



# TRANS INCLUSION POLICY

As parkour competitions are finding their footing, trans inclusion continues to need support. As the governing body, USPK works to prescribe regulations that reflect our community's needs.

Inclusion, adaptability, and accountability are among USPK's core values. In response to further research and community surveying, we are updating our trans inclusion policy. Here's how we came to our decision. The Trans Inclusion Policy shall remain in effect until a subsequent version has been published by the United States Parkour Association.

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## Research & Policy Analysis

USPK looked into current scientific research and compared policies from other sports' governing bodies.

Policies across other sports are varied, which encourages us to believe that each sport needs to look at its own unique circumstances.

- [USA Gymnastics](#): Trans athletes participate in a discipline that aligns with their identity, nonbinary athletes choose a gender for the season. Elite athletes still use IOC/FIG policies.
- [Surf Equity](#): Acknowledges athletic performance is influenced by many factors, and is fully unrestricted to trans athletes.
- [FINA \(Swimming Governing Body\)](#): Creating an "Open" league for any gender to compete in.

Most recently, the International Olympic Committee published an updated policy. Previously requiring testosterone testing for athletes, the Olympics ran into issues. ["Eligibility criteria have sometimes resulted in severe harm,"](#) the IOC acknowledged. The IOC [published an updated framework in fairness, inclusion, and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations](#) shifting the responsibility to each sport's governing body to create a sport-specific policy. Highlights from this framework include:

- “Eligibility criteria should be established and implemented fairly and in a manner that does not systematically exclude athletes from competition based upon their gender identity, physical appearance, and/or sex variations.”
- “Any restrictions arising from eligibility criteria should be based on robust and peer reviewed research that... demonstrates that such disproportionate competitive advantage and/or unpreventable risk exists to the specific sport...”

The controversy over trans inclusion is centered on trans women ‘dominating’ womens divisions, and this focus marginalizes trans men and nonbinary athletes’ inclusion. This has shown to be detrimental to people assigned female at birth (AFAB) as well. A [28-yr old AFAB Olympian discovered she was intersex and forced to take testosterone suppressants if she wished to continue competing](#). In Utah, [rival parents secretly ordered a transgender investigation after a cis girl ‘outclassed’ their daughter](#). The fear of transgender participation in womens and girls sports invites another reason to police womens’ bodies.

[Research does show that trans women have more muscle mass and bone density](#) compared to cis women, but it has yet to be determined if that transfers to athletic performance in every sport. Even within parkour, we see practitioners with higher muscle mass not necessarily have the required skill output or mentality to always have an advantage.

While being transgender may provide some advantages, there are other factors, i.e. [socioeconomic background](#), access to a local parkour gym, or years of parkour or similar sports participation in an athletes’ youth. Increasing [female participation needs a more wholesome perspective](#) than just the debate over transgender inclusion.

2022 marked the 50th anniversary of Title IX - the federal civil right law that prohibited exclusion from participation in sports based on gender. In [Key Finding #7 from the Womens Sport Foundation Report](#), “Title IX is poised to play an important role in securing the legal rights of transgender students to compete on athletic teams according to their gender identity.” Sports participation is a human right.

## Community Survey Results

In addition to looking at current research and other governing bodies' sports policies, USPK interviewed 72 cis women and 13 trans & nonbinary parkour practitioners. Most of these cis women have competed in parkour competitions. Most trans and nonbinary practitioners have not, and a minority expressed interest in competing.

The overall majority voiced their interest in including trans and nonbinary athletes, stating they valued parkour for its inclusiveness. 12% overall did not want trans women to compete with cis women. 28% overall wanted some sort of restriction, but there was not much agreement on how: for instance, some preferred a separate division, others wanted a requirement of years on hormone therapy before competing. The remaining were fine with transgender athletes participating in the division that best represented their gender.

## QUOTES - shared with permission

*"I'm super open to it! From someone who used to be really into competing, I think we need to provide a space that is welcoming for more female (and non-binary) identifying individuals, not a space that's less welcoming. In a sport like parkour that's so community based, being inclusive and accepting is really important in my eyes. People who fall under the trans/gender queer umbrella are already ostracized from so many communities and groups that I would never want to add to that. I know some people may be upset about trans women having an advantage in some way, but don't see that as an issue in my own opinion, because there are cis female athletes who have a physical advantage over me due to their own build and strengths, and I also know that I have a physical advantage over some cis female athletes due to my own build. There's always gonna be people better and worse at things than others, so I don't agree with the argument that trans athletes may have some sort of advantage, because competitions have never and will never be a place where everyone is at a level field! I would love to see more trans athletes in competitions, and let them be in the divisions they feel comfortable in, including non-binary people being able to partake where they see fit." - Juliette Marzio*

*"My opinion is let trans people compete. No one changes their gender, especially to female, to have an "unfair" advantage in competition." - Kristine Henry*

*"Short answer — trans women are women, and I am completely comfortable with competing against them." -Amanda*

*"I actually feel like trans people should just get to choose their division. If they wanna sign up for mens they should do it. If they wanna sign up for womens, they should do it. But of course I understand why some people feel some type of way about it." -Emily Tung*

*"I definitely think there's a lot of work to be done for inclusion for trans and non-binary inclusion in comps. ... I think that those who are conflicted about trans athletes tipping the balance in competitions are mainly looking at parkour as a test of strength, which absolutely is not the full picture behind it. At the root, parkour really did start with a bunch of guys having fun in France by pushing their creativity through movement, much like how an artist would start their career by just experimenting and seeing where their mind takes them. ... There is so much more to parkour than just a big jump (although that is also impressive in its own way) and when people only judge the sport based on strength, they miss the other aspects that can just as easily be appreciated, like connection-building in lines or creativity. Stopping trans or non-binary athletes from competing with the gender that they best align with simply because people believe that "it's not fair for the rest of the people competing against them" is extremely selfish, and they are simultaneously denying someone the privilege of experiencing parkour as the true person they are. I think to start, parkour comps need to continue to change the way that they judge movement, so that all aspects in a line can be appreciated equally and athletes can have the*

*best experience and opportunity while competing no matter what style their movement is.”*

*-Sophie Gigante*

*“As a non-binary athlete, I have never felt comfortable in the existing categories and while I was willing to compete in the women's category, because I love competing and it seemed the most appropriate, I would much rather have an open category and not have to decide.”*

*Richards*

## **USPK 2023 Policy**

Competitive parkour is a relatively new sport. Just as parkour is still working to stabilize its judging and competition formats, we recognize that parkour needs time to find what works for it.

As parkour competitions do not require formal testing (i.e. drug testing) in order to participate, we felt it unfair to require participants to undergo hormonal or blood tests. We acknowledge that gender affirming services for transgender people are not always accessible due to a variety of reasons: whether it's state laws, lack of safety to be 'out' in your community, or lack of health insurance. Additionally, not all transgender people aspire to transition medically.

The following policy was created weighing the majority decision of stakeholders affected by the policy: cis women and AFAB people surveyed in the parkour community, most of whom have participated in parkour competitions.

**Our 2023 policy is that trans and nonbinary athletes participate in one division of their choice for the entirety of the competitive season.**

We trust trans athletes to make the decision that is best for them, and we will continue to listen to feedback from the community. While 2023 will only have womens and mens divisions, we will continue looking into the inclusion of an open division for future years.

## **Final Thoughts**

The parkour community cares about inclusion and we seek to reflect these values in all our decision-making. Fundamentally, we must look at why we hold competitions in parkour to make sure these events are staying true to our values.

Competition is innately exclusive, weeding out losers to find winners within a determined category. It's up to us to determine how we define these categories. Historically, genetics have played an important role as competition has been a display of nationalism (especially on an Olympic, professional level). Let's question if that's why competition exists in parkour itself, as we look to create more professional paths for competitive athletes.

Modern day competition is valuable as it creates an environment for people to grow together by sharing challenges. We value competitors being able to select categories they feel challenged by and represented in. We seek to increase accessibility to competition at every turn, for more skill levels and abilities.

## FAQ

*Competitive sport has always been broken up by sex, not by gender or gender identity. Why would USPK choose to break categories up by gender instead of by biological sex?*

It's more accurate to say that competitive sport has always assumed competitors' biological sex. You can't be sure without testing chromosomes, internal organs, etc. Check out this [quick video](#) which discusses issues of intersex participation and testosterone in women competitors.

*How can parkour competition organizers help address concerns about 'fairness' through their competition formats?*

Organizers are encouraged to develop scoring that favors diverse strengths and expertises as capable of winning. This makes it harder to pin-point the winner having an unfair advantage due to raw power. Possible examples include:

- What makes a parkour speed or tag competition unique from other races is the unique scenarios the athletes must train for, ie. multiple route options resulting in strategy-setting, including small spaces to fit through to help level the playing field from a height advantage, etc.
- Skill competitions include complex mental or technical challenges in addition to big jumps.
- Style competitions using scoring formats that equally values movements from diverse expertises, such as advanced flexibility/contortion in addition to power-based acrobatics.

Organizers should also strive to build a leadership team with multiple genders, who provide input on the formats and challenges to ensure as much representation of diversity as possible.