

Majority of non-binary youth avoid team sports due to discrimination and barriers, study finds

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Non-binary youth face immense barriers and discrimination preventing them from participating in team sports, according to a new study from

Simon Fraser University.

Only 11% of non-binary [youth](#) currently participate in [team sports](#), according to the 2023 [Canadian Non-Binary Youth in Sport Report](#) authored by SFU researcher Martha Gumphrich in partnership with ANKORS Trans Connect.

"The experiences of non-binary youth in organized team sports in Canada have been drastically understudied," says Gumphrich. "Our report found that many youth avoid team sports due to abuse and discrimination but there are some solutions that would make sport more inclusive for non-binary participants and benefit everyone."

The report uses data from the UnACoRN (Understanding Affirming Communities, Relationships and Networks) study, which surveyed youth ages 15–29 across Canada, including 2,513 non-binary youth.

Non-binary includes those who identify as non-binary, genderqueer, third [gender](#), gender fluid, agender or selected "yes" to trans experience in the survey and don't identify with a binary gender.

According to the report, 66% of non-binary youth in Canada who have avoided joining an organized team sport have done so because they would have to play on a binary gendered (men's or women's) team. Four in five avoided joining a team because of locker room layouts.

More than half of non-binary youth in sports have witnessed [discrimination](#) and more than one in six have witnessed someone being physically harassed because of their gender—another major reason many non-binary youth reported avoiding organized team sports.

To make sports more inclusive, the report makes a number of recommendations, including allowing non-binary participants to choose

which gendered team to play on, offering mixed-gendered co-ed teams and dividing teams by competitiveness.

The report also proposed gender-neutral changing areas with private single stalls and posting signage in locker rooms stating that harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Better education on diverse genders, using people's pronouns and consequences for breaking rules regarding inclusion would also help, the [report](#) states.

"Participation in [physical activities](#), particularly activities with the sociality of team sports, is a key part in preventative health measures," says SFU health sciences assistant professor Travis Salway, Gumprich's supervisor and an expert on 2S/LGBTQ health equity. "Non-binary youth deserve the same opportunity to participate in team sports as everyone else."

More information: Marht Gumprich et al, [The Canadian Non-Binary Youth In Sport Report](#) (2023)

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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