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**Liz Mckeown | Director, Public Policy Analysis**

Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation  
Office for Statistics Regulation  
(by email)

23 March 2022

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter regarding the article [What is the difference between sex and gender?](#) that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published in 2019. I appreciate the time your team have taken to discuss the purpose of the article and its fit with wider ONS work on the topic area of sex and gender.

As you note, this was an exploratory article which aimed to explain the differences between the two terms and highlight the complexities in reporting the required data for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators. We agreed with your team the need to be clear to users as to when the article was published; its original purpose in relation to the SDGs; and, that the government definitions included in the article are not current and do not reflect a current cross-government agreed position. The information banner added to the web page yesterday seeks to provide that clarity.

Separately, the GSS Harmonisation Team in the ONS will be reviewing harmonised standards and guidance for the topics of sex and gender identity in the coming months, as outlined in the [Government Statistical Service \(GSS\) Harmonisation Team workplan](#) published on 25 February 2022. My colleagues would be happy to engage further with your team on this and to provide any additional information that might be useful on their upcoming work.

I am copying this letter to Rachel Skentelbery, Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics at ONS.

Yours sincerely,

Liz McKeown  
Director, Public Policy Analysis, ONS