



Rethinking Trans and Gender-Diverse Athlete Inclusion in Canadian Sport, Education, and Health

Jared Khalifa

Contact Author: jkhalifa@student.ubc.ca

Faculty of Arts, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 1Z4, Canada

Dr. Moss Norman

School of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 1Z4, Canada

Dr. Sarah Teetzel

Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2, Canada

Abstract

Background: Although Canada was an early leader in the inclusion of trans- and gender-diverse (TGD) athletes in sport, existing frameworks, resources, and support systems remain rooted in binary gender categories that overlook, if not ignore, research and the lived realities of TGD athletes (Caudwell 2014; Jones et al. 2017). Systemic gaps within the Canadian sport landscape extend beyond participation, affecting belonging, health, and well-being (McGuire-Adams et al. 2022). This review aims to serve as a resource for informed and equitable leadership in sport, health, and education, emphasizing practices that promote the inclusion and safety of TGD athletes.

Methodology: This research employs an interdisciplinary critical policy analysis, informed by biomedical, sociological, legal, and sport policy scholarship. A narrative review of clinical, scholarly, policy, and community-based resources was conducted, drawing upon TGD experiences and perspectives that are often structurally and institutionally excluded.

Results & Conclusion: Variations across provincial legal systems and eligibility regulations set by International Federations and National Sport Organizations contribute to inconsistent participation policies throughout Canada, resulting in fragmented, ambiguous eligibility determination. Institutions aligned with the *IOC Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Consideration for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies* continue to advance exclusionary policies that lack scientific justification, violate fundamental human rights, and subject athletes to potential social, psychological, and physical harms (Erikainen et al. 2026; European Society of Human Genetics 2025; International Commission of Jurists 2026; International Federation of Sports Medicine 2026; Hamilton et al. 2024). While this resource addresses these matters and provides practical tools for creating inclusive sports environments, it is intended as an evolving document that recognizes identities, language, and research as continually in flux. As such, it encourages ongoing adaptation and learning that aligns with the time, culture, and needs of the communities it serves. This work challenges the notion that TGD athletes are participants in need of accommodation and instead positions trans inclusivity as a foundational principle of ethical sport governance and leadership (Travers 2024). Physical health education sits at the crossroads of disciplines that can collectively support TGD athletes, particularly youth. By offering a resource that enhances learning environments and aligns with Canada's broader commitments to human rights and inclusion, this work directly supports educators, coaches, healthcare professionals, parents, and other key stakeholders in fostering safer, more affirming spaces for TGD students and athletes.

Keywords: transgender; gender-diversity; inclusive sport; health; sport policy



References

- Caudwell, J. (2014). [Transgender] young men: Gendered subjectivities and the physically active body. *Sport, Education and Society*, 19(4), 398–414.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2012.672320>
- Erikainen, S., Karkazis, K., Krech, M., Mazzucco, M., Mitra, P., & Pape, M. (2026). *Frequently asked questions: IOC policy on the protection of the female (women's) category in Olympic sport and guiding considerations for international federations and sports governing bodies* (Version updated April 6, 2026). Humans of Sport.
- European Society of Human Genetics. (2025). *Proposed SRY test to determine athletes' sex should be treated with caution*. European Society of Human Genetics.
https://www.eshg.org/news/news-details?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=81&cHash=4623c0a023cac2fdadac3ab05861c2cd
- Hamilton, B., Brown, A., Montagner-Moraes, S., Comerar-Chueca, C., Bush, P. G., Guppy, F. M., & Pitsiladis, Y. P. (2024). Strength, power and aerobic capacity of transgender athletes: A cross-sectional study. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 58(10), 586–597.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2023-108029>
- International Commission of Jurists. (2026). *Olympics: Sex testing harms all women and girls*.
<https://www.icj.org/olympics-sex-testing-harms-all-women-and-girls/>
- International Federation of Sports Medicine. (2026). *FIMS calls for evidence-based, sport-specific approach to IOC eligibility policy* [Press release]. <https://www.fims.org/news-events/news/press-release-fims-calls-for-evidence-based-sport-specific-approach-to-ioc-eligibility-policy/>
- Jones, B. A., Arcelus, J., Bouman, W. P., & Haycraft, E. (2017). Sport and transgender people: A systematic review of the literature relating to sport participation and competitive sport policies. *Sports Medicine*, 47(4), 701–716. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-016-0621-y>
- McGuire-Adams, T., Joseph, J., Peers, D., Eales, L., Bridel, W., Chen, C., Hamdon, E., & Kingsley, B. (2022). Awakening to elsewhere: Collectively restorying embodied experiences of (be)longing. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 39(4), 313–322.
<https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2021-0124>
- Travers. (2024). The Carceral Logic of Female Eligibility Policies: Gender as a Civilizing Narrative, the Science of Sex Testing, and Anti-Trans Legislation1. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 41(3), 213-223. Retrieved Jun 1, 2026, from <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2024-0135>