How to Talk About:
THE THREAT TO
WOMEN’S SPORTS
# Table of Contents

3  Five Key Points About Women’s Sports
4  Female Athlete Stories
5  Images
6  Quiz: Women’s Sports
7  Quiz Answers
9  Misperceptions v. Facts
11 What You Can Do
12 Social Media Kit
Across the country, increasing numbers of male-bodied athletes are seeking to compete on women’s sports teams. Many athletic associations today allow transgender athletes to compete according to their gender identity. And in some states, non-transgender males are allowed to compete on women’s teams, such as field hockey, where the school offers no male counterpart.

When male-bodied athletes compete against females, they have an unfair advantage. The science is clear: the average male is stronger, bigger, and faster than the average female. Males, therefore, dominate in sports where strength, size, or speed are relevant factors.

When male-bodied athletes participate in women’s sports they take opportunities from females. On teams with limited roster spots, the participation of biological males inevitably means that women and girls will lose opportunities to play and, in some cases, scholarships.

When male-bodied athletes participate in women’s sports, female athletes can get hurt. Because of strength and size differentials, allowing biological males to participate in certain women’s sports places females at risk of physical injury.

Allowing male-bodied athletes to participate in women’s sports undermines Title IX. Congress passed Title IX in 1972 to expand opportunities for women and girls. Since 1972, the creation of separate single-sex teams for female athletes has led to an explosion in female athletic participation. Eliminating single-sex teams will inevitably erode some of those gains.
Female Athlete Stories

ALANNA SMITH
High School Track Athlete Speaks Out To Save Girls’ Sports

LAURA WEAVER
A Mother Mobilizes to Protect Women’s Sports

LINNEA SALTZ
The Female College Athlete Whose Years Of Training May Now Be In Vain

MADISON KENYON AND MARY KATE MARSHALL
Two Idaho Track Stars Are Fighting The ACLU To Protect Women’s Sports

SELINA SOULE
High School Runner Who Lost To Transgender Athletes Will Compete In College
Quiz: Women’s Sports

1. Title IX is:
   A. An athletic clothing company for women
   B. A law that prohibits sex discrimination in educational programs that receive federal financial assistance
   C. The ninth step in a 12-step fitness program

2. Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, the percentage of women and girls playing sports has:
   A. Increased exponentially
   B. Dropped dramatically
   C. Stayed about the same

3. In which sport are women’s records about the same as the men’s records?
   A. Swimming
   B. Running
   C. Weight lifting
   D. None of the above

4. TRUE or FALSE: Science indicates that males possess a significant athletic advantage over females.
   A. True
   B. False

5. TRUE or FALSE: Testosterone suppression reduces any male athletic advantage over females.
   A. True
   B. False
   C. It’s complicated

6. The threat to women’s sports today comes from:
   A. The courts
   B. Congress
   C. The Executive Branch
   D. Athletic associations
   E. Proposed constitutional amendments
   F. All of the above

7. TRUE OR FALSE: Some activists want to eliminate sex-segregated sports altogether.
   A. True
   B. False
Quiz Answers

Q1 ANSWER: B
Title IX of the Education amendments of 1972 states:

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Federal regulations implementing Title IX require schools, colleges, and universities that receive federal money to “provide equal athletic opportunity for members of both sexes.”

Q2 ANSWER: A
According to the World Economic Forum, since 1972, there has been a 545% increase in the percentage of women playing college sports and a 990% increase in the percentage of women playing high school sports.

Q3 ANSWER: D
Women’s athletic records are generally not comparable to men’s. A comparison of world records in the 800m freestyle swim competition shows an 8.4% difference in speed between male and female athletes. In Olympic weightlifting, the strongest male record is over a hundred pounds more than the strongest female record. Although Allyson Felix is arguably the fastest woman in the world, nearly 300 high school boys in the United States alone can beat her lifetime best for the 400-meter.

Q4 ANSWER: A
There is at least a 10 to 12% difference between male and female athletic performance. Scientists regard this difference not simply as a difference in human variation between top athletes and others, but as a difference, on average, between the two biological sexes. While there are, of course, some very talented female athletes who can beat many male athletes, the best female athletes still stand little chance against the top male athletes in their sport.

Q5 ANSWER: C
Altering testosterone levels after puberty does not eliminate the male athletic advantage. As transgender athlete and doctor Joanna Harper has acknowledged, “I’ve been on hormone therapy for 15 years, and I carry more muscle mass than a woman my size, absolutely.” Altering testosterone levels prior to the onset of male puberty may eliminate much of the male athletic advantage, but perhaps not all of it.

continued >>
Q6 ANSWER: F
At least 19 state athletic associations allow athletes to compete according to their gender identity without restriction, meaning without surgery or hormone therapy. The NCAA allows biological males to compete on women’s teams once they have completed one calendar year of testosterone suppression treatment.

In some states that have adopted equal rights amendments to their constitutions, public schools are prohibited from barring males from playing on women’s sports teams. In Massachusetts, for example, boys are allowed to try out for and compete on girls’ high school field hockey teams.

Recently, the federal government has taken steps to require (not just allow) schools to let male athletes play on female teams and against female athletes. In February 2021, the House of Representatives passed H.R.5, the so-called Equality Act, which redefines “sex” to include “gender identity.” If passed, this law would require schools and athletic associations across the country to open up girls’ and women’s sports to male-bodied athletes.

The proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution could be interpreted to prohibit all single-sex sports permanently.

Q7 ANSWER: A
Efforts to eliminate single-sex sports are picking up steam. Some activists argue that sex is a “social construct” and that sex segregation in athletic competitions should be prohibited. Others have argued that allowing males and females to compete in separate divisions reinforces pernicious gender stereotypes and undermines honest evaluation of athletic ability. Writing recently in Newsweek, Professor Robyn Ryle says that “sports remain one of the last strongholds for the cult of gender differences.” Ryle claims that sex is not a meaningful category when it comes to competitive sport. Activists like these seek to eliminate single-sex teams altogether.
1. Misperception: This isn’t a big problem.

**FACT:** Increasing numbers of young people today identify as transgender. At least nineteen state athletic associations allow high school students to compete according to their gender identity, rather than their biological sex.

**FACT:** It is not only transgender athletes who are seeking to play women’s sports. Across the country, boys who are not transgender have sought spots on traditionally female athletic teams. For example, in Massachusetts, a number of male athletes have been allowed to compete on varsity field hockey teams (since schools do not typically offer men’s field hockey teams).

2. Misperception: Allowing male-bodied athletes to participate in women’s sports won’t disadvantage women and girls.

**FACT:** On teams with limited roster spots, allowing male-bodied athletes to participate will take spots, playing time, and scholarships away from women and girls.

**FACT:** In head-to-head competitions, allowing male-bodied athletes to play women’s sports will limit female athletes’ chances of success.

**FACT:** Allowing male-bodied athletes to play women’s sports will, in some cases, place female athletes at risk of injury.

3. Misperception: Sex segregation is not necessary in athletic competition.

**FACT:** Without separate single-sex teams, males will dominate competitive sports where size, strength, and speed are factors, depriving female athletes of equal athletic opportunities.

continued >>
4. Misperception: Preventing transgender athletes from competing in women’s sports is discriminatory.

**FACT:** Competitive sports are not supposed to be inclusive. Varsity teams are selective; colleges recruit athletes to fill their rosters. Not everyone gets to participate in these activities.  

**FACT:** In order to qualify for a women’s team, athletes need to be female. It is not discriminatory to require that athletes meet that basic qualification any more than it is discriminatory to require that athletes be enrolled in the school that offers the team.

5. Misperception: Transgender athletes lose any competitive advantage over females once they start suppressing testosterone.

**FACT:** Athletes who were born male maintain many of the physical advantages of natal males after fully transitioning. A 2020 study found that one year of testosterone suppression resulted in only modest physical changes in athletes who were born male.

6. Misperception: *Bostock v. Clayton County* has nothing to do with sports.

**FACT:** In *Bostock*, the Supreme Court held that any adverse employment action that takes biological sex into consideration is discriminatory—*even if it treats members of both sexes equally.* If applied to Title IX, this will prohibit schools from offering women’s teams because the decision to keep male athletes off the roster would almost always be different *but-for* the biological sex of the athlete.
What You Can Do

SIGN THE PETITION

Sign the Petition: Demand Fair Play
Protect Women’s Sports

SAY THIS

- It goes without saying that transgender students should be treated fairly, but we can do that in a way that does not harm biological women and girls.

- Women and girls have fought long and hard for equal athletic opportunities.

- Allowing biological males to take roster spots and scholarships from women and girls isn’t fair.
Social Media Kit

Post the below messages, videos, and graphics to social media and make your voice heard.

**Tag us so we can RT/Share your post:**
- @IWV (Twitter)
- @IndependentWomensVoice (Facebook)
- @IndependentWomensVoice (Instagram)

**Hashtag to include:** #SaveWomensSports

**VISUALS:** Include these visuals with any Twitter, Facebook or Instagram posts.

Download
VIDEO:

Martina Navratilova says that in competitive sport “sex segregation is the only way to achieve equality for girls and women.”

The Threat to Women’s Sports

IWF RESOURCES:

- **Two Truths & A Lie: Transgender Athletes** How much do you know about equal opportunity and transgender athletes? Let’s play “Two Truths and a Lie” and find out.

- **Competition: How Transgender Athletes Will Transform Women’s Sports** In this Facebook Live event, Jennifer C. Braceras talks with kinesiologist Linda Blade and author Abigail Shrier about whether biological males should be allowed to compete with and against female athletes.