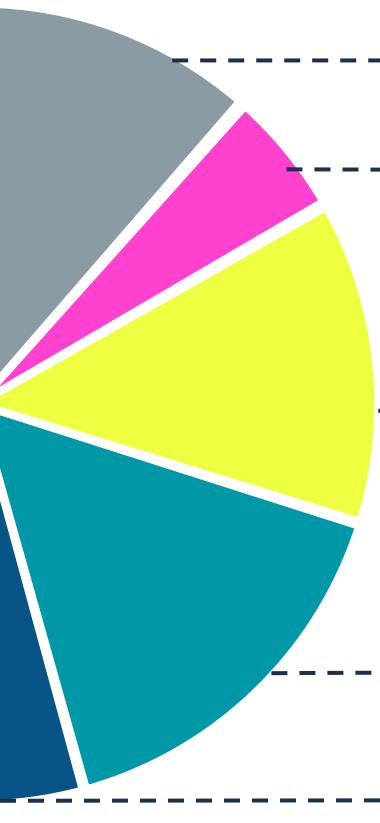


Hey 
I'm Martha

EXPECTATION SETTING



----- Government has a problem with trust

----- But, like, what does that even mean?!

----- How trust is won and lost

----- And what's design's role in all of this?

----- Questions



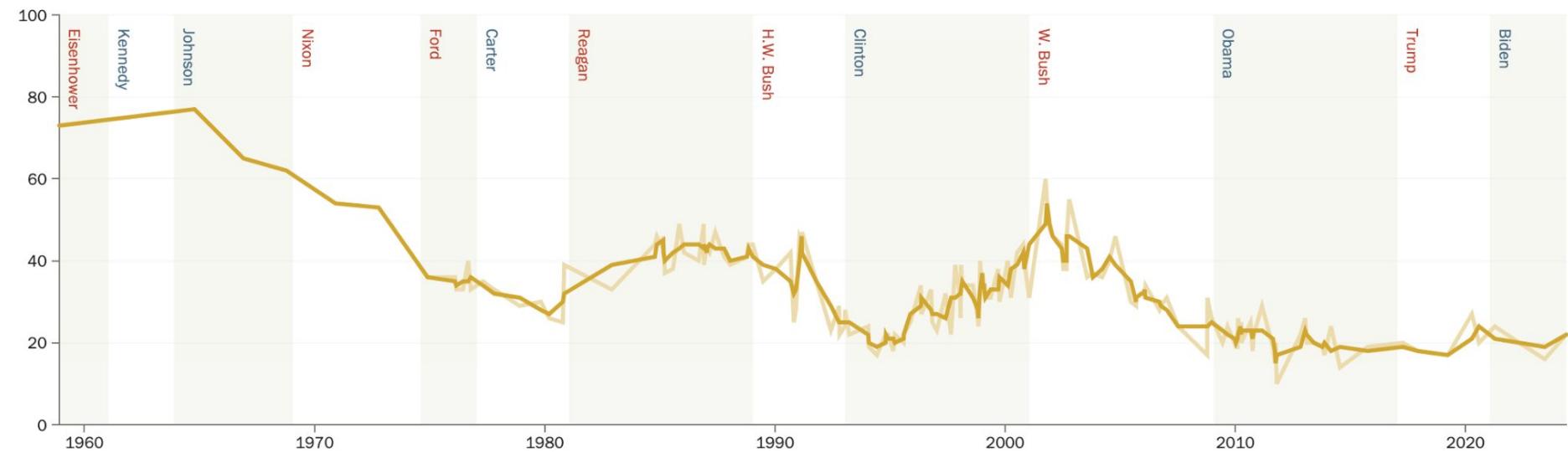
01

GOVERNMENT HAS A TRUST PROBLEM

Public trust in government near historic lows

% who say they trust the government to do what is right just about always/most of the time

Moving average Individual polls



Sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN surveys.

**How do we get people to
trust government?**

~~How do we get people to
trust government?~~

**How do we get government
to trust people?**



Accessing Healthcare in the UK



Accessing Healthcare in the UK



Accessing Healthcare in Canada



**Innocent until
proven guilty**



**Guilty until
proven innocent**

**It's a problem when people
can't access necessary
government services that they
are eligible for because of
*'fraud prevention'***

Government's identity crisis



**Serve the
public?**

**Enforce
the
rules?**



**Enforce the rules
first**

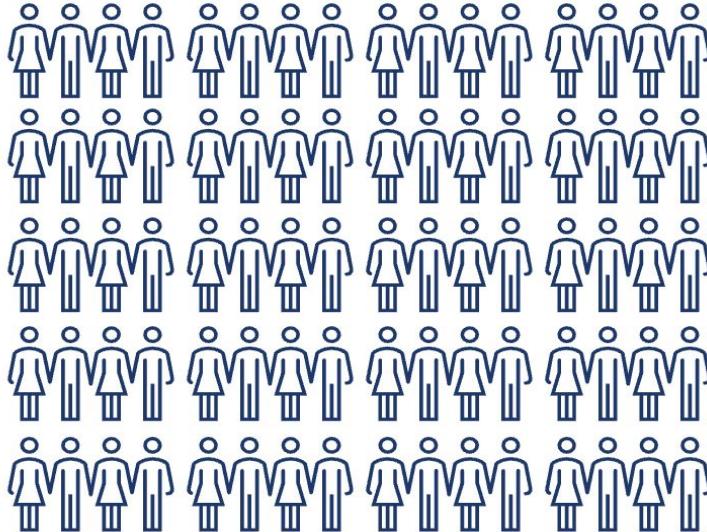
**Sometimes it
feels like this**



**Serve the
public
second**



**Typically, governments focus
more on keeping the wrong
people out, than on letting the
right people in**



The cyber security team



The accessibility team

How do we get people to trust government?

AND

How do we get government to trust people?



02

**BUT, LIKE, WHAT DOES THAT
EVEN MEAN?**

Trust (noun) *the firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something*

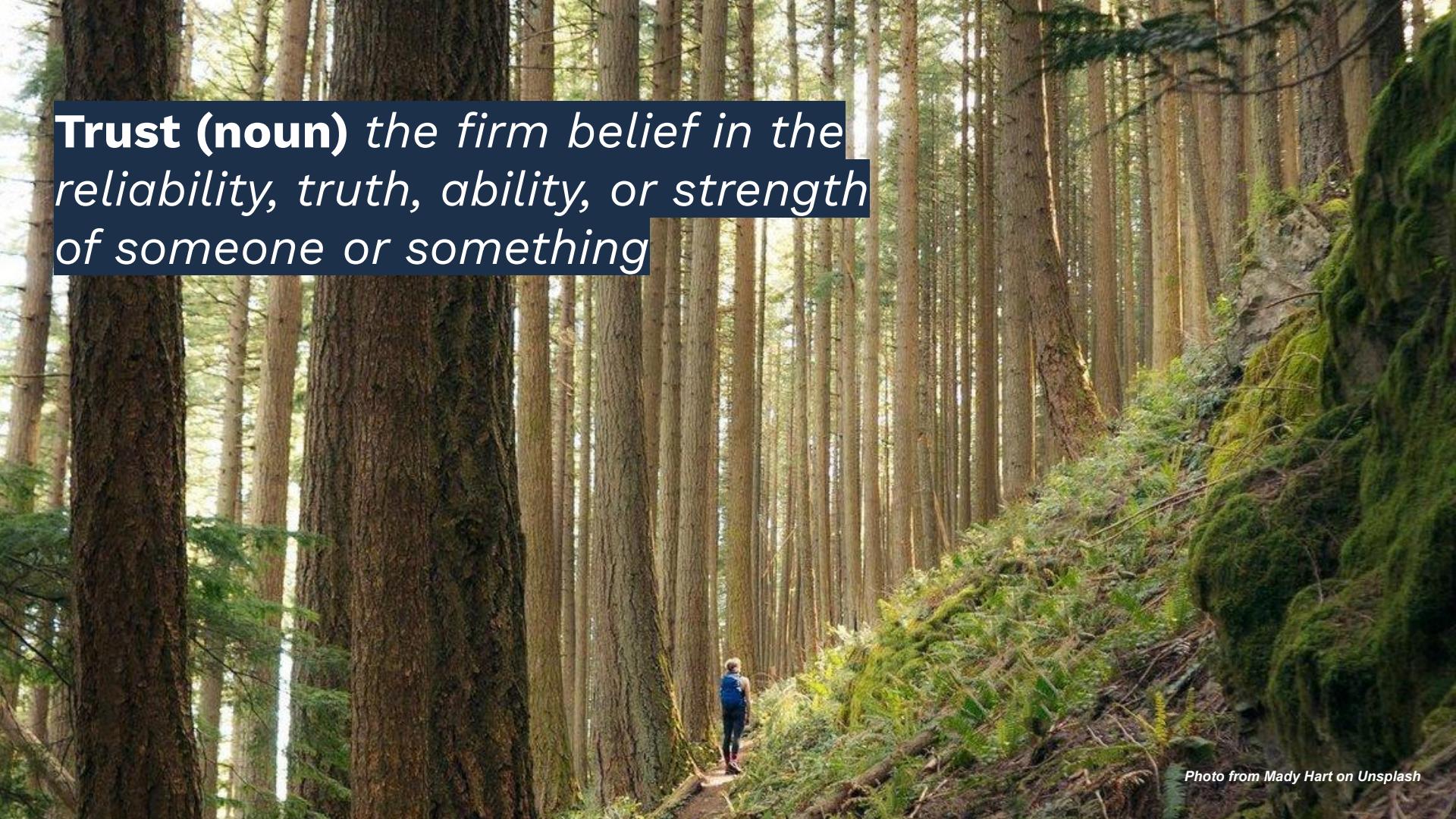


Photo from Mady Hart on Unsplash

“The giver of trust has all the power. Your role is to earn it by [consistently] demonstrating you are trustworthy.”

Rachel Botsman, author of How to Trust and Be Trusted

Trust is *earned*

It's shaped by experience over time through repeated trustworthy actions. And it can be withheld or withdrawn at any time

Trust is *reciprocal*

It's a two-way exchange—when one party extends trust, the other is more likely to reciprocate (and vice versa)

Trust is *a process*

Trust is not fixed—it is built, tested, reinforced, and sometimes lost or repaired based on experiences and interactions

Trust is *risky*

*Without sufficient safeguards,
governments can be exposed to
fraud, security risks and misuse of
public funds*



Photo: Masaaki Komori on unsplash

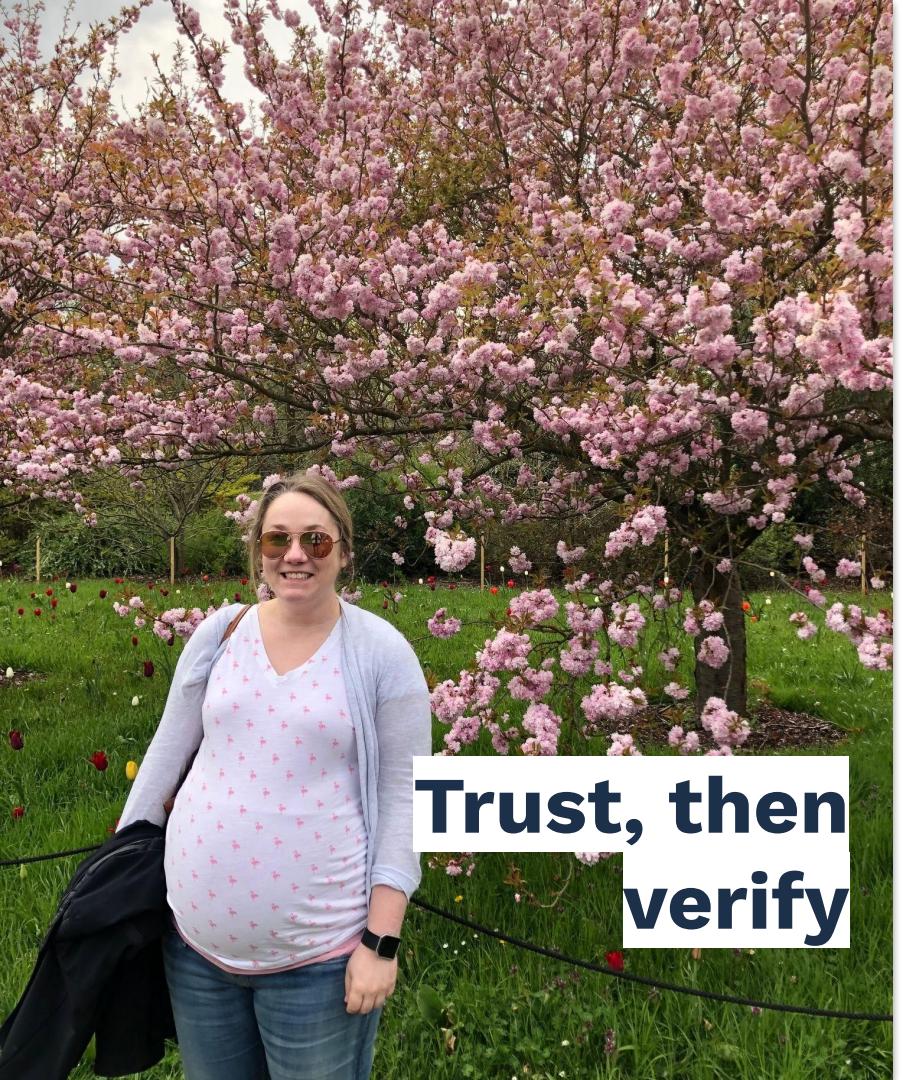


**Who is being left out by the
gates we put up?**

**“Trust, but
verify”**

Ronald Reagan





**Trust, then
verify**



**Verify, then
trust**

**“Trust, but
verify”**



03

HOW TRUST IS WON AND LOST

Three trust insights for governments

1. Trust barriers can harm individuals, especially those with the most challenges accessing government

Three trust insights for governments



job
centre
plus



job
centre
plus

“Only 38% of Universal Credit claimants can successfully use Verify when applying for the benefit.”

[Government flagship digital identification system failing its users, UK Parliament](#)



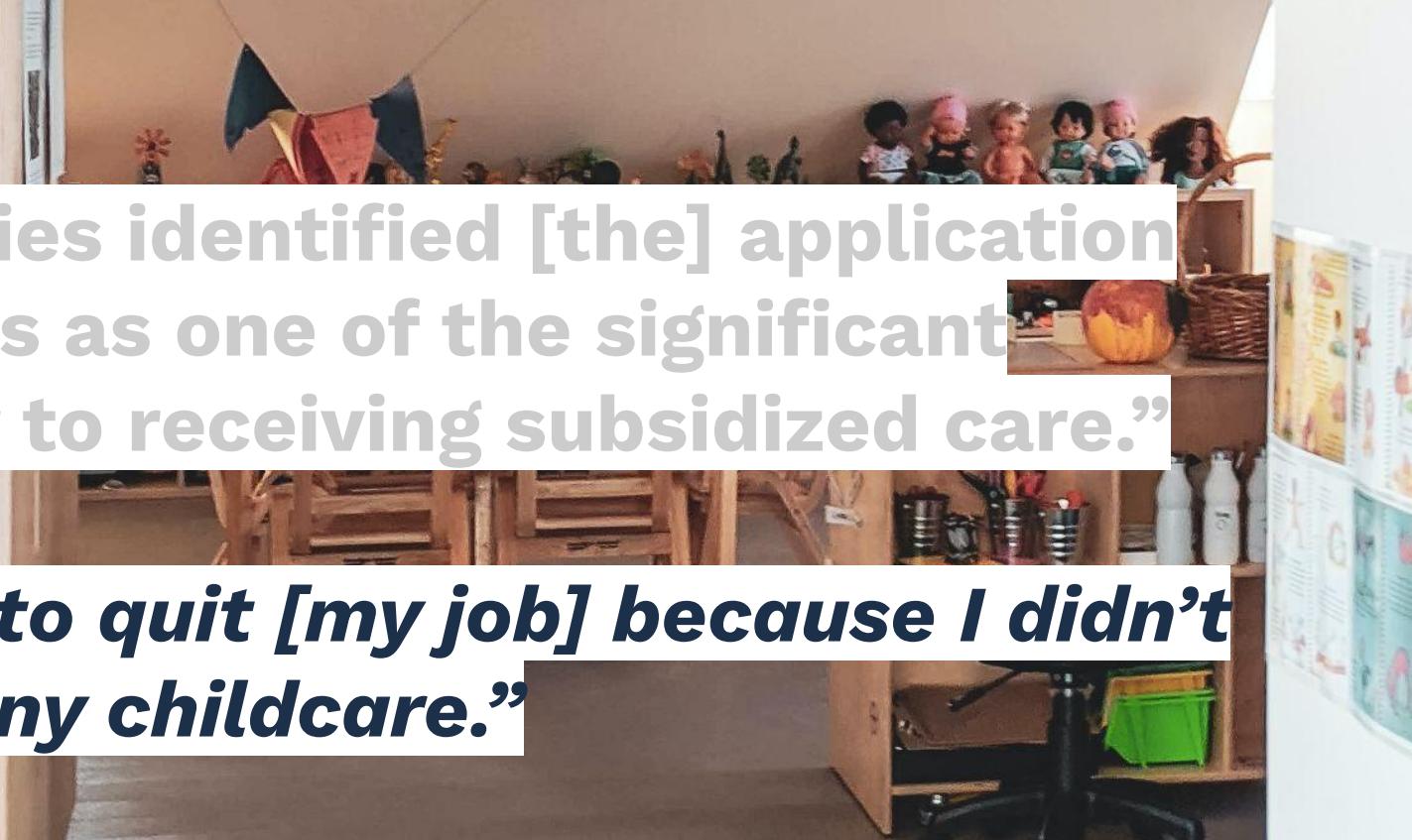
Photo from Sigmund on unsplash

“Families identified [the] application process as one of the significant barrier to receiving subsidized care.”



Source: Beeck Centre, *Beyond Technology: How Federal-State Partnership and a Test-and-Learn Approach Can Deliver an Equitable Child Care Assistance System*

Photo from Sigmund on unsplash



“Families identified [the] application process as one of the significant barrier to receiving subsidized care.”

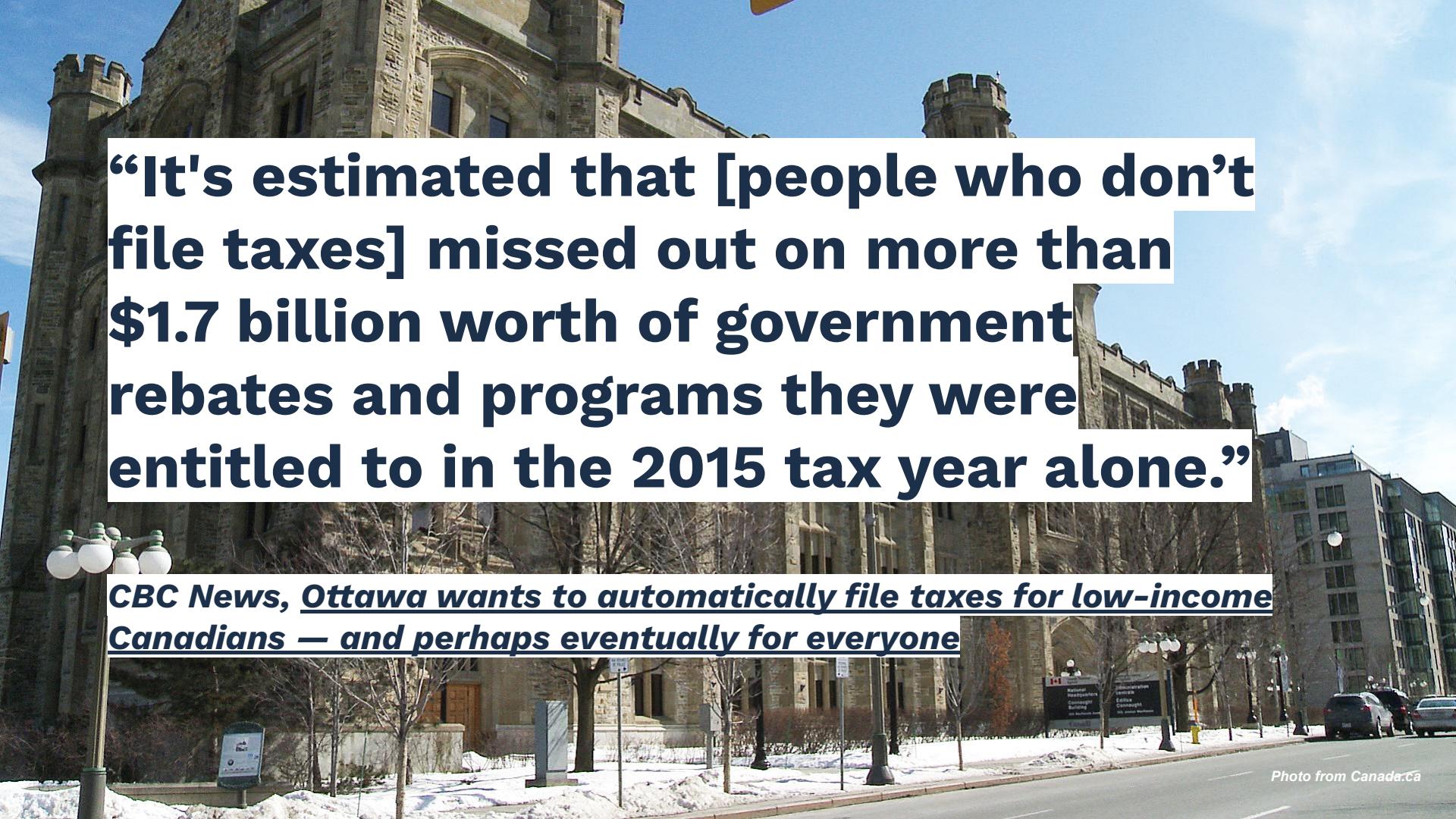
“I had to quit [my job] because I didn’t have any childcare.”

Source: Beeck Centre, *Beyond Technology: How Federal-State Partnership and a Test-and-Learn Approach Can Deliver an Equitable Child Care Assistance System*

Photo from Sigmund on unsplash



Photo from Canada.ca



“It's estimated that [people who don't file taxes] missed out on more than \$1.7 billion worth of government rebates and programs they were entitled to in the 2015 tax year alone.”

CBC News, Ottawa wants to automatically file taxes for low-income Canadians — and perhaps eventually for everyone

- Fill out a lengthy form
- That you don't understand
- So you have to find someone to help
- If it's wrong you could go to jail 😊

Are we asking too much?



**If eligible people are
being left out, the
barriers are too high**

***And if we treat everyone like a criminal, why
would they treat us any differently?***

When people can't access government services, the risks are immense

Risks to *individuals*

- Perpetual cycle of poverty
- Poor health outcomes
- Mental health crisis

Risks to *everyone*

- Breakdown of trust and confidence in our public institutions
- potential for radicalization

1. Trust barriers can harm individuals, especially those with the most challenges accessing government
2. Irresponsible trust can erode confidence in government and institutions, which harms society

Three trust insights for governments

OPEN

“The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is working to recover \$9.53 billion in overpayments from people who received pandemic benefits while ineligible”

CBC News, [CRA preparing to take legal action against people who received pandemic benefits while ineligible](#)



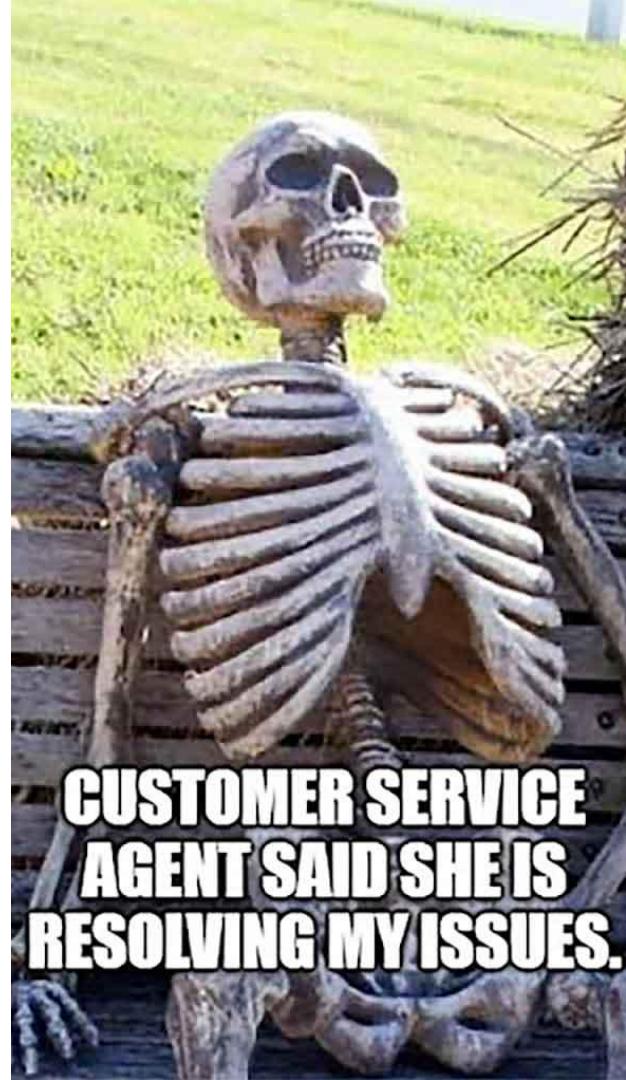
Too much trust is dangerous

1. Trust barriers can harm individuals, especially those with the most challenges accessing government
2. Irresponsible trust can erode confidence in government and institutions, which harms society
3. When people feel well-supported by the public services they need, whether they are ‘trusted’ might be irrelevant

Three trust insights for governments







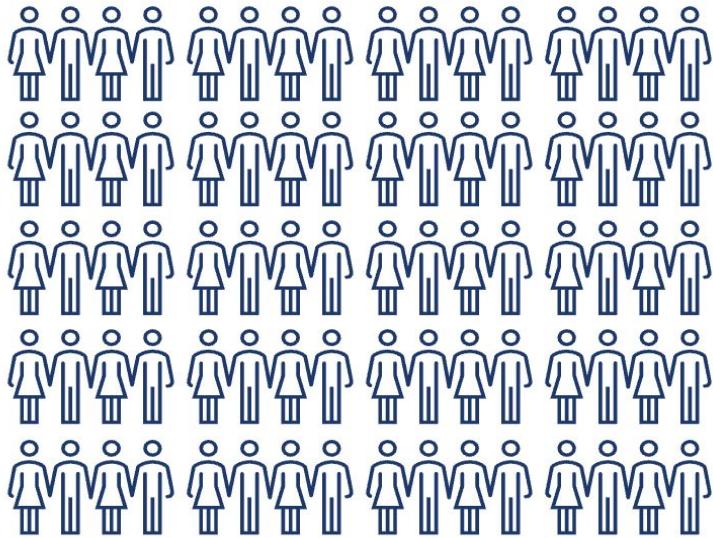
People may not
notice if they feel
“trusted”, but they
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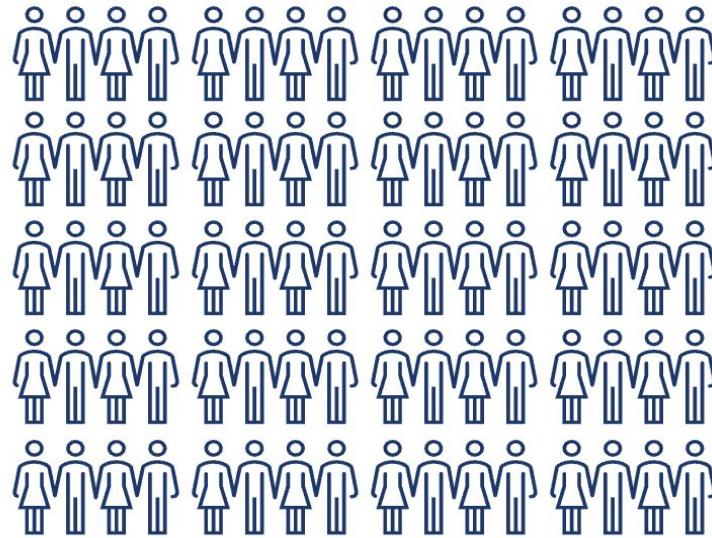
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***Capable
Empowered
Supported
Acknowledged
Cared for***



**Protecting government
from fraud and misuse**



**Ensuring equitable
access to services**

**“Responsible,
appropriate trust
and
equitable, inclusive
verification”**

- 2025 Millennial version
of Ronald Reagan,
(as imagined by META AI)





04

DESIGN'S ROLE IN TRUST

How governments earn trust

How governments earn trust



Consistency



Mere exposure effect: repeated exposure to something increases positive feelings toward it

How governments earn trust



Consistency



Openness and thoughtful transparency

“Blanket transparency is a Jackson Pollock painting - randomly sprayed or hosed everywhere.

Intentional transparency is a spotlight - lighting up an issue to understand it better and hold people accountable.”

Rachel Botsman - How to be intentional with transparency

How governments earn trust



Consistency



Openness and thoughtful transparency



Clear expectations and accountabilities

“A good service must clearly explain what is needed from the user to complete the service and what that user can expect from the service provider in return.”

Lou Downe, Good Services

How governments earn trust



Consistency



Openness and thoughtful transparency



Clear expectations and accountabilities



No one left behind



**Designers and researchers
often carry the weight of
trust issues and the
responsibility of repair**

*But we also have the methods, tools and
skills to make a difference*



Good design and research
**creates consistent,
clear services**

“Unclear and inconsistent messaging from government institutions has been associated with criticisms of government competence, a core dimension of trust.”

Canadians’ trust in government in a time of crisis: Does it matter? (Sept 2023)



**Good design and research
understands the
human experience,
across all channels**

Trust is won and lost

...In waiting rooms

...In long queues

...Over the phone

...On paper

...Online

...Face to face



A black and white photograph showing two people from the side, focused on a task at a desk. In the foreground, a person's hands are visible, one holding a small piece of paper and the other resting on a laptop keyboard. Behind them, another person is seated at a desk with a computer monitor. The scene suggests a collaborative work environment.

Good design and research
surfaces risks

Are the barriers appropriate for the service?

What are the alternate entry point for the service?

What are the consequences when eligible people can't access the service?

What are the *risks* when non-eligible people can access the service?

Where is trust won and lost?

end of August surpasses a record 982 deaths last year.

In Victoria, there were 65 overdose deaths recorded in the first eight months of this year, compared with a total of 67 last year.

The province declared a state of emergency last year and took steps to try to reduce the number of overdoses.

Grant Mc

eight booths, two paramedics are on hand.

"I'm seeing probably over a day," McKenzie said. "We've opened, we still see our overdoses a day, but I haven't had a single fatality."

Our Place, a drop-in centre unit outside Our Place, offers various services to citizens, is a

per cent of over-

Chief coroner Lisa Lapointe said the increase in deaths highlights the complex issues of drug dependency.

"It's heartbreaking to see the continued high numbers of deaths throughout the province despite numerous initiatives and harm-reduction measures in place."

naloxone programs, training in overdose prevention to those who were susceptible. The overdose-reversing drug was also made available at pharmacies around the province.

The statistics show 91 per cent of those who have died this year were between the ages of 19 and 39.

Toronto, a power appears to account for the increase in overdoses in 2012 because the drug has remained stable.

— With a file by

Good design and research advocates for those who've been left out and let down

Source: Marlieke Kieboom

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Grant Molle

User numbers at Our Place, with eight booths, two paramedics are on hand.

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The statistics show 91 per cent of those who have died this year were between the ages of 19 and

29. In 2012, 85 per cent of deaths were in that age group.

— With a file by

Grant Molle

Source: Marlieke Kieboom



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— With a file by

Building trust through

Thoughtful codesign

Trauma-informed research practices

Deep listening and curiosity

Impactful advocacy work

Showing that you are taking action

Source: Marlieke Kieboom

**“Trust, and faith in the possibility of progress,
can only be restored by one thing: concrete
progress actually happening”**

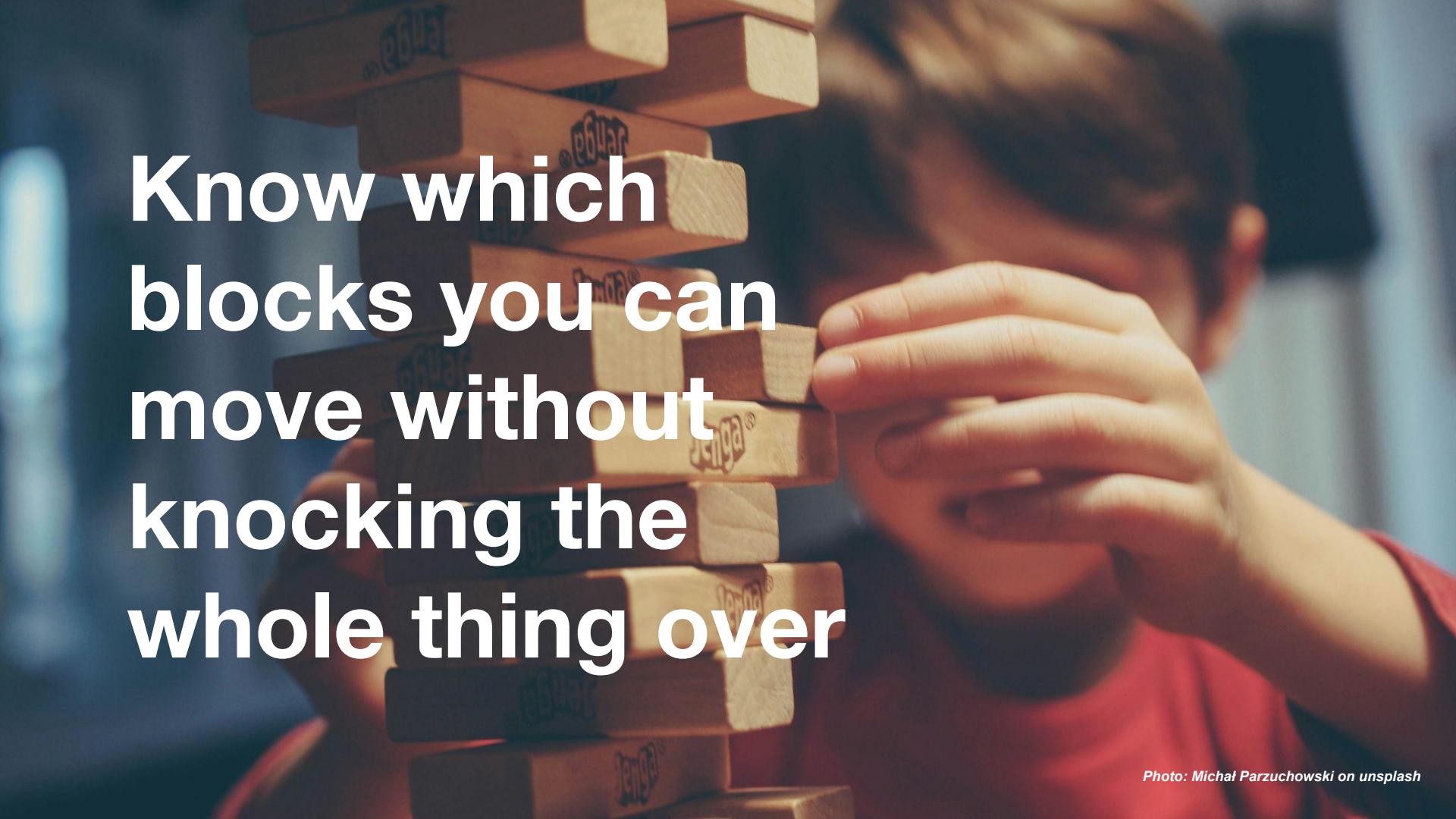
Torsten Bell, Labour MP for Swansea West

It's not easy





Photo: Michał Parzuchowski on unsplash

A close-up photograph of a person's hands playing Jenga. The person is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt. They are carefully removing a wooden block from the middle of a tall, precariously balanced stack of Jenga blocks. The blocks are light-colored wood with some darker grain visible. The background is dark and out of focus.

Know which
blocks you can
move without
knocking the
whole thing over

“Earning trust is through small gestures over time. It's how you treat people day in, day out. It's how you make them feel, especially on tough days.”

Rachel Botsman, An Expert on Trust Says We're Thinking About It All Wrong

A very condensed summary

When the trust barriers to services are too high, it will undermine people's confidence in government's ability to deliver

Designers and researchers play a key role in understanding how trust is won and lost, and helping teams mitigate that risk

We can build trust and more equitable public services through consistency, clarity and openness

Change is slow but it does happen



Photo from Mady Hart on Unsplash

Change is slow but it does happen

Benefits claimants no longer have to struggle through Gov.uk Verify



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Benefits claimants no longer have to struggle through Gov.uk Verify

Canada just introduced automatic tax filing for low income people



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Benefits claimants no longer have to struggle through Gov.uk Verify

Canada just introduced automatic tax filing for low income people

Ontario waived its Healthcare waiting period in 2020 (as a temporary measure)



Photo from Mady Hart on Unsplash





Thanks for your time

*You can add me on LinkedIn if
that's your thing!*

