



SEX & GENDER

in cross-cultural traumatic stress research

Sex and gender from a Western perspective

- **Sex** refers to biological and physiological traits a person is born with.
- **Gender** describes how individuals understand themselves and relate to gendered social roles and norms.



Why does gender matter in traumatic stress research?

- Sex- and/or **gender-based differences are documented in the literature**, for instance in the types of traumatic events experienced and traumatic stress symptomatology.
- These differences are shaped by cultural values and beliefs, **raising complex questions** about how to safely and respectfully **include both binary and non-binary concepts of gender in cross-cultural research**.



Common Challenges and Potential Solutions

Ethical & Legal

Challenges: Gender diversity is not recognized or criminalized in some countries, placing participants at risk of physical harm and arrest. Ethics review boards in some countries resist the inclusion of non-binary response options in research studies.

Solutions: Include a “refuse to answer” option, allow the participant to provide a free text responses, or use qualitative interviews to elicit nuanced response.

Measurement

Challenges: In many languages, there are no specific terms for sex and gender, or the terms that do exist are not used colloquially.

Solution: Provide definitions of biological sex and the different gender identities.

Statistical Modeling

Challenge: Low statistical power is often an issue when studying the experiences of people with intersectional marginalized identities.

Solutions: Choose non-parametric tests, qualitative research designs, or combine gender identity categories for increased statistical power.

Reporting

Challenges: Researchers may use different definitions of sex and gender in their work, and well-meaning articles could be misused to further perpetuate discrimination and stigma.

Solutions: Published documents should include clear definitions, a positionality statement, and researchers should take responsibility for knowledge transfer activities to help shape the narrative.

Interested in sharing your thoughts on the topic?

Join the [sex and gender section](#) of the [Global Collaboration on Traumatic Stress Research](#).