



NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH)

# Notice of Special Interest: Health Influences of Gender as a Social and Structural Variable

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# Notice of Special Interest: Health Influences of Gender as a Social and Structural Variable

**Concept Clearance:** New Limited Competition

**Title:** Notice of Special Interest: Health Influences of Gender as a Social and Structural Variable

**Objective/Purpose:** To highlight interest in receiving research and training grant applications focused on the health impacts of gender-related social and structural variables

**Funds Available and Anticipated Number of Awards:** Contingent upon NIH appropriations and ICO partnership

**Award Project Period:** Determined by mechanism

# What are Sex & Gender?

## *And why do they matter in health research?*

Understanding sex and gender is critical to understanding human health and disease. Although “sex” is often incorrectly thought to have the same meaning as “gender,” the terms describe different but connected constructs. Sex and gender shape health independently as distinct factors, as well as interactively through the many ways in which they intersect and influence each other.<sup>[1]</sup> It is important to understand the differences and interactions between sex and gender to better understand how they affect health and why they are important in medical practice and health research. <sup>[1]</sup>


### **Dimensions of Sex (Biological Variable) & Gender (Social and Cultural Variable)**



# What are Sex & Gender?

*And why do they matter in health research?*

## Importance of Considering Gender as a Social and Structural Variable in Health Research

A person's gender can affect their physical and mental health and well-being in many ways and is an important factor in understanding the health of all individuals. For example, gender inequalities  in a society have been shown to limit girls' and women's access to health services.<sup>[9]</sup> Gender norms and roles (such as cultural expectations and definitions of masculinity) influence the willingness and likelihood of boys and men to seek health services.<sup>[10]</sup> Gender norms, gender roles, and gendered power relations (such as a society's perception of "women's work" or "a woman's role") contribute to the disproportionate burden of caregiving duties borne by women and women's vulnerability to negative health impacts associated with caregiver stress.<sup>[11]</sup>



# Gender and Health Scientific Workshop (October 2022)

NIH-wide support:

- NICHD, NIA, NIAID, NCI, NHLBI, NIDDK, NINDS, NIMH, NIDA, OBSSR

Objectives included:

- Identify opportunities to advance research and foster collaborations on health impacts of structural sexism, gender norms, relational power dynamics, and gender inequities.

High enthusiasm from extramural community:

- 1100+ registrants
- 70+ abstracts submitted

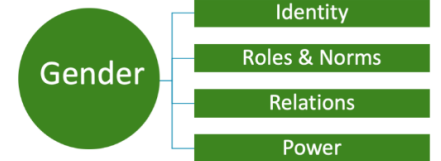
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## Gender and Health Scientific Workshop

### Summary

On October 26, 2022, the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) and Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) hosted a scientific workshop titled [Gender & Health: Impacts of Structural Sexism, Gender Norms, Relational Power Dynamics, and Gender Inequities](#). This virtual workshop was held in partnership with the National Institute of Aging (NIA), the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR).

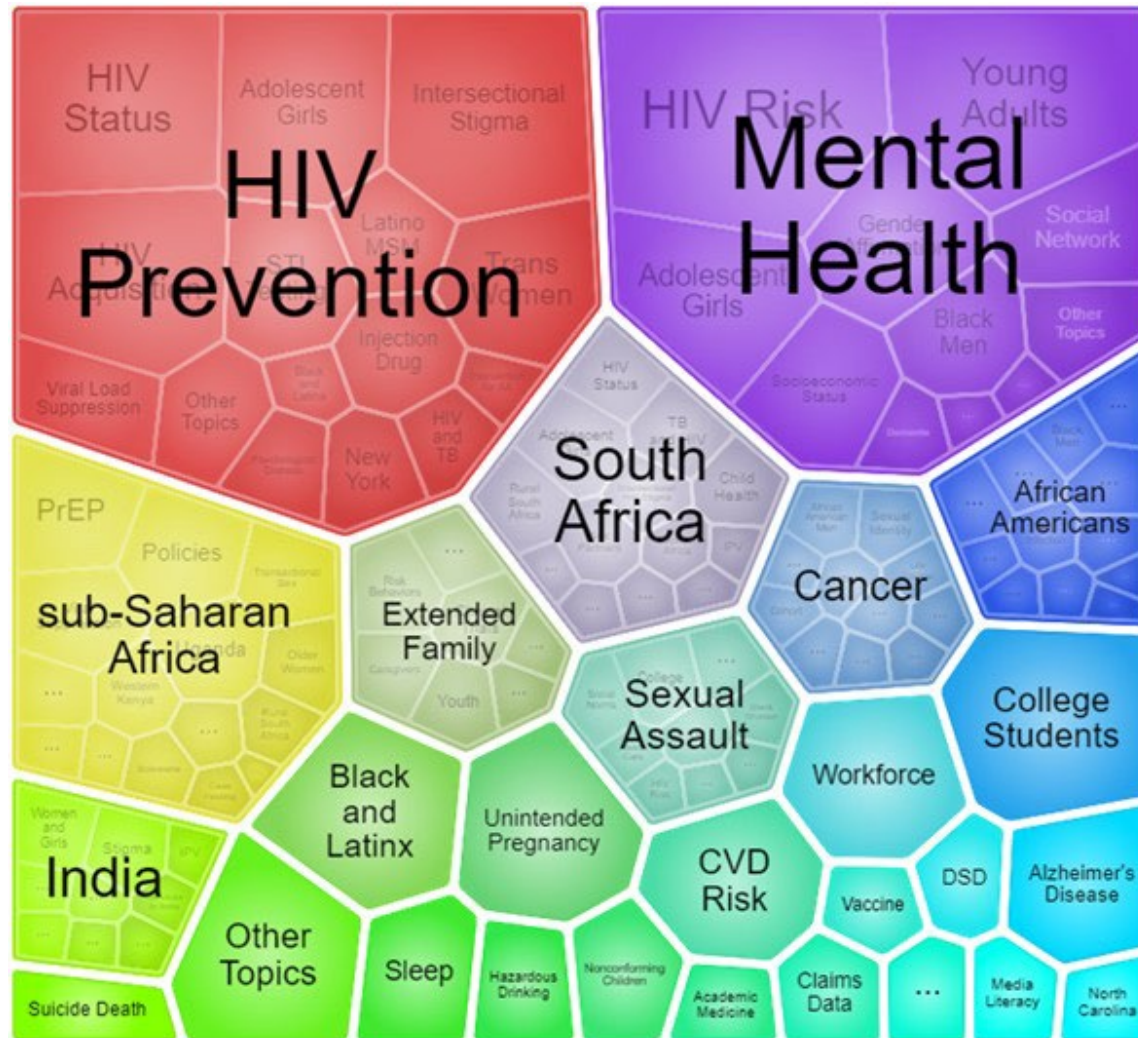
The overarching goal of the workshop was to convene NIH staff, the external scientific community, and the public to discuss methods, measurement, modifiable factors, interventions, and best practices in health research on gender as a social and cultural variable.



<https://orwh.od.nih.gov/gender-and-health-scientific-workshop>



# Gender-related research at NIH, FY2017-FY2022



204 awards across 16 ICOs

Top Topics:

- HIV prevention
- Mental health
- Cancer
- Sexual assault
- Unintended pregnancy



## Gender as a social and structural variable: research perspectives from the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Elizabeth Barr,<sup>1</sup> Ronna Popkin,<sup>2</sup> Erik Roodzant,<sup>3 4</sup> Beth Jaworski,<sup>5 4</sup> Sarah M. Temkin<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Office of Behavioral and

<sup>6</sup>Office of Research on W

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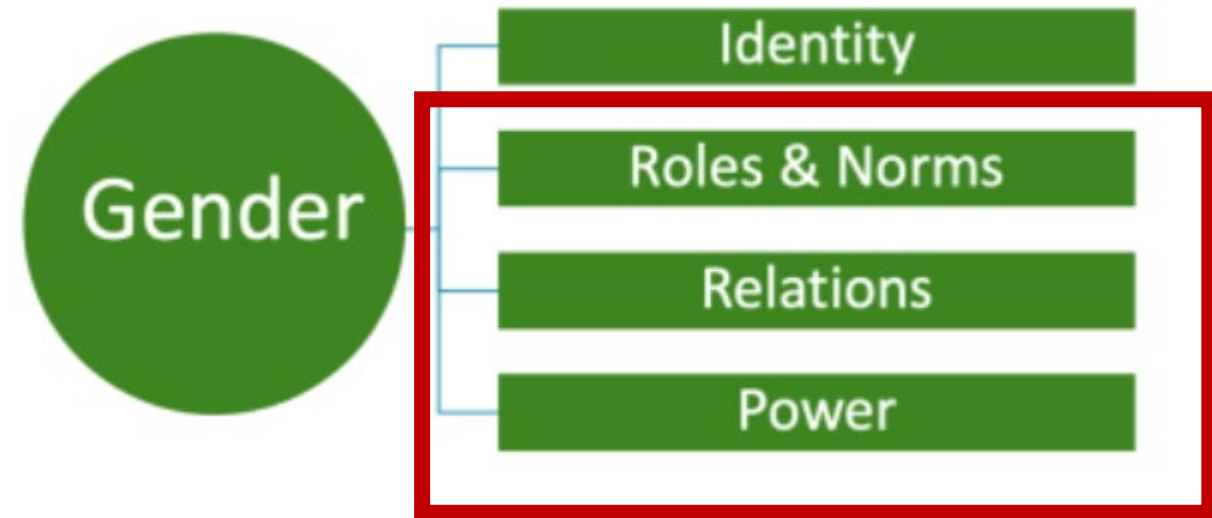
### Abstract

Gender is a social and structural variable, and its influence on health and disease is complex. Understanding gender roles and norms is essential for advancing research on the health of women and individuals assigned female at birth. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) health research enterprise is addressing these issues through a series of conditions (e.g., HIV, malaria) and knowledge transfer and integration from disciplines that have well-established methods, theories, and frameworks for examining the health impacts of gender and other social, cultural, and structural variables.

A second critical opportunity is continued and expanded support for research that considers the multiple social, structural, biological, and behavioral factors that influence the health of women and individuals assigned female at birth, and the intersections of these factors.

# Concept Clearance: Health Influences of Gender as a Social and Structural Variable

- Areas of focus:
  - Gender roles, norms, relations, power, equity, equality, sexism
- Intersectional approaches encouraged
- Research and training grants
- Multi-IC partnership
  - Wide interest across NIH





# Examples of Responsive Topics

<b>Development, testing, or validating measures and methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intersectional approaches to measuring gender roles, norms, relations, power, equity, equality, sexism</li><li>• Quantifying health effects of gender as a social and structural variable</li></ul>
<b>Observational studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing understanding of health influences of structural sexism, gender norms, relational power dynamics, and/or gender inequities</li><li>• Elucidating modifiable factors in gender-related health disparities</li><li>• Investigating the interactions between multiple social and structural domains of gender</li></ul>
<b>Development, testing, implementation, dissemination, and/or evaluation of interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community-led interventions</li><li>• Social and structural interventions</li><li>• Interventions addressing gendered influences on prevention, treatment, and outcomes of female-specific conditions and diseases more common in women (e.g., fibroids, autoimmune diseases)</li></ul>

# Thank you, and Questions?