

Which genders are you?

Gender Confusion



Level 3



10 to 30



120 minutes



Complexity: Level 3

Group size: 10 to 30

Time: 120 minutes

Overview: This activity combines an analytical exploration of concepts (terms) used in work around gender equality and how they are understood / used by young people or presented in the media and by the educational authorities. It allows participants to reflect on the role of language in gender-based violence.

Objectives:

- To understand the meaning of concepts such as sex, gender and sexual orientation
- To reflect on how different notions related to gender are presented in participants' environment and what impact it has on people and society at large
- To illustrate the dynamic and complex nature of gender identities

Materials:

- Pens and paper
- Appropriate visual aids and presentation equipment for the input
- Copies of the grid for group work

Preparation:

- Prepare a short input / presentation on terminology used in work around gender equality - covering at least terms such as sex, gender, transgender, sexual orientation, gender-based violence, gender-based discrimination. Definitions and explanations of these terms can be found in Chapter 1 of this manual and in the glossary at the end of the manual. The presentation can be made using flip-charts or as an electronic presentation.
- Copy handouts - one per each group



Instructions

- 1) Tell the participants that in this activity they will have time to reflect on how different terms related to gender and gender equality are understood by young people and other people or institutions in the society.
- 2) Divide participants into smaller groups: the number of groups should correspond to the number of terms you decide to explore together with the participants. Each group receives one term (e.g. gender) and the grid for group work, which you can find in the end of this activity. Tell the groups that they should first start with writing down their own understanding of the term, and then follow each box in the grid: how it is understood by other young people, how it is presented in the media and by educational authorities. Participants should base their reflection on what they know, what they heard or noticed in their own environment. Tell them that it is not a problem if they do not know some of the answers. Allow some 30 minutes for this part of the activity.
- 3) Once the groups finished their task, ask them to present their findings. You can allow some short time for questions after each presentation. The questions, however should only be asked if something is unclear. Do not open a discussion here.
- 4) At the end of the process give a brief presentation of the terminology used in the activity – use Chapter 1 and the Glossary of terms in this manual. Once it is done, continue with the debriefing and evaluation.

Debriefing and evaluation



Ask participants to sit in a circle, and ask them the following questions:

- How did you feel in this activity? How did you find the discussion in small groups? Were there any differences of opinion, or misunderstandings?
- Did your understanding of the term differ in comparison with the one presented in the end of the activity by the facilitator? What were these differences?
- Why do you think people have such different interpretations of terms relating to gender?
- Does the understanding of the terms by other young people and the way they are presented in the media and by educational authorities carry a positive or negative message? Why is it so? What impact does it have on the society?
- Do you agree that "gender" is political? Why yes / no?
- Can the use of language contribute to gender-based violence?
- How do gender related concepts, and the way they are used, contribute to discrimination? How can we avoid this?
- Is there any space for people in your community to discuss issues relating to gender and gender-based violence? To what extent are young people able to be involved in such debates? How could young people become more involved?

- Which human rights are violated in cases of gender-based violence? What can young people do to promote and protect human rights?



Tips for facilitators

Be aware that participants will have different approaches to, and knowledge of the topic. They may be confused about the meaning of terms, and there may be linguistic differences, particularly relating to transgender issues. Some participants in the group may have a better understanding of the concepts than others: it is important to reassure everyone that all opinions will be respected, and no-one should feel inhibited by other members of the group.

Try to explain and clarify, without giving participants the impression that you are telling them “the truth”. Be aware that in some languages the English word “gender” may not have a direct equivalent.



Suggestions for follow-up

If you would like to explore the concept of gender further, try the activity “Expectations and demands”, which uses brainstorming to help participants understand the different expectations towards, and demands upon, girls/ young women and boys/young men in contemporary society.

If the group has not already explored the human rights framework, and you would like to place gender issues in the wider context of human rights, you could try the activity “Act it out!” from *Compass – manual for human rights education with young people*.

Once participants have a basic understanding of the terms, it may be useful to explore stereotypes and prejudices related to gender and sexuality. Try running the activity “Let’s talk about sex!” from *Compass*. This activity uses the “fish-bowl” technique to explore attitudes to sexuality, including homophobia.



Ideas for action

Consider inviting a guest speaker from a local LGBT+ or gender organisation to come and talk to the group about gender issues and the work they are doing. Participants could prepare questions before the meeting.

Participants could prepare a lesson plan and deliver a mini workshop to their peers (in the youth club or at school) explaining different terms related to gender.



Grid for group work

You will receive one term used when talking about gender and gender equality. Write in each box how, in your opinion, this term is understood and presented by different people, including you. You will have some 30 minutes to do the task.

Gender Confusion

Term:

1. How do you understand it?

2. How is it generally understood by your peers / other young people?

3. How it is presented / promoted in the media?

4. How is it officially presented / promoted by the educational authorities around you?
