# Transgender Athletes Should Not Compete in Sports

Fairness and inclusion are the two most essential cornerstones of professional and competitive sports. The former implies that all participants have equal or analogous chances of winning, while the former ensures that everyone can access the same support, resources, information choices, training, and pathways in their quest for sporting glory. The dynamics of traditional sex segregation in sports have recently been challenged by the transgender rights movement, which pushes for the promotion of transgender people’s legal status and the elimination of discrimination and violence against them in various societal forums. While it is crucial to accord transgender women their respective rights and privileges, their participation in women’s sports is unfair because they possess unfair physical advantages, which cannot be mitigated using hormone therapies.

## Fairness in Competitive Sports

The continued inclusion of women impedes the promise of equality, ensuring that all participants in competitive sports have access to similar physical and psycho-social resources. Fairness and inclusion are the foundations on which sex-based segregation in sports is based, wherein most athletic competitions, beginning in youth, separate boys from girls and men from women (Voyles, 2019). Handelsman et al. (2018) note that sex segregation is meant to increase women’s chances of winning against men, who are, on average, more muscular, taller, and faster; they also have greater endurance because of their larger and stronger muscles and bones, which are complemented by a higher circulation level of hemoglobin. In this regard, female sports competitions are a protected category in which the entry of men must be restricted because of the many physical advantages the latter enjoys over the former. Therefore, the participation of transgender women in competitive sports is increasingly unfair because transgender women are born with inherent physical advantages over other women, which cannot be mitigated or suppressed by such measures as hormone suppression.

## Transgender Rights and the Social Model of Inclusion

The transgender rights movement has gained considerable traction over the last few decades, and restricting transgender women’s participation in competitive sports can be interpreted as a denial of their rights. Sexuality is a protected category in the United States under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. In the same way, one could argue that transgender women should be allowed to participate in competitive sports because of their sexuality. Recently, there has been an emergence of elite transgender women athletes in various sporting categories, including Laurel Hubbard in weightlifting, Lia Thomas in swimming, and Emily Bridges in swimming. However, these recent developments have created a sensitive political dilemma in which the recognition of trans rights conflicts with the irrefutable canons of fairness and equality. On the one hand, the inclusion of transgender women in competitive sports achieves the objectives of recognizing trans rights and privileges and not discriminating against them based on their sexuality. On the other hand, doing so infringes on the fundamental principle of fairness and equality in competitive sports, mainly because transgender women retain significant physical advantages because they undergo male puberty (Ingle, 2022). While it is essential to include and recognize trans women’s rights, it is crucial to do so in ways that do not give them unfair advantages over other protected categories in society.

Including transgender women in competitive sports negates the guarantees perpetuated by the social model of inclusion. Thoms and Burton (2018) note that the social model strives to ensure that any disadvantages a person can encounter do not stem from such inherent characteristics as gender, impairment, culture, or age. Only recently, Fina, swimming’s global governing body, issued a politically charged decision banning trans women’s participation in competitive water sports, because they retain significant physical advantages over other women even after transitioning (Ingle, 2022). The decision was made to ban Lia Thomas, who transitioned at the age of 20, and has dominated college swimming since then. During male puberty, transgender women acquire significant physical advantages over women, including increased endurance, speed, and power because of high hemoglobin in the blood and larger and stronger muscles and bones. Although such interventions as puberty blockers may temporarily delay the advent of male puberty, there is a dearth of research suggesting that doing so could ensure that transgender women do not have unfair physical advantages over other women. Roberts et al. (2021) note that the effects of such gender-affirming hormones on athletic performance among transgender women, particularly during gender transitions, remain largely unknown. Accordingly, more research is needed to ensure that such international bodies as the International Olympic Committee and Fina can develop guidelines to ensure that transgender women’s participation in sports sufficiently adheres to the principles of fairness, equality, and inclusion.

## Conclusion

The transgender rights movement has made impressive strides in ensuring the recognition of trans rights, inclusion, and non-discrimination over the last few decades, as can be seen in the inclusion of sexuality as a protected category in federal law. However, scientific studies have shown that efforts to suppress or delay male puberty are only temporary, and the changes cannot be reversed. Male puberty gives men significant advantages over women, including increased endurance, strength, and speed, which is the basis of sex segregation in sports. Although it is vital to include trans women and recognize their rights to participate in sports, it is impossible to overlook the biological basis of their transformation, which appends them an unfair advantage over women, even after transitioning. Consequently, transgender women should not be allowed to compete in women’s sports unless scientific interventions that can permanently mitigate the physical changes transgender men undergo during poverty are developed.

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