



HOCKEY CANADA **GENDER EXPRESSION /** **GENDER IDENTITY** **POLICY FAQ**



A. RATIONALE

1. Why is this policy needed within hockey?

- a. Hockey Canada is committed to [Make Hockey More](#), and committed to the inclusion of everyone residing in Canada in the game. This policy is a foundational document designed to explicitly state Hockey Canada's commitment to be more inclusive to transgender and non-binary participants. It spells out the practical considerations and needs to address often invisible and unique challenges that transgender and non-binary athletes face. This includes, but is not limited to, treatment, eligibility, registration and dressing rooms.

2. Why is this Frequently Asked Questions page needed and who is it intended for?

- a. This resource is designed to provide guidance to Hockey Canada Members and local hockey associations, along with coaches and parents/guardians of registrants across the country. This document is designed to action the policy, address common concerns, break down complex issues into digestible and easy-to-understand ways, and provide additional context that is not possible in the policy.

B. DEFINITIONS

3. I thought gender was assigned to people at birth based on their sex. Is that true?

- a. In our society, people think sex determines gender. For many, that is the case, but not for everyone. According to the most recent census in Canada, for 0.3% of the population (approximately 114,750 people), there is a difference between their gender identity and their sex – also referred to as being transgender or non-binary (Statistics Canada, 2022).

C. ELIGIBILITY

4. I've heard policies like this are problematic because of the competitive advantage transgender women may have in sport, which leads them to dominate. Is this true?

- a. The athletic ability of transgender athletes varies, just as athletic ability varies with cisgender athletes. Assumptions that are sometimes made about the athletic abilities of transgender women include that they are always more skilled, stronger and bigger than their cisgender opponents. However, the overlap in skill and performance in sports among males and females and the wide variance within each sex are important considerations. Sport accepts the competitive advantage a taller, stronger cisgender female athlete may have over a shorter, less muscular cisgender female athlete where size and strength are important (e.g. basketball), but this variation is questioned when a transgender woman athlete is involved. According to the CCES, having financial material resources (access to infrastructure, equipment, nutrition, training time, etc.) are associated with advantage in sport, more than certain biomedical factors (2022). The extensive [literature review](#) released by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES, 2022) shows there is no conclusive evidence that supports that transgender women have a consistent and measurable overall performance benefit after 12 months of testosterone suppression.

5. Won't this policy allow men/boys to lie and say they are women/girls so they can play hockey in the female division and win?

- a. Genuine transitioning or affirming one's gender is a time-intensive undertaking (whether that is telling other people and/or changing documents and/or accessing gender-affirming care) and is not done on a whim. Given these challenges, nothing like this has been reported and is highly unlikely. This concern often overlooks the constant risk, discrimination and potential violence transgender women endure navigating through public spaces, sport and life.

6. I've heard that including transgender women/girls hurts cisgender women/girls. Is that true?

- a. Excluding transgender women hurts all women by introducing additional levels of scrutiny that could subject any woman (including those who are cisgender) to invasive tests, arbitrary measures of being 'too masculine' or vague notions of being 'too good' at their sport to be a 'real' woman. This concern is based on the false dichotomy that women are weak(er) and men are strong(er), rather than the more nuanced reality of strength existing along a bell curve with overlap across all genders. The inclusion of transgender and non-binary athletes will assist in the promotion of values centered on non-discrimination and wider inclusion.

7. Can non-binary people play hockey?

- a. Hockey Canada is committed to including non-binary individuals (those who do not identify as exclusively women nor men) in the sport of hockey. However, hockey (like most sports) currently only has two categories of girls'/women's (female hockey) and boys' (minor hockey)/men's hockey. Hockey players who are non-binary are welcome to register in the category they would feel most comfortable in. Going forward, Hockey Canada will investigate ways to be more inclusive in this regard by exploring or testing alternatives to gender categorization.

D. CHANGE ROOMS

8. I've heard that policies like this are problematic because this allows men to say they are women and enter women's dressing rooms. Is this true?

- a. There is no evidence that transgender or non-binary individuals use toilets or change rooms to harass or assault others (CCES, 2016). More often, transgender and non-binary people are at a higher risk of being victimized, harassed or assaulted in washrooms and change rooms (Herman, 2013).

9. How does this policy work in the dressing room?

- a. The Hockey Canada Dressing Room Policy, Dressing Room Policy Implementation Guide and Dressing Room Policy FAQ provide guidance on the dressing room.
- b. Fundamentally, all athletes in every dressing room in the country should enter the dressing room wearing their base layer, or change into their base layer in a private area. Additionally, athletes have the right to use the dressing room that is most congruent with their gender identity. If an athlete needs an alternative dressing room arrangement, local organizations should work with the athlete to find a solution.

E. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

10. How can my organization or team make hockey more inclusive for transgender and non-binary people?

- a. Listen to transgender and non-binary people with empathy, respect and compassion. These stories are valid and important sources of information and knowledge.
- b. Educate yourself. Please see the Hockey Canada website for a list of resources that provide general and sport-specific information on transgender and non-binary participant inclusion.
- c. Think critically about your own ideas, perceptions and beliefs about gender, gender identity and gender expression: Are some of those ideas, perceptions and beliefs about gender impacting people in your life? For example, as a coach, are you familiar with Hockey Canada's new Dressing Room Policy?
- d. Commit to using inclusive language and images. Honour individual's pronouns and chosen names. When communicating use gender-neutral terms, such as 'they' instead of 'he/she', use linesperson instead of linesmen. Use phrases such as 'everyone' or 'team' in favour of 'ladies and gentlemen' and 'boys and girls'. If you need to ask for information about athletes' parents, use parent/guardian and avoid using mother and father, and offer spaces for more than two contacts, as families come in all different forms.
- e. Avoid making assumptions around people's identities or relationships. You cannot tell someone's gender identity or sexuality by looking at them. Someone's gender identity or sexuality is their own to share; it is essential to never share with others (if you know), unless they have given explicit permission to speak about them to others, including parents or guardians.
- f. Address any dressing room questions or requests as per the Hockey Canada Dressing Room Policy, Dressing Room Implementation Guide and Dressing Room Policy FAQ.
- g. Collaborate with other organizations in your community to offer learning opportunities to your members.

11. Are there any educational resources available to assist teams, parents/guardians and athletes with this topic?

- a. Yes! Hockey Canada, in consultation with non-binary hockey participants and experts, have developed a resource list for individuals to access.

F. CHALLENGES

12. What do I do if I witness or experience acts of homophobia, transphobia or sexism?

- a. Safety – This is the first priority. Ensure you are safe in the environment before deciding on next steps.
- b. Intervene – If you feel comfortable enough to intervene in the situation, politely inform the person they are using discriminatory language and if they would like to learn more about why the language is discriminatory, Hockey Canada has developed a resource bank that is available on its website. Alternatively, you can reach out to a trusted person to brainstorm together about how to approach the situation.
- c. Inform – If a person is engaging in discriminatory behaviour (e.g. intimidation, harassment, bullying, threats, etc.), inform someone in a leadership role (e.g. coach, manager or administration). A person in leadership may have the responsibility of formally reporting any breaches of policy.
- d. Report – If you would like to file a formal complaint outlining the mistreatment you either witnessed or experienced, you can submit the complaint directly to the external independent third party - sportcomplaints.ca.