Methods

I anonymously surveyed student-athletes at Ithaca College about issues surrounding gender identity and sexuality within sport: locker rooms, bathrooms, dress code, and support by teammates, coaches, and administrative staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Gender</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Participation Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-Gender</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Varsity</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The majority of respondents identified as playing on a female team, with 44.1% identifying as a part of a male or mixed-gender team.
- The majority of respondents also identified as varsity athletes, with this makeup up 53 percent of the sample.

Introduction

In contemporary United States’ society, LGBTQ+ identities are widely becoming more accepted. However, LGBTQ+ athletes often experience discrimination at the college level, ranging from exclusion to hostility in sport (Attebury-Ash and Woodford, 2018; Griffin and Taylor, 2012). My research examines the experiences of current LGBTQ+ athletes competing in college by asking:

- Do all student-athletes share similar experiences of discrimination? Are some sports more discriminatory than others?
- How can answers to these questions improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals who participate in college athletics?

Results

To measure LGBTQ+ athletes’ experiences with perceptions of discrimination, I calculated a Support Score Index. This score measured comfort with a range of athletic experiences, such as locker rooms, bathrooms, and dress code policies.

Support Scores ranged from 0 to 7, where higher numbers indicate a greater sense of support for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Overall, student-athletes showed a moderate amount of support for LGBTQ+ athletes, with a mean Support Score of 5.36.

Conclusions

The assumption that all LGBTQ+ athletes experience discrimination may not be entirely accurate; the LGBTQ+ Support Score Index indicates that discrimination is more likely to occur on a male team, but LGBTQ+ athletes are likely to be shown support on a female or mixed-gender team.

- What is it about the relationship between gender and sports that makes women’s, and mixed-gender sports in particular, more supportive of the LGBTQ+ athletes?

Recommendations

The NCAA and other governing athletic bodies should prioritize developing and implementing policies and procedures that ensure equitable access to athletic programs, and safe spaces for all as a priority. These policies and procedures might include:

- Increasing programming and awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues
- Examining the gender breakdown of sports, including the number of women’s and mixed-gender sports offered
- Examining uniform and dress code standards
- Addressing facility concerns (locker rooms, bathrooms, playing fields) to ensure equity of access and comfort of all student-athletes

Additionally, future research should focus on the impacts of such discrimination on athletic and academic performance.

Literature Cited


Acknowledgements

Thank you to my professor and mentor, Sergio A. Cabrera, for his eternal patience, guidance, and support throughout all stages of this project and beyond. Additionally, thanks to all my anonymous survey respondents; without you, this project would not have been possible.

Further Information

Additional information can be found at [https://qrgo.page.link/8y8hq](https://qrgo.page.link/8y8hq). For further inquiry, I can be reached at aperry3@ithaca.edu.