

Gender and Health

Session, 2 hours

This session introduces the topic of gender as a determinant of health. Women and men have different roles and responsibilities and different social realities. This is due not only to biological differences but also to socially determined gender norms and differential access to, and control over, resources. These gender norms, roles and relations impact women's and men's health.

Download the [curriculum](#) for this session.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Identify and discuss gender as one of the determinants of health.
- Appreciate how gender intersects with other determinants of health.
- Distinguish between factors affecting men's and women's health.
- Identify factors common to women and men of a specific social group, e.g. rural/urban, poor/rich.

Preparation

Drawing on the references below, prepare a short presentation to introduce the topic (Step 1).

Distribute these readings to students the day before the session, together with the assessment task:

- Arber, S. 1997. [Comparing inequalities in women's and men's health](#): Britain in the 1990s. *Social Science & Medicine*, 1997; 44(6):773-87.
- Weber, A.M., et al. 2019. [Gender norms and health](#): insights from global survey data. *The Lancet* 393.10189: 2455-2468.
- O'Neil, A., Scovelle, A. J., Milner, A. J., & Kavanagh, A. 2018. [Gender/sex as a social determinant of cardiovascular risk](#). *Circulation*, 137(8), 854-864.
- Batist, J. 2019. [An intersectional analysis of maternal mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa](#): a human rights issue. *Journal of global health*, 9 (1).

Prepare slides or flip charts for each of the three discussion groups – one on the health of adults in general, one on the health of men, one on the health of women (Step 2).

Assessment

Give students an article to read and ask each one to write a summary, following these steps:

- Include details about the paper: title, author(s), and whether it is a research study, a review article, or chapters from a book.
- Outline the main thesis or argument in no more than five or six lines: What is the paper about? What is it telling us about how gender influences health status?
- Describe how the article builds the arguments towards the main thesis.
- It is not necessary to cover every point made in the paper or paraphrase it page by page. Just pull out the main threads. Present a few (no more than three) tables or graphs if these will contribute substantially to illustrating the arguments.
- Conclude with your own reactions to the paper. Did you find the paper useful? In what ways? Are there some points you do not quite agree with? Why?

Steps

Time	Step	Who
10 minutes	1. Introduce the topic of gender and health	Facilitator
40 minutes	2. Compare characteristics of health by gender	Groups
20 minutes	3. Present on health of adults/ men/ women	Groups to plenary
40 minutes	4. Discuss health factors	Facilitator, plenary
10 minutes	5. Summarise social factors affecting health	Facilitator

Step 1. Introduce the topic of gender and health

10 minutes

Give a short presentation on gender as a determinant of health.

Step 2. Compare health factors by gender

40 minutes

Divide participants into three groups. Give each group a set of the questions on what makes a person healthy – on a flipchart or slide.

- Group 1 answers questions about the health of adults in general.
- Group 2 answers questions about the health of men.
- Group 3 answers questions about the health of women.

Each group records their responses to the relevant questions:

- What are the characteristics of any healthy adult / a healthy man/ a healthy woman?
- What are some of the factors contributing to good health for all adults / for adult men/ for adult women?
- What are some of the factors that contribute to ill health for adults generally/ adult men/ adult women?
- Of the factors listed in questions 2 and 3, which are social and which are biological?
- Are there differences in health status across different social groups of adults generally, adult men and adult women?
If yes, what are they, and what are some of the reasons for these differences?
- What are the differences, if any, between the social and biological causes of ill health for adults in general/ adult men/ adult women?

Step 3. Present on healthy adults, men, women

20 minutes

Each group – 1, 2, 3 – takes a turn to present their answers.

Step 4. Distinguish between health factors

40 minutes

Invite and facilitate a discussion to distinguish between factors that:

- Affect women's health, that are common to women and men of a specific social group (e.g., rural/urban, poor/rich).
- Arise from women's biological differences from men.
- Relate to gender-based differences in roles and norms.
- Relate to access to and control over resources.
- Arise from differences in power between women and men within the same social group.

Group factors on the flip charts or virtual boards.

Step 5. Summarise social factors affecting health

10 minutes

Health is a socially constructed reality: a product of the physical and social environment in which we live and act. Differences in people's health status, including gender differences, arise not only from biological differences but also from differentials in social and economic status.