

Why do we need data on sex?

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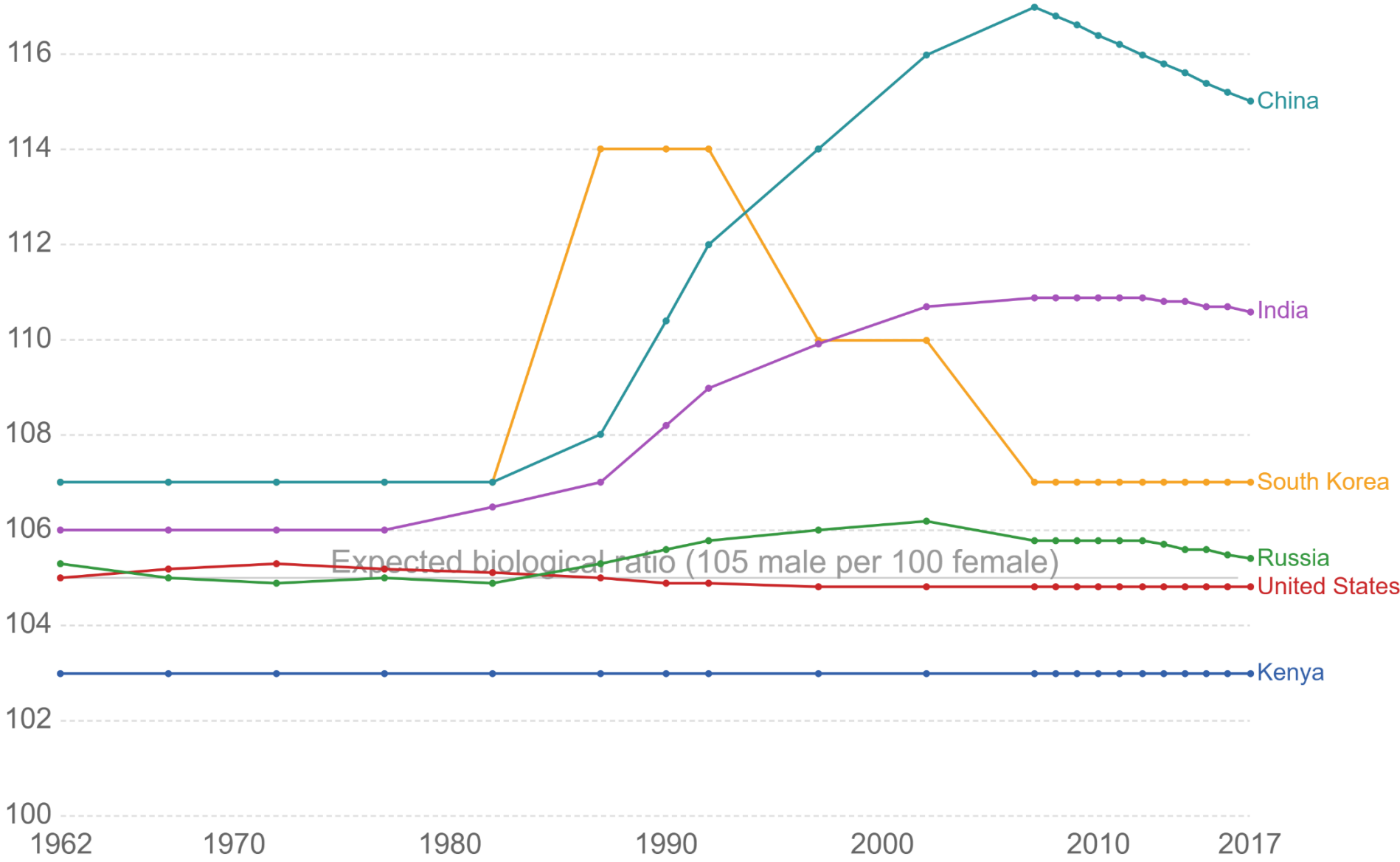
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Sex matters in data collection and analysis

- Sex is a fundamental demographic and explanatory variable.
- Sex is a powerful predictor of almost every dimension of social life.
- Sex is a protected characteristic under Equality Act 2010, and is essential for equalities monitoring.

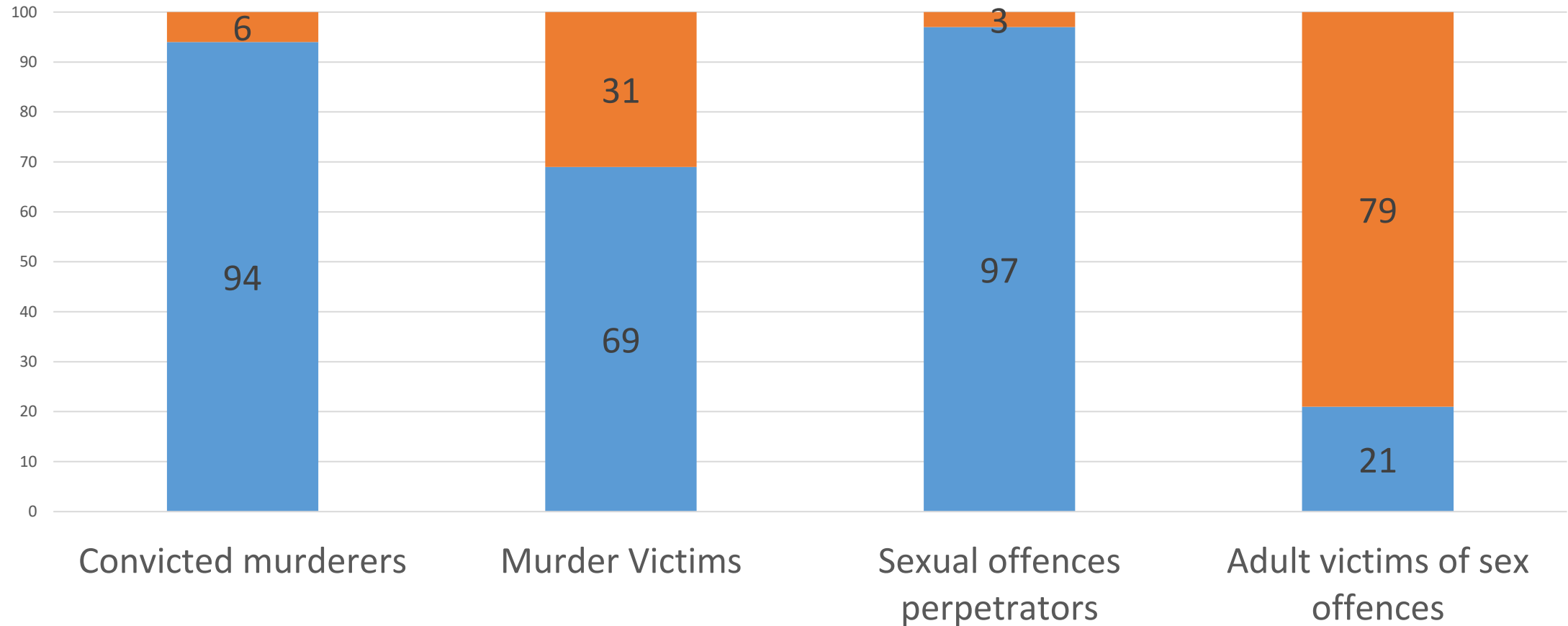
Sex ratio at birth

The sex ratio at birth is measured as the number of newborn boys for every 100 newborn girls.



Source: World Bank

Crime: % M & F



(ONS England and Wales, 2017-18)

■ M ■ F

Sex, gender and gender identity

1. Sex (*biological*): Immutable binary category based on reproductive function
 2. Gender (*social*): Refers to stereotypes and social roles according to sex –power/hierarchy
 3. Gender identity (*psychological*): Refers to (some) people's psychological sense of gender, typically when this does not match their sex
- 3 distinct concepts which are increasingly being conflated in data collection

Losing data on sex: some UK examples

- Gender pay gap: Govt Equalities Office advise that data should be categorised by gender identity, and data on non-binary people excluded
- Crime: Police forces recording crimes by men as though they were committed by women at the request of the perpetrator
- Health: replacement of actual sex with gender id on medical records at the patient's request has implications for research using administrative data

Trans parenting

Why are so many teenage girls appearing in gender clinics?

A new paper suggests this may be partly a social phenomenon



Print edition | United States >

Sep 1st 2018



Are the numbers too small to make a difference?

- in 2008, one in 2,000 female undergraduates (0.05%) identified as transgender, but by 2021, this had risen to one-in-twenty (5%) (American College Health Association, 2021).
- A 2018 survey of an urban school district in Pennsylvania found that nearly ten percent of high school students surveyed reported a gender-diverse identity (Kidd et. al. 2021).
- We can expect different levels of trans identification for different population groups, and change over time. Trans pop not randomly distributed: young, highly educated, female, neurodiversity/ autistic spectrum.

Modest numbers can make a big difference

- Small errors can make a big difference when the baseline category is also small. Small baseline categories include: women in physics, women in violent crime. Our ability to monitor change can be severely affected by 'small' errors.
- The direction of error is not necessarily predictable.

Why are we losing data on sex?: Policy capture

- Changes to practice implemented without announcement or scrutiny.
- Lack of consultation with data experts or women's groups.
- Consequences for those who express belief in reality and importance of sex include no-platforming and harassment.
- Chilling effect.

The 2021 Census

- Proposed guidance (2019) to accompany the sex question advised respondents that they may answer the sex question in terms of their gender identity rather than biological or legal sex. A new, voluntary question on gender identity was also to be included.
- Social statisticians campaigned against the “self-id” guidance on the sex question.
- Fair Play for Women took the question to Judicial Review in March 2021 and won.

Chilling
effect of
bullying by
extremists

“So with a very heavy heart I have chosen to swallow my integrity on this particular issue and keep my head down. I don't like doing this, and I don't like how it feels. I don't like the implications of my inaction for social justice in general or gender issues in particular.”



Policy capture
and “no
debate”

Stonewall’s new boss Nancy Kelley let census expert be no-platformed

THE  TIMES



Sullivan: 'silencing of mainstream views more widespread than people realise'

AKIRA SUEMORI

Conclusions

- Without accurate data on sex, we lose the ability to understand and monitor differences and design evidence-based policies.
- Policy capture and silencing are preventing rational discussion and normal scientific processes from being applied to questions on sex and gender identity. All who value evidence-based policy must oppose this.
- We should not confuse the concepts of sex and gender identity. We should collect accurate data on both.
- We have a duty to address important social phenomena, and to defend science and scholarship in the face of bullying.

Thank you!

- Sullivan, A. 2020. Sex and the Census: why surveys should not conflate sex and gender identity. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23(5) 517-524
- Suissa, J., & Sullivan, A. (2021). The gender wars, academic freedom and education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 55(1), 55-82.
- Sullivan, A. (2021). Sex and the Office for National Statistics: A case study in policy capture. *The Political Quarterly*, 92(4), 638-651.
- <http://profalices.co.uk/sex-and-gender>