

National Sports Public Opinion Pulse Survey – Key Takeaways on Transgender Athletic Issues

1. **GOAL: Identify how much the general public knows about transgender people and issues facing the transgender community**

- Key Takeaway: As a whole, respondents believe that there is such a thing as being transgender; however, the respondents did not demonstrate a clear understanding of any of the terms we tested except “cross-dresser.”
- Supporting data points:
 - Always a plurality but seldom a majority of respondents identified the terms correctly. People were least knowledgeable about the words “transgender” and “transsexual.”
 - Definition: People whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Transgender: 38%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transsexual: 21%
 - Intersex: 12%
 - Cisgender: 10%
 - Definition: People who were assigned female at birth but identify and live as a boy/man
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Transgender boy/man: 49%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transgender girl/woman: 22%
 - Definition: People who were assigned male at birth but identify and live as a girl/woman
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Transgender girl/woman: 49%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transgender boy/man: 22%
 - Definition: A person who changes gender by undergoing surgical procedures
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Transsexual: 36%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transgender: 29%

- Definition: A person who is not transgender, or whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Cisgender: 49%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Intersex: 17%
 - Transsexual: 10%
- Definition: A person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Cross-dresser: 68%**
- Definition: People born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosomal pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Intersex: 46%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Cisgender: 16%
 - Transsexual: 13%
- People are not knowledgeable about the differences between "sex" and "gender."
 - 48% identified the correct answer – a plurality but not a majority
 - Those with higher levels of **educational attainment, women,** and respondents in the **pacific** region were most likely to identify the correct answer.
 - The following demographics had among the highest shares of belief that sex and gender were the same: respondents with a high school education or less (48%), those living in rural areas (44%), and those in the Southern (42%) or Plains (45%) regions.
- The majority of respondents believe that being transgender is real
 - Only 23% of respondents believe that there is **no such thing** as being transgender
 - This belief is firmest among **35-44-year-olds** (38%). The ages who are least likely to agree with this belief are those between the ages of **55-64** and those **65+** (16% each).
 - **Men** (29%) are more likely to believe that being transgender is not real than women (18%)– especially men between the ages of **18-54** (36%).
 - Parents of young children are more likely to agree with this belief (35%) than those with older children (18%) or those without children (17%).

- Key Takeaway: Many people who think they have a good understanding of transgender issues did not demonstrate a clear understanding of terms related to the transgender community
- Supporting data points:
 - Respondents who believed that they have a good understanding of issues faced by transgender people did not perform significantly better at identifying terms related to the transgender community correctly.
 - Definition: People whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Transgender: 39%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transsexual: 20%
 - Cisgender: 11%
 - Definition: A person who changes gender by undergoing surgical procedures
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Transsexual: 38%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transgender: 28%
 - Cisgender: 10%
 - Definition: A person who is not transgender, or whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Cisgender: 48%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Intersex: 17%
 - Transsexual: 10%
 - Definition: A person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Cross-dresser: 65%**
 - Definition: People born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosomal pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female
 - Correct Answer:
 - **Intersex: 45%**
 - Incorrect answer(s) that 10%+ respondents believed was correct:
 - Transsexual: 13%
 - Cisgender: 14%

2. **GOAL: Discover the opinion of the public, in general, regarding transgender athletes**

- Key Takeaway: Younger, more affluent, and urban respondents were more likely to report having personal knowledge of someone who has competed or chosen not to compete against a transgender athlete
- Supporting Data Points:
 - Three-quarters of respondents do not have personal experience with transgender athletes
 - Younger respondents (18-34, 35-44) have more experience with transgender athletes than older respondents (55-64, 65+)
 - Urban respondents have more experience than rural
 - Wealthier (\$100k+) and postgraduate respondents have more experience than those less educated or less wealthy
 - Parents with children under 18 at home are more exposed than those with older children or no children
- 35% of **parents of young children** believe that transgender athletes competing in youth sports is an extremely/very widespread issue, compared to 23% and 24% of parents of older children and those without children, respectively.
- Half of the respondents felt as though they had a **good understanding** of transgender issues
 - Younger respondents (62% of 18-34 year olds), Hispanics (57%), and parents of 0-17 y/o children (60%) have higher than average perceived understanding of transgender issues
- Parents of children, regardless of age, believe that the media **is influencing children** to think they are transgender more so than those without children (53% of parents with children under 18 living at home, and 54% of parents whose children are not living at home)
 - Also, white respondents (52%), males (52%), and respondents 35+ (51%) are more likely to agree with the statement
- Younger respondents (53% of 18–34-year-olds) were most likely to believe that refusing to allow transgender athletes to compete in the category of their gender identity would **harm them mentally or emotionally**, compared to the population as a whole (41%).
- More respondents were worried about the impact that allowing **transgender girls** to compete in girls' sports would have than **transgender boys'** impact on boys' sports
 - By a 28-point margin, respondents thought that allowing transgender girls would have a negative impact on girls' sports
 - By a 16-point margin, respondents thought that allowing transgender boys would have a negative impact on boys' sports
 - Parents of young children were less concerned overall than parents of adult children.
 - By a 10-point margin for each, those with young children thought that the presence of transgender athletes would have a negative impact on both girls' and boys' sports

- By a 57-point margin, parents of adult children thought that the presence of transgender girls would negatively impact girls' sports, and by a 33-point margin, they thought the presence of transgender boys would negatively impact boys' sports.
- More respondents believe that a male athlete would say he is transgender to **compete against women** (33%) than a female athlete would say she is transgender to **compete against men** (19%)

3. GOAL: Determine what the overall consensus is regarding how transgender and non-transgender athletes should interact

- Key Takeaway: Respondents were very divided on how transgender and non-transgender athletes should interact or even if they should interact at all.
- Supporting Data Points:
 - More respondents were supportive of athletes who were **assigned female at birth but identify as male competing against those assigned male** at birth (31% support/36%oppose) than the other way around
 - Only 26% of respondents supported allowing those who were assigned male at birth but identified as female to compete against those assigned female at birth, while 44% opposed
 - 45% of respondents are concerned about the **presence of transgender athletes in locker rooms**
 - This includes 53% of **parents of younger children** and 37% of those **without children**
 - 51% of all **males** and 53% of younger (18-54 y/o) males
 - 55% of those between the ages of 35-44
 - 47% of those who have exercised at a Micro gym, a boutique fitness gym, and at a traditional gym in the past 60 days as well as before the pandemic started
 - A majority (60%) of those who are **not** concerned about transgender people's presence in locker rooms believes that if they are not allowed to compete in the category of their gender identity, they will suffer mental and emotional harm
 - Respondents were united in the belief that **transgender people should be allowed to compete in sports** but divided on where they should compete.
 - 32% said transgender athletes should be required to compete with their **sex assigned at birth**, 30% said they should be able to compete with their **gender identity**, 28% said **new categories** should be created specifically for transgender athletes
 - Younger respondents (18-34) were more likely to allow transgender athletes to compete with their gender identity as opposed to their sex assigned at birth, as were women, Hispanics, Asians, non-specified ethnicities, and respondents without children

- Among the only demographics who had a plurality of support for the creation of two additional competition categories were **55+ women** and **suburban women**
- Respondents without kids favored placing athletes by gender identity over assigned sex by 6 points, while parents of adult children favored assigned sex over gender identity by 18 points. Parents of young children were evenly divided, with 32% favoring assigned sex and 31% favoring gender identity
- A majority of respondents (65%) believe that transgender people are **normal human beings** AND disagree with the statement **that there is no such thing as being transgender**.

- Key Takeaway: Respondents themselves are not entirely sure of what should be done with transgender athletes. There is little consistency in respondents' opinions, indicating respondents are not certain in their beliefs.

- Supporting data points:
 - Respondents were *slightly* more supportive of the real-life example of Texas allowing *transgender boys* to compete in *girls'* sports (27% support / 40% oppose) than Connecticut allowing *transgender girls* competing in *girls'* sports (25% support / 44% oppose)
 - Respondents' answers to the example of transgender athletes competing in the category of their gender identity tracked closely with their opinions on what should be done with transgender athletes, in general.
 - 46% of those who were against the Connecticut example preferred athletes to compete in the category of their sex assigned at birth. Conversely, 55% of those who supported the example want athletes to compete in the category of their gender identity.
 - When given the Texas example of transgender athletes competing in the category of their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity, respondents were a little more confused
 - A plurality (3-point margin) of respondents who supported the Texas example of *transgender boys* to compete in *girls'* sports, in general, also prefer that transgender athletes in general compete in the category that matches their gender identity
 - When asked about their preferences for transgender athletes in general, a plurality of respondents (13-point margin) who opposed the Texas example allowing *transgender boys* to compete in *girls'* sports said that they preferred athletes compete in categories for their sex assigned at birth – appearing to contradict their earlier opposition to the Texas athletes competing in the category of their sex assigned at birth.

- Of the respondents who initially supported that idea that transgender people who were born with externally male sexual characteristics but identify as a woman should be allowed to compete as a woman, only 55% also supported the same statement later in the survey when asked which statement best matches their beliefs. Similarly, only 53% supported the idea when asked about athletes born with externally female sexual characteristics but identify as a man and want to compete as a man.

Summary

Overall, respondents viewed transgender people positively, with majorities believing that there is such a thing as being transgender and that transgender people are normal human beings. However, despite general feelings of positivity towards transgender people, the majority of respondents were not knowledgeable about terms relating to sex and gender and had not formed a consensus about how transgender athletes and non-transgender athletes should interact. A very small minority thought that transgender people should not be allowed to take part in sports, but there was no agreement among the majority of respondents whether transgender athletes should compete against other athletes of the same gender identity, sex assigned at birth, or whether new competition categories should be created for transgender athletes.

Methodology

This national survey was conducted by OH Predictive Insights between May 19th - May 27th, 2021 from a nationwide general population (18+ year old) sample. The sample size was 1,800 completed surveys, with a MoE of $\pm 2.31\%$. All respondents were given the option to take the survey in English or Spanish. Of the 1,800 respondents in total, 16 respondents opted to take the survey in Spanish, while the remaining respondents chose to take the survey in English. The sample demographics accurately reflected the target population's age, gender, region and ethnicity according to population statistics derived from recent US Census data for US adults. This survey was conducted via opt-in online panel. Numbers may not total 100%, due to rounding.