What does “**INTERSEX**” mean?

Intersex individuals are born with physical sex characteristics, such as genitals, gonads, and chromosome patterns, that don't fit typical male or female categories.

The term "intersex" is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of natural bodily differences. In some instances, intersex traits are noticeable at birth. In other cases, these traits might not become apparent until puberty. Additionally, some chromosomal intersex variations might never be physically visible.

Experts estimate that between **0.05%** and **1.7%** of the population is born with intersex traits. To put this in perspective, the upper estimate is comparable to the number of people born with red hair. It's important to understand that being intersex is related to biological sex characteristics and is distinct from a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. An intersex person can be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual. They may identify as female, male, both, or neither.

Due to the fact that their bodies are different from typical male or female bodies, intersex children and adults often face significant stigma. This stigma can lead to numerous human rights violations, including violations of their rights to health and physical integrity, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, and equality and non-discrimination. These violations can occur in various settings, including healthcare, education, and social environments, exacerbating the challenges that intersex individuals face throughout their lives.

The experiences of intersex people highlight the importance of raising awareness and promoting acceptance of bodily diversity. Ensuring that intersex individuals receive appropriate medical care without coercion or unnecessary interventions is crucial. Equally important is the need for social and legal protections to safeguard their rights and dignity. By fostering a more inclusive society, we can work towards reducing the stigma and discrimination that intersex individuals endure and support them in living healthy, fulfilling lives.

**Physical Integrity**

It's common for intersex children to undergo unnecessary surgeries and procedures to make them look more typically male or female. These irreversible procedures can cause permanent infertility, pain, incontinence, loss of sexual sensation, and lifelong mental suffering, including depression. They are often done without the child's informed consent, violating their rights to physical integrity, freedom from torture, and protection from harmful practices.

These procedures are often justified by cultural and gender norms and discriminatory beliefs about intersex people. However, discrimination cannot justify human rights violations. States should combat harmful stereotypes and discrimination instead of reinforcing them. Claims of health benefits for these procedures are often weak and don't consider alternative solutions that respect physical integrity and autonomy.

Doctors and parents, influenced by societal pressures, may support these procedures despite the lack of medical necessity and potential human rights violations. Consent is often given without full information about the consequences and without support from other intersex individuals and families.

Intersex adults who underwent such surgeries often report shame, stigma, and significant physical and mental suffering. They frequently feel forced into sex and gender categories that don't fit them.

Given the irreversible impact on physical integrity and autonomy, such unnecessary surgeries should be prohibited. Intersex children and their families should receive proper counseling and peer support.

**Discrimination**

Intersex individuals often face discrimination and abuse if others know they are intersex or if they don't conform to typical gender norms. Anti-discrimination laws usually don't protect intersex people, leaving them vulnerable in many areas such as healthcare, education, public services, employment, and sports.

Healthcare professionals frequently lack the training and understanding needed to address the specific health needs of intersex individuals, provide suitable care, and respect their autonomy and rights regarding physical integrity and health.

Intersex people also encounter obstacles and discrimination when they try to amend sex markers on birth certificates and official documents.

Intersex athletes face unique challenges. There have been instances where female intersex athletes were disqualified from competitions due to their intersex traits. However, being intersex doesn't inherently enhance performance, whereas other physical variations, like height and muscle development, which can impact performance, aren't subjected to the same scrutiny and restrictions.

REFERENCE: <https://www.unfe.org/en/know-the-facts/challenges-solutions/intersex>

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES**

<https://outragemag.com/intersex-community-holds-first-summit-in-phl/>