

WOMEN IN THE 2018 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES:

**An Analysis of Participation, Leadership, and
Media Coverage
Executive Summary**

November 2018

A Women's Sports Foundation Report

Foreword and Acknowledgments

This report is the sixth in the series that follows the progress of women in the Olympic and Paralympic movement. The first three reports were published by the Women's Sports Foundation. The fourth report was published by SHARP, the Sport, Health and Activity Research and Policy Center for Women and Girls. SHARP is a research center at the University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women and Gender, co-founded by the Women's Sports Foundation. The fifth report, published in 2017 by the Women's Sports Foundation, provided the most accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date examination of the participation trends among female Olympic and Paralympic athletes and the hiring trends of Olympic and Paralympic governing bodies with respect to the number of women who hold leadership positions in these organizations. The sixth report examines the same issues for the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. It is intended to provide governing bodies, athletes, and policymakers at the national and international level with new and accurate information with an eye toward making the Olympic and Paralympic movement equitable for all. These reports can be found at: <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/research/articles-and-reports/all/>

The Women's Sports Foundation is indebted to the study authors, Emily Houghton, Ph.D., Lindsay Pieper, Ph.D., and Maureen Smith, Ph.D., whose research excellence brought this project to fruition.

For each edition of the report, the Women's Sports Foundation provided relevant evidence-based policy recommendations for future planning and action. We gratefully acknowledge the leadership and expertise of Nancy Hogshead-Makar, who as Senior Director of Advocacy originally authored the recommendations for the report on the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and Donna Lopiano, Ph.D., President of Sports Management Resources, who updated the recommendations for the fifth edition as well as this edition. Special thanks to ESPN and ESPN Corporate Citizenship for their generous support in the development and dissemination of this report

We are grateful for the consultative energy and scholarly insights of the experts who reviewed the report and the recommendations. They made many suggestions that greatly improved the content and clarity of the report.

Sarah Axelson, MPA, Director of Advocacy, Women's Sports Foundation

Lisa Baird, Chief Marketing Officer, United States Olympic Committee

Erin Buzuvis, J.D., Director, Center for Gender & Sexuality Studies and Professor of Law, Western New England School of Law

Robin Harris, Executive Director, The Ivy League

Mary A. Hums, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Health and Sport Sciences, University of Louisville

Karen Issokson-Silver, MPH, Vice President, Research and Evaluation, Women's Sports Foundation

Richard Lapchick, Ph.D., Chair, DeVos Sport Business Management Program, University of Central Florida

Nancy Lee, former Head of Sport for Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, former COO of Olympic Broadcasting and Project Advisor for IOC's Gender Equality Review Project

Don Sabo, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, D'Youville College, and Sport and Health Policy Advisor, Women's Sports Foundation

Marjorie Snyder, Ph.D., Senior Director of Research, Women's Sports Foundation

Eli A. Wolff, Director, Sport and Society Initiative, Brown University

A special note of acknowledgement and appreciation is extended as well to Deana Monahan for her editorial and graphic skills.

About The Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation — the leading authority on the participation of women and girls in sports — is dedicated to creating leaders by ensuring girls access to sports. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we seek to strengthen and expand opportunities for all girls and women to participate in all sports at all levels through research, advocacy, community impact and a wide variety of collaborative partnerships. The Women's Sports Foundation has relationships with more than 1,000 of the world's elite female athletes and has positively shaped the lives of more than 3 million youth, high school and collegiate student-athletes. To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org or follow us at [@WomensSportsFdn](https://twitter.com/WomensSportsFdn) and www.facebook.com/WomensSportsFoundation.

Contact us at info@WomensSportsFoundation.org or toll-free at 800.227.3988.

This report may be downloaded from www.WomensSportsFoundation.org. This report may be reproduced and distributed only in its entirety. Any material taken from this report and published or transmitted in any form, electronic or mechanical, must be properly attributed to *Women in the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games: An Analysis of Leadership, Participation, and Media Coverage* published by the Women's Sports Foundation.

Preferred citation: Houghton, E.J., Pieper, L.P., & Smith, M.M. (2018). *Women in the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games: An Analysis of Participation, Leadership, and Media Coverage*. New York, NY: Women's Sports Foundation.

© 2018, Women's Sports Foundation, All Rights Reserved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC) both maintain that the growth of women's athletic and leadership participation in international sport is a major goal. The Olympic Agenda 2020, a strategic plan for the future of the Olympic Movement, contains 40 recommendations that serve to "protect the uniqueness of the Games and strengthen Olympic values in society" (International Olympic Committee, 2014). Recommendation 11 aims to improve gender equality¹ in the Olympic Games by setting a 50 percent female participation target for the International Federations. To further help Olympic stakeholders achieve gender equality, the IOC Women in Sport and Athletes' Commissions launched the *IOC Gender Equality Review Project* in February 2018, which outlines 25 recommendations to achieve parity in five theme areas. Participation, leadership, and media coverage are addressed. Along the same lines, in 2003, the IPC activated the Women in Sport Committee to address the low number of female athletes and events in the Paralympic Games, as

1 Throughout this report when referring to IOC reports, recommendations, and targets, we have used the language of those reports, recommendations, and targets. The IOC (and other international bodies like the United Nations) uses "equality" not "equity" in its lexicon. They see "equity" as a benchmark towards achieving "equality". In the U.S "equity" does not necessarily mean absolute "equality," rather it means everyone is justly treated. This report uses "equity" when discussing issues of fairness.

well as the low number of women in leadership positions in Paralympic governance (International Paralympic Committee, 2016).

Over the past decade, the IOC and IPC both have made strides in supporting the inclusion of women in the international sporting scene. At the first Olympic Winter Games held in 1924, 11 women (4.3% of the participants) competed in individual and mixed pair figure skating. Since 1924, the number of female winter Olympians and women's events has gradually increased. By 1960, 21.7% of the Winter Games athletes were women. Yet, it took another 34 years until women accounted for more than 30% of the athletes (30.1% in 1994). At the Olympic Winter Games hosted in Sochi in 2014, women accounted for 40.4% of athletes. Female Paralympians have not fared nearly as well as their Olympic counterparts. At the first Paralympic Winter Games held in 1976, 37 women (18.7% of the participants) competed in alpine skiing and cross-country skiing. By 2002, nearly 21% of the Winter Paralympic athletes were women. At the most recent Paralympic Winter Games in 2018 women accounted for 23.6% of athletes.

The IOC and IPC also have made attempts to support the inclusion of a greater number of women in leadership positions. The IOC requested that women be provided with at least 20% of the leadership opportunities in international

sport organizations by 2005. In December 2016, the IOC Executive Board established a 30% minimum target for women in decision-making positions by 2020. Since women continue to be minimally represented in leadership positions in Olympic governance, Recommendation 38 of the Olympic Agenda 2020 incorporates gender balance as a criterion for the recruitment process of IOC membership. In the *IOC Gender Equality Review Project*, five recommendations explicitly address increasing female leadership in the Olympic Movement. The IPC established a 30% threshold for gender equity in its leadership structures in 2009.

This report examines the status of women in the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games as both participants and leaders. More specifically, it examines the athletic opportunities, leadership positions, and media narratives afforded to female athletes to illuminate the place of women in the International and U.S. Olympic and Paralympic sport hierarchy. This report also assesses the extent to which the IOC, IPC, and USOC are fulfilling their stated missions with respect to fairness and gender equity, as well as whether or not past recommendations articulated by the Women's Sports Foundation have been fulfilled. Despite significant changes over the histories of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the data suggests much work remains, and this report is one means of accounting for such change.

Some of the major findings documented by this study are summarized below:

1. Male athletes continue to outnumber female athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

At the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, 1,704 male athletes (58.6%) and 1,204 female athletes (41.4%) participated. This is a slight increase from 2014 when 1,708 men (60%) and 1,158 women (40%) competed. At the 2018 Paralympic Games, 431 male athletes (76.4%) and 133 female athletes (23.6%) participated as compared to 2014 when 412 men (76.2%) and 129 women (23.8%) competed.

2. Countries continue to exclude women in their Olympic and Paralympic delegations.

Of the 92 countries represented at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, 23 delegations did not send any female athletes, and eight delegations did not send any male athletes. Single-sex delegations were all smaller than 10 athletes. Of the 49 countries represented at the Paralympic Winter Games, 19 delegations did not send any female athletes, and two delegations did not send any male athletes. Only four delegations included at least 10 female athletes.

3. Female athletes continue to have fewer participation opportunities than male athletes.

Structural gender discrepancies continue in the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. At the 2018 Games, women did not compete in Nordic combined, four-man bobsleigh², and doubles luge (although doubles luge is considered a mixed event). In addition, female athletes had fewer participation opportunities than their male counterparts: there were 44 (43.1%) women's events, 50 (49%) men's events, and eight (7.8%) mixed events. At the 2018 Paralympic Games, women did not compete in snowboard cross SB-UL and banked slalom SB-UL in the sport of snowboarding. Female Paralympians also had fewer participation opportunities than their male counterparts: there were 37 (46.2%) women's events, 39 (48.8%) men's events, and four (5%) mixed events (cross country mixed relay, cross country open relay, para ice hockey, and wheelchair curling).

4. The IOC requested women be provided with at least 20% of the leadership opportunities in international sport organizations by 2005. In December 2016, the IOC Executive Board set 30% as a minimum target for women in decision-making positions by 2020. As a result of the 2018 Gender Equality Review Project recommendations #19c and d, the target has been revised. The recommendation is to achieve

2 Technically four-man bobsleigh is open to women, but no women have participated in the event in the Olympic Games.

equal representation of men and women in all IOC decision-making positions by 2024. However, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in Olympic governance.³

IOC: Female representation has increased in the IOC governance structure; yet, the number of women in leadership positions remains slightly below the IOC's 30% 2020 target. Twenty-nine (29%) of the 100 IOC members are women. Four (26.7%) women sit on the 15-person Executive Committee. There has never been a female IOC President or Secretary General.

NOCs: Leadership positions within the 202 active National Olympic Committees (NOCs) are still primarily dominated by men: women constitute 7.5% of listed NOC presidents and 16.2% of listed secretary generals. Moreover, 152 (77.2%) NOCs have all-male leadership teams, 43 (21.8%) have male/female leadership teams, and two (1.0%), Ireland and Zambia, have all-female leadership teams.⁴ Although this is a slight improvement in female representation since 2016 when 79.9% of NOCs had all-male leadership teams, women remain underrepresented in NOC leadership positions.

3 Data on the numbers of men and women in leadership positions were collected between October and December 2017, and statements are based on that time period.

4 During data collection, Brazil did not provide information about its president or secretary general, and Malawi, Montenegro, Morocco, and Paraguay only included a male president. These countries were therefore not included in the leadership team counts. Kuwait and Russia were suspended and therefore were not included as active NOCs.

IFs: Leadership positions within the seven Winter Olympic International Federations (IFs) also are dominated by men. Women hold 13 of the 80 (16.2%) Winter IFs Executive Council positions. Only the World Curling Federation has a female president, Kate Caithness. Only the World Curling Federation and International Skating Union Executive Board exceed the 20% 2005 threshold for female representation with 25% and 38.5%, respectively. No woman serves on the Bobsleigh & Skeleton Executive Council.

IPC: The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has set a standard of 30% for gender equity in its leadership structures. Four women (28.6%) are part of the 14-member IPC Governing Board, an 8.6% increase from 2016. Twenty-nine (16.8%) of the 173 listed NPC presidents are women, an increase from 26 in 2016 and 19 in 2012. Fifty-five (31.1%) of NPC designated “main contacts” are women.

5. The United States Olympic Committee continues to make strides toward organizational gender equity, but it is still well below a balanced 50/50 split in leadership positions. This is particularly true in the Winter National Governing Bodies and Olympic coaching staffs, where women are woefully underrepresented in leadership positions.

USOC: The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) exceeds the IOC-recommended 30% threshold for the inclusion of women on the Board of Directors, with 37.5% female members. This is consistent from 2016. The Executive Team, which consists of 14 members, has four (28.6%) female members, an increase from two in 2016.

NGBs: Taken together, the U.S. Winter Sport National Governing Bodies (NGBs) board of director positions are held largely by men. Of the 123 board of director positions across the eight Winter NGBs, men hold 84 (68.3%) positions and women hold 39 (31.7%) positions. At the time of data collection, no woman serves as chair of a Winter NGB. Only the US Figure Skating Board of Directors is comprised of more female members (56.3%) than male members. The USA Curling (24%), USA Hockey (23.5%), USA Luge (27.3%), and US Speedskating (20%) boards of directors all fall below the IOC’s 30% 2020 target.

U.S. Olympic Coaches: U.S. Olympic coaches are overwhelmingly male. Of the 66 “main coaches,” for the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, eight (12.1%) were women, seven of whom coached figure skating or ice dancing.⁵ This is a slight increase from the 2014 Games when women held 8.5% of “main coach” positions.⁶ Linlin Sun, the only female coach outside of figure skating or ice

5 Main coaches include those designated in a media guide or press release, or as indicated by the NGBs’ press officer via email correspondence with the authors. Main coaches include: men’s and women’s head coaches, men’s and women’s assistant coaches, national teams’ men’s and women’s coaches, men’s and women’s international coaches, and skill- or position-specific coaches (such as start coaches, speed coaches, sprint coaches, and goal-tending coaches).

6 Main coaches for 2014 data was collected using the 2014 USA Olympic Media Guide. Main coaches include those pictured in the guide with a biography, including but not limited to head coaches, assistant coaches, and general managers. Various other positions were listed in the media guide but did not include biographical information; therefore, they were not included in this calculation. Such positions include, but are not limited to: ski technicians, sled mechanics, or team leaders.

dancing, served as the 2018 speedskating short track assistant coach.

6. Media accounts appear to be trending toward more equitable coverage of male and female Olympians; however, coverage of the Paralympic Games remains minimal.

Media coverage favored women during the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. Stories on female athletes exceeded that of male athletes, with 43% of articles dedicated to women, 40% to men, and 17% discussed both women and men. Online outlets pictured women in 47% of photographs and men in 43%. This is an improvement from 2010 when Smith and Wrynn (2010) found that 62.4% of coverage was dedicated to male athletes and 37.6% to female athletes.

During the 2018 Paralympic Games, the four major online websites (ESPN, NBCOlympics, New York Times, and USA Today) published only 34 articles about Paralympians. Of those, 44% were about male athletes, 21% about female athletes, and 35% about both male and female athletes.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1

All IFs, NOCs (including the United States Olympic Committee), and NGBs should act immediately to endorse the March 25, 2018, IOC Gender Equality Recommendations and produce analogous plans, timetables, and monitoring systems for their own organizations to achieve all recommendations.

Almost simultaneous with the production of this report (March 2018), the International Olympic Committee produced the *IOC Gender Equality Review Project IOC Gender Equality Report*. This Report represented the most comprehensive examination ever undertaken of the participation, media portrayal, funding, and governance (IOC, NGBs, IFs, ICOGs, and NOCs) related to the achievement of gender equity across the Olympic Movement. What differentiates this effort from past initiatives to advance gender equality are the following factors:

1. the Gender Equality Review Project was a joint initiative of the IOC Women in Sport and Athletes' Commissions rather than the IOC Women in Sport Commission alone, the latter being the traditional structure tasked with the responsibility to advise the membership, Executive Board, and President on equal opportunity for girls and women;
2. the scope of the year-long study was unprecedented, extending to 40 interviews with representatives from six stakeholder groups (athletes, NOCs, IF, sports media professionals, academic specialists in sports studies, and business leaders from the private sector) and including a review of 60 reports, publications, and management studies on gender equality across the Olympic Movement;
3. all of the Report recommendations were fully endorsed by the IOC Executive Board; and
4. the recommendations included multiple specific activation steps, timelines, and a monitoring plan.

These recommendations have been adopted by the IOC for the Olympic entities it owns and directly controls (Olympic Games, Youth Olympic Games, OCOGs and its other event and organizational agencies). However, these recommendations are being offered for the consideration of the other members of the Olympic family that are recognized but not owned and controlled by the IOC — the International Paralympic Committee, IFs, and the NOCs and their respective NGBs. Thus, while the IOC has fulfilled its leadership responsibility in defining best practice, it has not gone so far as to mandate the adoption of such policies as conditions for recognition and participation of these entities in the Olympic Games. These other Olympic

family members must now act to endorse and adopt analogous policies.

These recommendations are so significant that they deserve reiteration in this report, noting that the detailed implementation action items are the most powerful elements of the IOC Report but are not included in the following list.

Recommendations Related to Sport

1. Olympic Games Participation

- *Ensure there is full gender equality in athlete quotas and medal events for both genders from the Olympic Games 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games 2026 onwards.*
- *For all team sports/disciplines/events, ensure an equal number of teams and, where appropriate, an equal number of athletes for both genders.*
- *For all individual events, the number of female and male participants should be equal per event and/or per discipline.*

2. Competition Formats and Technical Rules

- *Ensure the competition format related to distances, duration of competition segments, number of rounds, etc., between women and men are as equal as possible.*

3. Uniforms

- *Ensure that competition uniforms reflect the technical requirements of the sport and do not have any unjustifiable differences.*

4. Equipment/Apparatus

- *Wherever possible, the sport-specific equipment and apparatus between men and women should be the same.*

5. Technical Officials

- *Balanced gender representation of participating Technical Officials.*

6. Coaches

- *Balanced gender representation for coaches selected to participate at the Games.*

7. Venues and Facilities

- *That women and men use the same venues and fields of play where possible.*

8. Competition Schedule

- *Equal representation of women's and men's events in the competition schedule.*

9. Medical

- To ensure equal treatment of female and male athletes, medical testing and/or studies should be conducted on both genders when exploring such matters as health and safety issues, equipment and apparatus changes.

10. Safeguarding athletes from harassment and abuse in sport

- Prevention of Harassment and Abuse in Sport (PHAS), which includes prevention of gender discrimination, to be considered for inclusion in the IOC Basic Principles of Good Governance.

11. Career Transition

- Develop a strategic plan focused on the transition of female Olympians into their post-competition career and maximise the use of existing programmes.

Recommendations Related to Portrayal

12. Balanced media portrayal of both genders

- The IOC requires its administration to establish principles and guidelines for fair and balanced portrayal in all its forms of communication.

13. Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs)

- As part of the commitment to respect the Olympic Charter and to protect the Olympic brand, OCOGs will

provide fair and equal portrayal of women and men in all aspects of the Olympic Games.

14. Communication Partnerships

- The Working Group endorses the need for all media to offer fair and equal portrayal of sportswomen. The IOC should implement mechanisms to address and monitor this objective with Olympic Movement stakeholders and partners.

Recommendations Related to Funding

15. Funding Requirement

- The Olympic Movement allocates a portion of its operations budget to achieve its goals for gender equality on the field of play, in governance and in its own administration.

16. NOC and IF initiatives

- Recognising that some NOCs and IFs already allocate specific funding to women's programmes, the Working Group strongly recommends that other organisations initiate this same practice.

17. Equal Payments

- NOCs and IFs to establish mechanisms to address inequalities between genders in prize money or other athlete payments.

Recommendations Related to Governance

18. Governance Leadership Development

- *The IOC to establish strategic mechanisms to increase the pipeline of female candidates for governance roles in general as well as for executive board positions.*

19. IOC Membership Electoral Process

- *The IOC to ensure its electoral process reflects its commitment to a diverse and balanced membership.*

20. NOC and IF Electoral Processes

- *The Olympic Movement partners should review their electoral processes with a view to developing strategies for gender-balanced representation in their governance bodies.*

21. Roles and Responsibilities

- *The IOC and Olympic Movement stakeholders should address the issue of marginalisation by women and men sharing responsibility for the implementation and sustainability of gender equality in their organisations and ensuring women have roles of influence and decision-making responsibilities in the organisation's administration and governance.*

24. Gender Equality Leadership

- *To ensure that a senior IOC executive coordinates all gender equality activity impacting the IOC*

administration and impacting Olympic Movement stakeholders.

Recommendations Related to HR, Monitoring and Communication

22. Inclusive Organisational Culture and Diversity Leadership

- *IOC Human Resources Committee to incorporate actions as appropriate into the Sustainability Action Plan and the People Development 2020 strategic plan for the 2017-2020 Olympiad.*

23. Monitoring and Tracking System

- *Implement a tangible reporting system to monitor, measure and evaluate gender equality activity and results on an ongoing basis. This monitoring and reporting mechanism needs to be straightforward, user-friendly and efficiently coordinated across function areas and organisations.*

Without exception, the Women's Sports Foundation concurs with these IOC recommendations, especially recommendations 1, 2, 7, and 8, which would remove the Olympic structural inequities that make it mathematically impossible to achieve gender equity in athlete participation and remove scheduling and facility barriers that affect performance. Significantly, the IOC is recognizing the absolute necessity of institutionalizing equal representation of males and females in governance via adoption of organizational policies and statutes. Also significant is the

fact that the IOC is using its considerable power to mandate fair and equal media portrayal of male and female athletes by the IOC, IFs, NGBs, OCOGs, and NOCs. These are huge leaps in the commitment and public positioning of the IOC.

Recommendation #2

The United States Olympic Committee should reconsider the mechanisms and measures utilized for tracking and evaluating the participation and representation of women within NGBs, specifically:

- a. USOC Diversity & Inclusion Scorecard benchmarks should be end goal gender equity standards established on the basis of census data alone rather than arbitrary determinations of reasonable growth based on current participation or representation of organizations that have historically depressed the participation of females.
- b. Annual athlete and coach participation and representation data required of NGBs should be national in scope (reflecting female participation in programs for all age groups and skill levels) rather than only national team and national team development programs because the Amateur Sports Act charges each NGB with the development of their respective sport “throughout the United States.”

Recommendation #3

The IOC and the IPC should require, as a condition of acceptance for participation in the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, that all delegations include male and female athletes, with formal waivers based on extenuating circumstances required for exceptions.

WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION

Women's Sports Foundation founded by Billie Jean King

New York City
247 West 30th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Eisenhower Park
1899 Hempstead Turnpike, Suite 400
East Meadow, NY 11554

800.227.3988
info@WomensSportsFoundation.org
www.WomensSportsFoundation.org

Follow the Women's Sports Foundation on:

