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Transgender & Non-binary Policy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tennis Ireland has developed a Transgender and Non-binary Policy to govern its competitions and facilities, and provide guidance to affiliated clubs.

The policy is a trust based one, whereby eligibility for male and female competition categories is determined by an individual's recognised birth sex. Social tennis will remain such, and clubs are encouraged to continue offering mixed-gender competitions and participation opportunities at local level. This ensures that participation is not restricted and that no individual is excluded from playing or competing.

The policy was developed following consultation with stakeholders, interested parties, and the wider tennis community. It seeks to balance fairness in competition with inclusion in participation. To support privacy and inclusion, clubs are encouraged, where possible, to provide a third, gender-neutral changing area, while access to existing changing facilities is based on birth sex.

The policy applies to all Tennis Ireland-sanctioned competitions, including Senior, Junior, and Masters Open Competitions, as well as Tennis Ireland-owned facilities such as the National Tennis Centre (NTC). Individual clubs may choose to adopt this policy or use it as a reference document to inform their own separate one for internal competitions and club facilities. It is hoped however that clubs have decided on some policy approach before January 2027, as that is when this one will be adopted by Tennis Ireland.

Recognising that this is an evolving area, the policy will undergo a formal review within five years. In addition, it will be considered by the Competitions Team on a biannual basis. Updates will be made as required in response to legal, medical, scientific, or policy developments.



INTRODUCTION

Tennis Ireland has developed a policy on the participation of transgender and non-binary individuals in tennis. It has been drawn up in light of its commitment to both competitive fairness and the provision of an inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment.

In preparing the policy, Tennis Ireland undertook a comprehensive consultation process involving a broad range of stakeholders. These included members of the tennis community, clubs, competition organisers, players, coaches, volunteers, and relevant advocacy and representative organisations.

The purpose of this document is, firstly, to outline the policy that has been developed for all Tennis Ireland events, competitions and venues and, secondly, to provide clubs with practical guidance when considering matters relating to transgender and non-binary player participation, inclusion and competition.

Clubs remain responsible for determining their own policies and practices within the relevant legal and regulatory framework, but Tennis Ireland hopes that this guidance will prove useful and reduce the need for individual clubs to undertake extensive development work themselves. Tennis Ireland intends this policy to be in place from 1 January 2027 for a period of five years, after which it will be reviewed. Clubs may either adopt it or use it as a guidance document to inform their own policies.

BACKGROUND

In March 2024, Sport Ireland asked all National Governing Bodies to develop a transgender and non-binary policy for their respective sports. Since then, Tennis Ireland has undertaken a process involving extensive engagement with Sport Ireland, the International Tennis Federation, other international tennis governing bodies, other National Governing Bodies in Ireland, Board members, advocacy groups, Tennis Ireland staff, and affiliated Tennis Ireland clubs and members.

CONTEXT

Inclusion is one of Tennis Ireland's strategic values, and it works extremely hard to provide opportunities for all players to take part in its sport. We value transgender and non-binary players as members of the tennis community and is committed to ensuring they are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

It also recognises that questions of participation and competition can involve competing considerations, including inclusion and fairness. Its approach seeks to respect the dignity of all participants while providing clear and consistent rules for competition.

Research cited in Sport Ireland's Guidance for Transgender and Non-binary Inclusion Policy (2024) highlighted that biological males can have physical and physiological advantages in sport compared with biological females, and that such advantages may persist even after medical transition. This research was accepted by Tennis Ireland. However, some stakeholders consulted during this process presented alternative perspectives, arguing that the sporting performance of transgender women should not be directly equated with that of cisgender men. They therefore questioned whether advantages observed between male and female populations can be assumed to apply in the same way following transition.



EXISTING POLICIES

Tennis Ireland have also monitored changes that other governing bodies have made to their policies in recent months and years. Examples include:

- In 2026, the International Olympic Committee announced that eligibility for female categories at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games would be restricted to athletes who test negative for the SRY gene, which the IOC contends is associated with the development of male characteristics. Athletes who test positive for the SRY gene will be deemed ineligible for female events but may compete in male, mixed or open categories. The Women's Tennis Association adopted the same policy approach in July 2026, becoming the first independent sporting organisation to do so.
- In 2025, the International Tennis Federation updated its Gender Eligibility Policy, restricting the female competition category to biological females, biological males with a female or non-binary identity who have Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, and biological males with a female or non-binary identity whose testosterone levels have remained below 2.5 nmol/L for at least 24 months prior to competition and throughout the competition period. Eligibility for the male competition category includes biological males with a male or non-binary identity and biological females with a male or non-binary identity.
- In 2025, the Lawn Tennis Association in Britain distinguished between specified competitions, in which transgender women and non-binary individuals assigned male at birth are restricted from competing in the women's category, and non-specified competitions, in which venues have discretion to adopt a fully inclusive approach, allowing transgender and non-binary players to participate in friendly and social environments.

MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

As part of the consultation process, Tennis Ireland asked all of its affiliated tennis clubs on the island of Ireland to send a survey to their affiliated members. 582 affiliated members responded to the survey. The following is a summary of the survey results:

- In response to the statement, “Biological sex (not gender identity) should be the primary factor in determining competitive categories in tennis”, 81% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed (60% strongly agreed, 21% agreed), 11% either strongly disagreed or disagreed (3% strongly disagreed, 8% disagreed), and 8% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- In response to the statement “Transgender and non-binary athletes should be allowed to compete in the category that matches their gender identity”, 75% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed (49% strongly disagreed; 26% disagreed), 15% either strongly agreed or agreed (6% strongly agreed, 9% agreed), and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- In response to the question, “To what extent would you support introducing completely gender-blind (open/mixed) competitions in tennis, where players of any sex or gender identity compete together without separate men’s or women’s divisions?”, 35% of respondents either strongly or somewhat supported the proposal (16% strongly supported; 19% somewhat supported), 46% either strongly or somewhat opposed it (34% strongly opposed; 12% somewhat opposed), and 19% neither supported nor opposed it.
- In response to the question “At which levels do you think completely gender-blind competition could or should be implemented?” 33% selected social tennis; 19% selected internal club competitions or leagues; 12% selected interclub (all levels); 10% selected interclub to class 4 level; 10% selected junior (under 12); 6% selected junior (under 18); 5% selected none of the above; and 5% selected other.
- In response to the statement, “Transgender players should be allowed to use the changing facilities that match their gender identity,” 60% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed (42% strongly disagreed; 18% disagreed), 22% either agreed or strongly agreed (10% strongly agreed; 12% agreed), and 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- In response to the question “Which policy option would you most strongly recommend that Irish tennis clubs adopt for access to changing rooms, showers and toilets?” 46% selected provide additional unisex/gender-neutral/private cubicle facilities where possible for everyone who needs them; 23% selected allow access based on biological sex; 14% selected keep strict single-sex facilities with no exceptions, but offer temporary private options when requested; 9% selected allow access based on gender identity (self-identification); 6% selected case-by-case assessment (e.g. individual risk or comfort review with club committee); and 2% selected other.
- In response to the question “If a club cannot provide separate changing facilities, which principle should take priority when designing and updating changing facilities?” 40% selected based on biological sex; 27% selected equal weighting, with clubs finding a practical compromise (e.g. more private facilities); 15% selected privacy for all players; 9% selected inclusion of transgender and non-binary players; and 9% selected it depends on the club (recreational vs elite, size of facilities, etc.).
- There were 582 respondents to this survey with a gender breakdown of 47.92% male; 50.34% female; 0.36% participants who identified as non-binary; and 1.38% of participants who preferred not to indicate their gender. The age demographic of respondents included 2% aged between 18–24 years old; 9% aged between 25–34 years old; 20% aged between 35–44 years old; 36% were aged between 45–54 years old; 20% were aged between 55–64 years; and 13% of respondents were aged 65+ years old.
- In relation to the level of consideration respondents had given to the participation of transgender and non-binary people in tennis – 30% had thought quite a lot about it; 32% of respondents had given it passing consideration; and 38% of respondents had never really thought about it.
- In response to the question “How would you rate your understanding of transgender and non-binary player participation in tennis?”, 15% of respondents believed they had a minimal understanding, 25% of respondents believed they had some understanding, 37% of respondents believed they had a reasonable understanding; and 23% believed that they had a good understanding.



POLICY

- This is a trust based policy.
- Tournaments, leagues and competitions sanctioned by Tennis Ireland will be organised on the basis of an individual's recognised birth sex.
- Junior, Senior and Masters Open Competitions are subject to these guidelines.
- As WTN ratings become more commonplace, tournament and event organisers will be encouraged to offer additional 'Open, Gender Neutral' events on a more regular basis.
- Clubs are encouraged to offer mixed, gender-blind competitions where possible. Such competitions should not however fully replace sex-based competition, even at lower levels.
- Social tennis should be gender neutral.
- Clubs should provide single-sex changing facilities, while also offering, where possible, a third option for anyone who seeks a separate private space.

SUMMARY

Our guidelines, which are in line with other sporting governing bodies, recognise that appropriate limitations are always part of competitive sport - whether this is in relation to sex, age, weight or another specified category. For this reason:

- a. Eligibility for the female category is limited to individuals with a recognised birth sex of female.
- b. Eligibility for the male category is limited to individuals with a recognised birth sex of male.
- c. In order to include transgender and non-binary individuals who do not wish to play in the gender category which aligns with their birth sex, it is recommended, where possible, that clubs provide opportunities for players to join mixed-sex events or events based solely on WTN or other similar rating systems.

Changing facilities remain single sex. However, clubs may be in a position to provide a third space for those who do not wish to use facilities which cater to their recognised birth sex.

This policy will be reviewed by Tennis Ireland in 5 years. The policy may also be updated in light of relevant policy changes or any operational challenges as raised by Tennis Ireland Competitions Team.

APPROVAL

Approved by: Tennis Ireland Board of Directors

Date: 25th July 2026



GLOSSARY

- **Birth Sex/Biological Sex:** Sex refers to the anatomical and physiological body type determined by chromosomes and is affected by reproductive hormones throughout life.
- **Cisgender man:** A person whose recognised birth sex is male and who identifies as a man.
- **Cisgender woman:** A person whose recognised birth sex is female and who identifies as a woman.
- **Cisgender:** A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with their recognised birth sex.
- **Gender identity:** Someone's internal perception of their gender – how they feel about their gender.
- **Non-binary:** Gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine and do not fit into the binary categorisation of male or female.
- **Transgender man:** A person with a recognised birth sex of female, who now identifies as a man.
- **Transgender woman:** A person with a recognised birth sex of male, who now identifies as a woman.
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity or gender expression is different from their recognised birth sex.



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