

Inclusion of rainbow rangatahi in community sport

Trans and intersex young people don't feel safe or included in sports¹, so what are the stats?

14% 

of trans and non-binary people **participate in sports competitions**, events, or other organised activities.

61% 



of trans and non-binary people are **worried about how they will be treated** when participating in competitive sports.²

That's almost **50% less than the participation rate** of the general population.²



" Trans and intersex people in sports matter. "

Queer, Trans, Non-Binary, 19yo.

19%  12% 

Rainbow young people are **more likely to be physically inactive** compared to their cisgender heterosexual peers.³

What's causing this?

Myths about trans and intersex people's strength, abilities, and safety in sports create trans-exclusive social attitudes.

Trans and intersex people experience high levels of discrimination in sporting spaces.

Trans and intersex people fear exclusion and isolation because of their sex and gender.

Many people lack knowledge and understanding about trans and intersex people's experiences in sport.

¹ Sport New Zealand, (2021). Voice of Rangatahi. (2021 Report).

² Veale, J., Byrne, J., Tan, K., Guy, S., Yee, A., Nopera, T., & Bentham, R. (2019.) *Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

³ Lucassen, M.F., Guntupalli, A.M., Clark, T., Fenaughty, J., Denny, S., Fleming, T., Smith, M., & Utter, J., (2019). Body size and weight, and the nutrition and activity behaviours of sexual and gender minority youth: findings and implications from New Zealand. *Public Health Nutrition*, 22(13), 2346-2356.

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The Perceptions

You can tell someone's gender or sex just by observing their clothing, hair, how they talk or behave.

As a part of their uniform, boys need to wear shorts and girls need to wear skirts.

Transgender women have an unfair advantage in sports.

Allowing transgender women to compete will lead to a decrease in women's sports participation and inequities for cisgender women.

Inclusion of transgender participants poses safety risks to cisgender participants.

It's too complicated to implement transgender inclusion policies in community sport.

The Facts

We are assumed to be a particular gender at birth based on our sex characteristics, for example, our parents are told "it's a girl!" or "it's a boy!", but not everyone's gender is the same as that which was assumed. Gender is also understood differently across cultures and throughout history. With this understanding, it's important to note we cannot immediately know a person's gender just by looking at them.

Letting players pick their own uniforms is not only safer and more inclusive for trans people, it's also beneficial for all young people who wish to wear clothing they feel most comfortable in.

There is no conclusive evidence that transgender women have an advantage over cisgender peers in community sport. Transgender participants vary in athletic ability just like cisgender participants, and they have the same right to participate as everyone else.

There is no conclusive evidence that transgender inclusion has resulted in a decline in women's sports participation. Allowing transgender individuals to participate in a sport category that aligns with their gender identity instead leads to an increase in participation for the New Zealand population as a whole.

Transgender participants pose no more risk to cisgender participants than any other people. Including transgender participants benefits everyone by promoting the values of non-discrimination and inclusion among all participants.

Transgender inclusion policies in community sport aim to promote inclusion for everyone. While there can be complexities, many sports organisations in New Zealand and world-wide have successfully implemented inclusive policies that accommodate transgender people while ensuring fair competition.

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What are the key terms?

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, expectations and assumptions we are socialised into. Although gender is a vast spectrum, we are often assigned a binary gender of boy or girl at birth based on our sex characteristics.

Transgender is a word that is used to describe someone whose gender does not align with the sex or gender they were assigned at birth.

Non-binary is the preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/woman/girl or male/man/boy.

Cisgender is a word used to describe someone whose gender is aligned with the sex or gender they were assigned at birth (i.e. not trans or non-binary).

Sex is used to describe how a person's body is classified based on characteristics such as genitals, hormones, chromosomes, and gonads. People often conflate sex and gender, or wrongly assume that a person's sex always determines their gender.

Intersex is a word used to describe a person born with natural variations of sex characteristics such as chromosomes, reproductive anatomy, genitals, and hormones.

Endosex is a word that describes a person who has sex characteristics (ie. genitals, gonads) that would have them classified as male or female at birth.

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If organisations had really strong policies around inclusivity for rainbow people, that would make me feel more comfortable. ”

Non-binary, 26yo.

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What can you do?



-  Thank someone for coming out to you
-  Use the same language that young people use to describe themselves
-  Let young people pick their uniforms regardless of their gender
-  Allow mixed gender teams
-  Advocate for trans people when they're experiencing discrimination or exclusion
-  Respect young people's privacy, don't out them to others
-  Seek ongoing training and learning opportunities on inclusivity
-  Explore ways to create gender neutral bathrooms and changing rooms

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**I'm not out here to win a gold medal,
I just want to play a game of football. ”**

Trans woman, 28yo.