



TRANSGENDER ATHLETES:

A RESEARCH-INFORMED FACT SHEET

DID YOU KNOW?

- Legislation that seeks to limit transgender youth participation in sports is relatively new, yet transgender people have participated in sports for a long time!
- Numerous athletic organizations, including the NCAA and the International Olympic Committee, have allowed transgender athletes to participate on sports teams consistent with their gender identity since 2004.
- There is no evidence supporting a claim that transgender athletes have any sort of competitive advantage over cisgender athletes. (Jones et al., 2017)

“Trans-affirming policies and practices—including inclusive sports—save lives, improve mental health, and dramatically decrease the risk of adverse outcomes along all axes...participation in sports has been shown to counteract the harms suffered from bullying, rejection, and discrimination; thus, transgender youth have more to gain from participating in sports than many of their cisgender peers.” (Velte)



TRANSGENDER YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY HOSTILE AND ANTI-TRANS POLICIES AND RHETORIC

- More than half of transgender students have reported being prohibited from using bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identity. (Kosciw et al., 2020)
- Transgender youth report negative mental health effects as a result of hostile rhetoric in their communities, including proposed and passed anti-trans legislation or policies. (Paceley et al., 2020)
- Anti-transgender state policies contribute to increased suicide attempts. (Perez-Brumer et al., 2015)
- Policies that further exclude transgender children and youth will only result in decreased safety and increased risks for transgender youth.

ANTI-TRANS SPORTS POLICIES ARE HARMFUL TO ALL YOUTH

- States with policies that excluded transgender youth from sports or limited participation based on their sex assigned at birth showed decreased engagement by girls in sports—not increased as proposed! (CDC, 2020)
- Anti-trans sports policies that require youth to play on teams associated with their sex assigned at birth have contributed to harmful gender policing strategies (e.g. invasive sex verification processes) for any athlete on a girls or women’s team who presents as more “masculine” or “too strong”. (ACLU, 2020)

INCLUSIVE POLICIES BENEFIT ALL YOUTH

- States that have transgender-inclusive sports policies demonstrate consistent or increased participation of girls in sports, unlike those states that exclude transgender youth from sports. (CDC, 2020)
- Sports and athletics can create a sense of community—important for all people, and especially important for transgender young people who are regularly excluded from spaces that promote belonging. (ACLU, 2020)
- Transgender youth in schools and communities with inclusive policies report lower suicide, greater school safety, and higher grades (Day et al., 2020; Kosciw et al., 2020, & Meyer et al., 2020)

Want to know more about language used in this brief?

Check out the [Refinery 29 Gender Nation Glossary webpage](#)

For resources, research, or training materials, contact the
CENTER FOR LGBTQ+ RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY
LGBTQRESEARCH@KU.EDU

RESOURCES:

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Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). New York, NY.

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Paceley, M. S., Sattler, P., Goffnett, J., & Jen, S. (2020). "It feels like home": Transgender youth in the Midwest and conceptualizations of community climate. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 48(6), 1863-1881. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22378>

Perez-Brumer, A., Hatzenbuehler, M. L., Oldenburg, C. E., & Bockting, W. (2015). Individual and structural-level risk factors for suicide attempts among transgender adults. *Behavioral Medicine*, 41(3), 164-171. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08964289.2015.1028322>

Velte, Kyle C. (2021), Associate Professor of Law, Testimony Provided to the KS Senate Education Committee regarding SB208



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