

Running the Numbers

It's well known among primatologists that the number of males within a group of, say, baboons, chimpanzees, or lemurs is related to the number of females. Patrik Lindenfors, a zoologist at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and two colleagues have now identified which sex appears to be in charge of regulating those numbers.



Gathering of the gals

The biologists reanalyzed previously recorded data for a variety of primate species and discovered that females are the vanguard of the revolution: changes in the number of males lag behind changes in the number of females. Female numbers apparently respond directly to such evolutionary pressures as predation, climate, and the availability

of food. The females tailor their social relationships accordingly, and the males—if they hope to mate with anybody—must then adjust to the new size of the sisterhood. ("Females drive primate social evolution," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B (Suppl.)* 271:S101–S103, February 7, 2004)

—Caitlin E. Cox