

# Mars and Venus on the therapist's couch

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Generally speaking, men want a quick fix from psychological therapy and women want to talk about their feelings.

That is one of the findings of a study by Katie Holloway from the University of Portsmouth and colleagues being presented today, Thursday 19 January 2017, to the annual conference of the British Psychological Society's Division of Clinical Psychology in Liverpool.

The researchers asked 20 experienced therapists (clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists, and psychotherapists) whether they had identified [gender differences](#) in any aspects of their work.

All 20 of the therapists reported noticing gender differences in one or more aspect of therapy, and the overall message was that - in general - men want a quick fix and women want to talk about their [feelings](#).

John Barry from University College London, who worked with Katie Holloway on this study, said:

"One of the interesting findings was that 80 per cent of the therapists showed a reluctance to talk directly about gender differences in the needs of their clients. This could be due to the culture in academia, where discussions of gender similarities are more acceptable than discussions of gender differences.

"Psychology might be more effective in treating men if gender differences were taken into account more."

In a second study to be presented to the conference today, Louise Liddon, from Northumbria University, and her team asked 347 members of the general public to say what kind of therapy they would like if they needed help.

The men and women in this group, half of whom reported having received some form of therapy, showed many similarities in their preferences, but also some key differences. For example, men more than women expressed a preference for therapy that involved sharing and receiving advice about their concerns in informal groups.

More women than men preferred psychodynamic psychotherapy, where discussion focuses on feelings and past events.

There were interesting differences in coping strategies too, for example, women more than men used comfort eating, whereas men more than women used sex or pornography.

John Barry from University College London, who also worked on this study, said:

"Despite the fact that men commit suicide at three to four times the rate that women do, men don't seek psychological help as much. This might be because the types of treatment on offer are less appealing to men because - many psychological interventions are more about talking than about fixing problems.

"It is likely that men benefit as much as women from talking about their feelings, but if talking about feelings appears to be the goal of [therapy](#), then some men may be put off. Our study found that men were more likely than [women](#) to say that there is a lack of male-friendly therapies available."

Provided by British Psychological Society

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