INTO THE GREAT WIDE OPEN (DATA):

UNDERSTANDING AND USING BIG AND OPEN DATA IN EVALUATIONS

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PICTURE: FELIX PHARAND-DESCHENES/SPL/BARCROFT MEDIA
HUMAN TECH PRESENCE OVER AUSTRALASIA

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Overview

1. Session purpose
2. Concerns and questions about using Big/Open Data in evaluations
3. Core content:
   - What Big/Open Data is and is not
   - Evaluative situations using Big/Open Data
   - Factors for consideration, addressing risks
4. Conclusion and take-aways: Building our toolkits

What's limiting us?

- Challenges
- Issues
- Fears
- Concerns
- Misgivings
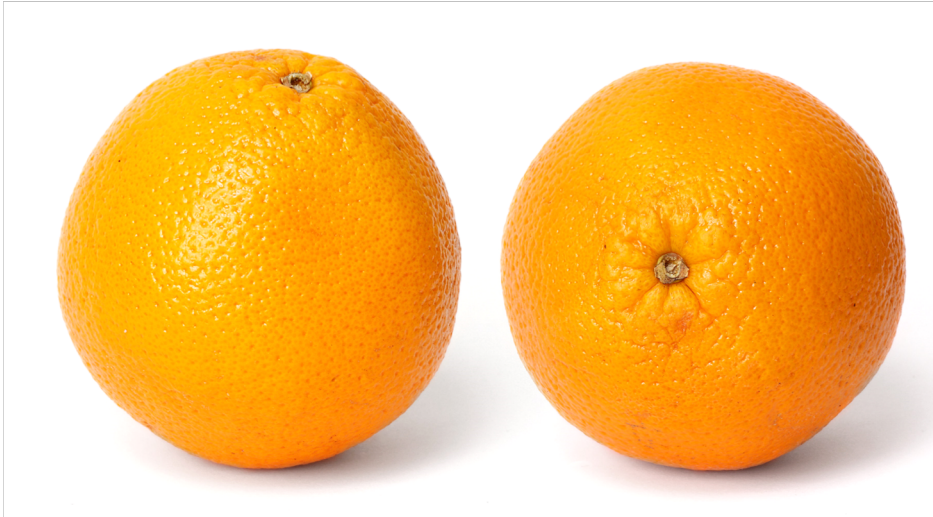- Questions
- Any other niggles, hang-ups or doubts

What's limiting us?

- Unsure of value in evaluative practice
- General lack of knowledge/understanding about big/open data
- Unsure of how to analyse/use effectively
- Steep learning curse
- Different analytical/technical skill-set
- Unsure of selection/access processes
- Concerns about data quality (reliability, validity, accuracy)

Big vs Open Data

Big Data	Open Data
Can be more difficult to access	Generally easier to access, use, re-use and re-distribute
Usually non-public data; can have associated access costs	Licensed and available to public domain (often held by government agencies); free or very low access costs
Is proprietary and therefore may not be anonymised for privacy	Anonymised to protect privacy
Constantly changing and often real-time, may have usage peaks	Generally not real-time but updated frequently
Complex and varied (quantitative, qualitative, video, audio)	Complex but generally less varied (mainly quantitative with some exceptions)
Can be more difficult to use with more traditional software	Easier to use ("machine-readable format")

Key differences and similaritie

- Closely related and overlapping qualities
- Big Data defined by its size, but Open Data defined by its use
- Open Data doesn't have to be big: Smaller amounts of data also accessible/usable (e.g., local government, local service data)

Big/Open Data in evaluations

- Evaluand
- Evaluation methodology
- Evaluation criteria
- Stakeholders
- Key evaluation question(s)
- Data collection methods and sources

Is Big/Data data...

- Of value to evaluand?
- Able to address evaluative criteria and key evaluation questions?
- Reflective or representative of stakeholders?
- Available to access and use?
- Able to capture change or change over time?

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APPROPRIATE?

We're using it. Now what?

- Data reliability, validity and quality
- Ethics and consent
- Assumptions and limitations

And...

- How would you address these factors?

Factors to consider and addressing limitations

- Data reliability, validity and quality
- Ethics and consent
- Other assumptions and limitations

- Test the quality, don't assume
- Be transparent about what you do and don't know
- Strengths-based, not deficit-based

Conclusion and take-aways

- Named, recognised, and considered personal and organisational challenges

- Increased understanding of what Big/Open Data is and isn't, including similarities and differences

- Considered how we could apply Big/Open data in our own evaluative practice

- Discussed ways to enhance the validity and credibility of our evaluations using Big/Open Data and ways of addressing limitations

- Take-aways to add to our toolkits

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