



Perspectives of British Fencing Members on the Inclusion of Transgender People in Fencing in the UK

Conducted by

**University of
Hertfordshire UH**



In partnership with

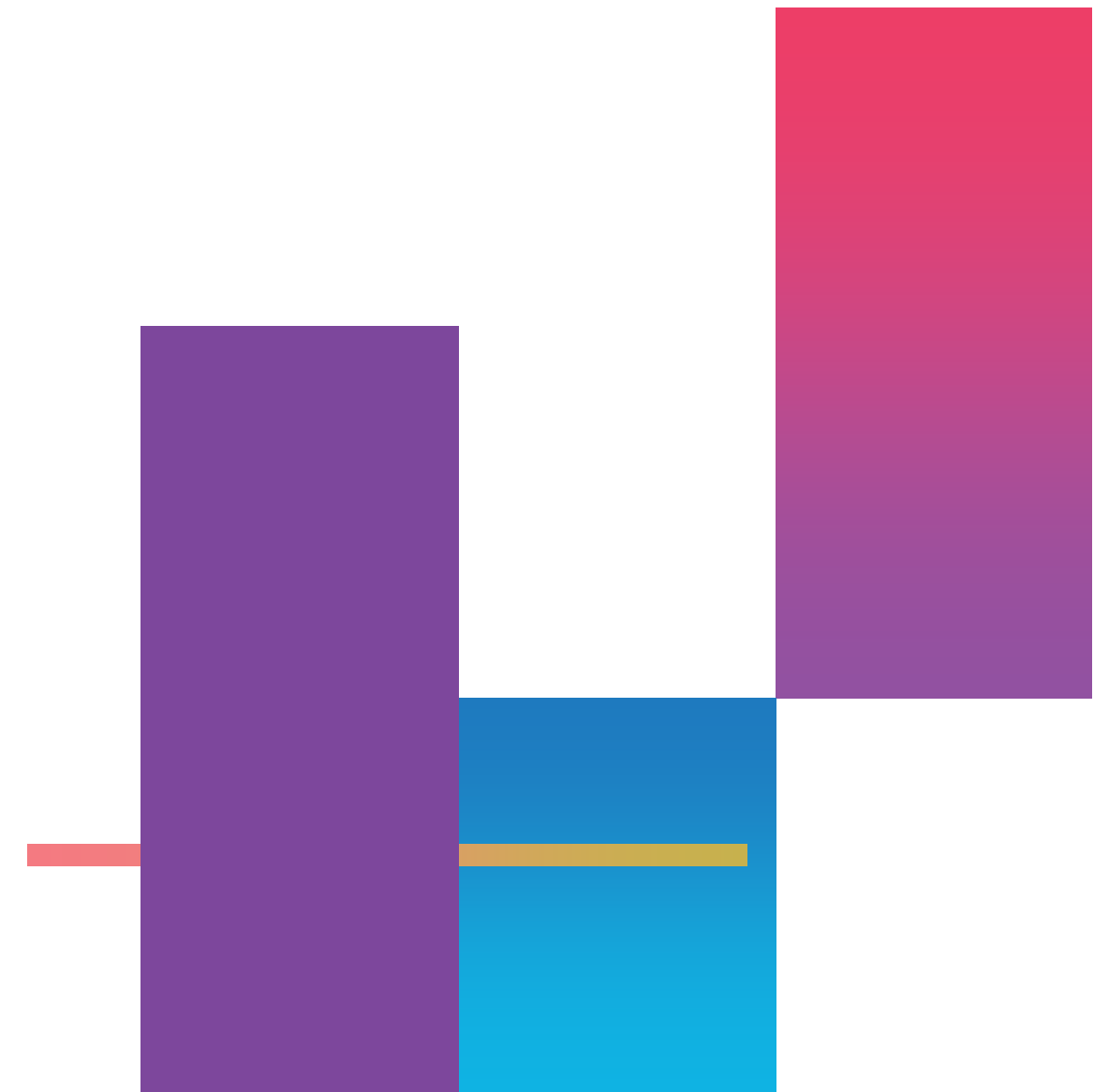


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An Overview of Today's Talk

- A statement of intent and definitions
- A brief outline of fencing in the United Kingdom
- The research we have conducted
- A summary of what we found
- Broad recommendations



Aim of the Research

This research was undertaken under the request of British Fencing to understand the views of its members on the inclusion of Transgender people in Fencing in the UK.

Defining Terms

Woman & Women

The **subset of the sample** including cisgender women, transgender women, and those who identify as women who prefer not to state whether their sex assigned at birth is the same as the gender they self-identify.

Man & Men

The **subset of the sample** including cisgender men, transgender men, and those who identify as men who prefer not to state whether their sex assigned at birth is the same as the gender they self-identify.

Transgender & Cisgender

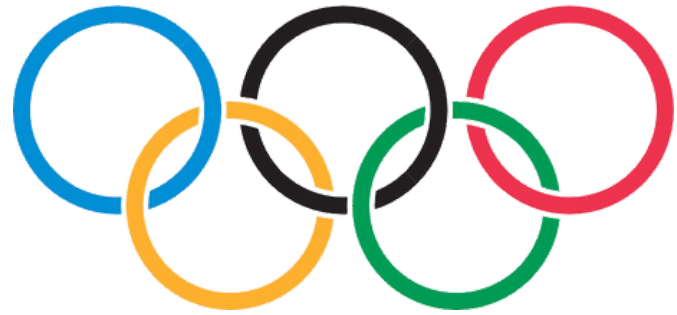
Transgender and cisgender (abbreviated to 'trans'/'cis') will only be used where it is appropriate and/ or necessary to differentiate the two. It is recognised that language is continually evolving and personal to individuals.

What is fencing?



Video thanks to 'Olympic Foil'

Hierarchy of Governance in UK Fencing.



International Olympic Committee (IOC)

- International governing body of all sports.
- 2021 Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations.



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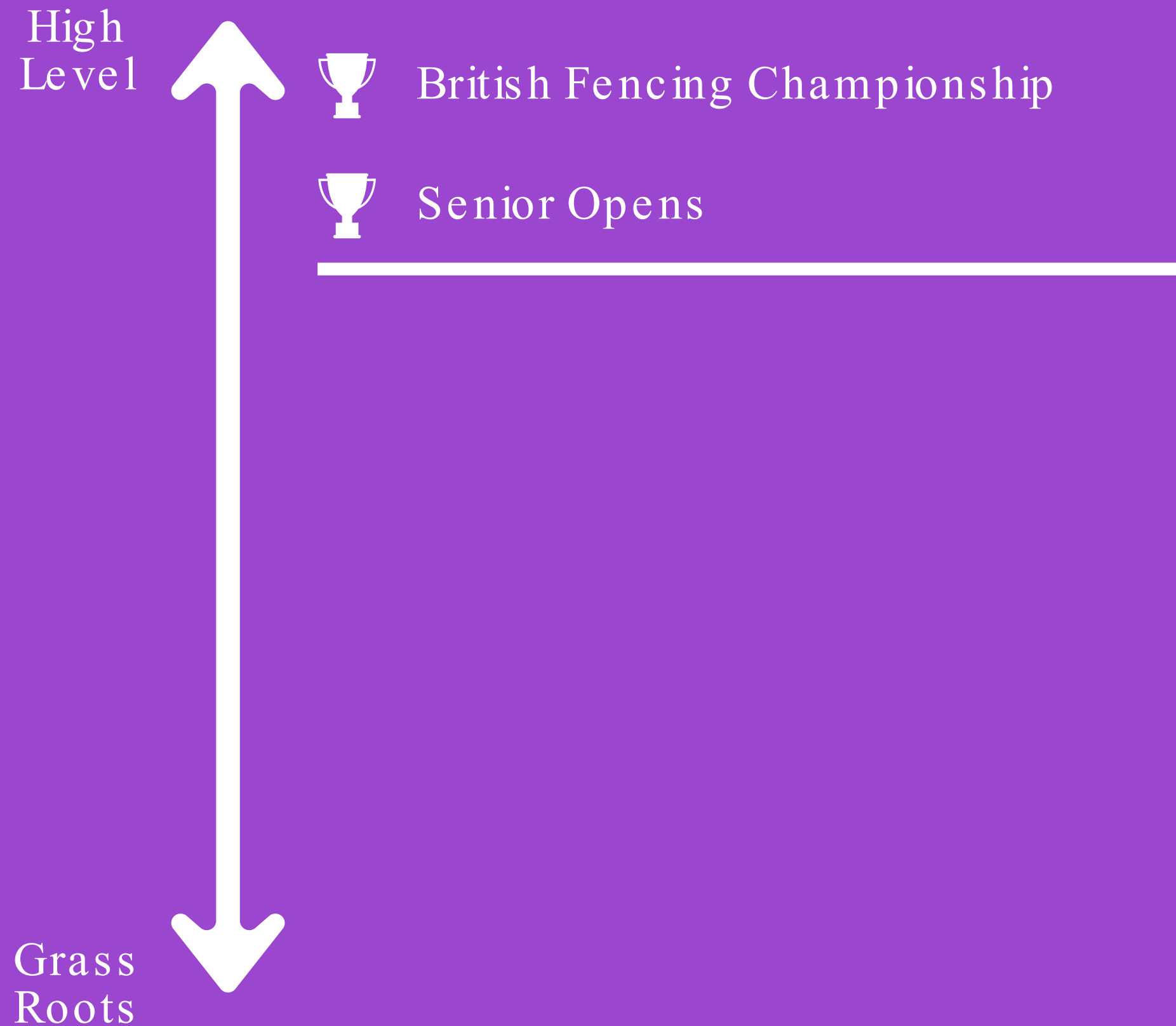
International Fencing Federation (FIE)

- International governing body for fencing.
- No current guidance.

British Fencing (BF)

- British national governing body for fencing.
- Currently undertaking policy review.

Levels of Competitive Fencing in the UK



Competitions with 🏆 are those which assign ranking points for international fencing events

You can find out more about competition fencing in the UK on the British Fencing website by scanning the QR code.



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Methods Used

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43.77 (± 18.15) years old
222 women, 420 men, 38
identifying outside traditional
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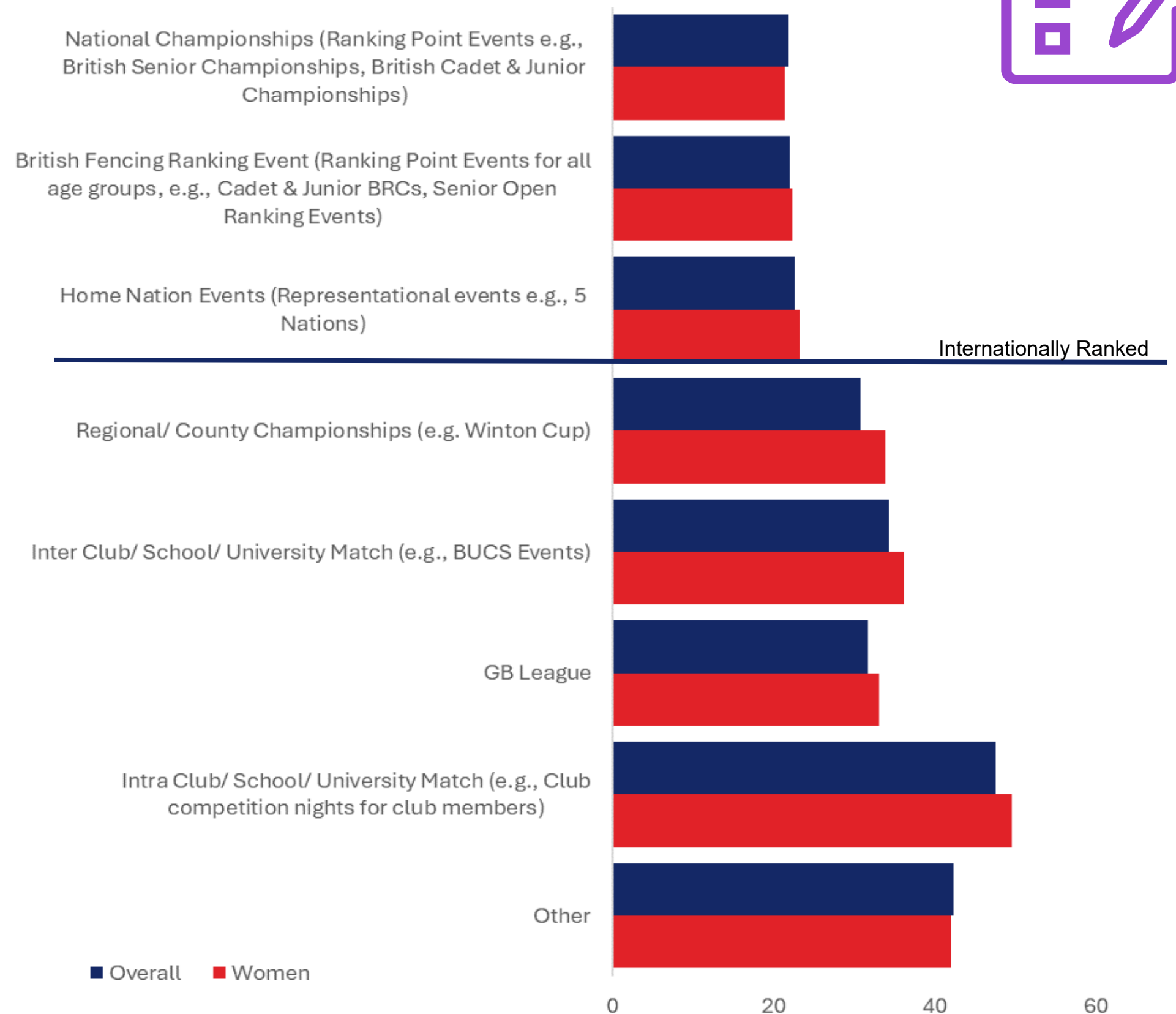


Exploratory analysis
conducted and findings
summarised.



Benefits of Inclusion in Sports

Percentage of Participants who Thought Transgender Women Should be Included Based on their Gender Identity



Benefits of Inclusion in Sports

- Respondents generally supported transgender inclusion in fencing.
- The importance of reducing barriers, creating meaningful competition, and celebrating achievements was emphasised.
- Inclusion training and education were seen as vital for fostering supportive environments where people can benefit from all that sport has to offer.

"At club level it is almost irrelevant, as individual differences in skill, experiences and training are bigger than gender related difference. As margins get tighter at higher performance levels it becomes more important."

Man, British Fencing Ranking Event.

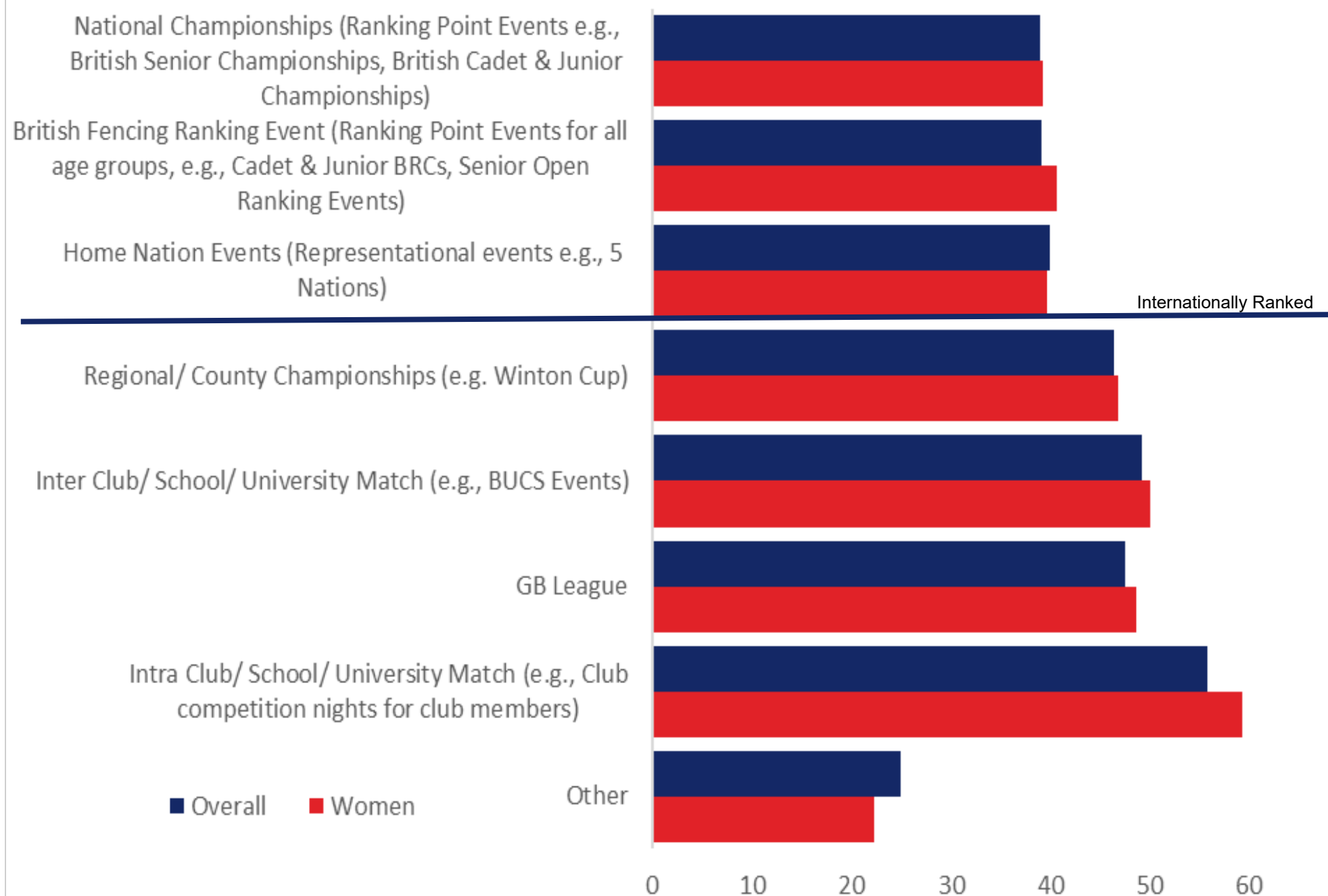


"I am completely acceptive of transgender inclusion in society. However, for transgender inclusion in sport, I view it as unfair due to the undeniable physiological advantages of transgender women. For example, height, body fat percentage, increased endurance, stamina, testosterone, muscle definition."

Woman, National Championships.



Percentage of Participants
who thought an Open
Category would be
appropriate.



Gender-Led Competitive Opportunities

Gender-Led Competitive Opportunities

Proposals for the fair inclusion of transgender people in competition included:

- Inclusion on a case-by-case basis, and requirement of predetermined time on hormone replacement therapy.
- Some advocating for complete inclusion, whilst others suggesting there should be separate categories for transgender athletes.
- The inclusion of transgender men in gendered categories was welcomed by the majority.
- Using testosterone levels as a measure was deemed ineffective and discriminatory.
- Gender-led competitions were seen as inappropriate for qualifiers governed by external regulations.

"The policing of women's bodies, for testosterone or other "abnormal" physiological attributes, is misogynistic in nature. Why is, for example, Michael Phelps celebrated for his low lactic acid whilst Caster Semenya is barred from competing due to her hyperandrogenism?"

Woman, Interclub/ School/ University Match.



"In British University and College Sport to qualify you have to have actively been presenting and taking reassignment treatment for 2 years, for me if someone has committed to such life changing choices and for that length of time I have no issue with them competing in the gender they now use."

Woman, Interclub/ School/ University Match.

Social and Research Barriers to Inclusion and Policy Implementation

- Clubs generally were very welcoming and inclusive of transgender fencers.
- Acknowledgement that cisgender women, and transgender men and women are largely underrepresented in fencing.
- Periodic reviews of competitive policy based on the most up to date research in the area was of high importance.
- Throughout the research, members emphasised the need to safeguard transgender fencers from being inadvertently outed by well-intended policy decisions.
- Safeguarding especially important in current hostile environment created from media portrayals and general lack of public understanding on issues affecting transgender communities.

“Very positive, I am a cis -female athlete and have friends who are both trans female and male. I have fenced against a trans -woman in a competition where we all gave our okay for her to be included and it made the event better. I think there are other aspects to the athlete journey that have much more of an impact for example differentials in socio -economic status (especially economic status of the family) and not including transwomen in fencing at competitions causes more harm than good.”

Woman, Interclub/ School/ University Match.

“I feel that a lot of the conversation around trans people in sport is very toxic. I feel people overly focus on the advantages trans women may have, even though trans women are underrepresented in competitive sports while trans men and non -binary people, both those who choose to medically transition and those who do not, are rarely thought of or talked about at all.”

Genderfluid, British Fencing Ranking Event.



Broad Recommendations

- Continually review policy, consulting with identified key stakeholders during implementation and evaluation.
- Consider small scale trials of new policies to investigate efficacy and implications of large scale roll out.
- Take precautions to ensure that well intended policy changes do not have unintended discriminatory impact.
- Stay up to date with high quality research into the experiences of transgender individuals in sport.
- Foster inclusive environments at all levels, especially grass roots, encouraging safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities to participate and feel welcome.
- Ensure language used in the policy and communications more widely are inclusive to all.



Photo courtesy of Greater London Authority

Thank you for listening

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask!

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