

Gender Analysis Overview

What is gender analysis?

Gender analysis is a process of considering gender and gender inequalities when analysing data and in program planning. It informs action to address inequalities that arise from the different roles of women and men, the unequal power relationships between them and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, their health and wellbeing.¹

Gender analysis can be used to ensure that women and men are not disadvantaged by a policy, program or project, to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of activities, or to identify priority areas for action to promote equality between women and men.²

In recognition that particular groups of women, such as women with disabilities or migrant women, experience even greater disadvantage, gender analysis processes have expanded to incorporate an intersectional lens. Just as gender blind policy and practice can discriminate against women and deepen inequality, policy and practice that views all women as a homogenous group can discriminate against groups of women – especially women who face multiple forms of discrimination.³

Gender analysis can assist in ensuring that the diverse needs of a community are comprehensively addressed, contributing to the creation of equitable and inclusive communities.

Why is gender analysis used in policy and planning?

All policy, programming and planning decisions affect individuals and groups of people differently, with women and girls often not receiving a “fair share” of the opportunities and benefits that exist relative to their efforts and contributions.⁴

In order to make organisational policies, processes and practices more gender sensitive or gender transformative, work has been carried out to understand women’s and men’s different experiences, specifically how gender roles, social norms and expectations, as well as access to power and privilege, influence the lives of women and men. Gender analysis looks at the impacts that current and proposed policies, programs and services have on particular groups of women and men with a view to making changes which empower women and men to participate equally in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life.

Women’s Health In the North’s gender analysis resources

The **Gender Analysis Planning Tool** is designed for use during strategic planning processes and can be applied to organisational policies and corporate plans, as well as projects, programs and services. It is a how-to guide, rather than a score-card and is designed to guide staff on which questions to ask and where to focus their attention. This tool can be applied at each stage of program, policy and service planning to assist with gender-sensitive practice. The tool can also be used retrospectively as a way of evaluating programs.

The **Gender Equity Organisational Assessment** assists managers, executive staff, human resources teams and other policy and planning staff to assess whether current workplace approaches and practices are gender sensitive and to measure subsequent change. The checklist can be used to identify strengths and gaps in current practice, inform work plans and can also be used as an advocacy tool to promote ways for an organisation to become gender sensitive.

These resources are available at www.whin.org.au/resources/gender-equity-and-analysis.html

The following section looks in more detail at some of the concepts and thinking associated with gender analysis.

What is gender?

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, identities and expectations that are assigned to women and men, and to girls and boys. These perceived differences between the sexes are socially, and not biologically determined and are based on learned behaviour. Gender roles are learnt from early childhood and reinforced through our lives. Concepts of gender will 'differ within and between cultures, and change over time in response to cultural, religious, educational, historical and economic factors.'⁵

Women's and men's experiences of power and privilege are also influenced by gender, with men typically having greater access to, and control over, wealth, resources and decision-making opportunities.

The potentially differential effects of policies, programs and legislation on women or men can often be masked or obscured.

When gender is explicitly considered in policy analysis, these effects are revealed, and previously hidden implications come to light.

(Status of Women Canada, 1996)

What does gender sensitive and gender transformative mean?

A gender sensitive approach is one that takes gender into account, acknowledging the different experiences, expectations, pressures, inequalities, and needs of women, men, transgender and intersex people. Gender transformative policy and practice goes further, examining, challenging and ultimately transforming structures, norms and behaviours that reinforce gender inequality, and strengthens those that support gender equality.⁶

What is intersectionality and why is it important?

Intersectionality is an approach that considers intersecting and overlapping aspects of a person's identity. It recognises the interaction between multiple forms of discrimination or oppression, such as sexism, racism, class oppression, homophobia and ableism. To date, often aspects of social, biological or cultural identity have been treated in isolation in policy and programming, as if a person is defined by one aspect only, such as their gender. It is now understood that research, policies and programs need to be attuned to these interactions and what they reveal about power and hierarchies.⁷

What are the benefits of a gender analysis and an intersectional lens?

Gender analysis can assist in ensuring that the diverse needs of a community are comprehensively addressed, contributing to the creation of equitable and inclusive communities. Gender analysis can help to better identify the ways in which community members may respond to a particular issue or changes to infrastructure and services, enabling more precise targeting to produce maximum outcomes for policies and programs. In addition, a gender analysis can also improve democratic processes by encouraging widespread and meaningful consultation, including with women's organisations and other stakeholder groups.⁸

Applying a gender analysis to an organisation's work also ensures compliance with the ***Sex Discrimination Act 1984***; the ***Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010***; the ***Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999***; and the ***Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities***.

The application of an intersectional lens which considers the race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability/disability and/or economic status of women is also crucial in the creation of equitable and inclusive communities. Analysis must therefore also consider the complexity of identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men, and the experiences of women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds.

Who should apply a gendered lens to their work?

Gender analysis is important for anyone involved in policy, program development and service delivery. It should be applied across all levels of an organisation. Evidence of gender sensitive practice should be reflected in an organisation's corporate, operational and program plans, statements, policy, and professional development opportunities.

What is gender equity and how does it differ to gender equality?

Gender equity is a term which describes fairness and justice in outcomes for both women and men. The concept of gender equity recognises that men and women have different life experiences, different opportunities, different needs, different levels of power and access to decision-making levels in our society, as well as differing expectations by others.

Taking a 'gender equity' lens to our work highlights these differences and recognises that women may require specific resources and services to rectify what is their unequal position. It is not about providing the same services or resources to women and men; it is about recognising diversity and disadvantage, and directing resources and services where they are needed, to ensure equal outcomes for all.

Gender equality is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal valuing by the society of the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play. The following diagram articulates the difference between an equitable and equal distribution of resources.



Definitions

'Sex' refers to the biological differences between females, males and intersex people.

'Gender' is a social construction of female and male identity that refers to the roles, behaviours and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men and how these roles are valued. This dominant social construction of gender disproportionately privileges men over women on the basis of their sex (and privileges some men over other men).

'Gender identity' refers to how people view and express themselves across the masculine-feminine spectrum, including people who identify as transgender, genderqueer or gender fluid.

'Gender analysis' is a process of considering gender, gender relations and gender inequalities when analysing data or program planning. It informs action to: ensure diverse groups of women and men are not disadvantaged by a policy or program; direct services and resources to those most in need; enhance effectiveness; and promote equality.

'Sex disaggregated data' is information collected and presented separately on females and males.

'Intersectionality' is an approach that considers intersecting aspects of a person's social, biological or cultural identity, and how they are affected by systems of oppression and access to power and resources. This approach considers how different forms of discrimination can overlap and intersect.

'Gender equity' refers to the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men.

'Gender equality' is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal participation and the equal valuing of women, men, girls and boys in all aspects of public and private life.



For more information:

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¹ Women's Health Victoria. (2013). *Applied Gender Analysis Workshop Manual*. Melbourne: Women's Health Victoria.

² Hunt, J. Introduction to gender analysis concepts and steps. *Development Bulletin*, No. 64.

³ Murdolo, A. and R. Quiazon (2015). Bringing the Margins to the Centre. [Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia \(Appendix 3\)](#). Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth.

⁴ Status of Women Canada. (1996). *Gender-based analysis: A guide for policy making*. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada.

⁵ Hunt, J for Finucane Consulting. (2013), Participatory Gender Auditing and Assessment Training Workshop.

⁶ Greene, M.E. A practical guide for conducting and managing gender assessments in the health sector Washington DC: Population Reference Bureau on behalf of the Interagency Gender Working Group; 2012. Available from: http://www.igwg.org/~link.aspx?_id=EF882B1668CE4B208A669E7F2BD098BD&_z=z.

⁷ See note 4.

⁸ Office for Women (2010). *Inclusion Matters: A Public Sector Guide towards Gender Equity*. Government of South Australia: Adelaide, Available from, http://www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/5136/Inclusion-Matters-OVERVIEW.pdf