



The Recent Gender Policy Announced by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) recently amended its eligibility policy. From the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, eligibility for any female category Olympic event, is now restricted to 'biological females.' This policy applies to both individual and team sports. Eligibility will be determined on the basis of a one-time test for the presence of the SRY gene.¹ Until now, ensuring the eligibility of athletes was left to their respective sports federations.²

This policy was developed to protect safety, fairness and integrity in the female category. Based on scientific evidence, the IOC considered that the presence of the SRY gene is fixed throughout life and represents highly accurate evidence that an athlete has experienced male sex development. The IOC considers that SRY gene screening through saliva, cheek swab or blood sample is unintrusive compared to other possible methods.³

Athletes with an SRY-positive test will continue to be included in all other classifications for which they qualify. They are eligible for any male category, including in a designated male slot within any mixed category, and any open category, or in sports and events that do not classify athletes by gender.⁴

¹ International Olympic Committee announces new Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport. <https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/international-olympic-committee-announces-new-policy-on-the-protection-of-the-female-women-s-category-in-olympic-sport>

² The Olympics' transgender athlete ban is a legal and moral minefield. (2026, March 27). The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/the-olympics-transgender-athlete-ban-is-a-legal-and-moral-minefield-279445>

³ International Olympic Committee announces new Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport. <https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/international-olympic-committee-announces-new-policy-on-the-protection-of-the-female-women-s-category-in-olympic-sport>

⁴ International Olympic Committee announces new Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport. <https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/international-olympic-committee-announces-new-policy-on-the-protection-of-the-female-women-s-category-in-olympic-sport>

The working group developing the policy reviewed the latest scientific evidence and found that the biological system in males provides a performance advantage in all sports and events that rely on strength, power and endurance. To ensure fairness, and to ensure safety, particularly in contact sports, eligibility should be based on biological gender.

This policy has been criticised on the basis of gender- policing, and as enforcing a binary definition of gender which reinforce harmful stereotypes and slow down progress towards gender equality among other human rights concerns such as increased risk of abuse.⁵

Questions

1. Discuss your views on the policy by critically analysing the policy, how it was made and its potential impact.
2. Discuss your views on how fairness can be operationalised in Olympic sport.

⁵ Australian Olympic Committee backs new IOC transgender eligibility rules as human rights experts raise concerns. (2026, March 27). ABC News, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-27/aoc-backs-ioc-rules-transgender-athletes-human-rights/106502332>