

'Tremendous, troubling, exposing and triumphant.'
HARRY NICHOLAS
AUTHOR OF A TRANS MAN WALKS INTO A GAY BAR

RAINBOW TRAP

**Queer Lives,
Classifications and the
Dangers of Inclusion**

KEVIN GUYAN

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???

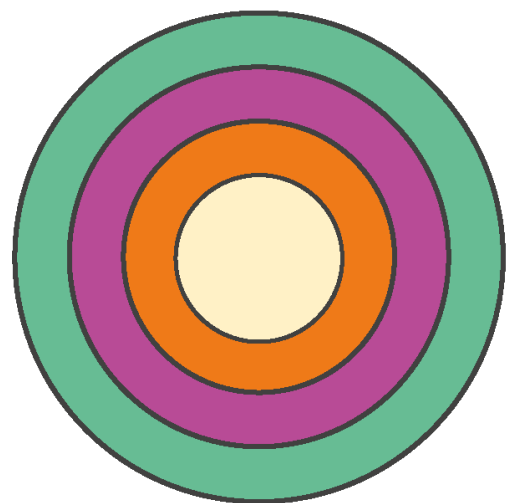
Who is centred in your work?

Five challenges when working with LGBTQ data



Welcome to the Gender + Sexuality Data Lab

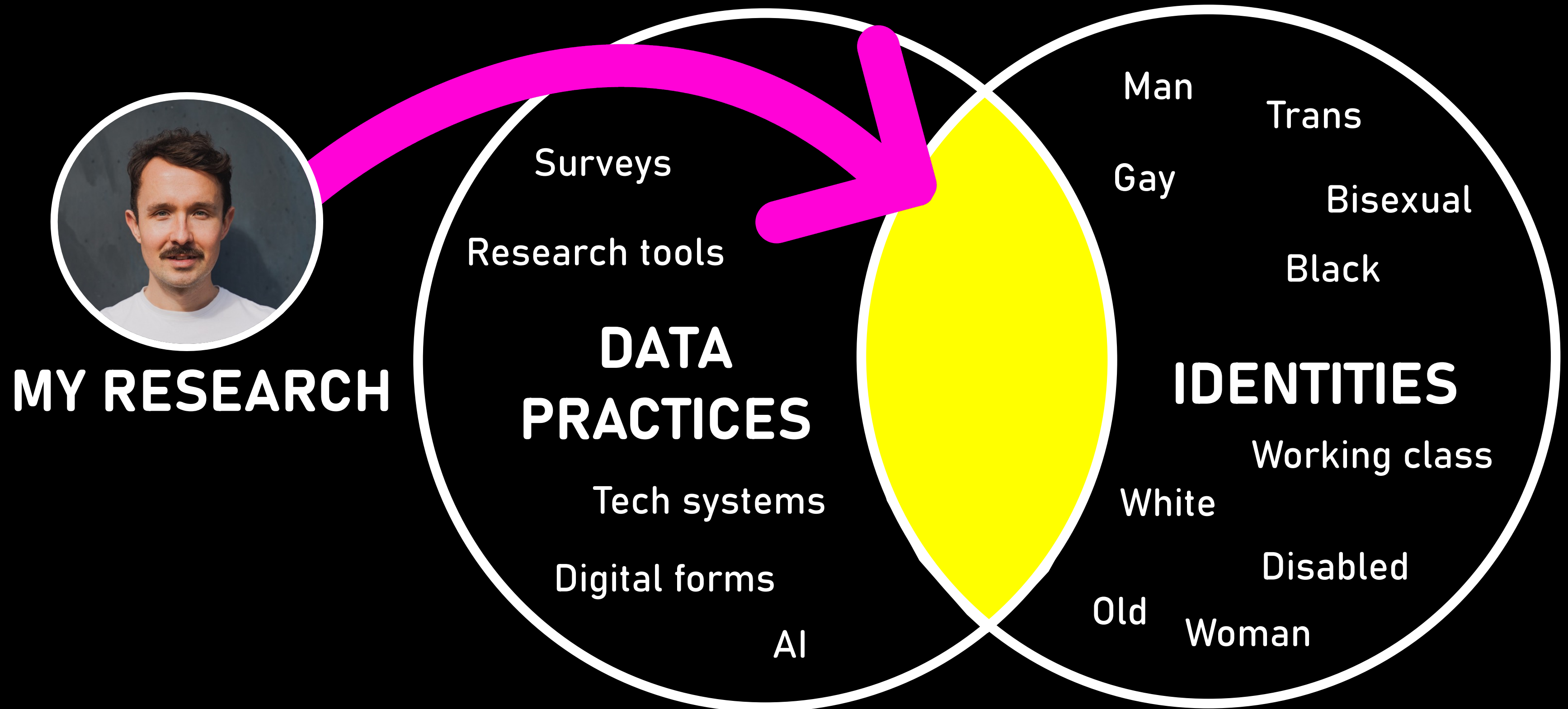
The Gender + Sexuality Data Lab is a north star for researchers, practitioners, activists and creatives engaged in critical work on collecting, analysing and using gender, sex and sexuality data. It is for people who feel outside the data systems that shape our everyday lives — and want to change them.



**Gender +
Sexuality
Data Lab**

**gensexdatalab.
com**

The intersection of data and identity





1

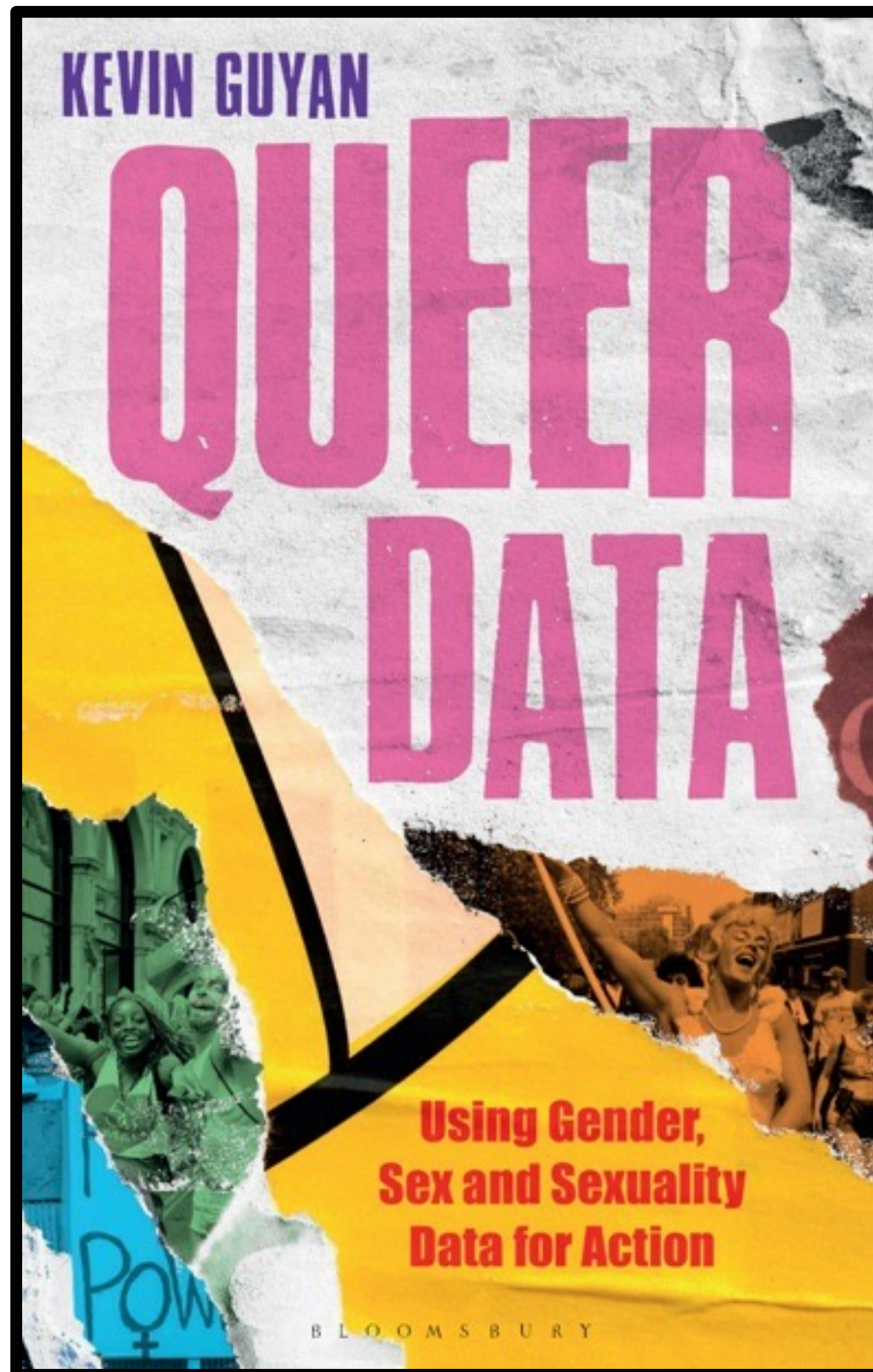
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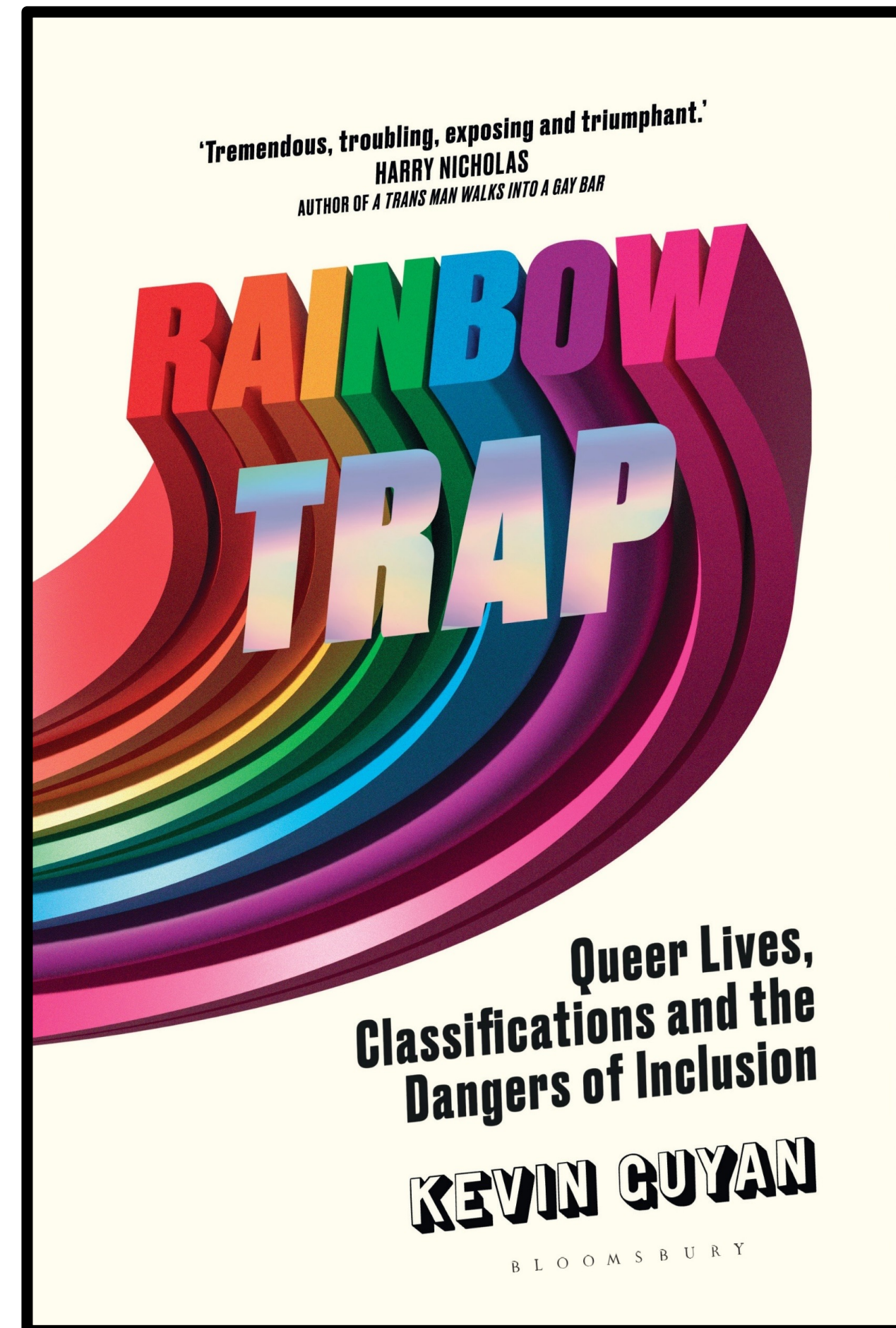
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Queer Data, 2022.



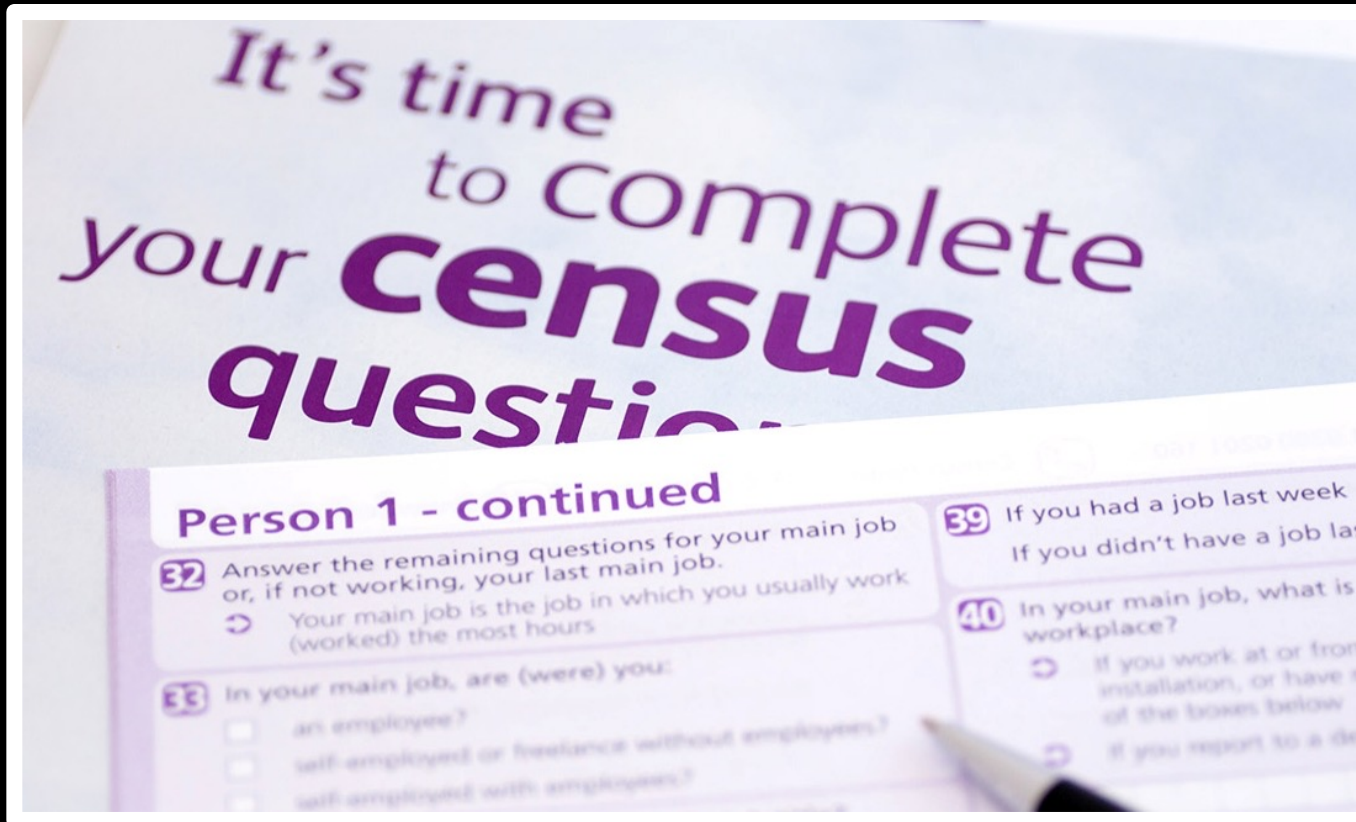
Rainbow Trap, 2025.

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



**#PROUD
TO BE
COUNTED**



**MAKE HISTORY ON 21 MARCH AS
LGBT PEOPLE ARE #PROUDTOBECOUNTED
IN THE CENSUS FOR THE FIRST TIME!**

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):

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

LGBTQ lives and the census

4.0

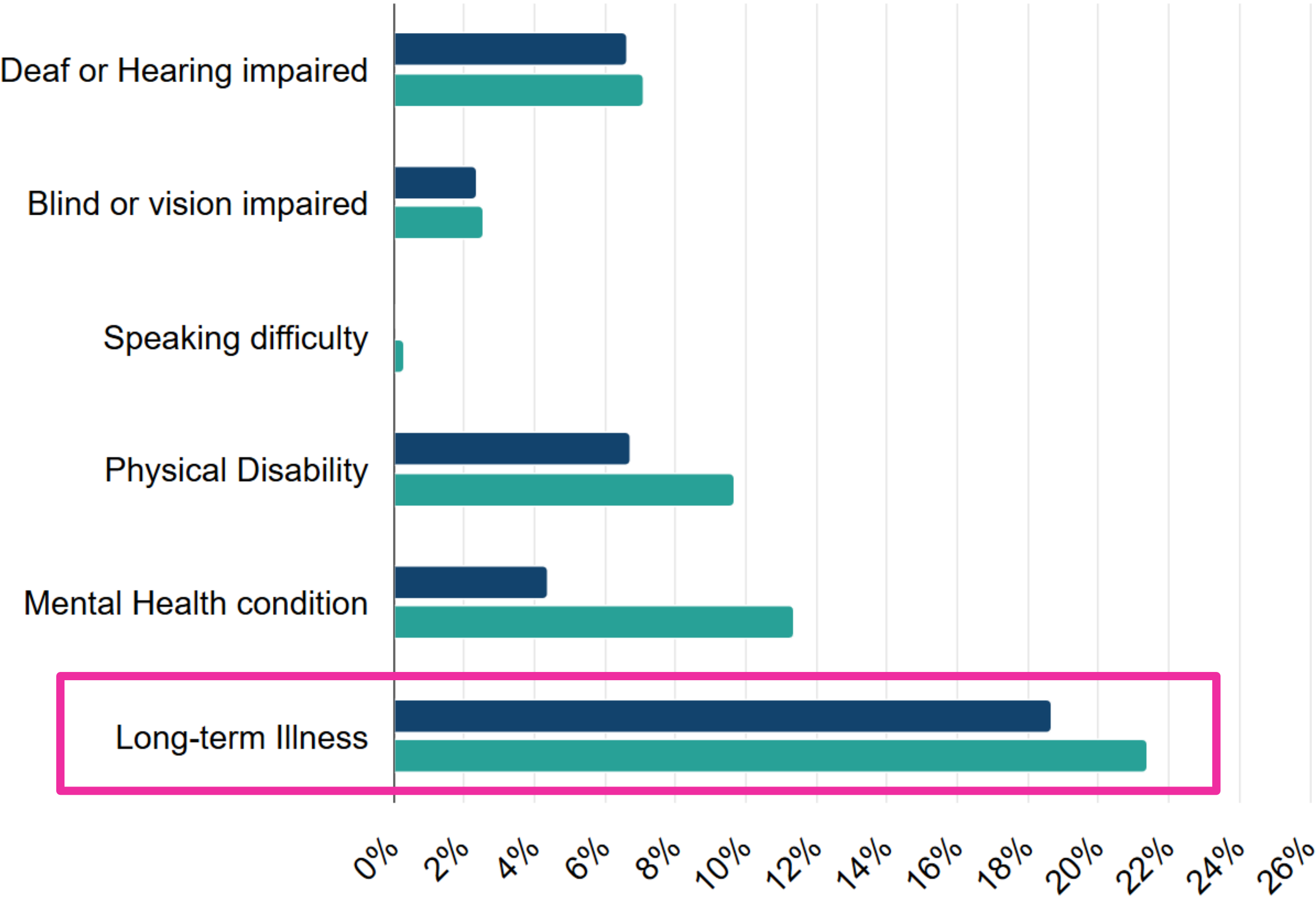
of the Scottish population aged 16 or above identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or a sexual orientation 'other' than heterosexual (NRS).

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

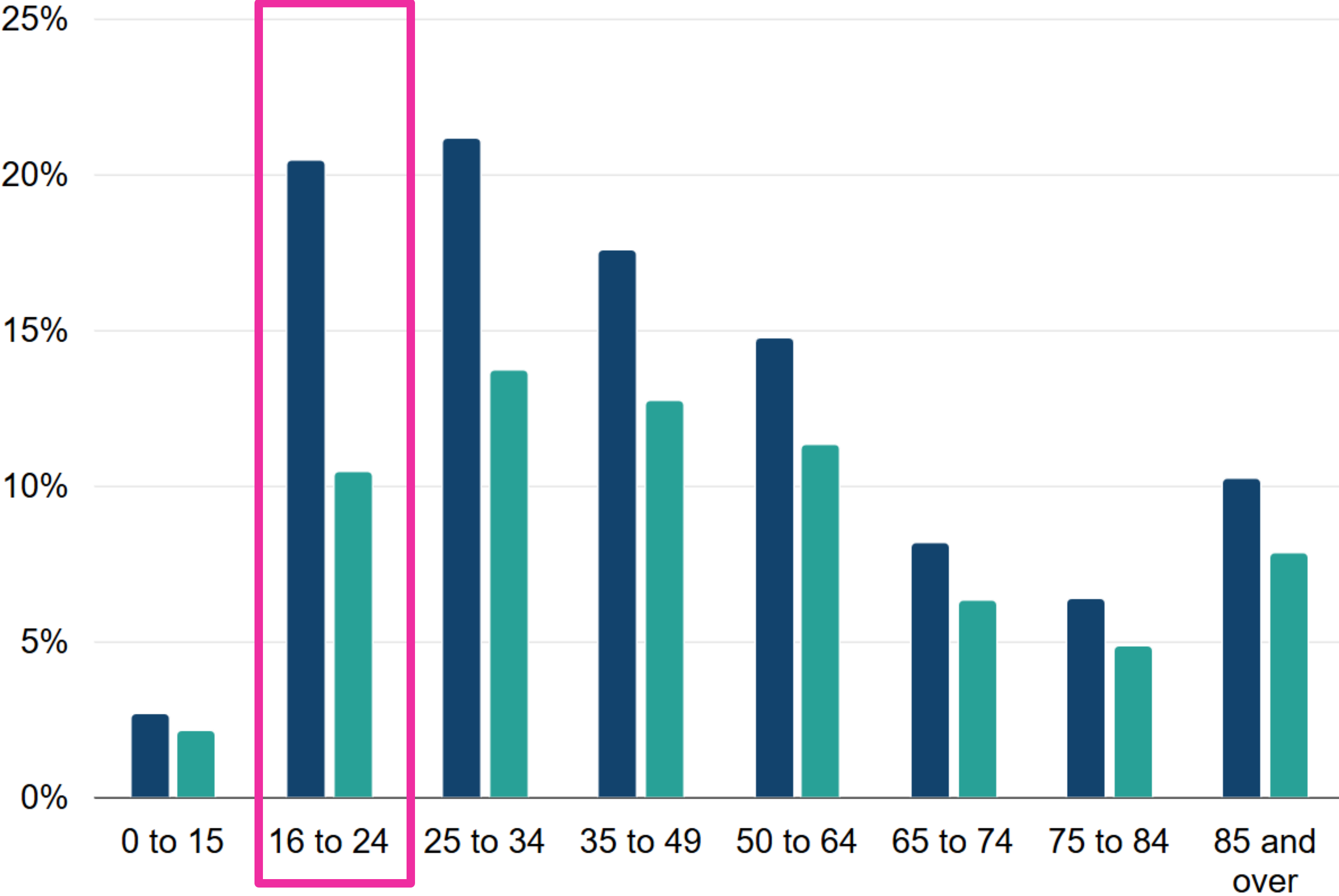


● 2011 ● 2022

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.

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

**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.

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

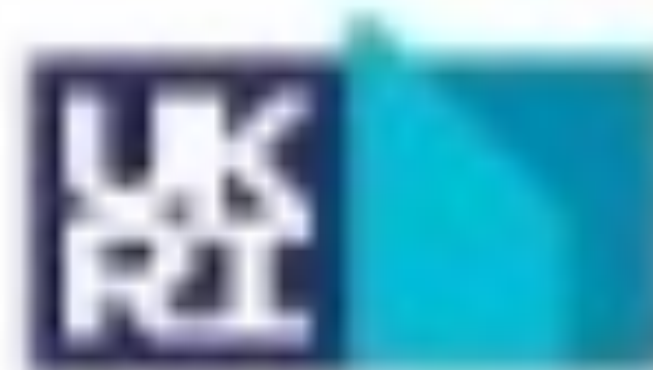
Research methods

≠

Apolitical or
ahistorical

1. MORE DATA

Embedding Diversity in Research Design Policy

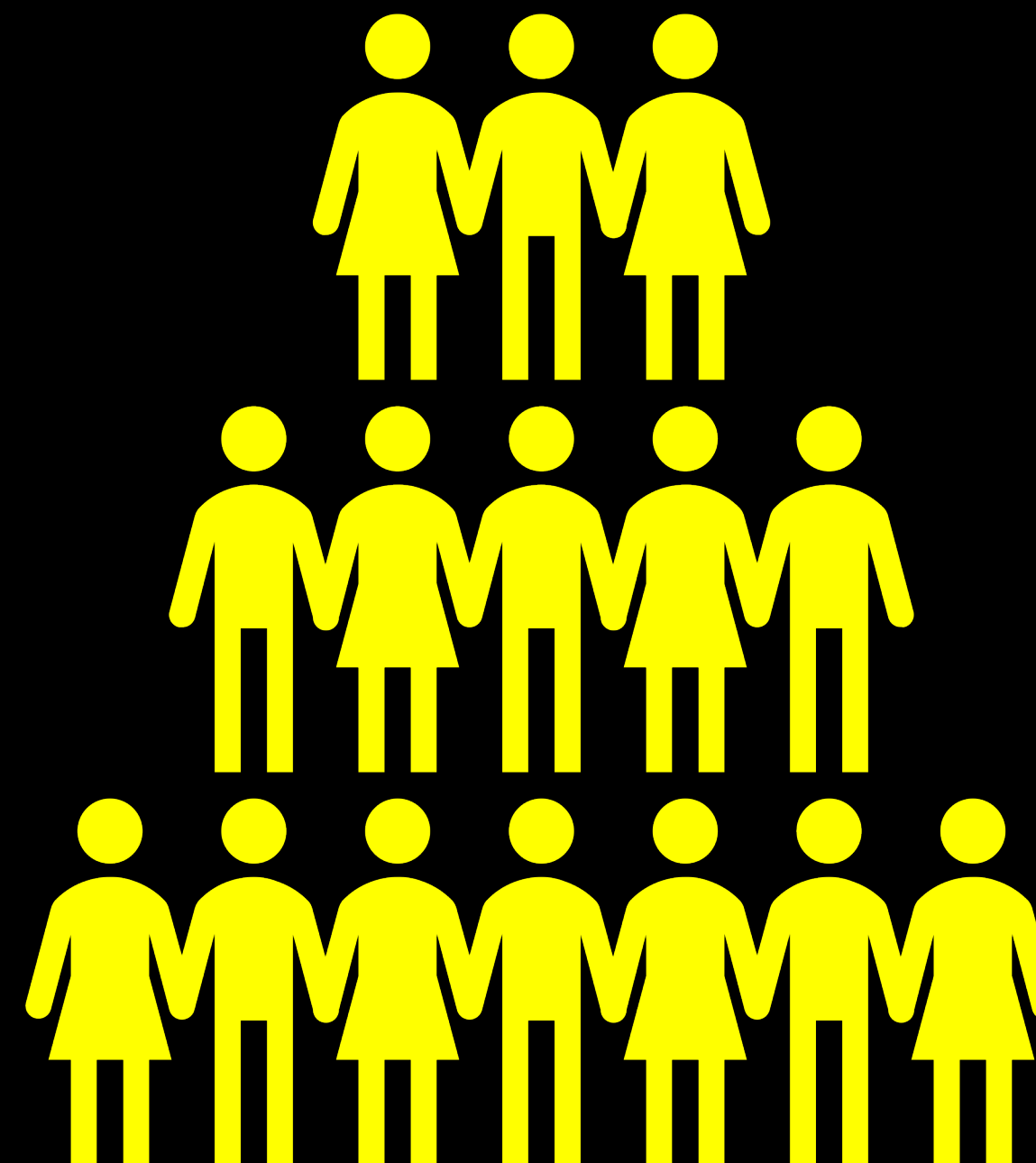


Medical
Research
Council



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.

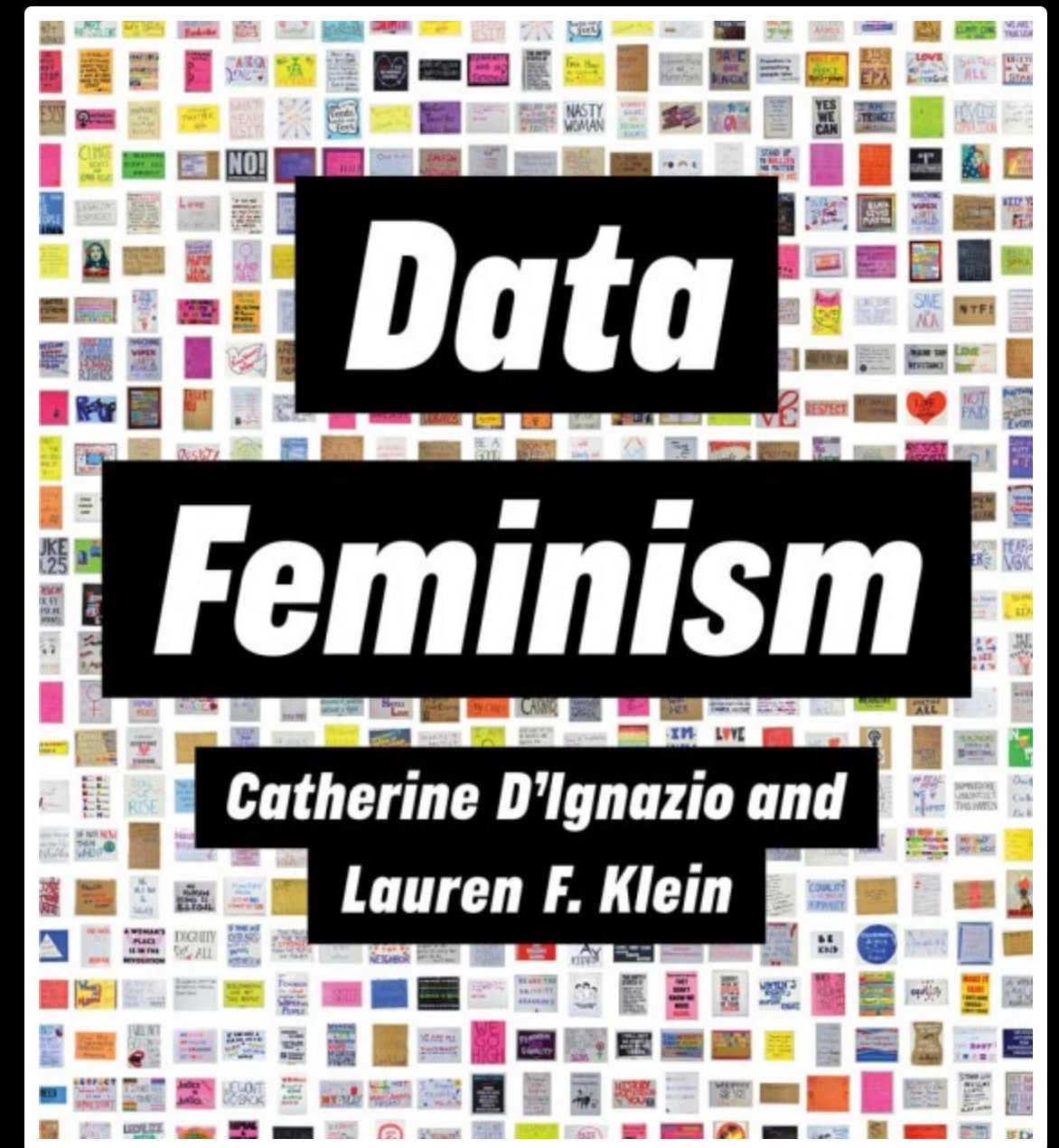
Demanding data on subjects that we already know much about is, in my estimation, a perversion of knowledge.

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



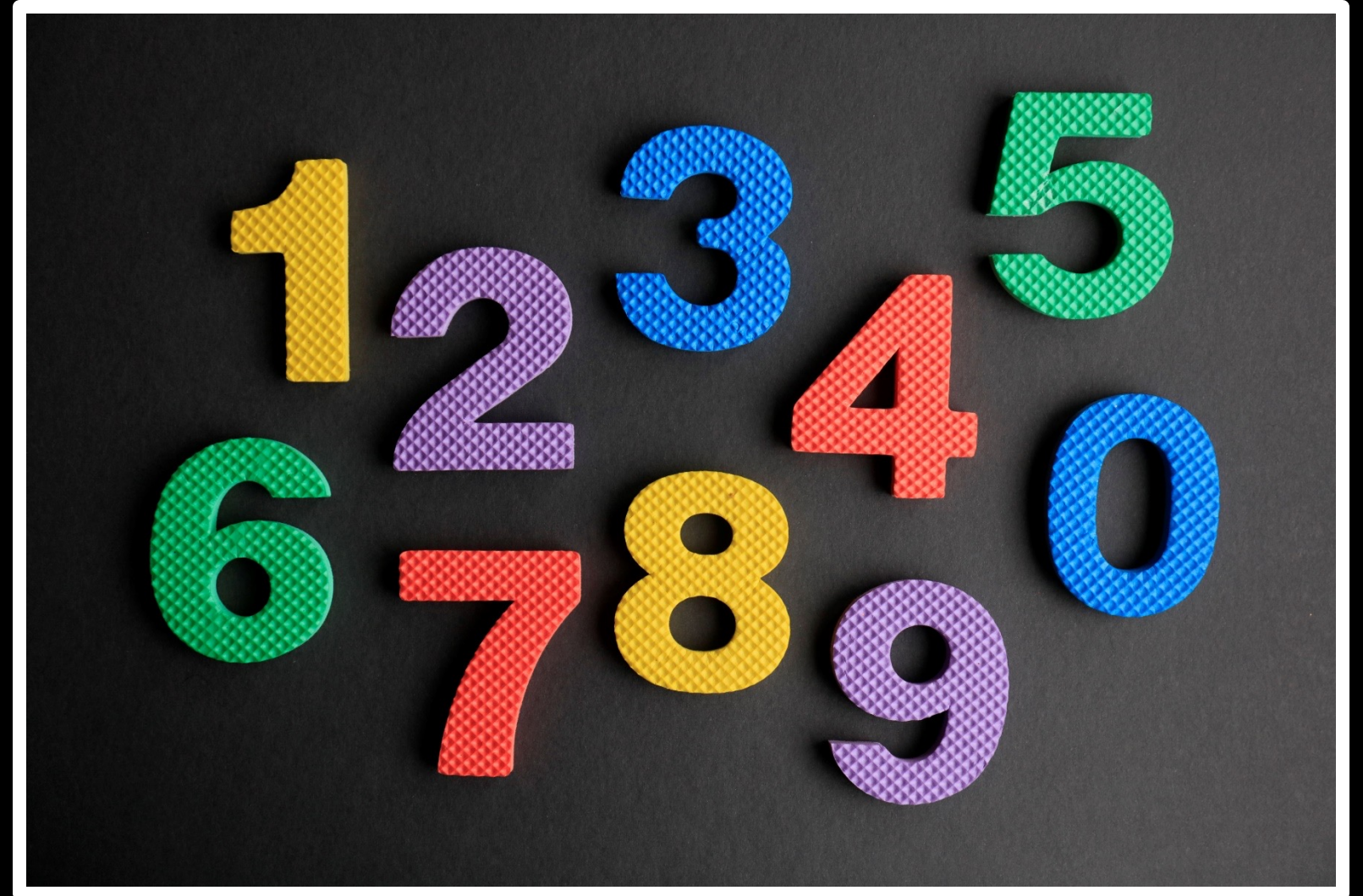
Minoritized individuals and groups should not have to repeatedly prove that their experiences of oppression are real.

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 care experienced

non-religious deaf

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 care experienced

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?**

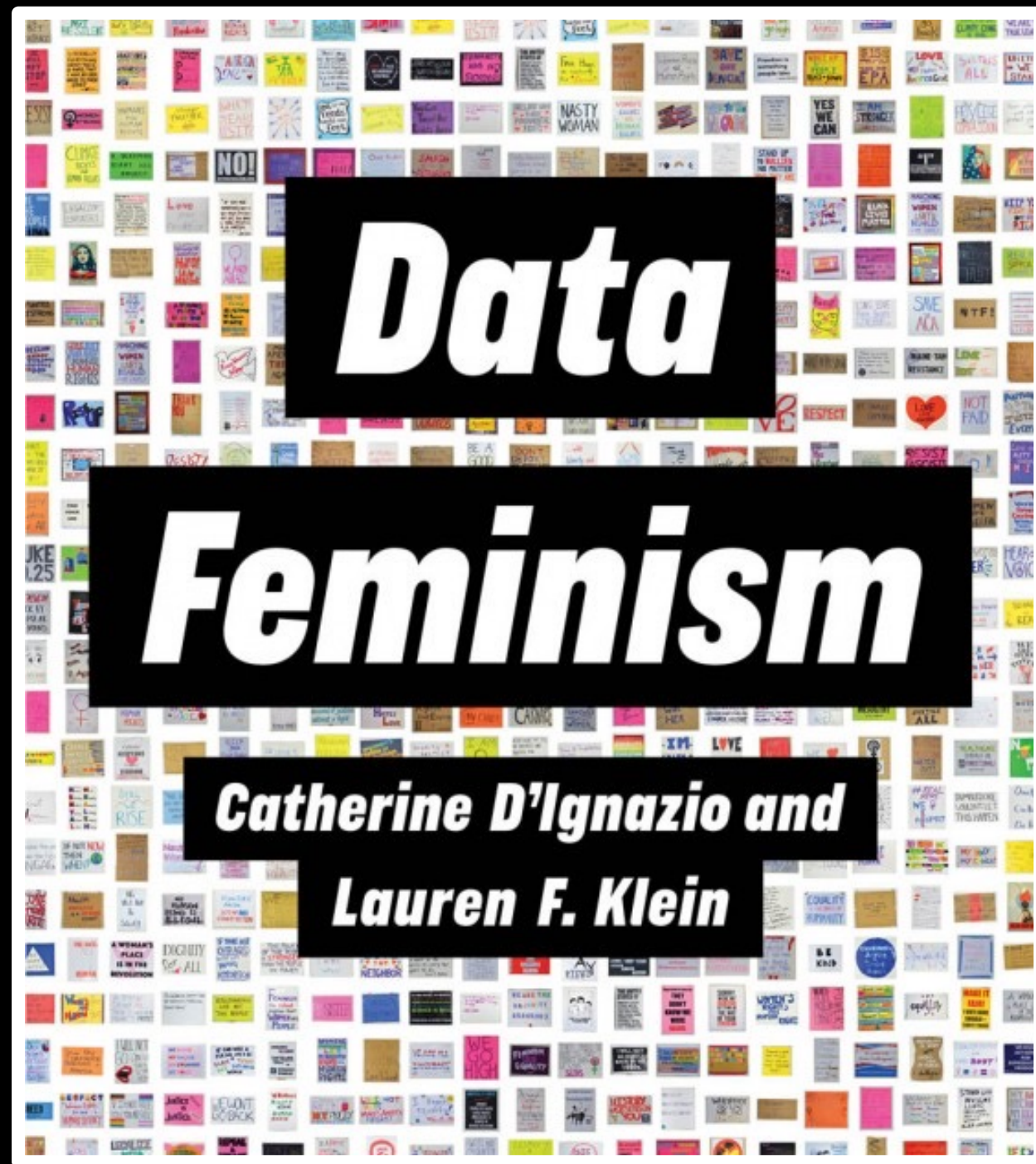
3. DATA AS

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



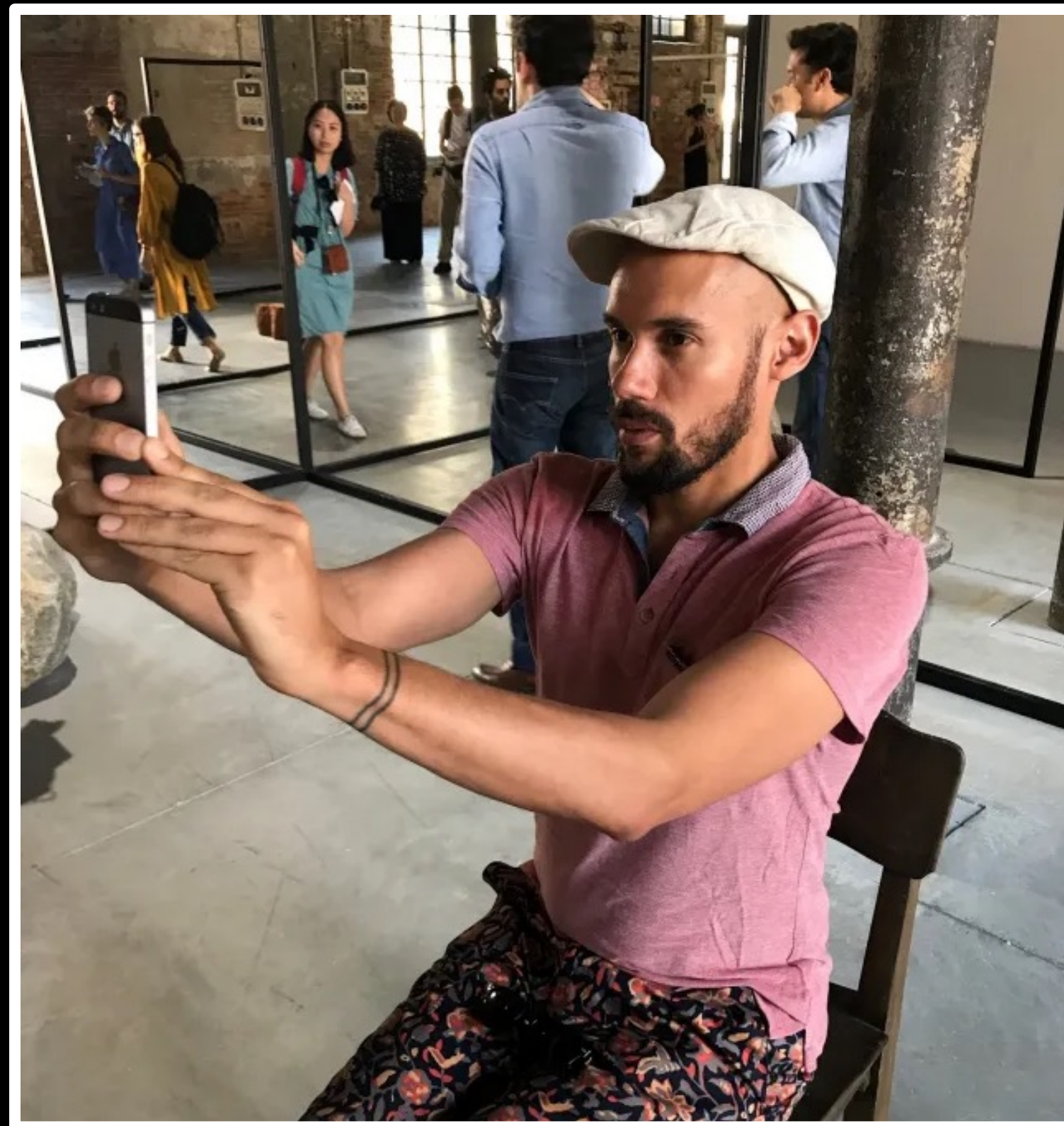
D'Ignazio & Klein, *Data Feminism*.



Data For Black Lives.



Jen Jack Gieseke.



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.



OCTOBER 11-1988 NATIONAL GAY RIGHTS ADVOCATES

Keith Haring, National Coming Out Day, 1988.

University of Edinburgh staff data...

46.3%	Heterosexual
3.1%	Bisexual
2.8%	Gay or lesbian
0.8%	Other sexual orientation
= 6.7%	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

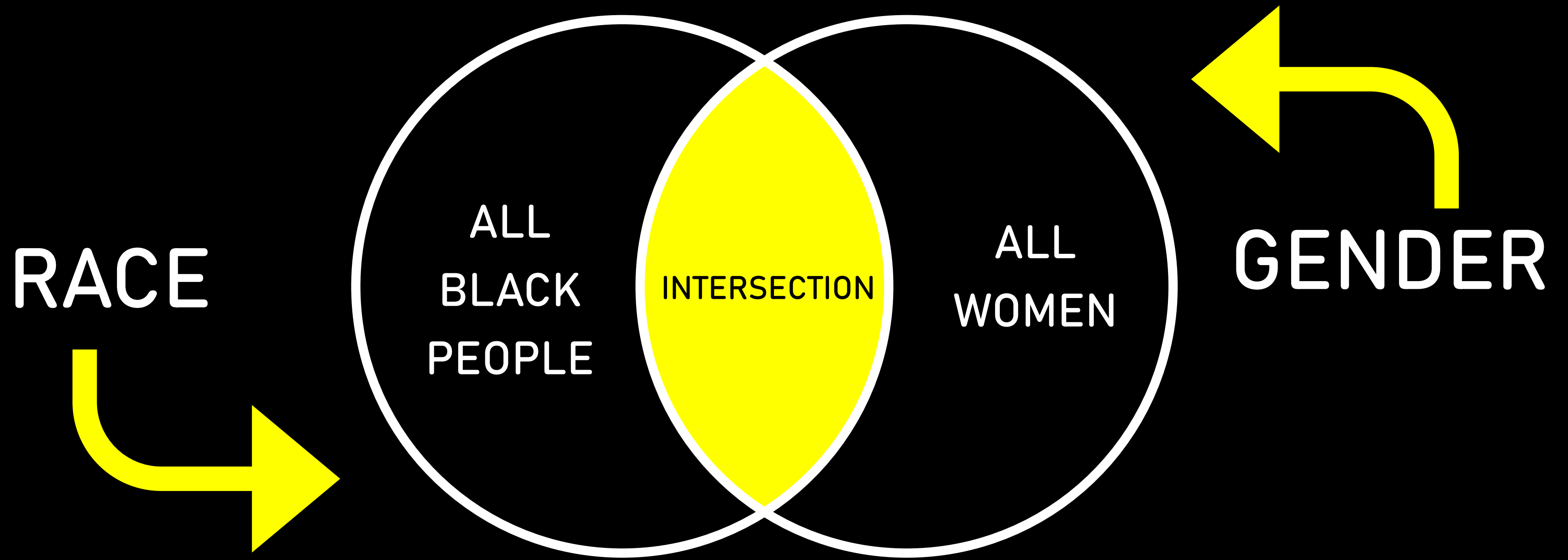


[A] single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group. In other words, in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in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

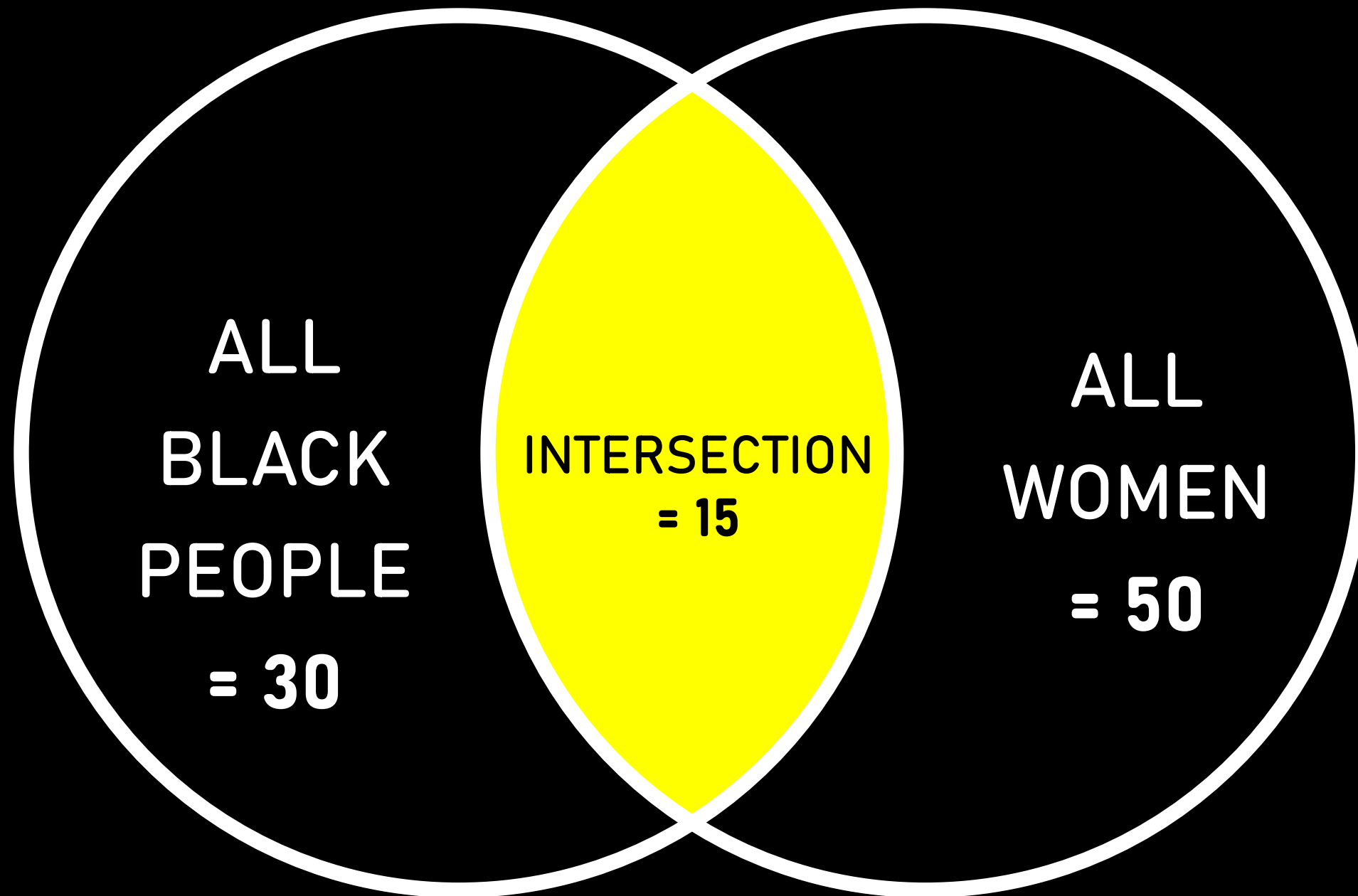
Kimberlé Crenshaw,
Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.

THE DATA IS
INADMISSIBLE

Intersectionality



Small numbers



Data might identify individuals.

Data might be received badly.

Data might lose statistical power.

* 80 interviewees in total

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
siloes?

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

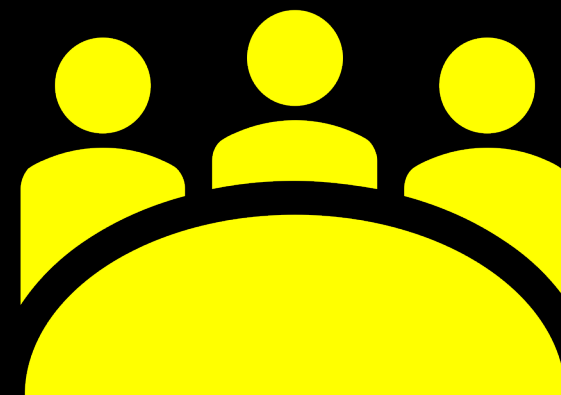
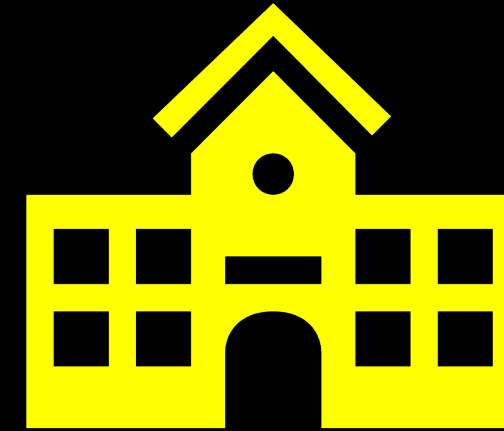


REPAIR



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:

☐

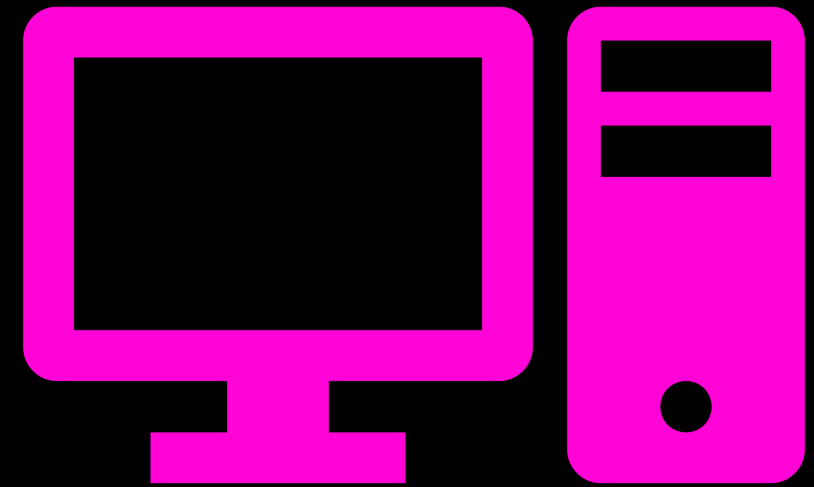
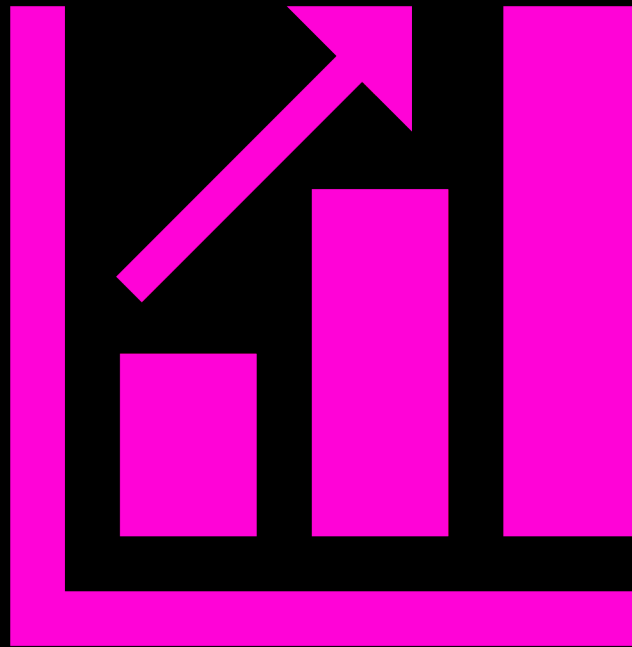
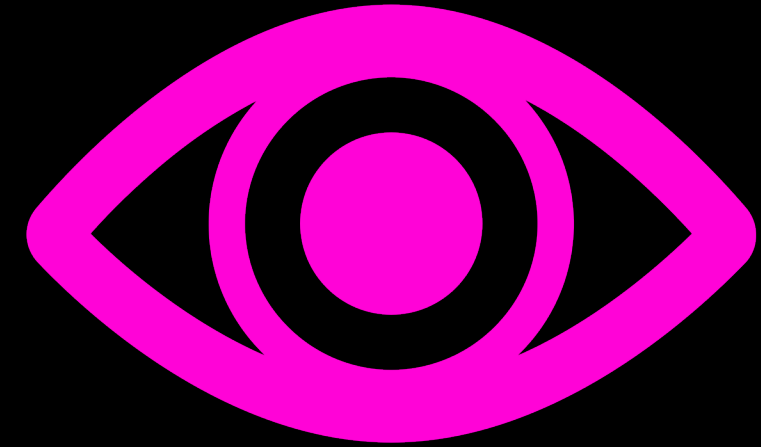
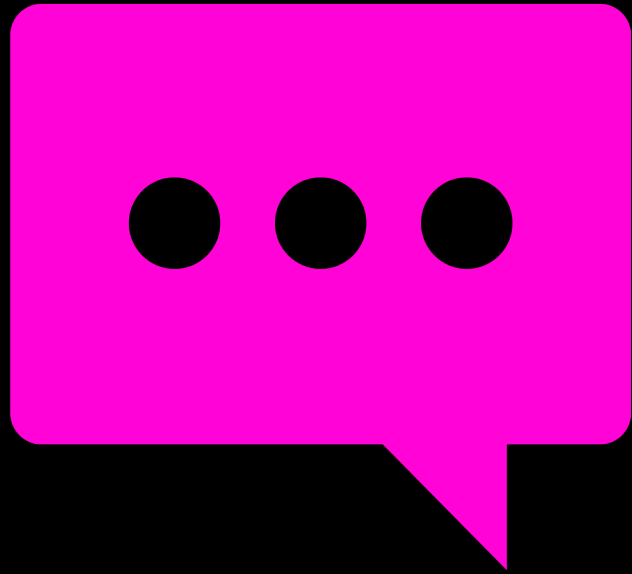
Straight

☐

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

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