

Gender

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. This is referred to as intersectionality.

Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth.

Gender influences people's experience of and access to healthcare. The way that health services are organized and provided can either limit or enable a person's access to healthcare information, support and services, and the outcome of those encounters. Health services should be affordable, accessible and acceptable to all, and they should be provided with quality, equity and dignity.

Gender inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls puts their health and well-being at risk. Women and girls often face greater barriers than men and boys to accessing health information and services. These barriers include restrictions on mobility; lack of access to decision-making power; lower literacy rates; discriminatory attitudes of communities and healthcare providers; and lack of training and awareness amongst healthcare providers and health systems of the specific health needs and challenges of women and girls.

Consequently, women and girls face greater risks of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, cervical cancer, malnutrition, lower vision, respiratory infections, malnutrition and elder abuse, amongst others. Women and girls also face unacceptably high levels of violence rooted in gender inequality and are at grave risk of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, and child, early and forced marriage. WHO figures show that about 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

Harmful gender norms – especially those related to rigid notions of masculinity – can also affect boys and men's health and wellbeing negatively. For example, specific notions of masculinity may encourage boys and men to smoke, take sexual and other health risks, misuse alcohol and not seek help or health care. Such gender norms also contribute to boys and men perpetrating violence – as well as being subjected to violence themselves. They can also have grave implications for their mental health.

Rigid gender norms also negatively affect people with diverse gender identities, who often face violence, stigma and discrimination as a result, including in healthcare settings. Consequently, they are at higher risk of HIV and mental health problems, including suicide.

Gender theory

Gender theory is the study of what is understood as masculine and/or feminine behavior in any given context, community, society, or field of study (including, but not limited to, literature, history, sociology, education, applied linguistics, religion, health sciences, philosophy, cultural studies). The term *sex* refers to categories of the biologically observable human body, female and male or intersex (i.e., nature), while the term *gender* refers to the categories of social expectations, roles, and behaviors, feminine and masculine (i.e., what is nurtured). Some argue, however, that even biological sex is socially constructed and that masculine and feminine behaviors may be rooted in physiology as well

Crime

What is crime?

crime is: *an illegal act for which someone can be punished by the government*".

Crimes are acts committed within the public sphere, which means that they are punishable by public authorities. Anyone can commit a crime, intentionally or unintentionally, and there are many different types of crime. You might be familiar with a lot of them.

- Crimes against the person (e.g. assault).
- Crimes against property (e.g. theft, fraud, vandalism).
- Financial crime (sometimes known as white-collar crime).
- Cybercrimes.
- Green crimes.
- Human rights crimes.
- War crimes.

Age and crime in sociology

Official statistics show that there are certain patterns regarding age and criminal activity. Younger people are more likely to behave deviantly than older people, especially younger men. The 2015 statistics show that in England and Wales, more men between the ages of 15 and 20 were arrested or given police caution for serious crimes (indictable offences) than men aged 21 or older.

Bearing in mind all of the social, political, and economic changes that take the world by storm from decade to decade, it doesn't seem all that shocking to know that certain developments also give rise to new types of crime.

In criminology or criminal sociology, the word 'contemporary' is used to refer to the state and occurrences of the modern world. Studies from previous decades and centuries can help us identify

trends in crime over time, as well as distinguish how patterns in crime have changed in tandem with new developments.

Contemporary crime: examples

While it may seem like plenty of crimes are unique to contemporary society, most can be traced back to older times in interesting ways. For example, theft before the era of online banking and e-commerce involved break-ins and pickpocketing.

Today, while these types of crimes still occur, they're more likely to exist in the form of internet scammers or online hacking.

Other examples of crime in contemporary society include:

- Air and water pollution-related crimes,
- Identity theft,
- Censorship, and
- The international trade of counterfeit goods

A crime is defined as 'an act that breaks the law in a particular society'. Crimes occur when social control fails within a society.

We can also explore the idea of a 'deviant act'. This is different to a crime, as it's not illegal, but it still breaks the norms of society.

To steal something is a crime; however, to cheat on a partner is a deviant act.

Types of crimes

Seven common types of crime

Broadly, there are seven common types of crime categorised by how the crime is committed and who the victim(s) (if any) are.

Personal/violent crime

Personal crimes are crimes against a person, such as kidnapping, murder, rape, or assault.

White-collar crime

White-collar crime is fraud often committed by businesses or business people to gain or avoid losing money, such as money laundering, mortgage fraud, or embezzlement.

Property crime

Property crime is criminal activity directed at properties which don't involve harm to a person, such as arson, theft, or burglary.

Organised crime

Organised crime is committed by a criminal group in an organised manner, such as terrorism, drug dealing, or sex trafficking.

Victimless crime

Victimless crime is a crime that doesn't target another individual or property, such as drug-taking, or illegal gambling.

In recent years, sociologists have explored the idea of two other types of crime. These are recently named, as they come along with the growth of our postmodern society.

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is committed with the aid of a computer or internet-accessible device, and includes acts like hacking private documents, accessing child pornography, or stealing somebody's identity.

Green crime

Green crime is often committed by large corporates and organisations. Piers Beirne and Nigel South (2007) define green crime as 'unjust exploitation of natural resources, ecosystems, humans and animals'. This includes pollution from economic exploitation, or creating a war that brings people into conflict and destroys the land on which it is fought.

With new developments happening in society, crime adapts too. Technological improvements in recent years have meant cybercrime is on the rise, with many new laws being introduced to combat it. Green crime has been committed more often too. However, this is harder to police as it is committed by powerful companies.

Causes of crime

Crime changes all the time, as does society. However, laws take longer to change and are not subjective. The government decides the line between 'right' and 'wrong', which can sometimes lead to controversy when new laws come into action.

Social factors of crime

Causes of crime are very complex. There is never just one underlying reason for a criminal committing an act against the law. However, studies have shown that cause is often determined by the situation you are born into.

The amount of crime you will commit in a lifetime can generally be determined by social factors such as the location you are born, your gender, ethnicity, and social class. This can be seen by looking at official statistics. Over 70 percent of crime is committed by men; if you are born a man, it's more likely you will commit a crime than a woman.

Poverty is a great factor in crime. Those born into poverty are more likely to commit crimes such as theft in order to escape poverty.

By joining delinquent subcultures, the working class can finally feel accepted in society. However, this results in the labelling going even further. Being labelled as 'criminal' makes them become so, as they have lost other opportunities in life.

Effects of crime

There are many effects of crime, but statistically, the effects are often worse if the crime is violent. Areas that have a higher crime rate often suffer from crashing property prices. People are likely to want to move away when the crime rate increases, yet find it difficult to sell their homes for a good profit. This is because nobody wants to move to an area affected by high crime rates

Deviants

What, exactly, is deviance? And what is the relationship between deviance and crime? According to sociologist William Graham Sumner (1840–1910), deviance is a violation of established contextual, cultural, or social norms, whether folkways, mores, or codified law (1906). folkways are norms based on everyday cultural customs concerning practical matters like how to hold a fork, what type of clothes are appropriate for different situations, or how to greet someone politely. Mores are more serious moral injunctions or taboos that are broadly recognized in a society, like the incest taboo. Codified laws are norms that are specified in explicit codes and enforced by government bodies. A crime is therefore an act of deviance that breaks not only a norm, but a law. Deviance can be as minor as picking one's nose in public or as major as committing murder.

John Hagen provides a typology to classify deviant acts in terms of their perceived harmfulness, the degree of consensus concerning the norms violated, and the severity of the response to them (1994). The most serious acts of deviance are consensus crimes about which there is near-unanimous public agreement. Acts like murder and sexual assault are generally regarded as morally intolerable, injurious, and subject to harsh penalties. Conflict crimes are acts like prostitution or smoking marijuana, which may be illegal but about which there is considerable public disagreement concerning their seriousness. Social deviations are acts like abusing serving staff or behaviours arising from mental illness or addiction, which are not illegal in themselves but are widely regarded as serious or harmful. People agree that these behaviours call for institutional intervention. Finally there are social diversions like riding skateboards on sidewalks, overly tight leggings, or facial piercings that violate norms in a provocative way but are generally regarded as distasteful, or for some cool, but harmless.

The point is that the question, “What is deviant behaviour?” cannot be answered in a straightforward manner. No act or person is *intrinsically* deviant. This follows from two key insights of the sociological approach to deviance (which distinguish it from moral and legalistic approaches). Firstly, deviance is defined by its social context. To understand why some acts are deviant and some are not, it is necessary to understand what the context is, what the existing rules are, and how these rules came to be established. If the rules change, what counts as deviant also changes. As rules and norms vary across cultures and time, it makes sense that notions of deviance also change.

Fifty years ago, public schools in Canada had strict dress codes that, among other stipulations, often banned women from wearing pants to class. Today, it is socially acceptable for women to wear pants, but less so for men to wear skirts. In a time of war, acts usually considered morally reprehensible, such as taking the life of another, may actually be rewarded. Much of the confusion and ambiguity regarding the use of violence in hockey has to do with the different sets of rules that apply inside and outside the arena. Acts that are acceptable and even encouraged on the ice would be punished with jail time if they occurred on the street.

Whether an act is deviant or not depends on society’s definition of that act. Acts are not deviant in themselves. The second sociological insight is that deviance is not an intrinsic (biological or psychological) attribute of individuals, nor of the acts themselves, but a product of social processes. The norms themselves, or the social contexts that determine which acts are deviant or not, are continually defined and redefined through ongoing social processes — political, legal, cultural, etc. One way in which certain activities or people come to be understood and defined as deviant is through the intervention of moral entrepreneurs.

[Marijuana] has the effect of driving the [user] completely insane. The addict loses all sense of moral responsibility. Addicts to this drug, while under its influence, are immune to pain, and could be severely injured without having any realization of their condition. While in this condition they become raving maniacs and are liable to kill or indulge in any form of violence to other persons, using the most savage methods of cruelty without, as said before, any sense of moral responsibility.... They are dispossessed of their natural and normal will power, and their mentality is that of idiots. If this drug is indulged in to any great extent, it ends in the untimely death of its addict. (Murphy, 1922)

One of the tactics used by moral entrepreneurs is to create a moral panic about activities, like marijuana use, that they deem deviant. A moral panic occurs when media-fuelled public fear and overreaction lead authorities to label and repress deviants, which in turn creates a cycle in which more acts of deviance are discovered, more fear is generated, and more suppression enacted. The key insight is that individuals’ deviant status is ascribed to them through social processes. Individuals are not born deviant, but become deviant through their interaction with reference groups, institutions, and authorities.

Through social interaction, individuals are labelled deviant or come to recognize themselves as deviant. For example, in ancient Greece, homosexual relationships between older men and young acolytes were a normal component of the teacher-student relationship. Up until the 19th century, the question of who slept with whom was a matter of indifference to the law or customs, except

where it related to family alliances through marriage and the transfer of property through inheritance. However, in the 19th century sexuality became a matter of moral, legal, and psychological concern. The homosexual, or “sexual invert,” was defined by the emerging psychiatric and biological disciplines as a psychological deviant whose instincts were contrary to nature.

Homosexuality was defined as not simply a matter of sexual desire or the act of sex, but as a dangerous quality that defined the entire personality and moral being of an individual (Foucault, 1980). From that point until the late 1960s, homosexuality was regarded as a deviant, closeted activity that, if exposed, could result in legal prosecution, moral condemnation, ostracism, violent assault, and loss of career. Since then, the LGBTQ rights movement and constitutional protections of civil liberties have reversed many of the attitudes and legal structures that led to the prosecution of gays, lesbians, and transgender people. The point is that to whatever degree homosexuality has a natural or inborn biological cause, its deviance is the outcome of a social process.

It is not simply a matter of the events that lead authorities to define an activity or category of persons deviant, but of the processes by which individuals come to recognize themselves as deviant. In the process of socialization, there is a “looping effect” (Hacking, 2006). Once a category of deviance has been established and applied to a person, that person begins to define himself or herself in terms of this category and behave accordingly. This influence makes it difficult to define criminals as kinds of person in terms of pre-existing, innate predispositions or individual psychopathologies.

The process of classifying kinds of people is a social process that Hacking called “making up people” (2006) and Howard Becker called “labelling” (1963). Crime and deviance are social constructs that vary according to the definitions of crime, the forms and effectiveness of policing, the social characteristics of criminals, and the relations of power that structure society. Part of the problem of deviance is that the social process of labelling some kinds of persons or activities as abnormal or deviant limits the type of social responses available. The major issue is not that labels are arbitrary or that it is possible not to use labels at all, but that the choice of label has consequences. Who gets labelled by whom and the way social labels are applied have powerful social repercussions. Therefore, it is necessary to use the sociological imagination to address crime and deviance both at the individual and social levels. With a deeper understanding of the social factors that produce crime and deviance, it becomes possible to develop a set of strategies that might more effectively encourage individuals to change direction.