# UK Supreme Court rules woman in Equality Act refers to biological sex



The UK Supreme Court has delivered a unanimous ruling clarifying that the term “woman” within the Equality Act 2010 refers specifically to biological sex. This decision arises from a legal challenge against an attempt by the Scottish government to broaden the legal definition to include transgender women holding Gender Recognition Certificates (GRCs).

The case directly concerned whether transgender women with GRCs were eligible for roles on public boards designated exclusively for women. The Supreme Court sided with campaigners who opposed the Scottish government’s expansion, resulting in transgender women no longer qualifying for such gender-specific positions.

Deputy President of the Supreme Court Lord Hodge, issuing the ruling, emphasised that the judgement does not represent a victory for one group at the expense of another. He also reaffirmed that transgender identities continue to receive legal protection under the Equality Act 2010, safeguarding against discrimination and harassment.

Nevertheless, the ruling has elicited a range of emotional and political responses. Women Scotland, an organisation which initiated the legal challenge, welcomed the decision. In contrast, transgender rights advocates expressed distress and concern.

Helen Belcher, chair of the transgender rights group TransActual, told the South West Londoner: “Trans people are devastated. The Supreme Court chose not to hear from any trans people, preferring instead to listen to exclusionary groups. The intent seems clear: to exclude trans people wholesale from participating in UK society. Today, we are feeling very excluded.”

Belcher further warned that the ruling risks exacerbating divisions within society. “Society will divide more sharply into queer-friendly and queer-hostile spaces, and it will be the poorer for it,” she added.

Scottish Trans, a prominent advocacy group, urged calm and cautioned against hasty interpretations of the court’s decision. However, Belcher also called on the governments of the UK and Scotland to actively defend transgender rights and resist discrimination, describing the ruling as a “biased and harmful court ruling.”

She encouraged LGBTQ+ communities to remain united and resilient, stating: “We call on LGBTQ+ people to continue to stand together, strong and defiant, as we enter a new era of our long struggle for equality and civil rights.”

The ruling marks a significant moment in the ongoing legal and social discussions surrounding transgender rights and gender definitions within UK legislation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf> - This PDF contains the Supreme Court's judgment on the definition of 'woman' under the Equality Act 2010, which clarifies that 'woman' refers to biological sex and addresses legal challenges related to transgender women's roles on public boards. The ruling emphasizes that transgender identities remain protected against discrimination.
* <https://knowledge.dlapiper.com/dlapiperknowledge/globalemploymentlatestdevelopments/2025/Supreme-Court-rules-that-meaning-of-man-and-woman-in-Equality-Act-2010-refers-to-biological-sex> - This article discusses the Supreme Court's decision that the terms 'man', 'woman', and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex. It highlights the implications for single-sex facilities and services while asserting that trans people remain protected from discrimination.
* <https://www.globalworkplaceinsider.com/2025/04/definition-of-woman-for-the-purposes-of-the-equality-act-2010/> - This piece explains how the Supreme Court's interpretation ensures consistency across the Equality Act 2010, maintaining that 'woman' and 'sex' are understood in biological terms, which is necessary for certain provisions like single-sex services to function coherently.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/jk-rowling-calls-for-sir-keir-starmer-to-apologise-after-supreme-court-ruling-on-women-13353967> - This news article covers reactions to the Supreme Court ruling, including political and social responses. It highlights the ongoing debate and emotional impact of the decision on various groups within society.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although the content isn't directly accessible, this URL refers to the original source article discussing the UK Supreme Court's ruling on the definition of 'woman' and its implications for transgender rights and social dynamics.