



ATHLETE ALLY



COVERING LGBTQ ATHLETES AT THE 2020 OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS

A resource for journalists and media professionals

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INTRODUCTION

A record number of out LGBTQ athletes—at least 142 at the time of publication—are competing in the Tokyo Games from the U.S. and around the world¹. LGBTQ athletes have likely competed in the Olympics and Paralympics since the very first Games in history. It's only now that more are comfortable being out as their authentic selves, with many embraced and supported by fans and sponsors.

The growing visibility and acceptance of out athletes offers a unique opportunity for global audiences to see LGBTQ people as individuals on the world stage. LGBTQ athletes have the same basic human need to belong and—with an elite athlete's drive to achieve—to represent their respective countries with pride, support, and dignity.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are a celebration of our shared humanity and represent the pinnacle of sports achievement. Including LGBTQ athletes in your coverage means exploring all their challenges and triumphs, not just their sexual orientations, sex characteristics and gender identities. Being LGBTQ is only once part of who they are and what they bring to their sports and to the Games.

Transgender athletes will face unique scrutiny in Tokyo. These are the first Games for which transgender athletes have qualified for competition, a historic moment that happens to align with a tremendous backlash waged against transgender participation in sports in dozens of U.S. states and in countries across the world including the UK and New Zealand.

It is critical that media recognize and report that transgender people have always existed throughout history and across cultures; that policies have been in place to include them in sports, including at the Olympics since 2004; and that despite misinformation about transgender athletes having an “unfair advantage,” this is the first time any have qualified for the Games in the nearly 20 years since inclusion.

For perspective, since 2004, there have been over 54,000 Olympians and Paralympians and not a single athlete has been out as transgender, until New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard qualified this year. There is no evidence that transgender athletes have unfair advantages, or that they are dominating—or ever will dominate—sports.

This guide will help journalists understand the history of LGBTQ participation in sport and provide facts and context to support accurate, respectful and inclusive coverage, especially of transgender athletes.

¹ <https://www.outsports.com/olympics/2021/7/12/22565574/tokyo-summer-olympics-lgbtq-gay-athletes-list>

TERMINOLOGY BASICS

LGBTQ

is an acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.” Sometimes, when the Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it can also mean questioning. The acronym describes a community of people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. When the + symbol is used, it implies that there are even more populations and experiences included in the community, including pansexual, nonbinary, asexual and intersex. The acronym describes a community, as no one person is LGBTQ+. Reporters may see or hear variations of the acronym (LGBT, GLBT, LGBTQIA, LGBTI, etc.), which can reflect cultural differences and language evolution. Specifically, when the acronym includes an “I” for intersex communities, it broadens the scope of included populations to directly add people born with diverse sex characteristics.

SOGIE

is an acronym that stands for “Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression.” It is used internationally to refer to issues and policies that address these topics in both a broader sense and in reference to LGBTQ issues. Sometimes **SOGIESC** is used, adding Sex Characteristics, to promote specific attention to human rights issues affecting intersex populations.

Sexual Orientation

is the term for an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and/ or emotional attraction to members of the same and/ or other sexes, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual (straight) orientations. Avoid the offensive term “sexual preference,” which is used to suggest that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is voluntary and therefore “curable.” People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all.

Gender Identity

A person’s internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. For cisgender, or non-transgender, people, their own internal gender identity does match the sex they were assigned at birth. Like sexual orientation, gender identity is a fixed, innate trait that cannot be changed. This is supported by the World Health Organization, among other leading scientific institutions. To resolve the incongruence of gender identity not matching with a sex assigned at birth, it is medically advised that transgender people bring their bodies into alignment to match their gender identity, which is called transition.

Gender Expression

Refers to external manifestations of gender, expressed through a person’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/ or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sex Characteristics

are physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, and other reproductive anatomy, and secondary features that emerge from puberty.²

² <http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles-en/vp10/>

Intersex

is an umbrella term referring to people with one or more innate sex characteristics that are perceived in ways that do not fit medical and social “norms” for female or male bodies, and that give rise to risks or experiences of stigma and discrimination.³ Intersex people are a diverse population with many different intersex traits and other characteristics. Individual people with intersex variations use a variety of different terms, including being intersex, having an intersex variation or condition, or naming specific traits. Having an intersex trait is relatively common, with up to 1.7% of people born with an intersex variation.⁴ The medical community often refers to this as disorders of sex development, which is widely considered by the community as pathologizing and stigmatizing, and best avoided. Some people ameliorate the term to ‘differences of sex development’, but usage of this term is often indistinguishable from stigmatizing usages.

Intersecting and Overlapping Identities:

Each of these populations can overlap, with distinct experiences that should be respected: some people might be same-sex attracted and transgender, or be same-sex attracted or transgender and have an intersex trait. An intersex woman or man might be cisgender and heterosexual.

TRANSGENDER VS. NONBINARY

Transgender

is umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including transgender. Use the descriptive term preferred by the person. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Many change their names and the sex on their identity documents, and some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. Upon first mention in coverage, it’s best practice to use the full term transgender, which can be shortened to trans on further mentions. Unlike nonbinary people, most transgender people are either male or female. In the U.S., about 0.6 percent of the population, or about 1.4 million people, is transgender.⁵

Nonbinary

is a term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for either intersex or transgender and should only be used if someone self-identifies as nonbinary. 1.2 million people in the U.S. identify as nonbinary, according to the Williams Institute.⁶ Around the world, there are similar terms for people who fall somewhere between—or outside of—the binary categories of male and female. Those include...

Cisgender

is a term that refers to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. “Cis-” is a Latin prefix meaning “on the same side as,” and is therefore an antonym of “trans-.” A more widely understood way to describe people who are cisgender is simply to say non-transgender people.

³ <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles-en/yp10/> and <https://ihra.org.au/sport>

⁴ <https://interactadvocates.org/faq/> and <https://ihra.org.au/allies>

⁵ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgb-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx>

⁶ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/nonbinary-lgbtq-adults-us/>

BEST PRACTICES FOR REPORTING ON TRANSGENDER ATHLETES

Transgender people have been participating fairly in sports for years. What's important to remember is that everyone—including trans athletes at all levels—deserves equal access to, and participation in, sports.

People look to sports and athletes to represent some of our culture's most important values: teamwork, respect, integrity, the ability to overcome adversity, inclusion, and equity. Acceptance of trans people in sport is about far more than simply the ability to play or participate; it's an overall expression of fundamental equality for trans people.

As a journalist, you have a critical role in informing the public about trans people who are athletes as well as contributing members of their teams and societies.

HERE ARE A FEW KEY GUIDELINES:

Always use a transgender person's chosen name

Many transgender people are not able to obtain a legal name change from a court. Some transgender people cannot afford a legal name change, or are not yet old enough to legally change their name, or the legal process can prove to be difficult to navigate.

Always use current name and gender in historical references

In cases where a trans or nonbinary athlete had a career under a previous name, use their current name to refer to past events—even if those events were categorically gendered. For example: "Elliot Page is an award-winning actor; he was nominated in the Best Actress category for the 2007 film *Juno*."

Always use a transgender or nonbinary person's pronouns accurately

Pronouns are a way that people are gendered in everyday language, and using the wrong pronoun (including former pronouns) signifies disrespect for a person's gender identity. If you do not know a person's pronouns, it is fine to ask: "What are your pronouns?" If it is not possible to ask a transgender or nonbinary person which pronoun they use, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender expression or use the singular *they*. Many media outlets have updated their style guides to include singular *they*/them pronouns. For example: "Sam should be able to express *their* gender in a way that is comfortable for *them*."

Avoid focusing on medical issues

It is inappropriate to ask a transgender person questions about their genitals or other surgeries they may or may not have had, as it is for any other person. Do not characterize being transgender as a mental disorder. Neither the American Psychiatric Association nor the American Psychological Association consider being transgender a "mental disorder."

TERMS TO AVOID:

- “Biological female/biological male:” Biological sex characteristics are complex and not binary; sex characteristics like hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy vary from person to person. Use of terms like ‘biological female’ can be reductive and inaccurate when used to describe transgender athletes and some intersex athletes, most of whom have passed strict testing requirements that measure things like hormone levels.
- “Born male/born female:” No one is born with a gender identity. Everyone is born a baby and their gender is assigned to them by doctors and family members based on physical sex characteristics that may not correspond to their gender identity as it develops over time.
- “Transgendered/Transgenderism:” Trans is an adjective used to describe a person. It is not a verb. Refer instead to transgender people, a transgender person, the transgender community.
- “Identifies as:” A transgender woman is a woman, and a nonbinary person is nonbinary. If you would not write that “Joe Biden identifies as a man,” do not write that “Jacob identifies as nonbinary.”
- “Post-operative/surgery:” Medical steps are just some of what transgender people may take as a part of their transition, but they are not required to be transgender. Some trans people have surgery, some don’t. A person’s genitals are no one’s business and do not impact their ability to compete in any sport. Avoid asking invasive questions about surgical procedures and other gender-affirming healthcare treatments.

CHAPTER 4

OLYMPIC POLICIES ON THE INCLUSION OF TRANSGENDER ATHLETES

Transgender athletes have always existed in sport. The International Olympic Committee has been working to include trans people in sport since the early 2000s. At the 2003 Stockholm Consensus on Sex Reassignment in Sports⁷, convened by the IOC, new guidelines were developed for transgender athletes with three requirements for participation: athletes were required to have undergone sexual reassignment surgery, to show legal recognition of their gender, and to have undergone hormone therapy for at least two years. In 2004, the IOC allowed transgender athletes to participate in the Olympic Games under these guidelines (however, none did)⁸.

In 2015, the IOC adopted new guidelines⁹ which no longer mandated surgery, recognizing the need for updated guidance in line with current human rights standards and legislation protecting the rights of transgender people globally. The 2015 guidelines deemed transgender men athletes eligible to take part in men’s competitions “without restriction”; transgender women athletes were still required to demonstrate that their testosterone level has been below a certain level for at least one year before their first competition¹⁰. These guidelines were in place for the 2016 Rio Olympics, however no openly transgender athletes competed.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics will include the first out transgender athletes competing. Any transgender athlete who qualifies has met the guidelines listed above.

⁷ <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-approves-consensus-with-regard-to-athletes-who-have-changed-sex>

⁸ http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Commissions_PDFfiles/Medical_commission/2015-11_ioc_consensus_meeting_on_sex_reassignment_and_hyperandrogenism-en.pdf

⁹ http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Commissions_PDFfiles/Medical_commission/2015-11_ioc_consensus_meeting_on_sex_reassignment_and_hyperandrogenism-en.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Commissions_PDFfiles/Medical_commission/2015-11_ioc_consensus_meeting_on_sex_reassignment_and_hyperandrogenism-en.pdf

SOME PROMINENT LGBTQ+ ATHLETES TO WATCH

In the 2020 Summer Games, a record number of out LGBTQ athletes are competing compared to previous years. According to Outsports, there are at least 142 this year; in 2016 Outsports editors counted 56 out LGBTQ athletes, up from just 23 in 2012. As sports—and the world—becomes safer and more inclusive for LGBTQ people, athletes, more feel comfortable living openly as their authentic selves. Here is a sampling of some LGBTQ athletes to watch at this year's Olympic and Paralympic Games, as of July 19, 2021.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Sue Bird (*she/her, Team USA, Basketball*) is an American professional basketball player for the Seattle Storm and a member of Team USA Women's Basketball. Bird was drafted by the Storm first overall in the 2002 WNBA draft and is considered to be one of the greatest players in WNBA history. She is an out lesbian and engaged to soccer player Megan Rapinoe. Bird is an [Athlete Ally Ambassador](#)¹¹.

Tom Bosworth (*he/him, Team Great Britain, Race Walking*) is a British race walking champion with multiple world and national medals who holds six British records. Bosworth is an ardent LGBTQ+ advocate who came out in 2015, and made headlines for proposing to his now-husband Harry in Rio during the 2016 Olympic Games there¹².

Isadora Cerullo (*she/her, Brazil National Team, Rugby*) is a Brazilian-American rugby sevens player on Brazil's national team. She won a bronze medal at the 2015 Pan American Games¹³. At the 2016 Olympics, where she also competed, her now-wife walked onto the field at Deodoro Stadium and proposed to her¹⁴. Cerullo is an [Athlete Ally Ambassador](#).

Kendall Chase (*she/her, Team USA, Rowing*) is a five-time World U23 champion and a World Junior silver medalist. Chase's US Rowing bio describes her as an LGBTQ+ advocate who "hopes to help rowers and other LGBTQ+ youth find a safe space within the sport of rowing."¹⁵

Tom Daley (*he/his, Team Great Britain, Diving*) is a British diver who has won world, European and Commonwealth titles, and bronze medals at the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympics¹⁴. Daley, who identifies as queer, came out in 2013 on YouTube. He married his husband, screenwriter Dustin Lance Black, in 2017 and they are raising their 3-year-old, Robert.^{17,18}



Tom Daley



US National Women's Rowing Team, L to R: Regina Salmons, Meghan O'Leary, Gia Doonan, Kendall Chase, Ellen Tomek

¹¹ <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-basketball/athletes/Sue-Bird>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2016/aug/16/olympic-marriage-proposals-tom-bosworth-question-boyfriend>

¹³ "Isadora CERULLO". Toronto2015.org. 2015 Pan American Games. Archived from the original on 2017-05-10. Retrieved 2021-07-1.

¹⁴ "Rio 2016: Brazilian rugby player accepts surprise on-field marriage proposal after 7's final". ABC News. 9 August 2016. Archived from the original on 2016-08-12. Retrieved 9 August 2016.

¹⁵ <https://usrowing.org/sports/olympic/roster/kendall-chase/344>

¹⁶ <https://olympics.com/en/athletes/thomas-daley>

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-25183041>

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-39836555>

Gia Doonan (*she/her, Team USA, Rowing*) finished third in the the eight at the 2019 World Rowing Championships, and second in two 2019 World Rowing Cup events. Doonan is a World U23 gold medalist¹⁹.

Edênia Garcia (*she/her, Brazil National Team, Swimming*) is a Brazilian Paralympic swimmer and an out lesbian²⁰. She specializes in the backstroke and has won three Paralympic medals (silver at Athens 2004, bronze at Beijing 2008, silver at London 2012)^{21,22}. [Learn more.](#)

Brittney Griner (*she/her, Team USA, Basketball*) is an American professional basketball player for the Phoenix Mercury in the WNBA, and a Team USA Women's Basketball team member. Griner came out publicly as a lesbian in a 2013 Sports Illustrated interview. Together with her Team USA teammate Sue Bird, Griner is one of 11 U.S. Olympic women's basketball team players who have earned an Olympic gold medal, FIBA World Cup gold medal, WNBA title, and NCAA title²³.



Brittney Griner

Laurel Hubbard (*she/her, New Zealand Olympic Team, Weightlifting*) is a New Zealand weightlifter, and on June 21, was announced as the first openly transgender athlete to qualify to compete in the Olympics²². Hubbard is part of a team of five weightlifters representing New Zealand in Tokyo²³, is ranked fourth in her weight category (87 kilos) at the Games, and will be the oldest weightlifter competing at 43²⁶.

Robyn Love (*she/her, Team Great Britain, Wheelchair Basketball*) is a Scottish Paralympic basketball player who made her international debut in Japan at the 2015 Osaka cup, winning silver. Her team also placed fourth in the 2016 Paralympics in Rio. Love is an [Athlete Ally ambassador](#)²⁷.



Robyn Love

Meghan O'Leary (*she/her, Team USA, Rowing*) is a 2016 Olympian, 2017 World Championship silver medalist, and five-time National Team member with the United States Rowing Team. This will be her second Olympic Games. When not competing, O'Leary is a professional motivational speaker and marketing executive²⁸.

¹⁹ <https://www.usrowing.photos/2021-Olympic-Team-Headshots/i-pXRNWGF>

²⁰ "Hear my voice: Edenia Garcia talks being an LGBTQIA+ woman with a disability". International Paralympic Committee. 30 June 2020.

²¹ "Athlete in numbers: Edenia Garcia". International Paralympic Committee. 30 June 2020.

²² "Edenia Garcia - IPC Athlete Bio". ipc.infostradasports.com. 1 July 2020.

²³ <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-basketball/athletes/Brittney-Griner>

²⁴ "Laurel Hubbard: First transgender athlete to compete at Olympics". BBC News. 21 June 2021. Retrieved 28 June 2021.

²⁵ <https://www.olympic.org.nz/news/five-weightlifters-named-to-new-zealand-olympic-team/>

²⁶ <https://apnews.com/article/2020-tokyo-olympics-olympic-games-sports-e478c884a6f71f616a8ec336aa5e0be2>

²⁷ <https://www.athleteally.org/allies/robyn-love/>

²⁸ <https://meghanoleary.net/>

Quinn (*they/them, Team Canada, Soccer [Football]*) is a midfielder for OL Reign in the US National Women's Soccer League (NSWL), and for the Canada women's national soccer team. Quinn won a bronze medal at the 2016 Summer Olympics with Team Canada²⁹. In September 2020, Quinn came out as transgender, and on June 23, 2021, Quinn was announced as a member of Canada's National Team for this year's Olympics^{30,31}. Quinn is an [Athlete Ally Ambassador](#).

Douglas Souza (*he/him, Brazil, Volleyball*) is an outside hitter on the Brazilian men's volleyball team, which is currently ranked number one in the world. Souza's team took gold at the 2016 Games in Rio along with several other world championships. He often speaks about the importance of being an out LGBTQ+ athlete and advocate in the Brazilian press³².

Megan Rapinoe (*she/her, Team USA, Soccer [Football]*) is a two-time World Cup Champion and co-captain of the U.S. Women's National Team. Rapinoe led the USWNT to the 2019 Women's World Cup Championship, scoring some of the biggest goals of the tournament and earning the tournament's two top honors – the Golden Boot for top scorer, and the Golden Ball for the best player in the tournament. Rapinoe is an out lesbian, engaged to basketball player Sue Bird and an advocate for equality. Rapinoe is an [Athlete Ally Ambassador](#)³³.

Jessica Thoennes (*she/her, Team USA, Rowing*) is a University of Washington NCAA champion and placed second in the eight at World U23 in 2017³⁴.

Ellen Tomek (*she/her, Team USA, Rowing*) is a decorated champion rower who competed in the 2008 and 2016 Olympic Games in double sculls. Tomek has won several medals in the World Rowing Championships and World Rowing Cups in addition to numerous national victories³⁵.



Megan Rapinoe

Chelsea Wolfe (*she/her, Team USA, BMX Freestyle (Alternate)*) is a Team USA Freestyle BMX athlete. She is the first openly transgender woman to join the U.S. Olympic team, and is an alternate for the BMX Elite Women's National Team, which is included for the first time in this year's Olympics^{36,37}. Wolfe is an [Athlete Ally Ambassador](#).

Jack Woolley (*he/him, Team Ireland, Taekwondo*) is the first Irish athlete to compete in Taekwondo at an Olympic level. While this will be his first Games, Woolley has won medals at international championships in Australia, Turkey, the USA, and at the European Championships. Woolley has said that after coming out as bisexual in the media, some opponents have refused to shake his hand at matches³⁸.

²⁹ <https://olympic.ca/team-canada/quinn/>

³⁰ McElwee, Molly (September 9, 2020). "Canada international Quinn comes out as transgender". The Telegraph. Retrieved September 23, 2020.

³¹ <https://olympic.ca/2021/06/23/team-canada-soccer-squad-set-for-tokyo-2020/>

³² <https://www.olimpiadatododia.com.br/orgulho-lgbtqia/245986-caso-lilico-giudou-douglas-souza-a-vencer-e-inspirar-jovens-lgbtqi/>

³³ <http://meganrapinoe.com/>

³⁴ <https://www.usrowing.photos/2021-Olympic-Team-Headshots/i-WcCksP>

³⁵ <https://www.usrowing.photos/2021-Olympic-Team-Headshots/i-b82vq2W>

³⁶ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9701947/BMX-rider-Chelsea-Wolfe-Team-USAs-transgender-Olympian.html>

³⁷ <https://usacycling.org/athlete/chelsea-wolfe>

³⁸ <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2020/01/24/bisexual-olympics-jack-woolley-ireland-taekwondo-coming-out-homophobia-biphobia/>

HISTORY OF LGBTQ ATHLETES AT THE OLYMPICS

LGBTQ athletes have played a vital role in Olympic and Paralympic history, though many were not out at the time they competed.

At the 1976 games, British figure skater John Curry was outed by the press as gay shortly after winning the gold medal. Curry responded by saying the rumors were true, making Curry technically the first out gay Olympic athlete. Curry died of AIDS complications in 1994, but spoke openly about the disease in the years prior to his passing³⁹.

In the years prior to out Olympic athletes, many LGBTQ athletes competed in the Olympics while still closeted. Some athletes, such as Greg Louganis and Johnny Weir, waited until their Olympic competitions were over to come out publicly. Others were not given an option. After competing in the 1928 and 1932 Olympic Games, German track runner Otto Peltzer—known as the first gay Olympic athlete—was arrested in 1934 on the charge of homosexuality, which prevented him from training and qualifying for the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Peltzer was later sent to a Nazi concentration camp⁴⁰.

³⁹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/11/newsid_4504000/4504532.stm

⁴⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jun/29/olympicgames>

⁴¹ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/brief-history-openly-gay-olympians-180968125/>

⁴² <https://www.outsports.com/2016/9/6/12731156/paralympics-lgbt-gay-athletes-out-rio>

⁴³ <https://www.glaad.org/blog/take-action-use-principle-6-graphics-support-global-equality-olympics>

⁴⁴ <https://people.com/sports/winter-olympics-2018-adam-rippon-gus-kenworthy-competing-openly-gay-athletes/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/new-zealand-names-transgender-athlete-hubbard-womens-tokyo-olympics-2021-06-20/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/06/18/trans-bmx-chelsea-wolfe-tokyo-olympics/>

In 1982, Olympic decathlete Tom Waddell founded the Gay Games. Waddell was a decathlete in the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games who was later inspired to start a gay sports event modeled on the Olympics. The event was originally marketed as the Gay Olympics, but a lawsuit filed just three weeks before the opening date forced the organizers to change the name to the Gay Games. The Gay Games have continued since, with the next event set for Hong Kong in 2022.

In 1988 equestrian Robert Dover came out and became the first Olympic athlete to compete as an out gay man, during his second Games in 1988⁴¹.

In 2012 we know that at least two out LGBTQ+ athletes competed in the Paralympics: Great Britain's Claire Harvey (Volleyball) and Lee Pearson (Equestrian), and at least 12 out LGBTQ+ athletes competed in the 2016 Rio Paralympics⁴².

In 2014 Athlete Ally, GLAAD, and All Out teamed up during the Sochi Winter Olympics to launch the Principle 6 campaign⁴³, which successfully lobbied for sexual orientation to be included as a protected class within the anti-discrimination Principle Six of the Olympic Charter.

In 2018 Adam Rippon and Gus Kenworthy became the first out gay American men to compete in the Winter Olympics⁴⁴.

In 2021 New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard became the first out transgender athlete to qualify for Olympic competition⁴⁵, followed by Canadian soccer player Quinn. American BMX Freestyle athlete Chelsea Wolfe qualified as an alternate for Team USA⁴⁶, making her the first transgender Team USA athlete at an Olympic competition (though not the first transgender athlete to make Team USA: Hall of Fame triathlete and All-American duathlete Chris Mosier is 6-time member of Team USA).

SOGIESC DISCRIMINATION IN SPORTS AND A RISE IN ANTI-TRANS HATE

Sports remains one of the greatest socialization mechanisms in the world — it communicates values without relying on any one language, and its most successful participants are known and respected globally. Participation in sport also has powerful mental and physical health benefits. Research from [The Trevor Project](#) shows that LGBTQ youth who do participate in sports earn higher grades, and have lower rates of depression and alcohol use⁴⁷. And yet, an entire community of people remain systematically excluded from sport: Research from [Human Rights Campaign](#) found that LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to drop out of sport as their peers, and that 80% or more of LGBTQ youth aren't out to their coaches⁴⁸.

An Out in the Fields study found that

84% of participants have witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports⁴⁹

Anti-trans discrimination in sports can even impact young cisgender children at the K-12 level. In 2017, an entire Nebraskan youth soccer team was disqualified from a tournament because an 8-year-old player was accused of “looking like a boy.”⁵⁰

One of the most powerful interventions to counter anti-LGBTQ discrimination in sports is education on the impact of discriminatory “locker room talk” and the importance of cultivating an inclusive environment.

[The Trevor Project](#) found that having a supportive coach can be lifesaving for LGBTQ youth, reducing the risk of suicide by

40%

This Olympic and Paralympic games marks the first time in history that we will see openly transgender athletes competing. This also coincides with what has been the worst legislative year on record for the LGBTQ community in the U.S., with 337 overall anti-LGBTQ+ bills, of which 75 have sought to ban transgender youth from sports. Nine U.S. states have enacted such bans: Idaho, Florida, South Dakota, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, West Virginia, Montana and Alabama.

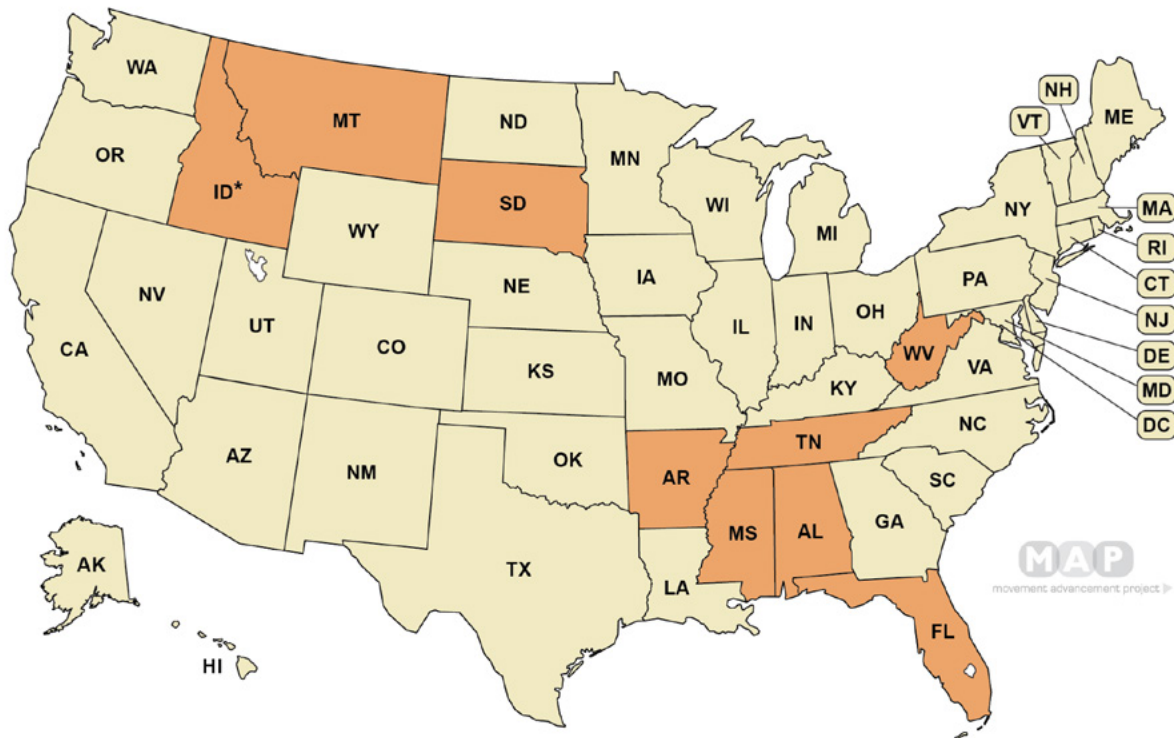
⁴⁷ “Research Brief: The Well-Being of LGBTQ Youth Athletes.” [The Trevor Project](#). 31 August 2020.

⁴⁸ “Play to Win: Improving the Lives of LGBTQ Youth in Sports.” [Human Rights Campaign](#). June 2018.

⁴⁹ Dennison E, Kitchen A. (2015). *Out on the Fields: The First International Study on Homophobia in Sport*. Nielsen, Bingham Cup Sydney 2014, Australian Sports Commission, Federation of Gay Games. <http://www.outonthefields.com/media/#United%20States>

⁵⁰ <https://www.si.com/soccer/2017/06/05/nebraska-soccer-tournament-mili-hernandez-banned-looks-boy>

STATES WITH LAWS BANNING TRANSGENDER CHILDREN FROM SPORTS



Movement Advancement Project. "Equality Maps: Bans on Transgender Youth Participation in Sports." https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/sports_participation_bans Accessed 07/15/2021.

The kind of gender discrimination faced by transgender athletes inevitably impacts cisgender athletes as well, especially Black women and women and girls of color with intersex variations, who often do not know they have an intersex trait until they have undergone mandatory sex testing. World Athletics had medical testing conducted on both runners specifically because their race times were so fast that they raised suspicion, highlighting a sexist undercurrent that pervades much of the conversation on elite women athletes: if a woman is too fast or too strong, then she must not actually be a woman⁵¹. Namibia's National Olympic Committee said in a statement that neither athlete was aware that they had heightened levels of naturally occurring testosterone⁵². In June, South African gold medalist Caster Semenya also failed to qualify due to naturally occurring levels of testosterone; Semenya has refused to take medication to suppress her hormone levels, and has challenged the policy—which she and other global human rights experts call discriminatory—in two court cases at the European Court of Human Rights⁵³.

Though women athletes with intersex variations face distinct and different issues to transgender women athletes, all women are impacted by policies that scrutinize and police women's bodies. In comparison, some prominent male athletes have been applauded for their physical differences from competitors; Olympic swimming champion Michael Phelps has been cited for his hypermobile joints, uniquely long wingspan, and the fact that his body produces significantly less lactic acid than other athletes⁵⁴.

⁵¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/summer/trackandfield/namibia-teenagers-out-of-olympic-400-over-testosterone-level-1.6087993>

⁵² <https://www.si.com/olympics/2021/07/02/namibia-sprinters-banned-olympic-events-elevated-testosterone>

⁵³ https://www.espn.com/olympics/trackandfield/story/_/id/31739867/caster-semenya-fails-reach-olympic-qualifying-5000-meters-race-belgium

⁵⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/we-celebrated-michael-phelps-genetic-differences-why-punish-caster-semenya-for-hers/2019/05/02/93d08c8c-6c2b-11e9-be3a-33217240a539_story.html

RACIAL JUSTICE AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Continued advocacy over racial justice has continued in athletics for years, and this year has renewed calls for international sport federations and national governing bodies to consider how Black athletes—especially Black women athletes—are monitored and sanctioned. Many of the issues facing athletes of color intersect with colonialism, and with the ongoing fight for equality for LGBTQ athletes.

U.S. track star Sha'Carri Richardson was suspended from competition in early July after testing positive for marijuana, even though its use is legal in the state where Richardson ingested it. Other policies enforced by international federations ahead of the Games have resulted in other Black women being excluded from specific Olympic events because of natural testosterone levels deemed “too high” to compete in women’s categories, and a current ban on certain swim caps that only affect Black swimmers. Recently, controversy over the right of athletes to engage in peaceful protest and speak out about political issues—including displaying the rainbow LGBTQ+ pride flag, taking a knee during anthems, or raising a fist during awards ceremonies—has also dominated discourse and coverage around the upcoming Games.

The advocacy organization Color of Change has led efforts to bring awareness to how issues of racism and colonialism at the Olympics represent the larger struggle for equality and justice in all areas of life for Black athletes around the world, including LGBTQ people of color.

ANTI-TRANSGENDER ACTIVISTS AND MEDIA MISINFORMATION

In the United States, a number of anti-LGBTQ activist groups have spent many years fighting against LGBTQ equality and have recently put enormous resources into attacking the transgender community, especially trans youth. In years past, these organizations focused on trying to keep the community from gaining marriage rights, fighting bans on conversion therapy, and enacting laws that prevent teachers from speaking about LGBTQ people in schools, for example. In the period between 2015-2018, these activist groups focused on trying to prevent trans youth from accessing restrooms and locker rooms at school. Anti-LGBTQ organizations have largely lost most of these battles, but they continue to draft model legislation, fight against LGBTQ rights in the courts, and promote misinformation on social media and in right-wing media.

Familiarizing yourself with these anti-LGBTQ groups and their recent campaigns targeting transgender access to sports in particular can help journalists place anti-trans policies and sentiment in context, and help to avoid recirculating anti-trans rhetoric. The surge in transphobia surrounding sports over the past year didn't arise from a vacuum; it is the result of consistent campaigning. Here are just a few of the most prominent groups working to restrict or abolish transgender athletes from competition. Reporters should give extra scrutiny to statements and spokespeople representing the following organizations, understanding that this current campaign is a continuation of anti-transgender (and broader anti-LGBTQ) animus.

Promise To America's Children

Launched by a coalition of longstanding anti-LGBTQ activist groups in early 2021, Promise to America's Children is a campaign geared towards eradicating gender affirming healthcare for transgender youth, banning trans youth from sports, and preventing trans equality in schools. It offers [model legislation](#) to state lawmakers, promoting legislation that refers to healthcare for transgender youth as "dangerous medical experimentation."

Alliance Defending Freedom

Designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Alliance Defending Freedom or ADF is an enormous law firm with deep pockets. ADF has recruited cisgender female athletes to join its lawsuits in Idaho and Connecticut that seek to ban trans athletes from competition, and is known for filing opposing briefs in most major LGBTQ rights court cases and [made fraudulent claims in filed lawsuits](#).

Family Policy Alliance

An offshoot of Focus On The Family, Family Policy Alliance is linked to state chapters around the U.S. and recently made fighting against transgender rights one of its pillar issues. The group launched a campaign called #SaveGirlsSports that inaccurately alleges trans girls have innate physical advantages over cisgender girls, and proudly takes responsibility for passing the first anti-trans sports ban in the nation (Idaho) on its [website](#).



[Every major medical organization supports gender affirming care for youth and their access to sports participation.](#)

Heritage Foundation

A right-wing think tank with extensive influence in the U.S. Republican party, Heritage Foundation cites Gender as one of its pillar issues of focus—meaning anti-transgender activism. Throughout 2021, the group has published numerous reports that inaccurately state that gender-affirming healthcare harms children (despite the fact that every major U.S. medical association supports such healthcare) and that equitable access to sports harms women. Former Vice President Mike Pence, notable for his history of anti-LGBTQ policies, is a current Heritage fellow.

Fair Play For Women

A UK-based organization formed in 2017 with the express purpose of fighting against transgender equality, Fair Play For Women works to restrict transgender women's access to sports, women's prisons, and women's restrooms and changing rooms. The group has also fought to oppose more widespread inclusive trans policies, such as changes to the UK's Gender Recognition Act that would make the process of name changes easier for trans people.

Save Women's Sports

An American group founded in 2019, Save Women's Sports resembles Fair Play For Women in that it is almost unilaterally focused on banning transgender women and girls from being able to train, qualify, and compete in women's categories. Save Women's Sports founder Beth Steltzer has spoken at events organized by the Family Policy Alliance and Heritage Foundation.

Women's Sports Policy Working Group

Founded in early 2021 by former athletes (including former Olympians) and sports management analysts, none of whom are transgender. The group relies on insufficient data to reach its policy recommendations, disagrees with current NCAA and IOC standards, and inaccurately claims that trans girls and women have an inherent athletic advantage against their cisgender peers, a claim at odds with science and evidence in real-world competition.

JAPANESE LGBTQ CONTEXT

The occasion of the Olympics has provided an opportunity for LGBTQ advocates to campaign for further protections for the LGBTQ community. The Japanese LGBTQ community has faced cultural hurdles, finding their identities running up against the cultural values of harmony, unity, and conformity. The push for acceptance in Japan has picked up speed in the last several years. Since the Games in Tokyo were announced, organizations have been formed to secure nondiscrimination and marriage equality laws, as well as raise visibility and awareness of the LGBTQ community.



Japan's national government has yet to enact anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Trans people in Japan have been allowed to change their legal gender since 2004, but the procedure for doing so includes arduous and discriminatory requirements. Under the law, applicants must undergo a psychiatric evaluation and be surgically sterilized. They also have to be single and without children younger than 20.

Prefecture governments have passed ordinances recognizing same-sex relationships with certificates, and a court has ruled the government's ban on marriage equality is unconstitutional, a moral victory that is not yet legally binding. Additionally, the national sex education curriculum has failed to include information about the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity.

In 2018, the city of Tokyo adopted an important ordinance that protects LGBTQ people from discrimination, in line with the Olympic Charter and international human rights standards. But several Olympic competitions, including the marathon, golf, fencing, race walking, and surfing, will take place outside of Tokyo in Hokkaido, Saitama, Chiba, Shizuoka, Kanagawa, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures. LGBTQ fans, athletes, and visitors in these prefectures will not be protected under Tokyo's anti-discrimination ordinance⁵⁵.

Human Rights Watch, J-ALL (LGBT 法連合会, Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation), Athlete Ally and All Out have worked together to push forward Equality Act Japan, which called on Japan's government to introduce and enact legislation to protect LGBT people from discrimination before the Olympics. More than 100,000 people signed a petition calling for the government to pass Equality Act Japan, and over 20 corporations and other organizations from Japan and overseas have also supported the legislation. Unfortunately, Equality Act Japan failed to pass this legislative session, but the work continues.

⁵⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/equalityactjapan>

JAPANESE LGBTQ ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Japan Society for Sport and Gender Studies (JSSGS)

The mission of JSSGS is “to achieve gender equality and impartiality in sport” and “to build a sports culture that is totally free of gender bias” through academic forums and the promotion of cooperation among members and related institutions.

Pride House Tokyo

Since 2018, the Pride House Tokyo Consortium has been working to expand understanding of LGBTQ and other sexual minorities in Japan, and to create an environment in which all people can feel safe, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Pride House Tokyo Legacy, a permanent, comprehensive LGBTQ center that opened in Shinjuku on October 11, 2020, is an initiative that resonates with one of the visions of the Tokyo 2020 Games, “Diversity and Harmony,” and is recognized as part of the game’s official program.

LGBT法連合会 (Japan Alliance for LGBT legislation)

<https://lgbtetc.jp/english>

Japanese organization with a mission to legislate laws in Japan to remove social barriers based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Marriage for All Japan

<http://marriageforall.jp/en/>

Marriage For All Japan (MFAJ) is an organization that works to achieve marriage equality in Japan. MFAJ’s main activities include providing information on the MFAJ’s activities and the latest developments in marriage equality in Japan through its website and SNS, holding events to call for public support for marriage equality, and supporting the “Marriage for All” lawsuits, which challenge the unconstitutionality of the current laws that do not allow same-sex marriage. MFAJ has also been involved in a number of lobbying activities, including meeting with Diet members and holding rallies in the Diet. MFAJ is also working with major companies and launched the “Business for Marriage Equality” campaign to raise the visibility of companies that support marriage equality.

LGBT Support Lawyers Network Volunteer

<http://lanjapan.org/en>

Lawyers for LGBT and Allies Network is a Japanese NPO of business lawyers. Our mission is to realize an equal society where every person, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can safely realize their full potential. We engage in legal advocacy and events designed to promote corporate awareness. Initiatives to date include the 2018 Japan launch of the UN LGBTI Business Standards; the 2019 launch of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan’s “Viewpoint on Marriage Equality” (now counting over 120 corporate supporters) and the 2020 publication of Open for Business’ Japan report on marriage equality and inclusion.

LGBTQ+ ATHLETES IN JAPAN

Japanese cultural values of harmony, unity, and conformity can create a challenge for LGBTQ athletes to come out. Like elsewhere around the world, Japanese LGBTQ athletes fear backlash from fans by sharing their authentic selves. However, in the last few years, LGBTQ athletes have increasingly shared their identities, along with the movement to pass further LGBTQ protections, including a nondiscrimination law and marriage equality.

Many of the athletes named below have only come out in recent years. Reporters can explore how the Olympics and Paralympics have created an opportunity for LGBTQ athletes to come out, be more visible, and call for further protections for the LGBTQ community.

Fumino Sugiyama (*he/him, Fencing*) became the first transgender executive board member named to the Japanese Olympic Committee, just weeks before the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo. Sugiyama competed on Japan women's national fencing team in 2004 and 2005. In 2006, he retired and shared that he was transgender. Since then, he has been a campaigner for LGBTQ awareness.

Airi Murakami (*she/her, Rugby*) is a 31-year-old female rugby player who was selected as a member of the 2019 Japanese National Team. Murakami came out as a same gender loving person in 2021, sharing also that she is in a relationship.

Makoto Kikuchi (*she/her, Boxing*) is professional boxer who won the All Japan Women's Welterweight Championship in 2018. Kikuchi came out as a lesbian in 2021.

Shiho Shimoyamada (*she/her, Football*) came out as having a same-gender partner in 2019 while playing soccer—known internationally as football—professionally in Germany. She felt Germany was a safer place to share her sexual orientation.

Kumi Yokoyama (*he/him, Football*) is a former national team striker who plays professional soccer in the U.S. Yokoyama came out as a transgender man in 2021.

ABOUT GLAAD

GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBTQ acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love. For more information, please visit www.glaad.org or connect with GLAAD on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Contact: press@glaad.org

ABOUT ATHLETE ALLY

Athlete Ally believes sport will change the world when it welcomes and empowers all people. As a leading national nonprofit working at the intersection of sport and LGBTQI+ equality, Athlete Ally works to end the structural and systemic oppression that isolates, excludes and endangers LGBTQI+ people in sport. We educate individuals and institutions to understand obstacles to inclusion for LGBTQI+ people and how they can build an inclusive culture within their athletic communities. We work to ensure sport governing bodies, teams and leagues adopt policies that reflect the diversity of their constituents. We incubate athlete activism to advance LGBTQI+ equality in and through sport. For more information, visit www.athleteally.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

Contact: press@athleteally.org

ABOUT PRIDE HOUSE TOKYO

Since 2018, the Pride House Tokyo Consortium has been working to expand understanding of LGBTQ and other sexual minorities in Japan, and to create an environment in which all people can feel safe, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Pride House Tokyo Legacy, a permanent, comprehensive LGBTQ center that opened in Shinjuku on October 11, 2020, is an initiative that resonates with one of the visions of the Tokyo 2020 Games, "Diversity and Harmony," and is recognized as part of the game's official program.

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