International Olympic Committee

FACTSHEET

Women in the Olympic Movement
19 August 2026

Mission

Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. As the leader of the Olympic Movement, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has an important responsibility to take action when it comes to gender equality – a basic human right of profound importance and a Fundamental Principle of the Olympic Charter.

The Olympic Charter states that one of the roles of the IOC is "*to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women*" (Chapter 1, Rule 2, paragraph 8).

The IOC's commitment extends well beyond balancing women's participation in the Olympic Games. The IOC also recognises that gender equality is a critical component of effective sports administration, and continues to support the promotion of women and girls in sport at all levels and in all structures off the field of play. Great progress has been made in appointing women to key decision-making positions, within both the IOC's administration and its governing bodies.

Many Olympic Movement stakeholders have also implemented significant gender equality initiatives, expanding access to all areas of sport for women and girls around the world.

Historical milestones

In 1979, the right of women to participate in sport was formally included in an international convention for the first time, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 1994, the International Working Group (IWG) on Women and Sport was established and held its inaugural World Conference on Women and Sport in Brighton (UK). This important Conference gave rise to the Brighton Declaration, an international treaty to support the ongoing development of a fairer and more equitable system of sport and physical activity. The IOC supported the initiative and became a signatory to the Declaration. The following year, in 1995, the United Nations organised the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace in Beijing (China). The resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action included for the first time a specific reference to sport as a tool for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Building on these international developments, in 1996 the IOC took the historic step of amending the Olympic Charter to include an explicit reference to the IOC's role in advancing women in sport for the first time: "The role of the IOC is to lead the promotion of Olympism in accordance with the Olympic Charter. For that purpose the IOC: (...) strongly encourages, by appropriate means, the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, particularly in the executive bodies of national and international sports organizations with a view to the strict application of the principle of equality of men and women." (Olympic Charter, 1996).

That same year, the IOC also held its first World Conference on Women and Sport. The objectives of these conferences were to:

1. create awareness about women's role in sport;
2. assess the progress made in the area of gender equality in sport; and
3. determine future priority action to promote women in sport.

Following this inaugural Conference, the IOC Session accepted the recommendation to set a target of having at least 10 per cent women in decision-making positions by 2000, and 20 per cent by 2005.

Olympic Agenda 2020

In 2014, under recommendation 11 of the IOC's strategic roadmap for the Olympic Movement, Olympic Agenda 2020, the IOC undertook to:

1. *work with the International Federations to achieve 50 per cent female participation in the Olympic Games and to stimulate women's participation and involvement in sport by creating more participation opportunities at the Olympic Games.*
2. *encourage the inclusion of mixed-gender team events.*

IOC Gender Equality Review Project

In March 2017, the IOC launched the Gender Equality Review Project with a mandate to review the current state of gender equality in the Olympic Movement and "push gender equality globally" with "action-oriented recommendations for change". A joint initiative of the IOC Women in Sport and Athletes' commissions, the project was led by an 11-member Working Group composed of IOC Members and representatives of National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Sports Federations (IFs) from every continent. The Working Group undertook a comprehensive review of gender equality throughout the Olympic Movement under five themes: Sport, Governance, Portrayal, Funding and Human Resources, Monitoring and Communications. The result was 25 bold and action-oriented recommendations, approved by the IOC EB in February 2018, to forge a new path in advancing gender equality in the sporting arena and beyond.

In January 2020, an evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations was conducted. Key findings and a summary of each recommendation can be found in the 2021 IOC Gender Equality & Inclusion Report.

Olympic Agenda 2020+5

To support the implementation of Olympic Agenda 2020+5, the IOC adopted 21 Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for 2021-2024 in May 2021. The objectives built on the progress achieved as part of Olympic Agenda 2020 and the IOC Gender Equality Review Project; and set out a roadmap for future progress across five focus areas (Participation, Leadership, Safe Sport, Portrayal and Resource Allocation) and the IOC's three spheres of responsibility: the IOC as an organisation, the IOC as the owner of the Olympic Games and the IOC as the leader of the Olympic Movement. The IOC led the implementation of the objectives with support from the NOCs, Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) and IFs. For more information, see the Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Progress Report 2021–2024.

Gender Equality at the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games have grown to be the largest, gender-equal sports event in the world. This achievement is the result of the IOC's longstanding commitment to gender equality, supported by deliberate actions taken by the IOC and Olympic Movement stakeholders. Female athletes first took part in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, four years after the first Olympic Games of the modern era in Athens. Twenty-two women out of a total of 997 athletes competed in five sports: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian and golf, though only golf and tennis had women-only events.

Women's participation has increased steadily since then. In the last 20 years, the IOC has led the evolution of the Olympic programme to incorporate more women's events, in cooperation with the IFs and the Organising Committees. With the addition of women's boxing, the 2012 Olympic Games in London were the first in which women competed in every sport on the Olympic programme. Criteria were also introduced for new sports to have at least one women's and one men's event in order to be included in the Olympic Games.

Introduction of women's sports

Year	Sports or disciplines
1900	Tennis, Golf
1904	Archery
1908	Tennis*, Skating
1912	Aquatics
1924	Fencing
1928	Athletics, Gymnastics
1936	Skiing
1948	Canoe
1952	Equestrian
1964	Volleyball, Luge
1976	Rowing, Basketball
1980	Hockey
1984	Shooting, Cycling
1988	Tennis*, Table Tennis, Sailing
1992	Badminton, Judo, Biathlon
1996	Football, Softball
1998	Curling, Ice Hockey
2000	Weightlifting, Modern Pentathlon, Taekwondo, Triathlon
2002	Bobsleigh
2004	Wrestling
2012	Boxing
2016	Golf*, Rugby
2020	Baseball/Softball*, Karate, Skateboarding, Sports Climbing, Surfing
2024	Breaking
2028	Cricket*, Flag football, Lacrosse*, Squash

* Sports re-introduced to the Olympic programme.

History made at Paris 2024

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games became the first in history to achieve full gender parity on the field of play, thanks to the IOC's allocation of an equal number of quota places for female and male athletes. With female athletes accounting for more than 49 per cent of participants (5,300 women out of 10,813 athletes), this landmark achievement was enabled by a number of concrete measures, both on and off the field of play. Gender equality was at the forefront from the first day of the Games, with 196 NOC delegations (96 per cent) selecting two athletes – one male and one female – to carry their respective countries' flag during the Opening Ceremony on the River Seine. This initiative was first introduced at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to ensure that female athletes receive an equal share of the spotlight during the Opening Ceremony in front of a global audience.

Paris 2024 also saw a gender-balanced sports programme, with the milestones on the field of play including:

- A more gender-balanced sports programme, with 28 out of 32 sports reaching full gender equality.
- A more gender-balanced number of medal events, with the competition schedule comprising 152 women's events, 157 men's events and 20 mixed-gender events. This means that more than half of all medal events at Paris 2024 were open to female athletes.

In collaboration with its stakeholders, the IOC has continued to build on its efforts to ensure a balanced Olympic competition schedule, in which women's and men's events were fairly distributed and enjoyed equal visibility across the 16 days of the Games.

At Paris 2024, particular attention was given to improving the balance of medal events and competition hours during the final weekend, a key moment for global viewership and athlete recognition.

For the first time since its inclusion on the Olympic programme in 1984, the women's marathon took place a day after the men's event, showcasing the performances of female athletes during the Closing Ceremony. For Paris 2024, this was made even more special by the fact that the marathon route pays tribute to the historic Women's March of 1789.

In addition, the order of events for many of the combat and strength sports was based on weight category, allowing the men's and women's events to alternate. Previously, the women's competitions would be scheduled in the morning and the men's in the evening, when there are typically more viewers.

Beyond the competitions, gender balance was reflected throughout the Games experience, as women made up 50 per cent of volunteers, Torch Relay participants, and participants in the *Marathon pour Tous*.

LA28: equal quotas and more women's teams

For the LA28 Olympic Games, gender equality has been a key consideration in shaping both the athlete quota and the event programme. As at Paris 2024, quota places have been allocated equally to female and male athletes, and for the first time in Olympic history, all team sports will have at least the same number of women's teams as men's teams.

With the inclusion of the additional sports at LA28, 5,635 quota places have been allocated to female athletes and 5,563 to male athletes. Of the 353 events on the programme, there are 161 women's events, 166 men's events and 26 mixed/open events. Discover the sports programme here.

Milano Cortina 2026: the most gender-balanced Winter Games to date

The IOC worked alongside the Milano Cortina 2026 Organising Committee, IFs and NOCs to increase women's events and modify athlete quotas to ensure a more balanced representation. With 46.7 per cent of female athletes, Milano Cortina 2026 became the most gender-balanced Olympic Winter Games edition to date.

In the sports programme, full gender balance was reached in 12 out of 16 disciplines, in comparison to 10 out of 15 at Beijing 2022: biathlon, skeleton, curling, figure skating, short track speed skating, speed skating, alpine skiing, freestyle skiing, ski jumping, ski mountaineering, snowboard and cross-country skiing. Four new women's events were introduced – ski mountaineering sprint, luge doubles, freestyle skiing dual moguls, and ski jumping large individual hill. As a result, Milano Cortina 2026 had the highest number of women's events at any Olympic Winter Games with 50, in comparison to 46 at Beijing 2022.

In cross-country skiing, men and women competed over the same distances in all events, for the first time in Olympic Winter Games history.

Alpes 2030 to reach Olympic Winter Games milestone

Alpes 2030 is set to achieve gender parity by quota allocation for the first time in Olympic Winter Games history as a result of the changes introduced to the programme. Female athlete quota places will account for 50 per cent of the total quota of 3,046 athletes. The programme will also achieve parity in the number of events staged, with 56 women's and 55 men's events, plus 15 mixed events.

Additionally, four sports will increase women's participation, with two reaching full parity:

- Luge: from 44.3 to 50%
- Skiing: from 48.6 to 50%
- Bobsleigh: from 32.9 to 39.5%
- Ice hockey: from 43.4 to 45.6%

Beyond the field of play

Portrayal guidelines

Full gender equality goes beyond statistical parity. Sports coverage plays an important role in shaping gender norms and stereotypes, and in promoting new positive, diverse role models. However, there are still some fundamental differences in how sportswomen and women's sport are portrayed in comparison to sports men and men's sport.

To address this important issue and support its stakeholders in adopting fair and equal portrayal practices, the IOC published the IOC Portrayal Guidelines in 2018. The Guidelines were updated in April 2026, and the IOC continues to work with stakeholders across the Olympic Movement to promote and encourage their implementation.

Gender equality at the Youth Olympic Games

The 4th Summer Youth Olympic Games (YOG) will take place in Dakar, Senegal, from 31 October to 13 November 2026, the first country on the African continent to be awarded the honour of hosting an Olympic sports event.

They will also mark a historic milestone for the Olympic Movement when they become the first YOG in history to achieve full gender equality across athlete quotas, disciplines and events. Dakar 2026 will feature 2,700 athletes competing in 151 events, with 72 events for men and 72 for women, with the remaining seven designated mixed-gender events.

Gender Equality in the IOC

IOC President

In March 2025, Olympic champion Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe was elected as the 10th President of the IOC, and the first female President in IOC history, after one round of voting at the 144th IOC Session in Costa Navarino, Greece.

IOC Members

Venezuela's Flor Isava Fonseca and Finland's Pirjo Häggman were co-opted as the first two female IOC Members in 1981. As of August 2026, 44.2 per cent of the active IOC Members (46 women and 58 men) were women – more than double the number in 2013, before the launch of Olympic Agenda 2020.

IOC Executive Board (EB)

Flor Isava Fonseca was elected as the first woman on the IOC EB in 1990. Seven years later, Anita DeFrantz became the first female IOC Vice-President, holding the position from 1997 to 2001. In July 2020, the IOC reached its target of 30 per cent female representation on the EB. As of August 2026, 33.3 per cent of the EB members were women.

IOC Commissions

As at September 2024, women held 50 per cent of all IOC commission positions - a 150 per cent increase from 2013, when the figure was 20 per cent - and 42.4 per cent of the IOC commissions were chaired by women, up from 18 per cent in 2013.

IOC Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission

Created in 1995, the IOC's Women and Sport Working Group served as a consultative body composed of representatives of the three constituent bodies of the Olympic Movement (the IOC, IFs and NOCs), and independent members. In 2004, the Women and Sport Working Group became a fully-fledged Commission chaired by Anita DeFrantz. In 2022, the IOC Women in Sport Commission was renamed the IOC Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission, to reflect its focus on advancing gender equality and inclusion for women in all their diversity.

The Commission advised the IOC Session, the EB and the President on the implementation of the gender equality and inclusion strategy across the IOC's three spheres of responsibility.

IOC Administration

As part of the IOC's People Management 2020 Programme strategy, a number of policies have been put in place to ensure an inclusive and diverse workforce. In 2021, the IOC also implemented a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to support internal objectives for equality in the workplace.

Gender Equality in the Olympic Movement

The IOC is setting an example for other sports bodies by increasing the number of women in its own decision-making positions and closing the gender gap in the IOC membership, its EB and across all its commissions. These milestones reflect the IOC's ongoing efforts to set a standard for gender-balanced leadership across the Olympic Movement.

In December 2016, the IOC EB advised members of the Olympic Movement to set a minimum target of 30 per cent for women's representation in their governing bodies by 2020, and to adopt accompanying measures that will help them to reach this goal. This message was reinforced when incorporated into the Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance within the Olympic Movement in 2022.

As of June 2025, 43 per cent of NOCs and 60 per cent of IFs had reached at least 30 per cent representation of both sexes in their executive boards, and many more are making steady progress to close the gender gap.

Olympic Solidarity programmes

Olympic Solidarity offers NOCs a series of assistance programmes for athletes, young hopefuls, coaches and sports managers, and these benefit a growing number of women. All major Olympic Solidarity programmes have incentives encouraging women's participation. Furthermore, the Olympic Values Programme offers funding for NOCs to encourage more women and girls to benefit from sport and to create preconditions for women to take on leadership roles in sport, in terms of both coaching and sports administration. Learn more about Olympic Solidarity here.

Building equal and inclusive communities through sport

Collaborating with a diverse range of sport and social development organisations, the IOC, through its Olympism365 strategy, is strengthening the contribution of sport to improving equality, diversity and inclusion across communities. This includes initiatives that increase opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised groups to benefit from sport, promote gender equality in and through sport, and support programmes that use sport to challenge discrimination. Learn more here.

Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions

Each year, the IOC Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions awards recognise outstanding individuals who are advancing gender equality, diversity and inclusion in and through sport.

As of 2026, there have been 150 winners from 75 countries.

More information regarding the Awards can be found on our website.

For further information, please contact:
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Table A: Women's participation in the Games of the Olympiad

Years	Sports	Women's Events	Mixed Events	Total Events	% of Women's Events	% of Women's and Mixed Events	Female Participants	% of Female Participants
1900	2	2	1	95	2.1	5.3	24	1.9
1904	1	3	0	95	3.1	6.4	6	0.9
1908	2	4	8	110	3.6	10.9	37	1.8
1912	2	5	6	102	4.9	10.8	48	2.0
1920	2	8	16	156	5.1	15.6	63	2.4
1924	3	10	4	126	7.9	11.1	135	4.4
1928	4	14	3	109	12.8	15.6	277	9.6
1932	3	14	4	117	12.0	15.4	126	9
1936	4	15	4	129	11.6	14.7	331	8.3
1948	5	19	5	136	14.0	17.6	390	9.5
1952	6	25	7	149	16.8	21.5	519	10.5
1956	6	26	9	151	17.2	23.2	376	13.3
1960	6	29	8	150	19.3	24.7	611	11.4
1964	7	33	11	163	20.2	27.0	678	13.2
1968	7	39	18	172	22.7	33.1	781	14.2
1972	8	43	20	195	22.1	32.3	1,059	14.6
1976	11	49	19	198	24.7	34.3	1,260	20.7
1980	12	50	19	203	24.6	34.0	1,115	21.5
1984	14	62	15	221	28.1	34.8	1,566	23
1988	17	72	14	237	30.4	36.3	2,194	26.1
1992	19	86	12	257	33.5	38.1	2,704	28.8
1996	21	97	11	271	35.8	39.9	3,512	34.0
2000	25	120	11	300	40.0	44.0	4,069	38.2
2004	26	125	10	301	41.5	44.9	4,329	40.7
2008	26	127	10	302	42.1	45.4	4,637	42.4
2012	26	132	8	302	43.7	46.4	4,676	44.2
2016	28	136	9	306	44.4	47.4	5,059	45
2020	33	156	18	339	46.0	51.3	5,457	47.8
2024	32	151	22	329	45,9	52.6	5 300	49

Table B: Women's participation in the Olympic Winter Games

Year	Sports	Women's Events	Mixed Events	Total Events	% of Women's Events	% of Women's and Mixed Events	Female Participants	% of Female Participants
1924	1	1	1	16	6.3	12.5	11	4.3
1928	1	1	1	14	7.1	14.3	26	5.6
1932	1	1	1	14	7.1	14.3	21	8.3
1936	2	2	1	17	11.8	17.6	80	12
1948	2	4	1	22	18.2	22.7	77	11.5
1952	2	5	1	22	22.7	27.3	109	15.7
1956	2	6	1	24	24.0	29.2	134	17
1960	2	10	1	27	35.7	40.7	144	21.5
1964	3	12	2	34	35.3	41.2	199	18.3
1968	3	12	2	35	34.2	40.0	211	18.2
1972	3	12	2	35	34.2	40.0	205	20.5
1976	3	12	3	37	32.4	40.5	231	20.6
1980	3	12	3	38	31.6	39.5	232	21.7
1984	3	13	3	39	33.3	41.0	274	21.5
1988	3	16	4	46	34.8	41.3	301	21.2
1992	4	23	3	57	40.4	45.6	488	27.1
1994	4	25	3	61	41.0	45.9	522	30
1998	6	29	3	68	42.0	47.1	787	36.2
2002	7	34	3	78	42.5	47.4	886	36.9
2006	7	37	3	84	44.0	47.6	960	38.2
2010	7	38	3	86	44.2	47.7	1,044	40.7
2014	7	43	6	98	44.9	51.0	1,121	40.3
2018	7	44	9	102	42.7	52.0	1,169	41
2022	7	46	12	109	42.2	53.0	1,267	44.7
2026	8	50	12	116	43.1	53.4	1,328	46.7