



Frontline Feminists Scotland

WOMEN'S VOICES MATTER

Frontline Feminists Scotland is a collective of women who are campaigning to protect women's rights. Established in 2020, we come from a range of backgrounds, including workers from violence against women services, health and criminal justice, who have had a range of personal experiences. A number of our members are survivors of male violence and abuse, including rape and attempted rape.

Outlined below are the reasons we are submitting this note of support for the Murray Blackburn and MacKenzie petition: PE1876: "Accurately record the sex of people charged or convicted of rape or attempted rape".

- We believe it is essential to record accurate data with regard to perpetrators of rape and attempted rape. Principle four of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy states a commitment to ensuring that, "Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response". We believe the inaccurate recording of the biological sex of perpetrators will undermine this principle and impact not only on decision makers understanding of nature of rape and attempted rape, but also on strategic approaches towards prevention, such as education, awareness raising and development of support.
- Removing accurate recording of the sex of perpetrators we believe will undermine the law itself. The law defines rape as involving penetration by a penis. A focus on gender identity we believe will unnecessarily confuse data in relation to convictions, as being defined as a woman would suggest the perpetrator is of female biology. This would also undermine public campaigns to raise awareness of dangers to women and children, and in some cases men. This we believe would be particularly true for media reporting, a vital source of information for communities.
- Many of our members provide services to women and we believe the focus on the gender identity of the perpetrator, rather than the biological sex, would further distress victims of rape and attempted rape. Being believed and appropriateness of responses to survivors is essential to reporting and recovery. We believe women being forced to recognise their perpetrators gender identity rather than their biological sex will undermine their sense of reality, cause further unnecessary distress and ultimately could affect reporting levels, which are already far too low, "Where this was known, only just over half of survivors (50.35%) seeking support from rape crisis centres in 2019-20 had reported to the police." Rape Crisis Scotland Annual Report 2019/20.
- It is our understanding that there are few cases in Scotland that require this change to approach, yet the immediate and long term implications could be complex and distressing to survivors. We would suggest that the law by definition is clear regarding the biological sex of perpetrators of rape and attempted rape and convictions should be recorded as such.

We would therefore support Murray Blackburn and MacKenzie's petition be taken forward with further action to determine the immediate impact and the long term impact of any changes to data collection, including the undermining of legislation and national policy, from omitting biological sex of perpetrators from statistics.

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