

The Right To Compete

#LiftUpTransRights
#TransEquity

GENDER
JUSTICE

Trans people belong in — and are already participating in — sports. It's important that transgender people continue to experience the social, physical, and cultural benefits of athletics. Sports institutions must respect the dignity and humanity of transgender people by ensuring their ability to participate.

Recently, anti-trans activists have launched aggressive legal, legislative, and messaging campaigns perpetuating the false notion that trans women competing in sports pose an existential threat to women's sports. This is simply not true.

To be clear, there are very real threats to women's sports — racism, pay inequities, sexual abuse, and lack of athletic opportunities in schools, to name a few — but trans athletes competing is not one. Women's sports are stronger when we prioritize equity and inclusion.

Facts

- **Trans athletes have been competing in sports for decades without issue.** Organizations like the International Olympic Committee, International Powerlifting Federation, the International Weightlifting Federation, the NCAA, the Olympics, and the Minnesota State High School League, **all have policies allowing trans athletes to compete.**
- **Scientists have repeatedly said there is no single biological factor that determines sex,** and sex assigned at birth is not the sole determinant of gender.
- **A person's sex assigned at birth does not inherently advantage or disadvantage them in competition,** it is simply one of many elements that make up who they are. There are a lot of factors that contribute to an athlete's ability to succeed in competition: biology, time, resources, training and money, to name a few. Examples of athletes who have biological advantages in competition:
 - **Michael Phelps excels at swimming, in part because his wingspan is longer than his height;** he is hyper-jointed in the chest--meaning he can kick from his chest instead of just his ribs; his double-jointed ankles bend 15 percent more than his rivals and, coupled with his size-14 feet, help his legs act like flippers to glide him through the water.
 - At 4-foot-8, **Simone Biles' height-to-strength ratio enables her to do more** flips/maneuvers in the same amount of time as other gymnasts who might be taller.
 - The late **Manute Bol, a former NBA player, was 7 feet 7 inches tall** and the tallest player to ever play in the NBA (tied with Gheorghe Mureșan). Bol is widely considered one of the best shot-blockers in NBA history — a title he was likely able to earn, in part, because of his height.
- There is very little or no scientific research regarding the performance of elite transgender athletes, and when research has been done, scientists explicitly warn people not to use the data to enact total trans bans in sports.
- From the ACLU: [Four Myths About Trans Athletes, Debunked](#)



Q & A

DO TRANS WOMEN ATHLETES INHERENTLY HAVE AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE?

No. Every person's body is different. There's no scientific evidence that the average trans athlete is any bigger, stronger, or faster than the average cis athlete. Trans women are women. Different athletes have advantages over one another all of the time. Athletic performance depends on many complicated factors: access to better coaches and facilities; money to pay for nutritionists, recovery services; and many others. At the highest levels of sport, physical characteristics can only get you so far — you also need serious technical skill, training and access to resources.

BUT AREN'T TRANS WOMEN JUST ALWAYS BIGGER AND STRONGER THAN CIS WOMEN?

No. Trans women are not always stronger or bigger than cis women. Additionally, there are *many* indicators that contribute to success in sport, including control, finesse, agility, technique, or depth perception (stereopsis) in order to win. Every single athlete's body is different.

BUT AREN'T MEN'S BODIES JUST ALWAYS BIGGER AND STRONGER THAN WOMEN'S?

When discussing trans people's participation in sports, it is not appropriate to compare men and women. Trans women are women and trans men are men. When trans women compete in women's sports, there are no men competing.

WOMEN HAVE FOUGHT SO HARD — AND ARE STILL FIGHTING — TO GET THE RECOGNITION THEY DESERVE IN SPORT. IF TRANS WOMEN ARE ALLOWED TO COMPETE, WON'T THEY TAKE OVER SPORT?

Trans women are women. They're not perpetrating fraud to dominate in sport, they're looking to be a part of a sport, just like any other athlete. The reality is that trans women are very much under-represented in sport. Professional trans women athletes are extremely rare. In fact, trans athletes have been allowed to openly compete in the Olympics since 2003, and yet no trans athlete has ever gone to the Olympics. While we do not have any concrete numbers of trans athletes that are participating at any other level of sport (including youth, high school, or collegiate sport), we do know that a 2017 study found that about 3% of Minnesota high school students identify as transgender or gender nonconforming. Often, trans athletes' participation in sport is only noticed when they win.

To learn more about our case for trans equity in sports, please contact us at info@genderjustice.us.

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