# What is data?

Hi I'm **Data**. I represent things in the world, including details about you.

I can represent something small and personal, like the number of cups of tea you drank this week.

Or I can represent something huge, like the number of cups of tea drunk in the UK each year. (Almost 36 billion!)

By linking different kinds of data together, researchers can ask bigger questions, look at more sides of a problem and gain new insights.
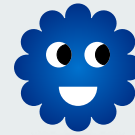
Usually, people think of me as representing numbers or amounts, like 'how many,' 'how much,' 'how often.'

But I can also be about describing experiences. For example, if you told me why you drink so much tea—or so little tea--that could be data too.

Health researchers can use data to help improve their knowledge of diseases and illnesses so that society can prevent, treat and care for people better.

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For example, researchers who wanted to know about tea drinking and life expectancy in the UK brought together data on cups of tea drunk and data on mortality rates.

Researchers can also link up data from different kinds of places to discover more about people's health. For example, do places that serve free tea improve mental health by combating loneliness?

Using big data is getting easier and faster with new technologies. This raises important questions about who gets to collect, research and make decisions with data.

The NHS is trying to answer these questions as part of their commitment to use data to improve the health and care of the population--in a safe, trusted and transparent way.

NHS