

# SEX VS. GENDER

- Gender bias
- Sex
- Gender
- Male
- Female
- Women
- Social norms
- Values
- Violence
- Domestic Violence
- Abuse
- Stereotypes
- Gender minorities
- Sexual minorities
- Gender roles

- ✓ 1. To help learners identify their own gender bias.
- ✓ 2. To illustrate the differentiate between sex & gender.

- 🕒 45 min - 1 hour
- ★ Card stock or Chalk & Chalkboard

## PROCEDURE

- 1 Each learner will be given cards which indicate different roles, activities and occupations. The learner should place cards, as they think appropriate, in an area designated 'Boy/Man' or as 'Girl/Woman', Alternatively simply use a chalkboard and call out words.

Examples of the things that learners might suggest include:

Boy/Man	Girl/Woman
Police	Cooking
Loud	Menstruation or Periods
Power	Shopping
Strength	Home-maker
Freedom	Sexy
Adam's Apple	Breasts
Penis	Gossip

- 2 Now try swapping the cards. Which of the cards can be swapped? Which cards cannot be swapped?
- 3 Divide each column into two sub columns: one refers to characteristics that are fixed, the other to those which can be swapped (not fixed). The former pertains to gender, the latter to sex. Here is an example of a table:

Boy/Man		Girl/Woman	
Fixed	Can Swap	Fixed	Can Swap
Penis	Loud	Breasts	Cooking
Adam's Apple	Power	Menstruation	Shopping
	Strength		Home-maker
	Freedom		Sexy
	Police		Gossip

- 4 Based on this, ask learners to write a definition of 'Sex' and of 'Gender'.
- 5 Now share the following definitions from our **Glossary** with the class:

**SEX:** The biological characteristics that define humans as **female**, **male** or **intersex**. Sex is based on biology (external genitalia, chromosomes, hormones and the reproductive system) and is usually assigned at birth.

For example, children born with male sex organs (penis and testes) are classified as male. Once classified, sex is usually used as a label for raising the child as either one **gender** or another. For example, male children will be raised as boys and expected to conform to **stereotypes** about masculinity. However not all people fit easily – or at all – into the 'male' and 'female' categories, such as intersex and **transsexual** people. Biological sex terms include male, female, transsexual and intersex.

**GENDER:** Gender is an identity that is learned, that changes over time, and that changes from one culture or society to another. Hence gender is both a **social construct** (something made up by people) and a personal identity. In social terms gender refers to the socially created roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and **values** attributed and acceptable for men and **women** as well as the relative **power** and influence of each. This means that gender is relational (occurs in relation to something else) and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them. For example, a woman's gender not only means that she is considered and expected to have **feminine** attributes such as being soft-spoken or gentle, but that by having these characteristics society also expects her to be less dominant than men. In personal terms gender refers to the specific roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and dress that individuals use to express their personal **gender identity**, and this is influenced by social ideas of gender and by personal feelings about oneself and how one wants to be, and be seen in the world. For this reason, even though society tells us that there are only two genders, there are different ways to express gender which fall between or outside of man/boy and woman/girl. See also **gender binary**, **gender identity**, **gender non-conforming** and **gender queer**.

Discuss this with the class:

The fact that **women** give birth to children is biologically determined. However the fact that women usually perform the majority of household chores and predominate in lower -paid 'care work' in the formal sector, are all socially constructed.

It is important to stress that gender relations are dynamic. They are shaped through social relations and interactions. They can vary over time and between different groups of people. They may also be impacted by other factors such as race, class, ethnicity and disability.



## TEACHER TIPS

### General

If learners suggest words like mother, father, husband or wife, do not be alarmed. When asked if these can be swapped or not, point out that these are just gendered words for parent, or spouse/partner. Ask them to stick to characteristics, not roles/identities. Ask the learner what makes a good mother or father? Can these be swapped? Emphasise that these are synonyms for 'parent' and that other meanings are gendered (eg. mothers are comforting, fathers are strict). The same can be said of husband and wife (both refer to partner or spouse).

### Making the Link with Gender & Violence

This exercise allows students to begin to understand how **gender**, **social norms** and **values** combine to create gendered and unequal expectations in our society, and how these, in turn impact on perceptions and exposure to **violence**. For instance, if men are expected to be dominant and **women** to be subservient, this can lead to unequal power dynamics in relationships and increase the risk of **domestic violence** or **abuse**.

Learners should think about how women are often portrayed by society and in the **media**, as being powerless. They should understand that constantly seeing, hearing and internalising that women are

weak, have value only if they are pretty, have value to men only when they are subservient and passive, is likely to impact on the way that men treat women, on a woman's self-image and how she believes she should behave in relationships. Similarly, you may ask how these ideas shape the way boys/men think about **sex**, and what they can and cannot demand from girls/women.

### Assessment Ideas

This is not a good exercise for assessment as it is intended to solicit learner's ideas and opinions about gender as the basis for further discussion.

### Variation

For Part ① of the Procedure, learners could provide their own list of words to fill in under the headings. Here is one way to make it more fun:

Bring a ball to class.

Ask learners to sit in a circle. Hand the ball to a learner who should begin by passing it around. When you clap once the person with the ball should mention one characteristic of a girl; when you clap twice they should mention one characteristic of a boy.

