

Integrating sex and gender considerations in UK biomedical, health and care research

Sex, gender and other diversity characteristics play fundamental roles in individual and population health. They influence the medical conditions people develop, the symptoms they experience, the treatments and quality of care they receive, their disease progression and their overall outcomes. Therefore, studying and understanding sex and gender differences and similarities is essential for ensuring the safety and effectiveness of medicines and care, to improve the health of all people in the UK.

High-quality, reproducible and inclusive biomedical, health and care research requires consideration of sex and gender at every stage, from study design and recruitment to data analysis and transparent reporting of results. Various countries – notably [Canada](#), [the United States](#) and European nations under [Horizon Europe](#) – have developed standard, unified guidance for researchers about how adequately to consider sex dimensions in cell and animal studies, and sex and gender dimensions in human studies.

MRC launched its [new policy on Embedding diversity in research design](#) earlier this year. We are committed to providing our research community with the guidance, training and tools to ensure that future research meets the needs of all people, no matter their sex, gender or other diversity characteristics. At MRC, we will continue to work towards making this change through:

- working in partnership with funders and other stakeholders to align expectations of diversity in the design of biomedical studies across the sector
- updating our guidance and supporting material to help our applicants to plan for and undertake research that takes into account diversity considerations
- signposting existing resources and examples of best practice across the field
- monitoring the progress and evaluating the impacts of our new policy.

At MRC, we are working with the [MESSAGE](#) initiative to co-design a sex and gender policy framework which could guide and be adopted by organisations in the UK health and biomedical research sector. This framework will be available from 2024. Culture change in this space will ensure the UK cements its position as a world leader in rigorous, reproducible science and provides the most effective evidence to improve outcomes for patients and society, which MRC strongly supports.