Mobilizing and Applying Evidence: Perspectives from Behavioural Science

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Presenter

Sasha Tregebov
- Head of Canadian practice
- Lead BIT's role on *What Works Cities*
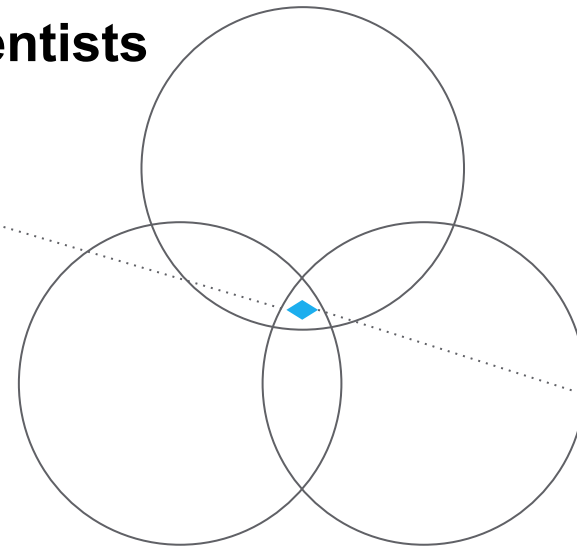
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A bit about BIT

Behavioural scientists

Evaluation experts

Policy advisors

Impact: Designing and testing interventions informed by behavioural science to improve policy outcomes.

From reducing wait times, to getting people back to work.

Finding out what works!

Our frustration

➢ Strong research

➢ Promising intervention
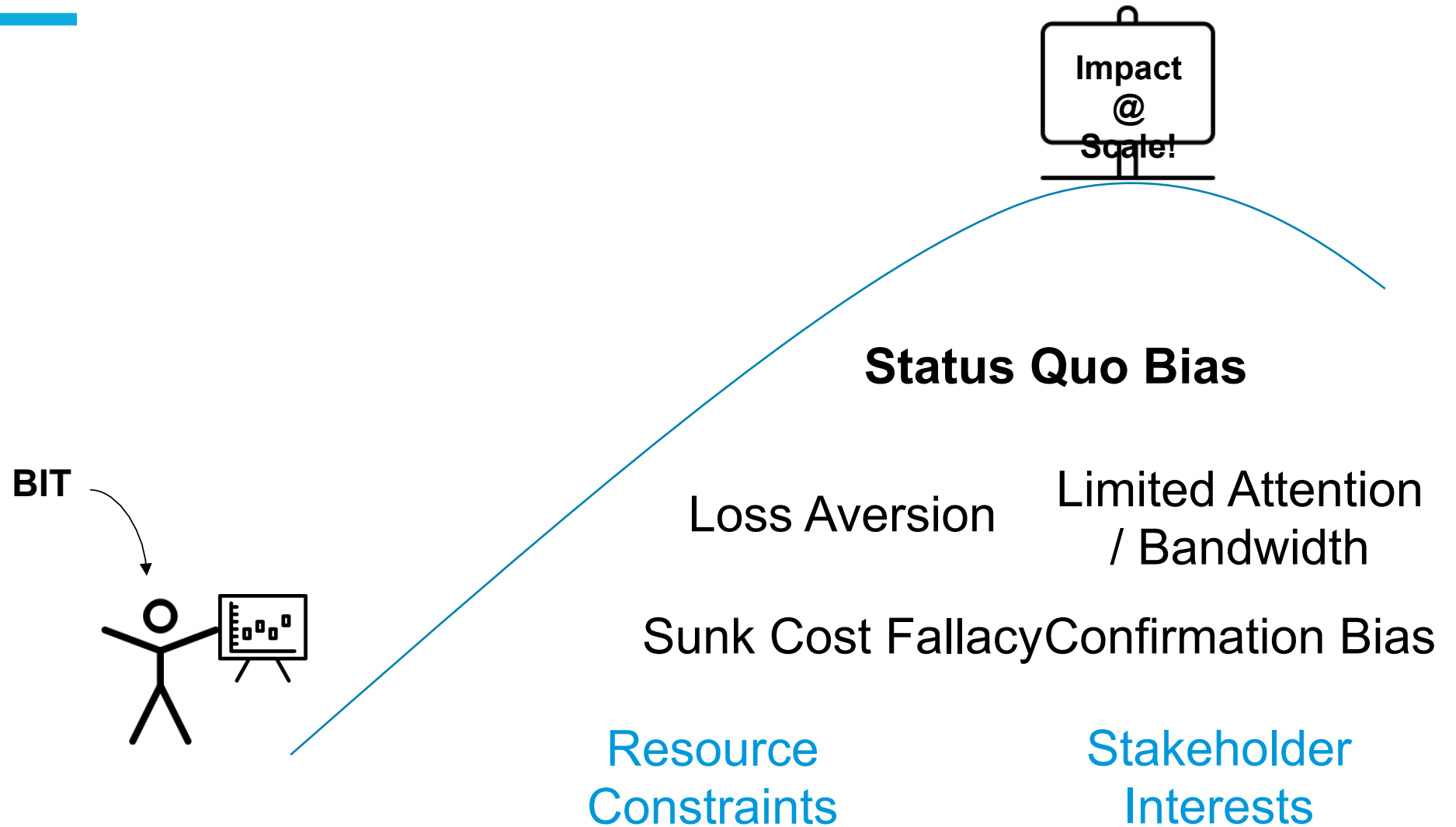
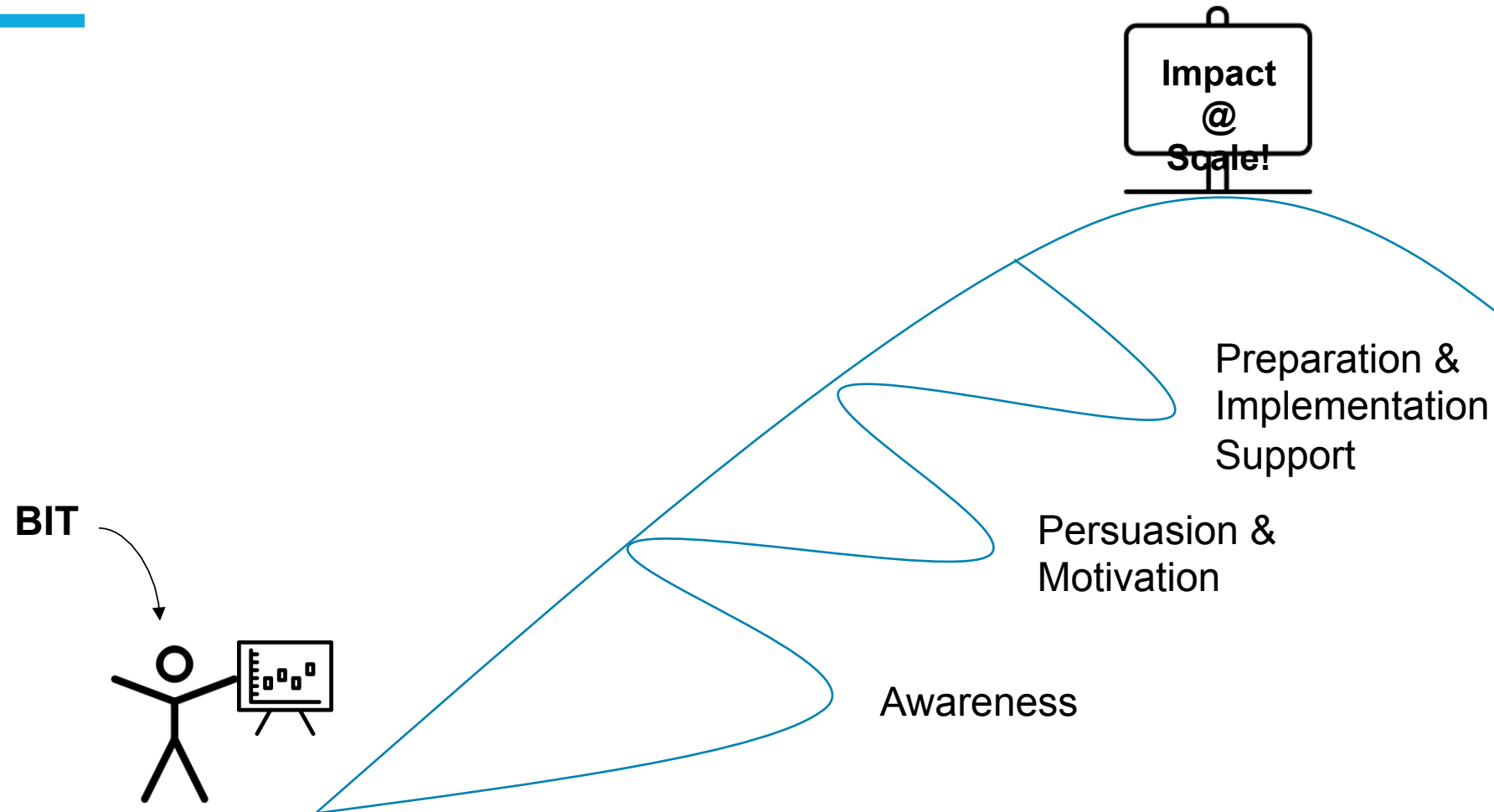➢ Experimental results positive and significant
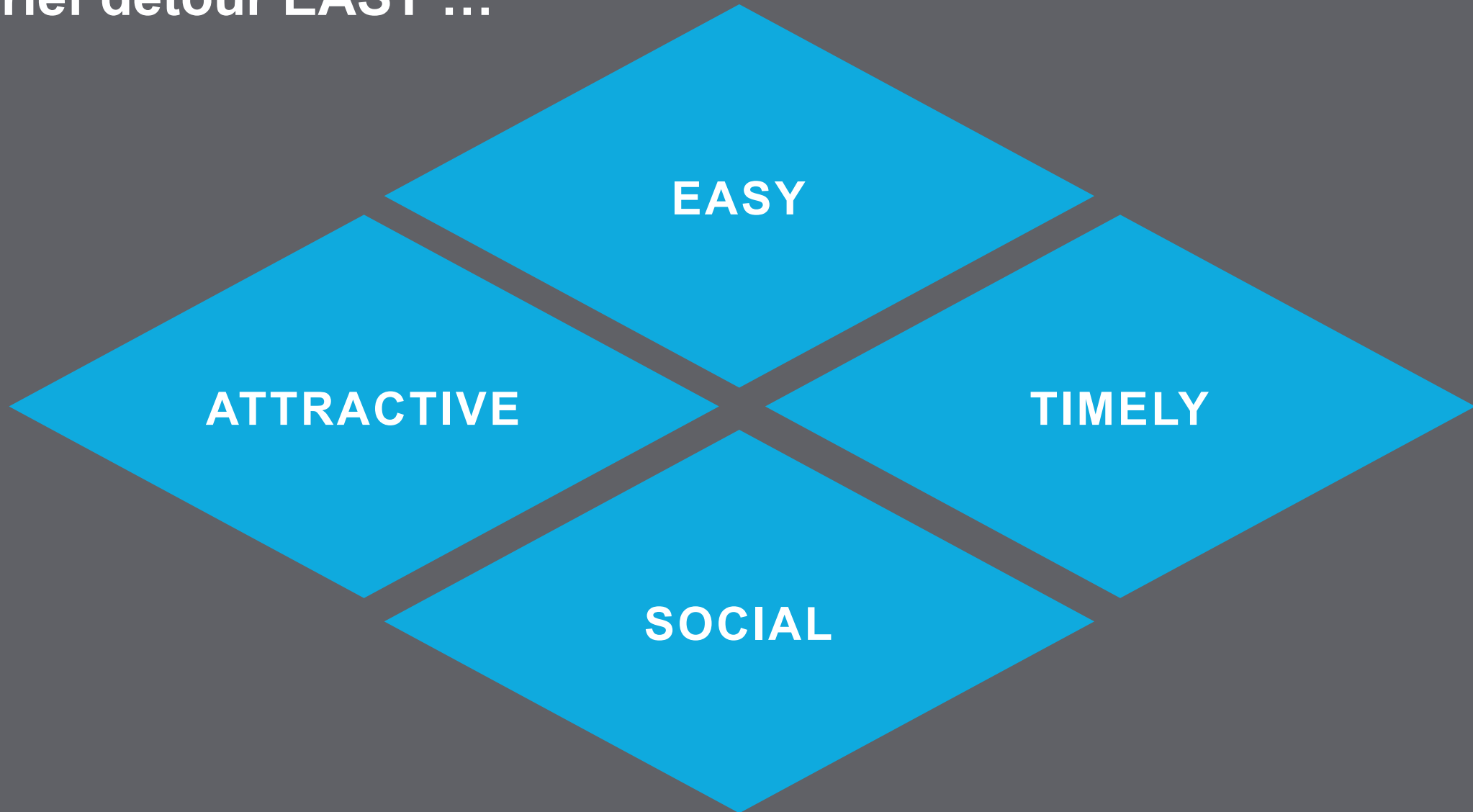
…

…   ⬅ We were missing something!

➢ Not taken to scale

An uphill battle

Impact @ Scale!

Status Quo Bias

Loss Aversion

Limited Attention / Bandwidth

Sunk Cost Fallacy

Confirmation Bias

Resource Constraints

Stakeholder Interests

BIT

We need "switchbacks"

Impact @ Scale!

Preparation & Implementation Support

Persuasion & Motivation

Awareness

BIT

A brief detour EAST …
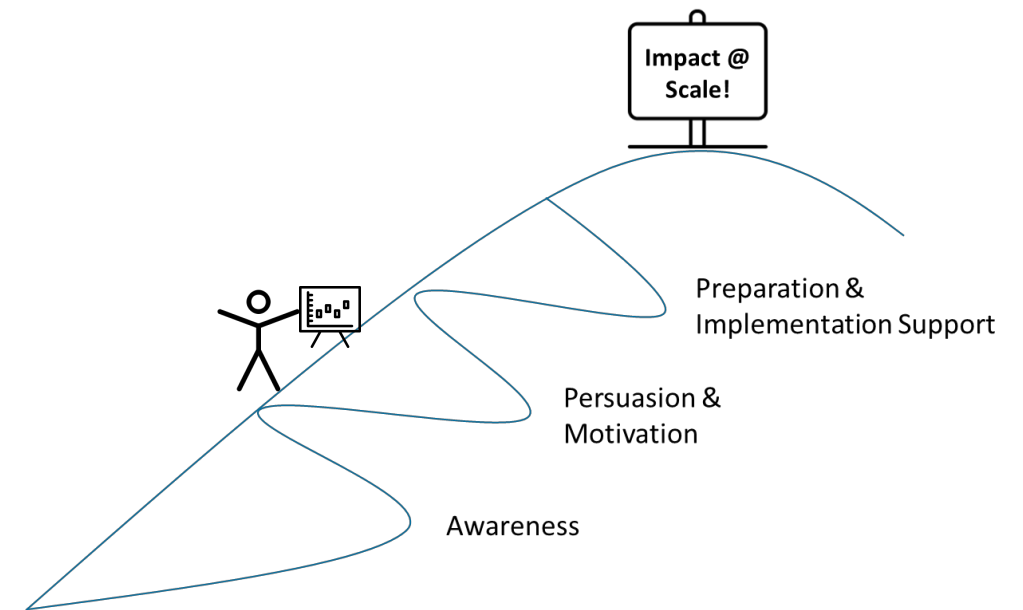
EASY

ATTRACTIVE

TIMELY

SOCIAL

Awareness

How can we get decision-makers more aware of our evidence-based solution?

- Easy: **go to them**
- Attractive: **catch their attention**
- Social: **go to who** *they* **go to**
- Timely: **go to them when they need it**

Awareness is necessary but not sufficient

Impact @ Scale!

Preparation & Implementation Support
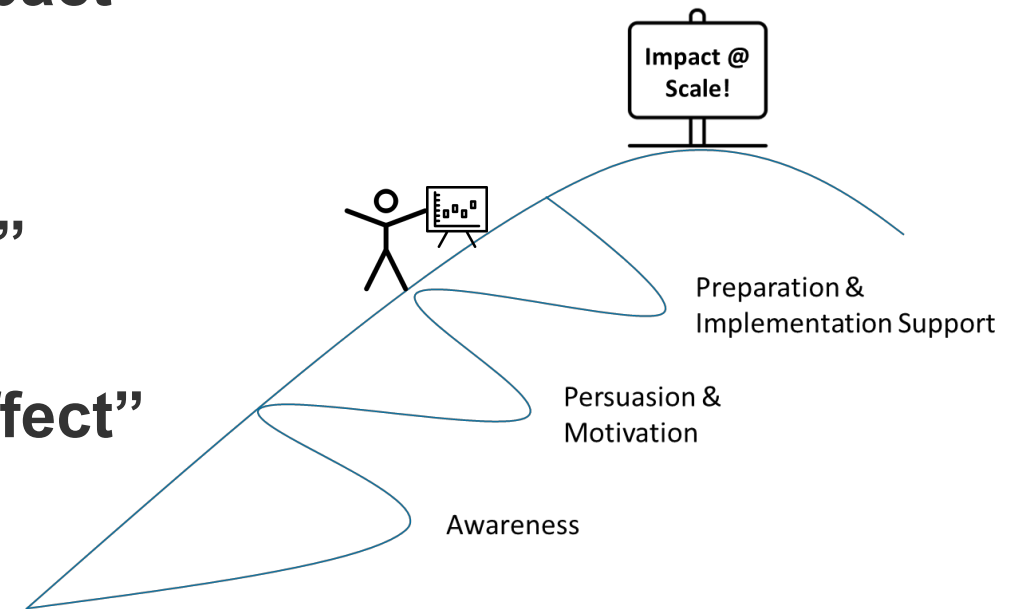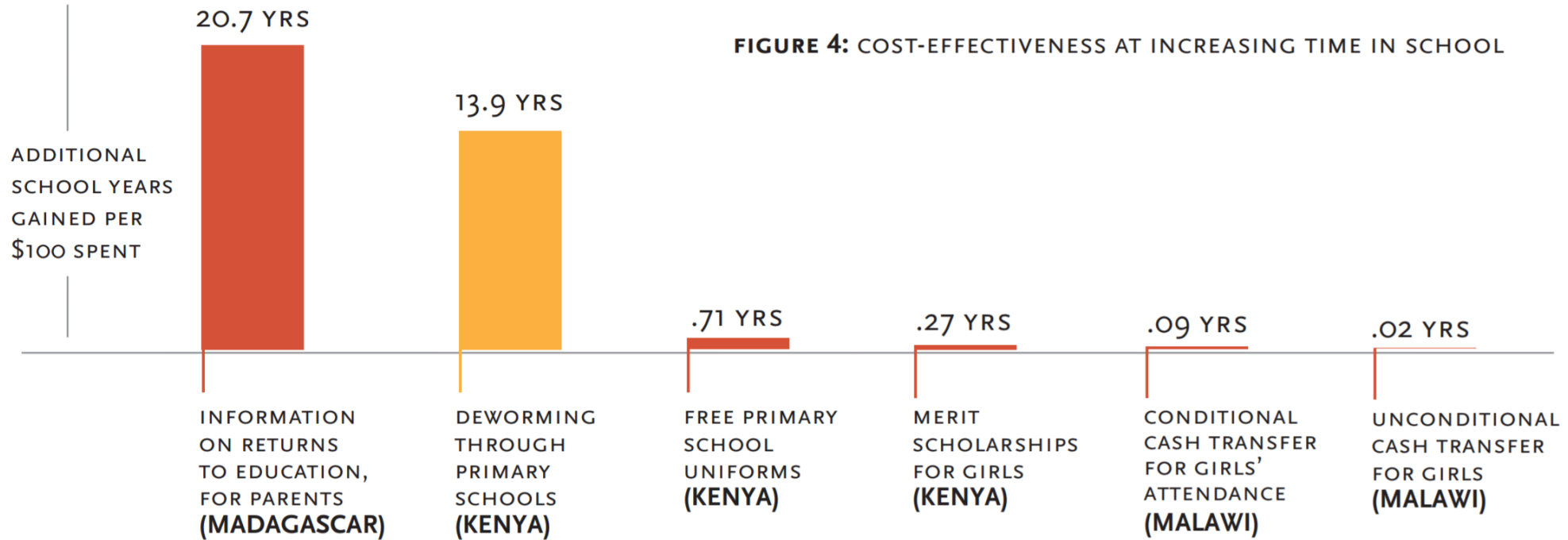
Persuasion & Motivation

Awareness

Persuasion and motivation

How can we get decision-makers to understand our evidence and be motivated to implement our ideas?

- Easy: **enable comparison to clarify impact**
- Attractive: **frame**, **visualize and/or use narratives**
- Social: **find influencers & "small world" networks, engage end-users**
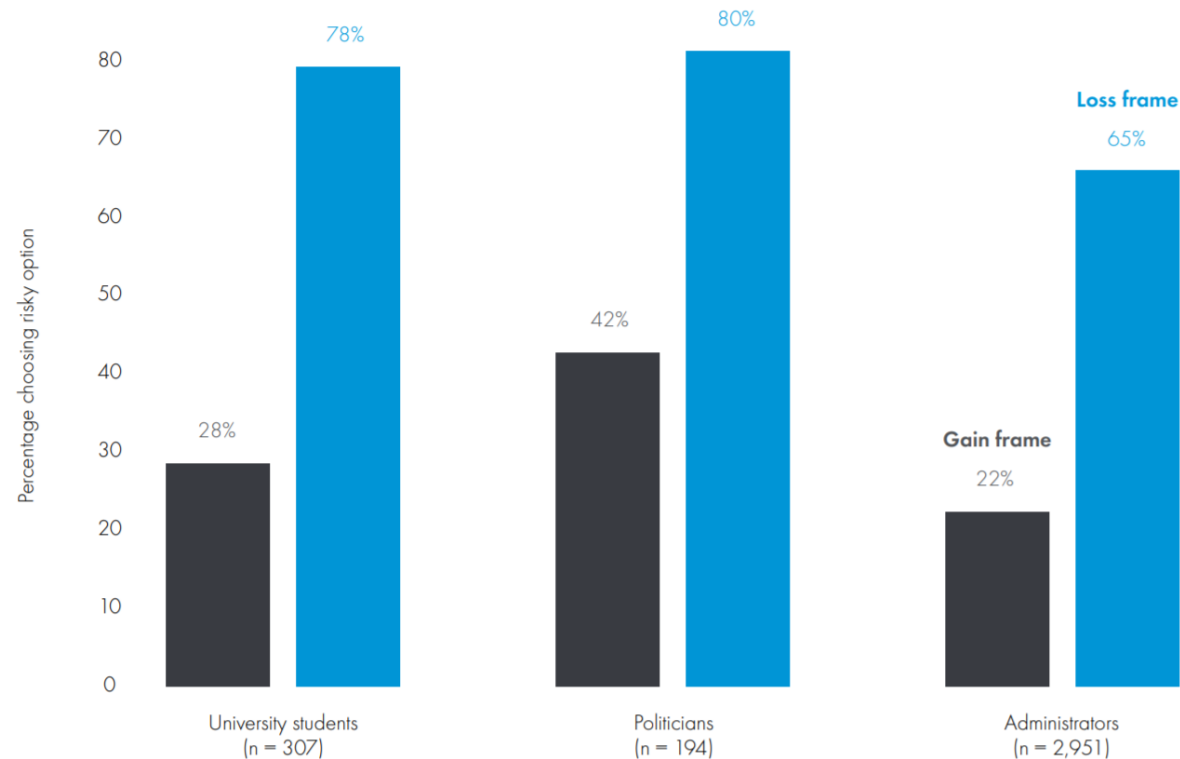- Timely: **capitalize on the "fresh start effect"**

Impact @ Scale!

Preparation & Implementation Support

Persuasion & Motivation

Awareness

Enabling comparison

FIGURE 4: COST-EFFECTIVENESS AT INCREASING TIME IN SCHOOL

ADDITIONAL SCHOOL YEARS GAINED PER $100 SPENT

20.7 YRS — INFORMATION ON RETURNS TO EDUCATION, FOR PARENTS (MADAGASCAR)

13.9 YRS — DEWORMING THROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOLS (KENYA)

.71 YRS — FREE PRIMARY SCHOOL UNIFORMS (KENYA)

.27 YRS — MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS FOR GIRLS (KENYA)

.09 YRS — CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER FOR GIRLS' ATTENDANCE (MALAWI)

.02 YRS — UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER FOR GIRLS (MALAWI)

Source: *Deworming: A best buy for development,* Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (JPAL), 2012

Framing

Percentage choosing risky option

- University students (n = 307): 28%, 78%
- Politicians (n = 194): 42%, 80%
- Administrators (n = 2,951): Gain frame 22%, Loss frame 65%

Students, politicians and civil servants are much more likely to prefer a risky option when framed in terms of *number of deaths* instead of *lives saved.*

People are *averse to losses.*

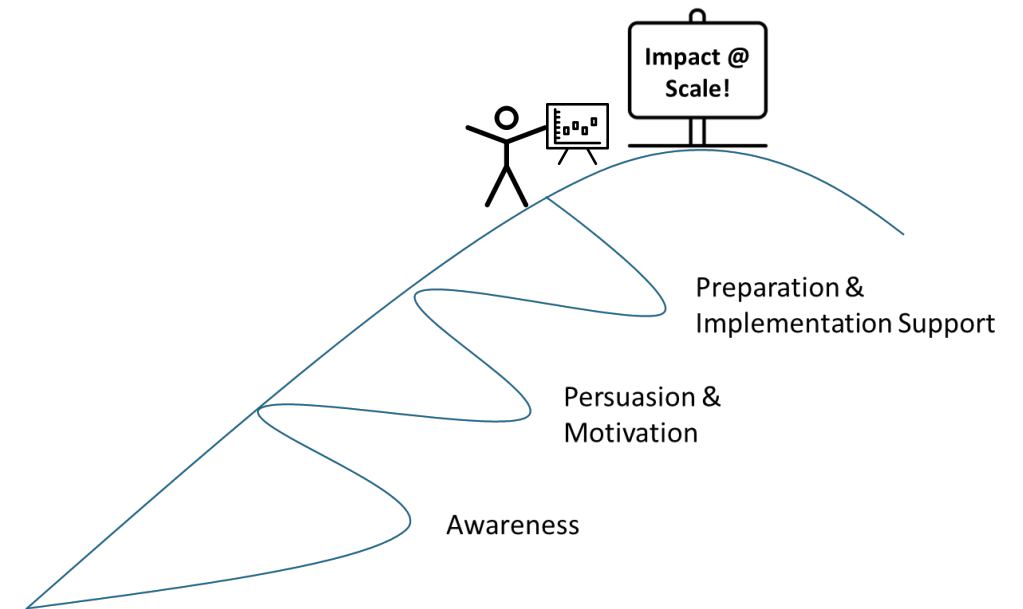Source for Image: *Behavioural Government*, 2018, Behavioural Insights Team
Source for Data: three studies, Tversky A. & Kahneman (1981), Banuri, S., Dercon, S., & Gauri, V. (2017), Sheffer, L., Loewen, P., Soroka, S., Walgrave, S., & Shaefer, T. (2018)

Preparation and implementation

How can we help decision-makers effectively implement our ideas?

- Easy: **start small**
- Attractive: **co-design and co-deliver; design smart incentives**
- Social: **feedback and monitoring**
- Timely: **just-in-time training and planning support**

Impact @ Scale!

Preparation & Implementation Support

Persuasion & Motivation

Awareness

A case study: Jobcentres

Conclusion

- The hard work is not over with finding an effective intervention

- Scaling / spreading is a challenge, and it's partly a *behavioural challenge*

- Behavioural science suggests concrete strategies that can build "switchbacks" to overcome barriers to adoption