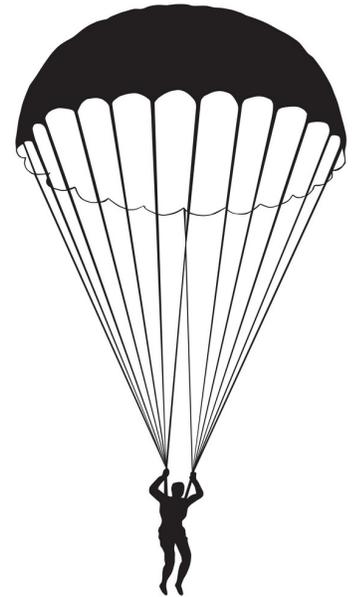# HOW CAN ECONOMICS INFORM SOCIAL POLICY?

Professor Gail Pacheco

Auckland University of Technology

ACE 15 July 2019

Evidence Informed Policy Making
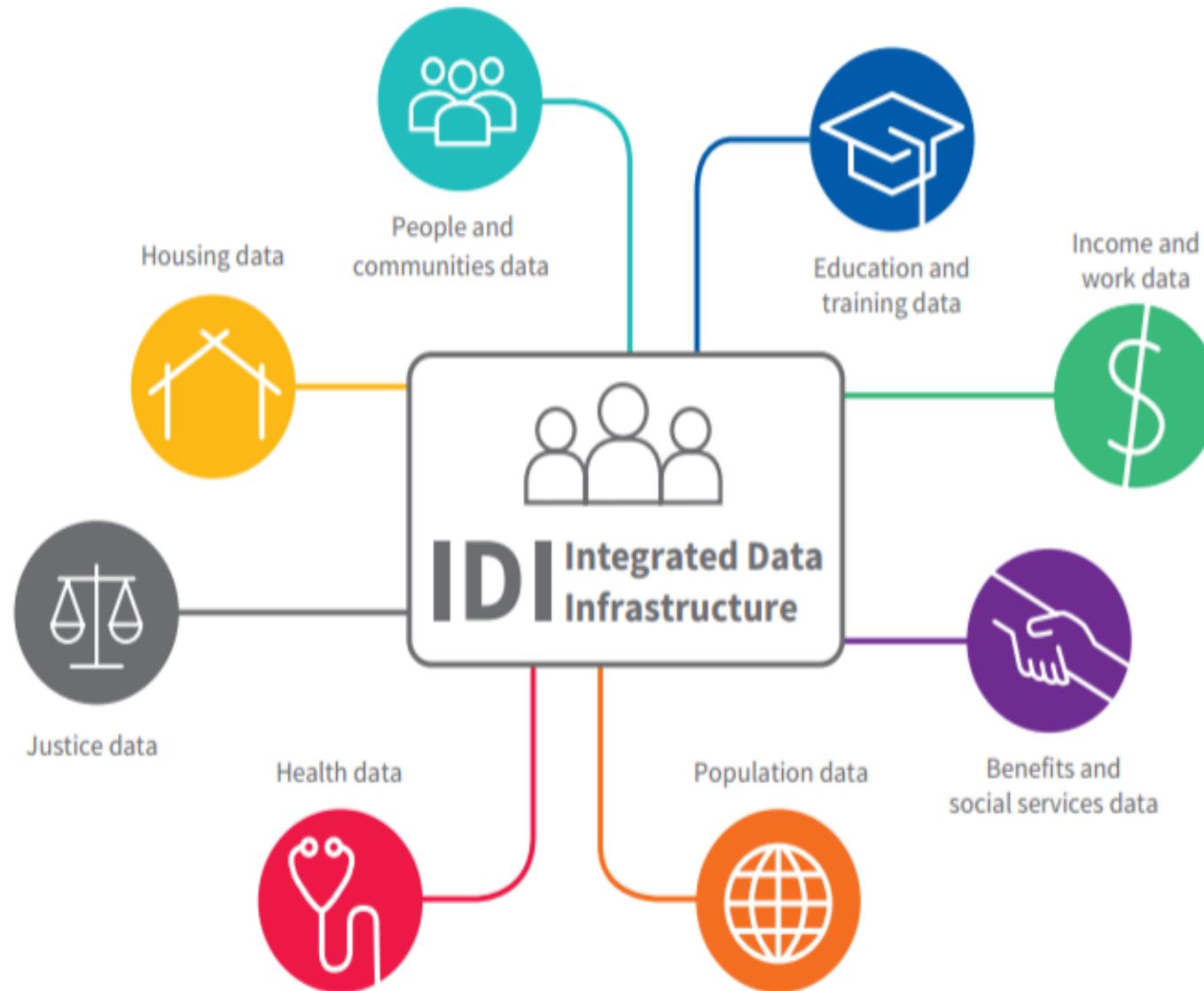
- Interface between science and policy but ALSO science and society

- While there are many other factors at play, policy decisions and direction <u>MUST</u> be informed by **robust evidence**.

- Rise of 'fake news' debates is a worrisome trend – threat to trust in robust scientific approaches

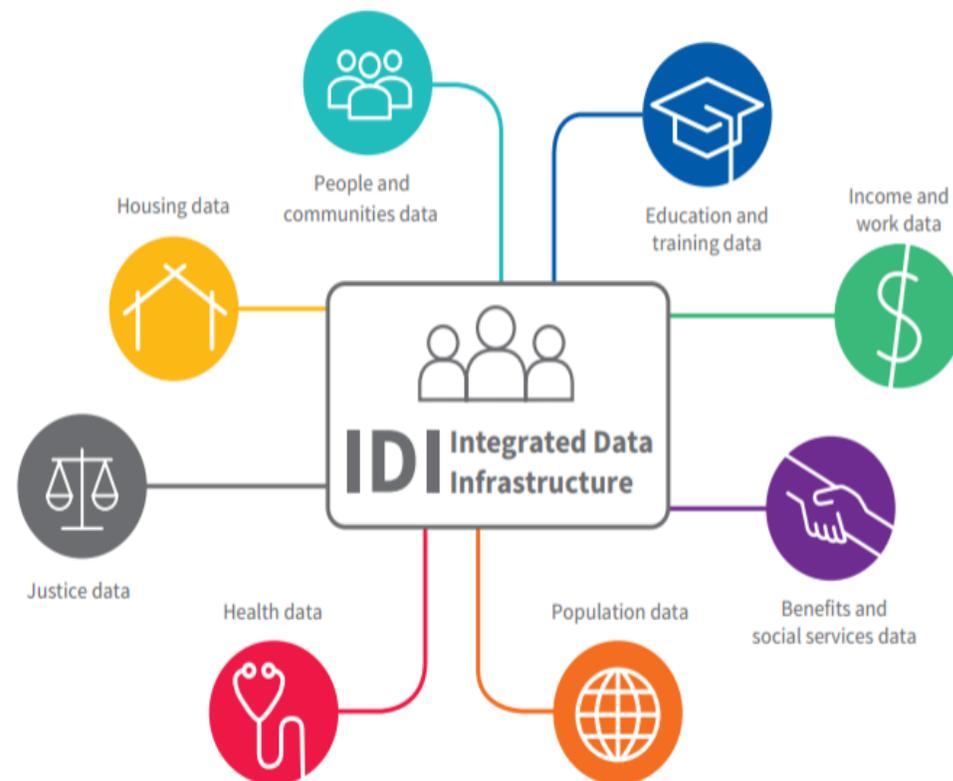*"decisions come down to a mixture of instinct and advice"*

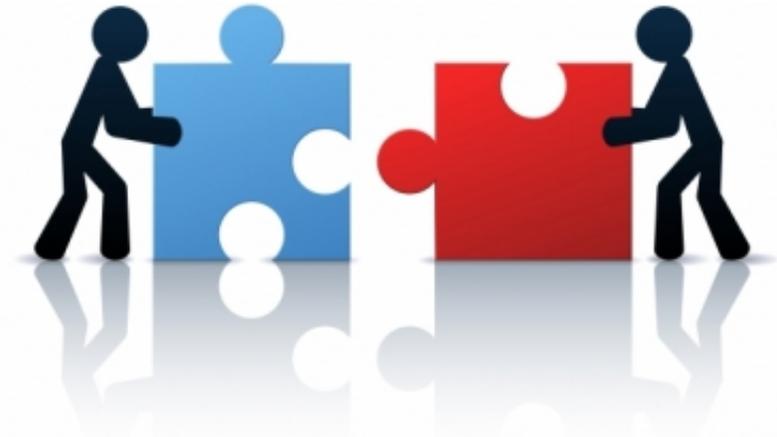- Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

Big Data

Source: Statistics NZ

Big Data

1) Selection and stewardship of data

Lots of positives:

✓ **Greater evidence base** when used
2) Uniformity across the data collection agencies appropriately, and in consideration of the
3) Misconception that bigger data is better – not context.
 always
✓ Particularly **useful**, when used in a
4) Misinterpretation is rife in the social sciences complementary fashion with our evidence
sources (e.g. qualitative)
5) Predictive risk models can be risky

Housing data

People and communities data

Education and training data

Income and work data

IDI Integrated Data Infrastructure

Justice data

Health data

Population data

Benefits and social services data

Source: Statistics NZ

Brokerage

- Scientists are good at problem definition, not at finding policy-relevant solutions within an appropriate timeframe.

- Brokerage ensures **alignment** between additions to the scientific knowledge base and policy / practitioner community.

- This implies:
  - A match is possible between the evidence base and policy target
  - Advice not haltered by predetermined biases or designed to support predetermined decisions
  - Just as strong an emphasis on what we don't know

Engagement and translation

- EARLY contact is key
- LINK to specific policy goals or targets
- SHARE preliminary results and discuss extensions, revisions *etc*.
- ENGAGE stakeholders at both policy and practice levels
  - ➢ Be the interface between these groups

- Include policy implications and link to policy targets
- Clearly state caveats and extensions (may lead to new work)
- Present, meet, share on a longer timeframe than dictated to by academic timelines

Thank you

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