

# Why do men and women have such different experiences of health?

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



In looking at the question " Why do men and women have such different experiences of health", I am going to look into topics such as Biological differences, Gender responsibilities, and Sociological explanations.

The diversity in male and females health begins from puberty, usually around the age of ten to fifteen in both sexes. Young women begin their menstrual cycle at an average age of thirteen, so it is acceptable to say that they are aware of their Physical self early on in life, women are more likely to visit their doctor as a result of menstruation, and are also encouraged by their friends, family and the Media to seek medical advice when they have a concern about their sexual health, which would lead to Routine visits for smear tests, or contraceptive advice.

Conversely young men would not usually bother to go to the doctor possibly for the reason that they do not want to cause a fuss, or even their peers dismiss their ailment, with comments similar to " be a man".

Another biological factor is connected to differences in physical make-up other than biological function. This view is based on different genetic features; for example women are generally smaller and so men are generally considered to be stronger.

This view is, however fraught with inconsistencies because of the variations that obviously exist in physical attributes among men and women. It also ignores social and cultural factors that are vital to any appreciation of gender.

Our ideas in society tend to construct gender differences in health problems, there appears to be some evidence that men take more risks than women such as dangerous sports, Violent activities and hazardous occupations.

Although women tend to consult doctors more often statistics suggest they have more ill health, this could be because women in their socially produced gender roles are seen as more acceptable to show weakness and seek medical help and also if they are going to the doctor they are more likely to be diagnosed, possibly if men visited the doctor more often there would be a change in that statistic.

In childbirth, reproduction, and mental health, women are more likely to be given prescriptions for anti-depressants or tranquillisers, men however are more likely to have alcohol problems, a more socially acceptable response to stress than it is for women, although statistics indicate that women are catching up with men in the drinking stakes.

A woman's role is often looking after everyone in the family so she tends to carry an added burden of stress with an attitude of having to soldier on with her responsibilities so she may be prone to physical and mental disorders.

Victims of social and economic circumstances women tend to suffer from what is known as "housewife syndrome" the isolation and constant decision making involved in housework are very stressful as is the responsibility of looking after young children and managing a job, and of course we must not forget single mums they have the extra stress of either being on benefits and trying to feed themselves and their children as healthily as they can, or

being the only wage earner trying to do the same with very little time to relax which is a contributing factor towards stress not forgetting, men are single parents as well and do suffer from the same financial factors as single mothers.

In addition there are certain illnesses that women suffer from because of their biology such as post-natal depression, and the menopause, because women tend to live longer they are more likely to suffer from degenerative disorders like arthritis and senile dementia. And an alarming 21% of women suffer from some form of disability. Men are more at risk from Coronary heart disease and there is an increase in men only disorders such as Prostate, Testicular, and Bowel cancer.

Gender social roles are becoming less important, girls are doing better than boys at school, they are more career minded than ever, the emphasis is on funding for themselves, its almost as if they don't need men. So where does that leave men?

There is substantial evidence that more and more men live alone, there is an increase in the rates of mental illness, suicide, and even eating disorders.

Present day mobility, lack of roots, weakened family structure and increased pressure to succeed have all been suggested as playing a part in the growing trend toward high suicide rates in young men.

There are more emotional support networks aimed at women, leaving men feeling isolated, although the last five years has seen a boom in men's

magazines such as FHM, Loaded and Maxim. These magazines investigate a large number of health issues concerning men, and they incorporate relevant medical information such as home examination of their testicals in a jocular light hearted way, they also contain contact numbers and advice lines, which must be a reassurance for men.

The artefact theory suggests that the use of surveys for statistics is inaccurate because it fails to take into consideration the clinical iceberg where it is unknown how many people suffer illness as they don't always report it, also most health care happens in the home, usually women treating symptoms by self care. In the case of postal surveys not everyone will respond and generally women fill in the forms for other family members. It is also unreliable because the figures relate to males of working age and not females, or older and younger people also statistics change all the time.

However a survey carried out in 1992 showed that there were major gender differences in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour relating to health.

These figures come from surveys like the General Household Survey (GHS) which is a continuous survey based on a small sample of the population resident in private households in the UK, included in this survey are questions on fertility, housing, health, employment and education.