



TRANS* PEOPLE & SPORTS

*A Report from RFSL – Swedish Federation for Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights*

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TRANS PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

Trans people suffer from poorer health compared to the population as a whole. There is an increased risk of mental illness and sedentary leisure. Young people are particularly insecure.



25

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT

Sweden is one of the world's most sporting nation in relation to its geography and population. More than three million of its inhabitants between the age 6 and 80 are members of sports club.



39

EXPERIENCES, FACTS AND TIPS

110 transgender people share their experience in sports. Casual gender division, changing rooms and insecurity creates obstacles for sports



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No One Left behind

Many trans people wouldn't ever get involved in organised sport because of sex segregation, uncertainty about changing facilities and worries about not being met with respect.

Agenda 2030 is a coordinated plan for UN Member States which aims to eradicate extreme poverty, inequality and injustice, as well as dealing with the climate crisis. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) are intended to ensure that everyone is able to "fulfil their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy environment." The countries that have signed the agreement have united under the motto 'No one left behind' to ensure efforts would be focused on helping the most marginalized of communities. Good health is a prerequisite for people to be able to achieve their full potential and contribute to progress in society. From a public health perspective, trans people belong to a group that lags far behind the majority population: trans people have more sedentary lifestyles than others in Sweden, and generally poorer physical and mental health.

With this report, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights (RFSL) wants to put in place conditions that will allow for the inclusion of trans people in Swedish sport. It is aimed, first and foremost, at those who are involved in sport in some way and who wish to contribute to a welcoming and inclusive environment.

This report has two primary goals: 1) to provide some background on trans people's life opportunities

“Our ambition is that participants with experience of being trans will be able to enjoy life-long participation and inclusion in the wonderful world of sport.”

in Sweden, as well as information relating to specific sports, and the hurdles and challenges that exist for trans people in sport; and 2) to publish recommendations for trans inclusion in sport.

We asked 120 trans people for opinions about sport. This report illuminates major issues with access to and inclusion in sport for trans people, as well as what is already working well and the reasons people get active. Throughout the text, you will find tips and resources particularly focused on creating guidelines for how your club or association can deal with sex segregation and other challenges that become obstacles to trans participation in sport.

Club sports is an important popular movement in Sweden, with both the opportunity and the mandate to improve people's lives, especially children and young people. Our ambition is that participants with experience of being trans will be able to enjoy life-long participation and inclusion in the wonderful world of sport.

An important perspective to bear in mind when reading these accounts is that the sporting organisations are not service providers, where you can adopt a customer-focused mentality. Of course you might want to see change before you get involved. But you can also look at it in the tradition of popular movements – you get involved to bring change.



Deidre Palacios
Chair, Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights (RFSL)



Mathilda Piehl
Editor, Expert on LGBTQ in Sport, Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights

TIP: If you want to know more about trans people, relevant words or what healthcare is like, read the final chapter, Glossary, (p183) first.

COMMENTS FROM A SELECT GROUP OF SWEDEN'S NATIONAL SPORT ASSOCIATIONS ON WHY THEY'RE WORKING TO ACHIEVE TRANS INCLUSION

SWEDISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



NAME: Håkan Sjöstrand
ROLE: General Secretary

Why do you want to work towards trans inclusivity?

We need to learn more about trans people and the obstacles that hinder participation under the same conditions as cis people.

How are you working towards becoming an inclusive sport?

We work and live according to our values, showing openness and respect for every individual's equal worth and combatting all forms of discrimination. We push for equality and integration. Through, amongst other things, *Everyone is different – different is good.*

What are your current priorities in terms of trans people's participation in sport?

Providing the framework so that everyone can get involved in football and feel welcome.

What does your vision for trans participation look like?

We want trans people to feel engaged in Swedish football's common vision: *Football, The National Sport – For Everyone, Everywhere.*



SWEDISH FLOORBALL ASSOCIATION



NAME: Märit Bergendahl

ROLE: Chair

Why do you want to work towards trans inclusivity?

We need awareness of trans people and the challenges they face within sport. We need that awareness to be able to follow our steering document Swedish Floorball Wants.

How are you working towards an inclusive sport?

Our fundamental values include being inclusive, treating everyone equally and with respect. We let everyone participate. We notice everyone and we involve them. If we're going to live up to that, we need to find out whether our sport is open to all and how we can make it easier to be a sport for all.

What are your current priorities in terms of trans people's participation in sport?

Examining our competition rules, so that we can create the conditions to allow everyone to take part.

What does your vision for trans participation look like?

One of the Floorball Association's strategic aims for 2025 states: "Conditions (for example: rules, policies, formats) are to be updated to ensure that getting involved, staying involved or indeed returning to the sport is as simple as possible, for everyone." Right now, we're working towards that goal.

"Our fundamental values include being inclusive, treating everyone equally and with respect."

SWEDISH VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION



NAME: Martin Kihlström
ROLE: Chair

“Working to become inclusive and against all forms of discrimination is in our mission statement.”

Why do you want to work towards trans inclusivity?

For us, it goes without saying that everyone can participate. We want everyone to feel welcome in our sport. The participation, the joy and the sense of community are our priorities and the competitive segregation like men/women/mixed should not be a bar to anyone who wants to play volleyball. We have the benefit of RFSL’s expertise and we can learn from each other to remove obstacles and change any rules that might be exclusionary.

How are you working towards an inclusive sport?

Working to become inclusive and against all forms of discrimination is in our mission statement. The issue is always part of our work and we want it to permeate throughout our external communications. Another concrete example is now we’re thinking inclusively when changing our rules for the three branches: volleyball, beach volleyball and snow volleyball.

What are your current priorities in terms of trans people’s participation in sport?

Joining the right team or training group has to be straightforward, and we’re now examining all of the information and recommendations we give to our 190 associations around the country. When it comes to children’s sport, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies – all children should feel safe and welcome.

What does your vision for trans participation look like?

Everyone should be made to feel welcome in sport in general, and Swedish Volleyball in particular, so that we create opportunities for life-long participation for all.

SWEDISH SKATING ASSOCIATION



NAME: Maurine Filip

ROLE: Chair

What makes you want to work towards trans inclusivity?

We have been working on a gender policy in one of our sports (roller derby) for several years and we are very proud to have such a progressive and inclusive sport within our organisation. We know we need to do get better at working for the inclusion of LGBTQ people in our other branches and that we need to learn more about these issues. This work on inclusion is important and we as an association will have to keep working with the issue.

How are you working towards an inclusive sport?

We follow the Swedish Sports Confederation's (SSC) guiding principle, that everyone should be welcome in our sports. We are a small organisation, which is why we use the SSC's educational materials at various levels and we have a close relationship with our associations, enabling personal dialogue.

What are your current priorities in terms of trans people's participation in sport?

Making a breakthrough on trans inclusion across our sports on this issue.

What does your vision for trans participation look like?

For everyone to feel welcome, and for trans people's participation in all our sports to be a given.



SWEDISH BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION



NAME: Mats Carlson
ROLE: Chair

What makes you want to work towards trans inclusivity?

We want to learn more to make sure that we don't inadvertently exclude anyone from our activities. Everyone should feel that they're welcome to play basketball!

How are you working towards an inclusive sport?

Everyone's right to participate is one of the cornerstones of our values and vision. In our current strategic work, ensuring that we live up to those values in every regional and district association is crucial. We have produced educational materials on these issues that everyone can access and we talk about these questions in many more situations than before.

What work are you doing right now?

We've been discussing these issues but we can't say we're perfect yet, there's more to do. We've had one case at elite level that taught us a lot and we're using our experiences from that going forward. We are going to get even better at including everyone.

What does your vision for trans participation look like?

We want everyone to be equally welcome in our sport! If there's anyone in Swedish Basketball who hasn't got that yet, they're about to – thanks to our on-going strategic work where we really push everyone's right to participate as well as the value of diversity.

“We want to learn more, to make sure that we don't inadvertently exclude anyone from our activities.”



SWEDISH BUDO & MARTIAL ARTS ASSOCIATION



NAME: Fredrik Gundmark
ROLE: Chair



What makes you want to work towards trans inclusivity?

Martial arts have long been seen as inclusive, in the sense that both young and old, people with varying socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and physical ability have been able to practice the sport together. There is an underlying idea that everyone is welcome.

However, we do see that martial arts are still dominated by the masculinity and that women and LGBTQ people do not feel safe or included in all of our sports. We know that people find it easier to include what they already know, and that we're learning through dialogue and knowledge exchange. Within martial arts, we can see that we need to be better at working to include LGBTQ people in our organisations and on our boards, and that we need to improve our awareness in those areas. We want to continue to be seen as inclusive sports, and to be the ones who accept and include everyone.

How are you working towards an inclusive sport?

Based on the Swedish Sports Confederation's directives, and through cooperation with them, we are raising these issues in our own

boardroom and in various contexts with our member confederations and associations. One of the ways we are raising awareness is through training for young leaders and coaches as well as conferences where we hold workshops. We have also taken part in Stockholm Pride for the past several years.

We already had a policy we call *Open Diversity*, which is being updated and we hope be able to present our proposals for our own approach and fundamental values in relation to discrimination soon. We also want to involve our membership in that work in various ways, including dialogue and feedback on ideas and proposals.

What work are you doing right now?

Our priority is for all trans people to feel welcome in all of the sports within our association. For that to happen, we need to be more visible. We need to become an obvious choice for trans people when choosing a sport. That's not how it is today.

What does your vision for trans participation look like?

For trans people to look at martial arts as an obvious choice due to our inclusive environment.

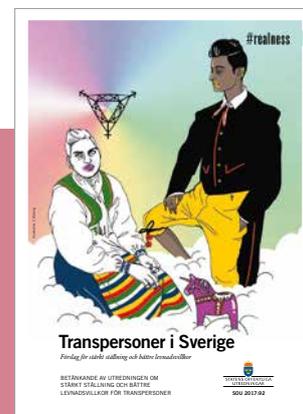


TRANS
PEOPLE'S
HEALTH
AND LIFE
OPPOR-
TUNITIES

In the government report, 'Trans people in Sweden – proposals for stronger status and improved living conditions'(SOU 2017:92), it is acknowledged that trans people are a vulnerable group. Trans people are more likely to experience insults, bullying, violence and the threat of violence, all of which has negative health impacts, even if trans people have a great range of different experiences and backgrounds.

FURTHER READING (IN SWEDISH)

Transpersoner i Sverige – Förslag för en stärkt ställning och bättre levnadsvillkor. Statens offentliga utredningar. SOU 2017:92



PERCEIVED POORER HEALTH

Trans people suffer from poorer health compared to the population as a whole. It is also much more common for trans people to have suicidal thoughts or to have attempted suicide. At an individual level, it is common to experience bullying, violence or insults, in places such as at home, school and in public.

In 2015, the Swedish Public Health Agency conducted a survey in

which only half of the trans people interviewed reported having good or very good general health. Around a fifth reported having poor general health.

More than half reported a reduced capacity to work or negative impacts on everyday life because of a physical or mental illness – this applies to young trans people in particular.

FURTHER READING (IN SWEDISH)

Hälsan och hälsans bestämningsfaktorer för transpersoner. En rapport om hälsoläget bland transpersoner i Sverige. Folkhälsomyndigheten 2015.



FACTS

The Health of Non-binary People – Organisation Transgender Europe conducted a survey in 2016 on the health of trans people in five European countries, including Sweden. It shows that it is noticeably more common for non-binary people to perceive themselves as being in poor health, compared to trans women and trans men. This data suggests, then, that non-binary people as a group have even worse health than trans women and trans men, although few studies have compared health differences within the trans population.

BEING SEEN MEANS BEING ACKNOWLEDGED

The experience of being made invisible in society is common among trans people in general, and among non-binary people in particular, who describe how this process is often an unwelcome part of everyday life. It is very common for trans people to experience the questioning of gender identity by others. For binary trans people, this takes the form of being expected to have a stereotypical gender expression, to demonstrate being a “real” man or woman. For non-binary people, the questioning might be about “really” being trans. It might also mean having one’s gender identity ridiculed or denied.

“It is very
commonplace
for trans people
to have gender
identity questioned
by others.”

Only 11% told the Swedish Public Health Agency that they could live completely according to the correct gender identity. A third reported largely living in accordance with gender identity, while a third reported doing so to some extent. A quarter answered that they always or sometimes hid their trans identity. Living in secret was more widespread amongst older people.

Transgender Europe’s survey shows that Swedish trans men – 76% and trans women – 71%, have greater opportunities to always or nearly always live according to their gender identity than non-binary people do – 42%.

The importance of being able to live according to their gender identity is reflected in how the different groups experience their own health. People not able to live openly are more likely to describe their health as poor than people who are able to live according to their gender identity.

The three main reasons that trans people in Sweden cannot live according to their gender identity are general reactions in society, the fear of discrimination and their parents’ reaction.



INCREASED RISK OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH

The research into trans people's mental health shows that trans people as a group have a high incidence of poor mental health, for example in terms of stress, anxiety or low mood. Compared to the population as a whole, trans people who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria are 4 or 5 times more likely to be treated for depression and anxiety. The increased risk of depression, however, decreases the more time that passes after gender-affirming health care, something that suggests that the anxiety and depression may be connected to untreated gender dysphoria. In the

Swedish Public Health Agency's study, a quarter of the trans people who responded were content with their mental wellbeing, while over a third were discontented or very discontented. More than a third reported having low mood in recent weeks. The proportion here was higher amongst younger people. Between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, it was as high as fifty-eight per cent. One third reported having a problematic relationship with food and eating. This response was more frequent among the younger respondents than their older counterparts.

FACTS

- Multiple psychiatric diagnoses common.
- Many of those diagnosed with gender dysphoria have several other diagnoses: autism, depression and anxiety disorders are commonplace.



MINORITY STRESS

Combined with general stress, belonging to a minority group or being in a minority position can have negative effects on physical and mental health. One explanation for the disparity in health between LGBTQ people and the rest of the population is the theory of minority stress.

The theory describes the increased psychosocial stress and the challenges that accompany exceeding, breaking or deviating from the heterosexual

norm and/or gender norms.

Minority stress includes being subjected to prejudice, stigma and discrimination, and the fear of being dismissed or negatively viewed, and attempting to avoid these problems. Minority stress also includes internalised homophobia, biphobia and transphobia – that is that the individual takes on the negative attitudes of their surroundings and incorporates them into their own self-image.

SEDENTARY LEISURE TIME

On the subject of physical health, a quarter of those who replied in the Swedish Public Health Agency's 2015 report said that they were satisfied with their physical health. An equal number reported dissatisfaction. Trans people spend much more of their leisure time sitting still than the general population. According to a national public health survey, 66% of the population are physically active for thirty minutes a day. Amongst trans people, the corresponding figure was just 19%.

Being trans and the fear of being badly treated in exercise or sport spaces restricts available options. The EU's Fundamental Rights Agency conducted a study in 2012, using a survey aimed at LGBTQ

people in various EU member states. In it, 26% of trans respondents in Sweden reported having experienced discrimination at a sporting facility because of their trans identity. The corresponding figure for homosexual and bisexual men and women was 6%.

“Trans people spend much more of their leisure time sitting still than the general population.”

YOUNG TRANS PEOPLE ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE

Young trans people are particularly at risk. The youngest group experience the greatest levels of social insecurity (over fifty per cent) and exposure to physical violence.

Young people also have the largest proportion of respondents who have seriously considered suicide. The Public Health Agency's 2015 report shows that more than half (57%) of all trans people between the ages of fifteen and nineteen have seriously considered suicide on at least one occasion in the past twelve months. 35% of young trans people have seriously considered suicide on several occasions. The figures are alarmingly high compared to the

population as a whole at 6%. In total, 5% had attempted suicide in the past year, which is five times the rate of the general population. 35% of young trans people between the ages of fifteen and nineteen had attempted suicide more than twelve months ago. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society conducts regular national youth surveys of people between sixteen and twenty-five. It shows that trans youth and young people who are unsure of their gender identity are less likely than cis young people to be satisfied with their work/education situation, health, family relations, qualifications and life in general. The group is also less optimistic about the future.

Many describe difficult school situations, as well as restrictions in terms of which sporting activities are available to participate in, and when. Access to safe meeting places, and meeting places specifically aimed at LGBTQ youth, have been identified by these young people themselves as a measure to improve their health.

“Several surveys point to young trans people being particularly at risk.”

FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED

There are some indications that trans people in Sweden comprise a financially disadvantaged group. This applies to young trans people in particular.

According to the Public Health Agency, the rate of unemployment is higher than the population as a whole. More than half are low earners, with a stated monthly

income of less than 14,000 SEK. It is also far more commonplace for young LGBTQ people to have experienced difficulties with basic necessities like rent or food in the past six months than other young people. A smaller proportion of young LGBTQ people stated that they had the option of seeking financial help from friends or family.

FURTHER READING

- *Minority stress factors as mediators of sexual orientation disparities in mental health treatment: a longitudinal population-based study, i Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 2017.*
- *Reduction in Mental Health Treatment Utilization Among Transgender Individuals After Gender-Affirming Surgeries: A Total Population Study, American Journal of Psychiatry, 4 October 2019.*
- *MUCF (2010) Hon Hen Han. En analys av hälsosituation för homosexuella och bisexuella ungdomar samt för unga transpersoner. Stockholm: MUCF.*
- *MUCF (2012) Om unga hbtq-personer – fritid. Stockholm: MUCF*
- *MUCF (2019) Olika verkligheter. Unga hbtq-personer om sina levnadsvillkor.*
- *Global health burden and needs of transgender populations: a review, i The Lancet vol 388, July 23.*



THE
MEANING
OF SPORT

Sport, organised under the Swedish Confederation of Sports, is Sweden's largest popular movement, with 90% of all children and young people in Sweden having belonged to a club at some point during their childhood. The movement is built on voluntary efforts and it has more than three million members.



The Swedish sporting bodies have more than 19,000 clubs around the country, 880 000 people in leadership roles, and 3.3 million members. 71 specialised sporting associations organise more than 250 sports.

Most leaders work without pay and 71% of all children between the ages of six and twelve are members of a club or association.

The sporting movement is a popular movement in which you join independent clubs and pay a membership fee. These clubs are organised into specialised federations, largely based on particular sports. A few federations, so-called multisport federations, are instead focused on particular groups. Examples of this are the School Sports Federation, The Swedish University Sports Federation and 'Korpen' – a national body which organises sports at a recreational and hobby level.

The Swedish Confederation of Sports is the main body with specialised and multisport

“In mass-participation sport, health, enjoyment and wellbeing set the tone.”

federations underneath it. The Confederation divides sports according to age and level.

Child sports refers to sports for children up to the age of twelve, youth sport covers teenagers and young adults up to twenty-five, and adult sports are for those older than that.

In both youth sport and adult sport, there is mass-participation and elite-level sport. At the elite level, improved performance and good results in competition dominate. In mass-participation sport, health, enjoyment and wellbeing set the tone.

SPORT'S FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Sport's fundamental values are built on joy, camaraderie, democracy and participation, everyone's right to join in, and clean competition.



DAFFEN
SPORT

SPORT HELPED ANDI TO GROW

“

I started boxing fifteen years ago, and it's one of the best things I've ever done. It's one of those sports you can always come back to because you don't need much. Just a pair of gloves and a punch bag. It's not actually all about hitting, it's also about improving fitness, coordination and balance. You can do loads of drills even without mitts or a sparring partner.

The concentration, decisiveness, respect for your trainer and the session in combat sports, all that gives me a buzz of wellbeing just thinking about it. Boxing a couple of times a week is an important routine for me, a bout every now and then, and then individual training at the gym or on the track.

I grew within sport and through sport, it strengthened me an incredible amount.

SEX SEGREGATION IN SPORT

At both elite and mass-participation levels, organised sport is divided by sex. You could say that the structures are built on the assumption that there are two categories of people. In almost all sports, there's a competition class for women/girls and men/boys.

The reason for the sex segregation – even if it is rarely explicitly stated – is that men are expected to have such a physical and performance advantage that it would be unfair to women to have a single class of

competition.

Sometimes the sex segregation is accompanied by an 'adjustment' of the rules for the women's class – an adjustment intended to make the conditions more 'equitable' in competitive situations. It may mean smaller balls, lighter shots, shorter distances, lower hurdles, tackle-bans, special clothing or sex-specific disciplines.

There is an underlying assumption, outlined by many researchers, that everyone assigned male at birth has an unfair advantage compared to those assigned female at birth. However, despite a demonstrable overlap between women's and men's performances, as well as the knowledge that the differences within the groups are larger than the differences between them, the notion that men are always better at sport seems persistent. One explanation for this is that the assumptions of binary sex and male superiority are seldom challenged – indeed they are often reinforced – in

“You could say that the structures are built on the assumption that there are two categories of people.”

an activity as segregated as sport. The segregation occurs early, often within child sport, despite the established wisdom being that sex is not significant before puberty. As Håkan Larsson writes in *Genus och heteronormativitet inom*

barn och ungdomsidrott (Gender and Heteronorms in child and youth sports), children learn from an early age that there are only two genders, and that boys and girls should not measure themselves against one another in competition.



QUEER EXPRESSION IN SPORT

Sport can be an environment in which stereotypical norms about sex and sexuality are exceeded, reconsidered and changed. There are many athletes who challenge dominant expectations about the gender binary and blur lines between what it means to be male, female, or neither within a dominate society. These athletes have paved the way for more inclusive sporting worlds.

For cis boys and men, it has been shown that participation in female-dominated sports such as equestrianism, dance and gymnastics can open them up to a more expansive understanding of masculinity than participation in traditionally male-dominated sports, such as ice hockey, weightlifting, boxing and skateboarding. Sport also provides a safe space for the LGBTQ community overall, especially for cis women and girls involved in team sports.

For binary and non-binary trans people, sporting environments whose structures are not dictated

by the gender binary allow for queer spaces to emerge. Equestrianism, for example, is not segregated by sex. Some gymnastics and parkour clubs have also deliberately begun gender-neutral operations where everyone, regardless of gender or body, trains together with the same equipment, and some dance sports allow you to choose whether you want to be a 'leader' or a 'follower' as opposed to the traditional 'male' or 'female' partner role. Roller derby has adopted a policy that explicitly includes binary and non-binary trans people and, as such, has been a sport that has attracted trans people. In these diverse and welcoming sporting contexts, it is easier to move between or beyond binary gender frameworks.

Overall, it can be said that queer sanctuaries for participants with trans experience arise more easily in newer, less traditional sports – especially in sports where competition is not seen as the ultimate aim.

FURTHER READING (IN SWEDISH)

Heteronormativitet och gränsöverskridanden inom elitidrotten. Riksidrottsförbundet, FoU-rapport 2014:5 och *Jag är en normal kille liksom. Att göras och göra sig till ridsportkille.* Svenska Ridsportförbundet.



THE UN'S GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN's global Sustainable Development Goals, also called Agenda 2030, exist to achieve four things by the year 2030: 1) to eradicate extreme poverty; 2) to reduce inequality and injustice in the world; 3) to promote peace and fairness; and 4) to solve the climate crisis.

Agenda 2030 aims to ensure that all people are able to “fulfil their potential in dignity and equality

in a healthy environment.” All the countries of the world have agreed to the slogan “No One Left Behind” to ensure efforts would be focused on helping the most marginalized of communities. The SDGs touch on most aspects of a person's life, as well as our collective commitments to one another as a global society. None of the 17 goals is more important than any other and all are to be worked on simultaneously.



THE GOAL OF INCLUSIVE SPORTS

The SDGs most relevant to the inclusion of trans people in sports are, amongst others, eliminating poverty, protecting health and wellbeing, education and lifelong learning, gender equality, access to water and sanitation, economic growth and access to work, reduced inequality, and making cities more inclusive and safer.

Exercise and sport improve both physical and mental health, which in turn leads to better school results, better performance in work, higher incomes and a more independent life. It also affects the opportunity to participate in and be part of civic society and club activities.

Trans people are a particularly relevant target group to ensure that no one is left behind in the work towards good and equal health according to Swedish public health aims and the SDGs. Sweden's cities

and towns need to become more inclusive and all people should have access to sporting facilities and gyms, as well as water and sanitary facilities, such as showers and toilets. Therefore, trans peoples' opportunities to participate in sport are also a clear issue of equality and parity.

“Therefore, trans peoples' opportunities to participate in sport are also a clear issue of equality and parity.”

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Good health is a fundamental prerequisite for people's opportunities to fulfil their full potential and contribute to the development of society. Individuals' health is affected by economic, environmental and social factors and Goal Three: Good health and wellbeing includes all dimensions and people of all ages.

RESOLUTION

On March 22, 2019, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted a resolution expressing concern over discriminatory regulations and practices that force certain athletes to lower their testosterone levels medically. The resolution was presented by South Africa, who requested a report about the intersection points between discrimination based on gender and race in sports.

INCLUSIVE SPORTS – OF PARTICULAR VALUE

The 2019 UN report *Discrimination and Violence against Individuals based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender*, states that program aimed at inclusive sport is of particularly high value.

FACTS

5,524 LGBTQ people from 28 EU countries participated in a survey on sport.

90% are of the view that homophobia and particularly transphobia are a problem within sport.

70% think that it is important that famous athletes come out, for them to be able to deal with discrimination.

82% report homophobic and transphobic language within sport in the previous twelve months.

33% stay in the closet when it comes to sport.

38% do not know where to turn when exposed to discrimination within sport.

Trans people's non-participation in sport is down to negative experiences or simply not fitting into the system.

EXPERI-
ENCES,
FACTS
& TIPS

110 people with trans experience responded to two surveys in summer 2019: one for those who participate, and one for those who do not participate in organised sport. The survey was distributed through The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights' social media and enabled respondents to elaborate on their answers with quotes or short anecdotes. Those who took part were also asked about participating in more detailed interviews. The result was ten interviews, reported below, alongside figures and comments from the quantitative study.





PARTICIPANTS

Of those active in sport, most were born in the 1980s and 90s, and of those who were not, most were born in the 90s. In some cases, a parent answered on behalf of their child.

An overwhelming majority – 78% – amongst both those active and those who were not, had been assigned female at birth. Only twenty-two per cent were assigned male.

Today, twelve per cent define themselves as a woman, forty per cent as a man and forty-eight per cent non-binary, intergender, as little as possible, queersexed, trans, genderfluid, genderqueer, agender, femme-presenting, non-binary man, non-binary trans man, non-binary trans-masculine.

Most report that those around them know about their gender identity and only one said that no one knew. 44% give their sexual orientation as ‘other’, 15% bisexual, 12% heterosexual, 24% homosexual, and 5% did not know.

13% live in rural areas, 22% in a small town, 20% in a large town, 4% in Malmö, 14% in Gothenburg and 27% in Stockholm.

Respondents participate in a wide range of sports. 6% compete at elite level, 77% at recreational level and 17% do not know. Most train three or four days a week, with 66% participating via a club. 74% of those who do compete reported doing so in their chosen gender category.

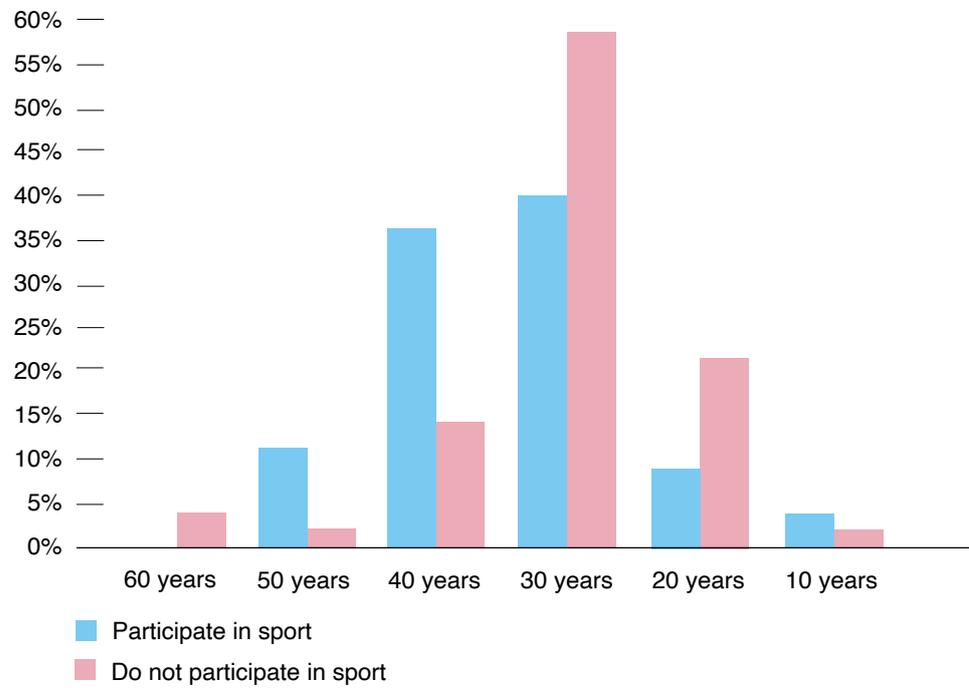
“Of those who do participate in sport, a majority describe their mental, physical and social health as good.”

Among those who do not participate in sport, 37% exercise by themselves, predominantly gym and strength training, cycling and running. 19% do not exercise. 49% did not answer that question.

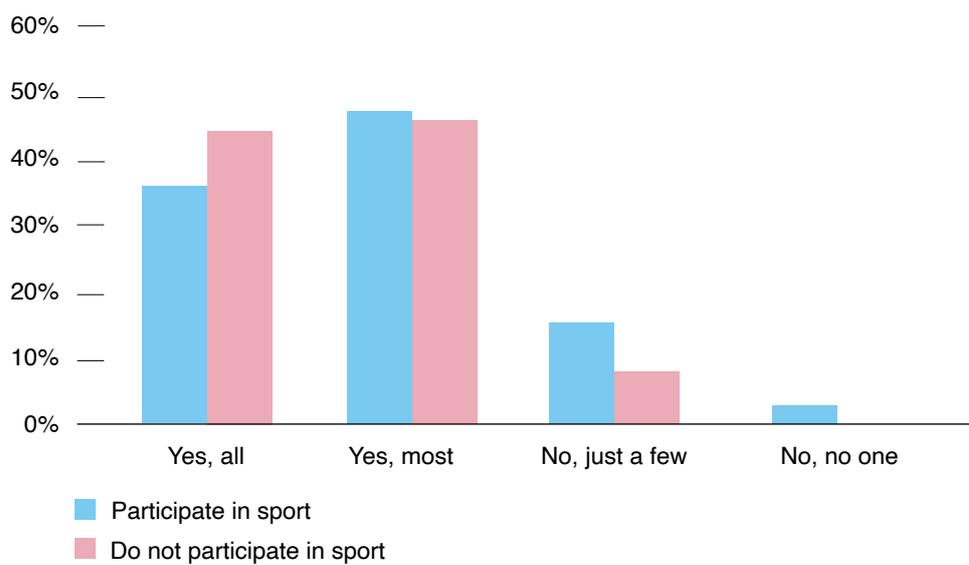
Of those who do participate in sport, a majority describe their mental, physical and social health as good. Of those who do not, a majority describe their mental, physical and social health as poor.

There is a significant underrepresentation of people from backgrounds other than Swedish. Particular effort was made to reach more members of this target group but unfortunately the underrepresentation remains. This might be because the channels to reach the group were missing, but it could also be because of an underrepresentation of trans people from backgrounds other than Swedish participating in organised sport.

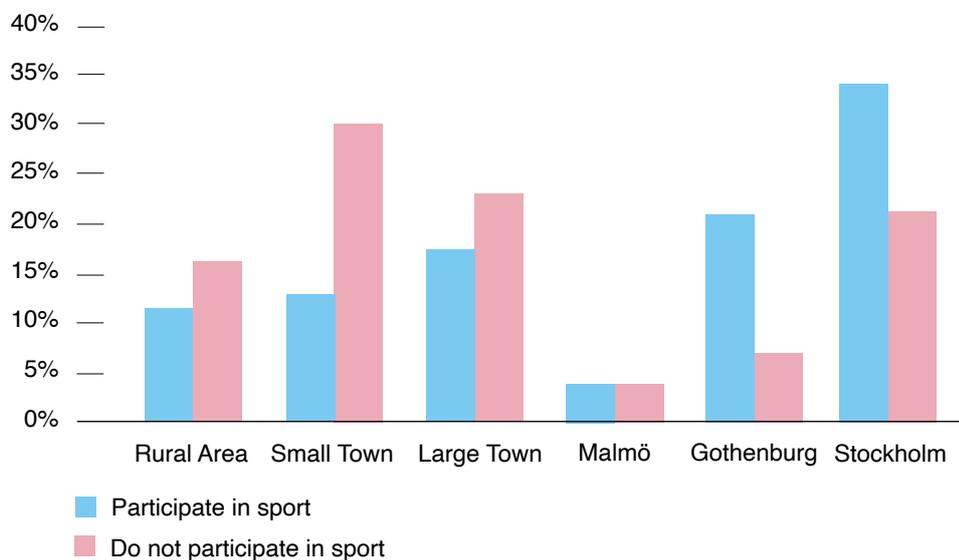
Difference in age between those who participate/do not participate in sport



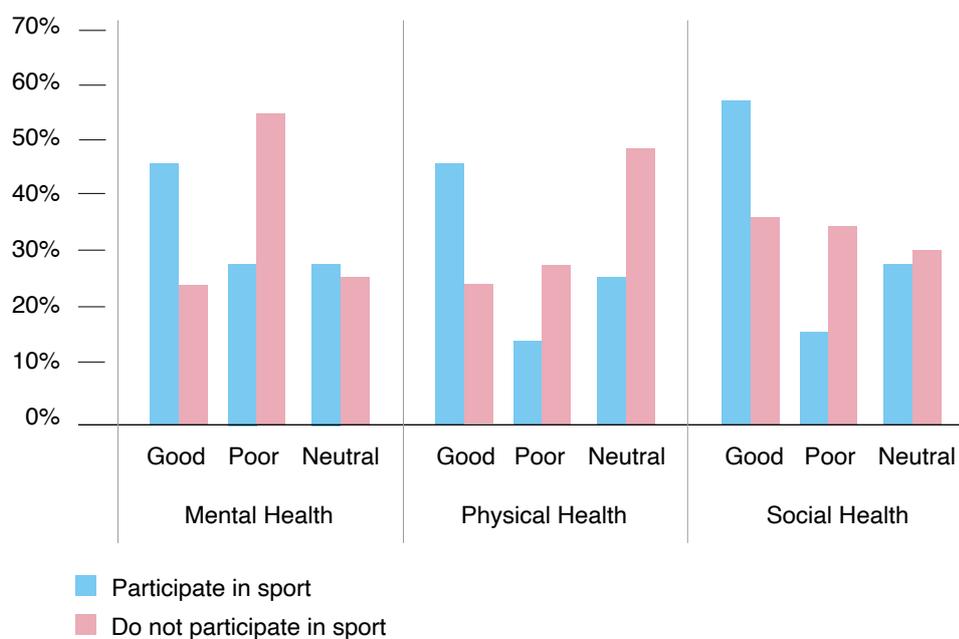
Do those around you know your gender identity?



Live in

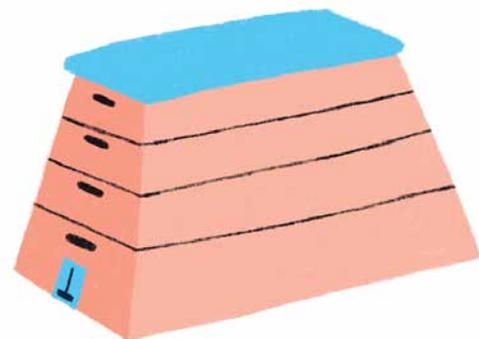
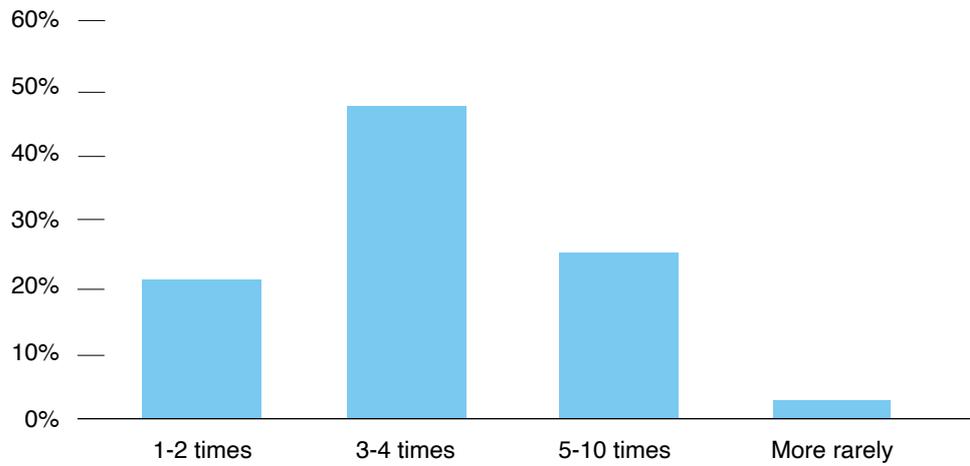


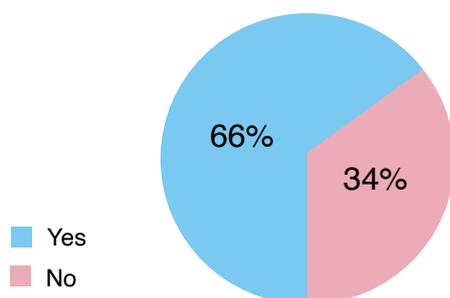
Description of own health

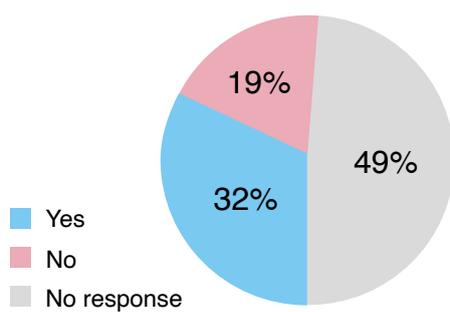


THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

Exercise, number of times per week

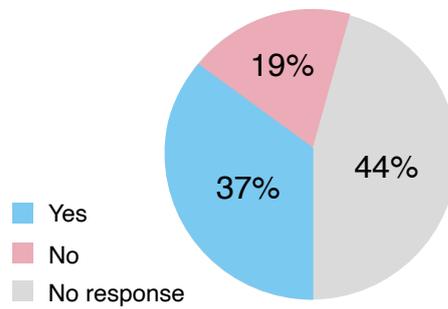


Participate in a club/association

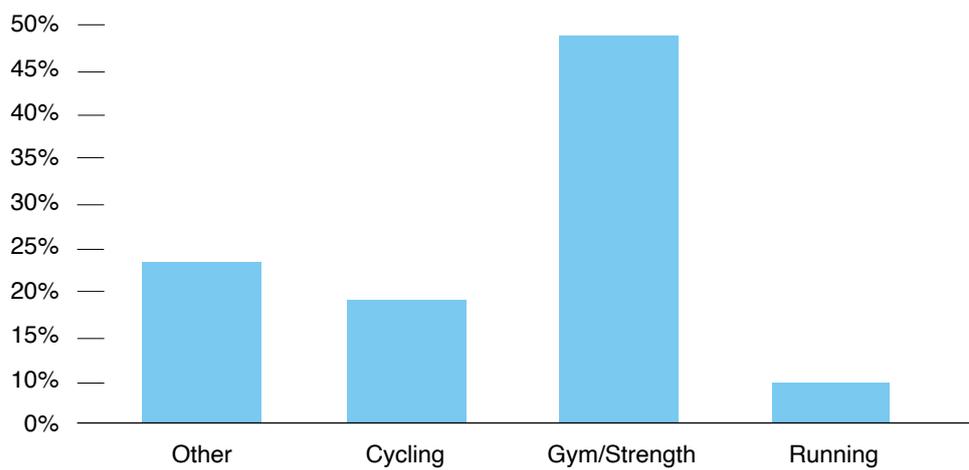
Report participation in favoured sport/activity

THOSE WHO DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

Exercise/train alone



If yes, what?





LEON CALLED TIME ON HIS CAREER

Ice Hockey goalie Leon Reuterström ended his career at twenty-one in order to undergo gender affirming treatment. The story received media coverage but what did not come through in the interviews was that he had sometimes felt left out within hockey. Leon Reuterström started his career at five years old, when a neighbour took him along to get him on the ice for the first time. He loved it right from the start and from a young age, Leon was able to play with the boys.

“In Ice hockey, it was natural for girls to play with boys, because there wasn’t a girls team. I was just one of the team members, and I felt good about that. No weirdness, the

“I had to get changed on my own in a tiny closet”

focus was on sport.” But when the teammates entered puberty, Leon became “the girl” on the team.

“I had to get changed on my own in a tiny closet, and that natural inclusiveness just disappeared. Suddenly I wasn’t just one of the team anymore.”

Leon wasn’t allowed to go to tournaments with the team because it was considered too expensive to rent another changing room just for him. Attitudes like ‘girls can’t play ice hockey’ also started to surface.

“I was no longer being given the chance to prove myself on the ice, and that was tough, of course.”

Leon says that the exclusion that emerged also spilled onto the rink. Missing the changing room banter meant that he lost his connection with his teammates. Thoughts about not being good enough started to arise and the gender dysphoria he experienced reinforced those negative feelings.

“Unfortunately, those times did leave their mark. It’s hard to get rid of that loneliness in the team, year after year. I don’t think you can ever



really understand it unless you've been in that situation yourself.

You get terrified of being misgendered, of not being allowed to join in, getting a harder tackle or a nasty blow on the back because someone thinks you shouldn't be there.

Leon explains how a lack of understanding of trans issues and macho culture play a role: "I don't really know how comfortable I'd feel going into a changing room full of guys and getting changed without feeling anxiety about getting bullied.

Leon eventually accepted a place on the women's team. However, being regarded and treated as a girl didn't feel right and the knots in his stomach became heavy rocks. It was then, about four years ago, that he

"I got the diagnosis halfway through a season and I realised straight away that this is my last season."



was referred to a doctor to discuss his gender dysphoria. "It had reached the stage where I hated everything about my body. I was really unhappy and in the end I couldn't carry on," Leon said.

When asked what sport meant to him, Leon's answer is simple: "Everything." Since childhood, ice hockey was his way of making his body feel good, of learning about himself and how to cooperate with others. It also gave him his network of social contacts, and in his teens, when he was starting to feel down, ice hockey was his sanctuary. He describes how, in spite of everything, ice hockey both saved him and destroyed him.

"I got the diagnosis halfway through a season and I realised straight away that this is my last season. Somewhere I had a feeling that this was too much, I wasn't going to be able to fuss and argue about rules, when I hadn't even fully landed in myself yet."

Since testosterone is considered a doping substance, competition in the women's category felt hopeless for Leon: "I googled, and I know that they come and do doping tests. Exactly what it says in the rules, I never checked. It's easy to say 'of course everyone's welcome,' but the rules still put a stop to it."

Leon went on to describe a lack of

support from his club: “No one at my club suggested I should play with the men or asked how they could help me carry on. They could’ve scooped me up and said ‘we want you here,’ which would have shown that everyone is welcome.”

To make things easier for trans people who want to participate in sport, Leon raises the possibility of making it easier to get an exemption: “The rules really need to be re-examined. It ought to be possible to look at that particular person and think: ‘how do we help them into sport?’ Not: ‘right, no, we’re banning anyone who’s taking hormones.’ You never really know where sport

“You never really know where sport stands – Can I join in?”

stands – Can I join in? – How can I join in? – What conditions will there be on me joining in? I think all sports need to clarify what’s what. Things are happening in society and I think sport has an important task to catch up and keep up, because it’s fallen a bit behind.”

LEON REUTERSTRÖM

Age: 24

Family: Partner

Lives: In Sandviken

Occupation: Retail

What sports can learn about trans people:

The movement lacks knowledge of the reality for trans people and their general conditions. I welcome any initiatives that benefit inclusion. Sport is really important for both physical and mental health. Love of sport is just as strong for everyone, regardless of who they are.

GENDER DYSPHORIA AND THE LACK OF GENDER AFFIRMING TREATMENT

Gender dysphoria can be described as a strong, persistent feeling that you've been given the wrong body. Often, that sensation is associated with mental suffering and it can cause a reduced capacity to operate in day-to-day life. Many cite gender dysphoria as one reason for no longer playing sport or never having taken it up. Several also say that they

are waiting for gender-affirming health care before getting involved.

57% say that they have refrained from playing sports because of how their gender would be perceived or was perceived and the impact that would have on their mental health and overall feelings of dysphoria. 14% of those who do not participate in sport have previously been active but have stopped because of gender dysphoria or the fact that they have not yet received gender-affirming health care. Lou, 20, says it was as though, "the physical and social gender dysphoria got too strong."

32% of those who do not participate in sport also mention dysphoria and/or lack of gender-affirming care as one reason why they have not taken up sport.

Of those who don't take part in sport, 23% say that access to treatment could get them to start

"Gender dysphoria can be described as a strong, persistent feeling that you've been given the wrong body."

exercising. Isak, 15, is one of them: “Getting gender correcting surgery, above all a mastectomy.” Vide, 22, has always been uncomfortable with training in a group because of low self-esteem and dysphoria: “I often feel uncomfortable about my body. Since I realised/accepted that I am genderqueer and came out, sport has felt even less accessible.”

In summary, the bodily dysphoria many trans people feel along with others’ perception of gender causes many not to participate in sport. In certain cases it is in a



sporting context that this is most problematic, for others it is because their gender dysphoria is so strong that it prevents them from living a full life more generally.

TIPS

Sport has a unique potential to help towards a positive body image, where you value your body according to what it can do and not, for example, what it looks like. Offer an environment in which people get the chance to appreciate what their body can do.

ALBIN, MORE SECURE IN SPORT THANKS TO GENDER- AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE

“My life would probably be pretty empty without sport”

Albin, 35, started training at a rowing club just six months after his mastectomy. Before that he felt uncomfortable with how prominent his chest was when he moved and felt general discomfort about his physique. Now he feels more at home in his body, and he trains regularly.

“My life would probably be pretty empty without sport,” he says.

Albin grew up in a little town, close to a nature reserve. So, as a child, it was easy to get out and move around a lot. But then he often chose solo activities such as long nature walks, running and riding, since at first he didn't want to get involved in team sports.

In order to function in a group, you also need to be comfortable with yourself and your body.

Albin elaborates:

“...And I wasn't until after my mastectomy. I used to choose activities like spinning, because at least there you're sitting still. I could

FACTS

Mastectomy is an surgery where you remove breast tissue to create a flatter chest.



“Moving around with the body I had was uncomfortable, and it got more and more difficult.”

choose a spot at the back of the room, and pretend that the others weren't there. Suffering from gender dysphoria might mean that it's uncomfortable to feel your breasts bouncing when you move around.”

For a while, Albin exercised only sporadically since he wasn't comfortable with his body and there was a fear of being misgendered.

“It had a big impact on my wellbeing. When I started on testosterone, but before the mastectomy, changing rooms were really difficult. It felt least

threatening to get changed in the women's, which is what I did, but I wasn't actually comfortable there either.”

But later, as the testosterone changed his body, it became increasingly difficult to get changed among women, since people's stares would follow him ever more intently.

“I tried to forget about it, and I can't see very well without my glasses, so that was a help,” Albin explains with a chuckle. Albin ended up getting changed at home before the session, or in an accessible toilet.

Albin says that difficult situations to do with his body can arise even during the training sessions themselves, if, for example, a coach decides to gender participants by saying something like “great job, ladies!”, which can lead to misgendering other participants. He also feels that such scenarios can be avoided by coaches becoming more aware of how troubling misgendering can be for many trans people.

“The biggest problem was the internal struggle. Moving around with the body I had was uncomfortable, and it got more and more difficult. There are lots of factors here. Even if I am more at ease today, I’m not completely comfortable, maybe I never will be.”

Today, he’s waiting for gender-affirming bottom surgery, and hopes that he’ll soon be able to avoid being so conscious of his body’s appearance. The club changing rooms, however, don’t feel like a problem. He feels comfortable with his friends and the idea that someone would say something hateful, or feel troubled by his presence, is something Albin feels is out of the question.

The training clothes are tight, close-fitting garments, so he uses a ‘packer’ – a kind of prosthetic penis. “After taking testosterone for a while, and having a mastectomy, I can take more pleasure in what my body can do. It’s not as uncomfortable as it used to be, the little shell of anxiety is gone and it’s disappearing more and more.”

“After taking testosterone for a while, and having a mastectomy, I can take more pleasure in what my body can do. It not as uncomfortable as it used to be.”

And that this gives him a positive kick in sporting terms:

“Yes, I would definitely say so, and I will certainly be keeping up the training! I need it to stay well and to deal with life somehow. I would probably feel that my life was pretty empty without sport.”

CASSANDRA WANTS TO KEEP PLAYING IN THE GIRLS TEAM

“It’s reassuring to know that our club is fighting for us.”

Cassandra, 12, felt uneasy because she didn’t know whether she, as a trans girl, would be welcome when she approached the local football club, but she was pleasantly surprised when she was welcomed into the girls team with open arms. What little anxiety remains is about being allowed to play in the upcoming league matches.

“The Football Association’s rules seem unclear, but it’s reassuring to know that our club is fighting for us,” says Cassandra’s mum Mona.

When Cassandra and her family moved to a bigger city, they made contact with the chair of the local football club to ask whether Cassandra, as a trans girl, could play on their girls team. They were immediately told that it wouldn’t

be a problem. Even if the club doesn’t have an official policy about inclusion of trans people, their guiding principle is that “everyone can join in,” Mona says.

Since Cassandra is turning 13 in 2020, and the team is about to go up a year, the local club has applied to the Swedish Football Association (SFF) for an exemption. Cassandra is still legally registered as a boy, since in Sweden it is not possible to change one’s legal sex until 18. This might mean that she can’t play matches alongside the other girls. The club, however, has given assurances that they will do whatever they can to make sure that she can continue to participate.

“The SFF might give her an exemption, but what applies to trans girls seems uncertain. Ultimately, it’s because they believe that trans girls like Cassandra have an advantage,” Mona explains.

After a while, Cassandra’s Dad Rolf joins the conversation and it becomes clear that the family feels a certain sense of powerlessness at the



situation that has arisen.

Cassandra has been taking puberty-blocking hormones and has been told by her endocrinologist that there is no reason why she shouldn't be able to play with other girls.

"We don't, however, know how engaged SFF are in these issues. Do they have experience including trans youth in sport or will their decision be based on prejudice?" Mona wonders, and Rolf agrees.

The decision is expected soon and until then, the family just have to cross their fingers. Cassandra will still be going to training, regardless

of the outcome.

"It wouldn't feel good though, not being allowed to play matches," Cassandra says emphatically. And if she and her family were to give some advice to those who are active in club sports for children and young people, it would be to get rid of sex segregation as much as possible. "I think a lot of it is down to routine – girls and boys should be separated. A lot of people probably never even think that it could be difficult for those who are trans," Mona says.

She is keen, however, to point out that the inclusion of her daughter by the local club, and the clear support they feel from the coaches, is important. "They really are fighting to make sure our girl can join in and play, and it's important to say that, because you hear so much negative stuff about trans people. I hope our situation can serve as a positive example."

Cassandra agrees with the picture painted by her mother. With the exception of a football trip which she chose not to go on, because of concerns about gender segregated changing rooms and sleeping

"Do they have experience including trans youth in sport or will their decision be based on prejudice?"

arrangements, she has never not participated in sport because she is trans. She has gained lots of new friends in her team, one of whom has become her best friend, and she feels confident enough with her environment that she can be who she is – on and off the pitch.

“Everyone took it really well and it felt good telling them,” says Cassandra.

“Everyone took it really well and it felt good telling them.”

FACTS

Throughout 2020, the Swedish Football Association is working with RFSL to formulate a policy for the inclusion of trans athletes. Today, SFF’s competition rules are as follows:

- Women and girl players may play in men’s and boys’ teams.
- Men and boys may be given permission to play in a girls’ or women’s team.

In deciding whether to grant permission, all circumstances of the case in question must be considered, for example age, level of competition and the risk of injury to fellow players. The association take submissions from medical experts before deciding on an application.

CIM DOESN'T KNOW WHETHER THEY'D STILL BE ALIVE IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR SPORT

As a teenager, non-binary Cim, 32, trained in martial arts but soon stopped after homophobic remarks from a coach. The dream of participating in sport was never completely extinguished and was reignited in adulthood when they were invited to join a roller derby team. Today, Cim is an active roller derby player and strongly critical of the way the sporting world treats non-binary people.

“Those of us who are neither men nor women are easily overlooked, even when dealing with

“Those of us who are neither men nor women are easily overlooked, even when dealing with trans issues.”

trans issues,” they say.

Cim’s re-entry into the sporting world came when a friend wanted them to come along to a training session a few years back. Cim was sceptical. They thought that the sport seemed more like a fad than anything else. The film *Whip It*— in which a young woman who defies her mother’s wishes that she become a beauty queen, starts playing roller derby instead — had just premiered, and lots of people in their social circle were curious about giving it a try.

“It really felt like a fad. But I went along and gradually learned how to roller skate. I wasn’t terribly dedicated, but after maybe a year we started playing matches and at that point something happened. I realised that I wasn’t crap at sport, that I could improve, and that there was a chance of getting really good.”

Since the matches demand a certain level of strength, Cim goes to the gym a few times a week, to build muscle and keep their body trim. Being so active has had a positive impact on their mental health.



“Derby was the first sport I’d tried that worked for me.”

“I don’t even know if I’d still be alive if it hadn’t been for sport, so it scares me that I came across roller derby so randomly. As an adult, especially, it can be difficult to start training if you haven’t done it earlier, the motivation and the desire don’t just fall into your lap. Derby was the first sport I’d tried that worked for me.”

An important factor in them daring to have a go was that the international body, Women’s Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) had formulated an inclusion policy, so that people of all genders and identities are able to participate.

Even players undergoing hormone treatment may join in.

Cim would also like to try other sports, such as weightlifting, but the fear of a negative response from the more normative sporting world holds them back.

“Roller derby isn’t completely devoid of transphobia, but it’s light years ahead of the established sporting world. Obviously I know that some progress has been made for more binary trans people, but I am genuinely very worried about how non-binary people might be received. Those of us who are not men or women are easily overlooked. Can I get changed in the changing room I want to use? Will people use the right pronouns?”

“There’s something about the sporting world that makes it incredibly conservative in its view of gender,” Cim states, pointing out that there are ideals and norms that are so strong that it will be difficult

for binary and non-binary people to compete side by side.

“The sporting movement needs to change fundamentally, and we need to tackle gender segregation. It’s as though we think women need to be protected in a category of their own for them to have a chance of winning. At the same time, the male category is seen as open – within it, hormone levels can vary, as long as you’re not taking something external.”

Cim doesn’t feel like the sporting world in general is taking trans issues seriously, and that a lot of things could be done differently. Educating coaches and administrators would be a good start. There’s a need for more understanding of trans issues, and people involved in sports need to open their eyes to the problems that trans people face.

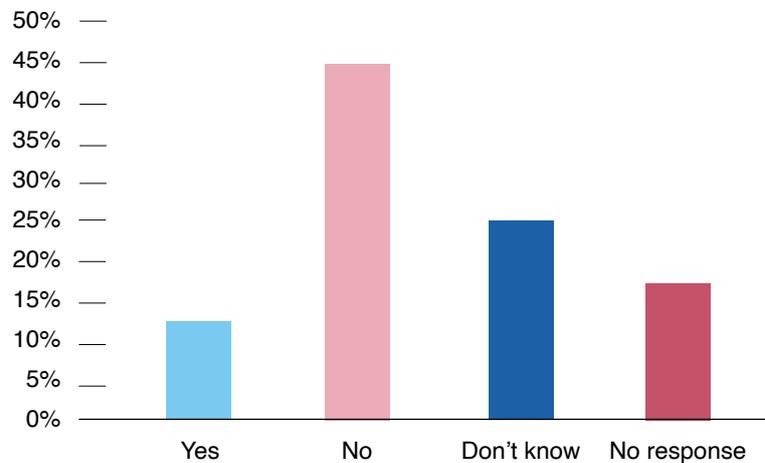
“Otherwise it will probably be difficult for them to come up with creative solutions,” Cim underlines.

“There’s a need for more understanding of trans issues, and people involved in sports need to open their eyes to the problems that trans people face.”



THE WRONG CATEGORY: NOT FITTING IN

Does your club have a policy for inclusion of trans people?



Source: RFSL's sport survey 2019

“In a system where people are segregated only according to sex assigned at birth, however, trans people are often completely barred from taking part.”

Many sports are segregated by sex, with both training and competition conducted in men's and women's categories. Even children, often out of habit, are divided into gendered categories. But sport does not abide by this strict categorization everywhere. Within small sports, particularly in more rural areas, the number of participants might for example be so few that it isn't possible to segregate by sex or age. Others have deliberately decided not to separate children into boys' and girls' groups.

In some situations, non-segregated activities can exclude

those in the minority. If the majority of participants are cis boys, then cis girls – and trans people – may struggle to feel included. At times, sex segregation can then be a good thing, if it helps to provide cis girls and trans people with a secure environment in which to participate in sport.

In a system where people are segregated only according to sex assigned at birth, however, trans people are often completely barred from taking part. Eli, 8, actually wanted to play football, but all the clubs their parents have looked at are divided into gendered categories.

“Eli is open to playing with the boys, but doesn’t want to fight for the right to be there, as a new member of the team. Instead, we’ve chosen sports that aren’t divided into boy/girl categories in the lower age groups. Another example was a period when our child didn’t want to go swimming, because they didn’t know whether it would be okay for those around them if they wore swimming shorts rather than a more traditionally feminine bathing suit.”

Not all trans participants experience gender dysphoria and see a medical professional to get access to gender-affirming health care. But, for those that have, the timescales involved are long. After being seen by a medical professional and getting a “diagnosis” of gender dysphoria, you can get access to gender-affirming health care. For those who undergo surgical procedures, it takes time to recover and heal which might affect their ability to join in with physical activity. Hormone therapies are often life-long.

“Even more serious are the indications that people put off seeking gender-affirming health care because they don’t want to stop participating in sport.”

Since there may be long periods during which participating in sport is difficult or even impossible, their prospects of continuing in sport are harmed. Even more serious are the indications that people put off seeking gender-affirming health care because they don’t want to stop taking part in sport. Such a decision can have life-changing consequences. Albin, 35, says that it’s an impossible equation.

“Few elite athletes of the right age have received gender-affirming health care as children.

They have probably been involved in elite sports within their assigned gender and stopped in order to transition, with many not coming back, especially not at an elite level. That is probably impossible in many sports. So I’d probably

“Liam, 17, has refrained from competing”

rather prolong my career for as long as possible and for as long as I am comfortable with my gender expression, and then I'll let go of it.”

Non-binary people run the further risk of never fitting into the sex-segregated sport and must therefore very often choose sports according to what is possible, rather than what seems fun. Eight of those who said they participate in sports said that they have not participated at some point because of how they were received or the risk of being perceived according to gender identity/ gender expression in terms of segregation. Liam, 17, has refrained from competing on several occasions because of his gender identity.

“In the last competition I took part in, they registered athletes as usual, and the referee laughed at my name. I felt very belittled, which is why I often refrain from competitive situations.”

11% of those who participate in sport say that changes to the system could make sport more accessible for them. Chris, 31, says: “Open up to non-binary people. Get rid of

the two-gender division if it doesn't have a purpose that is scientifically supported.”

12% of those who do not participate have previously done so, but stopped because of sex segregation. Sixten, 51, has wanted to train throughout his life, but gave up when he reached puberty because he didn't fit in.

33% percent of those who do not participate in sport also name sex segregation as a reason for them not taking part and 25% say that a more flexible division, mixed groups or gender-neutral categories might help them start to join in. Vide, 22, would like to see opportunities for “training in a situation where I don't need to categorise myself as a man or a woman.”

Sixten wants an inclusive club where they are “accepted and either can hang out with the blokes, or where men and women mix.”

It's clear that routine segregation by sex, based on sex assigned at birth and without alternatives, excludes trans athletes. That's why producing guidelines for tackling trans and nonbinary inclusion must be one of our top priorities. Complementing existing divisions with gender-neutral categories or allowing people to compete according to their own definition does not need to rule out efforts to provide safe spaces for girls and women, for example.

TIPS

Read more in the chapter on guidance recommendations about how clubs and federations can work on issues surrounding sex segregation.

Working for inclusive sport doesn't mean that segregation is never a good thing, just that you need to think about trans people's opportunities to take part and that sex segregation shouldn't just be routine.

FACTS

You can read more about sex segregation in *Genus och heteronormativitet inom barn och ungdomsidrott, Könsmönster i idrottsdeltagande och regelverk inom idrott*. (In Swedish)

TIPS

INTEGRITY: Under no circumstances should a participant's trans experience be revealed without their consent. All medical information must be treated in strict confidence.

MEDIA: Representatives for sports who communicate with the media ought to receive information about appropriate terminology, correct use of names and pronouns, and about current policy.

GENDER NEUTRAL CATEGORIES WOULD MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR EIGHT-YEAR-OLD ELI

Eli, 8 years old, does gymnastics, swimming and horse riding in his free time. He is often asked the question, “are you a boy or a girl?” by others at training. The situation is tough on Eli, but adults within the clubs are afraid of addressing the problem.

“The sporting world keeps a lid on issues about trans people,” says Eli’s mum, Felicia.

Despite Eli being only eight years

old, sex-segregated sport has already started to take its toll on him.

“I could see people’s pupils widening before my very eyes, but they didn’t say much.”

For several years, Eli existed between ‘boy’ and ‘girl’, and for a while wanted to be addressed as ‘they’. Six months ago, he started to identify as a boy. Eli’s mum then made sure to inform the three clubs where Eli goes, which she said was met with silence.

“I could see people’s pupils widening before my very eyes, but they didn’t say much. These reactions are hard to decipher. They call Eli ‘him’, change the roster and use the new name during training sessions. I would have liked some kind of reaction though, to make it easier to talk about, for both kids and adults.”

Felicia recalls how Eli had a period when he evaluated each day

“I could see people’s
pupils widening
before my very eyes,
but they didn’t
say much.”



“My feeling is that the coaches are uncomfortable and they don’t know what to do.”

according to whether he’d been asked if he was a boy or a girl.

Sometimes, no one asked, and that was a good day. Other days, like when he’d been on a horse-riding summer camp and his mum picked him up every day, he could be angry and upset.

“Everyone just goes on about whether I’m a boy or a girl,” Felicia recalls Eli saying. He has never passed as a girl, and people wondered – simple as that. I think that the question of gender non-conformity or expression is delicate for the clubs, which is why they put a lid on it and rush past. People do have questions though, and that must be given some focus.

Felicia compares the silence from the sports clubs to the positive

coming-out process that Eli has experienced in his school. His class teacher went around all the other classes with him and explained the situation, making sure that everyone knows the difference between being a trans person and a cis person. She has also underlined how brave it is to be for who you are, something the other pupils agreed with and told Eli as much.

One explanation for why it’s different in the sports clubs, Felicia believes, could be that coaches are often very young volunteers who might not be particularly established within the club in question, but just turn up to their session.

“They do their job, in administrative terms, but they don’t take any responsibility for difficult situations. Coming out has been a relief for Eli, but he struggles to stand up for himself if people ask questions or don’t understand. My feeling is that the coaches are uncomfortable and they don’t know what to do. They ought to be given more knowledge about trans people so that they can support Eli.”

When asked if Eli feels excluded because of his trans identity, Felicia says:

“I think so. When it’s time for



gymnastics or swimming, getting changed is starting to be a problem. At the swimming pool, Eli has to get changed in the women's changing rooms, which Felicia has noticed is tough for him. However, their local council is in the process of building a new swimming facility, and have promised that there will be separate rooms for people 'with a particular need for enhanced privacy'."

People also expect girls to wear swim suits in the pool, and Eli did until he was seven. Now he wears a gender-neutral wetsuit instead.

"It's almost laughable, they're only eight years old, why can't kids with girl bodies also wear trunks? We've tried to find ones that fit, but it's impossible to find ones that don't have extra room for the penis. So we went with a wetsuit and he's happy with that for now."

Before gymnastics, Eli gets changed at home and he puts his shoes on in the women's changing room, even if he'd probably be happier doing that in the men's.

When it comes to horse riding, everyone gets changed at home and they train in mixed groups, which means that the getting changed problem doesn't arise in the same way.

"In children's sports, pretty much all sex segregation should be removed," says Felicia.

"There shouldn't be such weight given to dividing children into 'girls' and 'boys' at the mass-participation level. Gender-neutral categories would make training easier for Eli and he would also be able to participate in team sports. Now we've chosen non-team sports instead. It would at least be something if the clubs could provide gender-neutral changing rooms, so that Eli can shower after training."

"Gender-neutral categories would make training easier for Eli and he would also be able to participate in team sports."

VERONICA ERICSSON

FORMER SWEDISH
POLE VAULT
RECORD-HOLDER





VERONICA HID BEHIND A MUSCULAR FACADE

Veronica Eriksson, 48, former Swedish record-holder in the pole vault, has wanted to live her life as a woman for as long as she can remember. But it was only in 2016 that she dared to come out. Today, she hopes that younger trans people won't have to agonise for so long.

In the early 2000s, Veronica Ericsson competed in the men's pole vault, and was Sweden's best, with a European Championship medal and a Swedish record on her CV.

Despite knowing that she is a woman since childhood, putting the experience into words is something

“Her time as an elite athlete was a success story – at least on the surface.”

relatively new. During her years as an active athlete, she tried to work out how she was feeling inside.

“I thought to myself, ‘it would have been more fun to be a woman, but since I am a man, then I’ll have to be a whole lot of man!’” Veronica explains. “It never occurred to me to come out as a woman, it even felt unlikely that I was trans.”

Veronica describes how her time in the closet was accompanied with a constant hum in the background. She has never had suicidal thoughts or serious mental illness, her gender dysphoria was more like a stone in her shoe, she says.

Her time as an elite athlete was a success story -- at least on the surface. Veronica set the Swedish pole vault record, at 5.80 metres, and won six Swedish Championship golds as well as a European Championship silver. In 2003, Veronica called time on her professional career. The training continued, but the pole was replaced by gym equipment. In her struggle with dysphoria, she hid behind a

muscular façade.

“I gained an awful lot of muscle and the mass is still there, but the strength is gone. It wasn’t good, almost like anorexia in reverse. It was so important to prove oneself as a ‘real man’.”

Yet at the same time, it was at the gym that Veronica dared to push gender boundaries for the first time. After a while, she started putting on make-up both before and after training, and later she felt able to wear a skirt in public.

“The gym was a good place to experiment, no one ever said anything. People stared a bit, but I would just do my makeup in the mirror and then go, so it felt pretty easy, in spite of everything.”

It’s easy to imagine that Veronica would’ve dared to come out earlier, if sport had been a bit more open towards trans people. Yet she herself isn’t sure that the answer is that simple.

“I don’t know if it was just that sport was narrow-minded, those attitudes were present throughout society. I was barely aware of the concept of trans, it was pretty unknown territory. But sure, it would’ve been easier if I’d been able to begin the process as a younger person.”

Asked how people have reacted to her living as a woman today, she responds that most people around her have been positive.

“Everyone thinks I’m so strong, but I think I was stronger before, because that was when everything felt tough. Coming out has been a

relief, a weight off my shoulders.”

What do you think about the way sports are divided into men’s and women’s competitions?

“Obviously it’s a division that has always been there, but perhaps it doesn’t work anymore. It would be great if the issue was lifted onto the agenda now that the problem is actually known about. There’s nothing to stop sport being the vanguard for this, on the contrary, it would be pretty neat!”

So what can the sports movement do?

“It’s important to inform people about the existence of trans people. If you’re coaching ice hockey for twelve year olds, for example, then the chances are that one of them is dealing with this. I think we need to get that understanding into coaching courses and so on. There ought to be a sort of ‘driving licence’ for aspiring coaches. The higher the level you reach, the more you’d have to raise the bar of course, so that it becomes a more inclusive environment for all.”



ISAC

16 year-old cross-country skier Isac started skiing at ten, and now attends a skiing high school. Isac comes from a small town and competes for a skiing club. He's gone from the women's to the men's category.

"It's more fun, now that I can compete with the guys."

Switching category was no problem. However, problems may arise if Isac decides to seek gender-affirming care.

"Dad emailed the Ski Federation and I don't really know what was said, but there were no problems

"Sport means a lot to Isac, and it's crucial to his wellbeing."

then. There'll be more problems later, if hormones are involved, because that can be considered doping. Then you have to apply for an exemption."

Sport means a lot to Isac, and it's crucial to his wellbeing. His plan is to pursue skiing at the highest level. Isac believes that the feeling of not fitting in and worries about what others might think are the main reasons as to why many trans athletes drop out of sport.

To make things easier for trans people who want to participate in sport, Isac has lots of suggestions:

"Firstly the clubs need knowledge. Then you need to work on making sport more open. With young kids, above all, it doesn't have to matter whether you're playing on a boys' or a girls' team, or skiing in the girls' category or the boys'. When you're young, you should be participating in sports because it's fun – there's no need for it to be as segregated as it is today."

“Isac believes that the feeling of not fitting in – and anxieties about what others might think – are the main reason as to why many trans athletes drop out of sport.”



AXEL'S TIPS FOR DEALING WITH CHANGING ROOMS

“Most places do have separate changing rooms, but a lot of the time there’s no information about it on their websites.”

Not many of his training buddies in the climbing club know that Axel, 28, is a trans guy. He chooses not to say, because he passes well and he doesn’t want to be defined by his experiences of being trans. Addressing questions concerning

trans people, and finding solutions, makes demands on sport. When Axel moved to a large town in Sweden, of around 80,000 people, training became his gateway to meeting new friends. Of course the friends he knew from before knew he was trans, but he has chosen not to tell the new ones.

“I would never lie, if someone asked me, but I don’t take the initiative. My gender identity is important to me personally, but being publicly trans, that’s not really me. There’s so much else that defines me better.”

These days it’s climbing that accounts for most of his training time, but Axel is also a coach in an activities club, and he practises yoga a couple of times a month.

Until just over a year ago, he avoided training in groups, because he was scared of getting changed with others, but he has gradually found strategies to avoid having to expose his whole body.



“It can be as simple as just covering certain parts with your towel until you get to the showers, and then choosing the one that’s got a curtain.”

His experiences as a trans man who doesn’t wish to reveal his background have led him to regard the sporting movement as a bit backwards when it comes

to inclusion. People with trans experience shouldn’t be the main people to have to push inclusion forward themselves.

“The clubs need to take more active responsibility for making sure that people feel welcome at various levels. If we take changing rooms as an example, it would be a help to me

PRONOUN ROUNDS

One way of creating a sense of security is to use pronoun rounds. That means all participants get to introduce themselves with their name and pronoun (e.g. he, she, they, ze). This is to ensure that everyone is referred to by the correct pronoun. A pronoun round isn’t always appropriate, however. It’s also important that they are conducted correctly to avoid becoming counterproductive and ending up causing insecurity for trans people instead. So remember to:

- Clearly explain why you’re having a pronoun round. Explain what pronouns are, and the purpose of doing the round - because you never know what pronouns someone else has, and it’s important to be referred to with the right pronoun.
- Remind the group that it’s always okay to say ‘pass’. No one should have to say their pronoun if they don’t want to.
- If participants start joking around during the pronoun round – be quick to shut that down.

Remember that there may be participants who are not open with their pronouns and that one’s pronoun may change over time.

if the towel hooks were as close as possible to the showers, because I want to cover up.”

One thing that Axel says would be easy for lots of clubs to fix would be to publish information about changing rooms and separate showers on their websites.

“Most places do have separate changing rooms, but a lot of the time there’s no info about it on their websites. When I’m going to visit a club or a facility, I want to be able to find out about the possibility of getting changed in private, and if it’s there on the page then I know whether I can go there or not. It would also be good if it was possible to give suggestions for improvements anonymously. I think that’s so simple, but it must just be ignorance when they don’t do it.”

Axel wishes that leaders in various clubs could serve as a support system when trans people come out.

“You need to realise that not everyone at training is cis, and that trans people aren’t necessarily binary. If someone’s new to the club, an official could, for example, take the initiative and suggest that the group all state their pronouns.

“That’s what I try and do, as a leader in the activities club. Being aware that there might be trans people among the participants is really important, even if I don’t know of anyone. When I think back to my own process, I think I could’ve done with a leader who could do something about the practical stuff on my behalf, once I’d told them. So that I wouldn’t have had to explain to first the coach, then my training buddies and finally

“If we take changing rooms as an example, it would be a help to me if the towel hooks were as close as possible to the showers, because I want to cover up.”

the management – that there was someone to help me out with that instead. That would’ve been a dream come true.”

Generally speaking, Axel has had mostly positive experiences of sport, and he feels that the lack of inclusion when it comes to trans people is primarily about ignorance, which can be addressed through education and by the sport movement taking a more active responsibility for trans issues.

“Nowadays it feels pretty alright to be trans or LGBTQ, it’s like sport has become more accepting of diversity. That’s my take anyway. Then of course it depends where you are, what sport you’re playing and stuff like that,” Axel says, and despite wishing sport was more inclusive, he’s optimistic about the future.

LAYOUT MATTERS

Sports facilities are often constructed in such a way that you have to pass through the changing rooms in order to get to the actual training area.

The segregation in changing rooms is usually based on binary gender identities. It is also related to the mistaken idea that sexual attraction only occurs between people of opposite genders, or that sexual assault can only be carried out by cis men, against cis women.

Albin, who's 35 and lives in a large town, states that he has sometimes decided against training because of anxiety about the changing rooms. Not exercising has impacted his mental and physical wellbeing. He describes his fear around locker rooms:

“I used to get changed in the women's changing room – I wasn't comfortable with that, but it seemed the least threatening.”

“When I started taking testosterone and before my mastectomy, the changing room thing was really difficult. I used to get changed in the women's changing room – I wasn't comfortable with that, but it seemed the least threatening. Then it got to the stage where I felt like ‘this isn't going to work’. People stared quite a lot. Then I'd get changed beforehand or in an accessible toilet. I'm not comfortable in the men's changing rooms either, at least not having a shower. It doesn't feel like a safe situation.”

Lots of people develop strategies to get through the uncomfortable situations that arise in changing rooms. It might be getting changed in the toilet, at home, or coming up with special solutions.

23% of those who participate in sport say that they've refrained from taking part at some point because of how they've been received or how they felt that they might meet a negative response to do with changing rooms. Alice, 31, says: “I did used to have problems with sport, amongst other things because of changing rooms and bullying.”

Some people want to use the ‘right’ changing room, according to their gender identity, but are not welcome there or are worried that they won't be welcome there. Others are waiting for gender-affirming health care and for the time being they do not comfortably “pass” for their gender identity. Non-binary



“I often get stared at by new members and I don’t always have the energy to train after that, because of the mental strain.”

people often don’t fit in anywhere. For Vilde, 27, social anxiety also plays a role:

“It feels as though my gender identity is brushed aside when I go into a segregated changing room, and my social anxiety makes it difficult for me to ask for the key to a separate room.”

5% of those who do not participate in sport have previously done so, but stopped because of problems with changing rooms, and 33% of those who don’t participate also mention changing rooms as a reason for not taking part. Leo, 29, doesn’t dare to use changing rooms or try new sessions and activities because of the fear of unsympathetic staff or visitors: “I often get stared at by new members and I don’t always have the energy to train after that, because of the mental strain. I want to try new

sports, but I don’t dare.”

The fact that sex segregated changing rooms present an obstacle to participation is clear. Fortunately, there are lots of solutions that can be implemented to remove this obstacle and create the conditions for participation on equal terms. It might be a question of cubicles where you can both get changed and shower, a third, gender neutral changing room or flexible solutions where the same changing room has several sections. There are lots of ways of working on changing rooms so that lots of different needs are met.

45% of those who participate in sport say that changing rooms are one of the things where sport has room for improvement. Andrea, 38, has a suggestion: “Introducing gender-flexible changing rooms or at least private showers – not just a soggy half-transparent shower curtain – inside the sex-specific changing rooms.

19% of those who do not participate in sport have stated that they might start taking part if there was another kind of changing room.

Practically all of those who completed the survey have a problematic relationship with changing rooms. Even if the clubs don’t own the facilities or design the premises, this problem has to be acknowledged through dialogue and cooperation with the owners.

TIPS:

- Everyone should be able to use the changing rooms, showers and toilets that correspond to their gender identity. All changing rooms should offer private and separate changing cubicles, showers and toilets.
- State on your website what your changing rooms look like and what alternatives are available.
- When new buildings are being built, or existing ones renovated, your club can influence, alongside schools, councils and other stakeholders, so that premises are reviewed and made accessible.

ANDERS: UNSURE WHO TO TURN TO AFTER INCIDENTS

23 year-old Anders, from Malmö, describes how he is yet to come across any transphobia within sport. On the contrary, he was both supported and encouraged by his teammates and coaches when, as a young adult, he came out about his desire to seek gender-affirming care. Soon afterwards, however, he hung up his boots, so that he could start his assessment and testosterone therapy.

“I’ve been able to experience so much as a participant in sport, but in the last two years of training and competition, I wasn’t in a good way. It was really bad. I’d never liked being seen as a girl and not being allowed to train with the guys, I just wanted to be allowed to join them. So I chose to come out and once that was said I had to start sorting my life out.”

Anders recalls how his mental health suffered as a result of his gender dysphoria, and that suicidal

thoughts appeared at the darkest moments.

Despite Anders not feeling that he’s been exposed to any attacks because he’s trans, he does have experience of harassment because of the colour of his skin.

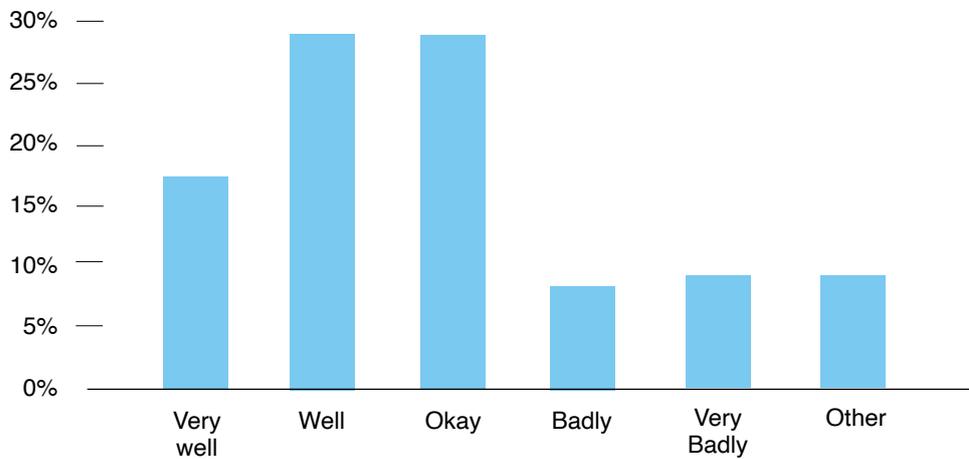
“When Anders was subjected to racism during a competition, he didn’t know how to get support from the sporting establishment. The incident was deeply offensive and training buddies and coaches thought that Anders should turn the other cheek.

Anders started playing sports at the age of eight, and for the most part he felt protected from the outside world whilst doing so. But it’s not unusual for the sporting movement to try and shut things down when difficult situations arise, Anders feels. He doesn’t know where you’re supposed to turn to get support and help.

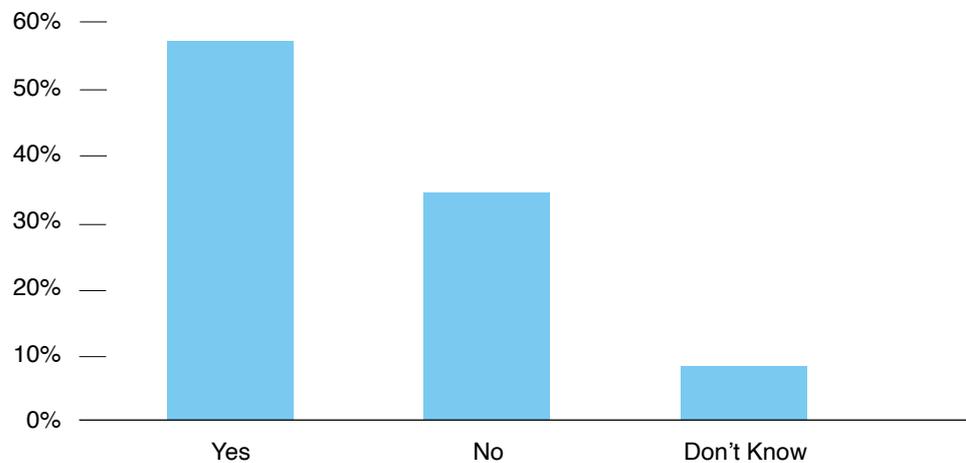


BULLYING AND MINORITY STRESS

How those who participate in sport feel they have been received in terms of their gender identity/expression.



Have those active in sport ever refrained from taking part because of how they were received or risked being received in terms of gender identity/ expression



Some have been subjected to bullying, others experience the feeling of being an outsider, or feel afraid and insecure. Others are so anxious about how they'll be received that they never even dare to give sports a try.

Being part of a minority group, or having to be alert and prepared to be exposed or questioned, causes psychosocial stress for many. Wilma, 28, describes it like this:

“Hyper-vigilance, all the time. When I look out at a crowd, I always see the expressions, the body-language, I identify danger zones.

The stress Wilma describes is referred to as minority stress. In society at large, there are strong norms around gender that make trans people invisible, exclude them and subject them to prejudice, ignorance, hate, harassment and violence.

Even everyday, more or less subtle events can contribute to minority stress. It might be stares, questions or comments that reflect a lack of understanding or prejudice. Those responsible are often unaware of this and for the one on the receiving end it can be difficult to put their finger on what is wrong. It could be events that are repeated often and form a negative pattern. Well-meaning but unfortunate comments can also reinforce the norm, such as, for example: “Are you trans? How exciting!” Even private and intimate questions can cement the norm of whose private life and body deserves respect.

“Others are so anxious about how

“Others are so anxious about how they'll be received that they never even dare to give sports a try.”

they'll be received that they never even dare to try sports.”

19% of respondents who participate in sport say that they have on occasion refrained from taking part because of bullying or insecurity. For a long time Mika, 22, didn't participate in sport at all: “Because I didn't know where I'd fit in, or how I'd be received. The compromise ended up being that I started but I've only come out to one of my teammates.”

53% of those who do participate also say that issues of bullying and insecurity are areas which sport can make things better for them. Mika continues: “Many clubs have a statement of principles about respecting one another, but I think it would be helpful to say, in a more concrete way, that, ‘trans people are welcome and WILL be respected.’”

Leo, 29, underlines the importance of simple gestures, like having a pride flag in the lobby:

“A place where you can be who you are, you know? A place that doesn’t focus on gender. Even before and after training.”

“Welcoming words and expressions. Focusing on performance, not gender.

Neutral changing rooms. A clear plan of action to tackle offensive behaviour. The opportunity to play and compete outside of gender categories.”

9% of those who do not participate in sport name bullying and insecurity as a reason why they don’t take part. They summarise with words like ‘transphobia’, ‘frozen out’ and ‘insecurity’.

30% of the non-sporting group say that being welcomed, inclusivity, changed attitudes and an improved sense of security might get them involved. Edwin, 13, describes it like this: “A place where you can be who you are, you know? A place that doesn’t focus on gender. Even

before and after training.”

And Belle, 22, says: “If I was allowed to play as a woman, and find a good place where I don’t need to be scared. The first one, I’m not allowed, and the second, I can’t bring myself to look for.” Many don’t know where to turn if they are subjected to harassment. Such as Jamie, 30, interviewed here:

Jamie “I think I’d try to contact the board of the club first. But beyond that, if they didn’t react, then I don’t know where I would turn.”

Interviewer “How do you think that the sporting world as a whole is dealing with questions of trans people’s conditions, transphobia and discrimination?”

Jamie “It doesn’t really exist?”

Interviewer “There is no such action?”

Jamie “Not that I’ve seen, or heard about. I believe that’s probably why a lot of trans people are reluctant to play sport.”

Several use the word ‘bullying’ to describe their experiences, but the vast majority are worried about what could happen. It can be summarised by saying that the collective recounted experiences scare people off. Roller derby is described as a safe sport, but the general mood can still be described as being one of not feeling secure in sporting contexts.

FACTS

It's important to be aware that a comment or question you ask with the best intentions can be something that the person has had to listen to countless times before. It can feel both tedious and like having your existence queried.

TIPS

Make it clear on your website and other channels where people can turn if subjected to discrimination.

BIANCA WORRIES ABOUT WHAT THE CLUB IS GOING TO THINK

Bianca, 32, loved swimming as a kid, but she hated the boys' changing room and the swimming trunks she was forced to wear. Her love for sport trumped the discomfort, but since coming out as a trans woman, it hasn't felt safe to keep taking part.

"There are two parts to it, the first has to do with me and my perception of my body, and the second is about other people's reaction to that fact that I'm trans," Bianca explains.

She says that the coming out process has involved sick leave after nervous exhaustion and depression. That's why she has been forced to move from her friends and a good

"It feels like it's a bit of a social minefield, being trans."

job, back to the town where she was born.

Bianca would actually like to find a way to get more active and meet people, but other people's reactions and her low mood are a further obstacle.

"Which changing room should I use, which one am I allowed to use? Might it cause a problem that I still haven't legally changed sex? Can someone say I'm molesting women if I get changed in that changing room – I haven't been able to change my body either?" Bianca asks.

When it comes to organised sport, thoughts of what the leaders in her local club might think if she tried to join pop into her head. "It feels like it's a bit of a social minefield, being trans. You have no idea about what someone thinks or how they're going to react, until you're actually subjected to it." At all levels of society, she says, there are those who really do not like trans people.

What would it take for her to feel secure enough to start taking part



“They need to explicitly state that trans people are welcome and it is, of course, extra important that the coaches are overtly inclusive.”

via a club?

“They need to explicitly state that trans people are welcome and it is, of course, extra important that the coaches are overtly inclusive. Not just, ‘yeah, yeah, that’s fine I suppose,’ but rather, ‘you are very welcome’. One thing clubs can do

is state on their websites that they have zero tolerance of racism and LGBTQ phobia, for example.”

Just a stone’s throw from her apartment, there’s a swimming pool, which should be perfect, because Bianca still loves to swim. But, after a phone call to enquire about the provision of separate changing rooms, she doesn’t feel comfortable training there. “They didn’t really understand what I was talking about, and I need that support and to feel encouragement, that they want you there, swimming, regardless of who you are. Since I’m not in a great state at the moment, I feel deflated, I can’t face taking on that struggle. Research shows of course that it’s good to work out when you’re depressed or burned out, but I’m not strong enough to put up with questions from staff, or people’s judgemental looks.”

In a nearby town, about twenty-five minutes from where Bianca lives, a new swimming pool with access to gender-neutral

changing rooms has opened, with consideration to trans people among others. So far, she's been swimming there once. "It worked really well – they had lockers in the common area and the showers in smaller, separate rooms. I think this is good for parents with children or people with enhanced care needs. Then of course I didn't think it was much fun having people staring at me once I had got changed. But that's a different problem."

Even if society and the sporting world have some way to go in terms of inclusion of trans people, Bianca sees it as a step forward that clubs and facilities are taking the issue seriously, and delivering solutions to the problems.

"It means that I can go to those places, get changed and get into the pool. It's a big difference compared to other places where I don't even go," Bianca explains.

"Since I'm not in a great place at the moment, I feel deflated, I can't face taking on that struggle."



WILMA: SHOUTED AT BY A COACH

When Wilma, 28, came out to her aikido club as a trans woman, she felt a reluctance there towards inclusivity. After being repeatedly misgendered by her coach, the situation became untenable. Today, she's moved clubs, but isn't training until she can see that the sport as a whole is distancing itself from outdated structures.

"Aikido markets itself as though everyone's welcome, but I don't think that's the case. When I ask about concrete ways of improving things, I don't get any answers," Wilma says.

Wilma came out five years ago, telling her coach and her friends at the club about her transition. Then she was told that anyone who couldn't accept her was 'bad at aikido', since the sport itself welcomes all. It turned out, however, that people struggled

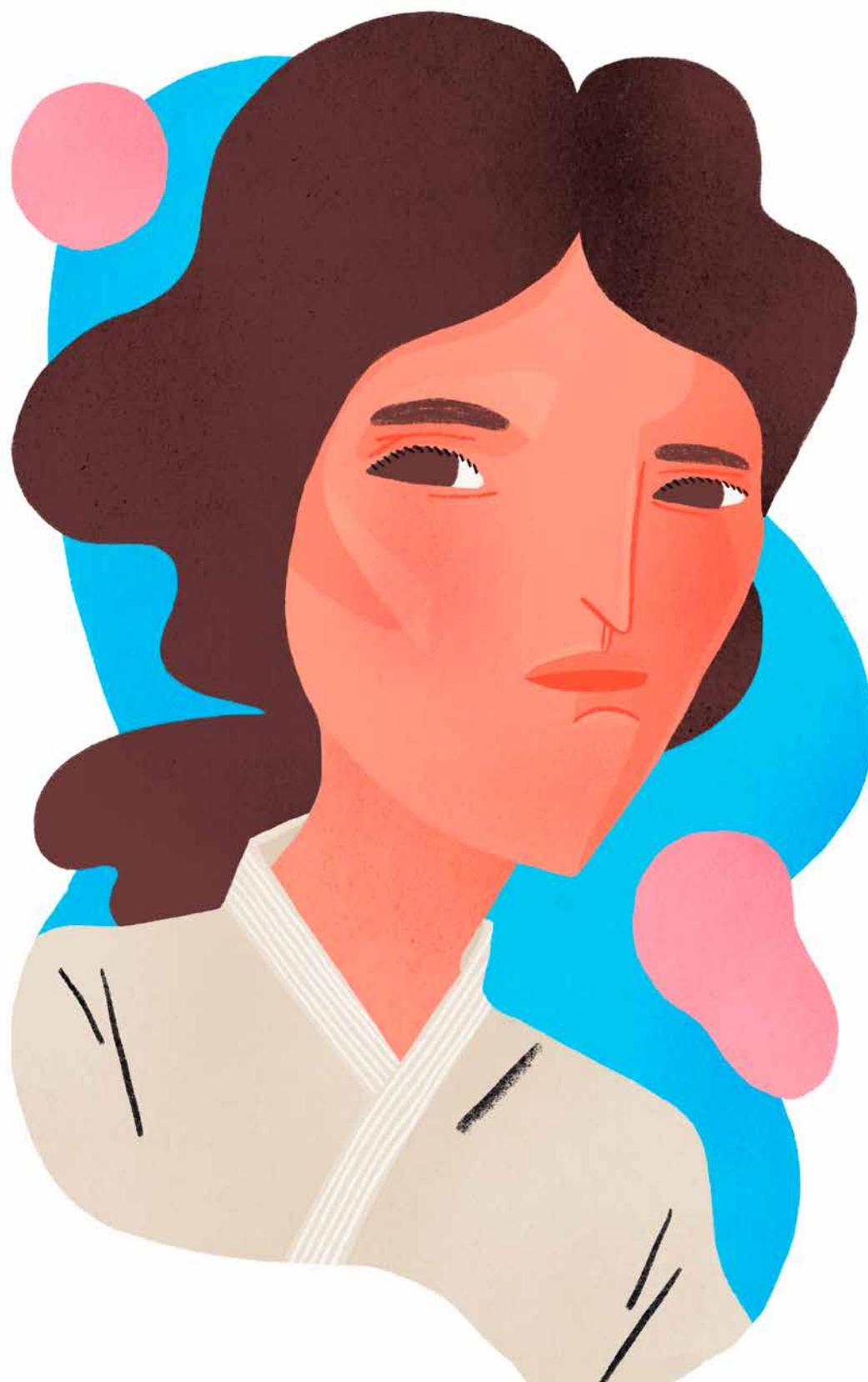
to say the right name and pronoun, something that was shrugged off with laughter and apologies.

When a well-renowned guest coach came to lead a session, she was constantly misgendered. "I kept correcting him but he just replied, 'I don't understand,' and, 'focus more on your training'. After I'd been misgendered again, and I'd pulled him up, he said harshly, 'is this Swedish identity politics?' I didn't stand for it and I left the mat."

One of the club's permanent coaches ran after Wilma and asked what had happened. That's when it got too much for Wilma and she burst into tears in the corridor outside the training hall, known in aikido as the dojo. "The coach said: 'I'm not making any excuses for him, but you can try and look at it like he comes from another time.' After that the guest coach came and gave me a rollicking, he said: 'There's no bad intent here, but you cannot take your identity into the dojo. It's the same for everyone. I don't bring up the fact that I'm a world famous professor, but I am.'"

Despite the group that Wilma was training with having felt like a second family, no one stood up for her.

"I kept correcting him but he just replied, 'I don't understand.'"



“That was bloody tough. The guest coach thought I was narrow-minded for even bringing up the fact that he’d misgendered me. I was in the middle of transitioning and wasn’t in a good way. It was so difficult going through the assessment, I felt alone and I was then shouted at without getting any support from friends or coaches.”

The situation was never cleared up, instead ending when the permanent coach seem to grow tired of Wilma, after comforting her for a while, and he then tried to explain to the guest coach that Wilma was going through a transition, which he didn’t seem to take in.

“I later asked for feedback from the club, because obviously I didn’t feel secure after he was allowed to do that. Six months passed, and nothing happened. I carried on chasing it up with emails, and I wrote and told them I felt I’d been discriminated against, but no reply. I heard, in a roundabout way, that the club didn’t think I’d been open with the whole truth, and that they didn’t like what I’d written. Eventually I received the response that they, ‘respected my right to be who I am,’ but that they also, ‘respected the guest coach’s right not to let values affect his session.’”

Wilma points out that she thinks there was a hierarchical element to what happened. The club had previously acted in accordance with the principle of everyone’s equal value when a younger person was teased for having painted nails – a

question that at the time concerned the youth section, their parents and coaches. The person who shouted at Wilma had a more senior position and “that’s when it all went quiet,” she says. Wilma escalated the case to the top of the national association, and at first she was reassured that it was an important question, but as time went on it emerged that there was no support for working actively on the issue. She tried changing clubs, but has so far only attended training once.

“I haven’t told them I’m trans, but I’m sure they’ve guessed, because there was one person there who was on the board that I’d turned to. They were keen to see me on the mat, but I don’t know whether I want to invest time and energy into a sport with heavy demands if no one shows an interest in inclusivity. I can put my time into roller derby instead, or find somewhere where people do what they’re supposed to.”

While Wilma is working out where to go from here, she makes sure to work out at Friskis & Svettis gym. Sometimes she goes jogging too, or else she works out in front of the telly, so-called lone training.

“There needs to be an openness if I’m going to train with others, otherwise I have to hide myself,” Wilma explains.



PRONOUNS

Pronouns are words that others use about a person instead of their name. They, she, and him belong to the word class, ‘personal third-person pronouns’.

For most people, it’s important that others use the correct pronoun. Being referred to with the wrong pronoun, or other gendered words (like sister, boyfriend or phrases like ‘hi girls’) can cause discomfort. Being referred to by the correct pronoun instead can improve mental wellbeing. Cim, 32, says that her coaches and training buddies use the right pronoun, for the most part: “You notice who isn’t used to it, it takes them a while. But people are usually really good at correcting each other in roller derby. At least where I’ve been. It’s been really nice not to have to deal with it myself.” Ideally,

using gender-neutral language to refer to groups of people in an athletic environment or training space is also a goal. Cim explains, “At my last club, we were really good – when doing examples or drills or whatever – at using non-gendered language when talking about what to do or what not to do.”

When you think about your gender identity or you’re about to start living in accordance with your gender identity, a new pronoun is often an important step. Sometimes pronouns change at the same time as names, sometimes they don’t.

People have different ways of letting others know that a new pronoun applies. Some write a status update on Facebook, others tell a few people close to them and ask them to spread the word.

TIPS

Using the right pronoun is showing respect. Of course, everyone can get it wrong sometimes. All you need to do is apologise and correct yourself.

CLOTHING

In some sports, men and women wear different clothes. Even if dress codes are not always written into the rules, there are strong norms around clothing that can make taking part difficult for those with trans experience. It might be a matter of what the clothes look like, and what function they have or lack, but also what sizes are available.

4% of those who take part in

“Everything is too long, or too tight-fitting.”

sport say that other clothes would make things easier. Elias, 19, struggles with the sizes available: “Everything is too long, or too tight-fitting.”

7% of non-participants mention clothing as a reason for not playing sport. Claude, 26, says: “The clothes are expensive and I’m already a freak without having to go into a hall in skin-tight clothes.”

4% of those who don’t take part in sport say that they would consider participating in different clothes. Toni, 21, describes what would help him in the swimming baths: “Access to reasonable swimming costumes, like a binder that works in water and that is approved by the pool.”



FACTS

Lots of men and some non-binary people who have not undergone mastectomy use a binder. It is a garment that flattens and smoothes down the bust, so it is less visible. Some say that one problem with a binder is that it can make breathing difficult, especially during exertion.

TIPS

Participants should be allowed to dress as comfortably as others, in accordance with their gender identity or gender expression. The need for gendered dress codes should be examined.

Clothes should be designed to fit different body types and a large range of sizes should be available.

A LACK OF ROLE MODELS HELPED KEEP SIXTEN IN THE CLOSET

Sixten, 51, dreams of being able to play team sports, but the fear of being badly received means he has been to afraid to take the plunge and join a club. Instead, he works out on his own in his free time, and invests in a gym membership every year.

“Once the transition is finished, I hope I’ll feel more comfortable in my body. Today I’m worried that someone will react negatively if I

“Once the transition is finished, I hope I’ll feel more comfortable in my body.”

get changed in the men’s changing room,” he says. Sixten gets changed before he arrives at the gym, or else he gets changed in the toilets in the men’s. He’s not ashamed of being trans, but for the time being he’s not at ease with his body. It’s only been two years since he came out as a trans man to family and friends, and since then everything’s gone quickly. Since February, he’s been taking hormones and he hopes to legally transition early next year.

Having until now had to live in the closet both inwardly and outwardly has hampered Sixten’s sporting participation. The coming-out process helps him to dare more, but there’s still a way to go. “I would love to go to the swimming baths and jump into the pool. But I’ve had a mastectomy and it hasn’t completely healed yet.

If I stepped out into a brightly-lit pool, I wouldn’t feel comfortable with my torso.”

In his hometown, there’s a



“Even if I’m quite cocky on the outside, I do have a bit of anxiety, which I attribute to everything I’ve previously suppressed.”

floorball team with several LGBTQ players. Sixten has been invited to join in, but doesn’t feel quite ready to sign up just yet.

“Even if I’m quite cocky on the outside, I do have a bit of anxiety, which I attribute to everything I’ve previously suppressed. I think I’d have been better off if I’d had help with gender correction earlier in life, when I was young. Since I’ve spent so long living with the feeling that something’s wrong, it sticks around.”

As a young child, Sixten’s big dream was to play football, a sport he still loves. But he was hampered by his mother, who told him football wasn’t for girls.

“I thought I was a boy, but no one else did, so I just had to get on

with it.”

Sixten tells notes that another reason he didn’t want to join a club is the lack of visible trans representatives. He knows of a few younger trans guys who participate, but finding trans men his age can be difficult. That was why Sixten was so happy to stumble across TV footage of triathlete Lukas Svärd a few years ago.

“He’s a really great role model! When I was coming out he was on Malou von Sivers’ talk show. That’s really important, because one of the reasons I came out so late is that I didn’t have any role models whatsoever. The first ones to arrive were of course trans women, and I didn’t relate to that at all, because a trans woman is something I am not.”

Despite difficulties and internal resistance to group training, Sixten feels his general health is good. He’s an active politician and he conducts research into diversity issues at a university. In his free time, he like to hang out with friends old and new, the most recent of whom are also LGBTQ. Along with his daughter, he trains regularly at the local gym and gets a bit of exercise taking the dog out.

“If you count the gym and a bit of light jogging with the dog as sport, then yes, I take part in sport,” he says with a laugh. “But I would definitely like to be part of a team in future. Maybe floorball, but preferably football!”

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE MODELS

Role models are important, because they reveal possibilities. There are few openly trans people within sport, and some of the most written-about Swedish athletes have retired from elite sports at the same time as coming out. The fact that there is a lot of media attention around the few that do come out might also hinder people from publicly coming out.

72% of those who participate in sport stated that they did not have

role models with trans experience within sport; 28% said they did.

Some of the role models mentioned are: Aleksei Weaver, Andreas Krieger, Balian Buschbaum, Chloe Jönsson, Jaycee Cooper, Kian Sigge, Sam Swords, The Smacktivist, and Lukas Svärd, as well as friends active in sport at various levels. Chris Mosier is mentioned by many, as are Swedish athletes Leon Reuterström, Loui Sand and Noel Filén Hammarström.

TIPS

Think about representation on your website and in printed materials. A picture of an openly famous trans person in sport is an easy way to contribute to inclusion.



NOEL FILÉN HAMMARSTRÖM

BEING TRANS IN SPORT AT ELITE LEVEL



NOEL

On the 23rd of January 2020, Noel Filén Hammarström played his first match with men's team Södertälje Knights, and in so doing he made history. Noel started playing basketball in Södertälje at ten years old. He played 25 matches in a debut season with women's team Telge Basket, and also played 53 times for Sweden's youth teams. Noel has been crowned Best Nordic Player and has a European Championship bronze medal.

In spring 2018, Noel took a decision that would change his life. At the same time as he started his gender-affirming health care, he stopped playing basketball. Noel's

“Noel's journey towards being able to return to the court has been anything but plain sailing.”

journey towards being able to return to the court has been anything but plain sailing. Despite his coach supporting him carrying on:

“Jocke googled and checked what could be done. Was I going to play with girls or guys? We didn't find any info in Sweden and Jocke said it was probably going to be a process, but that if I was ready, he was ready. They started by contacting the Basketball Federation and the Swedish Sports Confederation. They'd never come across anything like it and they barely knew what a transperson was.” To Noel, it seemed to be a struggle for the associations.

“Where are we going to put Noel? Which team should he be in? Should he start a team of his own? It didn't feel welcoming or inclusive.”

Sex segregation and ignorance around trans people are factors that Noel feels make participation difficult for many today:

“It's divided into guys and girls, and there's no category in between. I can't walk into the girls' changing room, but I can't go into the guys' either, so it ends up being the wheelchair-accessible toilet. They say they welcome everyone, and basketball definitely is one of the sports that's most equal, but they

didn't know what a trans person was."

Noel describes how sport still isn't equal and how that makes things even harder for trans people. "It's like we don't exist. There's no programme to follow on what to do for trans people or how to respond as a coach. The associations don't have guidelines to follow when it comes to trans people, or knowledge of hormone treatments as medicine. My hormone treatment wasn't intended to be doping."

With a sense of never truly feeling

at home, Noel explains how much it means to be able to participate in sport. He always felt welcomed and secure in Tälje's home arena, and with the people there. In his teens, basketball became a way of fleeing reality and a means of focusing on something other than how he was really feeling. His mental health and self-harming behaviour were brushed aside and his basketball career went from strength to strength. Noel sought out a gender dysphoria assessment. In the winter of 2018 Noel's dysphoria was



“I don’t think I’ve ever been as nervous as I was when I was about to publish that status on social media.”

confirmed and he was then eligible to begin gender-affirming health care. At that point, he came to the conclusion that it would mean the end of his basketball career.

“I don’t think I’ve ever been as nervous as I was when I was about to publish that status on social media. I realised it was going to affect my sporting career, and in my head I thought, ‘okay, I’m going to put this up and then it’ll be my last ever basketball game.’ I have never heard of any trans person participating in sport. So it was a grieving process that I went through that season. Now I’m saying goodbye to my team, goodbye to my sport, even though I didn’t actually want to, and I turned down the European Championships.”

Noel describes a crossroads at the age of 17 when he felt that he really had to choose. It was tough for him, but Noel came to the conclusion that he had to love himself.

Noel says that in concrete terms, there needs to be rules and

guidelines: “Look at how people are received, educate coaches and clubs and different districts about what trans is. Then obviously the rules about what’s okay and what’s not okay when it comes to matches and so on, for example, making applying for an exemption easier. I had to sit and wait and write loads of complicated stuff just to apply. I think there should be an easier way.”

Noel says that the kind of exemption he’s talking about would’ve been good when he didn’t yet feel ready to join the men’s team to play with the guys. He wanted to carry on playing with the women but was prevented from doing so because his medication – testosterone – was classed as doping.

“If I could’ve played with the girls to begin with, when my body still wasn’t ready to play with guys. It’s bloody hard to go straight in and start playing with men, I tried to be as clear as possible with the association and the doping committee – that I wasn’t there to learn to dunk, not to win every match, aided by testosterone. I was there because it helped me with everyday life, sport helps me.”







FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUP

Some things suggest that trans people, and young trans people in particular, may form a financially disadvantaged group. The proportion of trans people who are unemployed is higher than for the population as a whole, and many live on low incomes. Some also feel that they lack the option of getting financial help from friends or family.

9% of those who do not participate in sport mention finances as a reason for not taking part. Jean, 31, struggles to get active because of nervous exhaustion and chronic pain:

“I would need help from a physiotherapist at the same time, but I’ve struggled to find one I get on with, and it’s tough having dealings with the healthcare system. I live on

benefits; I can’t afford it.”

11% of the non-sporting respondents said that better finances or cheaper training would get them involved. Dana, 44, says:

“A new binder, as soon as I can afford one I’m going to start training again.”

“Some also feel that they lack the option of getting financial help from friends or family.”

TIPS

When sports are working to reach people in financially disadvantaged groups, bear in mind that trans people might be part of that target group.

TRAINING BUDDIES: A SECOND FAMILY FOR JAMIE

Jamie, 30, is non-binary and fell in love with roller derby because they feel both included and respected. The recipe for creating a safe space for all includes openness, listening, and a will to change.

“Roller derby comes from the feminist movement so there’s that element of norm-breaking and that’s why a lot of queer people join up,” says Jamie.

No where else in sport has Jamie come across such camaraderie as in

“No where else in sport has Jamie come across such camaraderie as in the roller derby club.”

the roller derby club. What attracted them to the sport was that women and norm-breaking people were given space to be tough and tackle hard, but what keeps them there was that their training buddies have become like a second family. There are no taboos about taking time out because of mental health, instead the players encourage one another and care about how people are getting on.

“There are players who have panic attacks during games, and that’s okay. That should also be allowed. We’re not just athletes, we’re people too, and we play because it’s fun. But then we’re also a team that doesn’t tend to win a lot either,” Jamie says with a hearty chuckle.

Away from the rink, they hang out with training buddies and sometimes everyone will watch the world championships at someone’s home, or they might organise a yard sale to raise money for travel expenses.



“It’s a secure little community, no one thinks anything of it if you’re trans, lesbian or polyamorous, for example.”

“It’s a secure little community, no one thinks anything of it if you’re trans, lesbian or polyamorous, for example. We always do a ‘pronoun round’ when someone new starts and that helps create an open atmosphere.

It was in their early twenties that Jamie realised that they didn’t see themselves as a girl, but as non-

binary. That was when they started their gender assessment with a medical professional and started taking testosterone. A few years ago, they also underwent a mastectomy. Jamie doesn’t, however, plan any further treatment and they plan to end the testosterone therapy.

“My aim was to get a deeper voice, I wasn’t after facial hair, so now that my voice is lower I’m happy,” they explain.

The team Jamie plays in is called a women’s team, but in the world of roller derby it is widely known that people who identify in other ways will take part. Everyone except cis men (who are directed to the men’s team) are welcome, Jamie says. That leads to a relaxed attitude to the fact that there are different kinds of bodies in the team, which makes Jamie feel comfortable getting changed alongside their teammates. They also look up to some of their teammates, who have similar physical attributes to themselves.

Through them, Jamie is inspired to make progress: “I see what they can do and that spurs me on. I’m going to be that good too, you know?”

Roller derby policy is for players’ identities and pronouns to be respected as far as possible. When the higher divisions play a match and the players have different pronouns, the situation is dealt with by applying gender-neutral pronouns to all the players. When Jamie and their team play, a team sheet listing each one’s preferred pronoun is given to the commentators. There is no specific policy on discrimination in their local club, but that is down to a lack of incidents rather than a lack of engagement, Jamie points out.

“There’s only been one smaller incident. One player happened to use the wrong pronoun. We had a discussion about formulating a policy after that, to deal with harassment, but it tailed off a bit. It’s pretty obvious that we don’t have much of that in the team,” Jamie smiles.

What can the sporting movement as a whole learn from roller derby?

“That it’s quite easy to be inclusive. My impression is that lots of people think it’s a hassle. It’s enough to have ‘pronoun rounds’ and to show respect, let everyone join in, regardless of what sex it says in your passport. You don’t have to do any more than that.”

“Roller derby policy is for players’ identities and pronouns to be respected as far as possible.”

QUEER TRAINING AND INCLUSIVE SPACES



Sport doesn't have to be synonymous with insecurity and exclusion.

In certain sports, not only has a welcoming environment been created, but also an environment that is seen as a sort of sanctuary: a secure place where social bonds are made and opportunity develop and reinforce identity. Albin, 35, gives two examples:

“Feeling welcome is obviously a pre-condition for wanting to spend time and energy on your sport.”

“Certain federations are good at including trans people. I think roller derby is a really good example. An open sport. NFL seems to have done a lot of work with this too. Obviously it's easier not to be alone.”

Feeling welcome is obviously a pre-condition for wanting to spend time and energy on your sport. Wilma, 28, wants to get involved, but in a place where she's welcome: “I'm going to find something that actually includes me and gives me justice, that deserves my time and energy, because I have drive and time and energy and passion that I can do an awful lot with. Why would I choose an old man's game that doesn't want me?”

It's safe to assume that the need for safe spaces is generally substantial within the group. Bobbie, who's 29 and active in sport, says that special training sessions for

trans people or queers might make sport better: “Trans-specific training sessions/locations, preferably focusing on wellbeing.”

19% of those who don’t take part in sports say that a trans-specific environment might make them start. Emil, 25, agrees with Bobbie: “If there was a separate place, that would be a good foundation. Personally, I would probably feel more comfortable in all training environments if I could get going on a platform where I could focus on the training alone, less on everything else.”

Those who do participate possess

a knowledge that can be captured and channelled into encouraging more people to join in.

Interviewer – “Are you a member of any LGBTQ organisations?”

Wilma – “RFSL Youth and RFSL. Good stuff.”

Interviewer – “Why are you a member?”

Wilma – “They fight for good policies and laws, they do a good job.”

Interviewer – “And if RFSL organised sporting events, would you take part?”

Wilma – “Definitely, I can teach people a thing or two.”

TIPS

Is your club or sport seen as an inclusive environment by participants with trans experience? Make use of that, you could be an example to others.

Do you know whether your club is always seen to be inclusive and secure? It might be an idea to start creating special safe meeting spaces for participants with trans experience, led by others with similar experience.

ROLLER DERBY: A POSITIVE EXAMPLE

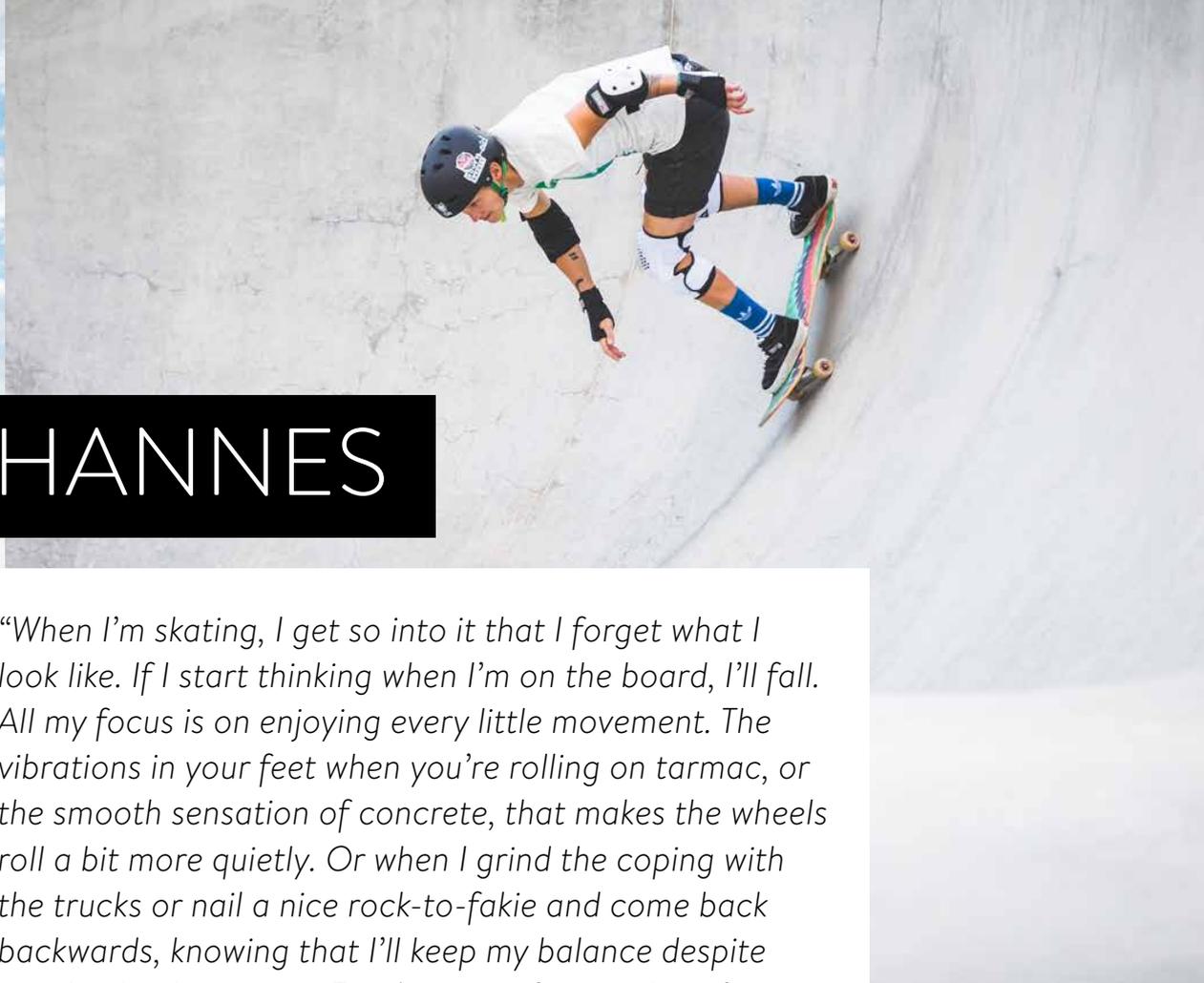
Roller derby's international federation The Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) has an inclusive and anti-discriminatory policy, and even works actively to create a welcoming, inclusive climate.

In Sweden, the Swedish Skating Federation has a gender policy that says that all divisions within roller derby are to actively strive to encourage a climate that is welcoming and inclusive. They want to use anti-discrimination when it comes to all trans women, trans men and non-binary participants, to ensure that all players, officials and members' rights are protected. All are welcome as members, officials, referees and staff, regardless of gender identity and gender expression. Hostile or discriminatory behaviour concerning gender identity and/or gender expression is not tolerated.

Roller derby welcomes all those who: 1. Identify as cis woman, trans woman, non-binary and trans man; and 2. Feel that a league belonging to the Women's Flat Track Derby Association is better for them than a league within the Men's Roller Derby Association.







HANNES

“When I’m skating, I get so into it that I forget what I look like. If I start thinking when I’m on the board, I’ll fall. All my focus is on enjoying every little movement. The vibrations in your feet when you’re rolling on tarmac, or the smooth sensation of concrete, that makes the wheels roll a bit more quietly. Or when I grind the coping with the trucks or nail a nice rock-to-fakie and come back backwards, knowing that I’ll keep my balance despite the tingling in my legs. That’s when I feel the joy of movement.

I tell myself that I, like everyone else, have been born with an inner drive to move my body, but that years of societal norms, body norms, schools or the sporting movement’s conservative framework has slowly worn down that simple pleasure.”

FACTS

Name: Hanne “Hannes” Liljeholm

Age: 33

Pronouns: They, she or he.

DOS AND DONT'S

- Don't divide kids into boys and girls out of habit.
- Don't assume that everyone is cis because no one says they're trans.
- Don't presume to know what pronoun someone uses.
- Don't just say, 'everyone's welcome' – be clear that trans people are just as welcome as others.
- Make sure everyone has a safe place to get changed and shower. Showers should be separate. No one should have to get changed in a room intended for people with another gender identity.
- Make sure no one feels scared or anxious about the changing rooms.
- Don't have things like team talks in changing rooms that aren't accessible to all participants.
- Ensure that there's information on your website about the ways in which your club is trans-inclusive.
- Support trans people, help them to navigate the rules of the club and federation and make sure that other participants, referees or coaches don't treat anyone badly.
- Read up on minority stress and what you can do to minimise it



at and around training sessions. Be aware that an environment can feel unsafe for someone even if no one says or does anything obviously offensive. Instead of combating insecurity, try to actively create security.

- Make sure that everyone knows where to turn if they are treated badly.
- Be aware that gender-affirming health care can cause physical difficulties in sport.
- Think about representation on the internet and in printed materials. A picture of an openly famous

trans person within sport is a simple way to contribute to inclusion.

- Associations should proactively seek education on LGBTQ inclusion in sport. Waiting until something happens isn't good enough.





TRANSACTIVE – A SUCCESS STORY FROM SOUTH AFRICA

TransActive is a project in South Africa that uses sport to strengthen and mobilise trans women. It's about improving health and wellbeing but above all it's about creating a secure psychosocial space. Through the RFSL and the Rainbow Fund, TransActive funds two netball teams started by local trans activists. The players don't just play netball though, they also automatically undergo training in how to organise themselves and are given practical experience of leadership, which is important for the trans community.

In South Africa, there is a strong connection between sport and the political sphere. Sport has been a place for those who have fought for social justice, most importantly for equality between Black and White communities. The project was started on the initiative of trans women and it is a powerful platform for organising. The teams which TransActive support are in East London, a part of South Africa

“Sport has been a place for those who have fought for social justice, most importantly for equality between Black and White communities.”

where the risk of being subjected to hate crime is three times higher than the rest of the country. The teams train every week and the team members have somewhere to meet and have fun together. TransActive also aims to play a positive,

“Now trans activists are using sport in the same way, according to South African tradition, to unite and push the fight for trans rights forward.”

educating role in society as a whole.

Many of those who would never take part in an educational programme will be more than happy to watch a good netball match.

Nelson Mandela was an amateur boxer himself and during his time in prison he saw how football helped his fellow prisoners to survive. Following his release, he used large sporting events to shape public opinion. After being elected president, he was looking for something that could unite the divided nation. According to many, sport was what brought people together.

Now trans activists are using sport in the same way, according to South African tradition, to unite and push the fight for trans rights forward.

FACTS

Netball is a sport with its roots in early basketball, and is a large spectator and participation sport in South Africa, Jamaica, Barbados, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain.



TESTOSTERONE

Many trans men and non-binary people who were assigned female at birth take testosterone to alter their bodies. This can cause problems within sport, since it's classed as a performance-enhancing substance. Testosterone is often called a

“Many trans men and non-binary people who were assigned female at birth take testosterone to alter their bodies.”

male hormone, but the majority of people, regardless of what kind of body they have, produce testosterone. The amount, however, does vary between different kinds of bodies. Most of those assigned male at birth produce a larger amount of testosterone and a lesser amount of oestrogen, and most of those assigned female at birth produce more oestrogen and less testosterone.

For some, the aim of taking testosterone is to make their body more typically masculine, through, for example: beard growth, redistribution of body fat and a lowering of the voice. For others, the goal may be to get their body feeling and being perceived as more gender neutral or androgynous. The hormone treatment is intended to reduce gender dysphoria.



TESTOSTERONE AND SPORT

Testosterone is classified as a doping substance – forbidden and generally regarded as cheating. According to WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency), doping is defined as fraudulent or deceitful use of a substance or method that is potentially dangerous to the athlete's health and/or has the potential to improve the athlete's performance.

A participant who uses testosterone can apply for an exemption. The exemption rules have come about so that athletes who have to use substances on the banned list can continue to participate in their sport. The

rules within Swedish sports are in accordance with the demands of WADA's code/guidelines the World Anti-Doping Code, WADC.”

“A participant who uses testosterone can apply for an exemption.”

FACTS

On the Swedish Sports Federation's website rf.se, you can find out whether you need to apply for an exemption.

FAQ: TRANS POLICY, SPORTING RULEBOOKS AND ANTI-DOPING IN SWEDEN

There are three areas that impact opportunities for participation in sport:

1. A common system of values, rules and targets for the Swedish sporting movement

Sport's highest decision-making body, the Sports Confederation Council, makes decisions about their statutes, within which the movement's fundamental values are included. The statutes are binding documents and must be followed by all specialist associations and clubs that are members of the Confederation. In principle, the statutes are reviewed before each council meeting, and sometimes even before extra meetings which may be arranged between the regular ones. The fundamental principles, or the sporting movement's common values, consist of overriding

principles, the purpose of which is to guide associations and clubs through decisions about their own activities. A document detailing what sports' aims, *Idrotten Vill (Sport Wants To)* was ratified by the Swedish Sports Confederation's AGM in 2019.

In addition to this values and rules governance, SSC's meetings have also decided to adopt common overarching goals. These are collated, along with a plan for how operations will be led towards the goals, in the strategic plan approved by the 2017 AGM.

Each member of SSC, that is each specialist association, as well as each of their members – in other words the clubs – are legal entities in their own right, with their own decision-making bodies. These are the AGMs and the Board meeting. Each legal entity is free to make their own decisions but if those



decisions are considered to breach the organisation's statutes, those statutes also stipulate what the possible consequences may be.

2. The sports' rules and competition regulations

As well as the governance above, the Federation's statutes function as a contract between the members (clubs) of each Specialist Federation. Values and principles may be expressed, rules are included and as well as that the AGM is likely to have decided on goals. Regulations about competitive matches, however, are essentially a matter solely for the association in question. The SFF's statutes also include rules for their championship competitions, since regional or national championships must be approved by the board of the Swedish Sports Federation. In practice though, this section leans on the rules and competition regulations of the relevant association. In turn, these owe

much to the rules of the world federation of which the Swedish specialised association is a member. To use a current example, World Athletics published competition rules which are then adopted partially or in their entirety by the Swedish Athletics Association. Potential exemptions from the competition rules, such as which class a trans person can/may take part in, are handled by the international federation or the Swedish one, depending on the level of competition in question.

If sporting activity is limited to within a club, the club's own statutes govern participation. If taking part includes competition within the club or with others, then the rules governing competition at that level apply. The main reason for the rules being completely down to the respective sporting organisation is that they are considered to have the best knowledge of their particular sport and thus how best to ensure competition on equal terms.

3. Anti-doping rules

The Swedish Sports Federation is Sweden's National Anti-Doping Organisation (NADO), which has the purpose of protecting athletes' right to participate in sport free from doping. The operative work is undertaken by Swedish Anti-Doping. The Swedish rules and anti-doping work are governed by the global regulations established by the World Anti-Doping Agency, WADA. Each year the agency updates a mandatory standard, the doping list, which lists the substances and methods that are forbidden in sport. A participant who needs to use one of the substances for medical reasons may apply for an exemption.

Four criteria must be fulfilled in order for a participant to be granted a medical exemption:

1. The participant may be affected by significant health problems if the medicine is not taken.
2. The medicine does not enhance the participant's performance.
3. There are no satisfactory alternatives.
4. The use of the medicine is not the result of side-effects from earlier use of controlled substances.

As well as these criteria, there is a guideline document from WADA that is used to assess applications for medical exemption. For trans people (WADA uses the term transgender), there is a specific set of guidelines. These guidelines can be adjusted from time to time so it is important to always check WADA's website for up to date information.

Sweden does not have any guidelines of its own, besides those issued by WADA and applications for exemption are individually considered on the basis of those.

Who takes care of the exemption application?

The Swedish Sports Confederation, in their role as Sweden's NADO, handle applications for medical exemptions through the unit known as Swedish Anti-Doping. Swedish elite athletes who belong to a control pool regulated by a global governing body or take part in competitions organised by such a body as well as events organised by groups such as the International Olympic Committee or the International Paralympic Committee should apply for medical exemptions through the relevant governing body or the competition organisers.

What is the application process like?

There is information on Swedish Anti-Doping's website about how the application for exemption in Sweden is handled (see flow chart below). If the athlete is to apply to Swedish Anti Doping, they are given access to the forms and instructions on how to proceed.

Similarly, instructions are published on global governing

bodies' websites and those of major competitions if they are the ones who grant medical exemptions in a particular case. On WADA's site, there is a checklist for guidance on what medical documentation should be submitted with an application.

Again, this is updated regularly so it is important to always check online.

The flow chart below show how the process works when handled by Swedish Anti Doping.

GUIDANCE – SEX SEGREGATION

Here, RFSL gives advice on how clubs and associations can work in a concrete way using policy and rule-changes to include athletes with trans experience.

GENDER NEUTRAL CATEGORIES

First of all, carefully examine the possibility of creating categories that are not based on sex for all ages and categories. Alternatively, if traditional sex segregation continues, introduce a third category for competition.

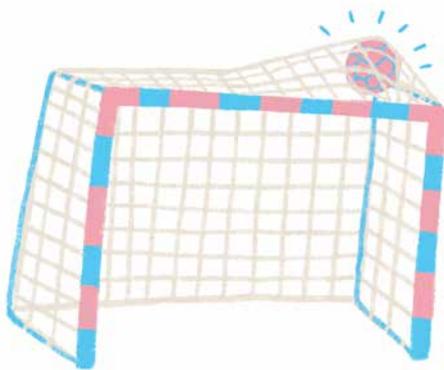
Children and young people under 18

Sport must, according to the Swedish Sport Federation's statutes, be organised in accordance with the

UN Convention on the Rights of The Child. One consequence of following the convention is viewing children as being of equal worth and having the same rights. Any decision that affects children should be taken primarily with the best interests of the children at heart. Children have the right to development and the right to express their opinion and be consulted on all issues that affect them. Attention should then be paid to the children's opinions.

A child who participates in sport should have the right to take part in activities according to their own wishes, regardless of what gender they have been assigned at birth.

All children and young people up to the age of 18 may choose their category, team or group themselves, regardless of gender. The gender identity and gender expression of all children and young people shall be respected.





MASS PARTICIPATION AND HOBBY-LEVEL SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 18 – 25 AND ADULTS

According to the Swedish Sports Confederation's statutes, its mission is to organise in clubs for life-long enjoyment, wellbeing and development. In mass-participation sport, health, wellbeing and enjoyment are norm-shaping, even if performance and competition results often encourage people to participate.

For adults who are not involved in competition, the same recommendations as for children and young people should apply. In competitive contexts, the organisers should start by determining the purpose of the competition:

- If the point of the competition is to have fun, to enjoy sport and to continue lifelong development, the same praxis as for children up to 18 should apply.
- If the aim of the competition is to spur on performance and prepare for higher-level tournaments, the rules for elite sports can be applied (check each

association's policy).

- Decisions ought to be made in accordance with the UN's Declaration on Human Rights and with the broadest possible inclusivity as a guiding light.

“Decisions ought to be made in accordance with the UN's Declaration on Human Rights and with the broadest possible inclusivity as a guiding light.”

ELITE SPORT FOR ADULTS

Sport-specific associations should find out what policy their global governing body has adopted in relation to including trans adult athletes. This should be referred to when national policy and rules are introduced. Sport specific associations should, however, choose to work for the rights of trans people and adopt as progressive a

“Athletes who intend to make a serious attempt at elite performance should be given the opportunity to do so, in socially secure settings.”

policy as possible. In elite-orientated sports, improved performance and good competition results are guiding principles, according to the Swedish Sport’s Federation’s statutes.

In Idrotten Vill – sporting Sweden’s programme of ideas – everyone should be given the opportunity to train and compete together, regardless of gender and age. Athletes who intend to make a serious attempt at elite performance should be given the opportunity to do so, in socially secure settings. Competitions should be structured so that they stimulate qualitative and long-term development, and combat exclusion.

Young people who are committed to elite competition should be given the opportunity to garner understanding of the factors that affect their participation, and they should be given the opportunity to influence decision-making on matters that affect them.

Sport for young people up to the age of 18 should operate from a children’s rights perspective and follow the UN convention.



VISION OF THE FUTURE

RFSL's vision and long-term goal is a society characterised by diversity and respect for people's differences. A society in which everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or

gender identity and regardless of how they choose to express that orientation or identity, has the same rights and responsibilities and the same opportunities to live and act.

“RFSL's vision for sport is, in accordance with Agenda 2030, for no one to be left behind, that everyone is included, especially those who find themselves left out today.”

RFSL's vision for sport is, in accordance with Agenda 2030, for no one to be left behind, that everyone is included, especially those who find themselves left out today.

Everyone will have access to all sporting facilities, as well as water and locker room facilities like showers, toilets and changing spaces. Sport should always be organised with a children's rights perspective and in accordance with the UN convention. A child who participates in sport will have the right to take part regardless of which sex they were assigned at birth. We believe it is possible to create safe spaces for cis girls and trans girls to play together, and that all sports should create categories based on something other than sex assigned at birth.



RFSL'S PRIORITIES 2018 – 2021

- To ensure that trans people have the same opportunities as cis people to participate in sports.
- To ensure that the sporting movement as a whole works to give trans people the same opportunities as cis people to participate in sports.
- To ensure that municipal sports facilities and all areas of arenas, including changing rooms and toilets, are fully accessible to all, including trans and intersex people.
- To ensure that all leaders, trainers, employees and volunteers receive training about LGBTQ issues and cis normativism.

Greeting From the Swedish Sports Confederation

The body is a central part of sporting participation, training and competition. It can help us to develop and through our bodies we can feel affinity with others. In the sporting arena, our bodies can make it possible to break norms and to act in ways that deviate from what is expected. With the body's help, the idea of what is possible to do and who it is possible to be can be changed. On countless occasions,

“On countless occasions, people have used the sporting arena to demonstrate that it is possible to do what no one thought was possible.”

people have used the sporting arena to demonstrate that it is possible to do what no one thought was possible.

Developing and tearing down boundaries gets easier if there are helpful factors and people around the individual or the team, if there are structures and rules that protect and enable the individual to challenge themselves in an inclusive environment – regardless of the individual's aims or what level they compete at. Sport does not yet offer such an environment for all.

There are still many obstacles to be removed before everyone is able to compete and exercise on equal terms. Amongst other things, gender identity and gender expression are factors that stand in the way for trans people and that place conditions on the existence of trans bodies and manifest society's, sport's and individuals' assumptions about what bodies, gender and identity ought to be. Such manifestations and norms create minority stress and exclusion from different sporting spaces. It might come down to

language or dress codes that still embody masculine, hetero and cis norms. Fortunately, those norms and those obstacles are not static – they can be changed. They can change if those of us who make up the sporting population can look ourselves in the mirror and refuse to see our weaknesses, if we think beyond ourselves and listen to different experiences. Sport finds itself somewhere around there today: in listening and learning, but also in doing.

There's lots still to do to ensure that we create a sporting world for all bodies -- in the long-term and in the short-term. In recent years, brave voices have come forward and personal stories have been shaped, including in basketball, ice hockey, roller derby, archery and handball. Those brave voices, along with the research conducted, are important pieces of the jigsaw in the work ahead of us.

The responsibility for creating an inclusive environment does not, however, lie with the individuals who have personal experience of the problem, it lies with those of us who possess the power to shape the conditions for sport. We have a responsibility to listen, to learn and to act. It is about both increasing one's knowledge as a board member, leader, staff member or coach and revisiting the rules and documents necessary for us to create an environment in which everyone can feel welcome and able to participate and to lead under good conditions. That work is ongoing in several areas, but needs to be ramped up in others. It's important to remember that sport is a popular movement

“It's important to remember that sport is a popular movement and when change does eventually come, big things can happen.”

and when change does eventually come, big things can happen. The Swedish sporting movement, with more than 19,000 clubs around the country, 880,000 people in leadership roles and 3.3 million members, reaches many lives. 72 sport specific associations organise more than 210 different sports.

To get a better understanding of where the sporting movement finds itself today on LGBTQ issues and trans issues in particular, we just take a short step back in time, to ten years ago:





In 2011, Anton Hysén became the first openly gay male footballer to come out and talk about his experiences while still an active player. Football clubs Östersunds FK, Kiruna IF and a national body (The Swedish American Football Association) were LGBTQ-certified between 2016 and 2018, along with broadcaster CMore. We gained more insight into the situation for LGBTQ athletes through the research and development reports published in 2013 and 2014. It became clear that LGBTQ people do not always feel welcome in sport.

“In many areas, women’s sport has led the way in terms of equality, LGBTQ issues and inclusivity.”

There are differences between sports, however, and lots of factors have an impact.

In 2016, the Swedish Sports Confederation and its student equivalent took part in Stockholm Pride for the first time, and in recent years they have been the largest group in the parade with around 1800 participants. Most recently, 32 of the 72 sports specific associations were in attendance. In many parts of Sweden, district associations and clubs join Pride parades. Several thousand rainbow-coloured captain’s armbands have been distributed since 2016, when the first one turned up, and eight of sixteen top-flight men’s football clubs wear or have worn one. Others jump long jump with rainbow-coloured fingernails, play with rainbow corner flags, shoe laces or hockey-stick tape. Swedish Hockey League organised a Pride Week of its own, in which all clubs played in rainbow colours on the 15th of February 2020. In many areas, women’s sport has led the way in terms of equality, LGBTQ issues and inclusivity. The fact that men’s sport is also taking a stand and showing what their principles mean in practice is not only symbolically important since men’s sports has been one of the places it has been (and sometimes remains) most difficult for norm-breakers, such as LGBTQ people to participate.

Thanks to earlier reports, we know that rainbow colours really do matter in terms of which club one chooses or how much one feels acknowledged and respected

in a sporting context. The symbols show that the club or association takes things seriously, even if many still have a long way to go. In future Stockholm Pride parades, the trans colours will be visible on the SSC's floats. That matters, because we know that the symbols of today affect the sporting reality of tomorrow and whether we regard people's participation as given.

A huge educational effort has been made and continues within norm-conscious sport, to make it possible to see and actively engage with sporting norms and to gain a better understanding of power structures and privilege. Between 2017 and 2019, almost 6000 sporting leaders received training. Awareness of the two gender norm and the cis-norm's influence on sport are an important part of the training and future improvements. Better understanding of how cis norms affect trans people lays the groundwork for wise, norm-aware decisions within associations and clubs, helping us to live up to our fundamental principles that say everyone has the right to join in, and keeping us in line with our mission

– feel good, have fun and keep developing throughout life.

Another important part of our work is learning about norms, power and privileges in the educational programmes that already exist and that shape the leaders and coaches of today and tomorrow. For the past year, part of the education programme for coaches has been about norms, power and privilege and discussing ones own privileges and how one can make best use of them but also how one can lead sports into the future – a future where equality and inclusivity are important values for children and young people.

In cooperation with RFSL and Idrott för alla kroppar (Sport for all bodies), the sporting movement has learnt a lot and we stand together, determined to reach our goal to make sport for all bodies a reality, where everyone, regardless of the gender identity and gender expression, has a given place in the changing room, the boardroom, training and in competitive arenas.

Together we are making progress, and we look forward to a continued collaboration going forward.



*Stefan Bergh,
General Secretary
Swedish Sports Confederation*



*Sofia B Karlsson
Expert and Director of Education,
Equality and Inclusion
Swedish Sports Confederation*





INSPI- RATIONAL HEROES

Role models are a source of motivation and self-confidence. They help you to understand your own potential. Many sex-segregated sports exclude trans athletes. In spite of that, some find inspiration, joy and engagement in sport. They are ahead of their time and they inspire the rest of us. Writer Aleksa Lundberg and photographer Elisabeth Ohlson Wallin have met five heroes who are going to change our era, our future, and our relationship with sport.

JULLE, THE FOOTBALLER WHO TOUCHED A WHOLE COUNTRY

A wave of euphoria rushes through the body of footballer Julle, 10, when he gets to run out onto the pitch, pass the ball and be part of a team. As an eight year old, he was barred from the boy's team he was playing for, because he is a trans boy. This also led to isolation in school. Now the club has apologised and welcomed him back.

Julle became familiar to the Swedish people after he took part in a TV programme about the club that excluded him from the boys' team. The club's board insisted that 'girls should play with girls and boys should play with boys, and they did not consider Julle a boy, despite him identifying as one.

His friends took their cue from the adult world and started teasing Julle at school for 'being a girl' and 'not a real boy'. The situation eventually became unsustainable and Julle's mother Petra Douhane helped him to change schools.

"Before he was excluded from the team, there were never any problems

between Julle and his friends – it all started when the adults started the segregation. For kids, there's nothing weird about this sort of thing. Norms are shaped by society – by adults of course – and it ends up being 'the norm preservation society'. Everything gets so much easier when we can put people in compartments," Petra Douhane explains.

After the TV report, a parent from a club in Lund contacted Petra, asking whether Julle would like to play in their boys' team instead. He was more than keen.

"It felt secure straight away. Everyone was very welcoming," Julle recalls.

FACTS

Name: Julle

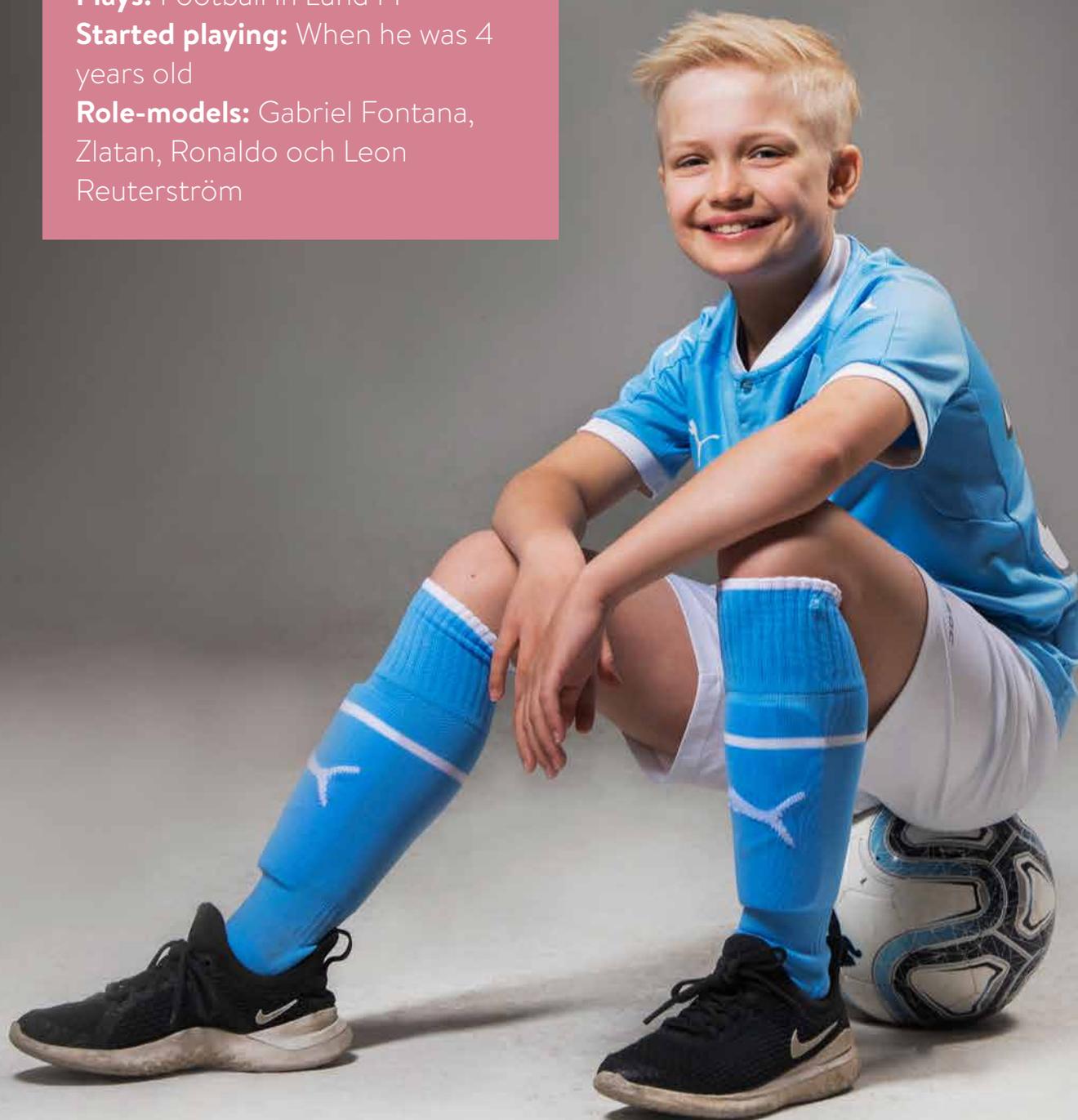
Age: 10 years old

Lives: Veberöd, east of Lund

Plays: Football in Lund FF

Started playing: When he was 4 years old

Role-models: Gabriel Fontana, Zlatan, Ronaldo och Leon Reuterström



“As soon as I get the ball at my feet, I burst out laughing.”

How did your new teammates treat you?

“It was just fun, I was treated like all the others.”

Even if it was a pain getting from his home in Veberöd to training sessions in Lund, with early mornings and late nights, Julle didn't hesitate to be at each and every one.

“As soon as I get the ball at my feet, I burst out laughing for some strange reason,” he says with a smile that stretches from ear to ear.

“That's exactly how it is, a rush of joy,” Julle's mother Petra confirms.

Playing matches is something Julle enjoys even more and it isn't unusual for him to win over his opponents.

“I suppose it might be a bit of a shame for the losers, but for it's great fun for me. It makes me happy and I feel proud of myself –

because I didn't give up.”

He particularly remembers the sensation of scoring his first goal.

“We were up against a tough opposition and it was a really small pitch. My teammates passed to me and I aimed for goal, but missed. The keeper took the ball in his hands and was about to kick it up field, but I got hold of it and passed the ball into the net.”

What would your advice be to a trans person who doesn't feel secure doing sport, or doesn't dare to get involved?

“Go for it! It's like being new in the gym. I saw a film where someone was thinking ‘everyone's staring at me, I'm new here’. Just go for it – don't worry about what anyone else thinks.”

Julle thinks he gets his bravery from his mum. If, for example, he doesn't dare approach someone for an autograph, then Mum will go instead, he explains. She is one of Julle's role models. Besides her – and Zlatan of course – Julle also looks up to artist Gabriel Fontana.

“He is someone who spreads joy, and he's got short hair and long hair. High heels. He doesn't care what

anyone thinks. When he was on TV he didn't want to win, he just wanted to spread love. Show that he dared to be himself. I think that's great.

One thing that would've made it easier for Julle to take part in sport would be if the clubs had allowed mixed teams. He thinks there shouldn't be so much focus on sex or gender identity, he just wants to play and have fun.

"The kids can take care of it themselves, it's not like the adults have to take that many decisions."

Julle's former club have apologised for their actions, and have signed a settlement agreement with Petra Douhane and Malmö Against Discrimination. At the same time, they invited him back into the team. The club has also hired an LGBTQ staff member to continue raising awareness within the club.

When we talk about the possibility of returning, both Julle and Petra are hesitant, but just a few weeks after our interview, Petra called to say that Julle had started back with his home team.

"A lot has happened. It was clear from the first training session – the

ones who were nasty before have a completely different attitude now. They were really good at looking out for him and encouraging him. Now he gets to be one of the team and he's delighted. And I don't have to drive him an hour to training," explained a nervous but happy mum.

"A lot has happened. It was clear from the first training session – the ones who were nasty before have a completely different attitude now.

“After all, he just wants to play football.”

He has also decided to go back to his local school.

“The conditions have changed, there are new teachers and a new principal, who take Julle’s situation seriously. They’ve planned properly and they make sure he has a changing room of his own when it’s time for PE. And now he walks to school with his football friends who

have since apologized.

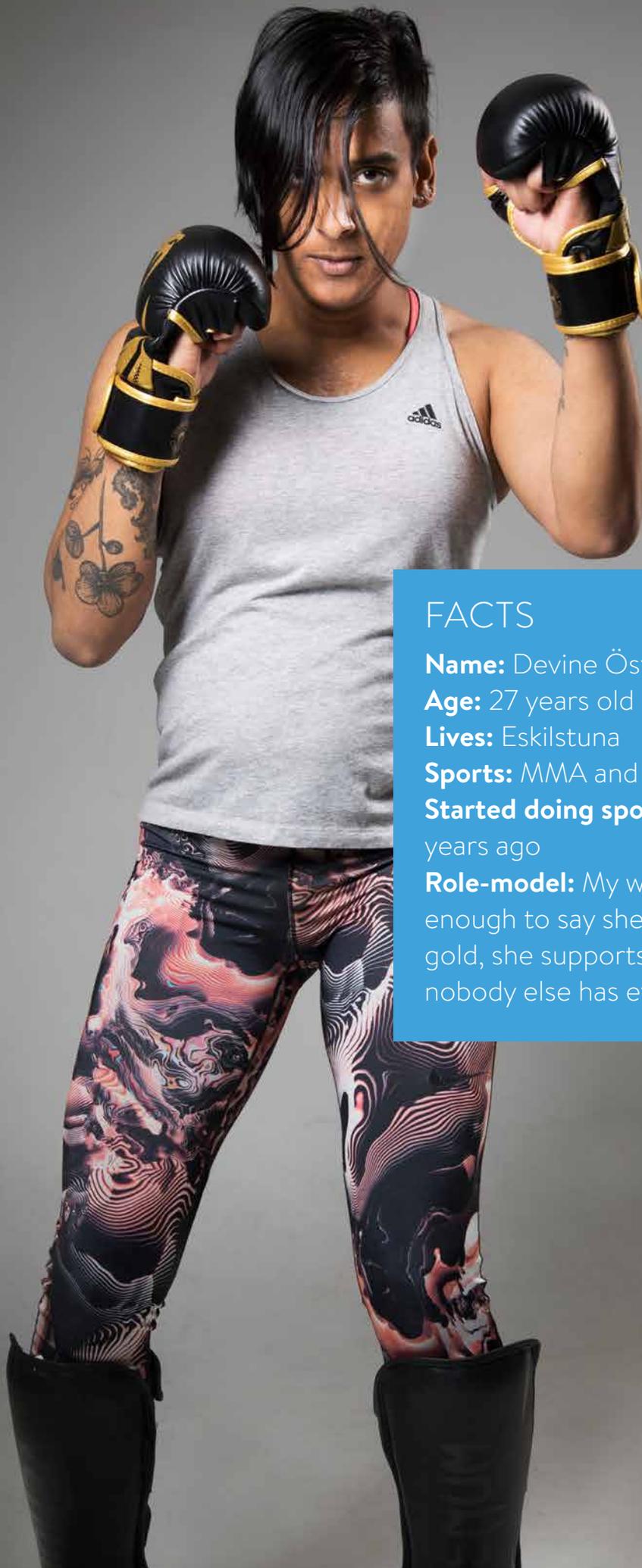
Petra also told us how she’s been stopped on the street by people who think it’s great that Julle is back playing at home.

“I’ve been so nervous, but this is so great. After all, he just wants to play football. I hope that things continue to go well with the club and that they keep this up.”

Julle wears a key with a squiggly pattern on it around his neck. It is to remind him that it is possible to open closed doors.

“It means that if you’re in a pinch, it opens all the doors. You just take the key and unlock them,” he explains.





FACTS

Name: Devine Österman

Age: 27 years old

Lives: Eskilstuna

Sports: MMA and thai boxing

Started doing sports: Eleven years ago

Role-model: My wife. It's not enough to say she has a heart of gold, she supports me in a way nobody else has ever done.

DEVINE, A FIGHTER FROM ESKILSTUNA

Devine Österman (27) from Eskilstuna, has a fighter inside her. Since childhood, she's been fighting social anxiety and her status as a trans woman has compounded the feeling of insecurity. But thanks to combat sports Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and Thai Boxing, she has found a sanctuary.

“It’s a great way to train and it’s also good for emotional wellbeing,” she says.

As a youngster, combat sports were out of the question for Devine Österman. Her parents thought it was daft to ‘pay to scrap’, so she concentrated on track and field, mainly 200 and 400 metre events. Six months ago, Devine started Thai Boxing and a month or so ago she took the step over to the controversial combat sport MMA.

“In one way, it is about fighting. But then I often think about how accidents happen in football and ice hockey. Getting in a car is riskier than being active in a combat sport. I do understand those who say we just scrap, but we do it under very controlled conditions,” Devine

explains.

It isn’t just the training that means a lot to her, her friends in the Thai Boxing club have become like a second family. “I got such a great reception from this club. All of a sudden, I had a load of friends thrown in.”

Devine usually enjoys training, but there are times when the difficult emotions take over, and it’s important not to give up.

“I’m not the kind of person where

“All of a sudden, I had a load of friends thrown in.”

“It cuts both ways, the fact that I like to win, because I can be a bit of a sore loser sometimes.”

things come easily, I like to be active and exert myself to get the reward. Afterwards, when I get home, I feel so relaxed. Especially if I've really given it everything.”

Since Devine is new to combat sports, she has no experience of winning there, but she knows what it's like to stand on the top of the podium from her time as a track and field athlete. Deep down, she has a will to win, she sees winning as evidence that her efforts have been worth it.

“It cuts both ways, the fact that I like to win, because I can be a bit of a sore loser sometimes. I've got better at hiding it over the years though. But back then, before I realised I had another identity, I competed under

completely different circumstances.

What do you mean by that?

“Before, I used to feel like I had to compete and train to be good, to feel like I was worth something. It was more of a necessity, not really something I was doing for fun. Nowadays it's almost always fun. Of course I want to do well though, like most people.”

Does your 'new' approach have anything to do with having come out?

“Yes and no. Obviously that's helped me, but I've been working on myself and my emotional life for a long time in therapy. This journey will never be over, I mean you can polish a gem as many times as you like. There's a big difference between how I worked then and how I work now. If training goes badly, I don't start thinking I'm a bad person.”

What would you like to say to other trans people who don't dare to get involved in sport?

“Part of it would be to take things at your own pace, and not to be too hard on yourself. I wish I had lots of courage, but you have to realise that it's not always easy. If I take feminism as an example, there's a lot of talk about how 'we need strong female role models,' but it also needs to be okay not to be strong. Because of course

that becomes a demand in itself. It must be okay to choose the easier path. Do what works for you.”

A concrete tip from Devine to those who have mixed feelings about taking part in sport is to find out what the law says, to find out what your rights are. Another tip would be to start by training with a friend or join a place where you already know people.

“That was what made things easier for me – having someone at the club who I know and who knows my history. I’ve struggled with social anxiety and that has made it difficult for me to start participating. Again – you don’t have to achieve great things, take the easier routes.”

So far, Devine Österman hasn’t noticed any major obstacles in combat sport. As a new member of her club, she’s mostly had positive experiences, with the exception of an isolated incident where somebody inadvertently misgendered her. There is, however, a certain anxiety about future competitions.

“I’m in the process of applying for an exemption so that I can compete in the women’s category and I’ve found out that it shouldn’t be a big problem. What might be problematic is the social element. Some people might think it’s unfair, and wonder what I’m

doing there.

Are you worried about negative attitudes?

“Yes, I am worried that it might get to the stage that it’s a mental challenge. That it might take the joy out of the sport itself. And sure, I sometimes worry that someone might physically attack me.”

That anxiety means that it’s easy to lose focus, that she loses energy and gets tense, she explains. But she reiterates the fact that most people wish her well and her anxiety isn’t all down to her trans experience.

“Throughout my life, I’ve assumed people are nasty unless the opposite is demonstrated. In therapy, I’ve learned that people can be good too. I try not to worry too much, a negative attitude can stop me from grasping life’s opportunities.

How do you feel about the gulf between prejudices about ‘Neanderthals brawling’

“It must be okay to choose the easier path. Do what works for you.”



and the reality of you, as a trans woman, practising MMA and Thai Boxing?

“Actually I can understand that people have that image. A lot of people probably think, “eh? Girls don’t fight do they?” Devine laughs. “It’s okay for men to act out, but as a girl you’re expected to stay calm. It’s probably more common for guys to fight in uncontrolled situations, but in the sporting world I don’t think people care whether someone’s a girl or a guy.

At Devine’s club, guys and girls mix in training. Who you’re going to fight against is determined by experience, weight and height rather than sex.

“A girl can knock a guy out just as easily as the other way around,” says Devine.

“If you’ve been training for the same length of time, and you’re in the same weight division, got for it.”

Have you personally struggled with the image of ‘men who fight’ and your identity as a woman?

“Well yes, I have, it’s just difficult to explain how,” Devine says while she thinks about her answer.

“I don’t know what the research

would say, but sometimes I do grapple with the fact that I was born in a man’s body. If someone thinks that it doesn’t matter that I’m taking hormones, because ‘I still have my broad shoulders,’ for example, then I wonder if I should keep quiet or whether a girl can be ‘this strong’. It does confuse me sometimes. If I push too hard, maybe I’ll ruin the image of me being a girl, and at the same time I want to get exploit my full capacity. It’s the most fun when I do my best.”

Devine wants to help advance the cause that we as a society deal with the norms about men’s and women’s body. That we need to accept different appearances.

“A body is a body, it’s that simple,” she declares.

“A girl can knock a guy out just as easily as the other way around

LUKAS, THE TRIATHLETE WHO SEES IRONMAN AS 'A BIT OF FUN'

Triathlete Lukas Svärd, 38, loves the feeling of having given his all and feels best when training feels tough. After starting his gender-affirming health care seventeen years ago, it was important for him to appear hypermasculine, but as the years have passed, he has given his feminine sides a chance to surface as well.

“It took me ten years before I understood who I was and started to accept my whole self,” he says.

Lukas Svärd already saw himself as a boy by the age of four. His greatest wish was to get to meet a spirit who could grant him three wishes. He wanted to become a boy named Johan, to be together with his secret love, Malin, and to go from being poor to being rich.

Lukas’ family lived in strained financial circumstances, which

meant he inherited his big sister’s clothes, something he really didn’t like. When he later began studying at middle school, his mental health got progressively worse. He ran away from home increasingly frequently and he had thoughts about ending his own life.

“My self-esteem was so low. People had tried to steer me into being a girl, and I wasn’t accepted for who I was.”

After middle school, Lukas started

A portrait of a man with short, light brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a blue athletic singlet with white stripes. He has a tattoo on his left arm depicting a woman's face and the text 'Live for the moment'. The background is a plain, light grey.

FACTS

Namn: Lukas Svärd

Age: 38 years old

Lives: In Täby

Sport: Triathlon

Started doing sports: At the age of seven (first football, later hockey, rugby and hand ball)

Role-model: I have had many, but they have disappeared one by one. Those macho men didn't turn out to be that good. My wife is my role-model, Karin Svärd.

working, instead of carrying on in high school. He sold cakes and was often out on the road, alone. That way he avoided pressure from the world around him, but his mental struggles didn't go away. One day he found himself standing by a weir in Norrköping, ready to jump.

“The Police stopped me, and drove me to the psychiatric unit. I

was put in touch with a psychologist and for the first time, I dared to tell someone that I wanted to have a gender reassignment.”

At first, after his transition, Lukas strove to fit the stereotypical male role. He became an infantryman in the army, trained as a fire fighter and started training for Ironman, a company who arrange triathlon-



competitions of the same name. During his fire fighter training, one of the other participants had teasingly told the group that ‘you’re never going to make it,’ which spurred Lukas on to prove himself.

All the competitions around the world comprise a four kilometre swim, one-hundred and eighty kilometres on the bike and finally a marathon. The competitions are qualifiers for the grand final, Ironman World Championship, which is held in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, each year.

“It was probably part of my journey, to show how manly I was, but then again I’ve always loved adventure. I probably pushed myself harder than what is healthy. I used to get up at four in the morning, run thirty kilometres and then work for ten hours before going training again. I was in a cycle that probably wasn’t the best, because I was so keen to reach my goals.”

It took about ten years for Lukas to really start to understand who he was, and to also accept the sides of him that he felt were more feminine. Today, he doesn’t feel the need to prove his manhood or demonstrate that he’s a worthy triathlete. But sure, he still enjoys the sensation

“There’s a fantastic camaraderie during those events, people calling your name and cheering. It’s a wonderful feeling.”

of pushing hard and breaking his PB, which for the time being is nine hours and fifty-two minutes. The record for all competitors is a touch over eight hours.

Today, Lukas describes Ironman as ‘a bit of fun’, that starts at seven in the morning and runs until about midnight, when the last participants cross the line. All the competitors come together after finishing, waiting for the last runner and cheering them on.

Ahead of his very first triathlon in 2014, Lukas had to go to the swimming pool to train in the water.

It was the first time he was going to have to get changed in the men's changing room. He sat on one of the benches, but didn't dare take his clothes off, for fear of someone seeing the scars on his chest or reacting to the fact he'd had genital surgery. So he choose to go home that time, but came back a few days later, solving the problem by getting changed in the toilet.

"Now I'm really glad I didn't skip the swimming just because I didn't dare get changed. You must never

"Now I'm really glad I didn't skip the swimming just because I didn't dare get changed."

let another person ruin your life," he says.

For a while, Lukas used to keep his trunks on in the shower, to avoid prying eyes. But after an older man told him off, and that swimming costumes weren't allowed in the showers, he realised he was going to have to go the whole hog.

"At first I was angry, I was thinking 'you don't know what I've been through just to dare to be here'. But after thinking about it, I concluded that he was right, and I took the telling-off as a challenge. Today I dare to be naked in the changing rooms and it's been fine so far. People aren't as interested in you as you think. It's mostly in your head."

What would you like to say to other trans people who also want to participate in sport?"

"Fight. And accept that you're transsexual, because for a long time I didn't. Don't put up obstacles! Don't think, just go for it," he emphasises.

It's this – doing something even when it doesn't always feel good – that's been the key to Lukas getting around most of the obstacles.

But what could have made your participation easier, so that you wouldn't have had to struggle so much?

A mentor to after me when I came into the club, even though I was an adult when I started. It's easy for people to start comparing themselves with each other and cementing hierarchies when the group changes and new people come in. If, in those circumstances, there was a person who took you in and talked to you, instead of you having to stand there all on your own, then the chances of you sticking at it and remaining a part of the group would improve.

Signalling that LGBTQ people are welcome is also important, for example by hanging up rainbow flags in the training hall or by the coaches using neutral pronouns.

“It's shouldn't make any

“I'm at my happiest when it doesn't matter that I'm transsexual. I don't want my background to give me advantages or disadvantages.”

difference if you're trans, homo or queer. Everyone should be treated the same. I'm at my happiest when it doesn't matter that I'm transsexual. I don't want my background to give me advantages or disadvantages,” Lukas declares.

FACTS

Name: Noel Andersson Köhler

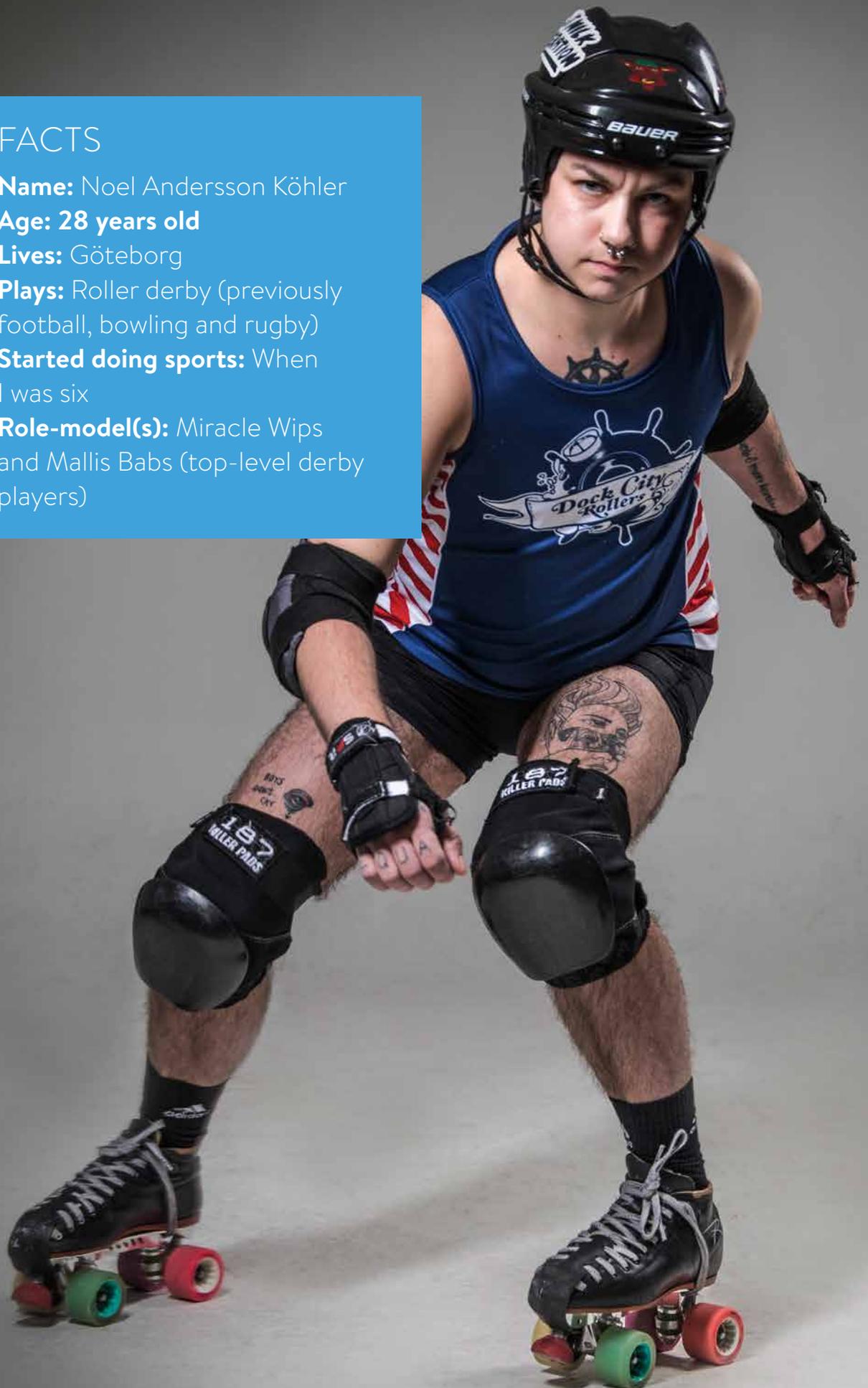
Age: 28 years old

Lives: Göteborg

Plays: Roller derby (previously football, bowling and rugby)

Started doing sports: When I was six

Role-model(s): Miracle Wips and Mallis Babs (top-level derby players)



NOEL SCORES POINTS WITH BIG JUMPS

For ten years, football was the game for Noel Andersson Köhler, 28, but the segregation into women's and men's teams was what ultimately caused him to quit. After coming out as non-binary, he discovered roller derby, a sport renowned for being female-dominated and trans inclusive. After that, he was hooked.

"I'm known as the monkey in the team, because I score points with my big jumps," he explains.

The first time Noel Andersson came into contact with roller derby was three years ago, after seeing the film, *Whip it!* (a film that follows a young girl living in isolation and who finds her place through a roller derby club in Austin, Texas). He then started wondering whether the norm-creative sport existed in Sweden too.

"My current partner plays roller derby, so she got me to try it the first time. After that I was hooked," he reveals with a chuckle.

As a young child, he played a lot

of football, but in his late teenage years he chose to stop because he wasn't keen on how the teams were made up.

"There was an awful lot of focus about how one could only join a team that had a specific gender identity. I wasn't comfortable with that, nor with the idea of coming out as a guy.

Today, Noel defines himself as non-binary. He knows that he's not a woman, and at the same time he doesn't feel comfortable trying to fit with male norms. The pronoun is still 'he' but in terms of gender identity, 'man' feels a bit too narrow.

"Right at the start of my

“Starting to play was a way of doing something for myself.”

assessment for gender-affirming health care, I really felt that I was a ‘bloke’. But then later it was like ‘nah, not that either’. I think I struggle to identify with the male role. It sucks,” Noel underlines.

When the testosterone treatment started to give visible results, about four years ago, he started looking for a new sporting context to fit in to. He made contact with clubs and visited gyms, but never really felt that he could relax completely. One incident in a changing room for men stuck in his memory.

“Me and a friend were training and I didn’t like getting changed there, because there was a bloke who was very suspicious of me. I’m obviously shorter than an average guy and this was early in my treatment, so I hadn’t got any beard growth at that point. I looked either like a very young boy, or as if I’d

gone into the wrong changing room and was very lesbian,” Noel recalls with a grin.

But then you found roller derby?

“Yeah, and it was such a positive experience! It’s meant a lot to me. I could be open with my teammates about being trans. We always have ‘pronoun-rounds’ when new people start and it feels very secure. Just before I found the sport I was pretty depressed, so starting to play was a way of doing something for myself, pushing myself in a way I hadn’t done for a long time.

During our conversation, Noel often returns to the fact that many people involved in roller derby are very aware and have discussed gender identity and identity as a whole. Some might be between forty and fifty when they start training, which contributes to a diversity of experience and perspectives that enrich their discussions.

“Even if you’re having a bad day, you still want to go,” he says.

When it’s time for a match and he rolls onto the rink wearing a helmet and body pads, he feels focused, and the world outside seems to gradually fade out.

“I feel very powerful when I play,” he says, and bursts into a

hearty laugh. “Because this really is something I’m good at!”

At the same time, he explains how there are moments when he feels nervous about being regarded as a trans man playing in a girls’ team. Those feelings usually arise when he meets players from other clubs.

“Even if the sport is very open, I do know that not everyone in the wider community shares those values. People accept it, but a lot

“I feel very powerful when I play.”

of people might think, ‘what are you doing here?’ because it is still a women’s team after all.

A little over a year ago, the



Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) adopted a new policy on gender and participation, where they made clear that the organisation is striving to include all types of trans people, as long as they share WFTDA's values. Matches, however, are still played between teams divided by sex, and it

is sometimes difficult to know who can, or can't, play, according to Noel Andersson Köhler. He himself has a given place in his women's team, but that isn't always so well received by others.

“My club hosted the Swedish Championships recently and I think there were some people who



thought it was tough having to have contact with a bloke, since I was one of the coordinators. I think the vast majority didn't have a problem, but I think it's because I come across as a cis guy that some people react. Before they get to know me.

Do you think they have reacted in the same way if they'd been in contact with a trans woman?

"I don't think so. It's quite strange, there are many more trans women playing at a high level in the open leagues. I only know of one trans guy though. It might be the case that not everyone is so open with their trans identity, which is completely fine."

It sounds like there's a lack of 'pussy-born' trans people.

"Yeah, and I think that's really interesting..."

Noel's position is called 'jammer' – his main task is to get past the opponents' huddle, which comprises four people. The most memorable moments thus far came in his first match, just over a year ago.

"When I rolled onto the rink, I was given the lead position – the one who skates ahead of all the others. On my point round I did an 'apex jump' (one of roller derby's

"I'm known as the monkey in the team."

crowd-pleasing plays that looks like a huge leap and takes a lot of balance). It's something that lots of people practice for ages, but for me it came naturally. So I'm known as the monkey in the team, since I can jump high and jump far."

Noel's advice to other trans people who want to take part in sport is to try and stick to the sport they like, even if it might be tough sometimes.

"There's usually a place in each club that you can turn to. And if that doesn't work, try and find a new club. I really believe, especially now, that there's always a way. Dare to try new things, take a friend along, I really believe that.

He also wants to challenge the sporting movement as a whole.

"A broader inclusion would have made it easier for trans people to participate – not sex segregating all sports," he declares.

VIX, THE GYMNAST MAKING CHANGES FROM THE INSIDE

Artistic gymnastics is something fantastic for Vix Herjerud, 34, who found sanctuary in it as a youngster. At the same time, there is a conflicting relationship with the “extremely binary” division of men and women, where the two sexes basically practice ‘two completely different disciplines’. That’s why Vix wants to influence their sport to make room for those who find themselves beyond the two-gender norm.

“For a long time I felt like I was performing on stage, but I did it because I love the sport,” they say.

There’s no doubt that Vix Herjerud is very fond of artistic gymnastics. They describe it as a guru for daring to challenge yourself and to struggle towards your goals. There

“We’re a good group who pep each other.”

are lots of different skills to learn and that means you can find ‘your own thing’,” Vix says. “You can feel strong, get lots of self-confidence, and learn to do things that perhaps not everyone can do. It’s a great world to flee into, where you have to be in the here and now, because if you’re thinking about other things it won’t end well,” they explain with a smile.

Vix underscores that the camaraderie that develops between the members of the club has been a crucial ingredient in making gymnastics such an important part of their

FACTS

Name: Vix Herjeryd

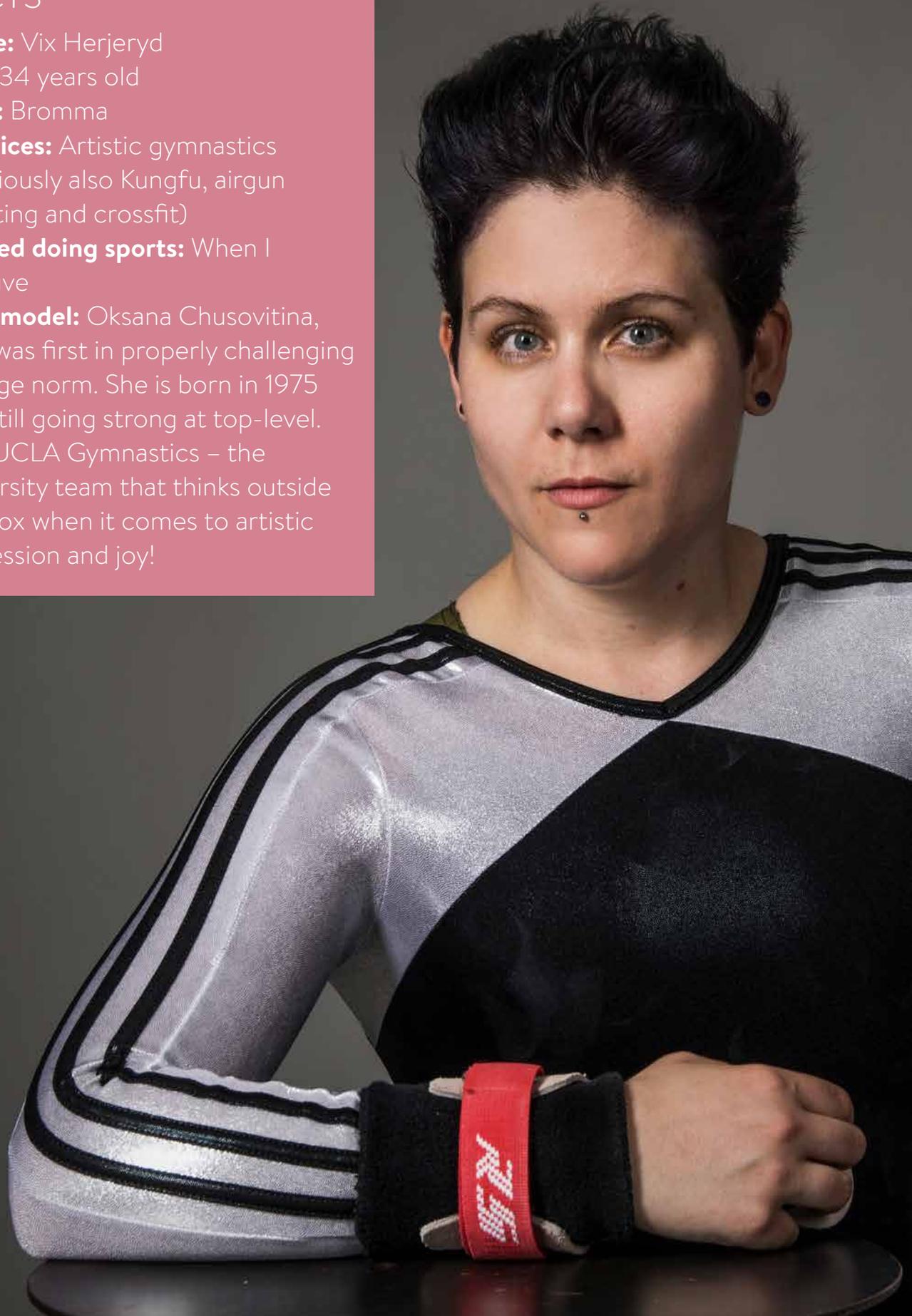
Age: 34 years old

Lives: Bromma

Practices: Artistic gymnastics
(previously also Kungfu, airgun shooting and crossfit)

Started doing sports: When I was five

Role-model: Oksana Chusovitina, who was first in properly challenging the age norm. She is born in 1975 and still going strong at top-level. And UCLA Gymnastics – the university team that thinks outside the box when it comes to artistic expression and joy!



life. “We’re a good group who pep each other, peripheral things don’t matter so much. We help each other to learn new stuff.”

When they were young, Vix made sure to spend a lot of time in the training hall, in order to distract herself from thinking about how they didn’t feel at home in their body. Today they define themselves as non-binary.

“I’ve enjoyed having muscles, for example, which the gymnastics has helped with. Sport has also been like an identity, which is strange in a way because it’s been like a form of acting for me. I had to put one identity to one side, to give space to another and that wasn’t easy.

Artistic gymnastics is an ‘extremely binary sport’, according

to Vix. Men and women have different equipment and basically compete in two different disciplines. For a long time, Vix felt compelled to take on the role of ‘female athlete’. Just like many other similar sports, it is partly appearance, in terms of style and expression, that are judged.

“Sometimes that has bothered me, because you’re nurtured into a certain kind of body language. If you take the girls, for example, then it’s all about glitter and pony tails. They’re often incredibly strong, powerful, determined individuals, and then that’s all hidden behind being light, glittery and cute. The guys can be pleased and applaud their own performances, while the girls are expected to walk away graciously.

As a 19 year old, Vix stopped competing because of mental health issues. They have never left the sport altogether though, instead continuing as a competition judge and training at a lower level in more accepting environments. A few years ago, when the term ‘non-binary’ was becoming established, they realised that it was the word that best described their identity. Today Vix doesn’t want to put sport to one side

“I had to put one identity to one side, to give space to another and that wasn’t easy.”

any more.

“Now I’m a bit older and it doesn’t matter, I’ve become really keen to sign up for the veteran Swedish Championship and do a choreography which is nothing like what people are expecting.”

What does that entail? A more androgynous routine?

“For example. Or I might enter half of the male events, and half of the female ones. Can I join in then? That’s something I’m really keen to try, because I think we need a bit of that to drive change.”

It might, however, be tough to nudge artistic gymnastics into a more gender-neutral direction, Vix says, because it is steeped in tradition and influenced by countries such as Romania, China and Russia, where it is a big sport.

“I take small steps at a time, and I try to find various scenarios where I can be myself and where I can have an influence. I’ve trained coaches and judges and tried to present the idea that we should look at children as children, let them find their own ways of expressing themselves, even if they break norms in doing so.”

The training Vix has done was for the Swedish Gymnastics Association, where they’ve been able to include some of their own ideas about a gender-neutral, inclusive sport.

“That’s why I’ve started a gender-neutral training session for adults, where everyone gets to have a go at everything.”

“When the delegates are coaches who look after younger kids, it’s easier, because when you get further up, things are the way they are. It’s harder to have an impact there. That’s why I’ve started a gender-neutral training session for adults, where everyone gets to have a go at everything.

Vix now leads her sessions under Hammarbygymnasterna’s roof, after being active at All Star Gymnastics for a time. That’s where those interested gather and do whatever suits the individual, at the level and within the appropriate gender identity for each person. The dream is to eventually start a club and a



gym focused on LGBTQ people. During pride week, they hope to take a first step towards that dream, through 'have a go' training in artistic gymnastics as well as parkour, in Pride Park.

What advice would you give to the trans people who'd like to try artistic gymnastics, but perhaps feel intimidated?

"Of course it does depend a little bit on how old you are. If it's kids we're talking about, then I would recommend parents collaborating and perhaps becoming leaders or starting groups themselves. Get in touch with a club and check if they can train the way they want to. Or turn to organisations like Transammans, where trans people can try different activities in a secure environment. Adults can come and train with me!" Vix chuckles.

What three things would have made your participation in sport easier, as a trans person?

Role models and an awareness within sport that trans exists.

"The dream is to eventually start a club and a gym focused on LGBTQ people."

Then I think there needs to be opportunities to try and explore things within the framework of the sport you take part in. When I was little, I dreamed of being allowed to do the rings, like the guys do. I also wanted to try the horizontal bar. Today, as an adult, the rings and the horizontal bar are still two of my favourite disciplines. I think it would've been good if there'd been the chance to try things, even as a youngster. I want to help to make sure that gymnasts of today actually get that chance.



GLOSSARY

Trans people is an umbrella term that gathers a range of identities, groups and people who identify with the concept trans in various ways. What trans people have in common is a gender identity and/or gender expression that doesn't match legal sex assigned at birth.

FACTS

Trans is not a sexual orientation.

GENDER

Gender Identity is the gender an individual feels they belong to. It doesn't have to correspond to how one's body looks or which legal sex one has.

Gender Expression is how someone expresses themselves in terms of gender. This is done through, for example, clothes, body language, hairstyle, whether and how one wears make up, and through the voice. Gender expression is a part of social gender, which also encompasses the various expectations that one's surroundings may have according to what gender one is perceived as being.

Social Gender relates to how someone 'lives' their gender, often inter-playing with their surroundings, e.g. through leisure interests, the role they

take on (or are expected to take on) in groups, or how others perceive them.

Sex characteristics concerns external and internal reproductive organs, sex chromosomes and hormone levels – that is to say ovaries, testicles, vagina, penis, levels of oestrogen and testosterone, XX and XY chromosomes. It is also about secondary sex characteristics such as facial hair and other bodily hair and how one's chest looks. In physical terms there are not only two sexes, but a range of variations. Intersex people are born with physical sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies. Intersex traits include a wide range of different underlying variations. These can be determined prenatally, at birth, during puberty and at other times, such as when trying to conceive a child. Each trait has its own characteristics and differing degrees of expression. The term intersex is best described as an umbrella. Being intersex is not the same as being trans.

Legal Sex is the sex recorded in official records. It is stated in passports and sometimes other ID cards. In Sweden, one's personal identification number also includes gender. The country recognises two legal sexes: woman and man. Some countries have more than two legal sexes, including Germany, Australia, Iceland and South Africa. In Sweden, legal sex is assigned at birth, the medical staff determine this through external sexual organs.

“Gender Identity is the gender an individual feels they belong to. It doesn't have to correspond to how one's body looks or which legal sex one has.”

FACTS

Personal Definitions

Lots of people call themselves guy, man, woman, girl, without prefixing with 'trans'. And if one calls oneself trans girl, trans woman, trans guy, trans man, that's determined by gender identity. A trans girl is a girl who was assigned male at birth, a trans guy is a guy assigned female at birth.

If you don't identify as either a guy or a girl, there might be a lack of obvious words relating to gender. You might instead refer to yourself as a person, a human, a name or something else. You have to see what feels right. Gender identities such as *inter-gender*, *non-binary* and *genderqueer* mean different things to different people. You're free to decide what it means to you.

A cis person, in simple terms, is someone who is not trans. Quite simply a person whose body, legal sex and gender identity correspond with the norms. For example, a person born with a vagina and registered as 'female' and who has always seen themselves as a girl/woman is a cis girl/ cis woman.

Non-binary is something that a person who identifies between or beyond the male/female dichotomy can call themselves. Sometimes non-binary is used as an umbrella term for various gender identities which do not follow the two gender norm. Non-binary doesn't mean the same thing to everyone who identifies that way. Some non-binary people want to change their bodies with hormones and/or surgery. Many non-binary people use *they* or *ze* as their pronoun.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare defines gender dysphoria as psychiatric suffering or a reduced capacity to cope in daily life. The condition is caused by a disparity between gender identity and the sex assigned at birth. Those who experience gender dysphoria can receive gender-affirming treatment; what used to be known as gender-

correction or a sex change. As well as trans men and trans women, non-binary people can also experience gender-affirming treatment.

The fact that it is possible to diagnose does not mean that it is an illness. The diagnosis describes a need for contact with healthcare professionals and certain medical help.

FACTS

Many trans people experience gender dysphoria. There are also lots of trans people who do not. Gender dysphoria can express itself in many different ways and may be bodily and social. Bodily dysphoria refers to discomfort or suffering because of how the body looks. Social gender dysphoria often refers to the discomfort and anxiety that arises when others assume the wrong gender or use the wrong pronouns. Non-binary people, trans women and trans men can all experience gender dysphoria. Gender-affirming health care is used to reduce dysphoria.

GENDER DYSPHORIA AS DIAGNOSIS

In Sweden, gender assessment and gender-affirming health care are part of the publicly-funded healthcare system. To ensure that people are given the right treatment, careful assessments are carried out by specific teams linked to specialist psychiatry at teaching hospitals. Queues are long, with waiting times between one and two years being common before the first appointment.

For those under eighteen, the assessment usually takes several years, while for adults it usually takes between six and twelve months. The assessment is individually tailored and takes age, life situation and other diagnoses into account.

The purpose of the assessment is to establish whether you're suffering from dysphoria and whether gender-affirming health care is appropriate.

The teams who conduct this kind of assessment have specialist knowledge and usually comprise psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors. They also have links to other specialists, such as endocrinologists, surgeons and speech therapists.

Not everyone diagnosed with dysphoria wants to undergo gender-affirming health care, but many do require a certain type of gender-affirming health care to relieve their gender dysphoria.

FACTS

In 2018, around 6,000 people in Sweden had a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. That, however, does not correspond to the number of trans people or the numbers who are unsure of their gender identity.

GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE

After gender dysphoria has been diagnosed, access to gender-affirming health care becomes available. That includes, amongst other things, hormone treatments and various surgical procedures for those over the age of eighteen. In some cases, people under eighteen can access certain treatments, such as hormones that pause puberty and then hormone therapy with oestrogen or testosterone as well as ‘top-surgery’ from age sixteen.

To be able to change legal sex requires that you have been in contact with the assessment team for at least two years, that you are over eighteen and resident in Sweden. The same conditions apply to undergoing genital surgery. The applications for legal sex change and genital surgery are submitted to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, and processing times vary. Sweden’s

current legislation is currently under review, however, and new rules may apply after 2021.

Gender-affirming health care is given successively, in various stages, over several years. For those wanting surgery, more than one procedure is usually required, which means time needed for recovery and healing may affect the opportunities for physical activity. Hormone therapy continues throughout life.



FACTS

You can read more about what gender affirming care encompasses at transformering.se. The site gathers information about trans issues and is run by RFSL and RFSL Ungdom.



SUMMARY

From a survey of over 110 trans people and their sporting experience, a few key themes emerged:

The structure of sport excludes trans people: Sports' view of bodies and physique mean that many choose not to participate in sport. It is also very clear that routine sex segregation based on bodies, with no flexibility, excludes participants with trans experience.

Locker rooms are scary, dangerous places: Basically everyone who responded has a problematic relationship with changing rooms. Even if the clubs themselves don't own or design the premises that are used, the problems must be considered in dialogue and collaboration with the buildings' operators.

Trans people are bullied, feel excluded or insecure in sporting environments. Some have been subjected to bullying, others

experience exclusion or feel fear and insecurity. Some don't dare even try sport because of what the reception might be like.

Gendered dress codes are inherently problematic. In some sports, men and women have different clothing. Even if the dress codes are not always in the rulebook, strong norms exist that can make participation for people with trans experience more difficult. It might come down to what the clothes look like and what functions they have or lack, but also what sizes are available.

Role models are important because they illustrate possibilities. There are few openly trans people in sport and some of the most written-about Swedish athletes have ended their career at the same time as coming out as trans. That demonstrates how difficult it is to be an athlete and a trans person.

There are misunderstandings about Testosterone in sport. Many trans guys, and non-binary people assigned female at birth, take testosterone in order to change their bodies. This can cause problems within sport, since it's classed as a doping substance.

With all of the issues, there are some positive examples. Sport doesn't need to be linked with exclusion and insecurity though. Certain sports have managed

“Sports' view of bodies and physique mean that many choose not to participate in sport.”

not only to create a welcoming environment but an environment which feels like a sanctuary: a safe space where people can create social connections and are given the opportunity to develop and grow in their identity.

Trans people experience negative health outcomes as a result of not having access to – or feeling safe to participate within – sex segregated sport.

Good health is crucial to people's opportunities for reaching their own potential and contributing to society's development. Trans people have more sedentary leisure time than the general population and it is clear that sex segregation excludes participants with trans experience. Questions like which category you should compete in, which changing room you should use, sex-specific clothing, pronoun use and a feeling of insecurity lead to many people not taking part in sport. Trans people who are active in sport rate their own physical and social health more highly than those who do not take part.

Through inclusive guidelines about sex segregation, the layout of facilities and by making it clear that trans people are welcome, children's and hobby sports can contribute to less sitting still, better health, and safe spaces for trans people.

RFSL encourages sport to investigate the possibilities to divide

“Sports can contribute to less sitting still, better health, and safe spaces for trans people.”

groups in ways that are not based on sex for all ages and categories. In particular, RFSL wants children active in sports to have the right to participate in the category of their choice, regardless of the sex assigned at birth. All children and young people under eighteen should be allowed to choose their team, category or group. All children and young people's gender identity and gender expression should be respected.

RFSL's vision and long-term goal is a society characterised by diversity and respect for people's difference, one in which everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity and regardless of the way it is expressed. RFSL's vision, in accordance with Agenda 2030, is for no one to be left behind, especially those who are excluded today.



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Good health is a fundamental prerequisite for people's ability to reach their full potential and contribute to societal development.

Trans people have a more sedentary leisure time than the population in general, and it's clear that sex segregation excludes athletes with trans experience. Questions such as what category to participate in, what changing room you can use, gender specific clothing, pronouns and a feeling of insecurity contribute to that many abstain from doing sports.

At the same time, trans people who do sports rate their mental, physical and social health higher than those who don't do sports.

Through inclusive guidelines regarding sex segregation, the design of premises and through making it clear that trans people are welcome, organised sports for children and adults may contribute to a less sedentary lifestyle, improved health and safe places for trans people.

