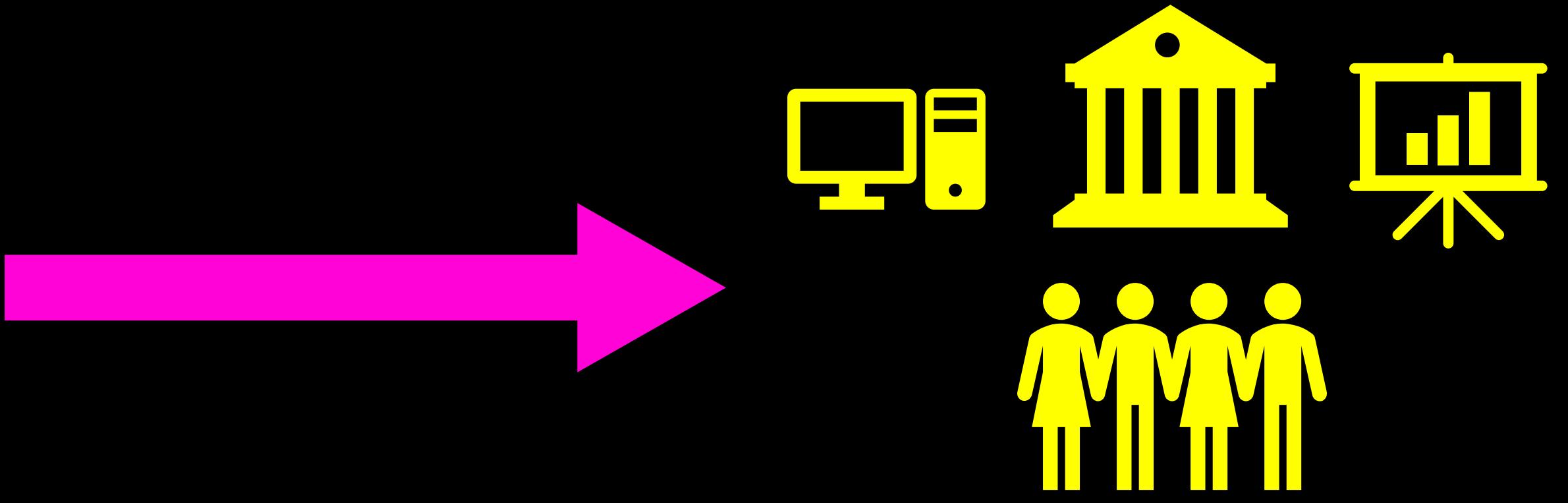
Data about LGBTQ communities.

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Queering of methods used to collect, analyse and present data on LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ communities.



LGBTQ  
communities



Researchers, practitioners,  
and policymakers

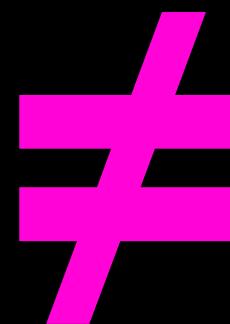
**WHO IS  
CENTRED IN  
YOUR WORK?**

# Queer data

Data about LGBTQ communities.

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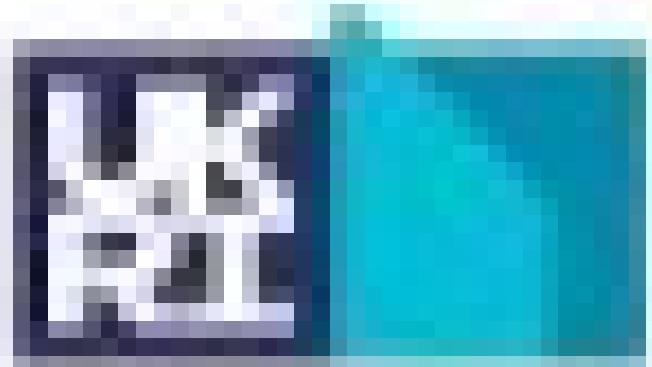
# Research methods



## Apolitical or ahistorical

# 1. MORE DATA

# Embedding Diversity in Research Design Policy

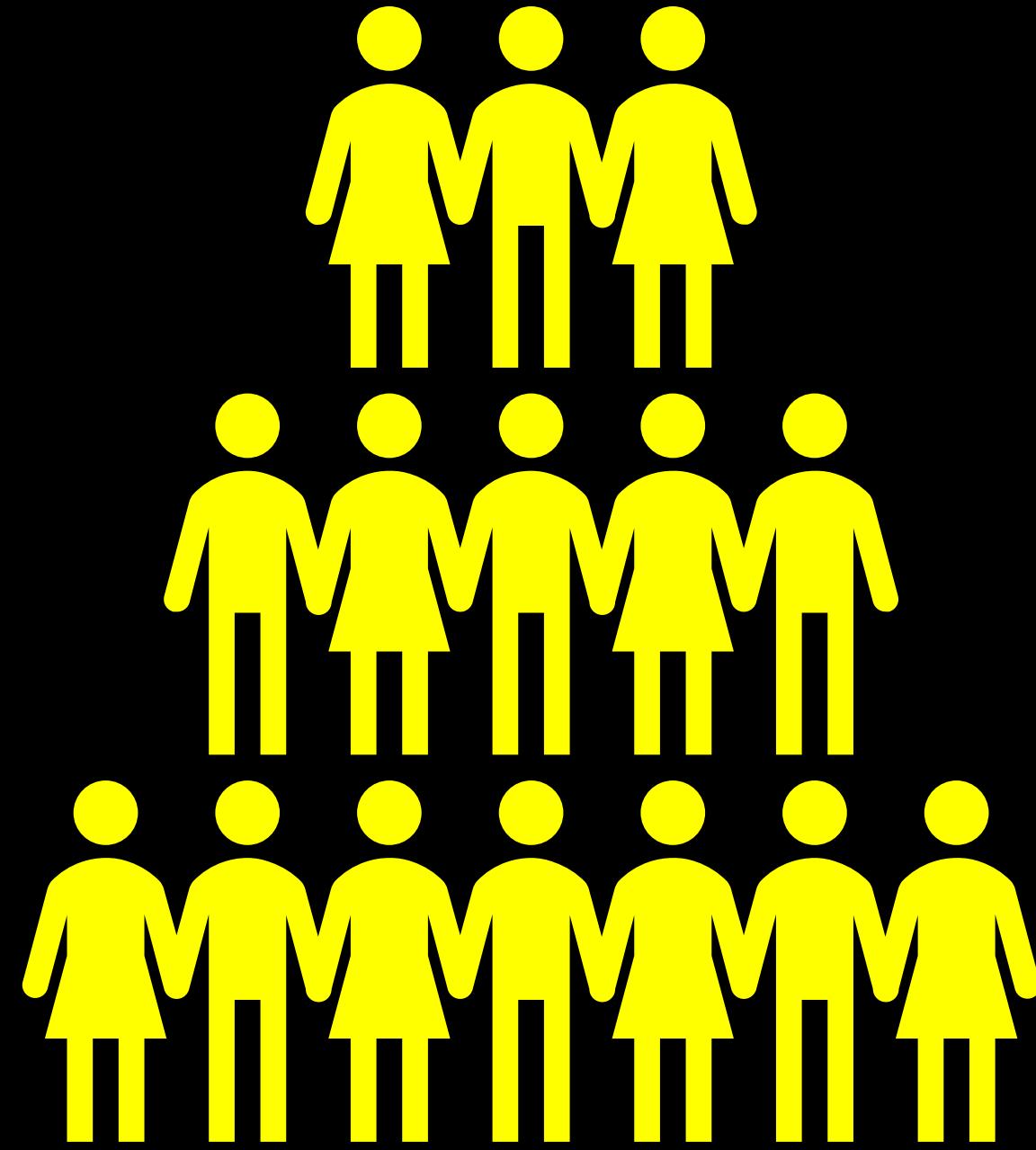
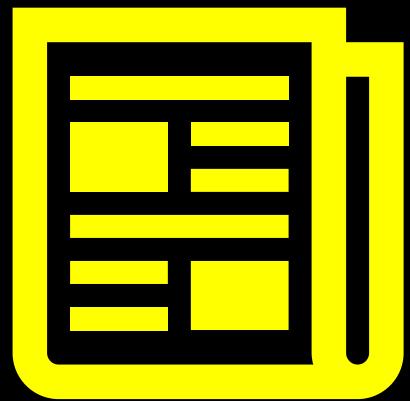
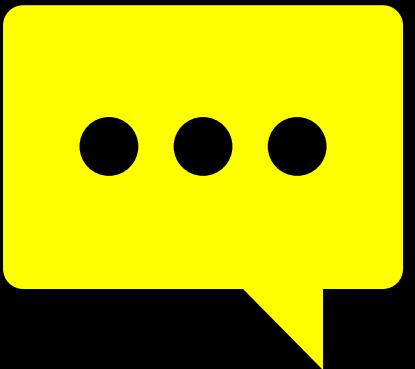


Journal  
of Business  
Ethics  
Education



Being counted is  
not enough

# Positives and negatives



**WE NEED**

**MORE DATA!**

**REALLY?**

**DO WE NEED MORE DATA?**

“A society with more data about LGBTQ people is not automatically a society that is better for LGBTQ people.”

Guyan, *Queer Data*, p. 19.

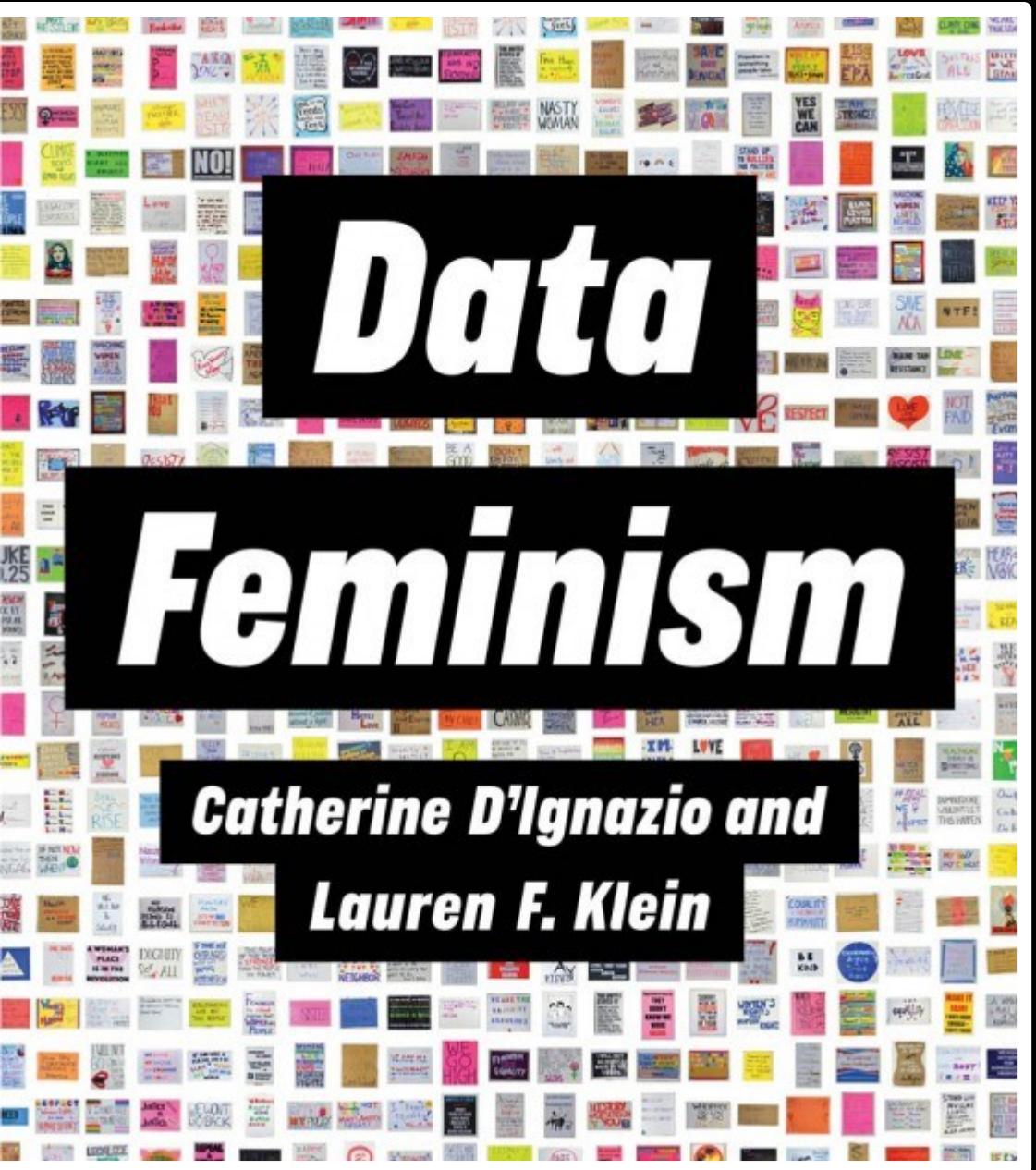
Demanding data on subjects that we already know much about is, in my estimation, a perversion of knowledge.

Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*.



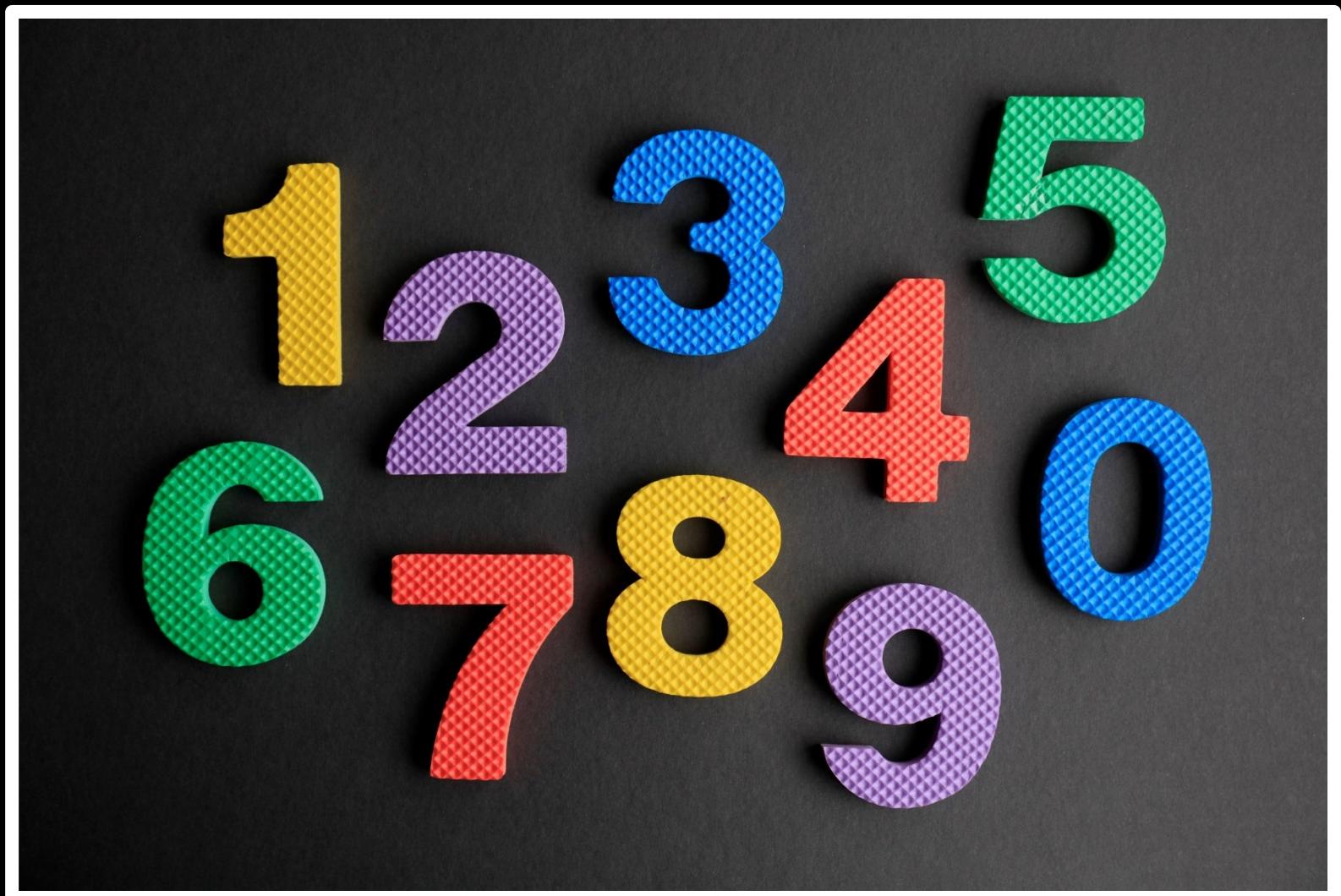
Minoritized individuals and groups should not have to repeatedly prove that their experiences of oppression are real.

D'Ignazio & Klein, *Data Feminism*.



# Q.

Will **more data** about  
LGBTQ lives improve  
the experiences of  
LGBTQ communities?



**2. FROZEN IN  
TIME AND SPACE**

“ Those working with data need to [...] defrost assumptions that have kept ideas about gender, sex and sexuality data frozen in time and space. ”

Guyan, *Queer Data*, p. 191.

pregnant

single

working class

non-binary

married

straight/heterosexual

trans man

female

caring responsibilities

Indian

asexual

Sikh

Black

over 50

disabled

Christian

male

white

under 25

gay or lesbian

queer

non-religious

deaf

pregnant

single

working class

non-binary

married

straight/heterosexual

trans man

female

caring responsibilities

Indian

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disabled

Christian

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white

under 25

gay or lesbian

queer

non-religious

deaf

Q.

Do our research methods and data practices present LGBTQ identities (or any other identity groups) as **fixed** in time and space?

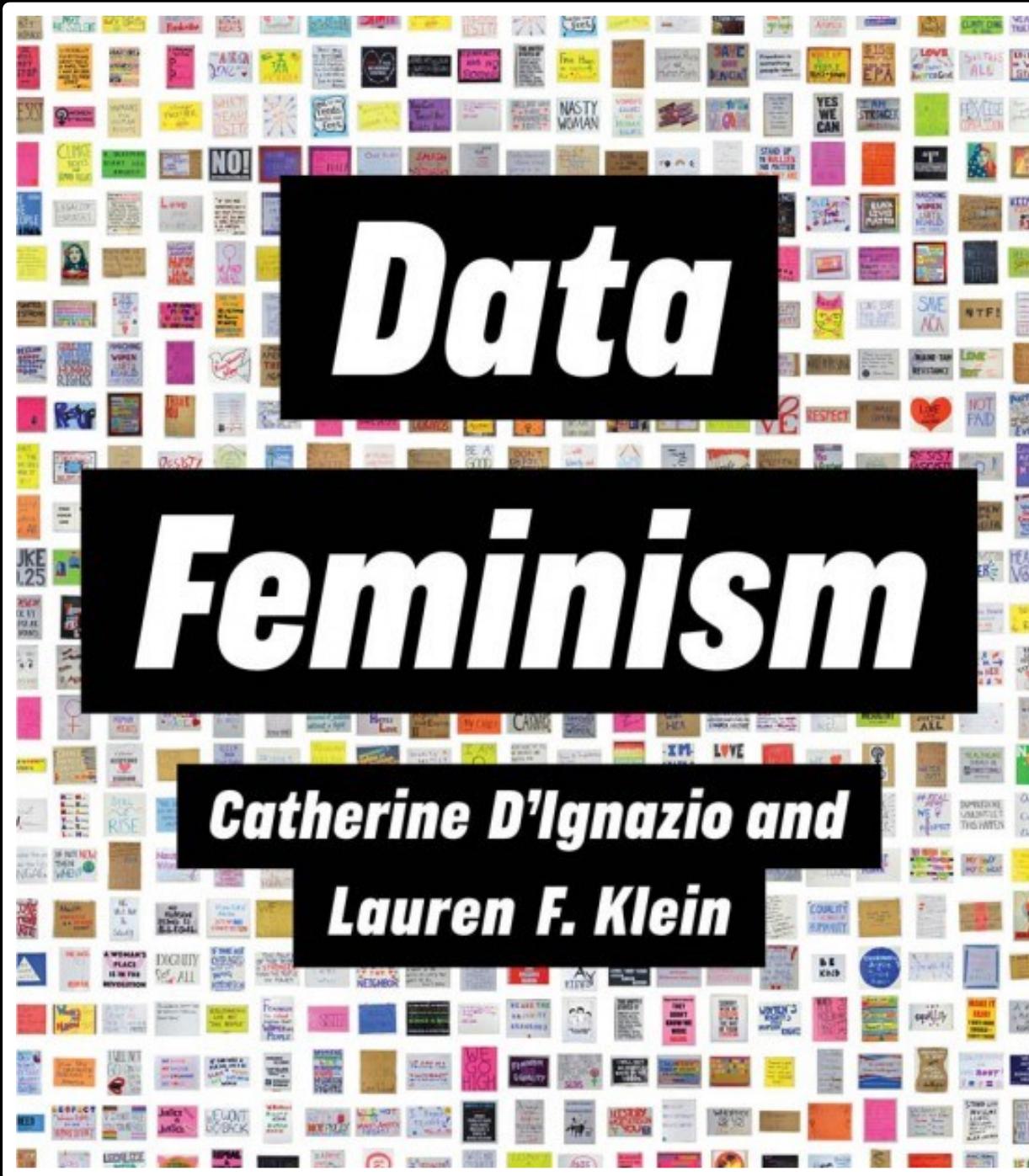
**3. DATA AS**

**HISTORICAL**

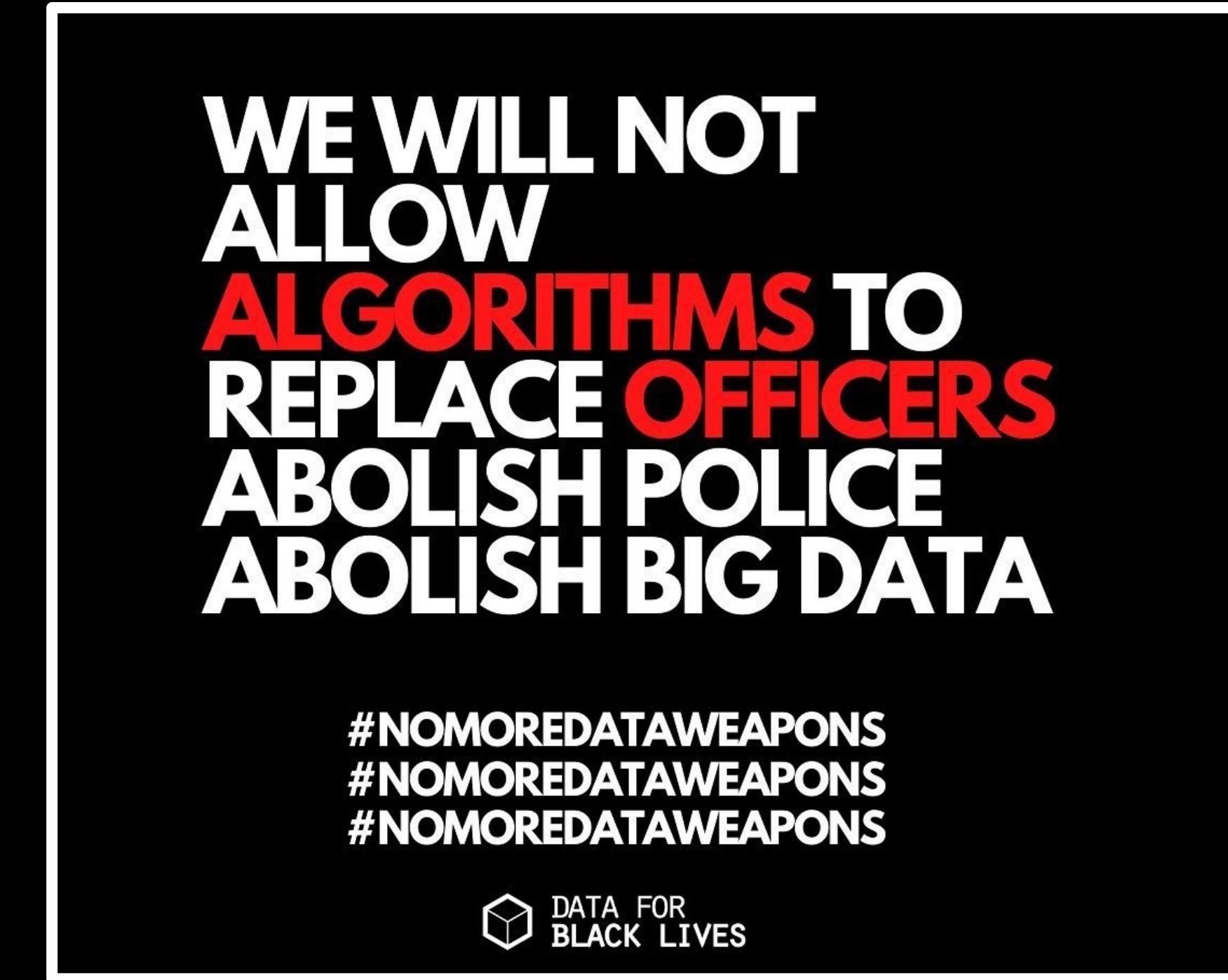
“ Where data was collected to positively demonstrate the existence of gender, sex and sexuality minorities, data was most often collected to provide evidence of a ‘problem’ and used to justify further marginalization. ”

Guyan, *Queer Data*, p. 29.

# Historical distribution of data



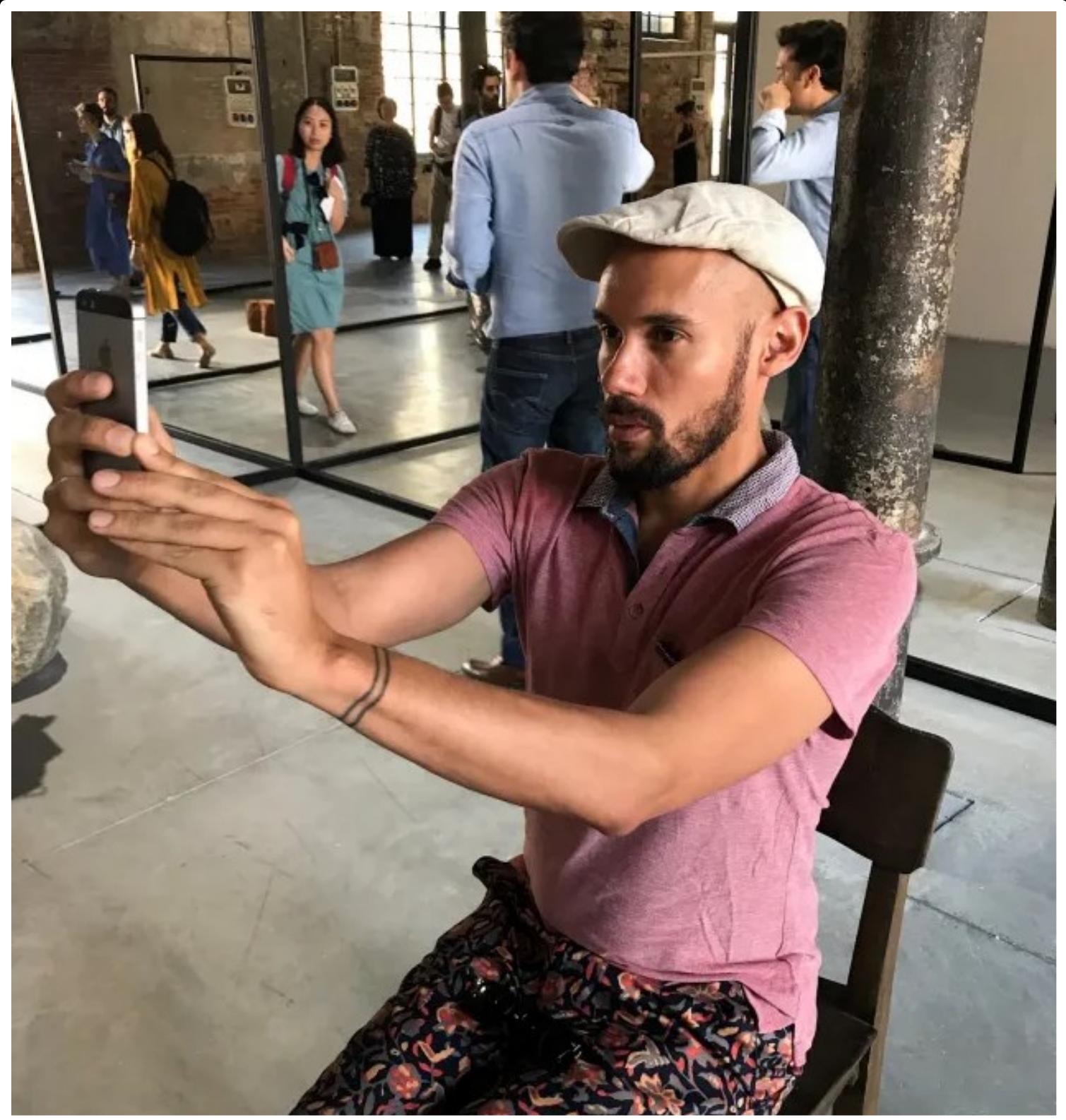
D'Ignazio & Klein, *Data Feminism*.



Data For Black Lives.



Jen Jack Giesecking.



Shaka McGlotten.

**Q.**

How do we ensure our research methods account for the **history** of **data** about LGBTQ communities? And ensure it doesn't repeat harmful assumptions or stereotypes?

**4. 'HARD  
TO REACH'**

# Hard to reach

Those who potentially stand to gain the most from research into equality, diversity and inclusion - in terms of project outputs and outcomes - often face the greatest risks from participation.



Keith Haring, National  
Coming Out Day, 1988.

# University of Edinburgh staff data...

46.3%

3.1%

2.8%

0.8%

= 6.7%

Heterosexual  
Bisexual  
Gay or lesbian  
Other sexual orientation

LGB+



\* University of Edinburgh, 2023/24 staff data. Data unknown for 41.2% of staff, 5.7% of staff chose not to disclose.

# University of Edinburgh staff data...

Data unknown for 41.2% of staff, 5.7% of staff chose not to disclose.

**Q.**

Do our methods and practices  
reduce barriers and challenges  
for 'hard to reach' communities?  
Do they only count LGBTQ people  
who are out?

# **5. INTERSECTIONALITY**

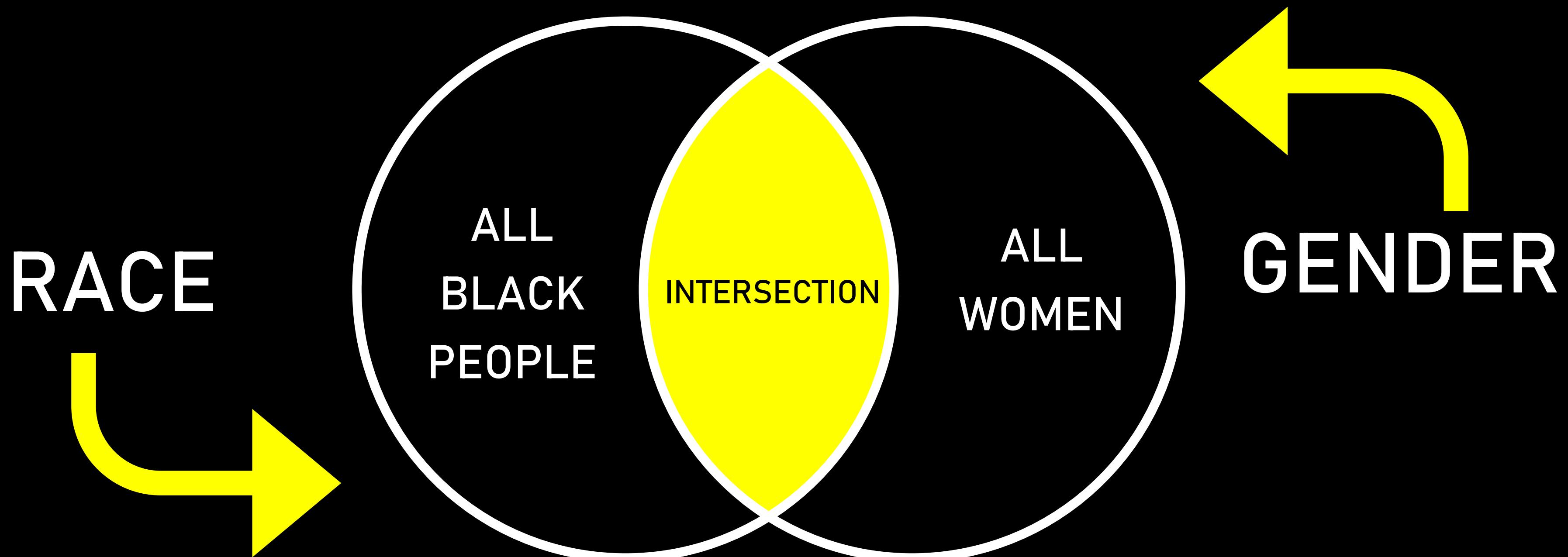


[A] single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group. In other words, in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women.

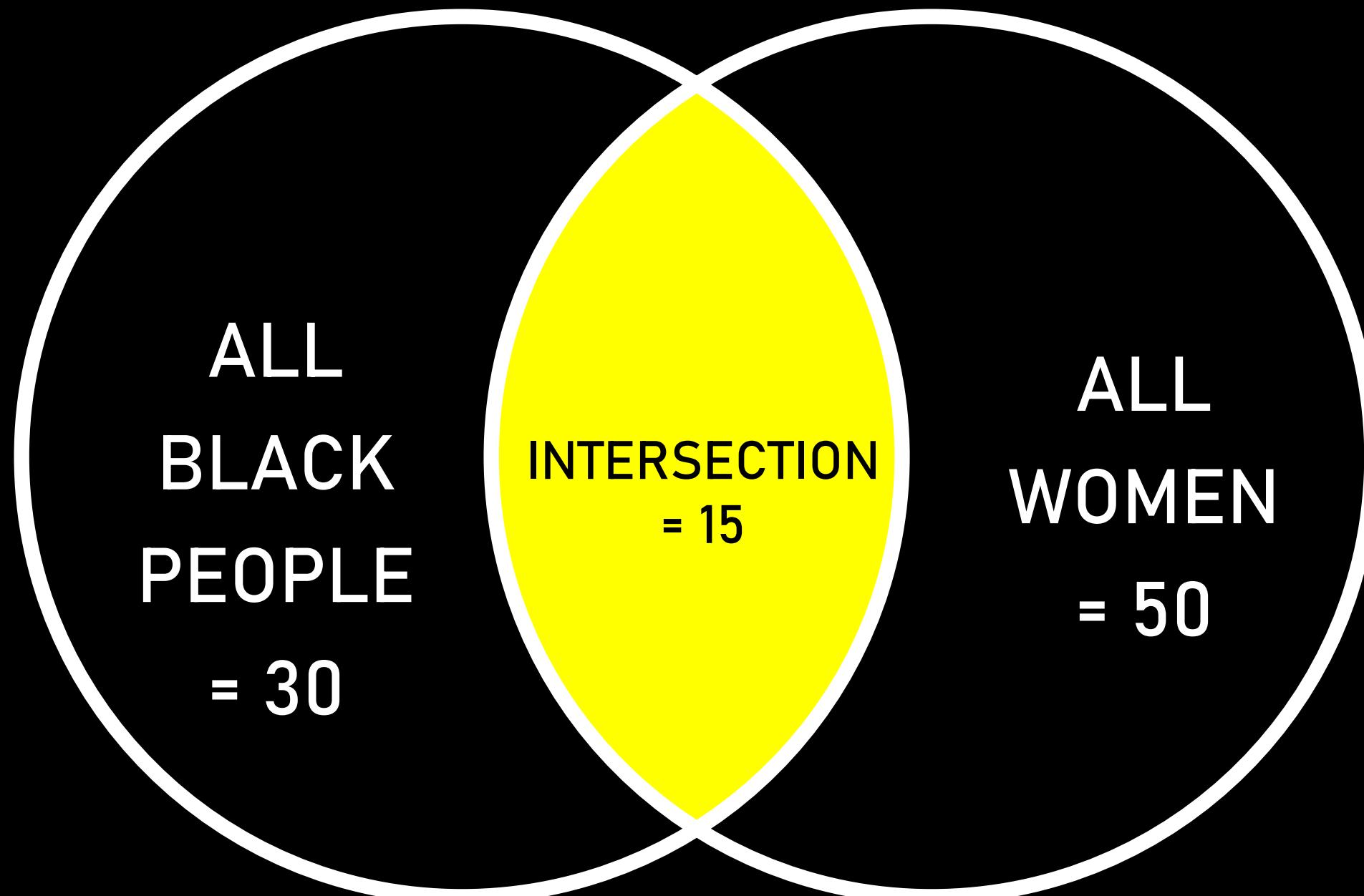
Kimberlé Crenshaw,  
*Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.*

THE DATA IS  
INADMISSIBLE

# Intersectionality



# Small numbers



\* 80 interviewees in total

Data might identify individuals.

Data might be received badly.

Data might lose statistical power.

Promoting a political agenda that concerns gays and lesbians experiencing marginalization through a single vector of identity only – sexual orientation. Such a politics excludes queer and trans people who experience homophobia simultaneously with transphobia, poverty, ableism, xenophobia, racism, sexism, criminalization, economic exploitation, and/or other forms of subjection.

Dean Spade, *Normal Life*.



**Q.**

Are your methods **intersectional**?  
Do they imagine identity categories  
as separate, distinct, exclusive and  
siloed?

# **CONCLUSION**

**... why is any of this important?**

# Recap of five data challenges

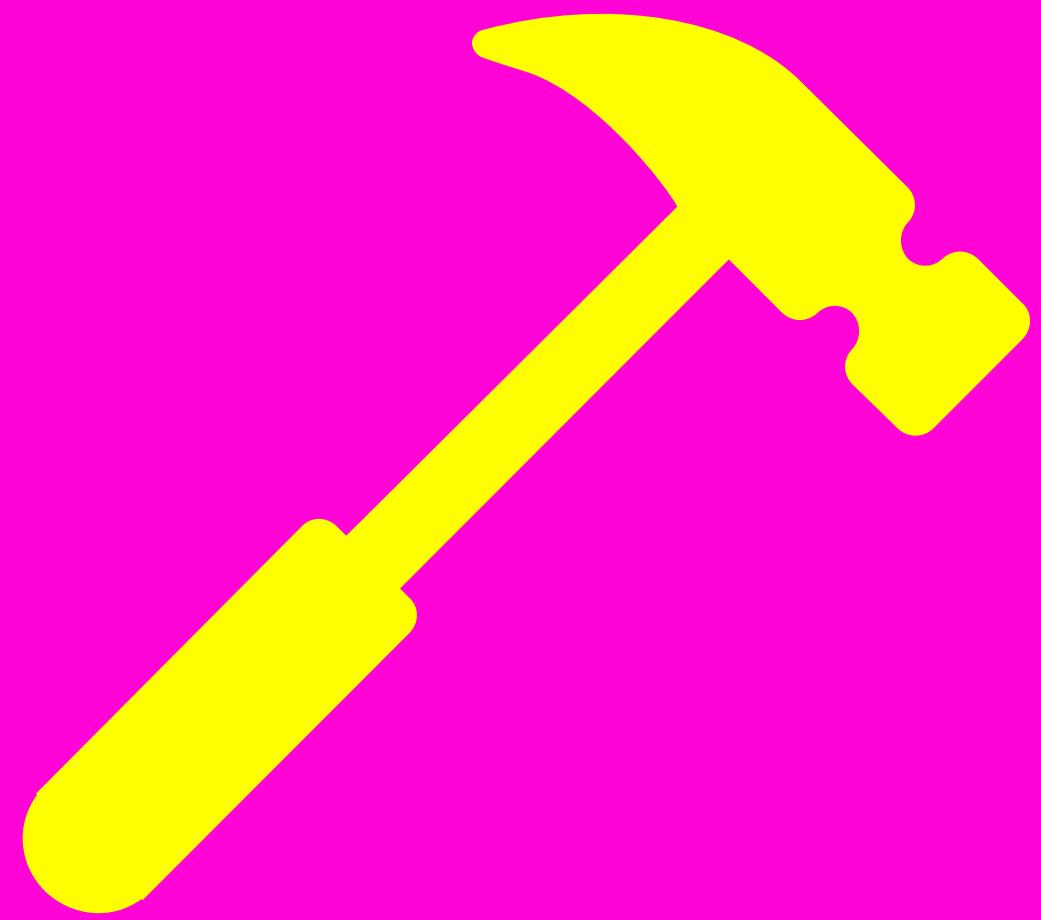
More data

Frozen in time and space

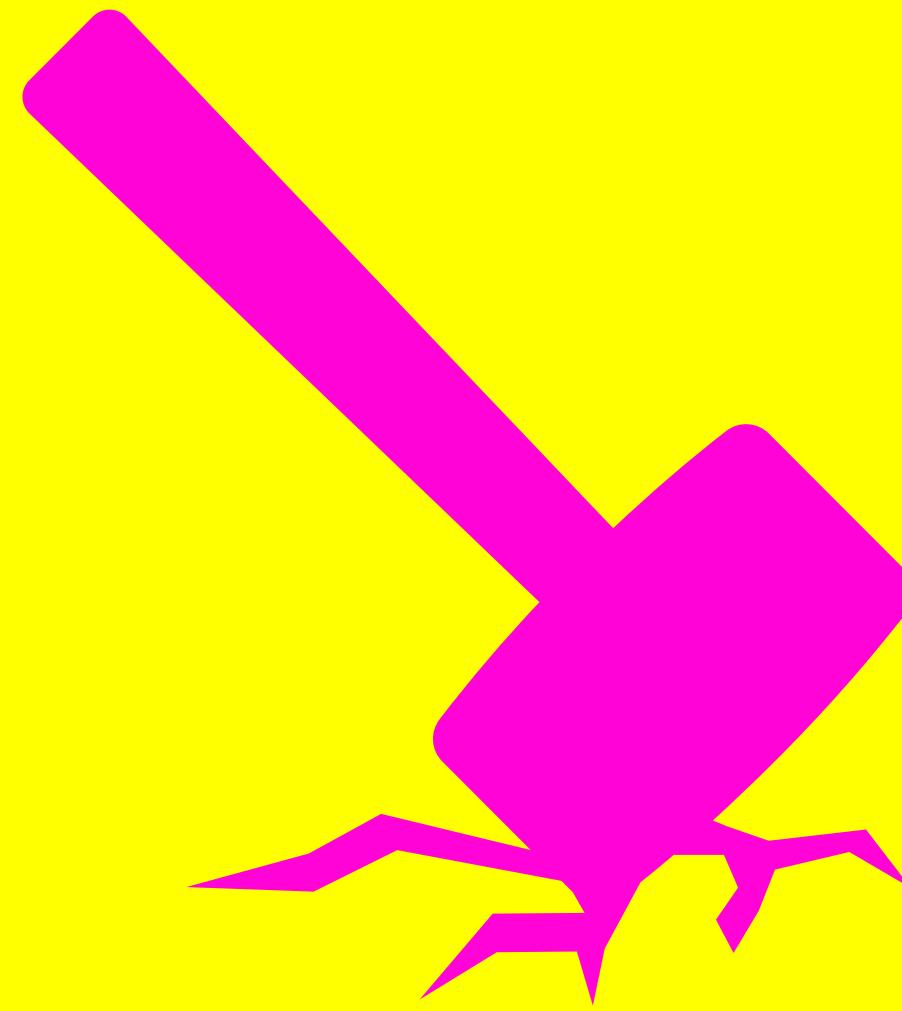
Data as historical

Hard to reach

Intersectionality

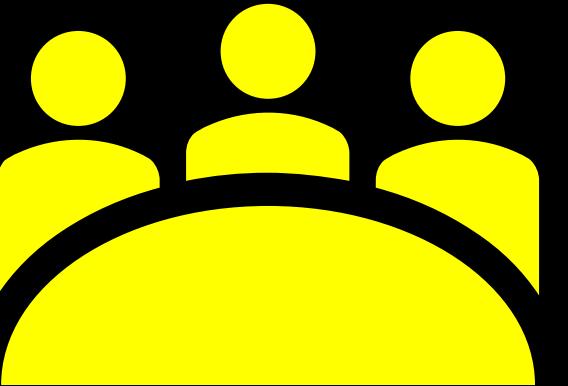
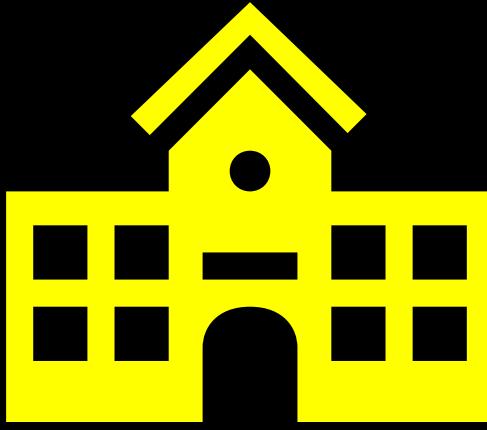


REPAIR



ABOLISH

# Institutional resilience



# LGBTQ lives and the census

**4.0%**

of the Scottish population aged 16 or above identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or a sexual orientation 'other' than heterosexual (NRS).

**0.4%**

of the Scottish population aged 16 or over identified as trans or as having a trans history (NRS).

# The politics of data

University researchers may be forced to record trans people's biological sex

Telegraph, 2 March 2024

Census records trans population in England and Wales - but accuracy is doubted

The Guardian, 8 November 2023

## Census 'hugely overstated' trans population

The Telegraph, 23 September 2023

Gender-critical activists and pro-transgender groups clash in Edinburgh

The Guardian, 6 April 2024

Did Stonewall invent 300,000 non-existent trans people?

The Spectator, 6 January 2023

Are our current  
data systems  
worth saving?

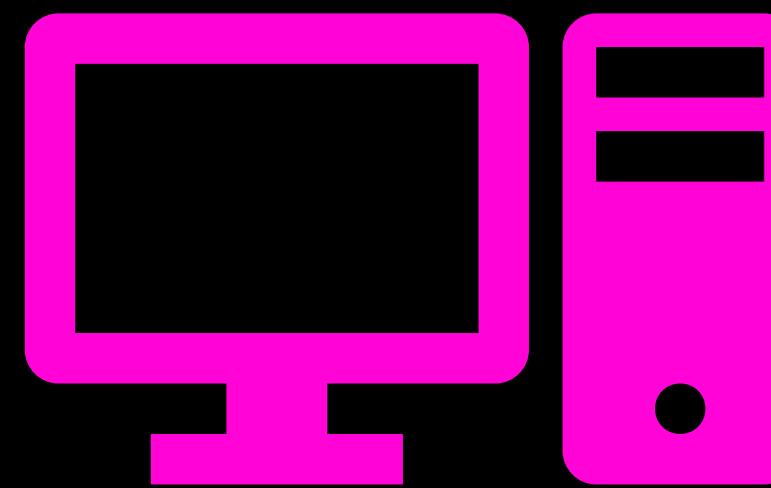
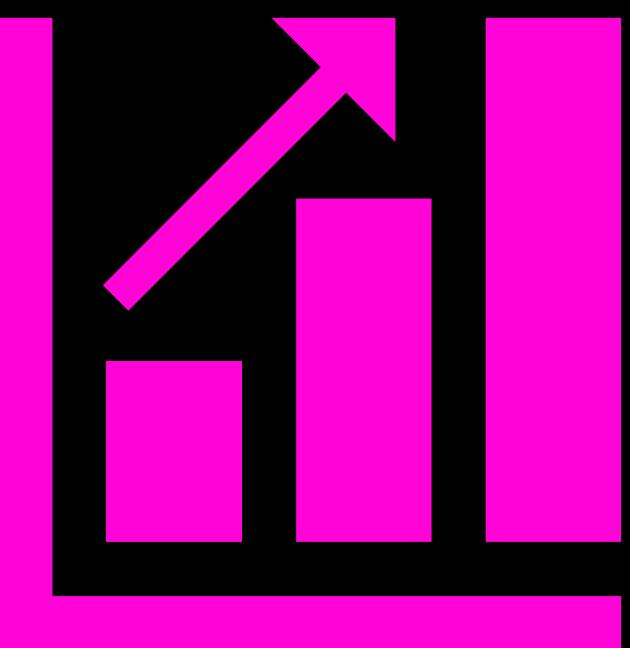
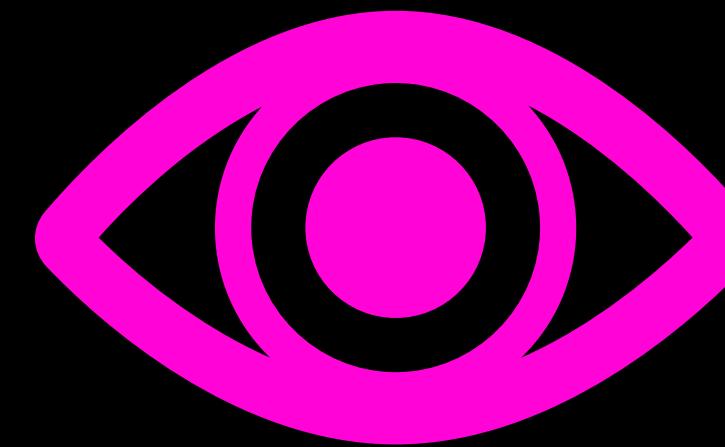
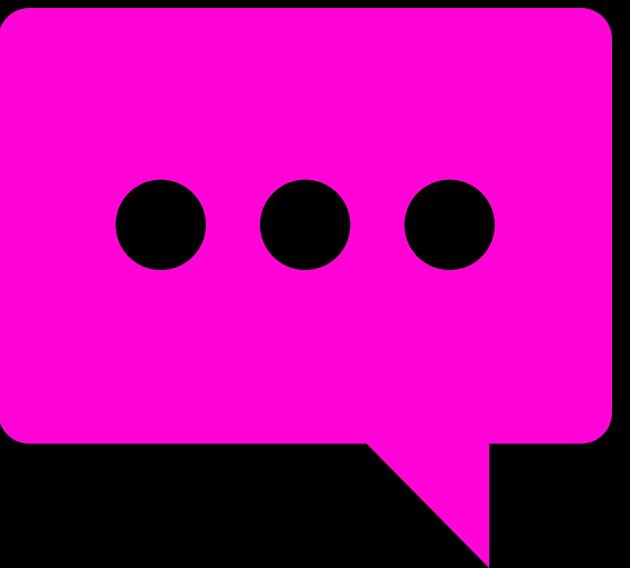
Select from one of the two options:

Straight

Queer



I refuse to participate





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# Data and Identity. The Politics of Counting LGBTQ Communities

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# References and further reading

Benjamin, Ruha. *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Medford: Polity, 2019.

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Westbrook, Laurel, Jamie Budnick, and Aliya Saperstein. ‘Dangerous Data: Seeing Social Surveys Through the Sexuality Prism’. *Sexualities Online* (10 February 2021): 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460720986927>.