

Definition of Sex and Why it Matters to the Women's Institute as a Whole

Definition of Sex

1. The definition of male and female that I understand
 - a. Female: an organism on a developmental pathway to produce larger gametes (ova) for the purpose of sexual reproduction. A woman is an adult human female.
 - b. Male: an organism on a developmental pathway to produce smaller mobile gametes (sperm) for the purpose of sexual reproduction. A man is an adult human male. ^[1]

Throughout this letter I use woman/women and man/men as exclusively biological sex categories. For trans woman/women I use the NFWI's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms.

2. I regard the definition above as merely a scientific fact, observable across all species that have a division for the purpose of sexual reproduction. I understand humans as a sexually dimorphic species. This definition means that humans can not change sex, it is immutable, trans women are unable to produce ova.
3. This was the definition that Maya Forstater used when she took her employers to court with a direct discrimination claim. It was recognised as a philosophical belief under s.10, Eq A. ^[2] The judge also noted that "whilst offensive to some, and notwithstanding its potential to result in the harassment of trans people in some circumstances, fell within the protection under Article 9(1), ECHR and therefore within s.10, Eq A. ^[3]
4. I read through the NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy there is no definition of what a woman is. It does define what a trans woman is though ^{[4], [5]}. The definition I am using would exclude trans women from joining the Women's Institute, however, this does lack nuance.

Why it Matters

5. If you can not define the group you seek to represent (women), how can you understand their needs and demands? One of the goals of the Women's Institute is campaigning on women specific issues; these are not limited to members' individual needs or experiences, but will benefit women who are not members of Women's Institutes and society as whole.
6. I will use the 2022 resolution as an example: Thinking Differently: Autistic and ADHD Women and Girls. If anyone is allowed to be a girl or woman how would it be possible to determine different that boys and men exhibit different traits, I quote:

“Women and girls are often better at masking or camouflaging their difficulties. In general, they engage in more “internalising” behaviour than boys, meaning they tend to take their problems out on themselves rather than others. According to the National Autistic Society’s Centre for Autism, professionals often don’t recognise and understand the different ways autism can manifest in women and girls” ^[6]

8. This is one example, I appreciate that many campaigns and resolutions are not always sex specific, but when they are, it is about women. To a certain extent it is fortuitous that this was selected by members in 2022 and it very neatly highlights my argument.

Conclusion

9. Women is a biological sex category, humans are incapable of changing sex. This is a protected belief under the Equality Act 2010.

10. Women as a biological group matter due to specific needs, as highlighted by Women’s Institute campaigns. A person “who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman”^[7] does not fall into this category.

References

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3. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60c1cce1d3bf7f4bd9814e39/Maya_Forstater_v_CGD_Europe_and_others_UKEAT0105_20_JOJ.pdf
4. NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021
5. NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms
6. <https://www.thewi.org.uk/campaigns/key-and-current-campaigns/thinking-differently>
7. NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms: Transgender (trans) woman.