

# TRANS WOMEN IN SPORT

## THE ALLEGATIONS AND THE REALITIES

ALLEGATIONS

~~TRANS WOMEN HAVE A BIOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE IN WOMEN'S SPORTS REGARDLESS OF ANY OTHER FACTORS~~



~~TRANS WOMEN OVERWHELMINGLY DOMINATE ELITE LEVEL WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



~~EXCLUDING TRANS WOMEN WILL PROTECT WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



~~POLITICIANS CARE ABOUT WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



~~MEN WILL PRETEND TO BE TRANS WOMEN IN ORDER TO DOMINATE IN WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



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~~IT IS UP TO THE GOVERNMENT TO SET POLICES SO THAT CIS WOMEN ARE NOT FORCED TO COMPETE AGAINST "BIOLOGICALLY STRONGER" TRANS WOMEN.~~



## ~~TRANS WOMEN HAVE A BIOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE IN WOMEN'S SPORTS REGARDLESS OF ANY OTHER FACTORS~~



This allegation is more reflective of sexism in sport rather than an accurate assessment of trans women's ability in sport. The concentration of anxiety around testosterone levels in someone's body is directly reminiscent of **the sexist rhetoric that any man can perform better than a woman in sport regardless of skill and ability**. This simultaneously puts down women, falsely vilifies trans women, and overinflates the athletic prowess of any average cisgender man.

Trans women are already subject to requirements to suppress testosterone levels at the Olympic level. A 2023 [report](#) commissioned by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, clarified that **there is no evidence trans women athletes have a biological advantage after 12 months of testosterone suppression**.

Why are other biological advantages celebrated, but when it comes to women's bodies, it becomes a matter of fairness? For example, Michael Phelps is lauded for his [many genetic differences that give him an advantage](#) in his sport, but Caster Semenya is scrutinized for hers.

## ~~TRANS WOMEN OVERWHELMINGLY DOMINATE ELITE LEVEL WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



Trans women have been allowed to compete in the Olympics since 2004. **Only one trans woman has competed in the women's Olympic category since (in 2021)**; she did not medal.

Trans and nonbinary people have long faced barriers to being included in sport. A [Trans PULSE Ontario study](#) from 2014 found that 44% of trans people and 54% of nonbinary people have avoided going to a gym or a pool for fear of harassment and/or violence. [A study in 2017](#) surveying 1,008 Canadian athletes showed that 67% of LGB athletes and 85% of trans athletes experiences at least one homophobic episode. It's not a surprise that these barriers limit the number of elite trans athletes.

## ~~EXCLUDING TRANS WOMEN WILL PROTECT WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



There are many other more priority areas to care about women's sports such as **lack of women in sports leadership, lack of media coverage, equal pay, equal access, racism, sexism, and misogyny**. According to Canadian Women & Sport excluding trans women [will not reduce the barriers](#) cisgender women face in sport.

In fact, excluding trans women will actually end up hurting all women. There is already a [history](#) of scrutinizing women deemed not feminine enough leading to invasive "sex verification" processes for women athletes and athletes with intersex variations. **Policies to exclude trans women will place further regulation on all women's bodies**, when [research](#) shows women in sport already fear for their personal safety, and have anxieties related to performance and to their personal appearance. In order to exclude trans women, by process any woman can then be accused of being trans; when does a woman become "too strong", "too masculine", "too athletic" to merit scrutiny? This line of thinking continues to follow the sexist values that women cannot possibly be a *that good* in sport.

## ~~POLITICIANS CARE ABOUT WOMEN'S SPORTS~~



Rather than listening to and consulting with organizations working towards gender equity for women in sport, politicians are **manufacturing a reality where they paint trans people as a threat** under the guise of "protecting women".

This is a fearmongering political tactic to sway voters and public opinion. It is similar to the [archaic political tactic](#) of swaying voters under the guise of "protecting children" that has seen a poorly repackaged [resurgence](#) in the recent context.

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This is a rare, if not non-existent, problem.

Even if it does exist, the problem with this is to do with dishonest cisgender men, not trans women.

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There are different organizing bodies for specific sports at varying levels. For example, the International Ice Hockey Federation governs hockey internationally, including at the Olympics; Hockey Canada governs the sport in Canada, and also has provincial branches. There is no one regulator for sport as a whole.

To be clear, federal and provincial **governments do not regulate competitive sport**. In the case where the premier of Alberta felt compelled to lay allegations and promised to start working with sporting organizations specifically so that women are not forced to compete against "biologically stronger transgender female athletes" is a clear overstep. This overstep adds to the moral panic surrounding trans rights. In fact, counter to the allegation that trans women should be excluded because they are "biologically stronger" than cis women, the [International Olympic Committee](#) has already set out in 2021 that:

**No athlete should be precluded from competing or excluded from competitions on the exclusive ground of an unverified, alleged, or perceived unfair competitive advantage due to their sex variations, physical appearance, and/or transgender status.**

For a more in-depth and research-backed review of misinformation in sports inclusion, check out [Re-Creation Collective's community report](#).