



Gender Identity Policy FAQs:

Where can I find the policy?

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

Additionally, see [here](#) for USRowing's LGBTQ+ Inclusion Recommendations.

Why did USRowing work on an amended Gender Identity Policy in 2022?

Transgender and gender diverse awareness are increasing. More people are becoming comfortable expressing the gender identity that may not match their gender assigned at birth, and in our broader community, bias and mistreatment of transgender people continues to manifest itself. As the national governing body for our sport, it is important for USRowing to address and weigh these issues from both an inclusion and a competitive fairness standpoint. Additionally, the NCAA decided in mid-January 2022 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 2022, 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 advisors. Finally, USRowing staff with approval of 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: updating the collegiate policy [policy section II], adding an open gender racing category [policy section III], updating

the eligibility and protest method [policy sections IV and V], and providing clear inclusion guidelines [policy section VI].

This updated policy went into effect immediately upon release [December 1, 2022] and was updated on February 21, 2023 to reflect World Rowing's February 2023 bylaws change (see FAQ below).

How were USRowing membership and the Board of Directors engaged 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 membership and community. There was no strong support in either direction.

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.

Although formal approval from the Board of Directors was not required given USRowing did not make wholesale changes to the existing policy, the Board of Directors approved this re-affirmation of our policy. The Board of Directors held several lengthy and comprehensive discussions on the topic. They took careful consideration of the policy and alternatives and had been kept abreast of the process and rationale for the retention of the policy with the changes described above. This analysis also took into account litigation outcomes and policy trends reflected in recent Federal court cases that considered inclusion at the youth sports level in the context of Title IX.

Considering World Rowing's February 2023 bylaws change, how is USRowing is updating its Gender Identity Policy?

- Effective immediately, rowers competing for the United States at World Rowing regattas or qualification regattas are subject to the new World Rowing standards;
- Effective March 1, 2025, collegiate rowers competing in NCAA or IRA women's categories must maintain a continuous serum testosterone level of 2.5 nmol/liter or less for at least 24 consecutive months prior to any competition as a member of their collegiate team

This is a different policy format than I reviewed in spring 2022. Why?

If you were part of the Zoom feedback sessions in spring 2022, you may notice that the content of this amended policy is very similar to what was reviewed in the spring, but the format is different. To simplify things, we updated the existing 2016 policy and kept a format familiar to the community.

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 event in 2023. This category's purpose is to create space for those athletes who are non-binary, gender diverse, bi-gender, or intersex and choose not to race in the category of their sex assigned at birth.

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 this policy in summer 2023 and in successive summers, if necessary. We will also review the policy in other as-needed circumstances (i.e., changes in policy of other governing organizations like NCAA, IRA, or World Rowing). Any resulting changes to the policy will align with the following calendar year, similar to updates to USRowing membership structure and SafeSport policies and procedures.

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 on my team / 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 you have specific questions, please reach out to USRowing.

How does USRowing protect gender diverse athletes at regattas – especially at 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 displays LGBTQ+ signage and partners with local community-based organizations to ensure visibility and resources for athletes on site during regattas.

Why did USRowing decide to be fully inclusive at the youth level?

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.