

NCAA Division-I Athletic Equality Index (AEI)

Launched in 2017, the AEI measures LGBTQ+ inclusion policies and practices in NCAA D-I athletic departments. Now an evergreen index, the AEI provides a comprehensive, up-to-date snapshot of how NCAA D-I institutions are supporting their fans, staff, coaches, and athletes. The aims of the AEI are to: set a gold standard of LGBTQ+ policies and practices in collegiate athletics; provide feedback to NCAA athletic departments on how their LGBTQ+ inclusion policies and practices compare to other institutions across the nation; and offer resources and model LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices to departments hoping to update their policies and practices.

The Leaderboard

As of August 2023, 20 NCAA D-I institutions have a score of 100 on the AEI, including:

Boston University | Columbia University
Dartmouth College | George Mason University | James Madison University
Lafayette College | The Ohio State University | University at Buffalo
University of Arizona | University of California, Berkeley | University of California, Davis
University of Cincinnati | University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Louisville | University of Massachusetts, Amherst | University of Miami
University of Nebraska - Lincoln | University of Oklahoma | University of Pennsylvania
University of Texas, Austin

The conference with the highest AEI score is the Ivy League with an average of 78.

Ongoing Work with Colleges & Universities

The AEI research process allows for ongoing conversation and collaboration with colleges and universities. Throughout the research process, the Athlete Ally team conversed and consulted with athletic department leaders, and provided them with resources (sample policies, educational materials, etc) to help them seamlessly make changes to foster a more inclusive environment for the LGBTQ+ community.

If you have any questions on the AEI, please contact aei@athleteally.org

Why this Matters

In September of 2022, the NCAA published the most comprehensive and up to date report on the mental health of member-institution athletes, finding athletes who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to face debilitating depression and overwhelming anxiety and to consider self harm than their heterosexual, cisgender peers. Yet, while LGBTQ+ athletes reported more mental health concerns, they were also safeguarded reporting lower rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation than non-athletes. Time and again, when athletes are offered affirming spaces, they are more likely to be mentally, physically, and academically healthy. Still, those affirmative spaces depend on whether athletic departments foster an environment where students are safe, welcome, and accepted. **Are you looking for the most current, best policies regarding NCAA transgender athletes?** Read Athlete Ally's [Transgender and Nonbinary Inclusion Policy Guides](#).

High Level Findings

- Despite growing support for, protections of, and attention to transgender athletes at the Olympic level and federal level, **88% of NCAA Division-I athletic departments do not have fully inclusive, public transgender athlete policy.**
- When educational resources are available, LGBTQ+ athletes and staff can seek information, education, and support without fear of repercussions. **Yet, 77% of Division-I athletic departments do not offer comprehensive resources.**
- Of over 9,000 sport fans surveyed, the majority believe spectator stands are the most dangerous and unwelcoming of all places for LGBTQ+ people in sports. **Still, a majority of D-I athletic departments (66%) do not have a published code of conduct or guide for fan behavior that protects against abuse.**
- Despite a growing number of athletes coming out as LGBTQ+ in college (and before being recruited), as of 2022, **only 5.6% of NCAA D-I athletic departments fully protect and support their LGBTQ+ athletes, coaches, staff, and fans through policies and practices captured by AEI metrics.**
- **Over 80% of athletic departments had a robust nondiscrimination policy in 2022-23**, earning at least a 15 of 25, an increase of 4.2%. In addition, there was an 8.3% increase in schools earning a 25 of 25 as compared to 2021-22.
- In total, **26.2% of schools had a statement supporting transgender athletes in some capacity.**

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How the AEI Works

Our Research Fellows perform a comprehensive audit of the official athletics website of every NCAA D-I institution annually to identify policies and practices of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Publicly available documentation for each metric is reviewed, scored, and saved between July and May of the academic year. Scores are also updated on an ongoing basis when an institution reaches out with additional public information, such as an event or social media campaign. The following 8 metrics have been empirically proven to positively impact the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community. The following numbers reflect how many departments received full points for each metric on the AEI:

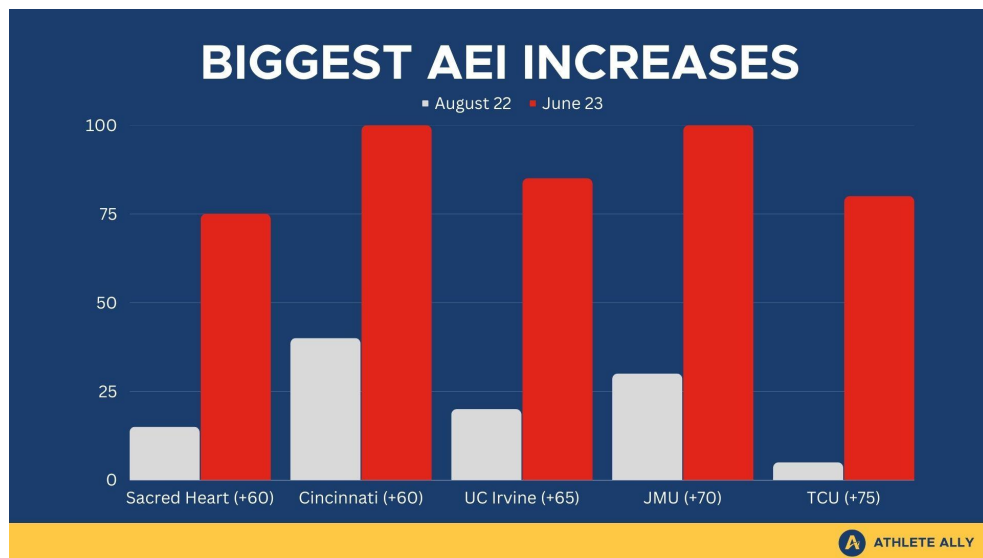
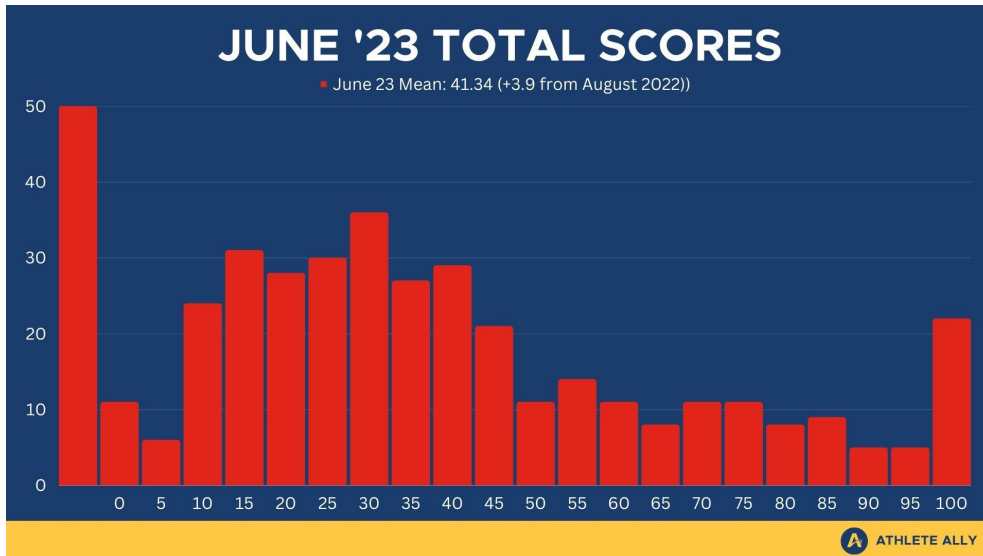
How many departments have an accessible and comprehensive non-discrimination statement?	35%
How many departments have a publicly accessible and comprehensive trans-inclusion policy?	12%
How many departments have a publicly accessible and comprehensive sexual misconduct policy?	30%
How many departments have a public LGBTQ+ inclusive fan code of conduct?	24%
How many departments offer/direct to LGBTQ+ educational resources?	23%
How many departments host or participate in allyship events?	21%
How many departments offer LGBTQ+ education training to athletics staff?	21%
How many departments offer LGBTQ+ education training to athletes?	21%

Every athletic department has the capacity to earn full points on the AEI by enacting and making each policy, resource, and training publicly available to staff, fans, and athletes. Access to information is imperative and demonstrates a department's commitment to sustained LGBTQ+ inclusion, while signaling to prospective employees, spectators, and athletes that they welcome all people into their department and spaces.

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2022 Overview

Across D-I athletic departments, mean scores improved for all 8 metrics during the 2022-23 academic year. **Total AEI scores improved from an average of 37.4 to 41.3** of 100. The chart below illustrates the frequency of AEI scores across the 358 institutions competing in D-I during the 2022-2023 academic year.



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