



WDI USA Journalism Style Manual

A reference guide for reporting on incidents and issues affecting the sex-based rights of women and girls.

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Introduction

WDI USA is the United States [chapter](#) of Women’s Declaration International, a global volunteer organization that works to advance the [Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights](#) (the Declaration) in law and throughout society.

At WDI USA, our commitment to reality-based language sets us apart from other organizations that work on women’s issues. For this reason, we have created this style manual outlining our principles for writing, reporting, and testifying on issues that primarily affect women as a sex class, such as “gender identity”, abortion rights, sexual abuse, and same-sex attraction. These issues, though they may also affect some men, have much more profound implications for women and girls. In many ways, they have the potential to threaten our very existence in law, our safety, and our participation in civic and social life.

The language that is used in discourse around the idea of “gender identity” is of utmost importance in conveying our message clearly. If we allow any dilution of the language we use to refer to our sexed bodies, or to describe our realities in them, we compromise not only our integrity, but the basis on which women have won our sex-based rights.

The physical and legal human rights of women and girls are at stake, and must take precedence over any undefinable ideas or immeasurable feelings that may conflict with them. WDI USA holds this line firmly, and will not concede to any clouding of the meaning of our words. We insist on communicating the exact truth, unapologetically, as a necessary barrier between women and girls and those who would erase us from linguistic and legal existence. Please use this manual to stand with us in factual reality whenever writing or speaking.

Part 1:

Terms to Avoid and Suggested Replacements

To ensure absolute clarity, use only accurate terms and phrases that have precise, comprehensible definitions. Articulating the reality of women’s experience, and the threats gender identity ideology poses to our rights, requires that we make only statements that are true, and that do not create a misleading impression or misrepresent our position.

Transgender, or any variant/derivative:

The manufactured word “transgender” does not have a universally agreed upon definition. Even the group of people who call themselves “transgender” have not, and cannot, agree on a single, coherent definition. The word “transgender”, including any of its derivatives or variations, such as “**trans**”, “**transwoman**”, “**transman**”, “**trans-identified**”, can never be used with any exactitude or credibility. Instead of using it, define what you mean by it. For example:

Instead of this	Use this
Transgender people	Those who claim to be the opposite sex
Trans women	Men
Trans men	Women

If it is necessary to clarify that the person in question claims to be the opposite sex, then just say so. For example:

Instead of this	Use this
Trans women are being housed in women’s prisons.	Men who claim to be women are being housed in women’s prisons.

Transgender athletes are not allowed on girls' teams.	Boys who say they're girls are not allowed on girls' teams.
Trans-identified males are requesting services in women's clinics.	Men who claim they're women are requesting services in women's clinics.
Do you welcome trans women in this women's shelter?	Do you welcome men who say they're women in this women's shelter?

Non-Binary:

The same logic as in “transgender” applies to the word and idea of “non-binary”. There is no agreed-upon definition, and there can never be one. People who claim to be “non-binary” are simply rejecting both sets of sex-based stereotypes, and to some extent, that definition includes everyone; it is not possible for any person to conform to 100% of sex stereotypes 100% of the time. This term therefore can't be used in any meaningful way. Simply refer to all people by **accurate, sex-based pronouns**. When necessary for clarification, in addition to referring accurately to a person's sex, add that the person **denies that she or he is in a sex category**.

Instead of this	Use this
Sam, a non-binary student, reported Mr. Johnson for sexual harassment.	Sam, a student who says she is neither male nor female, reported Mr. Johnson for sexual harassment.

Gender:

The word gender is often misused and is easily misinterpreted by the average reader. The writer sometimes means sex, and sometimes means sex-based stereotypes. In place of the word gender, define the concept with reference to sex (a person's reproductive capacity or biology) for greater clarity.

Instead of this	Use this

The gender pay gap still exists.	The sex-based pay gap still exists.
A person's gender is observed at birth.	A person's sex is observed at birth.
Gender is socially constructed.	Sex-based stereotypes are socially constructed.
Gender nonconformity	Nonconformity to sex-based stereotypes.

Misgender:

People who claim to have “gender identities” often claim that it harms them to be “misgendered”, which in reality, means **correctly sexed**. This is a tactic intended to compel speech and silence opposition. Always refer to everyone by correct sex pronouns.

Male-Bodied, Female-Bodied:

No one is born in the opposite sexed body. Male-bodied people are always male. Female-bodied people are always female.

Instead of this	Use this
Male-bodied athletes do not belong in sports programs designed for females.	Male athletes do not belong in sports programs designed for females.
Male-bodied athletes on cross-sex hormones retain biological physical advantages over female-bodied athletes.	Male athletes on cross-sex hormones retain biological physical advantages over female athletes.

Identify as:

Sex cannot be changed. Regardless of a person's sense of identity, a person is and will remain either female or male. When referring to a man who claims to

“identify as a woman”, simply refer to him as **a man**. When clarification is necessary, refer to him as **a man who says he’s a woman**.

Transition:

People cannot change sex, so there is no such thing as “transition”, “transitioning”, or being “transitioned” to the other sex. Instead, when people undergo medical interventions in an attempt to approximate the opposite sex, such as cross-sex hormones, mastectomies, or genital surgeries, use the accurate word, “**medicalized**”.

Detransition, Detransitioner:

While it’s true that people who call themselves “detransitioners” are making news headlines, and bringing much needed attention to the dangers of medicalization, the word “detransition” gives credence to the idea that “transitioning” is possible in the first place. Instead of using this common misnomer, say instead “**people who are no longer trying to change sex**”, or “**those who have stopped medicalizing their bodies**”. When referring to someone who has stopped trying to change sex and has **not** been medicalized, the accurate word for that person is **desister**.

Instead of this	Use this
Corey, a detransitioner, has always loved mud.	Corey, who is no longer trying to change sex, has always loved mud.

Top Surgery/Bottom Surgery:

It is important not to use euphemisms to glaze over the horrors of the body-altering surgeries performed on people who try to change sex. Use accurate medical terms such as **elective double mastectomy**, **hysterectomy**, **orchiectomy**, or appropriately descriptive terms such as **castration** and **genital mutilation** to describe the experimental, permanent damages being done to patients.

HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy):

Trying to change sex by taking wrong-sex hormones is a dangerous, experimental, mutilating practice. To call it hormone replacement therapy is inaccurate and harmfully misleading. In reality, it is the damaging **introduction of wrong-sex hormones**, or **cross-sex hormones**, into the body. Use the names of the specific drugs themselves, if known. For example: “men who take exogenous estrogen.”

LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA+, LGB, “Gay”, etc. and “Queer”:

Any conflation of same-sex attracted people with the “gender identities” of T, Q, I, A, etc. serves to delegitimize and erase the right of same-sex attracted people to be openly and exclusively same-sex attracted. Since there are only two sexes, there are only two ways to be same-sex attracted. The T (“transgender”) indicates people who pretend to be the opposite sex; therefore, by its inclusion, same-sex attracted people are required to consider people of the opposite sex as potential sexual partners. Those who refuse its inclusion are labeled bigoted and “transphobic.”

The term “gay”, when used to include both gay men and lesbians, tends both to erase lesbians and to imply similarities that do not exist in the sexualities and political interests of the two groups.

Queer is a derogatory word historically used as a slur against same-sex attracted people, many of whom still consider it offensive and degrading. Queer Theory refers to the postmodern ideology that legitimizes any sexual practice that deviates from societal norms, including pedophilia, incest, and other sadistic sexual acts that are inherently harmful and immoral.

All intersex people (or more accurately, people with Disorders of Sexual Development) are either male or female, so the same sexual orientation categories that apply to everyone else also apply to them.

“Gay” should only be used in combination with “man” or “men”, so that it clearly does not include lesbians. Avoid using “LGB” except when quoting others. When referring to same-sex attracted people, use unabbreviated, accurate terms such as **lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people**.

‘Coming Out’ as a Different Sex Category:

When the term was developed, “coming out of the closet” as same-sex attracted required profound courage, as discrimination against lesbians and gay men was rampant and often violent. People who want to change sex do not face this kind of discrimination; to the contrary, they are generally culturally celebrated and awarded privilege. For them to adopt the term “coming out” is a form of cultural appropriation that should not be conceded. Rather than using language that erases lesbians and gay men as the ones who bravely pioneered and coined “coming out”, it is more accurate to say that a person is **lying about her or his sex, disguising her or his sex, or trying to deceive others into accepting her or him as the other sex**.

Trans Activists:

This term misleads the reader into thinking that “trans” is a kind of civil rights movement for the rights of an oppressed group. To give an accurate representation, use the term “**men’s sexual rights activists**”. Alternatively, you can use the word “**misogynists**” to describe the group that is attempting to erase the rights and protections of women.

People With Vaginas/People Who Menstruate:

All people who have vaginas, wombs, and menstruate are women or girls. Only women and girls give birth, are mothers, and are lesbians. All so-called “inclusive” language modifications, such as “people with uteruses” are used to erase women as the class of humans who are oppressed on the basis of sex, and who gestate and birth children. Simply say **women** or **girls** when referring to specific lesbians and mothers. By extension, never use obfuscating words like

“chestfeeding” or “birthing person” that erase **women** and **mothers** from the language around childbirth.

“Inclusive”:

The word “inclusive” is increasingly used to refer to policies which either conflate same-sex attraction with “gender identity” or allow men into spaces designated for women. Because the word “inclusive” typically has a positive connotation, this usage creates a misleading impression that such policies are beneficial. Instead, accurately describe them as **intrusive**.

“Transphobic”:

When reporting on controversies related to gender or “gender identity”, accurately describe the specific views of dissenters to gender identity ideology. Additionally, include evidence of said statements or actions, rather than merely reporting that an individual or public figure said something that was deemed “transphobic” by others.

Part 2:

Reporting Principles

Alignment with the Declaration on Women’s Sex-Based Rights:

Refer to a specific Article of the Declaration on Women’s Sex-Based Rights when applicable, and use the language from the Declaration as a guide. For example, “The Idaho law is consistent with Article 7 of the Declaration on Women’s Sex-Based Rights, which reaffirms women’s rights to the same opportunities as men to participate actively in sports and physical education, in that it prohibits males from competing as females on the basis of sex.”

Names & Pronouns:

When reporting on anyone who claims to be the opposite sex, use the correct sex pronoun. If the person has changed her or his legal name, use the new legal name and include a reference to the person’s previous name. For instance: “Rachel Levine (formerly known as Richard) currently serves as the 17th Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).”

Using They or Their as a Singular Pronoun:

“They” refers to a group of more than one individual. When “they” is used as the personal pronoun of someone whose sex is known, this usage obscures reality and creates confusion. People who call themselves “non-binary” often insist that “they” be used in place of a sex-based singular pronoun. Instead, **always refer to an individual using an accurate, sex-based pronoun.** Use “her or his” where someone’s sex is not known.

Use of Qualifiers:

- **Biological as a prefix, as in ‘biological woman’: NO**

To qualify a person’s sex by adding “biological” implies that there is another kind of person that is that sex. Simply use the accurate, sex-based word to refer to each person: **woman, man, girl, or boy.**

- **Cisgender, Cis woman, Cis man: NO**

To qualify a person’s sex by adding “cisgender” or “cis” implies that there is another kind of person that is that sex. Simply use the accurate, sex-based word to refer to each person: **woman, man, girl, or boy.**

- **Feminist/Feminism: YES**

Feminism is a political advocacy movement for the liberation of the sex class women. However, there are disagreements about what constitutes liberation. For this reason, it is a good idea to **add a descriptor or qualifier to denote which sect of feminists you are referring to.** Those who promote the idea that some men are women should not be referred to as feminists.

Perspective - Naming the Perpetrator:

When reporting on violence against women, avoid using a passive voice, which erases men as perpetrators, and obscures reality. Put the perpetrator in the active role.

Instead of this	Use this
The woman was raped by sex traffickers and left unconscious on the beach.	Sex traffickers raped the woman and left her unconscious on the beach.

“In every case, if we say men who kill women, men who rape women, men who rape children, men who pretend to be women... it’s only by doing that really clearly that we even begin to get a picture of patriarchy.” - Julia Long

Correcting Misrepresentations:

It is common to find headlines that confuse readers about the content of the story. For instance, it is common for reporters to write that a man who says he's a woman is "a woman" when he has committed a heinous crime, and that a man who says he's a woman is a "trans woman" when he has been victimized. Always report on stories involving incidents of male violence consistently with this Manual. Clearly identify a male perpetrator as a man (or boy in the case of minors) and refer to men as men, using the correct sex pronouns.