

Gender and sexuality education

Kristien Michielsen

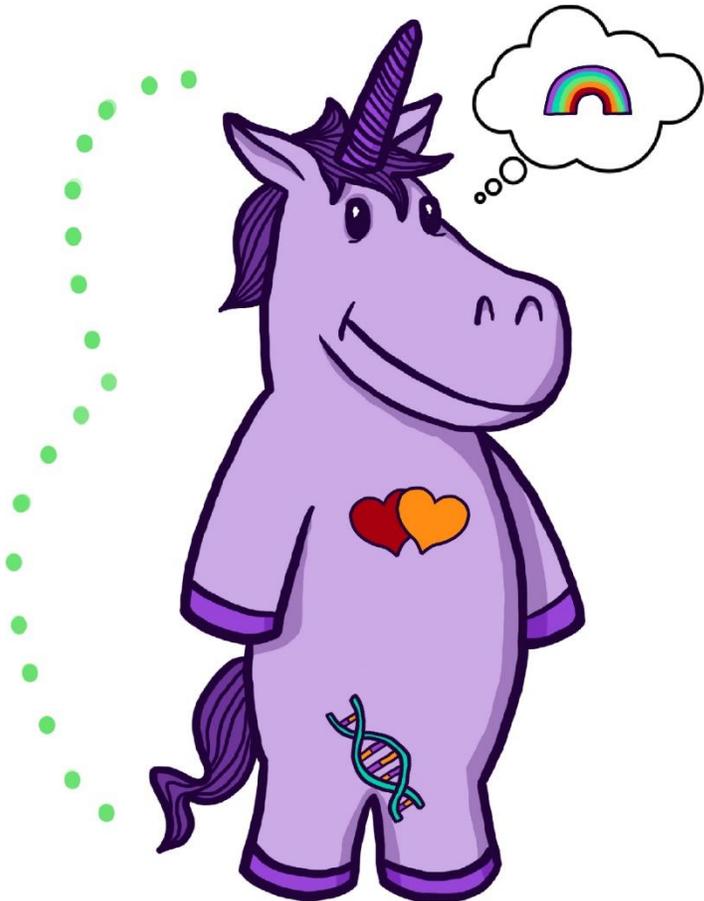
Two key questions

Why should we care about gender equality and gender norms in relation to sexuality and sexual health?

What's the evidence for including gender equality in sexuality education?

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Gender Identity

-  Female / Woman / Girl
-  Male / Man / Boy
-  Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression

-  Feminine
-  Masculine
-  Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

-  Female
-  Male
-  Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

Sex

Biologically determined characteristics of men and women
Refers to reproductive organs and functions

Gender

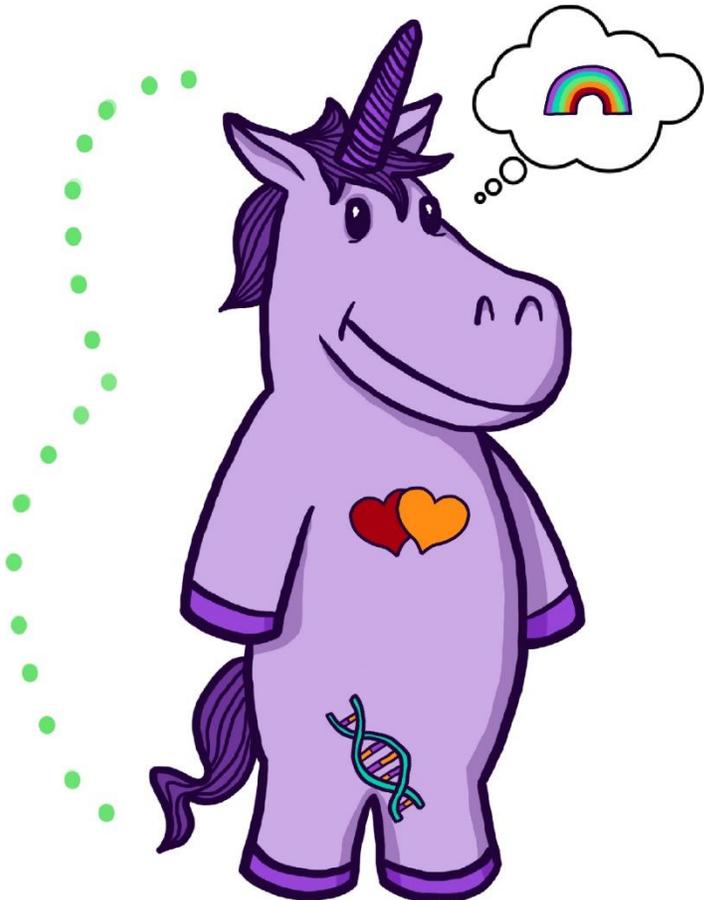
Social construction: women and men / femininity and masculinity
Varies: time, place, cultures

To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

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Gender diversity

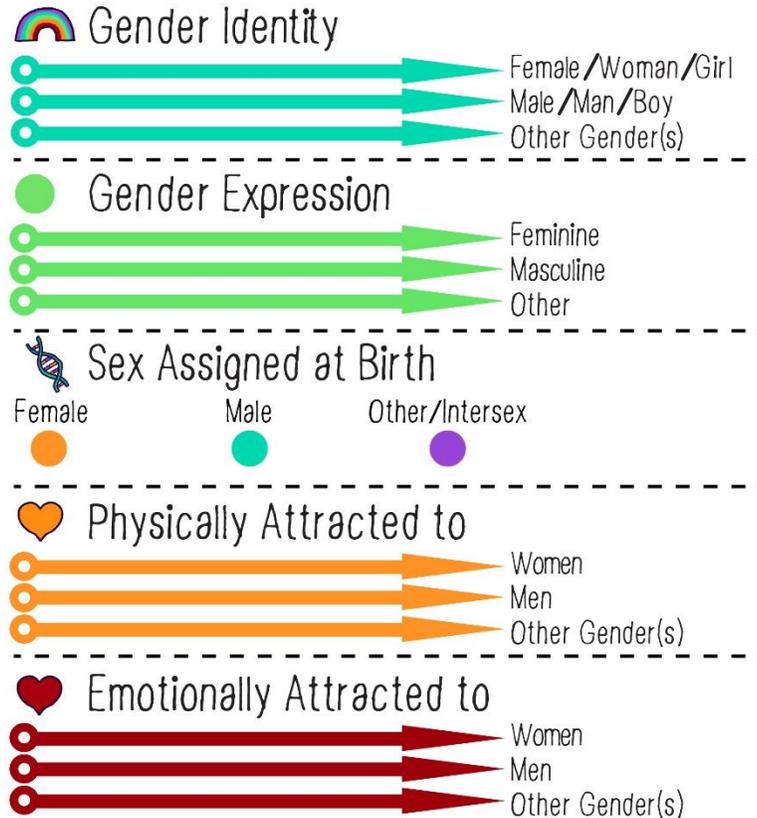
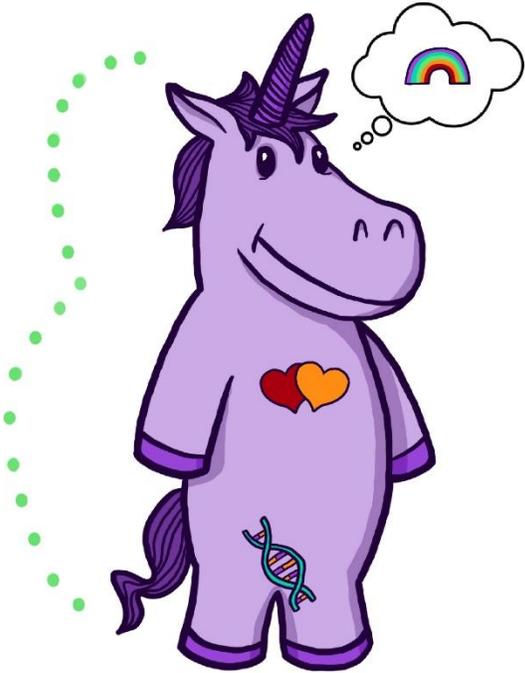
Sexual diversity

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Gender norms are ideas about how women and men should be and act.

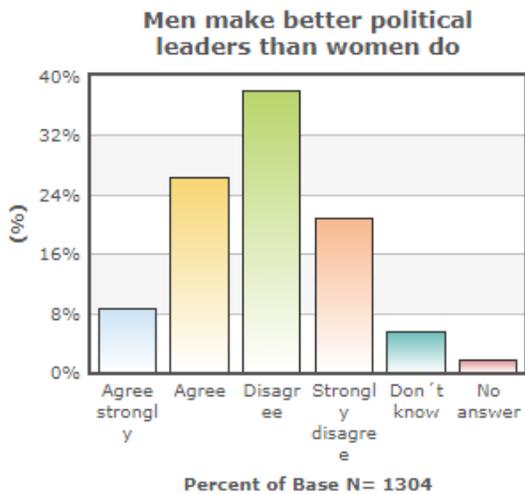
Gender attitudes are views held by individuals regarding the roles men and women should play in society

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

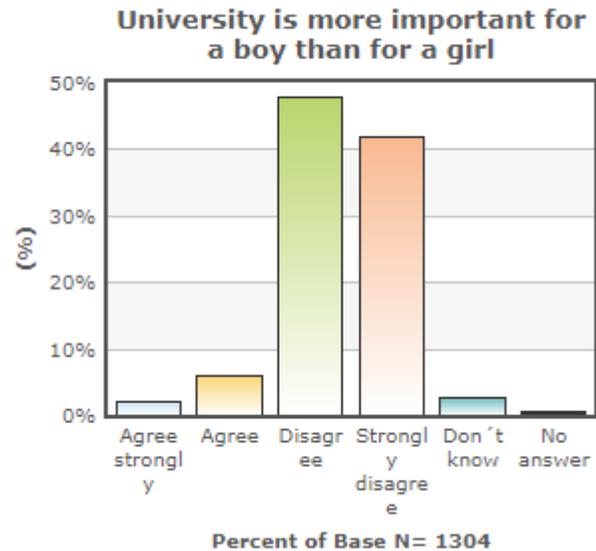
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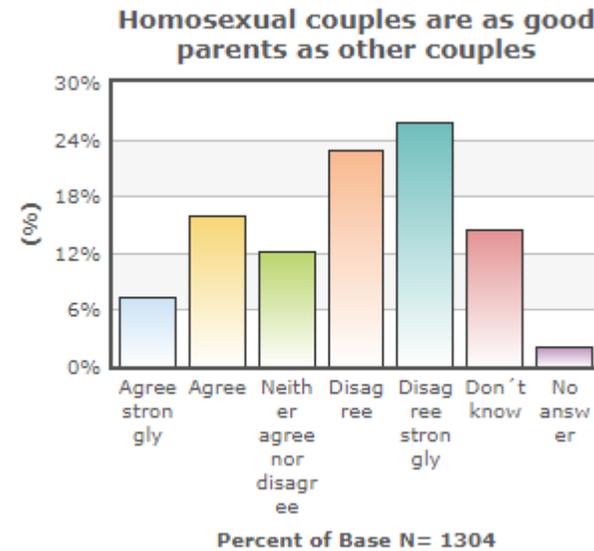
How about Estonia? (World Value Survey 2017-2020)



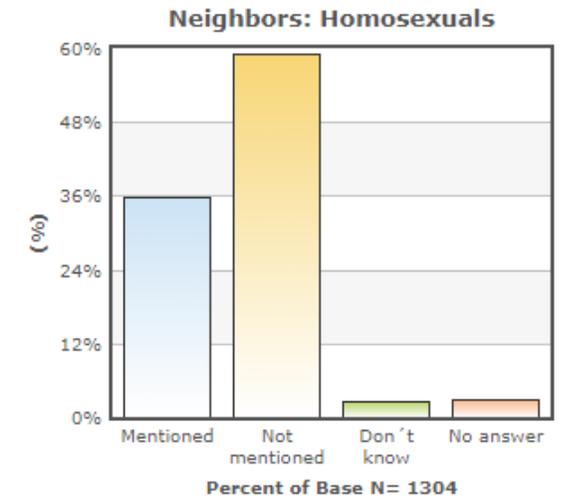
37% agree problematic



8% agree

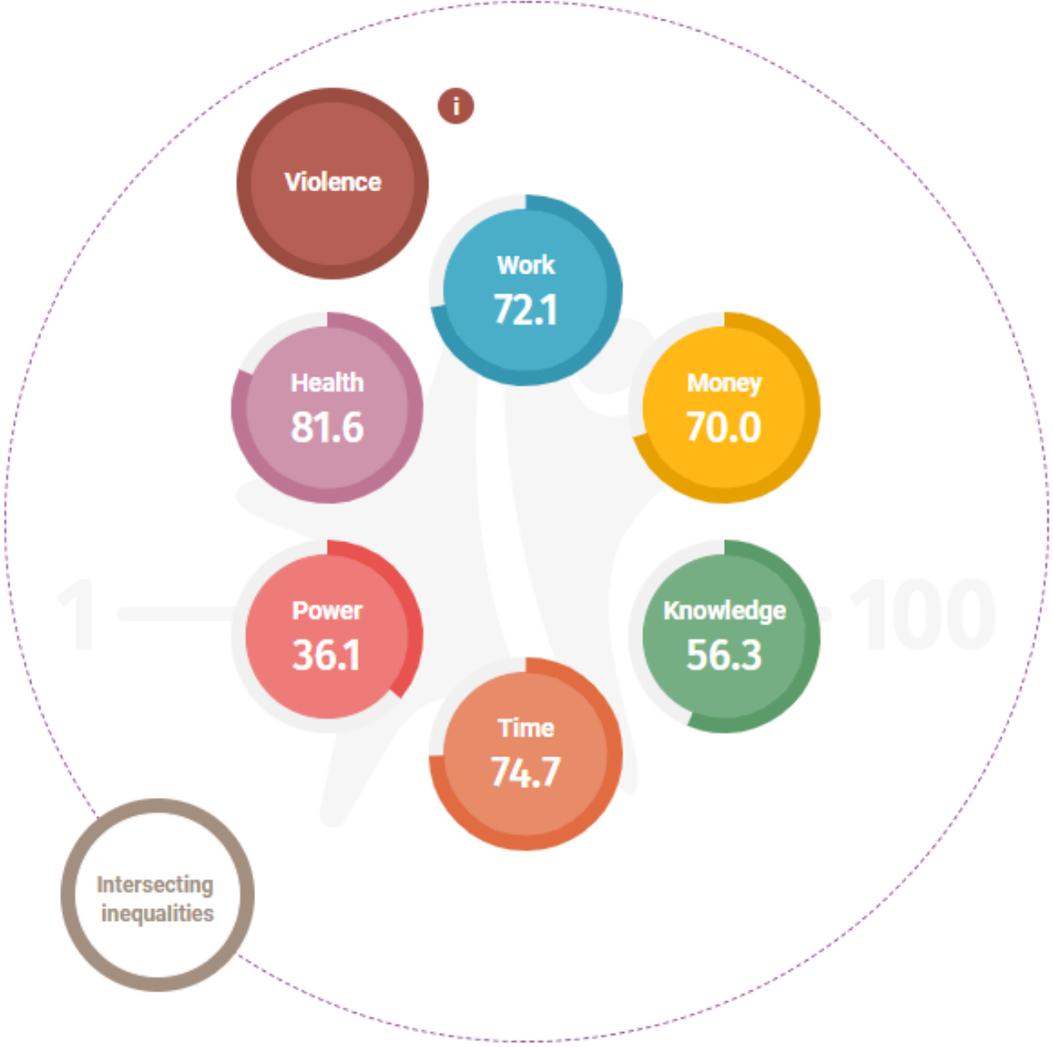
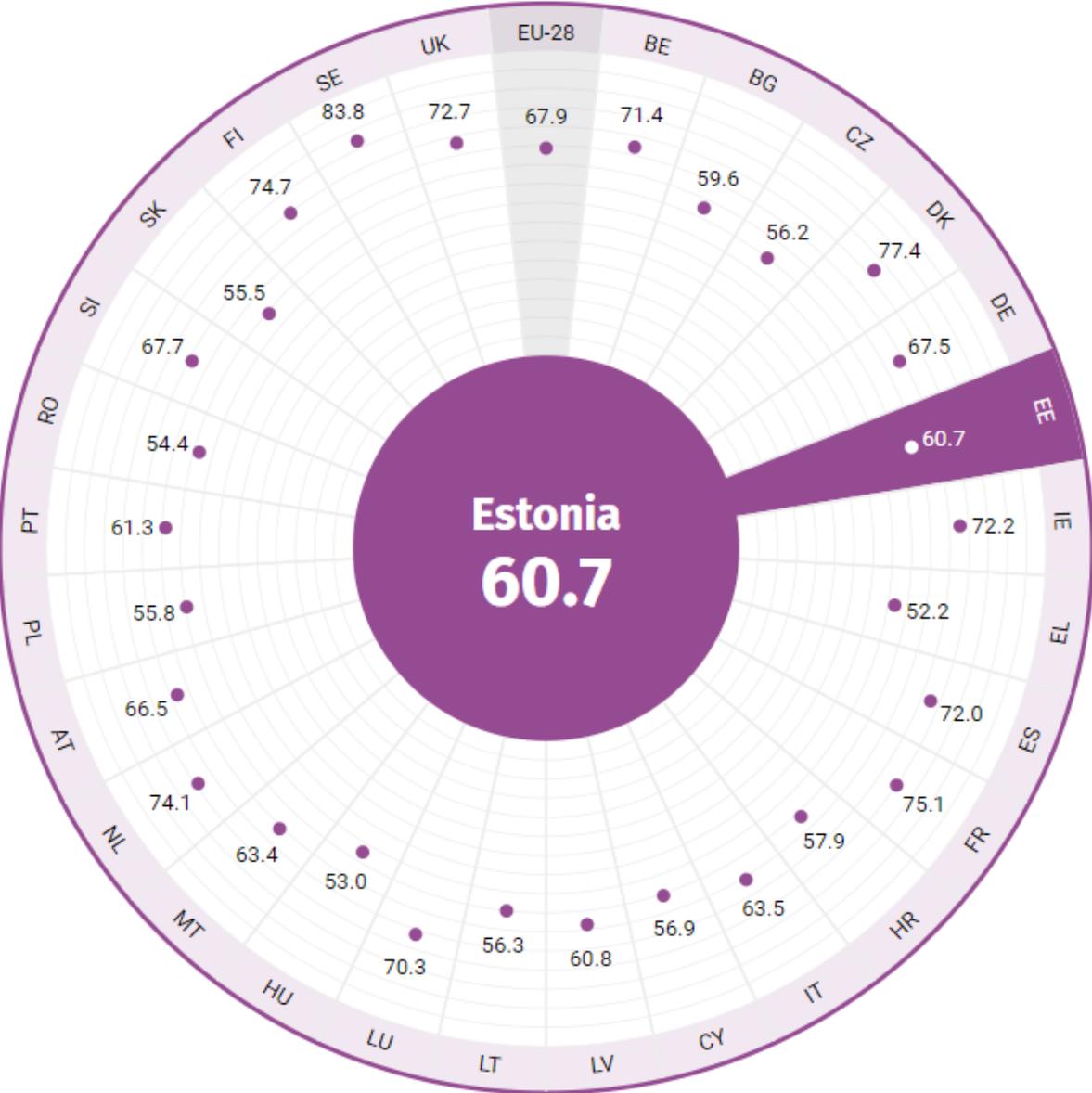


48% disagree



36%

Estonia ranks 18th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index



Why should we care about gender equality and gender norms in relation to sexuality and sexual health?

Girls and boys often have to follow different norms about 'acceptable' behaviour ("sexual double standard"):

- girls are expected to show modesty and maintain purity
- boys are encouraged to engage in sexual activity to live up to masculine ideals



'Yeah, I've grown; I can't go out anymore': differences in perceived risks between girls and boys entering adolescence

Kristin Mmari, Caroline Moreau, Susannah Emily Gibbs, Sara De Meyer, Kristien Michielsens, Caroline W. Kabiru, Bamidele Bello, Adesegun Fatusi,

Journal of Adolescent Health 61 (2017) 548–554



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Original article

Marching to a Different Drummer: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Young Adolescents Who Challenge Gender Norms



Chunyan Yu, M.S.^{a,b}, Xiayun Zuo, Ph.D.^a, Robert W. Blum, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.^c, Deborah L. Tolman, Ph.D.^d, Anna Kägesten, M.P.H.^c, Kristin Mmari, Dr.P.H., M.A.^c, Sara De Meyer, M.A.^e, Kristien Michielsens, Ph.D.^e, Sharmistha Basu, Ph.D.^f, Rajib Acharya, Ph.D.^f, Qiguo Lian, M.S.^{a,b}, and Chaohua Lou, M.D.^{a,*}

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"A Boy Would Be Friends With Boys ... and a Girl ... With Girls": Gender Norms in Early Adolescent Friendships in Egypt and Belgium



Ghada Al-Attar, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.^{a,*}, Sara De Meyer, M.A.^b, Omaira El-Gibaly, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.^a, Kristien Michielsens, Ph.D.^b, Lydia H. Animoso, M.S.P.H.^c, and Kristin Mmari, Dr.P.H., M.A.^c

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Interviews with 202 adolescents and 191 parents across six diverse urban sites (Baltimore, Ghent, Nairobi, Ile Ife, Assuit and Shanghai) about perceived risks associated with entering adolescence and how these risks differed by gender.

In all sites except Ghent, both young people and their parents perceived that **girls face greater risks** related to their sexual and reproductive health and were perceived to require more protection. In contrast, when **boys** grow up, they and their parents recognised that their **independence broadened**, and parents felt that boys were strong enough to protect themselves.

These differences in perceptions of vulnerability and related mobility are markers of a **gender system that separates young women and men's roles, responsibilities and behaviours in ways that widen gender power imbalance** with lifelong social and health consequences for people of both.



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238 interviews in 4 sites (Shanghai, New Delhi, Baltimore, Ghent)

Most perceptions and expressions about gender were regulated by stereotypical norms.

Growing acceptability for girls to wear boyish clothes and engage in stereotypical masculine activities such as playing soccer/football.

However, there was **no comparable acceptance of boys** engaging in traditional feminine behaviors. Boys who challenge gender norms by their dress or behavior were by many respondents seen as socially inferior: Boys who are not like boys will be laughed at by other boys, be despised or talked about, or be called names like gay or faggot (Baltimore, Ghent), or sissy or weirdo (Shanghai).

Across all sites, challenging gender norms was often found to lead to **verbal, physical, and/or psychological retribution.**



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“...uh, a man can also have something feminine, but if you want to be a real man. That you have to adapt with those things, with your clothing and stuff. And also play soccer and stuff, well yeah, or not like put on make-up and like mascara and paint your nails. Then you’re not a boy.”

‘Yeah, I’ve grown; I can’t go out anymore’: differences in perceived risks between girls and boys entering adolescence

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5,913 adolescents aged 14-18
Cochabamba (Bolivia) and Cuenca
(Ecuador).

Sexually active adolescents who
consider gender equality as important
report:

- Report higher current use of
contraceptives
- Are more likely to describe their last
sexual intercourse as a positive
experience
- Consider it easier to talk with their
partner about sexuality

**A cross-sectional study on attitudes toward gender
equality, sexual behavior, positive sexual experiences,
and communication about sex among sexually active
and non-sexually active adolescents in Bolivia and
Ecuador**

Sara De Meyer^{1*}, Lina Jaruseviciene², Apolinaras Zaborskis²,
Peter Decat¹, Bernardo Vega³, Kathya Cordova⁴, Marleen Temmerman¹,
Olivier Degomme¹ and Kristien Michiels¹

What's the evidence for including gender equality in sexuality education?

Recommended by international guidelines:

Standards for sexuality education in Europe

International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education (UN):

4. Sexuality education is firmly based on gender equality, self-determination and the acceptance of diversity.

Based on gender equality: CSE addresses the different ways that gender norms can influence inequality, and how these inequalities can affect the overall health and well-being of children and young people, while also impacting efforts to prevent issues such as HIV, STIs, early and unintended pregnancies, and gender-based violence. CSE contributes to gender equality by building awareness of the centrality and diversity of gender in people's lives; examining gender norms shaped by cultural, social and biological differences and similarities; and by encouraging the creation of respectful and equitable relationships based on empathy and understanding. The integration of a gender perspective throughout CSE curricula is integral to the effectiveness of CSE programmes. To learn more on how to understand the concept of gender, see *Section 9 - Glossary*.

What's the evidence for including gender equality in sexuality education?

Haberland, 2015 - The Case for Addressing Gender and Power in Sexuality and HIV Education: a comprehensive review of evaluation studies

“The programs that addressed gender or power were five times as likely to be effective as those that did not; fully 80% of them were associated with a significantly lower rate of STIs or unintended pregnancy. In contrast, among the programs that did not address gender or power, only 17% had such an association.”

What's the evidence for including gender equality in sexuality education

Evidence that sexuality education can contribute to:

- Lower homophobia
- Reduced homophobic bullying
- Expanded understanding of gender/gender norms
- Increased knowledge, awareness and appreciation of gender equity and sexual rights
- Increased awareness of discrimination and oppression based on gender and sexual orientation



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Review article

Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education

Eva S. Goldfarb, Ph.D. *, and Lisa D. Lieberman, Ph.D.

Department of Public Health, Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey

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Keywords: Sex education; Sexuality education; National Sex Education Standards; National Sexuality Education Standards; CSE; comprehensive sex education; Systematic Literature Review; K-12



Conclusion

Gender equality is far from being achieved

Gender norms are important influencer of sexuality and sexual health

Gender equality and sexuality education are mutually reinforcing:

- Including gender equality in sexuality education programmes results in better health outcomes
- Sexuality education programmes can also contribute to gender equality

Thank you!

Kristien.Michielsen@ugent.be



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