

The Lost Symbol: Integrating the Critical Impact of Sex, Gender, and Diversity when Considering Action on Health Inequity

Objectives:

To illustrate the critical importance of sex, gender, and diversity when developing policy options for addressing health inequities.

Methods:

The BC Centre of Excellence in Women's Health, Provincial Health Services Authority, and BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport conducted a sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA) of proposed policies to address health inequities in British Columbia. The analysis located BC health inequities within a social context to reveal how sex, gender, and diversity could improve health policy efficiency and efficacy.

The team reviewed policy recommendations in the following topic areas:

- Income – including minimum wage, earned income benefit, federal child benefit, and income assistance.
- Housing – including affordable housing availability, safety, and accessibility.

Results:

SGBA provided a lens through which key at-risk population groups could be identified and their needs and barriers understood. As a result, the team was able to recommend ways in which policies can be tailored to those with the highest need or altered where there is a need for a new approach to overcome barriers to access and utilization of services. Policy suggestions are offered in each of the areas described above.

Conclusions:

The lives of men and women living in marginalized situations and the mechanisms through which those situations impact their health are dramatically different. Sex-neutral policies and interventions ignore these impacts and risk being at best inefficient and at worst, counter-productive. Sex- and gender-based analysis is a valuable policy analysis tool through which this intersection of social positioning and health can be applied towards improving health policies aimed at addressing health inequities.