

FACTSHEET

Women in the Olympic Movement

09 December 2021

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 7).

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. Olympic Agenda 2020+5, the new strategic roadmap for the Olympic Movement, reaffirmed the commitment to and priority of gender equality.

Many Olympic Movement stakeholders have also implemented significant gender equality initiatives, so that girls and women around the world are being given greater access to and the chance to participate in sport.

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. define future priority actions to promote women in sport.

Following this inaugural Conference, the IOC Session accepted the recommendation to set a target of at



least 10 per cent of women in decision-making positions by 2000, and 20 per cent by 2005.

From 1996 to 2012, the IOC's advocacy action was supported by the organisation of quadrennial World Conferences on Women and Sport. The 5th and last conference was held in Los Angeles in 2012.

Olympic Agenda 2020

In 2014, under recommendation 11 of 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; and, opportunities at the Olympic Games.*
2. *encourage the inclusion of mixed-gender team events.*

In 2016, following the recommendation of the IOC Women in Sport Commission, the IOC Executive Board (EB) approved a revised target of 30 per cent for the Olympic Movement constituents:

"Members of the Olympic Movement are advised 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."

Minutes, IOC EB, 8 December 2016

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 chaired by Marisol Casado (IOC Member) and 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 the state 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.

Olympic Agenda 2020+5

In May 2021, the IOC approved 21 Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for 2021-2024. These objectives build on the progress achieved as part of Olympic Agenda 2020 and the IOC Gender Equality Review Project and set out actions to help achieve Recommendation 13 of Olympic Agenda 2020+5. Based on consultations with internal and external stakeholders, and taking into account the global context, the objectives centre around five focus areas: Participation, Leadership, Safe Sport, Portrayal and Resource Allocation, and are categorised into the IOC's three areas of responsibility: The IOC as an organisation, The IOC as owner of the Olympic Games and the IOC as the leader of the Olympic Movement.

The IOC is leading the implementation of the objectives with support from the NOCs, Organising Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs) and IFs.

Gender Equality in the IOC

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 25 July 2020, 39 out of the 104 (38 per cent) active IOC members are women.

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. Since then, the IOC has had a further two female Vice-Presidents: Gunilla Lindberg (2004-2008) and Nawal El Moutawakel (2012-2016). As of 17 July 2020, five women are members of the IOC EB (33 per cent): Anita DeFrantz (First Vice-President), Nicole Hovertsz, Kirsty Coventry, Nawal El Moutawakel and Mikaela Cojuangco Jaworski.

IOC Commissions

As of May 2020, women chair 11 of the 30 IOC Commissions (37 per cent). In 2020, the IOC has reached its target for gender balanced participation within its commissions, with 48 per cent of the



positions currently held by women (in 2013 women held 20 per cent of the positions).

IOC Women in Sport 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), plus an athlete representative and independent members. In 2005, the Women and Sport Working Group became a fully-fledged Commission chaired by Anita DeFrantz.

Currently chaired by Lydia Nsekera (IOC Member), the IOC's Women in Sport Commission advises the IOC President and the IOC EB on which policies to adopt in order to be a catalyst for positive change in the following priority areas:

1. Encouraging women's participation in the Olympic Games and in sport generally;
2. Empowering women to have access to decision-making positions in sports;
3. Raising awareness on the benefits of gender equality;
4. Providing support to NOCs and IFs;
5. Preventing harassment and abuse in sport.

In 2020, the IOC Women in Sport Commission is composed of 33 members, 30 per cent of whom are male, including the Vice-Chair HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein (IOC Member). In order to ensure that the gender equality agenda is integrated into all aspects of the IOC's work, members of the Women in Sport Commission also sit on key IOC commissions.

IOC Administration

As part of its People Management 2020 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 that will support internal objectives for equality in the workplace.

Partnerships

Partnerships are paramount for the spread of positive social change and gender empowerment. The IOC policy for women's empowerment through sport has been developed and implemented through numerous partnerships with sports organisations, UN agencies and programmes, NGOs and other members of civil

society. In March 2020, the IOC joined the UN Women Sports for Generation Equality Initiative to accelerate progress on a set of common principles and aligned objectives that will harness the power of sport in making gender equality a reality within and through sport. The IOC is encouraging Olympic Movement stakeholders to follow suit. More information can be found [here](#).

Gender Equality at the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games have grown to be the largest, gender equal sporting event in the world. However, this was not always the case. Women 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. Despite the reticence of Pierre de Coubertin, 22 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.

Female participation has increased steadily since then, with women accounting for more than 48 per cent of the participants at the 2020 Games in Tokyo (5,457 women out of 11,420 athletes), compared with 23 per cent at the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, and just over 13 per cent at the 1964 Games in Tokyo. In the last 20 years, the IOC has also increased the number of women's events on the Olympic programme, 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.

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

* Sports re-introduced to the Olympic Programme.

Gender Equality at Tokyo 2020

The IOC worked with the Tokyo Organising Committee for the Olympic Games and the IFs to ensure that the Summer Olympic Games continued to showcase the best of women's and men's sport. Tokyo 2020 had the most gender-balanced athlete participation to date, with female athletes accounting for 48 per cent of the total.

In addition, the EB took two key decisions relating to gender equality at the Olympic Games in March 2020 that came into effect for Tokyo:

- All NOCs should be represented by a minimum of one female and one male athlete at all editions of the Olympic Summer Games, starting with Tokyo 2020; and
- the IOC protocol guidelines were changed to allow NOCs to nominate a female and a male athlete to jointly bear their flag at the Opening Ceremony.

Furthermore, three key achievements were realised at the Tokyo Games:

- Four IFs moved to gender-balanced events for the first time (Canoe, Rowing, Shooting and Weightlifting).
- Three disciplines achieved gender balance (BMX racing, mountain biking and freestyle wrestling).
- Six IFs moved to gender-balanced athlete quotas (Canoe, Judo, Rowing, Sailing, Shooting and Weightlifting).

In collaboration with its stakeholders, the IOC has also made progress towards a gender-balanced Olympic Games competition schedule to ensure fair and balanced exposure of all athletes. In particular, there has been substantial improvement made on Day 16 to improve gender balance in the number of hours of competition and the medal events per gender.

Gender Equality at Beijing 2022

The IOC has worked with the Beijing OCOG, IFs and NOCs to add events and modify athlete quotas to ensure more balanced representation at the Beijing Winter Olympics. Additionally, the Beijing 2022 competition schedule builds on key advances made to the PyeongChang 2018 competition schedule, particularly on Day 16, to further enhance gender equality at the Winter Olympic Games. Of note, two women's events have been moved to Day 15 to increase the number of hours of women's sport on the penultimate day.

In terms of athlete representation, Beijing 2022 will be the most gender balanced Olympic Winter Games to date, with women expected to account for 45 per cent of athletes. Gender balance will be reached in skeleton, individual luge, speed skating, cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, freestyle skiing and snowboard.

Beijing 2022 will also boast the highest number of women's events ever with the addition of two women's events and four mixed-team events. The new women's events are:

- Women's monobob (Bobsleigh)
- Women's Big Air skiing

This will increase the percentage of women's events in the Olympic Programme to 47 per cent.

Beyond the field of play

Improving the representation of women among other key functions at the Olympic Games, including coaches, technical officials and Games team leadership, continues to be a priority for the IOC.

In Rio 2016, women represented:

- 11% of National Olympic Committee Chef de Missions
- 39% of National Delegation Flagbearers
- 32% of Accredited International and National Technical Officials
- 11% of Accredited Coaches



The IOC's Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives 2021 – 2024 include several actions that involve the IOC, IFs, NOCs, and Olympic Movement Stakeholders jointly working together to improve these statistics.

Portrayal is a key focus area for the IOC beyond the field of play. Portrayal includes the language (words and expressions), images and voices used, the quality and quantity of coverage and the prominence given when depicting individuals or groups in communications and the media.

To support its stakeholders in adopting fair and equal portrayal practices, the IOC published the [IOC Portrayal Guidelines](#). The Guideline was updated in June 2021, and the IOC will be working with stakeholders in the Olympic Movement to implement them.

Gender equality at the Youth Olympic Games

The 3rd Summer Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires blazed a trail for equal participation on the Olympic stage, with 2,000 girls and 2,000 boys competing. The 3rd Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne followed suit, with 936 girls and 936 boys participating. But this is not the only important contribution that the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) have made to gender equality in sport. Mixed-gender events have also featured at the YOG since the inaugural YOG in Singapore in 2010. These mixed events have been a combination of events where boys and girls compete separately in a combined team, and events in which they go head-to-head in direct competition. Many of these events have since been included in the Olympic programme.

Gender Equality in the Olympic Movement

While the participation of women in physical activities and the Olympic Games has steadily increased over the years, the percentage of women in governing and administrative bodies of the Olympic Movement has remained low.

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. To date, several NOCs and IFs have achieved gender balance and many more are making steady progress to close the gender gap in the upcoming Olympiad.

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. In the 2017-2020 Olympic Solidarity plan, all major programmes have special incentives encouraging women's participation. Furthermore, a special "Gender Equality and Diversity" programme is devoted to promoting initiatives creating preconditions for women to take on leadership roles in sport, in terms of both coaching and sports administration. NOCs can also apply for funding for projects aimed at raising sports participation levels among girls and women through a programme devoted to sport for social development.

Women and sport awards

Since 2000, the IOC Women and Sport Awards have been held to recognise women, men or organisations that have made remarkable contributions to the development, encouragement and reinforcement of women's and girls' participation in sport on an annual basis. There have been over 122 winners from 65 countries to date.

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

Year	Sports	Women's only Events	Mixed Events	Total events	% of women's only events	% of women's/mixed events	Women participants	% of women participants
1900	2	2	1	95	2.1	5.3	22	2.2
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	48.7

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

Year	Sports	Women's only Events	Mixed Events	Total events	% of women's only events	% of women's/mixed events	Women participants	% of women 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	1,314*	45.4*

*: predicted number