

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER

What is the difference between gender and biological sex?

KEY WORDS

differences | identity | reproduction



Exploring the difference between gender and biological sex is a necessary part of understanding human identity in general. This is a topic that's not black-and-white, and instead requires patience, understanding, and open-mindedness.

Biological sex is assigned at birth, and it is typically based on physical attributes. Think of it like the info you find on an ID card which describes age, name and whether you are male or female in the eyes of the law. So, the classification as male or female is a **legal recognition**.

This 'male or female' classification is based on **physical characteristics such as genitalia, chromosomes, and reproductive systems**. It is essential to recognise that an individual's biological sex **also considers "secondary sex" characteristics**, which manifest during puberty. These features that develop visibly or not include: the presence of facial hair, menstruation, breast development and difference in voice pitch.

Besides male or female, biological sex also includes a category for **intersex individuals**, as people that are born with physical or biological traits that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. Someone is determined as 'intersex' if they have a difference in chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, or other sexual characteristics.

How about gender?

Gender is an aspect of your personal, not assigned, identity. **It goes beyond the categories of male and female**. So, it's about how you see yourself – whether that's as a man, woman, both, or neither (which can be called 'nonbinary'). Unlike biological sex, we can conclude that **gender is a deeply personal and self-defined aspect of who you are**.

Understanding gender is a key part of growing up. This is because it can help us find the answers to questions about not just how we feel in our bodies, but also whether we relate to the expectations society has for men and women, or whether we prefer to be outside traditional gender norms.

Sometimes, biological sex and gender identity match up (like if you're assigned female at birth and feel like a girl), but sometimes they don't (like if you're assigned male but feel more like a girl). No matter the situation, ask yourself these tough questions and practice self-acceptance.

So, when you hear the terms "biological sex" and "gender," just know that one is about your physical attributes (visible or not), and the other is about your inner feelings and how you express them. Embracing and understanding your sexual orientation and gender identity is a journey of self-discovery and authenticity – you're awesome just the way you are! When you acknowledge and respect your unique experiences, you contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate world for everyone.

It may seem scary to figure things out as soon as possible, but there's no rush or predefined path – take it one question at a time, just don't forget to enjoy the ride of discovering yourself and celebrating who you are!



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