

Input to IE SOGI report to HRC62

Dear Mr Reid,

We note your intention to present to the 62nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the topic of violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and queer ('LBQ') women.

Scottish Lesbians is an unfunded, voluntary organisation formed in 2022 with the aim of campaigning for the rights and wellbeing of lesbians. We believe that, as lesbians, we have the right to meet and organise on the basis of being same-sex attracted women. Because we are a lesbian-only organisation, we focus our responses here on lesbians.

Definitions to be used in your report

We believe that to produce a report on violence and discrimination against a minoritised group, a clear and unambiguous definition of the group membership is needed. We note the following from your own introduction to your report:

This report seeks to contribute to the mandate's evidence base by incorporating holistic and intersectional perspectives to examine the material consequences of SOGI-based discrimination and exclusion on LBQ women. To this end, the IE SOGI recognizes that LBQ identities encompass a diverse range of experiences, including those of transgender women who identify as lesbian or bisexual, and/or queer. The report is also interested in documentation that speaks to these intersecting experiences of gender identity and sexual orientation.

(<https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2026/call-input-thematic-report-hrc62-violence-and-discrimination-experienced>)

We do not recognise the above definition as being in any way applicable to lesbians, and we reject its usefulness for the purposes of your report. You will know of the decision of the UK Supreme Court, in 2025, in a case brought by For Women Scotland, that sex for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 is defined as biological sex, and that lesbians are same-sex attracted biological women. Please see in particular the point below:

206. Accordingly, a person with same sex orientation as a lesbian must be a female who is sexually oriented towards (or attracted to) females, and lesbians as a group are females who share the characteristic of being sexually oriented to females. This is coherent and understandable on a biological understanding of sex. On the other hand, if a GRC under section 9(1) of the GRA 2004 were to alter the meaning of sex under the EA 2010, it would mean that a trans woman (a biological male) with a GRC (so legally female) who remains sexually oriented to other females would become a same sex attracted female, in other words, a lesbian. The concept of sexual orientation towards members of a particular sex in section 12 is rendered meaningless. It would also affect the composition of the groups who share the same sexual orientation (because a trans woman with a GRC and a sexual orientation towards

women would fall to be treated as a lesbian) in a similar way as described above in relation to women and girls. (https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf)

In the UK, therefore, it is settled in law that lesbians are same-sex attracted females, and the definition used by the UN is unsupported. We would also note that although the above cited Supreme Court decision applies to the UK, there is an ongoing international effort by lesbians to have our rights reinstated on the basis of our sex and our sexual orientation. **It is not an exaggeration to say that the use of the word 'lesbian' as an honorary or vanity title for heterosexual males, is itself an act of discrimination against lesbians.**

Research

It should go without saying that good research and data collection depends on having robust definitions in place. There is currently a dearth of published, peer-reviewed research concerning the lives and needs of lesbians, and the field of lesbian research has been gravely obstructed and undermined by the use of incorrect definitions of 'lesbian'.

In our 2025 Lesbian Survey, we asked lesbians to report on issues impacting lesbians. The survey attracted almost 700 international responses, with the following issues particularly highlighted as problems for lesbians: loss of lesbian spaces; inclusion of men in lesbian groups/spaces; and organisations being captured by gender ideology.
(<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/571aa49f-c57c-4592-8025-97f9a242321e/downloads/ecf8a86d-6dc9-442b-aecd-5b67560a7c02/Scottish%20Lesbians%20Survey%202025.pdf?ver=1765788293894>)

A particular issue for lesbians has been the coercive concept of the 'cotton ceiling', which refers to sexual pressure resulting from the aspirations of heterosexual males ('transwomen') to be perceived as, and in relationship with, lesbians. Please see the work of Angela Wild
(<https://www.gettheloutuk.com/attachments/lesbiansatgroundzero.pdf>) This sexual coercion was also reported in our own 2023 research.
(<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/571aa49f-c57c-4592-8025-97f9a242321e/downloads/Study%20final%20print%20PDF.pdf?ver=1765788294026>)

Violence, abuse and aggression towards lesbians

There have been numerous documented instances of lesbians being targeted for abuse and aggression as a result of speaking or campaigning on the issues affecting us. It is beyond our reach to summarise this in our response here. As a grassroots, campaigning group, however, we can offer recent examples of our own experiences of violence, abuse and aggression.

In October 2025, we were invited to contribute presentations to the FiLiA 2025 Conference in Brighton, England. You may be aware that the conference venue was vandalised shortly before the conference started, and that a group called 'Bash Back' claimed responsibility for the criminal damage. Others posted that they intended to enter and disrupt the conference, with security implications for the women attending and speaking. We and other lesbians were named by 'Bash Back' as targets for their intimidating and threatening action, as you can see below.

STATEMENT ON BASH BACK ACTION AGAINST FILIA (9/10/25)

**LAST NIGHT, ACTIONISTS FROM BASH BACK
TOOK ACTION AGAINST THE BRIGHTON CENTRE,
VENUE OF THE FILIA CONFERENCE, WHICH PLAYS
HOST TO SOME OF THE MOST VICIOUS
TRANSPHOBIA IN POP POLITICS.**

**FILIA'S SPEAKERS THIS YEAR INCLUDE BIGOT-
PROVOCATEURS JULIE BINDEL, LGB ALLIANCE
AND "SCOTTISH LESBIANS" - A GROUP BEHIND
THE SEGREGATIONIST 2025 SUPREME COURT
RULING.**

**THEIR VILE AND HATEFUL RHETORIC LEADS TO
THE SAME KIND OF DISCRIMINATORY VIOLENCE
THAT KILLS HUNDREDS OF TRANS PEOPLE EVERY
YEAR.**

**THESE BIGOTS HAVE OUR BLOOD ON THEIR
HANDS. THEY USE THIS CONFERENCE TO GLOAT.
THIS YEAR, WE WILL NOT LET THEM.**



We have previously been targeted for abuse and aggression when we attended Edinburgh Pride in 2024, and our 2025 Lesbian Survey, described earlier, attracted 26 directly abusive responses.

Our experiences are sadly not uncommon among lesbians who choose to advocate for lesbian rights. There are, of course, many different strands to the violence and discrimination faced by lesbians. Young lesbians, in particular, are worryingly deprived of support in the current context, as the majority of services aimed at this demographic are ones which tell them that men can and should be included as lesbians. Old-style homophobia has not gone away, and there are still countries in which it is illegal to be same-sex attracted and in which lesbians are unable to come out for fear of direct violence. Please see FiLiA's campaign relating to lesbians in the Kakuma refugee camp.
(<https://www.filia.org.uk/kakuma-campaign>)

We have focused our comments here on our experiences in Scotland, a country in which it is nominally safe to be a lesbian, and yet one in which few lesbians actually feel empowered to speak publicly about the challenges we face. Our response is also informed by the premise on which you have introduced your intention to report. We are concerned that your report, rather than shedding light on lesbian experiences of violence and discrimination, could simply obfuscate the issues and lead to further discrimination.

Scottish Lesbians' resources are limited to our own time and efforts. While we would be happy to engage in further dialogue with you about the experiences of lesbians, we would seek assurance in the first case that you, and by extension the UN, are willing to listen to minoritised groups and not simply impose offensive and incorrect definitions on us, further contributing to the problems we face.

Best wishes,

Dr Lorraine Douglas and Jenny Willmott

Directors, Scottish Lesbians