



Terminology

Terminology

Sex identifies the biological differences between women and men.

Gender is the culturally specific set of characteristics that identify the social behaviour of women and men and the **relationship** between them. Gender, therefore, refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them and to the way it is socially constructed. Because it is a relational term, gender must include women and men. Like the concepts of class, race and ethnicity, gender is an analytical tool for understanding social processes.

Only a small proportion of the difference in the roles assigned by gender can be attributed to physical differences based on sex (such as pregnancy and childbirth, or differences in physiology and bodily functions).

Gender Equity means being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures are often needed to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating as equals.

Equity leads to equality.

Gender Equality means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results.

Originally it was believed that equality could be achieved simply by giving women and men the same opportunities. **Same** treatment, however, was found not necessarily to yield **equal** results. Today, the concept of equality acknowledges that women and men may sometimes require different treatment to achieve similar results, due to different life conditions or to compensate for past discrimination. It is this notion of equality that is embedded in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Gender equality, therefore, is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and the differences between women and men, and the varying roles they play.

Gender Equality Analysis refers, in the legal context, to a process that from the earliest working stage assesses the differential impacts on women and men of policies, programs, legislation and legal principles. This assessment considers gender differences, the nature of relationships between women and men and their varying socio-economic circumstances and takes into account compounding issues such as race, class, sexual orientation or disability (see *Policy of the Department of Justice on Gender Equality Analysis*).