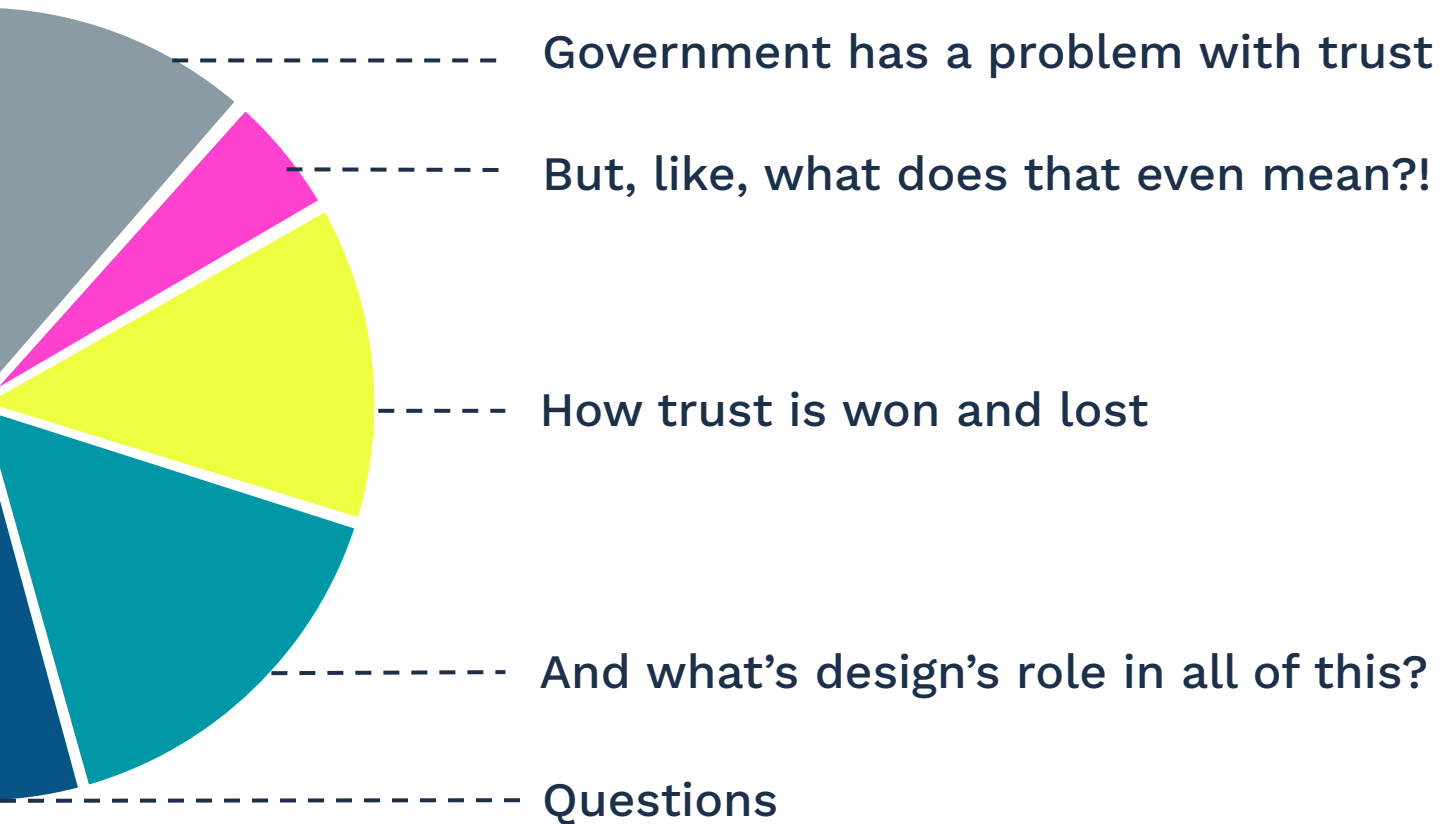


Hey 🖐️
I'm Martha

EXPECTATION SETTING



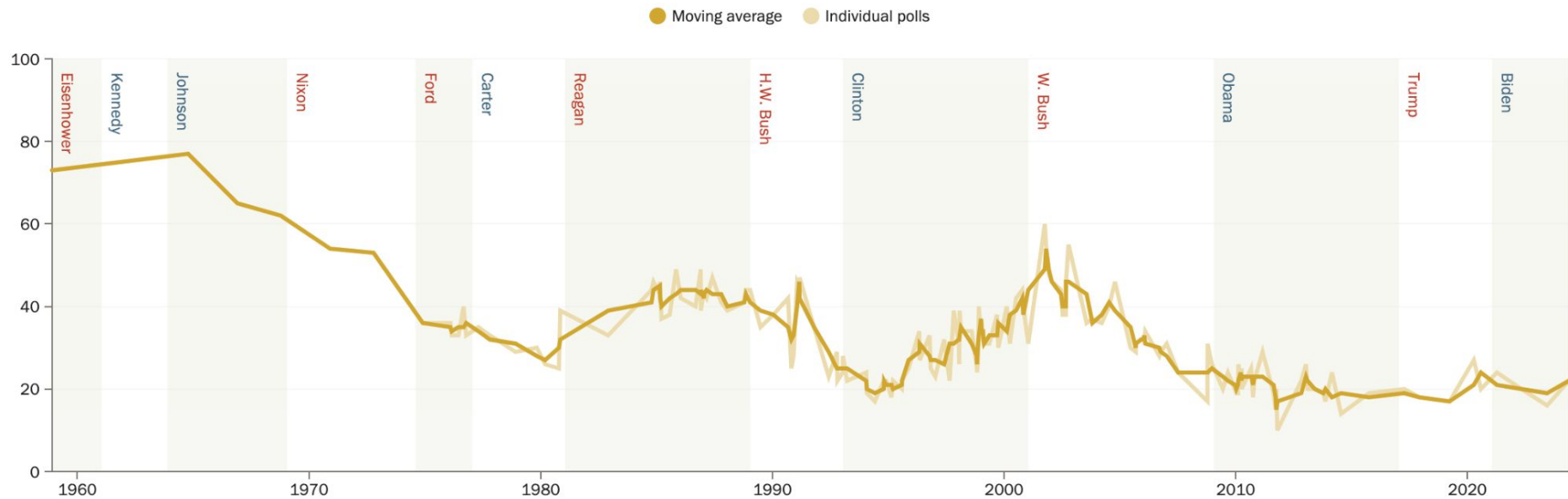


01

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



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**

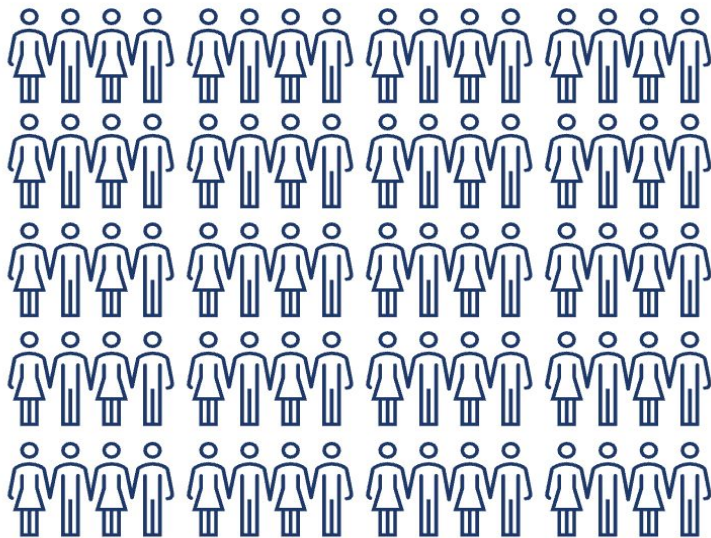
**Sometimes it
feels like this**



**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

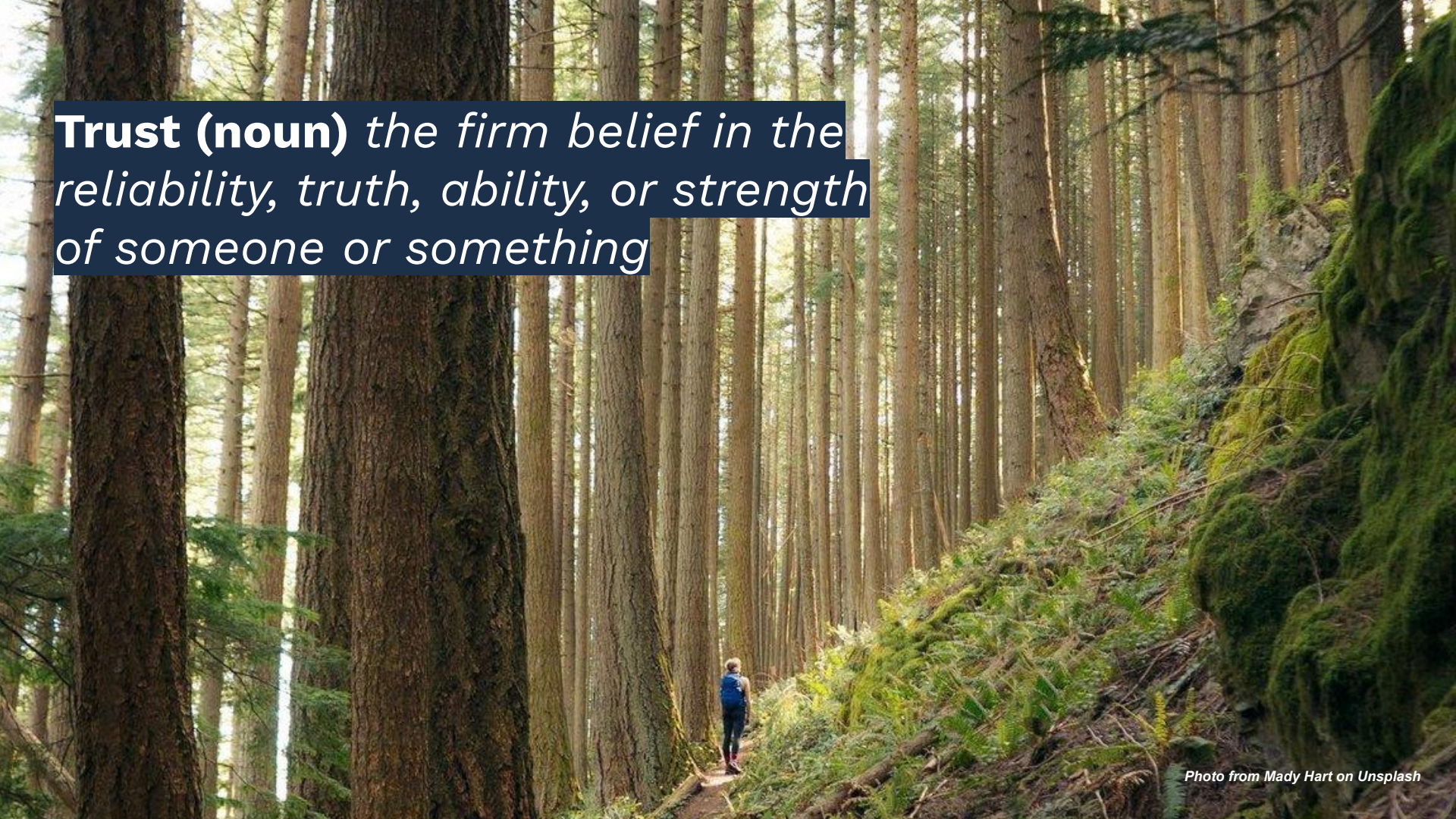
**How do we get government
to trust people?**



02

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

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



“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 And it can be withheld or withdrawn at any time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*



A close-up photograph of a silver metal gate with a diamond-shaped lattice pattern. A silver metal padlock is attached to the gate's locking mechanism. The background is blurred, showing a building and a street lamp under warm, golden light.

**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

A photograph of a Job Centre Plus sign mounted on a building. The sign is a bright green square with rounded corners, featuring the text 'job centre plus' in a sans-serif font. 'job' and 'plus' are white, while 'centre' is yellow. The building has a stone facade with arched windows and a white door. A person in a dark jacket is walking away from the camera on the street in the background. A white van is parked on the street further back. The image is slightly out of focus, emphasizing the sign.

job
centre
plus

A green rectangular sign with the text "job centre plus" in white and yellow. The sign is mounted on a building facade. In the background, there are brick buildings and a white van.

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





“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

A photograph of a child's playroom. On a wooden shelf, there are several dolls, including a Barbie and a doll with dark skin and curly hair. To the left, a colorful bunting banner hangs from a string. Below the shelf, there are wooden chairs and a table. To the right, a wicker basket sits on a shelf next to a large orange and yellow pumpkin. Further right, a white refrigerator is visible with several colorful children's drawings pinned to it.

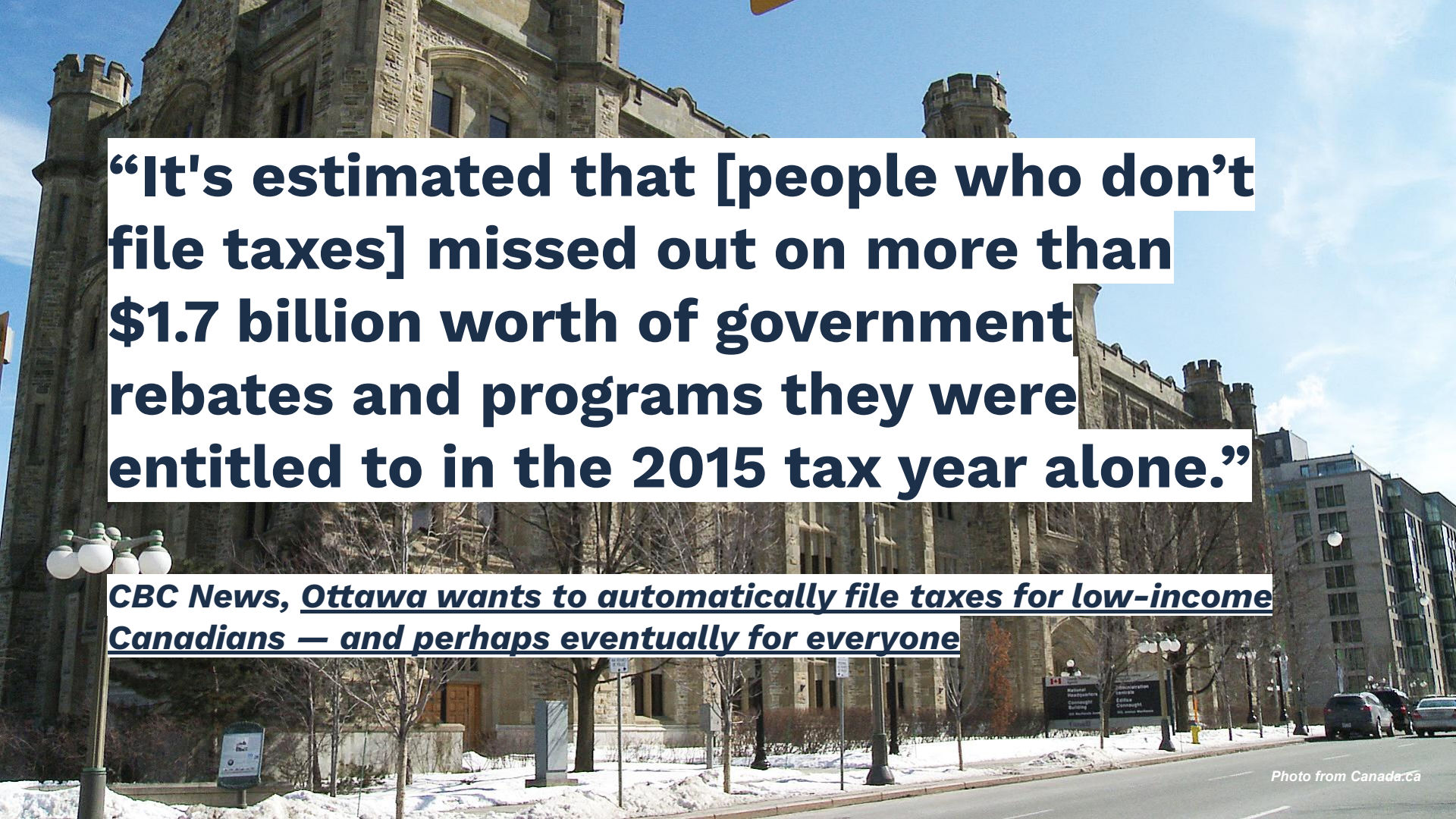
“Families identified [the] application process as one of the significant barrier to receiving subsidized care.”

“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*

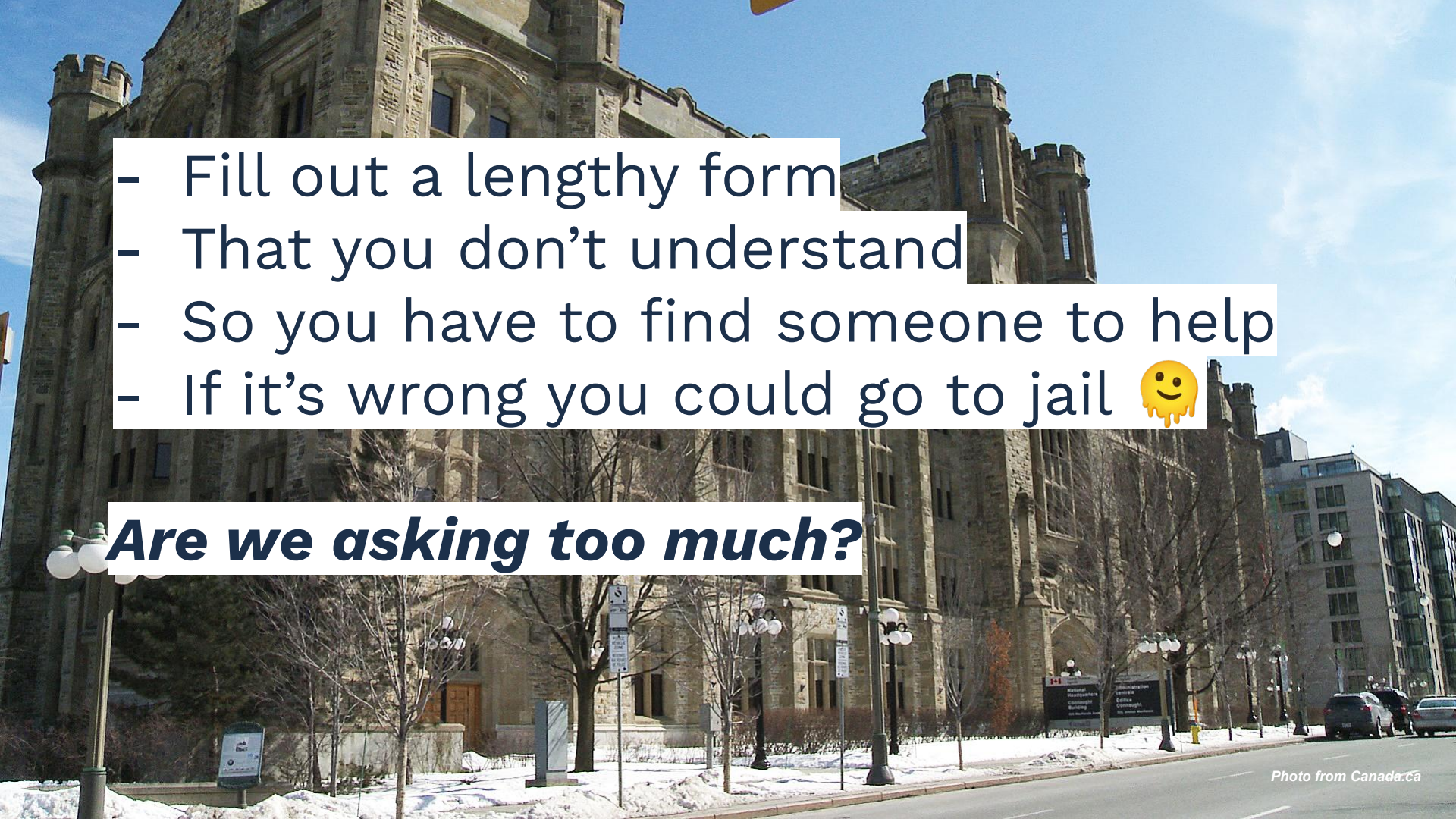
Photo from Sigmund on unsplash





“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

A blue and white rectangular sign with the word "OPEN" in large, bold, black capital letters. The sign is hanging from a silver-colored metal chain attached to a circular suction cup mounted on a glass door. The background is a blurred interior of a shop or restaurant, showing shelves with various items and warm lighting.



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

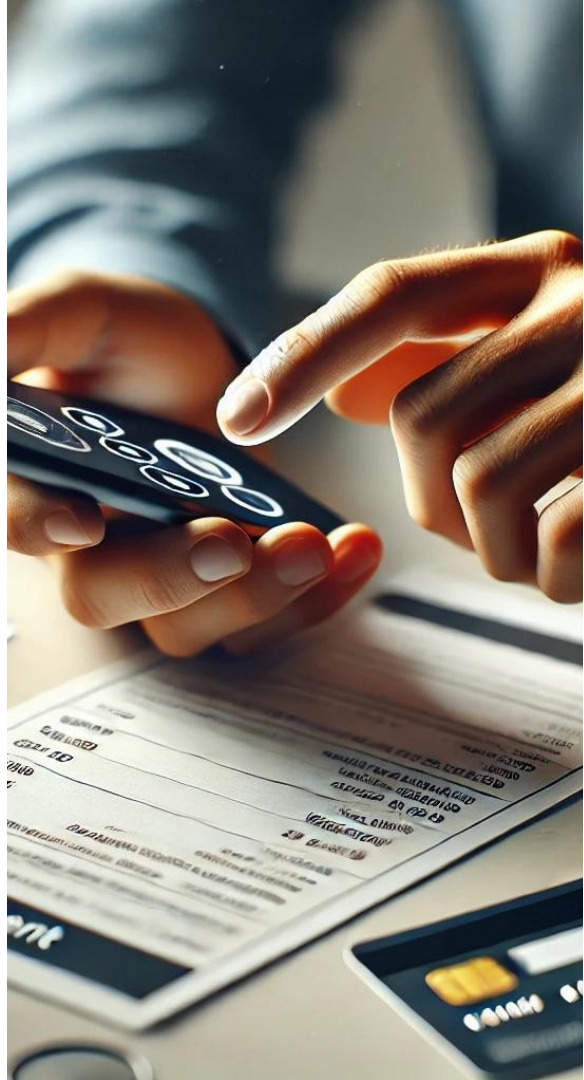
CBC News, [CRA preparing to take legal action against people who received pandemic benefits while ineligible](#)

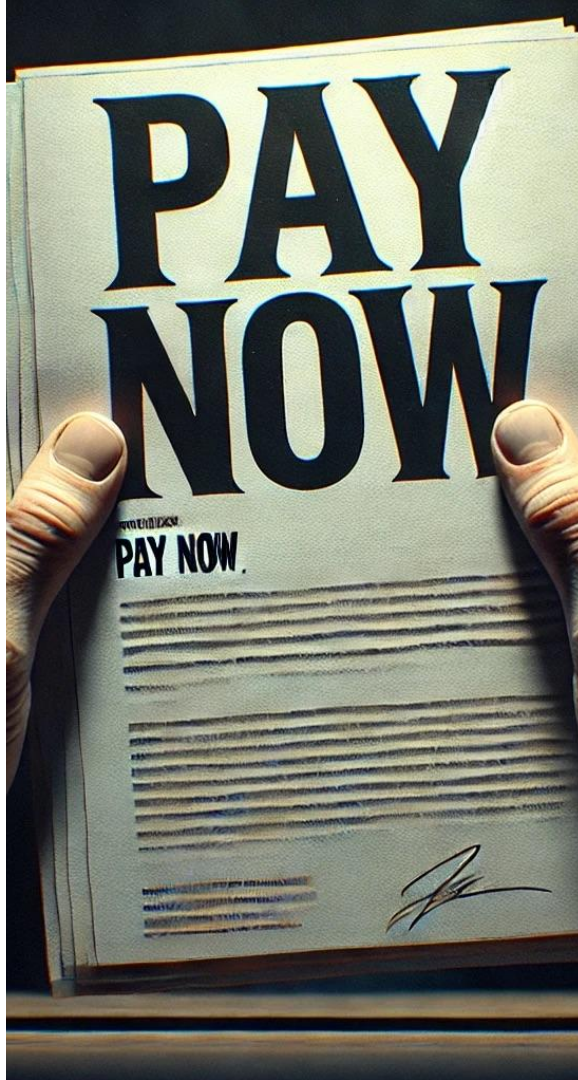
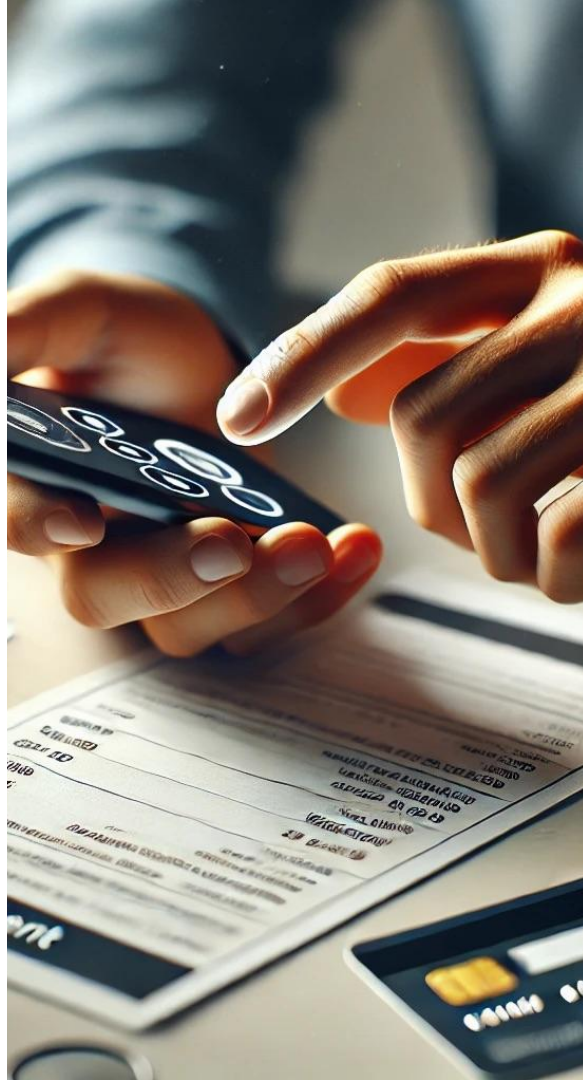


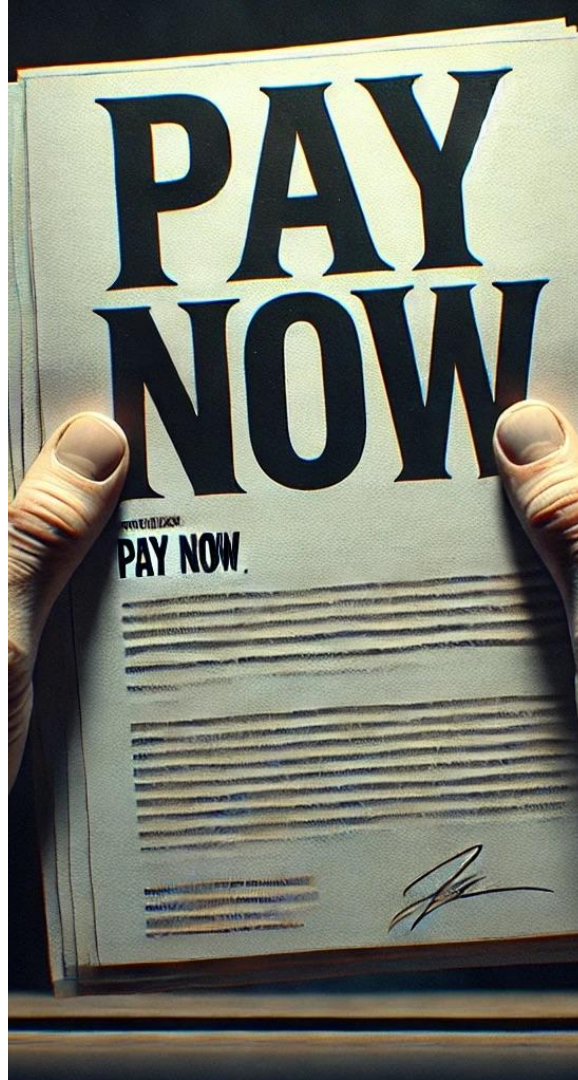
Too much trust is dangerous

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







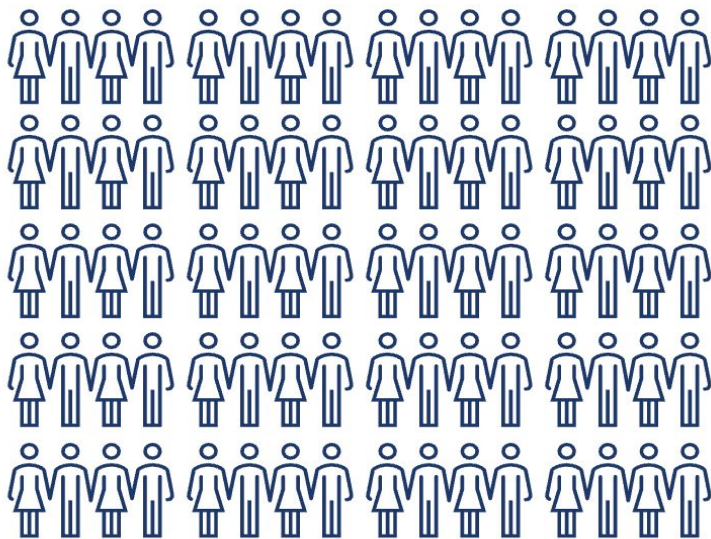
People may not
notice if they feel
“trusted”, but they
will notice feeling...



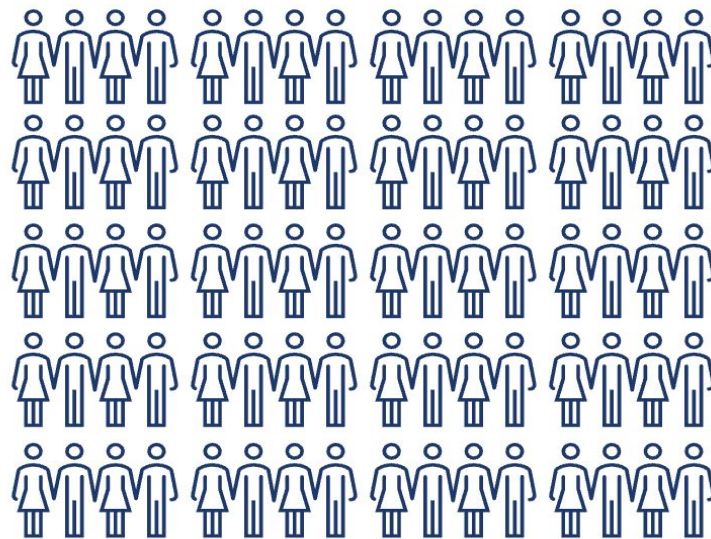
People may not
notice if they feel
“trusted”, but they
will notice feeling...



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

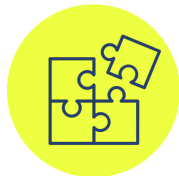


Consistency



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

How governments earn trust



Consistency



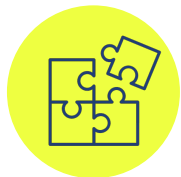
Openness and thoughtful transparency

“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

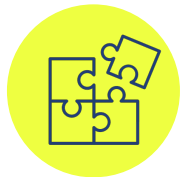


Clear expectations and accountabilities

“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





Good design and research *surfaces risks*

Source: BC Government

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?

A black and white photograph of a hand holding a newspaper. The hand is positioned in the foreground, with fingers gripping the paper. The newspaper text is visible in the background, partially obscured by the hand and a large text overlay. The overlay is a dark blue rectangle with white text. The newspaper text discusses overdose deaths in Victoria, mentioning statistics for the first eight months of the year compared to last year, and quotes Chief coroner Lisa Lapointe and Grant Mott. The text overlay reads: "Good design and research advocates for those who've been left out and let down".

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

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 Mott

Users can use the eight booths, two paramedics are on hand.

"We're seeing probably over a day," McKenzie said.

"We've opened, we still see four overdoses a day, but we haven't had a single fatality."

The unit outside Our Place, offers various services to citizens, is a

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

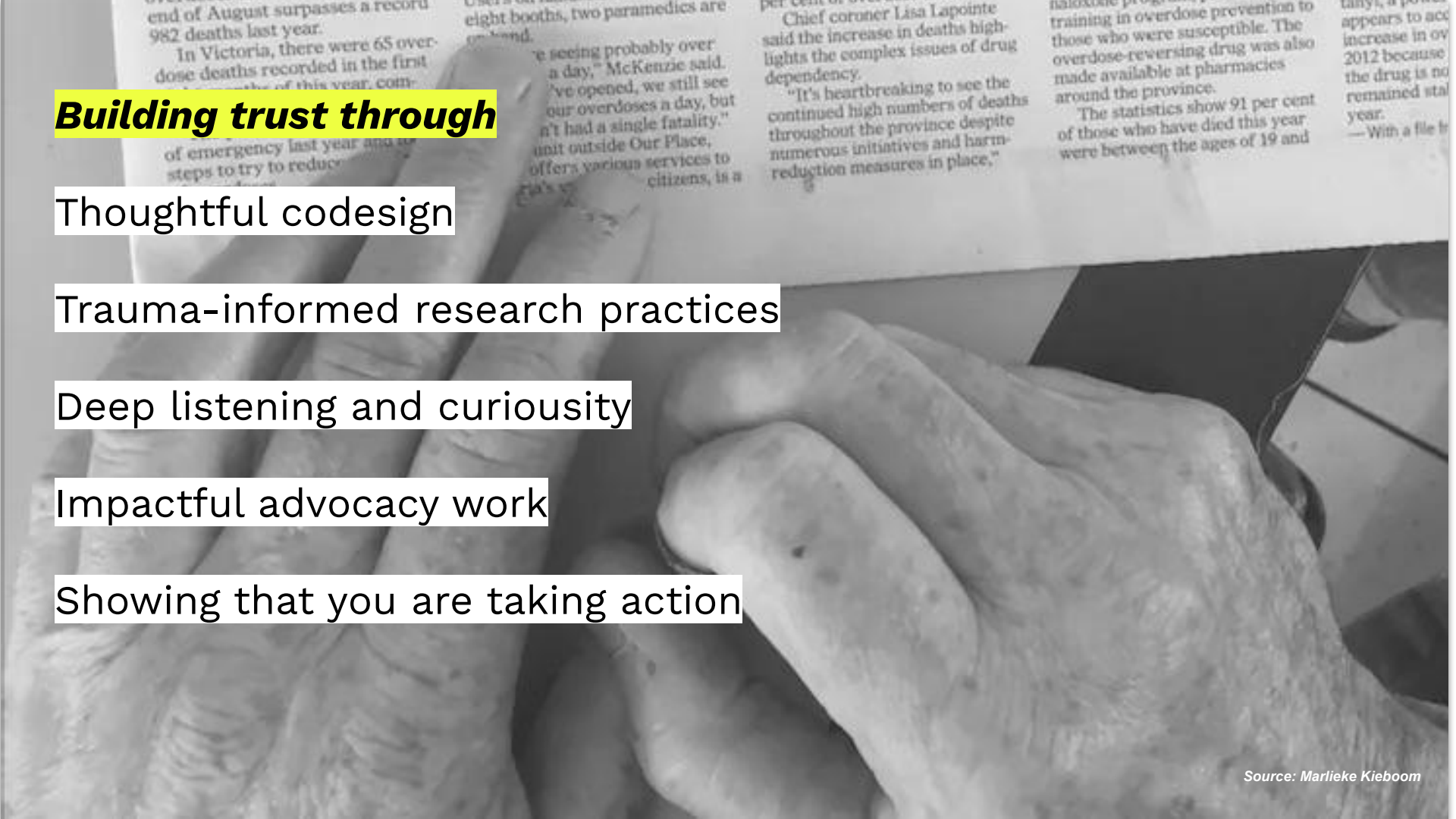
"It's heartbreaking to see the continued high numbers of deaths throughout the province despite numerous initiatives and harm-reduction measures in place,"

naloxone program. 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

tany, a police officer appears to account for an increase in overdoses in 2012 because the drug is no longer remained stable year.

—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

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

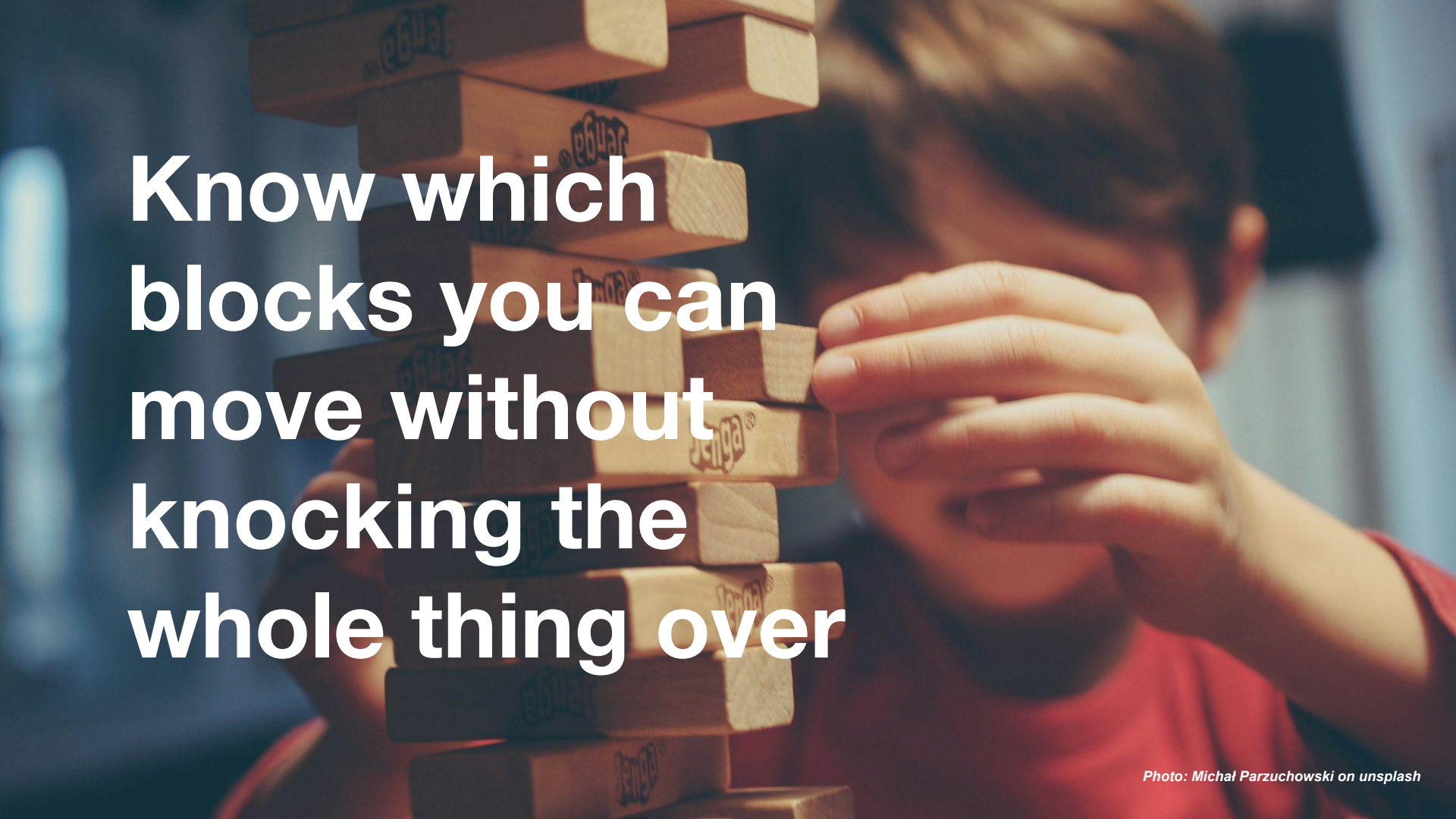
Torsten Bell, *Labour MP for Swansea West*

It's not easy





Photo: Michał Parzuchowski on unsplash

A close-up photograph of a child's hands carefully moving a wooden block from a tall, wobbly stack of Jenga blocks. The child is wearing a red shirt. The background is blurred, showing a blue light source on the left. The text "Know which blocks you can move without knocking the whole thing over" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

**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



Photo from Mady Hart on Unsplash

Change is slow but it does happen

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

Canada just introduced automatic tax filing for low income people



Photo from Mady Hart on Unsplash

Change is slow but it does happen

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!*

