



International  
Olympic  
Committee

The President

Presidents and Secretaries General  
of International Sports Federations

Lausanne, 26 March 2026

Dear Presidents, dear Secretaries General,

Later today the IOC will publish its Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Considerations for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies.

Attached is a copy, so that you have time to read it before publication, and also a Q&A document. We understand that this is a very sensitive topic, and there will be many questions, in particular around the implementation of the policy. The IOC will work closely with all of our stakeholder groups on this. We want you to have the opportunity to read the policy before we get into detailed discussions about the implementation. Please do not be concerned if you feel that you do not have all the precise answers about implementation at this stage.

At 16:15 CET today there will be a press briefing, which you can watch either live or after the event at [www.youtube.com/iocmedia](http://www.youtube.com/iocmedia).

It is a policy based on science, and has been led by medical experts.

The scientific evidence is very clear. Male chromosomes give performance advantages in all sports that rely on strength, power or endurance.

At the Olympic Games, even the smallest margins can be the difference between victory and defeat. So, it is absolutely clear that it would not be fair for biological males to compete in the female category. In addition, in some sports it would simply not be safe.

Every athlete must be treated with dignity and respect. Athletes will need to be screened only once in their lifetime. There will be clear education around the process, and counselling available, alongside expert medical advice.

We are grateful to you for keeping the contents of this email confidential until publication of the policy.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any initial questions, and we will also be organising group calls over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hindy Community". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



## IOC Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women’s) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Considerations for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies

### PREAMBLE

Eligibility for the female (women’s) category has been a longstanding topic within the Olympic Movement. Most recently, in November 2021, the International Olympic Committee (the “**IOC**”) issued the *IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations* (the “**Framework**”), which provided guidance for International Federations (“**IFs**”) to develop sport-specific eligibility criteria for the female (women’s) category (the “**Female Category**”). The Framework provided for periodic review of that guidance to reflect relevant ethical, human rights, legal, scientific and medical developments, including stakeholder feedback on their application. This *Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women’s) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Considerations for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies* (the “**Policy**”) reflects such review and developments.

### BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY

From September 2024 to March 2026, the IOC Administration (the “**Administration**”) conducted a broad-based review of the Framework’s approach to eligibility for the Female Category at IOC Events (the “**Review**”). The Review included consideration of the IOC’s policy goals for the Female Category, consultations with a range of experts in relevant fields and lessons learned, and feedback from Olympic Movement constituents, among whom were IFs whose sports have been on the sports programme of an Olympic Games and athletes from around the world potentially impacted by a revision of the Framework.

As part of the Review, in September 2025 the IOC established a working group specifically to examine scientific, medical and legal developments since 2021 (the “**Working Group**”). The Working Group members came from five continents and included specialists in sports science, endocrinology, transgender medicine, sports medicine, women’s health, ethics and law. In addition, as a separate part of the Working Group, IF Chief Medical Officers representing individual and team sports were included.

Following an update to the IOC membership in November 2025 on the status of the Working Group’s work to date, the Administration was tasked with drafting a policy on the protection of the Female Category in an Olympic context that would reflect the Working Group’s work, the various IOC consultations and consideration of recent developments, including in international human rights law.



## REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENTS

### *Review of and Developments in Science*

The Working Group reviewed the state of the science, including developments since 2021, and reached consensus that:

- i. Male sex (as defined in Schedule 1) confers performance advantage in all sports and events that rely on strength, power, and/or endurance;
- ii. To protect fairness in such sports and events, as well as safety particularly in contact sports (e.g. combat, collision, projectile sports), it is necessary and adequate to base eligibility for competition on biological sex; and
- iii. The most accurate and least intrusive way currently available to screen for biological sex is by screening for the SRY Gene, which is a segment of DNA that is almost always on the Y-chromosome, initiates Male sex development in utero, and signals the presence of testes/testicles.

In reaching this consensus, among other information and evidence, the Working Group agreed on the following:

- **Sex and Gender:** Biological sex, which is divided into categories (Male and Female, based on their reproductive biology, including their sex chromosomes, gonads and hormones), is distinct from gender identity, which is a person's sense of themselves as a woman or a man or neither/non-binary.
- **Testosterone Levels:** Healthy adult Males have 15 to 20 times more circulating testosterone than healthy adult Females. Testosterone levels do not overlap between the two groups. The gap in testosterone levels exists in the general and elite athlete populations. Males experience three significant testosterone peaks: in utero, in mini-puberty of infancy and beginning in adolescent puberty through adulthood.
- **Performance Advantage:**
  - Consistent with the functional effects of higher circulating testosterone levels, Males have larger and stronger skeletal muscle and bone, larger and stronger hearts, larger lung size, more red blood cells, and lower body fat than Females trained to the equivalent level. Together these attributes afford Males individual sex-based performance advantages in sports and events that rely on strength, power and/or endurance.
  - Female athletes experience performance disadvantages relative to Males, associated with Female anatomy and physiology, that contribute to overall Male performance advantage in sports and events that rely on strength, power and/or endurance. These disadvantages may include, for example, the menstrual cycle, gestation and anatomical differences such as periodic ligament laxity (looseness), wider hips and more breast tissue.



- XY Transgender athletes and athletes with certain XY differences/disorders in sex development (DSD) (as defined in Schedule 1) have anatomical and physiological advantages in line with being Male even as their legal sex, the manner in which they were raised, and/or their gender identity may vary. XY transgender athletes and athletes with XY-DSD typically have testes/testicles and testosterone levels in the Male range. The clear majority are androgen-sensitive, meaning that their bodies are receptive to and make use of that testosterone during growth and development and throughout their athletic career.
- Androgen-sensitive XY-DSD and XY Transgender athletes retain Male performance advantage due in part to training effects and fixed traits. There is no current evidence that testosterone suppression or gender-affirming hormone treatment eliminates this advantage.
- XY-DSD athletes with Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS) (defined in Schedule 1) and other rare XY DSDs that do not benefit from the anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects of testosterone should, on that basis, be included in the Female Category.
- **Magnitude of Advantage:** At the elite level, the magnitude of the Male performance advantage is different depending on the sport or event:
  - There is a 10-12 per cent Male performance advantage in most running and swimming events.
  - There is a 20+ per cent Male performance advantage in most throwing and jumping events.
  - The Male performance advantage can be greater than 100 per cent in events that involve explosive power, e.g. in collision, lifting and punching sports.
- **Variation in Advantage:** The extent of the performance advantage (and its implications) varies across sports and events and from occasion to occasion, depending on the athletes involved.
- **Safety risks:** In contact sports (e.g., individual and team combat, collision, projectile sports), the strength and power differential between Males and Females increases safety risks to Female athletes.
- **SRY Gene Screening:**
  - Screening for the SRY Gene via saliva, cheek swab or blood sample is minimally intrusive.
  - The presence of the SRY Gene is fixed and thus provides better evidence of biological sex than measuring testosterone levels, which are variable and can be changed.
  - SRY Gene screening is almost always sufficient to determine sex for eligibility purposes.
  - All Biological Female athletes screened will be negative and eligible, and virtually all athletes who screen positive will have testes/testicles that naturally produce testosterone at adult Male levels.
  - Because a positive SRY Gene screen does not establish a specific DSD diagnosis, further evaluation should be made available to the athlete to determine whether they have CAIS or another rare XY DSD that precludes testosterone's anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects.



### ***Review of IF Chief Medical Officers' Concerns and Developments in IF Policies***

The Working Group and the IOC reviewed IF positions on the Framework. These included:

- i. The fact that, for fairness and safety and to meet additional institutional priorities, many IF policies continue to be based on the scientific understanding that Male athletes have a performance advantage in all sports and events that rely on strength, power and/or endurance.
- ii. Concerns in some sports about being able to preserve the unique nature of the Female game without relevant eligibility rules.
- iii. A preference for policy alignment led by the IOC, to achieve Olympic Movement integrity (consistency among sports that have a Female Category).

### ***Review of and Developments in Law***

The Working Group and the IOC examined the state of the law and took special note of the following:

- i. Based on IF experience, genetic screening for sex does not create significant problems in practice. It is legal in most countries, and athletes from the countries where it is not permitted can lawfully be tested elsewhere.
- ii. Human rights experts, including UN Special Rapporteurs, disagree on the legitimacy of sex-based eligibility rules in competitive sports. Some hold that they violate the rights of XY individuals who identify as women. Others also consider the rights of XX individuals.
- iii. No supranational court has held that defining eligibility for the Female Category by reference to biological sex would constitute an unjustifiable infringement of individual and/or human rights.

### ***Review of and Developments in Olympic Movement Constituent Perspectives***

As part of the Review, the IOC considered competition results and Olympic Movement constituent perspectives, and found that eligibility rules based on legal sex or gender identity do not align with the IOC's Policy Goals for the Female Category, as stated below. Specifically, there is broad consensus among Female athletes, and other Olympic Movement constituents, in favour of eligibility rules for the Female Category based on biological sex.

The IOC consulted athletes in three ways: through an online Athlete Survey that received over 1,100 responses, through in-depth individual interviews with impacted athletes from around the world, and via a presentation to and discussion with members of the IOC Athletes' Commission.

Although nuances exist across sex and gender, region and athlete status (active/retired), the athlete consultation revealed a strong consensus that fairness and safety in the Female Category requires clear, science-based eligibility rules, and that protecting the Female Category is a common priority.



## POLICY GOALS

The IOC's role as leader of the Olympic Movement is to ensure the regular celebration of the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games host elite athletes who are among the best in the world according to their age, sex and skill. The IOC also recognises the importance of widespread participation in grassroots and recreational sports programmes, to which this Policy does not apply, and that different sport contexts are motivated by different goals. As such, eligibility rules should be carefully considered and tailored accordingly.

At the Olympic Games, in light of the scientific consensus that Males have a performance advantage in all sports and events that rely on strength, power and/or endurance irrespective of subsequent testosterone suppression or gender-affirming hormone treatment, the Olympic Movement has a compelling interest in having a sex-based Female Category, because this is necessary to ensure fairness, safety and integrity in elite competition. It is also necessary for the reliable attainment of the IOC's modern goals for the Female Category, shared with other Olympic Movement constituents:

- i. Equality - equal opportunities for Female athletes in finals, on podiums and in championships;
- ii. Enhancing Olympic Value - featuring both women's and men's finals in every sport; and
- iii. Visibility and Inspiration - celebrating Female athletes on the Olympic podium to inspire and represent women and girls worldwide.

It is universally accepted that providing for a Female Category is necessary to allow equal access to elite sport to both Males and Females. Including athletes who are XY transgender and/or androgen-sensitive XY-DSD athletes (whatever their legal sex or gender identity) in the Female Category in sports and events that rely on strength, power and/or endurance runs fundamentally counter to ensuring fairness, safety and integrity in elite competition and to the reliable attainment of the IOC's modern goals. Furthermore, the need for consistency and fairness across sports precludes eligibility criteria that require case-by-case consideration of differences in Male performance advantage.

To reliably uphold fairness, safety and integrity in elite sport and to meet these shared goals, and in light of relevant developments since 2021, the IOC is issuing this new *Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Considerations for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies*.

## THE POLICY

For the purpose of this Policy, the IOC has adopted the consensus definitions of the Working Group, which are set out in **Schedule 1**.

For all disciplines on the Sports Programme of an IOC Event, including individual and team sports, eligibility for any Female Category is limited to Biological Females.



Eligibility for the Female Category is to be determined in the first instance by SRY Gene screening to detect the absence or presence of the SRY Gene. On the basis of the scientific evidence, the IOC considers that the SRY Gene is fixed throughout life and represents highly accurate evidence that an athlete has experienced or will experience Male sex development. Furthermore, the IOC considers that SRY Gene screening via saliva, cheek swab or blood sample is unintrusive compared to other possible methods.

Athletes who screen negative for the SRY gene permanently satisfy this Policy's eligibility criteria for competition in the Female Category. Unless there is reason to believe a negative reading is in error, this will be a once-in-a-lifetime test.

With the exception of athletes with a diagnosis of CAIS or other rare DSDs that do not benefit from the anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects of testosterone, no athlete with an SRY-positive screen is eligible for competition in the Female Category.

Athletes with an SRY-positive screen, including XY transgender and androgen-sensitive XY-DSD athletes, continue to be included in all other classifications for which they qualify, for example, they are eligible for (i) any Male Category, including in a designated Male slot within any mixed category, and (ii) any open category or in sports and events that do not classify athletes by Sex.

The IOC recognises that XY athletes who identify as women and who want the opportunity to compete at IOC Events according to their legal sex or gender identity may disagree with this Policy. However, after a thorough scientific review and consultations with constituents of the Olympic Movement, the IOC determined that a Sex-based eligibility rule is necessary and adequate to the attainment of the IOC's goals for competition at IOC Events.

## **SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

This Policy applies to all IOC Events and enters into force at the date of its adoption by the IOC Executive Board. It is not retroactive and shall be applicable for the first time at the LA28 Olympic Games.

This Policy shall be adopted by IFs and other sports governing bodies, such as National Olympic Committees ("**NOCs**"), National Federations and Continental Associations ("**SGBs**"), when exercising their responsibility in implementing eligibility rules in relation to IOC Events.

The IOC retains the authority to establish that the IFs and SGBs have satisfied their obligations under the Policy, including but not limited to ensuring that all athletes participating in the Female Category at IOC Events are either SRY negative or qualify for an exception.

IFs and SGBs may request an exemption from this Policy if the IF/SGB can establish that their sport or discipline does not rely on strength, power and/or endurance, that their women's category exists for reasons unrelated to Sex differences in anatomy and physiology, and that ignoring Sex would not result in diminished opportunities for Female athletes.

This Policy replaces all previous IOC statements on this matter, including the Framework.



## **GUIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR IFS/SGBS**

In consultation with IFs that have already implemented such criteria and screening, the IOC will make available and periodically update best practice standards, but, consistent with the Olympic Charter, the IFs and SGBs must define, as applicable, the details of their respective programmes themselves. For the development of those details, the IOC provides the following guiding considerations and strongly recommends as follows:

### **SRY Gene Screening for Eligibility Purposes**

- Individual athletes should be provided with age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and accessible information necessary to make an informed decision about whether to undergo SRY Gene screening.
- Beyond relevant medical indications, information to make an informed decision about whether to undergo SRY Gene screening should include the facts that:
  - Athletes who wish to compete in the Female Category at IOC Events must demonstrate their eligibility in advance by means of SRY Gene screening results.
  - Athletes can expect to be eligible to compete in the Female Category if the results are negative.
  - Athletes will be ineligible for competition in the Female Category if the SRY results are positive, pending any further evaluation the athlete may choose to undergo regarding CAIS or other rare DSDs that do not benefit from the anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects of testosterone. The opportunity for further evaluation should include counselling and an informed consent process at each step.
  - An athlete who declines SRY Gene screening or who has a positive result (and does not fit within the exception) can participate in all other sporting opportunities, including any other elite category competitions for which they meet the qualifying standards.

### **Athlete-Centred Approach**

IFs and SGBs should undertake affirmative measures to educate their constituents and to mitigate foreseeable harm. Among other actions, IFs and SGBs should:

- Ensure that the athlete's human dignity, physical and psychological well-being, health and safety, and right to privacy and confidentiality are respected.
- Educate athletes, coaches, managers and other members of the athletes' entourage, with particular emphasis on the position that competitive integrity in women's sport requires eligibility criteria that ensure a level playing field consistent with Female sex development and Female anatomy and physiology. Such education should also emphasise the responsibility of coaches, managers and entourage members to support the athlete's autonomy, privacy and wellbeing, and to refrain from sharing information beyond authorised channels.
- Ensure full transparency of the process (what the screening is, how it works, what it measures, how to interpret results, who is involved, how information is shared, and the implications of the various outcomes).



- Establish internal mechanisms that offer athletes and other impacted stakeholders accessible, legitimate, safe and predictable avenues to obtain information on the process and rules, including clear pathways to raise concerns, seek safeguarding support or report inappropriate conduct or breaches of confidentiality without fear of retaliation.
- Encourage screening for biological sex early in the athletic career (for example, at the same time as entry of the athlete in international competition under the jurisdiction of the relevant IF, and in any case before embarking on the qualification pathway to participate in an IOC Event) so that athletes and their entourage can make informed decisions about their investment in competition in the Female Category.
- Carefully consider the special situation of minors and ensure that appropriate safeguards and protections are in place, including the involvement of appropriately qualified professionals, age appropriate explanations, parental or guardian consent, where required by law, and the prioritisation of the best interests of the minor at all stages.
- Wherever possible, combine SRY Gene screening with regular health evaluations.
- Reassure athletes that:
  - All athletes have a place in sport according to their age, sex and skill.
  - Biological sex-based eligibility criteria (including SRY Gene screening) are not a judgment on, and do not question, the athlete's legal sex or gender identity.
  - SRY Gene screening is a highly accurate, non-invasive screen for biological sex.
  - Unless there is reason to believe that the results are in error, SRY Gene screening will be required only once in an athlete's lifetime.
- Ensure that physical examinations are not required for initial sport eligibility determinations. In the very rare case of an athlete screening positive for SRY (<1%), such athlete may choose to either: (i) seek (with informed consent and support) further evaluation to obtain a clinical diagnosis that would clarify their eligibility and any health implications, or (ii) decline further evaluation which would make them ineligible. SRY-negative athletes (>99%) will have lifelong eligibility without further evaluation or examination.
- Make available or facilitate access to mental health and safeguarding resources for athletes undergoing SRY Gene screening, particularly for those with a positive result.

### **Right to Privacy and Confidentiality**

IFs and SGBs must:

- Respect the right to privacy and confidentiality of athletes.
- Comply with all applicable data protection and privacy laws to which they are subject when processing any personal data (including sensitive personal data such as health or medical information). This includes, without limitation, applying relevant data protection principles such as:
  - Transparency towards athletes about how their personal data will be processed;
  - In relation to the implementation of this Policy, using athletes' personal data only to the extent strictly necessary.



- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including, those governing genetic screening for sex, and confidentiality obligations (for example when handling information protected by medical confidentiality), and obtain any required consents or authorisations.

### **Implementation Workshops and Knowledge Sharing**

IFs/SGBs are responsible for implementing this Policy within their respective organisations and areas of competence. The IOC will organise a series of workshops, seminars and/or webinars with IFs and NOCs, including athlete representation, to provide guidance and facilitate the exchange of information and athlete-centred best practices related to the implementation of this Policy. These workshops will provide a platform to share experiences, discuss practical challenges and promote consistent, safe and effective application of the Policy across the Olympic Movement.

### **PERIODIC REVIEWS**

This Policy will be subject to periodic review, and may be amended following such review, to consider any new and relevant scientific, medical, ethical and legal (including human rights) developments, and should include the impacted stakeholders' feedback on their application.

### **ADOPTION BY THE IOC EXECUTIVE BOARD**

This Policy has been issued pursuant to Rule 19.3.10 of the Olympic Charter and was adopted by the IOC Executive Board on 26 March 2026.

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## SCHEDULE 1 – DEFINITIONS

**Sex:** Either of the two categories, Male or Female, into which humans are divided according to their reproductive biology.

**Biological Female (Female):** An individual who, regardless of their legal sex or gender identity, experienced female sex development usually based on their XX-chromosomes, ovaries, and estrogenic hormones.

**Biological Male (Male):** An individual who, regardless of their legal sex or gender identity, experienced male sex development usually based on their XY-chromosomes, testes/testicles and androgenic hormones.

**Differences/Disorders of Sex Development (DSD):** Rare genetic conditions that result in atypical sex development.

**XY-DSD:** A DSD that affects biological males who have the SRY Gene. With rare exceptions, athletes with XY-DSD have testes/testicles and testosterone levels in the Male range, and the vast majority are androgen-sensitive.

**Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS):** An XY-DSD characterised by the body's inability to respond to androgens, including testosterone. As a result, although the individual has XY chromosomes, testes/testicles and testosterone levels in the Male range, they do not experience androgen-dependent Male sex development.

**Gender Identity:** A person's sense of themselves as a woman or a man or neither/non-binary. While biological sex does not and cannot change, a person's gender identity can change over the course of a lifetime.

**Transgender:** A person whose gender identity is different from their biological sex. For example, they may have typical male sex development but female gender identity, or typical female sex development but male gender identity. Some transgender people take gender-affirming hormone treatment and/or undergo gender-affirming surgeries, and others are/do not.

**SRY Gene:** A segment of DNA which is almost always on the Y-chromosome, signalling the presence of testes/testicles and initiating Male sex development by the production of testosterone. SRY stands for "sex determining region Y."

**Female (Women's) Category:** The competition category designated for athletes who are biological females.

**Male (Men's) Category:** The competition category designated for athletes who are biological males.

**IOC Events:** Sports events organised by the IOC, including the Olympic Games, Olympic Winter Games, Youth Olympic Games, Winter Youth Olympic Games, and any other event organised by the IOC.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IOC POLICY ON THE PROTECTION OF THE FEMALE (WOMEN'S) CATEGORY IN OLYMPIC SPORT AND GUIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL FEDERATIONS AND SPORTS GOVERNING BODIES**

As of 26 March 2026

*This document aims to help you answer questions from the media and others with regard to the IOC Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Considerations for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies. The document should not be published in its entirety. We remain available to support you with media requests. Please reach out to us via [pressoffice@olympic.org](mailto:pressoffice@olympic.org).*

*Your IOC Communications Team*

### **What is the new IOC Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport?**

- The IOC's new policy ensures that participation in the female category at IOC events, including the Olympic Games, is restricted to biological females.
- This is applicable for all sports – individual and team – from LA28 onwards and is not retroactive.
- Eligibility is determined scientifically, by screening for the SRY gene, typically found on the Y chromosome, which initiates male sex development.
- Without this gene, sex development proceeds along the female path. Hence, athletes who screen negative for the SRY gene will be eligible for the female category.
- There are only a few exceptions, based on rare specific conditions, which would allow athletes with an SRY gene to compete in the female category.

### **Why has a new policy been adopted?**

- A decision was made to adopt the new policy because the prior approach was no longer aligned with the state of the science, the IOC's goals for the female category, lessons learned and feedback from Olympic Movement constituents.
- The IOC's goals for the female category are:
  - Ensuring fairness and reducing safety risks (common to all categories)
  - Promoting equality, enhancing Olympic value and celebrating female athletes on the Olympic podium.
  - The feedback came from across the Olympic Movement, including International Federations (IFs) whose sports have been on the Olympic programme for a long time, as well as athletes from around the world.

### **When does the policy come into effect?**

- The policy was adopted by the IOC Executive Board on 26 March 2026 and will be implemented for the first time at the LA28 Olympic Games. It is not retroactive.

### **What does the IOC mean by fairness and safety?**

- The IOC considers that competition is fair when all competitors are alike with respect to the characteristics that define the category, e.g. that all competitors are the same age in an age category, the same weight in a weight category, or the same sex in a sex category.
- Contact, collision and combat sports involve physical safety risks regardless of how athletes are classified.
- All sports organisations, including the IOC, have a responsibility to manage safety risks through various measures, including separating athletes by sex.

### **Does this new policy mean transgender athletes can no longer compete at the Olympic Games or other IOC events?**

- Transgender athletes are not excluded from IOC events, including the Olympic Games. Like all other athletes, they are eligible to compete in the category that aligns with their biological sex.

- Transgender athletes who are biologically female – as per the scientific eligibility requirement – and who meet qualification standards may compete in the female category as long as they have not used testosterone or other androgens.
- Transgender athletes who are biologically male and who meet qualification standards may compete in the male category.
- Outside the Olympic Games or other IOC events, like all athletes who do not qualify for the Olympics, transgender athletes can participate in all other sporting events available to them.

**Does this new policy mean athletes with XY chromosomes who have differences or disorders of sex development (DSDs) can no longer participate in the Olympics?**

- Athletes with an XY-DSD are not excluded from IOC events, including the Olympic Games. Like all other athletes, they are eligible to compete in the category that aligns with their biological sex.
- Differences (or disorders) of sex development are genetic conditions that result in non-typical sex development.
- In the case of athletes with an XY-DSD, they are born with undescended testes/testicles and ambiguous or female-appearing genitals, but because they typically have testosterone levels in the male range, as they grow, they undergo male sex development. There are rare exceptions.

**Is the new policy unfair to transgender women and athletes with an XY-DSD, leaving them to compete in the male category?**

- No athlete is excluded from IOC events, including the Olympic Games, if they meet qualification and eligibility criteria.
- Those who are biologically female and who meet the qualification standards are included in the female category. Transgender athletes who are biologically male and who meet the qualification standards are included in the male category.
- All elite athletes have a place in global sport, according to their biological characteristics.

### **Why does the policy treat athletes with an XY-DSD and transgender women the same?**

- While we acknowledge the differences in certain aspects such as gender identity, legal sex and upbringing between groups of athletes, the policy applies SRY gene screening to all athletes who want to compete in the female category.
- Transgender women and athletes with an XY-DSD have the same biological characteristics: both have XY chromosomes, the SRY gene, testes and male-level testosterone, to which their bodies typically respond. These characteristics are responsible for male sex development and result in performance advantage.

### **What is SRY gene screening and how invasive is it?**

- The SRY gene is responsible for initiating male sex development and is a highly reliable marker of biological sex.
- SRY gene screening involves a once-in-a-lifetime, non-intrusive biological sample collection (e.g. a cheek swab) to detect the gene's presence.
- A cheek swab is an easy and unintrusive way to collect a biological sample. Most of us are familiar with mouth swabs from having taken a COVID test.

### **What if an athlete refuses to take the SRY screen?**

- Athletes may refuse to take the SRY screen but, without proving their eligibility, they will not be able to compete in the female category at IOC events, including the Olympic Games, from LA28 onwards.

### **What if an SRY screen is not allowed in the athlete's home country?**

- Genetic screening, including for sex, is lawful in most countries and can be subject to certain conditions.
- Based on IF experience, athletes from the few countries where it is prohibited, e.g. Norway and France, are legally able to be screened elsewhere.

### **Will this result in athletes contravening the law of their own country to satisfy IOC requirements?**

- No. It is legal for athletes to be screened in countries where screening is legal. No country bars its citizens from being screened abroad.
- National laws generally apply only in their national context. When a person goes to another country, the laws of that territory apply.

### **How was the policy developed?**

- As part of its standard processes, including as described in the *IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations*, the IOC administration conducted a broad-based review of its prior approach to eligibility for the female category from September 2024 to March 2026.
- The review included consultations with leadership, experts in medical and sports ethics and international human rights law, and Olympic Movement constituents, including all Olympic IFs and athletes from around the world, including athletes who would be impacted by any policy development.
- As part of the review, the IOC established a working group comprising independent experts, specifically to examine scientific, medical and legal developments since 2021. The working group members came from all five continents and included specialists in sports science, endocrinology, transgender medicine, sports medicine, women's health, ethics and law. The group also included IF Chief Medical Officers representing individual and team sports.
- In November 2025, based on the learnings from the review, including from the working group, the IOC administration was tasked with drafting the *Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport and Guiding Considerations for International Federations and Sports Governing Bodies*.

### **Why are you not naming the members of the working group?**

- The IOC administration was responsible for the development and drafting of the policy. Confidentiality was often a necessary condition to obtain full consideration and information throughout the review. At this time, the IOC is not releasing the names of the many individuals who provided perspectives and expertise, including the members of the working group.

**Why was it concluded that, to protect the female category, it is necessary to base eligibility on biological sex?**

- Based on a review of and developments in the scientific evidence, the IOC working group concluded that males have anatomical and physiological performance advantage over females in all sports and events that rely on strength, power and/or endurance.
- Males benefit from the anabolic and performance enhancing effects of 15 to 20 times more testosterone than females.
- Testosterone is the primary driver of the performance gap between elite male and female athletes.
- Testosterone suppression and gender-affirming hormone therapy do not eliminate overall male advantage.

**What was the evidence that supported the scientific consensus?**

- The scientific evidence is continually growing and includes systematic reviews, longitudinal and cross-sectional cohort studies, case series (both published and available under seal) and mechanistic analyses.

**Is there a performance gap before puberty? What if an athlete transitions at or before puberty?**

- Yes, there is an established performance gap before boys begin puberty.
- The gap in childhood is not nearly as big as the gap that exists after boys begin puberty, but it is athletically important, i.e. it is almost always more than the margin of victory.
- The result is that, in most sports and events, there are more boys than girls in the top 10 and top 100 performances.
- This is true even when females outnumber males.
- There is no evidence that early transition affects the advantages males develop before the onset of male puberty.

**What about sports like shooting or archery, which don't depend on strength, power or endurance?**

- The policy includes the possibility for an International Federation to request an exception if it can show that a sport or event does not depend on strength, power or endurance.
- Some sports, e.g. equestrian, do not classify their athletes by sex.

### **Will the IOC consider an “open” category?**

- The IOC did not consider a new third or open category. It is committed to the existing categories.
- Open categories should not be confused with mixed events, where male and female athletes compete together but in sex-designated spots, e.g. a mixed relay comprising two male athletes and two female athletes. If there is a fixed ratio of male and female athletes, the eligibility criteria for the female athletes needs to be met.

### **How will the IOC ensure implementation of the new policy?**

- The IOC will work with its stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of this policy, taking into account the situation of the individual Sports Governing Body (SGB).
- In principle, IFs and SGBs are responsible for enforcing eligibility rules in line with the IOC policy.
- They may conduct athlete screening or delegate the responsibility to the relevant SGB (for instance, the national sports federation).
- The IOC retains oversight authority for ensuring compliance, and the NOCs are responsible for ensuring that the athletes entered for IOC events, including the Olympic Games, meet the IOC eligibility criteria.

### **Is it legal to have sex-based eligibility rules based on SRY gene screening?**

- As a matter of principle, private Sports Governing Bodies are free to determine eligibility rules for the competitions they organise, as they deem fit.
- Such rules are lawful as long as they serve legitimate purposes, in this case the protection of the female category and fair and safe competition, and they are also necessary and proportionate on balance given the affected interest.

- Genetic testing, including for the purposes of determining sex, is lawful in most countries.

#### **What about countries where the system does not allow SRY gene screening?**

- Athletes from the few countries where it is prohibited, e.g. Norway and France, are legally able to be screened elsewhere.

#### **Will minors be expected to undergo screening and is this legal?**

- Minors who hope to compete at elite level may decide to seek proof of eligibility early in their careers so that they can confirm under which category they fall for the entirety of their sporting career.
- Where screening is lawful in general, most countries require that parents or legal guardians provide consent for medical screening of minors.
- For the Youth Olympic Games, it will be mandatory from 2030 onwards.

#### **What if an athlete takes the IOC to court?**

- We will not speculate on hypothetical situations.

#### **How will this new policy impact qualification for LA28?**

- It will be implemented by the IOC for the first time at the LA28 Olympic Games and will be part of the eligibility criteria which athletes have to meet when they are entered for the Games by their NOCs.

#### **What will happen to the previous results of athletes who will no longer qualify for the female category?**

- The policy is not retroactive and will be implemented only from LA28 onwards.

### **What about previous medal results, such as the boxing tournament in Paris?**

- All athletes participating in the boxing tournament of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games complied with the competition's eligibility and entry regulations, as well as all applicable medical regulations at the time.
- There is no retroactive change of eligibility criteria; however, in this context, as in others, policy develops over time.
- The IOC's approach to eligibility, for the female category in particular, has changed multiple times since 2000, to take into consideration the latest state of the science and scientific developments and the interests of the Olympic Movement and its constituents.

### **What about rare cases when the SRY gene's presence is not conclusive evidence?**

- In extremely rare cases, an athlete who tests positive for the SRY gene may have Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS) or another rare condition that precludes typical male sex development.
- This is why SRY gene testing is only a screen for eligibility. In such cases, further evaluation is necessary to determine whether the athlete has such an exceptional condition.
- It is always up to the athlete to decide, having been fully informed, whether they wish to undergo further assessment, including a genetic and hormonal analysis.

### **How will the IOC support athletes and Sports Governing Bodies that cannot afford to pay for the testing?**

- The IOC distributes its revenue to the global Olympic Movement in order to enable the Sports Governing Bodies to support their athletes in their preparation for the Olympic Games.
- We will organise a number of seminars to work on the implementation of this policy with the relevant Sports Governing Bodies and, in that context, best practices will be shared, including about how to finance testing.

**What if the medical system in a country is not equipped to manage the screening?**

- Athletes who compete internationally often travel abroad. SRY gene screening does not require a developed medical system. If necessary, given local conditions, athletes who are SRY positive and wish to proceed with further assessment to determine if they are eligible for an exception can be seen by specialists abroad.

**Will the IOC create an organisation to implement the policy in a trustworthy manner?**

- There is no plan to create another organisation to conduct this task. In line with the Olympic Charter, this is the legitimate role of the existing Sports Governing Bodies.
- The IOC will work with its stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of this policy, taking into account the situation of the individual SGB.

**Does this policy apply to recreational sport as well?**

- This policy applies only to IOC events, including the Olympic Games, and does not apply to any grassroots or recreational sports programmes.

**How will the IOC support athletes who face stigma or an invasion of privacy, or have to stop their athletic careers because of the new policy?**

- The policy has been developed through an athlete-centred approach that prioritises athletes' human dignity, physical and psychological health and well-being, and safety. Their right to privacy and confidentiality should be respected.
- IFs and NOCs should lead the education of athletes and entourage members, with a particular emphasis on the responsibility of coaches, managers and entourage members to support the athlete's autonomy, privacy and well-being, and to refrain from sharing information beyond authorised channels.
- They should ensure access to mental health and safeguarding support, provide clear early guidance on SRY gene screening and, where appropriate, align it with regular sports health checks.

- They should also maintain safe, accessible channels for information, concerns and reporting, with specific safeguards for minors.
- This education and guidance should provide reassurance that all athletes have a place in sport according to their age, sex and skill, and that biological sex-based eligibility criteria (including SRY gene screening) are not a judgement on, and do not question, the athlete's legal sex or gender identity.

*Please note: In the event of any divergence between the English, French and Spanish texts, the English shall prevail.*