

BEYOND THE SNIFF TEST

PRACTITIONER CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING JUSTICE SYSTEM DATA

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2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GOVERNANCE, CRIME AND JUSTICE STATISTICS
JUNE 18-24 2014, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

HAVE YOU ASKED THE
QUESTION?

IS THERE
SOMETHING
FISHY ABOUT
YOUR DATA?



WHY DOES
QUALITY
MATTER?

RECENT EXAMPLES

UNITED KINGDOM

- CONTROVERSIES OVER THE INTEGRITY OF POLICE RECORDED CRIME STATISTICS
- WHISTLEBLOWER
- HOUSE OF COMMONS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY (RELEASED APRIL 2014)
- ALLEGATIONS: VICTIMS NOT SERVED APPROPRIATELY, POLICE FORCES UNDER-RESOURCED, COMMUNITY MISLED (TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY)
- UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY STRIPPED POLICE RECORDED CRIME DATA OF 'NATIONAL STATISTICS' STATUS DUE TO QUALITY CONCERNS

“The attitudes and and behaviour which lead to the misrecording of crime have become ingrained, including within senior leadership. This leads to the subordination of data integrity to target-chasing.”

–PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
SELECT COMMITTEE

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/760/760.pdf>



RECENT EXAMPLES

FRANCE

GAGNERON REPORT, 2014

- SYSTEMATIC MANIPULATION OF CRIME STATISTICS FROM 2008 AND 2013
- BETWEEN 13,000 AND 16,000 CRIMES REPORTED IN 2011 AND 2012 ARE NOT IN THE RECORDED
- A RANGE OF OFFENCES WERE DOWNGRADED
- HIGH VOLUME STREET HAWKER CRIMES WERE NOT RECORDED AT ALL AFTER FEBRUARY 2013 AS THEY WERE TOO NUMEROUS
- IN RESPONSE, AMENDMENTS TO CRIME STATISTICS AND A VICTIMISATION SURVEY PROPOSED IN THE PRESS

"Paris's claim to be a safe destination for tourists was undermined last night by the disclosure that police had wiped thousands of crimes off their record books to salvage the city's image."

– ADAM SAGE, THE TIMES

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/europe/article4022060.ece>



RECENT EXAMPLES

CHICAGO, UNITED STATES

- 'SUSPICIOUSLY GOOD' CRIME STATISTICS SHOWING REDUCTIONS IN CRIME
- INSPECTOR GENERAL AUDIT INTO THE RECORDING OF ASSAULTS: AUDIT FOUND SIGNIFICANT ERRORS IN SUMMARY REPORTING OF CRIMES. SPECIFICALLY, CPD FAILED TO COUNT EACH VICTIM IN MULTIPLE VICTIM CRIMES AS A SEPARATE OFFENCE, CONTRARY TO REQUIREMENTS.
- RESULTED IN A 24% UNDERCOUNT IN VICTIM OFFENCES AND 21% ERROR RATE IN THE REPORTING SAMPLE.

'In 2013, the city totalled the fewest robberies, burglaries, motor vehicle thefts, and arsons in recorded history.'

–CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE,
JANUARY 1, 2014

<http://www.chicagopolice.org/MailingList/PressAttachment/2013crimerate.pdf>

'The Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting program—a one-person office within the state police department—merely submits the department's numbers to the FBI after checking for data-entry errors, not for accuracy, according to a state police spokeswoman.'

–CHICAGOMAG, JUNE 2014

<http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/June-2014/Chicago-crime-statistics/>

“They wash and rinse the numbers”

–FORMER CPD LIEUTENANT, CHICAGOMAG, JUNE 2014

<http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/June-2014/Chicago-crime-statistics/>

WHY DOES QUALITY MATTER?

INFORMED
AND
EFFECTIVE
DEBATE

STRENGTH
OF
EVIDENCE
BASE

SUPPORTS
DECISION
MAKING

TRUST

WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE
FOR DATA
QUALITY?

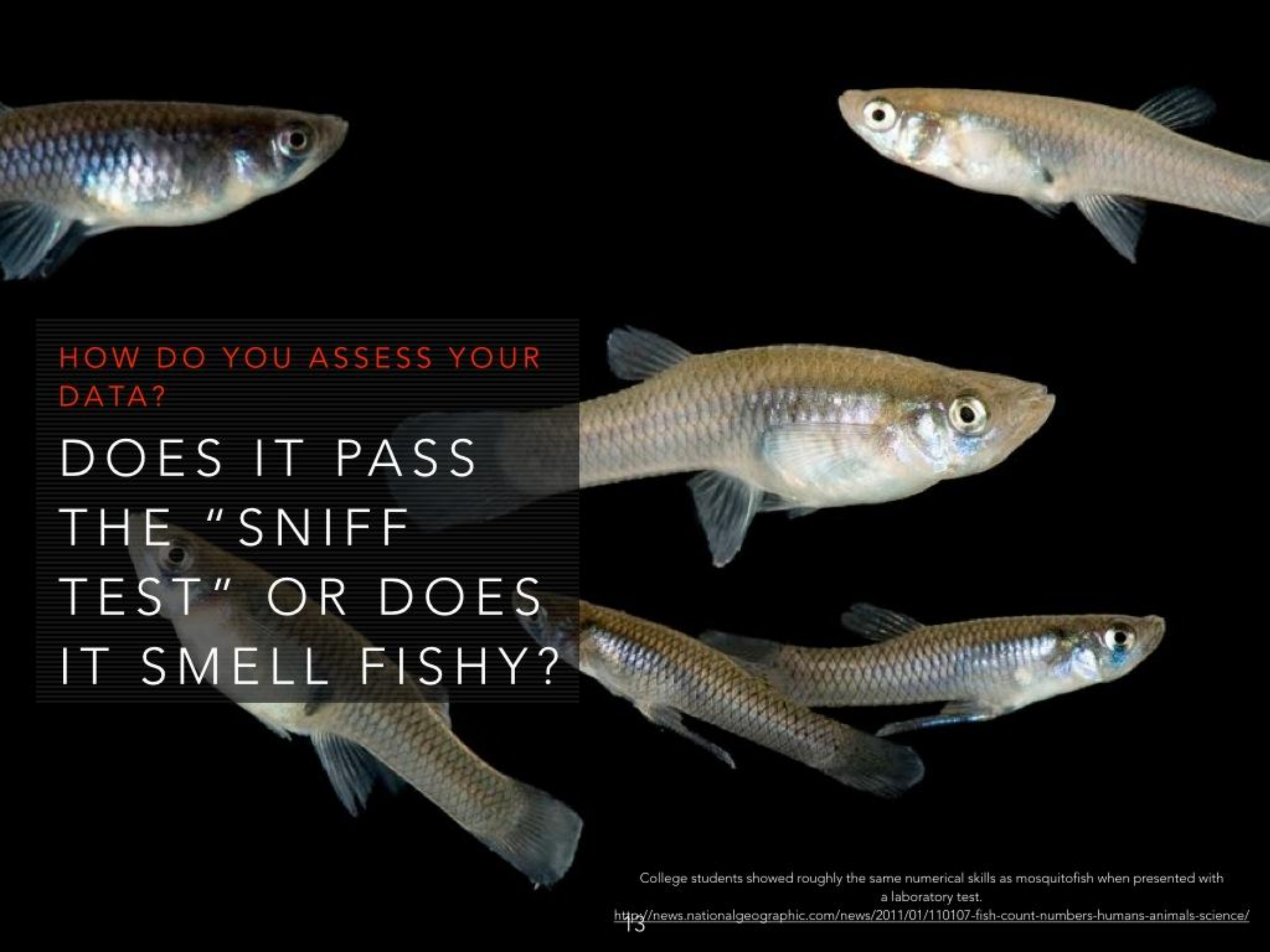
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DATA QUALITY?

DATA
COLLECTOR

DATA
MANAGER

DATA
PRODUCER

DATA
PUBLISHER



HOW DO YOU ASSESS YOUR
DATA?

DOES IT PASS
THE "SNIFF
TEST" OR DOES
IT SMELL FISHY?

College students showed roughly the same numerical skills as mosquitofish when presented with a laboratory test.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/01/110107-fish-count-numbers-humans-animals-science/>

WHERE DOES YOUR DATA COME FROM?

KEY ISSUE:

VISIBILITY OF DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY,
PRACTICES AND SYSTEMS

RESPONSE:

- PROCESS MAP OF INFORMATION FLOWS
- DOCUMENTATION OF SYSTEMS (MANDATORY ELEMENTS, EDITS, REVIEW)
- AUDIT OF PRACTICES
- SURVEY OF DATA COLLECTORS
- REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTOR TRAINING
- QUALITATIVE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY JUSTICE AGENCIES

EXAMPLES

UNITED KINGDOM

AUDITING

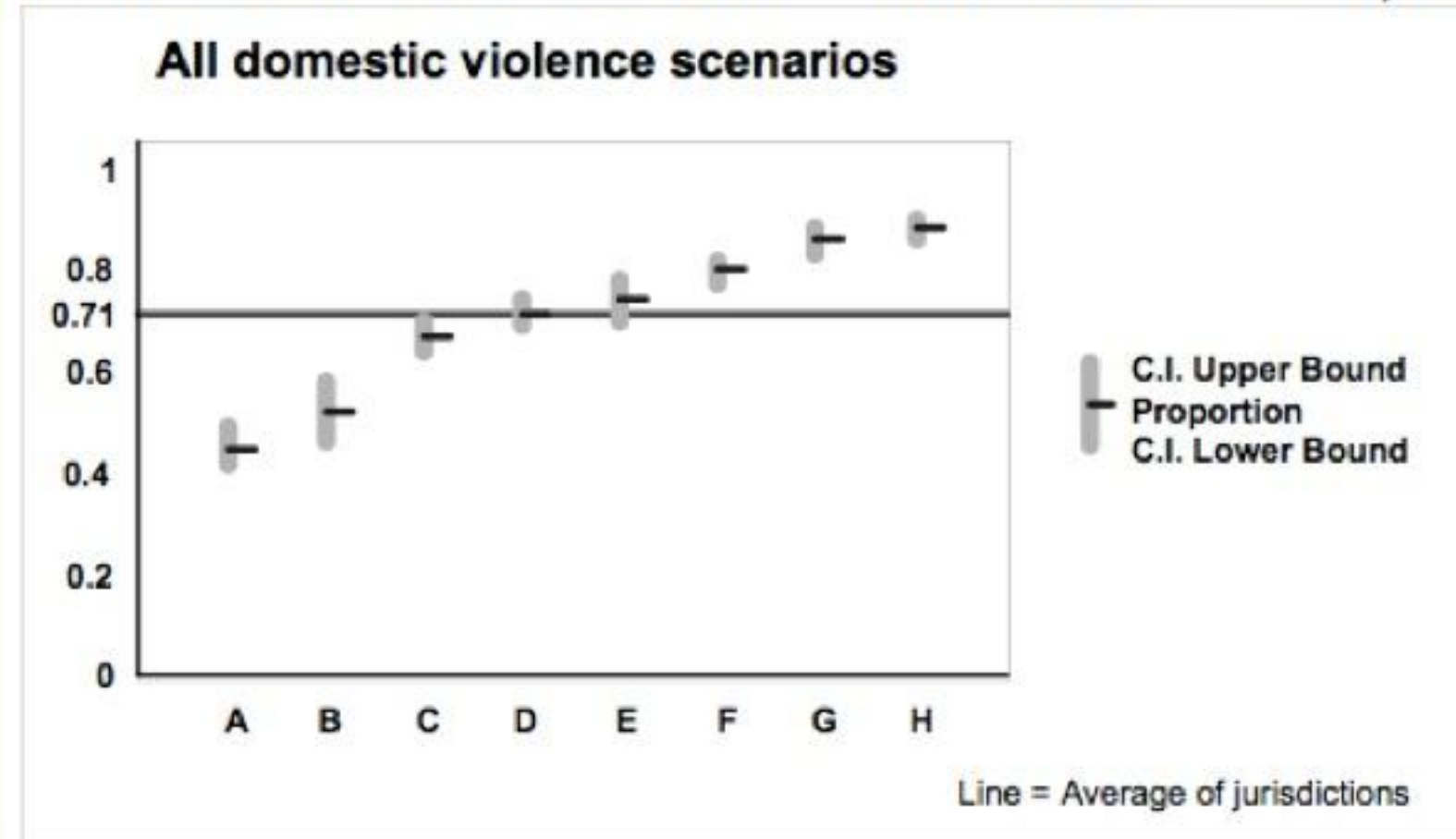
- HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY (HMIC) AUDITING OF POLICE FORCE CRIME DATA INTEGRITY IN ENGLAND AND WALES
- INSPECTION INTO 43 POLICE FORCES, AUTHORISED BY HOME SECRETARY, UNDER POLICE ACT POWERS
- INTERIM REPORT RELEASED APRIL 2014
- AUDIT OF A SAMPLE OF CRIME REPORTS (N=5500)
- AIM TO FIND INSTANCES WHERE CRIMES WERE NOT RECORDED OR WERE INAPPROPRIATELY CLASSIFIED ("TO WHAT EXTENT CAN POLICE-RECORDED CRIME INFORMATION BE TRUSTED?")
- LISTENING TO INITIAL PHONE CALLS TO TEST ACCURACY OF RESULTING REPORTS
- INTERIM REPORT: 13 FORCES: 20% OF CRIME MAY BE UNREPORTED

EXAMPLES

AUSTRALIA

DIFFERENCES IN RECORDED CRIME PROJECT - SCENARIO BASED TESTING

13. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING AN ASSAULT, SBT 2005 (a)



(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

WHAT MIGHT BE MISSING?

KEY ISSUE:

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHAT IS MISSING FROM YOUR DATASET?

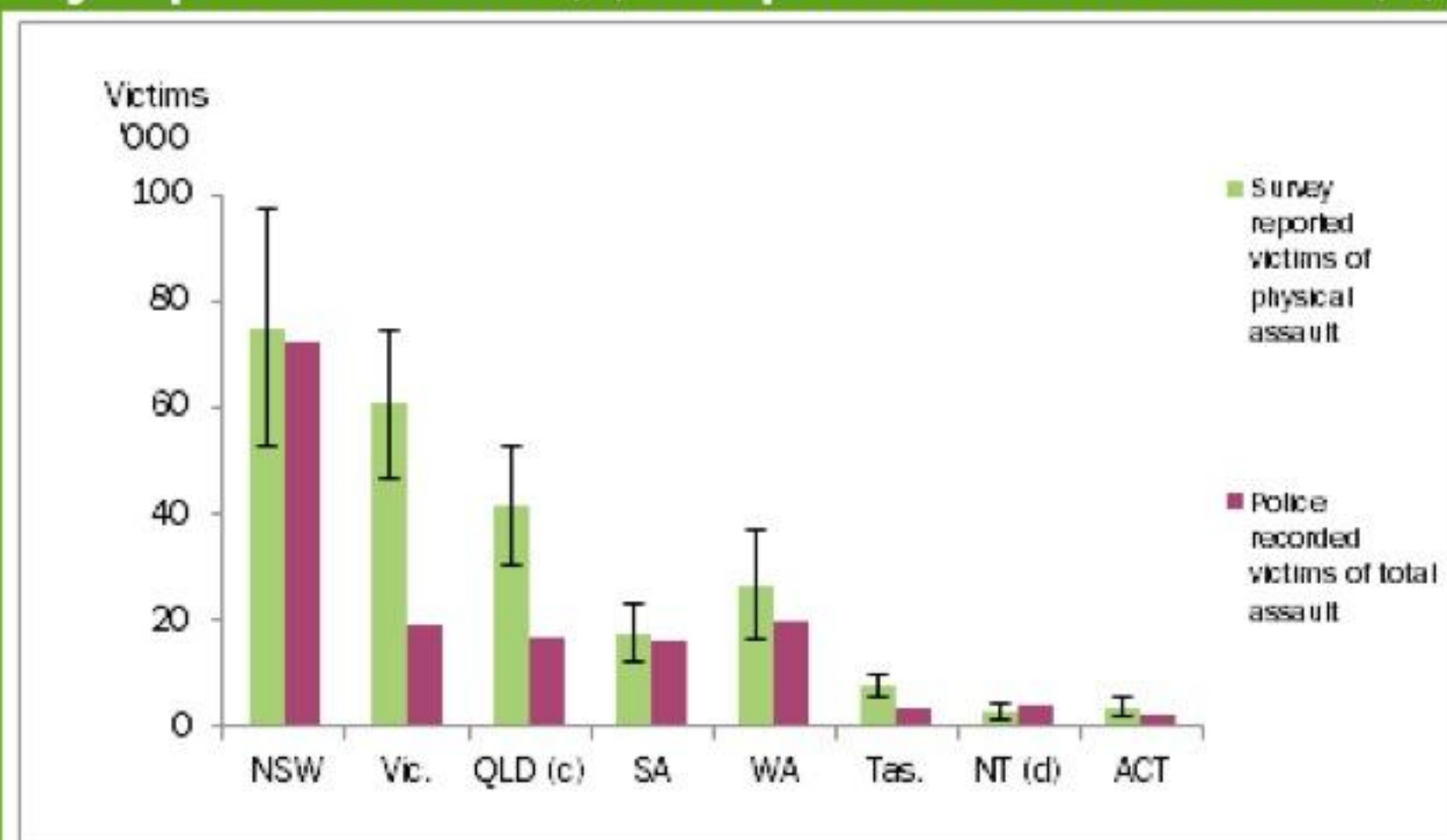
RESPONSE:

- COMPARISON WITH ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCES
- COMPARISON BETWEEN JURISDICTIONS, REGIONS, POLICING AREAS, ETC.

EXAMPLES

NATIONAL CRIME RECORDING STANDARD IMPLEMENTATION

Survey reported victims (a) and police recorded victims(b): Assault, 2008



(a) Includes only respondents who stated the most recent incident of assault was reported to police.

(b) Data has been adjusted to align with the Crime Victimization Survey data, refer to technical note for further details.

(c) Data excludes counts determined as 'no crime'. For more information refer to technical note.

(d) Refers to mainly urban areas. For more information refer to technical note.

Sources: Crime Victimization, Australia 2008-09 (cat. no. 4530.0) and Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia 2008 (cat. no. 4510.0).

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DATA?

KEY ISSUE:

IF YOU DO NOT COLLECT THE DATA, HOW DO YOU KNOW IT IS INTACT, ROBUST AND CORRECT?

RESPONSE:

- EDITING STRATEGIES:
 - WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE GROUND? DOES THE DATA MATCH EXPECTATIONS?
 - CONSISTENCY WITH TRENDS?
 - SUBSTITUTION OR DRIFT BETWEEN CATEGORIES
 - TRACE ERRORS OR ANOMALIES TO SOURCE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE
 - IS IT TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?
 - WHAT IS THE ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF QUALITY?

RECENT EXAMPLES

UNITED STATES

DOWNGRADING OF OFFENCES

- A RISK WHERE THERE ARE INDEX CRIMES, OR ONLY SOME OFFENCES 'COUNT' TOWARDS CRIME STATISTICS
- SERIOUS CRIMES WHICH WOULD APPEAR IN STATISTICS CAN BE DOWNGRADED INTO LESS SERIOUS CATEGORIES

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DATA QUALITY?

DATA
COLLECTOR

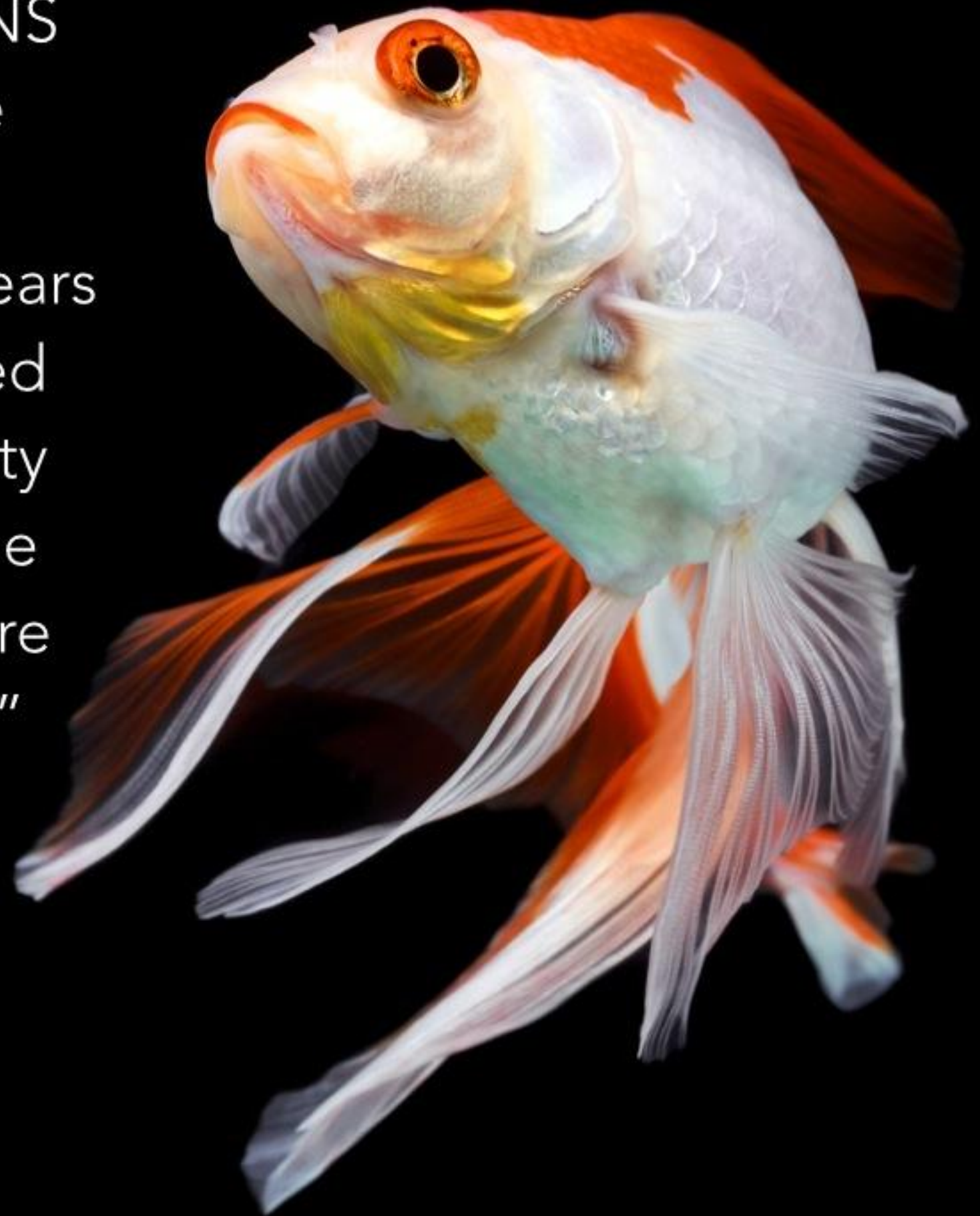
DATA
MANAGER

DATA
PRODUCER

DATA
PUBLISHER

"It is deplorable that ONS
can have overseen the
production of crime
statistics...with what appears
to have been very limited
knowledge of the 'quality
assurance' steps that the
data went through before
being sent to the ONS"

– HOUSE OF
COMMONS PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
SELECT
COMMITTEE, 2014



CHALLENGES

FOR
PRACTITIONERS
AND POLICY
MAKERS

CHALLENGES FOR PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY MAKERS

ACCESS

RESOURCES

ROLES AND
TRUST

STATISTICAL
LITERACY &
CAPABILITY

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