

“Smarter data”

National Statistician Sir Ian Diamond [said](#):

“There’s no god given right for us to have data. There needs to be a really sound public good reason for collecting data, and using data, and people need to feel absolutely comfortable that their data are being used properly and kept securely and in a way that satisfies all forms of privacy”

The notion of “smarter data” sharing requires a legal basis, and many legal bases require the data subject to be able to object to such unnecessary data processing. When researchers argue that making data available to research is a legitimate interest, it should be noted that any such legitimate interests are always dissentable.

[The view](#) of “Smarter Data Research UK” (and their line managers at [HDR UK](#)) that data subjects have no rights and data can be used however others desire is likely to degrade badly over time. Even in the few cases where sharing is not dissentable, those flows losing public confidence will undermine all data activities. Open Banking advocates claim it has done many good things, but the thing people see first are [landlords creeping on their tenants](#).

Clubcard culture in Government

Clubcard culture was brought into Government by the CDEI (as was¹). Tesco will no doubt share data with departments if required or encouraged (or Tesco gets a better deal on something as a result), and citizens have no choice. If you shop at Tesco, having a Clubcard is decreasingly a “choice” because of the price differences. Tesco requires confidence in the clarity of their data. If they were to hand clubcard data to government to inform the sanctions regime, there are likely to be widespread changes in how clubcards are used which would undermine the cleanliness of the data held by Tesco and used for Tesco’s own profitability goals.

A Data Preference Service, because [data mining is the new junk calls](#)²

Should ONS force a citizen to have their data included for purposes that they find objectionable? If a person would refuse to answer the question in person, should ONS be able to collect the data anyway by ignoring their wishes? Should those who wish to share data with Government be required to disclose and offer opt outs? Will the burden be entirely placed upon the citizen to notify every service they engage with?

The desire to move to an administrative census will be dependent upon public support and compliance with the parts that can never be administrative.

ONS may need more and more bullying and force to get ever less data³ – will the approach respect Ian’s recognition?

¹ While everyone welcomes *Responsible* Technology Adoption, it is the *Irresponsible* Technology Adoption that causes the problem. Of course, all adopters believe they are being responsible. Often they are wrong.

² <https://medconfidential.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Data-preference-service.pdf>

³ Similarly, HDRUK relying on sock puppets and focus groups as the evidence base is no better than relying on twitter polls. The focus groups upon which NHS England cite when advocating for Palantir was merely [10 people](#).