

2026-2027 USRowing Youth Series Age Categories & Definitions

During the December 1–31, 2026 USRowing Entry Packet Comment Period, USRowing solicited member feedback on the proposed USRowing Youth Series Age Categories & Definitions. The proposal was intended to explore potential updates to youth eligibility definitions beginning in 2027. [Click here](#) for the original proposal.

After extensive review and discussion with our member community, USRowing has determined that the Youth Definitions and age categories currently in place (as of 2025) will remain unchanged for the 2026 and 2027 USRowing Youth Series, as stated below.

- U15 (only at regional regattas): A Competitor may compete in the U15 category until December 31 of the year of their 14th birthday.
- U16: A Competitor may compete in the U16 category until December 31 of the year of his or her 15th birthday.
- U17: A Competitor may compete in the U17 category until December 31 of the year of their 16th birthday.
- Youth: A Youth is a Competitor who in the current calendar year does not attain the age of 19, or who in the current calendar year does not attain the age of 20 and has been continuously enrolled in secondary school as a full-time student seeking a diploma. A Competitor thus ceases to be a Youth after December 31 of the year of their 18th birthday (U19), or upon completion of the 12th grade of secondary school, having been a full-time student within the year of their 19th birthday (U20). Athletes older than U20 are never eligible to compete as Youth

Feedback Process

Throughout this process, USRowing prioritized broad engagement, transparency, and direct dialogue with members to ensure all perspectives were heard and fully understood.

USRowing received 73 written comments during the formal comment period. In addition to reviewing all submissions, USRowing took the following steps to ensure comprehensive understanding of our member's perspectives:

- Conducted one-on-one conversations with nearly all commenters
- Met with councils and rowing leadership groups
- Presented the proposal and gathered feedback at USRowing Forums

This engagement allowed USRowing to provide members with the same information available internally and to better understand the practical and competitive implications of the proposal across different segments of the rowing community.

Summary of Member Feedback

A consistent concern expressed by members was the potential unintended consequences of adopting a youth definition that relied solely on age (U20) without reference to educational status.

Specifically, members raised concerns that:

- A standalone U20 definition could incentivize some college-aged athletes to delay college enrollment or extend high school enrollment in order to remain eligible for high school-level youth competition.
- This could result in continued competitive imbalances at the high school level and create challenges for fairness and program integrity.

USRowing recognizes these concerns and agrees that additional time and data are needed before considering such a structural shift.

USRowing Determination & Path forward

After reviewing all feedback and engaging with stakeholders, USRowing has determined the following:

- The 2026 and 2027 USRowing Youth Series will continue to use the Youth Definition and age categories that were in place in 2025.
- No modifications will be made to Youth Definitions or age categories prior to 2028.
- This approach allows sufficient time to monitor participation trends, competitive impacts, and athlete development pathways before considering any future changes.
- 2028 will serve as the first opportunity for potential adjustments, should data and member feedback support reconsideration at that time.

In situations where questions arise regarding whether an athlete meets the Youth Definition for participation in the USRowing Youth Series, USRowing will defer to the appropriate parties — including, but not limited to, the coach, athlete, parent/guardian, and/or school — to confirm that the eligibility requirements are met.



For additional detail, [click here](#) to view the webinar outlining USRowing's 2026 and 2027 Youth Series Age Categories & Definitions path forward. For additional questions, please email Competition@usrowing.org