

## Rotary Statement on Clubs Excluding Women

Rotary clubs should be inclusive and welcoming to all. While it's true that in the distant past, Rotary started out with only men as members – in 1989, we welcomed [Women into Rotary International](#), so Rotary is open and inclusive to everyone. While it's possible to have a club that just happens to have only one gender at any given time (although diversity is the ideal), it is not acceptable to have a club that refuses members because of their sex or gender identity. Such a club would not be in compliance with the Rotary Code of Conduct and the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion policies contained within the Rotary Code of Policies (COP).

### **POLICY**

Rotary's constitutional documents and policy state that no club may in any way limit membership due to gender. Please refer to the RI [Governance Documents page](#). Below are some relevant policy excerpts:

1. From the RI Constitution, contained in the Rotary Manual of Procedure (MOP):

#### **Article 4 Membership in Clubs**

##### **4.070.** *Diversity of Membership.*

Each club or Rotaract club shall endeavor to build a well-balanced membership that celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion. **No club or Rotaract club, regardless of when it joined RI, may in any way limit membership due to gender**, race, color, creed, national origin, or sexual orientation, or impose any membership condition not specifically allowed by the RI constitution or bylaws. Any membership provision or condition in conflict with this section is null, void, and without effect.

2. From the COP:

#### **26.130. Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

At Rotary, we understand that cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture is essential to realizing our vision of a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change.

We value diversity and celebrate the contributions of people of all backgrounds, across age, ethnicity, race, color, disability, learning style, religion, faith, socioeconomic status, culture, marital status, languages spoken, **sex**, sexual orientation, and **gender identity** as well as differences in ideas, thoughts, values, and beliefs.

Recognizing that individuals from certain groups have historically experienced barriers to membership, participation, and leadership, we commit to advancing equity in all aspects of Rotary, including in our community partnerships, so that each person has the necessary access to resources, opportunities, networks, and support to thrive.

We believe that all people hold visible and invisible qualities that inherently make them unique, and **we strive to create an inclusive culture** where each person knows they are valued and belong.

3. From the COP:

#### **26.140. Code of Conduct**

*Rotary core values: fellowship, integrity, diversity, service, and leadership*

*This code of conduct reflects our core values and explains the responsibility that comes with being a Rotarian and Rotaractor (...). Like our core values, we expect Rotarians and Rotaractors to exemplify this code of conduct (...).*

All club members and other participants including Rotary program participants, are expected to comply with this code of conduct, be considerate and contribute to a collaborative, positive, and healthy environment in which all are respected and valued.

##### ***Use Respectful Language***

- When addressing larger groups, utilize gender neutral words to avoid gender assumption.

##### ***Be Supportive***

- Be an ally and advocate for others and be ready to intervene when you see a need.
- As a member of Rotary, uphold the Code of Conduct, build this culture within your club experience, and address any issues as they arise.

##### ***Foster a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment***

- Review any club or program traditions and stop or change activities that may be offensive or alienating to a specific group.

##### ***Celebrate Diversity***

- **Acknowledge and celebrate different genders.**

4. From the COP:

#### **8.030.2. Rotarian Code of Conduct**

*All members (Rotarians and Rotaractors) are expected to: (...)*

2. **Deal fairly with others and treat them with respect, which includes adhering to Rotary's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Code of Conduct by using respectful language, being supportive, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, and celebrating diversity.**
4. **Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary** or other Rotary members.

## **PROCEDURE**

Districts are encouraged to engage with clubs that exhibit an absence of female members. Discussions should be direct and focused on our expectations that the exclusion of women in any club is not consistent with Rotary's commitment to

diversity, equity, and inclusion. Districts should work with clubs to impress upon them the need to expand their membership reach. The exclusion of women members is not acceptable.

Rotary is calling on any clubs of single gender to decide about their future with Rotary. It's time for those clubs to either choose to get on board with the Code of Conduct and Rotary's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, or they can opt to remain a men-only club – but they will have to do so without their Rotary affiliation. Our goal is for these clubs to learn the value of diversity, start to be more inclusive, and retain their affiliation with Rotary. We are hopeful they'll decide to retain their affiliation with Rotary by developing a plan for improvement with specific and measurable steps.