

## **Anonymous NPS3 – Written evidence (NPS0082)**

Question 1. How can racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and ableism in sport be tackled?

1. To ensure fairness in sport UK government should be promoting a 3<sup>rd</sup> category for trans identified males, for example, if they are not prepared to play sport with other male-born people. This would provide fair competition, protect the safety and dignity of female sports participants.
2. Create clear guidance on what and how organisations should provide for female single sex provision, male single sex provision and, separately, trans gender provision. Provide clearer guidance on the single-sex exemptions in the Equality Act 2010. (Reference: <https://fairplayforwomen.com/calls-for-clearer-guidance-single-sex-spaces/>) This is needed for safety, fairness and dignity of all participants in sport. The Equality Act allows for exclusions due to sex in sports teams, changing rooms and toilets, for example.
3. I have been a member of a mixed-sex softball team: equal number of players divided by male and female sex. When I played this was clearly a mixed-sex team. My team and I would have been at a disadvantage if male-bodied but female identifying people took places reserved for the female-bodied players. By not protecting sex-based rights in sport, this destroys female and mixed sex sports. I now see that my former sports league is "mixed-gender". This simple change of terminology has destroyed the fairness previously created in this sports league by blurring the categories of male-sex and female-sex players. This will potentially push out women players from teams who want to win games as they will be the weaker players: who cannot run as fast or throw as far as the male-bodied players. This league is a social league with an emphasis on social, companionship and friendship. This aspect of this sport will be denied to new women players. The period of my life when I participated in a team in this league played a big part in helping me cope during a dark period of my life. I feel it is misguided or misogynistic to exclude females from sport in this way.

Question 3: How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

4. I have a concern that government is overlooking the fact that girls and women find it difficult to get into sport and therefore will impact their ability to keep and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This is evidenced by the fact that there has been a need for campaigns to get women and girls to participate in sport eg '**This Girl Can**' campaign is a National Lottery/Sport England backed campaign launched in 2015 stating as an objective "to get women and girls moving, regardless of shape, size and ability." They claim that they have helped nearly 3 million women to get

more active but that there is still more work to do because their research shows that “many women are put off taking part in physical activity due to a fear of judgement – this might be about the way they look when they exercise, that they’re not good enough to join in or they should be spending more time on their families, studies or other priorities.”

(Reference: <https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/this-girl-can>)

5. Women and girls need to know that they will be able to participate in single-sex sports, if that is what they want to do for reasons of dignity, privacy and safety. I have friends whose daughters gave up sports eg rowing because they were embarrassed participating in front of boys. This is due to the fact that teenage girls become more embarrassed about their bodies, especially in front of boys (and therefore all male-bodied people). Providing/allowing more single-sex sports facilities would be helpful in this situation to encourage more girls to continue sports they love at the time they are growing into adults and becoming more self-conscious.
6. Conflating sex with gender is threatening to the existence of female-sex based teams in sport. See that Sport England use the term “gender” instead of “sex” which makes it unclear if this group now includes male-bodied people who identify as women in womens’ sports.  
<https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/gender>
7. Yet this same group have supported the “This Girl Can” campaign (Reference: <https://www.sportengland.org/news/this-girl-can-returns-with-new-tv-advert>). Sport England need to be clear what they mean by “Girl”. I am concerned that they will put me and my female family and friends at risk of injury by playing sport against male-bodied people identifying as female who have not declared and I will not be allowed to know so cannot make informed decisions about my own safety prior to participating. I need to know as I have been injured by male-bodied players in various sports: tennis, hockey, football, softball and squash. How does the use of the term “gender” instead of “sex” allow me to make informed decisions about my own safety in the future?
8. You must address potential problems of privacy and safeguarding if sports bodies are now referring to “gender” instead of “sex” because sports bodies have taken advice from activist groups such as Stonewall, Gendered Intelligence and Mermaids without any reference to women’s groups such as Fair Play For Women. This impacts women and girls in many ways: fair competition, changing rooms in particular. Examples where this is of concern are that, although World Rugby have declared that trans identified male-bodied people cannot play in elite rugby teams because of strength, size, weight issues, the English RFU has refused to apply this rule to lower level teams and are waiting for more evidence. This has a direct impact on whether women and girls will be safe to play against male-bodied people. This must be addressed at the ground level of sport.

9. So, although World Rugby stated that "As with many other sports, the physiological differences between males and females necessitate dedicated men's and women's contact rugby categories for safety and performance reasons. Given the best available evidence for the effects of testosterone reduction on these physical attributes for transgender women, it was concluded that safety and fairness cannot presently be assured for women competing against transwomen in contact rugby." (Reference: World Rugby <https://www.world.rugby/news/591776/world-rugby-approves-updated-transgender-participation-guidelines>), the English RFU refused to implement this policy (Reference: English Rugby Football Union: <https://www.outsports.com/2020/10/15/21517019/rugby-union-england-transgender-policy-world-rugby-inclusion-fair-play-for-women-transphobia>)
10. The safest answer to this (and to comply with World Rugby's conclusions and advice) is for male-bodied rugby players to play rugby in teams that match their sex. There is a big risk that female-bodied players will be seriously injured playing rugby in England. This has put me off playing women's rugby. I have female friends who have played rugby 29 and who have received neck injuries from playing against female players. I am afraid that, in the future, there will be more severely damaging injuries receive by women and girls if this English RFU decision to ignore World Rugby's policy continues. I am now completely put off playing rugby as there is clearly no regard for the safety of female players. I will actively try to dissuade my female friends from participating in rugby and recommend that they find another less dangerous sport for women and girls.

*29 January 2021*