



TITLE IX: IT'S ABOUT LOTS MORE THAN SPORTS

Title IX, enacted into law 50 years ago, states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." This 37-word snippet tucked into the Educational Amendments of 1972 has received the greatest attention in the context of equality for girls and women in school sports. However, the reach of Title IX goes far beyond the sports arena, and it affects the lives of girls and women in any federally-funded program. Title IX also prohibits discrimination by federal funds recipients in the following areas:

- Recruitment, admissions, and counseling
- Financial assistance
- Employment
- Sex-based harassment, including sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence
- Treatment of pregnant and parenting students
- Treatment of LGBTQI+ students
- Discipline
- Single-sex education. ¹

BEFORE TITLE IX:

- Women were not admitted into many colleges and universities. Athletic scholarships for women were rare, and math and science studies were reserved for boys.

¹ (U.S. Department of Education; https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html)

- Girls square danced instead of playing sports, studied home economics instead of training for “male-oriented” (read: higher-paying) trades.
- Girls could become teachers and nurses, but not doctors or principals; women rarely were awarded tenure and even more rarely appointed college presidents.
- Graduate professional schools had quotas and openly discriminated against women.
- There was no such thing as sexual harassment because “boys will be boys,” after all, and if a student got pregnant, her formal education ended.²

IN THE FIFTY YEARS SINCE TITLE IX:

- **Women Earn More Degrees.** In 1972, women earned just 7% of all law degrees and 9% of all medical degrees. Now they earn nearly half of all law and medical degrees.
- **More Women Enter “Non-traditional” Careers.** Women’s participation in careers in technical education (CTE) programs has increased from nearly 0% in 1972 to over 25% nationally.
- **More Women Become Professors.** Women have made gains as university faculty members; their representation among all tenured or tenure-track professor positions in STEM increased from 9% in 1979 to over 30%.
- **More Women Participate in Sports.** In 1971–1972, fewer than 30,000 women participated in college sports. In 2010–2011 that number exceeded 190,000—over six times the pre-Title IX rate. In 1972, women received only 2% of school athletic budgets, and athletic scholarships for women were nonexistent. In 2009–2010, women received 48% of the total athletic scholarship dollars at Division 1 schools.
- **Pregnant teachers and students are protected.** Pregnant teachers are legally protected from firing and other discriminatory practices, and pregnant students are protected from being forced into less academically challenging programs.³

Title IX and Sexual Assault on Campus:

Sexual harassment and sexual violence on campus qualify as sex discrimination under Title IX. Harassment, sexual assault, and other forms of sexual misconduct all negatively affect a student's access to higher education. The sexual misconduct protections in Title IX also apply to faculty and staff.

The Future of Title IX

In the nearly five decades since it became law, Title IX has continued to evolve. President Biden has taken steps to change Title IX rules — including expanding the law to cover sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. LGBTQ+ students face elevated risks of sexual violence. In the 2019 AAU survey⁴, 23% of undergraduate transgender students reported nonconsensual sexual contact in college. By extending protections to transgender students, Title IX will continue to serve its original mission: to protect access to higher education for everyone.

² Barbara Winslow, The Impact of Title IX.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/impact-title-ix>

³ Vector Solutions Title IX: 5 Ways It Changed Education for the Better
<https://www.vectorsolutions.com/resources/blogs/title-ix-positive-changes>

⁴ <https://www.aau.edu/newsroom/press-releases/aau-releases-2019-survey-sexual-assault-and-misconduct>