Twitter Thread by Dani Ahrens



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The @ONS have decided that it's no longer possible to ask people simply what their sex is, even though this has been asked in every census since forever. Women have used the resulting data to prove that we face ongoing and widespread discrimination, at large and small scales 1/10

The people making decisions about the census, however, have been persuaded that some (unknown number of) people won't respond to the census at all if they have to answer this very basic factual question. 2/10

They have therefore changed the guidance so that an unknown number of people are advised to answer it according to their 'official documents' - which may contradict each other. Since it's easily possible to change the sex marker on a passport or driving licence 3/10

just by asking for it to be changed, this guidance effectively means that (an unknown number of) people unhappy about their biological sex are advised to answer the sex question however they choose. 4/10

The most immediately damaging impact of this decision will be on trans people. It means the opportunity to gather robust data from the new gender identity question in the same census is lost. We will not be able to tell how many trans people are male or female. 5/10

Authorities seeking a basis on which to plan, for example, health care for trans people, won't have the data they need. But the impact on women is more profound. This is the result of a decades-long effort to delegitimise sex as a relevant factor in social policy. 6/10

Read this report, and its appendix, to understand how this was done https://t.co/1rsEXeIAik
Without sex as a category, how can we see sexism? If sex is unimportant, why would domestic violence, rape, or abortion be women's issues? 7/10

And this is how we have local government officials making tick-box decisions that remove funding from experienced, trusted, women's organisations like @riseuk. Women in Brighton who've relied on this service over years are in bits today because women's expertise isn't valued 8/10

Services like @riseuk were created by women, for women. They should not be subject to some technocratic process of switching to a new provider https://t.co/iriLMWLSDH
9/10

Whose interests does it serve to pretend we don't know what sex we are? Not those of women, not lesbians & gay men, and not trans people either. If you take away the means to analyse our oppression, you make it harder to resist.
#WomenCountSoCountWomen
10/10

Further thoughts on this:
https://t.co/zf1FXS8pHZ

> I don't agree with calls for feminists to #BoycottTheCensus. I think boycott campaigns are only effective if they can gather truly mass support. We simply don't have time to build a noticeable boycott campaign in 5 weeks. So any boycott is likely to be largely invisible. 1/5
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> — Dani Ahrens (@rebelyarns) February 13, 2021