

Gender and HIV/AIDS

Biological & Socio-Cultural Factors



Men	Women
Biological Factors	
Usually infected a later age (>30).	Usually infected 5-10 years earlier than men, especially aged 11-29.
Lower physiological risk/vulnerability for men.	Physiology: women four times more likely to contract HIV and other STD's than men. Young women's developing genital tract especially vulnerable to passing of HIV virus
STI detection enabled by external genitalia and more reliable symptoms	STI detection more challenging because of internal genitalia and less reliable STI symptoms
Socio-Cultural Factors: Prevailing Norms and Expectations	
Sexual domination.	Emphasis on virginity and value of marriage and motherhood; unable to control sexual relations.
Multiple sex partners as norm.	High-risk behavior of regular sexual partner.
Presumption of knowledge (prevents seeking information/contraception/treatment).	Culture of silence on sexual matters (inappropriate to be aware of sexuality or suggest condom use).
Violence (including association with drugs/alcohol).	Cultural practices: female genital cutting, ritual cleansing, widow inheritance.
Frequency of drug abuse, including injection. Link between socializing and alcohol use.	Link between substance use and exchange of sex for money or drugs.
Imbalance of sexual power (including violence) Lack of responsibility for own sexuality.	Vulnerable to coerced sex, including rape and other sexual abuse, practice of dry sex.
Stigma attached to HIV/AIDS discourage testing knowledge sharing, and leads to ostracism	
Economic Factors	
Economic power.	Economic dependence & insecurity.
Control over resources.	Less access to and control of economic assets. Fewer options for income/asset creation, leading to greater vulnerability (poverty; malnutrition; exchange sex for money/favors). Lack of legal resources and discrimination in legal rights and protections.
Male occupations (e.g., truck driving, military) involve mobility and family disruption.	Resort to sex work by migrant or refugee women when migrating, or when families are disrupted.

Source: Adapted from Rao Gupta, Geeta. 2000. "The Gender Dimensions of HIV/AIDS: Putting Gender into the MAP." Washington, DC: The World Bank Africa Region Gender Team, Office of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management and other materials.