

Women in the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games: A Women's Sports Foundation Research Report

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An analysis of participation, leadership and media coverage

Full Report

http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/binary-data/WSF_ARTICLE/pdf_file/1164.PDF

Executive Summary

Increasing women's participation in the Olympic Movement as participants and leaders has been a slow and challenging process. While the number of "events" open to female athletes has increased steadily during the past 30 years, the actual number of female Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games participants and the number of opportunities to medal within those events has yet to equal the number of male participants or medals. The 2006 Paralympic Winter Games statistics are a good illustration of this discrepancy; while there are nearly an equal number of events open to female athletes, the total number of female Paralympic athletes was 99 of 474 or 20.9%. And, while women's participation has attempted to "catch up" with small increases in participation numbers, men's events and participation opportunities have continued to increase, thereby perpetuating and increasing the participation gap. For instance, there were 1,006 women (38.3%) and 1,627 men (61.7%) in the 2006 Olympic Winter Games compared to 886 women (36.9%) and 1,513 men (63.1%) in 2002. Interestingly, the same continued growth of men's sport and, as a result, the perpetuation of the gender gap has occurred in U.S. high school and college sport in the wake of Title IX's push for gender equity (BFHSA, 2006; NCAA, 2006).

Some countries claim that the lack of women in their delegation is a result of lack of funding; however, the majority of these countries cite other reasons for the exclusion of women, such as social, cultural and religious differences (Good, 2002). However, the Olympic Charter specifically states that "Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement." (IOC, 2004). Thus, social, cultural and religious differences between men and women are not legitimate justifications for the lack of women in delegations.

While the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made significant efforts to play a leadership role in growing women's participation, it has had limited success in encouraging the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), the 203 National Olympic Committees (NOC) and international winter sport federations (IF) to commit to gender equality.

Women are also significantly underrepresented in the IOC and on IF boards of directors, the international governance structures that determine whether women's sports are offered in Olympic, Paralympic and world championship competition. There are few women serving as members of National Olympic Committees (NOC), such as the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), that determine the size and composition of their respective national Olympic and Paralympic delegations and

whether developmental programs are offered to support women's sports participation.

And, like the situation here in the United States, the underrepresentation of women is also reflected within each country's respective National Sports Governing Bodies (NGB) boards of directors (e.g., USA Hockey, U.S. Figure Skating, etc.) and at community leadership levels where grassroots participation opportunities ultimately determine the Olympic and Paralympic participation pipeline. Without strong leadership from governing boards at all levels, insufficiencies in financial support and programmatic infrastructure will continue and the number of female Olympic and Paralympic athletes will continue to lag behind men.

Olympic status raises the visibility of both sports and athletes, opening new doors to media visibility, high earnings through prize money and endorsements, college scholarships and jobs and key influencer connections. More significantly, Olympic status also ignites the aspirations of millions of girls who are inspired to participate by the heroes they see. With an estimated audience of 2 billion, the Olympic Winter Games is the most widely viewed forum for winter sports (USA Weekend, 2006). Thus, it is important to regularly examine the state of women's participation as leaders and athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This report specifically examines such participation and leadership in the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games from both an international and United States perspective.

This report examines the extent to which both the international and U.S. sports communities are providing equitable sports participation and leadership opportunities for women and assigns grades based on the assumption that men and women should have equal opportunities as athletes and leaders and be equally represented in media coverage.

The evidence gathered here sheds empirical light on the extent to which the IOC and USOC are living up to their ideals and existing legal statutes. Specifically, the following data are reviewed and evaluated:

International

(1) The participation rates of female athletes compared to male athletes in the Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games from 1924 through 2006

(2) The current involvement of men and women in leadership roles within the International Olympic Committee, national Olympic committees and international sport federations

United States

(3) The current participation rates and ethnic and racial diversity of U.S. male and female athletes in Olympic Winter and Paralympic Winter Games

(4) The membership patterns and extent of ethnic and racial diversity among men and women in selected staff and volunteer board of directors leadership

positions within the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and U.S. national sport governing bodies (NGBs) for winter sports

(5) The media coverage of female and male athlete participation in the 2006 Olympic Winter Games

Grades are summarized below. A complete explanation of the grading scale can be found in Appendix A of the full report.

International Report Card

2006 Olympic Winter Games Participation **(B)**

2006 Paralympic Winter Games Participation **(C-)**

2006 IOC Governance **(F)**

2006 IF Executive Committees **(F)**

2006 IPC Governance **(D)**

2005 National Olympic Committee Governance **(F)**

70.7% of NOCs have fewer than 20% women on their governing committees

2006 National Olympic Delegations **(C-)**

70.6% of countries attending included female athletes in their delegations

2006 National Paralympic Delegations **(C-)**

69.2% countries attending included female athletes in their delegations

United States Report Card

2006 U.S. Olympic Participation of Women **(B)**

2006 U.S. Paralympic Participation of Women **(D+)**

2006 U.S. Olympic Team Racial/Ethnic Diversity **(Incomplete)**

2006 USOC Board of Directors **(F)**

2006 U.S. Olympic/Paralympic NGB Boards of Directors **(F)**

except skating received a B

2006 U.S. Olympic/Paralympic NGB Executive Committees **(F)**

except skating received an A and skiing a D+

2006 U.S. Media Coverage **(C+)**

Major Findings

International Findings

(1) Sports and Medal Events for Women are Close to Equitable. In the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, women competed in 47.6% and 48.3%, respectively, of all sports and 45.3% and 48.3%, respectively, of all medal events. Women still do not compete in ski jumping, Nordic combined, four-person bobsled (also referred to as bobsleigh) or doubles luge in the Olympic Winter Games and ice sledge hockey in the Paralympic Winter Games.

(2) Participation Opportunities Lag Far Behind. While female participation numbers grow, men's participation is increasing more, creating backsliding in the percentage of women competing in the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games:

Olympic Winter Games

- There were 1,006 women (38.3%) and 1,627 men (61.7%) in 2006, compared to 886 women (36.9%) and 1,513 men (63.1%) in 2002.
- Of 80 total countries, 20 delegations did not send any female participants and four delegations did not send any male participants in 2006. In 2002, 77

countries competed with 22 delegations sending no females, compared to one delegation that sent no males.

Paralympic Winter Games

- There were 99 women (20.9%) and 375 men (79.1%) in 2006, compared to 88 women (21.1%) and 328 men (78.9%) in 2002.
- Of the 39 participating countries, 12 delegations did not send any female participants and five delegations did not send any male participants in 2006, compared to 36 countries with 10 delegations sending no female participations and two delegations sending no males in 2002.

(3) Women's Representation in Governance Structures at all Levels is Dismal. In the last 10 years since the IOC adopted goals of 10% for women's leadership participation in the NOCs and IFs by 2000 and 20% by 2005, these governance entities have come no more than one quarter of the way toward the 20% goal.

- Only 29.3% of the NOCs (54 of 181) and 28.6% of Olympic winter sport IFs (10 of 35) have achieved 20% representation of women on their respective boards of directors. At this rate it will take another 30 years before each NOC and IF has at least 20% women.
- Only 13% of the IOC membership is female.
- Only two women (13.3%) serve on the 15-member International Paralympic Committee.
- There is only one woman (14.3%) among the top paid staff and top volunteer positions of the seven winter sports IFs.

The United States Findings

(1) The United States is Not Fulfilling Its Gender, Race and Disability Equality Obligations Under the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (ASA). Women, particularly women of color and disabled women, are significantly underrepresented in participation and leadership opportunities in Olympic and Paralympic winter sports in the United States. The findings below also confirm that the U.S. NGBs are not fulfilling their ASA obligations or quadrennial reporting requirements under the ASA.

U.S. Olympic Winter Games Participation

- There were 90 women (42.2%) and 122 men (57.8%) in 2006, compared to 91 women (42.9%) and 121 men (57.1%) in 2002.
- In 2006, the U.S. delegation ranked 10th in the percentage of women athletes, compared to other countries sending at least 10 athletes.

U.S. Paralympic Winter Games Participation

- There were 11 women (19.6%) and 45 men (80.4%) in 2006, compared to 16 women (28.1%) and 41 men (71.9%) in 2002.
- Of the 39 participating countries, the U.S. delegation tied for first in numbers of female athletes participating but was only ranked sixth in terms of the percentage of female athletes among delegations of at least 10 athletes.

U.S. Team Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- Unofficial USOC data indicates that while the U.S. Olympic winter team's racial and ethnic diversity has more than doubled since the 1990s, among the 212 male and female U.S. winter Olympians in 2006, there were 20 athletes (9.4%) who identified as African-American, Asian or Latino. Only seven athletes of color were women, comprising only 7.9% of the entire U.S. female delegation of 89 athletes. This is an increase of one athlete since 2002.
- No data exists for U.S. Paralympic athletes.

Women in USOC and NGB Leadership

- Women were significantly underrepresented in leadership positions on the USOC Board of Directors (27.3%) and as members of key USOC committees (0% on Audit Committee and 25% on Governance Committee).
- With the exception of skating (42.9% on Board of Directors, 55.6% on Executive Committee), gender diversity on the governing boards of U.S. NGBs was minimal.
- There were no women in the top paid staff or top volunteer positions in any U.S. winter sports NGB.

(2) Media Coverage of Women Participating in the Olympic Winter Games Far Exceeds Daily U.S. Print and Electronic Media Coverage. Editorial and photographic coverage by the New York Times (38.2% and 36%, respectively) and NBC television coverage (42.7%) of women in the 2006 Olympic Winter Games far exceeded average daily U.S. editorial (8%) and televised (6.3%) coverage of women in sports. One historic event that did occur during the 2006 Games was the broadcast of the entire Olympic women's ice hockey tournament, a first in U.S. television history.

Policy Recommendations

International Olympic and Paralympic Governance

- The IOC should add women's ski jumping, double luge, four-person bobsled and Nordic combined to the events contested in the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and consider early future admission for other sports and events in which women are not currently participating.
- The IPC should add women's ice sledge hockey to the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games program and establish a minimum of two players of each gender (currently one) on each five-person mixed team in wheelchair curling.
- The IOC should provide financial incentives to countries that demonstrate measurable progress towards equity in their delegations, training programs and governance structures.
- The IOC and IPC should allocate financial incentives to IFs in order to increase the number and quality of technical assistance programs provided to NOCs in events in which women are underrepresented. Similar incentives should be offered to those sports not currently included on the Olympic or Paralympic Winter Games calendar for women.
- The IOC, through its IOC Women and Sport Commission, should produce a quadrennial report that provides reliable data on the participation of women in national and world championship competitions in winter sports and as staff members and members of governance and committee structures in the IOC, the NOCs and the winter sport IFs. Such quadrennial reports should describe

- and analyze efforts made within the IOC, NOC and IF programs to increase the participation of women as athletes, administrators and members of governance structures. The IPC should establish a Women and Sport Commission that would produce similar reports on women's participation and program evaluation.
- The IOC should substantially increase its current 20% goal for representation of women on the IOC, NOC and IF governing boards. A goal of 50% would establish a clear vision of gender balance for policy development in sports governance.

United States Olympic and Paralympic Governance

- The USOC Board of Directors and all USOC committees and task forces should be required to reflect the gender, race, ethnic and disability diversity of the U.S. population. Women, persons of color and disabled persons are underrepresented in U.S. sport as athletes, coaches, trainers, managers, administrators and officials. Achieving diversity and eliminating discrimination must start with a commitment to diversity at the highest levels of decision-making within the U.S. Olympic Movement. The USOC Board of Directors should consider setting minimum standards for NGBs, such as the 20% minimum NOC representation of women requirements adopted by the IOC and, after a reasonable time, increase the goal to 50%.
- The USOC should institute clear and evidence-based NGB reporting requirements with regard to current patterns and improvements about NGB gender, race and disability. More specifically, the following measures should be considered by the USOC Board of Directors to encourage diversity progress by each NGB:
 - Require that each NGB complete its quadrennial reporting obligations under the ASA before receiving USOC funding or reimbursement for expenditures.
 - Require each NGB to have a program in place to increase the participation of women, racial minorities and/or disabled individuals if one or more of these populations are underrepresented. Quadrennial reports on those programs should include reliable participation numbers in each program and evidence-based measures of progress.
 - Utilize the Women's Sports Foundation and other expert groups to assist the USOC and its NGBs in their efforts to design and implement diversity programs and to identify women, minorities and disabled persons to be recruited for volunteer service or employment.
 - Tie USOC staff performance measures and bonuses to improvements in NGB data collection and program evaluation that take diversity into account.
 - USOC data collection related to race and ethnicity should conform to U.S. census data methodology in order to permit comparative analysis.
 - Each NGB should be required to have a small and diverse Board of Directors with majority independent directors. Setting minimum diversity goals with deadlines should be considered.

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