



Gender Identity Policy FAQs:

Where can I find the policy?

It is listed on our website [here](#).

Why has USRowing been working on the transgender policy this year?

Transgender and gender diverse issues are increasing. More people are becoming comfortable expressing the gender identity that may not match their gender assigned at birth, and unfortunately, bias and mistreatment of transgender people continues to manifest itself. As the governing body for our sport, it is important for USRowing to address these issues from both an inclusion and a fairness standpoint. Additionally, the NCAA decided in mid-January to approach transgender participation on a sport-by-sport basis and to have each policy be determined by the national governing body of each sport.

Considering this, USRowing leadership, in conjunction with key stakeholders, engaged through numerous online and in-person forums, including six zoom meetings, a membership survey, a meeting with the Athlete Council, and feedback from regions.

What was the process for developing the transgender policy? And what is the timing?

The proposed changes were written by the USRowing team in March, and from April through the end of September, we solicited feedback from stakeholders. We engaged through numerous online and in-person forums, including six zoom meetings, a membership survey, a meeting with the Athlete Council, and feedback from regions. The results from the membership survey were mixed and inconclusive.

We gathered input from medical professionals as well as our legal team. Finally, USRowing staff and the Board of Directors decided to update the 2016 policy with changes we deemed critical, while largely leaving the existing policy in effect. This policy has been in place for six years and has resulted in no significant issues to date. The critical changes we made were as follows: adding an open gender racing category, updating the eligibility and protest method, updating the collegiate policy, and providing clear inclusion guidelines.

This updated policy will go into effect immediately upon release.

How did you hear from all USRowing membership on this topic?

We actively sought out and considered membership input, including through questions on this topic in our membership survey. The results were divided, with varying opinions across the board. There was no strong support in either direction.

Who was a part of the discussions to put this amendment in place?

We held six public Zoom sessions and heard from cisgender girls and women, trans women and men, non-binary athletes, cisgender men, coaches, athletes, parents, club administrators, referees, and more. We tried to hear from anyone who would give us their opinion on the topic. We also held a special session for the Athlete Council to hear from the national team. Our Board of Directors held several lengthy discussions on the topic as well.

This is a different policy format than I reviewed in the spring. Why?

The content is very similar to what was reviewed in the spring, but we wanted to simplify / keep the same format as our existing 2016 policy since that format is familiar to the community.

Did the USRowing Board of Directors approve this policy?

The Board of Directors approved this re-affirmation of our policy. Because we decided not to make wholesale changes to our existing policy, formal approval from the Board of Directors was not required. The Board has been very engaged and participated in several discussions of the policy, alternatives, and the topic in general.

How will the Open Gender Category work?

The details of implementation of this category are yet to be determined, but we expect it will provide at least one sculling and one sweep event in 2023. This category's purpose is to create space for those athletes who are non-binary, gender diverse, bi-gender, or intersex.

What if I miss the date to update my gender on January 1 / September 1?

If you intend to change your gender but miss the deadline, it will default to your current gender in the system. Please do your best to update your gender by the relevant deadline.

When will the policy be assessed again?

We plan to review the policy annually each summer. Any resulting changes to the policy would be in line with the calendar year, similar to updates to USRowing membership structure and SafeSport.

How does this policy align with other sports, especially at the youth level?

USRowing has connected with peer endurance sports at the National Governing Body (NGB) level, and we have similar policies. At the youth level, almost all NGBs allow youth to participate in the gender category that aligns with their identity until they plan to compete internationally – in which case they must refer to the policy of their international federation (World Rowing in our case).

What if I have an athlete / am an athlete who has not transitioned because of issues at my club or at home?

First, we encourage clubs to support all athletes in the LGBTQ+ community, including those athletes who are transitioning. See [here](#) for additional guidance on this topic. We hope all athletes can row in their expressed gender category but understand that there are sometimes limitations to this. If that is the case, that athlete can row in the category of their gender assigned at birth. If you have specific questions, please reach out to USRowing.

How will USRowing protect gender diverse athletes at regattas – especially those in places that have anti-trans legislation?

USRowing's top priority at regattas is the health and safety of athletes. With this in mind, all regatta attendees must adhere to the Code of Conduct and treat others with respect. USRowing will not tolerate any behavior that is not appropriate and respectful during our regattas.

In addition, USRowing proudly displays LGBTQ+ signage and partners with local community-based organizations to ensure visibility and resources for athletes on site.

Why did USRowing decide to be fully inclusive in youth sports?

As Nelson Mandela said, "Sports have the power to change the world." Rowing has the power to support youth who need it most. Like many of our peers at the national governing body level of sports, we are prioritizing the safety of young people. Here are some statistics from the Trevor Project to illustrate the importance of giving all youth the chance to participate in rowing, regardless of their identity:

- 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.
- LGBTQ youth who live in a community that is accepting of LGBTQ people reported *significantly lower rates* of attempting suicide than those who do not.
- 68% of youth don't participate in sports, several due to reasons related to discrimination or fear of LGBTQ-based discrimination
- LGBTQ youth who *do* participate in sports report a variety of positive reasons for it, including connecting with friends and teammates, opportunities for fitness and health, and the fun of participation.

- Many LGBTQ youth who play sports describe sports as supporting their mental health, helping them cope with stress, and distracting them from negative thoughts.
- 83% of transgender and nonbinary youth said that they have worried about transgender people being denied the ability to play sports due to state or local laws.
- For additional information, please check out the [2021 LGBTQ Youth Sports Survey Brief](#) and the [2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#) from The Trevor Project.